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Archetypes of the Mother in the Fantasies of George MacDonald

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Abstract

A study of the Wise Woman, Mother, or Grandmother figure throughout George MacDonald's fantasy. Discusses how MacDonald is better understood through Jungian rather than Freudian analysis. Places imagery associated with these figures in their mythological, symbolic, and religious contexts, and examines both the beneficial and deadly aspects of the anima as shown in their actions.

Keywords

Anima in George MacDonald; Jungian analysis of George MacDonald; MacDonald, George—Characters—Mother-figures

Henry also sees Sybil as maid and matron at once, a strange, maidenly mystery, the Virgin of the Zodiac. Virgo with her sheaf of wheat stands at right angles to *Anima Mundi*, to World Soul. She adds a new dimension to the image of the Good Mother. What image emerges from this new dimension?

In older days they gave the name New Moon to the first slim crescent which appeared in the west after the dark of the moon. Galadriel's moon has waned and gone dark. Her age is past. Psyche's moon is full of hope for the future. Sybil's moon is new. Her age is just beginning. Galadriel lives for the past, Psyche for the future, Sybil in and for the moment.

Galadriel expressed her motherly protection through magical talismans. Psyche spoke words of hope. Sybil takes effective action. Sybil's seeming folly on the road, for example, came from her attempt to restore old Joanna, the Weeping Mother, to sanity.

SYBIL: "Out of Egypt have I called my son. Could you search for the god and not belong to his house?"
 JOANNA: "Worship me then! Worship the divine Isis!"
 SYBIL: "Ah, but I've sworn only to worship the god. Let Isis forgive me, and let us look for unity together."
 JOANNA: "They've parted him and torn him asunder. He was so pretty, so pretty, when he played with me, once."
 SYBIL: "He will be so lovely when he is found. We'll certainly find him. Won't you come with me and look?"
 JOANNA: "Alone I am and alone I go. I'm the goddess. But I will bless you. This is the blessing of Isis; go in peace." (9)

"Conversation of two aunts," said Sybil, settling herself in the car again.

Like Galadriel ageless, like Psyche human, Sybil culminates the Good Mother. Like the Fool (and Vac) she remains poised at the center of things; like the Tarot Fool she is eternally in creative motion, as the waters of the abyss ebb and surge forever.

Sybil is the Good Mother and Nancy is her spiritual child. Nancy repeats the hope and folly of Psyche; she is World Soul come anew. The power of the Fool unites Nancy and Sybil. Sybil lives in the eternal Now; Nancy is the future leaping to the measure of the Great Dance.

Though a virgin, Sybil is Nancy's spiritual mother. Sybil has passed through the trials which Nancy has yet to undergo. "From the freedom of a love more single than Nancy's she smiled at the young initiate who in untrained innocence beheld the conclusion of all initiations." (10) Sybil labors to teach Nancy that love and sanctity and universe are all one.

Sybil, this godly woman, at last shows old Joanna her lost child made whole--in the person of Nancy. Fully self-

possessed, fully personal, fully human and full of grace, Sybil is to Nancy as the Fool is to the World and as the Virgin Mary is to Messias.

A careful look at any portrayal of the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, will show her feet standing on the upturned crescent moon.

So Galadriel personifies the fundamental Mother Moon of the primitive man, from whom flow blessings and good gifts. From the Moon Mother grew World Soul, or Psyche, innocent and girlish. From Psyche's disobedience came the Weeping Mother, or *Mater Dolorosa*, endlessly searching for her child. At last Psyche matures into Sybil, while Isis merely ages into the mad Joanna. Sybil personifies the Christian image of the Good Mother, the Virgin Mary. Seen from Middle-Earth far away, the Virgin appears as Elbereth, the Star of the Western Sea. "Ave Maria, thou Virgin and Mother, fondly thy children are calling to thee; Thine are the graces unclaimed by another, sinless and beautiful, Star of the Sea." (Latin hymn.) Galadriel's yearning to return to Elvenhome where Elbereth shines personifies the need of the primitive Moon Mother to grow and to become human. Psyche's wanderings and Isis' search personify the soul's difficult road to the attainment of spiritual wholeness. Sybil's repose personifies the final attainment of perfection, the union and exaltation of all the Mothers into the Mother of God.

Their purpose for being is to point out the soul's way to salvation. The journey begins in the unconscious, in the light of Mother Moon. As the person grows he or she takes on individuality, a soul or Psyche. The innocent soul learns of sorrow and pain, and wanders through a baffling world. The soul passes through many severe trials until it learns wisdom enough to adore the mystery of love. In Sybil the wandering soul finds its Omega--its home.

NOTES

- (1) Tolkien, *Fellowship of the Ring*, Ch. 7, Bk. II, pp. 457-472 Ballantine edition.
- (2) *op. cit.*, p. 473.
- (3) Ellwood, "On Symbols and Heroes," p. 93 in *Good News from Middle Earth*.
- (4) Helen Diner, *Mothers and Amazons*, p. 12.
- (5) Jeremiah, 31:15.
- (6) Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, p. 306 Eerdmans edition.
- (7) Guy Davenport, *LIFE*, Aug. 14, 1970, p. 13.
- (8) Williams, *the Greater Trumps*, p. 19.
- (9) *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
- (10) *op. cit.*, p. 61.

Archetypes of the Mother in the Fantasies of George MacDonald

by Nancy-Lou Patterson

The best vision-inducing art is produced by men and women who have themselves had the visionary experience.
 Aldous Huxley

Few people respond mildly to the fantastic. It generally evokes either enthusiasm or detestation. The reason for this is simple: fantasy deals, often quite nakedly, with the archetypes, the basic components of the psyche which make themselves known to the conscious mind as images. C.S. Lewis has named the capacity to deal with such images in literatures "the art of myth-making."¹ He states:

What really delights and nourishes me is a particular pattern of events, which would equally delight and nourish if it had reached me by some medium which involved no words at all--say a mime, or a film.^{1A}

In fact, extremely crude works of fantasy, like comic books, film serials, and certain television programmes can exert great power despite (or even because of) their transparent obviousness. This phenomenon Northrup Frye explains in his concept of "displacement,"^{1B} stating that naturalism in story-telling displaces the archetypal contents. The term is used by Freudians to mean a transfer of imagery from a sexual (and hence forbidden) theme to a non-sexual (permissible) one, as when a Victorian novelist displaces his interest in a lady's body upwards into an impassioned description of her face. In Frye's thought, all stories are based upon mythology, that is, upon archetypes.

One reacts to these images, whether or not they are partially disguised by displacement, with vigour. They may strike one as attractive or repulsive, but the mark of a successful myth is experience of a direct and unforgettable impact. Such power exists in extreme form in the works of George MacDonald, (1824-1905) who was C.S. Lewis' spiritual mentor and who has been adulated as well by W.H. Auden. One may read in their works a record of strong, direct, personal response to MacDonald's power. A work which admirably demonstrated the opposite response is Rober L. Wolff's *The Golden Key*. As far as it is possible to determine, the author of that book detests MacDonald as a man, disagrees wholeheartedly with his theology, finds most of his writings execrable, and applies to the subject of his book-length and exhaustive study the very yardstick that C.S. Lewis called least suitable: Freudian analysis.^{1C} He pronounces *Lilith*, for instance, "feeble, ambiguous, and inconsistent in its imagery, full of senile hatreds and resentments, and the most violent in its aggres-

It might be well to examine Wolff's commentary on one of MacDonald's least-known works, *The Wise Woman*, or as it is called in its most recent publication, *The Lost Princess*. This book may serve as an introduction to the theme of the present essay. The Wise Woman is, MacDonald tells us, a frightening figure. Her task is the spiritual healing of two little girls who are equally unpleasant and unloveable. The means the Wise Woman uses are these; for the ungovernable Princess she sets tasks of a simple nature which are increased in their difficulty as they become more frankly spiritual. We are told of the Princess's interior development as she moves from stubborn defiance to eager humility when the really difficult attempts at human relationships begin. The second child is a self-important peasant girl, and her cure (which Wolff rightly deems incomplete) consists first of leaving her alone with herself in a "blue sphere" (a striking pre-cognition of an isolation chamber) and latterly of allowing her to serve as a kitchen-maid in the King's palace. Wolff's quarrel with the book comes from his judgement about the treatment of the girls, whom he takes to be real little girls who have been kidnapped and submitted to forms of brainwashing. Yet a close reading shows that they quite openly stand for the healing of the overweening ego. The princess's experiences parallel closely what every Christian convert undergoes when once the blandishments of newness have worn off and the lifelong struggles for self-mastery begin. The peasant girl, in a theme to be repeated frequently by MacDonald, refuses to know herself, and her cure, though predicted, does not take place within the book.

In all this it is the Wise Woman who is the heroine of the piece, and at first glance she appears as an intensely ambivalent figure. She can be loving:

The moment she was asleep the wise woman came, lifted her out and laid her in her bosom; fed her with a wonderful milk which she received with out knowing it; nursed her all the night long and, just ere she awoke, laid her back in the blue sphere again.⁴

and she can be severe:

She threw her cloak open. It fell to the ground, and the radiance that flashed from her robe of snowy whiteness, from her face of awful beauty, and from her robe of snowy whiteness, from her face of awful beauty, and from her eyes that shone like pools of sunlight, smote them blind.⁵

She is, in fact, the embodiment of that feminine spiritual guide whose

name she bears. For light upon this tender and terrible mother who bears nurses and corrects, we may turn to C. G. Jung.

Like any other archetype, the mother archetype appears under an almost infinite variety of aspects... to this category belongs the goddess, and especially the Mother of God, the Virgin, and Sophia. Mythology offers many variations of the mother archetype, as for instance the mother who reappears as the maiden in the myth of Demeter and Kore; or the mother who is also the beloved, as in the Cybele-Attis myth... The archetype... can be attached to a rock, a cave, a tree, a spring, a deep well, or to various vessels such as the baptismal font, or to vessel-shaped flowers like the rose or the lotus. Because of the protection it implies, the magic circle or mandala can be a form of mother archetype.

... All these symbols can have a positive, favourable meaning or a negative, evil meaning. An ambivalent aspect is seen in the goddesses of fate (Moira, Graecae, Norns). Evil symbols are the witch, the dragon... the grave, the sar-cophagus, deep water, death, nightmares and bogies (Empusa, Lilith, etc.).

... In India, "The loving and terrible mother" is the paradoxical Kali. Sankhya philosophy has elaborated the mother archetype into the concept of *prakṛti* (matter) and assigned to it the three *gunas* or fundamental attributes: *Sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*; goodness, passion, and darkness.⁶

It will be seen that the *anima*, as Jung calls her, appears in her divided benign form as the perfect Green Lady of Perelandra and in her divided malign form as the White Witch of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Ward-robe*, to mention two books by C. S. Lewis with which readers of this paper will be familiar, and as the malign Shelob and the benign Galadriel in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. In the present paper we will not deal with the *Kore* form, the young girl as an image of the unconscious as a pilgrim or seeker, a theme which is exquisitely presented in Lewis' writings as the contemplative Lucy of the Narnian Chronicles. She is of course embodied in MacDonald as Tangle in *The Golden Key*, as Princess Irene in *The Princess and the Goblin*, and probably in a "shadow" form as Lilith in the book of that title. In each case the *Kore* figure has been provided with a male counterpart: Mossy in *The Golden Key*, Curdie in *The Princess and the Goblin*, and Mr. Vane in *Lilith*. With the usual complexity of effective symbolism, they thus constitute both a *syzygy* (divine or potentially divine couple) and an image in each case of the feminine part, or unconscious, of the boy who is the hero of each book. This gives a simple Jungian solution to the problems of identity which deeply troubles Wolff when he attempts to understand these stories in Freudian terms.

The present writer had the great good fortune first to encounter the Lady, who appears in various forms in all of MacDonald's fantasies, in his two best-loved works, *At the Back of the North Wind*, and *The Princess and the Goblin*. In these books she appears as North Wind, and as Irene's Grandmother Queen Irene. The former was read aloud in the second grade, and the latter read, for the first of countless times, a few years later. She seemed to that young reader the very image of the numinous. Since then she has been encountered as Mara in *Lilith*, as the Wise Woman in *The Golden Key* and *The Lost Princess*, and as Anodos' Fairy Grandmother in *Phantastes*. In this paper we will examine the manner in which MacDonald achieves the intense air of numinousness which characterises the North Wind and the elder Irene.

The first thing to be noticed is the Lady's appearance, and perhaps most especially the glory of her marvellous long hair. Of North Wind, MacDonald writes:

What was the most strange was that away from her head streamed out her black hair in every direction, so that the darkness in the hay-loft looked as if it were made of her hair; but as Diamond gazed at her in speechless amazement, mingled with confidence, for the boy was entranced with her mighty beauty--her hair began to gather itself out of the darkness, and fell down all about her again, till her face looked out of the midst of it like a moon out of a cloud.⁷

Again, of Irene's Grandmother, he writes:

The princess opened the door, and entered. There was the moonlight streaming in at the window, and in the middle of the moonlight sat the old lady in her black dress with the white lace, and her silvery hair mingling with the moonlight, so that you could not have distinguished one from the other.⁸

The sexual element is here apparent and is used in its holiest form. Parallels may be seen with the coiling hair of the mother goddess from earliest times. In Canannite and Egyptian religion, Asherah (Qudshu),--"Holiness"--the consort of El, (the creator God) whose titles are "the lady who traverses the sea," and "she who gives birth," as well as "The lady who treads on the Sea Dragon," is shown carrying lilies and snakes, her head adorned with spiral locks of hair.⁹ The child who strokes the dangling hair of his mother as she bends over him while she gives him her milk suggests the original expression of this image. The coils may be related to the "spiral of conditional access" discussed in Gertrude Levy's *The Gate of Horn*, an example of which is Ariadne's cord to lead one through the Labyrinth, the convoluted route to the other world.

The hair of the North Wind is her power:

The wind... twisted and shot and curled and dodged and clashed and raved ten times more madly than anything else in creation

except human passions. Diamond saw the threads of the lady's hair streaking it all. In parts indeed he could not tell which was hair and which was black storm and vapour. It seemed sometimes that all the great billows of mist-muddy wind were woven out of the crossing lines of North Wind's infinite hair, sweeping in endless intertwistings.¹⁰

In some of her activities, as she causes a storm which destroys ships and all the human lives they carry, she is, as Jung would lead us to expect, a veritable Kali, combining with her goodness both passion and darkness. Again, Irene's Grandmother's hair is the clue to her identity: in a scene of transfiguration, she becomes young, and her hair turns from silver to gold:

Her grandmother was dressed in the loveliest pale-blue velvet, over which her hair, no longer white, but of a rich golden color, streamed like a cataract, here falling in dull gathered heaps, there rushing away in smooth shining falls. And even as she looked, the hair seemed pouring down from her head, and vanishing in a golden mist ere it reached the floor. It flowed from under the edge of a circle of shining silver, set with alternated pearls and opals.¹¹

In *The Princess and Curdie*, the Lady shows herself in a similar form to Curdie:

... Curdie and his father beheld a lady, beautiful exceedingly, dressed in something pale green, like velvet, over which her hair fell in cataracts of a rich golden color. It looked as if it were pouring down from her head, and like the water of the Dustbrook, vanishing in a golden vapor ere it reached the floor. It came flowing from under the edge of a coronet of gold, set with alternated pearls and emeralds. In front of the crown was a great emerald, which looked somehow as if out of it had come the light they had followed.¹²

The various apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary come immediately to mind, and particularly those contemporary with MacDonald, the Victorian imagery offering obvious parallels. Most famous of these is the apparition to Saint Bernadette at Lourdes:

I had just begun to take off my first stocking when suddenly I heard a great noise like the sound of a storm. I looked to the right, to the left, under the trees of the river, but nothing moved; I thought I was mistaken. I went on taking off my shoes and stockings; then I heard a fresh noise like the first... I saw at one of the openings of the rock a rosebush, one only, moving as if it were very windy. Almost at the same time there came out of the interior of the grotto a golden-colored cloud, and soon after a Lady, young and beautiful, exceedingly beautiful, the like of whom I had never seen, came and placed herself at the entrance of the opening above the rosebush. She looked at me immediately, smiled at me and signed to me to advance, as if she had been my mother.¹³

One can almost hear her use the same tone as Irene's Grandmother saying, "Come in, Irene," when the child first encounters her in the garret. Of the Lady's garments, Bernadette reported:

She has the appearance of a young girl of sixteen or seventeen. She is dressed in a white robe, girdled at the waist with a blue ribbon which flows down all around it. A yoke closes it in graceful pleats at the base of the neck; the sleeves are long and tight-fitting. She wears upon her head a veil which is also white; this veil gives just a glimpse of her hair and then falls down at the back below her waist. Her feet are bare but covered by the last folds of her robe except at the point where a yellow rose shines upon each of them. She holds on her right arm a rosary of white beads with a chain of gold shining like the two roses on her feet.¹⁴

She adds, touchingly, "The girl was alive, very young, and surrounded with light."¹⁵

Besides her glorious hair and her shining garments, the lady is provided by MacDonald, as we have seen above, with a crown. The crown or the necklace--both are circles, images of wholeness or completion, of the cosmic One, and the Divine Self--are ancient attributes of the Mother Goddess. They have their counterpart in Bernadette's vision of the rosary, which is also a circular form. The Mother's jewelry is so central a part of her identity that sometimes in very early forms her image contained nothing but her eyes and her necklace: T. G. E. Powell interprets the great stone doorstep of the megalithic tomb at New Grange in Ireland as suggesting an "extreme stylization of the tomb-goddess recumbent in front of her holy place."^{15A} We will read below of this particular lady and her doorstep.

An additional item of attire which MacDonald emphasizes is the Lady's shoes. To Irene, they "Glimmered with the light of the Milky Way, for they were covered with seed-pearls and opals in one mass."¹⁶ To Curdie, they were "one mass of gleaming emeralds, of various shades of green, all mingling lovelily like the waving of grass in the wind and sun."¹⁷ One is reminded again of Bernadette's vision: "On each foot I saw a yellow rose."¹⁸ The glimmering of the Grandmother's shoes is reminiscent also of the silvery crescent moon upon which the Blessed Virgin stands in many representations of her: beneath her feet it becomes a symbol of her virginity. It was previously an attribute of As-tarte--and of Diana the Virgin Huntress. In fact, Irene's Grandmother possesses a "great silvery globe" which appears to guide Irene from danger when she has wandered out onto the mountainside. The Grand-

mother tells Irene "It was my lamp." This globe is the sign of the lady's presence and protection in both the Curdie books, and in The Princess and Curdie, the Grandmother is called, in a chapter title, "The Mistress of the Silver Moon." A similar combination of images occurs in the silvery ball of thread which the Grandmother gives Irene to guide her into the underworld of the mines to rescue Curdie from the Goblins.

The golden roses on the feet of Our Lady of Lourdes reminds us of yet another ancient symbol of the Mother which is not lacking in MacDonald's books. The flaming roses which lie on the hearth in the Grandmother's room are an unforgettable image:

Then Irene looked again, and saw that what she had taken for a huge bouquet of red roses on a low stand against the wall, was in fact a fire which burned in the shape of the loveliest and reddest roses, glowing gorgeously between the heads and wings of two cherubs of shining silver. And when she came nearer, she found that the smell of roses with which the room was filled, came from the fire-roses on the hearth.¹⁹

This supernatural fire (one recalls that the Burning Bush is taken in Medieval symbolism as an image of the perpetual virginity of Mary) is used to cleanse and to try.

As (Irene) spoke (her grandmother) set her down, and Irene saw to her dismay that the lovely dress was covered with the mud of her fall on the mountain road. But the lady stooped to the fire, and taking from it, by the stalk in her fingers, one of the burning roses, passed it once and again and a third time over the front of her dress; and, when Irene looked, not a single stain was to be discovered.²⁰

When Irene begs to be so cleansed, her Grandmother says, "smiling a little sadly, as she threw the rose from her; 'it is too hot for you yet.'" But for Curdie, this trial is required:

"Go and thrust both your hands into that fire," she said quickly, almost hurriedly.

Curdie dared not stop to think. It was much too terrible to think about. He rushed to the fire, and thrust both of his hands right into the middle of the heap of flaming roses and his arms halfway up to the elbows. And it did hurt!²¹

When this ordeal ends, Curdie finds that his hands are not only "white and smooth like the princess's" but that he has gained the capacity to tell, by touching anyone's hand, what sort of being, whether animal or human, that person interiorly is. This is a gift of Wisdom, a proper gift from the lady who is Sophia, and embodiment of the Divine Wisdom.

Another symbol of the Mother is the Dove. This bird, a spirit image, is the attribute of early goddesses of Mesopotamia and Crete.

The sacred bird was just as characteristic of the Minoan Household Goddess as it was of Athena Parthenos, but it was usually a different bird in Crete. The birds associated with her in Middle Minoan deposits, such as the doves of a shrine from the Loom-Weight Basement, or from the temple repositories, or from Late Minoan shrines such as Gournia or Gaze, or sub-Minoan shrines such as Karphi and Prinias, ... all resemble doves.

.....
The epiphany of gods and goddesses in the form of birds must have been equally familiar in Mycenaean mythology. Even in classical times we have... Aphrodite's doves...²²

In The Princess and the Goblin, the Grandmother takes Irene to see her "chickens."

The princess expected to see a lot of hens and chickens, but instead of that, she saw the blue sky first, and then the roofs of the house, with a multitude of the loveliest pigeons, mostly white, but of all colours, walking about making bows to each other and talking a language she could not understand.²³

Irene discovers that her Grandmother lives upon the eggs of these quite natural-seeming birds. But their role as eiphinal symbols is to increase. At the end of the book, when a gigantic flood has swept all the goblins from mines and castle, the Grandmother's "great globe of light, shining like the purest silver" appears above the tower, and "The same moment there shot from it a white bird, which, descending with outstretched wings, made one circle round the king and Curdie and the princess, and then glided up again. The light and the pigeon vanished together." Irene interprets this sign immediately: "Now Curdie...you see my grandmother knows all about it, and isn't frightened. I believe she could walk through that water and it wouldn't wet her a bit."²⁴

In The Princess and Curdie, as we have seen in foregoing examples, the tone is in every case darkened from that of The Princess and the Goblins. Here, Curdie idly shoots a white pigeon with an arrow.

Then the underground waters gushed from the boy's heart, just before the princess went away with her father, came from somewhere--yes, from the grandmother's lamp, and flew round the king and Irene and himself, and then flew away: this might be that very pigeon! Horrible to think!²⁵

Thus brought to himself,

He lifted his eyes, and saw a great globe of light--like silver at the hottest heat: he had once seen silver run from the furnace. It shone from somewhere above the roofs of the castle: it must be the great old princess's moon!... there was the white globe shining, and here was the dead white bird in his hand?... That moment the pigeon gave a little flutter. "It's

shriek."²⁶

Some readers will remember C. S. Lewis's comment that for the contented atheist, the discovery of the living God is like turning over a stone and finding something there; "It's alive!" What for Irene has been continual tenderness becomes for Curdie a fearful ordeal.

The moon, referred to above, is not the only celestial symbol of the Mother; another is the star. Astarte's name means "Star." The Blessed Virgin is called "The Star of the Sea" in a great hymn to her. In a sequence which this writer found inexpressibly moving as a child, Irene sees a revelation of the heavens in her Grandmother's tower:

She had been gazing at the lovely lamp for some minutes fixedly; turning her eyes, she found the wall had vanished, for she was looking out on the dark cloudy night. But though she heard the wind blowing, none of it blew upon her. In a moment more, the clouds gathered again and shut out the stars; the wall gathered again and shut out the clouds; and there stood the lady beside her with the loveliest smile on her face, and a shimmering ball in her hand, about the size of a pigeon's egg.²⁷

This ball is the thread the Grandmother has spun, which leads her safely underground and out again. A similar vision is granted to Little Diamond; when North Wind flies through the air with him:

"I can't see anywhere to stop," said Diamond. "Your hair is all down like a darkness, and I can't see through it if I knock my eyes into it ever so much."

"Look, then," said North Wind, and, with one sweep of her great white arm, she swept yards deep of darkness like a great curtain from before the face of the boy.

And lo! it was a blue night, lit up with stars. Where it did not shine with stars it glimmered with the milk of the stars...²⁸

Again, in an extraordinary combination of images, Curdie sees the underground chamber where once the goblins held their "state assemblies, a starry revelation of the lady's presence:

... strange to tell, the light by which they saw came streaming, sparkling, and shooting from stones of many colors in the sides and roof and floor of the cavern--stones of all the colors of the rainbow, and many more. It was a glorious sight--the whole rugged place flashing with colors--in one spot a great light of deep caruncular red, in another of sapphire blue, in another of topaz yellow; while here and there were groups of stones of hues and sizes, and again nebulous spaces of thousands of tiniest spots of brilliancy of every conceivable shade.²⁹

It was this scene which flash into the present writer's memory on reading of the use of jewel-imagery as vision-inducing material in Aldous Huxley's The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell. In this particular image one may probably see the influence of MacDonald's acknowledged master, Novalis, whose Klingsohr's Fairy Tale garden blossoms with jewels.^{29A} Novalis himself may have based his image upon the jewelled trees of the Buddhist Paradise.^{29B}

All these evocations of the Mother in her celestial mode have shown her a guide and counsellor. Her chthonic identity, in the underground cavern, made manifest: the earth mother in her death-goddess role. This aspect of the Mother will be familiar to students of megalithic architecture: the passage graves and stone circles of Europe and Britain are well known. As Glyn Daniels puts it, "It was a powerful, compelling, Aegean-inspired religion that made them build their tombs (or their tomb-temples?) with such labour, and preserve in various ways the image of their tutelary and funerary goddess."³⁰ As we have seen, the lady gives Irene the power to enter the underground caverns safely, guided by a thread. She releases Curdie from a tiny interior chamber in which he has been walled up with stones, and they slowly made their way out. Curdie does not see Irene's thread, and ungratefully refuses to believe in it. He will not, in Jungian terms, listen to his *anima* when she attempts to reveal herself to him. In his later adventures, the lady herself reveals her splendours to him in an underground cavern:

"You want to know where the light comes from?" she said smiling.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then see: I will go out of the cavern. Do not be afraid, but watch."

She went slowly out. The moment she turned her back to go, the light began to pale and fade; the moment she was out of their sight the place was black as night, save that now the smoky yellow-red of their lamps, which they thought had gone out long ago, cast a dusky glimmer around them.

For a time that seemed to them long, the two men stood waiting, while still the Mother of Light did not return.³¹ The explicit designation, "Mother of Light," demonstrates that MacDonald was aware of the supernatural identity of his grandmother figure. Wolff, of course, also recognizes this, but his explanation is wide of the mark. He says that MacDonald could not endure the "terrible paternal Calvinist God" who had proclaimed "election and all its inexorable consequences." In order to deal with this problem, which as a Scottish minister, MacDonald had to face in its strongest terms, "God was to act as if He were a 'mither himself'." Wolff declares, "The Mother-God we have found incarnated in the long succession of grandmother-goddesses, earth-spirits, and wise women in the fairy-tales. In the fiction, God is effeminate."³² This would seem as effective explanation of why MacDonald turned to the Mother for his fantasies if it were not that she has made her appearance for so many millenia else-

where: she does not require a Calvinist God to force her into being. She is part of the universal equipment of the human psyche, just as is the Father, who both judges and is merciful. Certainly MacDonald was not the first Christian to turn from the stern Father to the loving Mother, for the Blessed Virgin had played that role in Medieval piety. But the Mother is, as we have seen, both loving and terrible. She is not simply an embodiment of feminine tenderness in contrast to masculine harshness, but a complete psychic being in her own right. This does not mean, however, that MacDonald presents her as an "effeminate God." She is always on business which is her duty; as she tells Curdie, "I am poor as well as rich... I, too, work for my bread, and I show myself no favor when I pay myself my own wages."³³ The same motif appears when North Wind counsels Diamond not to be afraid of her, whatever form she may take: "If you hear me raging ten times worse than Mrs. Bill, the blacksmith's wife... you must believe that I am doing my work."³⁴ To express the matter in Judeo-Christian terms, she is *Sophia*, or Wisdom seen in a female form, the power of Creation. In Kabbalist symbolism this feminine emanation is called the *Shekhinah*, "an aspect of God, a quasi-independent feminine element within Him."^{34A} The Wisdom literature of the *Apocrypha*, which has furnished so much symbolism for the Blessed Virgin — "I am the mother of fair love" — is full of references to this lady, who may be called God's own *anima*. It will be remembered that an individual's *anima* is not the self, but an aspect under which his unconscious presents itself to him.

The paradoxical nature of the Mother is fully developed in her Chthonian form, for the tomb, as in baptismal symbolism, is also a womb. The logic of the symbol is that, as the mother gives birth at the beginning of life, so at the end of life, by a return to the earth, a new birth will take place into a new, eternal life. The reference to baptism suggests the image most frequently associated with the cave, that of water. The spring of living water which gushes forth from a cave or underground source is a universal sign of the Mother. Statues of the lady stood in the spring-houses of ancient Crete. Our Lady of Lourdes showed Bernadette where to find a healing spring. The rushing flood which washed away the goblins from the mines and caves in *The Princess and the Goblin* was, as we have seen, closely associated with the Grandmother. North Wind's power over the storm has been described above: as she tells Diamond, "I only want one arm to take care of you; the other will be quite enough to sink the ship."³⁵ Water in its benign aspect is seen in the description of the Grandmother's bath, in which she bathes Irene:

Irene wondered what she was going to do with her, but asked no questions — only starting a little when she found that she was going to lay her in the large silver bath; for as she looked into it again she saw no bottom, but the stars shining miles away, as it seemed, in a great blue gulf. Her hands closed involuntarily on the beautiful arms that held her, and that was all... the next instant she sank in the clear cool water.

When she opened her eyes, she saw nothing but a strange lovely blue over and beneath and all about her.³⁶

Inside the bath, Irene feels "perfectly blissful," and hears the voice of the lady singing a song "of which she could distinguish every word; but of the sense she had only a feeling — no understanding."^{36A} Some readers may be reminded by this passage of the baptism of Betty beneath the "wise waters" in Charles Williams' *All Hallows Eve*. Water is a motif appears repeatedly in MacDonald's evocations of the Mother: one thinks of the Wise Woman's fish-filled tank, into which Mossy is placed in *The Golden Key*. This mercy can be refused: in *The Lost Princess*, MacDonald writes of Rosamond, "all the time she knew well enough that, close by the heather bed, was the loveliest little well, just big enough to wash in, the water of which was always springing fresh from the ground and running away through the wall."³⁷ It was from just such a spring that Anodos drew water in which to wash when entering Fairy Land in *Phantastes*.

Water is also found in the land which lies at the back of the North Wind: He said the river — for all agree that there is a river there — flowed not only through, but over grass; its channel, instead of being rock, stones, pebbles, sand, or anything else, was of pure meadow grass, not over long. He insisted that if it did not sing tunes in people's ears, it sung tunes in their heads, in proof of which I may mention that, in the troubles which followed, Diamond was often heard singing; and when asked what he was singing, would answer, "One of the tunes the river at the back of the north wind sung."³⁸

Irene had a similar experience: "In after years... she would sometimes fancy that snatches of melody suddenly rising in her brain must be little phrases and fragments of the air of that song."³⁹

This land is quite plainly Paradise, as MacDonald makes clear by attributing its previous description to "Durante," a veiled reference to Dante, a quotation from whom MacDonald had made his own anagrammatic motto "Corage, God mend al." The passage to which he refers is Canto XXVII of the *Purgatorio*, in which Dante sees Matilda picking flowers:

So, when she'd come to where the crystalline
Clear water bathes the grasses, she at once
Did me the grace to lift her eyes to mine.⁴⁰

The water of this stream wells from the twin fountains of Forgetfulness and Memory. That it lies in the realm of Death, to which the Great Mother is the gate, is indicated by the description of the passing of Diamond in the last line of *At The Back of the North Wind*:

I walked up the winding stair, and entered his room. A lovely figure, as white and almost as clear as alabaster, was lying on the bed. I saw at once how it was. They thought he was dead. I knew that he had gone to the back of the north wind,⁴¹ In the final passage of *Phantastes*, after a period in which he has lain in his grave at peace, for "I lay in her bosom, the whole earth, and each of her many births, was as a body to me."⁴² Anodos is roused and returned to waking life, left to wait for "a great good" which is yet to come. While he waits, he:

fancied that the sound reminded [him] of the voice of the ancient woman in the cottage that was four-square. I opened my eyes, and, for a moment, almost believed that I saw her face, with its many wrinkles and its young eyes, looking at me from between two hoary branches of the beech overhead.⁴³

The association of the lady with the tree, is one of the other great symbols of the Mother in mythology. It is used repeatedly in *Phantastes*. Another is the snake: these symbols: snake, tree, spring, may be found discussed in R.W. Hutchinson's *Prehistoric Crete*. The snake motif makes a striking appearance as the "white worm" which Mara (her "mother of sorrow," as MacDonald calls her) uses to show Lilithe her "self," in *Lilith*, MacDonald's last book:

I saw a little worm-thing come creeping out, white hot, vivid as incandescent silver, the live heart of essental fire... Mara stood motionless, as one waits an event foreknown.⁴⁴

The worm burrows into Lilithe's heart, leaving no exterior trace, and Mr. Vane says, "I knew the Worm was in her secret chamber."

You cannot go near her, [Mara] said. She is far away from us, afar in the hell of her self-consciousness. The central fire of the universe is radiating into her the knowledge of good and evil, the knowledge of what she is. ... she knows that she is herself the fire in which she is burning, but she does not know that the Light of Life is the heart of that fire.⁴⁵

As Anodos remarks at the end of *Phantastes*, "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."⁴⁶

Having discussed the lady's appearance and her attributes, there remains one final motif. The lady always appears with a dwelling, usually described by MacDonald as a "cottage." The house as such is often called a Mother symbol, and the cottage is the most primeval version of the house. One recalls the "reed hut" which is the place of origin in Mesopotamian mythology. In *Phantastes*, *Lilith*, *The Golden Key*, and *The Lost Princess*, there are cottages, usually with miraculous attributes, where the lady lives. In most cases the cottages will open only when the lady wishes:

... once more the wise woman set her down on the hearth, a few yards from the back of the cottage and, saying only, "No one ever gets into my house who does not knock at the door and ask to come in," disappeared round the corner of the cottage, leaving the princess alone with the moon — two white faces in the cone of the night.⁴⁷

This is one of the many places where a Freudian reading is justified, for the womb-house has a door which is to be opened properly only with the consent of its mistress. In passing one may note that while Wolff interprets the Golden Key in the story of that name as a phallus, it opens not the wise woman's house but the rainbow, which is certainly the door to eternal life, but not by means of sexual symbolism. Sexual symbols for spiritual realities are very common in Christian literature, but this part of *The Golden Key* is not an example. The womb-house is universal, and is opened to male and female alike, for the mistress here is the Great Mother and not merely the mother of an individual boy.^{47A}

The exception to the cottage motif is that of Irene's Grandmother, who lives in chambers at the top of a building which is "half castle, half farm-house, on the side of... [a] mountain, about halfway between its base and its peak."⁴⁸ The farm-house half suggests a relationship even here to the primeval cottage. In a sense this entire edifice belongs to the Lady. Certainly her own chambers in the "Dove tower" are subject to "conditional access." As a child, this writer found powerfully compelling the endless upstairs hallways with their closed doors and empty rooms, through which Irene searched for the stairway to her Grandmother's rooms:

There she found the landing was the end of a long passage. Into this she ran. It was full of doors on each side. There were so many that she did not care to open any, but ran on to the end, where she turned into another passage, also full of doors. When she had turned twice more, and still saw doors and only doors about her, she began to get frightened. It was so silent! And all those doors must hide rooms with nobody in them! That was dreadful. Also the rain made a great trampling noise on the roof.⁴⁹

Readers of Victorian children's literature will be reminded here both of the great house in F.H. Burnetts' *The Secret Garden*, where Mary searched for something to do and ultimately discovered Colman, the secret little crippled boy, and of Alice in the hall at the bottom of the Rabbit's Hole.^{49A}

The stairway motif, also mentioned above, is a common symbol of the spiritual life, first seen in Irene's own room. This image of contact with spiritual reality is familiar as Jacob's Ladder, with its ascending and descending angels, and corresponds to the tent pole of the Siberian shaman, and the central Thunderbird-topped pole of the

Amerindian Plains "Sun Dance."^{49B} It is a route upwards to a higher plane. Irene's Grandmother's chamber lie at the top of the castle for a good reason, the tower being used as a celestial symbol in every Christian church which contains one. She dwells upstairs in the house of Irene's psyche, and the same dwelling is provided with a corresponding goblin-infested basement, which is ultimately cleansed by a flood, over which the Grandmother's moon reigns, as we have seen in a passage quoted above.^{49C}

The other exception to the cottage motif is in the land at the back of the North Wind. Here, however, the North Wind is herself the passage or doorway to the other world. Gertrude Levy, describing the way in which the earth mother moved from cavern to cattle-byre writes,

It will be seen that the Mistress of the Mountain of the Dead became, in her other aspect of guardian of the fecundity of the deep pastures, the very enclosure which protected the kine, and especially the door of entry, like her triangular symbol which closes the gate of the magic corral on the walls of Pasiega in Paleolithic Spain.⁵⁰

The symbol most commonly associated with this doorway goes through development from the looped-over reed bundles which held the rolled woven door in the early cattle byre, through this coiled form's association with the crescent moon and the curving bull's horns, to its spiral form in which, especially as a triskelion (tripartite spiral) it is found upon the recumbent figure of the mother as she lies at the doorstep of the New Grange tomb in Ireland. One of the most powerful evocations of this idea of passage from one world to the next is given, the present writer believes, in At the Back of the North Wind, in the following last quotation:

"What do you want me to do next, dear North Wind?" said Diamond, wishing to show his love and obedience.

"What do you want to do yourself?"

"I want to go into the country at your back."

"Then you must go through me."

"I don't know what you mean."

"I mean just what I say. You must walk on as if I were an open door, and go right through me."

"But that will hurt you."

"Not in the least. It will hurt you though."

"I don't mind that, if you tell me to do it."

"Do it," said the North Wind.

Diamond walked towards her instantly. When he reached her knees, he put out his hand to lay it on her, but nothing was there save an intense cold. He walked on. Then all grew white about him; and the cold stung him like fire. He walked on still, groping through the whiteness. It thickened about him. At last, it got into his heart, and he lost all sense. I would say that he fainted — only whereas in common faint all grows black about you, he felt swallowed up in whiteness. It was when he reached North Wind's heart that he fainted and fell. But as he fell, he rolled over the threshold, and it was thus that Diamond got to the back of the North Wind.⁵¹

The foregoing catalogue of symbolism has been assembled not simply to prove the bald thesis that MacDonald makes use of traditional motifs of the Mother archetype. Probably he was not aware in detail of what he was doing, for the great treatises on comparative mythology were not yet in print when he wrote. But he was fully familiar with their use in classical literature, in The Divine Comedy and other medieval works, and in German romantic literature, and had them readily at hand in his memory.

We have been solemnly warned by W. H. Auden in his introduction to The Golden Key that "to hunt for symbols in a fairy tale is absolutely fatal... for example, any attempt to 'interpret' the Grandmother or the air-fish or the Old Man of the Sea is futile: they mean what they are."^{51A} No such interpretation is offered in this present paper. The Mother always means what she is. But Wolff asks early in his book on MacDonald, of the following image:

...behind those world-enclosing hills,
There sat a might woman, with a face
As calm as life, when its intensity
Pushes it nigh to death, waiting for him,
To make him grand forever with a kiss,
And send him silent through the toning worlds.

"Who is the woman? Is she the spirit of death? Is she the hero's mother? Is she a vision of MacDonald's own?"⁵² This question seems to demand an answer, one which is sought in this paper. The constellation of powerful and numinous images in MacDonald's writings is one of the factors which life him from the category of "children's writer" or "Victorian novelist" and place him among the greatest of the myth-makers. The lady is well known to fantasy readers in the "She" of H. Rider Haggard, where Jung himself found her,⁵³ MacDonald's ladies may not be so well known, and for some readers an encounter with them may be like Curdie's first meeting with Irene's Grandmother: "I see a big, bare, garret-room — like the one in mother's cottage... and a ray of sunlight coming through a hole in the middle of the roof... I think you had better drop it, princess, and go down to the nursery like a good girl."⁵⁴

Wolff suggests that MacDonald himself ultimately could no longer believe in the reality of the powers he had described, as during his

last years, with many of his children dead before him of tuberculosis, he lapsed into a waiting silence. Wolff finds evidence of this in MacDonald's last fantasy, Lilith, in which Mr. Vane (Lilith is his own anima who must be made to know herself/himself in order that he/she may lie down in peace to await the Resurrection) is found to return from the supernatural vision of the Throne of God to wait, even as Anodos had done in Phantastes, MacDonald's earliest fantasy. But this is a misreading, a forcing of the evidence. Both Curdie and Diamond attested that contact with the lady could hurt, deeply. Even the Dante of The Divine Comedy was forced to turn back to daily life:

Thither my own wings could not carry me,
But that a flash my understanding clove,
Whence its desire came to it suddenly.

High phantasy lost power and here broke off;⁵⁵

George MacDonald's last word upon his writings and their relationship to human life, with all its sufferings and imperfections, may be found in his quotation from Novalis, with which he concludes his final book: "Our life is no dream, but it should and will perhaps become one." He has long since gone to the back of the North Wind, leaving to us his works of "high Phantasy," from which the Mother of Light does us the grace to lift her eyes to ours.

— Nancy-Lou Patterson, The Feast of the Assumption, 1970

Footnotes

1. C. S. Lewis, George Macdonald, an Anthology, The Macmillan Company (New York: 1948), p. 14.
- 1A. Ibid., p. 15.
- 1B. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, Atheneum (New York: 1967), pp. 136-37:
Realism, or the art of versimilitude, evokes the response "How like that is to what we know!" When what is written is like what is known, we have an art of extended or implied simile. And as realism is an art of implicit simile, myth is an art of implicit metaphorical identity. The word "Sun-god," with a hyphen used instead of a predicate, is a pure ideogram, in Pound's terminology, or literal metaphor, in ours. In myth we see the structural principles of literature isolated; in realism we see the same structural principles (not similar ones) fitting into a context of plausible, and the devices used in solving these problems may be given the general name of displacement.
.....
The central principle of displacement is that what can be metaphorically identified in a myth can only be linked in romance by some form of simile: analogy, significant association, incidental accompanying imagery, and the like. In a myth we can have a sun-god or a tree-god; in a romance we may have a person who is significantly associated with the sun or trees.
- 1C. Lewis, op. cit., pp. 10-11
2. Robert Lee Wolff, The Golden Key, Yale University Press (New Haven: 1961), p. 332.
4. George MacDonald, The Lost Princess, J. M. Dent and Sons, (London: 1965), p. 62.
5. Ibid., p. 140.
6. C. G. Jung, "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype," The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Bollingen Series, Princeton University (Princeton: 1968), pp. 81-82.
7. George MacDonald, At the Back of the North Wind, The Macmillan Company (New York: 1950), p. 10.
8. George MacDonald, The Princess and the Goblin, The Macmillan Company (New York: 1951), pp. 85-86
9. W. F. Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan, Athlone Press (London: 1968), pp. 126, 127. On the secularity of hair, see Edmund R. Leach, "Magical Hair," Myth and Cosmos, ed. John Middleton, Natural History Press (Garden City N. Y. : 1967) pp. 90-91: "Married women wear their hair long... long-haired women are those who are expected to produce children."
10. At the Back of the North Wind, p. 72.
11. The Princess and the Goblin, p. 113.
12. George MacDonald, The Princess and Curdie, The Macmillan Company (New York: 1954), p. 45.
13. Francis Parkinson Keyes, The Sublime Shepherdess, Julian Messner (New York: 1945), pp. 51-52.
14. Ibid., p. 52.
15. Francis Trochu, Saint Bernadette Soubirous, Pantheon (New York: 1957), p. 43.
- 15A. T. G. E. Powell, Prehistoric Art, Praeger (New York: 1966), p. 117.
16. The Princess and the Goblin, p. 113.
17. The Princess and Curdie, p. 45.
18. Trochu, loc. cit.
19. The Princess and the Goblin, p. 113. Readers may consult Seonaid M. Robertson, Rosegarden and Labyrinth, Routledge and Kegan Paul (London: 1963), and Eithne Wilkins, The Rose-Garden Game, Herder and Herder, (New York: 1969), for excellent discussions of the rose and its symbolism, both of the universal Mother and of the Blessed Virgin Mary. See Wilkins, pp. 146-147 for a combination of symbols which will be discussed in detail below:

Water is the soft rain that can be heard pattering in the sound of the rosary-beads. Water and the rose are related to each other in the rosary-symbolism not only through "the dewdrop in the rose" and the fountain in the garden, fons in medio, but also by virtue of Mary's being Myrrh of the Sea.

Both the rose and the sailing-boat are proper to both Isis and Mary, each of them an enthroned heavenly mother suckling a divine child who undergoes death and resurrection and who is also her lover; each of them travels in the moon-boat; each is called Star of the Sea... A means of transport, whether boat or chariot (such as that of Isis with roses for wheels) or the travelling moon, is a universal symbol of the feminine principle, or the Great Mother, whether as the rose sailing on the waves of the sea or as the rose that is the haven, is also the sea itself, the vast watery womb, the depth. The Lady is symbolized as the sea, the traveller on the sea, the haven, and the rose. It was when Aphrodite was born, foam of the sea, that the roses first bloomed on her island..."

See also, p. 208:

Because red is the colour of blood, it is the colour proper to the Great Mother, and therefore to Mary, the God-Bearer, to whom the European rosary is proper... It is proper to her also as Sedes Sapientiae, for red is the colour of the fiery wind of Wisdom that descends into the heart at Pentecost, imbuing those who receive it with the power of language, prophecy, miracle-working, making them into "makers" as well as "seers."

As will be seen below, contact with the Grandmother's flaming roses does render Curdie a "seer."

20. Ibid., p. 114.
21. The Princess and Curdie, p. 66.
22. R. W. Hutchinson, Prehistoric Crete, Penguin Books (Hammonds-Worth: 1962), p. 210.
23. The Princess and the Goblin, pp. 17-18.
24. Ibid., p. 244.
25. The Princess and Curdie, pp. 15-16.
26. Ibid., p. 17.
27. The Princess and the Goblin, p. 117.
28. At the Back of the North Wind, pp. 76-77.
29. The Princess and Curdie, p. 46.
- 29A. Novalis, Hymns to the Night and Other Selected Writings, trans. C. E. Passage, Liberal Arts Press (New York: 1960), Klingsohr's Fair Tale, "Most splendid of all stood out the garden in the great square before the place, which consisted of metal trees and crystal plants and which was sown with jewel-blossoms and fruits," p. 17.
- 29B. Aldous Huxley, The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell, Penguin, (Harmondsworth: 1960), pp. 83-84:
 ... there is the land of Uttarakuru, the Other World of the Hindus. "The land," we read in the Ramayana, "is watered by lakes with golden lotuses. There are rivers by thousands, full of leaves of the colour of sapphire and lapis lazuli; and the lakes, resplendent like the morning sun, are adorned by golden bed of red lotus. The country all around is covered by jewels and precious stones, with gay beds of blue lotus, golden-petalled. Instead of sand, pearls, gems, and gold form the banks of the rivers, which are overhung with trees of fire-bright gold. These trees perpetually bear flowers and fruit, give forth a sweet fragrance, and abound with birds."
 Uttarakuru, we see, resembles the landscapes of the mesocalin experience in being rich with precious stones. And this characteristic is common to virtually all the Other Worlds of religious tradition. Every paradise abounds in gems, or at least in gem-like objects resembling, as Weir Mitchell puts it, "transparent fruit". Here for example, is Ezekiel's version of the Garden of Eden. "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald and the carbuncle, and gold... Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth... thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire." The Buddhist paradises are adorned with similar "stones of fire." Thus, the Western Paradise of the Pure Land Sect is walled with silver, gold, and beryl; has lakes with jewelled banks and a profusion of glowing lotuses, within which the Bodhisattvas sit enthroned.

And again page 85:

Men have spent enormous amounts of time, energy, and money on the finding, mining, and cutting of coloured pebbles. Why? The utilitarian can offer no explanation for such fantastic behaviour. But as soon as we take into account the facts of visionary experience, everything becomes clear. ... These things are self-luminous, exhibit a praeternatural brilliance of colour and possess a praeternatural significance. The material objects which most nearly resemble these sources of visionary illumination are gem-stones.

30. Glyn Daniel, The Megalith Builders of Western Europe, Penguin (Harmondsworth: 1963), p. 136.
31. The Princess and Curdie, pp. 48-49.
32. Wolff, p. 374.

33. The Princess and Curdie, p. 51.
34. At the Back of the North Wind, p. 13.
- 34A. Gershom G. Scholem, On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism, Schocken (New York: 1965), p. 105.
35. At the Back of the North Wind, p. 68.
36. The Princess and the Goblin, p. 183-4.
- 36A. Ibid.
37. The Los Princess, p. 37.
38. At the Back of the North Wind, p. 116.
39. The Princess and the Goblin, p. 184.
 Compare with Charles Williams, All Hallows Eve, Bard Books (New York: 1969) p. 127:
 "... I must have been very small indeed, because, you know, it always seems as if I'd only just floated up through the lake, which is nonsense. But sometimes I almost think I did, because deep down I can remember the fishes, though not so as to describe them, and none of them took any notice of me, except one with a kind of great horned head which was swimming round me and diving under me. It was quite clear there under the water and I didn't even know I was there. I mean I wasn't thinking of myself. And then presently the fish dived again and went below me, and I felt him lifting me up with his back, and then the water plunged under me and lifted me up..."
 Wolff, op. cit., p. 9, states: "Others like Charles Williams... have paid MacDonald the even greater compliment of presenting his ideas in twentieth-century fantasies — often influenced by his creations — without explicit acknowledgement." This idea is borne out in an examination of the following quotation from The Golden Key, pp. 20-21:
 The lady spoke some words Tangle could not understand, and threw her into the tank.
 The fishes came crowding about her. Two or three of them got under her head and kept it up. The rest of them rubbed themselves all over her. Then the lady, who had been looking on all the time, spoke again: whereupon some thirty or forty of the fishes rose out of the water underneath Tangle, and bore her up to the arms the lady held out to take her.
40. The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine, Cantica II, Purgatory, translated by Dorothy Sayers, Penguin (Harmondsworth: 1959), p. 290.
41. At the Back of the North Wind, p. 402.
42. George MacDonald, Phantastes, Ballantine Books (New York: 1970) p. 207.
43. Ibid., p. 212.
44. George MacDonald, Lilith, Ballantine Books (New York: 1969) p. 218.
45. Ibid., p. 219
46. Phantastes, 1. 212.
47. The Lost Princess, p. 22.
- 47A. Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, Harper Torchbooks (New York: 1967) p. 171: "Clearly, if the galleries of mines and the mouths of rivers were likened to the vagina of the Earth-Mother, the same symbolism applied fortiori to grottoes and caverns... in prehistoric times the cavern... ritually transformed into a labyrinth... was homologised with the body of the Earth-Mother."
48. The Princess and the Goblin, p. 2.
49. Ibid., pp. 7-8. MacDonald as a young man underwent an unforgettable experience in a "great house in the north," where he went to catalogue a library. The library appears in a number of his stories, and this passage may contain another memory of the house. The theme of "upstairs silences," as C.S. Lewis called them from one of his own childhood memories, is very strong in Victorian literature.
- 49A. C.S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy, Fontana (London: 1955), p. 14: The New House is almost a major character in my story. I am a product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes, and the noise of wind under the tiles.
 Frances Hodgson Burnett, The Secret Garden, J. B. Lippincott (New York: 1938), pp. 55-56:
 She opened the door of the room and went into the corridor, and then she began her wanderings. It was a long corridor and it branched into other corridors and it led her up short flights of steps which mounted to others again. There were doors and doors, and there were pictures on the walls.

 Surely no other little girl ever spent such a queer morning. It seemed as if there was no one in all the huge rambling house but her own small self, wandering about upstairs and down, through narrow passages and wide ones, where it seemed to her that no one but herself had ever walked. Since so many rooms had been built, people must have lived in them, but it all seemed so empty that she could not quite believe it true.
 ...
 Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, Penguin (Harmondsworth: 1970), pp. 29-30: She was close behind it when she turned the corner, but the Rabbit was no longer to be seen: she found herself in a long low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again.

Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of solid glass: there was nothing on it but a tiny golden key, and Alice's first idea was that this might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but, alas!, either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of them.

- 49B. Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 110: "Let us now examine another set of images... in connection with the symbolism of the flight — the ascension to Heaven by means of steps." Also, pp. 112-113: "the 'seven steps of the Buddha' are analogous to the Siberian Shaman's ascent to Heaven by means of the steps cut in the ceremonial birch-tree..." Also, page 115: "...all the sanctuaries, palaces and royal cities, and, by extension, all the houses are situated, symbolically, at the 'Centre of the World', it follows that, in no matter which of these buildings, a rupture of planes is

possible; that is, it may be possible to transcend space (by elevation into Heaven)..."

- 49C. C.S. Lewis, *George MacDonald*, pp. 19-20: "His psychology also is worth noticing: he is quite as well awate as the moderns that the conscious self, the thing revealed by introspection, is a superfluous. Hence the cellars and attics of the king's castle is The Princess and the Goblin..."
50. Gertrude Levy, *The Gate of Horn*, Faber and Faber (London:1948) p. 96.
51. *At the Back of the North Wind*, pp. 110-111.
- 51A. George MacDonald, *The Golden Key*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (New York: 1967), p. 85.
52. Wolff, p. 39: he quotes from George MacDonald, "A Hidden Life."
53. Jung, *op. cit.*, "Concerning the Archetypes and the Anima Concept," p. 71.
54. *The Princess and the Goblin*, pp. 179-180.
55. *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine*, Cantica III, *Paradise*, translated by Dorothy Sayers, Penguin (1962), p. 347.

The Lure of the Ring

by Alexis Levitin

all." Middle-earth: "It's only an old-fashioned word for world. That's

-J.R.R. Tolkien-

We love Middle-earth. But why?

Naturally I had my own simple explanation, but I was curious to see what others would say. My request for help appeared in the Tolkien Journal and the Green Dragon and brought me responses characterized by charming openness and intelligent reflection.

Here are selections from the letters I received.

The most desirable story, thruout the world and history, is that of the triumph of good over evil. People want very much to be told, and believe, that cruelty and injustice will ultimately be punished, and beauty, joy and love reign. They will accept the most crudely told stories, if only they ... give them this message. How gladly, then, will people welcome a story beautifully written and convincing, not only in the context of the story itself, but afterwards, applied to the real world. This, I think, is the key to the amazing popularity of the Ring. Tolkien believes truly, and makes his readers believe, that good really will triumph, not because of inherent superiority over evil, but simply because evil is by its nature self-destructive.

-Sylvia Wendell

... However, while LOTR is wonderful escapism, it is paradoxically true that the situations and moral dilemmas presented in the story are so familiar to us in our daily lives. We are always and continually being faced with choice between good and evil... The interweaving and interlacing of events, and cause and effects, is also so true to life--and masterfully done.

All this blending of the exotic and familiar which makes up the atmosphere of LOTR goes a long way towards making it the outstanding book it is. Middle-earth is so strange and different; yet so heartbreakingly familiar.

-Mary M. Pangborn

I like the way Tolkien winds his story, such as when he brings the story to Gandalf, and then to the hobbits, Frodo and Sam. I like the message he gives us, the struggle between good and evil.

-Stephen Pangborn (age 11)

It is, of course, an escape from the world of today. To be a hobbit, and to live in the Shire, would be (to me) a sort of "Utopia." It is not, however, completely unrelated to today's life. Many parallels can be found... between the War of the Rings and World War II, but even more important is the fact that the reader can identify with the characters. I find that I have a sort of empathy with Frodo, while in many other characters I can see my friends and relations. I also see some of my traits in Gollum, and I find the thought of this rather frightening.

-Betsy Chapman

To tell someone else why you like the Rings is very hard to do. It's like trying to explain why one likes blue-eyed blondes, mint juleps, and crayfish bisque--it is next to impossible!--but I'll attempt to do so nevertheless... Adventures are still possible... Men seem to be "their own man" there. There is ultimate good and complete evil--and little area of grey. In Middle-earth, good fights against evil for goodness' sake--not for economic or petty national reasons... it would be a nice place to live... my hand cannot write what my heart feels. Basically, I BELIEVE in Middle-earth.

-Charles N. Elliott

... The first of the "externals" is, of course, the main plot line--good conquering evil wherein which is easily discernible, contrary to the real world... The prevailing philosophy of the Trilogy... that the Ultimate Controller of the world is both good and active in the world, coincides with my own at this point in my life...

... I identify with Frodo/Bilbo in so far as... I feel "borne down by the unsupportable weight of Middle-earth", the weight, that is, of five thousand years of human failure in the realm of human relations...

... the Trilogy has given me a much fuller awareness that I am human--I feel no kinship with either Legolas or Gimli...

-Kirk L. Thompson

... I think one very important reason that I liked LOTR was its reality. Tolkien made those people breathe...

But for me the best thing about LOTR is that in it it is proper to fight evil with a sword. With our knowledge of psychology, modern thinking tends to call no one evil. Even the murderers and rapists of today are not bad and deserving of punishment, but are sick and needing treatment. I agree that this is probably true... in LOTR there is the same attitude toward certain characters, as when Gandalf says of Gollum that he might yet be cured, and when Frodo stops the other hobbits from killing "Sharky" who... might yet find his cure. But toward the source of evil, Sauron, there is no pity, no sympathy--only the determination to overcome it, willingness to sacrifice in order that good should win over evil.

... We are too sophisticated now to call a country or a man wholly bad. And that is a good thing, for no country or man is wholly evil. But it would be refreshing to have an enemy one could hate whole-heartedly, against whom one could fight with violence and still with honor. We no longer hate a man or a group of men, we only hate the evil they may do. And hating an intangible is frustrating...

This aspect of Tolkien's work, the assurance that some things are absolutely evil and you have not only a moral right but a moral duty to destroy them, is what appeals to me most.

Also, in line with this, is the idea that good triumphs over evil not because it happens to be stronger this time around, but because evil by its very nature tends to weaken itself.

-Nancy Giudice

These were the answers I received. Rereading them, one discovers two main points that appear again and again. First of all, most readers are glad to encounter a world where it is clear that the only really important thing is the struggle between good and evil. Naturally, they also are glad that Tolkien believes that good can triumph, at least for a time. The other important observation, a recurring theme in these letters, is that Middle-earth, that other place that superficially seems merely to provide escape from reality, in fact is intimately connected to reality. Either the reader claims to believe in Middle-earth itself, or he links aspects of that world to the one he experiences daily.

Miss Wendell makes an astute comment on the activities of Tolkien enthusiasts and a simple but most convincing interpretation of what "believing" in Middle-earth means: "I think that the intense study of things Middle-earthly... and above all, the slogan 'Frodo lives!' is an effort to make the book even more real and convincing. Saying that Frodo lives is saying 'I believe this book's message.' Frodo is the symbol of goodness; not beauty or strength or wisdom, but the humble courage that does what must be done, or dies in the trying." With her words in mind, we are less likely to assume that those who say with Mr. Elliott, "Basically, I Believe in Middle-earth," are mere escapists, weaklings unable to dwell in the real world, and therefore sick people. No, most of them are profoundly sane and that is why they turn with joy to this so-called fantasy