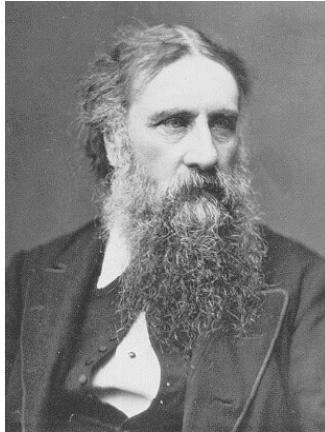


# PHANTASTES

by George MacDonald



## THE AUTHOR

George MacDonald (1824-1905) was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and attended Aberdeen University, studying chemistry. After three years making a living tutoring, he studied for the ministry and became the pastor of a small Congregational church. Soon his congregation became disenchanted with his liberal theology - he had been influenced in his college years by more than the literary aspects of German Romanticism - and he left the ministry after three difficult years. For the rest of his life, he moved from job to job, lecturing, tutoring, and writing, none of which provided sufficient income to support his wife and eleven children. Despite the family's poverty and the constant need to depend on the help of others, the MacDonalds were known far and wide for their hospitality. George MacDonald died after a lengthy illness in 1905.

After writing several books of poems, MacDonald published his first novel, *Phantastes*, a fantasy, in 1858. His first successful endeavors were his Scottish novels, including *Robert Falconer* (1868). His children's stories, which are among his best-known works today, included the novels *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), *The Princess and Curdie* (1883), and the collection of Christmas-themed short stories, *Gifts of the Child Christ* (1882). He returned to fantasy with the publication of *Lilith* in 1895.

MacDonald had been influenced early in life by the German Romantics, having had an opportunity to read their writings while tending the library of a nobleman during his university years. He appreciated the English Romantics as well, and his writings fit very well into that genre. The open door of the MacDonald home led to long-standing friendships with Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Charles Dodgson, and John Ruskin, whose companionship brought him into contact with the Pre-Raphaelites, whom he greatly admired. MacDonald's writings in turn influenced C.S. Lewis, who considered him the premier exemplar of the mythopoeic in the nineteenth century. Lewis referred to MacDonald as his "master," and traced to his reading of *Phantastes* his "literary conversion" (his spiritual conversion was to come later). Like Lewis, MacDonald's writing also shows the influence of Platonic philosophy; note the role played by the concept of ideals in the present work. *Phantastes* is the story of a quest, that of a young man searching for his true self, and many details of the visit of Anodos to Fairy

Land have clear connections with Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, beginning with the opening of the story, in which the protagonist enters Fairy Land through an old piece of furniture.

## **PLOT SUMMARY**

The day after his twenty-first birthday, Anodos, the narrator, awakes to explore his newly-gained inheritance. Among the items left to him by his father is a key to an old secretary. Upon opening it, he discovers a hidden cabinet from which emerges a tiny, beautiful fairy. She makes herself larger so he can see her more easily, and he is entranced with her beauty. He reaches out to embrace her, but she tells him that, not only would he be harmed if he touched her, but also that she is 237 years old. She tells him that he will find the way into Fairy Land the next day, and he goes to sleep dreaming of her promise. When he wakes, he finds that his bedroom is gradually being transformed into a living forest, which he enters along a path that winds before him.

As he travels through the forest, a young maiden walks past him and surreptitiously speaks to him of the trees, telling him to trust the Oak, Elm and Beech, but to beware of the Ash and the Alder. Later he finds a cottage tended by the girl's mother. She feeds him and again warns him about the Ash, who is an ogre. The only way they are kept safe from his depredations is because their cottage is protected by four oaks. He learns from her that fairies also live in flowers, and that the ones in his world are young and immature. They visit the woman's garden and watch the fairies frolicking.

Anodos leaves the cottage and again travels through the forest, marveling at the beauties on every hand. Soon, however, he begins to sense an indefinable fear. The Ash soon overtakes him and he catches a glimpse of the horrible vampire-like countenance of the ogre. He flees, but soon stumbles into the protecting arms of the Beech, who assumes the form of a woman and tells him that someday all the trees will be people. He spends the night under her protection, and she gives him a woven lock of her hair to keep him from further danger.

The next day he continues his journey, encountering fresh wonders and talking animals. He enters a cave that seems prepared for habitation, with seats covered with moss. He notices a strange carving on the wall of the story of Pygmalion. Further exploration leads him to look under the moss, where he discovers smooth alabaster stone. As he scrapes away the soft stone, he sees beneath it a marble carving of a beautiful woman. He speaks to it and thinks he perceives slight movements. When he sings a song pleading for the statue to come to life, she does, and flees the cave before he can react. Anodos pursues her and soon encounters a knight in rusty armor, who warns him to beware the Maiden of the Alder-tree. After more fruitless searching, he decides to sing again, and soon what he thinks is his marble lady appears. She leads him to her bower, always keeping her face toward him. Once in the cave, he lies down and gazes at her beauty, then falls asleep. When he awakes, she is nowhere to be found, but he discovers that the entrance to the cave is guarded by a coffin-like figure, shaped like a person but empty. When the "coffin" turns to face him, he is horrified to discover that it is none other than what he thought was his marble lady. The horror, who is in reality the Maiden of the Alder-tree against whom he had been warned several times already, then tells her compatriot, the Ash, to take custody of her captive. She, meanwhile, destroys the lock of hair given Anodos by the Beech. As the Ash is about to destroy him, Anodos hears the sound of axe blows in the forest; at the sound of them, the Ash and the Alder flee, leaving their captive to his own devices. Anodos surmises that the axe blows came from the disgraced knight, which he later finds to have been the case.

He then wanders about the wood, filled with shame and mortification. He no longer cares for the beauties with which he is surrounded. After walking all day, he comes to a farmhouse, where he is kindly received by the farmer's wife. She brings him nourishment, though he still cannot eat, and he tells her his story. She assures him that the Maiden of the Alder-tree is not as beautiful as she appears, but rather delights to attract the attentions of the unwary because they enable her to believe that she is still indeed beautiful. The farmer's wife also suggests that the Maiden of the Alder-tree was not the same person as the marble lady in the cave. The rest of the family soon arrives - a good-humored farmer and his sullen son, neither of whom believe in fairies or magic, and a little girl who, like her mother, knows the reality of the magical land in which they live. Throughout the visit, Anodos sways between belief and unbelief depending on the family member to whom he is speaking. The next morning he continues his journey after being directed by the son along the path that will keep him away from an old house associated with the ancient activity of ogres.

Anodos eventually arrives at a hut in the forest. He enters and sees an old woman quietly reading. He approaches a door at the other end of the room, and the old woman warns him not to open it. He feels compelled to do so nevertheless, and sees a utility closet with no back wall. Looking through the opening, he sees the sky in the distance, at the end of a long tunnel. A dark figure rushes toward him and past him, and when he turns back into the hut, the woman tells him that the figure was his shadow, who now will accompany him everywhere. She grins wickedly, and Anodos realizes that the farmer's son had in fact put him on the path to the ogre's house after all. As he continues to travel, he realizes that his shadow has the power to drain the magic from anything on which it falls. Flowers, trees, fairy children, and even the wandering knight lose their wonder when the darkness that follows Anodos passes over them.

One day he meets a young child who carries a lovely globe. She protects it carefully, but finally allows him to touch it gently, at which time it gives forth harmonious music. After three days of traveling with the child and speaking of the wonders of Fairy Land, his shadow attacks her, though it cannot dim her beauty. While this is happening, Anodos places his hands on the globe despite pleas and cries of the little girl. The music grows more and more intense until finally the globe bursts. The little girl then tearfully flees with the fragments, leaving Anodos deeper in shame than before. He then enters a village in which the people change in appearance depending on his distance from them, as if one were looking into a concave mirror, and remains there for a week.

He then travels through a desert region populated by goblins who taunt him, though they cease their torments when they see his shadow. He finds a small stream and follows it. As he continues, the stream grows and gives life to all around it. Joined by other streams, it becomes a mighty river surrounded by beautiful trees and flowers, and Anodos wishes he could see the Spirit of the Earth as he had seen the maiden of the Beech and the marble lady. He soon sees a boat at the edge of the river and climbs in, allowing himself to float along with the current. The gentle motion soon puts him to sleep, and he awakes at night, marveling at the beauty of the reflections in the water. Soon the river takes him to a great palace, lovely in the moonlight. He lands and goes to the palace, which is all of marble. In the courtyard he finds a porphyry fountain, the water of which overflows and streams into the palace itself. He then follows this stream, which leads him into a great hall. No longer able to perceive fairies, he nonetheless senses their presence. Wandering farther into the palace, he comes upon a door marked *The Chamber of Sir Anodos*. Upon entering, he finds that it is none other than his own room,

furnished with a blazing fire and plentiful food and wine. He eats and drinks his fill, waited on all the while by unseen hands, then sleeps peacefully in his own bed, hoping to find in the morning that his experiences in Fairy Land were nothing but a dream.

He wakes refreshed in the morning and finds himself still in the palace, which is everywhere indescribably beautiful. He hardly thinks of his shadow as he wanders from room to room and roams the grounds, but soon becomes conscious of its now-faint presence, though he hopes the Queen of the Fairies can deliver him from his evil twin. He takes a swim in a magical pool, then realizes that he is regaining the ability to see, albeit faintly, the fairies with whom he is surrounded. After a few days in the palace, Anodos finds the library, where he spends many a happy afternoon reading, discovering that the books have the power to draw him into the histories, tales, and poems as he reads them.

Anodos then describes something of the nature of fairy life about which he read in one of the books in the library. Fairies do not bear children; instead, maidens find them in the forests and meadows and raise them as their own. Fairy men have arms and wings, while fairy women have wings only; the two have little to do with one another. Death for a fairy comes of excess of longing and desire; when a male and female fairy love each other, they do not come together, but separate from one another and die of their longing. One day a group of fairies ask Anodos about the way in which children come into his world; after he explains what is totally foreign to his audience, two of the maiden fairies go away quietly to die (the book becomes so real to Anodos that he inevitably inserts himself into the story as he reads it).

The book also contained the story of Cosmo von Wehrstahl, which Anodos then relates. Cosmo was a young student at the University of Prague who was much interested in all things magic. He secretly read the works of the medieval magicians and kept his room, which he concealed from all his acquaintance, filled with mysterious objects of the magician's trade. One day he was asked to accompany a friend to an obscure shop, where he found a peculiar mirror. He later returned and purchased the mirror, which the owner gave him at a fraction of the asking price, claiming that he had known Cosmo's father, requesting only that he be permitted to buy the mirror back if Cosmo ever decided he no longer wanted it (the old man whispers as Cosmo leaves the shop that this was the sixth time he had sold the mirror). The mirror was unusually bright and shiny for something so old, and the frame was covered with intricate but indecipherable carvings. As he looked at his room in the mirror, he noted how different it looked. Then, much to his amazement, he saw a lovely lady, all in white but stricken with sorrow, enter the room and recline on his couch. When he turned to look at her, she was nowhere to be found, but, turning again to the mirror, he again saw her reflection in the glass. When she opened her eyes, Cosmo realized that she could only see him in the mirror as well, but she soon fell asleep. He sat before the mirror and began reading, but could not concentrate; when he looked again in the mirror, the lady was gone and the room looked perfectly normal, with none of the magic with which the glass had earlier endowed it. Hoping that the lady would return the following night, he removed his skeleton, which had seemed to alarm her, along with other frightful objects, and tidied the room in expectation of her visit. She returned the following night and seemed pleased by the removal of the skeleton. Cosmo then determined to turn his room into a place such that the loveliest of ladies would be happy to call it her own. To finance his remodeling project he began to give fencing lessons, and became quite prosperous. As each new thing was introduced into the room, the lady became more admiring and less sorrowful, though she still showed no signs of being able to see Cosmo, and the two had never been able to communicate. Cosmo longed to speak to her,

to be able to kiss her foot, and one day he saw her blush, as if she were conscious of being looked upon admiringly. He then had another thought - that, since she could not see him, she must have another lover, and it was of him that she thought when her cheeks flushed crimson. That night, she left earlier than usual, and did not return at all the next night or for the six nights that followed. Cosmo was inconsolable, refusing to eat or attend lectures, avoiding his friends, and caring for nothing in the world except his lady. He finally decided to use his knowledge of conjuring to break the spell under which she surely must have been placed. He studied his magic books and gathered the materials he needed. One week after her last appearance, he enlisted the occult powers to bring her to life so they could meet face to face. She indeed appeared, looking very weak and haggard. As he continued with his enchantments, she approached the mirror, clearly saw him, then finally appeared in the room with him for the first time. She told him that it was his love, not his enchantments, that had brought her out of the mirror, but that she was enslaved to the mirror and could never be free unless it were broken. She begged Cosmo to break the mirror, though confessing to him that they might never be able to meet again if he did so. Struggling within himself, Cosmo, after hesitating a moment, seized his sword and prepared to strike the mirror, but the sword slipped from his hand and he fell to the floor in a faint. When he awoke, both the lady and the mirror were gone. He then fell into a terrible fever that kept him bedridden for weeks thereafter. Fearful that the mirror had magically returned to the shop, he went there but received no satisfaction from the owner. He was terrified at the thought that the mirror could have been sold to another, and that the lady he loved had simply been delivered to a new bondage because of his hesitation to free her. Some time later, Cosmo went to a party and heard two women speaking of the strange illness by which the Princess of Hohenweiss was being afflicted; they said that it had something to do with an old woman's curse and an antique mirror, and commented that the affliction had for a brief time been abated, but that it had gotten worse again recently. Soon thereafter, Cosmo heard that one of his former students, von Steinwald, was rarely seen anymore, and had been seen emerging from the old curiosity shop. Meanwhile, across the city, the princess was dying. Suddenly her ladies in waiting marveled as she leaped from her bed, and cried out that Cosmo had freed her at last. She ordered them to bring her cloak and accompany her to find her deliverer. She found him on a bridge and professed her love for him, only to find that blood poured out from a wound that he had given himself in despair, thinking his love had now been lost to him forever. Cosmo then died with a blissful smile on his face.

Anodos continues to explore the palace and finds a great hall with a high arched ceiling. Behind twelve curtains along the walls are twelve more halls, each containing a variety of statuary. Anodos has long wondered why he has heard no music in the palace, but now begins to realize that the problem is the insensitivity of his ears, in the same way the dullness of his eyes has kept him from seeing the fairies very clearly. He develops a vague sensation of dancing going on around him, and soon suspects that the statuary in the halls behind the curtains comes to life when he is not looking. In a dream he sees his marble lady in the corner of one of the halls, frozen on her pedestal while the other statues dance around her. He decides to try to surprise the statues in the midst of their dancing. He succeeds, and after that is admitted to the halls with no cessation of activity on the part of the dancers. Much to his disappointment, however, the pedestal on which his marble lady had been standing is empty. Remembering how his singing had brought her to life once before, he again begins to sing, and is overjoyed to find that an invisible veil is lifted as he intones his melody, revealing the beautiful lady from the marble cave. Though the halls are clearly posted with signs that say, "Touch not," Anodos forgets himself and embraces his lady.

She then wrests herself from his grasp, cries out that he never should have touched her, and flees from the room. He follows her, but loses her in the darkness.

Because he last saw her at the edge of a deep pit, he decides to descend into the pit in hopes of regaining his lost love. He finds the pit full of goblins and kobolds, who mock him and tell him of the impossibility of his quest. He also meets an old woman who seems to know all about him; she transforms herself into a beautiful creature and begs him to stay with her, but as he retreats she again becomes an ancient crone. Despite her mockery, she assures him that he will see his lady again. He emerges from the subterranean caves onto a gray and dismal beach. Going out onto the rocks, he dives into the water, which he finds very comforting and soothing. After surfacing, he sees a boat into which he climbs. He looks down into the water and sees scenes from his past floating by beneath the surface. He falls asleep, and when he awakes he discovers that the boat has come to rest on the shore of an island.

On the island, Anodos finds a cottage where an old woman with lovely young eyes tends a fire. She treats him kindly and gives him food and rest. As he rests, she sings him a song about Sir Aglovaile in which the knight, while riding through a graveyard, encounters a beautiful ghost. He realizes that she is the ghost of his beloved, and falls in love with her all over again. He continues to visit the graveyard nightly until one night he cannot control himself and seeks to embrace her, at which time she turns into a corpse in his arms.

When he regains his strength, Anodos realizes that the cottage has four doors and determines to try them all. The first door, the door of Sorrow, which was the one through which he had entered the cottage, opens onto the farm on which Anodos had grown up, and he relives a quarrel with his brother the night before the boy had drowned. He returns to the cottage and leaves through the door of Sighs, which takes him into a great hall, where he sees his beloved marble lady come to life, but in the arms of the disgraced knight. Here he learns that, though she loves Anodos a little for having delivered her from her imprisonment, her true love is the knight. Anodos also learns that the knight had saved him from the Ash by meeting the ogre in mortal combat and killing him by chopping down his tree. The third door is the door of Dismay, through which he enters a scene from his home city and encounters his former love, only to be led to a church and discover that she has died. When he returns to the cottage, the old woman tries to prevent him from entering the fourth door, but Anodos will not be denied. The door is the door of the Timeless, of which Anodos remembers nothing except that he again finds himself in the arms of the old woman, who tells him that she had to go through the door herself to rescue him. He now must leave the cottage because the waters are rising, and the old woman tells him to go and do something worthwhile.

After leaving the island, Anodos sees a tower in the distance. In the tower he finds two strong young men, both engaged with hammer and anvil finishing work on a sword. They address him as "brother," and explain that the old woman in the cottage had told them to expect him. They are sons of the king of the land, but their country is being terrorized by three giants. Originally the three came peacefully and occupied a ruined castle, which they slowly rebuilt. But later they turned vicious, plundering, murdering, and taking captives for ransom, often killing their captives in gruesome fashion if anyone from the kingdom dared oppose them. The king's two sons could not hope to take on the giants when outnumbered, but the wise old woman had promised to send them a third brother - Anodos. The wanderer accepts the charge and begins to forge armor for himself. As he does so, he sings for the brothers and sharpens their fencing skills. Each has a hidden fear of returning from the battle victorious but dead, one fearing for his love

and the other for his elderly father. The next day is the one chosen for battle, but the giants surprise the three brothers before they are able to arm themselves. They seize their weapons and prepare for the assault. Anodos kills his opponent and his brothers do the same, but die in the attempt, leaving Anodos as the sole survivor. While contemplating the thrill of victory and the pain of losing his friends, he turns and sees his shadow, who had not bothered him for many days. He then goes to the castle of the giants and releases their captives, then takes the dead giants and the heroic young princes to the capital city, where the grief and pride of the old king are mingled with the joy of the populace at their deliverance.

After many days, Anodos leaves to inform the love of the older brother that her beloved has indeed been killed in combat. Three days later he approaches a forest, and is warned by a young man that the forest contains an indescribable enchantment. The shadow does not follow him into the forest, so Anodos is at first heartened by the unnamed enchantment. Soon he meets a knight looking just like himself, dressed and mounted just like himself, only larger and fiercer. He is afraid to fight the knight, so when he is told to follow, he meekly does so. They arrive at a dismal-looking tower. The knight unlocks the door and tells Anodos to enter with his companion; to his horror, Anodos turns and sees that his shadow has accompanied him after all, and begins to fear that the knight and the shadow are one. For days he remains in the tower, alone with his shadow. At night, the moonlight transforms his surroundings into an open forest, where he stays close to a beech tree, remembering the kindness of the Beech in his early days in Fairy Land. But as soon as the sun rises, the walls of the tower reappear and he is again imprisoned with his shadow. One day he hears a woman's voice singing outside the tower. After her song is over, he opens the tower door, which he could never do before, and finds that the singer is the same maiden whose globe he had broken. She tells him that she took the fragments to the Fairy Queen, hoping to get the globe repaired, but that the Queen sent her away empty-handed, but with a new gift - the power of song, by which she was able to deliver those in trouble. He begs her forgiveness, and she then goes in search of other captives to deliver. Anodos, humbled by the experience, sheds his armor because he considers himself unworthy to be called a knight. He notices, however, that his shadow has left him forever.

He soon encounters a singing knight on horseback, dragging a dead dragon behind him. The knight is the same one whom Anodos had met twice before - he of the soiled armor, and the one beloved by the marble lady. Anodos offers himself to him as his squire, and the knight accepts. They arrive at a cottage, where the knight tells a woman and her husband that their daughter is now safe, but that the dragon must now be buried. They invite the knight in for some refreshment, and he ministers to the child's wounds. As Anodos and the knight travel on, the knight tells him that the little girl had been told by some unknown person to gather wings from butterflies and moths to make a pair of wings for herself so she could fly away. She began to do so (without telling her parents, who were frantic at her absence), but found that, whenever she begged the wings of a butterfly, large wooden manlike creatures would knock her over and step on her. When she met the knight, she asked for his help, and he soon discovered that, if turned on their heads, the wooden creatures could not regain their feet. Thus the child was able to gather the wings she needed. The knight never finishes his story, so neither Anodos nor the reader discovers the outcome.

As the journey continues, Anodos and the knight become fast friends, and Anodos feels he could be content serving him for the rest of his life, though he wishes he could do something more for the noble knight than the normal tasks of a squire. They soon reach a clearing cut into

the woods - a large parallelogram surrounded by trees to serve as walls. Within are rows of white-clad priests and a festive audience, obviously awaiting something of great import. Anodos, however, senses evil about the place. They observe six priests lead a young man to a throne at the far end of the enclosure, where he is forced to enter a door under the pedestal on which the throne rests. When six more priests lead an unwilling girl to the same end, Anodos decides to intervene. He borrows a white robe and advances toward the throne. No one stops him. When he gets there, he finds it occupied by a large wooden idol. He tears the idol from the throne and casts it down, but in the process uncovers a hole into the pedestal below, from which emerges an enormous wolf-like creature. Anodos engages it in mortal combat, managing to strangle the beast before he himself is killed by the guards.

Anodos, now dead, continues to narrate the last two chapters. He is in his coffin, being mourned by the knight and the marble lady. Anodos is now at peace, and feels as if death is a blessing. He is buried on the grounds of the knight's castle and becomes one with the earth. He floats with the clouds, thinking of the love he now will be free to bestow on all creatures. His unspeakable joys are interrupted by a sudden jolt, and he awakes in his own country, on a hill above his family's castle. His sisters receive him gladly and tell him that he had disappeared twenty-one days earlier when his room had been flooded. He resumes his earthly life a changed man, hoping to benefit from the lessons he learned in Fairy Land, and convinced that evil is nothing more than good in disguise.

## **MAJOR CHARACTERS**

- Anodos - The narrator and protagonist of the story. His name means "without a road."
- The Fairy in the Cabinet - She hints that Anodos has fairy blood in him through his grandmothers, and tells him that he will enter Fairy Land the next day.
- The Woman with the Garden - She is the first to give comfort and sustenance to Anodos; in her garden he first learns about and observes fairies.
- The Beech Tree - A lovely maiden who comforts Anodos and with whom he briefly falls in love, she longs to become a woman, and tells Anodos that in time she, and all trees, will attain to humanity.
- The Ash Tree - An ogre who repeatedly pursues and threatens Anodos, he is killed by the Knight, who chops down his tree.
- The Alder Tree - A lovely maiden; Anodos thinks she is his Marble Lady, but she lures him to her cave in order to imprison him and turn him over to the Ash.
- The Marble Lady - Anodos finds her in a cave decorated with images from the legend of Pygmalion. He frees her from the stone and awakens her by singing to her, but she flees. He falls in love with her and pursues her, but discovers that she is the beloved of the Knight.



- The Knight - Connected to the legend of Sir Percivale as the Marble Lady is to that of Pygmalion, Anodos first encounters him in great sorrow, disgraced and with his armor sullied. Later he rescues Anodos from the Ash and is reunited with his love, the Marble Lady. Near the end of the story, Anodos becomes his squire, and in that capacity, gives his life to deliver others from a rapacious wolf.
- Anodos' Shadow - An evil figure who follows Anodos everywhere and has the power to blot out the effects of magic in Fairy Land. Anodos finally loses his Shadow when he rejects his pride and learns humility.
- The Girl with the Globe - She meets Anodos in the forest and, under the influence of his Shadow, he destroys her globe. She is crestfallen, but later rescues Anodos from his self-imposed prison with her singing and tells him that she does not miss the globe because her singing, which can deliver others, is a much more valuable gift.
- Cosmo von Wehrstahl - The protagonist of a story that Anodos reads in the library of the fairy palace, his story parallels that of Anodos himself in some respects.
- The Old Woman on the Island - She lives in a cottage with four doors through which Anodos goes successively, gaining knowledge of himself at every turn.
- The Two Princes - Anodos meets them in a tower where they are preparing to fight three loathsome giants. He agrees to help them and the three giants are slain, but the two princes are killed in the battle.

### NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Ah, that is always the way with you men; you believe nothing the first time; and it is foolish enough to let mere repetition convince you of what you consider in itself unbelievable.” (Fairy, ch.1, p.7)

“No one comes here but for some reason, either known to himself or to those who have charge of him, so you shall do just as you wish.” (Old Woman, ch.3, p.15)

“Whether all the flowers have fairies, I cannot determine, any more than I can be sure whether all men and women have souls.” (Old Woman, ch.3, p.18)

“But it is no use trying to account for things in Fairy Land; and one who travels there soon learns to forget the very idea of doing so, and takes everything as it comes; like a child, who, being in a chronic condition of wonder, is surprised at nothing.” (Anodos, ch.4, p.24)

“But the most awful features were the eyes. These were alive, yet not with life. They seemed lighted up with an infinite greed. A gnawing voracity, which devoured the devourer, seemed to be the indwelling and propelling power of the whole ghastly apparition.” (Anodos, ch.5, p.28)

“I had never imagined that such capacity for simple happiness lay in me, as was now awakened by this assembly of forms and spiritual sensations, which yet were far too vague to admit of being translated into any shape common to my own and another mind.” (Anodos, ch.5, p.35)

“How can beauty and ugliness draw so near?” (Anodos, ch.7, p.48)

“In a land like this, with so many illusions everywhere, I need his aid to disenchant the things around me. He does away with all appearances, and shows me things in their true colour and form. And I am not one to be fooled with the vanities of the common crowd. I will not see beauty where there is none. I will dare to behold things as they are. And if I live in a waste instead of a paradise, I will live knowing where I live.” (Anodos, ch.9, p.61)

“The shadow was in my heart as well as at my heels.” (Anodos, ch.10, p.64)

“All mirrors are magic mirrors.” (Anodos, ch.10, p.66)

“The sign or cause of coming death is an indescribable longing for something, they know not what, which seizes them, and drives them into solitude, consuming them within, till the body fails. When a youth and a maiden look too deep into one another’s eyes, this longing seizes and possesses them; but instead of drawing nearer to each other, they wander away, each alone, into solitary places, and die of their desire. But it seems to me, that thereafter they are born babes upon our earth: where, if, when grown, they find each other, it goes well with them; if not, it will seem to go ill.” (Anodos, ch.12, p.81)

“But is it not rather that art rescues nature from the weary and sated regards of our senses, and the degrading injustice of our anxious every-day life, and, appealing to the imagination, which dwells apart, reveals Nature in some degree as she really is, and as she represents herself to the eye of the child, whose every-day life, fearless and unambitious, meets the true import of the wonder-teeming world around him, and rejoices therein without questioning?” (Cosmo, ch.13, p.89-90)

“Nay, how many who love never come nearer than to behold each other as in a mirror, seem to know and yet never know the inward life; never enter the soul; and part at last, with but the vaguest notion of the universe on the borders of which they have been hovering for years?” (Cosmo, ch.13, p.95)

“It may seem strange that one with whom I had held so little communion should have so engrossed my thoughts, but benefits conferred awaken love in some minds, as surely as benefits received in others.” (Anodos, ch.18, p.124)

“Soon I fell asleep, overcome with fatigue and delight. In dreams of unspeakable joy - of restored friendships; of revived embraces; of love which said it had never died; of faces that had vanished long ago, yet said with smiling lips that they knew nothing of the grave; of pardons implored, and granted with such bursting floods of love, that I was almost glad I had sinned - thus

I passed through this wondrous twilight. I awoke with the feeling that I had been kissed and loved to my heart's content." (Anodos, ch.18, p.127)

"There was something noble in him, but it was a nobleness of thought, and not of deed." (Knight, ch.19, p.138)

"In whatever sorrow you may be, however inconsolable and irremediable it may appear, believe me that the old woman in the cottage, with the young eyes ..., knows something, though she must not always tell it, that would quite satisfy you about it, even in the worst moments of your distress." (Old Woman, ch.19, p.144)

"Go, my son, and do something worth doing." (Old Woman, ch.19, p.144)

"Then first I knew the delight of being lowly; of saying to myself, 'I am what I am, nothing more.' 'I have failed,' I said; 'I have lost myself - would it had been my shadow.' I looked round: the shadow was nowhere to be seen. Ere long, I learned that it was not myself, but only my shadow, that I had lost." (Anodos, ch.22, p.166)

"I learned that it is better, a thousand-fold, for a proud man to fall and be humbled, than to hold up his head in his pride and fancied innocence. I learned that he that will be a hero, will barely be a man; that he that will be nothing but a doer of his work, is sure of his manhood." (Anodos, ch.22, p.166)

"More convinced than before, that there was evil here, I could not endure that my master should be deceived; that one like him, so pure and noble, should respect what, if my suspicions were true, was worse than the ordinary deceptions of priestcraft." (Anodos, ch.23, p.177)

"The very fact that anything can die, implies the existence of something that cannot die; which must either take to itself another form, as when the seed that is sown dies, and arises again; or, in conscious existence, may, perhaps, continue to lead a purely spiritual life." (Anodos, ch.24, p.180)

"I knew now, that it is by loving, and not by being loved, that one can come nearest to the soul of another." (Anodos, ch.24, p.181)

"Thus I, who set out to find my Ideal, came back rejoicing that I had lost my Shadow." (Anodos, ch.25, p.184)

"Yet I know that good is coming to me - that good is always coming; though few have at all times the simplicity and the courage to believe it. 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." (Anodos, ch.25, p.185)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. C.S. Lewis was greatly influenced by the writings of George MacDonald, and especially by his fantasy novel *Phantastes*. What influences were you able to discern as you read MacDonald's book? Choose three specific images or incidents and describe how they reappear in Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*. Do the two authors use the concepts in the same ways? Why or why not?
2. Most characters in George MacDonald's *Phantastes* are not given names, but the protagonist Anodos is. What is the significance of his name, which means "without a road"? Connect the name to the major themes of the novel. Does he find his road by the time the story ends? Why or why not?
3. What is the significance of the protagonist's shadow in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*? What does it represent? Is it intended to represent more than one thing? Why is the means by which he rids himself of the shadow so important? What moral lesson is associated with the incidents involving the shadow?
4. Compare and contrast the uses of the concept of the Shadow in George MacDonald's *Phantastes* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. How are these symbols of evil the same, and how are they different? Do the two authors share the same conception of the nature and source of evil? Do they agree about how it must be opposed?
5. In seeking to deal with the problem of evil, some Christian writers have gone so far as to suggest that the Fall of Man was a good thing - that man was much happier in his redeemed state than his unfallen one. Does George MacDonald's *Phantastes* support this idea of the Fortunate Fall? Is this concept biblical? Cite specific incidents and quotations from the novel and passages of Scripture to support your conclusion.
6. Many Romantic writers argued that the loss of childhood joys was essential in order to experience the greater pleasures of maturity - note that this is another, albeit secularized, version of the idea that the loss of Eden is ultimately beneficial. George MacDonald was greatly influenced by the Romantic writers, both German and British. To what extent does his novel *Phantastes* show that he adopted this Romantic conceit? Support your answer with specifics from the story.
7. In George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, Anodos at one point is puzzled by the powerful impression the Marble Lady made on him. He says, "It may seem strange that one with whom I had held so little communion should have so engrossed my thoughts, but benefits conferred awaken love in some minds, as surely as benefits received in others." In your opinion, which is the more powerful force in generating love, benefits received or benefits conferred? Why do you think so? What was MacDonald's answer? What is the answer given in Scripture?

8. Discuss the imagery of the mirror found in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. Why does Anodos say that "all mirrors are magic mirrors"?
9. At one point in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, the knight describes Anodos in the following words: "There was something noble in him, but it was a nobleness of thought, and not of deed." Discuss MacDonald's view of the relationship among thought, word, and deed. Which does he consider the most important? Would the Bible agree? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel and from Scripture.
10. Discuss the theme of the pursuit of happiness in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. What does the author believe is the key to happiness? Be specific and organized in your answer and support it with quotations and details from the novel.
11. Discuss the symbolic significance of Fairy Land in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. Some have suggested that it represents the human soul, thus making the novel a picture of the inner pilgrimage of man. Do you agree with this assessment or not? Support your conclusion with details from the novel.
12. Discuss the significance of Fairy Land in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. Does it symbolize spiritual reality or psychological reality, or does the author see the two as one and the same? Support your conclusion with specific events and quotations from the novel.
13. In George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, the protagonist concludes at the end of the novel that "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." Compare and contrast this view of evil with that found in Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*. Do the two men, one from the Romantic Era and the other from the Enlightenment, draw their conclusions about the character of evil for the same reasons?
14. In George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, the protagonist concludes at the end of the novel that "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." On the other hand, Voltaire's *Candide*, written almost exactly a century earlier, mercilessly ridicules the idea that "this is the best of all possible worlds." Is Voltaire's critique as effective against the Romantic notions of MacDonald as it was against the teachings of closer contemporaries like Leibniz and Pope? Why or why not?
15. Both George MacDonald's *Phantastes* and George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* make use of the legend of Pygmalion and Galatea, but in very different ways. Discuss the ways in which the two authors use the Greek legend, and relate their uses of the story to the overall themes of the two works.
16. George MacDonald's *Phantastes* is full of poems, songs, and stories. Two of these tales are those of Cosmo von Wehrstahl and Sir Aglovaile. Why are these lengthy stories included in the novel? How do they relate to the experience of Anodos and the larger themes of the book? Be specific.

17. Compare and contrast the story of Cosmo in George MacDonald's *Phantastes* with "The Tale of Ill-Advised Curiosity" in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Why do the authors include these lengthy narratives? How do they support the plots, characters, and themes of the two novels?
18. Discuss the symbolic significance of the forest in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. To what extent is his use of the imagery similar to that of familiar fairy tales, and in what ways does he use the symbol differently? Cite specific examples to support your arguments.
19. In George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, the scene at the fairy palace and the one at the old woman's cottage on the island prove to be turning points in the plot, but are also important in revealing the character of the protagonist. What do we learn about Anodos from these two pivotal scenes? What does he learn about himself? How is this knowledge central to the themes of the novel?
20. The theme of self-sacrifice is a prominent one in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. The most obvious example is the death of the protagonist at the end of his visit to Fairy Land, but this is far from the only example. What other foreshadowings lead the reader to anticipate this culminating picture of true love as giving one's life for another? Is the treatment of this theme in accordance with Scripture, or does MacDonald approach it in some different fashion?
21. Charles Dodgson was a friend of George MacDonald and his family. Seven years after the publication of MacDonald's *Phantastes*, Dodgson submitted *Alice in Wonderland* for publication under the pseudonym of Lewis Carroll. Compare and contrast the two stories. What obvious areas of influence can you see operating? What are the chief differences, other than that the protagonist of the earlier book is a young man while that of the latter is a little girl? Why are these differences important in understanding these works of literature?
22. In chapter five of George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, Anodos says, "I had never imagined that such capacity for simple happiness lay in me, as was now awakened by this assembly of forms and spiritual sensations, which yet were far too vague to admit of being translated into any shape common to my own and another mind." Discuss the extent to which Plato's philosophy of ideals influenced the novel. What other evidence can you find of Plato's understanding of the nature of things in MacDonald's story?
23. Discuss the ways in which the protagonist changes from the beginning of the story to the end in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. What does he learn about himself and about the world? In what ways is he a better man at the end of the story than he was at the beginning?

24. The little girl with the globe appears twice in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. What is the significance of this character? Discuss the significance of the globe, the lessons she learns between her first appearance and her second one, and the role she plays in the character development of the protagonist.
25. Discuss the significance of pride and humility in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. Choose three specific incidents from the novel and comment on the ways in which they contribute to the development of these central themes. Why does MacDonald consider these character traits so important? Is his treatment of them biblical? Why or why not?
26. In George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, we learn little about the protagonist that would distinguish him from others. Are we thus to view Anodos as an Everyman, a character with whom we are to identify in order to learn the lessons he learns? What aspects of the experiences of Anodos mark him as a universal figure?
27. Like many great fantasy stories, George MacDonald's *Phantastes* gives considerable attention to the struggle between good and evil. Discuss some of the ways that he illustrates this great battle. Does he consider the fight against evil to be primarily a struggle with something within or something outside of oneself? Support your answers with specifics from the novel.
28. In George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, Anodos consistently ignores the advice given to him by others. In horror movies, such stupidity on the part of the characters is a transparent plot device to place them in peril. What is its significance in MacDonald's fantasy novel? In your answer, be sure to relate the issue to the larger themes of the story.
29. Some critics of George MacDonald's *Phantastes* believe that the old woman with the young eyes in the cottage on the island is intended to represent God. Do you agree or disagree? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
30. Discuss the role of the imagination in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. Consider especially the importance of songs and stories in the narrative, along with general comments about Fairy Land and the significance of the Shadow of the protagonist. Why does MacDonald consider the imagination to be such an important part of personal and moral development?
31. Discuss the concept of the relationship between appearance and reality in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, and relate it to the treatment of beauty in the story. What do you think MacDonald is trying to say through his treatment of this theme?
32. To what extent are you able to identify with the protagonist of George MacDonald's *Phantastes*? What do these points of identification tell you about yourself? What do they tell you about human nature in general? Use specific details and quotations from the story in answering the question.

33. Discuss the concepts of childhood and maturity as they appear in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. What are the characteristics of these stages of life? How does one move from one to the other? Does this transition accurately describe the impact of the experiences narrated in the novel on the protagonist?
34. Discuss the use of foreshadowing in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, particularly with regard to the epigraphs, songs, and stories contained in the novel. Why does the author choose to give the reader hints of what is to come? How does this foreshadowing help to bring out the themes of the story?
35. Compare and contrast the use of the Platonic notion of ideals in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* and George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. Do these concepts play significant roles in the plots and themes of the two novels, or do they simply represent part of the philosophical background held in common by the two authors?