

The Family Tree in Blossom : The Circular Structure of Peace in George MacDonald's Princess Books

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The Family Tree in Blossom: The Circular Structure of Peace in George MacDonald's *Princess* Books

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Introduction

I [the great-great-grandmother] have been trying to cultivate your [Peter's] family tree, every branch of which is known to me, and I expect Curdie to turn out a blossom on it. (208)

Peace means a period of freedom from war or violence. However, in George MacDonald's two-part work *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883), there appear battles, discord, and violence despite the name of these books' heroine is Princess Irene, which means "peace".¹ In *Goblin*, there is a battle between goblins and humans (whom goblins call "sun-people"). In the same way, there is discord among citizens in Gwyntystorm which the King (Irene's King-Papa) governs, and a rebellion against him breaks out in *Curdie*.²

Curdie ends in a scene in which Gwyntystorm falls into pieces and everything returns to nature.

One day at noon, when life was at its highest, the whole city fell with a roaring crash. The cries of men and the shrieks of women went up with its dust and then there was a great silence.

Where the mighty rocks once towered, crowded with homes and crowned with a palace, now rushes and raves a stone-obstructed rapid of the river. All

¹ "Irene" is derived from the Greek "Eirene" which means peace, and is the name of the peace-goddess in the Greek myth.

² I use the shortened title in this paper: *The Princess and the Goblin to Goblin, The Princess and Curdie to Curdie*, and when I mention both books I call them "the *Princess* books".

around spread a wilderness of wild deer, and the very name of Gwyntystorm has ceased from the lips of men. (341-42)

Not only is the ending gloomy, but the atmosphere of the whole story is gloomy. Though *Curdie* is set only one year after the ending of *Goblin*, this work changes appreciably from the earlier story: the King's faithful vassals such as Sir Walter disappear; a rebellion against the King is in progress; the King is seriously ill; and even in *Curdie* there is a sign of degeneration at the opening.³

In former studies, many scholars perceived the ending as gloomy and destructive, and so they made negative comments about *Curdie*. Robert Lee Wolff states that MacDonald "[is] convinced that evil triumphs in the end" (Wolff 176) and that *Curdie's* ending is "a choking pessimistic gloom" (178-79), and Stephen Prickett also says that "The ending is startling bleak" (Prickett 168). Humphrey Carpenter points out that "this is the Last Judgement. But it is a very strange Last Judgement: No one is saved" (Carpenter 84). Moreover, Bonnie Gaarden comments that "*Curdie* is the only one of his [MacDonald's] fantasies that focuses on the fate of a society, and the apocalyptic nature of the tale reveals the limits of its author's optimism" (Gaarden 159).

The purpose of this paper is to cast light on *Curdie* which in former studies has tended to be considered as melancholy. Given that the name of the great-great-grandmother, the mysterious person who fills a very important role, is also Irene ("peace"), I will focus on peace in the *Princess* books.⁴ In order to do this, two things must be considered: 1. why the people have been directly opposed to peace. 2. what are the essential requirements or conditions to gain peace.

The apples of discord may be various, but their root must be the thought that

³ Although the elapsed time of the setting is only one year, in fact eleven years have passed since the publication of *Goblin* when its sequence *Curdie* sees the light of day. During this eleven years, MacDonald had to go through painful experiences: his serious illness and deaths of his beloved people including his own children (Mary Josephine and Maurice). These seem to bring about *Curdie's* gloomy atmosphere.

⁴ From this point onward, I will use the shortened designation "the Grandmother" when I refer to the great-great-grandmother.

regards the things one belongs to as the best, which in turn leads to the desire to suppress, rule, and exclude others. Consequently, the inclusion or mixture of different things can mediate discord and bring peace. Therefore, in this paper, I will focus on interracial marriage and the idea of being a half-blood as possibility that can mediate discord.⁵ In order to show its importance, I will examine the possibility of peace in *Goblin* caused by the half-blood and its failure and ironical result in section I. In section II, focusing on the way the citizens' corruption and their discord in *Curdie* are closely related to the Queen (Irene's mother)'s death, I will discuss how important the recovery of the female line of power is in order to gain peace. In section III, I will show Irene and Curdie's marriage is pseudo-interracial one and how their marriage brings peace by restoring the female line of power. Because they have no children and their line dies out, former studies have stated that this intensifies the gloom of *Curdie*'s ending. However, I will confirm that it is a matter of great significance for peace that Irene is the last individual of her family line by referring to the Grandmother's words about the family tree which I have quoted at the beginning of this paper. And I will conclude that there is the circular structure of peace in the *Princess* books.⁶

I. Interracial Marriage and the Half-Blood

Firstly, I will pay attention to interracial marriage and the half-blood. Princess Irene is brought up by servants in a house far apart from the palace where her

⁵ I will pay attention to the unusual marriage between human and beings who are not human, namely, goblins and fairies. These marriages are similar to interracial marriages, in so far as they are unions of different types—who have different physical characteristics, culture, language, etc.—but not wholly different types. The relationships between humans, fairies, and goblins would seem to be as fluid and possible as relationships between people of different races. Therefore, in this paper, I will call these marriages "interracial."

⁶ Fernando Soto states that the Princess' name "Irene" should not be plainly considered as peace because *Curdie* lacks peace. He comments that "Instead, the book [*Curdie*], particularly final chapters, deals almost exclusively with avengers, vengeance, judgment, and destruction" (Soto 70) and so he relates two Irene's in the *Princess* books to the Erinyes, the Greek goddesses of vengeance. There is some truth in his indication, but I would rather connect Irene to Eirene, the Greek goddess of peace in order to prove that there is the circular structure of peace in the *Princess* books.

parents live because of her mother queen's feebleness. Her dwelling place shows the importance of the mixture of different things. Her house is "... half castle, half farmhouse, on the side of another mountain, about half-way between its base and peak" (5). Moreover, the garden, which is Irene's favorite place to go to with her father, is the place where nature and art meet together: hardy mountain plants and well-kept garden flowers coexist in the garden. The narrator comments "This mingling of the wild mountain with the civilized garden was very quaint, and it was impossible for any number of gardeners to make such a garden look formal and stiff" (57). This depiction indicates the mixture of different things, none of which holds priority over the others.

Based on the importance of the mixture of different things, I will show the possibility of peace caused by the half-blood who can meditate a conflict between goblins and humans in *Goblin*.⁷ Although former studies rarely call attention to the title, it is important to note that it is not *The Princess and Goblins* but *The Princess and the Goblin*.⁸ We can infer that this specified Goblin is Harelip, a goblin prince who is a half-blood and thus can be a bridge between humans and goblins. In this section I will focus on interracial marriage and the half-blood in *Goblin*. And although the mixture of different things can meditate a conflict and bring peace, the object of interracial marriage in *Goblin* is not mixing but assimilating one to the other, and so there appears priority on only one side, the distinction of ruler and ruled—this can be regarded as the seed of conflict. Therefore I will examine the possible peace brought by interracial marriage and the half-blood in *Goblin*, and its ironic results. And then, I will link this failure in bringing peace with the success of

⁷ Nancy-Lou Patterson refers to Mircea Eliade's interpretation of Persephone that by annulling the unbridgeable distance between Hades and Olympus, she becomes the Mediatrix between two worlds, and states that in *Goblin* "it is Irene who travels between the tower world and the goblin world, carrying the power of her mother and her great-great-grandmother" (Patterson 172). I also pay attention to the mediator, but unlike Patterson, I suggest the possibility that Harelip can be one as the person who has two different things in him—the half-blood.

⁸ Roderick McGillis also indicates that this specified Goblin may be Prince Harelip. However, unlike my interpretation, he comments Harelip "has only a minor role in the action" and the title only "alerts us to the pattern of opposites that threads its way through the book" (McGillis 150).

Curdie and Irene's marriage in *Curdie* in section III.

Harelip is the half-blood: his father is the goblin king and his mother is a human whom goblins call "the sun-woman". His mother dies immediately after his birth, and then the goblin king remarries a goblin woman. The goblin king thinks that if they abduct Princess Irene and his son Harelip marries her, they can enjoy peace at least for a generation.

[The goblin Chancellor is making a speech.] Should his majesty be successful—as who dares to doubt?—then a peace, all to the advantage of the goblin kingdom, will be established for a generation at least, rendered absolutely secure by the pledge which his royal highness the prince will have and hold for the good behaviour of her relatives. (50)

Actually Harelip himself wants to take a sun-woman as his wife, and this indicates adoration for his dead mother and rivalry against his father. Harelip, the half-blood goblin prince can be a bridge between goblins and humans by marrying Irene, the sun-woman. However, even though interracial marriage may have a chance of bringing peace, in fact this never occurs in *Goblin*.

As I noted above, the mixture of different things can bring peace, and so interracial marriage itself has possibility, but this marriage is not one on which I focus in thinking about peace, and it causes ironic results. In the first place, this interracial marriage cannot bring peace because it is not an equal marriage: "all to the advantage of goblin kingdom" (50) says the Chancellor in the above quotation. Moreover, though Harelip is a half-blood, he is so deeply rooted in goblin society which he now belongs to that he has become almost a pure-blood goblin. The most obvious difference between goblins and humans is found in their feet: goblins' feet are toeless and very soft. Harelip says about the plan after he marries Irene: "Only it *will* be nice to make her cry. I'll have the skin taken off between her toes, and tie them up till they grow together" (95). This shows his cruel and violent nature, and the way of this operation indicates that they try to bring Irene over to goblin's

society and “goblinize” her. In addition, although Harelip himself also has toes by reason of being half-human, he shuts his eyes to this reality and imagines only Irene undergoing the operation of uniting toes together. It can be said that he considers himself as a pure-blood goblin.

Harelip is given the possibility of bringing peace by means of becoming a bridge between goblins and sun-people. However, far from that, he plans to absorb Irene, the human princess into the goblin society. Accordingly the possibility vanishes and this failure ironizes the title: *The Princess* (the symbol of peace) and *the Goblin* (one who should seize the possibility of peace).

Another person who draws attention to this irony is the goblin woman whom the goblin king marries after his first wife’s death. This queen pretends to be a pure blood, but her “six horrible toes” (115), which she tries to hide at all cost by wearing granite shoes, proves she is also a half-blood and, as such, may bring about peace. Her intense hatred of sun-people, however, inhibits her from being a mediator, even though she shares their blood.

When the goblin king mentions Harelip’s biological mother, his stepmother (the goblin queen) says indignantly “Don’t talk to me of his mother! ...Whatever belongs to *that* mother, ought to be cut out of him” (94). This utterance issues from her hatred of the sun-people and jealousy toward the former wife, and it demonstrates that she has exclusivistic opinions. Moreover, she even proposes the eradication of the sun-people, saying “Why do we not destroy them entirely ...?” (102).

Her absolute hatred originates in her inability to accept the mixture of the blood that runs through her own body. Therefore she attempts to negate what belongs to the sun-people in her by dint of detesting them thoroughly and trying to exterminate them. When she captures Curdie in the underground goblin kingdom, she suggests an infinite cruel plan to the goblin king: she wants to feed Curdie to creatures which the goblins keep. Incited by her cruelty, the goblin king accepts her plan and in order to add brutality to it, he proposes conducting a public execution, saying “let us tie him [Curdie] hand and foot, and have the pleasure of seeing him torn to pieces by full torchlight in the great hall” (101). Both the goblin queen and her stepson Harelip,

overjoyed at this proposition, clap their hands. Their hatred toward the sun-people and their exclusivism imply that they negate parts of themselves, if not their whole selves. Refusing the mixture of different things, and what is worse, lapsing into self-negation, these half-blood goblins cannot be a bridge between goblins and sun-people. Eventually intertribal battle breaks out, and the goblins who lose this battle must escape from their residence. In *Goblin*, peace brought by interracial marriage and the half-blood cannot be achieved.

II. The Recovery of the Female Line of Power

In this section, I will concentrate on how “for some years, *ever since his queen’s death*, he [the King] had been losing heart over the wickedness of his people” (290, emphasis mine) and discuss another important factor in gaining peace: the recovery of the female line of power. Although I use the words “the female line of power”, I do not simply mean that women should begin to have power: by itself female power is insufficient. I use this phrase as meaning both the strength of female power and the succession in a female line. Therefore I will examine the process of Irene’s growth and the female line of power’s recovery, and suggest the possibility for the attainment of peace.

The importance of female power in the *Princess* books is clearly shown by the Grandmother who is the most powerful figure and has mysterious atmosphere.⁹ In addition to her, there is the female monster Lina, who is the top of forty-nine strange monsters (they are called “Uglies”) and fights with Curdie against degenerate subjects in Gwyntystorm. She originally seems to have been a woman. Moreover, not only is female power important in the *Princess* books, but so is the female line

⁹ MacDonald often writes goddess-like women who remain young and beautiful despite their old age: for instance, the fairy grandmother and the Wise Woman in the cottage in *Phantastes* (1858), North Wind in *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), and so on. Among these goddess-like women, the Grandmother in the *Princess* books can be regarded as a representative figure. Bonnie Gaarden comments that MacDonald “wrote fantasies in which he presented God as a woman” (Gaarden 1). In *The Christian Goddess*, she classifies these female figures and examines them respectively.

of succession.¹⁰ For example, the miraculous stories about royalty and the tales of the mysterious person called “Old Mother Wotherwop”—in fact she is the disguise of the Grandmother—are handed down from grandmother to mother, and mother to daughter.¹¹ The power to apprehend and believe in supernatural experience is an expression of female spirituality and imagination in the *Princess* books. I will show in more detail how important the female line is by discussing the relationship between the Grandmother and Princess Irene, as well as the Princess’ growth.

The King is a noble and respectable person, but there is something wrong in the way he rules as a king. This is often displayed in the employment of his officers.

Wherever he journeyed, he kept a constant look-out for the ablest and best men to put into his office; and wherever he found himself mistaken, and those he had appointed incapable or unjust, he removed them at once. (89)

He separates people into two categories—useful to him or useless; he adopts those who are useful and abandons those who are not without hesitation. This dualistic and exclusive attitude, which the Japanese psychologist Kawai Hayao would call the “principal of paternity”, is essential for a king to govern a society, but this way of clarifying the rights or wrongs in everything and then abandoning the wrong things begets discord and may lead to battles.¹² In consequence, it can be said that the King himself is responsible to his subjects for falling away from him and going astray. The “principal of maternity” which unites different things and embraces everything is indispensable, and needless to say this principal must require female power.

The absence of the Queen obviously exhibits the weakening of female power.

¹⁰ The succession in female line is found in MacDonald’s other works too. In *Phantastes* spirituality and imagination are inherited in female line like the *Princess* books. In chapter 7 of *Phantastes*, a family of four appears: while father and son embody rationality, mother and daughter have spiritual insight and are full of imagination. Moreover, MacDonald discusses the importance of imagination in his essay “The Fantastic Imagination” (1893).

¹¹ *Goblin*, 128, *Curdie*, 198.

¹² Kawai 139-74.

However, by giving birth to Princess Irene, who is really a symbol of peace, the Queen has left the possibility of restoring peace. Therefore in order to gain peace, Irene must attain her full growth and restore female power which has weakened. However, Irene, who has been given the possibility of peace, appears at the opening of *Goblin* in a very spiritless and dull state.

She got very tired, so tired that even her toys could no longer amuse her. ... – leaning with her back bowed into the back of the chair, her head hanging down, and her hands in her lap, very miserable as she would say herself, not even knowing what she would like ... (8)

Her serious languor shows the weakening and stagnation of female power. First of all, she needs a being who compensates and fills the absence of her mother-queen. There appears the Grandmother.

Princess Irene was separated from her mother immediately after her birth and brought up by servants in a large house distant from the palace where her parents lived.

The princess, whose name was Irene, was born there [in the palace], but she was sent soon after her birth, *because her mother was not very strong*, to be brought up by country people in a large house, ... (5, emphasis mine)

Why must the Princess be separated from her mother only because *her mother was not very strong*? This reason seems insufficient and incomprehensible, and the detailed state of the Queen remains unexplained. Anyway this indicates the weakening of female power and the discontinuation of the female line. Although exactly when the Queen died is not mentioned in the *Princess* books, Irene never sees her mother again, and she does not remember her mother at all because the separation from her occurred when she was a baby. It is certain that the King visits her time after time and their domestic happiness (for example she is always jubilant

at receiving a call from her father) proves that he builds a good relationship with his daughter, but she has been raised up without feeling much love from her parents.

Though brought up by servants with much care, Irene must feel lonely. In the meantime, one day she comes across the Grandmother. She says to Irene “I came here to take care of you”, “I’ve been here ever since you came yourself” (14), and hearing this Irene realizes that she has been under the protection of this fascinating lady and has been loved by her. She experiences supreme bliss with the Grandmother, and this forms the foundation for this solitary Princess’ growth.

One day in the Grandmother’s room she gives Irene a bath, which is very mysterious. It is a large silver bath and when Irene looks into it she sees “no bottom, but the stars shining miles away, as it seemed, in a great blue gulf” (124). She goes through a marvelous experience in it.

When she opened her eyes, she saw nothing but a strange lovely blue over and beneath and all about her. The lady [the Grandmother] and the beautiful room had vanished from her sight, and she seemed utterly alone. But instead of being afraid, she felt more than happy—perfectly blissful. And from somewhere came the voice of the lady, singing a strange sweet song, of which she could distinguish every word; but of the sense she had only a feeling—no understanding. Nor could she remember a single line after it was gone. It vanished, like the poetry in a dream, as fast as it came. (124)

When she gets out of the bath, she feels “as if she had been made over again” (125), and as many scholars point out this scene is metaphor of rebirth.¹³ Moreover, the Grandmother’s behavior to Irene is so intimate (for example, she holds the Princess in her lap or close to her bosom, and sleeps in one bed with her) that their relationship is like a mother and a young child. Irene receives motherly love from

¹³ See for example, Willis 33, Holbrook 110. MacDonald closely connects water with life in his many works. For example, Mossy and Tangle’s bathing in “The Golden Key” (1867) is a metaphor of rebirth like Irene’s, and in “The Light Princess” (1864) the Princess’ life is directly linked with the lake.

the Grandmother, which she has not been given by her own mother. After taking a mysterious bath whose water is suggestive of amniotic fluid, Irene is reborn and begins to live a life again with the Grandmother. She who has been passive and unlively becomes full of life and obtains vitality step by step. While Irene feels the importance of female power which the royal family lacks, she grows with the assistance she receives from the Grandmother. Her growth directly links with the recovery of the female line of power, and she takes strides toward peace, which she symbolizes.

The symbol of Princess Irene's immature childhood when she must be protected is Lootie, her nursemaid. Significantly, whenever Irene meets the Grandmother and has a dangerous experience and confronts a difficulty which is requisite for her growth, Lootie is absent or fast asleep. In Chapter 24 of *Goblin*, the Princess gives directions to servants by herself for the first time.

‘Please, Mrs Housekeeper,’ said the princess, ‘will you take me to your room, and keep me till my king-papa comes? I will ask him to come as soon as he can.’

Every one stared at these words. Up to this moment, they had all regarded her as little more than a baby. (135)

Misunderstood and scolded unreasonably by Lootie, Irene decides that she has to do without the nursemaid.¹⁴ This behavior reveals her independence from Lootie, and as the chapter title “Irene Behaves Like a Princess” indicates, she becomes a

¹⁴ Lootie, who cannot believe the existence of the Grandmother, misunderstands Irene's disappearance. When the Princess disappeared, the whole servants searched everywhere for her, thinking she must be abducted by goblins at last. In fact Irene visited her Grandmother and slept with her. When she awoke from her sweetest sleep, mysteriously she was in her own bed and found her room full of servants who worried about her. Lootie, by deep affection for Irene and misconception, scolded the Princess unreasonably: “How *could* you get under the clothes like that, and make us all fancy you were lost! And keep it up all day too! You *are* the most obstinate child!” (134). Irene, who realizes Lootie cannot understand the truth, determines to begin to manage without her. The Princess is independent of the nursemaid, who is affectionate but lacks imagination.

respectable princess at this point of time. As Patterson states, “[Lootie] represents Irene’s childhood dependency and is thrown off rather like an outworn garment when the Princess leaves that childhood behind” (Patterson 180). That the King takes Irene with him toward the palace leaving Lootie behind at the close of *Goblin* shows the end of the Princess’ immature childhood. In addition, that the nursemaid no more appears (nor even is referred to) in *Curdie* exhibits Irene’s independence and the possibility of her further growth.

The importance of the succession in the female line is depicted in the Princess’ name itself: she realizes that she has been named after the Grandmother at the first meeting.

‘Do you know my name, child?’

‘No, I don’t know it,’ answered the princess.

‘My name is Irene.’

‘That’s *my* name!’ cried the princess.

‘I know that. I let you have mine. I haven’t got your name. You’ve got mine.’

‘How can that be?’ asked the princess, bewildered. ‘I’ve always had my name.’

‘Your papa, the king, asked me if I had any objection to your having it; and of course I hadn’t. I let you have it with pleasure.’

‘It was very kind of you to give me you name—and such a pretty one,’ said the princess. (13)

She has succeeded to the name of this mysterious lady, and this fact is so important that I will mention it later. And that Irene inherits the ring, which her mother queen possessed in her life time through the Grandmother, and that the thread of special spider is tied to this ring which connects two Irenes prove the succession in the female line and women’s bonds. Besides that, by following this thread tied to the ring, Irene succeeds in delivering Curdie, who has been confined in the underground

cave by the goblin queen, and evading the goblins' assaults whose purpose is to abduct the Princess and marry her to their Crown Prince Harelip. The important role which the ring fills as well as the suggestion that this ring has been passed down unbroken from generation to generation in the female line of the royal family shows the female power and the ring promotes Irene's growth. That Irene inherits her mother's ring means that she reconnects with the female line and as a queen, the highest-ranking female in the land, she begins to prepare for the recovery of the female line of power.

In *Curdie*, Irene continues to mature, and even though she is still a child—as the narrator says—she already has a grown-up demeanor: “She was only between nine and ten, though indeed she looked several years older, and her eyes almost those of a grown woman, for she had had terrible trouble of late” (267). She devotedly nurses the King who has become ill because of worry over his degenerate subjects, while at the same time he is secretly poisoned to death by Dr Kelman. Irene assumes a role of responsibility more befitting the King's wife rather than his child-princess.

However, she feels strongly that she is too immature, and so she says desperately “It is so sad he [the King] should have only me and not my mamma! A princess is nothing to a queen!” (270, emphasis mine). In *Goblin*, Irene's power of believing and imagination are depicted quite positively, and the Princess' feminine spirituality is praised in the work: exactly this power enables her to meet the mysterious Grandmother. On the contrary, however, in *Curdie* her power works against her because she is credulous and trusts those she should not trust. In his works, MacDonald often writes about men and women who support each other and grow together physically and spiritually. The *Princess* books are not exceptions.¹⁵ Having only feminine spirituality and imagination is inadequate, and so masculine rationality is needed. Although the recovery of the *female line* of power is essential for peace, there is a limit to what Irene can do by herself. Curdie, consequently, will

¹⁵ For example, Mossy and Tangle in “The Golden Key”, Richard and Alice in “Cross Purposes” (1867), and Photogen and Nycteris in “The Day Boy and the Night Girl” (1879).

play a key role, as the Grandmother foresees— “I expect Curdie to turn out a blossom on it [the family tree]”.

III. Marriage Between Curdie and Irene

On the basis of the importance of the half-blood and interracial marriage, and the power of the female line, which I stated in previous sections, I will consider how Curdie and Irene bring about peace by overcoming their limitations and marrying.

First, I will examine the marriage between Curdie and Irene from the viewpoint of interracial marriage. Curdie, the son of the diligent miner Peter Peterson, lives in a mountain cottage with his parents: the family is very poor and they apparently belong to the working class. However, the Grandmother reveals that they are related by blood to the royal family.

And now I am going to tell you what no one knows but myself: you, Peter, and your wife have both the blood of royal family in your veins. I have been trying to cultivate your family tree, every branch of which is known to me, ... (208)

Though how the Grandmother has cultivated the family tree remains unexplained to the last, she has established a branch family from the royalty. What is more, she has done this with much deliberation lest the descendants of the branch family notice this fact.

That Peter and Curdie work in the mines is remarkable in two points: 1. they work under royalty—the mines which they labor in are the property of the royal family; 2. underground is the territory of goblins, and so some resemblances are seen between them and the miners, including Peter and Curdie who mainly stay under the earth by digging in the mines. Namely the royal family is different from the Petersons (the branch family) not only in the respect of social class but also racially. I do not mean to equate Curdie with goblins, but that he is well informed of the underground has an important meaning. McGillis, who discusses the reconciliation

of opposites in his paper, refers to Curdie-Irene relation: “The relationship between Curdie, boy of the cellars and mines, and Irene, girl of the tower and sky, accomplishes this reconciliation” (McGillis 151). In addition to that, I emphasize that their marriage since they belong to different spheres each other assumes an aspect of interracial marriage. From the description of their eyes, we can appreciate how their differences complement each other. Irene is like the sky and Curdie the earth.

Her [Irene's] face was fair and pretty, with eyes like two bits of night sky, each with a star dissolved in the blue. (5)

He [Curdie] was a very nice-looking boy, with eyes as dark as the mines in which he worked, and as sparkling as the crystals in their rocks. (28)

MacDonald writes about the coexistence or reconciliation of opposites in his other works too, and so this must be a theme of vital importance for him. The recovery of wholeness and harmony through the marriage of opposites is especially shown by the relationship between Photogen, the day boy and Nycteris, the night girl in “The Day Boy and the Night Girl”, and Curdie and Irene's one conforms to this marriage.

The Grandmother intentionally makes Curdie different from the royalty and she marries him to Irene: this can be considered as a pseudo-interracial marriage. In *Goblin*, peace by the mixture of different things—the half-blood and interracial marriage—cannot be gained and the story, as a consequence, ends on an ironic note. In *Curdie*, however, after their pseudo-interracial marriage they succeed in governing their reign peacefully.

Secondly, I will discuss their marriage viewed from the recovery of power in the female line. I will pay attention to the relation between Curdie's mother Joan and the Grandmother, who promotes Irene's growth and is the most powerful and mysterious person. Remarkably, their similarity is emphasized in the *Princess* books.

Mrs Peterson was such a nice good mother! All mothers are nice and good more or less, but Mrs Peterson was nice and good all *more* and no *less*. She made and kept a little heaven in that poor cottage on the high hillside... I doubt if the princess was very much happier even in the arms of her huge-great grandmother than Peter and Curdie were in the arms of Mrs Peterson. (67)

Moreover, Irene plainly expresses their resemblance when she talks with Curdie: “your mother has been so kind to me—just like my own grandmother!” (152). Taking notice of this similarity between the two women, McGillis says “To show the grandmother manifested in “real” world MacDonald equates her with Curdie’s mother” (McGillis 153). I stated in the previous section that the death of Irene’s mother evidently showed weakening in the female line of power. On account of her son’s marriage, affectionate Joan, who is closely connected with the Grandmother, becomes the Princess’ mother-in-law: “Irene’s mother”, the void in her family tree is filled by Joan and this leads to the recovery of the female line of power.

The process before their marriage must be considered as well. Irene is not one of the passive princesses of fairy tales who just wait the advent of a prince: for example, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, and Rapunzel, etc. Unlike these classical princesses, Irene acts decisively. When Curdie is confined by the goblin queen, Irene goes under the ground in order to deliver him. Some scholars connect her with Persephone (Kore),¹⁶ but this behavior reminds us of Demeter, the mother earth. Irene grows up fast through this difficult deliverance.

Their mutuality is also important. Although Irene’s imaginative power is her virtue and plays a key role, in *Curdie* her power of believing falls to gullibility. Thanks to Curdie, “Irene’s eyes were opened” (281) and therefore she, who has been deceived by revels, can see through their wickedness. Besides that, Irene, who

¹⁶ For example, see Patterson “Kore Motifs in *The Princess and the Goblin*.”

progresses by dint of Curdie's help, influences him greatly too. Curdie is a nice and respectable boy, but he lacks imagination and this indicates his spiritual immaturity.¹⁷ To say nothing of the aforesaid deliverance, Irene affects him positively: her spiritual and imaginative power complements his rationality and makes him better. Irene and Curdie, who have different natures, interact with one another, and by this mutuality they become higher together.

That Princess Irene becomes Queen Irene by dint of her marriage to Curdie is very significant because the Grandmother's true name is Queen Irene—"Queen Irene—that was the right name of the old princess..." (340). Irene and the Grandmother, who has transcendental power and protects her, hold the title in common as well as name itself. This indicates Irene's independence from the Grandmother and that she heads the female line, practically speaking. The female line of power which has weakened by the death of Irene's mother-queen is recovered through Irene's pseudo-interracial marriage with Curdie—the child of peace in the end becomes the Queen of peace herself.

Conclusion

In this paper, I paid attention to what mediates battles and discord, and brings peace which Princess Irene symbolizes. I discussed the possibility of peace created by the half-blood and interracial marriage in section I, and peace attained by the recovery of the female line of power in section II. I also stated its failure and limitation respectively. On the basis of these observations, I then pointed out that Irene and Curdie succeeded in bringing peace by their marriage.

The Grandmother, who remains young in spite of her unbelievable old age and has mysterious power, is kindred to Anodos' fairy grandmother in *Phantastes*.¹⁸

¹⁷ Curdie's immaturity is obviously shown in his disbelief in the Grandmother and Irene's story about her. He cannot even see the Grandmother despite being face to face. *Goblin*, 110-25.

¹⁸ Anodos' fairy grandmother is remarkably his ancestor on the mother's side. Like the Grandmother, she remains young and beautiful in spite of her old age (she is two hundred and thirty-seven years old!) and she serves an essential function: she teaches Anodos the way into the Fairy Land and she reminds him of his mother who has died immediately after his

Since she tells Irene that “I’m your father’s mother’s father’s mother” (13), namely she is the Princess’ ancestor four generations back, it can be said that the Grandmother has married to the then king “interracially”. Therefore, after this interracial marriage the royal family is the half-blood between humans and supernatural being such as fairy.

If the family tree is grasped from the view of the half-blood, the Grandmother can be called its originator. Besides, Curdie and Irene, through their pseudo-interracial marriage, become the king and queen and govern peacefully. As former studies have pointed out, it can be said that they have no children and their family line dies away intensifies *Curdie’s* gloomy atmosphere, but this extinction—Irene is the last individual of her family tree—is very significant. The family tree, which has started from the Grandmother (Queen Irene) comes to its end with Irene, that is to say, the family tree both begins and ends with “peace”—there is the circular structure of peace. Irene, who has inherited the symbol of peace from the Grandmother, attains peace with Curdie: they make the family tree blossom.

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birth—she shows maternal warmth to one who does not know mother’s love.

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