
Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials and The Book of Dust as rewritings of John Milton's Paradise Lost

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Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres

Département de Langues et Littératures Modernes

**Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* and *The Book of Dust* as
rewritings of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.**

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l'obtention du diplôme de Master en Langues et Littératures
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Marie Klinkenberg, August 2020

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SYNOPSES

His Dark Materials

In *Northern Lights* the reader follows the adventures of Lyra and her daemon –a person’s inner-self in the shape of an animal– Pantalaimon. She lives in Jordan College among male scholars and spends most of her time with her best friend Roger. One day, she leaves Oxford with a lady named Marisa Coulter. Right before Lyra’s departure, the Master of Jordan College gives her an object he calls ‘an alethiometer’. At first Lyra enjoys her time in London with Mrs Coulter. However, she gradually realizes that the lady is trying to steal her alethiometer and is behind the kidnapping of many children, including Roger. Lyra runs away and is helped by gyptians who hide her and meets their leader John Faa and their elder Farder Coram. The latter reveals that Lyra’s uncle, Lord Asriel, is actually her father and Mrs Coulter her mother. Later, the gyptians decide to go north in order to rescue their children who have been kidnapped and Lyra goes with them. During their journey, they are joined by the aeronaut Lee Scoresby, the witch Serafina Pekkala and the exiled bear Iorek Byrnison. At some point, Lyra and her friends are attacked and she ends up in a place ruled by the General Oblation Board. There, she is reunited with Roger and discovers the organisation’s plans: they cut the connection between a child and its daemon in order to prevent something they call ‘Dust’, glowing particles that surround adult bodies. Lyra decides to launch an escape plan for all the children and succeeds thanks to the witches’ help. Lyra can now continue her journey to the north, to her father, and is accompanied by Roger, Lee, Iorek and Serafina. She finally finds Lord Asriel who explains what Dust consists in. The novel ends with Lord Asriel who kills Roger to open a door between worlds and Lyra who goes after him to avenge Roger’s death.

A new character is introduced in *The Subtle Knife*: Will. He lives alone with his mother ever since his father's disappearance. One day, he runs away after killing a man by accident and goes through an interdimensional window. He discovers the city of Cittàgazze where he meets Lyra. Lyra is first taken aback by the fact that Will does not have any daemon but chooses to trust Will once the alethiometer tells her he is a murderer. They decide to stick together while they both fulfil their goal: find their respective father and Lyra also wants to learn more about Dust. During her researches, Lyra meets the scientist Mary Malone with whom she shares her knowledge on Dust. Lyra comes across a man named Mr Latrom a couple of times and he takes the opportunity to steal the alethiometer. Lyra and Will first negotiate with Mr Latrom who agrees to return the alethiometer in exchange for the subtle knife. Lyra and Will find this object that creates openings between worlds and use it to steal the alethiometer back. The two children are later joined by witches who follow and protect them. At the same time, the Church learns that Lyra is Eve again. Mrs Coulter takes the decision to go find her daughter before the Church does. One night, Will is walking in the woods when he meets a man, Stanislaus Grumman, who helps him with his hand injury and gives him some advice. Will suddenly realizes that this man is his father but the reunion comes to an end when a witch kills Grumman. Meanwhile, the witches' camp is attacked and Lyra is kidnapped by Mrs Coulter.

The Amber Spyglass is divided in two main storylines: on one side, Lord Asriel and Mrs Coulter's and, on the other side, Lyra and Will's. Following Lyra's escape, Mrs Coulter is captured by Lord Asriel's men. She learns about his plan and decides to infiltrate the Magisterium for him. She is caught but then saved by Lord Asriel. They then make a plan: she will deceive Metatron, the Authority's regent, to make sure he lets Lord Asriel approach him. Their plan works and they manage to kill Metatron but at the cost of their lives. Meanwhile, after Will has delivered Lyra,

they both decide to go to the land of the dead: Will to see his father and Lyra because she has made a promise to Roger in a dream that she would come to rescue him. They succeed but Lyra has to separate from her daemon Pan and Will from his invisible daemon. Once in the land, they reunite with Roger, Grumman and Lee Scoresby and open a door between this land and the living world. Once in the living world, Lyra and Will try to find their daemons and discover the mulefa world. There, they meet up with Mary Malone who, after a conversation with some angels, has arrived in the mulefa world and has helped the population. Progressively, thanks to Mary Malone, Lyra and Will realize their feelings for each other and fall in love. They also reunite with their daemons but as soon as this happens, they learn they have to close all the openings but one. They decide to keep the one that connects the land of the dead with the living world. The trilogy ends with Lyra and Will's separation, the destruction of the subtle knife and Lyra's decision to study the alethiometer.

The Book of Dust

La Belle Sauvage's storyline takes place ten years before *Northern Lights*. Malcolm, an eleven-year-old boy, divides his time between school, his father's inn called the Trout and the Priory of Godstow where he regularly helps the nuns. One day, he witnesses an aggression and finds a message hidden by the victim. The consignee, Hannah Relf, uses an alethiometer to find out what has happened to the message and meets Malcolm. She explains that she is part of a secret organisation called Oakley Street that fights the Magisterium. She then suggests a deal: if Malcolm listens to what customers say in the Trout and, when it is interesting, report it to her, she will lend him books. He agrees and that is how he tells her about the League of St Alexander at his school, the baby who now lives in the prior and whose name is Lyra but also about a strange man, Gerard Bonneville, who lurks about the prior. Malcolm warns the nuns and, one night, when Bonneville is inside the prior to kidnap Lyra, a flood destroys the prior. With the help of Alice, a girl who

works at the Trout, Malcolm saves Lyra and the three of them board Malcolm's boat, La Belle Sauvage. Then begins a chase between the children and Bonneville during which the children will meet magic creatures and lands. Eventually, Bonneville manages to approach them after many attempts and rapes Alice. Malcolm has no choice but to separate from his daemon and kill Bonneville to save Alice. They finally meet Lord Asriel and members of Oakley Street and Lyra is entrusted to Jordan College's scholars.

In *The Secret Commonwealth*, ten years after *The Amber Spyglass*'s events, both Lyra and Malcolm are adults. One night, Pan witnesses a murder and they begin to investigate this murder with Lyra. Unfortunately, ever since they have split in the land of the dead, their connection has been broken and they hate each other. This makes their investigation complicated. Lyra also finds out about her nurse Mrs Lonsdale who happens to be Alice and Lyra learns about how she and Malcolm saved her life. She then has a conversation with Malcolm in private because his daemon, Asta, has also witnessed the murder. They share information and Malcolm takes over the investigation once Lyra is stalked by those who have organised the murder. After an umpteenth argument, Pan runs away to find Lyra's imagination. She immediately goes after him and believes Pan will meet her in a place called the 'Blue Hotel' where humans who have been separated from their daemons can be reunited with them. In the meantime, Malcolm has learned about the Blue Hotel as well and is sent there by Oakley Street because he and Asta can separate. Various events take place during his journey like when he meets Bonneville's son, Olivier, and lies about Bonneville's death because his son wants revenge. Malcolm also attends a public meeting interrupted by gunmen who want all roses to be destroyed. The volume ends with Lyra who arrives at the Blue Hotel and Olivier who is about to attack her but is stopped by Lyra's guide.

INTRODUCTION

In 1922, John Erskine writes about the concept of originality saying that “there is nothing new about religion or love or friendship, war, sunsets, the sea, danger or death, yet something remains to be told of each eternal theme.¹ All literary works, in prose or in verse, deal with themes that have already been written about. Yet, sometimes it is not only the theme that two works have in common but the whole plot:

The achievements of literature are all, as in these instances, a gradual reworking of traditional or popular or folk materials, and in the process it is precisely because the subject is not original that the audience can decide how well it has been portrayed.²

Literary history is made of rewritings and the audience appreciates it as it gives them a benchmark to evaluate whether the new version is superior or inferior to the previous. A common theme among rewritings are myths and legends. According to Julie Sanders, “[each] new generation of story-makers adopted familiar mythic templates and outlines for their storytelling purposes”.³ Many writers take inspiration from myths and appropriate them. Anne-Marie Bird mentions that “[few] myths have had such an immensely powerful and prevailing influence on the Western imagination, or have generated quite so many retellings, as the Judeo-Christian myth of the Fall”.⁴ Genesis is one of the most retold myth. An example would be John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* published in 1667 that relates the episode of the Fall but with more details than in the *Bible* and the epic poem also includes Satan in its narration. Jeffrey Shoulson comments on Milton’s work:

¹ John Erskine, “The Literary Discipline: II: Originality in Literature,” *The North American Review* 216, no. 805 (1922): 737.

² Ibid.

³ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (Great Britain: Routledge, 2006), 64.

⁴ Anne-Marie-Bird, ““Without Contraries is no Progression”: Dust as an All-Inclusive, Multifunctional Metaphor in Philip Pullman’s “His Dark Materials”,” *Children’s Literature in Education* 32, no. 2 (2001): 111.

Each of these facets of the poem's version of the Fall expands on, interrogates, and proposes a variety of interpretative responses to the Bible's terse account. These poetic expansions open up matters of theology, of government, of gender and sexuality, of ontology, of epistemology, and more.⁵

Paradise Lost raises new topics in its rewriting of Genesis, which is totally normal according to Julie Sanders: "appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into wholly new cultural product and domain".⁶ Milton's epic poem was influenced by the culture, the history and the society at the time and this is why it differs from the *Bible* in various aspects.

Another example of rewriting the Fall, and more recent, would be Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*. In his introduction to the 2008 edition of *Paradise Lost*, Pullman writes: "In my own case, the trilogy I called *His Dark Materials* [...] began partly with my memories of reading the poem aloud at school so many years before".⁷ This appropriation could be considered as rather different from the others as it is a rewriting of a rewriting. Yet, it still relates the story of Genesis and some biblical excerpts are even included in *His Dark Materials*, which means it can still be argued that it is a rewriting of Genesis. Pullman's trilogy also distinguishes itself from other rewritings because it is meant to be read by children. It is true that there have already been children's Bibles but these were just like the *Bible*'s stories written in simplified language with, sometimes, illustrations.⁸ *His Dark Materials* is completely different since its volumes are described as fantasy novels. Pullman's trilogy brings a new dimension to Genesis through this completely different type of narrative. Some people could say that if it belongs to children

⁵ Jeffrey Shoulson, "Milton's Bible," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paradise Lost*, ed. Louis Schwartz (U.S.A.: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 73.

⁶ Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006), 26.

⁷ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, (Oxford: University Press, 2008), p. 9.

⁸ Victor Watson, *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 78.

literature, it is simple and does not deal with any society issue. Pullman disagrees as Nicholas Tucker mentions: “In the same vein, [Pullman] has stated elsewhere that: “Children’s book still deal with the huge themes which have always been part of literature – love, loyalty, the place of religion and science in life, what it really means to be human””.⁹ It is not because *His Dark Materials* is meant for children that it does not deal with as many topics as *Paradise Lost*, especially considering that the trilogy is a rewriting of Milton’s epic poem.

This dissertation’s aim will be to analyse and compare *His Dark Materials* and *Paradise Lost* to discover whether Pullman’s trilogy differs from Milton’s epic poem as much as Sanders implies in her comment on appropriation mentioned above. This paper will also attempt to find the reason why the myth of the Fall has been retold so many times throughout literary history. As a starting point, I will study the various critics towards God and religious organizations that can be found in both works. I will then analyse *His Dark Materials*’s rewriting of Genesis in itself in relation to *Paradise Lost* and King James Bible’s versions. As previously mentioned, *Paradise Lost* deals with topics that are not connected to religion. I will therefore mention various other issues included in *His Dark Materials* and Milton’s work. Eventually, Pullman has recently published the two first volumes of his new trilogy, *The Book of Dust*. This trilogy is connected to *His Dark Materials* as it is both a prequel and a sequel to *His Dark Materials*. I will thus try to see whether this trilogy can be described as a rewriting of *Paradise Lost*, and, by extension, Genesis, or not.

⁹ Nicholas Tucker, *Darkness Visible: Philip Pullman and His Dark Materials* (Great Britain: Icon Books, 2017), 154.

CHAPTER 1: CRITICISM OF GOD AND RELIGION

Ever since John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* (1667), a debate has existed about whether Milton's God is wicked or not (*Paradise Lost*: xxv). Julie Sanders lists some of an appropriation's characteristics and mentions:

Adaptation is nevertheless frequently involved in offering commentary on a source text. This is achieved most often by offering a revised point of view from the 'original', adding hypothetical motivation or voicing what the text silences or marginalizes.¹⁰

Given that Philip Pullman's trilogy consists in a rewriting of *Paradise Lost*, it could therefore be argued that *His Dark Materials* offers a revised point of view on *Paradise Lost* and, in this case, on Milton's God. Naomi Wood states that "Pullman, in the republican tradition of [...] Milton's political writing, depicts corrupt ecclesiastic and political authorities to who allegiance would be evil".¹¹ Furthermore, Rebekah Fitzsimmons writes:

Despite its popularity with children and adults, the trilogy is also extremely controversial, especially with conservative Christian groups. These groups commonly object to the depiction of the Authority as a dishonest dictatorial angel and the death of this God-like figure at the end of the trilogy.¹²

Both works criticize God and religion in general. Hence, in order to know more about the reason for this criticism, an analysis of various elements will be made. The different aspects that will be commented are the opposition between good and evil, the notion of destiny, the Church and eventually God.

¹⁰ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (Great Britain: Routledge, 2016), 23.

¹¹ Naomi Wood, "Paradise Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman," *Children's Literature in Education* 32, no. 4 (2001): 239.

¹² Rebekah Fitzsimmons, "Dialectical "Complexifications": The Centrality of Mary Malone, Dust, and the Mulefa in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 22, no. 2/82 (2011): 213.

good versus evil

The opposition of good versus evil is a key element in Genesis. As it is explained in *Paradise Lost*, the tree of Knowledge teaches the distinction between good and evil:

This garden, planted with the trees of God,
Delectable both to behold and taste;
And freely all their pleasant fruit for food
Gave [Adam], all sorts are here that all th' earth yields,
Variety without end, but of the Tree
Which tasted works Knowledge of Good and Evil,
[Adam] may'st not.¹³ (*PL*: 164)

Adam and Eve, now they have eaten the forbidden fruit, are able to distinguish good from evil. The notion of good versus evil is thus essential to *Paradise Lost* and is therefore illustrated in *His Dark Materials* but not in the same way.

Carole Scott argues that “Lyra’s role focuses the book upon the battle of good and evil for the soul of humankind, the key theme of the biblical story, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*”.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Scott qualifies her statement afterwards: “The allegiances of Pullman’s figures are enigmatic and the reader often unclear on who to trust. In this he differs from Milton and Blake, both of whom perceived a clear division figures of good and evil”.¹⁵ In other words, Scott explains that Pullman’s trilogy deals with the notions of good and evil but, unlike *Paradise Lost*, it does not make a clear distinction between the two notions. As Anne-Marie Bird states:

However, the distinction between good and evil, or spirit and matter, is not only a distinguishing Gnostic characteristic, but is just as notably a feature of traditional

¹³ Lines 538-544.

¹⁴ Carole Scott, “Pullman’s Enigmatic Ontology: Revamping Old Traditions in *His Dark Materials*,” in *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman’s Trilogy*, ed. Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 97.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

Christianity in which the irreconcilable nature of the opposites arises from their moral emphasis. There is no such simple theological dichotomy in Pullman's texts. Rather, his work strives to convince the reader of the interconnectedness of these particular conceptual opposites.¹⁶

There is not any clear distinction between good and evil in *His Dark Materials*; the boundary is blurred. Wood first writes: "Even characters who are on the "good side" are not necessarily or inevitably admirable or right".¹⁷ She then adds: "Pullman's narrator challenges the reader, even as Lyra is challenged, to make moral sense of the story without over direction, requiring the reader to develop more independent judgements of the moral stakes".¹⁸ Since Pullman's trilogy does not depict a clear distinction between good and evil, the reader is left to decide whether a character's actions are right or wrong. As Emmanuelle Burton highlights,

[*His Dark Materials*] recounts the adventures of a motley assortment of figures who murder, lie, steal, and employ the naked use of force to impose their will on others, including their own companions and collaborators.¹⁹

Most characters commit crimes in Pullman's trilogy, even those on the hero's side. The reader could therefore think that there are no honest characters in *His Dark Materials*.

Nonetheless, the reader's opinion could change because of Mary Malone. In *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), when Mary shares her story with Lyra and Will, he asks her:

'When you stopped believing in God,' he went on, 'did you stop believing in good and evil?'

'No. But I stopped believing there was a power of good and evil that were outside us. And I came to believe that good and evil are names for what people do, not for what they are. All we can is that this is a good deed, because it helps someone, or that's an evil one, because it hurts them. People are too complicated to have simple labels.' (448)

¹⁶ Bird, "'Without Contraries is no Progression": Dust as an All-Inclusive, Multifunctional Metaphor in Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials"," 115.

¹⁷ Wood, "Paradise Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman," 245.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁹ Emmanuelle Burton "Moral Horror and Moral Maturity: Philip Pullman's Theological Anthropology for a Godless World," *Literature & Theology* 30, no. 2 (2016): 198.

According to Mary's speech, it is not about being good or evil but rather about doing the right thing; one reading could be that the end justifies the means. Lord Asriel and Stanislaus Grumman illustrate this interpretation. Lord Asriel kills Roger at the end of *Northern Lights* (1995) to have access to the other worlds. Yet, he does it in order to create a republic and put an end to the Authority's tyranny. In *The Subtle Knife* (1997), Lee Scoresby sacrifices his life for Grumman's in exchange for the promise that Grumman will protect Lyra:

'And your oath. You won't forget what you swore to me?'

'I won't forget.'

'Because, Dr Grumman, or John Parry, or whatever name you take up in whatever world you end in, be aware of this, I love that little child like a daughter [...] if you break the oath, whatever remains of me will pursue whatever remains of you [...]. That's how important that oath is.'

'I understand. And you have my word.' (298-299)

Grumman later breaks this promise when he decides to focus on the knife's bearer, Will, and to send him to Lord Asriel: "He was painfully aware of the oath he'd sworn to Lee Scoresby, and he hesitated before he broke it; but break it he did" (*The Subtle Knife*: 320). Grumman believes it is more important to ensure the victory of the republic than to honour his promise. Both Lord Asriel and Grumman commit unpardonable actions but their intentions can be considered to be commendable; which means, according to Mary's speech, they can be seen as worthy. This is what seemingly differentiate them from the members of the Church: their intentions. The Church's members can be perceived as villainous since their actions, just like their intentions, are harmful. This interpretation of the notion of good and evil could be applied to *Paradise Lost* as well. Satan provokes the war against God, a detrimental action, but he does so to put an end to God's tyranny:

My sentence is for open war: of wiles,
More unexpért, I boast not: them let those
Contrive who need, or when they need, not now.

For while they sit contriving, shall the rest,
Millions that stand in arms, and longing wait
The signal to ascend, sit ling'ring here
Heav'n's fugitives, and for their dwelling place
Accept this dark opprobrious den of shame,
The prison of his tyranny who reigns
By our delay?²⁰ (*PL*: 25-26)

God, on his part, sends Satan to Hell to keep his throne. Whereas Satan's intention can be considered as respectable, God's is rather selfish. Satan and God would then switch their role as hero and villain in *Paradise Lost*: "In the first two books especially it seems that Satan will be the hero of a poem like Virgil's *Aeneid*" (*PL*: xii). It could therefore be argued that both *Paradise Lost* and *His Dark Materials* reverse the common vision of God and Satan, of good and evil.

Destiny does not mean the absence of free will

In his "Introduction" to the 2003 edition of *Paradise Lost*, John Leonard mentions a debate Milton's work has created within critics about whether God could have prevented the Fall or not. Some critics like Arthur Lovejoy or William Empson have argued that Milton's God knows the Fall is going to happen and does nothing to prevent it (*PL*: xxvii-xxxi). Victoria Silver adds:

The Father in Book 3 replies to the unspoken thought raised in the mind of both speaker and reader – namely, that God Almighty could have prevented the fall of Adam and Eve, or as Satan more insidiously suggests, that it is God himself who tempted the revolt of human and angel kind, rendering their creator the ultimate, if not the sole, cause of all creature evil.²¹

²⁰ Lines 51-60.

²¹ Victoria Silver, "The Problem of God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paradise Lost*, ed. Louis Schwartz (U.S.A.: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 44.

In other words, as Satan implies, God provokes the angels' rebellion on purpose and makes the decision to let the Fall happen. If God knew about Adam and Eve's fall, it means that it was meant to be and it was not Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit, it was destiny. This is most likely a consequence of the old opposition between destiny and free will. Leet writes:

If there is any confusion about Milton's message concerning free will, it is dispelled by the hopeful ending of *Paradise Lost*, where freedom of choice remains the penultimate thought:

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and providence their guide;
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.
(XII: 645-50)

Like Milton, Pullman also recognizes the value of choice.²²

Despite the idea of destiny formulated by critics, free will is an important aspect of Milton's work and Pullman's *His Dark Materials* too. As Nicholas Tucker states: "Although this is a narrative world governed by prophecy, a sense of destiny and fate, free will is insisted on, even if it is illusory".²³ Indeed, the entire trilogy's storyline is based on a prophecy about Lyra. When Farder Coram and Lyra meets the witches' consul, Dr Lanselius, the latter waits for Lyra to leave the room and then tells Farder Coram: "Without this child, we shall die. [...] But she must fulfil this destiny in ignorance of what she is doing, because only in her ignorance can we be saved" (*Northern Lights*: 175). She must fulfil the prophecy but it is important she does so with an impression of free will. Many of Pullman's characters have a destiny to fulfil but some of them struggle with this idea of

²² Andrew Leet, "Rediscovering Faith through Science Fiction: Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," in *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman's Trilogy*, ed. Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 181.

²³ Tucker, *Darkness Visible: Philip Pullman and His Dark Materials*, 252.

destiny. They refuse to accept that they may not have free will. An example would be Lee Scoresby. When he is in his balloon with Serafina Pekkala, Lyra and Roger right after the children's escape, Lee Scoresby talks with the witch and, at some point, says: "'You speak of destiny,' he said, 'as if it was fixed. And I ain't sure I like that any more than a war I'm enlisted in without knowing it. Where's my free will, if you please'" (*Northern Lights*: 308). Lee Scoresby refuses to let anyone decide for him. Ironically, he claims he does not want to be enlisted in a war without knowing it but, in *The Subtle Knife*, he eventually takes part in the conflict and dies protecting Will's father from the Church. It can be argued that Lee Scoresby combines destiny and free will: he takes part in the war mentioned in his destiny and manages to modify the part about 'knowing it' when he consciously decides first to help Lyra and then to save Will's father.

Another character that insists on his free will is Will. Kurt Bruner and Jim Ware highlights that "Will, as his name suggests is a boy of fierce independence and strong determination".²⁴ Their argument is first illustrated when Will and his father are reunited in the land of the dead and Will says: "Father, you were wrong. I fought because I had to. I can't choose my nature, but I can choose what I do. And I *will* choose, because now I'm free" (*The Amber Spyglass*: 419). Furthermore, when Will learns that he will never see Lyra again and that they must close the openings, he looks at the angel Xaphania and asks:

'What work have I got to do then?' said Will, but went on at once, 'NO, on second thoughts, don't tell me. I shall decide what I do. If you say my work is fighting, or healing, or exploring, or whatever you might say, I'll always be thinking about it, and if I do end up doing that I'll be resentful because it'll feel as if I didn't have a choice, and if I don't do it, I'll feel guilty because I should. Whatever I do, I will choose it, no one else.' (*The Amber Spyglass*: 500)

²⁴ Bruner Kurt and Jim Ware, *Shedding Lights on His Dark Materials* (U.S.A.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 54.

Even though Will accepts the idea that his life's narrative has already been written, he does not want to know about it in order to have a feeling of free will. Both Lee Scoresby and Will insist on the importance of their free will but they do not reject the existence of destiny. Lee Scoresby, Will but also Lyra who has a destiny to fulfil but has to make her decisions on her own, demonstrate that destiny and free will can maybe coexist. Destiny cannot be used as an excuse for someone's mistakes; Eve takes the decision to eat the forbidden fruit, she cannot hide behind destiny for her fault.

The Church

Paradise Lost is set in the Garden of Eden, back to the creation of humanity, which means that the Church is not represented in Milton's poem. It is true that the Church is briefly mentioned in the epic poem: "So clomb this first grand thief into Go's fold: / So since into his Church lewd hirelings climb" (*PL*: 78).²⁵ Still, this does not provide enough information to comment on the Church in *Paradise Lost*. A comparison between *Paradise Lost* and the Church in *His Dark Materials* could thus be considered impossible. Nevertheless, Wood describes the Church in Pullman's trilogy as "the Body of God".²⁶ The Church's actions can then be perceived as the Authority's actions – the Authority being the Godlike figure in the trilogy – and consequently compared to Milton's God. Wood comments on the Church in *His Dark Materials*:

Pullman exploits the known offenses of institutional religion, Christianity in particular, to buttress his thesis about the poisonous effects of religion on humanity and the rest of nature. [...] In Pullman's world, the Church is monolithic, powerful,

²⁵ Lines 192-193.

²⁶ Wood, "Paradise Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman," 243.

and combines the most authoritarian, formidable and evil aspects of Protestant Calvinism and Roman Catholicism.²⁷

She mentions that *His Dark Materials* contains references to the Church's known offenses to denounce the poisonous effects of religion. Both the known offenses and the poisonous effects will be analysed.

A few known offenses of religious institutions appear to be mentioned in *His Dark Materials*. In *The Amber Spyglass*, when Mrs Coulter infiltrates the Magisterium – the head of the Church in the trilogy – but is caught, the Father President asks her why she could not just give Lyra to them and Mrs Coulter answers:

If you thought for one moment that I would release my daughter into the care – the *care!* – of a body of men with a feverish obsession with sexuality, men with dirty fingernails, reeking of ancient sweat men whose furtive imagination would crawl over her body like cockroaches – if you thought I would expose my child to *that*, my Lord President, you are more stupid than you take *me* for. (326)

One reading could be that Mrs Coulter implies that members of the Magisterium have sexual intentions towards Lyra and maybe even abuse her. Lyra has already been molested by members of the Magisterium in the first volume. It is when the scientists discover that Lyra is spying on them and decide to separate her from her daemon:

The men were gasping and grunting with pain or exertion, but they pulled and pulled.

And suddenly all the strength went out of her.

It was as if an alien hand had reached right inside where no hand had a right to be, and wrenched at something deep and precious.

She felt faint, dizzy, sick, disgusted, limp with shock.

One of the men was *holding* Pantalaimon.

[...]

²⁷ Wood, "Paradise Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman," 243.

She *felt* those hands... It wasn't *allowed*... Not *supposed* to touch... *Wrong*... (NL: 274-275)

Bruner and Ware comment on this episode:

But the link to human sexuality becomes much more explicit in the taboo of touching another person's daemon. [When] Lyra is assaulted by a group of men, one of whom, horror of horrors, handles her daemon. Pullman's description of the scene is meant to tighten one's stomach—as if one were reading an account of child molestation.²⁸

The depiction of the scene can be interpreted as a description of a sexual abuse. This might be connected to the “sex abuse crisis within the Catholic Church” the legal counsel Theo Gavrielides mentions in his article.²⁹ Gavrielides explains there have been reports of child sexual abuses within the Church and it has become a crisis since 1985.³⁰ Mrs Coulter's speech and Lyra's molestation could be referring to this Church's crime.

Another known offense of institutional religion that is apparently mentioned in *His Dark Materials* is the use of torture. In *The Subtle Knife*, when Mrs Coulter and Magisterium's members torture a witch, Mrs Coulter says to the witch: “Oh, there is more suffering to come. We have a thousand years of experience in this Church of ours. We can draw out your suffering endlessly” (38). This could be interpreted as a statement that the Church has a lot of experience in terms of torture. Christine Stewart explains that the Church has practice in terms of witch torture: it was rather usual in the twelfth century and the thirteenth century.³¹ Even though witch trials and tortures were not common anymore by the eighteenth century, Stewart writes that: “Nevertheless, beliefs and practices still persisted, mainly among the grassroots population, and the Christian churches,

²⁸ Bruner and Ware, *Shedding Lights on His Dark Materials*, 17.

²⁹ Theo Gavrielides, “Clergy Child Sexual Abuse and the Restorative Justice Dialogue,” *Journal of Church and State* 55, no. 4 (2013): 618.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Christine Stewart, “The Courts, the Churches, the Witches and Their Killers,” in *Talking It Through: Response to Sorcery and Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices in Melanesia*, ed. Forsyth Miranda and Eves Richard (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015), 183.

in England at least, still oppose witchcraft”.³² Even when the Church was not supposed to go after witches anymore, they still practiced witch torture and trials. The Church’s use of torture was not reserved for witches. Henry Kelly, in his article “Judicial Torture in Canon Law and Church Tribunals: From Gratian to Galileo”, outlines the Church’s various uses of torture on scientists in the past. Kelly also explains that a clergyman is not supposed to punish people in a way that could harm them.³³ This means that the Church, when it used torture, went against the religious oath to not hurt anyone and therefore committed an offense. Even though *Paradise Lost* does not mention the Church, there is a reference to the use of torture in the epic poem:

The prison of his tyranny who reigns
By our delay? no, let us rather choose
Armed with Hell flames and fury all at once
O’er Heav’ns high tow’rs to force resistless way,
Turning our tortures into horrid arms
Against the Torturer;³⁴ (26)

God is described as the torturer in this excerpt, he tortures Satan and the fallen angels. Both *His Dark Materials* and *Paradise Lost* share the aspect of torture perpetrated by God.

Andrew Leet highlights another possible known offense:

Recall, for example, the Catholic Church’s condemnation of Galileo’s astronomical theories in seventeenth-century Italy and his house arrest, or the attempted suppression over a century ago Darwin’s evolutionary theories by Christian churches [...]; in these and numerous other cases, the church organization involved chose to undermine the individual’s right to personal reflection.³⁵

³² Stewart, “The Courts, the Churches, the Witches and Their Killers,” 184.

³³ Henry Kelly, “Judicial Torture in Canon Law and Church Tribunals: From Gratian to Galileo,” *Catholic Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (2015): 775.

³⁴ Lines 59-64.

³⁵ Leet, “Rediscovering Faith through Science Fiction: Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” 176.

Leet stresses the Church's desire to maintain its power on people by controlling their knowledge and indirectly their mind. Leet's theory is illustrated in *His Dark Materials* as Pullman says in an interview:

In just the same way that the Catholic Inquisition of the 17th century persecuted Galileo, who brought new ideas like the sun being at the centre of the universe. The Church persecuted them because they seemed to contradict what the Bible said. And the Church, being in control of everything, wanted to command people's thoughts as well as they did. They were fierce and severe in defending this knowledge that we now know to be untrue. So the Magisterium in my book is doing the same sort of thing with this idea of Dust.³⁶

The Church's lies and persecutions throughout history are represented in *His Dark Materials* through the Magisterium's actions. It is mentioned in *The Subtle Knife* when the witch Ruta Skadi makes a speech during the witch council: "For all its history [...] [the Church]'s tried to suppress and control every natural impulse. And when it can't control them, it cuts them out" (50). An illustration of Ruta Skadi's statement would be when the Church separates children from their daemon. When Lyra reunites with Lord Asriel in the north after the bear fight, Lord Asriel explains that a person who is cut off from his daemon becomes a *zombi*:

'[...] The African have a way of making a slave called a *zombi*. It has no will of its own; it will work day and night without ever running away or complaining. It looks like a corpse...'

'It's a person without their daemon!'

'Exactly [...].' (NL: 373)

The Church separates children from their daemon and turn them into *zombies*; Bird describes them as "slave to the oppressive Church".³⁷ The Magisterium takes away their free will and knowledge.

³⁶ Steve Paulson, *To The Best Of Our Knowledge*, <https://www.ttbook.org/interview/his-dark-materials-author-philip-pullman-consciousness-all-things> (accessed 16 April 2020).

³⁷ Bird, "Without Contraries is no Progression": Dust as an All-Inclusive, Multifunctional Metaphor in Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials", 118.

The Church wants to keep the knowledge for itself, and therefore the power, and is ready to erase people's consciousness, their free will to keep it.

In the statement above, Wood also mentions “the poisonous effects of religion on humanity”.³⁸ Ruta Skadi, when she recounts her meeting with Lord Asriel to the witches, mentions “cruelties and horrors all committed in the name of the Authority” (*TSK*: 271). A connection can be made with Burton Hatlen's opinion:

Rather, Pullman implies, [people] are talking about an idol that they have created in order to justify their power over others – a power that they seek, Pullman suggests, because they hate the life within themselves and want to destroy the life they see around them. Brutally and brilliantly, Pullman's portraits of Mrs Coulter the opportunist and Father Gomez the fanatic reveal what “religion” has become in our time.³⁹

According to Hatlen, religion has become an excuse for horrible actions like torture, like Mrs Coulter, or murder, like Father Gomez who volunteers to kill Lyra:

‘I propose to send a man to find her and kill her before she *can* be tempted.’

‘Father President,’ said Father Gomez at once, ‘I have done pre-emptive penance every day of my adult life. I have studied, I have trained –’ (*TAS*: 71)

Pre-emptive penance is when “members [...] whip themselves [...] before they kill so they will be in a ‘state of grace’. In the 16th century, priest did absolve, in advance, conquistadors who slaughtered thousands of indigenous people”.⁴⁰ Father Gomez's crimes are done in the name of the Church that supports and absolves them. As long as crimes are done in the name of the Church or

³⁸ Wood, “Paradise Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman,” 243.

³⁹ Burton Hatlen, “Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, a Challenge to the Fantasies of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, with an Epilogue on Pullman's Neo-Romantic Reading of *Paradise Lost*,” in *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman's Trilogy*, ed. Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 89.

⁴⁰ Paul Simpson, *The Rough Guide to Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials* (London: Rough Guides, 2007), 171.

the Authority, they can be forgiven. Hence, the poisonous effects on humanity would consist in the use of religion as an excuse to allow crimes.

In *His Dark Materials*, The Authority is criticized through the description of the Church. The Church is portrayed as rather harmful with references to child abuse, torture, mind control and murder. Still, it can be argued that the Church's actions are dissociated from the Authority in *His Dark Materials*. When the angel Baruch meets Lord Asriel in *The Amber Spyglass*, he says:

The Churches in every world are corrupt and weak, [Metatron] thinks, they compromise too readily... he wants to set up a permanent inquisition in every world, run indirectly from the kingdom. And his first campaign will be to destroy [Lord Asriel's] republic... (61)

One interpretation could be that Metatron, the Authority's regent, criticizes the Church and distinguishes himself, and therefore the Authority, from the Church's actions. As Bruner and Ware highlights, "it's *the Church* that kidnaps little children and ships them off to die in a concentration camp", not the Authority or Metatron.⁴¹ Nonetheless, Metatron wants to destroy the republic Lord Asriel is building, most likely to keep the power to the Authority and himself. It can therefore be said that the Authority does not completely distinguish himself from the Church despite Metatron's criticism.

The Authority: a human invention

In Book I of *Paradise Lost*, God is described as a "grand Foe, Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy / Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heav'n" (6).⁴² In this excerpt – and regularly throughout the epic poem – God is referred to as a tyrant. In addition, God lives not in Heaven but

⁴¹ Bruner and Ware, *Shedding Lights on His Dark Materials*, 84.

⁴² Lines 123-124.

in “his Heaven” (*PL*: 27), which can emphasize the tyrannical aspect of his character.⁴³ Neil Forsyth explains:

The angelic order is there to provide models for human action. They have superior intellectual and physical powers which man may eventually attain, but in *Paradise Lost* they are moral models only. They form a community of service and obedience, often doing things meaningless to them except that as the will of God they have meaning.⁴⁴

In other words, angels are supposed to be superior to men but in *Paradise Lost* they do not appear capable of making a decision of their own; they follow God’s orders just like little good soldiers. A connection can be made with the definition of a dictator: “someone who rules a country with complete power, has complete control over the armed forces, and destroys any political opposition”.⁴⁵ God has complete power over Heaven, controls the angels and deals with the opposition:

what time [Satan’s] Pride
Had cast him out from Heav’n, with all his Host
Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal’d the most High,
If he oppos’d; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais’d impious War in Heav’n and Battel proud
With vain attempt.⁴⁶ (*PL*: 3-4)

⁴³ Line 102.

⁴⁴ Neil Forsyth, “Satan,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Paradise Lost*, ed. Louis Schwartz (U.S.A.: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 24.

⁴⁵ “Dictator,” *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/dictator> (accessed April 4, 2020).

⁴⁶ Lines 36-44.

The same way a dictator destroys any political opposition, God defeats Satan and sends him to Hell. It is true that Milton's God is described as a tyrant and not a dictator. However, both terms share common aspects. The *Cambridge Dictionary* describes a tyrant as "a ruler who has unlimited power over other people, and uses it unfairly and cruelly".⁴⁷ Both definitions contain the element of complete power, and the second part of a tyrant's definition about the unfair and cruel use of power may refer to the destruction of any opposition. Consequently, dictator and tyrant could be used as synonyms. It can therefore be argued that God's army of angels reinforce the idea of God's tyranny.

This representation of God can be found in *His Dark Materials* too as Wood writes: "Pullman's [God] is a tyrannical usurper".⁴⁸ On the one hand, Wood uses the word 'usurper' and, the other hand, the word 'tyrannical'. In *The Amber Spyglass*, the angel Balthamos answers Will's question about Metatron and the Authority:

The Authority, God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty – those were all the names he gave himself. He was never the creator. He was an angel like ourselves – the first angel, true, the most powerful, but he was formed of Dust as we are [...]. The first angels condensed out of Dust, and the Authority was the first of all. He told those who came after him that he had created them, but it was a lie. One of those who came later was wiser than he was, and she found out the truth, so he banished her. (31-32)

One reading could be that Wood's use of the word 'usurper' is justified: the Authority pretends to be the Creator whereas he has been created just like other angels. Wood even comments on the excerpt above and insists on the fact that the Authority is a liar.⁴⁹ Wood's remark can be considered ironical since it is Satan who is said to be the liar in *Paradise Lost*: "Late fall'n himself from

⁴⁷ "Tyrant," *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/tyrant> (accessed April 4, 2020).

⁴⁸ Wood, "Paradise Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman," 240.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 243.

Heav'n, is plotting now / The fall of others from like state of bliss; / By violence, no, for that shall be withstood, / But by deceit and lies" (p. 107).⁵⁰ God punishes Satan for his lies and Satan falls from Heaven. However, according to Wood, the Authority is a liar in *His Dark Materials*. The first angel war is not described in Pullman's trilogy but it can be assumed that the narrative is the same and includes Satan's punishment. This would mean that the Authority, who claims to be the Creator, which is a lie, condemns liars. This is rather hypocritical and can support Wood's choice of the word 'usurper'.

Wood also uses the term 'tyrannical' in her description of Pullman's God. This is implied by Pullman's choice to call his divine entity, his God, the Authority. According to the word's definition, the authority consists in "the power to control or demand obedience from others", which is thus suggested in Pullman's name for his God.⁵¹ In the extract above, it is said that the Authority banished an angel who had found out the truth about his lies. A tyrant, as it has already been established, uses its power unfairly and cruelly. The action of banishing someone from Heaven simply because they know the truth can be seen as rather unfair and cruel, especially since the person has apparently not tried to spread the truth. A possible interpretation would be that the Authority ensures that no one knows about his lie: "For Pullman, God's prohibition demeans both God and man: warning Adam and Eve away from the Tree of Knowledge, God seems only to want them ignorant to protect his own status".⁵² The Authority seemingly prefers to keep all the knowledge for himself and make sure no one else has access to it. Woods adds that the Authority is jealous of mankind because humans are "physically stronger than angels".⁵³ If humans are

⁵⁰ Lines 240-243.

⁵¹ "Authority," *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/authority> (accessed April 4, 2020).

⁵² Wood, "Paradise Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman," 248.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 243.

physically stronger than angels, that means they are physically stronger than the Authority since, as Balthamos has mentioned, he is an angel like the others. Wood's comment can once more be considered rather ironical as, in *Paradise Lost*, the notion of jealousy is associated with Satan: "aside the Devil, turned / For envy, yet with jealous leer malign" (p. 86).⁵⁴ The word 'jealous' is used to refer to Satan but in *His Dark Materials* it is Pullman's God who is jealous.

This jealousy could be the reason why the Church cuts the connection between humans and daemons in *Northern Lights*. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines a daemon in this way: "in stories from ancient Greece, a creature that is part human and part god".⁵⁵ In Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, a daemon is a person's inner-self in the shape of an animal. If we combine both interpretations of the word, a 'daemon' would thus refer to the part of a human that is divine. Lyra's conversation with her death – a presence that follows a person during its life and appears once death is close – may support the possibility of the daemon as the human's divine part. When Lyra asks her death if there are daemons in the land of the dead, her death answers: "'No,' he said. 'Your daemon vanishes into the air, and you vanish under the ground'" (*TAS*: 267). Humans go underground whilst daemons vanish in the sky; sky where the Kingdom of Heaven can be found. In the third volume, the reader learns that the Authority and Metatron are established in the Clouded Mountain. To confirm this, the chapter titled '*The Clouded Mountain*' begins with a *Paradise Lost*'s extract: "Far off th' empyreal Heav'n, extended wide / In circuit, undetermined square or round, / With opal tow'rs and battlements adorned, / Of living sapphire" (51).⁵⁶ This is the moment when Satan sees Heaven for the first time since he was sent to Hell. This can be read as a confirmation that the Clouded Mountain is the Kingdom of Heaven, which would mean it is in the

⁵⁴ Lines 502-503.

⁵⁵ "Daemon," *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/daemon> (accessed January 19, 2020).

⁵⁶ Lines 1047-1050.

sky. Therefore, it could be argued that daemons, once they die, go to the Kingdom of Heaven. This would confirm that a daemon is divine. To cut the link between a person and its daemon would thus mean to remove their connection to God. As previously explained, a person who is cut off from his daemon becomes a *zombi* and loses his free will. When the Church cuts the link, not only does it destroy the connection between a human and God, but it also turns them in good little soldiers who follow orders without question. This is similar to Forsyth's description of Milton's angels mentioned above. It can therefore be argued that the Church's action reinforces the 'tyrannical' aspect of the Authority. Yet, in *The Amber Spyglass*, the Authority is introduced rather differently. When Lyra and Will leave the land of the dead, right after the spy Tialys dies, they apparently meet the Authority:

Will saw her hands pressing against the crystal, trying to reach to the angel and comfort him; because he was so old, and he was terrified, crying like a baby and cowering away into the lowest corner. [...] Demented and powerless, the aged being could only weep and mumble in fear and pain and misery. (411)

Earlier in the novel, the reader learns from Baruch that "[the Authority] has retired to a chamber of crystal" (*TAS*: 60). The angel that Lyra and Will meet is therefore most likely to be the Authority.

Bernard Schweizer considers this angel to be the Authority and writes:

Such a disoriented, feeble God has obviously no claim to omnipotence or omniscience. It could therefore be argued that the earlier pronouncements about His tyrannical nature cannot be true either. But this would be misreading, since it is perfectly consistent that a former tyrant should grow old and grizzled.⁵⁷

Schweizer explains that it is not because The Authority is depicted as weak and fragile that he is not a tyrant. Dictators grow old as well, they become weaker but it does not change their status.

⁵⁷ Bernard Schweizer, "'And He's A-Going to Destroy Him': Religious Subversion in Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," in *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman's Trilogy*, ed. Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2005), 166.

His Dark Materials and *Paradise Lost* seemingly offer a similar depiction of their divine entity: they both describe him as a tyrant. Pullman's trilogy adds the aspect of usurper, which is not highlighted in *Paradise Lost*. God is eager to keep the power and the knowledge only for himself and any threat he encounters is meant to be destroyed, as Satan's case illustrates. Another difference between Milton's work and Pullman's is that God dies in *His Dark Materials*: "[the angel's] form began to loosen and dissolve. Only a few moments later he had vanished completely" (*TAS*: 412). The opposition wins: the monarchy Milton describes does not exist anymore at the end of *The Amber Spyglass* as the last line of the volume is "'The republic of heaven,' said Lyra" (522). With the Authority defeated, his tyranny ends and the republic of heaven can be built.

However, the Authority and God may be two distinct characters. It is true that Balthamos says that the Authority and God are the same being but Balthamos and Baruch are "of the rebels' party" (*TAS*: 60), which means their information could be biased. Furthermore, God does not speak to mankind anymore as Mrs Coulter says to Father MacPhail during her infiltration:

'Well, where is God,' said Mrs Coulter, "if he's alive? And why doesn't he speak any more? At the beginning of the world, God walked in the garden and spoke with Adam and Eve. Then he began to withdraw, and Moses only heard his voice. Later, in the time of Daniel, he was aged – he was the ancient of Days. Where is he now? Is he still alive, at some inconceivable age, decrepit and demented, unable to think or act or speak and unable to die, a rotten hulk? And if that *is* his condition, wouldn't it be the most merciful thing, the truest proof of our love for God, to seek him out and give him the gift of death?" (*TAS*: 328)

God has progressively stopped talking to humans. If God does not talk to humans anymore, this would mean he has not asked the Magisterium to do anything. Yet, Metatron gives order in the Authority's name. This does not entirely coincide but an explanation can be found thanks to Thorold and Mary Malone. In the second volume, when Serafina Pekkala and Lord Asriel's servant, Thorold, are talking about Lord Asriel's plans, Thorold asks her whether she knows "The God of the Church, the one they call the Authority" (*TSK*: 45). When Mary explains her

deconversion from nun to scientist to Lyra and Will, she says: “There’s no one to fret, no one to condemn, no one to bless me for being a good girl, no one to punish me for being wicked” (*TAS*: 446). The Authority, the Church’s God, punishes or rewards people according to their behaviour. However, the reward promised to people is a lie as the martyr in the land of the dead may imply in her speech to convince the ghosts to follow Lyra:

When we were alive, they told us that when we died we’d go to heaven. And they said that heaven was a place of joy and glory and we would spend eternity in the company of saints and angels praising the Almighty, in a state of bliss. That’s what they said. And that’s what led some of us to give our lives, and others to spend years in solitary prayer, while all the joy of life was going to waste around us, and we never knew.

‘Because the land of the dead isn’t a place of reward or a place of punishment. It’s a place of nothing. The good come here as well as the wicked, and all of us languish in this gloom for ever, with no hope of freedom, or joy, or sleep or rest or peace [...]’ (*TAS*: 320)

The Church pretends that if people follow orders and pray, they will go to heaven but it is a lie.

Tucker states that:

[Pullman] is not against the idea of one great force in the universe, of the type that makes the northern lights glow and may be pushing the hands of the alethiometer at the same time. But he hates all the attempts by human agencies to first claim this force for themselves and then use it for evil purposes.⁵⁸

He then adds:

For [Pullman], Christianity is a powerful and convincing force that has adversely shaped Western culture ever since it was first adopted. In this view. The Christian concept of the Kingdom of Heaven has always been an authoritarian attempt to impose negative values on populations, backed up by the weight of a self-serving Church hierarchy.⁵⁹

Tucker implies that the Church uses God and the Kingdom of Heaven as a pressure tactic on the population to have power over it and to cover up their actions. Scott, on her part, writes that

⁵⁸ Tucker, *Darkness Visible: Philip Pullman and His Dark Materials*, 84.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

“[Pullman] imports the relatively recent conviction that God is dead and that the divine structures have been usurped by wickedness”.⁶⁰ The Authority could stand for a false divinity the Church has invented to, supposedly, punish the unbelievers and assert its power over the population; it is the excuse they have created to justify their harmful actions. John Baker argues that “[Metatron] symbolizes Pullman’s cynical of organized religion”.⁶¹ The reader learns in *The Amber Spyglass* that Metatron’s actual name is Enoch: “when I was a man I was known as Enoch” (400). Enoch is a man who was turned into an angel for his goodness and his faith in God: “By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him” (King James Bible: 466). This description does not quite match Metatron. It could be said that society, more specifically the Church, has corrupted the vision people have of Enoch and God and turned them into Metatron and the Authority. God would have progressively stopped speaking to humans because they would gradually believe in The Authority instead of God. Milton’s God is rather similar to the Authority because the process had already started when *Paradise Lost* was published: the Church was in charge (*PL*: viii) with its false divinity. Both *Paradise Lost* and *His Dark Materials* denounce the Church’s fraud.

⁶⁰ Scott, “Pullman’s Enigmatic Ontology: Revamping Old Traditions in *His Dark Materials*,” 96.

⁶¹ John Haydn Baker, “The Man Who Walked with God: Philip Pullman’s Metatron, the Biblical Enoch, and the Apocrypha,” in *Critical Perspectives on Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials: Essays on the Novels, the Film and the Stage Productions*, ed. Steven Barfield and Katharine Cox (U.S.A.: McFarland & Company, 2011), 144.

CHAPTER 2: REWRITING GENESIS

In his “Introduction” to the 2008 edition of *Paradise Lost*, Philip Pullman mentions his own trilogy and indicates the importance of Milton’s work in its creation:

I found that [...] I was beginning to tell the same story, too. I wasn’t worried about that, because I was well aware that there are many ways of telling the same story, and that this story was a very good one in the first place, and could take a great deal of re-telling.⁶²

In other words, *His Dark Materials* is an appropriation of *Paradise Lost* (1667) that is already a rewriting of the *Bible*. This cycle of rewritings is not surprising as Julie Sanders explains “Mythical literature depends upon, incites even, perpetual acts of interpretation in new contexts, a process that embodies the very idea of appropriation”.⁶³ Pullman, with his trilogy, maintains the cycle of appropriation but in a new version. *His Dark Materials*’s Genesis is the new stage of the process written in a new context. There will therefore be an analysis and a comparison of various biblical aspects present in Genesis. These include: Satan or the snake, Eve, Eden, the Fall and Pullman’s creation of the metaphor of Dust.

Lord Asriel and Mary Malone: two characters for one role

The main character in *Paradise Lost* is Satan who wants to take revenge on God and disguises himself as a serpent in order to trick Eve. In Milton’s text Satan is an instrumental actor in the Fall because he tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Therefore, the reader would expect the character’s

⁶² Milton, *Paradise Lost* (2008), 9.

⁶³ Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2016), 80.

presence in Pullman's *His Dark Materials*. It could be argued that both Lord Asriel and Mary Malone fulfil the role.

The first time Lord Asriel is described in *Northern Lights* (1995), the terms used could be perceived as demonic such as 'powerful,' 'fierce dark face,' 'savage laughter,' 'wild animal' (13). Burton Hatlen comments on this episode: "Thus, daringly, Milton begins his poem not with God or man but with Satan. So, too, at the very beginning of Pullman's trilogy, we meet his 'Satan,' Lord Asriel".⁶⁴ Even though Lord Asriel's appearance is brief at the beginning at the beginning of the novel, it still allows for a connection between Satan and Lord Asriel in terms of chronology; they appear at the same time in their respective narrative. Later in *Northern Lights*, Lyra learns who her parents are and what happened after her birth: how Lord Asriel lost his fortune and the right to see Lyra just because he protected his daughter. This could provoke a feeling of sympathy towards Lord Asriel among the readers. Similarly, in *Paradise Lost*, as Neil Forsyth explains, "Satan evokes many readers' sympathy both because of what he says himself and of what the narrator, perhaps not quite intentionally, reveals about him".⁶⁵ Even though Satan and Lord Asriel are as villains –one is the fallen angel and the other kills a child– they can both inspire sympathy.

Forsyth also mentions that "[Satan] is what his Hebrew name implies, the Adversary".⁶⁶ Lord Asriel could be described as the Church's adversary as the dialogue between Lord Asriel's servant, Thorold, and Serafina Pekkala might demonstrate:

'It's death among our people, Serafina Pekkala, to challenge the church, but Lord Asriel's been nursing a rebellion in his heart for as long as I've served him, that's one thing I do know.'

⁶⁴ Hatlen, "Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, a Challenge to the Fantasies of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, with an Epilogue on Pullman's Neo-Romantic Reading of *Paradise Lost*," 87.

⁶⁵ Forsyth, "Satan," 17.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

‘a rebellion against the church?’

[...] ‘He’s gone a-searching for the dwelling place of the Authority Himself, and he’s a-going to destroy Him.’ (NL: 45-46)

Thorold explains that Asriel has planned a rebellion not only against the church but also against the Authority. Thus, the same way Satan is referred to as “the Adversary of God” (*Paradise Lost*: 40), Lord Asriel can be considered the Adversary of the Authority.⁶⁷ Furthermore, in *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), Mrs Coulter asks the angel Xaphania if she is one of the angels who fought alongside Satan, and Xaphania answers in the affirmative adding: “Now I have pledged my allegiance to Lord Asriel, because I see in his great enterprise the best hope of destroying the tyranny at last” (208). Xaphania fights alongside Lord Asriel just as she fought alongside Satan because their purpose is the same. In addition, in *The Amber Spyglass*, the fifth chapter begins with the epigraph: “with ambitious aim / Against the throne and monarchy of God / Raised impious war in Heav’n and battle proud” (*Paradise Lost*: 4).⁶⁸ This excerpt comes from Milton’s epic poem and refers to Satan. It is most likely not a coincidence that this *Paradise Lost*’s extract introduces the chapter in which Lord Asriel appears for the first time in the third volume. One interpretation could be that it confirms the connection between Lord Asriel and Satan. One last common feature would be that they both fall from Heaven. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan describes himself as “oppressed and fall’n” (24), most likely fallen from Heaven.⁶⁹ At the end of Pullman’s trilogy, in order to kill Metatron, Lord Asriel falls in the abyss in the Clouded Mountain. As previously established, the Clouded Mountain is the equivalent of the Kingdom of Heaven. Hence, both Satan and Lord Asriel

⁶⁷ Line 629.

⁶⁸ Lines 41-43.

⁶⁹ Line 13.

fall from Heaven. As Emanuelle Burton notes, Satan and Lord Asriel share some characteristics.⁷⁰ Lord Asriel could therefore be Pullman's equivalent of Milton's Satan.

In Pullman's trilogy, it is Mary Malone who is supposed to tempt the new Eve, as some angels reveal to Mary in *The Subtle Knife* (1997) that "[she] must play the serpent" (248-249). Moreover, an epigraph in *The Amber Spyglass* may support the angels' statement. At the beginning of chapter seventeen, there is a quote from Genesis: "*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made*" (TAS: 221). It may not be a coincidence that this excerpt mentions the serpent in a chapter that starts with the name Mary Malone. One reading could be that it confirms Mary's role as the snake. Some similarities can be found between Satan and Mary, as, for example, they both turned their back on God. In *Paradise Lost*, the word rebel is regularly associated with Satan: "Among th' angelic Powers, and the deep fall / Of those too high aspiring, who rebelled / With Satan" (148).⁷¹ This is due to his rebellion against God's tyranny. When Mary shares her story with Lyra and Will, Mary explains that she used to be a nun but realised that she had forgotten what love felt like:

I'd made myself believe something that wasn't true. I'd made myself believe that I was fine and happy and fulfilled on my own without the love of anyone else. Being in love was like China: you knew it was there, and no doubt it was very interesting, and some people went there but I never would [...] it wouldn't matter, because there was all the rest of the world to visit. [...] I suddenly realized I *had* been to China. (*The Amber Spyglass* : 444)

She then came to the conclusion that she did not want to forget about love once more:

Am I really going to spend the rest of my life without ever feeling that again? I thought: I *want* to go to China. It's full of treasures and strangeness and mystery and joy. I thought, will anyone be better off if I go straight back to the hotel and say my prayers and confess to the priest and promise never to fall into temptation again?

⁷⁰ Burton, "Moral Horror and Moral Maturity: Philip Pullman's Theological Anthropology for a Godless World," 199.

⁷¹ Lines 898-900.

Will anyone be the better for making miserable? And the answer came back – no.
(TAS: 446)

She then took the decision to quit the Church and become a full-time scientist. Both Satan in *Paradise Lost* and Mary in *His Dark Materials* turn their back on God. Rebekah Fitzsimmons states that: “The original serpent was an angel who enticed a young female into a sensual awakening, encompassed in the consumption of a fruit. Mary, filled with an understanding of the universe, repeats this process”.⁷² In other words, it is when Mary mentions the reason for her deconversion from nun to scientist that she tempts Lyra: “As Mary said that, Lyra felt something strange happen to her body. [...] She felt as if she had been handed the key to a great house [...] that was somehow inside her” (TAS: 445). As Naomi Woods explains, “Mary Malone’s role as ‘serpent’ in this new Garden of Eden is to tell her own true story of her ‘deconversion’ from celibacy to joyful sexuality, thereby helping Lyra and Will to understand their feelings for each another”.⁷³ This is rather comparable to what happens in Book IX of *Paradise Lost* when Satan is disguised as a serpent and tempts Eve: “Serpent, thy overpraising leaves in doubt / The virtue of that fruit [...] his words replete with guile / Into her heart too easy entrance won” (201 and 204).⁷⁴ Satan and Mary are both rebels and serpents who tempt Eve to eat the forbidden fruit.

Forsyth writes that there is “an important reason for the ambivalence that attaches to Satan, even before Milton, is that he is not really the personification of evil”.⁷⁵ In *The Subtle Knife*, Mary is not introduced as a villain. This can be seen when Sir Charles Latrom offers Mary and her colleague money in return for their research results. Mary is ready to quit her job as a scientist in

⁷² Fitzsimmons, “Dialectical “Complexifications”: The Centrality of Mary Malone, Dust, and the Mulefa in Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” 229.

⁷³ Wood, “Paradise Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman,” 255.

⁷⁴ Lines 615-616 and 733-734.

⁷⁵ Forsyth, “Satan,” 25.

order to do the right thing: “they want to find new ways of killing people. And you heard what he said about consciousness: he wants to *manipulate* it. I’m not going to get mixed up in that, Oliver, never” (*The Subtle Knife*: 244). Thus, she refuses to hurt anyone even indirectly. It is true that, later in the novel, she destroys some of the laboratory’s facilities and papers in order to slowdown her former colleague’s researches. This action can be interpreted as wrong, which would allow a connection between Mary and Satan. Still, according to Mary’s notion of good and evil explained above, Mary’s purpose is to save lives and this can wipe her misconduct. Satan, on his part, provokes the Fall of humanity on purpose. Consequently, Mary and Satan may have both act wrong, their action’s consequence is rather different. This most likely distinguishes the two characters from each other.

In his comments on the King James Bible, William Stevenson explains a main difference between Milton’s *Genesis* and the King James Bible’s:

Christian tradition developed the massive doctrine of the Fall, and Redemption of humanity in which the story takes its more familiar, post-biblical form known through Christian iconography and such works as *Paradise Lost*. In this form, Satan, the Evil One, driven by jealousy and hate, seduces Adam and Eve, and through their weakness enters the world, bringing with him sin and death; here the history of all the world’s evils begins. The biblical version bears no such burden. Satan plays no part; the serpent is a serpent, not the Evil One in disguise. (58)

Whereas in the *Bible* Eve is tempted by a snake, in *Paradise Lost* she is tempted by Satan disguised as a serpent. This would explain why two characters compete for the role of Milton’s Satan: they do not actually compete, they coexist. While Lord Asriel could represent Satan with his fight against tyranny, Mary could represent the snake that tempts the two children. Lord Asriel would be the Authority’s enemy whilst Mary would be the snake in God’s Garden of Eden.

Lyra: Eve again or new Eve?

At the end of *The Subtle Knife*, when Mrs Coulter tortures the witch Lena Feldt, the reader discovers that Lyra is Eve again:

‘[...] Tell me the truth about my daughter.’

Lena Feldt gasped: ‘She will be the mother – she will be life – mother – she will disobey – she will –’

‘Name her! You are saying everything but the most important thing! Name her!’ cried Mrs Coulter

‘Eve! Mother of all! Eve, again! Mother Eve!’ stammered Lena Feldt, sobbing. (313)

However, Pat Pinsent writes that “Unlike traditional Christian theology, Pullman’s trilogy presents the story of the Fall not as a disaster but as a coming of age for the human race, with his main protagonist, Lyra, becoming the new Eve”.⁷⁶ In the *Bible*, Eve’s action condemns the human race, it does not mean the dawn of a new era. Pinsent’s statement could therefore imply that Lyra is not exactly like Eve though they share some characteristics; she would be a new Eve. The elements for and against this interpretation will be analysed.

Lyra can be considered Eve’s equivalent for various reasons like when the narrator describes Lyra’s life in Jordan College with the scholars for instance:

They were men who had been around her all her life, taught her, chastised her, consoled her, given her little presents, chased her away from the fruit trees in the Garden, they were all she had for a family. (NL: 19)

Lyra is kept far from the fruit trees in the same way as Eve is not allowed to eat from the Tree of Knowledge: “of all the trees / In Paradise that bear delicious fruit / So various, not to taste that only

⁷⁶ Pat Pinsent, “Unexpected Allies? Pullman and the Feminist Theologians,” in *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman’s Trilogy*, ed. Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 202.

Tree / Of Knowledge” (*PL*: 84).⁷⁷ They are both kept away from one tree or more. Another element that connects Lyra and Eve could be Lyra’s various acts of treason. Lyra commits three acts of betrayal in the trilogy. The first one is when she suggests the fight between Iorek and Iofur in *Northern Lights*. She is locked in a cell with Jotham Santelia, a scholar, and has the idea of the fight after her conversation with him. When Iofur is preparing for combat, Lyra feels guilty and “[realizes] that she [has] betrayed Iorek Byrnison” (*NL*: 344) but he immediately appeases her. A key element may be that the scholar who triggers the idea of the fight, and thus the betrayal, has a serpent for his daemon: “His daemon, a weary-looking serpent” (*NL*: 326). Since a daemon represents “[someone’s] real nature” (*TAS*: 460), it could be argued that Lyra has been influenced by a serpent. A similar event takes place in *The Subtle Knife* when Sir Charles Latrom tricks Lyra and makes her break her promise to Will. The first time Lyra meets Latrom she notices what seems to be a snake in his clothes: “But then out came that little dark tongue-point, as quick as a snake’s” (*SK*: 79). This snake is later confirmed to be his daemon: “Out of the sleeves of Sir Charles’s linen jacket [...] came the emerald head of a snake” (*TSK*: 164). She has, once more, been influenced by a serpent. Furthermore, Latrom’s name is the word “mortal” spelt backwards, which could associate him with bringing mortality to humans.⁷⁸ He would therefore tempt Lyra and bring death to the world the same way Eve’s –and Adam’s– betrayal proves mortal for humanity: “For dust thou art, and shalt to dust return” (*PL*: 223).⁷⁹ Lyra’s last treason happens in *The Amber Spyglass* when she leaves her daemon, Pan, behind in the land of dead and therefore fulfils the prophecy: “And thus the prophecy that the Master of Jordan College had made to the Librarian, that Lyra would make a great betrayal and it would hurt her terribly, was fulfilled” (*TAS*: 285). It is true that,

⁷⁷ Lines 421-424.

⁷⁸ Simpson, *The Rough Guide to Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials*, 103.

⁷⁹ Line 208.

in this situation, she is not directly influenced by a person who has a serpent for daemon. Nevertheless, she decides to go to the land of the dead after a dream in which her deceased friend, Roger, appears and talks to her. This can be reminiscent of Eve's dream in *Paradise Lost*, Book IV when Satan whispers into Eve's ear: "Who tells of some infernal Spirit seen / Hitherward bent (who could have thought?) escaped / The bars of Hell, on errand bad no doubt [...] him there they found / Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve" (94).⁸⁰ Moreover, Lyra's last betrayal leads her and Will to death—in the shape of the land of the dead—, similarly to Eve and Adam who are condemned to mortality. Lyra feels ashamed after each of her betrayals: "[she] felt a deep sickness in her, like guilt and fear combined" (*NL*: 345), "Will understood that Lyra had done something she was too ashamed to tell him about" (*TSK*: 156), "[Pan's] eyes never left Lyra's face, and Will could see her making herself not look away, not avoid guilt" (*TAS*: 284). Lyra knows she has done something wrong and feels guilty about it every time. The same reaction is expressed by Eve and Adam in *Paradise Lost*: "Love was not in their looks, either to God / Or each other, but apparently guilt" (220).⁸¹ One reading could be that Eve and Adam betray God when they eat the forbidden fruit and then feel ashamed. Lyra goes through the same process. One last common aspect between Lyra and Eve can be found in Mrs Coulter's speech mentioned above. She implies that Adam and Eve are the only ones who have seen God. In the trilogy, Will and Lyra are the only ones to meet the old angel, God, trapped in the crystal. The new Adam and Eve are reunited one last time with God before he dies. Moreover, Mrs Coulter also says that killing God would be the truest proof of love. When Will and Lyra free God, they kill him and God, as Mrs Coulter predicted, is thankful for Will and Lyra's action: "[Lyra and Will's] last impression was of those eyes, blinking in wonder, and a sigh of the most profound and exhausted relief" (*TAS*: 412). Lyra and Will therefore show

⁸⁰ Lines 793-795 and 799-800.

⁸¹ Lines 111-112.

their love for God, the love that once vanished from Adam and Eve's eyes in *Paradise Lost*. The circle is complete.

Lyra may be Eve again, it does not mean she is Eve's exact replica. Lyra is rather different from Eve in various aspects. A first example would be their coming to the world. As Mrs Coulter, Lyra's mother, describes, Lyra was "conceived in sin and born in shame" (*TSK*: 37). Eve's creation is almost the opposite as it is God's decision to give Adam a partner: "Under his forming hands a creature grew, / Manlike, but different sex, so lovely fair" (*PL*: 179).⁸² In other words, God creates Eve on purpose whereas Lyra is unexpected and unwanted. Another element that distinguishes the two female characters is Lyra's ability to lie. Throughout her journey, Lyra receives a new last name from Iorek: "Belacqua? No. You are Lyra Silvertongue" (*NL*: 346). According to the *Collins Dictionary*, silvertongue consists in "the characteristics of being skilful at persuading people to believe what they say or to do what they want them to do".⁸³ This name suits Lyra quite well as she lies and manipulates several times in *His Dark Materials*. A connection is even made between her name, Lyra, and the term 'liar' by the harpies; the two become one single word: "the word echoed back from the great wall in the fog, muffled and changed, so that she seemed to be screaming Lyra's name, so that *Lyra* and *liar* were one and the same thing" (*TAS*: 293). This could be a trivial detail if Pullman did not insist on the pronunciation of Lyra's name: "It's significant then, that Philip Pullman, in interviews and public readings, has always made it clear that the name *Lyra* should be pronounced so that the first syllable sounds exactly like the word *lie*".⁸⁴ This ability to lie and persuade may be reminiscent of Satan who is referred to as a liar: "Late fall'n himself

⁸² Lines 470-471.

⁸³ "Silvertongue," *Collins Dictionary* <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/silver-tongue> (accessed January 5, 2020).

⁸⁴ Bruner and Ware, *Shedding Lights on His Dark Materials*, 114.

from Heav'n, is plotting now / The fall of others from like state of bliss; / By violence, no, for that shall be withstood, But by deceit and lies" (*PL*: 107).⁸⁵ After all, Lord Asriel, Satan's equivalent, is Lyra's father. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan has a daughter called Sin: "a goddess armed / Out thy head I sprung: amazement seized / All th' host of Heav'n; back they recoiled afraid / At first, and called *Sin*" (44).⁸⁶ Since she is Lord Asriel's daughter and is described as conceived in sin, Lyra could be associated with Sin. Furthermore, Sin helps Satan going through the gate between Hell and Heaven, it could be argued that she connects the two worlds. Likewise, Lyra has helped many ghosts going through the opening between the land of the dead and the living world. Hence, whereas Eve comes to the world in Eden, as God wanted, and lives a rather peaceful life in this paradise, Lyra is the opposite. Lyra was born in sin, she was unwanted, and she lies most of the time. This new Eve might be closer to Satan and this could be interpreted as a way to make her appear more humanlike than Eve.

The mulefa world: a new Garden of Eden

Lyra and Will travel to many places and worlds, unlike Eve and Adam who stay in the Garden of Eden until they are expelled. As a result, it could be complicated to point a specific spot as Lyra and Will's Garden of Eden. Especially since Mary's description of her first kiss with the Italian implies it could be anywhere:

And I think it was at that party, or it might have been at another one, that we kissed each other for the first time. It was in a garden, and there was the sound of music from inside, and the quiet and the cool among the trees, and I was *aching* – all my body was *aching* for him [...] we were kissing each other and oh, it was more than China, it was paradise. (*TAS*: 445-446)

⁸⁵ Lines 240-243.

⁸⁶ Lines 757-760.

The reader, with this association of the words ‘garden,’ ‘trees’ and ‘paradise’, could come to the conclusion that she has found the Garden of Eden. However, she does not remember where it happens and this paradise is rather linked to love than to the kissing spot. This could mean that paradise, the Garden of Eden can be anywhere and everywhere at the same time, as long as there is love.

Nevertheless, a specific location in *His Dark Materials* can be Lyra and Will’s Garden of Eden: the mulefa world. The reader discovers this world in *The Amber Spyglass*’s seventh chapter, which begins with a quote from *Paradise Lost*: “last / Rose as in dance the stately trees, and spread / Their branches hung with copious fruit” (158).⁸⁷ This excerpt is part of the description of the earth’s creation by God. It is later written “[that] earth now / Seemed like to Heav’n” (*PL*: 158).⁸⁸ The insertion of this quote may imply that the mulefa world is this specific spot mentioned in *Paradise Lost* and described as Heaven alike. Mary is the first to arrive there. She learns the mulefa’s language and later their history. They explain the mulefa have been there for 33 000 years, which is the date for the arrival of sraf, the mulefa word for ‘Dust’. The mulefa also explain that it happened thanks to a “she” who talked to a snake that convinced her to put her foot in a hole to gain wisdom. Fitzsimmons comments:

This myth bears striking resemblance to the Christian myth of the Garden of Eden; a female person encouraged by a serpent to consume the fruit of a tree (the *mulefa* puts her foot into the seedpod and absorb oil; Eve eats the fruit from the tree of knowledge).⁸⁹

The sraf is the equivalent of Dust in the mulefa world, Dust that is said to be the result of original sin: “The Magisterium decided that Dust was the physical evidence for original sin” (*NL*: 369).

⁸⁷ Lines 323-325.

⁸⁸ Lines 328-329.

⁸⁹ Fitzsimmons, “Dialectical “Complexifications”: The Centrality of Mary Malone, Dust, and the Mulefa in Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” 220.

Accordingly, the “she” could stand for Eve who, influenced by the serpent, ate the fruit of knowledge:

And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat. (KJB: 64)

In the King James Bible, Eve does not put her foot in a hole but she still gains knowledge – knowledge that leads wisdom– after she eats the forbidden fruit. The mulefa land may be the original Garden of Eden. Lyra and Will discover this world later and some of their actions are similar to Adam and Eve’s in the *Bible*. When Lyra wakes up naked in the mulefa village for instance. She feels ashamed and quickly tries to find some clothes: “Lyra sat up, and found herself naked. She was indignant for a moment, and then she saw some clean clothes [...] She put them on, feeling swamped in the shirt, but at least decent” (*TAS*: 435). The same feeling overwhelms Adam and Eve right after they have eaten the fruit: “Whence Adam falt’ring long, thus answered brief. / I heard thee in the garden, and of thy voice / Afraid, being naked, hid myself” (*PL*: 221).⁹⁰ Adam and Eve do not put clothes but they try to hide their nakedness, just like Lyra. Furthermore, while the King James Bible describes the moment when Eve shares the fruit Adam this way: “she took the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat” (64), a similar account can be found in *The Amber Spyglass*:

Sixty years and more would go by, and as an old man [Will] would still feel some sensations as bright and fresh as ever: Lyra’s fingers putting the fruit between his lips under the gold-and-silver trees; her warm mouth pressing against his; (486)

These are two versions of the same episode that takes place each time in a Garden of Eden.

⁹⁰ Lines 115-117.

The Fall and dust: a change of result

This episode, the origin of the Fall, is essential to both the *Bible* and *Paradise Lost*: “She gave him of that fair enticing fruit / With liberals hand: he scrupled not to eat” (*PL*: 211).⁹¹ It is also insisted on in *His Dark Materials*: an excerpt from the King James Bible is included in *Northern Lights* when Lyra reunites with Lord Asriel in the north after the bear fight. Lord Asriel asks her to bring him the *Bible* and then he reads out loud Chapter Three of Genesis. However, there is a difference between the King James Bible’s text and Pullman’s text when it comes to the moment when Adam and Eve discover each other’s nakedness. In the *Bible* it is written: “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew, that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (KJB: 64). In *His Dark Materials*, some lines have been added:

‘And the eyes of them both were opened, and they saw the true form of their daemons, and spoke with them.’

‘But when the man and the woman knew their own daemons, they knew that a great change had come upon them, for until that moment it had seemed that they were at one with all the creatures of the earth and the air, and there was no difference between them:

‘And they saw the difference, and they knew good and evil; and they were ashamed, and they sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness...’ (*NL*: 370)

In Pullman’s version, Adam and Eve first meet their daemons after they eat the forbidden fruit. This modification can be due to the fact that the world in *His Dark Materials* is a world in which creatures like daemons, witches, bears able to speak... exist. Genesis had to be adapted to this new world. This modification actually matches what happens at the end of *The Amber Spyglass*. Shortly after Lyra and Will kiss each other for the first time, Will finally meets his daemon: “And Will knew what it was to see his daemon. As she flew down to the sand, and he felt his heart tighten and

⁹¹ Lines 996-997.

release in a way he never forgot” (486). This meeting means the Fall for Lyra and Will as their daemons explain the reason why they cannot be together anymore. Later, after the Fall, their daemons appear in their final shape: “The daemons flew back down now [...] ‘Pan,’ Lyra said as he flowed up on to her lap, ‘you’re not going to change a lot any more, are you?’ ‘No,’ he said” (*TAS*: 502). This matches Pullman’s rewriting of the *Bible*’s excerpt. This rewriting of Genesis may confirm that Lyra and Will are the new Eve and Adam and that they repeat the Fall.

The moment when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit means the end of their life in the Garden of Eden, the Fall of humanity but it also includes various consequences. In his “Introduction” to the 2003 edition of *Paradise Lost*, John Leonard states that “Milton often implies that Adam and Eve lose their happiness in the moment they gain knowledge of it” (*PL*: xxxiv). This happiness, according to Northrop Frye, is connected to sexuality and this is what happens to Lyra and Will.⁹² Almost immediately after they discover their love for each other and embrace it, they are separated in order to save the world: “we have to live in our own worlds” (*TAS*: 492). As soon as their sexuality is awoken and they are happy, it is taken away from them. Leonard highlights another consequence: “[by] disobeying God, Adam and Eve bring death into the world, but they also open the way to Heaven” (*PL*: xxviii). When Lyra and Will decide to open a door between the land of the dead and the living world, not only do they bring death into the world but they also create a way to Heaven for those who died. Even though they make this decision before the Fall takes place, they chose to keep this door open rather than create one between Lyra and Will’s worlds after the Fall happens. Lyra and Will’s Fall thus brings death and opens a way to Heaven. In Genesis, God decides to punish Adam and states that “for dust thou *art*, and unto dust

⁹² Northrop Frye, *The Return of Eden* (Canada, University of Toronto Press, 1965), 26.

shalt thou return” (KJB: 65) (*PL*: 223).⁹³ In *The Amber Spyglass*, when Roger leaves the land of the dead, his body “[turns] into the night, the starlight, the air” (365). A possible interpretation would be that Roger has turned into Dust. Anne-Marie Bird explains that, in Genesis, dust refers to the body whereas in Milton, through the dark materials, it refers to a constituent of the universe.⁹⁴ It can be argued that *His Dark Materials* includes both versions since Roger, for instance, first returns to dust when he dies but then becomes a constituent of the universe as Dust, dark materials. Still in relation to dust, Adam and Eve are not the only punished in Genesis, the serpent is punished too. God says to the serpent “and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life” (KJB: 65). On Milton’s part, since it is not a serpent’s fault but Satan’s, he has adapted the scene:

[Satan’s] visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare,
His arms clung to his ribs, his legs entwining
Each other, till supplanted down he fell
A monstrous serpent, on his belly prone,
Reluctant, but in vain; a great power
Now ruled him, punished in the shape he sinned,⁹⁵ (*PL*: 231)

As punishment, God turns Satan into a snake. Satan will have to crawl on the ground and most likely eat dust for the rest of his existence. In both cases the serpent is meant to eat dust. As developed above, Mary is the serpent and the fact that she studies dark matter –a synonym for Dust– for living can be considered as a reference to God’s punishment.

Nevertheless, the notion of Fall seems to change in *His Dark Materials*. In the King James Bible and Milton’s work, the Fall means the end of Adam and Eve’s immortality but also humankind’s immortality in general as they shall return to dust. Pullman’s trilogy distinguishes

⁹³ Line 208.

⁹⁴ Bird, ““Without Contraries is no Progression”: Dust as an All-Inclusive, Multifunctional Metaphor in Philip Pullman’s “His Dark Materials,”” 112.

⁹⁵ Lines 511-516.

itself from the two previous versions when it comes to humanity's faith. Burton highlights the fact that "the witches [...] insist that Lyra must be allowed to act of her own volition and judgment, because 'only in her ignorance can we be saved'".⁹⁶ Shelley King also writes "Exegetical readers of Pullman's narrative might see Lyra as a second Eve, one who also brings a form of salvation to her world".⁹⁷ Even though it is a Fall for Lyra and Will, it is apparently a salvation for the rest of humanity, unlike in the *Bible* and *Paradise Lost*. It could even be argued that *His Dark Materials* is not about the Fall but rather a reversed Fall. Some aspects do not match the original tale: the serpent is supposed to eat dust after the Fall, not before; the Fall is supposed to condemn humanity, not save it; Adam and Eve are not supposed to be separated after the Fall. All these elements could tend to a reversed Fall, to the idea of a paradise regained: it was lost at the *Bible's* time, the process to find paradise had begun when *Paradise Lost* was published and it comes to an end in *His Dark Materials*.

⁹⁶ Burton, "Moral Horror and Moral Maturity: Philip Pullman's Theological Anthropology for a Godless World," 204.

⁹⁷ Shelley King, "'Without Lyra we would understand neither the New nor the Old Testament': Exegesis, Allegory, and Reading *The Golden Compass*," in *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman's Trilogy*, ed. Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 116.

CHAPTER 3: POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

Even though Genesis is a religious episode, rewritings of Genesis do not necessarily focus only on the religious dimension. Many different aspects can be included and this allows the reader to learn more about society at the time. This is the case in *Paradise Lost* (1667) and in *His Dark Materials*. According to Paul Simpson, Pullman's trilogy, for instance, can be said to convey an ecological message: "Pullman is disgusted by politicians' 'desperately foolish' attitude to climate change, worried by the commercialization of everyday life".⁹⁸ Ecology is a rather recent debate as the environmental lawyer Daniel Esty highlights: "Environmental protection has gone from a realm of broad political consensus in the 1970s to a domain of bitter partisan battles today".⁹⁹ Historical context can have an influence on literary works and these can vehiculate some political messages connected to their society. After a brief historical background on *Paradise Lost* and *His Dark Materials*, the promotion of female characters and the conflict between technology and nature will be analysed.

The impact of historical background

Paradise Lost was written a few years after the Civil War opposing the Whigs and the Tories. Whereas the Tories were in favour of monarchy, the Whigs were rather in favour of

⁹⁸ Simpson, *The Rough Guide to Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials*, 184.

⁹⁹ Daniel Esty, "Red Lights to Green Lights: From 20th Century Environmental Regulation to 21st Century Sustainability," *Environmental Law* 47, no. 1 (2017): 3.

Cromwell's religious freedom and protectorate.¹⁰⁰ This event had an influence on Milton's epic poem as John Leonard writes in his "Introduction" to the 2003 edition of *Paradise Lost*:

Paradise Lost is, among other things, a poem about a civil war. Satan raises "impious war in Heav'n (i 43) by leading a third of the angels in revolt against God. The term "impious war" (punning on Latin *bellum impium*, "internecine war") implies that civil war is impious. But Milton applauded the English people for having the courage to depose and execute King Charles I. In his poem, however, he takes the side of "Heav'n's awful Monarch" (iv 960). (*PL*: xxiii)

Milton's epic poem relates the English Civil War to a certain extent. *Paradise Lost*, even though it focuses on the Fall, includes the war in Heaven. This demonstrates the impact of a work's historical background.

Similarly to Milton's epic poem, *His Dark Materials* was impacted by a war: World War II. In *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra discovers that the Church kidnaps children and separates them from their daemons. According to Nicholas Tucker, "[the] cruelty inflicted on the kidnapped children when their daemons are cut away is more reminiscent of some of the abominable experiments carried out in Nazi concentration camps than anything to do with the modern Church".¹⁰¹ Simpson supports this connection between this procedure of separation and the Nazis: "Intercision is carried out at a remote experimental station – even further away from the rest of society than Mengele's unit at Auschwitz was".¹⁰² Joseph Mengele was a Nazi who experimented on twins in Auschwitz and killed most of them.¹⁰³ Since a daemon is a person's soul, it can be argued that it is kind of this person's twin. This would mean that when the Magisterium separates

¹⁰⁰ John Oakland, *British Civilization: an Introduction*, 8th ed. (Great Britain: Routledge, 2016), 121.

¹⁰¹ Tucker, *Darkness Visible: Philip Pullman and *His Dark Materials**, 90.

¹⁰² Simpson, *The Rough Guide to Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials**, 194.

¹⁰³ "Joseph Mengele," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/josef-mengele> (accessed August 4, 2020).

children from their daemon, it repeats Mengele's experiments. It could therefore be said that *His Dark Materials* denounces the Nazis' actions during World War II.

The female voice

Eve is a key character to Genesis since she is the one who succumbs to temptation, eats the fruit and gives it to Adam. She is essential to the Fall. It is therefore logic to find her in both *Paradise Lost* and *His Dark Materials*, which are rewritings of Genesis. Julie Sanders explains that "Many appropriations as a result have a deep political and literary investment in giving voice to characters or events which appear to have been oppressed or repressed in the original".¹⁰⁴ Rewritings have a tendency to give a voice to characters who have been silenced in the original version. According to Deirdre Keenan McChrystal, Eve has usually been the one blamed and criticized by the *Bible's* readers; she is an oppressed character.¹⁰⁵ As rewritings, *Paradise Lost* and *His Dark Materials* give voice to their female characters.

There was a change in terms of female characters around Milton's era. As Shannon Miller writes:

The literary and cultural texts of the early and middle seventeenth suggest that traditional gender roles were under significant pressure. Such texts present us with, for example, the active involvement of powerful wives in the English Civil War, women prophets predicting England's future, and female petitioners challenging Parliamentary decisions: these women defied cultural expectations that they be 'chaste, silent, and obedient'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Sanders, *Appropriation and Adaptation* (2016), 126.

¹⁰⁵ Deirdre Keenan McChrystal, "Redeeming Eve," *English Literary Renaissance* 23, no. 3 (1993): 491.

¹⁰⁶ Shannon Miller, "Gender," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paradise Lost*, ed. Louis Schwartz (U.S.A.: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 153.

Female characters were given a voice they did not have before. However, it does not necessarily mean they were equals to male characters. *Paradise Lost* may deal with the notion of equality as Miller highlights: “Eve actively contemplates the meaning and implication of ‘equal’, a word on which so much emphasis has been placed in Book 4’s introduction of Adam and Eve as “Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed” (296)”.¹⁰⁷ Adam and Eve are not equal in terms of physical appearance and Eve cannot stop thinking about the word ‘equal’. Miller also notes that:

Milton adds “my self/Before me” to this echo of Genesis. This addition recalls the language of equality between Adam and Eve, but the description of Eve’s secondary creation, especially her naming as a being ‘extracted’ from man, resurrects the secondariness that the Genesis 2 account was traditionally understood to assert.¹⁰⁸

Miller’s comment highlights how the point of view on female characters was changing in the seventeenth century. *Paradise Lost* appears to be in-between the two different perspectives: it enhances the female character but Eve still comes after a male character. Yet, in the epic poem, Adam says about Eve “My fairest, my espoused, my latest found, / Heav’n’s last best gift, my ever new delight” (*Paradise Lost*: 102).¹⁰⁹ Eve may come after Adam, she is Heaven’s last best gift; Adam, with these words, implies he is not the best creation, Eve is.

According to Miller, *Paradise Lost*’s narration also insinuates that Eve is superior to Adam: “In his opening speech, Adam invokes a Genesis I-like account of their creation and the prohibition of the fruit, while Eve narrates her status, her creation, and the initiation of her relationship with Adam in language consistent with Genesis 2”.¹¹⁰ Eve’s narration is more profound and developed than Adam’s. Moreover, Eve’s narrative appears before Adam’s, which can be interpreted as a way

¹⁰⁷ Miller, “Gender,” 160.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁰⁹ Lines 18-19.

¹¹⁰ Miller, “Gender,” 154.

to insist on Eve's superiority.¹¹¹ It is true that, at the end, Eve is not superior to Adam any more as God states that "Thy sorrow I will greatly multiply / By thy conception; children thou shalt bring / In sorrow forth, and to thy husband's will / Thine shall submit, he over thee shall rule" (*Paradise Lost*: 223).¹¹² Not only will she live a painful life but she will have to submit to her husband. One reading could be that he is now superior to her. The conclusion of the epic poem may imply that *Paradise Lost* is rather in favour of patriarchy than feminism. Nevertheless, as William Shullenberger highlights:

It would be fruitless to argue that Milton was not a poet of his age, or that his poetry is not consequently and explicitly patriarchal. He could not be a feminist in any way in which we understand the term, for the way of feminist thinking was at best obscure and marginal in the seventeenth century.¹¹³

Even though Eve eventually has to obey Adam, *Paradise Lost* still gives her a voice and implies in various ways that she is superior to Adam. Considering *Paradise Lost* was written and published in the seventeenth century, Milton's work can be considered as feminist for his time.

His Dark Materials's structure can be considered similar to *Paradise Lost*'s since they both put Eve's narrative before Adam's. Indeed, Will does not even appear in *Northern Lights*; the volume's narrative follows Lyra and no one else. Even though Will's narrative is included in *The Subtle Knife* (1997) and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), it is just another narrative among the others as various other characters such as Serafina Pekkala, Lee Scoresby or Mrs Coulter also have their own narrative. Will is just a character like any other whereas Lyra has her own volume and still has her narrative in the other volumes; Eve is superior to Adam in terms of narrative in *His Dark Materials*. Furthermore, there are three main characters in *Paradise Lost*, which appear in this order

¹¹¹ Miller, "Gender," 156.

¹¹² Lines 193-196.

¹¹³ William Shullenberger, "Wrestling with the Angel: *Paradise Lost* and Feminist Criticism," *Milton Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (1986), 70.

in terms of narrative: Satan, Eve and Adam. In Pullman's trilogy, Lyra is the very first; she comes before Satan, unlike Eve in *Paradise Lost* who comes after Satan. It can therefore be argued that *His Dark Materials* goes even further than Milton's epic in terms of giving importance to the female narrative. Pullman's trilogy distinguishes itself from *Paradise Lost* on another aspect as Tucker argues:

This, then, is the journey that the first Eve also had to take after she ate apple that symbolised sexual and intellectual awareness. Lyra has to make it too, but now she is unpunished by those ecclesiastic forces that vilified the first Eve and have done their level best to eliminate the second one.¹¹⁴

It is true that, in Pullman's trilogy, the Church sees Lyra as a threat and an enemy and tries to kill her. However, it fails and Eve is perceived as the heroine and not the villain.¹¹⁵ Yet, contrary to Tucker's statement, Lyra is punished: she will never see Will again. This punishment may not come from God but it is the angel Xaphania who tells Pan and Kirjava, Will's daemon, that all openings should be closed: “‘But how do you *know*?’ demanded Lyra. ‘An angel told us,’ said Kirjava. ‘We met an angel. She told us all about that, and other things as well. It's true Lyra.’” (*The Amber Spyglass*: 490), “‘It's the angel we saw,’ said Pantalaimon, guessing. He guessed correctly [...] Xaphania spread her wings wider and glided down to the sand” (*The Amber Spyglass*: 494). An angel is “a spiritual being in some religions who is believed to be a messenger of God, usually represented as having a human form with wings”.¹¹⁶ Despite the fact that Xaphania rebelled against the Authority, she is still an angel and can be perceived as God's messenger, especially since God and the Authority may not be the same being as established above. Therefore, it can be argued that

¹¹⁴ Tucker, *Darkness Visible: Philip Pullman and His Dark Materials*, 148.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹¹⁶ “Angel,” *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/angel> (accessed July 24, 2020).

it is God who punishes Lyra, just like God punishes Eve in *Paradise Lost*. They both have an unfortunate ending.

Lyra may be in the spotlight in terms of narrative but when it comes to her development it is rather different. According to Kristine Moruzi:

Pullman reinforces traditional gender roles. In [*Northern Lights*], Lyra is refreshingly smart and independent, but with the arrival of Will in *The Subtle Knife* and the move to alternate worlds, she is described as ‘lost’ and she becomes increasingly dependent on Will to help her on the journey. Will, as the one with the knife and greater physical strength, becomes her protector in many ways.¹¹⁷

Once Lyra meets Will, she becomes less fierce and more dependent; she relies on him. Similarly, in *Paradise Lost*, Eve can be considered as independent when she is created as she lives her life without giving Adam any attention: “Than that smooth wat’ry image; back I turned, / Thou following cried’st aloud, Return, fair Eve” (*PL*: 86).¹¹⁸ She turns her back on Adam because she is not interested. Nevertheless, once she includes Adam in her life, she says: “O thou for whom / And from whom I was formed flesh of thy flesh, / And without whom am to no end, my guide / And head, what thou hast said is just and right” (*PL*: 85).¹¹⁹ Lyra and Eve think for themselves at first but this changes as soon as they begin to fall in love with their Adam; they become followers. Lyra still makes decisions of her own like when she goes to the land of the dead but she immediately includes Will in this journey as if she could not make it on her own: “But there’s only one person really who... [...] ‘But we can trust him, Roger, I swear,’ [...] because he’s Will” (*TAS*: 78 and 92). *His Dark Materials* seemingly implies that women should not rely on men to decide what they should do with their lives.

¹¹⁷ Kristine Moruzi, “Missed Opportunities: The Subordination of Children in Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” *Children’s Literature in Education* 36, no. 1 (2005): 60.

¹¹⁸ Lines 480-481.

¹¹⁹ Lines 440-443.

Various examples of this independence are given in Pullman's trilogy such as Mrs Coulter, Mary Malone, the witch Serafina Pekkala or even the angel Xaphania. When Lyra meets Mrs Coulter for the first time, the reader can understand that Mrs Coulter is not any woman:

[Lyra] regarded female Scholars with a proper Jordan disdain: there *were* such people but, poor things, they could never be taken more seriously than animals dressed up and acting a play. Mrs Coulter, on the other hand, was not like any female Scholar had seen, and certainly not like the two serious elderly ladies who were the other female guests. [...] Mrs Coulter has such an air of glamour that Lyra was entranced. She could hardly take her eyes off her. (*Northern Lights* : 67)

Mrs Coulter immediately stands out from the other women in the room and the fact that Lyra cannot take her eyes off Mrs Coulter implies that even the Master of Jordan College, a man, is eclipsed by Mrs Coulter. This could mean that Mrs Coulter can be considered as superior to men. Moreover, Mrs Coulter seduces the male characters to have control over them and even kill them sometimes. Her victims include Sir Charles Latrom and Metatron. In *The Subtle Knife*, she first seduces Charles Latrom to obtain information: “‘Marisa,’ he murmured, ‘it’s enough of a pleasure to be close to you...’ ‘No, it isn’t, Carlo; you know it isn’t. You know I can please you more than this.’” (309). As soon as she has the information she wants, she poisons him: “while the man’s eyes were closed, Mrs Coulter secretly tilted a few drops from a small flask into the glass before filling it again with wine. [...] He was already intoxicated” (*The Subtle Knife*: 311). Mrs Coulter uses her charms one last time to trick Metatron:

‘Oh Metatron, how long it is since you were a man! Can you really not tell what it is I’m regretting? It’s not *her* coming of age, but mine. How bitterly I regret that I didn’t know of you in my own girlhood; how passionately I would have devoted myself to you...’ (*TAS*: 405)

When Lord Asriel arrives, she plans Metatron’s murder with her former lover: “we can wrestle with him and bring to the edge of the gulf, and we’ll both go down with him” (*TAS*: 407). Regularly in the trilogy, as these two examples illustrates, Mrs Coulter seduces to achieve her own ends; she

does not need men, she rather uses them. Mary, for her part, lives her life on her own without male domination. When Sir Charles Latrom tries to control her researches, she refuses: “The course of this research is a matter for us. I’m perfectly willing to discuss the results, but not the direction” (*The Subtle Knife*: 241). She agrees to cooperate but she will not let him tell her what to do. Mary succeeds on her own, like when she helps the mulefa, and does not need any man to do so. Both Mrs Coulter and Mary have had lovers and work with men but they do not lose their independence. Another character in the trilogy who does not lose her independence over the opposite sex is the witch Serafina Pekkala. Serafina Pekkala, and witches in general, do not take orders from men. When Lyra and Serafina Pekkala are in Lee Scoresby’s balloon, Lyra asks if there are only female witches and the witch answers:

There are men who serve us, like the Consul at Trollesund. And there are men we take for lovers or husbands. You are so young, Lyra, too young to understand this, but I shall tell you anyway and you’ll understand it later: men pass in front of our eyes like butterflies, creatures of a brief season. (*Northern Lights*: 312)

There are no male witches and men have shorter lives than witches. Serafina Pekkala explains that it does not stop witches from falling in love with some men but they are usually the one who puts an end to the relationship. They sometimes have their heart broken but they still go on with their lives; they go back to their clan and live their independent lives. Serafina Pekkala could be the right model for Lyra to follow in order to regain her independence now that she will never see Will again. When it comes to the angel Xaphania, she can be considered as a follower since she joins the rebel angels –most likely under Satan’s orders– and later Lord Asriel’s army to fight the Authority. Nevertheless, as Bernard Schweizer writes:

Although his disdain for both “the Authority” and Metatron is strong, Pullman seems to be receptive to a different kind of deity, notable a female one. Toward the end of the trilogy, the angel Xaphania makes her appearance as an entirely benevolent, graceful, and wise deity worthy of religious reverence. Thus, it is

possible to identify Pullman's antireligious animus with a feminist rejection of patriarchal theological doctrines.¹²⁰

At the end of the trilogy, Xaphania's side has won and she can be considered as a new divinity to worship. God, the Authority, Metatron, they all are a 'he' and ruled the world. *His Dark Materials* could imply that it is time for a 'she' to lead. These three strong female characters include men in their life: they love them, they work with them, they fight with them... but they remain independent. Lyra and Will's separation may not be a punishment after all, but an opportunity for Lyra to be independent again unlike Eve who will have to obey Adam for the rest of her life.

Technology versus nature

Despite the fact that *Paradise Lost* was written in the seventeenth century and that ecology was not at the heart of discussions as it is nowadays, the epic poem contains an ecological message.

As Nick Pici states:

Returning to our work at hand, another green subtext within *Paradise Lost* can be seen in the general structure of Adam and Eve's relationship with nature. [...] Though real life on Earth will assuredly never be as "easy" and certainly never as painless as Adam and Eve's life in Paradise, harmonious living within nature is not only a very real possibility in the world today, but an increasing obligation of the human species. It could even be argued that this very lack of harmonious living is the umbrella cause of current environmental crises and degradation.¹²¹

The beneficial aspect of nature is insisted on in *Paradise Lost*: "Beneath him with new wonder now he views / To all delight of human sense exposed / In narrow room Nature's whole wealth, yea more, / A Heav'n on earth, for blissful Paradise" (79).¹²² Adam and Eve live in harmony with the nature around them but once Eve eats the forbidden fruit, this relationship changes: "Forth

¹²⁰ Schweizer, "'And He's A-Going to Destroy Him': Religious Subversion in Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," 168.

¹²¹ Nick Pici, "Milton's 'Eco-Eden': Place and Notions of the 'Green' in *Paradise Lost*," *College Literature* 28, no. 3 (2001): 41.

¹²² Lines 205-208.

reaching to the fruit, she plucked, [Eve] ate: / Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat / Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe, / That all was lost” (*PL*: 205).¹²³ One reading could be that Eve’s pursuit of knowledge has hurt Nature and that they will never live in harmony again.

Similarly, in *His Dark Materials*, there may be a conflict between technology, knowledge, and nature. Katharine Cox writes:

In the trilogy there is a repeated threat to the environment through cultural attitudes (the Church) and technological advancement (intercision and Asriel’s machines). Pullman’s ecological zenith is presented in the final book through the characters of the *mulefa* with their balanced relationship to their environment.¹²⁴

Cox explains that the main ecological issue in *His Dark Materials* is the gradual destruction of the *mulefa* world. When Mary uses her amber spyglass to observe the *sraf*, the Shadow-particles, she tries to find an explanation for the gradual disappearance of the *sraf* and the destruction of their ecosystem: “three hundred years, the *mulefa* had said: that was how long the trees had been failing. [...] At the same time in that strange world through which she’d come to get here, the subtle knife was invented” (*TAS*: 367). At that time, Mary does not know about the subtle knife but when she learns about its existence, she connects the two events:

Suppose that all this time, little by little, Dust had been leaking out of the wounds the subtle knife had made in nature... [...] the subtle knife was responsible for the small-scale, low-level leakage. It was damaging, and the universe was suffering because of it, and she must talk to Will and Lyra and find a way to stop it. (*TAS*: 453)

¹²³ Lines 781-784.

¹²⁴ Katharine Cox, ““Imagine *Dust* with a Capital Letter”: Interpreting the Social and Cultural Contexts for Philip Pullman’s Transformation of Dust,” in *Critical Perspectives on Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials: Essays on the Novels, the Film and the Stage Productions*, ed. Steven Barfield and Katharine Cox (U.S.A.: McFarland & Company, 2011), 137.

In their pursuit of knowledge and because of their desire to find other worlds, the Guild of the Torre degli Angeli has brought the Spectres, creatures that eat the human soul, to the world as Giacomo Paradisi tells Lyra and Will before he dies: “The Spectres are our fault, our fault alone. They came because my predecessors, alchemists, philosophers, men of learning, were making an enquiry into the deepest nature of things” (*TSK*: 187). As Tucker comments: “This makes Spectres symbolic of what can go wrong when humankind meddles with matters that should be left alone”.¹²⁵ The creation of a new technology such as the subtle knife goes against nature and can mean the end of the ecosystem if not the world.

The destruction of the mulefa world’s balance is not the only ecological issue mentioned in Pullman’s trilogy. Tucker writes:

His Dark Materials is packed with examples of environmental devastations, running hand in hand with descriptions of accompanying human cruelty, neglect and intolerance. For Pullman, bad behaviour towards other humans is inseparable from behaving badly towards the living environment. In both cases, violence is shattering what should be a natural harmony and still could be.¹²⁶

Tucker argues that there is a connection between human violence and the destruction of the environment. This connection is seemingly illustrated in *His Dark Materials*. When Lord Asriel kills Roger in the Arctic to create an opening between worlds, his action has repercussions on the nature around. When the bear Iorek finds Lee Scoresby’s body and eats it, he thinks about what happened in the Arctic and about its consequences:

And then there was the melting of the ice. [Iorek] and his people lived on the ice; ice was their home; ice was their citadel. Since the vast disturbances in the Arctic, the ice had begun to disappear, and Iorek knew that he had to find an ice-bound fastness for his kin, or they would perish. (*TAS*: 42)

¹²⁵ Tucker, *Darkness Visible: Philip Pullman and His Dark Materials*, 134-135.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

Lord Asriel invented a new technology to create openings, which requires a human sacrifice, and it destroyed the environment around. A connection can be made between Lord Asriel's violence and the ecosystem's destruction. Another example of violence that deteriorates the environment is the Magisterium's bomb. In the College of St Jerome, Father MacPhail discusses the bomb's running with Dr Cooper, its inventor, the latter compares it to an "atomic bomb" (*TAS*: 334). Later, when the bomb is on the verge of exploding, Will quickly creates an opening, throws Lyra's hair in this new world and closes the opening. Even though the bomb explodes in another world, Lyra, Will and their friends still feel the impact in the land of the dead:

And then the ground began to shake. From somewhere very deep there came a growling, grinding noise, as if the whole centre of the earth were turning on itself like a vast millwheel, and little fragments of stone began to fall from the roof of the tunnel. The ground lurched suddenly to one side. Will seized Lyra's arm, and they clung together as the rock under their feet began to shift and slide, and loose pieces of stone came tumbling past and bruising their legs and feet – (*TAS*: 355)

This description of the bomb's impact on the land of the dead may give the reader a little glimpse on what must have happened in the world where the bomb exploded. This can be reminiscent of the atomic bombs launched during World War II. The scientist Rachel Rothschild explains that after the creation of the atomic bomb, there was a meeting during which "many of the ecologists [...] recognized a threat to the environment from nuclear technology".¹²⁷ Since the Magisterium's bomb is compared to an atomic bomb, this means that the environment world in which Will threw the hair is most likely devastated. Once more, human violence and technology lead to the destruction of the ecosystem.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that any form of technology should be banished. As Arthur Markman comments: "technology can be a force for good, but it must be grown within the structure

¹²⁷ Rachel Rothschild, "Environmental Awareness in the Atomic Age: Radioecologists and Nuclear Technology," *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 43, no. 4 (2013): 493.

of a culture rather than imposed on it”.¹²⁸ Technology is not a synonym of destruction; it can be used in harmony with nature and people. The mulefa community illustrates this possible harmony:

Little by little Mary came to see the way everything was linked together, and all of it, seemingly, managed by the mulefa. They knew the location of every herd of grazers, every standoff wheel-trees, every clump of sweet-grass, and they knew every individual within the herds, and every separate tree, and they discussed their well-being and their fate. [...] Nothing was wasted. (TAS: 127)

The mulefa have some technology but, as Cox highlights, it is “adapted from the world around them”.¹²⁹ The mulefa have learned as much as they could about their environment and their pursuit of knowledge has allowed them to exploit natural resources while living in harmony with nature. It is not the pursuit of knowledge that it is criticized in Pullman’s trilogy, it is the way to achieve it. The implied message in both *Paradise Lost* and *His Dark Materials* could be that knowledge is not worth it if it degrades the environment. Men like Lord Asriel and the Guild of the Torre degli Angeli’s members create new technologies to visit new worlds but they hurt both humans and nature whilst they could live in harmony with nature like the mulefa. Tucker writes: “a daemon can only live its full life in the world in which it is born. In the same way, Pullman suggests, we too must always make the best of where we are”.¹³⁰ These men keep looking for a better world, a paradise when they could create their own paradise in their own world the same way the mulefa land has become the new Garden of Eden.

¹²⁸ Arthur Markman, “Science, Technology and the Danger of Daemons,” in *Navigating the Golden Compass: Religion, Science & Daemonology in Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials*, ed. Glenn Yeffeth (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2005), 68.

¹²⁹ Cox, ““Imagine *Dust* with a Capital Letter”: Interpreting the Social and Cultural Contexts for Philip Pullman’s Transformation of Dust,” 138.

¹³⁰ Tucker, *Darkness Visible: Philip Pullman and His Dark Materials*, 109.

CHAPTER 4: A NEW TRILOGY

Philip Pullman wrote *The Amber Spyglass*, the last book of his trilogy *His Dark Materials* in 2000. Seventeen years later, he published *La Belle Sauvage* (2017), the first book of his new trilogy *The Book of Dust*, now onto the second. As the title *The Book of Dust* implies, there is a connection to *His Dark Materials* through Dust but it is not the only element in common: the action takes place in Lyra's Oxford, Lyra is one the main characters, there is still a fight between good and evil... The comparison could end here or it could be argued that *The Book of Dust* is also a rewriting of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). In order to find out whether Pullman's new trilogy can also be considered as an appropriation of the epic poem, both *La Belle Sauvage* and *The Secret Commonwealth* (2019) will be analysed according to the previous structure: the criticism of the Authority and the Church, the rewriting of Genesis and the political involvement.

Criticism of God and the Church

His Dark Materials was and still is criticized for his negative representation of religion. This critics may have had an impact on *The Book of Dust* as Nicholas Tucker explains: "To those who have previously accused [Pullman] of only focusing on the evils of organised religion he has said: "This is a big subject and I'm writing a big, big book in order to deal precisely with that question""¹³¹. Nevertheless, even though this statement seems to imply that there will a change in terms of the Church's representation, religious institutions may still be criticized.

¹³¹ Tucker, *Darkness Visible: Philip Pullman and His Dark Materials*, 34.

As Bernard Schweizer highlights, *His Dark Materials* does not depict religion in a positive way: “In [Pullman’s] fictive world, religion is mass deception; God is grizzled, tottering liar; his prince-regent a kind of devil; and the servants of the Church as corrupt as they are tyrannical”.¹³² This depiction may be maintained in *The Book of Dust*. Schweizer, on Pullman’s first trilogy, comments: “Indeed, the heroes of the story act on the belief that God is not a champion of mankind but rather its enemy, since He is opposed on principle to what is beautiful, enlightened, and pleasurable in life”.¹³³ Most of the characters in *His Dark Materials* consider The Authority an enemy who is against beauty. A similar account takes place in *The Secret Commonwealth* when the gunmen interrupt the public meeting in the auditorium:

You and your families and your workers have been tending your gardens for far too long. The Authority does not want roses, and you are displeasing him by growing so many. The smell of them is sickening him. It is like the dung of the devil himself. Those who grow roses and those who deal in oils and perfumes are pleasing the devil and offending God. We have come to tell you this. (533)

A man reacts to this speech:

He says this is a new teaching. He has not heard it before. His fathers, his family, his cousins who grow roses in the next village, they all thought they were doing the will of God by tending the flowers. He created and preserving the beauty of their scent. This doctrine is new and strange, and it will be strange to everyone he knows and to everyone in this hall. (533)

The gunman then adds: “It will please God to see them no longer involved in that evil trade. It will please him to see them turn away from their false gardens and set their eyes on the one true garden, which is paradise” (*The Secret Commonwealth*: 534). The roses are described as beautiful by the man and he is surprised to hear that God wants them to be destroyed. The gunman even says that those roses turn people away from the true garden, the Garden of Eden, and those who grow them are on the devil’s side. Moreover, these gunmen describe themselves as God’s messengers and they

¹³² Schweizer, ““And He’s A-Going to Destroy Him”: Religious Subversion in Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” 160.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 164.

kill the people who refuse to follow them. The gunmen can be compared to a dictator's army; they follow the orders they have received and get rid of the opposition in the name of their leader:

Then the farmer shouted, "*I will never burn my roses!* I will never deny the truth of my senses! The flowers are beautiful and their scent is the very breath of heaven! You are wrong!"

And the raven plunged down towards the cat, and the cat leaped up towards the raven, but even before they met, the gunman pulled the trigger and sent a bullet through the old man's head. The raven vanished in mid-air and the farmer fell dead, blood pulsing from the hole in his skull. (*The Secret Commonwealth*: 535-536)

As soon as the farmer expresses his disagreement, he is killed by the gunman. Exactly like in a dictatorship, as explained above, the gunman deals with the opposition for his leader: God. This could be reminiscent of *Paradise Lost*'s description of God; "And dungeon of our Tyrant. Now possess, / As lords, a spacious world, to our native Heaven" (*Paradise Lost*: 230)¹³⁴. The representation of God as a tyrant is apparently maintained in *The Book of Dust*. However, the gunmen's actions may not be God's will. At the end of *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), God dies. If God died ten years ago, it would not make sense for him to send the gunmen as messengers. This may illustrate Burton Hatlen's statement about people who use God as an excuse for their harmful actions.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, there might be an explanation for God's message in *The Secret Commonwealth* in Gottfried Brande's work called *The Hyperchorasmians*: "It told the story of a young man who set out to kill God, and succeeded. But the unusual thing about it [...] was that in the world Brande described, human beings had no daemons" (76). It confirms that God is dead but in a world without daemons, probably Will's. This could mean that the God who dies at the end of *The Amber Spyglass* is the God from Will's world. The gunmen would say God instead of the Authority; the false divinity would not have been defeated and still be used to justify harmful actions.

¹³⁴ Lines 466-467.

¹³⁵ Hatlen, "Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, a Challenge to the Fantasies of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, with an Epilogue on Pullman's Neo-Romantic Reading of *Paradise Lost*," 89.

Another example of this negative depiction of the religious body can be found in *La Belle Sauvage*. In the volume, the reader is introduced to a new organisation called ‘The League of St. Alexander’. A lady named Miss Carmichael comes to Malcolm’s school to explain who is St. Alexander: Alexander was a child who had heard about God and Jesus Christ and decided to be baptized. He later denounced his pagan parents to the Christian authorities who were killed the day after. She then adds what the league consists in:

The League of St. Alexander was set up in memory of that brave little boy [...]. Now you might think that those days are long ago. We don’t have pagan altars in our cellars anymore. We all believe in the true God. We all cherish and love the Church. This is a Christian country in a Christian civilization. But there are still enemies of the Church, new ones as well as old ones. [...] the spirit of little St. Alexander lives on today in every boy or girl who is brave enough to do what he did and tell the Church authorities about anyone who is working against the true faith. (*La Belle Sauvage*: 112)

She encourages children to repeat St. Alexander’s actions and denounce people who do not believe in God. It is true that it does not mean that these people will be killed like St. Alexander’s parents. Nonetheless, the reader later learns that the headmaster and some teachers are fired due to children’s report. Thereafter, Mr. Boatwright almost dies because Andrew, a member of the League, has denounced Malcolm, Alice and those who were hiding from the Consistorial Court of Discipline, another religious organization connected to the League. God is supposed to be love: “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love” (King James Bible: 476) but the League’s actions are rather the opposite of this love message. In contrast to the gunmen, the League’s actions take place when God is still alive. This could mean that God had something to do with the League’s creation and that he may agree with its actions. Yet, in the excerpt above, Miss Carmichael briefly mentions God and insists on the Church: “we all cherish and love the Church”, enemies of the Church”, “tell the Church authorities” (*La Belle Sauvage*: 112). One interpretation could be that God is once more mentioned only to justify the harmful

actions and that it is the Church that pulls the string. God would be mistaken for the Authority, the Church's false god.

However, Malcolm cannot help but to compare his actions to the League's:

It had occurred to Malcolm already, and it came back to him now, that what he was doing in talking to Dr. Relf was very like what St. Alexander was celebrated for. What was the difference? Only that he like and trusted Dr. Relf. But he was not less a spy for that. (*LBS*: 116).

Hanne Relf notices this and tries to reassure him:

Well, it's true in a way, but I wouldn't call it sneaking. I have to report the things I find out, so I'm doing the same sort of thing. The difference is that I think the people I work for are good. I believe in what they do. I think they're on the right side. [...] against people who kill and leave bodies in the canal. (*LBS*: 116-117)

Both Malcolm and Hanna spy on people and report what they have heard or seen, similarly to the League's members. Still, Hanna, who is described as an historian of ideas like good and evil, qualifies this comparison by saying their intentions, unlike the League's, are honourable. This can be reminiscent of Mary Malone's notion of good and evil in *His Dark Materials*. They may do some wrong actions but it is in the democracy's interest. *The Book of Dust* confronts the notion of good and evil in the same way as *His Dark Materials*. This could be a reference to *Paradise Lost* as it is an important theme in Milton's work.¹³⁶ In both trilogies, the difference between harmful actions and harmful intentions is highlighted: while the first can be justified if it is for the greater good, the last cannot.

The Book of Dust could thus be said to criticize religious organization the same way *His Dark Materials* and *Paradise Lost* do. Nonetheless, two examples contradict the idea that all religious organizations are on the evil side: Father Jerome Burnaby and the nuns. Father Burnaby

¹³⁶ Scott, "Pullman's Enigmatic Ontology: Revamping Old Traditions in *His Dark Materials*," 97.

helps Lyra, who answers by the false name Tatiana, in Seleukia when she is lost and hurt. He only wishes her to be reunited with her daemon and distinguishes himself from the Magisterium when he gives information to Lyra about the daemon trade: “My bishop gave me no guidance. The Magisterium denies that this is happening, but I know it is” (*TSC*: 661). Unlike the Church that refuses to acknowledge the existence of such business, Father Burnaby denounces it to Lyra. The nuns also stand out from the Church’s other members as Lyra’s thoughts on the Smyrna ferry illustrate:

It was complicated. She remembered Malcolm describing the sisters in Godstow Priory who had been so kind to him when he was a boy, and who’d taken in the baby Lyra and looked after her before the flood came. Clearly what they did was good, and equally clearly much of what the Magisterium did was not; but they were part of the Magisterium, because of their beliefs, or something else altogether because of their activities? She thought she’d been certain about things when she came back from the north, but the things she’d learned during her adventures there seemed so far away now; (*TSC*: 477-478)

When Lyra leaves the north in *His Dark Materials*, the Church has become a synonym of enemy to her since she knows that the Magisterium cuts the connection between children and daemons. However, ten years later in *The Secret Commonwealth*, she doubts this categorization. This change of mind may be due to the Fall. In *Paradise Lost*, it is explained that the tree of Knowledge is connected to the notion of good and evil: “the Tree / Which tasted works Knowledge of Good and Evil” (164).¹³⁷ When Lyra ate the forbidden fruit with Will, she must have gained knowledge of what is good and what is evil the same way Eve does in *Paradise Lost*: “O sons, like one of us man is become / To know both good and evil, since his taste / Of that defended fruit” (*PL*: 249).¹³⁸ Hence, Lyra knows that she can no longer see the world in black and white, there is grey; there is good in the evil and evil in the good. Father Burnaby and the sisters are the good in the evil.

¹³⁷ Lines 542-543.

¹³⁸ Lines 84-86.

Rewriting Genesis

In *The Secret Commonwealth*, the reader learns that Lyra used to date a young man Dick: “Much more recently, she and he had a brief but passionate relationship and, what was more, parted friends” (*TSC*: 53). Something that can be considered ironic is that Dick’s last name is Orchard. This may be a reference to the Garden of Eden and it is seemingly not the only one.

At the beginning of *La Belle Sauvage*, when Malcolm tells Sister Fenella that the ex- lord chancellor asked whether the priory had ever taken care of a child, Malcolm suggests the idea that he may be looking for a shelter for an important baby. He then adds: “Maybe there’s a royal infant that we don’t know about because it was ill, right, or maybe got bitten by a snake” (*LBS*: 16). This assumption can be related to Eve in two aspects: the royal infant and the reference to the snake. On the one hand, in *Paradise Lost*, God is described as “Heav’n’s perpetual King” (6).¹³⁹ Later, Eve is referred to as the “Daughter of God” (*PL*: 90).¹⁴⁰ Logically, this would mean that Eve is a royal infant. On the other hand, the allusion to the snake could be reminiscent of Satan’s disguise in Milton’s work to tempt Eve: “So talked the spirited sly snake; and Eve / Yet more amazed” (*PL*: 201).¹⁴¹ Furthermore, the baby who arrives at the priory is Lyra who is described as Eve again in the previous trilogy. Malcolm’s assumption would therefore be a clear reference to Eve. Another of Malcolm’s comment might refer to Genesis: when Malcolm meets Hanna Relf, she tells him about the Magisterium’s refusal to investigate Dust and Malcolm asks “[how] can something be sinful” (*LBS*: 75). A similar question can be found in *Paradise Lost*: “Can it be sin to know” (87).¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Line 131.

¹⁴⁰ Line 660.

¹⁴¹ Lines 613-614.

¹⁴² Line 517.

Apparently, the answer is yes since Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden of Eden after they eat from the tree of Knowledge and Will and Lyra will never see each other again.

Now that Lyra lives in the priory, another connection can be made with Eve and the Garden of Eden: “Malcolm admired the nuns for their neat ways in general, for the manner in which they laid their fruit trees in espaliers along the sunny wall of the orchard” (*LBS*: 3). This depiction of the priory may be reminiscent of *Paradise Lost*’s description of the Garden of Eden:

The verdurous wall of Paradise up sprung:
Which to our general sire gave prospect large
Into his nether empire neighbouring round.
And higher than that wall a circling row
Of goodliest trees loaden with fairest fruit,
Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue.¹⁴³ (*PL*: 77)

In both descriptions there are references to trees and a wall. Similarly to Eve who lives in Eden, Lyra would live in another Eden: the priory. Furthermore, in the epic poem, Adam learns from Michael what will happen to the Garden of Eden: “then shall this mount / Of Paradise by might of waves be moved / Out of his place, pushed by the hornèd flood, / With all his verdure spoiled, and trees adrift” (*PL*: 268).¹⁴⁴ The Garden of Eden will be completely destroyed by waves. A similar scenario takes place in *The Book of Dust*: “[the priory]’s a ruin now. The flood destroyed so much, and it was simply too expensive to repair” (*TSC*: 131). The same way Eden is meant to be destroyed by waves, the priory is blasted by a flood. As a matter of fact, the word ‘flood’ appears nineteen times in *Paradise Lost*. *La Belle Sauvage*’s whole plot could thus be a reference to Milton’s epic

¹⁴³ Lines 143-148.

¹⁴⁴ Lines 829-832.

poem. Hence, based on its description and destruction, the priory could be considered the equivalent of *Paradise Lost*'s Garden of Eden in *The Book of Dust*.

When Malcolm meets Lyra for the first time it is written: "Malcolm was enchanted. Everything about her was perfect and delight him" (*LBS*: 43). This comment in addition to the fact that Malcolm falls in love with Lyra could be reminiscent of Adam's account of Eve's creation: "And in her looks, which from that time infused / Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before, / And into all things from her air inspired / The spirit of love and amorous delight" (*PL*: 179).¹⁴⁵ Malcolm and Adam feel delighted when they first see their Eve and fall in love. Still, it does not necessarily mean that Malcolm is Lyra's Adam. In *His Dark Materials*, Will can be considered Adam's equivalent. Even though Malcolm expresses the same feelings as Adam, Will still seems to have the role of Adam even in *The Book of Dust* as Lyra's memory of Will may imply: "Was it rational to lift the little red fruit to Will's lips, in that little sunlit wood, and relive the act [Lyra and Will]'d heard Mary Malone describe, the one that had made her fall in love" (*TSC*: 482). Lyra remembers one of her first intimate memories with Will, a moment that can be seen as similar to the scene when Eve gives the forbidden fruit to Adam as mentioned above. Despite the fact that Will is not present in *The Book of Dust* and Malcolm shares some characteristics with Adam, Will remains Lyra's Adam.

Moreover, when Lyra discovers that Dr Polstead's name is Malcolm, she says: "I didn't see him as a Mal. I knew his initial was M, but I thought it was Methuselah" (*TSC*: 87). Methuselah is a biblical figure who does not appear in Genesis, who is Adam and Eve's descendant and Enoch's

¹⁴⁵ Lines 474-477.

son.¹⁴⁶ As previously explained, it is revealed in *The Amber Spyglass* that Metatron's actual name is Enoch, which could mean that Malcolm is somehow connected to Metatron / Enoch. Joseph Duncan states that: "The old idea of an existing paradise inhabited by Enoch and Elijah lingered on well into the seventeenth century, not only in popular tradition but in scholarly controversy".¹⁴⁷ At the time of *Paradise Lost*, it was believed that Enoch could show the way to paradise since he lived there. In *His Dark Materials*, Enoch was corrupted by society and became Metatron as explained above. Therefore, it can be argued that Enoch does not inhabit paradise as Enoch does no longer exist. As Enoch's son, Methuselah may know the way to paradise; in *The Book of Dust*, Malcolm could be the one who finally finds an access to paradise.

Malcolm could also play the role of another character: Jahan. An epic poem entitled *Jahan and Rukhsana* is regularly mentioned in *The Secret Commonwealth*. While Malcolm is reading the poem in the train, the reader learns more about its story: "The poem told the story of two lovers and their attempts to defeat Rukhsana's uncle, the sorcerer Kourash, and gain possession of a garden where precious rose grew" (*TSC*: 605). Once he finishes his reading, Malcolm discusses it with his daemon, Asta, and they find various matches between their own life and the story:

"Delamare is Lyra's uncle," said Asta.

"So what?"

Sometimes he could be very slow. "Kourash is Rukhsana's uncle. He's trying to capture a rose garden."

"Oh! I see. But who's Jahan?"

"Oh, really Mal."

"They're lovers."

¹⁴⁶ "Methuselah," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Methuselah> (accessed April 26, 2020).

¹⁴⁷ Joseph Duncan, *Milton's Earthly Paradise: A Historical Study of Eden*. (U.S.A.: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), 190.

“It’s the essence of the situation that matters.”

“It’s a coincidence.”

[...]

“That place [Lyra]’s looking for,” Asta said, “that dead town: why d’you think daemons live there? Is there somewhere like that in the poem?”

“Damn it, actually there is. Rukhsana’s shadow is stolen and she has to get it back from the land of the zarghuls.” (*TSC*: 607)

They first notice there is a coincidence between Delamare, who is Lyra’s uncle and tries to find her, and Kourash, Rukhsana’s uncle who kidnaps her. The same way Rukhsana’s goes looking for her shadow, Lyra travels to the Blue Hotel to find her daemon Pan. If Lyra is Rukhsana, it could mean that Malcolm is Jahan since he is in love with Lyra. Moreover, Malcolm saved Lyra from the fairy of Thames in *La Belle Sauvage*:

“There’s a passage in which Rukhsana is captured by the enchantress Shahzada, the Queen of the Night, and Jahan rescues her...”

“Go on.”

“The thing is that he tricks her by tying her silk sash in a clever knot that she can’t undo, and while she’s trying to do that, he and Rukhsana escape.”

[Malcolm] waited. Then [Asta] said, “Oh! The fairy of the Thames and the box she couldn’t open!”

“Diania. Yes, the same kind of things.”

“Mal, this is...”

“Very similar. I can’t deny that.” (*TSC*: 608)

Malcolm and Asta confirm the parallel between him and Jahan as they both rescued their Rukhsana thanks to a trick. Even though this story is rather different from Genesis, a connection can still be made between the two stories: the garden. Rukhsana and Jahan eventually find a rose and garden and live happily ever after there. This garden could be the Garden of Eden as it contains roses the same way the Garden does: “Fenced up the verdant wall; each beauteous flow’r, / Iris all hues,

roses, and jessamine” (*PL*: 91).¹⁴⁸ *Jahan and Rukhsana* could be Genesis’s sequel: Adam and Eve lose their paradise, their Garden of Eden and, years later, Jahan and Rukhsana find it. It could therefore be argued that Malcolm, either as Methuselah or Jahan, is the key to finding the Garden of Eden.

An excerpt of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590) is included at the end of *The Secret Commonwealth*. This could imply that Pullman’s new trilogy is inspired from a work other than *Paradise Lost*. Yet, it could actually confirm that *The Book of Dust* is connected to *Paradise Lost*. In his article, Duncan writes:

In England, the two most celebrated gardens in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, the Bower of Bliss (II, xii, 42-87) and the Garden of Adonis (III, vi, 29-54), illustrates clearly the enchanted garden or false paradise and the mythological garden embodying philosophical truth. Milton understood the Bower Bliss as a false paradise.¹⁴⁹

Spenser’s work, at Milton’s time, was famous, notably for two gardens described in it. Duncan explains that Milton did not see the Bower of Bliss as paradise but Duncan later adds:

In his description of the heavenly paradise in the Epilogue to *Comus*, Milton revealed his assimilation of Spenser’s depiction of the Garden of Adonis. It is altogether likely that Milton would have recalled Spenser’s garden again in composing his own description of Paradise.¹⁵⁰

The Faerie Queene’s second garden has most likely influenced *Paradise Lost*’s Garden of Eden. The extract included in *The Book of Dust* could be a reference to this possibility. Moreover, the excerpt at the end of *The Secret Commonwealth* comes from the third book of Spenser’s work. The Garden of Adonis comes also from the third book of *The Faerie Queene*. This could confirm the hypothesis mentioned above that *The Book of Dust* is about finding the paradise once lost: Lyra

¹⁴⁸ Lines 697-698.

¹⁴⁹ Duncan, *Milton’s Earthly Paradise: A Historical Study of Eden*, 217.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

and Malcolm will probably find the Garden of Adonis, known as the Garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost*.

Political involvement

Paradise Lost and *His Dark Materials*, as previously established, contain an ecologist message and give voice to their female characters. *The Book of Dust* gives the reader an insight of how much has changed within the ten years that separate *The Amber Spyglass*'s narrative and *The Secret Commonwealth*'s in terms of ecology and feminism.

As mentioned above, once Lyra meets Will and trusts him, she gradually loses her independence. This is confirmed in *The Secret Commonwealth* when Lyra is on the ferry heading for Flushing. A man is intrigued by her daemon's absence and when he asks her where he is, she does not know what to say so she just gives him a look of contempt. She then remembers that when she travelled to the Arctic, thus before she met Will, she was able to make up a story that would have made this man leave her alone "[but] now she just lacked inventiveness, or energy, or chutzpah. She was tired and lonely and frightened" (*TSC*: 335). She could have referred to the moment she went to the land of the dead, which would have implied that it was possibly the harpies' fault if she had lost her ability to make up stories but she points out her last adventure before meeting Will. Therefore, it can be argued that Will is connected to the disappearance of Lyra's inventiveness. This can explain why Pan leaves her to find her imagination. During one of their fight, Pan says to Lyra: "'Now you're cautious, you're anxious... You're pessimistic.'" She knew he was right, but it wasn't right that he should speak to her accusingly, as if it was something to blame her for" (*TSC*: 38). Pan wants her to become the old Lyra again; the one who lied, broke

the rules and was amazed by the world around. Lyra's journey to find Pan may actually be her journey to become her old self again. This might also be a response to Eve's fate to obey Adam: *The Book of Dust* could demonstrate how women can, and should, emancipate from men's supervision.

Once more, Lyra is surrounded by independent female characters such as Mrs Lonsdale, Hanna Relf, Glenys Godwin or even Alison Wetherfield to support and show her the way to independence. Mrs Lonsdale, or Alice in *La Belle Sauvage*, helps Malcolm save Lyra throughout the whole first volume. She is not treated in a kind way by most people, including Malcolm's mother who says to Alice after she complains about Malcolm's daemon biting hers: "Serves you right. I got no sympathy for you. Keep your nasty mind to yourself" (*LBS*: 2). Still, she does not fall for Bonneville's false kindness and fights for what she thinks is right. She remains strong even after her rape and, many years later, when the Consistorial Court of Discipline, a Church's organization, questions her about Lyra, she resists them. Hanna Relf and Glenys Godwin are both members of the secret organization Oakley Street. Both make a name for themselves without the help of a male figure: Hanna becomes the head of St Sophia's College and Glenys "[is] the first woman to head Oakley Street" (*TSC*: 170). Alison Wetherfield, the woman Lyra meets while waiting for the Smyrna ferry, can be considered open-minded as she does not judge or reject Lyra because of her daemon's absence. Alison keeps a cool head when the Smyrna ferry hits the refugees' boat and immediately helps the survivors. On the Smyrna ferry, Lyra thinks about Alison and comes to the conclusion that she wants to be like Alison or even Hanna in the future:

She was thinking about the woman, Alison Wetherfield. A teacher, a woman of clear decency and certainty, someone she would like to emulate... she reminded Lyra of Hanna Relf. The fears Alison expressed about the new High Council were like her own, though Lyra hadn't managed to think them through. [...] Good women

like Hannah and Alison found other things to fret about, or better still, didn't fret at all. Good women... (TSC: 477)

Lyra aspires to become like Alison or Hanna, women who have concerns but still manage to see through them by themselves. In Genesis, Eve is sentenced to obedience and *The Book of Dust* may show Lyra, Eve again, how to regain her own voice in the narrative, the one Eve once had in *Paradise Lost*.

At the end of *The Amber Spyglass*, Xaphania plans to close all the openings to restore the natural balance and save the mulefa world. The reader could come to the conclusion that the ecosystem will soon be saved. Unfortunately, another environmental crisis takes place in *The Secret Commonwealth*: the rose panic. Alison Wetherfield mentions it in her discussion with Lyra before boarding the Smyrna ferry:

“[...] People are feeling brutalised by the laws, exploited by their bosses, discriminated against by social structures they've got no means of changing. It's been like that for years: there's nothing new about it. But it's a fertile soil for the rose panic to flourish in...”

“The rose panic?”

“It's a new sort of fanaticism. Rose-growers are being persecuted, their gardens set ablaze or ploughed over by these men from the mountains, as they're called, who say that the rose is an abomination to the Authority. I hadn't realised it had spread this far.” (TSC: 470)

The progressive destruction of all rose gardens can be reminiscent of the deforestation of the Amazonian forest. As the scientists Timothy Wade, Kurt Riitters, James Wickham and Bruce Jones explain in their article, this deforestation has an impact on the whole world in terms of ecosystem.¹⁵¹ It could be argued that Lyra's response to Alison's statement refers to this global impact: “They're feeling the effects already in Oxford” (TSC: 470). Yet, there may be another way

¹⁵¹ Timothy Wade, Kurt Riitters, James Wickham and Bruce Jones, “Distribution and Causes of Global Forest Fragmentation,” *Conservation Ecology* 7, no. 2 (2003): 1.

to interpret Lyra's response. At the beginning of *The Secret Commonwealth*, Lyra has a conversation with her classmate Miriam. The latter mentions the rose panic to Lyra but not in terms of ecology: "'Daddy's bankrupt,'" Miriam said shakily" (*TSC*: 22). Miriam is worried about the rose panic because it has an impact on her father's company and income, not because of the ecological impact. Paul Simpson writes: "Pullman is disgusted by politicians' 'desperately foolish' attitude to climate change, worried by the commercialization of everyday life".¹⁵² Ecology does not seem to be a priority even though it could mean the end of the world; economy is the priority. If the rose garden, the new Garden of Eden, mentioned above is on earth, it could soon be lost if humankind keeps focusing on money rather than on the ecosystem.

Both *Paradise Lost* and *The Book of Dust* include a war in their narrative: the angel war and the war against the mountains man. However, unlike Milton's epic poem, Pullman's trilogy seemingly contains a criticism. When Lyra is in the train, soldiers board and sit in Lyra's cabin. Later, she is sexually assaulted by some soldiers and defends herself. A superior intervenes and, when he learns what has happened, he says to Lyra: "'You have already put three of my men out of action, I am told.'" "am I supposed to let myself be raped? I'd kill them all first.'" (*TSC*: 638). One reading could be that the superior blames Lyra instead of blaming his men. Nonetheless, they then have another conversation when they leave the train:

"I see. Thank you. It would be better for everyone if you disciplined your soldiers."

"You have done that yourself."

"I should not have had to."

"Nevertheless, you defended yourself. They will think twice before behaving badly again."

"No they won't. You know that."

¹⁵² Simpson, *The Rough Guide to Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials*, 184.

“You are probably right. They are trash. [...]” (*TSC*: 642)

This conversation implies that it is probably not the first nor the last time that soldiers sexually assault women. Yet, they remain unpunished, apart from the punishment they receive from Lyra when she fights back. This could be a reference to those men, and sometimes women, who take advantage of a violent context to rape other people. As the jurist Michelle Jarvis writes:

In bringing the appeal, the Prosecution emphasised that the sexual assaults were violent crimes carried out as an integral part of a violent expulsion campaign. The regrettable truth is that we still live in a world where sexual violence against females is commonplace. In the chaos and aggression of conflict, when normal social structures have broken down, the risk is higher again.¹⁵³

The soldiers in *The Secret Commonwealth* take advantage of the chaos Lyra’s world is into to give in to their basic instincts. Unfortunately, as Jarvis states and Lyra’s conversation with the superior confirms, these assaults are commonplace. It could be said that *The Book of Dust* denounces this type of behaviour and implies that it should be punished.

There is a brief mention of slavery in *Paradise Lost* when the angel Michael shows the future to Adam: “Suspected to a sequent king, who seeks / To stop their overgrowth, as inmate guests / Too numerous; whence of guests he makes them slaves / Inhospitably, and kills their infant males” (*PL*: 275).¹⁵⁴ Apparently, A king will turn guests into slaves. There is also a quick reference to slavery in *The Amber Spyglass* when Will opens various doors to test the knife in front of Balthamos and sees “the smoke-laden air over an industrial city, with a line of chained and sullen workers trudging into a factory” (*TAS*: 19). The workers could be said to be slaves.¹⁵⁵ Yet, this reference to slavery does not quite match *Paradise Lost*’s mention of slavery whereas *The Book of*

¹⁵³ Michelle Jarvis, “Prosecuting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Crimes: How Far Have We Progressed and Where Do We Go from Here? Thoughts Based on ICTY Experience,” in *Imagining Law: Essays in Conversation with Judith Graham*, ed. Stephens Dale and Paul Babie (South Australia: University of Adelaide Press, 2016), 125.

¹⁵⁴ Lines 165-168.

¹⁵⁵ Simpson, *The Rough Guide to Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials*, 143.

Dust seemingly fulfils the scenario depicted by the angel Michael. This scenario might take place in *The Secret Commonwealth* as Lyra's conversation with Father Jerome Burnaby about the people who helped her demonstrates:

“No. But their names are not Anatolian – they're Tajik. They mean Eleven, the woman, and Forty-two, the man.”

“Tajik?” she said.

“Yes. They're not allowed to have personal names, so they're given numbers instead, even for the men, odd for the women.”

“That's horrible. Are they slave or something?”

“Something like that. They can take up only limited number of occupations: grave-digging is a common one. And the nigh-soil business.” (*TSC*: 656)

Father Burnaby insists on the distinction between Anatolian and Tajik, they are not the same people and they may not even come from the same place. This could mean that the Tajiks once came as guests in Seleukia, the town where Lyra is, and are now slaves. Father Burnaby says it is something like slavery but it can be argued that it is slavery since they do not have real names, they are numbers. Furthermore, Father Burnaby also tells Lyra that Tajiks do not have daemons anymore because their daemons were sold: “Parents will sell their children's daemons for money to stay alive. It's technically illegal, but big money brushes the law aside... when the children grow up, they're not full citizens, being incomplete” (*TSC*: 660). Lyra later meets various daemon sellers and sees pictures of daemons with labels such as name, age, languages spoken and price. Even though daemons have the shape of animals, they are also partly humans as they are the physical representation of a person's soul and Father Burnaby claims that the children without daemon are not longer complete. This daemon trafficking could thus be compared to human trafficking. The professor of Law Chuang Janie writes that human trafficking is also “referred to as “modern-day

slavery,””.¹⁵⁶ Hence, despite what Father Burnaby says, the Tajiks and their daemons have become slaves. As predicted in *Paradise Lost* the guests are turned into slaves. This could confirm the hypothesis that *The Book of Dust* is *Paradise Lost*'s sequel; it rewrites the future predicted by the angel Michael.

¹⁵⁶ Chaung Janie, “Exploitation Creep and the Unmaking of Human Trafficking Law,” *The American Journal of International Law* 108, no. 4 (2014): 609.

CONCLUSION

His Dark Materials has been influenced by many literary works as the various epigraphs in *The Amber Spyglass* (2000) demonstrate. Nevertheless, *Paradise Lost* (1667) and the *Bible* stand out from the other works. Even though *His Dark Materials*, *Paradise Lost* and the *Bible* were written at different periods of time and belong to different genres, the three share the aspect of the Fall and the beginning of a new era. The *Bible*'s Genesis recounts the origin of humanity; it gives the starting point of human existence on earth. Milton's epic poem was published a few years after the English Civil War, which ended up in a change of politics; a new England was born. When it comes to *His Dark Materials*, as Paul Simpson highlights: "the last century [was] marked by two world wars, several genocides, a succession of famines and mankind's seeming inability to change the behaviour that may destroy the planet it lives in".¹⁵⁷ The twentieth century has known many changes and humanity could not go on as if nothing had changed; a new era had started. Each new era, either the *Bible*'s, Milton's or Pullman's, needs a Genesis, a starting point. This would explain why Genesis keeps being rewritten but also why Pullman includes references to both Milton and King James Bible: the past is essential in order to move on, to know where you are going. It also allows to see the development of each era's struggles such as the Church's politics, feminism or ecology. Moreover, the reference to the two previous version of Genesis may confirm Mrs Coulter's comment on God's gradual silence: whereas it is mainly God who speaks in the *Bible*, he is given less voice in *Paradise Lost* and does not say a word in *His Dark Materials*. This could

¹⁵⁷ Simpson, *The Rough Guide to Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials*, 180.

support the idea that God is actually dead, as stated in Pullman's trilogy, and imply that there will be no more rewriting of Genesis since God is as essential to Genesis as Eve, Adam or the snake.

Despite its various references to *Paradise Lost*, *The Book of Dust* does not seem to enter the circle of Genesis's appropriation. Still, Pullman's new trilogy can be considered a rewriting of *Paradise Lost*'s ending or rather the epic poem's sequel. Paradise was lost in *His Dark Materials* and *The Book of Dust* could be about finding this paradise again as Lyra and Malcolm travel around the globe to maybe find the rose garden, the Garden of Eden of this new era established in *His Dark Materials*. The reader will have to wait for the last volume of *The Book of Dust* to know whether they do find this paradise or not.

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