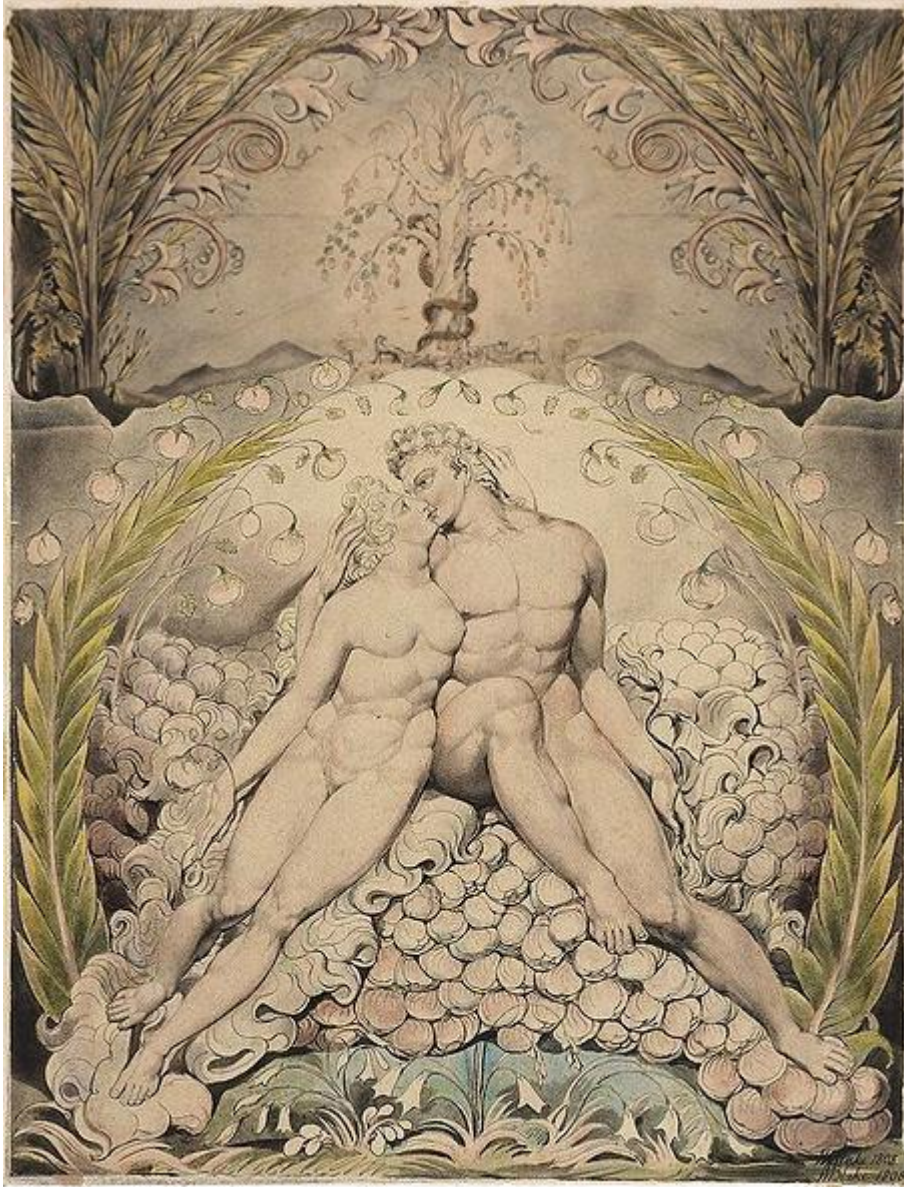


Intertextuality between Philip Pullman's *His Dark*

Materials and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*



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Introduction

Philip Pullman is the author of the award-winning fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials* (HDM), consisting of *Northern Lights*,¹ *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*. He has established himself as one of Britain's most popular authors of children's books today, having won two Carnegie Medals (1995, 2007), the Astrid Lindgren Award in 2005, the Whitbread Book of the Year prize for *The Amber Spyglass* in 2001, and many other awards. It was the first time ever that the Whitbread Book of the Year prize was bestowed on a book coming from the "children's literature" category, which shows that Pullman's trilogy has bridged the gap between young and adult audiences. Nevertheless, the author received some negative responses as well, for the most part from Christian groups. According to the protestant Anthony Horvath, the trilogy is "a threat to the Christian world view" (4) as well as "a dangerous rival to Christianity" (3). Moreover, the president of the U.S. Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, William A. Donohue, called for a boycott of the screen-version of *The Golden Compass* in 2007. A booklet was spread, informing the public that the film is based on a book which aims "to promote atheism and denigrate Christianity" (Donohue iii).

Pullman's trilogy about the girl Lyra Belacqua, who sets off on an epic journey to save all universes by performing as a second Eve in a new Fall of Man, has certainly stirred things up. In Pullman's fiction there are multiple universes, parallel worlds so to speak, each of which reflects our own reality in a slightly different way. Lyra's world resembles Victorian England, but one in which people have "dæmons": a concrete extension of the human soul as an animal-shaped being. As the daughter of Lord Asriel and Mrs Coulter, Lyra is determined to explore the nature of Dust and its relation to the abduction of children to the North.

Pullman's trilogy follows her travels into several other worlds; there is our own modern

¹ Republished as *The Golden Compass* in the United States of America.

world, a world of crossroads called Citàgazze, Lord Asriel's resistance world, the land of the dead and the world of the *mulefa*. In the crossroad world, she meets the other child protagonist, Will Parry, who is to perform as her Adam. Their perilous adventures signify their journey from childhood to adolescence, i.e. from innocence to experience.

Although the story might seem yet another fantasy tale, Pullman raises serious ethical issues in *His Dark Materials*. Concerned with theological and philosophical matters, such as the questioning of God's existence and the reversal of Eve's conventional role as disobedient woman, Pullman provides an alternative myth about the Fall of Man. Ultimately, his story is about good and evil, and the struggle between them. However, Pullman's ambiguous writing forces the reader to contemplate each twist and turn throughout the novels, and thus to take sides. As Naomi Wood explains, in Pullman's story there are "positive and negative wild-card figures who are not impelled by the same motivations or rules as those who guard the status quo" (251).

His Dark Materials was inspired by John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (*PL*). As Pullman affirms in an interview with Wendy Parsons and Catriona Nicholson, he intended to rewrite *Paradise Lost* "for teenagers in three volumes" (126). In Milton's epic of the Judeo-Christian myth about the Fall of Man, the temptation of Adam and Eve by Satan and their subsequent expulsion from Paradise, the narrative perspective often changes from that of Satan to Adam and Eve's. Although it is unmistakably obvious who the villain is, at times the reader finds himself sympathising with Satan. He is portrayed as a much more complicated and intriguing character than his adversary, God. In the introduction to *Paradise Lost* in the *Norton Anthology I*, it is stated that Milton "continually challenged [his readers] to choose and to reconsider their most basic assumptions about freedom, heroism, work, pleasure, nature, and love" ("Paradise Lost" 1815-6). Considering Milton's scandalous political reputation, *Paradise Lost* provoked many critical responses from his contemporary readers, mostly

hinting at his controversial depiction of Satan. A century later, around 1760, numerous readings like “straightforward editions, commentaries, translations [and] adaptations” were circulating (Stevenson 448). For the Romantic writers, Milton was the “prime precursor poet”; “someone worthy of emulation,” since he had written the “greatest epic in English literature”; he even matched Shakespeare’s excellent reputation in the English literary canon (Kitson 463-4). Milton heavily influenced writers like William Blake, Samuel T. Coleridge and William Wordsworth, all of whom tried to rewrite *Paradise Lost* in their own manner. For William Blake, Milton’s poetry had been “a guiding star [...] since his earliest days” (Ward 29). In several of his works, he alters Milton’s notion of God and Satan and adapts it to give meaning to his own interpretation; God is a “predestinarian tyrant” and Satan is the “true Romantic hero of the epic”² (Whittaker “Zoapod 15” par. 6; Padley & Padley 331). Blake’s understanding of Milton’s Satan has noticeably shaped Pullman’s reworking of the myth of the Fall.

In his acknowledgements, Pullman admits three influences in particular: Heinrich von Kleist’s essay *On the Marionette Theatre*, poetry and paintings by William Blake, and John Milton’s epic *Paradise Lost* (HDM 1017). Each chapter in *The Amber Spyglass* begins with a few lines of poetry by famous poets such as Samuel T. Coleridge, Emily Dickinson, Edmund Spenser, Lord Byron and John Keats among many others. Nevertheless, most of the quotes are derived from the works of Milton and Blake. There are a number of critics who have affirmed and commented on this, including the following researchers. David Gooderham argues that Pullman’s attraction to Milton and Blake “derives from an ideological affinity with the two visionaries,” rather than from the “imageries of *Paradise Lost* and Blake’s prophetic books” (16). Whereas Naomi Wood finds that Pullman recreates the story of the

² This is also expressed by Burton Hatlen, who says Blake regarded Milton’s God as “an unjust and arbitrary tyrant and saw Satan as the “true hero” of *Paradise Lost*, a gallant Promethean rebel fighting on in a cause that he knows is doomed but still insists is just” (86)

Fall of Man “from grace through disobedience as found in Genesis and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*” (238), Anne-Marie Bird claims that Pullman is mostly driven by Blake’s poetry and even Gnostic mythology as he “attempts to synthesise the opposing principles that lie at the core of the myth [of the Fall] while leaving the innocence-experience dichotomy firmly in place” (112). The Blakean metaphor “To see the World in a Grain of Sand” is similar to Pullman’s notion of Dust, suggesting that each elementary particle contains an entire universe (Bird 112). Nevertheless, the foundations for this notion derive from Milton’s “dark materials”. As Lauren Shohet points out, the first book of *His Dark Materials* “takes the reader through a bracing series of identifications and revelations that magnifies the readerly process” of Books One and Two of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (24). Although many critics merely mention *Paradise Lost* as a primary source for Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*, Burton Hatlen elaborates on Pullman’s neo-Romantic reading of Milton’s epic and his reworking of the Myth of the Fall. Nonetheless, none of these researchers have explicitly investigated the relationship between Pullman’s quotations in *The Amber Spyglass* and the works from which these are derived.

The focus of this thesis will be on how the intertextual echoes of Milton’s epic poem *Paradise Lost* function within Pullman’s trilogy *His Dark Materials*. The question here is how these relate to Pullman’s theological themes and how his own views are often (though not always) diametrically opposed to those of Milton. The first chapter will explore the theological notions within the two works, regarding the nature of the universe, God, the afterlife and the Church. In the second chapter, the emphasis will be on the interpretation of the character of Satan in both works, with regard to the Romantic readings. The last chapter will discuss Lyra and Eve’s search for knowledge, their temptation and subsequent Fall.

1. Universal and Heavenly Matters

“Atheism suggests a degree of certainty that I’m not quite willing to accede to. I suppose technically you’d have to put me down as an agnostic,” says Philip Pullman in an interview with Helena de Bertodano of the *Daily Telegraph* (par. 16). Yet, Pullman is said to be “one of England’s most outspoken atheists,” is even called “a militant atheist” with a “distinctly atheistic worldview” (Miller 1; Donohue 20; Horvath 3). As David Gooderham puts it, Pullman is rather a secular humanist (157) who makes extensive use of religious terminology in order to demythologise Christian myths (156).

In contrast to Pullman, John Milton was a deeply religious man, yet troubled by the corruptness of the Church. He wrote *Paradise Lost* in a very tumultuous period, marked by the Reformation a century earlier, the Civil War in 1642-51 and the Restoration of England’s monarchy in 1660. Within Puritanism there were many subdivisions, which were often also political parties. According to N. H. Keeble, Milton could be “counted among the Independents” (129), in addition to favouring Arminianism (135), yet he also found himself along the lines “of some Socinian points of view” (Poole 483). Milton committed himself to ideas such as the freedom of the human will; he rejected notions of predestined salvation and damnation, and found the Holy Scriptures textually corrupt (Keeble 135; Poole 483).

In this chapter a comparison will be drawn between Pullman and Milton, regarding their theological stances towards the universe; its Creator who sets the standards for morality; the afterlife that people subsequently deserve; and the Church which ensures that this morality is upheld by society.

1.1 The Universe

In *Northern Lights*, the reader learns about the multiple universes in Pullman's fiction. As Lord Asriel explains, there are "uncountable billions of parallel worlds" (*HDM* 308), which came into existence as a "result of possibility," similar to the tossing of a coin. Thus, whenever there are two outcomes of a certain event, one will happen in this world but simultaneously, another world will spring into existence in which the other outcome will occur. Milton also plays with the idea of other worlds in *Paradise Lost*, yet the idea is "just a fleeting reference" (Laurence par. 4). Pullman quotes Milton to give his own particular view of the universe and develops it into a central concept in his trilogy as his epigraph to *Northern Lights* suggests:

Into this wild abyss,
The womb of Nature and perhaps her grave,
Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
But all these in their pregnant causes mixed
Confus'dly, and which thus must ever fight,
Unless th' Almighty Maker them ordain
His dark materials to create more worlds,
Into this wild abyss the wary Fiend
Stood on the brink of Hell and looked a while,
Pondering his voyage... (*PL* 2.910-9, my italics)

In this passage of *Paradise Lost* Satan looks out at Chaos, which is then yet to be classified as "good or evil"; it is a moment of infinite possibility (Hatlen 87; Bird 114). It is exactly this notion of infinite possibility that attracts Pullman, as anything is possible in the many worlds hypothesis, or "multiverse" as Anthony Horvath calls it (5). Apart from the previously cited

lines, there are other clues in *Paradise Lost* that seem to suggest the possibility of other worlds as well. On his way to Earth, Satan has an encounter:

Amongst innumerable stars, that shone
Stars distant, but nigh hand seemed other worlds,
Or other worlds they seemed, or happy isles,
Like those Hesperian gardens famed of old,
Fortunate fields, and groves and flowery vales,
Thrice happy isles, but who dwelt happy there
He stayed not to inquire... (*PL* 3.565-71)

The implication in the last line is that Satan has the potential to travel (in)to these other worlds, since there is no mention of any explicit obstacles, and about the angel Raphael it is said that he simply “sails between worlds and worlds” (*PL* 5.268) when he flies to Earth to warn Adam and Eve about Satan’s coming. It is probable that Milton’s “other worlds” are in fact “the planets seven” (*PL* 3.481), which were known to exist in the solar system during the 17th century. In Milton’s day and age, some scholars considered “every star perhaps a world of destined habitation” (*PL* 7.621-2). As Milton’s angels travel within the one universe as we know it, Pullman’s celestial beings have the ability to travel *into* different worlds via “invisible places in the air [...] gateways into other worlds” (*HDM* 443), whereas his protagonists have need of the “subtle knife”. The subtle knife is a tool made according to the principles of quantum physics; it splits open the “very smallest particles of matter” (*HDM* 584). One side cuts through all materials; the other cuts through air, thus creating an opening into a new world. It is the ultimate weapon and is known as “Æsahætr,” that is the “god-destroyer” (*HDM* 548).

The fundamental difference between Pullman and Milton on the notion of “other worlds,” is a theological one. In contrast to Pullman, it is Milton’s belief that God is the

Creator of Heaven, Hell and Earth. The world was created by God in a vast hierarchical structure, whereas Pullman's universes equally come into being by the "tossing of a coin"-principle. This primary distinction corresponds with their representations of God, the afterlife and the Church by both authors, which have either religious or political origins.

1.2 The Creator

In Pullman's world the Authority, also named "God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty" (*HDM* 622), is a fraudulent character. We are told that he was the first angel to be formed of Dust, and Dust is "only a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself [...] It [matter] seeks to know more about itself, and Dust is formed" (*HDM* 622). The Authority was never the Creator, yet he upheld this lie and banished those who contested it. The Authority is depicted as a "senile Ancient of Days" (Hatlen 88) who is withering away in a crystal litter, upon his secluded Clouded Mountain. He is a corporeal being who gives the "impression of terrifying decrepitude, of a face sunken in wrinkles, of trembling hands and a mumbling mouth and rheumy eyes" (*HDM* 915).

Given that the Authority is a feeble and powerless character, he has secretly granted his Lord Regent Metatron the authority to rule in his place. This personage has scriptural reference to a man named Enoch, a descendant of Adam who became angelic.³ Pullman's angel Metatron is the most terrifying oppressor and persecutor of all worlds. He finds that the representative Churches in all universes have become weak and corrupt; therefore, he plans to subordinate all conscious beings, in name of the Authority. The character of Metatron is quite comparable to the God of the Old Testament, who is

³ According to the Jewish Talmud, Enoch became Metatron. He is also mentioned in Genesis, but nothing is said about his transformation from man to angel.

arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser, a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully. (Dawkins 51)

The way in which Milton depicts the nature of God is quite conventional by New Testament standards. He is “the great Creator” (*PL* 2.385; 3.167; 3.673), “the Almighty Father” (*PL* 3.56; 3.86; 6.671; 7.11) and “Heaven’s King” (*PL* 2.751; 2.992; 4.110). Milton’s God is the great Creator, who out of Chaos created the world by means of taking “golden compasses”⁴ in his hand while he centred on one foot (*PL* 7.225-8). As God infused “vital virtue and vital warmth throughout the fluid mass” (*PL* 7.236-7), the Earth miraculously “self-balanced on her centre hung” (*PL* 7.242). According to Milton’s own beliefs, God is the Almighty Father as he is forgiving to all who seek His grace. Abdiel, one of the fallen angels, is forgiven after showing remorse. Also, in anticipation of Satan’s desire to corrupt God’s creation of Man, the Almighty Father has devised a plan to undo the damage by sacrificing His only Son (*PL* 3.214-5). Nevertheless, Milton does add some controversy by letting God have direct speech throughout book three of *Paradise Lost*; particularly considering the fact that Milton’s personal beliefs about salvation are expressed by Him (Fallon 331). Milton countered the Calvinist notion of predestination; he believed that all God’s creatures are free to fall, but because grace is offered to all, salvation depends on accepting or rejecting it. Also, Milton portrays God as Heaven’s King, yet only in conjunction with the idea of opposition: “in bold conspiracy against Heaven’s King,” “made head against Heaven’s King,” and “divided empire with Heaven’s King I hold” (*PL* 2.751; 2.992; 4.110). This might allude to Milton’s political ideas at the time of the Restoration, as he was a known anti-royalist. Nevertheless, in book 4 of *Paradise Lost*, Milton emphasises the fact that God’s kingship is

⁴ Milton’s “golden compasses” do not refer to the American title of the first novel, nor the film; Lyra’s golden compass is called an “alethiometer,” a symbol-reader that tells her the truth (*HDM* 109).

“unlike any other kind of kingship and certainly does not resemble an earthly Stuart monarchy” (Loewenstein 354). The irony here is that Milton could not bear to have an English monarch on the throne, granting himself sole responsibility to God instead of the people. However, God as heavenly monarch was duly acceptable for him.

In contrast to Pullman’s notion of an incompetent and dying God figure, Milton’s God is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Furthermore, in His conversation with His Son He reveals Himself to be merciful and just to those who want to be saved by His grace. Milton’s moral standards are those of a conventional Protestant Christian, and his unorthodox theological ideas about salvation and celestial sovereignty ultimately do not question the authority and justice of God; He remains Milton’s ultimate role model. By contrast, Pullman’s God is a fraudulent character, reinforcing the deceitful morality portrayed by other religious figures in his narrative. Some critics even argue that Pullman’s Authority “bears particular resemblance” to Milton’s Satan, regarding his assistant Metatron as the “one next himself in power, and next in crime, long after known in Palestine, and named Beelzebub” (Padley & Padley 331; *PL* 1.79-81).

1.3 The Afterlife

Traditionally, the afterlife which people deserve is subject to the way they have spent their lives. In Pullman’s narrative, the notion of an afterlife and heaven is quite different from Christian conceptions. The Clouded Mountain is the Authority’s dwelling place and is introduced to the reader with yet another quote from Milton:

Farr off th’ empyreal Heav’n, extended wide
In circuit, undetermined square or round,
With opal tow’rs and battlements adorned
Of living sapphire... (*PL* 2.1047-50)

However, the Clouded Mountain, also known as the Chariot, is a citadel that moves through the universes. It has remained secluded for ages, but “wherever it goes, there’s the heart of the kingdom” (*HDM* 622). At the Clouded Mountain there is no place for any human souls; these are sent to the world of the dead instead. This world is similar to the classical underworld of Hades, in which the ferryman Charon rows the deceased to the other side of the river Styx. The land of the dead is a “prison camp” (*HDM* 623), which has been established by the Authority in the early ages; “everyone comes here, kings, queens, murderers, poets, children” (*HDM* 827), to be then tormented by Harpies. As Lyra and Will enter this world, the number of people is unimaginable:

Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th’ Etrurian shades
High overarched embow’r... (*PL* 1.302-304)

This passage from *Paradise Lost* is quoted by Pullman at this particular moment in the trilogy to suggest that the dead are in such a great number that they could be compared to fallen leaves on the ground on an autumn day. Milton uses this simile to describe Satan’s fallen angelic forces lying upon a flaming sea (*PL* 1.300). However as he arouses his rebel angels, they all spring up to obey their general (*PL* 1.337). In Pullman’s instance, the appearance of Lyra and Will in the world of the dead has the same effect. Furthermore, “Vallombrosa” means “shady valley” (Milton 1824n.), which Pullman unobtrusively reworks in his notion of the world of the dead; it is a land with “no true shadows and no true light, and [where] everything was the same dingy colour” (*HDM* 834). Also, sounds have been reduced to mere whispers, “faint pale sound[s], no more than a soft breath, was all they could utter” (*HDM* 835). The masses of the dead, of whom many are innocent, are arbitrarily condemned by the Authority to remain an eternity in this afterlife. Pullman compares his dead to Milton’s fallen

angels, as the latter, from the devil's perspective, are similarly trapped in a "prison of his tyranny who reigns by our delay" (*PL* 2.59-60).

Milton's own beliefs clashed with the orthodox Calvinist ideas about the afterlife in Heaven, as he could not reconcile himself with the notions of predestination and damnation. He believed that after one had sought and accepted God's grace, and naturally lived a virtuous life, one would be permitted entrance to Heaven's Paradise. If this were not the case, the alternative would be to be sent to Hell, or to "a Limbo large and broad, since called the Paradise of Fools" (*PL* 3.496). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton tells of three different kinds of Paradise. Firstly, there is the actual Garden of Eden located on Earth, from which Adam and Eve are expelled. To make up for this loss, they will need to love God by obeying him; in addition to living faithfully, virtuously, patiently, temperately and lovingly, they shall then "possess a Paradise within thee, happier far" (*PL* 12.586-7). Milton hereby implies that Paradise is then rather a peaceful and calm state of mind. Finally, the archangel Michael explains to Adam that the Earth will become a grander Paradise eventually, when the Son will reward

His faithful, and receive them into bliss,
Whether in Heaven or Earth; for then the Earth
Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
Than this of Eden, and far happier days. (*PL* 12.462-5)

In Pullman's trilogy, the Authority has played a cruel joke on mankind: the righteous are not separated from the sinners and all are stuck in an eternal death full of torment. This reflects Pullman's agnostic conviction that the afterlife might not be as expected. The Kingdom of Heaven is but a mere fantasy and justifies the need for building a Republic of Heaven on earth.⁵ The Republic of Heaven is rather similar to Milton's "Paradise within thee"

⁵ This notion will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

(*PL* 12.586), as both refer to the idea that people should build their happiness in the here and now, thereby making the world a better place for everyone. In *His Dark Materials*, each person has their own responsibility to make the most of life, without an oppressive Church controlling and meddling in human affairs. In Milton's epic, it is consistently emphasised that a "Paradise within thee" can only be accomplished by obeying God's commands. Yet, as Pullman says: "We must find a way of believing that we are not subservient creatures dependent on the whim of some celestial monarch, but free citizens of the Republic of Heaven" ("The Republic of Heaven" 658).

1.4 The Church

Throughout *His Dark Materials*, the Church is most vehemently attacked by Pullman in the sense that it encompasses all monotheistic religions. In his trilogy, the Church is known as the Magisterium, which is recognised as a Calvinised version of the Catholic Church: "ever since Pope John Calvin had moved the seat of the Papacy to Geneva and set up the Consistorial Court of Discipline, the Church's power over every aspect of life had been absolute" (*HDM* 31). The Magisterium consists of a web of courts, colleges and councils; the most powerful of all is the Consistorial Court of Discipline. As the name already indicates, its main aim is to enforce a morality upon society and in Pullman's case, it does not hold back from using any means in order to accomplish its goals. It allows

all kinds of different agencies to flourish. They [Consistorial Court of Discipline] can play them off against one another; if one succeeds, they can pretend to have been supporting it all along, and if it fails, they can pretend it was a renegade outfit which had never been properly licensed. (*HDM* 306)

The Church believes Dust to be the "physical evidence for original sin" (*HDM* 371), because adults from the onset of puberty attract significantly more of it than children. Dust is also a

metaphor for sexual awareness, so to free mankind from original sin, the Magisterium endorses child abuse by kidnapping and experimenting with the severing of children from their dæmons. Supposedly, by severing the dæmon from the child, Dust may never settle on the individual; hence, the child is not affected by original sin and the state of innocence remains. Despite allegedly good intentions, the Church has had thousands of years of experience with suffering (*HDM* 360) and is known to circumcise children of both sexes in the southlands as well, as one opponent of the Magisterium reveals:

They cut their sexual organs, yes, both boys and girls; they cut them with knives so that they shan't feel. That is what the Church does, and every church is the same: control, destroy, obliterate every good feeling. So if a war comes, and the Church is on one side of it, we must be on the other. (*HDM* 370)

Here, Pullman incorporates Judaism, Islam and some nature religions into the notion of “the Church,” as undistinguishable divisions of organised religion that perform physical mutilations, as well as mutilations of the soul.

Agents of the Church come as opportunists, like Mrs Coulter, or as fanatics, like Father Gomez (Hatlen 89). Mrs Coulter, who runs the General Oblation Board, is the initiator of the dæmon-cutting experiments. Although she is initially one of the most horrible characters in the trilogy, she eventually develops into a motherly figure, capable of feeling remorse. Her daughter Lyra is to be protected from the Church, whose clerics are accused by Mrs Coulter of being nothing more than: “a body of men with a feverish obsession with sexuality, men with dirty fingernails, reeking of ancient sweat, men whose furtive imaginations would crawl over her body like cockroaches” (*HDM* 859). Father Gomez could be characterised as a deeply religious fanatic. When the Magisterium finds out Lyra is destined to fulfil the role of a second Eve, Gomez is granted pre-emptive penance for the murdering of Lyra, “which would make his murder of Lyra no murder at all” (*HDM* 659).

Religious fanaticism, personified by Father Gomez, is introduced in the chapter “Pre-emptive Absolution” and begins with a quote from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*:

...relics, beads,

Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,

The sport of winds... (*PL* 3.491)

As Pullman condemns religion in itself, so Milton argued that the Catholic Church had become corrupt and identified the Pope and bishops as “being the focus of the powers of darkness described in the book of Revelation” (Parry par. 4). In *Paradise Lost*, he elaborates on their evil-doing and says they will find “fit retribution” (*PL* 3.454) for all the vanity they have displayed; their human pride and folly will be punished accordingly. In this particular passage, Milton refers to Catholic friars and pilgrims, whose souls together with their religious garments will be blown off to limbo (*PL* 3.493-5). He upholds one of the Reformation policies of abolishing saints’ relics, rosary beads, papal decrees and various other kinds of pardons for sins.

Pullman explains in an interview with Huw Spanner how his extreme antipathy to the Church has evolved: “It comes from history [...] Every single religion that has a monotheistic god ends up by persecuting other people and killing them because they don’t accept him. Wherever you look in history, you find that” (2002, n.p.). Religious toleration is in principle out of the question in monotheistic religions, considering that tolerance incites heresy (Rumrich 151). Another reason for Pullman’s antipathy is that the Church teaches ignorance and innocence above wisdom and experience. They do not teach people to think for themselves, but rather teach them what they *should* think.

In conclusion, this chapter provides an insight into theological matters in the literary works of both Pullman and Milton. In a world where universes come into existence by the “tossing of a coin”- principle, anything is possible. There is no need for a Creator who likes to have a

particular hierarchical order in his exact grand scheme of things, when universes independently spring into being. Pullman portrays his God as a dying fraud, while Metatron acts as his personal persecutor in all universes. Milton's God is represented as just and merciful, being the great Creator, the Almighty Father and Heaven's King. The different moralities of both God characters imply different notions of the afterlife. Whereas in Milton's text one has the chance to go to Heaven, Hell or Limbo (depending on one's behaviour), in Pullman's world of the dead everyone is predestined for an eternity of torment. The Kingdom of Heaven is a lie, which justifies the building of the Republic of Heaven. This notion is similar to Milton's "Paradise within thee" (*PL* 12.586), as both refer to the idea that people should build their happiness in the present, thereby making the world a better place for everyone. This should be upheld by the agent of morality: the Church. However, in *His Dark Materials* the Church represents all evil in the world, just as the Catholic Church did to Milton. They oppressively teach ignorance and doctrines. The Church has been society's storyteller for centuries and "all stories teach, whether the storyteller intends them to or not. They teach the world we create. They teach the morality we live by" (Pullman qtd. in Schweizer 169). In a world where morality is oppressively upheld by an evil Authority figure, there needs to be resistance, perhaps even in the figure of a devilish Satan.

2. Daring Devils and Harrowing Hell

In a world where there is a God, there has to be an Adversary; and wherever the established authority is dictatorial, there is bound to be opposition as well. In Pullman's novels, this is the exact situation, although he converts the conventional good guys to the Devil's party.

There are two great powers [...] and they have been fighting since time began [...]

Every little increase in human freedom has been fought over ferociously between those who want us to know more and be wiser and stronger, and those who want us to obey and be humble and submit. (*HDM* 585)

There are a few characters throughout the story that embody Satanic values. Firstly, the angel Xaphania who contests the Authority's claim of being the Creator in his early days; she finds out the truth and is banished from the Citadel along with her rebel angels, "the followers of wisdom" (*HDM* 983). Secondly, the character of Lord Asriel who challenges the Authority by waging war against him. Lastly, there is the character of Mary Malone who tempts Lyra into a second Fall.⁶

Milton introduces the reader to a controversial depiction of Satan and provides the reader with a "poem-long exploration and redefinition of heroes and heroism, the fundamental concern of epic" (Lewalski 13). Milton invokes a certain sympathy for the Devil at times, which has particularly been of interest to Romantic readers and writers, such as William Blake.

In this chapter the focus will be on the use of the Devil's perspective throughout *His Dark Materials* and *Paradise Lost*; by comparing Lord Asriel's nature and his surroundings to those of Milton's Satan, we will also see how Blake's view of Milton's Satan has influenced Pullman's novels.

⁶ The character of Mary Malone will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

2.1 La Resistance

Although the opposition in Pullman's trilogy is not undertaken by a sole character, Lord Asriel is the "Satanic hero" of the story (Wood 252). He is the father of Pullman's heroine Lyra, but remains a distant character throughout Pullman's narrative, absorbed in his own affairs and his research regarding the nature of Dust. Despite the facts that the reader is rarely entrusted with his inner thoughts and that Lord Asriel is only on few occasions spoken of, he is an essential character to the story. He bears significant resemblances to Milton's Satan as he contends with God and builds his own Pandemonium. Pullman introduces his chapter "The Adamant Tower"⁷ with a quotation from Milton, describing Satan's rebellion against God:

... with ambitious aim

Against the throne and monarchy of God

Rais'd impious war in heav'n and battle proud. (*PL* 1.41-43)

Throughout the novels, the reader is not quite sure what to make of Lord Asriel's intentions, as he initially sets out to seek "the source of Dust and stifle it for ever!" (*HDM* 323).

However, his true motivation is revealed by his manservant Thorold, who explains that Lord Asriel has never been at ease with the doctrines of the church and that rebellion has long been on his mind. Nevertheless, it is Thorold's belief that Asriel's rebellion is not directed against the church, "not because the church was too strong, but because it was too weak to be worth the fighting" (*HDM* 366). Instead, his ambition is to raise "a rebellion against the highest power of all"; to seek out the dwelling place of the Authority Himself and destroy Him (*HDM* 366). In the previous chapter, we have learned that Pullman's Authority is a fraudulent character. His Regent Metatron now has further plans to subordinate all conscious beings of all worlds in His name. Free will would no longer exist, which justifies Lord Asriel's dream of a democratic Republic of Heaven, instead of the authoritarian Kingdom of Heaven. The

⁷ Although the reader is well aware of Asriel's alternating ambitions throughout the trilogy, this is the first chapter in which the reader is welcomed (in)to Asriel's new world and his personal agenda.

Republic of Heaven is based on a non-hierarchical society in which free will is central to the bliss and happiness of all, without any impositions or oppressiveness of the church.

Ultimately, Asriel aims to free mankind from a tyrannical and bogus god.

Similarly to Pullman's rebel, Satan in *Paradise Lost* rebels against God and declares war. However, in Milton's epic the initial motive for doing so is Satan's refusal to accept the Son as his superior; in *His Dark Materials*, the Authority has no son and Lord Asriel does not aspire to rule. Satan would rather "reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" (*PL* 1.263), where he is obliged to acknowledge the hierarchy within the Kingdom. At some point, he even claims that God was just another angel, not altogether different from himself:

... since he

Who *now* is sovran can dispose and bid

What shall be right: farthest from him is best

Whom reason hath equalled, *force* hath made supreme

Above his equals. (*PL* 1.245-9 my italics)

Satan persuades a third of Heaven's angels to align with him, due to his alluring and compelling speech. After Satan's defeat, the concept of free will, as opposed to God's will, is above all other things important to Satan:

What though the field be lost?

All is not lost; the unconquerable will. (*PL* 1.105-6)

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the "unconquerable will" rather denotes the concept of heroic will power than the theological notion of free will; Satan *chose* to fall, as "freely they [all the ethereal Powers and Spirits] stood who stood, and fell who fell" (*PL* 3.102). Rather than intending to take up arms again, Satan informs his fellow rebels about the new race of Man upon Earth. It is his desire to corrupt this new Creation of God, since it "would surpass

common revenge” and “spite the great Creator” (*PL* 2.370-1; 2.384-5). Satan’s rebellion against God will entail the Fall of Man and will lead to the virtual enslavement to Satan.

According to Barbara Lewalski, Satan is represented as an explorer with a mind fixed on conquest and colonisation (14). She claims that Satan’s undertaking is not merely about revenge, but about imperialism as well, since his intent is to use the new world and its inhabitants to his own advantage (14). This is illustrated by Satan’s thoughts when he ponders about Adam and Eve at his arrival on Earth:

League with you I seek,
And mutual amity, so strait, so close,
That I with you must dwell, or you with me
Henceforth; [...] Hell shall unfold,
To entertain you two, her widest gates,
And send forth all her kings. (*PL* 4.373-81)

As Satan returns from his quest to the gates of Hell, he is awaited by his rebels as “their great adventurer, from the search of foreign worlds” (*PL* 10.440-1).

Likewise, Lord Asriel is an explorer of the regions of the far North, before he leaves to discover other worlds in search of the Authority’s abode. Before long he finds an empty world, where he gathers his forces to prepare for the second epic battle in history.

2.2 The Bastions

Lord Asriel’s similarity to Milton’s Satan is reinforced by the description of Asriel’s fortress, which resembles Pandemonium in *Paradise Lost*. After Satan’s fall, he was thrown out of Heaven into the dark pits of Hell, where he and his rebel angels recovered from their defeat. He decides that they should “make a Heaven out of Hell” (*PL* 1.255), with the same riches and adornments found in Heaven. This results in the building of Pandemonium, a grand

palace for all demons; the counterpart of the Greek Pantheon, for all gods. As many riches can be found in the poisonous soils of Hell, Satan's rebel angels build a magnificent temple within the hour with ample space for each and everyone present. Even the interior has been adorned:

From the arched roof

Pendent by subtle magic many a row

Of starry lamps and blazing cressets fed

With naphta and asphaltus yielded light. (*PL* 1.726-29)

Pullman uses this exact quote of Milton as heading to chapter 16, "The Intention Craft," a chapter in which the reader is given a second glimpse of Lord Asriel's new surroundings. The way in which Pandemonium is built in Hell, is quite comparable to the fortress of Lord Asriel in the Republic of Heaven: both are originally empty worlds, which become solid ground for resistance against the established authority. The first eyewitness of Lord Asriel's fortress is a witch, who followed some angels into his world. However unlikely, she thinks he must command time to go faster or more slowly, as the sheer sight of the fortress makes her believe he must have been preparing this for aeons. As the witch tells her sisters: "It is the greatest castle you can imagine—ramparts of basalt, rearing to the skies, with wide roads coming from every direction [...] And coming to this fortress are warriors of every kind, from every world"⁸ (*HDM* 545). Although majestic and grand, the castle has been built for a practical purpose: to gather the greatest force ever, so Asriel's armies can defend themselves against those of the Authority. The interior of the fortress is comparable to that of Pandemonium: "a massive hall lit by glowing crystals in the pillars that supported the roof" (*HDM* 767), accompanied by naphta lamps in smaller chambers. This coincides with the "starry lamps and blazing cressets fed with naphta" from Milton's description (*PL* 1.728-9). Asriel's armoury deep within the mountain resembles the atmosphere as imagined in Hell:

⁸ This is similar to Milton's "With hundreds and with thousands trooping came attended" (*PL* 1.760-1).

“hot and sulphur-laden” (*HDM* 768) and filled with the noisome hammerings of the forge.

Pullman uses similar imagery to create a world akin to the industrial and foul environment of Hell, particularly by describing the senses that are aroused by the surroundings.

Although Pullman’s Republic of Heaven commences as the physical world where Lord Asriel assembles his *force de resistance*, it evolves into a slightly different concept. As it turns out, people can only live their full lives in the world in which they are born. They can travel in between worlds, but a permanent stay will lead to the sickening and death of their dæmon (the animal-shaped counterpart of the human soul). As a consequence, Lord Asriel’s endeavour is doomed to fail for the same reason: “we have to build the Republic of Heaven where we are, because for us there is no elsewhere” (*HDM* 889). As Pullman explains in his lecture “The Republic of Heaven,” there needs to be a moral and social obligation to other human beings, as well as to nature and the universe around us; “it enables us to see this real world, our world, as a place of infinite delight, so intensely beautiful and intoxicating that if we saw it clearly then we would want nothing more, ever” (664).

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan is initially bitter about the change of scenery subsequent to his Fall, as he is exchanging “that celestial light” for “this mournful gloom” (*PL* 1.244-5). Yet, he believes he can make Hell his own place of “infinite delight” as he claims that

The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven. (*PL* 1.254-5)

Regardless of the mind’s workings, it is said that wherever Satan goes, he brings Hell within him (*PL* 4.20-1) and he himself finds that “Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell” (*PL* 4.75). As Satan is at times tormented by internal doubts about “repentance” and “submission” (*PL* 4.80-1), he realises that the mind cannot be tricked. This makes the real point of resemblance between Pullman and Milton the notion that it is the state of mind that counts,

rather than the place. This is reaffirmed by Blake in his *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, in which Eden and the Fall are also symbolic states of the human mind (Kitson 472).

2.3 Blake's Romantic Satan

Although Lord Asriel resembles Milton's Satan in contending with the Authority and in building his own Pandemonium, we also need to consider the influence of William Blake on Pullman's writings. Blake's poetry has been profoundly influenced by John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Blake, in his turn, greatly inspired Pullman's *His Dark Materials*.

According to Anne-Marie Bird, Blake's poetry is well-known for his opposition against "orthodox religion, the State, and authority in general" (118). Likewise, Aileen Ward proclaims that "'Priest and King' were for him [Blake] twin symbols of tyranny" (24). For Blake, poetry was his outlet to denounce the cruelties of all churches, which entail the "exploitation of the poor, the degradation of labour, the subordination of women, the abridgment of political liberty, the repression of sexual energy, and the discouragement of originality in the fine arts" (Ryan 150). In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (MHH)*, Blake asserts his conviction that there are serious errors to be found in all Bibles:

1. That Man has two real existing principles; Viz: a Body and Soul.
2. That Energy, calld Evil, is alone from the Body, & that Reason, calld Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies. (*MHH* plate 4; *Norton Anthology II* 74)

Blake disagreed with the religious dogmas that "Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy" (*MHH* pl. 3; *NA II* 74). Blake rather advocates that "Good" is a union between the opposing forces; human nature needs to choose a midway, for "Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love

and Hate, are necessary to Human existence” (pl. 3; *NA II* 74). It was Blake’s ardent revolutionist belief that from two clashing opposites something better must arise; analogous to a synthesis that arises from the conflict between thesis and antithesis. Therefore, he invented his own mythological chronicles in which a community of Eternals, the Four Zoas, represents all aspects embedded in humanity: imagination (Los), passion or energy (Orc), body or instinct (Tharmas), and intellect or law (Urizen).⁹ Crudely put, Blake’s myth envisions Urizen rebelling against the collective to establish his authority as “sole presiding deity [who is] unduly concerned with authority and obedience” (Ryan 155). Ryan argues that in Urizen, Blake embodied his objection to the Christian theology of “submission, self-denial, contrition, and expiation,” in addition to the explicit “fear of sexual passion that became the defining element of Christianity” (156-7). Urizen’s prime opponent is Orc, who wants to stamp Urizen’s stony laws to dust, but unsuccessfully (Ryan 158). Los then acts as the synthesiser between the two characters, as his mission is to redefine religion by appealing to humanity’s “appetites and affections rather than by harsh legislation and threats of force [like Urizen]” (Lincoln 212).

Blake presumed that in Milton’s days, *Paradise Lost* reinforced the ideology of a “distant, judgmental God who took pleasure in crushing rebellion against authority and who required the future death of his only Son before he could bring himself to pardon the sin of Adam and Eve” (Ryan 154). Even so, Blake regarded Milton as a revolutionist, as he depicts Satan as a being struck with “inward grief” (*PL* 9.96). The way Milton illustrates Satan’s inner struggle prompts the reader to empathise with him and leads Blake to remark that “The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil’s party without knowing it” (*MHH* pl. 6; *NA II* 74-5). Blake perceives Satan as the revolutionary spirit Orc, as Energy which has

⁹ Blake also regularly identified Los as Urthona and Orc as Luvah.

been “demonised by the orthodox as Evil” (Kitson 474). According to Blake, as Mary Lynn Johnson argues, Milton’s error in *Paradise Lost* was to “relegate revolutionary energy to the realm of the diabolic” (234). She elucidates that in *Milton: A Poem*, Blake asserts that Milton needs to reclaim the Energy (including sexual energy) of Blake’s Orc. He is the “flawed but vital faculty that Milton misidentified as Satan,” all the while mistaking (his) God for Urizen (Johnson 234). Ryan insists that Blake’s Satan is not the “malevolent supernatural power of Christian tradition who tempts human beings to sin,” but is rather the “will to power that encourages us to use others for our own advantage” (159). He elaborates that Satan is the name Blake has given to the “self-destructive and anti-social instincts that exist within every individual and stand in the way of imaginative health and psychic integration” (159). Ultimately, Ryan argues that it is the barrier within us that prevents access to Milton’s “‘Paradise within thee’ where we would rediscover our full humanity and our freedom as eternal beings” (159-60).

According to Jason Whittaker, Pullman’s assault on religious dogmas focuses on the “role of churches in human oppression that echo the infernal spirit of Blake’s classic text” (“Zoapod 10” par. 5). Moreover, as Pullman explains in his lecture “The Republic of Heaven”, for him religion is dead and subsequently a sense of meaninglessness or alienation follows (656). In light of Blake’s statement in *Jerusalem*, “I must Create a System or be enslaved by another Man’s” (“William Blake” 37), Pullman invents the Republic of Heaven as his own system. Besides each of us having a moral obligation to all things or people around us, Pullman stresses another “element of a republican morality [...] that trying to restrict understanding and put knowledge in chains is bad, too” (“The Republic of Heaven” 666). However, to Blake’s claim that Milton is “of the Devil’s party,” Pullman responded: “I am of the devil’s party, and I know it” (qtd. in Gooderham 163). His Satanic character Lord Asriel has become a “Nietzschean *übermensch*, willing to go beyond good and evil in quest of his

goals” (Hatlen 88). Like Blake’s Orc, he has ominous sides to his character; he sacrifices Lyra’s dear friend Roger to open a pathway between other worlds. Yet, the reader also sympathises with Asriel, as we are led to believe that his mission to destroy the Authority is a just cause. Also, Asriel does not seek to replace him, as one of Pullman’s neutral characters points out: “I met him once, and I thought he had an ardent and powerful nature, but not a despotic one. I don’t think he wants to rule...” (*HDM* 364). Ultimately, Asriel seeks to liberate Mankind from an oppressive and tyrannical god, whereas Milton’s Satan leads Man to death and misery.

In conclusion, Lord Asriel resembles Milton’s Satan in that he challenges the Authority and builds his own Pandemonium with the intention to destroy the Authority to prevent further subordination of the human will. Milton’s Satan rebels against God for egotistical reasons; he wants to be sovereign himself and desires to corrupt God’s creation out of revenge. The comparison between Lord Asriel and Satan is reinforced by the similar imagery that Pullman uses to describe Asriel’s fortress, as it resembles Milton’s Pandemonium. Nevertheless, Pullman’s concept of the Republic of Heaven is quite different to that of Milton’s Hell; it encompasses relishing all aspects of life in the physical world, whereas Milton’s Satan finds he cannot escape the Hell within him, thus confining him to feelings of rage and misery. Yet, both Hell and the Republic of Heaven are represented as a “dwelling of free choice” (Shohet 24-5).

Pullman’s take on Milton’s Satan can only be understood in light of the Romantic readings. Blake converted the traditional role of Satan into that of an epic hero, as he perceives Satan as a revolutionary spirit rather than a being of pure Evil. He inverts Milton’s dualistic representation of Satan by proclaiming that Satanic Energy is innate to human nature. Pullman’s Satanic character even surpasses the very notion of Good and Evil, and is more than willing to go beyond these Christian notions in pursuit of his own goals. Whatever

the diabolical readings reveal, M.H. Abrams claims in *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971) that the Romantics generally held on to the idea of a “circuitous journey from innocence to experience, and from this state to a higher form of innocence” (Kitson 469). This journey is usually marked by an initial unity between the self and nature, but evolves into a stage of division, alienation and isolation (Kitson 469). In Pullman’s trilogy, this journey towards more knowledge is made by the girl Lyra Belacqua, in a recreation of the Fall in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

3. Eve's Legacy

Pullman retells the Myth of the Fall, but inverts the role of Eve from disobedient woman to the liberator of mankind. Although David Gooderham claims that *His Dark Materials* is a “convincing secular liberation narrative” (161), many other critics argue that Pullman incorporates Gnostic ideas into his novels. The main consensus is that Gnosticism is particularly found in “the idea that knowledge is liberating,” and that the “pursuit of knowledge is the key to maturity” (Padley & Padley 332; Wood 239). In his lecture “The Republic of Heaven,” Pullman explains that Gnostic myth

says that this world, the material universe we live in, was created not by a good God but by an evil Demiurge [a false creator deity, i.e. God of the Old Testament], who made it as a kind of prison for the sparks of divinity that had fallen, or been stolen, from the inconceivable distant true God who was their real source [...] It is the duty of the Gnostics, the knowing ones, to try and escape from this world [...] and find a way back to that original and unknown and far-off God. (656-7)

One of the basic ideas of Gnosticism is to gain knowledge or insight into one's true nature through experience; it is intuitive knowledge rather than rational thinking. The term “the knowing ones” refers to the Gnostic elite who lead themselves to salvation by understanding the spiritual nature of the cosmos, as well as their inner self.

Pullman's Gnostic angle stands in sharp contrast to the pursuit of knowledge in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. For Milton, knowledge is something not necessarily desirable as the “knowledge of good [is] bought dear by knowing ill” (*PL* 4.220). In Genesis and in *Paradise Lost*, it is stated that next to the Tree of Life stands the Tree of Knowledge, which is denoted by Milton as “our death” (*PL* 4.219). For Milton, knowledge clearly has an ominous undertone.

In this chapter a comparison will be made between Pullman's heroine Lyra and Milton's Eve in their retellings of the Genesis story. The heroines' search for knowledge binds them to the serpent character and brings about their Fall.

3.1 The Search for Knowledge

The journey from childhood toward adulthood is central to Pullman's plot in *His Dark Materials*. In *Northern Lights*, Pullman portrays Lyra as an inquisitive, strong-willed and disobedient child, as she grows up in Jordan College without any parental supervision. She is under the care of the Master of Jordan, while the other Scholars and College servants try to educate her and keep her in check. From the early beginning the reader gets the impression that Lyra is in search of knowledge: "Everyone knows they [the Master & Scholars] get up to something secret. They have a ritual or something. And I just wanted to know what it was" (*HDM* 14). According to Mary Harris Russell, Lyra initially seeks experiential knowledge (218); she wants to explore the roofs and crypts of Jordan College, as well as the streets of Oxford. She also wants to know what wine tastes like and what happens if you play tricks on the dead by switching their dæmon-coins. Eventually, Russell argues, Lyra finds that she needs more abstract and conceptual knowledge (218). This is triggered by the kidnapping of children by the Gobblers, or General Oblation Board,¹⁰ and the sudden interest of adults in the concept of Dust; "She would have listened eagerly now to anyone who could tell her about Dust. She was to hear a great deal more about it in the months to come, and eventually she would know more about Dust than anyone in the world" (*HDM* 39).

As the story progresses, Lyra gains an understanding of her own individual role within world affairs. According to the witches' prophecy, Lyra's role is that of a second Eve; yet,

¹⁰ This is one of the agencies of the Magisterium (Pullman's version of the Church), which is involved with the dæmon-cutting experiments.

“she must fulfil [her] destiny in ignorance of what she is doing, because only in her ignorance can we be saved” (*HDM* 149). This might seem rather paradoxical as Pullman emphasises the superiority of knowledge above ignorance throughout *His Dark Materials*, but Lyra’s ignorance is only mentioned in conjunction with not knowing her true destiny, as Russell points out (218). As we have established in the previous chapters, free will is one of the main themes in *His Dark Materials*, yet Pullman’s narrative world is “governed by prophecy, a sense of destiny and fate” (Wood 252). In light of free will, Lyra is “Eve as knowledge seeker, maker of important decisions” (Russell 217). Lyra must be allowed to make her own mistakes and, as Andrew Leet remarks, “move intuitively, always keeping in touch with the compassionate centre that serves as her spiritual guide” (183). This could be connected to the aforementioned Gnostic idea of intuitive knowledge about one’s true nature obtained through experience. Lyra’s experience will include a great betrayal; yet, “*she* will be the betrayer, and the experience will be terrible” (*HDM* 33). Although Lyra has an “innate sense of right and wrong” that is beset by her “compassion and sacrifice [which] are her truth” (Wood 251; Leet 183), she is also given a device called an alethiometer to guide her on her quest to investigate the nature of Dust. It is a symbol-reader that tells the truth, yet together with the books of readings it takes “decades of diligent study to reach any sort of understanding” (*HDM* 358). Nonetheless, Lyra has begun “to read it within a few weeks of acquiring it, and now she has an almost complete mastery. She is like no human scholar I can imagine,” says Fra Pavel, the alethiometer-reader in the service of the Magisterium (*HDM* 358).

Next to the alethiometer and her “innate sense of right and wrong,” Lyra has her friendship with Will Parry, a boy from our modern world, to guide her on her journey. As they join forces, Will becomes Lyra’s companion and “obviously fulfils the role of Adam, but by implication rather than by prophetic or narrative affirmation” (Gooderham 168). His aim is to find his long-lost father, but as it turns out, he has his own part to play in Pullman’s trilogy;

he is the bearer of the subtle knife, the god-destroyer that cuts through any kind of material. According to Wood, Will explains why it is crucial that they must both act in ignorance rather than in obedience to a story that is predestined (251):

‘What work have I got to do, then,’ said Will, but went on at once, ‘No, on second thought, 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.’ (*HDM* 998)

Wood explains that although Pullman’s narrative world is predestined, “free will is insisted on, even if it is illusory,” characters must choose their own direction within the novels and are led by their “innate sense of truth and justice” (252). In *His Dark Materials*, Pullman emphasises that “the cosmic order here is not based on suppressing natural impulses, but on embracing them”; Lyra and Will rather obey their “inner promptings” than abiding by any distinct authority (Wood 252).

In *Paradise Lost*, Eve stands at the other side of the spectrum with regard to obedience and authority. She is foremost answerable to Adam, who in his turn is accountable to only God, as she confirms to Adam:

My Author and Disposer, what thou bidst

Unargued I obey: So God ordains;

God is thy law, thou mine: To know no more

Is woman’s happiest knowledge, and her praise. (*PL* 4.633-6, my italics)

Here Eve acknowledges her inferiority to Adam, as well as her lesser commitment to God. Furthermore, it is remarkable that at this point of the story she declares that it is not her ambition to seek more knowledge at all, in contrast to Adam. However, Chikako Tanimoto

argues that Eve has already gained the most important wisdom there is: “she should be obedient to the God in Adam, she does not need any other knowledge” (84). In his conversations with Adam and Eve, Milton’s angel Raphael warns against the desire for knowledge:

Knowledge is as food, and needs no less
Her temperance over appetite, to know
In measure what the mind may well contain;
Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind. (*PL* 7.126-30)

On other occasions as well, Milton cautions to leave certain things to God above; sometimes it is best not to know.¹¹ Furthermore, the Tree of Knowledge brings

‘Knowledge of good and ill, which I [God] have set
‘The pledge of thy obedience and thy faith [...]
‘The day thou eatest thereof, my sole command
‘Transgressed, inevitably thou shalt die,
‘From that day mortal; and this happy state
‘Shalt lose, expelled from hence into a world
‘Of woe and sorrow.’ (*PL* 8.324-33)

The Tree of Knowledge is forbidden for Adam and Eve; moreover, possessing that knowledge is forbidden for them. According to Satan, this is

Suspicious, reasonless. Why should their Lord
Envy them that? Can it be sin to know?
Can it be death? And do they only stand
By ignorance? Is that their happy state,

¹¹ Also see *PL* 7.119-20; 8.71-5; 8.105-6; 8.167-8.

The proof of their obedience and their faith? (*PL* 4.514-8)

Naturally, in Milton's *Paradise Lost* Satan is not a trustworthy character as he embodies pure evil in Christian scriptures. Nonetheless, he articulates the doubts one might have at not being granted full access to knowledge about one's own nature, in relation to the cosmos. In Pullman's *His Dark Materials* the pursuit of knowledge is completely reversed; seeking to know more is something that is highly valued and admirable. Moreover, the life-time quest for wisdom is the very thing that constitutes life.

3.2 Tempting Eve(s)

Not only Lyra is given the role of Eve by Pullman; the character of Mary Malone could be regarded as one of his other Eve variations, as she provides "a surrounding context for her [Lyra's] journey to self-knowledge" (Russell 213). Russell points out that Malone's "very name evokes the tradition of Christ's mother" (217), identified in *Paradise Lost* as "Mary, second Eve" (*PL* 5.387). Mary Malone used to be a nun, but renounced her faith at some point and continued to study "dark matter," in the field of modern physics (*HDM* 399). In *His Dark Materials*, Mary travels into the world of the *mulefa*, which resembles the Garden of Eden. Pullman hints at this similarity as he uses a quote from Milton as chapter heading:

... Last

Rose, as in dance, the stately trees, and spread

Their branches hung with copious fruit... (*PL* 7.323-5)

In *Paradise Lost*, the Earth was created "desert and bare," where first there grows "tender grass" (*PL* 7.314). This is followed by the "herbs of every leaf" and the trees that "gemmed their blossoms" (*PL* 7.317; 7.325-6). Trees, and especially fruit trees, are associated with the Fall of Man from the Garden of Eden, hereby enhancing Pullman's portrayal of Mary Malone as Eve. In *His Dark Materials*, as soon as Mary enters the world of the *mulefa*, the first thing

she notices is “an endless prairie or savannah [...] most of it covered in short grass in an infinite variety of buff-brown-green-ochre-yellow-golden shades” (*HDM* 664). Also, on the plain were “stands of the tallest trees she has ever seen [...] their foliage was dense and dark green, their vast trunks gold-red” (*HDM* 664). As Mary wakes up, she feels “as if she were the first human being who had ever lived” (665). This is similar to Milton’s Eve who often remembers the day

...when from sleep

I first awaked, and found myself reposed

Under a shade on flowers... (*PL* 4.447-9)

Although Mary Malone could be identified as an Eve character, for Pullman she is also the true Satanic character of the story. In an interview with Huw Spanner he exclaims: “But of course the Satan figure is Mary Malone, not Lord Asriel, and the temptation is wholly beneficent” (2002). This is quite plausible as the biblical Eve is first tempted by the serpent, but subsequently plays the temptress herself; Adam even exclaims to her “Out of my sight, thou serpent!” (*PL* 10.848). Furthermore, Russell defines the character of Mary Malone as that of Gnostic “serpent mother” Sophia, “the initiator into knowledge” (217). Her task with Lyra, being the “initiator into knowledge,” is to teach her that eventually it does not matter in what manner one gains knowledge and how things are named; undeniably more important are the realities that lie behind these concepts of Dust, Shadows, elementary particles or dark matter (Russell 217). Moreover, her role as the serpent is to tell Lyra and Will stories; in fact, to tell *her* life story as a nun and her conversion from “celibacy to joyful sexuality,” from the “dream of religion to engagement in an adult sexual relationship” (Wood 255; Gooderham 168). The renunciation of her faith came at a time when Mary

was discovering another side of [herself], you know, the one that liked the *taste* of wine and grilled sardines and the *feeling* of warm air on [her] skin and the *beat* of music in the background. (*HDM* 951, my italics)

Pullman again enhances Mary Malone's identification with Eve, as she sits under a lemon tree surrounded by passion flowers at this particular moment, foreshadowing her Fall from her faith. The taste of marzipan brings back a memory of when Mary was twelve and fell in love with a boy for the first time. Pullman's temptation recounts Mary's own experiences with love and appeals to Lyra's senses, not very dissimilar from Satan's temptation of Eve in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Correspondingly, Milton's Satan tempts Eve by sharing *his* personal experiences after (supposedly) eating from the Tree of Knowledge. He finds Eve alone in the Garden of Eden and with "serpent-tongue" praises her beauty. Surprised to hear the serpent talk, Eve wants to know how this could be. He tells her of

A goodly tree far distant to behold
Loaden with fruit of fairest colours mixed,
Ruddy and gold... (*PL* 9.575-7)

After eating from "those fair apples"¹² (*PL* 9.584), the serpent tells of a "strange alteration in me" (*PL* 9.598). He claims to have gained the power of speech and the ability to see "all things fair and good," hereby acknowledging that Eve is the most beautiful of all and worthy of worship (*PL* 9.604-10). He escorts her to the Tree of Knowledge, but Eve refuses to give in as it is God's sole command not to eat from this particular tree. Yet, Satan tempts Eve in *all* her senses:

...his words, replete with guile,
Into her *heart* too easy entrance won:

¹² Note that Milton denotes the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge as "fair apples" only once, while he uses the word "fruit" on all other occasions.

Fixed on the fruit she *gazed*, which to behold
Might tempt alone; and *in her ears the sound*
Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregn'd
With reason, to her seeming, and with truth:
Mean while the hour of noon drew on, and waked
An eager *appetite*, rais'd by the *smell*
So savoury of that fruit, which with desire
Inclinable now grown to *touch* or *taste*,
Solicited her longing *eye*... (*PL* 9.732-42, my italics)

Milton emphasises the aroused senses to dramatise the inevitable temptation to which Eve gives in. Eve's curiosity to experience the knowledge of both good and evil and to become wise, wins.

Likewise, Pullman's heroine Lyra is curious and wants to know what feelings Mary Malone is talking about. As she listens to Mary's story about the boy who gently put a bit of marzipan in her mouth, Lyra

felt something strange happen to her body [...] She felt as if she had been handed the key to a great house she hadn't known was there, a house that was somehow inside her, and as she turned the key, deep in the darkness of the building she felt other doors opening too, and lights coming on [...] *Soon*, she thought, *soon I'll know. I'll know very soon.* (*HDM* 953-6)

According to Russell, the "knowing" that takes place between Lyra and Will "crowns Lyra's Eve-like knowledge quest" (219). It occurs a few days after Mary's anecdotes, when Lyra and Will sit down to eat some bread and cheese, secluded from the rest of the world.

Then Lyra took one of those little red fruits [...] And she lifted the fruit gently to his mouth. She could see from his eyes that he knew at once what she meant, and that he was too joyful to speak. (*HDM* 972).

They kiss and Lyra can finally give meaning to the feelings she has had: “now I know what I must have felt all the time: I love you, Will, I love you” (*HDM* 972). He answers her by “kissing her hot face over and over again, drinking in with adoration the scent of her body and her warm honey-fragrant hair and her sweet moist mouth that tasted of the little red fruit,”¹³ while “around them there was nothing but silence, as if all the world were holding its breath” (*HDM* 972). As they return, “they would seem the true image of what human beings always could be, once they had come into their inheritance [...] these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love” (*HDM* 976).

In *His Dark Materials*, the act of eating the fruit is accompanied by feelings of joy and happiness. This is very different from Milton’s Eve eating the fruit, as the

Earth felt the wound; and nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
That all was lost... (*PL* 9.781-3)

Eve tries to convince herself that she has done the right thing:

Experience, next, to thee I owe,
Best guide; not following thee, I had remained
In ignorance... (*PL* 9.806-8)

Nevertheless, she is afraid to think what would happen if she were to die after all and wants Adam to share her lot, as “so dear I love him, that with him all deaths I could endure, without him live no life” (*PL* 9.831-2). Adam feels the same way; he would not live without his Eve, who is his flesh. So,

¹³ Note that Pullman’s use of “warm honey-fragrant hair” and “red fruit” alludes to Milton’s “fruit of fairest colours mixed, ruddy and gold” (*PL* 9.576-7).

She gave him of that fair enticing fruit
With liberal hand: he scrupled not to eat,
Against his better knowledge; not deceived,
But fondly overcome with female charm. (*PL* 9.995-8)

Again the Earth trembles and gives a “second groan,” even the weather changes as it begins to thunder and “some sad drops wept at completing of the mortal sin” (*PL* 9.1000-3). After eating the fruit, Adam and Eve burn in lust and satisfy their inflaming, carnal desires (*PL* 9.1012-4). This signals the darkening of their minds, as their innocence has left them and has been replaced by “guilty Shame” (*PL* 9.1057).

Differences between Pullman’s and Milton’s accounts of the temptation are evident. Firstly, the temptress in *His Dark Materials* is a good person who helps to understand certain feelings that had not been known to the protagonists before. It is about knowing what love is and is represented by the “little red fruits”. In Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Satan is the tempter and only wants to corrupt humankind. Adam and Eve already know the concept of love before eating the fruit, yet they develop sinful lust contrary to the innocent love they had before. We could say that if the fruit is a metaphor, in Pullman’s narrative it represents sexual awareness, whereas for Milton it is the knowledge of evil, sin and regret. Lyra and Will’s kissing is marked by sweetness and tenderness in a state of happiness. Contrastingly, the lustful love-making of Adam and Eve is signalled by weather changes and a continuous dark omen of doom.

3.3 The Impact of the Fall

Lyra Belacqua is not only destined to fulfil the role of a second Eve, but as the witch Serafina Pekkala tells us: “We are all subject to the fates. But we must all act as if we are not [...] or die of despair. There is a curious prophecy about this child [Lyra]: she is destined to bring

about the end of destiny” (*HDM* 255). In Pullman’s narrative world, not only are people subordinated by the restrictive laws of the Church, Metatron and the Authority, but by destiny as well. Therefore, Lyra must act as Eve, the liberator of mankind, and she performs this task in various ways. Firstly, Lyra and Will together liberate mankind by travelling to the world of the dead and with the help of the subtle knife, provide the souls with an exit into the world of the *mulefa*. Here the souls will dissolve into the open air to become one with the cosmos. By liberating the dead, Lyra does not only function as an Eve-character but as a Christ figure as well (Gooderham 161; Padley & Padley 332). The comparison is validated by the apocryphal story of the Harrowing of Hell, in which Christ’s death paradoxically defeats Death. He descends to Hell to free the souls who have been trapped since Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Paradise. Moreover, he re-opens Heaven’s Gate for all who deserve God’s mercy. This clearly has an echo in *His Dark Materials*, as Lyra is paradoxically “destined to bring about the end of destiny” and also travels to the land of the dead to free the imprisoned souls. Furthermore, she also sets the Authority free. As the epic battle between Lord Asriel’s and Metatron’s forces persists, Lyra and Will coincidentally “stumble upon” the Authority in his crystal litter (*HDM* 919). When Lyra notices the ancient creature is still alive, she feels pity and releases him from his crystal cell, after which he “was gone: a mystery dissolving in mystery” (*HDM* 926). As Russell argues, Lyra’s portrait is inextricably linked to that of the Authority; “When the new Eve is ready for the new creation, built on truth, the old Authority, built on a lie, must vanish” (212). This leads the way to building the Republic of Heaven, in which the new morality leaves each to choose their own path in life. Thus, with the disappearance of institutionalised religion, fixed destiny is replaced by free will.

In *Paradise Lost* Eve is portrayed as anything but the “liberator of mankind”; instead, Milton portrays her as “our credulous mother” who is the cause “of all this woe” (*PL* 9.643; 10.916). Her disobedience towards God and Adam causes their expulsion from Paradise to

live a life filled with hardships, miseries, pain and death. Nevertheless, in the end Eve recognises herself as the “primary human agent in God’s redemptive plan and the primary protagonist of *Paradise Lost*” (Lewalski 16):

... though all by me is lost,

Such favour I unworthy am vouchsafed,

By me the promised seed shall all restore. (12.621-3)

As the “mother of all mankind” (*PL* 11.159), Eve’s lineage will eventually bring forth the Virgin Mother Mary and her son, Jesus. Therefore, indirectly she is the key to liberation as well, as God had intended his Grand Scheme in the Divine Comedy that we call life.

In conclusion, Pullman’s narrative applauds the persevering, life-time search for knowledge, whereas Milton openly questions the desire to know more. Pullman’s heroine Lyra is clearly portrayed as Eve, but in *His Dark Materials* she is seen as the liberator of mankind. This is quite unconventional compared to Milton’s Eve, who is represented as the “cause of our woe” (*PL* 10.916). Despite this great difference in character, Pullman describes Lyra’s temptation in a very similar way to that of Milton: both Eve characters are persuaded by words describing personal experiences and appealing to the senses. Yet, for Pullman the temptation is necessary to becoming an adult by focussing on feelings of love and sexual awareness, whereas for Milton the temptation is about knowing both good and evil. Pullman’s choice to have Mary Malone as temptress in *His Dark Materials* is by no means coincidental; she simultaneously acts as another Eve figure and, crucially, has renounced her Christian faith. Pullman deliberately merges conflicting biblical figures into his own characters: Lyra is both Eve and Christ, Mary Malone is the temptress but in her own way Eve as well, while alluding to the Virgin Mary. This is necessary to Pullman’s own ideology: building the Republic of Heaven, in a world where institutionalised religion has no place and each has the freedom to fulfil the role they want to assume.

Conclusion

This thesis explores how Pullman's intertextual references to Milton's *Paradise Lost* function within his trilogy *His Dark Materials*. As we have seen, Pullman often uses the same imagery as Milton to set the tone, yet his views are almost consistently opposed to those of Milton. The first chapter "Universal and Heavenly Matters" explains the difference in world picture. For Pullman, atheism or agnosticism is the norm, whereas Milton's faith was Puritanism. This accounts for the differences in the notions they have of the universe, its Creator, the afterlife that people deserve and the Church as the agent of religion.

In the second chapter, we learn that although there are several Satanic figures in Pullman's trilogy, Lord Asriel resembles Milton's Satan in that he challenges the Authority and builds his own Pandemonium. Here, Pullman uses many allusions to Milton to compare Lord Asriel's world and fortress to Satan's Pandemonium in Hell. Nevertheless, Pullman's Satan can only be understood in light of the Romantic readings of Milton's Satan; the Romantics have a certain sympathy for the Devil regarding him as the "true hero" of *Paradise Lost*.

Chapter Three, "Eve's Legacy," elucidates Pullman's core belief that the search for knowledge constitutes the meaning of life. The temptation in *His Dark Materials* is again described by imagery and symbolism that echoes Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The Fall constitutes very different outcomes in both works; in *His Dark Materials* Lyra's Fall leads to the liberation of Mankind and the building of the Republic of Heaven, whereas in *Paradise Lost* Eve's Fall leads to death and misery until the birth of Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, Philip Pullman uses Milton's words to turn Milton's world view upside down; he inverts Milton's theology, but retains a comparable ambience by using the same imagery and symbolism. While this thesis has explored the influences of John Milton's

Paradise Lost, one could also try to “pin down Blake’s role,” which according to Jason Whittaker would be a “more subtle affair” (Whittaker “Zoapod 10” par. 3). Another suggestion for further research might be to investigate why (almost) all quotes in *The Amber Spyglass* are from the Romantic period.

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