

**An Exploration into the Use of the Biblical Narrative of the Fall within
the children's series *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis and *His
Dark Materials* by Philip Pullman**

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Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the uses to which children's authors C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman put the major biblical theme of the Fall (with passing commentary on Temptation, the precursor to the Fall) in their seminal children's series *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *His Dark Materials* trilogy. I argue that each author uses the subject of the Fall as a central theme in his series in order to inflect the dominant message of this biblical story (that humanity has fallen from perfection into sin) with their personal opinions on fundamental human questions concerning the nature of God, the difference between good and evil, and the metaphysical 'rules' that structure the universe and mankind's place in it.¹ In exploring these issues, I point out the ways in which Pullman and Lewis, in their drastically differing opinions as to the legitimacy of the worldview implicit in the original Bible story, are nevertheless both heavily dependant on the overwhelming influence that the Fall narrative has had on Western culture.

¹ The terms "humanity" and "mankind" are used throughout this thesis, and are to be viewed as solely as imperfect terms of designation to refer to the complex categories of sentient life.

Introduction

To explain my aims in this thesis, I must first articulate the primary purpose of myths and stories, which besides providing simple entertainment, the passing on of knowledge and morality, and attempting to explain natural, social and cultural phenomena, have been told in order to grant humanity a sense of purpose and meaning. Stories are created and told in order to grant cultures a sense of order and structure in a world that often seems chaotic and random. All of these traits are to be found in the story of the Judeo-Christian Fall from grace, as recorded in the first book of the Old Testament.²

Eric Smith describes the Fall as a great aetiological myth central to the Western imagination, and according to him the story persists because it contains the perennial concerns of man, an explanation that is akin to Anne-Marie Bird's declaration that its prevailing influence on Western culture is due to the fact it answers a series of the most basic and profound questions humanity has posed to itself.³ The Fall narrative includes explanations as to how the universe was formed, how humanity was created, and why suffering and death entered the world. It discusses God's intentions for his creation, the nature of consciousness, growing up, even the gender relationship and Western culture's

² All biblical citations are taken from the King James Version.

³ Eric Smith, *The Myth of the Fall of Man in English Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1973), xiii
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*, Volume 1.32, Number 2, (2001): 111

aversion to snakes. It affects the way childhood is perceived, how evil is defined, and gives instructions on how lives should be led, effectively shaping mankind's view of itself. Its strength comes from the fact that whether one believes it is literal truth (as millions around the world do) or simply metaphorical, the story explains the flawed state of mankind and the reasons behind its history of war, suffering, disease, poverty and death, all of which all seem to prove that the human state as we know it is one that is fatally, undeniably flawed. Finally, the Fall is part of a major storytelling theme that is common to civilizations throughout the ages from the Ancient Greeks' idea of a former 'Golden Age' to our own sense of nostalgia for 'the good old days': that of an entropic descent from perfection.

However, this thesis is not concerned with the psychological influence that the Fall has had throughout history on either civilizations or individuals. My argument rests on the assumption that the story's great influence in Western culture allows it to act as a central theme around which Lewis and Pullman can discuss a range of issues within their seminal children's series *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *His Dark Materials* trilogy. Both Lewis and Pullman have each crafted for themselves worldviews based on this notion of the Fall that encompass a range of philosophical issues (such as good and evil, life and death, God and humanity) within the context of their secondary worlds. By "secondary worlds" I am referring to the worlds that exist parallel to each author's representation of the "real" world; specifically Lewis's realm of Narnia and Pullman's myriad of other universes, particularly his alternative version of Oxford. The terms "primary" and "secondary worlds" were originally coined by J. R. R. Tolkien in his essay "On Fairy Stories," in which fantasy worlds with inner consistency were described as

“secondary worlds,” and their authors’ as “sub-creators.”⁴ Although Tolkien refers to the “primary world” as the real world, for the purposes of this thesis, I shall be using the term in order to refer to the real world as it is represented within the texts of Lewis and Pullman themselves. Although each author establishes the “real” (or primary) worlds in their novels, it is within the scope of their secondary worlds that they can explore their individual worldviews in more detail, by implementing fantasy elements (such as Lewis’s character of Aslan, or Pullman’s concept of Dust) to better illustrate aspects of their personal beliefs. However, attention will also be given to the representation of the Fall narrative in the primary worlds, as in each case, the authors’ primary world contains knowledge and understanding of the Fall as it appears in its original biblical context.⁵ My thesis explores how aspects of the Fall are adapted by each author, as well as how each author uses it and its message to shape the drastically opposed worldviews apparent in their stories, with Lewis following the traditional understanding of the Fall, in which it is treated as an undesirable fall from perfection following an act of disobedience toward God, whilst Pullman reshapes its meaning entirely in order to present it as a story of growth from preconscious innocence to self-awareness and independence. Throughout, I argue that the overwhelming influence of the ‘Fall’ deeply influences the structure of each set of primary and secondary worlds, to the point where the concept is essential to both plot formation and the creation of meaning within each series.

The story of the Garden of Eden coherently explains the creation of man, the coming of evil and suffering into the world, and the separation of mankind from God, a

⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories,” *Tree and Leaf* (London: Unwin, 1964)

⁵ Lewis’s primary world is his child protagonists’ home-world that frames the beginning and end of all but one of the Narnia novels; for Pullman, it is the world that Will and Mary Malone inhabit, first seen at the beginning of *Subtle*.

human condition that is alleged to endure even to this day. Although the book of Genesis begins with the creation of the universe and ends with the sojourning of the Israelites in Egypt, the story of the Creation and the Fall is its most famous narrative, explaining that God created the Earth over a period of seven days, during which He created man in His own image from the dust of the ground. Adam, the first man, was given the Garden of Eden to work, being warned that: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”⁶ Out of one of Adam’s ribs God creates the first woman, Eve, as a helpmate for Adam. Unfortunately, Eve is approached by a serpent, which tempts her with the fruit of the forbidden tree, telling her: “You will surely not die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁷ Desiring the wisdom promised her, Eve eats the fruit and shares it with Adam: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”⁸ When God discovers their new condition, he banishes them from the Garden forever: “after he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”⁹ When I speak of the Fall throughout the course of the thesis, it is this story that I am referring to and its accompanying theological subtext: that humanity has caused its own fall from grace, a result of which is their continued existence as a flawed species prone to sin. It will predominantly be referred to as the “Fall narrative,” as it is its presence as a plot device in

⁶ Genesis 1:16

⁷ Genesis 3: 4

⁸ Genesis 3: 7

⁹ Genesis 3: 24

both series, (one that concerns a fall from grace either by an individual or group) that is of greatest significance in exploring how Lewis and Pullman rely on its narrative pattern of experience replacing innocence to shape the central part of their alternative plots. Although the theological implication of the biblical story – that humanity exists in a state of sin – is central to the understanding of each author’s treatment of the Fall, the term “narrative” will be implemented, given that a retelling or alternative version of the original story is present in each series, with the theological consequences differing drastically between each author. It is this point of similarity in each author’s use of the Fall to carry the messages implicit in their texts, not the differences in theology, which forms the basis of this thesis.

Just as the biblical story of the Fall has a rhetorical purpose, both Pullman and Lewis have a moral or ethical purpose in the telling of their stories, with a particular message inherent in their retelling of the story itself. As Pullman says: “all stories teach, whether the storyteller wants them to or not,” a claim that compliments Joyce Cary’s statement that: “all writers...must have, in any kind of story, some picture of the world and what is right and wrong in that world.”¹⁰ Both Lewis and Pullman have a set of opinions that they want to share with the reader, including commentary on the human condition, cultural definitions of good and evil, and the struggle to find meaning in life. Pullman says of his own story that “I like to refer to it not as fantasy at all but as stark realism,” explaining that all the fantastical elements apparent in the story simply serve as vehicles to help highlight his discussion of human beings, and claiming that books are

¹⁰ Philip Pullman, quoted in Claire Squires, *Continuum Contemporaries: Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials trilogy, A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Company, 2003), 63
Joyce Cary, quoted in Leland Ryken and Marjorie Lamp Mead, *A Reader’s Guide Through the Wardrobe* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 54

essentially dull if they don't discuss humanity itself.¹¹ As such, Padley argues that Pullman does indeed have an agenda in his text, one that negatively represents Christianity by reconstructing traditional doctrines, in which case: "the resultant comparison with the real world is every bit as pernicious as that which Pullman identifies so frequently in the works of others."¹² Even Pullman provides evidence to advocate this viewpoint when he states: "I had long wanted to give a sort of historical answer to the, so to speak, propaganda, on behalf of religion that you get in, for example, C.S. Lewis."¹³ This accusation of propaganda levelled at Lewis can be understood when working under the assumption that Narnia has been set up as a world to better explore the theological ideas outlined in his Christian apologetics. An imaginary world is the perfect context for Lewis to illuminate and promote these ideas, as he shapes his world to reflect his faith. In both cases, the Fall acts as the catalyst for the shaping of these ideals, with each author adhering to a particular set of beliefs and articulating a specific worldview designed to be shared with the reader.

C.S. Lewis, author of the seven part *The Chronicles of Narnia* uses the narrative of the Fall in order to extend his own Christian worldview, incorporating the concept into his secondary world of Narnia. All seven books adhere to a Christian understanding of the world, but this thesis will focus particularly on *The Magician's Nephew*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Last Battle*, the three books that most explicitly

¹¹ Kerry Fried, "Darkness Visible: An Interview with Philip Pullman," *HisDarkMaterials.org* (June 25, 2003), <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/darkness-visible-an-interview-with-philip-pullman-part-1>

¹² Jonathan Padley and Kenneth Padley, "A Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven: *His Dark Materials* Inverted Theology and the End of Philip Pullman's Authority," *Children's Literature in Education*, , Volume 37, Number 4, (December 2006): 326

¹³ Pullman, quoted in Nicholas Tucker, *Darkness Visible: Inside the World of Philip Pullman* (Cambridge: Wizard Books, 2003), 165

explicate the traditional understanding of the Fall. As a Christian apologist, Lewis assumes that the Fall was not only a literal event, but a negative one brought on by human sin in the course of human history. As he puts it: “the Fall is simply and solely Disobedience, doing what you have been told not to, and it results from Pride...forgetting your place, thinking you are God.”¹⁴ This is Lewis’s conception of the Fall, one that is adhered to in his portrayal of humanity and the universe, the consequences of which are played out in *Lion*. However, as I will explore, the realm of Narnia contains its own version of the biblical Fall within *Nephew*. Though Lewis has attempted to change several aspects of it in order to retain Narnia’s original innocence, this attempt leads to a conundrum when he needs to introduce evil in order to instigate conflict. How this occurs is explored in Chapter One, which deals with the way each author reshapes the Fall to facilitate his own ideals.

For Philip Pullman, author of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, the Fall is used as a metaphor within his own fiction to embody the evolutionary progress of humanity into self-consciousness. Different versions of the Fall narrative are told throughout the different worlds that Pullman creates, in which he argues that the Fall was a positive event for humanity, exploring the notion that we are better off for having eaten the metaphorical fruit. Pullman’s depiction is contradictory to mainstream Christian theology, since instead of assuming that humanity is intrinsically sinful in nature, he suggests that the coming of reason, agency and free will to the human race was entirely advantageous. The Fall has been reshaped to fit his own atheistic views, yet as we shall see, Pullman is indebted to the Christian narrative even as he tries to break away from it. The influence of the Fall is so great that Pullman must build his secondary worlds on so-

¹⁴ C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 70

called Christian assumptions, and often finds himself mimicking Christian ideals based on the Fall narrative, including warnings against the dangers of curiosity, the lures of female sexuality, the fulfillment that comes through hard work, and the need to sacrifice personal joy for the greater good.

This is not the only use to which Pullman puts the Fall narrative. Along with allowing it to stand as a metaphor for humanity's gaining of self-consciousness, he also uses it as an analogy for the process of growing up, with the Garden of Eden serving as the embodiment of childhood innocence that eventually must give way to the experience of adulthood. However, in keeping with his interpretation of the Fall as a positive human event, Pullman ensures that unlike the idealistic view in which children are adulated as beings that embody untainted innocence, Pullman equates childhood with a sense of ignorance and savagery. Adolescence becomes the personal "fall" that each child goes through to reach adulthood and achieve possession of all it encompasses: self-consciousness, maturity and purpose.

Lewis on the other hand, identifies and separates adults from children in a less straightforward fashion, and seems torn between his regard for the innocence prevalent in children and the intelligence that he values in adults. His paradoxical statement: "it is the stupidest children who are the most childish and the stupidest grownups who are the most grownup," is part of his understanding of Adam and Eve's prelapsarian perfection: "the whole point about Adam and Eve is that, as they would never, but for sin, have been old, so they were never young; never immature or underdeveloped. They were created full-grown and perfect."¹⁵ This complex attempt to classify and reconcile adults and children

¹⁵ Lewis, quoted in Kathryn Lindskoog *The Lion of Judah in Never-Never Land* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 120

(with little attention paid to the adolescence that occurs between them) and his understanding of the consequences of the Fall results in an uneasy relationship between child and adult characters during the course of the series. Therefore Chapter Two explores the way in which the Fall narrative affects each authors' portrayal of childhood and adulthood and the (often uneasy) relationship between the two.

Finally, Chapter Three deals with how the lessons that the Fall proposes to teach the reader shape the representation of good and evil within each series. In typical fantasy fiction, conflict within the plot is created through the pitting of the forces of good and evil against one another, and in creating their respective fantasies, the authors' individual interpretations of the Fall are central in defining these two opposing states.

For Lewis, the epitome of good in his series is the Christ-figure of Aslan, who acts out the role of redeemer for those who live under the consequences of Eve's disobedience. In the biblical understanding of the story, the Fall implies that humanity is not capable of its own salvation from sin, and instead must rely on divine grace to intervene on their behalf. It is Aslan who negates the effects of the Fall within the realm of Narnia, as does his counterpart, Christ in the New Testament. With goodness expressed in the persona of Aslan, evil naturally becomes anything opposed to him, specifically those that display active disobedience toward his rule and a false sense of pride. These traits are captured particularly well in the main antagonist of the series, the White Witch, but also in minor villains such as the race of Calormenes, who worship a false god in the place of Aslan. Lewis creates a straightforward portrayal of good and evil that ensures the primal goodness of Aslan will inevitably emerge triumphant over the

Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, 116

lesser quality of evil, which is consistently portrayed as a mere distortion of goodness. As is to be expected, this closely resembles the notion of the original Paradise of the human state being gradually corrupted by evil forces, and is markedly different from the relationship explored in Pullman, in which the Fall is considered the gaining of self-consciousness for both humanity as a whole and individuals on reaching adolescence. As such, Pullman's concept of Dust is eventually revealed to be particles of consciousness that surround all sentient life. With this seen as the primal source of goodness (compared to the ignorance of being unself-aware) the forces of evil are naturally those attempting to destroy this precious aspect of human life. The Fall narrative has been exploited in *His Dark Materials* by a church system dubbed the Magisterium to demonize the concept of Dust, making it synonymous with Original Sin. One of the key plot threads in the trilogy is the ongoing attempt by the protagonists to identify the true nature of Dust, incorporating several versions of the Fall narrative in order to pinpoint its purpose and relationship to humanity. In Pullman's context, good and evil become the right or wrong actions that a person can commit, as opposed to any metaphysical forces outside of human control. Thus, the conflict that drives the plot in *His Dark Materials* is described as "a struggle between wisdom and stupidity," two sides that are based on attitudes toward the Fall and an individual's interpretation of it.¹⁶

Surprisingly, considered within exclusively generic terms, the fantasy writings of Pullman and Lewis have a lot in common. Both are multi-book sagas classified as children's fantasy fiction in which child protagonists are pitted against evil forces in parallel worlds which contain (among other things) talking animals, witches, complex

¹⁶ Claire Squires, *Continuum Contemporaries: Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials Trilogy, A Reader's Guide*, (Continuum International Publishing Company; 2003) 57

religious symbolism and a preponderance of Northern European and Arctic imagery and folklore. Each one even begins their series with the image of a young girl hiding in a wardrobe, and of course, both are remarkably similar in their use of the Fall narrative in building a morality in their secondary universe, representing childhood and defining good and evil. Although the shape and texture of all these components are markedly different, it is by exploring the way in which Lewis and Pullman implement the Fall narrative in their series that I aim to underscore this fundamental similarity between these two authors, as opposed to the drastic differences in opinion and belief, for it is their mutual interest in the Fall and its influence upon Western culture that make *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *His Dark Materials* such fascinating books, both in themselves, and when read as companion pieces.

Chapter I: Alternative Versions of the Fall Narrative as presented within *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *His Dark Materials*

The Fall narrative features heavily in both *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *His Dark Materials* trilogy within each author's presentation of both the primary and secondary worlds, as a plot device that shapes the way in which their worldviews are to be interpreted by the reader. Each series features some kind of Temptation and Fall, with each author using the original biblical narrative as a template for their own interpretation of the Fall's meaning and consequences. This point of similarity between the two authors will be explored in respect to their relationship with the biblical version of the Fall, in regards to how much each has changed the shape and meaning of the original story in order to use it in the formation of their own worldviews. It is each author's representation of their personal belief system presented in their secondary worlds that is the main focus of Chapter One, as well as how each author uses their modified versions of the Temptation and Fall pattern to present their range of ideas and opinions to the reader. Although neither one allows the Fall to dictate the development of their separate plots, altering certain aspects of the original story for the sake of their own, the fact that the pattern of the Fall narrative is such a recognisable part of each series demonstrates its significance as a key aspect of each plot.

The basic constructs of Narnia's worldview are crucial in understanding Lewis's treatment of the Fall. Together they form the assumption that there are immutable moral laws that humankind must obey, but that there is also supernatural grace that transcends these laws for the benefit of mankind, born out of the compassion that is inseparable from an all-powerful deity. Meanwhile, Pullman contradicts the very basics of Lewis's worldview, beginning with Lewis's acknowledgement that the Fall is a historical event that shaped the course of human history and that this fallen state is the condition of all intelligent life in both the primary and secondary worlds that Lewis presents. Pullman utterly reshapes this representation, which makes the structuring of the meaning and nature of the Fall and all it entails for humanity the fundamental difference between himself and Lewis and the worldviews each present to their readers. Lewis has a Fall within the context of his story so that he might explore the theme of redemption through his titular character Aslan, as despite the differences in the nature of the "fallen-ness" between the primary world and Narnia, there is still enough corruption within and between living things for the need of a loving God to intervene. In a marked contrast to this, Pullman is solely interested in the Fall itself, which is central to the plot of *His Dark Materials* and a story that he calls: "the central myth of what it means to be a human being."¹⁷ As that statement suggests, the Fall is not treated as anything other than a myth within the context of the trilogy, acting as a metaphor for the evolution of mankind from pre-consciousness to self-awareness or for the growth of a child into an adult. Throughout the trilogy there are several differing versions of the Temptation and Fall, all of which

¹⁷ Kerry Fried, "Darkness Visible: An Interview with Philip Pullman," *HisDarkMaterials.org* (June 25, 2003), <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/darkness-visible-an-interview-with-philip-pullman-part-2>

share several aspects that underscore its importance to understanding the nature of mankind. It is in exploring how the story of the Fall has influenced how mankind perceives itself, rather than how mankind deals with what many believe are the literal consequences of Original Sin, that is of paramount importance to Pullman.

The influence of the Fall is prevalent throughout Lewis's series, particularly in *Lion, Nephew and Battle*. In each of these volumes lies Lewis's understanding of the teachings within the Old Testament book of Genesis: that conscious life is susceptible to sin due to a self-imposed separation from God. The cause behind this schism is a metaphysical Fall from grace that has rendered the world and its inhabitants imperfect, and salvageable only through the intervention of a higher power. Lewis appeals to this belief system in two major ways within the context of his novels: first by assuming its influence upon the primary world of the child protagonists, and secondly, by using its template to construct his own retelling in the secondary world of Narnia. In doing so, it is used to present the author's convictions (as presented in Lewis's theological writings) as to the state of the human condition and mankind's place within the universe, sharing them with the reader within the context of the story. Because of his personal belief in the source material of the Fall narrative – the Book of Genesis – Lewis has remained fundamentally true to the former's original meaning and purpose, particularly as he portrays it in the primary world. Consciously or unconsciously, Lewis is caught (though quite contentedly so) within the confines of the Fall's morality, unwilling to change its structure and meaning from that laid out in Genesis. Using it to tell a series of stories concerned with finding spiritual meaning and fulfilment during our lifetimes, patterns of the Fall narrative appear throughout the *Chronicles* to enforce Lewis's own belief in

Christianity by recreating a world where the Fall's meaning – though not necessarily the details – collaborates with his faith.

One thing that is certain is that this Christian influence in the series was not a premeditated decision, but a presence that grew organically as Lewis wrote. When Lewis began *Lion*, he claims he was inspired by images in his head as opposed to any religious doctrines: “Everything began with images. A faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn't even anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord,” and he had no idea that it would evolve into a series of seven books.¹⁸ Lewis did not discuss his sources and inspiration until after the complete publication of the series, and so could say with the power of hindsight how he expected the Christian element of the books to be read. But even at this stage, Lewis was often ambiguous in his discussions on how the Christian influence on the *Chronicles* was to be interpreted and what his motivations were in depending so heavily on Christian beliefs to create Narnia. Despite what we know about the conceptual origins of *Narnia*, Sayer recalls Lewis telling him that the books were meant to act as a pre-baptism of the child's imagination, as the inclusion of aspects of Christian orthodoxy would “make it easier for children to accept Christianity when they met it later in life,” (though he goes on to state that the process of writing the Narnian stories was in no way calculated to include a prearranged theological scheme) and Lewis also described his intentions in writing the books as an attempt to cast Christian teachings into a more appealing light for a public that was becoming immune to preaching: “Supposing that by casting all these [biblical components] into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and

¹⁸ Lewis, quoted in Colin Manlove, *The Chronicles of Narnia, The Patterning of a Fantastic World* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 27

Sunday School associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency.”¹⁹ Both of these statements suggest conscious motivation on Lewis’s part to explore his understanding of Christian theology in a story without the reader’s initial awareness.

By the time Lewis wrote the *Chronicles*, he was already the author of several apologetics devoted to the defence of Christianity, using logic to explain certain components of Christian faith.²⁰ Through them, Lewis articulated why he was a believer in Christianity and how its teachings helped him gain a certain perspective on his life. With such a background, it is almost inevitable that he would imbue his children’s stories with Christian themes and symbolism, and that many of the arguments that he uses to defend Christianity in his apologetics would find their way into his fiction. In fact, Carpenter insinuates that after his Christian apologetics were found severely faulty in a public Oxford debate, Lewis turned to children’s fiction, a genre in which he could explore his theology in the context of an imaginary world that he had complete control over.²¹ However, in examining how exactly the Christian elements work within the series, Manlove concludes that Narnia is a creation that contains a mythopoeia within an inherited literary and biblical tradition, the point of which is to “recreate Christian supernatural truth within an invented world,” a viewpoint that informs my treatment of the subject.²² In dealing with this supernatural truth in a fictional capacity (a truth that he defended so passionately in his earlier publications), Lewis found he could neither

¹⁹ George Sayer, *Jack : C. S. Lewis and his Times* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 192
Lewis, quoted in Ryken and Lamp Mead, 97

²⁰ Such as *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*, *Beyond Personality*, *The Great Divorce* and *Miracles*.

²¹ Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1978) 216-7

²² Manlove, 6

change nor misrepresent any of the fundamental beliefs that make up the central tenants of Christianity, not even in the context of an imaginary world. Therefore, several of the most important Christian doctrines (the ones that Kilby describes as ancient, fixed and orthodox) could not be contradicted in his creation of Narnia.²³ Lewis, for example, would not be able to imagine a world in which love was considered evil and hatred good for, as Greydanus points out: “the supremacy of love is not a mere contingent fact about the created world, but an eternal and immutable fact about God himself.”²⁴ As a result, the most important Christian beliefs concerning God, the universe and the human condition must remain untouched within his fiction, though Lewis was free to reshape the details surrounding them with his creation of a fantasy world. Naturally, the central belief that forms the basis for all his ideas on these metaphysical issues remains that of the Fall.

However, with respect to Pullman and the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, there is no hesitation in tampering with the original meaning surrounding the biblical Fall to create a new worldview, starting with nothing less than the image of God Himself; (called “the Authority” throughout the trilogy) a being that is ultimately destroyed. The absence of God in Pullman’s worldview might lead one to suspect that within the context of *His Dark Materials*, the Fall does not exist as an historical occurrence at all (as it certainly does in Lewis), that it is instead only an elaborate lie conceived and spread by the Authority in order to control the mass of human thought. Certainly the biblical story of Creation, in which God creates the world in seven days and forms mankind from dust, is revealed to be a fabrication. However, Pullman chooses not to totally disregard the story

²³ Clyde Kilby, *The Christian Worlds in C. S. Lewis* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 141

²⁴ Steven D. Greydanus, “Harry versus Gandalf, An In-depth Analysis of the Use of Literary Magic in the Works of J.K. Rowling, J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis,” Decent Films Guide, <http://www.decentfilms.com/sections/articles/magic.html>

of the Fall, but to simply change its meaning in order to fit into his alternative worldview, coming to the understanding that instead of a negative occurrence, it is “completely essential, the best thing, the most important thing that has ever happened to us” and that it is “not the source of all woe and misery, as in traditional Christian teaching, but [the] the beginning of the human freedom, something to be celebrated, not lamented.”²⁵ It is the character of Mary Malone who discovers the truth about Genesis, thinking to herself that: “it all had something to do with the great change in human history, symbolised in the story of Adam and Eve: with the Temptation, the Fall, Original Sin...” (*Spyglass* 235).²⁶ The key word here is *symbolised*, as in the context of *His Dark Materials*, the Fall (in particular Eve’s decision to eat the forbidden fruit) is not a literal moment in history, but serves as a metaphor for the awakening of humanity out of ignorance and into self-realisation, being intricately bound up with the concept of Dust. As Woods describes it: “in a sweeping synthesis of evolutionary theory, particle physics, and human prehistory, *His Dark Materials* hypothesises that something happened when humanity evolved the possibility of consciousness and that Dust is a part of that process.”²⁷

According to Pullman, the fruit of Eden granted the figure of Eve self-awareness, sexuality and the beginning of humanity’s accumulation of knowledge and wisdom, an event which can be considered to be the metaphorical equivalent of history’s most important aspect of evolution: humanity’s gradual and collective acquirement of these same attributes (which in the context of the trilogy is the accumulative ‘soaking’ of Dust

²⁵ Pullman, quoted in Squires, 19
Philip Pullman, “Questions and Answers” Random House Kids,
<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/pullman/index.html>

²⁶ Subsequent references to Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy, hereafter referred to as *Northern*, *Subtle* and *Spyglass*, will be cited parenthetically.

²⁷ Naomi Woods “Dismembered Starlings and Neutered Minds: Innocence in *His Dark Materials*” in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, edited by Glenn Yeffeth (Texas: Benbella Books, 2005) 21

into human minds). As such, the most important thing to realise about Pullman's use of the Fall is that he does not consider the story literally *true*; Pullman makes it merely representational of the theory of evolution; to be more specific, the moment when humanity became aware of its own existence in the world. Pullman does not expect us to believe that human beings are really the descendants of Adam and Eve, that snakes can talk, and that it was the Authority who bestowed intelligence upon mankind. Most importantly, we are informed that it was not wrong of humanity to acquire such knowledge of itself, its sexuality and its place in the world; it was instead quite a natural and advantageous aspect of evolution. Because of this, Pullman makes it clear within the context of his story that the Fall narrative is not to be considered factual, as the two characters used to retell the story make abundantly clear in their retellings. Lord Asriel tells a sceptical Lyra to think of Adam and Eve as "an imaginary number, like the square root of minus one: you can never see any concrete proof that it exists, but if you include it in your equation, you can calculate all manner of things that couldn't be imagined without it" (*Northern* 372-3). Likewise, the mulefa tell Mary that their version of Eve's acquisition of knowledge is a "make-like," the mulefa term for metaphor (*Spyglass* 236). For the mulefa community, the story of the Fall is told in order to remember the joyful occasion when humanity became self-aware.

Part One: Lewis's Alternative Vision of the Fall Narrative within *The Chronicles of Narnia*

With these two drastically different approaches to the subject matter in mind, I shall henceforth be exploring each author's use of the Fall narrative within the context of their own stories. Beginning with Lewis and moving into Pullman, I shall highlight the differences and similarities that exist between the moral structure and religious symbolism of orthodox Christianity and their own versions of the Temptation and Fall from grace. For Lewis, this comparison serves to demonstrate his fidelity to the message inherent in the biblical version of the story, using the Fall narrative to shape his plot structure whilst simultaneously indulging his imagination by changing significant details. Lewis's intention was to create a set of images and story elements that remind the reader of Genesis whilst at the same time retaining several of its fundamental truths: a monotheistic Creator-God who creates a perfect world, the hierarchal ordering of intelligent creatures within that world, and the entrance of evil and sin that impinges of perfection, entering an unspoilt world without the permission of the Creator and disrupting His original designs for the world. These are all crucial aspects of the biblical Fall narrative, reshaped for the Narnian world, and by mirroring these key aspects of the biblical story in his own version of the Fall, Lewis remains true to his personal belief in the flawed state of the world, whilst giving himself room to change aspects of the Fall to allow Narnia to retain some of its inherent innocence. For Pullman, however, the fundamental details of the narrative, (such as a tempter, a garden setting, sweet food, and interaction between a male and female) remain more or less intact, but with a radically different meaning formed behind these elements. In the following comparison between the biblical Fall and Lewis's alternative world's version, I shall point out how far Lewis is able to go in altering certain aspects of his personal belief system to retain his didactic

purpose in presenting the consequences of Original Sin to his readership, whilst still maintaining a story that can be enjoyed for its own merits and imaginative qualities. In doing so, it will also become clear that Lewis relies heavily on the Fall narrative as an invaluable plot device for introducing necessary aspects within his story, such as the behaviour of humanity, the role of evil, the origins of the world and the nature of God. Without the Fall, Lewis would be at a loss as to how to introduce narrative components that allow for a plot, such as the emergence of evil and the conflict it creates. Whether working in the primary or secondary world portrayed in the text, the Fall is a tenet of Christianity that Lewis cannot change without seriously compromising his own belief-system, and by transposing the Fall into his stories, Lewis succeeds in encapsulating the central conceit of Christianity: that human life is subject to sin, only attaining salvation through divine intervention.

Narnia differs from Lewis's representation of the "real" world because there is no equivalent to the Fall of Man that corrupted our entire world; instead one Original Sin (Digory's decision to ring the bell to awaken the Witch in *Nephew*) reaches out from two already-fallen worlds (Earth and Charn) to pollute the purity of Narnia. Evil has not arisen from within Narnia itself, but has been brought there through no fault of the Narnians themselves. This is directly opposed to Adam and Eve whose disobedience caused a permanent change in their condition: knowledge of the existence of evil. This is markedly different from the state of the Narnians, who remain unaware of what 'evil' means even after they hear about the Witch: "What did he say had entered the world? - A Neevil - What's a Neevil?" (*Nephew* 144).²⁸ As such, we can look upon Narnia as a

²⁸ Subsequent references to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, hereafter referred to as *Nephew*, *Lion*, *Horse*, *Caspian*, *Treacher*, *Silver* and *Battle*, will be cited parenthetically.

world that is less fallen than our own world, what Manlove calls a place of “recovered innocence.”²⁹ By having the physical world of Narnia invaded by evil, yet sparing the creatures themselves from a Fall, Lewis has designed a system that allows him to present Narnia as a world more innocent than our own, yet still occasionally imposed upon by evil in order to create the necessary conflict for a story. When Narnia is not being threatened by encroaching evil; either from Witches, Calormenes or Telmarines, its inhabitants live in a blend of pastoral countryside and medieval romantic states, both of which are associated heavily with the innocence and simplicity of Eden. When Jill exclaims to Jewel in *Battle* that things always seem to be happening in Narnia, he informs her that:

The Sons and Daughters of Adam and Eve were brought out of their strange world into Narnia only at times when Narnia was stirred and upset, but she mustn't think it was always like that. In between their visits there were hundreds and thousands of years when peaceful King followed peaceful King till you could hardly remember their names or count their numbers, and there was really hardly anything to put into the History Books (*Battle* 110).

But although the Fall as the Bible describes is not present in Narnia, it does not follow that its moral implications are completely absent from the books. The biblical understanding of the Fall is implicitly present throughout the series due to the presence of our *own* world at the beginning and end of each book, and within the context of our world the events within the Garden of Eden *did* happen.³⁰ The existence of the Fall's historical consequences at work in our own world is something that Lewis the Christian author could *not* change, and though he never mentions it explicitly, the fact that all human

²⁹ Manlove, 36

³⁰ With the exception of the *Horse and his Boy*, which is set entirely in the Narnian universe.

visitors to Narnia are called the Sons of Adam or Daughters of Eve is a clear indicator that the reader is meant to suppose that the events of the Book of Genesis *did* happen as the Bible describes. This of course means that all human characters in the series represent humanity's collective Fall from grace, and carry the Fall's consequences (the ability as well as the tendency to sin) with them into Narnia. A close study of humanity's presence in Narnia reveals that every single individual has his/her origins in our world; accordingly, the race of mankind in Narnia is an offshoot of Adam and Eve's lineage. The first king and queen of Narnia are Frank and Helen, brought from our world into Narnia to be its first monarchs; becoming "the mother and father of many kings and queens...in Narnia and the Isles and Archenland" (*Nephew* 204). Eventually this line of kings in Narnia dies out, but the Archenland kings (also descended from Frank and Helen) are mentioned throughout the course of Narnian history.³¹ All the child protagonists; Digory and Polly, the Pevensie siblings and Eustace and Jill, arrive from our own world, each capable of sinful behaviour and expressing it to different degrees. Finally, Caspian's dynasty also originates from Earth, though this remains a mystery throughout *Caspian* until Aslan explains to the Telmarines at its conclusion: "You came into Narnia out of Telmar. But you came into Telmar from another place. You do not belong to this world at all. You came hither, certain generations ago, out of that same world to which the High King Peter belongs" (*Caspian* 233). Aslan goes on to explain to Caspian that his ancestors were pirates who stumbled upon a portal into Narnia, settling in Telmar and eventually invading Narnia itself. When Caspian voices his desire that he had come from a more honourable lineage, Aslan answers: "You come of the Lord Adam

³¹ The last one chronologically mentioned is in *Prince Caspian*; Cornelius advises Caspian to seek asylum there after he escapes his uncle.

and the Lady Eve...that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth," (*Caspian* 234) the most explicit mention of the Fall and Adam and Eve's role in it within the entire series. This leaves the Calormenes, the empiric people of Calormen in the south which so often threatens (and eventually defeats) Narnia. Their origins are not mentioned in any of the *Chronicles*, but in the timeline Lewis created for Walter Hooper, he reveals that the empire was founded by people of Frank and Helen's lineage, outcasts who fled Narnia to the south where they clearly came into their full inheritance of the sinfulness and pride that the Fall accorded their ancestors, as Lewis often personifies them as a bloodthirsty and cruel people who worship a false god.³²

The Narnian genesis occurs in *Nephew*, an adaptation that contains many of the same components mentioned in the biblical version: the creation of a world from nothingness by a singular Creator, the awakening of the creatures therein, the coming of evil into the unspoilt world, and a temptation scene, as well as the accompanying symbols such as a walled garden and forbidden fruit.³³ But there are also several fundamental differences, not surprising since Narnia exists in a completely separate universe from our own, one that (in Uncle Andrew's words) "you would never reach even if you travelled through the space of this universe for ever and ever - a world that could be reached only by Magic" (*Nephew* 31). The similarities between the genesis of the two worlds can be explained by the fact that, although Narnia is a separate world, it is made by the same Creator as our own. Many critics have attempted to articulate the nature of the relationship between our world and Narnia; Gibson for example, describes Lewis as an

³² In Walter Hooper's timeline, available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narnian_timeline>

³³ In this case I refer to 'genesis' as the origins of a world and its components.

author playing with the assumption that God may have created other realities that in no way related to the reality that we call “the universe” and that if He has, these other natures would have no spatial or temporal connection to ours.³⁴ That the two worlds are separate does not mean, however, that they never touch, an idea Lindskoog elaborates on when she says that: “there could be no interaction between the events in one (world) and the events in another by virtue of the character of the two systems... [though] perhaps God would choose to bring the two natures into partial contact at some point.”³⁵ This is precisely what Lewis does throughout the course of the series, describing a succession of visits from our world into Narnia, a totally different world with its own relationship to the same God.³⁶ Therefore, similarities between Narnia and our world *have* to exist, though at the same time differences are inevitable as well: it is a separate world after all. As Gibson puts it, Narnia and Earth are different novels by the same divine Author, an important distinction in understanding Lewis’s treatment of the Fall.³⁷

In light of this, Narnia shares the concept of a monotheistic God who is utterly omnipotent, existing at the pinnacle of Narnia’s hierarchy. Narnia’s version of God is called the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea, and though we learn little of Him in the course of the series (save that He is Aslan’s father), his title suggests power, masculinity and supreme ruler-ship (traits that coincide with the Christian conception of God). Because Christianity dictates that there can only be one God in existence, He is perceived as the sole sovereign over all created worlds, including our own, with each world being a part of

³⁴ Evan K. Gibson, *C.S. Lewis: Spinner of Tales, A Guide to his Fiction* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 151

³⁵ Kathryn Lindskoog, *The Lion of Juah in Never-Never Land: God, Man and Nature in C.S. Lewis’s Narnia Tales* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 35-6

³⁶ And visa versa, although less often.

³⁷ Gibson, 151

His vast universal empire (which is perhaps why Lewis chose the title of “Emperor” for the Narnian God, as it suggests a position as the overseer of an empire; not just of countries within Lewis’s sub-creation, but of worlds throughout the universe). The Emperor is therefore only another name to describe what Lewis believes also exists in our own world, and as such His principles will be consistent throughout all worlds inhabited by intelligent life. As God, the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea is responsible for the creation of the Narnian world, though in this case (unlike in the biblical version), it is through the medium of His son Aslan that this is achieved. The differences between our world’s biblical origins and Narnia’s continue as the narrative develops, not only in imagistic details (such as the inclusion of a flying horse and a growing lamppost), but in plot events and characterisation. Clearest of all these differences between the plot and orthodox Christianity is that the beginning of Narnia is seen through the eyes of four witnesses from our own world: Andrew, Frank, Digory and Polly, as well as Jadis the Witch from the destroyed world of Charn.

It is with Jadis that Narnia’s beginnings clearly differentiate from events in the Book of Genesis. Many readers have naturally equated Jadis with Satan, due to her place in both *Lion* and *Nephew* as the most memorable and dangerous nemesis of Aslan. However, though she is the most vivid characterisation of evil throughout the books, she does not easily fit into the role of Satan as it is portrayed in the Bible. The clearest difference between Jadis and Satan is (obviously) that the Witch is female, with Lewis offering vivid descriptions of this femininity. Her defining features are her long black hair, red lips and oft-admired beauty, and she frequently uses seductive measures in her attempts to exert power. Her ability to render males temporarily under her spell is best

seen in her interactions with Edmund in *Lion*, in which she offers him a seat on her sleigh and wraps him in her fur (*Lion* 41) and to a slightly lesser extent in *Nephew* where Digory thinks of her as the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, (*Nephew* 61) all of which is a far cry from Satan's traditional associations with masculinity. The seductive element of Jadis, in which Lewis explores the darker side of femininity, has less to do with Satan than the exploration of the archetypal image of the witch; something Lewis himself advocated, writing that: "The witch is of course Circe...because she is...the same Archetype we find in so many fairy tales. No good asking where any individual author got *that*. We are born knowing the Witch, aren't we?"³⁸ Likewise, there is no hint of Satanic influence in Lewis's account of Jadis's origins, in which he claims she appeared as one of several images in his mind, in her case as a queen on a sledge, which almost certainly stems from Lewis's love of Hans Christian Anderson's title character in *The Snow Queen*, also a stately beauty who lured young men onto her sledge in the winter season. Furthermore, Mr Beaver tells the children in *Lion* that Jadis is actually a descendant of Lilith, a mythological figure who pre-dated Eve as Adam's first wife.³⁹ According to the Hebrew legend, Lilith would not suffer Adam's dominance, and after rejecting her submissive and nurturing role as wife and mother, she fled the Garden of Eden to become the mistress of Satan. If Satan's lover is Jadis's ancestress, then she obviously cannot represent, or even co-exist with him. Finally, her death at the hands (or paws) of Aslan in *Lion* bears no resemblance whatsoever to biblical doctrine in which Satan remains at large in the world until the end of days; neither does the Witch's

³⁸ Lewis, quoted in Ryken and Lamp Mead, 44

³⁹ This claim becomes inconsistent with the revelation in *Nephew* that she comes from Charn, the last of a dynasty of kings; but in both cases her origins do not match up in any way with the ideology of Lucifer as a fallen angel who chooses to rebel against God; in both cases Lewis suggests that the root of her evil stems from her lineage.

intimate role in the death of Aslan bear any parallel to Satan's role (or lack thereof) in the Crucifixion of Christ.

The closest Jadis comes to emulating Satan is in her interaction with Digory at the climax of *Nephew*. Taking place in the vicinity of a walled garden, it involves the Witch (motivated by a desire to thwart Aslan's will) urging Digory to eat an apple imbued with life-changing abilities that Aslan has explicitly ordered Digory to bring back to him. She even gets his attention by enticing him with the promise of secret knowledge, telling him: "you will miss some knowledge that will have made you happy all your life" (*Nephew* 191). The apple grants immortality to those that eat it, and Jadis has already eaten one in order to gain its power, a scene that Lewis discussed in a letter to a young fan, writing: "Jadis plucking the apple is, like Adam's sin, an act of disobedience, but it doesn't fill the same place in her life as his plucking did in his. She was *already* fallen (very much so) before she ate it."⁴⁰ As such, the Temptation parallel lies with Digory, and Jadis's coaxing could be easily interpreted as an analogy to Eve's Temptation with the serpent (with the Witch as the serpent and Digory as Eve), though again there are several inconsistencies: Digory is not female, the apple does not grant forbidden knowledge but eternal life, in this case the choice of whether or not to take the life-saving apple home to his dying mother forms the basis of Digory's Temptation, the latter having no interest in the power or immortality that the Witch first offers him: "I'd rather live an ordinary time and go to Heaven," he says (*Nephew* 192). But in the most significant change from the traditional Temptation narrative, Digory manages to resist such Temptation and refrain from using the apple for his own purposes, returning it to Aslan as commanded. In fact, a

⁴⁰ *C.S. Lewis's Letters to Children*, edited by Lyle W. Dorsett and Marjorie Lamp Mead (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985), 92 - 3

better example of Temptation and the consequential Fall occurs earlier in the story, when Digory succumbs to his desire to acquire secret knowledge by ringing a small bell that is situated on a pillar etched with the words: “Make your choice adventurous stranger, strike the bell and bide the danger, or wonder, till it drives you mad, what would have followed if you had” (*Nephew* 64). His thirst for forbidden knowledge (which Kilby calls “sinful curiosity”) results in the awakening of Jadis from her enchanted slumber, setting off a chain reaction that brings the evil witch into the clean, untainted world of Narnia.⁴¹ This event directly leads to his journey to the Garden and the apple tree that grows there, making his actions there redemptive rather than sinful, designed in order to relieve him of the sin he has already burdened himself with.

Lewis also uses this theme of redemption in his concepts of Deep and Deeper Magic, in order to explore the next narrative step in the story of the Fall: the redemptive quality of a higher power taking it upon himself to restore the grace that humankind lost. As I have already pointed out, all of the human characters within Narnia have their origins in our own world and are therefore subject to the consequences of Original Sin accorded to them by Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve’s disobedience resulted in a division from God, a condition that was passed down throughout the generations, spawning a race that was intrinsically sinful in nature. In our own world, the wilful sacrifice of Christ, the Son of God, secured eternal life for the descendants of Adam and Eve who, because of their Fall from grace, could not ensure salvation for themselves. According to the gospels, it was out of love for his creation that God designed a way to save mankind from itself, mankind being unable to enter Paradise bearing the taint of sin: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish

⁴¹ Kilby, 121

but have eternal life.”⁴² Lewis’s didactic purpose in presenting an alternative, but fundamentally similar, version of the Fall to his readers means that the idea of a supernatural god figure sacrificing himself for lesser beings must also be translated in the Narnia story in order to take the Fall narrative to its proper conclusion.

Lewis does this in several ways, beginning with a set of laws known as Deep Magic. This Deep Magic is best understood as the moral infrastructure that makes up the core of Narnia’s existence and moderates a code of behaviour innately known to each inhabitant. Schakel suggests that the Deep Magic is synonymous with Lewis’s concept of the Law of Nature a system of moral understanding that Lewis describes at length in *Mere Christianity*, with its key feature being that: “(It is) a real Law which we did not invent and which we know we ought to obey.”⁴³ Even in the midst of his misconduct Edmund is aware that he is doing wrong: “deep down inside him he really knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel” (*Lion* 99). Gibson also points to the character of Shasta as a prime example of the Law of Nature being innately known to intelligent beings, for despite being raised by the amoral Arsheesh, Shasta is reluctant about the prospect of stealing, concerned for the fate of the slave-girl that Aravis drugged in order to make her escape, and guilty that he does not love the man he thinks is his father.⁴⁴ Consequently, members of the human race have no excuse for bad behaviour, since the fruit that our ancestors devoured not only has made us susceptible to sin, but also granted us a clear understanding of the differences between good and evil. Lewis goes on to say: “There is nothing indulgent about the moral law. It is as hard as nails. It tells you to do the straight

⁴² John 3:16

⁴³ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1943), 31

⁴⁴ Gibson, 148

thing and it does not care how painful or dangerous or difficult it is to do.”⁴⁵ Such a definition corresponds to the Witch’s explanation of how the Deep Magic works: “Every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to a kill” (*Lion* 153). By betraying his siblings, Edmund has done a grievous wrong and by all accounts deserves death in order to uphold the justice that Narnia is built on; indeed the consequences for not upholding the law is Narnia’s destruction: “unless I have blood as the Law says, all Narnia will be overturned and perish in fire and water” (*Lion*, 153). Even Aslan will not (or possibly *cannot*) go against the Deep Magic, as when Susan suggests attempting such a thing, Aslan’s response is: ““Work against the Emperor’s Magic?” ...turning to her with something like a frown on his face. And nobody ever made that suggestion to him again” (*Lion* 154). Edmund’s sacrifice is essential, therefore, to provide justice and uphold the moral order upon which Narnia was founded.

Lewis himself equated the Stone Table (upon which the Narnian Laws are written) with the tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments, given to Moses by God in the Old Testament.⁴⁶ The Ten Commandments were the irrefutable orders of God to mankind, and the Deep Magic’s connection to the Commandments is also hinted at by their close proximity to the Emperor, for the witch also states that the Law is “engraved on the spectre of the Emperor-over-the-Sea” (*Lion* 153). The Deep Magic serves the same function in Narnia: they are rules that make moral and social order possible, based on a clear understanding of right and wrong conduct. There are, of course, several differences between the Ten Commandments and the Deep Magic (for example, the Commandments are tenfold and are a series of prohibitions; the Deep Magic has but one major clause

⁴⁵ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 31 - 37

⁴⁶ “The Stone Table *is* meant to remind one of Moses’ Tablets.” (C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Children*, 93)

which instructs how traitors should be dealt with), but the point behind both is the same: that there are certain moral codes of conduct that are strictly forbidden and punishable by death. Of course, the nuances of the Deep Magic are predominantly designed to serve the plot, for they are solely concerned with a singular divine law that Edmund has broken, providing the catalyst for Aslan's intervention and subsequent death, but Schakel suggests that Lewis specifically chooses the transgression of betrayal as the key to Deep Magic, since treachery has been condemned across the world as well as throughout history, and is used here to display the universality of such a law. Edmund may not be native to Narnia, but he is still subject to its laws, as technically, they also exist in his own world.⁴⁷

Yet Narnia is not defined solely by this harsh set of laws and punishment. There is a Deeper Magic at work behind the straightforward prohibitions of the Deep Magic, one that Aslan invokes in order to transcend (not to be confused with 'disregard') the Laws of the Deep Magic.⁴⁸ Aslan bargains with the White Witch and agrees to take Edmund's place as the sacrifice on the Stone Table, and is duly put to death. But as Aslan explains:

"(The Witch's) knowledge only goes back to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before time dawned, she would have read there a different incarnation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack, and Death itself would start working backwards" (*Lion* 176).

Thus, the Stone Table and the Law it represents is broken and Aslan is restored to life, having defeated death itself through the grace of the Deeper Magic. Unlike the Deep

⁴⁷ Peter J. Schakel, *Reading with the Heart: the Way into Narnia* (Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 25

⁴⁸ As Christ said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Matthew 5: 17)

Magic, which has only existed since the beginning of Narnia, the Deeper Magic exists *with* the Emperor; one could say that the Deeper Magic *is* the Emperor, personifying his traits of compassion and mercy rather than the harshness of His created Laws. As Schakel puts it, the Deeper Magic is not inherent in created things, but in their Creator, and a sinner's life is spared due to the love of a faultless being, willing to carry his burden of sin for him.⁴⁹ The consequences for the Fall are negated, as they were in our world by the intervention of Christ.

Thus the worldview of Narnia is set out: there is an omnipotent deity who governs His created universe with a set of laws put in place that are both strict and somewhat grim (though undisputedly justified), laws that are essential considering the fallen nature of its inhabitants and human visitors. Because sin has entered the world, there needs to be a clear acknowledgement of the existence of good and evil in each free-thinking individual, as well as a system to deal with evil when the need arises. Yet there is another power at work behind these Laws that allows the Emperor's son to intervene and provide saving grace for those who inevitably fail to uphold these laws, an underlying power composed of love and compassion that is ultimately stronger than the harsh penalties of the Deep Magic. Of course, this format is almost identical in theme and meaning to the Christian ideas of God's laws and Christ's intervention on earth, but that is precisely Lewis's point in including it in the context of the stories: to present many of Christianity's fundamental truths without any of the "stained glass window imagery" that distorts many readers' basic awareness of what Christianity involves. Once again it is Manlove who eloquently describes the situation: "the basic pattern of the magic that Aslan enacts...will be the

⁴⁹ Schakel, 23

same in all worlds (because it is a spiritual rhythm based on divine reality) but in all worlds it will also be uniquely manifested.”⁵⁰

For Narnia, this pattern is presented within the imaginative details that Lewis uses to fill his fantasy world, such as talking animals, winged horses and magical rings, leading Wilson to suggest that the *Chronicles* are Lewis’s vision of an ideal world, and that Narnia itself “is the inside of Lewis’s mind, peopled with a rich enjoyment of old books and old stories and the beauties of nature.”⁵¹ Every volume in the *Chronicles* involves the attempt to defend and preserve this innocent and fragile world, encompassing the odd moments in Narnian history when peace and prosperity does not reign.

With this in mind, it is interesting to speculate that Lewis (along with his child protagonists) often treats Narnia nostalgically, using it to flee from the dreariness of our own world into a bright and exciting new one. Kilby points out that a dominant concern in the Narnia stories is that of an earlier time when things were better; the notion of an older and better world reminiscent of the Eden that existed before the Fall, and Manlove claims that practically all Lewis’s fiction expresses the desire to escape from the world, especially in the case of the Narnia series.⁵² It is certainly true that in all the cases in which children are taken into Narnia, they are escaping from unpleasant circumstances (whether it is World War II, a dull stay with relatives, or a horrible boarding school) into the beauty, mystery and adventure that Narnia offers. Even in *Horse*, the only book to take place completely in the Narnian world, the protagonists escape from captivity and

⁵⁰ Manlove, 39

⁵¹ A. N. Wilson *C.S. Lewis: A Biography* (London: William Collins and Sons, 1990) 221

⁵² Kilby, 144
Manlove, 3

slavery of the south to the freedom that Narnia offers. Furthermore, Lewis himself makes several comments throughout the series that strongly favour Narnia over our own world, rendering our own world needlessly unpleasant by comparison. When Susan and Lucy play with Aslan in *Lion*, for instance, Lewis comments: “it was a romp as no one has ever had except in Narnia” (*Lion* 177), when Peter and Susan cry after he slays Maugrim we are told, “in Narnia no one thinks any the worse of you for doing that” (*Lion* 143), and when Caspian expresses excitement about the Pevensies coming from a spherical world, Edmund replies: “There’s nothing so very special about a round world once you’re there” (*Treader* 254). Lewis clearly desires Narnia to be an escape from our own world, which is portrayed as dreary at best, and sinful at worst, but finds himself caught within the confines of the Fall narrative which requires a blemish to be imposed upon his fantasy world. Attempting to straddle his desire for Narnia to act as a better world than our own and the requirements of a plot which requires the presence of evil as the catalyst for conflict, results in a toned-down retelling of the Fall where Narnia is not damned, but susceptible to impinging influences of other fallen worlds. Insinuating Narnia’s superiority over our own world runs throughout the series, and in fact Lewis’s favouritism toward Narnia is so pronounced that it leads Goldthwaite to accuse him of a type of blasphemy, claiming that: “Lewis so deplored the world that, once deprived of his usual method, that of arguing Christ into being, and having now to evoke him in story language instead, he could do it only by making some other, some presumably better world for him to inhabit.”⁵³ Goldthwaite is virulent in his attacks on Lewis, but his views serve to prove Narnia’s purpose: that it *is* a better world. Because Lewis’s treatment of

⁵³ John Goldthwaite, *The Natural History of Make-Believe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 223

the Fall plays out differently in his created world, Narnia never falls from grace in the same way our world does, and neither do its native inhabitants (with only a few exceptions). The Deep Magic is designed to deal with visitors from our world (as is the case in *Lion*) and any Narnian creature that may become corrupted by the evil that was unleashed into Narnia at the hands of a Son of Adam. A pervading sense of blame directed at our own world can thus be perceived throughout; a reminder that Narnia would be perfect if not for humanity's intervention, and that even with its faults it still manages to be a better place than our own corrupted Earth.

Part Two: Pullman's Reinterpretation of the Traditional Understanding of the Fall Narrative within *His Dark Materials*

It is this sense of distaste with the sinful primary world that Pullman rejects in his own interpretation of the Fall throughout his trilogy, firstly by providing a range of Fall narratives throughout several parallel universes (suggesting that no world with sentient life has avoided some kind of "fall" from one state of being to another) and secondly, by reshaping the meaning of the story so that it has a positive outcome for those that live under its influence. Pullman reshapes the meaning of the Fall narrative in order to celebrate aspects of humanity such as self-awareness, independence, wisdom and the ability to grow and change, and reaches this conclusion through the use of several versions of the Fall narrative. By comparing and contrasting his versions of the Fall with that of Lewis and the Bible, I aim to highlight the radically different interpretation that Pullman presents to his readership and his argument that the acquisition of knowledge,

the pursuit of personal desire and the change from innocence into a more mature consciousness – whether by an individual or by mankind itself as a result of evolution – are not only natural, but worthwhile experiences. To present his alternative view of the Fall in the trilogy, Pullman uses these two otherworldly versions of the Fall to both reflect and be compared with our own version. In *Northern* we read the Genesis story of Lyra's world, as told to Lyra by Lord Asriel:

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

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 open, and your daemons shall assume their true forms, 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 reveal the true form of one's daemon, she took the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did it.

And the eyes of them were both 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 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 (*Northern* 371-2).

With the exception of the daemons (which are included in Pullman's version to indicate the growth of Adam and Eve into adulthood, a secondary layer of meaning that will be explored in Chapter Two), the story is identical in content and theme to our own world's

understanding of the Fall. It is a story of disobedience, forbidden knowledge and punishment, the catalyst for sin and shame being imposed on the human race. Eve is condemned for her actions, and mankind is cursed for ever afterwards. This pessimistic vision is in marked contrast with the mulefa version of the story told to Mary by Atal, one that is to be considered the “truer” story, given that it has not been corrupted by either the Magisterium or the Authority. The mulefa are strange creatures, but are nevertheless “as different from the grazing animals nearby as a human was from a cow” (*Spyglass* 92) and have their own interpretation of the Genesis tale.⁵⁴ Instead of the fruit of knowledge, the mulefa refer to the wheel pods that they use for transportation as the source of self-awareness, as these pods secrete “sraf” (the mulefa term for “Dust”) into their bodies when their feet are inserted into them:

One day a creature with no name discovered a seed-pod and began to play, and as she played she...saw a snake coiling itself through a hole in the seed-pod and the snake said...“What do you know? What do you remember? What do you see ahead?” And she said “Nothing, nothing, nothing.” So the snake said: “Put your foot through the hole in the seed-pod where I was playing, and you will become wise. So she put a foot in where the snake had been. And the oil entered her foot and made her see more clearly than before, and the first thing she saw was the sraf. And it was so strange and pleasant that she wanted to share it at once with all her kindred. So she and her mate took the first ones, and they discovered that they knew who they were, they knew they were mulefa and not grazers. They gave each other names. They named themselves mulefa. They named the seed-tree and all the creatures and plants (*Spyglass* 236-7).

⁵⁴ As a side note, the fact that the mulefa story mentions creatures like themselves existing *before* they become self aware (as opposed to Adam and Eve who were created fully formed by the hand of God) suggests that the mulefa support the concept of evolution.

In this version there is no sign of God, shame or sexuality in the course of the story, not even the linguistic concept of a 'fall'. Instead it is one of meaningful and positive growth from 'animal' to human, the gaining of self-awareness and the evolution of intelligence to the point where understanding and memory can enter one's mind. Unlike our Bible, in which the serpent is punished for his part in the temptation, ("Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life,") the snakes that live in the mulefa world are treated with respect, as a reminder of the fictional creature that helped them gain their intelligence: "Snakes are important here. The people look after them and try not to hurt them" (*Spyglass* 461).⁵⁵ The mulefa are not under any delusion that their story is *literally* true, the whole story is simply a "make-like" that encapsulates the gradual discovery of the oil and seed-pods that would have soaked intelligence into their ancestors over a time-period of thousands of years. This in turn creates the unique symbiotic relationship between mulefa and seed-pod trees that makes up the most crucial part of their ecosystem, adequately encapsulated in Metzger's description:

The mulefa's ecology is incredibly simple...(it) operates with three basic elements: the mulefa, the trees and Dust. The mulefa, being conscious beings, generate Dust. The Dust in turn fertilizes the flowers in the trees, ensuring that they will flourish. The trees in turn produce the nuts which supply so much to the mulefa, not the least of which are their use as wheels which evolution has designed to mesh perfectly with mulefa anatomy. Through the mulefa's act of using the nuts as wheels, the nuts experience constant pounding which

⁵⁵ Genesis 3:14

eventually cracks them, revealing the seeds within - which the mulefa plant in order to propagate the forests.⁵⁶

Thus the mulefa live in an idyllic lifestyle, free from any pointless sense of guilt or need for penance, rendering their existence (ironically enough) as the very definition of Western ideals of Eden-like perfection. There is an archetypal sense of innocence found in the communal lifestyles, harmonious cooperation with nature and total lack of materialism that make up the mulefa-people's lives, and as such they come across as beings who still exist in a pre-fallen state, comparable to Narnia in its infancy, in which the animals and other denizens of the newly created world featured in *Nephew* live in much the same way as the mulefa. Although the mulefas' ideal lifestyle is established not through retaining an actual childlike innocence, but in the wisdom of understanding the truth about their origins, it is curious to note that both the mulefa and the early Narnians rely on outside help when faced with a crisis that threatens their community. For the mulefa, it is in enlisting Mary to discover the cause of the decay in the seed-pod trees, whereas the Narnians rely on Digory to fetch the apple in order to grow a protective tree that will repel the Witch. This similarity between the "pre-fallen" communities suggest that both authors consider the inhabitants of their ideal lifestyles as incapable of effectively dealing with serious problems on their own, lacking the knowledge and experience to ensure the continuation of their innocent existence. Of course, Pullman would be reluctant to call the mulefa wholly innocent, considering their mature understanding of their genesis story, but their dependence on an outside party to save the seed-pod trees – just as the Narnians depend on Digory to plant the apple tree – is a point of similarity between both authors that suggests each recognise the limitations of

⁵⁶ Robert A. Metzger "Philip Pullman, Research Scientist," in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, 58

innocence and the benefits of a more worldly experience, as both Mary and Digory have both certainly achieved.

Significantly, it is the disillusioned ex-nun turned physicist Mary Malone who discovers the true meaning of the Fall within the context of the trilogy, and through her the discovery is relayed to the reader. Mary is first introduced into the trilogy through the instructions given to Lyra through the alethiometer which tells her where to find a scholar that will help Lyra understand the mystery of Dust. Mary works in the “Dark Matter Research Unit” of a research laboratory, and though she is initially bemused by Lyra’s presence, she soon catches onto the importance of what the young girl has to say. After witnessing the power of the alethiometer, Mary takes Lyra’s advice and manages to rig up her computer to act in the same manner as the alethiometer, which results in a conversation between her and what she has known as “shadow-particles”, which give her the task of finding Lyra and Will, and “playing the serpent.”⁵⁷ Continuing her communication with Shadow-particles through yet another medium, Mary finds her way into the world inhabited by the mulefa.⁵⁸ It is among these beings that Mary discovers the truth about the Fall and its thematic relationship to both Shadow-particles and the difference between children and adults: “she began to see the mulefa and the question which had occupied the past few years of her life” (*Spyglass* 135). In doing so, she also confronts the part of her life in which she put aside Christianity: “I thought that physics could be done to the glory of God, till I saw there wasn’t any God at all and that physics was more interesting anyway. The Christian religion is a very powerful and convincing mistake, that’s all” (*Spyglass* 464). We learn that Mary attended a conference during her

⁵⁷ Shadow particles are another name for Dust in Mary’s world.

⁵⁸ The I Ching; an ancient Chinese method of divination.

time as a nun, during which she experiences many new things for the first time: “I was discovering another side of myself, you know, one that liked the taste of wine and grilled sardines and the feeling of warm air on my skin and the beat of music in the background. I relished it” (*Spyglass*, 465-6). She enters conversation with a man, and is surprised to find herself flirting with him; this and the taste of marzipan bring back a vivid memory from her childhood:

I was twelve years old. I was at a party at the house of one of my friends, a birthday party, and there was a disco...Usually girls dance together because the boys are too shy to ask them. But this boy - I didn't know him - he asked me to dance, and so we had the first dance and then the next and by that time we were talking...And you know what it is when you like someone, you know it at once; well, I liked him such a lot. And we kept on talking and then there was a birthday cake. And he took a bit of marzipan and he just gently put it in my mouth - I remember trying to smile, and blushing, and feeling so foolish - and I fell in love with him just for that, for the gentle way he touched my lips with the marzipan...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, and I could tell he felt the same - and we were both almost too shy to move. Almost. But one of us did and then without any interval between - it was like a quantum leap, suddenly - we were kissing each other and oh...it was paradise (*Spyglass* 467-8).

Mary's retelling of her first love is strongly reminiscent of the story of the Garden of Eden; it involves the sharing of sweet food, a garden, two young people on the verge of adulthood, and even a reference to “paradise.” For the young Mary, the experience is akin to ecstasy, and the fact that she remembers every detail so clearly is a testimony to its

impact on her life. It is this memory that comes to her in the restaurant, brought back to her by the marzipan and the presence of another male she is attracted to, and she realises that the belief-system that preaches the truth of the Fall has told her that these exhilarating emotions are sinful; a result of the Fall from grace that are to be avoided. Mary (inspired by the ghosts of the escaping underground, who cry out “tell them stories!”) shares with Lyra and Will her experiences of love, as both an adolescence and an adult, which ultimately served as the catalyst for her decision to leave the Church. In Mary’s words, “temptation” is equated with a sense of her dormant sexuality (her attraction to a man), and when she speaks of confessing to the priest of “falling into temptation”, she is not speaking of a desire to gain forbidden knowledge, but to experience the sensual pleasure she derived from meeting and speaking with Alfredo Montale. Since Eve’s devouring of the forbidden fruit immediately resulted in herself and Adam feeling shame at their naked bodies, the Church has long since held strong attitudes toward the issue of sex, ranging from disapproval to condemnation, and equating it with the Original Sin of Eve.⁵⁹ But Mary does not regret her experiences; they granted her great joy even after the men she has been with have ceased to figure in her life, and the wisdom that she gained by the experiences help Lyra comprehend her own growing feelings toward Will (or as Squire puts it, the story “excites [Lyra’s] consciousness”, an apt choice of words given the event’s relationship to Dust).⁶⁰

It is in such a way that Mary plays the part of the serpent/tempter to Lyra, for equipped with Mary’s wisdom that articulates the feelings blossoming in her, Lyra is prepared to experience her own ‘fall’. The serpent of the Garden of Eden tempts Eve with

⁵⁹ “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.” (Genesis 3: 7)

⁶⁰ Squires, 41

the chance to be like God, to know good and evil. Mary's temptation runs a little differently, but like the serpent she offers up the possibility of new experiences and knowledge for Lyra and Will to obtain, tempting Lyra with the promise of the joy and ecstasy that comes from falling in love, with the Temptation taking the form of a story that sheds light on the emotions that Lyra holds toward Will. The Temptation is beneficial toward Lyra, acting as a stepping stone, necessary in helping her to reach a new understanding of her mind and body. This is in clear opposition to the temptations faced by various children in the *Narnia* series, for whether it is Digory deciding to ring the bell in Charn, Edmund succumbing to the lure of Turkish Delight or even Lucy casting a spell in *Treader* in order to eavesdrop on her friends, temptation takes the form of a choice between right or wrong actions, with the wrong option encompassing something that the child greatly desires. In all cases, succumbing to Temptation leads only to their misery. Alternatively, Pullman's version of Temptation portrays a sense of desire as a natural sensation, subtly playing on the linguistic notions of the word 'fall,' by equating the Fall from grace with our concept of falling in love; for as Cigman asks: "What does it tell us, that this experience so elevated by the eulogizing imagination is spoken of as a descent, that we fall into ecstasy...just as Adam and Eve "fell" from unflawed contentment in Paradise into fragile vulnerability?"⁶¹ In Pullman's own words:

The Satan figure is Mary, not Lord Asriel, and the temptation is wholly beneficial. She tells her story about how she fell in love, which gives Lyra the clue as to how to express what she's now beginning to feel about Will, and when it happens they both understand

⁶¹ Gloria Cigman, *Exploring Evil Through the Landscape of Literature* (Oxford: European Academic Publishers, 2002), 76

what's going on and are tempted and they (so to speak) fell - but it's a fall into grace, towards wisdom, not something that leads to sin, death, misery, hell - and Christianity.⁶²

Mary's story leads to the final and most crucial reinterpretation of the Fall; one that functions as both re-enactment, analogy and sequel of the biblical version of events, in which Lyra and Will unknowingly act out the roles of Adam and Eve in the Eden-like world of the mulefa.⁶³ It is morning, and Lyra and Will go in search of their missing daemons, the memory of Mary's story still fresh in their minds. Tellingly, the narrative explains that: "they might have been the only people in the world" (*Spyglass* 483), and that "they had all the time in the world, all the time the world had" (*Spyglass* 487). They enter a sheltered and private grove of trees, in which the detailed description invokes a paradise-like atmosphere: "there was a little clearing in the middle of the grove, which was floored with soft grass and moss-covered rocks. The branches laced across overhead, almost shutting out the sky and letting through little moving spangles and sequins of sunlight, so that everything was dappled with gold and silver" (*Spyglass* 491). It is in this tranquil and isolated spot that Lyra makes a decision: to take one of the "little red fruits" and (like Eve to Adam, like the first mulefa female to her mate, and like Tim to Mary) to share it with Will: "she lifted the fruit gently to his mouth" (*Spyglass* 492). It is a gesture and offering of love, a silent way of asking Will if he would like to fully experience the feelings that have been building in them (emotions that Mrs Coulter once described as "troublesome thoughts and feelings," a description that is accurate, though not laden with the negative connotation that she and the Church give them). In his acceptance, the Fall is

⁶² Huw Spanner, "Heat and Dust: Interview with Philip Pullman," *HisDarkMaterials.org* (August 27,, 2003), <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/heat-and-dust>.

⁶³ For the purposes of this chapter, I shall not focus on the 'coming of age' aspects of this event, but rather its relationship to the traditional understanding of the temptation and fall.

replayed, and the weight and potency of the scene mean that many critics all have their own interpretations on the proceedings. Squires calls the moment a celebration of adolescent sexuality and a vindication of a morality that lives apart from the Church, Lenz describes their embrace as the microcosmic means of saturating the macrocosm with loving awareness, whilst Tucker calls it a symbolic re-enactment of original defiance that manages to defeat the Church establishment, suggesting that in the biblical story, Eve lost; while in this version she wins.⁶⁴ As we know, in Pullman's account, Eve's metaphorical decision to eat the fruit is what first attracted Dust to human beings, allowing them to become conscious for the first time and experience all that comes with consciousness: thought, intelligence, emotion and wisdom. But recently Dust has been fading from the world, inexorably pulled into a great Abyss. Logically speaking, it will take another Eve to once again make the decision to embrace Dust and all that it entails. Prior to this encounter with Will, Lyra has already been identified as a replacement for Eve; one whose "true name, the name of her destiny" (*Subtle* 40) is Eve, not acting as a reincarnation, but as a young girl who will have the same opportunity, the same choice as Eve: whether to embrace new experiences, adulthood, love and the world in its entirety, or to remain "unfallen" in a static paradise of enforced innocence and ignorance. Naturally, the name of Eve is an evil portent for Mrs Coulter and the Church: to them, Eve is the individual who unleashed sin upon the world, the being responsible for exiling the human race from Paradise. Thankfully, for the sake of Dust and conscious life everywhere, Lyra chooses to embrace life, and Mary emerges to see the Dust falling from

⁶⁴ Squires, 51

Millicent Lenz 'Philip Pullman', in *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*, edited by Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz (London :Continuum Books, 2001), 137
Tucker, 165

the sky: “the terrible flood of Dust in the sky had stopped flowing...it was in perpetual movement, but it was falling like snowflakes...[Lyra and Will] would seem to be made of living gold. They would seem the true image of what human beings could always be, once they had come into their inheritance” (*Spyglass* 496-7). Their simple, powerful act of love serves as the required magnet for the Dust, hurtling into the Abyss, to be drawn back to the world.

Although this re-enactment of the Fall story is effective in establishing that this particular Fall from innocence to experience benefits not only Lyra and Will, but every conscious being in existence, not all critics are convinced by Pullman’s retelling. Jacobs denounces the event, arguing that Pullman has saved Dust through “a specifically erotic love”, and Sarah Zettel questions the role of Lyra and Eve as the saviours of the universe: “we have no explanation at all why it is Will and Lyra’s love in particular that saves the universe. Yes, they’re special - we get that. But if, as Pullman seems to be saying, every act of passionate love is an affirmation of independence and creation in this universe, why is theirs so essentially different it can heal evil?”⁶⁵ Even Tucker, in suggesting that Lyra’s experience of love (as a joyful rather than shameful discovery) will ruin the ecclesiastical establishment, wonders how her example will be filtered through and made known to the rest of the world.⁶⁶ Pullman does not explicitly explain these issues, but makes it clear within the text that what Lyra and Will have just experienced (a first experience of deep love and *eros* that is not marked by needless shame or guilt), has succeeded in reversing the flow of Dust - the very component that makes us human -

⁶⁵ A. Jacobs, quoted in Millicent Lenz, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*, 160
Sarah Zettel “Dust to Dust, the Destruction of Fantasy Trope and Archetypes,” in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, edited by Glenn Yeffeth (Texas: Benbella Books, 2005), 47

⁶⁶ Tucker, 122

back into the world. This is perhaps what the first human beings (encapsulated in the metaphorical figure of Eve) felt when they first became aware of their surroundings, their lives and their love for each other in prehistoric times. Pullman's retelling brings this to mind when describing the rapture of their love: "all his body thrilled with it, and he answered her in the same words, 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 warm mouth that tasted of the little red fruit" (*Spyglass* 492) the visceral pleasure that comes from a loving experience, and - just as importantly - being *aware* of that experience. Lyra's conscious and purposeful decision to admit her love for Will is the needed diversion for the Dust - the universes' collective consciousness - to flow back into the worlds. It is thus fitting that the story ends with Lyra and Pan in the Botanical Gardens, another symbolic representation of Eden; but this time it is at the end of the story, not at its genesis. This is a paradise that is regained, the true story of the Fall that is once more played out for the benefit of mankind, directly shaped by Pullman's belief that had "we had our heads on straight on this issue," churches would have been dedicated to Eve instead of the Virgin Mary and that our cultural history would have been much healthier had we interpreted Eve as the heroine rather than the villain of the story.⁶⁷

How then did our own version of the gaining of intelligence and self-awareness become so warped, resulting in a history of shame, guilt and recrimination? Pullman's answer lies with his portrayal of God. Within the context of *His Dark Materials*, God (usually called 'The Authority') occupies the same position within the text as Lewis's Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea, with one crucial difference: although Pullman's Authority is the first self-aware being to ever come into existence, he is *not* the creator of the universe

⁶⁷ Tucker, 121

as he claims to be. He is rather an angel who (like the other angels) is formed out of Dust, as Balthamos explains: “The Authority, God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty - those were all 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”(Spyglass 33). He is an impostor who has seized power, staking claim as ruler over every universe and the living creatures within them by right of his (false) role as creator, using this great lie to establish and maintain control. As Tucker puts it: “It was this same grim Authority that originally banished Eve after she discovered that he was in fact not the creator at all.”⁶⁸ Although Tucker mistakenly seems to perceive Eve as an actual historical figure within the context of *His Dark Materials*, the citation is still consistent with the idea that the Authority is concerned with maintaining control over life, and with preventing intelligent life from discovering the truth about his, and ultimately, its own identity. This colossal change in the preconceived notions of God subsequently changes everything that we take for granted about Lewis’s worldview, since the idea of a hierarchal system was acceptable because of Lewis’s assurances (in his favourable representation of Aslan) that the correct and rightful ruler is ultimately in charge of everyone’s fate. Lewis’s Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea is not only the creator, but the source from which intelligence, purpose and morality is placed into the world, three things that all his creations are imbued with (though they are given the free will to reject these gifts if they so choose). This God cannot be explained or even properly conceived, as Lewis eventually admits at the conclusion of *Battle*, writing that: “the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them” (*Battle* 224). In Lewis’s worldview, there is no meaning, no life, no existence of any kind at all

⁶⁸ Tucker, 100

without God: He is the source and reason behind every conceivable aspect of the universe. By removing the assumption that God is both good and all-powerful, Pullman is left with an entirely redesigned conception of the universe and a vacuum in the place of God. Without the presence of God, several secondary assumptions about the world are immediately nullified: the concept of good and evil, a system of reward and punishment after death, and the idea that humanity has its source in a divine being with a specific purpose in mind. For better or worse, the absence of God means that humanity is free from any ruling force that dictates and monitors our behaviour.

Pullman replaces Lewis's assurances of the existence of God with the acknowledgement that the origins of the world and the nature of humanity are both (at this stage of human knowledge) a mystery, inasmuch as the true nature of God was a mystery to Lewis. Even Pullman ultimately describes the Authority as "a mystery dissolving into mystery" (*Spyglass* 432) at the time of his death. Pullman freely admits his ignorance on this subject both within and without the context of the book, refusing to replace the traditional 'fire-and-brimstone' God with another, more benevolent representation. As Tucker rightfully points out, "to do so would be to run into exactly the same trap that has snared everyone else attempting to narrow down and specify a power that he believes remains impossible to understand," and yet he does not completely disregard the possibility of 'God' at work in the cosmos.⁶⁹ Within the text, he uses the character of King Ogunwe to state that: "There may have been a creator and there may not; we don't know," (*Spyglass* 221-2) and takes a similar vein in an interview when he says: "I don't know whether there's a God or not. Nobody does, no matter what they say. I think it's perfectly possible to explain how the universe came about without bringing

⁶⁹ Tucker, 133

God into it, but I don't know everything and there may well be a God somewhere, hiding away.”⁷⁰ Tucker believes that Pullman is not necessarily against the idea of some great force in the universe (one that controls the flow of the northern lights or moves the needle of the alethiometer), but that he despises “the attempt by human agencies to first claim this force for themselves and then use it for evil purposes.”⁷¹

Whereas Lewis believes in the literal truth of Genesis, and presents it as such in his series, Pullman discounts any Creationist stories as myth. In their place, evolution and natural selection are lauded as the reason – if not the origin – for human existence. Just as Lewis eliminated the possibility of evolution with his portrayal of Creation in *Nephew*, Pullman rejects Creationism by establishing evolution as reality in the narrative voice of the text. When Mary Malone enters the universe of the mulefa, there are no thoughts concerning God or Creation as she ponders the unique biology of the mulefa world: “Mary thought about the way this world had evolved...clearly in this world evolution enormous trees and large creatures with a diamond framed skeleton” (*Spyglass* 90) and later: “some time in the distant past, a line of ancestral creatures must have developed this structure and found it worked, just as generations of long-ago crawling things in Mary’s world had developed the central spine” (*Spyglass* 128). Despite what the Magisterium preaches, evolution is regarded as a reality within the context of the story. Characters such as Mary Malone take it as a simple fact of life, and with the removal of a legitimate creator-God, evolution seems to be the only available option left to explain life on earth.

The evolution theory is also applicable to the human race, unique among all other species on our planet in that humans have reached a level of self-awareness that allows

⁷⁰ Philip Pullman, Philip Pullman’s Official Site, http://www.philip-pullman.com/about_the_writing.asp

⁷¹ Tucker, 123

them, unlike animals, to think about the reality of their own existence. Self-knowledge was not always the state of the human condition, as Lyra discovers when she questions the alethiometer about several ancient skulls in the museum. She discovers that the skulls which have been trepanned (that is, have been drilled with holes by human craftsmen) have accumulated more Dust than others and were in fact much older than the Museum had dated them. Lyra tells Mary: “that skull with the hole in it is thirty-three thousand years old” (*Subtle* 88) a date that coincides with the time period in which the mulefa began to show signs of consciousness. Mary considers this skull phenomenon further:

Doctor Payne got some fossil skulls from a friend at the Museum and tested them to see how far back in time the effect [of accumulating Shadow-particles around man-made objects went]. There was a cut-off point about thirty, forty thousand years ago. Before that, no Shadows. After that, plenty. And that’s about the time, apparently, that modern human beings first appeared. I mean, you know, our remote ancestors, but people no different from us really” (*Subtle* 93).

Woods effectively explains the phenomena, concluding that “Mary Malone comes to realise that there’s a reason humans suddenly began creating art and making tools 30, 000 years ago, why various creatures in different places are conscious makers of culture and pattern - they respond to, are informed by and in turn generate Dust, the elemental matter of consciousness.”⁷² Using levels of Dust as an indicator of human intelligence, Pullman illustrates the evolution of the human mind from one phase of existence to another, from ignorance to self-knowledge. Before humans became self-aware there was less Dust; afterwards there is plenty, which is only natural, considering Dust itself is self-consciousness; or as Balthamos puts it: “Dust is only a name for what happens when

⁷² Woods, 21

matter begins to understand itself” (*Spyglass* 33). Over a time period of what could have been several hundred, or even thousand years, humanity gradually accumulated Dust and evolved into self-conscious beings, an event that is incorporated neatly by Pullman into the story of the Fall. In other words, Pullman has pulled his imagined reality of Dust into the context of the Fall narrative, and by doing so, has transformed its traditional meaning and purpose.

This scenario is drastically different from the way things started in Narnia, in which Aslan awakens the fully-grown creatures into understanding and grants them the power of speech within the space of a few minutes, selecting the chosen few in a manner that seems almost arbitrary to those witnessing the event:

He was going to and fro among the animals. And every now and then he would go up to two of them (always two at a time) and touch their noses with his. He would touch two beavers among all the beavers, two leopards among all the leopards, one stag and one deer among all the deer, and leave the rest. Some sorts of animals he passed over altogether” (*Nephew* 138).

Furthermore, Aslan retains power over this gift of awareness, claiming that he will take the power of speech away from the Talking Animals should they ever become unworthy of such a gift: “Do not go back to [the ways of the Dumb Beasts] lest you cease to be Talking Beasts. For out of them you were taken and into them you can return” (*Nephew* 141). Such a fate happens frequently in *Battle*, first to Ginger the cat, and then to a myriad of animals that choose to turn away from the visage of Aslan and so disappear into darkness: “You could see they suddenly ceased to be Talking Animals. They were just ordinary animals (*Battle*, 188-9). The removal of self-awareness (resulting in loss of identity and subsequent oblivion) from the animals is understandably met with fear and

horror, as seen when Ginger reverts back to a mere cat: “Then the greatest terror of all fell upon those Narnians. For everyone of them had been taught - when it was only a chick or a puppy or a cub - how Aslan at the beginning of the world had turned the beasts of Narnia into Talking Beasts and warned them that if they weren’t good they might one day be turned back again and be like the poor witless animals one meets in other countries” (*Battle*, 137).

The difference between the two authors’ treatment of self-knowledge, then, is very clear; in the *Chronicles* it is completely under the control of Aslan as to who receives and retains this gift. Lewis’s story device, in which animals are eventually deprived of their knowledge of self would be considered (in the context of Pullman’s worldview) the ultimate indicator that this god, who is prepared to deprive his creation of the defining feature of their existence as punishment for disobedience, is a god that must be disposed of. In *His Dark Materials* self-awareness is not a gift bestowed on humankind by God; it is simply a gift in itself that was obtained naturally by the process of evolution. This is done without the blessing or even the knowledge of the Authority, who is clearly in no position (being subject to the evolution process himself) to either grant or take away such a trait from individuals, the reason why he finds evolution such a great threat to his rule. Self-knowledge and intelligence gives humanity a level of independent thought that might one day be instrumental in questioning his authority, and since the existence of questioning and curious minds is a potential threat to his Kingdom and the emergence of free-thought in humanity is something that is outside his control, it must therefore be dealt with.⁷³ The result is the distortion of the Fall narrative and the

⁷³ As it turns out, the process of self-awareness in humanity was not a totally natural one; the evolutionary train was tampered with by the rebel angels. However, this aspect will be dealt with in Chapter Three.

Authority's invention of an elaborate set of rules in order to exert control over everyone. Since the devouring of the forbidden fruit is henceforth seen as both literal truth and as a sin that has been passed on from the first man and woman to the entire human race, humanity is burdened under a sense of wrong-doing, of unnatural separation from God, of a Fall from grace. An establishment growing naturally from this perspective of the Fall is the Church, the institution designed and run by the Authority (and later his regent, Metatron) that can save people from their Original Sin. With the acknowledgement of their own sinful nature and through their fear of hell, humanity naturally commits itself to the institution that offers them both forgiveness and heaven. The lie works so well that Pullman himself describes it as an excellent story:

It gives an account of the world and what we're doing here that is intellectually coherent and explains a great deal. The Christian story gives us human beings a very important and prominent part. We are the ones who Jesus came to redeem from the consequences of sin...it is a very dramatic story and we are right at the heart of it, and a great deal depends on what we decide.⁷⁴

Lewis and Pullman are fundamentally different from each other in the presentation of their worldviews in their fiction, as marked by their interpretation of the Fall and their treatment of humanity's relationship with the idea of God. Lewis caters to the belief that humanity needs a God for both its existence and salvation. The underlying premise of the *Chronicles* is of humanity re-finding the grace that was lost by its two remote ancestors through their association with Aslan. Pullman's argues that we do not only *not* need a God, but there is no God in existence *to* need, and redefinitions of humanity, God and the

⁷⁴ Huw Spanner, "Heat and Dust: Interview with Philip Pullman," <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/heat-and-dust>.

relationship between them turn Lewis's assumptions on their head. No longer is there a God to answer for (and perhaps there never was in the first place), no longer are we living under a burden of sin (we never were to begin with) and a new worldview has been established that nonetheless requires goodness, responsibility and understanding in just as high degrees as the old order. Mary eventually comes to understand that the action of eating the forbidden fruit was never a cause for apology in the first place, for it was instead a natural part of human evolution, and within the context of the story, a brave and inspiring thing to do: a young woman choosing her path, choosing to take responsibility and knowledge upon herself and share it with others. This pro-Eve system of thought has been corrupted by agents and creators of the Church into something wrong, especially in terms of sexuality, becoming twisted into a story of the unwelcome loss of innocence and the coming of death to mankind; according to Christian doctrines humanity is born into sin and saved only through the grace of a God which makes meaning in life possible. Such is the Christian view of the world, for according to Lewis: "Atheism...is too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we would never have found out that it has no meaning; just as, if there was no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. *Dark* would be without meaning."⁷⁵ Pullman's answer to this, through his reinterpretation of the Fall and the effect that has upon the origins of the world, the nature of God and the purpose of humanity is as follows:

The universe was meaningless before, but it's not meaningless any more. This is the mistake Christians make when they say that if you are an atheist you have to be a nihilist and there's no meaning anymore...Now that I'm conscious, now that I'm responsible,

⁷⁵ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 46

there *is* a meaning, and it is to make this better and to work for a greater good and greater wisdom.⁷⁶

The traditional story of the Fall is one concerned with answering questions as to the origins and purpose of the human race; thus it is appropriate that the novels of both Lewis and Pullman have at their centre, in the words of Brian Murphy, “the single greatest paradoxical truth [concerning] this whole series of children’s fantasies is that it has all been concerned with one object: the search for the real.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Spanner, “Heat and Dust: Interview with Philip Pullman,” <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/heat-and-dust>.

⁷⁷ Murphy is referring to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but it is a thought that easily encompasses *His Dark Materials* as well.
Brian Murphy, quoted in Manlove, 19

Chapter II: The Roles of Childhood and Adulthood within *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *His Dark Materials* and how each relates to each author's personal understanding of the Fall narrative.

The concept of childhood and the growth of protagonists into maturity and adulthood figure heavily in both Lewis and Pullman's work, particularly as both manage to link this topic with their treatment of the Fall narrative. For each author, the notion of the Fall is adapted in order to explore the process of growing up. By treating it as an analogy that signifies the change from childhood to adulthood, Lewis and Pullman equate the innocence of children with the prelapsarian state of humanity as it existed in the Garden of Eden, and the Fall itself as the onset of puberty and the arrival of adulthood. Because Lewis interprets the Fall as the Bible presents it, as the unfortunate loss of grace, he believes each newborn is born into a world that is inherently sinful, with each doomed to lose their innocence at adolescence. As Poole says: "we all fell in Adam, and even though we did not yet have individually created and apportioned shapes in which to live as individuals, what already existed was the seminal substance from which we were to be generated."⁷⁸ Although Lewis does not strictly cater to the idea that children reflect the innocent natures of Adam and Eve, claiming that he had once – but no longer – associated the beauty of Adam and Eve with the primitive, the unsophisticated and the naïf, it is telling that Narnia (a world that is significantly less corrupted than our own, as pointed out in Chapter One) largely forbids the entrance of adults. According to Lewis's personal theology, adults lose their spiritual wisdom at the same time they lose their

⁷⁸ William Poole, *Milton and the Idea of the Fall* (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25

childhood innocence.⁷⁹ This belief is in stark contrast to Pullman's reinterpretation of the Fall as a necessary development in humanity, with his text designed to lead individuals away from childish selfishness and ignorance and into adult wisdom and intelligence. Were it not for a personal fall in each individual at puberty from the unconscious grace of childhood, humanity would be doomed to a static state of perpetual childhood, in which no one learns, grows or attains self-awareness.

One of the most obvious similarities between *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *His Dark Materials* trilogy is that the main characters with whom the reader is expected to identify and through whose eyes we witness the progression of the stories are all children. This is only natural considering the books are geared toward a child demographic, but there are deeper contextual reasons as to why children are the protagonists of both series, reasons which are essential in exploring each author's interpretation of the Fall. Beginning with how exactly Lewis and Pullman are able to equate Eden with childhood and the Fall with puberty, Chapter Two will then move into an exploration as to how exactly children and adults in these two series embody the traits found in pre and post-fallen mankind, laid out in each author's understanding of the Fall as discussed in Chapter One. By closely examining the differing treatment of adults and children, in terms of their characterisation and the role they play in the plot, I aim to point out the strengths and weaknesses of these portrayals that have been based on differing interpretations of the Fall. Lewis predominately portrays children as beings that embody the virtues of a pre-fallen state, possessing innocence, innate spiritual wisdom and the ability to find wonderment and joy in both ordinary and extraordinary circumstances. It is an attractive portrayal of youth, tempered with a realistic side that takes into account

⁷⁹ Lewis, *Preface to Paradise Lost*, 116

childish squabbles and rivalry, and yet deserves comparison with the range of adult figures throughout the series, many of whom are unsympathetic antagonists toward the children, leading to the assumption that children possess a superior understanding of the world. Naturally, there are several exceptions to this rule, but in discussing these details to Lewis's theology, I argue that his underlying message to the reader insinuates that each child's progression toward adulthood is a microcosmic version of Adam and Eve's unfortunate Fall from grace. Lewis's favouritism toward childhood sets a lot of stock in youthful innocence without taking into account several of the advantages that come with a natural progression into adulthood, and is never more pronounced than in the surprising plot twist in *Battle*, a development that is denounced by Pullman.

For Pullman, the difference between adults and children is not that children are an innocent and un-fallen remnant of Eden, nor that adults are corrupted unless they retain their innocence and its connection to grace, but that adulthood is the natural progression from childhood, in which individuals gain the ability to learn new skills, gain wisdom and obtain meaningful relationships with others. In contrasting these two states of being, Pullman redefines innocence, not as an idyllic time of wonderment and enjoyment, but one that is also marked by inevitable selfishness, immaturity and bad deeds born out of ignorance, a state of mind that is certainly beneficial to grow out of. On reaching adulthood, the text suggests that individuals acquire an understanding of complex moral issues that is beyond a child's comprehension, in clear opposition to Lewis's views in which instinctive morality is often eroded as a child grows. However, Pullman's somewhat cynical view of childhood is undermined by the moral insight accorded to the child characters of Lyra and Will, as well as the dubious activities of such adults

characters as Lord Asriel, Mrs Coulter and the entire adult staff of the Magisterium and General Oblation Board, two aspects of the narrative that simultaneously suggest that Pullman shares Lewis's regard for the child's capacity for wonder and innate sense of right and wrong, as well as his disdain for an adult's ability to unnecessarily complicate matters with ambition and misinformation. In his eagerness to promote the need for growth and change, Pullman often seems to lose sight of the fact that a child's ability to demonstrate kindness and compassion (as many children do in the course of the trilogy) is by virtue of their innocence.

By equating childhood with the Garden of Eden and the Fall as the onset of puberty, (as both authors do to differing extents) we can explore not only their respective treatments of adulthood and childhood, but how their idea of morality works in relation to each state of existence. Growing up forms a major theme in *His Dark Materials*, in which the story resolution hinges on the fact that the children become young adults, and though the treatment of the topic in *Narnia* is less central to the storylines; it is still very much present in the treatment of several characters and plot points, and even in some cases by its obvious omission (there is for instance no mention of adolescence throughout the series; one is either a child or adult, with no period of transition between the two).

In justifying how the Fall can be interpreted as an analogy for growing up, Boas points out that admiration for the innocent qualities of children naturally leads to an association of children as a replica of Adam and Eve before the Fall, possessing of all the virtues that existed in primordial mankind.⁸⁰ In the words of Earl: "the child is the best copy of Adam before he tasted of Eve or the apple," an assumption that leads to the ability to read components of the Fall narrative as symbolic of the states of childhood and

⁸⁰ George Boas, *The Cult of Childhood* (London: The Warburg Institute of London, 1966), 42

adulthood.⁸¹ The idyllic world of Eden, for instance, is representational of a child's world (the Garden provides them with everything Adam and Eve need to sustain themselves, much like a child's natural dependence on their parents) and a childish state of mind. Like children, Adam and Eve are unaware and unashamed of their nudity; they are young and virile physically; they are ignorant about the concept of good and evil; their naivety and gullibility allows them to be tricked easily by the serpent, and they are quite literally the centre of the world (reminiscent of a child's natural belief that the world revolves exclusively around them and their needs). And of course, it is curiosity and the temptation to disobey a prohibition that denies Eve access to knowledge that causes her to eat the fruit - much like a wilful child will desire to experience an aspect of the adult world.⁸² Eden, the place of innocence and bliss, is thus quite easily interpreted as childhood, and Adam and Eve's banishment is likewise analogous to the onset of adulthood: once the fruit has been eaten, the couple become aware of their own sexuality, and shamefully attempt to cover up their nudity. Thrown from the Garden after their crime has been uncovered, Adam and Eve must now fend for themselves, and in their working of the earth in order to survive, we can see how the harsh and unforgiving terrain reflects the hard-earned lessons of adulthood:

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.⁸³

⁸¹ John Earl, quoted in Boas, 42

⁸² Eric Smith equates this with the sense of wilful disobedience against adult authority, describing it with the following example: "the tendency of children who have been told not to put peas up their nose to do so as quickly as possible thereafter." (Smith, *The Myth of the Fall of Man in English Literature*, 42)

⁸³ Genesis 3: 17-19

Most significantly, humanity has no chance of re-entering Eden, as the door is guarded by an angel with a flaming sword, just as no one can return to childhood (or regain their innocence) once it has gone. This conceit is strengthened by Christianity's admiration for innocence, and such appreciation is highlighted in verses such as: "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven," and "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will not enter it."⁸⁴

The same ideology that regards childhood as the embodiment of Eden is explored by the philosopher Henrich von Kleist, though he comes to a very different conclusion on how the loss of childhood is to be perceived. His essay "On the Marionette Theatre" contains most of Pullman's philosophy, leading Pullman to say: "Kleist says in three or four pages what I had to say in 1, 300 or so, and said it better."⁸⁵ Like Pullman, Kleist also associates the Fall with reaching adulthood, self-consciousness and the loss of grace, but elaborates on the necessity of growing up, since: "Now that we've eaten of the tree of knowledge...Paradise is locked and bolted, and the cherubim stands behind us. We have to go on and make the journey round the world to see if it is perhaps open somewhere at the back."⁸⁶ Kleist argues that humanity has irreversibly lost its innocence, both collectively and individually, but that Eden can be regained through hard work, learning

⁸⁴ Matthew 18: 31
Mark 10:14

⁸⁵ Fried, "Darkness Visible: An Interview with Philip Pullman,"
<http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/darkness-visible-an-interview-with-philip-pullman-part-2>

⁸⁶ Henrich von Kleist "On the Marionette Theatre", contained in Tucker, translation by Idris Parry, (1981), 202

and the wisdom that is garnered through the experiences of adult life. Pullman himself elaborates on Kleist's philosophy, saying:

We live in a dark valley, on a spectrum between the unconscious grace of the puppet and the fully conscious grace of the god. But the only way out of this impasse...is not back towards childhood: as with the Garden of Eden, an angel with a fiery sword guards the way; there is no going back. We have to go forward, through the travails and difficulties of life and embarrassment and doubt, and hope that as we grow older and wiser we may approach paradise again from the back, as it were, and enter that grace which lies at the other end of the spectrum.⁸⁷

In Kleist's interpretation of the subject, the Fall is not necessarily a negative occurrence, rather he supports the notion of the *felix culpa* or the fortunate fall that freed humanity from eternal childhood.

Part One: Lewis's Portrayal of Childhood and Adulthood, and his dependence on the Fall narrative in order to shape the distinct differences between the two states

Lewis's portrayal of adults and children in the series is directed, at least to some extent, toward the fact that he is writing for a child readership. Perhaps sympathising with the misfortune of children in being entirely under the control of their adult guardians both at home and school, Lewis knew that on a basic level his readers would enjoy seeing normal children like themselves outwit tyrannical adults, both in turning the tables on them and enjoying the freedoms of an imaginary world in direct contrast to the burdens

⁸⁷ Fried, "Darkness Visible: An Interview with Philip Pullman," <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/darkness-visible-an-interview-with-philip-pullman-part-2>

of real life. However, there is a moral purpose that goes beyond simply indulging his readership and is linked with Lewis's understanding of the Fall's effect on mankind. Because of his religious convictions, Lewis takes the viewpoint that the state of childhood is to be preferred to that of adulthood due to the former's un-fallen nature, a condition that he continually associates with an openness of mind, vivid imagination, clear moral understanding and innate attraction to goodness, as opposed to the corrupted and singularly minded adult world. However, this equation is not specifically found in any biblical doctrines; rather it is Lewis's own perception of childhood's traits that gave children this innate, instinctive spirituality, a view he believed with apparent sincerity, as seen in his letters, for example, where he comments: "The real children like [*Lion*], and I am astonished how some very young ones seem to understand it. I think it frightens some adults but few children," and "it is a funny thing that all the children who have written to me see at once who Aslan is, and grown ups never do."⁸⁸ His phrase "real" children (as opposed to those who are presumably unable to see the associations between Christ and Aslan) to describe those that enjoy the books, and the odd statement that adults are incapable of seeing who Aslan really is, are indicators of Lewis's bias toward children, especially in regard to their spiritual understanding that he implied gave them the ability to enjoy the *Chronicles* on a level that adults apparently could not. In the discussion that is to follow, I explore several of the differing portrayals of children and adults, arguing that even when Lewis does in fact go against his established norm and present either a positive portrayal of an adult, or a negative portrayal of a child, there are always mitigating factors to these exceptions that ultimately serve to vindicate – not endanger –

⁸⁸ Sibley, 72
Lewis, *Letters to Children*, 114

Lewis's established worldview that childhood's innocence is preferable to the fallen realm of adulthood.

Most of the children in the *Chronicles* embody traits that Lewis equates with the innocence of Eden and a pre-fallen state of mind, such as open-mindedness, guilelessness and faith in the spiritual realm. Unfortunately, the fallen world of adults often impinges on the children (particularly in the primary world), resulting in the misbehaviour of the children. When any child behaves badly in the course of the series, his or her behaviour is more often than not attributed to adult vices. For example, in *Caspian*: "Susan did wake up, but only to say in her most annoying grown up voice 'You've been dreaming Lucy, go back to sleep' (*Caspian* 160), and in *Nephew Polly* snaps: 'How exactly like a man!' ... in a very grownup voice, but she added hastily in her own voice: 'And don't say I'm just like a woman, or you'll be a beastly copycat'" (*Nephew*, 65). Lewis enjoyed imagining children as being free of the adult traits that he personally disliked, and it is therefore no coincidence that when the children do misbehave, such behaviour is usually associated with emulating adults. Such attitudes are certainly not welcome in the innocence of Narnia, and are usually eradicated by the intervention of Aslan. In contrast to the children, adults tend to embody a meanness, rationality and stuffiness that Lewis deplored and subtly connected with a lack of faith and love for Aslan himself.

It is in *Caspian* when the reader is informed for the first time of an explicit distinction Lewis makes between adulthood and childhood. The Pevensie siblings are preparing to return to their own world, when Peter and Susan return from a private meeting with Aslan. As Peter explains to his younger siblings afterwards: "we're not

coming back into Narnia...He says we're getting too old" (*Caspian* 238). This is elaborated on in *Treader*, when Aslan tells Edmund and Lucy the same thing, only here he explains the reasons why: "You are too old, children...and you must begin to come close to your own world now" (*Treader* 271). There are practical reasons as to why Lewis decides to prevent older children (and as such, adults) from entering Narnia: a desire to keep the series fresh by introducing new children, which could be seen as a device for keeping Narnia a province exclusively for children (much like J. M. Barrie's Neverland), and as a direct message to the reader that they too will one day have to leave Aslan and the imaginary trappings of Narnia and: "know [Aslan] better in your own world" (*Treader* 271). Being barred from Narnia hardly seems like an incentive for the children to grow up, but Aslan goes on to reveal that he exists in their own world also, albeit under a different name and that: "You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason you were brought into Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there" (*Treader* 271). Lindskoog interprets the exchange as an implication that the children will carry concepts of Christianity (such as Aslan's rule and the doctrine of Incarnation) back home with them, and that this will help them better understand Christ.⁸⁹ Judging by these words, it would appear that Narnia is a world where spiritual development begins, a place to which the children have been purposefully brought in order to meet, learn about and grow closer to a leonine version of Christ and by doing so, to gain a fuller understanding of how the Christian worldview works in their own world. Disregarding the fact that the children have also travelled to Narnia in order to participate in specific tasks (the Pevensies must reign as monarchs in *Lion* and Eustace and Jill must find the lost prince in *Chair*), Aslan's words imply that it is what Narnia has

⁸⁹ Lindskoog, 83

done for the children, as opposed to what the children have done for Narnia, that is of greater importance. With the onset of puberty, the children are removed from their fantasy world so that they might experience real Christianity as it exists on earth, having reached a level of spiritual preparation that allows them to re-enter their own world as improved, more spiritually sound individuals who might inspire others to follow the morality they have learnt in Narnia. Narnia is but a stepping stone in their development so that they may grow into worthy adults, an interpretation that coincides with Sayer's claim that it was Lewis's intention for the *Chronicles* to function as a "pre-baptism" of the child's imagination.⁹⁰ This interpretation of the text would appear to alleviate the claim that Lewis puts more stock in the wisdom of children, by suggesting that there are greater truths to be found beyond the child's world of Narnia, truths that can only be reached by returning to the real world and experiencing life as adults. So it would appear, except that there are several odd occurrences in later books that disrupt this theory. We unfortunately never learn much about the lives the children lead once they leave Narnia, and as such never see the full impact that Narnia's influence may have had in their relationship with their own world and Aslan's belief system at work there. We know that the children are changed beings from having met Aslan, and in most cases become better people because of him, but how they implement these personal changes in their own world is largely left unsaid. But ultimately this is of little matter when we read of the surprising plot twist in *Battle*, and discover that almost Lewis's entire cast has been killed in a train accident, a decision that leads Kilby to call *Battle* one of the most unusual children's books ever written.⁹¹ The result of this plot-twist means that we can no longer

⁹⁰ Sayer, 192

⁹¹ Kilby, 133

assume that the children grow up into spiritually enlightened adults, as none of them ever get the chance (with the exception of Digory and Polly, who are the only two child characters from our world to grow to full adulthood). The choice to kill his cast is quite a surprising one, even if it does result in them finding happiness in Aslan's Country, and underlies an important assumption of Lewis's: that experiencing adulthood isn't a necessary step for his protagonists. The death of the children in a train accident when still in their teens is not intended as a tragedy since it means they can avoid the problems of adulthood and go straight to Heaven instead.⁹²

But one of his characters does not join her family in Paradise, and as such *will* get the chance to experience life as an adult. This of course is Susan, whose fate is one of the most controversial and unpopular components of the Narnia series. In answering queries sent by fans about his decision to exclude Susan from Heaven, Lewis attempted to defend his decision, claiming: "Haven't you noticed...that she is rather fond of being too grownup. I am sorry to say that side of her got stronger and she forgot about Narnia."⁹³

Within the context of *Battle* she is discussed by her family members, who say of her:

"Whenever you've tried to get her to come and talk about Narnia or do anything about

Narnia, she says 'What wonderful memories you have! Fancy you still thinking about all

⁹² There is some debate surrounding the ages of the children at the time of their deaths. The timeline that Lewis gave to Walter Hooper puts Peter at 22, Edmund at 18, Lucy at 16 and Jill and Eustace at 15 at the time of *The Last Battle*, implying that seven years have passed in the primary world since *The Silver Chair*. However, Marvin Hinten [*The Keys to the Chronicles* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2005), 11-2] points out several passages within the text that imply that the children are much younger, including Eustace telling King Tirian that the last time he and Jill were in Narnia was "more than a year ago by our time," which is an odd way to describe seven years, and implies that only a few have passed, and King Tirian (who is described as "between twenty and twenty-five years old,") considering Peter as "certainly younger than himself." Hinten asks how Tirian in his early-twenties could find a twenty-two year old considerably younger than himself. He finally points out that Eustace and Jill are consistently referred to as "children" in the text and that Pauline Baynes's illustrations are certainly not that of teenagers. Basing his conclusions on the internal workings of the book, he speculates that three years have passed since *The Silver Chair*, putting their ages at: Peter, 16; Edmund, 13; Lucy, 12; Eustace/Jill, 11. In either case, the core cast are killed off at a very early age.

⁹³ Lewis, *Letters to Children*, 51

those funny games we used to play when we were children' ...She's interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipsticks and invitations. She always was a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up" (*Battle* 168). If the reason behind bringing these children into Narnia was primarily to bring them closer to Aslan, then Susan's rejection of Narnia as a childhood game indicates that bringing her there in the first place was a waste of time. She has grown up, and according to Lewis has grown up *wrong*, not only forsaking Aslan in favour of "lipsticks and nylons", but dismissing her entire experience there as fabrication, akin to Uncle Andrew's concentrated effort in *Nephew* to convince himself that the singing lion wasn't really singing at all. In embracing the world of the grownups, Susan has been excluded from the events of *Battle* and left to live out her life without her parents or siblings. In her character Lewis combines his disapproval for grownup interests and his general theme of adults being incapable of embracing fantasy and faith, as well as a distrust of female sexuality, an anxiety that is also manifested in the seductive qualities of the White and Green Witches, a comparison that highlights just how far Lewis considers Susan to have fallen. Lewis's attitudes as to children wishing to grow up faster - as he himself once did - collaborate closely with Polly's words concerning Susan: "Grown-up indeed. I wish she would grow up. She wasted all her school time wanting to be the age she is now, and she'll waste all the rest of her life trying to stay that age" (*Battle* 168).

Susan has joined the world of adults, which is presumably not a particularly desirable state, considering that throughout the stories there are barely any positive adult characters, and Lewis doesn't dwell on any adults who *could* be positive representations. Though the Pevensie parents are assumed to be decent folks, they are never seen

throughout the course of the story save for a brief glimpse in *Battle*. Amongst the rest of the parents of the child cast, we have Eustace's terrible parents who are: "vegetarians, non-smokers and teetotallers, and wore a special kind of underclothes" (*Voyage* 11), Polly's strict mother from whom Polly: "was given dinner with all the good parts left out and sent to bed for two solid hours," (*Nephew* 103) and Jill's apparently non-existent parents who are never mentioned at all. Even within the Narnian world children are suffering under their appointed guardians: Shasta's greedy surrogate father Arsheesh plans to sell him into slavery, Aravis's wicked stepmother and father try to marry her off to an old man, and Caspian's tyrannical uncle wages war against his nephew. Only Digory has any real luck with his parents, with a responsible (though typically absent) father and an angelic mother, who after her miraculous recovery from illness is tellingly told by another adult: "I declare Mabel, you're the biggest baby!" (*Nephew* 217).

It is only in Narnia itself that we find most of the worthy adults; all of whom come across as romanticised fairytale figures with no real grounding in reality at all; the knights and ladies of the Narnian court, Caspian's kingly descendants, the kindly King Lune and the grown Pevensies, of whom Shasta feels of Edmund: "that this young king was the very nicest kind of grownup" (*Horse* 71). One other important exception to the rule is Professor Kirke, in whom the Pevensies confide in after their adventures, but who nevertheless has to be disassociated from the rest of the world's adults since he is referred to as "a very remarkable man," (*Lion* 203) and is, as readers find out in *Nephew*, someone who has visited Narnia himself. Manlove also points to the figure of Ramandu, a fallen star who is gradually regaining his youthfulness, as a figure embodying the ideal development in Narnia, a process that parallels the de-aging process that Digory and

Polly experience once they reach Aslan's Country, of which Jill says: "I don't believe you two really are much older than we are here" (*Battle* 172).⁹⁴ Other adults in the series do not fare as well, such as the Tisroc of Calormene who sends his eldest son into battle with the hopes that he'll be killed, the useless Headmistress of Experiment House, the strict housekeeper Mrs Macready, who is not fond of children (*Lion* 59), and Digory's greedy Uncle Andrew.

Andrew is an adult of particular interest considering he is one of only three adults to enter Narnia directly from our world and shows us precisely why adults are not welcome there. It is in *Nephew* that Andrew, Jadis, Digory, Polly and Frank the cabby (a grown man, and soon to be joined by his wife Helen) enter Narnia at the dawn of its existence; but Andrew's experiences there are markedly different from those of his companions. The latter are enraptured by the sound of Aslan's song and the creation of the world around them; Andrew is terrified and desperate to leave: "The Cabby and the children had open mouths and shining eyes; they were drinking in the sound, and they looked as if it reminded them of something. Uncle Andrew's mouth was open too, but not open with joy...he was not liking the voice" (*Nephew* 121). Once Aslan appears, Andrew's reaction is as follows:

When the Lion had first begun singing, long ago when it was still quite dark, he had realised that the noise was a song. And he had disliked the song very much. It made him think and feel things he did not want to think and feel...And the longer and more beautifully the Lion sang, the harder Uncle Andrew tried to make himself believe that he could hear nothing but roaring. Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed. Uncle Andrew did. He soon did hear

⁹⁴ Manlove, 63

nothing but roaring in Aslan's song. Soon he couldn't have heard anything else even if he wanted to" (*Nephew* 150-1).

The difference between Andrew and the children is clear: because Andrew is an adult he is ruled by an adult frame of mind, one that is dictated by the Fall and the traits that Lewis associates with it. He is rational and practical, with fixed perceptions on how life should work, and so reacts to the sight of a singing lion with denial and fear, in direct contrast to Digory and Polly who are open to the possibility of Aslan as an intelligent being, and so watch the proceedings as they truly occur, and not just as a random gathering of wild animals. He is also contrasted with the characters of Frank and Helen, and since the two other adults who enter Narnia have a very different experience from Andrew, it would seem there is something in their characters that differs from Andrew. It soon becomes clear that Frank and Helen have already been introduced to Aslan, or at least to his alternate version in our world. When Aslan speaks to Frank, He asks him if he knows him, to which Frank replies: "Well, no sir...Leastways, not in an ordinary manner of speaking. Yet I feel somehow, if I may make so free, as 'ow we've meet before" (*Nephew* 163). This past awareness of spirituality has already been alluded to previously, when the group first enters Narnia and Frank says: "If we're dead...there ain't nothing to be afraid of if a chap's led a decent life. And if you ask me, I think the best thing we could do to pass the time would be sing a 'ymn" (*Nephew* 118). As well as this, Lewis often relates that Frank and Helen are country-born ("If my wife was here neither of us would ever want to go back to London, I reckon. We're both country folks really" [*Nephew* 163]) an association which is reminiscent of the innocence and simplicity associated with country living, the idealised state of a pastoral Eden. With that in mind, it is interesting to note that throughout Frank's stay in Narnia: "all through [the]

conversation his voice was growing slower and richer. More like the country voice he must have had as a boy and less like the quick, sharp voice of a cockney” (*Nephew* 166-7). In journeying to Narnia, Frank and his wife have in fact reverted *back* to their childhood natures and mannerisms. Within the ongoing contrast between childhood innocence and adult corruption in Lewis’s work, this would presumably be read as a positive regression. However, some take exception to this transformation. Glover, for instance, states that the admiration Lewis felt for protected innocence and uncorrupted country virtue is unconvincingly portrayed and that Frank’s ennobling is one of the least credible transformations in the *Chronicles*, but nonetheless, this combination of country living, child-like faith and life-long association with our world’s version of Aslan makes them the unique adult couple to be not only welcomed into Narnia, but to reign as its ideal king and queen.⁹⁵ As adults, they have successfully maintained a sense of childlike innocence, a trait which allows them to stay in Narnia.

But not all of Lewis’s child characters are good, pure and wholesome when they first arrive in Narnia; two in particular are quite the opposite. Edmund is a spiteful and unpleasant boy when *Lion* begins, and his personality worsens when he meets the White Witch and eats her enchanted food. However, Edmund is saved both physically and spiritually by the direct intervention of Aslan who gives him a life-changing talk: “There is no need to tell you (and no one ever heard) what Aslan was saying, but it was a conversation Edmund never forgot” (*Lion* 150), and who takes his place as sacrifice on the Stone Table. At the conclusion of the story we learn that Edmund: “was not only healed of his wounds, but looking better than [Lucy] had seen him look - oh, for ages...He had become his real old self again” (*Lion* 194), implying that his nasty

⁹⁵ Donald Glover, quoted in Manlove, 19

behaviour is a result of an outward corrupting influence against his inner being, and that it is Aslan who helps him return to his earlier, natural state. The second “child villain” of the series is Eustace Scubb, whose condition is a little different from Edmund’s, not just because he never does anything as bad as betray his family to the forces of evil, but because it is suggested that he has simply been raised the wrong way (as opposed to Edmund who has loving parents and siblings), evidenced in Lewis’s introduction to Eustace’s silly-minded parents. There is no original state of innocence that Eustace can return to, as “deep down inside him he liked bossing and bullying” (*Voyage* 12). Unlike Edmund, who needed to be returned to a state of grace, Eustace must be completely remade, which is precisely what happens once he is transformed into a hideous dragon, and returned to human form by Aslan, giving him a newfound sense of consciousness in the process. Both boys are returned to their own world as much improved individuals: “everyone soon started saying how Eustace had improved, and how ‘You’d never know him for the same boy” (*Voyage* 272). In both cases Edmund and Eustace are implied to be ‘bad eggs’, who do not embody the normal condition of childhood, but rather abnormalities that have little resemblance to *true* children like Peter and Lucy. Instead they are corrupted by bad parenting or schooling: constructs of the adult world, and thus are granted a second chance that is not afforded to Uncle Andrew. The difference in this opportunistic quality is based on their ages. Both Eustace and Eustace share common traits of childhood that Andrew has irreversibly lost that allow them to become enlightened in a way that is impossible for him. Edmund and Eustace possess the ability to simply believe in Aslan; they may not like the sound of him or even like him at first, (on first hearing Aslan’s name, Edmund “felt a sensation of mysterious horror” [*Lion* 77])

and Eustace says: “Aslan! I’ve heard that name mentioned several times since we joined the Dawn Treader. And I felt - I don’t know what - I hated it” [*Voyage* 125]) but they do not yet possess the adult attribute of sheer disbelief that allows Andrew to simply reject and deny the mere possibility of a being like Aslan. Likewise, the two of them have youth on their side, and with that the capacity to change for the better; to improve and develop, which is a far cry from the elderly Uncle Andrew whom Aslan describes as: “this old sinner...I cannot comfort him [for] he has made himself unable to hear my voice” (*Nephew* 202). Edmund and Eustace’s immature and unformed minds may warp the idea of Aslan, but their childish capability for belief mean that they cannot simply disregard him; a trait that leads both of them to their salvation.

It is from all of these story devices, most particularly the fact that the children cannot return to Narnia once they get too old, that Lewis’s pervading opinions on what it is to be either a child or an adult emerge, and it is clear that Lewis believes it is preferable to be a child. It is no coincidence that it is Lucy, the youngest of the Pevensie children, who finds Narnia first, or that in *Caspian* the children spot Aslan in order of their age (with the exception of Susan who refuses to believe he is there at all). Lewis, therefore, places an emphasis on youth and its attributes that are not found in most adults due to his association of adults with a fallen world. In Aslan’s rule of not permitting the children to return to Narnia after a certain age there is an unspoken assumption that Narnia is not designed for adults, and although Lewis is not explicit on the reasons why, it becomes clear throughout the series that children can accept and embrace Narnia in a way adults can’t due to their sense of adventure, natural innocence and capacity for belief. Many grownups have the fatal flaw of adulthood that causes them to reject or rationalise

Narnia, and in forbidding anyone post-adolescence from coming to Narnia, (and the fact that the children are told they must get to know Aslan better in their own world) Lewis implies that adults have reached a stage when it is too late for them to benefit from Narnia, and as such will never acquire the enlightenment Narnia affords for the children. On the odd occasion when adults *do* manage to reach Narnia, they belong to one of two categories: those that are *already* aware of Aslan's existence in their own world, (such as Frank, who is told by Aslan "you know [me] better than you think you know, and you shall live to know me better yet" [*Nephew* 163]) or those who have no comprehension of him whatsoever (Uncle Andrew). If Narnia is to be considered a place of spiritual awakening and development, then adults are too often fixed in their own ways to benefit much from it, in stark contrast with the children's natural acceptance of Aslan's presence. Not every child in the series is angelic, of course, and not every adult is an antagonist, yet their identification as either sympathetic or dislikeable people can often be discerned by their affinity with childhood. By growing up, children run the risk of losing their childhood traits and becoming a part of the corrupted adult world; which often pollutes the purity of Narnia, (as we see in the history of the Telmarine race [originally from our own world] who stumble upon a portal into Narnia, leaving a legacy of conquest that is only righted by the reigning of a child-king) and in Uncle Andrew's first exploitative reaction at seeing the regenerative possibilities of Narnia: "The commercial possibilities of this world are unbounded. Bring a few old bits of scrap iron here, bury 'em and up they come as brand new railway engines, battleships, anything you please. They'll cost nothing, and I can sell them at full prices in England. I shall be a millionaire" (*Nephew* 133). Susan eventually grows into a similar state of mind, and since growing up is

inevitable, Lewis insists that one must at least grow up right: by either regaining or retaining childhood innocence and not becoming tainted by the cynical and corruptive world of adults. Luckily for Peter, Lucy, Eustace and Jill, Lewis spares them from adult life, killing them off before they get a chance to grow to full maturity.

Part Two: Pullman's Treatment of Childhood and Adulthood, and how his Reinterpretation of the Fall Narrative inflects his Representations of each State

In moving into my discussion on Pullman's treatment on the same issue of the Fall narrative's influence over the portrayal of children and adults, it will become clear that, unlike Lewis, who ends the life of his child protagonists so that they might enjoy an eternity of youthful bliss, the underlying plot of *His Dark Materials* hinges on the fact that Pullman's protagonists Lyra and Will develop from children into adults. Unlike most of Lewis's child characters, Lyra and Will change throughout the course of the trilogy in noticeable, sometimes drastic ways, and are, in fact, no longer children at the conclusion of *Spyglass*. They are now young adults facing life and further growth in their separate worlds, for the process of growing up is deemed so important that the young lovers decide to sacrifice a life together so that they might grow to full maturity and adulthood in their own worlds. It becomes clear early on in the trilogy that Pullman is interested in the passage between childhood and adulthood, and that in his admiration for the benefits of adulthood and its attributes, his portrayal of childhood is the exact opposite of that portrayed in *Narnia*. Giardina speculates that many books written for children are concerned with keeping the *status quo* of adults knowing what is best for children, using

the apt analogy that: “adults must teach, discipline, protect, defend and nurture children so they can remain in the walled garden of childhood,” but by redefining innocence as ignorance and savagery, and highlighting the traits of self-involvement and self-awareness inherent in all children, Pullman creates a rather more cynical view of children than Lewis would have allowed in his own text.⁹⁶ Whereas the *Chronicles*’ cast is divided into the innocent and the fallen, the worlds of *His Dark Materials* are divided into the innocent and those that possess intelligence, memory, sexuality and experience; great discoveries which rescued humanity from the temporal and moral stasis and ignorance of childhood, making experience the natural replacement of innocence rather than its inevitable and unwelcome corruption. As well as this, Pullman reshapes our definition of innocence by downplaying its connotations with virtue and sentimentality, and amplifying its less-discussed facets, such as the ignorance and mindless cruelty that children can display. This is best seen in Pullman’s example of a gibbon he once saw at the zoo who managed to catch hold of a starling: “I can’t forget the cracking and snappings, the tough white sinews, the lolling shrieking head, and most of all the curious, *innocent* concentration of the ape.”⁹⁷ It is another side of innocence that is hardly ever considered, for as Woods says: “many people when asked, say that childhood’s most appealing trait is innocence...associated with purity, with truth and with goodness.”⁹⁸ But with childhood comes a lack of developed moral understanding, and Woods goes on to assert that though the ape is innocent in the sense that it has no moral consciousness, its

⁹⁶ Natasha Giardina, “Kids in the Kitchen” in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, edited by Glenn Yeffeth (Texas: Benbella Books, 2005) 140

⁹⁷ Pullman, quoted in Woods, 15

⁹⁸ Woods, 15

obliviousness does not negate the pain of the starling.⁹⁹ The passage not only provides direct inspiration for Mrs Coulter's malevolent monkey-daemon, but sheds new light on our conception of innocence as a trait that does not automatically denote virtue and sweetness, but a lack of morality. Pullman would have the reader believe that children are not born knowing right from wrong as Lewis attests, instead it is something taught to them by their parents and other adult teachers, something that is eventually understood when experience allows traits like empathy allow young people to feel injustice and cruelty directed at both themselves and other people. The lack of a moral centre means children can commit acts of cruelty and violence in a way that many adults - having both self control, empathy for others, and a sense of right and wrong – will not; seen best in Pullman's harrowing portrayal of a mob of feral children that turn on Lyra and Will: "They weren't individual children: they were a single mass, like a tide. They surged below him and leaped up in fury, snatching, threatening, screaming, spitting..." (*Subtle* 241). The only thing remotely comparable to this scene in Lewis is the bullies of Experiment House who ambush Jill and Eustace behind the gym. However, even these children come across as simply mean-spirited and boorish compared to the cruelty faced by Will and his mother by a group of school children, as Will recounts to Lyra: "She went out and she wasn't wearing very much, only she didn't know. And some boys from my school, they found her, and they started...they thought she was mad and they wanted to hurt her, maybe kill her, I wouldn't be surprised. She was just different and they hated her" (*Subtle* 273). Giardina also points to the scene where the children of Cittagazze torture a stray cat, claiming that it once again challenges our cherished belief in the innate

⁹⁹ Woods, 15

sweetness of children.¹⁰⁰ As opposed to Lewis's comparatively sentimental rendition of childhood, Pullman's portrayal of the children of Oxford paints quite a different picture:

Just as [Lyra] was unaware of the hidden currents of politics running below the surface of College affairs, so the scholars, for their part, would have been unable to see the rich seething stew of alliances and enmities and feuds and treaties which was a child's life in Oxford. Children playing together, how pleasant to see! What could be more innocent and charming? In fact of course, Lyra and her peers were engaged in a deadly warfare (*Northern* 36).

Lyra runs wild over Oxford with her playmates, fighting with other children, stealing apples, climbing over the roofs of the College, even hijacking a canal boat from the water-gypsies. According to Pullman she was: "a coarse and greedy little savage" (*Northern* 37), and "a barbarian" (*Northern* 35). To adults she is often sulky and sullen, and she claims superiority over her playmates due to the fact she lives at the illustrious Jordan College.

Both Will and Lyra show hidden depths of darkness that would feel uncomfortable in Lewis; such as Lyra's unashamed love of lying that causes her to feel how a: "part of her felt a little stream of pleasure rising upwards in her breast like the bubbles in champagne" (*Spyglass* 276), a subject which is treated very seriously in *Lion*, when Susan and Peter discuss the truthfulness of their younger siblings with Professor Kirke. Then there is Will's deep-seated ability to do violence: "Lyra saw with a cold thrill that Will was perfectly ready to dash the Gallivespian's head against the rock," (*Spyglass* 177) in direct contrast to Lewis's romanticized battles and acts of violence in which Peter kills King Miraz in a duel in *Caspian* and Eustace lops the head off a Calormene in *Battle*

¹⁰⁰ Giardina, p. 145

without any consideration to potential emotional trauma that may be sustained by the boys. Unlike Peter and Eustace, Will suffers guilt and fear after he accidentally kills the man pursuing his mother: “He couldn’t get out of his mind the crack as the man’s head had struck the table, and the way his neck was bent so far and in such a wrong way, and the dreadful twitching of his limbs. The man was dead. He’d killed him” (*Subtle* 8).

All these aspects of a darker definition of innocence help pave the way towards Pullman’s representation of adulthood, and it is through Lyra that Pullman predominately conveys the pre-Romantic sense that the passing of self-obsessed childhood is beneficiary to the individual. It is Lyra who goes through the most pronounced changes and the clearest rites of passage throughout the course of the trilogy, emerging as a markedly different individual at the conclusion of the novel. Will also goes through significant changes, beginning as a young boy with the childish desire to “live with [his mother] alone forever” (*Subtle* 11) and ending as a young man who knows he must give up his beloved for the sake of all the worlds. But because of Will’s troubled family life (a sick mother and an absent father), he has *already* left much of his childhood behind him, being forced to care for himself and his mother in a way that Lyra never has. Throughout her adventures in *Northern*, Lyra is almost constantly under the supervision of an adult, whether it be the scholars of Jordan College, the gyptians, the witches, Mrs Coulter or Iorek Brynison. Will on the other hand, is very much alone, and as he is prematurely forced into an early adulthood (Dolgin calls him a child-adult,) it falls to Lyra to fully represent the change from an immature child to a budding young woman.¹⁰¹

Lyra in *Northern* is rude, spoilt and largely unpleasant, and her reactions to some situations are completely childish; in her frustration over Roger’s disappearance she

¹⁰¹ Kim Dolgin, “Coming of Age in Svalbard and Beyond” in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, 71

“knock[s] over a stack of silver dish-covers and ignore[s] the roar of anger that arose” (*Northern* 62) before screaming her frustration out on the rooftops. Dolgin points out that even her daemon acknowledges her childishness, telling her that “spying is for silly children” (*Northern* 9).¹⁰² Woods points out that in *Lyra*, Pullman is highlighting the uncouth nature of children rather than its guiltless innocence; following a trend of commentators to fixate on the negative aspects of *Lyra*’s character due to the fact that such attributes are rare in protagonists of children’s literature.¹⁰³ All agree that her vices (such as her aristocratic snobbery, her impatience, her wildness) help to make her a fully rounded character, as well as an incredibly realistic portrayal of childhood, as she is labelled variously as uncouth, intractable, manipulative and occasionally stupid; self-centred and egocentric; as well as altogether human and altogether believable.¹⁰⁴ Like Shasta of *Horse*, *Lyra* thinks that adults are simply out to spoil her fun; unlike Shasta, she is aware on some level that adults have access to specialised knowledge and experience that are denied to children: she begs Lord Asriel to take her with him to the north, and is enraptured by Mrs Coulter partly because of the stories of her travels and the knowledge she imparts. As Pullman tells us, “She always had a dim sense that (the street) wasn’t her whole world; that part of her also belonged in the grandeur and ritual of politics represented by Lord Asriel” (*Northern* 37). Indeed, the first time we see her, she is sneaking into the adult realm of the Retiring Room to witness what happens inside, and Chabon points out that it is no coincidence that at this point she echoes the figure of Eve

¹⁰² Dolgin, 71

¹⁰³ Woods, 17

¹⁰⁴ Chabon, 3

Dolgin, 71

Harry Turtledove, “Ocean’s Razor and the Subtle Knife”, in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, 126

by engaging in an act of disobedience in entering a room prohibited to females, for the simple reason that she is curious to know what goes on there.¹⁰⁵

That Lyra is entirely a child for the majority of the trilogy is apparent not only by her behaviour and her daemon's changeability (one of Pullman's symbols of childhood I shall explore in more detail further on), but by the special gift she is granted in her ability to read the alethiometer. Made up of symbols that separately and conjunctively create millions of different meanings and provide articulate answers to any questions posed to it, people are amazed at Lyra's swift grasp of the coded language. Lyra converses with Iorek concerning this ability, following a faux-duel with him in which he effortlessly bats away her feints with a stick, and remains still when she attempts to bluff him. He tells her that this ability comes from not being human: "that's why you could never trick a bear. We see tricks and deceit as plain as arms and legs. We can see in a way humans have forgotten. But you know about this; you can understand the symbol reader...It is the same. Adults can't read it, as I understand. As I am to human fighters, so you are to adults with the symbol reader" (*Northern* 227). Both abilities are directly borrowed from Kleist's essay, in which he argues that animals and children possess an unconscious grace, one that is disturbed with the onset of consciousness at puberty. Kleist describes a young boy whose grace resembled that of a statue of a youth who is plucking a thorn out of his foot. When the author's young friend lifts his foot to dry it, he unconsciously replicates the beauty of the statue, but the moment the boy himself became aware of this similarity and attempts to reproduce it, his innate grace is lost forever: "A young acquaintance of mine had as it were lost his innocence before my very eyes, and all

¹⁰⁵ Chabon, 3

because of a chance remark. He had never found his way back to that Paradise of innocence, in spite of all conceivable efforts.”¹⁰⁶

Kleist elaborates on this phenomena with a passage on a fencer who cannot outwit the perception and skills of a great bear, his point being that: “in the organic world, as thought grows dimmer and weaker, grace emerges more brilliantly and decisively...grace appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness.”¹⁰⁷ So we see with both Iorek and Lyra’s grace-given gifts; for it is this inner grace that allows Iorek to triumph over his rival Iofur, a bear who desires above all to become human and replace his armour (a bear’s equivalent of a soul) with a daemon of his own. Lyra uses this knowledge to her advantage, for she has already been told that individuals who are dissatisfied with their daemons are: “fretful about it” (*Northern* 167), and recognizes this trait within Iofur: “[Iorek’s] armour was his soul. He had made it and it fitted him. They were one. Iofur was not contented with his armour; he wanted another soul as well. He was restless while Iorek was still” (*Northern* 349). As such, Iorek is able to trick Iofur into believing that his paw is injured when in fact he is building up his strength for the killing strike: “You could not trick a bear, but, as Lyra had shown him, Iofur did not want to be a bear, he wanted to be a man; and Iorek was tricking him” (*Northern* 353). Ultimately, Lyra’s instinctive gift of reading the althieometer is lost as her conscious love for Will grows, till it is gone forever:

It’s no good – I can tell – it’s gone forever – it just came when I needed it, for all the things I needed to do...and now it’s over, now everything’s finished, it’s just left me...I was afraid of that, because it’s been so difficult – I thought I couldn’t see it properly, or my fingers

¹⁰⁶ Kleist, quoted in Tucker, p.203

¹⁰⁷ Kleist, quoted in Tucker, p. 207

were stiff or something, but it wasn't that at all; the power was just leaving me, it was just fading away (*Spyglass* 518).

Lyra is devastated, but also comforted by the words of the angel Xaphania, who tells her that her ability can be regained, albeit through a lifetime of hard work:

You read it by grace and you can regain it by work...but your reading will be even better then, after a lifetime of thought and effort, because it will come from conscious understanding. Grace attained like that is deeper and fuller than grace that comes freely, and furthermore, once you've gained it, it will never leave you (*Spyglass* 520).

Lyra has left the 'Eden' of her childish mind, but certain abilities can be regained in what Kleist called "the journey around the world", to re-find this grace through hard work and the experience of adulthood.¹⁰⁸

Pullman's protagonist is an improved person when she leaves childhood for adulthood, changing from a wayward child to an intelligent young woman without ever realising it. When she returns to her old home at Jordan College, the inhabitants are struck by how different she is; the Master "saw how the child's unconscious grace had gone, and how she was awkward in her growing body" (*Spyglass* 544) a statement also directly inspired by the similar occurrence of the fifteen year old boy in Kleist's essay who loses his grace in the same moment he becomes aware of it.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, we are shown Lyra's mature decision to attend Saint Sophia's, a school for girls run by Dame Hannah, which is in marked contrast to her attitude toward female scholars in *Northern*: "she regarded female scholars with a proper Jordan distain, there *were* such creatures but, poor things, they could never be taken more seriously than animals dressed up and acting out a play" (*Northern* 67). She now finds that "her memory was at fault: for this Dame

¹⁰⁸ Kleist, quoted in Tucker, 202

¹⁰⁹ Kleist, quoted in Tucker, 203

Hannah was much cleverer, and more interesting, and kindlier by far than the dim and frumpy person she remembered” (*Spyglass* 541). A similar occurrence involves the manservant Cousins: “Lyra had been ready to meet his hostility with defiance, for they had been enemies as long as she could remember. She was quite taken aback when he greeted her so warmly and shook her hand with both of his: was that affection in his voice? Well, he *had* changed” (*Spyglass* 542). Of course, it is not Dame Hannah or Cousins who have changed, but Lyra herself who has now acquired a new perspective of life and the people around her. Within the short story “Lyra and the Birds” (part of *Lyra’s Oxford*), we are given a further look at how she’s grown, particularly when she runs across Doctor Polstead: “He was stout, ginger-haired, affable, more inclined to be friendly to Lyra than she was to return the feeling. But she was always polite.”¹¹⁰ One can’t imagine the Lyra of *Northern* reacting in such a way to someone she didn’t like.

Lyra’s journey is one of childhood giving way to adulthood, in marked contrast to Lewis’s ideals. To Lewis, anyone who grows into dreary adulthood experiences a fall *out* of maturity rather than growth into it (as Susan does, what with her interest in the frivolities of life), as the *Narnia* books are not about growing up, but staying young spiritually, mentally, perhaps even emotionally. Even though many of Lewis’s characters do reach a new level of maturity during the course of the series, such as Edmund, Eustace and Digory, these moments are certainly not as pronounced as those that take place in *His Dark Materials*, and in all cases they come through a better understanding of Aslan as opposed to any personal experiences that teach them wisdom. Pullman says of the unfortunate Susan, that: “[she], like Cinderella, is undergoing a transition from one phase of life to another. Lewis didn’t approve of that. He didn’t like women in general, or

¹¹⁰ Philip Pullman, *Lyra’s Oxford* (Oxford: David Fickling Books, 2003), 11

sexuality at all, at least at the stage when he wrote the Narnia books. He was appalled and frightened at the notion of wanting to grow up.”¹¹¹ Though Pullman defends Susan’s choice to embrace grownup things, it is somewhat ironic that Mrs Coulter is seen inhabiting such a glamorous, sexualised and voluptuous lifestyle (indeed her greatest attribute in the course of the story is her ability to seduce the angel Metatron and lure him into a trap), bearing more than a passing resemblance to the White Witch, in her beauty, power over men and children and even in her methods of temptation: in the place of Turkish Delight is the equally exotic and sweet flavour of hot chocolate. When Lyra is first taken to live with Mrs Coulter, she gets her first lessons in the art of femininity: “how to wash one’s own hair, how to judge which colours suited one, how to say no in such a charming way that no offence was given, how to put on lipstick, powder, scent” (*Northern* 84). The fact that it is Mrs Coulter giving these lessons to Lyra lends them a somewhat sinister quality, as though Pullman is subliminally in agreement with Lewis about the use of cosmetics on young girls. However, the difference in their treatment of budding puberty is clear; Lewis’s Susan is damned for it, whilst Lyra’s is treated as a natural occurrence, as she goes from a little girl who, along with Roger (we are told): “had swum naked together often enough, frolicking in the Isis or Cherwell with other children” (*Northern* 365), to one that recalls this youthful innocence once she’s reached adolescence: “she happily swam naked in the river Cherwell, with all the other Oxford children, but it would be quite different with Will, and she blushed even to think of it” (*Spyglass* 458), proof that the Fall’s attitudes on nudity made such an impact on the minds of humanity that even Lyra is affected.

¹¹¹ Pullman, quoted in Ryken and Lamp Mead, 147

In exploring all of these fundamental differences between childhood and adulthood, Cornwall defines Pullman's objective as leading his readers toward maturity, not back to a childhood of arrested development where children are trapped in a false world of innocence.¹¹² This is a state Pullman accuses Lewis of catering to when he kills off his cast in *Battle*, arguing instead that it is the ability to be granted an insight into one's inner self that is the great and worthwhile advantage to growing up, insinuating that this is something that children are incapable of achieving. According to Pullman, the serpent tempted Eve with a chance to be fully conscious; to be a fully formed individual complete with an awareness of past, present and future, self-consciousness, memory, morality, sexuality and knowledge of herself as a thinking, feeling human being. Thus, Eve's eating of the fruit represents the embracing of adulthood attitude: the acquisition of knowledge, the awakening of sexuality, the ability to find things out for oneself, and the discovery of who a person truly is. When Mary tempts Lyra, and Lyra in turn tempts Will, they are replaying and redefining this ancient story of innocence giving way to experience, childhood to adulthood, the secluded Eden to the entire world. In Dolgin's discussion on Pullman's exploration on adulthood, he quotes Erikson's views on adolescence, stating that the central life task of adolescence is the formation of an identity: "knowing who you are and what you want out of life, feeling the continuity between the child you were and the adult you wish to be...[becoming] your own person, capable of making your own decisions, [and obtaining] a coherent set of values to guide your behavioural choices."¹¹³ Possessing the ability to choose, to take responsibility, to express oneself as an individual, as well as gaining the experience to learn new skills, to

¹¹² John Cornwall "Some Enchanted Author," *The Sunday Times* (October 24, 2004), http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/article494636.ece

¹¹³ Erik Erikson, quoted in Dolgin, in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, 74

fall in love and have children, to experience loving relationships and to establish lifelong friendships are the traits of adulthood, denied to anyone who (willingly or unwillingly) is trapped within the confines of childhood. To grow up is to lose one's innocence, but also one's childish sense of selfishness and ignorance, something that Chabon elaborates on when stating that the flexibility and inner fire of childhood is replaced by the power to focus, concentrate and understand, whilst Moloney claims that growing up requires struggle, self-discipline, and a certain mixture of heartache and melancholy: "it is not all adventure and excitement, and few things come easily...it requires that one cease to be self-absorbed, to care about others and the common good."¹¹⁴ Throughout the trilogy, Pullman explores these differences between childhood and adulthood by crafting relationships between Lyra and Will and a variety of adult figures that embody Pullman's ideals of adult nature. However, in many cases, Pullman undermines his own theology by sympathising with Lyra and Will's inner convictions as to the nature of right and wrong, allowing them to possess a greater moral insight and instinct that is akin to Lewis's belief that an instinctive morality is imbued in human beings from birth and felt most strongly during youth. This can be clearly seen at the conclusion of *Northern*, when Lyra and Pan correctly assert superiority of mind over their adult counterparts concerning the nature of Dust, stating that:

"We've heard all them talk Dust, and they're do afraid of it, and you know what? We believed them, even though we could see that what they were doing was wicked and evil and wrong. We thought Dust must be bad too, because they were grown up and they said so. But what if it isn't? What if it's...really good" (*Northern* 398).

¹¹⁴ Michael Chabon, "Dust and Daemons," in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, 11
Daniel Moloney, "Show Me, Don't Tell Me," in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, 184

Likewise, many of the adult characters the children meet on their journey are highly dubious in the actions they take during the course of the series. Although there are several adults that do manage to encompass Pullman's ideals of adulthood, such as Mary Malone, Farder Coram and Lee Scoresby, who are all wise, accomplished grown-ups, a vast majority of adult characters behave with none of the mercy or compassion that Pullman has previously associated with maturity by its comparison with the general selfishness found in childhood. Examples can be found in the figures of Lord Asriel, who despite being the figurehead of the movement against the Authority, is guilty of murdering a child so that he might create a bridge into another world, as well as John Parry (who breaks a solemn promise to a dying man), the Master of Jordan College (who attempts to poison Asriel) and of course, Mrs Coulter and the Magisterium, the main antagonists in *His Dark Materials*. The Magisterium is Pullman's otherworldly vision of organised religion, an institute that takes an unhealthy interest in Pullman's central concept of the difference between children and adults: daemons.

Throughout Lyra's world, every human has a secondary being called a daemon that is inexorably bound to them throughout their lifetime. One of several functions of daemons in the narrative is to denote adulthood and the sense of self in the character involved, as a daemon's most interesting feature is that the daemons of children are fundamentally different from those belonging to adults. The former have the ability to change into any form of their choosing, often corresponding to the current mood of their particular child (when Lyra is told that she must leave Jordan College in order to live with Mrs Coulter: "Pantalaimon's fur changed from coarse brown to downy white" [*Northern* 71]). As they grow older, their ability to shape shift gradually fades and they

begin to favour a particular shape more and more, eventually settling permanently into the animal form that best suits their human's persona (for example, servants will often end up with dog-shaped daemons). Their ability to shapeshift in youth also has a real-world analogy, as Pullman himself explains: "daemons symbolize the difference between the infinite plasticity, the infinite potentiality and mutability of childhood and the fixed nature of adulthood."¹¹⁵ Lenz elaborates on this, comparing the fluidity of the child's soul with the rigidity of the adult's soul state, reflecting the fact that daemons also represent a child's inability to hide their impulses, whilst the fixed state of the adults' daemons represents their ability to disguise their emotions, a distinction seen in the impulsive and passionate Lyra when compared with the more stoic personalities of her parents.¹¹⁶

Daemons are explicitly mentioned in the Bible of Lyra's world and play a prominent part in her world's analysis of the Fall, one that in all other respects closely mirrors our own. However, as this version implies that Adam and Eve's daemons settle into one shape once the fruit has been eaten, the story is a much more obvious analogy for growing up. Here the eating of the apple and the coming of Original Sin is directly and explicitly connected to the process of reaching adulthood, recognisable in Lyra's world as a daemon settling into one form. Since the eating of the fruit results in the newfound ability to *speak* with their daemons (suggesting both self-consciousness and intelligence), the story is naturally linked to the acquisition of adulthood.

It is the signs of burgeoning sexuality, intelligence and maturity in children that capture the attention of the Magisterium, as the fact that their version of the Fall story explicitly links these things to the experience of adolescence makes the subject of

¹¹⁵ Pullman, quoted in Squires, 27

¹¹⁶ Lenz, 139

growing up a crucial one.¹¹⁷ The Magisterium believe that they possess divine justification to delve into the process of puberty, having discovered the connection between Dust and daemons, finding that there is: “physical proof that something happened when innocence changed in to experience” (*Northern* 373). It is not surprising that the Magisterium – on realizing the unique properties of Dust and the fact that it settles about the bodies of adults – is quick to identify it as the physical manifestation of Original Sin, as it divides adults from children and provides irrefutable proof that humanity changes at adolescence.

According to Lord Asriel, it is Mrs Coulter herself who stumbles upon this link: “she guessed that the two things that happen at adolescence might be connected: the change in one’s daemon and the fact that Dust began to settle. Perhaps if the daemon were separated from the body, we might never be subject to Dust – to original sin” (*Northern* 375). Finding the ability to manipulate Dust impossible, the Magisterium instead turns to experimentation on individual daemons, running on the hypothesis that if a daemon’s tendency to settle into one form could be prevented, surely Dust would avoid settling the individual. The soul would thus be saved from the onset of Original Sin, and innocence would remain untouched in each child. From a Biblical point of view, (one that Lewis, perhaps, would agree with) it is an ideal situation of ‘enforced’ sinlessness and innocence that could be distributed throughout all humanity.

But the Church first needs children to experiment on, and it falls to Mrs Coulter to entice them away onto ships bound for the far north, a location that allows their work to be hidden away “in darkness and obscurity,” an indicator suggesting that despite what the

¹¹⁷ As we have seen in their inclusion of daemons settling form after eating the apple is a very clear indication that part of falling from grace is growing into adulthood.

Magisterium preaches, they know their work must be hidden from the public eye” (*Northern* 374). The Magisterium’s kidnappings are first introduced to the story in the form of the elusive Gobblers, a mysterious group who is snatching children from public areas, a nickname that Lyra eventually learns is derived from the initials of the General Oblation Board: “In the Middle Ages, parents would give up their children to be monks or nuns. And the unfortunate brats were known as oblates. Means a sacrifice, an offering, something of that sort. So the same idea was taken up when they were looking into the Dust business” (*Northern* 91). As Lyra approaches Bolvangar, she witnesses firsthand the horror of the experimentation when she discovers Tony Makarios, a boy who has been forcibly cut from his daemon, rendering them separate entities (the result of an operation that Chabon describes as “metaphysical vivisection.”)¹¹⁸ Traumatized, sickly and unable to be distracted from his daemon’s absence, Tony dies soon afterwards. Lyra later witnesses the other half of these separations, the daemons left behind: “poor caged daemons, who were clustering forwards pressing their pale faces to the glass. Lyra could hear faint cries of pain and misery” (*Northern* 261). In both cases she is disgusted and horrified, even more so when Mrs Coulter attempts to justify the actions of the Magisterium:

“The doctors do it for the children’s own good, my love. Dust is something bad, something wicked, something evil. Grownups and their daemons are infected with Dust so deeply that it’s too late for them, They can’t be helped...but a quick operation on children means they’re safe from it. Dust just won’t stick to them ever again...all that happens is a little cut, and then everything’s peaceful. Forever! You see, your daemon’s a wonderful friend and companion when you’re young, but at the age we call puberty, they

¹¹⁸ Chabon, 7

age you're coming to very soon, darling, daemons bring all sorts of troublesome thoughts and feelings and that's what lets Dust in. A quick little operation before that, and you're never troubled again" (*Northern* 283-5).

Mrs Coulter also reveals that many of the adults at Bolvangar have already undertaken the intercision, something that Lyra has previously noticed in many of the Station's staff whose daemons appear bland and placid, no matter what the emotional state of their humans:

Lyra watched [the staff's] daemons. This nurse's was a pretty bird, just as neat and incurious as Sister Clara's dog, and the doctor's was a large, heavy moth. Neither moved. They were awake, for the bird's eyes were bright and the moth's feelers waved languidly, but they weren't animated, as she would have expected them to be. Perhaps [their humans] weren't really anxious or curious at all (*Northern* 257).

Pullman does not give a reason as to why adults are able to withstand the trauma of the intercision whilst children cannot, but its effect on the adults create the Magisterium's ideal life form: unquestioning, incurious and obedient servants (Lenz accurately calls them "adults who make perfect cogs in a war machine,") microcosmic versions of what would happen should the Dust of all the universes be lost in the Abyss.¹¹⁹ The children and adults that undergo the 'intercision' are only half-human, and although Pullman never says as such, it is obvious that the daemons cut from their children will never settle into a singular form (Pullman hints as then when he has Farder Coram say of Tony: "He couldn't settle, he couldn't stay in one place" [*Northern* 219]). Because they are permanently separated from their daemons to prevent the onset of puberty, they are also denied the chance to accumulate all that Dust grants humanity: freedom of choice,

¹¹⁹ Lenz, 131

sexuality, the ability to question authority and think for oneself (and in Lyra's world, the settling of a daemon into a fixed form); everything that the adults of the Magisterium finds so threatening. As Bird puts it, the procedure denies the child the opportunity to develop toward sexual maturity, whereas the adults are part of a concentrated effort to eradicate those elements that might threaten its absolute power – namely individuality, liberty and human consciousness.¹²⁰ Denied the right to see their daemons settle, the children never get the chance to see what their Bible calls “the true forms” of their daemons, or the individuality that adulthood bestows upon them.

These horrific actions performed by an adult population upon defenceless children does much to undermine Pullman's ideal of adulthood as a time of greater understanding and compassion, serving to further deepen the ambiguous relationship that Pullman has crafted between children and adults. In his characterisation of Lyra and Will, Pullman tends to agree with Lewis when he suggests that – despite their immaturity – children have an innate sense of morality that is lost or ignored in adults such as those in the Magisterium, as well as the fact that there are advantages that come with the “un-fallen grace” of a child that are sorely missed when entering adolescence. For example, the loss of a daemon's mutability in Lyra's world is comparable to the age restriction that Lewis places on Narnia, with the child protagonists of both series being forced to close a door on imaginative freedom in order to enter a more serious adult world. Furthermore, Lyra's ability to read the alethiometer is akin to the sense of grace that Lewis accords Lucy as the child with the strongest bond with Aslan, even having Edmund say at one stage that: “Lucy sees [Aslan] most often” (*Treader* 125). Given his favouritism toward the young Lyra and Will in pitting them against a range of malevolent adult figures, one can't help

¹²⁰ Bird, 118

but feel that despite Pullman's rewriting of the themes and meaning of the Fall in order to imagine it as a positive and optimistic story of growth from childhood into adulthood, his sympathies (much like Lewis) lie with childhood's spontaneity, optimism and clear-sightedness.

In one crucial area both Lewis and Pullman are in agreement, based upon their acknowledgement in each text that the devouring of the forbidden fruit bestowed upon humankind the ability to differentiate between the forces of good and evil. Despite Lewis's favouritism toward the intuition of children, and Pullman's emphasis on the enlightenment that comes with adulthood, both are careful to present all their characters, regardless of age, as beings that are conscious of opposing forces in the world, that work to either help or harm mankind. With this awareness comes the ability to recognise good and evil for what they are, as well as the ability to choose between them. It is this aspect of humanity, as well as how the influence of the Fall inflects each author's definition of these good and evil forces that is the focus of Chapter Three.

Chapter III: The Definitions and Presentation of Good and Evil within *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *His Dark Materials*

The Fall narrative provides answers to a number of questions pertaining to the human condition, particularly in explaining how duality and conflict may function in both the universe and the individual. These opposing forces are labelled good and evil within the biblical narrative, and were known to Eve the moment she devoured the forbidden fruit, an awareness which was passed on to the rest of the human race. Because the Fall is responsible for mankind's awareness of good and evil, it stands to reason that each author's reliance upon the Fall narrative to shape their worldviews will heavily influence their definition of good and evil and the relationship between the two that creates the conflict within the plot. Because Lewis follows the traditional meaning of the Fall, his conflict is drawn in rather black and white terms, with good and evil divided between those who love and obey Aslan, and those who rebel against him. As I shall point out in more detail within the course of the Chapter, Aslan is held up as the pinnacle of perfect goodness in Lewis's worldview, with the forces of evil portrayed as a corruption of primal goodness that lies at the source of all life. As such, goodness becomes synonymous with everything that Aslan stands for: compassion, kindness, wisdom and mercy, as well as strength, authority and order. Evil's main attribute is its opposition toward Aslan's natural role as ruler, leading various villains to embody traits of selfishness, arrogance, self-imposed isolation and self-obsession. Throughout the course of this Chapter, Lewis's portrayal of these good and evil forces are explored in relation to his dependence on the Fall narrative, for it is its influence that inflects his belief that

within every sentient creature is the ability not only to recognise, but to choose between good and evil. However, because of the pervading force of Original Sin set into the world after the Fall, Lewis believes that humanity is more likely to allow sin to influence their decisions. It is only the presence of Aslan that alleviates the presence of evil and ensures that goodness will ultimately triumph.

Pullman's treatment of evil agrees with Lewis in regards to the idea that evil's power stems from an individual's tendency to choose evil over good, but disagrees that humanity can do nothing to save itself from evil's influence and power. The need for humanity to be saved from itself is the fundamental reason - within both the Bible and Narnia - behind Christ/Aslan's presence in the world, to give salvation to those creatures with free will that chose primal goodness over degenerative evil, thereby erasing the consequences of the Fall. The central conceit of *His Dark Materials*, however, is not a divine figure, but a substance that eventually proves to be deeply connected to humanity's free will: the mysterious substance known (predominantly) as Dust. Dust occupies the same place within the trilogy as Aslan does in *Narnia*, as the source of all life, consciousness, growth and meaning. But whereas Aslan was a fairly straightforward alternative world version of the Christian God, Dust is an entirely different concept. It is initially presented as a mystery to the reader that fills a place in a universe structured completely differently from Lewis's Narnia; one in which even God (or rather, someone pretending to be God) is composed of, and reliant upon, Dust. Without it, mankind would not exist, and its shadowy definition eventually evolves into the realization that it is for the sake of Dust that Lyra, Will and their allies embark on their epic quest. As the concept situated at the centre of the trilogy, Dust forms the crux of Pullman's belief

system, helping to define his representation of good and evil, the nature of God, the meaning of life and the origins of humankind, all of which form a worldview that is radically different from that at work in the *Chronicles*, and one that restructures and redefines the Christian understanding of the Fall.

It would appear at first glance that in Pullman's worldview (where evolution is the cause of humanity's existence and there is no God to establish any rules on the matter) there could be no such thing as good or evil. But Pullman does have a strict moral code at work within the series, one that – like Lewis's – is based on an innate acknowledgement of good and bad. When Lyra expresses anger at the removal of the dead fish from Tony Makarios's corpse, we are told that her fury stems from instinctive knowledge that removing it was wrong: "all she saw was right and wrong" (*Northern* 220), and likewise, Pullman describes Will's certainty that the window he finds leads to another world thus: "he knew it at once, as strongly as he knew that fire burned and kindness was good" (*Subtle* 16). In a similar vein, the morally ambiguous Lord Asriel and Mrs Coulter are shown to know deep down the difference between right and wrong when Lyra steps directly into their line of work. The fact that they are unwilling to submit their own daughter to their experimentation undermines each one's commitment to the cause, thereby exposing their own moral culpability, for when Lyra is about to undergo intercision: "[Mrs Coulter's] face, so beautiful and composed, grew in a moment haggard and horror-struck" (*Northern* 279) an event which anticipates Lord Asriel's reaction when he believes for a moment that Lyra is the sacrifice he has called to power his experiment: "He seemed appalled; he kept shaking his head, he held up his hands as if to ward her off; she couldn't believe his distress" (*Northern* 364). As Giardina puts it: "Both

of Lyra's parents apparently believe that they are acting for a greater good, as if the ends justifies the means, but the fact that neither of them wants to do such things to Lyra proves that they know their actions are morally wrong, yet they do them anyway."¹²¹

There is a shred of goodness in both of them that recognizes their crimes are quintessentially wrong, a realization that eventually leads to their self-sacrifice for Lyra's sake.

As such, both Lewis and Pullman seem convinced that all human beings – no matter their age, deeds or background – have an innate sense of right and wrong, as well as the ability to choose between these two states during the course of their lifetimes.

Although they hold vastly different opinions on where evil comes from and what humanity can do about it, this point of similarity allows for comparison between several examples in which Lewis and Pullman approach moral ambiguities within the text and how these relate to the struggles faced by the protagonists as they attempt to negotiate right from wrong.

Part One: Lewis's Use of Aslan as the Definition of Goodness

At the centre of Lewis's definition of good is the figure of Aslan, the undisputed apex of the Narnia books. He is the only character to appear in all seven volumes and plays a vital part in the drive of each narrative, whether he is directly intervening in events, pulling strings from behind the scenes, or initiating each journey by bringing the children into Narnia. His defining feature is the enormous power that he wields; the power to create and destroy, to resurrect both himself and others from the dead, the

¹²¹ Giardina, 147

authority to establish monarchies and dynasties to rule in his name, his omnipotent knowledge of everything that occurs on a physical level as well as in the mind of each individual, and the undisputed allegiance that is accorded him by (most) of the residents of Narnia. The instinctual knowledge of his kingship that Narnians feel for him render him not only “the Lord of the whole Wood” (*Lion* 87) as Mr Beaver calls him, but nothing less than the ruling deity of Narnia.

Aslan’s divinity is something that even readers who do not (or choose not to) read into the Christian back-story cannot escape, as well as the fact that Aslan is not simply a god, but the Son of *the* God, as established by his relationship with several polytheistic gods that emerge throughout the series. Several gods of the Roman pantheon are featured in *Caspian* and mentioned in *Lion*: specifically, Bacchus, Silenus and Pomona, all of whom very clearly submit to Aslan’s dominion, as do Lewis’s own invented deities: the river-god of *Caspian* and the Calormene god Tash who invades Narnia in *Battle*. Aslan is best described as primal goodness, as he is the source of every conceivable aspect of existence, pre-dating the beginnings of the myriad of worlds that he and his father are responsible for creating. His rights as a ruler are guaranteed not just by his ability to rule, but because it is in his purest nature to rule as the creator of all life. Humans are very clearly not on equal footing with him, but are in his service as part of a hierarchy that renders life in a series of tiers: Aslan, gods, humans, and then animals, as Mr Beaver suggests in *Lion* after the children and Beavers quibble over who should approach Aslan first: “Sons of Adam before animals” (*Lion* 139).¹²² However, this service rendered to Aslan is not forced from people; rather it is willingly given as recognition that Aslan is

¹²² Human beings are the only race that can act as legitimate monarchs in Narnia, as *Caspian* is told: “You Sir Caspian, might have known you could be no true King of Narnia unless, like the Kings of old, you were a Son of Adam and came from the world of Adam’s sons” (Lewis, *Caspian*, 233)

their superior liege. Those that reject such submission are found guilty of the sin of pride (which Lewis considers the fundamental sin: “the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride...Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind”) and rendered a villain within the course of the story.¹²³

Because Lewis has established Aslan as the singular god of Narnia, we also find in him Lewis’s understanding of perfect goodness. Because the idea of “goodness” is so subjective (what may be deemed ‘good’ in one situation can be bad in other circumstances), a clear understanding of how Lewis defines ‘goodness’ is essential in order to define Aslan himself. As he describes in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis advocates the existence of a set of moral laws, calling it the Law of Nature, and argues two points concerning this law: that every human being is instinctively aware on some level of right and wrong, and that the latter are ingrained into our psyches by a higher power. By a process of argument, Lewis comes to the conclusion that there must be an objective embodiment of goodness that exists separately from any human being, who instils this knowledge of goodness and its opposite into humanity: “this rule of right or wrong, or law of Human Nature, or whatever you call it, must somehow or other be a real thing - a thing that is really there, not made up by ourselves...a real law which we did not invent and which we know we ought to obey.”¹²⁴

It is at this stage that Lewis’s use of the Fall narrative comes into play, for had Adam and Eve never tasted the fruit and gained its forbidden knowledge, there would be no desire amongst mankind to disobey their inner understanding of justice and fair play; in fact they would not even possess the knowledge that allowed them to behave in any

¹²³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 109

¹²⁴ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 30

way *except* as perfect creatures. Lewis's understanding of the human condition and the physical world is that it has fallen from a state of grace, and now that we are burdened with the tendency to sin, we need another way to return to our lost age of innocence. It is Christ who provided this salvation for humanity, promising that he held the authority to forgive individuals for their sins and that he rose again after a death that he endured for the benefit of humans, who would receive eternal life after death in which they would be returned to a state of grace and renew their damaged relationship with God. In other words, Christ as the Son of God was sent to earth in order to negate the effects of the Fall. The question that remains concerns how this story and its meaning may be translated in Narnian terms, a question that hinges on the fact that Aslan and Christ are the same entity and perform the same function in both worlds. Once Aslan's divinity is established, connotations with our own world's understanding of God can be drawn, particularly in Lewis's understanding of the Fall. As many discover throughout their reading of the series, Aslan is analogous to the Christian understanding of Christ, unsurprising considering Lewis's belief system revolves around the concept of God not just as a monotheistic all-powerful deity, but one whose incarnation walked the earth and affected the course of history. If Narnia's theological structure is to be complete, then it too needs a Son of God: Aslan, the Son of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea.

Of course, this leads to the major misconception that surrounds the Narnia series: that Aslan is merely an allegorical representation of Christ, whose actions and experiences in Narnia simply parallel that of Christ's. But Aslan is more than an allegory of Christ; he *is* Christ as Lewis imagines him in another world, in another form. Lewis

himself rejected the idea of Christian allegory, and instead deems Aslan as a suppositional idea of how Christ might appear in another world:

You are mistaken when you think that everything in the books “represents” something in this world. Things do that in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, but I’m not writing that way. I did not say to myself “let us represent Jesus as He really is in our world by a lion in Narnia”. I said “let us suppose that there were a land like Narnia and that the Son of God, as He became a man in our world, became a Lion there, and then imagine what would happen... if there are other worlds and they need to be saved and Christ were to save them as He would - He may really have taken all sorts of bodies in them which we don’t know about.”¹²⁵

The children’s relationships with Aslan make up a vital part of understanding how Aslan embodies Lewis’s ideas of goodness, as it is the children that showcase the positive impact that he can have on ordinary people, for even the sound of his name has a physical effect on those that hear it: “At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump on its inside” (*Lion* 77). Likewise, each individual’s contact with Aslan has a profound effect upon their behaviour, either by improving their dispositions, or providing them with deep happiness and contentment. The point Lewis is trying to make is that happiness in life comes from submitting to Aslan’s will, even if the initial yielding is uncomfortable, as seen in Jill’s nervousness at drinking before Aslan, Eustace’s painful transformation from his dragon skin and Digory’s painful admission that he is responsible for bringing the Witch into Narnia.

As Lewis states in *Mere Christianity*, perfect goodness is intimidating, an idea that is portrayed in the novel as the children approach Aslan for the first time:

¹²⁵ Lewis, *Letters to Children*, 44-45

People who have not been to Narnia sometimes think that a thing cannot be good and terrible at the same time. If the children had ever thought so, they were cured of it now. For when they tried to look at Aslan's face they just caught a glimpse of the golden mane and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes; and then they found they couldn't look at him and went all trembly (*Lion* 137-8).

Lewis hated what he called "watered down" Christianity, including any liberal thought that softened biblical ideas of sin, hell and punishment, and so took lengths to ensure that Aslan was not passive or indulgent in his dealings with the children. The oft-quoted "he's not a tame lion" is given its full potency in the understanding that Aslan is not something who can be controlled or even fully comprehended. As Kilby points out, the children never become "merely familiar" with Aslan, despite their many interactions with him.¹²⁶ Even Aslan himself is held to a strict code of conduct, as we discover in his fidelity to the laws of the Deep Magic in *Lion*, and (to a much lesser extent) his decision to follow the rules of invisibility that permeates Coriakin's island, of which he says to Lucy: "Do you think I wouldn't obey my own rules?" (*Treader* 178). Aslan's laws are absolute, his will *must* be done, and no amount of lies or excuses can pardon a person for behaving against their innate sense of right and wrong. Only Aslan's capacity for forgiveness can absolve a person from guilt. Yet, as he says himself: "I will not always be scolding" (*Chair* 259) and he is not solely defined by his feats of strength. More often than not Lewis concentrates on the intimate aspects of his character: the empathy he shows toward the human condition (his tears with Digory concerning his mother's illness), his playfulness (the romp with Susan and Lucy), and his sense of humour (his interactions with Reepicheep), as well as his own foibles (his loneliness on the walk to the White Witch's

¹²⁶ Kilby, 136

encampment). It is within this characterization that Lewis's conception of goodness arises; from his understanding of an absolute power that is fair and just, but also compassionate and merciful.

Part Two: Pullman's Use of Dust to Redefine the Fall narrative and its Understanding of Good and Evil

Lying at the centre of Pullman's worldview is his concept of Dust, a mysterious substance that is eventually revealed to be particles of consciousness that allow humans to become self-aware. As such, Dust is the most crucial aspect of existence. In Lyra's world, the discovery of Dust is attributed to a man named Boris Mikhailovitch Rusakov, who defined it as strange elementary particles that clustered around human beings, particularly around adults. However, in Lyra's world, where physics is called 'experimental theology' and closely monitored by agents of the Church, exception is taken to Rusakov's discovery, and attempts made to fit Rusakov-particles into pre-existing beliefs. As Lord Asriel explains, the Church eventually came to accept Rusakov's theories, and made the decision to identify the substance with Original Sin, owing to its accumulation around individuals who have reached puberty. As Lenz puts it, the loss of innocence and its consequence – death – has become inseparably linked with Dust by the Magisterium.¹²⁷ By naming the particles after a passage in the Bible ("for dust thou art, and into dust shalt thou return") in order to further denote their disapproval of it and strengthen its association with sin, the Church create a research branch in order

¹²⁷ Lenz, 127

to further study the phenomena.¹²⁸ Meanwhile, experimentation into Dust is also taking place in Will's world, something that the physicist Mary Malone is involved in. In fact, her dark matter research unit has a basis in real research, with the substance 'dark matter' being a real life mystery in the structure and makeup of the 'real' world universe.

Pullman uses Mary as a vessel to sum up this complicated theory when she tells Lyra:

“Dark matter is what my research team is looking for. No one knows what it is. There's more stuff out there in the universe than we can see, that's the point. We can see the stars and the galaxies and the things that shine, but for it all to hang together and not fly apart there needs to be a lot more of it – to make gravity work, you see. But no one can detect it. So there are lots of different research projects trying to find out what it is, we think it's some kind of elementary particles. Something quite different from anything discovered so far” (*Subtle* 90).

When questioned, Pullman remarked: “This notion of dark matter – something all-pervasive and absolutely necessary but totally mysterious in the universe...the idea that Dust should be in some sense emblematic of consciousness and original sin – what the churches traditionally used to understand by sin, namely disobedience, the thing that made us human in the first place – seemed too tempting to ignore, so I put them together.”¹²⁹

However, Lyra is introduced to these ideas in a far more gradual manner, first hearing the word “Dust” whilst hidden in the Retiring Room wardrobe, recognizing that its significance requires it to be spelt with a capital, and witnessing the photogram that displays the concentration of it around an adult. She hears snippets of conversation on the

¹²⁸ Genesis 3:19

¹²⁹ Fried, “Darkness Visible: An Interview with Philip Pullman,” <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/darkness-visible-an-interview-with-philip-pullman-part-2>

subject, and is privy to the reactions of other characters on it, which are usually ones of intense interest, fear and speculation. But Lyra herself makes a crucial discovery concerning Dust on her journey; that the strange substance can be *communicated* with. This she does through the instrument of the alethiometer, a name derived from the Greek word *aletheia*, which translates into ‘truth’, making the alethiometer a ‘truth-measurer’. By interpreting the variety of symbols around the rim of the instrument, and using them to pose a question in her mind, Lyra can use the alethiometer as a communication device between herself and Dust. The fact that Dust can be communicated with points to one very logical conclusion: that it possesses conscious thought. Lyra shares this knowledge with Mary Malone, who already suspects – however unlikely – that what she calls Shadow particles can be communicated with: “You know what? They’re conscious. That’s right. Shadows are particles of consciousness. You ever heard of anything so stupid?” (*Subtle* 92). The alethiometer informs Lyra that Mary can rig up her computer to receive messages from Shadow particles in her own language (as opposed to the symbols that Lyra has been using), something that Mary achieves after she masters the appropriate state of mind, stimulates the particles with her brainwaves and receives answers to her questions from the dark matter that fills the universe.

From the realization that Dust is both conscious and gives instructions (to both Lyra and Mary), comes the idea that Dust can have a physical effect on the environment around it, something Lyra considers as she looks at the lights of the aurora:

It wasn’t long before she found herself entering the same kind of trance as when she consulted the alethiometer. Perhaps, she thought calmly, whatever moves the alethiometer’s needle is making the Aurora glow too. It might even be Dust itself. She

thought that without noticing she'd thought it, and she soon forgot it, and only remembered it much later (*Northern* 183).

This is an idea that is later confirmed by Lord Asriel when he tells her that Dust *does* move the hands of the alethiometer. Pullman often hints throughout the trilogy that Dust is deliberately attempting to make changes to particular aspects of the universe, from the Professor of Cosmology's mad rant that: "the universe is full of *intentions*, you know. Everything happens for a purpose" (*Northern* 331), to Serafina's words that: "we are all subject to the fates. But we must all act as if we are not, or die of despair" (*Northern* 310), to Giacomo Paradisi's declaration that: "You have come here for a purpose, and maybe you don't know what that purpose is, but the angels do that brought you here" (*Subtle* 197).

Paradisi is the first character to hint at a link between angels and Dust, one that is made explicit in the conversation Mary has with Dust through her computer. After confirming that Dust, Shadow-particles and dark matter are the same thing, she is told that it is in fact "uncountable billions" of angels. It may seem odd at first that a man who has eliminated God from his worldview would use the biblical term 'angel' to describe creatures within his trilogy, but despite the fact that Pullman uses the Fall as a metaphorical tale to describe a real-life occurrence that does *not* have divinity at its source, he includes several other biblical elements in his story that *are* presented as a reality within the context of the story. The most obvious and important example of these are angels, which are (in part) used to overthrow yet another notion of the Fall.

The true theological nature of angels is by no means concrete; scanty information concerning them in the Bible means that differing opinions as to their nature has sprung up throughout history as to their purpose, nature and form. Angels, as they are described

in the Bible, are the messengers and servants of God, described as “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.”¹³⁰ They are creatures without corporeal bodies, created before humanity and serving God as part of a tiered hierarchy in which they are ordered according to their rank. Within *Subtle*, a character describes them in the traditional biblical sense:

“Their names for themselves is *bene elim*, I’m told. Some call them Watchers too. They’re not beings of flesh like us, they’re beings of spirit; or maybe their flesh is finer than ours, lighter and clearer, I wouldn’t know, but they’re not like us. They carry messages from heaven, that’s their calling...they have concerns different from ours, though in the ancient days they came down and had dealings with men and women” (*Subtle* 143).

Pullman describes angels as beings that are entirely spiritual, with no corporeal form at all. Their name is derived from the Greek word *angelos*, which means ‘messenger’, denoting their role as harbingers to mankind sent from God: “Angel is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is spirit; if you seek the name of their office, it is angel; from what they are, spirit, from what they do, angel” (*Subtle* 260).

The Christian understanding of angels (and their counterpoint, demons) is based on the story of Lucifer, the first and most beloved of all the angels who rebelled against Heaven with the objective of seizing God’s throne for himself. He and his host were defeated and cast into Hell, and became known henceforth as demons who reject the sovereignty of God and often attack mankind with the purpose claiming their souls. Although Pullman’s angels are heavily based on this biblical understanding, they are

¹³⁰ Hebrews 1:14

ultimately revealed to be quite different in several ways. The most striking difference is in their origins, as these spirits (including the Authority himself) are composed entirely of dark matter, as opposed to being the creation of God: “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” (*Spyglass* 33-4). Like the biblical angels, Pullman’s are also divided into two camps, but this division is not based on the concepts of good and evil, with evil defined as all that is opposed to God. Instead, the universal struggle that goes on is between those that support the Authority’s rule (and by doing so, reap the benefits of serving the greater power) and those who reject his authority and struggle to uproot him. Xaphania is one of these latter kind of angels, one that Balthamos describes as: “one of those who came later [who] was wiser than he was, and [who] found out the truth, so he banished her” (*Spyglass* 34). There are no such things as demons at all, simply two armies of angels (the Authority among them) fighting against one another for the final say on how the universes and the lives within them should exist.

By putting our understanding of angels and the conflict between them in this new light, the preconceived notions of Satan and his rebellion are drastically changed. In this context it is not a diabolical rebellion against a just and legitimate Creator, but a host of enlightened creatures armed with the truth attempting to dethrone a tyrannical impostor who unjustly exerts his will over them. Unlike the metaphorical story of the Fall, the rebellion of Satan and the rebel angels is treated within *His Dark Materials* as an actual historical event, one that shaped the fate of millions of universes. Joachim Lorenz speculates that: “there could be a war breaking out. There was a war in heaven once, oh, thousands of years ago, immense ages back, but I don’t know what the outcome was”

(*Subtle* 144) and later Mrs Coulter claims: “Lord Asriel is gathering an army, with the purpose of completing the war that was fought in heaven eons ago” (*Subtle* 208). Both quotes indicate that the rebellion against heaven was a real event, and we learn through an elderly cliff-ghast (who is telling his grandchildren a story) that Asriel’s coming battle will be “a greater battle than the last one...it’s a greater army than the one that fought the Authority before, and it’s better led” (*Subtle* 284). In other words, Asriel is finishing the war that was started by Satan. Though Satan is never mentioned by name in any of the three books, we can safely assume that this ‘fallen angel’ was the being that organized and led the first Rebellion against the Authority. Presumably, his name was slandered after his defeat, becoming prime propaganda for the Authority, serving both as a warning and a threat against those who dared attempt action against his leadership. Satan became the very embodiment of evil; someone to be shunned and condemned. By removing this idea of Satan as the personification of evil and revealing that the Magisterium’s understanding of God is utterly false, Pullman removes the figureheads of the traditional Christian understanding of good and evil, leaving us no external powers of good or of evil to define or control us. When seen in this new light, the battle against Authority as waged by Satan (and later Lord Asriel) is not only justified, but essential.

When Mary carries on her conversation with the angels, she learns an interesting fact that fills in the gap in her theory of evolution:

“Suppose something happened thirty, forty thousand years ago. There were Shadow-particles around before then, obvious – they’ve been around since the Big Bang – but there was no physical way of amplifying their effects at *our* level, the anthropic level. The level of human beings. And then something happened, I can’t imagine what, but it involved human beings. Hence [the] skulls, remember? No Shadows before that time, lots

afterwards?... What I'm saying is that around that time, the human brain became the ideal vehicle for this amplification process. Suddenly we became conscious" (*Subtle* 249).

She eventually discovers that it was angels who intervened in human evolution to awaken humanity to its own existence, citing vengeance against the Authority as the reason behind its meddling. Mary is initially confused as to how such a thing may act as an appropriate form of vengeance, but it is soon revealed that although angels are composed of profound consciousness, they lack one crucial component: physical bodies. Angels are fundamentally weak because of their inability to connect with the material world, and as Balthamos tells Will, human beings are stronger due to their physical corporeality; seen to best effect when Asriel and Mrs Coulter wrestle Metatron into the Abyss. This physicality is the reason why the Authority finds humanity such a threat. Angels are deprived the sense of touch, one that they crave so much that they have in the past taken human women as wives and which has led them to envy mankind for their bodies. Asriel says: "They haven't got *flesh*. Few as we are and short-lived as we are, and weak-sighted as we are - in comparison with them, we're still *stronger*. They envy *us*...that's what fuels their hatred, I'm sure of it. They long to have our precious bodies, so solid and powerful, so well adapted to the good earth" (*Spyglass* 394). It is in helping humanity gain consciousness that the rebel angels strike such a vengeful blow at the Authority, for in doing so they have helped create a species that may one day question the authority of the Authority and have the capacity – through their corporality – to defeat him. The Authority is ultimately powerless against the physicality of Lyra and Will who release him from his crystal coffin, thereby returning him to the Dust from whence he came: "in the open air there was nothing to stop the wind from damaging him, and to their dismay his form began to loosen and dissolve" (*Spyglass* 394). Since the Authority can be

interpreted as a symbol of the 'Old Testament' portrayal of a vengeful God, then his death is the destruction of everything that the Church has preached for over two thousand years. Dying alongside this impostor angel is the ideal of the patriarchal, hierarchical, fire-and-brimstone lord and judge of humanity, something that is now not only gone forever, but was never really, according to Pullman, worth following to begin with.

Part Three: The Origins of Evil according to Lewis and his Interpretation of the Fall Narrative

A common component that runs throughout Lewis's use of the Fall is that both versions of the story (biblical and Narnian) concern the arrival of evil into an untainted world. I have already acknowledged that though both Fall narratives are marked by the disruption of a perfect creation by the unwelcome invasion of evil, the circumstances and consequences in which this occurs in Narnia are quite different from our own, including the fact that Narnia is often visited by humans from a world that *does* live under the consequences of the biblical Fall, beings whose fantastic experiences in Narnia help them find fulfilment during their lifetimes and salvation after death. However, the basic premise is the same (it *must* be, or Lewis would not be adhering to 'mere Christianity') in that a singular God is responsible for creation, his work is invaded by evil, and measures are taken in order to protect the innocence that remains. Because Narnia has become a fallen world (albeit a less fallen one than our own world) due to the presence of Jadis, Aslan becomes of crucial importance in keeping evil at bay. He is *needed* in order to save the creatures from outside forces of evil as well as from their own internal bad impulses

through his guidance, leadership and good example. Genesis defines God as good not simply because he is responsible for our existence in the first place, but because it is only through him that evil can be defeated. As such, a part of Aslan's role as the embodiment of fundamental goodness is his willingness to save undeserving creatures, whether they are native Narnians or human visitors.

Any understanding of the concept of good is partly defined by the author's representation of its opposite: evil. In this case, Lewis's portrayal of evil naturally aligns with the Christian idea of evil as the corruption and distortion of goodness. Though evil is the opposite of goodness, it relies on the idea of goodness for its own existence. Before Aslan's intervention in the creation of Narnia there is endless nothingness ("This is an empty world. This is nothing," the witch says of pre-Narnia's atmosphere [*Nephew* 117]) and Aslan's original creations (our world as well as Narnia) are considered flawless in their design: "a new, clean world" (*Nephew* 162). Since the Emperor and Aslan are beings of quintessential goodness, there is no hint of sin or evil in their creations - this element will impinge upon their perfection at a later point. Because the Emperor and Aslan are both primal and perfect, one cannot attribute evil to either one of them, leading to the mystery as to where evil comes from. According to Lewis and Christian belief, it is born out of the free will given to humanity, and the knowledge that eventually dawns on each intelligent individual: that they have the capacity to act in a manner that is contrary to the rules of what they have been led to believe is "good" behaviour. All these beings who may succumb to evil are originally untainted beings, until a Fall of some kind opens the possibility for an individual to oppose the will of their creator.

This is seen clearly in the case of Jadis; the major villain of the series and the character most relevant to this thesis, thanks to her role in the patterns of temptation, fall (in *Nephew*) and redemption (in *Lion*). When Digory and Polly first come upon her in Charn, she is seated in a hall at the end of a row of figures that reveal the course of Charn's history:

All the faces they could see were certainly nice. Both the men and women looked kind and wise, and they seemed to come of a handsome race. But after the children had gone a few steps down the room they came to faces that looked a little different. These were very solemn faces. You felt you would have to mind your P's and Q's, if you ever met living people who looked like that. When they had gone a little further, they found themselves among faces they didn't like: this was about the middle of the room. The faces here looked very strong and proud and happy, but they looked cruel. A little further on they looked cruller. Further on still they were still cruel but they no longer looked happy. They were even despairing faces: as if the people they had belonged to had done dreadful things and suffered dreadful things (*Nephew* 62).

With this simple image, Lewis reveals a dynasty that has gradually fallen into greater sin over time, with each generation gradually growing more degenerate until we reach the irredeemable evil that is Jadis. By the time Jadis and the children leave, Charn has degenerated from its original happy state into something so corrupted it dies a premature death, as seen by the empty chairs in the hall: "there were plenty of chairs beyond [Jadis], as if the room had been intended for a much larger collection of images" (*Nephew* 63).

For Lewis, evil is not an abstract concept, but a reality that can seriously impinge upon the state of both the world and the individual. Aslan himself issues a warning at the conclusion of *Nephew* that Earth and even Narnia is capable of turning out like Charn,

and though the figure of Satan does not appear in any form (literally or allegorically) in the *Chronicles*, Lewis considered him as a very real being, referring to him several times throughout his apologetics. Because he viewed evil as a real phenomena at work in the world, evil could be defined by several key features that were common to all forms of evil, whether belonging to the supernaturally powerful or the petty mortal (for example Andrew and Jadis cite the same line, rendering the magician and the great queen as belonging to different levels of the *same* evil).¹³¹

As it is presented in the *Chronicles*, evil is interested in power and dominion over other living creatures, being desperately in pursuit of something to grant it majesty, control and purpose. But as Manlove points out, even when it *has* that something (as in the witch's possession of Narnia in the one hundred years winter), it does nothing with it: "the Queen is only concerned with maintaining power over Narnia, she does nothing with it and exists for no other reason than to keep it."¹³² The wintry landscape of Narnia reflects her spirit: frozen, uniform and static, with the power to change any independently-thinking creatures into stone. Aslan prophesies that the apple that granted her immortality will bring her nothing but grief: "Length of days with an evil heart is only a length of misery and already she begins to know it" (*Nephew* 208), and sure enough, her conquering of Narnia brings her no happiness, only her ultimate destruction. Evil does not realise that joy and contentment can only come from God, and instead it searches for meaning and fulfilment outside His influence.

As such, evil is always alone or marked by a state of isolation. Even those who have minions or slaves (such as the White Witch's wolves and dwarfs, or the Green

¹³¹ "Ours is a high and lonely destiny." (Lewis, *Nephew*, 28, 78)

¹³² Manlove, 36

Witch's gnomes) have no real companionship when opposed to the teamwork expressed in those who work under Aslan (no trip into Narnia is done solitarily; there are always at least two children, usually joined by Narnian allies early on in the story). This form of cooperation is, of course, completely contrary to any portrayal of evil, from the White Witch who has only slaves, to Miraz who cannot conceive the notion of joint-rulership, (asking: "How could there be more than one king at the same time?" [*Caspian* 53]), to Governor Gumpas, who shuts himself away from the people he is meant to be governing. Even Edmund and Eustace, at the time of their estrangement from the others suffer from self-imposed loneliness.

But ultimately evil is identified by its weakness: its dependency on goodness for its own existence. As Lewis describes it in *Mere Christianity*: "wickedness turns out to be the pursuit of good in the wrong way. You can be good for the sake of goodness: you cannot be bad for the mere sake of badness... Goodness is, so to speak, itself: badness is only spoiled goodness. And there must be something good first before it can be spoilt."¹³³ Evil is therefore portrayed as a mere distortion of goodness, something that is powerful and persuasive, but ultimately weak before the might of God; a condition that evil itself is aware of on some level. The Witch knows this from the moment she hears Aslan sing: "the Witch looked as if, in a way, she understood the magic better than any of them... ever since the song had began she had felt that this whole world was filled with a Magic different than hers, and stronger" (*Nephew* 122), and there are several crucial passages in *Lion* that reveal her underlying fear of Aslan and her recognition that he is more powerful than she: she forbids her servants to speak his name, she begs for safe passage when approaching the Stone Table to parley for Edmund's life, she flees in terror

¹³³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 49

when Aslan roars, and she and her creatures initially express trepidation when Aslan appears to sacrifice himself.

As Aslan shows, evil was unintentionally released into the worlds, whether by Satan and the temptation of Eve, the invasion of a Witch or the gradual succumbing of a dynasty to corruption. Though it is powerful and persuasive, evil is ultimately weak before the might of God, whose goodness is the reason for its existence in the first place. Its presence in the worlds is not the natural state of things as God intended, but because we ourselves are the agents of this evil, we cannot be expected to solve the problem.

Part Four: Pullman's Understanding of the Origins and Nature of Evil based on his Reinterpretation of the Fall Narrative

In the absence of a God figure acting as a creator and judge over human behaviour, dividing souls up between those who go to heaven, and those damned to hell, the Christian worldview of the universe falls apart. Lewis ascribes the notion of good and evil to the invention of God, a being who has placed the universal notion of 'right' and 'wrong' into all of humanity, along with the ability to choose between them. God stands as the pinnacle of perfect goodness, with his arch-rival Satan as evil-incarnate. Without them, where does Pullman's sense of good and evil behaviour come from? According to Pullman, it is from: "ordinary human decency...and accumulated human wisdom."¹³⁴

Within the context of Pullman's worldview, good and evil are replaced with the notion of right and wrong behaviour, as explained by Mary:

¹³⁴ Spanner, "Heat and Dust: Interview with Philip Pullman," <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/heat-and-dust>.

“I stopped believing there was a power of good and a power of evil that can define or control us. And I came to believe that good and evil are names for what people do, not for what they are. All we can say is that this is a good deed, because it helps someone, or this is an evil one because it hurts them. People are too complicated to have simple labels”
(*Spyglass* 470-1).

Lenz points out that Will and Lyra are the perfect examples of this rhetoric; they are neither all good or all bad – like everyone else, they have the capacity for both good and evil acts.¹³⁵ This is quite a different view from the Christian ideal that there are outside forces represented by both God and Satan. Without a God, without any threat of punishment or promise of reward, some might assume that there is no reason not to do whatever they please without threat of retribution, but Pullman advocates that the same thing that gives us meaning in life (our own consciousness) requires us to adhere to our innate sense of right and wrong for the sake of that consciousness and in the hope of achieving a heaven on earth.¹³⁶

As such, the idea of the Authority acting as the major villain of the piece is somewhat lessened by His ultimate destruction and the influence of the Church as the most powerful agency of action within the trilogy. The Authority comes across as more of a symbol of the vengeful Old Testament God as opposed to an actual character, a symbol that is eventually destroyed, along with all that it signifies. Pullman uses the mysteriousness of the world’s origins and our own awareness of life as two central features of the trilogy, but unlike Lewis he does not attempt to explain either one through the medium of God. Just as Lewis admits that he can only brush the surface of what Christ and God are really like, so too does Pullman respect the unknown aspects of the

¹³⁵ Lenz, 133

¹³⁶ Coined in the text as the Republic of Heaven.

world, using only the evidence available to him to structure his worldview; perhaps the reason for the inclusion of Mrs Coulter's demands for proof of God's existence: "Where is God if he's alive? And why doesn't he speak anymore?... Where is he now?" (*Spyglass* 344). Several of Pullman's earlier books relay this sense of questioning God's absence, most prominently seen in *The Tiger in the Well*, in which the protagonist Sally Lockhart (faced with the appalling social conditions of the poor) thinks to herself: "No wonder Doctor Turner felt that God, if there was a God, had turned his back."¹³⁷ This sense of disappointment in the lack of God's presence is surprisingly reminiscent of Lewis's own words in *Surprised by Joy* as he recalls his own atheism: "I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry at God for not existing."¹³⁸ Pullman eventually answers Mrs Coulter's question in two ways, through his portrayal of the Authority as a shrivelled and feeble being sealed in a crystal coffin: "demented and powerless, the aged being could only weep and mumble in fear and pain and misery" (*Spyglass* 431) and through advocating the existence of evolution as the real source of humanity's separation from God. To put it quite simply, there is no God in the universe to interact *with*. Good and evil is not divided between God and Satan, yet in order for there to be a sense of conflict in the trilogy, Pullman has to have some dramatic definition of right and wrong, and some division of his characters into these opposing groups. With the image of God completely obliterated, Pullman needs a more immediate (and threatening) enemy for Lyra and Will to defeat.

As such, a lot of time is spent throughout the course of the trilogy in constructing Pullman's image of the Magisterium. Because the Authority is crippled, incoherent and

¹³⁷ Philip Pullman, *The Tiger in the Well*, (London: Scholastic Children's Books, 1991), 193

¹³⁸ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 132

incapacitated in a crystal coffin, the pain and misery that his reign has inflicted across all the worlds must be represented by his tools of control on earth: his regent Metatron and the Magisterium. The Authority may not have been the creator of life, but he is presumed to be the creator of the Magisterium and the mass of dogmatic doctrines that were created to enforce rules upon humanity: it is this legacy that is presented as the real enemy of the trilogy, and the one that must really be destroyed. Unlike the concept of God (which differs from country to country, race to race, and even person to person), the church and other religious institutions are something recognisable and at work within our world today, a real institute that Pullman can critique. Acting in God's name and advocating the elaborate lies that the Authority has concocted in order to establish and keep control, the Magisterium (as well as the Christian worldview that it preaches) is presented as hypocritical, violent, cruel, corrupt, repressive and ultimately completely false in its teachings. In fact, Pullman paints it so black that it leads Christian sympathiser Moloney to say: "the religion to which Pullman's novel is opposed is such a caricature of real Christianity that most Christians would join him in rejecting it."¹³⁹ Wagner remarks: "the Church he portrays is so over the top wicked it threatens to tip into caricature," whilst Tucker compares the Magisterium with those caricatures found in the atheistic propaganda used in pre-war Soviet Russia that suggested that good clergymen and nuns never existed.¹⁴⁰ Even Lenz, who defends Pullman's depiction of the Church cannot help but use the term 'caricature' to describe the Magisterium, calling it a satire in the tradition of Jonathon Swift: "[it is] purposefully a gross caricature of institutionalised religion,

¹³⁹ Moloney, 171

¹⁴⁰ Erica Wagner, quoted in Squires, 73
Tucker, 127

totally at odds with any values the historical Jesus would recognise.”¹⁴¹ Padley in particular has astutely pointed out that Pullman’s portrayal of the church system comes dangerously close to the type of propaganda that he has accused Lewis of writing, claiming that: “in Pullman’s world the Church is bad, in *His Dark Materials*’ worlds the Church is bad, and, just as Pullman tries to persuade others by assertion of the Church’s badness in his interviews, so his fantasy trilogy attempts through its characters and narrative to do likewise...the purpose of the process appears to be simultaneously self-aggrandising and, whatever Pullman claims to the contrary, propagandic.”¹⁴² Pullman himself defends his portrayal of the Church based on his knowledge of its often-bloody history:

[The portrayal] comes from the record of the Inquisition, persecuting heretics and torturing Jews and all that sort of stuff; and it comes from the other side, too, from the Protestants burning the Catholics. It comes from the insensate pursuit of innocent and crazy old women, and from the Puritans in America burning and hanging the witches...Every single religion that has a monotheistic god ends up by persecuting other people and killing them because they don’t accept him.¹⁴³

One can’t help but feel, however, that the criticisms he holds toward the Church institution are somewhat dated (most of the atrocities of the Church bodies he cites took place hundreds of years ago and have been condemned by the majority of church congregations), and targeted at the expense of ignoring the great good that Churches around the world have achieved. Indeed, in recent interviews, Pullman has expressed a degree of regret over his entirely black portrayal of Christianity, admitting that in real life

¹⁴¹ Lenz, 158

¹⁴² Padley, 327-8

¹⁴³ Spanner, “Heat and Dust: Interview with Philip Pullman,” <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/heat-and-dust>.

there are decent people who follow the teachings of Christ and that their omission in the book is an ‘artistic flaw’: “If I’d had more time to think about it, no doubt I would have put in a good priest here or there, just to show they’re not all horrible.”¹⁴⁴ It is worth noting that his portrayal of our own world’s Christian organisation (which Mary once belonged to) is considerably more benevolent than the one that exists in Lyra’s world, seen most clearly in Lyra’s surprise that Mary was allowed to leave her convent once she lost her faith: “Nuns are supposed to stay in their convents forever...this en’t a bit like my world at all, not one bit” (*Spyglass* 95). However, perhaps there is a darker side to our world’s church, for Tucker suggests (though the text gives no substantial evidence for this claim) that the pale-haired man who chases Will around Oxford is in fact: “a hired man acting on the instructions from the Church,” (though I tend to agree with Chabon’s suggestion that the man is simply meant to be “vaguely governmental”).¹⁴⁵ In any case, it is the Church of Lyra’s world that is presented as the real enemy, one that claims to hold the monopoly on salvation, but is merely a bureaucracy of feuding factions and hypocritical priests.

Our first description of the Church (as it exists in Lyra’s world) occurs in the opening chapters of *Northern*, in which we are told that:

Ever since John Calvin had moved the sect 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. The Papacy itself had been abolished after Calvin’s death, and a tangle of courts, colleges and councils, collectively known as the Magisterium, had grown up in its

¹⁴⁴Spanner, “Heat and Dust: Interview with Philip Pullman,” <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/heat-and-dust>.

¹⁴⁵ Tucker, 99
Chabon, 9

place. These agencies were not always united, sometimes a bitter rivalry grew up between them. For a large part of the previous century, the most powerful had been the College of Bishops, but in recent years the Consistorial Court of Discipline had taken its place as the most active and the most feared of all the Church's bodies (*Northern* 31).

In this description Pullman describes the power structure of the Magisterium within his invented world and makes clear that this divided, bureaucratic and most likely corrupt institution is not to be considered favourably, for as Yeffeth puts it, the Magisterium is: “a powerfully repressive Church Triumphant that is itself fatally divided among warring factions of bishops and prelates banded into orders whose names are at once bland, grand and horrible.”¹⁴⁶ Pullman explicitly links it to the name of John Calvin (a 17th century Reformer who also exists in our own history, one who occasionally ordered the deaths of children he believed to be heretics) who in this parallel universe has become Pope and whose reforms have resulted in the strengthening of the Magisterium.¹⁴⁷ Unlike the situation in our contemporary world, in which the power of the Church is based on widespread personal influence rather than political clout, the Magisterium of Lyra's world remains a prominent institutionalized power at work in the world. Pullman explores a “what if” scenario in which there is no separation between Church and State, and every aspect of life is monitored and controlled (to some degree) by agents of the Magisterium. Pullman introduces characters such as Father McPhail, who “would have been fat were it not for the brutal discipline he imposed on his body: he drank only water and ate only bread and fruit, and he exercised for an hour daily under the supervision of a trainer of champion athletes” (*Spyglass* 73), reflecting the Church's esoteric lifestyle and

¹⁴⁶ Glenn Yeffeth “Dust and Dreams” *Navigating the Golden Compass*, 4

¹⁴⁷ Tucker, 126

denial of physical joy in life; Father Gomez, through whom Pullman criticizes the practice of pre-emptive penance and absolution, and Semyon Borisovitch, who: “kept leaning forward to look closely at [Will], and felt his hands to see if he was cold, and stroked his knee” (*Spyglass* 103), undoubtedly serving as a reminder of the Catholic Church’s paedophilia scandals. There is not a single member of the clergy who is not malicious, misguided, hypocritical and dangerously, fundamentally religious, all part of an institute born entirely out of a misinterpretation of the Fall and the misidentification of Dust with sin.

Surprisingly, in many ways Lewis was *more* accommodating to alternative belief systems and groups than Pullman. Though the Calormenes worship a heathen god, two members of the race are accorded grace by the hand of Aslan: Aravis of *Horse* and Emeth, a Calormene soldier, who is told by Aslan that:

“[Tash and I] are opposites - I take to me the services which thou has done to him. For I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. Therefore, if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath’s sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, though he know it not, and it is I who reward him. And if any man do a cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted” (*Battle* 202).

This is a significant matter of distinction between the two authors considering that (in the absence of a church-system in Narnia) Pullman’s portrayal of the Church is best compared with Lewis’s creation of the Calormene nation. Both are composed in a hierarchical power-structure, both have a desire for control and expansion, a history of cruelty and conquest, both worship what is eventually revealed to be a false god and

harbour a wilful misconception about alternative belief-systems (the Calormenes look upon Aslan as demonic, just as the Magisterium regard Dust as Original Sin). Most importantly, both authors display disgust toward the similar traits that both empire and institute embody. Yet Lewis accepts what he would deem ‘heathens’ into Aslan’s fold, closely collaborating with the views he expresses in *Mere Christianity* in which he admits his ignorance as to the fate of non-Christians and acknowledges the unfairness of non-Christian fates should they be denied a chance at accepting God: “Is it not frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in Him? But the truth is God has not told us what His arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ, we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through him.”¹⁴⁸ For all the sexism and racism that Lewis is often accused of, he is considerably more open to alternative systems of belief than Pullman, whose Magisterium is irredeemably corrupt. One need only compare Pullman’s ridicule of the Church (even into the Land of the Dead itself, where Lyra encounters priests who still denounce her and insist on the legitimacy of their religion) to Lewis’s edict on atheism: “If you are a Christian you do not have to believe that all the other religions are wrong all through. If you are an atheist you do have to believe that the main point in all the religions of the whole world is simply one huge mistake.”¹⁴⁹

Pullman’s Magisterium hates and fears Lyra, as they perceive her as a threat against their entire understanding of the structure of the universe. This is in fact the reason why the Magisterium is so dangerous: it is not *just* for wealth or respectability or

¹⁴⁸ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 65

¹⁴⁹ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 43

earthly power that they oppose Lyra (though all these things are certainly a part of it) but because they possess the utmost conviction that they are right in their thinking and have a divine mandate to do whatever it takes to maintain their hegemonic control, as seen in Father McPhail granting Gomez absolution to murder Lyra. The Magisterium discovers through several means (including torture) that Lyra is the object of a grand prophecy, identifying her as 'Eve', a name whose connotations naturally fill them with fear and horror. For them, Eve is the sole cause for the entrance of Original Sin into the world, something which is variously identified throughout the text as disobedience against God, gaining awareness of evil, terrible pride (also Lucifer's fatal flaw) in attempting to be like God, and the emergence of shame and sexuality; all of which they believe is encapsulated in Dust.

For the Magisterium, it is very clear what needs to be done to anyone who poses the threat of re-enacting the temptation and falling into the same consequences. Ironically, in eliminating the threat of Lyra, the Magisterium will indeed succeed in returning to that state of innocence that they so desire. As Mary Malone discovers in the mulefa-universe, Dust is gradually seeping out of the world and into the Abyss. In its absence, intelligent life will indeed devolve into a 'pre-fallen' or 'innocent' animalistic state, for if Lyra is prevented from fulfilling her destiny then the Magisterium will achieve their grand purpose: what they deem 'Original Sin' will indeed leave the world. However, their warped ideology has not informed them of the advantages of what they call 'sin', nor the consequences that will arise if it disappears: the complete annihilation of free thought and self-realisation: exactly what the Authority wants. Instead, the Magisterium are focused in their all-encompassing desire to eradicate Original Sin, even

if it means their own destruction, as seen in the assassin/martyr of *Subtle* who cries: “I am glad to die! I shall have the martyr’s palm!” (*Subtle* 132). It is also evident in the suicide of Father McPhail as he willingly separates himself from his daemon to trigger the bomb designed to kill Lyra, and in his earlier declaration concerning the potential fate of the church:

“If in order to destroy Dust we also have to destroy the Oblation Board, the College of Bishops, every single agency by which the Holy Church does the work of the Authority - then so be it. It may be, gentlemen, that the Holy Church itself was brought into being to perform this very task and to perish in the doing of it. But better a world with no church and no Dust than a world where everyday we have to struggle under the hideous burden of sin” (*Spyglass* 74).

The Magisterium is a frightening institute because it is willing to sacrifice everything to reach its goals even if it means destroying itself in the process, catering to what Squires calls a destructive, skewered logic that would prefer nothingness to imperfect life.¹⁵⁰ Eventually, the fate of the Magisterium remains somewhat vague; we are told in *Spyglass* that: “it seemed the power of the Church had increased greatly, and that many brutal laws had been passed, but that the power had waned as quickly as it had grown: upheavals in the Magisterium had toppled the zealots and brought more liberal factions into power” (*Spyglass* 541), yet it is not utterly dismantled. In the short story “Lyra and the Birds”, set four years after the events of *Spyglass*, we are casually told: “[Lyra and Pan] were going past the Grey Friars Oratory, and through the window there came the sound of a choir singing the responses to an evening rite.”¹⁵¹ Though the Magisterium’s power has been

¹⁵⁰ Squires, 52

¹⁵¹ Pullman, *Lyra’s Oxford*, 25

levelled, the institute itself is not eradicated – but Pullman’s views on the subject (to the reader at least) have destroyed any credibility the institute may have once possessed.

Pullman has redefined the idea of good and evil forces influencing humanity into an awareness of good and bad actions that human beings are solely responsible for. The conflict of these opposing actions are based on the notion of Dust, with characters divided into those who attempt to save it and all that it means, and those who are content to watch it flow back into oblivion, taking with it all the wisdom, beauty and knowledge that it has helped humanity acquire. The angel Xaphania describes the conflict thus: “All the history of human life has been a struggle between wisdom and stupidity... The rebel angels, the followers of wisdom, have always tried to open minds; the Authority and his churches have always tried to keep them closed” (*Spyglass* 506). This is a statement previously echoed in the words of John Parry:

“There are two great powers, and they’ve been fighting since time began. Every advance in human life, every scrap of knowledge and wisdom and decency we have has been torn by one side from the teeth of the other. 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” (*Subtle* 335).

‘Evil’, as Pullman might understand the word has nothing to do with anything sentient or living, but rather is the latter’s total opposite: annihilation and oblivion. The great purpose of Lyra and Will’s journey is based entirely on the need to confront this ideology of ‘evil’: they save Dust from seeping into the Abyss by re-enacting the drama of Adam and Eve, they release the dead from their prison so that they can dissolve into Dust, and they finally uncover the mystery of Dust’s nature, discovering its importance and purpose in the universal scheme. In this journey, Pullman’s own understanding of what governs

the world is revealed, from finding one's daemon as one becomes adult, to the revisionist version of the Fall.

Pullman's *Dust* also has bearing on Christianity's understanding of death, as Christians are taught that the universe is divided into: "two worlds: the world of everything we can see and hear and touch, and another world, the spiritual world of heaven and hell," (*Northern* 31) and that death results in the soul entering either one or the other, depending on one's devotion to God during their lifetimes. But within *His Dark Materials*, Pullman reveals this to be a complete fabrication, yet another method of control on the part of the Authority. In truth, every spirit, regardless of their quality of life, are all ushered down into a grim and dreary afterlife to spend the rest of eternity wasting away as incorporeal ghosts. A ghost who died as a martyr speaks out against this injustice:

"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 an eternity in the company of saints and angels praising the Almighty, in a state of bliss. That's what they said. And it'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 forever, with no hope of freedom, or joy, or sleep or rest or peace" (*Spyglass* 335-6).

Of course, Pullman does not leave the dead in the underworld, and through the combined efforts of Will and Lyra, a door is cut through to the world of the mulefa, and the ghosts re-emerge. Lyra has already informed them what will happen as soon as their incorporeal bodies are exposed to the elements:

When you go out of here, all the particles that make you up will loosen and float apart, just like your daemons did. If you've seen people dying, you know what that looks like. But your daemons en't just *nothing* now; they're part of everything. All the atoms that were them, they've gone into the air and the wind and the trees and the earth and all the living things. They'll never vanish. They're just part of everything. And that's exactly what'll happen to you, I swear to you, I promise on my honour. You'll drift apart, it's true, but you'll be out in the open, part of everything alive again" (*Spyglass* 335).

Rather than everlasting reward or torment in one of the two after-lives that Christianity promises, Pullman imagines a literal *return* to life, though it means that the last remnants of their being and individual thought will be obliterated, or as Leiber says, the ghosts "let their atoms go in the creation of new life."¹⁵² Some may not find such an ending to their existence completely satisfactory, such as Moloney, who believes that:

Pullman is preaching to his readers...what's more, he is preaching obvious nonsense about the joy of being a raindrop. Atoms are not alive, let alone conscious. To say otherwise is to promote pantheism, a silly religious belief if ever there was one...it's quite hard to sympathize with Roger's "vivid little burst of happiness" upon ceasing to exist.¹⁵³

Moloney's views are shared by Mrs Coulter who tells Asriel that: "I cannot bear the thought of oblivion...sooner anything than that. I used to think pain would be worse – to be tortured forever – I thought that must be worse...But as long as you were conscious, it would be better wouldn't it? Better than feeling nothing, just going into the dark, everything going out forever and ever?" (*Spyglass* 400). However, Pullman lets the reader know that the ghosts themselves are happy with this end. This is revealed by the

¹⁵² Justin Leiber, "Mrs Coulter versus C. S. Lewis," in *Navigating the Golden Compass*, 165

¹⁵³ Moloney, 176

martyr, who says: “Even if it means oblivion, friends, I’ll welcome it, because it won’t be nothing, we’ll be alive again in a thousand blades of grass, and a million leaves...out there in the physical world which is our true home and always was” (*Spyglass* 336) and by Roger who dissolves into the world: “leaving behind such a vivid little burst of happiness that Will was reminded of the bubbles in a glass of champagne” (*Spyglass* 382). Why the Authority contrived to pen up the dead in an immense prison is never explicitly explained, but one can assume that it was to prevent the natural re-emergence of ghosts into Dust, resulting in the growth and expansion of the one substance - consciousness itself - that poses such a threat to his rule.

This hypothesis matches Pullman’s belief that in the absence of God, it is consciousness itself that gives us a purpose:

[The universe] is not meaningless. It was meaningless before, but it’s not meaningless anymore. This is the mistake Christians make when they say that if you are an atheist you have to be a nihilist and there’s no meaning any more... now that I’m conscious, now that I’m responsible, there *is* a meaning, and it is to make things better and to work for greater good and greater wisdom.¹⁵⁴

Pullman replaces the idea of an invisible, silent God with an emphasis of the importance of the here and now, advocating that everything must be enjoyed and savoured whilst it lasts, and that we must enjoy our physicality and make meaning in what we do instead of finding it elsewhere. This is seen in his examples of both Serafina and Mary, the former who “snapped a little twig off the pine-branch she flew with, and sniffed the sharp resin smell with greedy pleasure” (*Subtle* 289), after feeling pity for the incorporeal bodies of

¹⁵⁴ Spanner, “Heat and Dust: Interview with Philip Pullman,” <http://www.hisdarkmaterials.org/news/philip-pullman/heat-and-dust>.

the angels: “how much they must miss, never to feel the earth beneath their feet, or the wind in their hair, or the tingle of starlight on their bare skin” (*Subtle* 289). Likewise, at a critical moment Mary anchors herself to her body by thinking of physical pleasures: “all the sensations that made up being alive. The exact touch of her friend Atal’s soft tipped trunk caressing her neck. The taste of bacon and eggs. The triumphant strain in her muscles as she pulled herself up a rock face. The delicate dancing of her fingers on a computer keyboard. The smell of roasting coffee. The warmth of her bed on a winter night” (*Spyglass* 385). This is later reiterated by Will, when he declares that: “The best part [of humanity] is the body...angels wish they had bodies. Balthamos and Baruch told me that angels can’t understand why *we* don’t enjoy the world more. It would be sort of ecstasy for them to have our flesh and our senses” (*Spyglass* 463). It is simple pleasures that we should relish and remember, rather than wasting time dreaming of a better life to come as the source of happiness and fulfilment, as Pullman accuses Lewis of doing: “It’s a sort of betrayal of life to long for death, as C. S. Lewis did in the Narnia books, which climax with the children being killed in a railway accident; their deaths are presented as a release from this ghastly life on earth. I think it would have been a braver – even, a more Christian – choice for Lewis to have let those children grow into fulfilled adulthood.”¹⁵⁵

He goes on to say:

The emphasis of [certain religions] is that this world is the place of sin and evil and that the material world is very inferior to the spiritual world, which is a sort of realm of gas and non-physical stuff that exists. And we get there after we die. If we’re good, we go to Heaven and we – well, nobody knows what Heaven’s like, and nobody really knows what Hell’s like...it seemed to me that people waste so much of their lives waiting for what’s

¹⁵⁵ Jennie Renton, “Philip Pullman Interview,” *Textualities Online Literary Magazine* (2005), <http://www.textualities.net/writers/features-n-z/pullman01.php>

going to happen after they die. And this world is the only world we know or we can be certain of. And it's a place of the most extraordinary and exquisite beauty.¹⁵⁶

But Pullman is overly critical in his claims that Lewis advocated world-denial, as the *Chronicles* are filled with moments of physical pleasures enjoyed by his protagonists. When Shasta enters a luxurious house we are told: “there was a carpet on the floor more wonderfully coloured than anything [he] had ever seen and his feet sank down into it as if he were treading in thick moss” (*Horse* 72), when the Narnians are traversing the countryside we read: “a light breeze sprang up which scattered drops of moisture from the swaying branches and carried cool, delicious scents against the faces of the travellers” (*Lion* 132) and when the Pevensie siblings enjoy a meal of fresh fish (one of many Narnian meals that Lewis describes in vivid detail) he writes: “You can think how good the new-caught fish smelled when they were frying and how the hungry children longed for them to be done” (*Lion* 82). Lewis may ultimately exalt death over life – according to his faith – but it is never at the cost of hating life itself. Although Lewis’s personal attitudes on women, violence, other races, and even certain aspects of Christianity may be somewhat dated by now, it is in keeping with his theology to make the deaths of the children a fortunate occurrence, as the event is based on a conviction of life after death. In this case it is the teachings of Christianity, not Lewis’s views, that Pullman has issue with when it comes to the structuring of the world: “What I don’t like is the notion that the world is a cruel and imperfect copy of something much better somewhere else. Seen from that perspective...life is shabby and second rate, shot through with failure and

¹⁵⁶ Kathleen Odean, “The Story Master,” *School Library Journal* (6 October), http://web.archive.org/web/20001203061100/http://www.slj.com/articles/articles/20001001_9064.asp

corruption and evil.”¹⁵⁷ Dust represents the bond that exists between the spiritual and the material world, naturally representing the spiritual, mental and emotional aspect of human existence. Unlike the similar dichotomy in *Narnia*, in which the spiritual realm is represented by Aslan, who eventually comes to remove his creations from the flawed and sinful world, the material and spiritual realms in *His Dark Materials* exist in a relationship of perfect equality, each reliant on the other for their own existence, as the angels tell Mary: “From what we are, spirit; from what we do, matter. Matter and spirit are one” (*Subtle* 260) and in Balthamos’s words: “Dust is only a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself. Matter loves matter. It seeks to know more about itself, and Dust is formed (*Subtle* 260). The relationship between the spiritual Dust and the material world is never seen better than by Mary when she witnesses the flow of Dust into the Abyss, and realises that Dust is trying to save itself:

But the vast flood [of Dust] in the sky was another matter entirely. That was new, and it was catastrophic. And if it wasn’t stopped, all conscious life would come to an end. As the mulefa had shown her, Dust came into being when living things became conscious of themselves; but it needed some feedback system to reinforce it and make it safe, as the mulefa had their wheels and the oil from the trees. Without something like that, it would all vanish. Thought, imagination, feeling, all would wither and blow away, leaving nothing but a brutish automatism; and that brief period when life was conscious of itself would flicker out like a candle in every one of the billions of worlds where it had burned brightly...

At the summit of the slope she looked for the last time at the Dust-stream, with the clouds and the wind blowing across it and the moon standing firm in the middle. And then she

¹⁵⁷ Renton, “Philip Pullman Interview,” <http://www.textualities.net/writers/features-n-z/pullmanp01.php>

saw what they were doing, at last: she saw what that great urgent purpose was. They were trying to hold back the Dust-flood. They were striving to put some barriers up against the terrible stream: wind, moon, clouds, leaves, grass, all those lovely things were crying out and hurling themselves into the struggle to keep the Shadow-particles in this universe, which they so enriched. Matter loved Dust. It didn't want to see it go (*Spyglass* 476).

Mary describes Dust as “particles of consciousness,” for it is not made of consciousness, it *is* consciousness, and Metzger praises the fact that it is not an inert substance or some independent phenomena that connects all conscious life, but consciousness itself.¹⁵⁸ As such, it is the reason behind our *own* consciousness, since it was the accumulation of Dust around our remote ancestors that first brought our species into self-awareness, and the angels (who are themselves are composed of Dust) who helped them achieve this awareness. With each human mind coming into full consciousness at adolescence, Dust is replenished. As the angel Xaphania explains:

“Dust is not a constant. There's not a fixed quantity that has always been the same. Conscious beings make Dust, they renew it all the time by thinking and feeling and reflecting, by gaining wisdom and passing it on. And if you help everyone else in your worlds to do that, by helping them to learn and understand about themselves, and each other and the way everything works and by showing them how to be kind instead of cruel, and patient instead of hasty, and cheerful instead of surly and above all, how to keep their minds open and free and curious... Then they will renew enough to replace what is lost through one window [made by the Subtle Knife]” (*Spyglass* 520).

Therefore, Dust makes up the most important aspect of existence; part of a symbiotic relationship with the rest of humanity that is constantly growing and replenishing itself. If the flow back into the Abyss continues, all sentient life will revert back to a pre-

¹⁵⁸ Metzger, “Philip Pullman, Research Scientist,” *Navigating the Golden Compass*, 58

conscious state, allowing the Magisterium to get its wish of returning to innocence, and the Authority's desire to reign forever over dwindling human existence. Of course, the question that naturally arises from all of this is that if our consciousness emerged because of Dust and angels, and if angels themselves are composed of Dust, then where did Dust come from in the first place? Information on its origins are not given, though it has been rumoured that Pullman will provide an answer to the question in the forthcoming "Book of Dust", a volume of short stories set within the *His Dark Materials* universe. Within the trilogy however, the ultimate source of our defining characteristic of human beings – our awareness of being alive – is left an ultimate mystery, simply because Pullman himself does not know. He has built a worldview based on his own understanding of the world, even if it means advocating oblivion after death, as opposed to the ideal of heaven.

Moloney complains that Pullman's description of non-existence contradicts the human impulse to believe that there is life after death, and that: "he insists a bit too zealously that we trust in his mere words and promises that oblivion is superior to life."¹⁵⁹ Moloney is probably correct in his assertion that most will prefer the promise of heaven (as displayed in Lewis's *Battle*) to the thought that their atoms will dissolve into the world, but he neglects to acknowledge that for Pullman – an avowed atheist – there is no other option available. With the obliteration of both God and heaven, oblivion is the only belief left, even if the thought is rather appalling to some readers. Pullman replaces Lewis's assurances as to the existence of God with the acknowledgement that the origins of the world and the nature of humanity are both a mystery, inasmuch as the true nature of God was a mystery to Lewis. Instead of focusing on the nature of death, Pullman pulls the narrative (and the reader's attention) back to his treatment of the Fall, arguing that since

¹⁵⁹ Moloney, 176

God isn't speaking – as Mrs Coulter asserts – there is little point in dwelling on the situation. What is important is the here and now, and the task of Will and Lyra to build the Republic of Heaven on Earth during their own lifetimes. It is their ability to think, feel and change that will make this possible, human traits which are the direct consequence of the metaphorical Fall, a tale that Pullman has explored in various ways to build his portrayal of life and its meaning, for humanity both individually and collectively.

Conclusion

My motivation in the writing of this thesis stems from my admiration for both Lewis and Pullman's contribution to children's literature, and an ongoing fascination for the weighty metaphysical content that each have imbued into series that are targeted mainly toward children.

In both cases, the stories have created controversy, with several critics claiming both authors cater to agendas that support their personal views on religious matters, a controversy that has only intensified with the recent release of films based on their work. Unfortunately, amidst all this controversy and publicity is lost the fact that both sets of books offer young readers commentary on the human-defining myth of the Fall, presenting them with opposing views on an issue that has helped define much of Western thought.

As each set of stories is dependant on the Fall narrative to explain certain aspects of the human condition, the authors' shared interest in this biblical tale provides a basis for comparison that has been at the centre of this thesis. To explore how the overarching influence of the Fall has shaped the worldviews in the books has been the main goal of this thesis, discussing how it has been essential for both Pullman and Lewis to present the reader with their individual commentaries on a range of issues such as life and death, God and humanity, good and evil.

That all of these issues can be found – to one extent or the other – in the story of the Fall certainly helps each author infuse the traditional story with their own views on these important themes, shaping and changing aspects of the original to form their own meaning within their modified versions. It is this search for meaning in life, I have

argued, that forms the underlying sense of rhetoric in each series, with both Lewis and Pullman determined to share their understanding of the world with the reader.

One of my aims throughout this work was to attempt to reconcile the two series, as when the books are viewed as companion pieces they provide the reader the opportunity to examine opposing opinions of a renowned and influential story of Western culture. What with each book's emphasis on choice and freewill, it is apt that although each book holds a bias toward the authors' personal point of view, their unlikely compatibility allows the reader to exercise their ability to judge two sides of an argument, to challenge their own beliefs, and finally, to make up their own minds on a story that purports to explain much about the human condition and the purpose of life itself.

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