2014

A Republic 'on Earth as it Is in Heaven': the Freedom of the Fall in Paradise Lost and His Dark Materials

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HONS 497

A Republic ‘on Earth as it is in Heaven’: the Freedom of the Fall in *Paradise Lost* and *His Dark Materials*

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March 31, 2014

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Abstract

The epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667, 74) retells the Biblical creation story through the blind eyes of the Christian political-poet John Milton. Three hundred years later, Milton's work is recast by the atheist children's and fantasy novelist Philip Pullman in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy (1995, 97, 2000). Although one might assume that these two writers' perspectives would contradict one another, Pullman's adaptation—though a perverted story of the Fall—still pursues the same goal as Milton's by imagining a new and better social structure. And not only do they share that goal, but they also explore the same mechanism—free will.

A Republic 'on Earth as it is in Heaven': the Freedom of the Fall in *Paradise Lost* and *His Dark Materials*

*"Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (*Paradise Lost *3.98-99)*

"You'll understand it later"

Following in the centuries-long epic tradition of the invocation of the Muse, John Milton begins his Book VII of *Paradise Lost* (1667, 74) by calling to Urania, the oldest and wisest of the Muses. This technique blatantly imitates epic poetry tradition, however, what he wills her to do is certainly a uniquely Miltonic expectation; he bids her saying, "[…] still govern thou my Song, / Urania, and fit audience find, though few" (7.30-31). In this moment Milton invokes not only wisdom for himself, but also a wise reader, a quality that he apparently considers rather rare. Milton poses this challenge as not merely a request, but a requirement. A fit reader absorbs the poetry and conceives beyond face value—an imperative task to fully comprehending Milton's purposes.

Regardless of the three hundred year gap, Philip Pullman makes a similar request of the readers of his fantasy children's novels the *His Dark Materials* series: *The Golden Compass* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000).[1] Shelley King, in her article "Exegesis, Allegory, and Reading *The Golden Compass*" says "Pullman imagines a complex audience for his novel, one that ranges from child to textual scholar" (111). She cites an interview where Pullman was once asked, "[W]ere you at any stage concerned that the uncondescending references to Church lore and Milton might alienate some children?" to which he responds:

[1] For the sake of expediency, when later discussing the titles of the books, I shorten them to the acronyms *GC, SK,* and *AS.*

> …I have a high enough opinion of my readers to expect them to take a little difficulty in their stride. My readers are intelligent: I don't write for stupid people…we are all stupid, and we are all intelligent…I pay my readers the compliment of assuming that they are intellectually adventurous. (qtd. in King 111)

Pullman leaves little doubt regarding his desire for intellectual adventurousness by presenting his main character, twelve-year-old Lyra, and her uncanny ability to read the golden compass—or alethiometer—a complex device that answers questions and gives advice through the manipulation of nobs and cyphering of symbol patterns. In the first novel of the series, *The Golden Compass*, Lyra manages to interpret the Alethiometer, only thereby she and her companions are capable of navigating their exploits throughout the series (King 110). At one point Lyra asks the witch Serafina Pekkala about this strange capability that she possesses, to which the witch replies, "You are so young, Lyra, too young to understand this, but I shall tell you anyway and you'll understand it later" (314). This idea of "you'll understand it later" is a central theme for Milton and Pullman, and perhaps not only for their characters, but also their readers. Adam and Eve, as well as Lyra, are given complete freedom to follow the will of God (or the alethiometer) or to follow their own will. The choices they make determine the outcome of the entire universe in which they inhabit. Equally, the challenge stands before the reader to grasp the message imbedded in the text and act accordingly, or to ignore it. The choice is theirs.

But do these writers have more in common than simply their desire for "intellectually adventurous" readers and characters? This study examines Milton's *Paradise Lost* alongside Pullman's *His Dark Materials* in order to more fully understand each in light of the other. I argue that Pullman and Milton are interconnected on many levels; first in Pullman's blatant connection

to Milton, which he has expressed through interviews and which he imbeds deeply into his novels, and second, through their mutual desire for a better social structure that can only be achieved through the vehicle of free will. It is necessary to examine each author in the light of his ideal social and political moment in order to fully comprehend his philosophical or religious perspective. Moreover, this study observes their divergent uses of free will as seen through their works. Only then can they be examined side-by-side to understand how they, though different in practice, both maintain an affirmative attitude toward free will and its role in society.

Social Construction/Social Order

In order to properly understand Milton and Pullman's take on social order, one must differentiate between social order and social construction. Both Milton and Pullman are keenly interested in how societies are created and how 'right' or 'good' social order comes only from the proper form of construction. More effectually, I argue that according to Milton and Pullman, societies can only flourish when they have been constructed with free will as their foundation. Paul Boghossian defines social construction as a society's ability to create or give meaning to something that otherwise would not exist or have that meaning. He says, "There are certainly many things…that are socially constructed…money, citizenship and newspapers, for example. None of these things could have existed without society; and each of them could have been constructed differently had we so chosen" (1). This study uses this definition broadly, especially in relation to Milton and Pullman's literal crafting of fictional societies. The authors are capable of giving, creating, and manipulating these societies to have meaning where they otherwise would have none, as well as the social construction that takes place within these societies by the characters therein.

Yet the manner in which these societies are constructed—the way meaning is given to them and functions within them—is quite different from social order. Instead of giving meaning, social order can be more effectually understood as hegemony or cultural imperialism. The Oxford English Dictionary defines hegemony as, "social or cultural predominance or ascendancy; predominance by one group within a society or milieu, or by a particular set of social or cultural ideas, way of doing things, or item" ("hegemony"). So essentially the hegemony that Milton and Pullman exemplify in their innumerable constructions are the cultural norms within each society. This study will look primarily on three social constructions from both Milton and Pullman. Milton focuses on the social units of Heaven, Hell, and the garden, while Pullman gives examples of societies that range throughout the course of his three novels, such as the personal society of a human and his or her dæmon, the panserbjørne, and the mulefa. The manner in which each society is constructed, as well as the social and cultural hegemony that presents itself in the societies, provides a deeper understanding of free will's imperative role in the worlds of both Milton and Pullman. So while Milton and Pullman construct societies that either reinforce the affirmative nature of free will, or critique the absence of it, the prescribed social order, or hegemonic composition in each author's work, is distinctly opposed.

Milton's Constructed Societies

During Milton's historical moment, a storm of regicide, fluctuating monarchy, civil war, and dissention filled England and buffeted the lives of the citizens. Because of Milton's outspoken and often inflammatory published political opinions—including the infamous *Eikonoklastes* which defended the execution of Charles I—, after the coronation of Charles II it was no longer safe for him to openly discuss his politics and he eventually took to poetry as his form of communicating his political and religious viewpoints. Barbara Keifer Lewalski notes,

> His political disappointments did not lead him, as is sometimes supposed, to retreat to a spiritual realm, a 'paradise within.' His epic is in fact a more daring political gesture than we often realize, even as it is also a poem for the ages by a prophet-poet who placed himself with, or above, Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, Tasso and the rest. It undertakes a strenuous project of educating readers in the virtues, values, and attitudes that make a people worthy of liberty. (442)

Aiming to educate his 'few' fit readers on the path to political proficiency, Milton positions his argument in defense of God and his heavenly monarchical government. Yet a poor reader might ask, "why would Milton choose to idealize a heavenly monarchy when he so violently opposes an earthly one? If Milton idealizes God as a king, would he not parallel his respect toward an English one?" The answer lies in the distinctive nature of the realms of Heaven and Hell. After observing the two kingdoms, there are distinct differences between them that Milton uses to defend his position on Heaven. Apart from the traditional connotations of evil and good, Heaven and Hell are surprisingly similar in regards to their form of government. Milton purposefully chooses to construct them as monarchies, but generates a discontinuity by allowing Hell to appear more like a republic than a traditional monarchy (Pittman). Milton also purposefully begins his poem from the perspective of Satan, as if willing his readers to sympathize with, or in the very least, understand the plight of his fall. Conclusively, a fit reader will find that Milton's goal is not to turn the reader toward evil, but rather to further contrast Satan's actions with God's. It is in the fall of Satan, as well as the fall of man, that the reader finds justice and mercy in the eyes of God.

As Milton opens his poem, the first two Books are focused primarily on Satan and his minions as the council of devilish forces must decide a plan of action and begin a heated debate

on how they should attempt to reconstruct their reality apart from their divine vanquisher. The controversy is weighed by many different members of the group, waffling between remaining in Hell or fighting to return to Heaven even if they must die for the effort. Molock immediately bursts forth with, "My sentence is for open War […]" (2.51). However, quickly the clever Belial comments, "This horror [Hell] will grow mild, this darkness light" (2.220) which is immediately verified by Mammon who says, "Eternity so spent in worship paid / To whom we hate […]" (2.243-244). After all of the opinions have been addressed appropriately, Beëlzebub, Satan's second in command, "Sage he stood / With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear / The weight of mightiest *Monarchies* […]" (2. 306-307 emphasis mine) presents an idea that would turn the course of the conversation as well as the history of mankind. He mentions a world where God has created a new race of being. Is there no better way to defeat the mighty King than to infect the creation that he loves? He compels the assembly by saying, "Seduce them to our Party. That thir God / May prove thir foe, and with repenting hand / Abolish his own works […]" (2.368-370). Beëlzebub's persuasive rhetoric is met with success and even the most vehement arguments are forgotten in the light of this powerful new suggestion.

Though while Beëlzebub is the speaker, he has done so only at the bidding of his sovereign, Satan;

> […] Thus Beëlzebub
> Pleaded his devilish Counsel, first devis'd
> By Satan, and in part propos'd: for whence,
> But from the Author of all ill could Spring
> So deep a malice, to confound the race
> Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell

To mingle and involve, done all to spite

The great Creator? […] (2.378-385)

Here Milton exposes Satan's first deception; by using Beëlzebub, Satan attempts to not only pacify the council and provide them with a false security, but also feign that his suggestion is merely a conversation point, and not indeed an act of tyranny. Noting the language that Milton uses such as 'spring,' 'root,' and 'mingle', he tries to demonstrate the organic growth of Satan's falsehoods, however hidden they might be in a democratic context. The deception does not end here but quickly escalates in volume and vehemence as the council searches for an individual who is mighty enough to brave the dangers of Chaos, and more poignantly, God's wrath. Milton narrates saying,

Of those Heav'n-warring Champions could be found

So hardy as to proffer or accept

Alone the dreadful voyage; till at last

Satan, whom now transcendent glory rais'd

Above his fellow, with Monarchal pride

Conscious of highest worth, unmov'd thus spake.

O Progeny of Heav'n, Empyreal Thrones,

With reason hath deep silence and demur

Seiz'd us, though undismay'd [...] (2.424-232)

In the opening of his dialogue, Satan immediately attempts to persuade the assembly by emphasizing *logos* and reason as their motive for caution. However, the language that he uses is filled purely with *pathos* and *ethos*[2] that calls to the emotional centers in his listeners (Pittman).

[2] Logos, Pathos, and Ethos refer to the three elements according to Aristotle that create effective rhetoric. Logos appeals to logic and reasoning, Ethos is based on the character and reputation of the speaker, and pathos is based on

By sympathizing with their fear, he is able to magnify himself even more effectively than would be possible otherwise and also establishes himself as an effective elocutionist who can persuade his followers into believing his falsehoods. After satisfying any remaining anxieties, Satan volunteers himself for the perceived unsavory task of maiming the new world and avenging his position in Heaven. Through rhetorical tactics Satan has managed to pacify his subjects, allow them to believe his new government is democratic and that they are indeed acting entirely upon their own free will, while remaining a corrupt monarch who subversively imposes his will upon his subjects and glorifies himself in the act.

It is no coincidence that Milton chooses to juxtapose the hellish conversation of Book II beside the heavenly realms in Book III. Milton's descriptions of Heaven, aside from the stereotypical splendor, encapsulate a feeling of divine purpose and logical intentions. God's conversations with his only Son are not superficially filled with pathos, but are instead comprised of logos and rational thought (Pittman). As God looks down on Satan and foresees the destruction that will ensue, he laments the fall saying, "For Man will heark'n to his glozing lies" (3.93) and defends his own righteousness and justice by asserting, "[…] I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (3. 98-99). God's mercy manifests the freedom that he gives his subjects; he watches as they walk into wickedness, yet his profound compassion still compels him to provide an advocate to his fallen creation. God announces his intentions of finding a savior to the whole host of his angelic beings, all of whom, according to Milton, were worthy to save the lives of meager humans. This moment directly parallels the hellish congregation, except when the Son volunteers to go to earth, he does so whole-heartedly and sacrificially, harboring no ulterior motives:

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emotion. W. Rhys Roberts says, "Aristotle's object is to show how truth and justice may be aided by the effective use of public speech" (351).

> Behold mee then, mee for him, life for life
> I offer, on mee let thine anger fall;
> Account mee man; I for his sake will leave
> Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
> Freely put off, and for him lastly die
> Well pleas'd on me let Death wreck all his rage. (3.236-241)

These words exemplify the almighty power of God and his Son, not only from a Christian redemptive perspective, but also from an understanding of monarchy. Though God and his Son are seen as monarchical figures, their benevolence exemplifies a different kind of ruling than Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, or Satan were able to establish in their earthly realms. Robert Thomas Fallon comments that, "Milton's consistency lies in his conviction that true freedom would follow only when the English government took steps to assure its citizens liberty of conscience" (190). Milton sees these other governments as falsifications of the original and ideal government of Heaven with a divine monarch. Human attempts to preserve monarchy not only disappoint, but actually steal away the very essence of God's monarchy—free will.

The final society that Milton constructs to portray the necessary role of free will in *Paradise Lost* is the Garden of Eden in Book IV with its half-divine, half-human inhabitants, Adam and Eve. Milton follows the Biblical narrative faithfully by describing a utopian bower filled with "crisped Brooks," (4.237) "sands of Gold," (4.238) and "Flow'rs of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose," (4.256) which begins laying the foundation for the alteration from perfection to sin. Adam and Eve are first described thus:

> ...where the Fiend
> Saw undelighted all delight, all kind

> Of living Creatures new to sight and strange:
> Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
> Godlike erect, with native Honor clad
> In naked Majesty seem'd Lords of all,
> And worthy seem'd, for in thir looks Divine
> The image of thir glorious Maker shone,
> Truth, Wisdom, Sancitutde severe and pure,
> Severe, but in true filial freedom plac't; (4.285-294)

One of the most prominent features of these beings that Satan first notices is the freedom of their 'sanctitude' or holiness; he even repeats 'severe' twice to emphasize the strength of this freedom. From the moment Adam and Eve appear to the reader, beauty, holiness, and freedom are their trademark. When Adam relays the story of his creation to Raphael, he knows from almost the first moments of his creation that he wishes to adore and worship his creator. He says, "[…] how came I thus, how here? / Not of myself; by some great Maker then, / In goodness and in power preeminent; / Tell me, how may I know him, how adore" (8.278-80). But as the Bible predicts, Milton's new humans are deceived by Satan's "glozing lies" and fall into sin and away from the perfection of a divine monarchy. Immediately after the fall, Adam and Eve begin to argue over where to lay the blame; when Eve accuses Adam of not forcing her to stay by his side, Adam says to her, "I warn'd thee, I admonish'd thee, foretold / The danger […] beyond this had been force, / And force upon free Will hath here no place" (9.1171-74). Until the very moment of the fall, Adam and Eve were abiding in the security of free will as the proper system of governance, but afterward Eve quickly begins to question, and even desire her free will to be taken from her in order to avoid the full responsibility of her actions.

After the fall, a new system needs to be created for these sinful creatures who were formed in the very image of God, yet have freely chosen to dismiss it. Satan has taken possession of the earth, bidding his incestuous mother and daughter, Sin and Death, to ravage the planet. His original plan, so cleverly delineated by Beëlzebub during the debate in Hell, has transpired, which means his kingdom of Hell will be transplanted onto the earth where he will institute himself as the same tyrannous and deceptive monarch. The previously perfect monarchical system of earth, governed by God, has been forever tainted; though free will still exists, it only operates within that flawed new government. In Book XII Michael even tells Adam that, "Since thy original lapse, true Liberty / Is lost… (12.82,3). Yet Milton gives Adam, as well as his readers, advice on how best to exist on a fallen planet; Michael explains that while "true liberty" might indeed be lost, a new social order can be constructed to rebut the ill effects of the fall. He says, "but Man over men / He made not Lord; such title to himself / Reserving, human left from human free" (12.69-70). Here Milton prescribes a governing system that does not allow one man to dominate the will of many; a flourishing society can only exist by following this new governmental system built upon free will. In the closing of the poem, Milton's language, though heavy with the weight of sin and death, still contains hope and a final appeal for humans to embrace free will. As Adam and Eve leave the garden, Milton narrates saying,

> The World was all before them, where to *choose*
> Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
> They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
> Through Eden took thir solitary way. (12. 646-49)

So while 'true liberty' can never be experienced in the same manner as had been possible with a heavenly monarch, Milton asserts that by exercising the freedom offered through a responsible republican or democratic government, and with God as their guide, humanity can still flourish.

It is through the readings of these three realms that Milton is able to make his most conspicuous argument about free will as the essential element of heavenly monarchy and the character of God. Lewalski explicitly confirms this by saying,

> Milton portrays Hell as a damned society in the making, with royalist politics, perverted language, perverse rhetoric, political manipulation, and demagoguery. By contrast, he portrays Heaven as a unique place, a celestial city combining courtly magnificence and the pleasures of pastoral nature…Milton's Heaven is also a place of process, not stasis, complexity not simplicity, and the continuous and active *choice of good* rather than the absence of evil. (465 emphasis mine)

Because Milton builds upon the Biblical story in his interpretation of divine government, he fully differentiates between a divine and an earthly monarchy. Human attempts—as well as Satan's—at reconstructing monarchy will only end in failure due to the faults of humanity after the fall of man and the loss of free will as humans are now "slaves to sin"[3]. The loss of free will during the 'fall' has, according to Milton, made it impossible for true divine monarchy to be enacted on earth. The conclusion that Milton comes to appears to lie in the differentiation that God's monarchy is an ideal state where earthly monarchy is only a poor reproduction of the original (Lewalski 466). Therefore, Milton observes human monarchy as an ultimate failure, and a heavenly monarchy as an ultimate success. When the reader reexamines God's behavior in light of these standards, they no longer question the logos God possesses, and when reviewing the acts

[3] From Romans 6:6 where Paul claims that those who accept the loving sacrifice of Jesus need no longer be slaves to sin, therefore asserting that those who do not accept this sacrifice are still in bondage. All of humanity after the fall is metaphorically enslaved to sin.

of Satan, he no longer appears the ideal leader who rules in a fair republic-like state, but instead the example of poor monarchy that Milton worked so hard to resist.

Individual Subjectivity & Biological Determinism

After closely examining Milton's constructions in *Paradise Lost*, this study turns to Philip Pullman and his very different approach. As previously mentioned, there can be no doubt of Pullman's intention to use Milton as a literary inspiration for his novels. Perhaps one could even go so far to say that Milton is his muse; a master artist to guide him in his literary process. He chooses to mimic much of Milton's story, not least of all the general plot that relates to creation, Adam and Eve, a temptation, and the "fall" of man. Even the title of the series is drawn from a line in *Paradise Lost* where Satan imagines the ingredients God uses to create worlds, which says, "Unless th'Almighty Maker them ordain / His dark materials to create more Worlds" (2.915-16). Notice that Pullman draws from a Miltonic reference to divine creation, which immediately focuses his stories towards the question of what and who is responsible for creation. But as readers of both Pullman and Milton will quickly notice, the plot is perverted in such a way that it can sometimes be difficult to trace, and it certainly is difficult to come to similar conclusions. Where for Milton the temptation of Eve and the fall of man were tragic events, for Pullman they are the crowning acts of triumph in his series. Where Milton situates God as the good monarch, Pullman deposes God and crowns the autonomous self. Instead of God creating the world, self-creation becomes the uttermost achievement. Instead of God providing freedom, the human frees him or herself. And this logic goes far enough so that the main characters in *His Dark Materials* must even murder God before they can be fully self-actualized.

As this study will later discuss, in the same way as Milton thought about the more ancient epic poems before him, Pullman likely sees his work as an enhancement of the original; not only

in form but in philosophical and religious merit. Pullman focuses, instead of on government, on a more personal interaction with free will. Freitas and King explain, saying, "When Pullman discusses various factors that restrict or enhance human freedom, he does not use terms like *social structures.* He focuses instead on the tension between destiny and freedom or nature and choice" (99). As an outspoken atheist, he naturally would never emulate Heaven as an ideal social structure. And as Milton suggests that he has "improved" upon the ancient epic poetry traditions before him by departing from the pagan gods of the Greeks and Romans to the civilized English Christian God, Pullman adopts Milton's basic story outline, yet completely changes the form (from poetry to prose), and more importantly, the theology (from seventeenth-century Protestantism to twentieth-century humanism). I argue here that Pullman desires to, not make a political statement, but a personal one. He wants to challenge his readers into confronting themselves in what I will call individual subjectivity. This term sums up the climax of his novels—when Lyra takes the fruit offered to her, and when both she and Will choose to eternally separate themselves for the sake of the universe, they are enforcing the individual subjectivity that they have striven for throughout their physical and emotional journeys in the series.

Further still, Pullman's social construction separates itself from Milton's in more ways than religion or politics. In many of the societies he constructs Pullman seems to suggest that true freedom appears only when the members of that society follow their true biologically determined behavior, or "nature and choice" as Freitas and King so aptly term it. This might appear to contradict free will—how can one be free when their behavior appears to be hardwired into their very nature? A perfect example of this comes from *AS* where the harpies—mythological creatures with the body of a buzzard but the head and chest of a woman—who guard the Land of the Dead, initially attack and threaten Lyra and Will when they enter without

being dead. No-Name, the leader of the harpies, recognizes Lyra's fake account of their adventures immediately, and says, "the Authority gave us the power to see the worst in everyone…but it was all we had to feed on" (316). When Lyra begins telling the true story of their adventures, the harpies listen attentively and without intent to harm, and when asked why, No-Name says, "Because it was true…because she spoke the truth. Because it was nourishing. Because it was feeding us. Because we couldn't help it. Because it was true" (317). Though she confuses the Authority (God), with her own biological inheritance, No-Name faithfully expresses Pullman's ideal of a creature realizing its true biological function. When Lyra composes a plan where the inhabitants of the Land of the Dead can be freed by climbing through a dangerous cave-labyrinth, No-Name demands, "That's not enough…we want more than that. We had a *task* under the old dispensation. We had a place and a duty. We fulfilled the Authority's commands diligently, and for that we were honored…What will happen to our honor now?" to which Lyra responds, "You are quite right. Everyone should have a task to do that's important, one the brings them honor…" (318). A new plan is concocted where the ghosts are given passage by the harpies, and in turn, must tell the harpies their life history, helping feed their desire for stories. This arrangement perfectly suits every individual, and creates a content social order based off of a society whose actions are grounded in biologically determined behavior. Freitas and King express it thus,

> Whether we call them environmental factors, the fates, or one's nature, various forces do define the boundaries of human freedom. Pullman recognizes and by no means trivializes these factors, but it appears to be in his own nature to desire freedom for his characters—to allow them the liberty to make their own choices. Pullman wants people not just to be free but also to believe that they are free.

> Without this belief, people cannot act on whatever freedom the fates have delivered to them. (100)

When Freitas and King say that Pullman "by no means trivializes" the value of nature, this study argues that nature, or biological determinism, is absolutely inherent and foundational to his conceptualization of societal flourishing. Pullman finds the truest source of freedom in this intuitive biology, just as Milton finds freedom in a benevolent and divine monarch. Where Pullman insistently shrugs off all forms of external governance, biological determinism comes from within and helps shape a person's identity and sense of self.

Yet while Pullman's departure from Milton is clear, his debt to the English poet is equally incontrovertible. Pullman says himself in an interview that "Although I call myself an atheist, I am a Church of England atheist, and a 1662 Book of Common Prayer atheist, because that's the tradition I was brought up in and I cannot escape those early influences" (Miller). This influence not only inspires him to write about issues of human spirituality, but it clearly impacts the very foundation of his narrative theme in *His Dark Materials*. Laura Miller transcribes a conversation with Pullman that begins, "Initially, Pullman told me, he simply planned to infuse his story with Miltonian atmosphere—'the grandeur, the nobility, the overwhelming magnitude of ambition and imaginative power.' Soon, however, Milton's theme, the Fall of Man, crept into the novel." Pullman's form of social construction, though not directly paralleling Milton's Hell, Heaven, and garden, conveys the full measure of Pullman's indebtedness, his semblance, and his divergence from Milton.

Pullman's Biological and Social Constructions

Because *His Dark Materials* stretches across entire worlds and universes, Pullman is able to create many different societies—scholars, Gyptians, witches, Tartars, Harpies, angels, Gallivespians, ghosts, and more—but the foremost example of society that Pullman constructs is

that of a person and his or her dæmon. Most Pullman scholars agree that a dæmon outwardly embodies the human soul and the translation of *Genesis* from the "Bible" in Lyra's world describes dæmons saying,

> And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and your dæmons 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 a tree to be desired to reveal the true form of one's dæmon, and she took the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened and they saw the true form of their dæmons and spoke with them. But when the man and woman knew their own dæmons, they knew a great change had come upon them, for until that moment it had seemed that they were at one with all the creatures of the earth and 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…" (*GC* 372, emphasis mine).

This biblical description of dæmons is important because it is one of Pullman's first attempts to express his understanding of free will stemming from individual subjectivity; instead of Adam and Eve's shame occurring because of the realization of their nakedness as it does in the Judeo-Christian Bible, in this depiction their shame comes from the difference between being one with all creatures, to 'knowing' only their dæmon, or better stated, their own soul. For Pullman the moment of the fall of man was a movement away from vague universalism toward individual subjectivity. And herein lies Pullman's distinction from Milton—where Milton sees the fall of

man as a step away from an omnipotent God, Pullman sees it as a step towards the true human self. Dæmons are Pullman's first and most obvious mechanism for comprehending individual subjectivity.

Pullman's construction of dæmons only further proves his interest in the human subject, and as manifestations of the soul, they logically function in his series in several ways: dæmons are animals (much like the idea of a 'spirit animal'), and they can speak, though choose to speak primarily to their human and only to others in special circumstances. They are often the 'voice of reason' and consistently warn their human companions of danger before they are aware of it as well as display the inner emotion of their humans. For instance, when Lyra haphazardly mentions dust "Mrs. Coulter's dæmon snapped his head up to look at her, and all the golden fur on his little body stood up, bristling" (*GC* 82). Lyra and her dæmon Pantalaimon play, talk, cuddle, and even argue frequently. Yet in moments of danger or need, Pantalaimon always transforms into the form that best serves Lyra. When they are almost kidnapped in London he becomes a wildcat. As they hide in the Retiring Room, he is a brown moth who is both unseen and able to spy more cleverly. Out on the boat with the Gyptians he is a dolphin or a seagull. The happy connection between a dæmon and human is why the dæmon-cutting experiments done by the Oblation Board, lead by Lyra's mother Mrs. Coulter, are so heinous. And the results are deadly, as seen when Lyra meets Tony Makarios, the little boy who has been cut from his dæmon, Ratter, and instead clutches a cold fish, willing it to be his missing dæmon. Upon confronting him, "[Lyra's] first impulse was to turn and run, or to be sick. A human being with no dæmon was like someone without a face, or with their ribs laid open and their heart torn out…" (*GC* 214). Sadly, Tony dies soon after they meet, presumably from a broken heart. Humans and dæmons are not meant to be separated, and as they mature the bond between them

grows even more distinct as the dæmon takes its permanent shape and begins to represent a person's true identity.

Only until a person reaches puberty—or as the *Dark Materials* Bible suggests, come to 'know' their dæmon—are dæmons able to shape shift. After that time each dæmon becomes fixed to one animal shape. This shape is significant because it ultimately represents who a person is, returning to Pullman's interest in biological determinism. For example, Lord Asriel's dæmon, a snow leopard, is regal, wild, dangerous, and suits Northern climates and adventures. Servants' dæmon's are always dogs, and the type of dog even depends upon what class of servant they are: maids and kitchen laborers with terriers, while the butler has a beautiful setter. As the novels progress the reader is actually able to start determining a character's identity based off of their dæmon. Lord Boreal's snake dæmon sparks suspicion immediately; witches' bird dæmons demonstrate their freedom and equip them to fly together; John Faa, the leader of the Gyptians, has a hearty crow that shows shrewdness, and some of the Tartar tribes of the north have vicious wolves. The dæmon's shape matches completely with the nature of that person's biological, and consequently, social history. Pullman's use of a dæmon demonstrates a person's subjective relationship to him or herself, and also how they are biologically determined to behave within their society.

Yet Pullman also constructs examples of societies beyond the dæmon/human to demonstrate how subjects work collectively in either positive or negative social roles. One poignant example is that of the panserbjørne—large talking polar bears who live in the frozen and far reaches of the north in their kingdom called Svalbard. Pullman constructs their society by introducing Iorek Byrnison, an outcast bear who befriends Lyra after she helps him recover his stolen armor. This armor is significant because for the panserbjørne, their armor is much like

their dæmon because they have no dæmons that live outside their bodies. Iorek and his armor perfectly symbolize biological determinism within Pullman's narrative, and this is exemplified by the contrast between Iorek and Iofur Raknison, the current king of Svalbard who, as the witch Serafina Pekkala describes, "is clever in a *human way*; he makes alliances and treaties; he lives not as bears do, in ice forts, but in a new-built palace; he talks of exchanging ambassadors with human nations…" (*GC* 316, emphasis mine). When Lyra is captured by the bears and held prisoner, she notices the general confusion of the panserbjørne guards that she encounters; they seem unsure as to how Iofer expects them to behave. When she enters Iofur Raknison's throne room she notices "the faces of a dozen or more bears, all gazing at her, none in armor but each with some kind of decoration: a golden necklace, a headdress of purple feathers, a crimson sash" (335). Bears without armor are not true bears, because their armor represents their soul. So consequently, stripping them of their armor not only makes them physically vulnerable, but also forces them to construct new social behaviors to match the new society, and weakens the 'soul' or biological instincts of the individuals of that society. And Iofer's desire to be human does not end in simply adornment; what he desires more than anything is his own dæmon. Lyra uses this information to trick him into believing that she is Iorek's dæmon and orchestrates a 'battle royale' with the winner claiming the crown of Svalbard.

Ultimately, providing the freedom from an unsuitably constructed social hegemony in order to follow their biologically determined behavior is the only event that can solve the confusion in the panserbjørne society; the very goal that Iorek accomplishes through the battle royale. This scene is the veritable climax of the *Golden Compass* where Pullman displays one of the most prominent characteristics of the panserbjørne—they are not easily tricked. When Serafina Pekkala predicts, "When bears act like people, perhaps they can be tricked…When

bears act like bears, perhaps they can't" (*GC* 317), she essentially sums up Pullman's ideal social order—that societies must behave in a manner that is true to their biology and in a way that does not limit their free will. This might sound paradoxical—freedom coming from biologically determined behavior? And yet Pullman proves it through the outcome of the battle between Iofer and Iorek. The fight seems to be going badly for Iorek who appears to be mortally wounded, and Iofer begins to gloat over his imminent victory. But at the last moment, Pullman's narrator asserts, "You could not trick a bear, but…Iofer did not want to be a bear, he wanted to be a man; and Iorek was tricking him" (*GC* 353). Iorek suddenly bursts forth with more strength and speed than Iofer predicted, and succeeds in killing him. Almost immediately the panserbjørne citizens, giddy with the freedom from the elaborate imitative oppression, begin tearing down the palace. "They were Iorek's bears now, and true bears, not uncertain semi-humans conscious only of a torturing inferiority" (354). So while the panserbjørne destroy the vestiges of imposed humanness they simultaneously and metaphorically reconstruct Svalbard to a state of nature with Iorek Byrnison as its rightful king.

Pullman's ideal of a society living in a state of nature according to their natural social construction is best seen through the last society that this study focuses on—the mulefa. The members of this society are described as,

> "gray-colored, with horned heads and short trunks like elephants'. They had…[a] diamond-shaped structure…[and had] on their front and rear legs, a wheel…the wheels were seedpods…the creatures hooked a claw through the center of the pods with their front and rear legs, and used their two lateral legs to push against the ground and move along" (*AS 88)*.

The scientist Mary Malone stumbles into their world unexpectedly and discovers that these strange, wheel-riding creatures are in fact not creatures at all, but people. “So they had a language, and they had fire, and they had society. And about then [Mary] found an adjustment being made in her mind, as the word *creatures* became the word *people*. These beings weren’t human, but they were *people*, she told herself” (*AS* 123). Regardless, in many ways this society seems quite primitive to Mary, who comes from the world that is the equivalent of Pullman’s contemporary England. They are simple agrarian villagers with mud-thatched huts, and a small settlement by the sea where they live in happy family units. Their physiology demands that they work in pairs—two-by-two—in order to accomplish seemingly simple tasks for humans such as tying knots. “At first [Mary] felt that this gave her an advantage—she needed no one else—and then she realized how it cut her off from others” (128). Members of this society fundamentally and biologically depend on each other, and Mary quickly joins the ranks, helping with tasks that prove difficult for the mulefa such as climbing on roofs or searching for mollusks in the sand by the shore. But the simplicity of their lives does not equate to simplicity of mind or consciousness. These mild mannered, humorous, and intelligent people are truly the most utopic of all of Pullman’s social constructions simply because they offer the least resistance to their inherent biological determinism and social construction.

Pullman’s juxtaposition of turbulent action narratives alongside Mary’s peaceful interactions with the Mulefa serves to effectively emphasize the Mulefa country as a paradise—a garden not completely dissimilar from Milton’s Eden. The reader takes in the first glimpse of both Eden and the Mulefa’s world from the eyes of the outsider, indeed the tempters, Lucifer and Mary. Both are in awe of the shocking beauty and serenity, and both are pleased to discover the inhabitants therein. The only distinctly un-utopic element of Mulefa existence is the

disappearance of sraf. Sraf is the equivalent to what Lyra's world calls dust, and Will's world calls shadow particles; the conscious particles that are invisible to the human eye, but settle around conscious beings that have matured past puberty. Mulefa need the sraf to germinate their seedpod trees, without which they cannot travel or function effectively. But more so, the universe needs dust because it is what surrounds fully conscious beings; it provides the means for all beings to act with free will. Freitas and King describe it well by saying, "Wherever freedom is absent, a little less Dust is generated, since Dust is a byproduct of consciousness and free human action" (103). Essentially, the entire biology of the universe is disturbed when free will is limited. So now, in order to overturn the loss of these conscious particles, Pullman has set the stage for a new fall of man to occur—a garden, an Adam and Eve in the form of Will and Lyra, and the scientist Mary instead of a snake. As Mary talks to them about her first love, Lyra and Will reenact the 'fall of man', except instead of taking fruit, the heretical act is '*falling* in love'—both falling, but with dissimilar connotations. The moment that Will and Lyra realize their love for each other, Mary begins to see through the amber spyglass the sraf falling gently and heavily. The action of the entire trilogy has led up to this moment of peace in the garden. Human love is an inherently biological and subjective act. Just as they are the only creatures with an internal dæmon community, humans also are the only creatures to fall in love, creating a dyad community. When Will and Lyra acquiesce to their truest biological and individual needs, the entire universe responds. It is there in the garden that Will and Lyra's dæmons settle on their final shapes, there that they fall in love, and there, in the tranquility of the Mulefa's unsophisticated yet biologically determined near-utopia, that free will reigns.

A

Republic in Heaven and on Earth

Just as Serafina Pekkala assured Lyra that she would "understand it later," so too must 'fit' readers of Milton and Pullman slowly reason through their work in order to better comprehend their purposes. Shelley King notes that even though Lyra's reading of the Alethiometer comes to her so easily at the beginning of the series, once she reaches puberty and her dæmon settles, she can no longer read it instinctively. At first Lyra is distraught, but realizes that she has her entire life to dedicate to the re-learning and studying of the golden compass so that she could perhaps read it even better than before. Coincidentally, David Quint also analyzes the idea of immaturity within Milton's poem by paralleling the fall of man to the tales of Phaëton and Icarus[4] from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* Quint claims that the fall of Satan, Adam, and Eve are closely related to Phaëton and Icarus; when individuals fail to trust in the wisdom of their caregiver, falling is the action that ensues—whether a literal plunge or a moral compromise. The foil of the fallen characters are the righteous ones—Jesus, and perhaps even Milton himself (Quint 847). Milton hopes to separate himself from the immature poets of the past who fail to see the imperative socio-political ramifications of their poetry and educate more 'fit' readers into believing the same.

One of the greatest challenges to epic poets throughout history has been the shadow of the poets who have preceded them. Milton, like the poets before him, succumbs to the competition and willfully attempts to draw from, and yet supersede the ancient epic poems of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and even his near contemporary, Spenser. Pullman adds another layer to

[4] Phaeton is the son of Apollo who is permitted by his reluctant father to ride his chariot—the sun—across the sky and eventually falls and dies only after he has set the heavens and the earth aflame. Icarus is the son of Daedalus who attempts to escape from Crete on wings of wax and feathers that his father has constructed for him. He also is unheeding, and flies too high, melting the wax in his wings and plummeting to his death. These two stories found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are meant to parallel each other and exemplify hubris and immaturity.

the discourse by expanding in genre, length, and target-audience. However, as extensively discussed in this study, Milton and Pullman both incontrovertibly view free will as an essential element to their writing; more specifically, they use free will, or a lack thereof, to demonstrate how freedom is necessary to create a flourishing society. The Kingdom of Heaven, as depicted in *Paradise Lost,* exemplifies Milton's greatest societal ideal. Pullman, however, depicts Lyra's daydreams about the building of the Republic of Heaven—a complete dismantling of oppressive religious systems—as the final conclusion to his entire *Dark Materials* series. So while they agree on free will as the necessary mechanism to achieving right social order, the method of action could not vary more. Milton views God as the benevolent monarch whose citizens choose to obey out of love and respect. Pullman believes that true freedom comes only when one dismisses every form of outside control, including and almost especially God, the church, religion, and spirituality. Pullman's fall of man does not separate humans from God, but draws them closer to their biological essence. For Milton, the fall of man was a fall into human deficiency. However, as great as Milton's anguish is over his fallen forefathers, he still believes that the freedom to fall is what truly separates God from Satan. In Satan's Hell, as well as in England's monarchy, freedom of the individual or, "liberty of conscience" (Fallon 186) is not permitted. Because Adam and Eve chose a flawed leader, they ultimately chose the flawed government that Milton contended with. But God, the perfect monarch, allows his subjects to choose, even if their choice is against him or against their own best path. The angel, Raphael, explains this complex idea to Adam in the garden by saying,

> […] That thou art happy, owe to God;
> That thou continu'st such, owe to thyself,
> That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.

> This was that caution giv'n thee; be advis'd.
> God made thee perfet, not immutable;
> And good he made thee, but to persevere
> He left it in thy power, ordain'd thy will
> By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate
> Inextricable, or strict necessity;
> Our voluntary service he requires,
> Not our necessitated, such with him
> Finds no acceptance, nor can find, for how
> Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve
> Willing or no, who will but what they must
> By Destiny, and can no other choose? (5.520-534)

Milton strongly believes that it is only through free will that humanity can properly function; if a society places a man upon the throne of God's kingdom, they are simply asking for free will to be taken. For Pullman, if anyone is invited onto that throne other than the individual self, free will cannot exist at all. The bond between these foreign governments—the Kingdom of Heaven and the Republic of Heaven—incontrovertibly remains free will.

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