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Coming-of-age and parallel worlds in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*

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Introduction

Philip Pullman is the award-winning author of the trilogy *His Dark Materials* that consists of the books *The Golden Compass*, *The Subtle Knife*, and *The Amber Spyglass*. His fantasy trilogy appeals to a large audience of adults and children all over the world, particularly in present-day Britain and the United States. *His Dark Materials* receives praise from many critics for its complex plot, the use of gnostic ideas, including the influences of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the works of William Blake. However, *His Dark Materials* also receives its share of controversy from critics who call the book anti-Christian.¹ Thus, Philip Pullman's trilogy did and still does receive much attention from the public. As a result there have been sold nearly 70 million copies of *His Dark Materials* worldwide. In addition the books have received a number of awards.

Since the publication of *His Dark Materials*, countless literary scholars have studied the trilogy and explored, discussed, and argued the many themes and influences that Philip Pullman incorporates in *His Dark Materials*. For this thesis, I will analyze one of the larger themes that *His Dark Materials* focuses on which is the theme of "coming-of-age." I will also examine the parallel worlds that the children explore and comment on what each world

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- 1) Peter Vere writes about the trilogy in his article "Atheism for Kids," "an atheistic, angry and at time [a] polemic story."
- 2) Claudia FitzHerbert writes in her article in "This Author is Original but also Dangerous," "Christian parents beware: his books can damage your child's faith."
- 3) Stephen Ross writes in " 'His Dark Materials' Pullman Owes to God what He Gives to His Daemon," "Reading or watching Pullman's tale is very risky, even if one is thoroughly grounded in the understanding and defense of the Christian worldview."

presents to the children in their coming-of-age process. After analyzing these two themes, I will argue how Pullman incorporates his influence of William Blake's idea of "innocence and experience" through the trilogy's theme of coming-of-age of the two children, Lyra and Will. In addition, I will argue how John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is reflected in the theme of parallel worlds in *His Dark Materials*.

Each book in the trilogy describes different experiences which contribute to a character's maturity as he or she enters and experiences the different worlds. Therefore this thesis will have each book as a focal point for consecutive chapters (that is: Chapter One: *The Golden Compass*, Chapter Two: *The Subtle Knife*, and Chapter Three: *The Amber Spyglass*) as I will analyze and argue how the children's experiences in each chapter contribute to their maturity. This will include analyzing the children's past experiences (as they refer to the past), their present situation and their future. Chapter Four will analyze the works of William Blake and John Milton and demonstrate how they are major influences for *His Dark Materials*. Finally, the conclusion of this thesis will give an overview of the children's progression from adolescence to adulthood through the "multiverse" worlds from *The Golden Compass* to *The Amber Spyglass*.

Chapter One: *The Golden Compass*

The first volume of *His Dark Materials* focuses on Lyra and her past. However in the latter part of the first volume, *The Golden Compass*, Lyra matures slightly as she gains experience towards her future journey through the parallel worlds in *The Subtle Knife*. While analyzing Lyra's social situation and her behavior patterns in *The Golden Compass* I will argue how we can understand and witness Lyra's development from innocence to experience.

Lyra's Innocence and Immaturity

Lyra's innocence and immaturity is most obvious at Jordan College. This is the "world" in which we read the most about Lyra's innocence and immaturity as it was her childish "delight" to be at Jordan College. During the years spent at the college she is lacking the love of a mother and father as she believes that her parents were killed in an accident when she was young. The scholars at the college are all Lyra has for family. However they never attended to her affections. As a result Lyra is not provided with any paternal love from any of the scholars at Jordan College. Because of this Lyra misbehaves at the college by participating in pranks in order to feel a sense of fellowship with others. These include actions such as climbing over Jordan College's roofs with her friend Roger and spitting plum stones on the Scholars, stealing apples from the market, and participating in feuds with the other colleges. This is all part of Lyra's "wild," immature, and selfish behavior. Lyra had remained like a "half-wild cat" at Jordan College because of being without a mother and a father. Amelia Rutledge notes in her essay "Reconfiguring Nurture in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, "If Lyra seems at times to participate in a version of the Romantic stereotype of the child as apparently 'innocent' and free, such instances are quickly noted as moments in which she is most need of restraint" (129).

Lyra's misbehavior is a result of her need for parental guidance. However though this behavior appears as misbehavior when viewed through the eyes of the Scholars at the college, it is a result of Lyra's innocence. Lyra is in search of guidance and family. By misbehaving, Lyra believes that she will form a community for herself at the college which will be her "family."

In spite of Lyra's immature behavior and selfish acts, the pranks and mischief that Lyra participates in at Jordan College are a part of her enjoyment. As much as she enjoys spending her time at the college participating in pranks, Lyra:

Had a dim sense that it wasn't her whole world...and that somewhere in her life there was a connection with the high world of politics represented by Lord Asriel. All she did with that knowledge was to give herself airs and lord it over the other urchins. It had never occurred to her to find out more. (*The Golden Compass* 53)

Although Lyra realizes that there is more to Jordan College beyond her pranks, she would rather remain unaware of the discussions that deal with college politics. This further exemplifies Lyra's innocence because she has no idea of the difficulties of the world beyond her world at Jordan College. The world which she creates for herself is centered on mischief and pranks.

In addition Lyra proceeds to complicate her immature behavior with the lies she tells. We observe this when her uncle Lord Asriel questions her as to how she spends her time at the College. As she spends most of the time on the roofs of the college with Roger and participating in pranks: "She had the feeling that being on the roof was forbidden" (*The Golden Compass* 34). Lyra uses lies to keep her out of trouble. However, she does not know the extent of damage that lies cause. It is because of her unawareness of the damage that lies cause that we can claim her innocence is most evident at this point.

Lyra's Path to Experience

One of the ways in which Lyra's experience process is formed in *The Golden Compass*, is by understanding the world outside of Jordan College. This is when she realizes that the "Gobblers" have kidnapped her friend Roger. At this moment Lyra is now exposed to the complications of the world outside her "world" at Jordan College. Jordan College for Lyra is fun and youthful. However she now realizes that "it was changing around her, for someone out there was stealing children" (*The Golden Compass* 55). Lyra is now being exposed to the realities of the world. The "youthful" world of Jordan College which Lyra creates for amusing pranks is not the safe haven that once was to her. In addition as she sheds her innocence, Lyra puts aside her needs for someone else. That is when she decides to look for Roger. By making this decision, Lyra faces a mature decision by having concerns for her friend rather than herself.

Lyra is further exposed to the cruelties of the world when Tony Makarios (a young boy that was kidnapped by the Gobblers and later was found by Lyra):

Was clutching a piece of fish to him as Lyra was clutching Pantalaimon, with her left hand, hard against her heart; but that was all he had, a piece of dried fish; because he had no daemon at all. The Gobblers had cut it away. (*The Golden Compass* 187)

A *daemon* is a part of a person's soul, and once the daemon is separated from the child, the child experiences pain. On Lyra's knowing that Tony's *daemon* is dried, she is faced with the new knowledge of the realities of the world. These realities of the world show her that it is not always a safe place as she holds on to her *daemon*, understanding that the Gobblers are out to kill a child's *daemon*. It is in *His Dark Materials* which the "children who are chiefly made to suffer

the extreme pains of separation, since they are the objects of the intercision experiment” (Rustin & Rustin 99). The children in the trilogy are the ones who experience the pain. This being pain of separation of their *daemon*. Therefore it is this moment that becomes a part of Lyra’s coming-of-age experience because she begins to have the knowledge about the realities of the world.

In addition Lyra further develops experience once she decides to run away from Mrs. Coulter. When she is questioned by Pantalaimon about wanting to run away Lyra responds “Course” (*The Golden Compass* 85) meaning “of course”. By Lyra responding to Pantalaimon in such a manner, Pullman stresses her new found courage. This can be compared to her earlier response when she complains to the Master of Jordan College when he suggests that she should leave the college. She resists and cries “No, I don’t want to leave Jordan. I like it here. I want to stay here forever” (*The Golden Compass* 62). At that moment, Lyra’s innocence and fear is evident to the reader as she is portrayed as a child trying to hold on to her childhood rather than leaving it behind. Now away from Jordan College, Lyra develops courage as well as experience.

One tangible point that shows the reader Lyra’s coming-of-age process from innocence to experience is her use of the alethiometer. When it was first given to her at Jordan College by the Master, Lyra did not know what to do with the alethiometer. She did not understand the meanings of the symbols on the alethiometer. However now being on her own she slowly attempts to master the item as it feels “like a young bird learning how to fly” (*The Golden Compass* 134). Like a young bird learning how to fly, Lyra must be “mature” and concentrate, in order to master reading the alethiometer. Lyra’s mature way of thinking is ultimately evident when she is able to concentrate and find the right answers to the questions that Dr. Lanselius

wants Lyra to ask the alethiometer. As Lyra asks the alethiometer what are the intentions of the Tartars to Kamchatka we preview Lyra's "full" concentration mode as Lyra is "letting her mind hold the three levels of meaning together in focus, and relax[ing] for the answer, which came almost at once" (*The Golden Compass* 153). Because Lyra mastered reading the alethiometer, we see her progression of experience through her new found knowledge. This can be compared to her earlier experience with the alethiometer when she could not conceive what the symbols on the alethiometer meant. In addition, Pullman depicts the rise of her maturity as she is able to *concentrate* on receiving the answers from the alethiometer. This idea can be compared to her earlier concentration level at Jordan College as the Librarian expresses views about Lyra, "Try to tell her anything serious and she'll half listen for five minutes" (*The Golden Compass* 28). At Jordan College, her immaturity was evident through her lack of concentration. Now away from the college as Lyra is put through new experiences, she is able understand the seriousness of matters and develop a higher level of maturity.

Through new experiences, Lyra continues her coming-of-age process. She gains creative skills to get her out of dangerous situations as "She had to be careful not to say anything obviously impossible; she had to be vague in some places and invent plausible details in others; she had to be an artist, in short" (*The Golden Compass* 246). Through her journeys in *The Golden Compass*, Lyra becomes experienced at this artistry of creating stories. By creating stories, Lyra becomes consciously knowledgeable of the risks that she is exposed to on her journeys. This can be compared to Lyra's past while attending Jordan College where she would lie to get out of trouble rather than create stories to help her to survive.

Experience for Lyra does not only come in the way she thinks and behaves but from her “coming-of-age” process from childhood to womanhood. This process is depicted in Lyra’s sudden interest in cosmetics. While staying with Mrs. Coulter, Lyra hides to watch Mrs. Coulter make herself up. As Mrs. Coulter notices this “she took care to let Lyra see where she kept the cosmetics, and to allow her time on her own to explore and try them out for herself” (*The Golden Compass* 74). Lyra secretly watching Mrs. Coulter provides us with Lyra’s interest in participating in “woman-like” interests that are important to the way one looks. This provides Lyra one path to experience not only because of the way she acts and thinks, but through her progress into womanhood.

In addition while staying with Mrs. Coulter Lyra is able to discover and attain the skill of “seduction.” We understand this while Lyra observes that Mrs. Coulter was unlike any female scholars. She appeared to be one “with dangerous powers and qualities such as elegance, charm, and grace” (*The Golden Compass* 72). It is such “powers and qualities” that make it hard for Lyra to realize that Mrs. Coulter would never take her to the north but rather keep her around like a “pet” and that Mrs. Coulter is the leader of the Oblation Board. “Showing Lyra how to cultivate appearances and femininity is one of the ambiguous pleasures of Lyra’s stay with her [Mrs. Coulter]; Lyra learns from her with good effect; as she is later able to seduce ... Seduction, indeed, is demonstrated to be an immensely powerful force: it is Mrs. Coulter’s beauty and charm which makes it so easy for her to kidnap the children” (Rustin & Rustin 100). This form of “seduction” underscores Lyra’s newly gained experience. Lyra adapts such of form of seduction by learning how to “convince” the people whom she meets on her journeys to participate in things. This is what helps Lyra succeed in her other journeys. This is proven later

in *His Dark Materials* when Lyra is able to successfully seduce the bear Iofur Raknsion into believing that she is Iorek Byrnison's *daemon* and to battle Iorek.

Another moment of Lyra's coming-of-age process is when she gains knowledge of who she is as she learns about her parents. She learns that her father is Lord Asriel (whom she used to think was her uncle) and her mother is Mrs. Coulter. After Lyra learns about who her real parents are she thought "to see Lord Asriel as her father was one thing, but to accept Mrs. Coulter as her mother was nowhere so easy. A couple of months ago she would have rejoiced, of course, and she knew that too, and felt confused" (*The Golden Compass* 115). Understanding her identity helps Lyra grow and understand who she was in the past. The old Lyra at Jordan College would have accepted Mrs. Coulter as her mother because of her need for a parent in her life. However, now that Lyra has knowledge about Mrs. Coulter's intentions knowing that she is her mother, not only helps Lyra shed her innocence but gives her a different perspective on her mother.

As Lyra is able to grow and observe new perspectives, her coming-of-age process is revealed when she uses her past experiences to reinvent her present. This is explored while Lyra is fighting off the Tartars and thinks "It wasn't like the battles in the Oxford claybeds, hurling limps of mud at the brickburners' children" (*The Golden Compass* 253). Lyra's thought process matures as she uses her past experience to assist her with her current situation. This is further shown at the end of *The Golden Compass* when she figures out that she went about her journey all wrong and tells Pantalaimon "Next time we'll check everything and ask all the questions we can think of, then, we'll do better next time" (*The Golden Compass* 350). Not only is Lyra able to use her past experience to assist her with her current problems, she is also able to use her past

to know her faults. Because Lyra is now knowledgeable about her faults and past experiences, she is now able to proceed and grow in the journeys to come.

The Worlds of *The Golden Compass*

The first of many worlds to which Pullman introduces us is known as “Lyra’s World.” *The Golden Compass* takes place entirely in this world. In this world Lyra adventures through Jordan College, London, Trollesund, Bolvangar, and Svalbard. “Lyra’s World” is crucial for *His Dark Materials* because it provides Lyra with the necessary experience to grow beyond her innocence. This can be shown by understanding Lyra’s innocence at Jordan College as she acts “like a barbarian...hoot[ling] like owls outside a window where a tutorial was going on, or racing through the narrow streets, or stealing apples from the market, or waging war” (*The Golden Compass* 31). The beginning of “Lyra’s World” presents us with her innocence. She is unaware of the dangers of the world that she will face. “As Lyra leaves the world of Jordan College...she comes to question what she has taken for granted” (Hines 45). It is only when Lyra leaves the campus with Mrs. Coulter and stays with her at London, that she is presented with the truth about the Gobblers who have been kidnapping children. As she escapes from Mrs. Coulter and journeys through Trollesund, Bolvangar, and Svalbard she learns who her father and mother are, how to read the alethiometer, witnesses the intercession that breaks the bonds between children and their *daemon*, and finally gains the knowledge of her faults.

Lyra’s world is crucial to Lyra’s path to experience. As she gains independence after leaving Jordan, it is only then that she is able to gain a deeper consciousness of knowledge and experience in order to achieve her coming-of-age process.

Chapter Two: *The Subtle Knife*

In Chapter Two, I will analyze the ongoing coming-of-age process of Lyra as she is introduced to a new world. I will first analyze Will's coming-of-age process as we are now introduced to him and his current social situation. I will later argue how Lyra and Will's cooperation is a part of their maturing process as opposed to their immaturity before they met each other.

Will's Innocence

Similarly to Lyra, we get introduced to Will who is without a stable family. With an absent father and an ill mother, Will:

took care how to learn from her then how to shop and cook and keep the house clean, so that he could do it when she was confused and frightened. And he learned how to conceal himself, too how to remain unnoticed at school, how not to attract attention from the neighbors. (*The Subtle Knife* 9-10)

Without the presence of a father, Will is adopting the role of being the man of the house by protecting his ill mother, thus becoming responsible and independent. Even though this appears opposite to Lyra's family situation where she had no responsibilities but rather was dependent on the Scholars and her "Uncle," some aspects of their lives are similar because of the instability they experience. It is because of Will's unstable family situation that he experiences his lack of trust towards society. As a result of this Will is unwilling to open himself up to any cooperation from society because of his mother's illness. This is further understood when Will explains to Lyra about some children at his school who were tormenting his mother. Because of this he fought with the boys at his school and since then Will expresses that "after that I never trusted

children any more than grownups” (*The Subtle Knife* 232). He separates himself from society because he is afraid of what will be discovered about his mother. Will’s separation from society is again demonstrated when he tells Lyra that “I’ve got my own things to do. You’ll have to find your scholars by yourself” (*The Subtle Knife* 23), or when he tells Lyra that “in my world, you got to do as I say” (*The Subtle Knife* 55). It is because of Will’s learned independence while growing up that his only interest and concerns are for himself and as a result he is unwilling and unable to cooperate with others because of his lack of trust and hostility towards others.

Rather, because of Will’s lack of father figures in his life, and his responsibilities to protect his ill mother so she can be unnoticed by the authorities and the neighbors, he adopts a defensive attitude in which the outcome is a lack of trust towards others and a violent lifestyle.

When Will was at school and:

the other children had sensed that there was something the matter with his mother...he’d learned that the object of a school fight was not to gain points for style but to force your enemy to give in, which meant hurting him more than he was hurting you. (*The Subtle Knife* 154)

Because of Will’s family situation he is forced to be a protector. As he needs to protect his mother’s illness from discovery by society, once it is spoken about by the other children or members of society, he uses violence as a defense mechanism.

Will only appears to be experienced and more mature than Lyra because most of Will’s behavior is what he learns from his mother about his father. Will learns that:

John Parry had been a handsome man, a brave and clever officer in the Royal Marines, who had left the army to become an explorer and lead expeditions to remote parts of the world...and from then on, in all his games he had an invisible companion: he and his father were together hacking through the jungle. (*The Subtle Knife* 9)

All of Will's images of his father are those that show him to be a warrior and a protector. Because of Will's fatherless upbringing, he strives to be placed in the "father role" as his mother reminds him "One day, you'll follow in your father's footsteps. You're going to be a great man too. You'll take up his mantle... It lifted Will's "pride and purpose. All his games were going to come true...he was going to rescue him (his father) and take up his mantle...It was worth living a difficult, life, if you had a great aim like that" (*The Subtle Knife* 9). As the main aim of Will's defensive lifestyle is to protect his mother, it is because of what he believes his father to be (a heroic warrior) that Will constantly returns to this image when he reads about his father in articles. He thinks to himself that "He'd been defending his mother...He had a right to defend his home. His father would have wanted him to do that. He did it so he could find his father...All his childish games came back to him, with himself and his father rescuing each other from avalanches or fighting pirates"(*The Subtle Knife* 88). Will adopts the role of fighter and protector because that is what he believes constitutes his father's identity. In contrast to all of the images that are portrayed of Will as a fighter, Will's innocence is evident because he has behaved as his father would have wanted him to do. Like Lyra, Will's "immaturity" stems from the absence of his mother and father.

In addition as Will needs a father figure, he also needs a strong maternal figure. This is understood while Lyra nurses Will when he is hurt. The idea of Lyra nursing Will's wounds makes Will think about his mother as:

He wanted her to look after him, as she'd done when he was very small. He wanted her to bandage him and tuck him into bed and sing to him and take away all the trouble and surround him with all the warmth and softness and mother-kindness he needed so badly; and it was never going to happen. Part of him was only a little boy still. (*The Subtle Knife* 279)

When we are introduced to Will he appears to be a strong experienced child who is afraid of nothing. However Will only *appears* to be strong to hide all his fears about society from knowing the truth about his mother's illness "He's afraid, but he's mastering his fear" (*The Subtle Knife* 93). Will is afraid but he knows how to control it. As a result, his fear is shown through his violence and his separation from society where he cannot trust anyone. Though Will may appear to be "experienced," we as readers must not forget Will is only twelve years old. Will is still in need of his mother's warmth, whereby she could cuddle with him and put him to sleep.

Will's Moment of Change

Will redefines who he is only after he meets Lyra. This process is understood when Lyra explains to him what she knows about him and his past through the alethiometer. When he realizes that Lyra knows that he was looking for his father, he tells Lyra "I suppose we'll have to trust each other" (*The Subtle Knife* 93). Will only begins to shed his inability of not trusting others when Lyra finds out about his father and his mission. In turn, he now knows about her

alethiometer. Will realizes that in order for him to pursue his mission to search for his father, he must shed all of his barriers against society, and to work with and trust Lyra.

It is not only trust that Will gains but also his cooperation with society (something that he never had before). We understand this while Lyra tells Will about her past and “Will listened without comment, but attentively, with sympathy” (*The Subtle Knife* 95). This becomes Will’s first moment in which he is willing to listen and open up to others. He overcomes the barriers that he once had towards others by having sympathy for others and listening to other people rather than his own self. Further evidence of this is the loss of the violent lifestyle that Will once followed. We learn this when he walks up to a terrace with Lyra and it reminds him of a similar house that he went to with his mother where a old man and woman had made his mother cry. While thinking about that moment “Lyra saw him breathing fast and clenching his fists... [but then he] took a deep breath” (*The Subtle Knife* 142). Will almost has a moment of violence when thinking about his past, however he learns how to control himself by proceeding on with his journey, by calming down, and taking a deep breath. In addition to his distancing himself from violence, an act which helps him learn and grow to cooperate with society, Will’s cooperation on his journeys with Lyra assists his coming-of-age process. We see Will cooperating with Lyra by means of the journeys he takes with Lyra as he learns how to work with her. We understand this through moments such as when Lyra and Will try to enter a tower and Will explains to Lyra “We’ll have to go in the front” (*The Subtle Knife* 150). This can be compared to the earlier descriptions of Will when he uses “I” on his journeys, meaning only he

will do something. However Will's progression through maturity is understood now when he says "we" to Lyra since he intends that he *and* Lyra will embark on their journey and work together. Kristine Moruzi states in her article, "Missed Opportunities: The Subordination of Children in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*:"

Lyra and Will are necessarily more experienced than other children who are able to depend on parental assistance...Lyra and Will both pursue their objectives despite being alone. This solitude provides them with the opportunity to unite in a way that would have been impossible if their parents were helping them with their quest. (58-9)

The lack of dependence on family enables Lyra and Will to rely on each other in order to succeed in their journey. By doing this, (by learning to work with society) Will matures along with Lyra.

One major aspect that is a part of Will's coming-of-age process is identified through the knife that he receives. This is first demonstrated when Will is in a battle for the knife and his fingers are cut off in the battle. The loss of his fingers in the battle for the knife are now an "ongoing reminder of the parents he has to cut off in order to escape an imprisoning identity" (Rustin & Rustin 235). By Will losing his two fingers, Pullman presents to us a symbolic image. This image implies that Will now must grow in his process to adulthood without his parents. In addition, like Lyra's alethiometer proves to us her maturity as she gains experience when she learns to respect the alethiometer, Will's maturing process is demonstrated as he gains knowledge and experience when he learns how to use the knife. This is proven to us when the old man hands over the knife to Will and explains to him "You have the knife. You are the

bearer. You should not be a child” (*The Subtle Knife* 166). When Will first holds the knife he is a child in the sense of not understanding how to use it. The old man teaches him how to concentrate on the power of the knife and not on his pain or his hands. However once he learns how to use it, Will “experiences extreme conflict between loyalty towards his mother and love for his father for whom he is searching. He himself literally is pulled in two opposite directions” (Rustin & Rustin 418). In order for Will to succeed in his task, Iorek restores the knife and reminds Will “you must no longer think about your mother. You must put her aside” (*The Amber Spyglass* 173). Will must be mature enough to put aside the thoughts of his mother and father in order to be successful in his journey with Lyra. The more Will is able to understand the knife, and its use of powers, the more his maturity increases.

As we see the progression of Will’s coming-of-age process through his gain of trust for others, cooperation with others, and use of knife, it is also shown through reactions to his father and Lyra’s kidnapping. When Will has his first encounter with his father and finds out it is his father only at the moment he is killed, he yells to the witch “I wait all my life and come all this way and I find him at last, and you kill him...” (*The Subtle Knife* 285). Will’s childhood dreams of his father : “They were best friends, they saved each other’s life countless times, they laughed and talked together over campfires long into the night” (*The Subtle Knife* 9) have ended in tragedy. Will comes to the realization that now the journey that he dreamed of taking with his father must be now taken alone. After this moment, Pullman depicts an image of Will wearing his “father’s feather-trimmed cloak [that was] trailing behind his body on the ground” (*The Subtle Knife* 286). Will’s wrapping his father’s cloak around him symbolizes that he is ready for

the next stage in his coming-of-age process. He must therefore continue his father's journey alone.

The final stage of his maturation process in *The Subtle Knife* is when he notices that Lyra is gone as "Will was shaking his head. It couldn't be true, but it was; Lyra was gone, Lyra was captured, Lyra was lost" (*The Subtle Knife* 288). By noting Will's being astonished about Lyra's being captured, we, as readers, receive an understanding that Will has matured. This growth in Will's feelings for others has developed through his new deep feelings for Lyra.

Lyra's "Coming-of-Age"

As I have argued in *The Golden Compass*, Lyra goes through an immense coming-of-age process where she breaks away from her immature behavior at Jordan College as she realizes the mistakes of her past journeys. Through this new growth in *The Golden Compass*, Lyra states that she will make sure (on her future journeys) to ask the right questions in future. I will argue in my chapter on *The Subtle Knife* how Lyra adapts her past experience to her future experiences with Will. This creates evidence demonstrating her growth into experience and her leaving her innocent self behind.

Lyra's maturity is not immediately demonstrated when Lyra promises to Will that she will not give out any information about him. However, as Lyra accidentally exposes to a Scholar that she knows Will, her maturity is displayed by her explaining her mistakes to Will: "I wouldn't listen. I just done what *I* wanted to do..." (*The Subtle Knife* 139). It is that "one of Lyra's main worries about herself is that she is a betrayer, and she keeps being reminded of this aspect of herself" (Rustin 231). Lyra's constant mistakes are reminders of her immaturity.

However Lyra's psychological maturation takes place as she understands her errors of breaking her promise to Will.

This is further proven when Pantalaimon suggests to Lyra that that they could use the alethiometer to find out more information about Will. Lyra responds that they would then be doing it for themselves while Pantalaimon expresses to her "That makes a change. It's normally you who's greedy and nosy" (*The Subtle Knife* 229) and he further reminds her about her selfish acts while attending Jordan College. Lyra responds to him "I might have done once...but I'm changing I think" (*The Subtle Knife* 230). Lyra's maturing process is evident as she understands what Pantalaimon is suggesting is wrong and only for their self-interest. This maturing process is only observed by Lyra because she "must stumble, if necessary, toward the knowledge that constitutes mature freedom" (Rutledge 125). Lyra constantly looks back on and grows from her past mistakes. Though her new journeys and the way she now makes decisions Lyra is fully aware that she *is* changing from the immature and selfish Lyra of Jordan College.

This process continues as Lyra admits to Will "You think I don't know about lying and that? I'm the best liar there ever was. But I en't lying to you, and I never will, I swear it" (*The Subtle Knife* 91) as well as when she says "I done that before I betrayed someone. And it was the worst thing I ever did" (*The Subtle Knife* 93). Lyra wants to prove to Will that she is experienced because he does not believe otherwise. In this attempt she explains to him what she *was* before, a liar and a betrayer. The difference between what she used to be and what she is now shows that she has learned from those experiences of betrayal and lying and gained the experience through her process of coming-of-age.

Through this process, as Lyra proves to Will who she was, through her journeys in *The Golden Compass*, additionally we can see the childish behavior that she once displayed has been abandoned in *The Subtle Knife*. Lyra now behaves unselfishly by using her past experiences to help both her *and* Will grow. Lyra's past is used to help Will while he is trying to learn how to use the knife while he is in pain. She advises him "I remember when I was reading the alethiometer once when I was frightened...Just sort of relax your mind and say yes, it does hurt, I know. Don't try and shut it out" (*The Subtle Knife* 164). Lyra unselfishly speaks of her past experience to help him with his knife. This act enables Will to learn how to use the knife to close the windows.² This can further demonstrate her "coming-of-age" as she acts out of selflessness and becomes a "mother like figure" as she helps Will heal and tells him "Come on, I'll make a new bandage, I'll put some coffee on to cook, I'll make some omelette, whatever you want, and we'll sleep...I'll do nothing now expect help you find your help" (*The Subtle Knife* 181-82). Lyra develops into a caring individual who is caring for someone rather than being cared for. This is in contrast to her time at Jordan College in *The Golden Compass* in which she only cared for her own selfish needs. Furthermore this presents to us as readers a symbolic image of Lyra as a mother-figure to Will. In addition Lyra postpones her journey to know about "Dust" to find her friend Roger and help Will find his father even though she does not know the reason for his search. This presents to us Lyra's emotional growth as she now acts now for others rather than just herself.

As I have argued, *The Subtle Knife* presents us with the coming-of-age process of both Lyra and Will. Both children only succeeded in this process by meeting each other. While Will appears to be an "experienced fighter," he is innocent because he is living in the dreams of his

² Windows are doors which lead to other worlds.

father. He is yearning for the love of a father and to be taken care of by a mother- figure. His personal growth only takes place where he learns to trust others and understands how to work with Lyra. As for Lyra, she uses her past experiences to help her grow in the present. She adapts new feelings and “female-roles” to help her continue with the coming-of-age process.

The Worlds in *The Subtle Knife*

The Subtle Knife, provides us with two new worlds. These worlds are Oxford (Will’s world), and Cittagazee which is the world that Lord Asriel creates at the end of *The Golden Compass*, into which Lyra follows him.

Cittagazee is the world where Will and Lyra meet and become allies, and where Will begins to learn how to trust others. It is because of this world that they gain knowledge of different worlds. For, Will Cittagazee provides him with a sense of security away from the police. As he was near the window to go to Cittagazee, he “felt himself smiling. [Thinking] It was going to be all right” (*The Subtle Knife* 95). However even as Will believes he is secure, Cittagazee also provides Will and Lyra with the knowledge that Specters feed on Dust. It is through this knowledge that both Lyra and Will become aware of the need for Dust later on in *The Amber Spyglass*. It is in this world “They are both struggling to survive in this strange place, and they find they have things in common...” (Rustin & Rustin 229). It is because Lyra and Will are in a new unfamiliar world that they learn how to work together. In addition, Cittagazee provides Will with the knife. By attaining the knife, Will further develops and gains the knowledge to learn how to open doors to other worlds. By means of the new experience of opening worlds, he uses the knife to open windows to gain access to gather more information for their journey.

The world of Oxford³, commonly referred to as “Will’s world,” is a world unlike Lyra’s Oxford. Here the roads are painted on, vast numbers of people exist, and this world has no *daemons*. This experience of Will’s world underscores Lyra knowledge to become independent as Lyra is “a lost little girl in a strange world, belonging nowhere” (*The Subtle Knife* 62). It is because of being in a new world that Lyra is forced to use her past experiences to create her future experiences. In addition, it is this world that provides Lyra and Will with new knowledge. Will attains information about his father and Lyra gains new knowledge about Dust from Dr. Malone. Moreover Will grows in a manner where he will take the responsibility to continue his father’s intended journey.

Both worlds, Oxford and Cittagazee, are crucial to Lyra and Will’s coming-of-age process because they both experience new worlds, and are forced to work together to succeed in each child’s personal journey. However because of the challenges that they face in both worlds, Lyra and Will gain experience and knowledge through learning how to cope with these challenges that they face.

³ Oxford, but in a different dimension

Chapter Three: *The Amber Spyglass*

In *The Amber Spyglass*, Will and Lyra's coming-of-age process continues as now it becomes evident of their emotional attachment towards one another, their *daemons* and their fixed forms, physical changes, and their final decision that they make at the end of the trilogy. This decision is what ultimately makes them sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of others.

Will's Final Process

Will does appear to gain experience and lose his innocence in *The Subtle Knife*. However a part of his coming- of-age process that he cannot leave behind concerns the need for his mother. This is first presented to us when Mrs. Coulter questions Will as to whether his mother would protect him. At that moment Will "Was complicated by the thought that his mother, after all, had not protected him; he had to protect her. Did Mrs. Coulter love Lyra more than Elaine Parry loved him?" (*The Amber Spyglass* 126-27). By Will clearly questioning if Lyra's mother loves her more than his mom, shows his need for his mother. Therefore because he wasn't taken care of by his mother and had to assume the parental role and care for her, Will feels an absence in his life regarding the mother figure.

This is once again presented when Will looks at Mrs. Coulter's face and sees his mother's face. At that moment "His heart quailed from sorrow; and then as he thrust the knife, his mind left the point...[and] the knife fell in pieces to the ground"(*The Subtle Knife* 137). When holding the knife to use it to open windows onto other worlds, Will must only concentrate on his mission as shown in *The Subtle Knife*. However, when thinking of his mother and believing he sees her, Will becomes

overwhelmed with pain because of his need for her. Therefore the knife breaks because of his loss of concentration when thinking about his mother.

In order for Will to part with his memories of his mother and grow from this, Iorek reminds Will “If you want to succeed in this task, you must no longer think about your mother. You must put her aside. If your mind is divided, the knife will break” (*The Amber Spyglass* 173). By having Pullman portray Will as unable to put aside the memoirs of his mother, we get an image of a young child’s resistance at parting with its mother. Although Will is only a child he must remember to carry on as an adult in order to excel in using the knife. He must gain independence by putting aside the image of his mother in order to gain experience.

As Will’s innocence is proven through his need for his mother, his coming-of-age is evident after Lyra is kidnapped. Will declares “I’ll find her first *then* I’ll go to Lord Asriel” (*The Amber Spyglass* 10). Will’s transformation is becoming clearer. Will’s initial goal in pursuing his father’s journey now takes the form of a new plan; finding Lyra. By proposing to find Lyra first, Will gradually develops from an individual who has no concerns for others (other than his family) to now becoming emotionally attached to another individual. This achievement whereby Will is able to create emotional bonds with others provides us with a new perspective on his newly acquired maturity.

As Will creates new emotional bonds with Lyra, he also matures in a way in which he is open to cooperating with others besides Lyra. In order to find Lyra, Will knows that he must be open to working with the two angels Balthamos and Baruch. Will tells them “Help me find Lyra” (*The Amber Spyglass* 10) and further reinstates this need for help to the angel Balthamos where he expresses that “If you die, too, that’ll be the end for me. Balthamos, I need you to help guide

me to Lyra” (*The Amber Spyglass* 84). By expressing to the angels that he needs help, Will confronts his own limitations. “Will, the strong, self-reliant hero, is forced to admit his need for companionship, assistance, and grace” (Bruner 155). Will needs the help of others in order to fulfill his mission of finding Lyra. This can be contrasted with the first description that we receive of Will in *The Subtle Knife* where he never asks anyone for help. Rather, Will now matures in a manner in which he acknowledges his need for help.

As Will progressively matures throughout his journey in *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*, he is able to shed his innocence and pursue experience in his coming-of-age-process. This process is evident when Will comes to an understanding that his father really wasn't a warrior, but simply afraid. Will states that:

Maybe sometimes we don't do the right thing because the wrong thing looks more dangerous, and we don't want to look scared, so we go and do the wrong thing because it looks dangerous. We're more concerned with not looking scared than with judging right. (*The Amber Spyglass* 172)

Participating in violent behavior and acting like a warrior was partly because of Will's innocence. He is playing out his childhood image of his father, the warrior. Now that Will is mature he is beginning to develop his coming-of-age process by gaining knowledge of the reasons behind the “doing the wrong things.” Will is now aware that it is fear that forces him and his father to do the wrong things. Because now that Will is aware of who his father really is, he is now closer to coming-of-age and abandons his initial ideas of his father as a warrior as he declares to Lyra “I'm not going to look back anymore”(*The Subtle Knife* 176).

Will's continuing coming-of-age process becomes clearly effective when he finally confronts his father and expresses to him:

You said I was a warrior. You told me that was my nature, and I shouldn't argue with it. Father, you were wrong. I fought because I had to. And I will choose, because now I'm free. (*The Subtle Knife* 373)

Will was only portraying the image of a warrior because of his expectations from his father. Therefore, by Will confronting his father, he is now able to leave behind all the ideas that are expected of him by his father. He is able to free himself and gain independence. By doing so, Will now has the experience for his coming-of-age process.

Will's coming-of-age process does not only derive from his maturity and experience; it is also important to note that it can be linked to his physical changes. This happens when Mary sees Will and wants to give him a hug. The narrator tells us:

Mary was grown up, and Will was nearly grown, and she could see that that kind of response would have made a child of him, because while she might have embraced a child, she would never have done that to a man she didn't know. (*The Amber Spyglass* 381)

It becomes evident that Will's coming-of-age is clearly visible from the change in his behavior and through his physical changes. Will is now becoming a "man" physically as part of this process of coming-of-age.

Lyra's "Coming-of-Age"

After Lyra is rescued by Will from Mrs. Coulter, her loss of innocence becomes clearly evident as she continues her search to rescue Roger from the world of the dead. Lyra declares to Will that:

...even if it *is* that dangerous, we should still try and rescue Roger. But it be like when I rescued him from Bolvanger, I didn't know what I was doing then...I mean there was all kinds of other people to help... There won't be any help where we'd have to go. (*The Amber Spyglass* 163-64)

Lyra makes it clear that the dangers of entering the world of the dead are considerable. However she lets go of her own fears and dangers in order to find Roger. Doing so marks Lyra's coming-of-age process. Because she understands the dangers of the underworld and decides to go there, Lyra dismisses all her fears, focuses on the need of another person and ultimately gains courage after emerging from the world of the dead. She is further tested when in order to get into the world of the dead, Lyra must leave her *daemon* behind. Lyra contemplates "She could be true to the heart-deep, life-deep bond linking her to Pantalaimon, she could put that first, she could push the rest out of her mind-But she couldn't" (*The Amber Spyglass* 253). Lyra is faced with the dilemma of abandoning her *daemon* in order to enter the world of the dead. Such a "painful choice is often conceived of as an adult predicament; but in reality, young people [as Lyra] can easily be placed in such situations" (Smith 148). Pullman presents his characters with growth in making mature choices. Lyra maturely accepts that she must leave Pantalaimon behind to search

for Roger. Because of her decision, we are presented with another aspect of Lyra's coming-of-age where she sacrifices herself to the need of another person.

Upon Lyra's sacrifice to find Roger, her coming-of-age process is developed through her emotional feelings for others. We truly have an understanding of Lyra's feelings after Iorek the bear leaves. Lyra cries to Will "I love him so much, I love him so much" (*The Amber Spyglass* 175). Throughout *The Golden Compass* and *The Subtle Knife*, Lyra has never expressed her love to anyone, including her father and mother. Now that Lyra is able to express her understanding of loving another individual, that emotional bond signifies her developing maturity and her growth. This is because she is able to mature in a manner whereby she develops the ability to love.

On another level Lyra continues her coming-of-age process as she proceeds to understand her new feelings when Will "turned and gave her a true smile, so warm and happy she felt something stumble and falter inside her...It might have been a new way for her heart to beat" (*The Amber Spyglass* 271-72). Lyra's new feelings towards another individual "awaken" her emotionally. Moreover in essence, she is able to receive a sense of connection on the personal level with another individual. This "other" individual happens to be of the opposite sex. By beginning to have awareness of this connection with Will, Lyra is engaged in her coming-of-age process by becoming sexually awakened. This is also observed by the way Lyra's body language changes as she speaks about Will: "Lyra began to explain, quite unaware of how her voice changed, how she sat up straighter, and how even her eyes looked different when she told the story of her meeting with Will" (*The Amber Spyglass* 278). Physically and emotionally Lyra begins to acquire new feelings towards Will. Although this demonstrates an "experiential

process” because she is developing new feelings for the other sex, Lyra is not yet fully developed into the “coming of age” process. Her feelings and physical behavior do begin to change when thinking about Will. However her body changes without Lyra understanding her new feelings towards Will. This prevents Lyra from fully coming-of-age to experience. Therefore she retains a part of her innocence.

One crucial moment where Lyra gains experience is when she learns the importance of telling the truth. In my chapter on *The Subtle Knife* I have argued that she only matures in the sense of making up stories to help her get through moments when her life is at risk. As she enters the Land of the Dead in *The Amber Spyglass*, she finds herself “in Hell, a place deigned for punishment and for the infliction of persistent suffering” (Holderness 285). Lyra is condemned in Hell by the Harpies for lying. She tells them a false story about her journey. Once she tells the Harpy her story, the Harpy’s “claws caught her scalp and tore out a clump of hair. Liar! Liar! the harpy was screaming” (*The Amber Spyglass* 261). It is only after Lyra realizes that she cannot tell anymore lies, and provides the harpies with the true story of her journey that they become satisfied with the truth. Millicent Lenz argues in her article “Story as a Bridge to Transformation: The Way Beyond Death in Philip Pullman’s *The Amber Spyglass*” that: “Initially she learns from the Harpy No-Name to discipline her imagination-to evolve a *true* imagination as distinct from a fanciful one” (49). Lyra grows through this experience as she learns the importance of telling the truth. In doing so, she matures in a manner where she abandons telling false stories for the rest of her journey.

The End of Lyra and Will's Innocence

Towards the end of *The Amber Spyglass* Lyra's and Will's coming-of-age process comes to a completion. This is achieved by both Will and Lyra becoming conscious of their sexual feeling for each other. One key moment is when Lyra "used to swim naked in the river ...but it would be quite different with Will, and she blushed even to think of it" (*The Amber Spyglass* 387). Because now Lyra thinks differently and blushes at the thought of swimming in the river naked, she is awakened to the idea of her own sexuality. As result, the arousal of Lyra's sexuality becomes the end of her innocence. At the same time as Lyra is sexually awakened, and she and Will fall in love, they attract Dust as "They were holding hands, talking together, heads close, oblivious to everything else...The Dust pouring down from the stars had found a living home again, and these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love, were the cause of the fall" (*The Amber Spyglass* 421). Dust is attracted to Lyra and Will because they have now gone through puberty. Dust "call[s] each person to freedom, intelligence, and love" (Freitas 162). This "fall" promotes Pullman's notion of Lyra's and Will's coming-of-age process (from innocence to experience). As Xaphania explains to Lyra and Will "Conscious beings make Dust-they renew it all the time, by thinking and feeling and reflecting, by gaining wisdom..." (*The Amber Spyglass* 440). Their act of love is the reason for the flow of Dust back into the world. Through this act both Lyra and Will become "conscious beings" and gain wisdom.

As Lyra and Will move from innocence to experience, their *daemons* settle themselves with their fixed forms. This signifies Lyra's and Will's experience of puberty: "Pantalaimon was now an animal...like a large and powerful ferret, red-gold in color, lithe and sinuous and full of grace. Kirjava was a cat of no ordinary size, and her fur was lustrous and rich..." (*The Amber*

Spyglass 446). Because Lyra and Will's *daemon* forms are now fixed, this physically signifies their "coming-of-age" process where a child's *daemon* frequently changes forms until the child reaches "experience." It is because the "connection between sexual awakening and settled daemons implies that this is the only way children can achieve higher consciousness" (Moruzi 63). By having their *daemons* change form, Pullman is able to show Lyra and Will the reality behind their coming-of-age and their sexual awakening.

However, as Lyra achieves the end of her coming-of-age process from innocence to experience, she loses her ability to read the alethiometer. Although I have argued that Lyra's knowing how to read the alethiometer indicates her coming-of-age process, originally she read it by "grace" (*The Amber Spyglass* 440). Carole Scott suggests in her article "Pullman's Enigmatic Ontology: Revamping Old Traditions in *His Dark Materials*": "The assertion of grace, with its religious overtones, lends a special Romantic aura to the understanding of innocence..." (103). When Lyra understood the alethiometer, she read it with a kind of innocence. However Xaphania explains to Lyra that she will need to study so that she can understand how to read the alethiometer. She further explains to Lyra that "your reading will be even better than, 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..." (*The Amber Spyglass* 440). The skill of reading the alethiometer as an adult (through studying) makes the process more effective than reading it as a child. Through Lyra's newly developed understanding she is able to fully comprehend this coming-of-age process as she strives to begin studying the alethiometer and decides to build the Republic of Heaven.

Lyra's and Will's maturity level is not only achieved through their "sexual awakening" but by their leaving each other in order to stop Dust from escaping through the windows. By Lyra and Will deciding that all windows must be closed and denying their own wish to stay together, we see a new level of maturity. Therefore they ultimately complete their coming-of-age process from children to experienced young adults.

What the Worlds in *The Amber Spyglass* Provide

As *The Subtle Knife* ends, *The Amber Spyglass* focuses on three worlds regarding Will and Lyra. This first world is Cittagazze which is the world in which *The Subtle Knife* ends, the second is the Land of the Dead, and third is the Mulefa world.

Cittagazze provides Will's coming-of-age process in the sense that he continues to grow by being able to work with others, as he is forced to work with Balthamos and Iorek in order to find Lyra. In doing so, Will not only grows in cooperation, but begins to learn how to trust others. For Lyra, Cittagazze provides her with her new "unconscious" feelings for Will as she begins to grow from child to young adult.

The Land of the Dead provides Will and Lyra with experiences of overcoming fear, the importance of the truth. It is here that Will finally grows away from the image of his father. "This is the place that Lyra and Will must visit so that Lyra can fulfill her promise to Roger, understand guilt and responsibility and confront destructiveness" (Rustin & Rustin 421). By creating this world, Pullman presents us with Lyra and Will's decisions of looking for Roger in such a dangerous place and letting go of their *daemons*, flaws which they discard (lying) because of the experience of being in that world, and their new strengths.

As all worlds in *His Dark Materials* are important for Lyra and Will's growth, it is in the Mulefa world where we see Lyra and Will move from innocence to experience. It is because in this world they realize their own sexuality, love one another, create Dust and *finally* become knowledgeable of what Dust is, and finally leave each other for the general welfare of society. By all these experimental acts both Lyra and Will experience pain in this world as their ultimate decision is to leave each other. The pain they experience in the Mulefa world is the ultimate coming-of-age process because it provides the reader with their decision to act as young adults.

All of these worlds are important to the coming-of-age of Lyra and Will. As they travel through London and Oxford, the Land of the Dead, Cittagazze, and Mulefa, they learn about themselves, gain experience, and act as adults. "None of these discoveries, are possible without the other spaces of multiple worlds" (Cantrell 304). Lyra and Will are only able to gain experience, and grow when leaving from their protected places of Jordan and College to go to unknown places. Matthew Grenby argues in his book *Children's Literature*: "The journey to another world, or another time, decontextualises the protagonists, removing them from the structures that locate and bind them into a particular role within the family, school, or the larger society. They then have to discover afresh who they are, and, usually can return to their reality at the end of the novel with a stronger sense of themselves" (164). Lyra and Will's journey together away from their "comfortable" worlds helps them grow as they further understand who they are. With this new knowledge, Lyra and Will return back to their "worlds" with a stronger sense of who they are and with a new hope for their future.

Chapter Four –Influence of William Blake and John Milton

Throughout *His Dark Materials*, Philip Pullman uses influences from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* to present us with his theme of coming-of-age with respect to Lyra and Will. In addition we also see Pullman's inspiration concerning John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (especially the theme of parallel worlds).

In *His Dark Materials*, Philip Pullman adapts William's Blake idea of "innocence to experience" as presented by Blake in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Blake's Church in his poems silences the children's voices where he shows the child being oppressed by the authority of the Church and being forced to conform to the ideals of the Church. This is a result of the child losing its innocence because of the corruption of the Church. Blake revolts against social institutions by using the images of children to portray "innocence," and the social institutions to portray the corruption of the children. For Blake the path from innocence to "experience is not wrong but an inevitable stage of human maturity and, he believes, a necessary step on the path to a higher consciousness" (Scott 103) naturally without the corruption of the Church. Similarly Pullman adapts Blake's notion of this through the characters of Lyra and Will. We see this idea through:

Mrs. Coulter (an agent of the Church) and her organization, the 'Oblation Board,' [believe that] it is imperative to prolong the child's state of innocence, and in their view the most effective method of preventing Dust from settling on the child is to separate the body from the daemon before the onset of puberty- - a castration of sort referred to as '*intercision*' and '*cutting*.' The result is a permanent end to any imminent sexual awakening. (Bird 116)

Although Pullman's Church attempts to prevent the process of puberty for the children, like Blake's Church, it interferes with the children's life and their natural growth into experience. As Immanuel Kant argues in his *Critique of Judgment*, the creative consciousness known as "genius" is a key growth by which "nature gives the rule to art" (156). Although Kant does not argue about childhood mentality, his idea can be used to depict a child's growth. Every child can be seen as a "genius" but the child needs the most natural kind of growth. Blake's Church endures the children into hard labor making them, slaves to the Church. Such interference affects their "genius" and their coming-of-age to "experience."

It is through Blake's *Holy Thursday* and *The Little Boy Lost*, that we see the children's being neglected or dominated by the Church. In addition in *The Little Vagabond* (*Songs of Experience*) we can see the emergence of the corruption of the Church.

Blake's *Holy Thursday* (*Songs of Innocence*) is a criticism of the Church as Blake describes innocent orphaned children in the charity schools of London going to Church on "Holy Thursday" and being forced to take up traditions of the Church. The children are not "experienced;" rather the poem shows their innocence when a cruel institution is contrasted with orphan children. In the first stanza of the poem, Blake describes to us the procession of children going to Church. In this first stanza, Blake effectively shows how innocent and pure the children are when he explains "their innocent faces clean" (1) suggesting they are without sins. The use of the word "clean" further suggests the faces of the children are not normally clean, but they are clean for the occasion. This description emphasizes the corruption within the Church because the orphaned children are not properly taken care of by their beadles and are only "clean" because they

are going to Church. In addition the children are described by Blake walking “two and two”/ [while] “Grey-headed beadles walked before with wands as white as snow” (2-3) These children are described walking behind “their beadles (parish officers)...[for] a compulsory exhibition of their piety and gratitude to their patrons” (Keynes 186). The orderly walk to Church and the beadles “wands” suggests the use of violent authority against the children. It is in Blake’s poems that he “uses the trope of the child to represent spiritual purity in its most fragile and vulnerable form and as an image of innocent humanity in an inhuman world. Images of child abuse and neglect serve to show how this initial spiritual purity is corrupted” (Benziman 169). This emphasizes Blake’s revolt against the Church. These children are forced to take up the traditions of the Catholic Church in spite of possible abuse as they are supervised by their beadles marching to “the high dome of Paul’s they like Thames’ water flow” (4). The children are taken into the Church because they are too innocent to know better.

In the second stanza, once inside the Church, Blake describes the children as “flowers of London town,” and mentions their “radiance” emphasizing their beauty and dismissing the idea that they poor orphaned children. In addition they are compared to “multitudes of lambs” (7) seated to receive communion “raising their innocent hands” (8). This image provides us with not only the innocence of the children as “lambs” under the control of the Church, but with the biblical image of God/ Christ.

Finally in the third stanza their voices like “a mighty wind” and “harmonious thundering” are raised to the heavens, while the beadles are now presented as “aged men.” The last line “Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door” (12), suggests that we should to pity the poor (such as the orphaned children) not focus on the abusive authority of the Church

against the children. David Fairer argues in “Experience Reading Innocence: Contextualizing Blake’s *Holy Thursday*,” “If the poem begins with the great pageant of the charity children, when innocence is on display and public charity dons its best clothes, it ends by placing the matter, briefly and undemonstratively, at our own door” (558). The innocent children in *Holy Thursday* do not understand the corruption of the Church. The speaker of the poem states the moral in the last line of *Holy Thursday*.

The influence of the Church corrupting the innocent is present in Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*. One example is when the Church attempts to stop the spreading of Dust by killing the children’s daemons. Pullman uses Blake’s notion of a powerful authority silencing the children’s voice. It is in Pullman’s world that the Church is:

monolithic, powerful, and combines the most authoritarian, formidable, and evil aspects of Protestant Calvinism and Roman Catholicism...[and] silences heretics through Inquisition, castrates young boys to retain their lovely voices at the cost of their sexuality, and generally opposes desire for things of the material world while amassing great wealth and power. (Wood 243)

Much like Blake’s Church in *Holy Thursday*, Pullman’s Church is an oppressive institution. In its own type of corruption, it controls the innocent by preventing them from going through the process of puberty. The Church dominates to the innocent children in other ways of abuse. It kidnaps children like Tony Makarios and kills *daemons* in the name of Authority.⁴

In *Little Boy Lost (Songs of Innocence)* Blake uses simplistic language to underscore the emotions that a child feels while losing its father. Blake provides, in the first stanza, the voice of the child trying to stop the father from abandoning it as the child cries after his father

⁴ Pullman’s word for God in *His Dark Materials*

“Father, Father, where are you going?/ Oh do not walk so fast. / Speak, father, speak to your little boy,/ Or else I shall be lost.” (1-4). It is clear that the father does not want to acknowledge his son. Jennifer Waller states in her article, “Maurice Sendak and the Blakean Vision of Childhood,” “The child of the *Songs of Innocence* seeking to find perceives an answer not by his powers of reasoning but by the strength of his love” (130). It is here that Blake shows us the “innocence” of the child because the little boy innocently follows his father, wanting to be with his father, while the father does not acknowledge his son.

In the second stanza however Blake shows us the abandonment of the boy as the child was left in the dark without his father. In the dark where the boy was left behind, “The mire was deep, and the child did weep,/ And away the vapour flew” (7-8). The boy is left crying in deep mud and the only light to guide him is gone. Although there are many interpretations of *The Little Boy Lost*, (father standing for God, for example) “what remains constant in all these readings is that from the child’s point of view the father is there, and abandoning him... [and] the main event is that of a child trying to be heard and failing, and this failure is experienced as desertion” (Benziman 173). Blake illustrates to us the innocence of the child following his father in vain. It is because of this the child becomes “experienced” in the second stanza, because he is left alone to face the reality that he has been abandoned by his father.

This poem influenced Pullman’s vision of “innocence” and “experience” in *His Dark Materials*. This is successfully shown when we become introduced to Will in *The Subtle Knife* and understand his father is gone, “he had vanished long before Will was able to remember him. Will was passionately curious about his father, and he used to plague his mother with questions...” (*The Subtle Knife* 8). Like Blake’s boy in *The Little Boy Lost*, both children are

looking for their father. The “innocence” of both boys is shown through their love for their respective fathers. As Blake’s boy tries to follow his father, Will lives out the dream of finding his father, and tries to follow in his father’s footsteps by trying to become a great warrior. Although Will does not visually experience the father leaving him like Blake’s boy in the poem, both children gain experience from the abandonment of their fathers. Blake’s boy becomes “experienced” in the sense that he feels the pain of abandonment. Will is “experienced” because he necessarily takes on the role of the protector (of his ill mother).

We begin to see more “experience” than “innocence” in Blake’s *The Little Vagabond* (*Songs of Experience*) where the child (a vagabond) lives at the Church and expresses the cruelty of the Church. The child begins the first stanza crying out to his mother “the Church is cold” (1) and compares it to the Alehouse as it is “healthy and pleasant and warm;” (2). It is with this comparison that Blake is able to provide to the reader the “experience” of the child (as the child complains of the church being unpleasant) and pessimistic. In addition we are provided with the “innocence” of the child as it is a young child crying out to his mother.

In stanza two, we begin to see some of the corruptions of the Church which the child experiences as he sarcastically says “But if at the Church they would give us some Ale,/ And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,/ We’d sing and we’d pray all the livelong day” (5-7). The child pleads for ale at Church claiming that its warmth will make the child never want to leave the Church. U.C Knoepflmacher notes in “The Balancing of Child and Adult: An Approach to Victorian Fantasies for Children,” “From the vantage point of innocence, [the] childhood agent may resist the imposition of adult values and stubbornly demand that its desire to linger in a realm of magic and wonder be satisfied...” (497). The child sets an imaginary world against the

realities of the corruption of the Church. This is a desire for warmth, and if this becomes possible, the child would never want to leave Church.

Moreover in stanza three, the Parson would be happy in this “imaginary world” and “might preach and drink and sing” (9) and the children would be “happy as birds in the spring” (10). Everyone would be joyful in the Church while Parson is preaching happily and the children responding happily to the sermons. It is through the “imaginary world” the child creates that we can understand Blake’s idea of “innocence.” The child hopes for an uncorrupted Church. However, as we read in the second half of the third stanza, in the child’s imaginary world, he also hopes the “modest dame Lurch, who is always as Church, Would not have bandy child nor fasting nor birch” (11-12). Here we can see the “experience” of the child. The child is not innocent and understands the corruptions of the Church. Such corruptions include fasting, and abusing the children in the Church. The “vagabond” child hopes for a change in his “imaginary world.”

The last stanza continues with the child’s “imaginary world” and its outcomes. These include “Gold like a father rejoicing to see/ His children as pleasant and happy as he,/ Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel,/ But kiss him and give him both drink and apparel” (13-16). The child imagines God being happy and pleased to see his children and even imagines God to be like a father to his children. In addition God would forgive the Devil and give him drinks and apparel. It is in this stanza that Blake provides us with the “innocence” of the child where the child hopes for a better future with the Church and hopes for an end to the Church’s corruption.

Pullman uses a similar notion to the Blakean child's "innocence" and "experience" with reference to the Church and Lyra. This is seen in *The Golden Compass* when Lyra visually sees the actions of the Oblation Board when she sees Tony's dead *daemon*. Lyra for the first time sees and understands "what it was that the Oblation Board was doing, and what was the nature of the sacrifice the children were having to make (*The Golden Compass* 187). Like the "Vagabond's" innocence being taken away by his witnessing the corruption of the Church, Lyra's innocence is lost as she realizes the corrupt nature of the Oblation Board. In addition as the "Vagabond" imagines a "world" without the corruption of the Church, Lyra decides to take action and rebels against the Oblation Board, and later tries to save the child from the Oblation Board. It is "the rebellion against the Church and God [and] is also a rebellion against Lyra's parents, a separation that enables her maturity" (Hines 45). Not only does Lyra rebel against the Church, but also her parents who are involved with the Oblation Board. It is by this act of "rebellion" in hope for a better "world" that Lyra matures and gain "experience."

Just as Philip Pullman incorporates Blake's *Songs of Experience*, he also incorporates Milton's concept of parallel worlds such as Eden, Heaven and Hell (found in *Paradise Lost*). This is shown through Pullman's parallel worlds of the Mulefa, the Land of the Dead, and Will and Lyra's respective worlds.

In *His Dark Materials*, Pullman develops multiple worlds as Lord Asriel explains there are "uncountable billions of parallel worlds" (*The Golden Compass* 330). The concept of multiple worlds that Pullman uses in *His Dark Materials* is found in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* as Pullman quotes directly from Milton's *Paradise Lost* in his epigraph to *The Golden Compass*:

Into this wild abyss

The womb of Nature and perhaps her grave,
 Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
 But all these in their pregnant causes mixed
 Confusedly, and which thus must ever fight,
 Unless the Almighty Maker them ordain
 His dark materials to create more worlds,
 Into this wild abyss the wary fiend
 Stood on the brink of Hell and looked a while,
 Pondering his voyage... (*Paradise Lost* Book II)

It is in this passage of *Paradise Lost* that Satan sets out to Earth, crossing Chaos. This outlines Pullman's concept of other worlds the children cross through the "windows". Milton further elaborates of the idea of other worlds in Book VII of *Paradise Lost*:

Then staid the fervid Wheelles, and in his hand
 He took the golden Compasses, prepar'd
 In Gods Eternal store, to circumscribe
 This Universe, and all created things:
 One foot he center'd, and other turn'd
 Round through the vast profunditie obscure,
 And said, thus farr extend, thus farr thy bounds,
 This be thy just Circumference, O World. (224-31)

For Milton in *Paradise Lost* "It seems reasonable that if God wanted to, He could create many more worlds from the leftover Chaos" (Robinson 2). Although Milton does not extend the idea of

other worlds, he expresses the possibilities that God could create other worlds. Pullman uses this concept and expresses there *are* many other worlds as read towards the end of the *The Golden Compass* in which Lyra's father creates a bridge from his world to another. This is additionally shown in *The Amber Spyglass* where the knife opens new windows into other worlds.

In *Paradise Lost*, the world of Heaven is inhabited by God and angels who do not rebel against him. Similarly, Pullman adapts this idea when King Ogunwe says to Mrs. Coulter:

I am a king, but it's my proudest task to join Lord Asriel in setting up a world where there are no kingdoms at all. No kings, no bishops, no priests. The kingdom of heaven has been known by that name since the Authority first set himself above the rest of the angels. And we want no part of it. This world is different. We intend to be free citizens of the Republic of Heaven. (*The Amber Spyglass* 188)

Even though we never see any of Pullman's characters in the Republic of Heaven, it is frequently referred to in *His Dark Materials*. In this world there are no kings, but the people are free. Similarly, like Milton's Heaven, it is a world which Lyra intends to go to through hard work and patience. This rejects the *Paradise Lost* concept that the sinless will go to Heaven. Unlike, Milton's Heaven which it is ruled by God, Pullman's Republic of Heaven is without a ruler where the people are free to do what they choose.

Another world which Pullman depicts that is similar to one of *Paradise Lost* is Hell. Hell in *Paradise Lost* is for "sinners" where evil and darkness abound. Milton describes Satan's sin in Book I of *Paradise Lost*:

The Mother of Mankind, what time his Pride

Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host
 Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
 To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
 He trusted to have equal'd the most High,
 If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
 Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
 Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battel proud
 With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
 Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie
 With hideous ruine and combustion down
 To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
 In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire,
 Who durst defie th' Omnipotent to Arms. (36-49)

It is because of Satan's pride that he wanted to have a war against God to glorify himself. And after he failed, God threw Satan and his followers into Hell as a punishment. It is because of Satan's sins that he is put in Hell. In *His Dark Materials*, Pullman depicts his "Hell" in the world of "The Land of the Dead." Like in Milton's Hell in "The Land of the Dead" one is punished. Lyra is punished by the harpies for lying, and experiences pain when she is apart from her *daemon* (as one must be while going through this world). However, unlike Milton's Hell, everyone, good and bad, goes to Pullman's "Land of the Dead."

The other world which Pullman incorporates from *Paradise Lost* is Chaos. In *Paradise Lost*, Chaos is often referred to as a world with disorder. Moreover it is the bridge between Hell

and Earth. Pullman's Cittagazze implies the same notion. It is regarded as "chaos" for its mass of Specters.⁵ In addition Cittagazze is read as Milton's world of "Chaos" in the sense that "Chaos" is the bridge between Hell and Earth (which Satan uses to get to Earth). Similarly Cittagazze is the world between Lyra and Will's world. Lyra's father created a bridge between the two worlds.

The last world which Pullman incorporates in *His Dark Materials* is similar to Milton's Eden. As Eden in *Paradise Lost* is related to the fall of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from it, Pullman's Mulefa world does something similar. Lyra and Will "sinned" in this world when "Lyra took one of those little fruit [and] lifted the fruit gently to [Will's] mouth" (*The Amber Spyglass* 416). Pullman captures the same sin of Adam and Eve when depicting Lyra and Will in their "Eden." In addition the Dust that is attracted to Lyra and Will make them reach puberty. Anne-Marie Bird argues in her article "Without Contraries is no Progress: Dust as an All-Inclusive, Multifunctional Metaphor in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*" that in Milton's universe "Satan himself is Dust" (121). Bird proposes that Pullman incorporates Milton's use of Satan as Dust. Both attract the innocent towards sin.

However as Margaret and Michael Rustin argue in their essay, "Learning to Say Goodbye," "This garden contrasts with the Garden of Eden, since its purpose is to provide information and knowledge, as well as beauty"(426). I argue that it does compare in a similar way because Milton's Garden of Eden *does* provide "information, knowledge and beauty." This happens in the manner in which Milton provides a detailed description of the beauty of Eden when he states:

⁵ Creatures that feed on "Dust" and created when new windows are open.

Out of the fertil ground he caus'd to grow
 Trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste;
 And all amid them stood the Tree of Life,
 High eminent, blooming Ambrosial Fruit
 Of vegetable Gold. (Book IV 216-220)

Milton's Eden is filled with images of nature's beauty. Eden is filled with trees, fruits and vegetables, caves, beautiful mountains, flowing waterfalls and many species of animals. It is a place where Adam and Eve take rest next to the cave. In addition Sarah Cantrell argues in her article "Nothing Like Pretend': Difference, Disorder, and Dystopia in The Multiple World Spaces of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*": "Will and Lyra's painful separation in the Botanic Garden reconfigures Adam and Eve's departure from Paradise as a necessary step towards maturity as well as wisdom and growth that they will foster in others as they tell stories of their travels" (319). Pullman's "Eden" provides Lyra and Will with the same wisdom as Adam and Eve. It is through their sins and puberty that they are able to learn, grow and mature and promote stories of their travels to others.

In addition as Adam and Eve eventually are cast out of Eden, Lyra and Will are cast out of their "Eden" (Mulefa) because of their "sin" and eventually have to go back to their world. "In short Lyra and Will are the new Adam and Eve. They are the ones who restore balance in the created order by stemming the flood of Dust that is leaving the worlds. The 'living gold' of the Dust which clings to their bodies make them seem 'the *true image* of what human beings always could be, once they had come into their inheritance" (Padley 332). Lyra and Will do become the

new Adam and Eve in the “Mulefa” world. Like Adam and Eve they are the ones who portray the truth of what it means to be human (sinning and attaining puberty) once they have gained “experience.”

Conclusion

Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* follows the process of Lyra and Will’s coming-of-age from innocence to experience. It is because of their past and their journeys (that help the children grow and mature) that Lyra grows through her gained knowledge. As shown in *The Golden Compass*, Lyra is able to grow out of her need for belonging, and rejects her craving for her mother. She matures in a manner whereby she commits herself to search for Roger, and is able to understand how to read the alethiometer. In *The Subtle Knife*, Lyra is able to use her past to reinvent the present. By doing so, she is able to use her new rational way of thinking to go on her new journeys. In addition, she learns how to engage in other goals like helping Roger search for his father, and learns to set aside her personal goals. In *The Amber Spyglass*, Lyra is able to grow when she rejects telling false stories. In addition we see her ultimate growth to maturity when she becomes “sexually aware.”

Will’s coming-of-age process is evident in *The Subtle Knife* where he learns how to cooperate with others, and gains their trust. This acceptance of new relationships becomes a means by which he can pursue his journey. In addition Will is able to learn concentration by learning how to use the knife. In doing so, he carries new responsibilities on his journeys as he learns to set himself apart from the image of his father and mother. *The Amber Spyglass* further promotes Will’s maturing process as he becomes more and more dedicated to Lyra, and is able to

learn to become dependent on others such as Iorek the bear. In addition, his growth is depicted by his love for Lyra, and the sacrifice that he makes to leave Lyra.

In structuring *His Dark Materials*, Pullman uses the influences of William Blake's themes of innocence and experience and John Milton's theme of parallel worlds in *Paradise Lost*. It is through these two major themes that Pullman is able to fully develop the world of his characters, Lyra and Will.