DIPLOMARBEIT

“Fantasy and Religion:
Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*”

Verfasser

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1 Introduction

Literary genres evolve in the course of time, and are influenced by past and contemporary thought respectively. This also applies to the fantasy genre. In the last decades, numerous studies have been written with the objective of defining this literary genre, and the more contributions have been added, the more complex this undertaking has become. J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* and his theoretical essay "On Fairy Stories" were landmarks in the evolution of the genre. In a spatial sense, Tolkien's fantasy world is completely separate from the reader's world. In addition, it depicts a medieval setting with its respective hierarchical and religious characteristics and is thus distant also in a chronological and social sense. Nevertheless, however, Tolkien and other genre theorists claim that the events happening in the fantasy world and their effect on the characters are relevant to the reader's personal life. This is the case if fantasy worlds are presented in a credible way. A further genre trait that makes these worlds accessible to the reader are the human or human-like characters who have human concerns; all these aspects are necessary in order to foster reader-identification. It is precisely by escaping into an imaginary world that the reader can regain a clearer view of his or her own role in life. The necessary condition for this is that ne or she regains the ability to wonder in the course of the quest, which is facilitated by the immersion in the fantasy world.

While *The Lord of the Rings* is still one of the main points of reference in fantasy literature and echoes in numerous later fantasy works in some way or another, there have also been authors who have introduced novelties in the genre, such as Ursula Le Guin with her revolutionary gender roles. Philip Pullman can also be counted among those authors who have brought change. One traditional genre trait that has significantly influenced fantasy authors is the spiritual or supernatural as a driving force regarding characters and plot. The supernatural is also relevant in the subgenre of Christian fantasy, where it is defined in a very specific way. Be fantasy Christian or not, the spiritual/supernatural has been of prime importance to the genre.

This causes certain challenges for authors such as Philip Pullman, who intend to focus rather on the physical than on the spiritual or supernatural. What is more, Pullman questions the predominant binaries of material-spiritual and good-evil in Western thought and uses the opportunities offered by the fantasy genre to elaborate a system that merges both of the respective realms. One of the focuses in this thesis will be the

discussion of this system and the philosophical and religious implications it has regarding the fantasy world, as well as possible suggestions for the world of the reader. In this context, one has to be aware that Pullman's unity of the material and the spiritual is a novelty in Western philosophy. One only has to take a closer look at the history of Western philosophy: various schools of thought that included both realms in one philosophical system, but still separated them. However, there have also been various tendencies that overemphasized one of the two areas. Regarding the material realm, there was e.g. empiricism, represented by philosophers such as Stuart Mill or David Hume, who said that only empirically obtained knowledge was real and reliable. In contrast, rationalist philosophers such as Renè Descartes or Baruch Spinoza claimed that secure knowledge could only be gained "independently of sense experience" (Markie).

The central focus of this thesis is the following question: in which ways does fantasy deal with religious elements? In order to answer it, the procedure will be as follows: first, a description of the genre will be given; as will be explained, its definition is somewhat difficult and thus it will be "reduced" to the main characteristics of fantasy: the "otherworld", the fantasy characters, the quest (including magic), and gender issues. Due to the central question of this thesis, the last area, namely religious elements in Philip Pullman's fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials*, will be dealt with in a separate part, and will be related to two examples of Christian fantasy, namely *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Some of the rather striking religious aspects in Pullman's trilogy are the following ones: an angel who appoints himself God of the universe; a universal principle which transcends the binary of material-spiritual; and souls which are incarnated in individual animal-companions of human beings.

2 Definition of the fantasy genre

After having read various articles and books about fantasy as a genre, one realises that the undertaking of its definition is somewhat difficult. In *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy* by Gary K. Wolfe, the entry *fantasy* says the following:

> Fantasy. A fictional narrative describing events that the reader believes to be Impossible [...] This is the most commonly cited definition of literary fantasy, although it has been argued that such a definition places too great an emphasis on reader response and not enough on structural or thematic characteristics – not to mention its use of such an imprecise term as "impossible". (38)

This quotation points out that for some genre theorists the literary text itself is less important than the effect it has on the reader. The author goes on to say that further problems arise regarding the separation of this genre from science fiction and horror. In addition, Wolfe mentions twenty different short definitions, and to get an idea of the diversity of approaches, some fantasy critics and writers are cited here.

J.R.R. Tolkien was a fantasy writer and critic, who published several notable fantasy books: *The Hobbit* (1937), *The Silmarillion* (posthumously published in 1977), and, more importantly, the trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), through which he became the most important fantasy author of the 20th century. In addition, he wrote a theoretical essay on fantasy called "On Fairy Stories" (cf. Bratman). Due to his influence on the genre, he and his works will be mentioned various times in this thesis. Tolkien defined fantasy as "'[t]he most nearly pure form' of art, characterized by 'arresting strangeness' and 'freedom from the domination of observed 'fact'; in other words, Sub-Creation[1] [...] combined with 'strangeness and wonder'" (*On Fairy* 44-45).

Ursula K. Le Guin is an influential fantasy and science fiction writer and critic. She has published various fantasy books, most importantly perhaps, the *Earthsea* tetralogy. I will quote her several times in the thesis, due to the relevant contributions I found regarding topics such as the role of spirituality and gender issues in fantasy. Le Guin describes fantasy as "'[a]n alternative technique for apprehending and coping with existence,' characterized by a 'para-rational' 'heightening of reality'" (qtd. in Wolfe 39).

Colin Nicolas Manlove is a fantasy critic who explored the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, Charles Kingsley and Mervyn Peake in

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[1] With Sub-creation, Tolkien means the secondary fantasy world created by the fantasy author (*On Fairy* 36).

Modern Fantasy: Five Studies. In addition, he has written a book about Christian fantasy that will be relevant in the chapter "The Christian fantasy tradition". According to Manlove, fantasy is "[a] fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on [sic] at least partly familiar terms" (*Studies* 132).

Brian Attebery is a further fantasy critic who published a study of fantasy called *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature from Irving to Le Guin* (1980). In addition, in *Strategies of Fantasy* (1982) he describes the genre as one that is defined by central examples rather than by margins (cf. Clute, *Attebery*). Attebery refers to fantasy as "[a]ny narrative which includes as a significant part of its makeup some violation of what the author clearly believes to be natural law" (*Tradition* 17).

The literary critic Tzvetan Todorov has a further approach to fantasy and coined the notion of the "fantastic". He defines the fantastic as "stories in which unusual events might have either a natural or a supernatural explanation" (qtd. in Westfahl, *Fantastic*). The fantastic is to be found between the "uncanny" (unusual events with a natural explanation) and the "marvellous" (uncommon events with supernatural explanations). Westfahl (ibid.) states that "Todorov thus seems to marginalize or even trivialize traditional fantasy and sf [science fiction]".[2]

Last but not least, Rosemary Jackson, a further fantasy critic, discussed Todorov's concept of the fantastic in various fantasy novels. She described fantasy as "[a] literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence or loss" (*Subversion* 106); in accordance with this quotation, Clute reports that Jackson "understands fantasy to be a literature of 'desire' – a term she defines as occasioned […] by cultural restraints and repressions – and that fantasy therefore *challenges* that repressive system" (Clute, *Jackson*). This approach will be particularly relevant when I discuss gender issues in fantasy.

Besides, Wolfe includes several more descriptions by genre theorists. With the definitions of fantasy mentioned above I only want to give an idea of the variety of approaches. They contain aspects such as the distance from the factual world,

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[2] For more information on the concept of the fantastic, cf. Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre.*

supernatural elements, but also a better understanding of reality and a means to recover loss and fulfil desire (all qtd. in Wolfe 38-40).

A further book which has to be quoted in this context is *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. Clute explains that

> [i]n the late 20th century [...] the term FANTASTIC has more and more frequently been substituted for 'fantasy' when modes are being discussed. As a term of definition, 'fantasy' [...] does designate a *structure*. Fantasy is not a form, like HORROR – named solely after the effect that it is intended to produce. This encyclopedia's central focus is on fantasy, although many entries (like AFTERLIFE, ALLEGORY, DARK FANTASY, FABULATION, FAIRYTALE, FOLKLORE, FOLKTALES, HORROR, SCIENCE FICTION, SUPERNATURAL FICTION, SURREALISM, TAPROOT TEXTS and WONDERLANDS) deal at some length with material within the broader realm of the fantastic. (337)

Reading this description, one realises that fantasy implies a certain structure as well as numerous aspects within the vast field of the fantastic. Afterwards, Clute concludes that "fantasy's specific location in the spectrum of the fantastic is a matter of *constant critical speculation*; there is *no* rigorous critical concensus over the precise definition and 'reach' and interrelation of any of the terms referred to above" [emphasis added] (ibid.).

Subgenres of fantasy

Above, it has been pointed out that a definition of the fantasy genre is somewhat difficult. However, there are various sub-genres with certain distinguishing traits that can be identified, some with a longer and others with a shorter tradition.

High fantasy is one sub-genre. Clute describes it as "[f]antasies set in OTHERWORLDS, specifically SECONDARY WORLDS, and which deal with matters affecting the destiny of those worlds" (466). Kuznets (19), regarding what is called high fantasy in Great Britain and the United States, points to Tolkien's fundamental works *The Lord of the Rings* and his essay "On Fairy Stories", where the author gives certain criteria for this genre: firstly, the prime importance of the "marvelous", i.e. the manifestation of supernatural agencies in the natural world. Secondly, high fantasy is dependent on the creation of a "substantial and original fantasy world" (Kuznets 19). In contrast, *urban fantasies* "are normally texts where fantasy and the mundane world intersect and interweave throughout a tale which is significantly *about* a real city" (Clute, *Urban*). Thus one important difference between high and urban fantasy is that in the first there is a complete separation from the world we live in, while in the second there is a link between the two realms.

Low fantasy is a further sub-genre: it refers to "[n]arratives in which the fantastic element intrudes on the 'real world,' as opposed to fantasies set all or partially in a Secondary World" (Wolfe 67). *Sword and Sorcery* is a further relevant term. Clute et al. describe this type as follows: it is a "fantasy subgenre featuring muscular HEROES in violent conflict with a variety of VILLAINS, chiefly WIZARDS, WITCHES, evil SPIRITS and other creatures whose powers are – unlike the hero's – supernatural in origin" (*Sword and Sorcery*). An example would be *Conan the Barbarian.*

The trilogy explored in more detail in this thesis is Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials.* These fantasy novels can be categorized as high fantasy for the following reasons: there are otherworlds, and matters affecting the destiny of those worlds are described. In addition, there is a supernatural agency. Despite the fact that there is a real city, i.e. the English Oxford, the trilogy cannot be categorized as urban fantasy because this location is of minor importance: *His Dark Materials* is not "significantly *about* a real city". This is also reflected in the fact that the real Oxford is introduced only in the second book. The beginning of the first book is also set in Oxford; however, this is a different city from the real Oxford, located in Lyra's world, which is a secondary world.

3 Characteristics of fantasy

It has been explained in the chapter "Definition of the fantasy genre" that its straightforward definition is not possible or very hard to accomplish[3]. Therefore, in this chapter the aim is to describe the main characteristics of fantasy literature, particularly high fantasy: the otherworld, the typical characters, the quest, and gender issues. The most important focus of this thesis, namely the relation between fantasy and religious elements, will be dealt with in a separate chapter in more detail. The main aim of this chapter, then, is to discuss the three interwoven aspects otherworld, character and the quest: the first one being the universe in which the character acts, and the third one being the task for which the hero has been chosen.

3.1 Otherworld

This chapter comprises the main traits of fantasy worlds, the functions of fantasy according to Tolkien, their relationship with our world and the reader, and the implications for its creation.

3.1.1 Traits of the otherworld

In the chapter "Subgenres of fantasy" it has been pointed out, that, apart from low fantasy, an original world has to be created. Timmerman (49-51) is quoted here because he makes three observations regarding the traits of fantasy worlds and thus provides a basis for further discussion of them.[4]

Firstly, according to Timmerman, the fantasy world is connected to the reader's world in the sense that the characters are confronted with "the same terrors, choices and dilemmas we confront in our world" (ibid. 49). The theorist does not point out, however, that this happens on a metaphorical level. Taking Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, one cannot claim that the fantasy reader finds him- or herself in as important a mission in his or her own life, namely the destruction of the One Ring, on

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[3] One book that demonstrates this is Sandner's *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader*: it is a compilation of numerous definitions of fantasy and its aspects. Due to the fact that different genre theorists consider different aspects as relevant or central, the scope is simply too wide to reduce a genre definition to a few sentences; besides, a thorough definition with the discussion of all relevant aspects would simply go beyond the scope of this thesis.

[4] This author has written a short book called *Other Worlds: the Fantasy Genre,* which I found very practical because it discusses fantasy exclusively according to its main traits, something I have not found in any other study of this genre. In addition, Timmerman focuses on high fantasy in the Tolkienian and Le Guinian traditions. In other words, the otherworld and the supernatural are important focuses, more than e.g. in politically motivated fantasy, which will be described in the chapter "Fantasy as politics". High fantasy is particularly relevant regarding the focus of this thesis and so I will refer to Timmerman several times in the following chapters.

which the future of the whole universe depends. Timmerman taught philosophy and religion at college and therefore the link established by him between the fantasy characters and the reader in terms of choices could be interpreted in a Christian sense which we also find in Tolkien's works. From a Christian perspective, the choices the individual makes in every moment do not only influence him or herself in a moral sense, but also the world as a whole (Mathews 72).

Secondly, Timmerman describes its world as "evoked", as complete and ready-made, and the step into this world takes place in our minds; the reader simply finds himself in it from the beginning, although there are, in some cases (but not necessarily) links from the first world to the secondary one, such as the wardrobe in Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* (or in urban fantasy in general). Attebery (12) remarks that fantasy worlds are to be found on a different spatial and chronological level than ours, that they "are always and never, long past, and yet still taking place." Jackson (153) completes this picture by saying that high fantasy, as we find it e.g. in MacDonald, Kingsley, Nesbit, Kilping and Morris, confronts us with worlds "too rich and complex to be contained by the conventions" of their contemporary society. These worlds are outside us. They are "[a]n imagined realm with its own order, [and] it is free from the demands of historical time" (154). Thus the relation between the reader's and the fantasy world is mostly not apparent, and so Timmerman states that "[t]his immediacy is opposed [...] to the nineteenth century notion of 'suspension of disbelief', with which we enter the world pretending for a time that this might be real. In fantasy, given a certain groundwork, the story *is* real" (Timmerman 50). However, this immediacy does only fully apply to high fantasy, of course. Additionally, it is pointed out that the otherworld only makes sense to the reader if its basic rules are accepted, that is, if he, in a sense, participates in it (cf. ibid. 50).

Pullman's fantasy worlds are not entirely separated from our world, which is comparable to Will's world in the trilogy. However, throughout the first book, *Northern Lights*, the entire plot takes place in Lyra's world, clearly a fantasy realm with some similar elements to the reader's world: among others there are ship-engines, zeppelins, rifles, and two specific countries, namely Germany and England. Only in the second book does the reader learn about Will's world; and in the rest of the trilogy, various characters move in and out of them repeatedly and thus create an enduring link between the fantasy worlds and the real world. The question to be asked in this context is to what extent the reader relates his or her own world to Will's – this world is only one of many

and not the most important one in the trilogy. Consequently, it could be argued that it loses some of its significance.[5]

And thirdly, Timmerman (50) stresses that the fantasy world is not a reader's means to escape from this world, but a realm where he or she can stay for a while in order to learn something about his or her own life. In this sense he adapts one of the functions that Tolkien sees in fantasy literature, i.e. Escape, which will be explained in the next sub-section. Timmerman supports this anti-escapist quality with a quotation by Eric Rabkin: "In the literature of the fantastic, escape is the means of exploration of an unknown land, a land which is the underside of the mind of man"[6] (qtd. in Timmerman 50). On the other hand, however, fantasy needs to be called "escapist" in the sense that only by leaving reality temporarily can the reader learn something about him or herself.

This, however, is different from the connotation that escape literature has nowadays, namely, that it "contribute[s] nothing to our greater understanding of reality" (Hume 90). Hume distinguishes four types of literature: "literature of illusion", "literature of vision", "literature of revision" and "literature of disillusion". The author explains that "literature of illusion" (i.e. escape literature) is written because the author considers everyday life as "boring, unromantic – even depressing" and that "the author believes that nothing can be done to change that reality, so he offers to disengage us from its grey unpleasantness and to enfold us in comforting illusions" (ibid. 55).

Functions of fantasy

Regarding the creation of the otherworld and the functions of fantasy, J.R.R. Tolkien made a number of highly relevant points in his essay "On Fairy Stories". Tolkien's "fairy story" is what I understand as fantasy in this thesis; Tolkien himself, however, used the term "fantasy" to refer to the author's special gift of giving his fantasy world absolute credibility. Tolkien's fairy stories have these characteristics: the "inner consistency of reality" (this is Tolkien's term for absolute credibility), and the three functions "Recovery", "Escape" and "Consolation". According to Timmerman, the essay "On Fairy Stories" is a very significant piece of writing for the fantasy genre because

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[5] Just as a footnote, we find real elements in Will's Oxford: Pullman points to two elements: "the line of hornbeam trees at the northern edge of the city, where Will first finds the window into the world of Cittàgazze" and "the bench in the Botanic Gardens where that story comes to an end" (*Making* 8).

[6] As will become clear later, it is not only a journey to the inside of man, but can also be understood as a journey towards a greater supernatural reality, i.e. something that lies outside man.

he [Tolkien] considers the making of a fantasy world. In his essay, Tolkien moves from the mind of the maker to the meaning of that which is made. As such, the essay constitutes one of the few genuine aesthetic treatises on making a fantasy world. Taken together with Tolkien's own artistic craft, the work does much to throw light on the nature of fantasy. [7] (Timmerman 51)

Let us now turn to the three functions of fantasy, namely Recovery, Escape and Consolation. These are explained in the following paragraphs and also applied to Pullman's trilogy (further details of these functions in the trilogy will only be discussed in later, however). "Recovery is a re-gaining – regaining of a clear view" (53). This implies our separation from material and spiritual possessions in order to gain a clearer vision of them. Timmerman (55) explains that this regaining of a clear view happens after the reader has experienced the physical and especially the spiritual struggles in the fantasy world and thus understands the real world better: the otherworld confronts him with true things from his own world; in other words, it shows us what is good and what is evil. Recovery is a very important element in *His Dark Materials*. By taking the reader on the exploration of the tensions and struggles in his universe, Pullman gives him or her new insights, or better, alternative perspectives, regarding elements that are traditionally seen as good or evil. The reader accompanies the protagonist Lyra, who is gaining knowledge throughout the trilogy; first, it is rather "experiential" (i.e. not abstract, cf. Russell 218), but later Lyra continually learns about more abstract truths. Lyra's gaining of a clear view regarding good, evil and truth can also have an effect on the reader and thus contribute to recovery in Tolkien's sense.

The second important function of fantasy is Escape – as we have seen above, the genre is anti-escapist at the same time: fantasy is not about fleeing this world, but rather to return enriched from it. Tolkien (*On Fairy* 55) does not blame a person who wants to escape after having realised that he or she is imprisoned. Mathews comments that "[e]scape follows as a liberation from the prison of habits and conventions of the contemporary real world, and as the cultivation of the ability to imagine possibilities beyond all our limits" (57). Tolkien stresses that this escape should not be confused with the escape of a traitor, because it comes from the longing to leave not life, but our self-misery: "hunger, thirst, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, death" (60). Fantasy can help us to fulfil rather superficial human desires such as transcending our physical limitations so that we can e.g. fly like a bird; more importantly, however, it makes possible the fulfilment of our "oldest and deepest desire, the Great Escape: the Escape

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[7] This is why this essay is one of my main points of reference when I discuss the nature and functions of fantasy. As will be shown later, it is also relevant regarding the Christian fantasy.

from Death" (61) – this is, according to Tolkien, the "genuine escapist [...] spirit" (ibid.), of which fantasy provides plenty. (cf. Tolkien *Fairy* 55-63)

Pullman's trilogy shows us the main characters as they leave their respective worlds and return to them at the end. They have undoubtedly been enriched because they have found truth and the purpose of their lives. Similar to the characters, readers of *His Dark Materials* can undergo reorientation: stimulated by what they are reading, they can reconsider their perspective on life and adjust it accordingly. Thus they can be liberated "from the prison of conventions of the contemporary world", especially regarding notions such as God, afterlife and original sin.

Let us now turn to the third function of fantasy, that is, Consolation. Tolkien stresses that this is even more important than the fulfilment of an old longing, and he claims that it should be included in all genuine fantasy. As the most important meaning of drama is tragedy, in the case of fantasy it is the joy of the "Consolation of the Happy Ending" (62) – this is what the author calls eucatastrophe, "the sudden joyous 'turn'" (ibid.). This does not mean that sorrowful and unsuccessful experiences are excluded from fantasy; they are even needed in order to evoke joy. What fantasy rejects, however, is the "universal final defeat"; thus it gives the reader "a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief" (ibid.). In the previous chapter, Rabkin's view on fantasy as the exploration of man's inner self has been mentioned. Later, it will be explained that Le Guin has a very similar approach. Tolkien, however, claims that fantasy makes possible not only the discovery of one's inner self, but also a supernatural reality that lies outside the reader: in the chapter "The Christian fantasy tradition", Tolkien's Christian approach to eucatastrophe will be explained. In Pullman's trilogy, we also find eucatastrophe: this will be explained in the chapter "The Republic of Heaven".

3.1.2 Creation of the otherworld

After having discussed the three fundamental traits of the otherworld according to Tolkien, the next important question is how to create a fantasy world and what is, in more detail, the aesthetic relation to the first world, i.e. the world of the reader.

3.1.2.1 Inner consistency of reality

Tolkien (*On Fairy* 44) states that "[t]he human mind is capable of forming mental images of things not actually present" and calls imagination "the faculty of conceiving the images". He goes on saying that the quality of the perceived image and what it implies, and to what extent it can be called successful, "may vary in vividness and strength" (ibid.). The objective regarding otherworlds, for Tolkien, is to achieve "the inner consistency of reality", which he calls art or "Sub-creation" – this is different from mere imagination. Timmerman (51) summarizes this point as follows: "the artist must possess the talent for shaping the image into an external form perceptible by others." This art is what Tolkien calls fantasy. He makes clear that the achievement of this inner consistency of reality is more difficult to achieve, the more uncommon the otherworld is, compared to our own. He illustrates this by mentioning an otherworld with a green sun – quite comprehensibly, to make such a world credible, the author has to put a lot of thought into designing it. According to Tolkien, it "will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft" (*On Fairy* 46). If it is successfully done at all, we "have a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode" (ibid.).

3.1.2.2 Realism of Presentation

Lin Carter (pp. 217) calls *fantastic realism* that which makes another world credible. He mentions C.S. Lewis in this context, who explains the following in his relevant book *An Experiment in Criticism:* "This is what I call Realism of Presentation – the art of bringing something close to us, making it palpable and vivid, by sharply observed or sharply imagined detail" (qtd. in Carter 217). Carter agrees with him on the crucial role of convincing, i.e. very precise and detailed, descriptions of the otherworld's creatures, scenes and events, and mentions some of the examples Lewis gives: "[t]he dragon 'sniffing along the stone' in Beowulf", or "[t]he fairy bakers in *Huon of Bordeaux* 'rubbing the paste off their fingers'" (both in ibid.). In addition, Carter (218) himself offers, among others, the following example of fantastic realism: "Leigh Brackett's Martian women, who are graceful as cats, bare to the waist, and wear no ornaments but

'tiny golden bells woven in their hair' that fill the air with 'delicate, wanton chiming' when they move." Thus, as we have seen, detail is important; it is not enough to set a traditional fantasy creature such as a dragon into another world, but the creator has to imagine exactly how this being works and moves, envisioning it in the specific context he has created for it, "as if they were actual zoölogical specimens encountered amidst a genuine landscape" (ibid. 220).

In this context, Timmerman (52) makes an interesting point: Tolkien persuades the reader of the reality of his otherworld not by forcing him to belief in what he is told, but by simply confronting him with factual statements such as the famous first sentence in *The Hobbit:* "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit" (13). The author describes his creatures' accommodation and thus creates enough context around it; only later does he tell what a hobbit is. Pullman starts his trilogy similarly, but in his case the strange element is not a hobbit, but a daemon. The first sentence in *Northern Lights* goes as follows: "Lyra and her daemon moved through the darkening Hall, taking care to keep to one side, out of sight of the kitchen" (3). A few lines further down, it becomes clear that her daemon Pantaleimon is an intimate friend and warns Lyra to behave herself. Thus Pullman presents the unusual element, i.e. the daemon, as a natural companion of the protagonist, a perfectly normal girl.[8] In a way, the reader is confronted with factual statements, similar to *The Hobbit.*

Carter (222) explains that some fantasy authors do not keep in mind the integration of sufficient description and, instead of narrating the characters' movement from one event to the other and thus describing his world more thoroughly, they unwisely simply cut the scene – this causes the otherworld to be less credible and memorable. Applying this point to e.g. *The Lord of the Rings*, it is the case that the plot as such is not particularly extensive. However, what accounts for the book's considerable length are its descriptions of characters and scenes. Pullman's trilogy is a contrast in this regard: the reader may find it irritating that the characters change frequently from one world to another, which can even have a confusing effect.

3.1.2.3 Originality

Carter (226) talks about a further relevant question regarding fantasy worlds: to what extent should the otherworld be similar or different to our own? He is in favour of not simply changing a few details in order to make the otherworld special or unlike, but to

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[8] It will become clear only later in the trilogy that she has extraordinary qualities.

invent it completely: "In brief, a new world should be new all the way, an imaginative invention from the magma up, so to speak" (229). As a role model he mentions Burroughs and his work *A Princess of Mars,* for which he created "thoats", that is, mammals with eight legs, instead of just taking horses; Carter praises him for being consistent down to animals such as dogs and cats, which can be recognised in "calot" and "sorek". The reason for his success, according to Carter, is that he extracted the essence of the respective animal and applied it to his own invented beings, e.g. "doggishness", incorporated in the Woola, "the faithful Martian hound" (qtd. in Carter 228). Furthermore, as can be seen in these examples, Burroughs gave his own names to his creatures. Carter describes those invented names as innately right and recognisable: e.g. "[t]hipdar, banth [...] zitidar" (ibid.). In contrast, other authors have not been as successful in this respect, such as Otis Adelbert Kline, who lived in Burroughs' times and imitated him. He came up with names such as "Zinlo, scarbo, kova, Urg, Uxpo, Azpok, Ropok, Rogvoz" (ibid.).

In *His Dark Materials,* Pullman confronts the reader with five more detailed worlds out of the numerous ones which exist in his universe. Of these five, the world of the mulefa is the most original one. The most striking elements are the creatures that live there: the mulefa and the tualapi. The mulefa look this way: "Like the grazers, their skeletons had a diamond-shaped frame, with a limb at each of the corners" (*Amber* 122). As social beings which have a language, they are considered as people by Dr Malone, not simply as creatures. Their trunks play an important role in their language and many other activities they engage. "They looked like a cross between antelopes and motorcycles" (424) because they use wheels to move. The tualapi, their enemies, are "enormous snow-white birds, each the size of a rowing boat, with long straight wings which trailed on the water behind them: very long wings, six feet or more in length [...] They had feathers, and heads and beaks not unlike swans [...] but those wings were situated one in front of the other" (370). The tualapi use their wings as sails and thus move in the water, and paddle with their feet as well. Concerning the rest of the flora and fauna in this world, only little is described.

As a conclusion, it can be said that Pullman is original in Carter's sense regarding the mulefa and the tualapi, for these are really non-existent beings. The author did not completely invent the mulefa's world, but this is comprehensible because this world is just one of the five otherworlds in the trilogy – a detailed account of all of them would surely have gone beyond the scope of the trilogy. Personally, I would argue that

Pullman's worlds are original not because of being entirely different realms, but rather because they have certain outstanding elements. In Lyra's world we find daemons, in Cittagazze there are Spectres, and in all worlds there is Dust[9].

3.1.3 Human-like characters

Leiber (cf. Carter 225) criticizes Carter's holistic approach by saying that regardless of how many unlike creatures there are in an otherworld, and how different they are from the ones in our world, the most important characters must always be human beings or very similar to us, and that this applies particularly to fantasy. This view is supported by the protagonist in *The Lord of the Rings,* the hobbit Frodo. Being man's relatives, hobbits are "about half our height [...] have no beards [...] inclined to be fat in the stomach [...]" and "dress in bright colours (chiefly green and yellow); [they] wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads" (Tolkien, *Lord* 14). They laugh, especially after dinner, and live in comfortable and warm hobbit-holes (cf. Tolkien, *Hobbit* 14).

These are only a few human characteristics by which Tolkien makes the hobbit familiar to us. It can also be argued that the author, in Carter's sense, applied some fundamental human traits to his creatures (representing humanness); this does not only imply physical similarity, of course; as has been shown above, the reader can also identify with the hobbits in terms of what they experience and how they act. Timmerman (54) supports this view by pointing out that the reader can easily identify with a hobbit, e.g. by the fact that Tolkien creates sympathy in the reader. In the example given by Timmerman, the reader feels compassion towards the character due to the fact that one of his virtues, namely courtesy, is exploited. At the beginning of *The Hobbit,* Bilbo is awaiting Gandalf for tea; however, surprisingly, a dwarf arrives, and then another one, and one more, until there are thirteen of them; Gandalf comes only at the end. After the arrival of the forth dwarf, Tolkien writes: "The poor little hobbit sat down in the hall and put his head in his hands, and wondered what had happened, and whether they would all stay for supper" (20). This scene may make it easier to imagine Bilbo's desperation about his sudden guests and where to take all the food from.[10]

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[9] These terms are explained in the chapter "Religious elements in *His Dark Materials*".
[10] In this context, it is important to know that food is highly relevant to Hobbits.

3.1.4 Language style

So far, the following aspects of the otherworld have been explored: Tolkien's inner consistency of reality, the otherworld's similarity to our world, and the human-like characters. This chapter addresses a further relevant aspect of fantasy worlds: language. One linguistic issue has already been discussed in the context of naming invented creatures. This chapter addresses the issue of adequate style. Le Guin argues in her essay "From Elfland to Poughkeepsie" that the genre demands a specific style – she contrasts one excerpt from a political novel with three from fantasy books. The political novel is set in contemporary Washington, D.C. and Le Guin changes it into a fantasy extract by exchanging a few elements: two characters, namely a senator and a lobbyist for pollution control, are substituted with a Celtic duke and a warrior-magician; in addition, two names are changed and the mentioning of White House is excluded. The fantasy-adapted version reads as follows:

> "Whether or not they succeed in the end will depend largely on Kelson's personal ability to manipulate the voting."
> "Can he?" Morgan asked, as the two clattered down a half-flight of stairs and into the garden.
> "I don't know, Alaric," Nigel replied. "He's good – damned good – but I just don't know. Besides, you saw the key council lords. With Ralson dead and Bran Coris practically making open accusations – well, it doesn't look good."
> "I could have told you that at Cardosa." (qtd. in ibid. 80)

Further down, Le Guin quotes, according to herself, three master stylists, namely E.R. Eddison, Kenneth Morris and J.R.R. Tolkien. The quotation from Morris is archaic and does not really apply to modern fantasy.[11] Therefore, I take the passage from *The Lord of the Rings*:

> "Who can tell?" said Aragorn. "But we will put it to the test one day."
> "May the day not be too delayed," said Boromir. "For though I do not ask for aid, we need it. It would comfort us to know that others fought also with all the means that they have."
> "Then be comforted," said Elrond. (qtd. in Le Guin 82)

Le Guin (ibid.) explains that the extract by Tolkien is an example of genuine fantasy language (or "Elfland language", as she calls it) – in contrast to the first one, which, according to her, is totally inappropriate for fantasy: instead of just a few words, as Le Guin did, a considerable part would have to be changed. She describes Tolkien's usage as powerful, dignified, and characterised by eloquence and passion – she claims that this

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[11] The excerpt reads as follows: "Detestable to me, truly, is loathsome hunger; abominable an insufficiency of food upon a journey. Mournful, I declare to you, is such a fate as this, to one of my lineage and nurture!" (qtd. in ibid. 82)

can hardly be said of the first quotation. However, this view needs to be contextualized. The examples mentioned by Le Guin are old ones: E.R. Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* was first published in 1922, Kenneth Morris' *Book of the Three Dragons* in 1930, and Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* in 1954. In Le Guin's defence, it has to be said that she wrote her essay in 1973. Despite the fact that the three works mentioned above are well-known fantasy books, they do not properly reflect the current fantasy style. Regarding *The Lord of the Rings,* Sammons (134) explains that Tolkien defends his out-dated language style as appropriate for the scenes that are described – they bring to memory a "heroic past and preserve Middle-earth's history". A modern style would therefore not be suitable. All of Le Guin's following arguments need to be seen in the light of the historic fantasy context she wrote in.

Le Guin maintains that style gives a good insight into fantasy characters because their usage exhibits their character: a hero does not use ordinary language, but his speech is eloquent and passionate, witty and forceful, and everything he or she says is meaningful. Also, the style illustrates how the writer sees and speaks – therefore, "the style is the writer" (*Elfland* 91). Le Guin's reason for this is the fact that the reader's only perspective of the otherworld is the writer's – there are, and this applies first and foremost to high fantasy of course, no historical parallels to our world.

As has been said above, the examples from Le Guin are out-dated in terms of language style. This is confirmed by the style we find in *His Dark Materials.* The reader learns at least some details about five worlds (although there are many more): Lyra's, Will's, the one where Cittagazze is in, the world of the mulefa, and the land of the dead. Will's world is very much like our own – there are e.g. cars, baked beans, cell phones and credit cards. In general, usage varies according to character, although the difference is not as great as in the two contrasting excerpts above. The two heroes, for example, speak rather colloquial English. The following example is taken from the occasion when Lyra and Will get to know each other, just after having met. Although they cannot see it, Lyra insists that Will has a daemon; he has never heard about anything like that:

> "You *have* got a daemon," she said decisively. "Inside you."
> He didn't know what to say.
> "You have," she went on. "You wouldn't be human else. You'd be … half-dead. Even if you don't know you've got a daemon, you have. We was scared at first when we saw you. Like you was a night-ghast or something. But then we saw you weren't like that at all." (*Subtle* 25)

The rest of the characters exhibit a similar usage: the Gyptians speak more colloquial English, and Churchmen, Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel use a more educated variety. However, none of the characters, be it a main or a minor one, seems to distinguish themselves from the rest by a more dignified or powerful usage. In this context, one has to keep in mind Pullman's intention for writing the trilogy. As an answer to the question whether he wrote *His Dark Materials* as fantasy, he says that he only used this genre because it gave him the opportunity to do what he wanted: "The only thing about fantasy that interested me when I was writing this was the freedom to invent imagery such as the daemon; but that was only interesting because I could use it to say something truthful and realistic about human nature" (Pullman, *Q&A*). In the same paragraph, the author calls the trilogy not fantasy but "stark realism". As becomes clear in the course of this thesis, it has a large number of fantasy elements in it. In order to understand what Pullman means by stark realism, let us hear him again regarding this issue. In another interview he explains the following:

> People say, "What were you talking about? Of course you're writing fantasy!" Well, when I made that comment [that the trilogy was stark realism] I was trying to distinguish between these books and the kind of books most general readers think of as fantasy, the sub-Tolkien thing involving witches and elves and wizards and dwarves. Really, those authors are rewriting The Lord of the Rings. I'm trying to do something different: tell a story about what it means to grow up and become adult, the experience all of us have and all of us go through. I'm telling a story about a realistic subject, but I'm using the mechanism of fantasy. I think that's slightly unusual. (cf. Weich)

Summarizing these two quotations, we can say that Pullman uses fantasy to say something about human nature, including the process of growing up. So far, this is consistent with Tolkien and the functions of fantasy mentioned above: it is a means to make the reader discover true things in his or her own life. The innovation in Pullman's trilogy is that it establishes a more obvious link to the real world (objects of our contemporary world, e.g. cell phones or baked beans) than other fantasy authors have done. As will be explained later, this is due to the fact that Pullman considers human existence as predominantly physical and centred in the world, as explained in the chapter "God". The trilogy is not about a medieval world as we find it in *The Lord of*

the Rings, and thus the characters use contemporary English which is neither particularly eloquent nor forceful.

3.1.5 Le Guin's meta-fantasy: relating the two worlds

It has been explained before that the fantasy world and the reader's world are related because of the human or human-like fantasy hero and his or her experiences. Attebery explains in his essay "The Beginning Place: Le Guin's Metafantasy" that Le Guin says something relevant in this context because she explicitly addresses these two worlds on the level of story. Le Guin creates two fictional levels in her fantasy story *The Beginning Place* – one is different from our world, the other one is an imitation of it. The two protagonists Hugh and Irene move from one realm to the other and back, just as the reader does when he is reading fantasy.

The plot is as follows (cf. Attebery 113-14): Hugh is deeply dissatisfied with the place he lives in, a U.S. suburb, and therefore runs away from it one day. Attebery comments:

> Unruly and fertile, as our unconscious minds tend to be, it protests one evening as Hugh sits at home heating a frozen TV dinner and waiting for his brittle, demanding mother to come home. Choosing as its defense not neurosis but escape, Hugh's unconscious stirs him to panic, drives him out the door, and sets him running. (ibid. 114)

Finally, Hugh arrives in a twilight zone – in fact, he has arrived at his unconscious. There, he finds another character, Irene, who has been coming to this place for some years, knows its language and is accepted by the locals. At the beginning the woman does not accept the newcomer.

Both Irene and Hugh realise that there is an evil in this world, although, at first, its nature is unknown to them, and only through cooperation do they get to know it. As Attebery explains, this monster, inhabiting the unconscious, does not always look the same, but its appearance depends on the observer: for Irene, it is a menacing man; for each person, it is the worst aspect of him or herself, to be found within them. This is what Le Guin calls the "shadow" of oneself[12]. In the twilight world, the two protagonists manage to overcome the monster together and consequently, they have no more need to return to this zone (cf. ibid. 115-17). In *His Dark Materials* there is no

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[12] This term will reappear in the chapters "The quest" and "Gender issues"*,* when an aspect of Le Guin's "Earthsea tetralogy" is addressed. This tetralogy comprises *A Wizard of Earthsea, The Tombs of Atuan, The Farthest Shore* and *Tehanu*. The Shadow is reminiscent of C.G. Jung's Shadow, although Le Guin was ignorant of this theory when she wrote her trilogy. Nonetheless, Jungian terminology is quite useful to explain some of Le Guin's meta-fantasy (cf. Wood 29-30).

apparent journey into the subconscious of the protagonists; rather, it leads the reader to the universal principle of everything in the world, as explained in the chapter "Dust". The monster is part of the external world and has to be defeated by the collaboration of numerous characters. However, if we take a closer look at Pullman's trilogy, there is a kind of interior monster that has to be overcome as well: according to the author, it is the consciousness deeply rooted in the reader that good and evil are two opposed forces. Pullman intends to blur this opposition with a relativist moral perspective.[13]

Attebery explains that *The Beginning Place* is rather a meta-fantasy than a fantasy story. But what does Le Guin exactly want to tell us? Attebery provides the following explanations. Firstly, she claims that fantasy contributes to our happiness, and is even required to achieve it. Hugh, before escaping his routine, is an unsatisfied, disconnected man; likewise, Irene is an undetermined, angry character who is imprisoned in the unhappy relationships with the other members of her family. It is only when Hugh and Irene escape to the twilight world that they zoom out of their lives, so to speak, and that their inner strength increases (cf. ibid. 117-18, 122).

The second point Le Guin makes is that the fantasy world is full of powerful realities. First and foremost, there is the monster with its horrible appearance. Only by their cooperation can Hugh and Irene enter and leave the twilight world and can overcome the monster. Clute (*Le Guin*) explains that the typical quest in Le Guin's fantasy involves searching for the other sex (in this case Irene), who is necessary for the protagonist to achieve wholeness. At the beginning both are ignorant of the rules that govern the evil, and of the relationship between the evil power and the inhabitants of the world; still, in order to overcome it, they have to understand it at least to a certain extent. The meta-generic aspect of this is that the characters

> begin to understand in the same way Le Guin says a child can understand the deeper significance of a fairy tale: nonverbally, irrationally, below or beyond the level of consciousness. Though the arcane mysteries of the twilight world remain mysteries, it is enough for the moment to know where they must go and what they must do. (Attebery 119)

Having become aware of their own role in the otherworld, they intuitively know what they have to do: Irene must not go back to the village in the twilight world where she used to live, and Hugh has to fight the monster. However, they do not understand the world completely (cf. ibid. 119). The theme of achieving wholeness through a character of the other sex plays a central role in Pullman's trilogy as well: with the help of Dr

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[13] This will be explained in detail in the chapter "Religious elements in *His Dark Materials*".

Malone, Lyra and Will are introduced to their roles and also to adulthood (cf. the chapter "The Fall"), and thus become whole.

Towards the end of his essay, Attebery makes the following distinction: the two protagonists Ged (in the *Earthsea* books) and Frodo (in *The Lord of the Rings*) really belong to the otherworld and thus the reader learns much about how it works – with its magic, creatures etc. Le Guin's *The Beginning Place* is different: the author only provides the reader with glimpses of the fantasy world, because Hugh and Irene are actually no part of it: all the things the reader learns are related to the two characters (cf. Attebery 122).

Summarizing this chapter, we can say that the value of Le Guin's *The Beginning Place* lies in the fact that it sheds light on the relationship between the fantasy world and the world of the reader. Compared to the high fantasy traits described above, the reader's world is particularly important: this is the reason why Hugh and Irene do not belong to the twilight zone (i.e. the fantasy world). In this sense, *The Beginning Place* is exceptional. Basically, however, Le Guin only emphasizes a trait that applies to fantasy in general, namely that it helps the reader discover or understand his or her role in their own lives by means of a journey to his or her subconscious. This is the place where the monster is to be found and defeated. One might ask the question what Le Guin exactly means when she talks about this monster. This is the moment to discuss the relationship between fantasy and religious elements for the first time. From a Christian perspective, the monster within oneself is analogous to the negative tendencies human beings find in themselves as a consequence of original sin.

Apart from the similarities mentioned in previous chapters, I have discussed Le Guin's *The Beginning Place* because it is parallel to *His Dark Materials* in the following sense: Lyra and Will are two protagonists who bear great potential for reader identification and thus can be considered representing the reader. What is more, Lyra's and Will's discoveries of truth and the republic of heaven (discussed in the eponymous chapters) can be seen as an invitation to believe in them and to act accordingly.

3.2 Character

Timmerman (29-48) wrote a relevant chapter on fantasy characters, where he distinguishes three aspects: the common features of characters, their child-like and their heroic traits. Again, these three aspects will serve as a basis for the discussion of fantasy characters.

3.2.1 Common characters

3.2.1.1 Human traits

Timmerman (29) points out that the majority of the characters in fantasy stories are common in the sense of human-like. They are not necessarily human, but have at least human traits – this is indispensable because, as will be shown later, the characters have to be accessible to the reader so that he or she learns something about his or her own life, namely by witnessing and experiencing the hero's life and thus growing him or herself internally. The hero or heroine makes the entrance into this often completely different world possible and guides us through it; what is more, through him or her we come to understand the wonders of the otherworld. In C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia,* ordinary children lead us into Aslan's kingdom, and in *The Hobbit* the first thing the reader is presented with is Bilbo, the hobbit-protagonist. In other words, the author says that the first reason for the characters' commonness is that it supports the reader's identification with them. In the case of *His Dark Materials,* most characters are human or human-like, some with a daemon and some without: the most important groups are humans, angels and witches; all of them share the same language and have similar bodies.

The second aspect (cf. Timmerman 30) the theorist mentions is the characters' naive trait. This does not mean naiveté due to a lack of experience, as we usually understand it, but rather refers to the fact that the character "retains a certain innocence and [...] is disinterested in terms of worldly allegiances." He has not "become cynical, hard-bitten, or spoiled by the world about him" (Timmerman 30). More importantly, as a consequence he or she is still able to wonder and prepared to get involved in adventure. It is pointed out that the characters' common traits imply that they are not flat, i.e. allegorical and thus representing only one characteristic such as lust or virtue, but that they are rather round, i.e. more-dimensional. The disadvantage of allegory, in other words, is that it does not depict whole human beings and is therefore not adequate for the genre.

Regarding the protagonists in *His Dark Materials* the following can be said. Lyra has a strong character and an amiable and caring nature; however, she is a little girl and as such helpless without the support of her companions. Therefore, she is a round character. Will, considering his young age, is characterized by immense physical strength, but also by sensitivity. The boy may not seem as round a character as Lyra, but he is clearly exhibits more than one character trait.

Having mentioned Aslan at the beginning of this chapter, one may ask the question if he is not an allegorical character. According to Clute (*Allegory*), Lewis himself claimed that his *Narnia* stories were no allegories. Similarly, Bell (12-14) argues that the *Narnia* stories as a whole are not allegorical – the four protagonist children, for example, are not religious, and they are round characters. Bell points out that Lewis' otherworld is not as consistent as Tolkien's and thus leaves much space for interpretation.[14] However, he also acknowledges that Aslan is undoubtedly a Christ-figure, and at the same time sees an inconsistency in the following observation: "The ability and willingness of Aslan to intervene, for example, […] [is] variable" (ibid. 14). Be it as it may, the parallels between Aslan and Jesus Christ regarding characteristics such as King or Saviour/Redeemer are very striking at any rate.[15]

To illustrate the incompatibility between allegory and fantasy, Timmerman (cf. 30) mentions C.S. Lewis' Christian fantasy book *The Pilgrim's Regress.* According to Timmerman, it fully achieves the goal of being an allegory: the author's intention of making the characters' meaning clear is evident. Timmerman reports that nevertheless, in the book's third edition Lewis expresses his dissatisfaction with it being an allegory, because "it lacked the sense of mystery, of exploration, of real human life that he [Lewis] had by that time located in fantasy" (qtd. in Timmerman 30). As regards fantasy characters, so far we have seen that the reader should be able to identify with the hero, due his or her commonness and roundness; and this implies that he or she is not

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[14] Bell claims that "[t]he critical and interpretive possibilities are multiple and complex enough to be vigorously debated in a new volume of essays by twenty-five critics, *Revisiting Narnia: Fantasy, Myth and Religion in C. S. Lewis's Chronicles* (BenBella Books). These writers, including authors of fantasy fiction, scholars from different disciplines, ministers and priests, a 'liberal feminist agnostic,' and an animal-rights advocate, disagree widely-and blessedly. There is no consensus on how purposefully, pervasively, systematically, and effectively The Chronicles of Narnia 'plant the seeds of Christian faith' or are a "vehicle for Lewis's lessons of Christianity." The religious content of this fantasy work will be further discussed in the chapter "The Christian fantasy tradition".

[15] If one compares Aslan and Jesus Christ e.g. in the first of the *Narnia* books, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* one can find numerous parallels which can be organized according to the categories "King" and "Saviour/Redeemer".

allegorical. In the following chapter, one more aspect which supports the commonness of fantasy characters will be described.

3.2.1.2 Animals

Animals or fable beasts are common characters in fantasy. As Timmerman (32) explains, the origin of this can be found in the fairy tale and the beast fable. Regarding fairy tales in general, it has to be said that it contrasts fantasy in the sense that animals imply danger for humans, as in e.g. *Little Red Riding Hood.* The influence of the beast fable is more important: as in fantasy, the characters are common, and they have to face the same problems as humans. However, Timmerman also makes clear that the beast fable tends to be allegorical, with Henryson being a representative of its frequent use (mostly towards Christian Redemption), while Chaucer is more open and less allegorical (cf. Timmerman 32).

Later, the author tackles the issue of how the most important aspect of the fantasy genre should be addressed, namely the conflict between good and evil powers.[16] This is the trickiest task for the fantasy writer; firstly, the evil should be presented in an innovative way, i.e. with wicked creatures that are not so common to the reader (i.e. ogres or dragons are less appropriate) – otherwise evil loses its horror. The second mistake would be to create an evil force so powerful that its good opposite is powerless. And thirdly, it would be fatal to design an unattractive struggle and thus cause indifference in the reader. In contrast, successful fantasy provides the reader with horrifying evil, with attractive confrontations between the two enemies, as well as a hero with common human traits who is therefore weak but still overcomes evil (cf. ibid. 32-33).

Pullman presents us with shocking evil personified in characters such as the terrifying Metatron, cardinals greedy for power and a ruthless priest. The struggle between good and evil is presented in a very suspenseful way: one may just think about the following details: the moment when the reader learns that the Subtle Knife can kill god (and which implications regarding reader-expectation this can have), or the scene in which the priest Father Gomez directs his rifle to Lyra and Will in order to kill them, when the fall is just about to happen – the event which determines the future of the universe. Regarding the commonness of the heroes it can be said that Lyra is weak in a

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[16] More relevant information concerning the struggle between good and evil in fantasy will be given in the chapters "The Christian fantasy tradition" and "Religious elements in *His Dark Materials*".

physical sense, which is normal for a girl aged 12. However, she has a strong character and tough companions, most importantly Will. With his collaboration and the support of others, she is able to overcome evil. As a summary, Pullman presents the struggle between good and evil in an attractive way; the only restriction I can see is the negative portrayal of religious elements.

Timmerman speaks about a further aspect that fosters commonness of fantasy characters, i.e. the fact that they are accompanied by animals:

> In the modern tradition, fantasy has frequently used animal characters to insure a kind of earthiness and commonality of its characters. Frequently, human characters in fantasy have animal friends who are gifted with voice, who are guides to action, who are a solace in a troubled world and a companion in loneliness. (ibid. 34)

This is also the case in *His Dark Materials:* the daemon[17], i.e. a person's soul, has a specific animal shape, e.g. a snake, a monkey, an ermine, or a beetle. Before puberty, the daemon changes its animal-nature according to the situation, be it dangerous or safe, for example. Later, when the person becomes an adult, the daemon's shape remains the same. As a person's soul, the daemon is an integral part of a human being and something good: this is reflected in the fact that the daemon's absence causes great pain. It can be considered anthropomorphized because it is the external expression of the person's character and mood. In addition, daemons function as mediators when two people, who may not even speak the same language, meet for the first time. Also, it is hard to concentrate when the daemon's attention is focused on something else than the person's. More generally speaking, daemons make characters complete and assist them in any situation. It has to be said, however, that not all beings in this trilogy have daemons – only the inhabitants of Lyra's and Will's worlds. Other animals in *His Dark Materials* comprise the mulefa and the tualapi, described in the chapter "Originality" – they are not relevant in this context because they are completely separate from human characters in the trilogy: they live in a different world and are not related to humans in any way.

Summarizing this subsection, the origin of animals in fantasy can be traced back to the fairy tale, and more importantly, to the beast fable. However, it is only in fantasy that they are really comparable to human beings and thus provide a basis for reader identification. Additionally, animals can be good or bad: as the former they serve as a

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[17] The daemon and its relevance are discussed in various chapters, e.g. in "Religious elements in *His Dark Materials*".

means of familiarizing the fantasy characters, and as the latter they need to be presented in an innovative way in order to present an attractive struggle between good and evil in which the reader is prepared to engage. Daemons in *His Dark Materials* are the (external) revelation of a person's character. Consequently, they foster the reader's sympathy or antipathy, depending on the side to which the respective character belongs. Mrs Coulter's daemon, for example, is an evil monkey.

3.2.2 Child-like traits

As has been explained above, the characters' naiveté does not have the negative connotation as in our common usage, but is a positive trait: it implies that the character is willing to wonder - the world and all the experience gained in and through it has not eliminated this openness. Timmerman remarks that it is precisely the villains in fantasy who see things in the light of negative realism: they are pragmatics and cold cynics. Be the fantasy protagonists children or not, the child-like is always there, which, according to the author, is a general human trait (ibid. 35). Pullman's trilogy presents us with two children as protagonists. The ability to wonder is present in Lyra in the sense that she is able to read the Alethiometer only as a child – when she is becoming an adult, she loses this ability and has to regain it by diligent study.

Timmerman (35) claims that the origin and the evolution of the child-like trait can be traced back to Romanticism and to Charles Dickens' novels. According to Timmerman, the child-like is the pure, natural characteristic of man, and is symbolic for Romanticism; it implies not being spoiled by the scientific and technological aspects of life, as well as the ability to distinguish true from false things, and to wonder. This natural characteristic of man has been lost, says the Romanticist. Friedrich Schiller is one of them and provides posterity, according to Timmerman, with the most thorough analysis of this child-like perspective. The German writer sees the cause for the tendency towards the natural in the poetic spirit – this spirit, of course, is challenged by the spirit of pure reason propagated by the movement of Rationalism, also very influential at that time. The child has not been spoiled by Rationalism and is therefore open to this poetic spirit; thus, the Romanticist admires children because of his own limited perspective. Afterwards, Timmerman goes on to explore the evolution of the child-like in Dickens' novels and claims that it has been influential in the shaping of the fantasy genre. However, Dickens' social realism is very different from this genre,

despite the fact that in both cases, children play an important role and are depicted as particularly appropriate because of their openness to wonder.[18]

One of the main objectives of this thesis is the discussion of the relationship between the fantasy world and the world of the reader: the reader can discover spiritual or supernatural realities in his or her own life by accompanying the fantasy hero in his or her quest. For this reason, the reader has to have or regain the same openness to wonder; in other words, he or she also has to have this child-like trait. This openness is particularly important nowadays, as the Western world is becoming increasingly secular and materialistic, and the openness for supernatural/religious realities decreases.

The child-like fantasy reader

The following paragraphs explore the role of the child-like in human beings on the basis of contributions from two fantasy writers and a psychiatrist. Le Guin illustrates the relevance of the child-like in modern fantasy in her essay "This Fear of Dragons". She reports what fantasy writers think:

> They believe that maturity is not an outgrowing, but a growing up; that an adult is not a dead child, but a child who survived. They believe that all the best faculties of a mature human being exist in the child, and that if these faculties are encouraged in youth they will act well and wisely in the adult, but if they are repressed and denied in the child they will stunt and cripple the adult personality. (qtd. in Timmerman 37)

C.S. Lewis, a literary scholar and fantasy author, explains that the child-like is not something we take off after a certain stage in our lives, but that it is part of the human nature and thus stays with us. Talking more specifically about the books we like to read, he claims the following in his essay "On Stories":

> It is usual to speak in a playfully apologetic tone about one's own enjoyment of what are called 'children's books.' I think the convention is a silly one. No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of fifty – except, of course, books of information. The only imaginative works we ought to grow out of are those which it would have been better not to have read at all. (qtd. in Timmerman 41)

Timmerman supports this view with Carl Jung, the well-known Swiss psychiatrist, who states in *The Development of Personality* that "in every adult there lurks a child, something that is always becoming, is never completed, and calls for unceasing care,

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[18] Dickens' novels often criticize contemporary social conditions and are set in our world. For Dickens, children are the ones who bring love, friendship, kindness and compassion into the adult world dominated by fact and a lack of love. Furthermore, they still have the natural gift to use their imagination (cf. Timmerman 37-41).

attention and education" (qtd. in Timmerman 42). A further quotation by Lewis from *An Experiment in Criticism* is relevant in this context, especially when keeping in mind Lewis' lamentation of the loss of the child-like in the quotation above. For him, fantasy opens our adult world for childlike wonder again, and this is of immense value:

> But who in his senses would not keep, if he could, that tireless curiosity, that intensity of imagination, that facility of suspending disbelief, that unspoiled appetite, that readiness to wonder, to pity, and to admire? The process of growing up is to be valued for what we gain, not for what we lose. Not to acquire taste for the realistic is childish in the bad sense; to have lost the taste for marvels and adventures is no more a matter for congratulation than losing our teeth, our hair, our palate, and finally, our hopes. (qtd. in Timmerman 42)

In other words, what Lewis says here is that becoming an adult has positive aspects; however, losing the openness for wonder and adventure is a rather lamentable consequence of it.

For some people fantasy may have a negative connotation because they think it is a deception, an illusion. However, as Timmerman has already explained, it gives the opportunity to shed light on truth, if the reader is prepared to discover it. Fact is the threat to this child-like vision; Lewis expresses this deplorable state in this essay "The Abolition of Man" (1943): he claims that man has become a spirit-less being. In Narnia, the children are able to learn things only when the holidays start. Prof. Kirke, the elderly man, who inhabits the countryside-mansion, wonders what these children are taught at school. "What they teach them is facts but not logic. What they teach them is system but not wonder. Basic assumptions are never defined, nor ever challenged. One has no opportunity to ask – but what does it mean" (Timmerman 43). According to Lewis, this way of instruction is too superficial for the human spirit and blunts it. Therefore, education should focus on profound truths instead of superficial facts, and fantasy literature can play a supporting role in this (cf. ibid. 42-44).

In this chapter it has been explained that the fantasy character retains naiveté in the sense that he is willing to wonder. Afterwards, the child-like in literature has been traced back to Romanticism, which saw the reason for the loss of fantasy and imagination in an adult world that was governed by science and fact. Later, it has been said that the child-like belongs to human nature, and thus, if it is lost, part of the human nature is lost – then man becomes a blunted and superficial being.

3.2.3 Heroic traits

After having described the common and the child-like traits of fantasy characters, their heroic traits remain to be dealt with. It will become clear that the fantasy hero is a gendered concept – later, this will be addressed in the chapter "Gender issues". Timmerman, like in the preceding chapter, orients us in the literary tradition and later, he distinguishes the traditional hero from the fantasy hero, and describing his main characteristics. Again, I use his main points as a basis for further discussion.

3.2.3.1 The hero tradition

Firstly, it has to be pointed out that the traditional fantasy hero is male. Going back to Greek mythology, for example, the hero's origin used to be unknown – *Oedipus*[19] is an example of this; thus it could at least not be excluded that the gods had not gifted him with supernatural powers. The hero's uncertain origin is a trait still present in the fantasy genre. Secondly, the hero was destined to fight a certain power that threatened people's lives and to establish a certain order. Timmerman says that in the course of history, little has changed, and the principle has remained the same: the hero can bring back order to the people's lives by means of his superhuman powers (cf. Timmerman 44-45).

3.2.3.2 The fantasy hero

Regarding the fantasy hero, Timmerman (45) points to several differences to the classic hero described in the preceding paragraph. Firstly, as a common being he or she is very much aware of their limited nature, e.g. the fact that they are mortal, in contrast to the traditional hero; the fantasy hero does what he or she has to do, but anxiety is not excluded. Secondly, loneliness plays an important part: despite his or her heroic struggle for a bigger group, often there is nobody to console him or her or cheer, especially in the cases when the hero acts in a different world. Mathews (65) states that in *The Lord of the Rings* the main characters are loners: Frodo is left by his uncle Bilbo, who leaves behind the ring for him and thus, though unknowingly, the mission to destroy it. In Mathews' eyes, Frodo is an orphan. When reading *The Fellowship of the*

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[19] In Greek mythology, Oedipus was the son of Laius, king of Thebes, and Jocasta, his wife. After the oracle's warning that he would be killed by his own son, Laius abandoned the baby on a mountain, where he was found by a shepherd and brought to the king of Corinth, who adopted Oedipus. Later, Oedipus learned from the oracle in Delphi that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Assuming that his foster parents were the real ones, he left Corinth and on his way he quarreled with his real father, Laius, and killed him. Eventually, Oedipus also marries Jocasta, whom he wins as a prize for solving the sphinx' riddle (cf. *Oedipus,* Columbian Encyclopedia).

Ring, it is indeed striking how frequently Frodo longs for Gandalf's return and company – their meetings are mostly short. The author points to Gandalf's similar life style: he only appears very rarely in the Shire at the beginning of the trilogy, e.g. to ensure that Bilbo leaves the Ring behind or to introduce Frodo to his mission to destroy it. Mathews comments on this: "To characterize those who make up this quest as a 'Fellowship of the Ring' is [...] ironic, for their actions as individuals increasingly form the basis for the story, and their paths lead them apart so that the visible fellowship rapidly dissolves" (ibid.). Although Frodo is a lonely character, Tolkien emphasizes that this one person is capable of heroic actions (cf. Mathews 65).

3.2.3.3 Horizontal and vertical heroes

Regarding the fantasy hero, Mathews (87) states that Morris, and Tolkien partly influenced by him, created their own original heroes, in part similar and in part quite different. I will discuss both types due to their considerable influence on the direction fantasy has taken in the past century; in addition, they are also relevant regarding the heroes in Pullman's trilogy, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

According to Brombert, the common areas of those two types of heroes are the following ones:

> (1) the transcendent supernatural or spiritual universe with its moral dimensions (atemporal or extratemporal); (2) the social order of tribe or nation in history; and (3) the individual mind, with its complex matrix of internal realities, conflicts between subject and object, self and other, thought and action. (qtd. in Mathews 87)

In other words, the fantasy hero can be discussed on the following three levels: firstly, his relation with the infinite and atemporal Gods and everything belonging to their realm; secondly, with the finite realm, his society or group, and thirdly, to the level of the hero's personal consciousness in the process of gaining self-knowledge and knowledge about the world and others. The chapter "Le Guin's meta-fantasy" has already addressed the process of gaining self-knowledge (cf. ibid. 87-88).

Going into more detail, Mathews explains the following: Morris' hero Thiodolf in *The House of Wolflings* (his prototype-hero) creates a bridge between the Gods and the earth by becoming the lover of a goddess and having a child with her. Thus, he is somehow lifted up to the same level as the goddess. In addition, he is "handsome, strong, courageous, virtuous and innocent" (Mathews 88). Regarding his tribe, the hero is necessary for the creation and affirmation of timeless moral standards, which he

confirms by what he says and does – in a way, this is god-like as well. And finally, regarding his inner self, the hero reflects the ethical and communal values in his personal dealings with his family, other people and his surroundings in general.

Tolkien's hero Frodo is a contrasting character to Morris', for the following reasons: firstly, he is not at all a godlike character. In addition, he is detached from all family-bonds and does not marry, nor does he have children; unlike Thiodolf, there is no opposite sex to complement him. Frodo is also rather an outsider among the hobbits. Because of these reasons, Mathews argues, he does not symbolize the continuum of the tribe's social and moral values. In addition, the reader does not enter a consciousness more profoundly understood through the relationship with a female character, as is the case with Morris' hero. The definition of the inner self of the hero takes place in the internal moral conflict between good and evil: the choices taken in this conflict forge the hero's character and identity. At the end, Frodo is not capable of separating from the Ring, which is achieved only by a supernatural intervention from outside: Gollum unexpectedly darts at Frodo and bites off his finger together with the Ring, and falls down with the Ring into the fire of the mountain (cf. Mathews 90-91).

Although the three realms mentioned above are relevant in both types of fantasy hero, it has become clear that these two types are still very different. As a summary, it can be said that there is a strong link between Morris' hero and his family and tribe or group; the quest is an individual and psychological exploration towards wholeness through the interaction with eternal and social realities. In contrast, Tolkien's hero is a loner who gains wholeness or loses it according to his worthiness and to supernatural intervention in the quest (cf. ibid. 91-92).

Referring to these two types of hero, Mathews calls them *horizontal* (Morris) and *vertical* (Tolkien) fantasy heroes. "The horizontal hero struggles to know himself and to share himself in love with another, to affirm the tribe's rights, land [and] values against encroachments of the enemy" (ibid. 90). With the vertical hero it is different: "[his] actions move upward or downward as he is propelled toward or away from absolute good or evil," rather than being a hero "who struggles horizontally on a plain where values must be determined without the benefit of divine intervention" (ibid. 92).[20] Later, Mathews claims that the horizontal hero can eventually defeat the threats, thanks to his

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[20] Depicting the difference between the two types of hero in the way, it may seem that sharing and love are only relevant in the case of the horizontal hero. However, it should not be forgotten that Frodo, the vertical hero, accepts the task of destroying the Ring, which possibly means the sacrifice of his own life for the future of all the good inhabitants of Middle Earth.

strong link to his community and the other sex, whereas the vertical hero, because of being lonely (also without a woman) can only overcome it through supernatural contribution (cf. ibid. 90, 92).

So far, it has been said that the fantasy hero is aware of his limits and that one typical characteristic is his loneliness, especially in the quest – this also applies to Tolkien's hero. However, Morris suggested a horizontal hero, who is godlike and handsome, and manages his mission without divine support; on the other hand, because of being so special, he does not bear as much potential for reader identification as the vertical hero does.

3.2.3.4 Identification with the hero

Timmerman, contrasting the horizontal hero, says that the "heart of modern fantasy is this premise: that a very ordinary character is tested beyond expectation or human hope for success. He cannot run to the organized assistance that our world offers. Ultimately, he must rely on nothing more than human imagination and intelligence" (45). This is why fantasy can have an impact on the reader: the hero goes successfully through his adventures with ordinary means: "The wonder of fantasy is thus what *we might do*" (ibid.) – it is not about a distant fictional character and what he or she does. To illustrate this point, Timmerman quotes George Slusser's comment on Ged, the main character in Le Guin's *Earthsea*: "Ged is an idealized hero…and an everyman. His powers seem exceptional, and yet he wins great battles with the means we all possess" (qtd. in Timmerman 46). The fantasy hero has to endure and to be strong, and is not immune to failure, although his cleverness always compensates for his weakness. So we talk about a mortal character who nevertheless decides to take dangerous actions – *decides*, because, unlike the traditional hero described above, the fantasy hero is free to choose what to do. This is what makes his deeds admirable and thus heroic. Regarding this point, Mathews makes an interesting distinction between Bilbo, the hero in *The Hobbit,* and Frodo, the hero in *The Lord of the Rings.* While Bilbo does not really freely decide to engage the quest, because the dwarves make him participate by playing a trick on him, "Frodo is a more mature hero, facing and *accepting* moral decision making from the outset of his story" [emphasis added] (67).

As a summary of this chapter, we have had a look at the traditional hero and have distinguished it from the fantasy hero, i.e. the godlike vs. the common and lonely character. Applying these two types to Morris' and Tolkien's fantasy heroes, the

horizontal one corresponds more to the traditional hero, while the vertical is rather like the common and lonely one. One crucial aspect of fantasy literature is the reader's identification with the hero: of these two types, Tolkien's hero is more appropriate for identification.

Turning to Pullman's trilogy, we can say that the heroes Lyra and Will are common in one way and uncommon in another. Lyra is of exceptional descent, with the powerful and mysterious Lord Asriel as her father and the irresistible and ambiguous Mrs Coulter as her mother. Furthermore, she has an extraordinarily caring nature and the magical gift of working the Alethiometer. Will is of more common origin, with a mentally sick mother, but with a notable arctic explorer as a father, who later becomes a shaman. What is more, Will's destiny is to be the bearer of the powerful Subtle Knife; in addition, his physical strength and determination are outstanding. These are Lyra's and Will's more special traits. On the other hand, one has to keep in mind that both are children, which probably fosters reader identification. Regarding the two types of hero mentioned above, the following can be said: on the one hand, Lyra and Will are horizontal heroes in the sense that they have special gifts and traits and come to know themselves and their roles, especially by falling in love with one another. On the other hand, they are vertical heroes in the sense that they are rather limited and dependent on others to fulfil their quest – it is striking that every time Lyra and Will find themselves in a hopeless situation, they are rescued by somebody who suddenly appears: one example is the moment when the two are surrounded by furious and armoured children, who are about to kill them. Suddenly, quite unexpectedly, witches appear and save them (cf. *Subtle* 233).

3.2.3.5 Lyra the liar

Lyra shows extraordinary strength, maturity and has a caring nature. There is one contrasting character trait Lyra shows, namely that she is liar – not someone who lies every now and then – the narrator clearly equates her with this characteristic. In the world of the dead she lies to one of the local guarding creatures, a harpy, that is, "a great bird the size of a vulture, with the face and breasts of women", with a "face […] smooth and unwrinkled." In addition, "she had seen thousands of years pass, and the cruelty and misery of all of them had formed the hateful expression on her features" (*Amber* 289-290). This creature can see through everybody; when it hears Lyra's lie, she reacts thus:

> the harpy was flying at them [Lyra and her company] again and screaming and screaming in rage and hatred: "Liar! Liar! Liar!" And it sounded as if her voice was coming from everywhere, and the word echoed back from the great wall in the fog, muffled and changed, so that she seemed to be screaming Lyra's name, so that *Lyra* and *liar* were one and the same thing. (*Amber* 293)

This extract is a summary of what becomes clear in the course of the trilogy: that this girl is essentially a liar: it is natural for her to lie (ibid. 268) and it is what she is best at (ibid. 262). This fact is alluded to by making the two words in the quotation above (quasi) homophones – Lyra and liar – especially if the echo is considered. Now, one may ask the question how her very significant task and positive character can be combined with the fact that she is a liar. To answer this question, it can be helpful to define the term "lie". The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers the following definition: "[a]n act or instance of lying; a false statement made with intent to deceive, a criminal falsehood" (*Lie*). This definition points out a crucial aspect, namely that a lie is an intent to deceive *somebody* – somebody who has a right to know the truth. Having said this, one can ask the question whether the characters Lyra lies to actually have the right to receive true answers to their questions. The following two examples may serve as illustrations.

The first scene takes place when Lyra and Will are about to be shipped to the land of the dead by Lyra's personified Death; Lyra feels guilty for Roger's death and therefore wants to atone for it by liberating him from this land. She is being asked to leave her daemon behind, but does not exactly know about the consequence of this.[21] Lyra lies to her Death in order to convince him that he takes her daemon on board – he has to ship Lyra and her companions to the land of the dead. Lyra gives him this reason: "'Because', she began, lying, 'because there's something I've got to do there, not just seeing my friend Roger, something else. It was a task put on me by an angel, and no one else can do it, only me. It's too important to wait till I die in the natural way, it's got to be done now. See, the angel *commanded* me. That's why we came here, me and Will. We got to'" (*Amber* 269). Lyra does not tell her Death about her plan to free her friend Roger from the land of the dead – she claims that she only wants to see him. Finally, she is not able to convince him. Her plan is actually morally good because the ghosts who are entrapped in this land suffer a lot because of the Authority.[22] Consequently, we

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[21] As has been explained above, the daemon is a person's soul. It is very painful to be distant from it, and Lyra is aware of that. What is more, in this scene she does not know for how long she has to remain separated from her daemon and what the long-term effect of this will be. She is not even sure whether they will ever be able to reunite.

[22] The land of the dead will be explained in the chapter "Afterlife".

can argue, her Death does not have a right to know the truth, despite the fact that this may sound strange. Additionally, keeping in mind that part of Lyra's destiny is to free others, she is consistent with it.

The second scene takes place in the land of the dead. Lyra and Will need to pass a harpy. Imagining this horrible creature, it is not difficult to understand that Lyra does everything possible to stall it; the only way she sees in that moment to accomplish this is to catch her attention with an interesting story. So Lyra invents parts of her past life, but without success – the harpy's reaction has been referred to above: it darts furiously at the company, crying "Liar!" three times. These two scenes show Lyra's behaviour as a liar: she is only untruthful to those who intend to prevent her from fulfilling her quest for a good objective: this quest includes the defeat of a tyrant and his church. In these circumstances, it is justified to lie, or better, Lyra does not lie, because the addressee has no right to learn about her real intentions.

The only ethical issue I see regarding a good liar-hero is the question to what extent young readers are influenced by Lyra's behaviour as a liar. This character bears great potential for identification on the part of children because she is a child and a good hero. As far as I can see, it is hard to tell whether children are able to differentiate between different "ways" of lying, i.e. being untruthful to people who have a right to know the truth, and to people who do not. In the chapter "Villains in His Dark Materials" we have learned that Lyra's mother, Mrs Coulter, is also a liar.[23] The difference between the two, however, is that the mother lies only in order to achieve her egoistic goals (i.e. gain more power), whereas Lyra is truthful to a totally altruistic mission: it even means risking her own life for others. So the motivation for lying is contrasted by these two characters. Considering this divergence, it may be easier for children to distinguish different types of lying.

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[23] It may just be mentioned that Mrs Coulter is referred to in a religious context as well: Lyra explains that on the Alethiometer her mother is the Madonna (*Northern* 152). This term refers to the Mother of the Christian God Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and thus means a further inversion of traditional Christian teaching.

3.3 The Quest

This chapter comprises the following aspects: first, it will be made clear what a quest actually is, in contrast to an adventure. Later, two types of quest will be introduced, namely the internal and the external one. Further aspects discussed will be the effect on the reader and the essential characteristics of the fantasy quest, illustrated with examples from *His Dark Materials.*

Clute (796) explains that quests "are [...] basic to the telling of the Story; as fantasy as a genre is inherently tied to Story, it is not surprising that almost all modern fantasy texts are built around, or incorporate, a quest." This quotation reflects the centrality of the quest in the fantasy genre.

3.3.1 Quest vs. adventure

Timmerman (cf. 91-102) has written a chapter about the fantastic quest as well. He starts off distinguishing between adventure and quest because the former is dominant in contemporary literature and thus could be confused with the latter. The theorist makes the following distinctions: firstly, the adventure has no specific objective and thus the character pursues it and can arrive at various destinations. In contrast, the quest has a specific goal, although it may not immediately be clear to the quest hero. Secondly, the reason for undertaking an adventure may vary quite considerably: the character can be simply bored, or he may want to change the circumstances of his life. However, the reason for engaging in the quest is far more significant: "The quest […] is always a spiritual or religious undertaking. The quest hero is appointed or ordained to his mission, and its end has spiritual significance" (ibid. 91). Last but not least, the adventure may just refer to moving around because of a whim. The quest, contrastingly, asks for the hero's full dedication and will because it implies a dangerous mission that probably threatens the hero's life.

3.3.2 External and internal quest

Clute (796) distinguishes two types of quest: the external and the internal one. In the external quest, the hero goes on a mission in order to gain something that ensures the survival of him or herself, or of the people for whom they are responsible. His or her journey takes them (in most cases a male hero) to unknown parts of the world where he has to prove his worthiness through a test or several tests, thus achieves the objective and returns home with the won object, person or knowledge. The second type is the

internal quest: in this case, it is more likely that the hero is female. He or she goes on a journey into his or her interior, mostly in order to get to know him or herself better. It includes engagement in a rite and coming back as an initiate, e.g. as a magus or a shaman. In the kind of fantasy relevant in this thesis, the two types of quest are combined. Mendlesohn (12) asks the following question: "Can one have an internal quest that does not require the protagonist to move through a physical […] landscape?" In other words, the otherworld is also a projection of the events that are happening in the hero's inner self. The author mentions Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as an example of the combined quest. As far as I can see, it is a very good example because the external struggle for the Ring between good and evil reflects the internal fight taking place in every bearer of the Ring due to the tension between the hero's good intentions and the evil power inserted into the Ring by the dark lord Sauron.

3.3.3 Discovery

As has been explained above, the fantasy quest is spiritual or religious. In addition, I intend to make clear in this thesis that the quest undertaken by the hero is an invitation for the reader to accompany the hero and thus to learn something important about his or her own life: through the quest, they can discover that their nature is spiritual, their experience can grow and they can become open to new perspectives. W.H. Auden illuminates us in his essay "The Quest Hero", in which he writes about the essence of the quest. A real quest is not about searching for a button that has been lost – for the following reasons: firstly, the affected person knows more or less where it can be found. Also, it can be made up for by replacing it, or by simply using the piece of clothing without the button; or else the piece may just be disposed of. Auden continues: "To go in quest means to look for something of which one has, as yet, no experience; one can imagine what it will be like but whether one's picture is true or false will be known only when one has found it" (qtd. in Timmerman 92). Timmerman shortly describes the history of the quest and claims that it can be counted among the literary forms with the oldest tradition, going back as far as ancient Greek heroic mythology (cf. ibid.). Lyra's quest in *His Dark Materials* is this search for something of which she has no experience at the time when she engages it. It becomes clear only in the course of the trilogy that her mission is of utmost importance: it comprises the liberation of a whole universe and will be explained in more detail in the chapter "Lyra".

In addition to the old origin of the quest mentioned by Timmerman, David Leeming emphasizes the centrality of the quest myth in literature as well as real life:

> [t]he quest myth in one sense is the *only* myth – that is, all other myths are a part of the quest myth. The hero's whole life from birth to apotheosis [i.e. the high point in his life] is a quest, whether for an actual place or object in this world, as is the case with Odysseus and Jason, or for eternal life in another world, as is the case with the great religious leaders such as Jesus and Quetzalcoatl. (qtd. in Timmerman 92)

Hunt (cf. *Form* 8) has written an essay with the purpose of answering the question why fantasy has become much more popular with older children and young adults since the beginning of the 1980s than before this time. One reason she gives is the potential identification of the youth with the fantasy hero: often young people have no clear picture about who they are or where they are going – in this context, Hunt refers to their identity and professional career within the society they live in. Likewise, the fantasy hero frequently does not know his exact identity, and this can even be the case in the literal sense, as the author illustrates with the protagonist in Le Guin's *Earthsea* books: Ged discovers his identity only step-by-step: "First he receives his real name, given to him by his mentor Ogion; then he undergoes various trials and adventures; and finally, at the very end of the book, he recognizes the identity of the evil 'Shadow' as part of himself and is able to conquer it" (qtd. in Timmerman 92). Only by facing his inner Shadow does Ged become whole. Although the protagonists in *His Dark Materials* are children, they do not only bear potential for identification on the part of young readers – the issue of finding one's identity and task is of prime importance in this trilogy and invites readers of all ages to support the establishment of the republic of heaven, as will be explained later.

3.3.4 Essential aspects

In this chapter, Timmerman and the authors mentioned by him are again an important point of reference because they provide an adequate basis for the discussion of the quest in *His Dark Materials*. According to Timmerman, Auden's contribution to fantasy is that he put together an overview of the central aspects of the fantasy quest, from its literary beginning to the present, i.e. 1962. These criteria are still valid, although there one aspect is missing and will be introduced by Timmerman later. Auden's central aspects are the following ones:

> 1) A precious Object and/or Person to be found and possessed or married.
> 2) A long journey to find it, for its whereabouts are not originally known.
> 3) A hero. The precious object cannot be found by anybody, but only by the one person who possesses the right qualities of breeding or character.
> 4) A Test or series of Tests by which the unworthy are screened out, and the hero revealed.
> 5) The Guardians of the Object who must be overcome before it can be won. They may be simply a further test of the hero's *arête* [i.e. goodness], or they may be malignant in themselves.
> 6) The Helpers who with their knowledge and magical powers assist the hero and but for whom he would never succeed. They may appear in human or in animal form. (qtd. in Timmerman 93)

Timmerman explains that a real quest must include all of these essential aspects, although Auden forgot an important one, namely the "threat to the status quo" (ibid.): this danger has to be a really serious one because otherwise the quest would not be undertaken. Applying these aspects to *His Dark Materials*, one or more examples for every aspect can be found. However, only few are mentioned for the sake of illustration.

3.3.4.1 The hero

In *Northern Lights,* the threat is caused by the Gobblers, a group employed by the church to kidnap children; as soon as the Gyptians are affected by it, they are prepared to react. Lyra is then accompanied by them to Bolvangar in order to set the kidnapped children free. As Lyra will be relevant regarding the religious elements in fantasy and *His Dark Materials,* many further explanations are left to the respective chapter. For the time being, let me only say this: Lyra is a girl, and in this sense a very a-typical fantasy protagonist. Is she a fantasy hero? That is definitely the case: she is human, child-like and heroic. It will become clear in the chapter "Gender issues" that in the past female fantasy heroes have been anything but the rule.

3.3.4.2 The journey

The journey in the trilogy is rather complex, due to the various worlds the reader is confronted with, namely five. What is more, various characters switch between these worlds throughout the novels, and thus it is not always easy to keep the overview. The journey's destination is not clear from the beginning: the company only learns about it during the course of their journey.

The journey in *His Dark Materials* is the journey of Lyra, who is accompanied by Will from the beginning of the second book. In addition, there are various other characters who accompany the two at different moments in the trilogy (cf. "The hero's

helpers"). Auden, as we have seen above, describes it as a long journey, which definitely applies to this one: Lyra first travels to London, then escapes and stays with the Gyptians, who accompany her to Bolvangar and Svalbard. After this, at the beginning of the second book, she enters Cittagazze in a different world; from there, she and Will change to Will's world and meet Dr Malone. In the meantime, some of their helpers (Serafina Pekkala and Lee Scoresby) travel elsewhere. The protagonists have to obtain the Subtle Knife and return to Will's world, etc. These events are only a part of all the shorter and longer travels that make up the long physical journey undertaken by Lyra and the other characters, and, more importantly, they are only one part of the quest. The second component is the internal quest, that is, Lyra's and Will's internal journey which, by engaging the external one, leads them to their real identities: this comprises who they are and what they are supposed to do.[24]

3.3.4.3 Precious objects and people

There are three (material) precious objects in the trilogy: in the first book it is the Alethiometer, in the second the Subtle Knife and in the third part it is the Amber Spyglass. The value of these objects lies in their magic powers. Timmerman definition of the term "magic" seems appropriate: he describes magic as "the presence of powers whose origins and nature lie outside of human knowledge or common experience" (73). This also applies to the three objects in the trilogy, whose origin and nature will be described in the following paragraphs. First, however, some words about magic in fantasy have to be said. Timmerman (72) refers to Manlove, who emphasizes the fundamental role of the supernatural and claims that "the use of the supernatural is not simply a 'possibility' in fantasy; it is the driving force in the story and takes a central role in the development and shaping of character and plot." The supernatural or magical elements in *His Dark Materials* comprise the three objects mentioned above, as well as Dust, the powers of angels, witches, a shaman and a bear. Jones (616) explains that magic can be found in various types of vehicles in fantasy, such as spells, persons (good magic in Tolkien's Gandalf, and bad magic in Saruman), animals and mythical creatures. The author adds that "[m]ost solidly of all, magic can be present in a stone circle or megalith […] an EDIFICE […] a CITY […] or an OBJECT – like in Tolkien's

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[24] Although this vague and general description of the internal quest is unsatisfactory, I am unwilling to give away more information at this stage, for the reason that it would reduce the surprise regarding Will's and especially Lyra's astonishing roles in the trilogy, as well as all the implications these roles have.

RING" (ibid.). The magical objects I discuss in this thesis are the most apparent and most important ones: the Alethiometer, the Subtle Knife and the Amber Spyglass.

The Alethiometer, the "truth-measure" (Shohet 22), looks similar to a compass and is golden. It is noteworthy that this gadget seems to work with Dust (*Subtle* 91); if this is the case, then it can be concluded that Dust is truth. This will be relevant in the discussion of God and Dust in the eponymous chapters. The Alethiometer has three hands and a face with 36 symbols on it, and every symbol has three levels of meaning. An hourglass, for example, can refer to time, death or change. Apart from telling the truth, it can also predict the future. Its origin is in Prague, where a scholar invented it in order "to discover a way of measuring the influences of the planets, according to the ideas of astrology. He intended to make a device that would respond to the idea of Mars or Venus as a compass responds to the idea of North" (*Northern* 173). Dr Lanselius, the consul of the witches in Lyra's world, is speaking here, and he adds that the scholar did not accomplish this; still, the instrument undoubtedly reacted to something (cf. *Alethiometer*).

The Alethiometer is not exactly found by the hero Lyra (like Auden describes it), because it is given to her by the Master of Jordan College; however, Lyra is indeed the chosen person to use it, because the other readers of the mysterious gadget take years of study and experience in order to decipher the symbols according to the different contexts in which they use it. With Lyra it is different: after only little time, she feels very confident in consulting it, and does so frequently. The following extract shows her special gift. Before the company arrives in Bolvangar, the Gyptian John Faa wants to know how well the research centre is guarded and asks Lyra to consult the Alethiometer in the inconstant, rather faint light of the Aurora:

> "I can see all right," she said. "But I know where most of the symbols are by now, anyway. What shall I ask it, Lord Faa?" "I want to know more about how they are defending this place, Bolvangar," he said.
> Without even having to think about it, she found her fingers moving the hands to point to the helmet, the griffin, and the crucible, and felt her mind settle into the right meanings like a complicated diagram in three dimensions. At once the needle began to swing round, back, round and on further, like a bee dancing its message to a hive. She watched it calmly, content not to know at first but to know what a meaning was coming, and then it began to clear. She let it dance on until it was certain. (204)

From the second part of the book, Will can be considered almost of equal importance to Lyra[25]: he is her friend and risks his life for the fulfilment of their common mission to defeat god and his forces and to make the republic of heaven possible. More importantly, he is the one who is destined to be the new bearer of the Knife – this is proven by the fact that he loses two fingers when he wins it in a fight (*Subtle* 180). Apart from considerable physical strength, Will catches the reader's eye through his intelligence (e.g. *Subtle* 227) and consideration towards others, especially Lyra (e.g. *Amber* 279). The *Subtle Knife* cannot tell the truth but is as important in the quest as the Alethiometer. This weapon makes it possible to change between worlds by creating a cut or gap and thus is an indispensable instrument for the liberation of all the ghosts entrapped in the land of the dead. One blade is for cutting any material whatsoever, and the other one is for creating and closing gaps to different worlds. According to John Parry, Will's father, the Knife can even kill god. In the language of the cliff-ghasts, it is called "aesahaettr", which means "god-destroyer" (Colás 58). At the beginning, its use is a mystery to Will and he has to be introduced to it by the former knife bearer Giacomo Paradisi:

> "Now hold the knife out ahead of you – like that. It's not only the knife that has to cut, it's your own mind. You have to think it. So do this: put your mind out at the very tip of the knife [...] Now feel with it, very gently. You're looking for a gap so small you could never see it with your eyes, but the knife tip will find it, if you put your mind there. Feel along the air till you sense the smallest little gap in the world..." (*Subtle* 182)

The use of this knife can have positive and negative consequences, but Will only learns about them in the course of the trilogy. On the one hand, it helps Lyra and Will on their quest by creating gaps into different worlds and, more importantly, by making it possible to free the ghosts from the land of the dead. On the other hand, however, every new cut creates a Dust-devouring Spectre, and also causes Dust to move out of a world through those cuts. The ambivalent role of this weapon is also reflected in the following statement. After having consulted the Alethiometer, Lyra reports that "[i]t said the knife would be the death of Dust, but then it said it was the only way to keep Dust alive. I didn't understand it, Will" (*Amber* 183). The origin of this instrument goes back to the Guild of the "Torre degli Angeli", a group of philosophers who also had knowledge about alchemy. Their created instrument has more powers that they knew (*Subtle* 215).

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[25] I say almost, as will be explained in "Religious elements in *His Dark Materials*".

In order to answer the question whether the Subtle Knife is a good or an evil instrument, one can say the following: for the cliff-ghasts and for John Parry, it is the god-destroyer, which is positive because god in the trilogy is evil. However, this god is similar to the Knife in the sense that he is also an enemy of Dust[26]. But the gaps are not intrinsically bad – they have only turned into a danger for Dust because some of them were left open by the Guild. As a summary, it can be said that the Subtle Knife is a good instrument, but that it has to be used wisely by people who know about its consequences. With Will, this is the case only towards the end of the trilogy.

The third precious object is the Amber Spyglass, which is produced by the physicist Dr Malone in order to see "sraf", the mulefa word for Dust. It consists of two sheets of sap-lacquer, which, when covered with the oil of the seed-pod which makes them wise, make sraf visible. As will become clear in the chapter "Two accounts", this oil is sraf. Thus the magic of making sraf visible by means of the Amber Spyglass is due to sraf (cf. *Amber* 230). With this instrument she is able to discover that Dust is drifting off and is going to disappear, if not prevented from it. As will become clear in the chapter "Dust", its disappearance has fatal consequences. Eventually, this process can be stopped by closing all the gaps between the worlds through which sraf could escape, except for one, which is necessary so that the ghosts in the land of the dead can escape from there.

As a summary, we can say that the Alethiometer and the Subtle Knife play a central role in the trilogy, and the Amber Spyglass plays an important one. In addition, it has become clear that the Alethiometer and the Amber Spyglass work with Dust, also a supernatural aspect of Pullman's universe (as will be explained in the chapter "Dust". However, it should be pointed out that they are only means to an end: as will be described in more detail later, these are objects to fulfil the great quest, i.e. the quest for liberation. More precisely, it is about liberation from imprisonment in Bolvangar, in the land of the dead, from the rule of Metatron and the churches, and is also the liberation of Dust from its enemies.

3.3.4.4 The test

The test Auden mentions, through which the chosen hero becomes evident, can be found in the fact that Lyra, like all the other children in Bolvangar, is to undergo intercision; however, in the last moment she is rescued by Mrs Coulter. This does not

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[26] As has been explained before, every gap created by the Knife contributes to the elimination of Dust.

necessarily imply that the other children are unworthy, like Auden puts it, but it is one occasion in which the narrator shows that Lyra is a special girl destined to fulfil a great mission. A further striking fact that emphasizes Lyra's protagonism is that, in contrast to the other children, who, quite comprehensibly, simply subject themselves to the experiment undertaken by the threatening adults in Bolvangar, she is the leader of the revolution there, which results in the freedom of all children and of all the daemons that have been cut off.

3.3.4.5 The object's guardian

The precious object's guardian mentioned by Auden can be found in the second book. In order to get the Alethiometer back from the evil Mr Latrom, Lyra and Will have to go the "Tower of the Angels" and get the Subtle Knife from its bearer. However, the true bearer has been overcome and the knife is now in the hands of a young madman. In the second book we find a description of him: "The man was crazy. His curly red hair was matted, his chin was flecked with spit, and the whites of his eyes showed all round the pupils. And he had the knife, and they had no weapons at all. Will stepped up the lead, away from the old man [the rightful knife-bearer], crouching, ready to jump or fight or leap out of the way" (*Subtle* 173-4). Eventually, Will manages to defeat the madman and thus obtains his weapon.

3.3.4.6 The hero's helpers

On her quest, Lyra has numerous helpers, first and foremost Will Parry, of course, the boy who accompanies her from the beginning of the second part until the end of the trilogy. He supports the girl with his knowledge and with his physical strength, which is quite remarkable for an approximately 12-year-old boy. The most important aspect, however, is that he is indispensible for the fall and that he is the bearer of the Knife which is able to kill god. In other words, Will is able to kill god, because as the bearer of the Knife he has to work together with it in order to cut or destroy something. Other important helpers on Lyra's quest are Iorek Byrnison, Serafina Pekkala, Lord Asriel, Dr Malone, Lee Scoresby, and John Parry; Mrs Coulter is an ambivalent character in this respect.[27] Some of these are explained here, others in the chapter "Religious elements in *His Dark Materials*".

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[27] This will be explained in the chapter "Villains in *His Dark Materials*"

Iorek Byrnison, the rightful king of the armoured bears, is characterized by immense strength and determination: having decided something, he would do anything to achieve it. His magical power becomes apparent in the fact that he can mend the Subtle Knife, though not without Will's help. Serafina Pekkala, the witch, also plays an important role in Lyra's quest. She rescues the two protagonists from the furious children in Cittagazze when they are about to be killed. In addition, she and other witches protect the company on their journey. The rebel angel Balthamos also prevents the two protagonists to be killed by the ruthless priest Father Gomez. Last but not least, John Parry, or Dr Grumman, helps Lyra and Will through his knowledge and superhuman powers as a shaman – he tells his son about the power of the Knife and makes use of his magic to let three of the Church's pursuing zeppelins crash.

To summarize this chapter we can say that it comprises several aspects: we have seen that the quest is something completely different and much more important than an adventure. It is closely related to the hero who engages an internal as well as external quest. Moreover, it has been explained that by accompanying the fantasy hero, the reader can discover important things about his or her own life. In addition, the most important elements of the fantastic quest have been mentioned and illustrated with examples from *His Dark Materials.*

3.4 Gender issues

After the description of the otherworld, fantasy characters and the quest, and the religious elements in fantasy to be dealt with later, there is one more issue that needs consideration due to its relevance in contemporary fantasy as well as in *His Dark Materials:* the issue of gender. First, this chapter will address traditional gender roles in fantasy literature: it will describe the predominantly patriarchal worldview in the past as well as the depiction of men and women in fantasy monsters – Pullman's trilogy will be relevant in this context as well. Afterwards, feminist tendencies will be discussed: these include the process of awareness-raising for gender issues in fantasy authors, as exemplified in Le Guin's *Earthsea* books and an early example of feminist fantasy, namely Morris' *The Well at the World's End.* As will be explained, *His Dark Materials* also shows egalitarian tendencies. Moving from the prime importance of the fictional realm to a more direct connection with our world, Morgner's approach to fantasy as a means for political and social subversion will be touched on. The following chapters mostly refer to high fantasy because this, together with urban fantasy, is the main focus of this thesis. In the chapter "Male and female villains", heroic fantasy will be relevant as well[28]. Other subgenres such as the Amazon story, where the heroine, gifted with immense physical or psi powers and defeating all (male) enemies, are therefore not taken into account (Cioffi 85-86).

3.4.1 Traditional gender roles

As will be explained in the following chapter, traditional gender roles are still common due to the genre's strong link to the Middle Ages and an often uncritical gender approach in dealing with this aspect. In addition, opportunities for increasing the power and significance of female characters in traditional fantasy have proved ineffective.

3.4.1.1 Patriarchy

When one is searching for appropriate literature regarding gender issues in fantasy, he or she will find numerous books and articles that mention the term "patriarchy". This is not very surprising, keeping in mind the predominantly male features of the genre in the majority of fantasy works until recently. Clute (*Fantasy*) points out that the Medieval Age is an integral part of the genre and that therefore a reasonable representation of women in roles such as rulers or mages has not yet been satisfactorily accomplished.

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[28] According to Clute (*Heroic Fantasy*), heroic fantasy is similar to Sword and Sorcery in the sense that it is a kind of fantasy that features a hero: the focus is on the hero who fights evil powers.

Tuttle (*Gender*) supports this by saying that fantasy takes the reader back into the past and identifies archetypes. It is advisable to keep this strong link to the past in mind when reading fantasy literature and reflecting about it. It is therefore comprehensible that these strong ties to the past have influenced all writers of fantasy and will do so in the future, despite the increasing number of more egalitarian fantasy works and relevant gender studies.

Tuttle (ibid.) points out that the common generic trait of patriarchy limits the genre and, what is more, it is often not questioned, nor even recognized. In *The Lord of the Rings*, a mile-stone in fantasy literature, the male dominance is reflected in the main characters: Frodo is the male protagonist, who is accompanied by three male hobbits, namely Sam, Merry and Pippin; further noteworthy characters are Aragorn, Gandalf, and Gollum. There are some women, such as Eowyn, the lady of Rohan, and Arwen, the daughter of the Elrond, the Elf-lord (cf. *"The Lord of the Rings' Characters"*). However, despite their noble origin, they are only minor characters because of their rare presence. The threat to the order in the trilogy is Sauron's aim to bind all powers to only one will. Mathews explains that

> Tolkien's ideal society is not egalitarian [...] He establishes a patriarchal hierarchy as the highest spiritual, social, and political ideal. The hope for social order clearly rests with the king, whose childhood name, Estel, is translated in Tolkien's appendix as "hope". (78)

This quotation illustrates the importance of the male king on whom the restoration of order depends. On the other hand, female characters have been seen traditionally only in relation with the male hero – either as good companions or evil opponents. An example of the first type would be the good fairy; Tuttle (*Gender*) states that in the past, by presenting such characters as small, old-aged or not exactly beautiful, they have been made insignificant. One possibility of granting female characters more importance in fantasy was to create strong and powerful women, as in the *Amazonian Sword and Sorcery,* a subgenre that developed in the 1980s; however, as Tuttle explains, this has not really contributed to strengthen the presence of strong women in fantasy because the Amazons all exhibited features above the average woman and thus did not represent a contrast to the common and inactive woman in a patriarchal society.

Magic (cf. ibid.) has been a further possibility to give female characters more importance in fantasy. However, particularly in high fantasy, only male characters are mages and sages – women's, or "natural" magic, is inferior, applied in the domestic realm, in contrast to men's magic which implies a specific training, acquiring

knowledge and sacrificial activities, with the aim of dealing with greater powers, even universal ones. In other words, women's magic is more intuitive, while men's is rather about acquiring knowledge and skills that are used for really relevant matters. Tuttle mentions a representative example: in Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, female magic is described as "weak as woman's magic", or "wicked as woman's magic" (qtd. in ibid.). In Pullman's trilogy we find the female protagonist Lyra equipped with magical powers (Alethiometer) as important as Will's (Subtle Knife). Besides, after having lost her magical gift of reading the Alethiometer intuitively, she can regain it by study, that is, by acquiring knowledge. In this sense *His Dark Materials* is revolutionary.

3.4.1.2 Male and female villains

In this chapter, I discuss male and female evil characters and the relevance of Veglahn's insights into this topic for *His Dark Materials.* Veglahn (106) describes male authors' evil projections in their female characters (or monsters, as she calls them) and vice versa. The theorist suggests that the defeat of the other sex involves author and reader in the story and thus confronts them with the bad tendencies they have in their own subconscious. For her investigation about female villains in male authors, she chose works by George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, Frank Baum and Lewis Carroll; in order to investigate the male villains in female authors, she decided on works by Ursula Le Guin, Natalie Babbitt, Susan Cooper and Madeleine L'Engle. The works explored can be counted among *heroic fantasy* works because they show a young male or female hero who fights some evil force, either in an otherworld or in a realistic world affected by the supernatural (cf. ibid. 106-111).

Veglahn gains various insights. The first one is that in recent fantasy, female villains are less isolated than male ones. The queen in MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* has a husband and the White Witch in Lewis' *Narnia* has a sister, and both of them, as well as the evil women in the other books, are accompanied by somebody. When they are first encountered by the reader; their company often belongs to the same family. These relationships are not characterized by mutual benevolence, however; the female villains always tend to dominate their companions, as can be seen in the White Witch who defeats her sister in order to obtain the rule of the city of Charn. Veglahn makes an interesting comment on this: the female monsters have company but are still alone because they abuse others to gain or maintain dominion. In contrast, the male monsters are depicted as separate from anybody else; sometimes they enter the plot out

of the blue. Having no family or any other bonds, the "Man with Red Eyes" in L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, for example, appears on his own in a spacious room. Sometimes the male villains lead other evil creatures into the fight against the good side, but then these companions are rather inferior to them, e.g. servants, and do not belong to the same family (cf. Veglahn 111-112).

Veglahn's (cf. 112-113) second insight is that the female monsters show strong emotions and male ones show exaggerated rational behaviour. The female monsters express their anger very strongly, such as the Wicked Witch of the West in Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*: when she does not succeed in killing Dorothea, she reacts in the following way: "she stamped her feet and tore her hair and gnashed her teeth" (qtd. in Veglahn 113). Moreover, the female monsters behave irrationally: e.g. the White Witch in Narnia in the presence of Aslan first claims that all traitors go under her dominion, in accordance with the law of Deep Magic; later, however, she does not act according to the promise given to Aslan, namely to let Edmund free after the lion has offered himself as a sacrifice for the boy – Veglahn points out that this is illogical and unfair. The male villains' behaviour is not less frightening, but different. They are also monsters, hardly show emotion but are rather too rational, that is, they keep too calm, as e.g. Cooper's Grey King who admits that his opponent's actions deserve justice: "'Go back,' the Grey King warns him in a voice that is both sweet and terrible; 'I shall let you go, if you go back now and leave my land. You have won that much'" (qtd. in Veglahn 113).

Partly implied in the preceding paragraph, the author's third conclusion (cf. 114-115) is that female villains tend to be treacherous, while their male counterparts rather keep to the rules. MacDonald's evil fairy in *At the Back of the North Wind* takes every opportunity to make others offend her in order to punish them gleefully in turn. The male monsters are depersonalized servants of a stronger or universal evil and therefore frightening: the "Dark Rider" in Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* is "a piece of the eternal emptiness of Dark made visible" (qtd. in Veglahn 114).

As a conclusion, the author summarizes her insights into the traits of the female villains created by male authors as follows:

> Thus, the evil projections of the male writers who originated the modern heroic fantasy tend to be female monsters who are destructively entangled with others, who are driven by uncontrolled emotion, and who behave in capricious and treacherous ways as a result of their passions. Those male monsters that do appear are often presented as subhuman or animalistic. (ibid. 115)

In addition, she offers a summary of the main features of male monsters created by female writers:

> Male monsters created by the female writers in more recent years are likely to appear as isolated figures, coldly rational and excessively intellectual, who have lost their essential selves in the service of abstract evil. (ibid.)

Later, the theorist makes further remarks, one being that in more recent fantasy novels the evil power tends to be a shapeless force and is thus more difficult to define in terms of male and female. When evil is personalized in male villains, as in the Dark Rider in *The Dark is Rising*, the monster tends to reflect the evil's great destructive power. In contrast, when evil is represented by female monsters, it is probably not utterly bad but shows ambiguity. Veglahn mentions the example of Serret in Le Guin's *Wizard of Earthsea*: she is the wife of the Lord of the Terrenon who is the really evil one, while she originally seems to be kind and delightful (cf. ibid. 114-15).

Veglahn concludes that in the last 150 years, heroic fantasy authors have personified their versions of evil in monsters of the opposite sex, reflecting the respective fears and associations. The author also establishes a link to a young readership who can be negatively affected by the gender depictions they are confronted with in heroic fantasy (cf. ibid. 118).

3.4.1.3 Villains in *His Dark Materials*

Like in any other fantasy book, we also find evil characters in *His Dark Materials.* What is different to the monster tradition described above is that, broadly speaking, Pullman does not only introduce one, but various villains in his trilogy: the Authority, Metatron, the cardinals, priests and soldiers of the church, Mrs Coulter and the harpies. Lord Asriel can also be mentioned in this context, although he cannot be entirely allocated to either the good or the evil side. I have chosen to discuss the female monster Mrs Coulter. The collective male monster of the church will be discussed in the chapter "The Well at the World's End".

Although Mrs Coulter is clearly an evil character throughout the majority of the trilogy, she is not an archetype in the sense that she remains evil until the end: in the third book, eventually, she shows altruistic interest in her daughter Lyra and even

sacrifices her life and thus contributes to the happy ending: together with Lord Asriel, she lures Metatron, the most powerful angel on the side of god, to an abyss and by fighting him, loses her life (like Lord Asriel). In this respect she corresponds to Veglahn's findings about the evil female character, namely that she is not utterly bad but rather ambiguous.

Regarding her evil traits, this bad character is first and foremost irresistible and thus very powerful. In various passages in the trilogy we find manifestations of this: in *Northern Lights*, all children follow her because they cannot resist her charm. "Her voice was intoxicating: soothing, sweet, musical, and young" (*Subtle* 198). She manages to control everybody due to her natural authority. The only exceptions are the two protagonists, Lyra and Will. After Will and Mrs Coulter meet, however, she is taking possession of his thoughts, at least for a while: "He had been captivated by Mrs Coulter. All his thoughts referred to her [...] if he thought of the church, it was to wonder how many of the priests and cardinals were under her spell" (*Amber* 143). As regards her character, her ruthlessness is striking: she does everything necessary to achieve her aim: not prepared to wait for the desired information, for example, she tortures a witch in order to obtain it; more generally speaking, she abuses anybody who can make her power increase. Metatron, the most powerful of the angels on the Church's side, is apparently the only character who can penetrate her ambiguity and summarizes her nature when he looks at her. He addresses her, reporting what he sees in her:

> Corruption and envy and lust for power. Cruelty and coldness. A vicious probing curiosity. Pure, poisonous, toxic malice. You have never from your earliest years shown a shred of compassion or sympathy or kindness without calculating how it would return to your advantage. You have tortured and killed without regret or hesitation; you have betrayed and intrigued and gloried in your treachery. You are a cess-pit of moral filth. (*Amber* 399)

This quotation emphasizes that she is a liar through and through. She is explicitly characterized in this way by different people at least three times in the trilogy and knows perfectly well how to trick others. One of her daughter's main traits is dishonesty as well, as I will explain in the chapter "Lyra". However, there is an important difference: Lyra lies in order to fulfil an entirely altruistic mission, whereas Mrs Coulter is untruthful only for egoistic reasons.

3.4.2 Character evolution

So far it has been explained that traditional fantasy shows stereotypical gender roles. Cioffi is relevant here because she looks at the historical evolution of male and female characters in science fiction and fantasy. In the middle of the past century, female characters in fantasy were still given stereotypical roles such as "goddesses, witches, fairies, or devil-women" (Cioffi 84) and thus did not exhibit any psychological depth. In the 1960s and 1970s, this changed and women were granted more-dimensional features in roles such as rulers or warriors. The author claims that the effect of this positive development was that male characters were also depicted rather round than flat. As an example, she mentions Elisabeth Lynn's fantasy trilogy *Chronicles of Tornor*: it confronts the reader with a soldier-protagonist who is unsure whether he is doing the right thing. This is clearly a contrasting hero compared to the fighting warrior we find in traditional action-fantasy novels (cf. ibid.).

Adams (204-205) reports that Attebery (*Strategies*) makes an interesting point concerning character development: "fantasy [has] a unique ability to investigate the twofold process of constructing a self" (qtd. in Adams): this refers to the fact that female characters and their process of coming-of-age are described within a genre that is predominantly male: therefore, men can be seen as the causes for the evolution of female characters. Le Guin's fantasy novel *Tehanu* illustrates this point, as will become clear in the chapter "Egalitarian tendencies".

3.4.3 Le Guin: from patriarchy to feminism

Le Guin reflects the gender evolution that fantasy and science fiction writers have been going through recently. This is why I take her as the main point of reference in this chapter. As its title suggests, Le Guin has become aware of the dominant gender traits of fantasy and has reacted to it. Later in this chapter, it will be explained that the *Earthsea Trilogy* as a whole reflects the predominantly patriarchal fantasy tradition, whereas the forth part in the series, *Tehanu*, exhibits a contrastingly reflective approach to gender issues. Pullman's *His Dark Materials* goes in the same direction: the church is portrayed as a patriarchal and corrupt organization and thus criticized.

Littlefield explores Le Guin's gender evolution by contrasting the trilogy with the forth part. Littlefield quotes Lefanu (132) in order to illustrate Le Guin's original worldview: in her novels, the small number of women are limited either in a biological (not specified by Littlefield) or in a stereotypical way. Further down, it is explained that

"[i]n the Earthsea trilogy women feature first as witches and enchantresses who are either wicked or ignorant—or like Elfarran [a princess from legends] dead.... Or they are absent: not a girl to be seen amongst the hundred or more boys and young men of the wizards' school" (qtd. in Littlefield 245-46). Only men are introduced to a superior type of magic and thus have access to significant power. In the essay collection *Language of the Night*, Le Guin comments on her original approach to gender issues in her writing by saying the following:

> At the time (1963-4), I could say with a perfectly clear conscience, indeed with selfcongratulation, that I simply didn't care whether my characters were male or female, so long as they were human. Why on earth should a woman have to write about only women? I was unselfconscious, without a sense of obligation: therefore self-confident, unexperimental, contentedly conventional.... I didn't care whether my protagonist was male or female; well, that carefulness is culpably careless. The men take over. (qtd. in Littlefield 246)

This quotation shows Le Guin's original affirmation of traditional gender roles in fantasy and science fiction literature, and can be considered as reflecting the general view of that time: Littlefield remarks that there were few authors who could have served as a model for a more egalitarian approach to fantasy and science fiction.

It has to be noted, however, that the Earthsea books are a turning point from traditional characters, themes and plot to more varied ones. Firstly, in the second Earthsea book, *The Tombs of Atuan*, we are confronted with a female protagonist called Tenar. This young woman belongs to a group of priestesses who serve old and fearsome Gods and lead monotonous lives. They have some power; however, they are granted it only in order to be at the service of men and male Gods. This situation already reflects Le Guin's critical attitude towards patriarchy, also illustrated in the rebellious protagonist: Tenar, because of her dissatisfactory existence, flees from the tombs where she has served as a priestess. She only manages this with the help of Ged, a fact that could be interpreted as a depiction of the passive and helpless woman, because in fact, Tenar would not have been successful without his help. Littlefield (248) comments on this: "When a fifteen-year-old girl single-handedly manages to outwit, entrap, and control the most powerful wizard in the land, it should be obvious that she is not a simpering, helpless female needing some knight in shining armor to rescue her." In fact, Tenar contributes more to the successful escape from the tombs than her male counterpart. It is also remarkable and speaks for Tenar's strong character that by leaving her priestess life behind she runs the risk of being killed – she nonetheless does it (cf. ibid. 247-48).

After her escape, her prime concern is what to do and where to go. The male protagonists in the other two novels, i.e. Ged in *A Wizard of Earthsea* and Arren in *The Farthest Shore*, take on socially accepted roles: Ged becomes a mage and Arren a king; Tenar, however, rebels against the patriarchal system and then there is no socially approved role for her. Commenting on Tenar's complicated situation, Cummins (156) states that Tenar "cannot immediately go back and become a peasant wife and mother, nor does she have the credentials to be a princess; she cannot become a wizard or a king.... Le Guin has created a strong woman and then was unable to imagine an appropriate place for her in the hierarchical, male world" (qtd. in Littlefield 249).[29] This is reflected in the fact that, at the end of *The Tombs of Atuan*, Le Guin leaves Tenar behind in Gont, a rather isolated place; the character does not return in the third book, only in the fourth one, as will be explained in the next chapter (cf. Littlefield 249).

3.4.4 Egalitarian tendencies

So far, it has been explained that the *Earthsea* trilogy has some modern gender traits: the female protagonist Tenar revolts against the patriarchal system in her society. Eventually, however, she is punished for it and, for the time being, finds a lonely end in Gont. Littlefield (pp. 251) contrasts the first three *Earthsea* books with the forth one, *Tehanu*: Le Guin clearly breaks with the first three books, where Tenar, in her isolated place as a young woman (i.e. the tombs and Gont), was unable to overcome the hierarchical structures she lived in; in the fourth book, however, the reader is confronted with a critical character who repeatedly laments her society, in which women are inferior to men. Tenar's approach shows the fact that Le Guin has undergone a process of critical reflection, now expressed in *Tehanu*.

The main theme in the first three Earthsea books is the preservation of an equilibrium, revolving around the balance between good and evil powers, and life and death. In contrast, the initial situation in *Tehanu* lacks this equilibrium:

> The book opens with death, the rape of a child, a mutilation, and widespread fear. A new king may be ruling, but all is not well. He has trouble keeping control over the pirates that roam the open seas, and most importantly we discover that there is no archmage in Roke [i.e. the school of wizards]. (ibid.)

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[29] In this context, Tuttle (393-94) remarks that writers who wanted to grant female characters more power, have fallen back on societies characterized by matriarchy, such as the Celtic culture: "Celtic Fantasy" offers writers a historical realm where women are free, instead of having to describe female characters in relation to men.

Littlefield (252) reports that in order to re-establish the balance, the powerful characters, namely the wizards, have to follow a prophecy and search for a woman. However, these male characters are depicted as completely blind for everything feminine and cannot accept that a woman should be the key to the problem; instead, they reinterpret the prophecy by assuming that a woman will lead them to a male arch mage, who is the real solution. In the course of the book, Tenar gains increasing insights into the gender imbalance that controls her world. Mathews (145-146) describes these wizards as men corrupted by their yearning for power, especially for immortality. This almost leads to the death of an innocent girl: after being severely attacked, Therru is burnt and almost dies: "[her] face and one eye have been mutilated by the fire imposed by males" (ibid. 148). Mathews explains that "[t]he book becomes in one significant aspect an explicit repudiation of exterior male dominance and a text that seeks to document and thereby exorcise to some extent the violations of balance this dominance has wrought" (ibid.). With the original imbalance and the very negative depiction of the powerful male characters in *Tehanu*, Le Guin expresses her critic.

Le Guin's feminist approach is reflected in *Tehanu* in the following aspects: Ged, a male wizard, has to face powerlessness (similar to Tenar in the second book) and, more importantly, it is Tenar, a female character, who teaches him to become fully human. Littlefield points out that in *Tehanu,* Ged is confronted with the same situation as Tenar in *The Tombs of Atuan*: he has lost all this strength and realises the complete lack of power. Tenar introduces him to being a man, to becoming an adult, in a different sense: by making him accept his inner shadows, i.e. the fact that he is weak and vulnerable. In addition, she introduces him to becoming a proper man in emotional terms: she shows him how to express his love sexually and that happiness can be found through caring for other people, and not through being one of powerful and cold male wizards – in contrast to them, Tenar brings love and warmness into the world. It is important to note that she can only teach him these things because, by becoming independent, she herself was reborn to full femininity before and thus gained precious insights. Barrow (37) remarks that "the [Earthsea] series begins with the wizardry of men and the power of mages but ends with the wisdom of women" (qtd. in Littlefield 254). (cf. ibid. 253-254)

To summarize the main points in "Le Guin: from patriarchy to feminism", we can say that in the first three books of the *Earthsea* tetralogy Le Guin was influenced by the dominantly male fantasy tradition: this was due to the fact that she did not see the need

to change this custom - also because there were only few authors who had done this before her. Having said this, the second book already exhibits revolutionary traits such as a rebelling protagonist who quits her restrictive role in society. Later, however, the protagonist has to take the consequences of her actions and therefore leads a lonely life in Gont, because the society she lives in does not accept rebellious women. *Tehanu,* contrastingly, is a feminist fantasy novel and reflects the fact that Le Guin herself has become aware of the imbalance in gender and has taken a critical position. In the first three books, the central theme of balance refer to good and evil and life and death, whereas in the fourth book it refers to gender relations: the male characters, i.e. the wizards, are blind for anything feminine and cannot accept that Tenar is able to perform magic and has an important role to play. The only exception to this negative characterization of men is Ged, who becomes a proper man by learning from Tenar.

Pullman's *His Dark Materials* can be considered as feminist fantasy in the sense that it shows a female protagonist, Lyra. The majority of her character traits will be relevant in the chapter "Religious elements in *His Dark Materials*" because her quest throughout the trilogy has supernatural significance. At this point, it is enough to point out that she is an incredibly strong character who, despite her age of approx. twelve, is very mature; her advice and questions are accepted by most adults on the good side; additionally, to a certain extent she takes on the mother-role for other children such as Will or Roger due to her caring and open nature. Having said this, it should be stressed that Will Parry, Lyra's companion, is almost as important as Lyra: he contributes decisively to the fulfilment of the quest because he is her partner in the fall and because he is the chosen bearer of the Subtle Knife, and thus granted a power that is indispensible for the fulfilment of the quest. Without him, Lyra would not succeed. More relevant information will be provided later.

The witches are also noteworthy female characters: there is e.g. Serafina Pekkala, who rescues Lyra and Will from the furious children in Cittagazze, attempts to heal Will from the wound he sustained when fighting for the Subtle Knife, and supports them with her clan in the quest. Additionally, Ruta Skadi, a helpful witch-queen, wins the reader round through her great wisdom and graceful appearance. Generally speaking, the presence of female characters in the trilogy is striking, compared to traditional fantasy: apart from the ones mentioned above, there are Dr Mary Malone (discussed later), Lady Salmakia, a Gallivespian (one of Lord Asriel's spies) who rescues the two

protagonists and accompanies them, and Ama, a girl who contributes to Lyra's liberation from Mrs Coulter's dominion in the Himalaya mountains.

The Well at the World's End

One of the main reasons for the extensive discussion of Le Guin's four *Earthsea* novels was to demonstrate the author's evolution from an accepting to a revolutionary fantasy (and science fiction) writer. In the following paragraphs, a fantasy novel with egalitarian traits by William Morris is described, namely *The Well at the World's End*, noteworthy because it was published in 1896 and also because its author is male. Where relevant, parallels in *His Dark Materials* will be included.

Ralph, the protagonist in *The Well at the World's End*, has to stay with his father, the king, at home, while his three brothers, after having drawn lots, are allowed to leave the unattractive place in search of adventure. Nevertheless, Ralph follows his brothers in secret. The noteworthy aspect is that he does not only leave his father behind, but also the local patriarchal hierarchy. This is expressed in a two-fold way: it is reflected in Ralph's turning away from the Catholic Church and in his turning to women. Regarding the Church, the following can be said: his father, the king, is called Peter, an allusion to St Peter and his successors in the Roman Catholic Church, an institution often regarded as patriarchal. After having identified the objective of his quest, namely a well with powerful water, he engages in it. On his way he follows his intuition (typical of female characters in fantasy) and clearly distances himself from the monks' lifestyle and thus, according to Mathews, implicitly also rejects male-oriented structures in society (cf. Mathews 47-48).

The Church also plays an important role in *His Dark Materials*: It is presented as the epitome of patriarchy. This exclusively male institution shows the following traits: it is very hierarchical, apparently seeks power as its ultimate goal and thus wants to control everything (this is the reason why even its different branches are struggling among themselves); in addition, it is a cruel and ruthless and thus, in a way, also hypocritical organization, which even betrays its faithful by claiming that after death they will be rewarded with heaven – as becomes clear, this is a lie.[30]

The second important movement during his quest in *The Well at the World's End* is Ralph's repeated turn to women, e.g. the Lady of Abundance, a female held captive

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[30] To learn more about Pullman's church, please consult the chapter "Religious elements in *His Dark Materials*".

by her husband, with whom he flees and makes love. They are found by the husband, who kills his wife, whereupon Ralph puts him to death. According to Mathews, this is a key moment in the hero's quest: it "marks a crucial point in Ralph's movement away from a stereotyped male role and from the patriarchal backgrounds of the book" (50). Mathews remarks that the husband's name, the Knight of the Sun, "suggest the obliterating *lack* of enlightenment in the purely masculine psyche" (ibid.). Moreover, the Lady of Abundance strikes the reader through her superiority to Ralph, due to her age, wisdom and experience. Having lost his ideal love, another woman appears in his dreams, Dorothea, whom he shall find and make her his companion on the quest. So the protagonist searches for her and is captured but is able to escape; he finally finds Dorothea, actually named Ursula, in the woods. Later, Ursula rescues Ralph from a tempting poison and eventually they arrive at the Well, where they consume its healing and rejuvenative water. This achievement is followed by numerous further events, contrary to the assumption that, after having obtained their goal, the novel ends. Mathews explains that

> [b]y showing the reader the lengthy sequence of events after Ralph and Ursula have attained their quest, Morris concretely embodies the idea that the Well is not an end but a means; Ralph and Ursula drink not for themselves but for the sake of the world and of life, and their quest is finally complete and meaningful only if it increases happiness and beauty beyond themselves. This tale should ultimately be seen not as a story about a hero and heroine but as an affirmation of the possibility of noble human vision, which can transcend the individual to effect a greater well-being. (ibid. 52)

This quotation reminds us of what has been explained in the chapter "The quest", namely that the quest is a significant and spiritual undertaking. In conclusion, Morris' *The Well at the World's End* is an example of feminist fantasy, in which a male hero turns away from the patriarchal world towards various women and thus changes from a stereotype to a proper man who obtains good for a larger community (cf. Mathews 48-52). In *His Dark Materials*, evil characters comprise male and female persons. Parallel to Ralph, Lord Asriel, together with numerous male characters, rebels against the male tyrant and his forces.

3.4.5 Fantasy as politics

So far, the chapter "Gender issues" has shown the shift from patriarchal to feminist fantasy, exemplified mainly by works of Le Guin and Morris. The following German author has written some fantasy novels that show her political motivation.

Irmtraud Morgner is an author who lived in the former German Democratic Republic and thus experienced its very repressive regime, in political as well as cultural terms. It is therefore little surprising that she felt the need to break free from it. By her use of literature, its potential for subversion becomes clear. Alison Lewis claims that in the recent past the genre has been considered a significant indicator of what a specific culture intends to hide. "[H]er [Morgner's] experiments with forms of the fantastic offer one of the most comprehensive and extensive examples of feminist critique of the history of patriarchal institutions and practices" (1). As we have already seen in Le Guin's works, fantasy provides the possibility to criticize social circumstances and can offer new perspectives that foster optimism regarding a change. In the *Earthsea* books these issues are addressed within the fictional realm of the fantasy worlds, i.e. with no particularly explicit reference to our world. Morgner, however, wrote fantasy stories with a clear political intention, referring to a specific patriarchal system, that is, the GDR. At first sight, Pullman's trilogy may also seem to be politically motivated in the sense that it criticizes a specific church. However, as will be explained later, this is interpretation is too narrow.

Alison Lewis (cf. 28-29) states that fantasy is not only able to estrange certain aspects of our world by isolating them and presenting them in a different context (an aspect that will also be relevant regarding religious elements in fantasy literature), but it can also go beyond the social limits and confront the reader with perspectives that break with its restrictions. This is where its subversive potential lies. Lewis refers to Rosemary Jackson, who sees a chance in fantasy as a genre that "interrogate[s] unitary, monological ways of seeing by introducing confusion and uncertainty regarding the precise nature of social reality" (qtd. in Lewis 29). Let us hear Jackson herself on this issue:

> Fantasy establishes, or dis-covers, an absence of separating distinctions, violating a 'normal', or common-sense perspective which represents reality as constituted by discrete but connected units [...] It subverts dominant philosophical assumptions which uphold as 'reality' a coherent, single-viewed entity.[31] (48)

As has already been explained in previous chapters, fantasy has the potential to provide new perspectives of our world. In this chapter, we have moved from traditional gender roles to more revolutionary ones, and have seen the climax of this development in the most direct link to our world and gender issues, namely in politically motivated fantasy. In the following chapters I will follow a similar sequence: I will start with traditional Christian fantasy, which intends to give new perspectives to the reader's world, and will explain in which sense Pullman's trilogy is revolutionary in this regard.

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[31] To learn more about politically motivated fantasy, please consult Alison Lewis' *Subverting Patriarchy: Feminism and Fantasy in the Works of Irmtraud Morgner.*

3.5 The Christian fantasy tradition

Christian elements in fantasy are no novelty. Manlove wrote a book with the title *Christian Fantasy: From 1200 to the Present* (1992) in which discussed over twenty literary works. Among them, there are early ones such as Dante's *Commedia*[32] (1307-1321). John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1666, 1667) is also noteworthy. Feeley (648) describes it the following way: "[e]normous in scope, the poem describes the entire Christian cosmology, dramatizes conversations between divine beings, and proposes famously to 'justify the ways of God to men'." According to Feeley, modern fantasy has been influenced in at least three ways by Milton's poem: firstly, it depicts Satan as a complex hero who defies God. Secondly, Milton accounts the revolt of Satan and his angels in great detail, and thirdly, there is the ideological influence of *Paradise Lost*. Historians and writers have spent much thought on how to interpret this work, and two approaches have emerged: one side argues for a revolutionary interpretation of the Fall, with a Satan who is "morally superior to God" (ibid.), as e.g. Percy Shelley did. Similarly, William Blake described Milton as "a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it" (ibid.). In contrast, authors such as George MacDonald and C.S. Lewis maintain that Milton gave an orthodox account of the Fall. As will become clear later, unorthodox interpretations in *Paradise Lost* resound in Pullman's trilogy in the sense that it also approaches Christianity in an unconventional way.

3.5.1 The Lord of the Rings

Manlove also discusses Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, which are Christian fantasy works, the first one less explicitly than the second. Tolkien himself said the following about his trilogy in a letter:

> The Lord of the Rings is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like "religion", to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism. (qtd. in Speed)

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[32] Nobody before the Italian writer gave such an extended account of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory: "There had been numerous legendary journeys to Hell, Purgatory and Heaven before Dante, but these are brief visions, not really narratives, and there is little that foreshadows his fullness and subtlety of treatment" (Manlove 22). Therefore, Manlove considers his re-creation relevant and as fantasy.

Earlier, I have explained that the eucatastrophe is, according to Tolkien, the most important function of fantasy: it is the sudden joyous turn that causes Joy in the reader[33].

Baviera (75-78) elaborates eucatastrophe in a Christian sense, based on Tolkien's essay "On Fairy Stories". In the following paragraphs, I explain his main points. In agreement with Tolkien's claim, Baviera (75) states that the eucatastrophe is *the* mission of fantasy because it can accomplish what no other kind of narrative can do: eucatastrophe is more than a mere imaginative satisfaction of the profound human desire for rejection of the universal final defeat. Fantasy gives "this fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world" (*Fairy* 62), and in this sense it is "evangelium", which means "good news" in Ancient Greek.[34] Tolkien says the following about "the sudden joyous turn": "when the sudden 'turn' comes we get a piercing glimpse of joy, and heart's desire, that for a moment passes outside the frame, rends indeed the very web of the story, and lets a gleam come in" (ibid. 63).

Baviera (75-77) makes some highly relevant observations on the following pages of his essay. He explains that the phrase "fleeting glimpse" refers to something that is outside the text, which causes a gleam to enter the reader, a gleam that evokes Joy. He goes on to say that the inner consistency of reality demanded by Tolkien is very important regarding the eucatastrophe: if fantasy has to correspond to this inner consistency of reality, and if the most important mission of fantasy is eucatastrophe, then Tolkien somehow wants to tell us that eucatastrophe is part of the reader's reality. Tolkien says that

> [t]he peculiar quality of the 'joy' in successful fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth. It is not only a 'consolation' for the sorrow of this world, but a satisfaction, and an answer to the question, 'Is it true?'[...] in the 'eucatastrophe' we see in a brief vision that the answer may be greater – it may be a far-off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world. (*Fairy* 64)

Baviera points out that the central aspect of Joy in the moment of eucatastrophe is that it opens us to a reality. Therefore, it is not just an imaginative satisfaction of a profound desire – Tolkien claims that the eucatastrophe in fantasy is a satisfactory answer to the question whether what one reads is true – meaning not the narrated events, but the

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[33] I have explained Tolkien's functions of fantasy in the chapter "Functions of fantasy".

[34] This term has a specific religious context: in the Catholic holy mass, *evangelium* refers to a passage of the Gospels read aloud by the priest. It is the "good news" because its central message is that God came to earth in order to redeem us.

underlying reality: this is where the echo of *evangelium* resounds. What is more, Tolkien has a conviction which is based on his Catholic faith and on his love for telling stories: according to Baviera, both aspects lead Tolkien to a personal discovery that relates eucatastrophe with the narrative of the life of Jesus in the Bible. This is his conviction:

> The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy stories. They contain many marvels [...] and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe. But this story has entered History and [...] the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfilment of Creation. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in Joy. (ibid. 65)

Baviera explains the content of this passage. Firstly, Tolkien claims that the Gospels are narratives that contain the greatest possible eucatastrophe: the Creator of the universe wishes to dwell among people and becomes man in Jesus Christ, out of love for us. What is more, He is unjustly sentenced to a violent death, but, in the face of his followers' desperation, he rises from the dead and thus defeats death. As Tolkien says, the Gospels begin and end in Joy. In this sense it is a fairy-tale or fantasy. However, compared to all other fantasy stories, it has become reality, it has really happened. Also, as Baviera points out, in Jesus Christ the universal final defeat has been rejected. Thus the Gospels are the greatest fulfilment of this profound desire, which is echoed in every eucatastrophe with a glimpse.

After having read this description of Tolkien's eucatastrophe and its relation to the Gospels, one may ask the question where we find eucatastrophe in *The Lord of the Rings*. Baviera (78) claims that there are various corresponding moments, but that one stands out particularly: this is the following scene at the end of the third book. Frodo has reached the Cracks of Doom where the Ring was made, with the plan to destroy it – on which depends the future of Middle-earth – but he is unable to get rid of it. Then, suddenly, comes the surprising turn: Gollum enters the scene and launches himself at Frodo with a desperate cry, bites off the Ring together with Frodo's finger, and falls into the Crack, thus undoing the Ring. This moment is eucatastrophe because, as Baviera explains, Tolkien manages to move the reader deeply by this "good catastrophe", which causes joy in the reader.

For the sake of illustration, some of the Christian elements we find in Tolkien's trilogy are mentioned here.[35] Colbert (107), states that it rather shows religion than talks about it: the author mentions Frodo's mercy towards Gollum, "despite every temptation to act otherwise [which] shows Tolkien's belief in compassion and forgiveness" (ibid.); also, the fact that Frodo carries on towards Mount Doom in spite of his permanent worries – this demonstrates that the protagonist trusts in the divine plan. In addition, it is remarkable that the mission of the fellowship to defeat Sauron starts on 25 December, i.e. the day of Jesus' birth (44).

3.5.2 The Chronicles of Narnia

C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) are more overtly Christian than *The Lord of the Rings*. Wilson (173) states that the *Narnia* books "contain a deeper meaning, introducing children to Christian morality and belief, and presenting numerous characters representing Christian believers of different types, at different stages of their journey towards a relationship with God. There can be no mistaking the theological undertone of the series." Wilson (174) also gives the reason why Lewis gave his Narnia worlds a medieval setting: this is because he wanted to express that in those days societies had stronger moral principles and the code of chivalry was more important than nowadays. The genre of fantasy also gave Lewis the opportunity to widen the realm of his "'Christian' fairy tales" with unusual characters, sceneries and occurrences. As Manlove (257) reports, Lewis wanted to free the Christian message from the associations that were caused by his own experience as a child. Lewis tells us the following in his essay "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's To Be Said":

> I thought I saw how [fairy tales] [...] could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told to feel about God and about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. And the obligation to feel can freeze feelings [...] But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in real potency? [...] I thought one could. (qtd. in Manlove 257)

Wilson (173-174) goes on stressing that the *Narnia* stories are very rich in Christian elements; they basically comprise all the classic stories in the Bible, from the Creation to the end of the world, including parallels to the life of saints. There is a God-figure,

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[35] These examples are in no way representative of the abundant studies that have been written about Christian elements in the trilogy. They are merely an arbitrary illustration of the quotation from Tolkien's letter, i.e. that the trilogy is deeply religious.

Aslan, and a Satan-figure, Jadis, or White Witch. Aslan is perhaps the most striking Christian character, with his sacrifice and resurrection. As Wilson (177) explains, in the book *The Magician's Nephew*, "he is presented as the almighty, the father and creator, singing Narnia into existence, as God is said to have spoken the earth into existence in Genesis":

> In the beginning, when God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth had no form and was void; darkness was over the deep and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (Genesis 1, 1-3)

In contrast to this rather explicit Christian element, there are less obvious ones as well: one of them is the depiction of different types of believers: Peter, the oldest of the four Pevensie children in the *Narnia* books, is an allusion to Simon Peter, the leader of Jesus' disciples, whom Jesus called "the rock". St. Matthew reports what Jesus says to him: "And now I say to you: You are Peter (or Rock) and on this rock I will build my Church; and never will the powers of death overcome it" (Matthew 16, 18). Wilson explains that Peter "represents the true and wise Christian who, once on the true path, follows Aslan wholeheartedly though whatever trials are placed in his way" (Wilson 184).

Both Tolkien and Lewis show a clear religious and more precisely Christian orientation in the fantasy works mentioned above. This is possible, as Manlove points out, because the spiritual, or in this case rather the supernatural, is the driving force in fantasy – this includes the quest engaged by the fantasy hero, which is always a spiritual or religious undertaking. One of the main points I have focused on in this thesis is the approach that fantasy influences the reader because he or she accompanies the hero and thus can gain new spiritual or supernatural insights, like the hero does. Furthermore, these discoveries can change the reader's perspective on certain aspects of his or her life, or can open him or her to a new dimension. In this regard, it is important to remember that the person addressed needs to be open to wonder, something that can be learnt from fantasy characters.

The Lord of the Rings is an extraordinary example of supernatural fantasy: Tolkien presents an internally consistent world and thus facilitates reader identification. What is more, the inherent eucatastrophe opens the reader to another dimension, a reality, and this reality is a reflection of the greatest possible eucatastrophe, namely the content of the Gospels. What is more, according to Tolkien, this eucatastrophe is part of the reader's reality. The *Narnia* stories are also profoundly religious, but in a more

obvious way: Lewis' books are full of allusions and parallels to the Bible – this reflects the author's intention of benefitting from a genre that offers an alternative world for the Christian message. As has been explained above, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are two examples of Christian fantasy. Pullman's *His Dark Materials* does not belong to this sub-genre despite the fact that it makes use of Christian elements. The difference between this trilogy and the two fantasy series discussed above will be explored in the next chapter.

4 Religious elements in His Dark Materials

Organized religions in fantasy can be Christian or non-Christian. In non-Christian fantasy, according to Clute (*Religion*), organized religions tend to be portrayed in a negative light, characterized by corruption, as in the *Earthsea* tetralogy mentioned above. While e.g. Le Guin's works with the central theme of balance between good and evil remind the reader of Taoism (cf. Cummins, *Le Guin* 33), it is clear that *His Dark Materials* has a Christian orientation: the respective aspects include God, the Fall, good and evil angels, and others; what is more, this claim can be backed up by the character Dr Malone, a physicist and former Catholic nun; she explicitly refers to the "Christian religion" (*Amber* 442).

If the *Narnia* stories make explicit use of Christian elements, one has to ask what Pullman does, because he uses religious language and elements more explicitly than anybody else in the fantasy genre before him. Gooderham explains that in *His Dark Materials* "there is much more explicit and extensive use of religious terminology and of specific allusion to Christian institutions and concepts than is usual in high fantasy" (156). As will become clear in the course of the following chapters, Pullman has a more or less revolutionary approach to aspects such as God, Church and the Fall; Pullman's god and church have little in common with traditional Christian teaching.

One more word about the church we find in *His Dark Materials*. One might argue that this institution could refer to various churches, because in principle this is a broad term; there are some aspects, however, which refer to the Catholic Church because they can only be found in that institution: among them, there are Cardinals, the Magisterium of the Church, reminiscent of the Catholic teaching authority with the same name (cf. Bainvel), and the fact that Swiss Guards fight on the side of the Church (i.e. the personal guards of the Pope). In addition, the Consistorial Court of Discipline could be considered an allusion to the Papal Consistory in the Catholic Church, that is, a council comprising the Pope and the cardinals (cf. Papi). Despite Pullman's explicit use of Catholic elements, however, we cannot assume that he actually and exclusively refers to the Catholic Church, because he never mentions this institution in the trilogy.

As has been pointed out above, Pullman clearly separates his trilogy from traditional Christian fantasy by the explicit use of religious language. The aim of the following chapters is to show in which sense *His Dark Materials* differs from this tradition (in this thesis represented by *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Narnia* stories) in

aspects such as God or the Fall. In addition, if one considers that Pullman makes use of various Christian elements (some of them Catholic), then it is comprehensible to compare Pullman's approach to these elements with Christian teaching – as a point of reference, I will use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (*CCC*) and *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (various authors).

4.1 God

God is a character in *His Dark Materials*. However, he is not a traditionally Christian God, but an unreal one. In this chapter, I will discuss the nature of Pullman's god, his end, and the possible presence of a real God.

4.1.1 An unreal god

God is the centre in Christianity. According to the *CCC*, God does not need man, but he created him "in a plan of sheer goodness [...] to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, [and] to love him with all his strength" (*CCC, The life*). Therefore, God is central in Christianity and man's life is an invitation on the part of God to participate in His life. Thus, it is appropriate to begin the discussion of the religious elements in the trilogy with God.

The existence of a genuine God in Pullman's universe is uncertain; it is neither confirmed nor denied. King Ogunwe, Lord Asriel's ally, says that "[t]here may have been a creator, or there may not: we don't know" (*Amber* 210). However, there is a being that has tricked all others into believing that he is God, namely the so-called Authority: he is therefore an illegitimate ruler. Balthamos, an angel accompanying Lyra and Will on their quest, explains that

> [t]he Authority, God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty – those were all names he gave himself. He was never the creator. He was an angel like ourselves […] and the Authority was the first of all. He told those who came after him that he had created them, but it was a lie. (ibid. 32)

This angel is the god of the church (*Subtle* 45) and his dwelling is the Clouded Mountain. After numerous years, he has become old and weak, and has transferred his powers to Metatron, another angel.[36] This picture contrasts the Authority's past, when he was powerful and cruel – as will be explained later, he commanded that the dead

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[36] As will become clear later, Pullman has a primarily materialistic approach to human life. This is also reflected in the fact that the angels in the trilogy are physical beings. Traditional Christian teaching says that they have a spiritual nature and thus they have no mortal bodies (cf. Pope, *Angels*).

ghosts have to go to the land of the dead where they are eternally tortured by the harpies. Also, the Authority is now wretched: this becomes evident when Mrs Coulter encounters him, being carried away from his dwelling in a litter by a group of angels. He was "indescribably aged […] [and Mrs Coulter] had the impression of terrifying decrepitude, of a face sunken in wrinkles, of trembling hands and a mumbling mouth and rheumy eyes" (*Amber* 397). Shortly afterwards, he is rescued by the two protagonists from the attack of cliff-ghasts, i.e. leather-skinned flying beasts; and the demented, defenceless and whimpering angel is dissolved by the wind. This actually means the death of god in the trilogy. Hatlen (88) claims that Pullman shows us God in the way Nietzsche saw him: "a God who has been growing increasingly enfeebled for centuries." Hatlen argues that Pullman's message is the following: in the past, the term "God" represented a very influential reality in society; however, what is left of Him nowadays are the repressive institutions which acts in His name, namely the different churches, because God himself "has been dying for centuries" (ibid.).

The same author compares Pullman's god to Tolkien's: in contrast to Pullman's god, Tolkien's is less obvious but definitely present. The following two observations may serve as illustration of this fact. Hatlen explains that in *The Lord of the Rings,* God "is embodied in a hierarchical structure of interrelationships among created beings [...] [and] this harmonious hierarchical order *is* God" (77). Kocher explains that the Council of Elrond, which takes place at the beginning of book two in *The Fellowship of the Ring,* reflects the presence of a Greater Force. Some very wise persons in the West, namely Elrond himself, Gandalf and Galadriel, are summoned to this council, which is a decisive moment for Middle-earth because they decide what to do with the Ring. Kocher quotes what Elrond says:

> That is the purpose for which you are called hither. Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, strangers from distant lands. You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered that we who sit here, and none others, must now find council for the perils of the world. (*Fellowship* 259)

Let us come back to *His Dark Materials.* Metatron, the Regent of the Authority, is the only evil angel the reader learns about. He has extraordinary physical strength (*Amber* 380) and can read other people's minds – even Mrs Coulter's – and is highly intelligent (ibid. 405). Women are his only weak spot and this is why Mrs Coulter can impress him at the beginning, and, more importantly, this is the reason why she can lure him to the abyss, where she and Lord Asriel fight him and the three of them die. Otherwise, we

learn about several good angels, i.e. the ones that support Lord Asriel: they are invisible to humans in broad daylight and they have the ability to pass from one world to another because they can see the gateways.

4.1.2 Death of an unreal god

Leet (185-186) makes the following observation regarding the death of the Authority. In the third book we read the following description of this scene: "Only a few moments later he had vanished completely, and their last impression was of these eyes, blinking in wonder, and a sigh of the most profound and exhausted relief. Then he was gone: a mystery dissolving in mystery" (*Amber* 412). Leet argues that the Authority had been longing for this relief, i.e. his death, for a long time, and finally, it was made possible by Lyra and Will, who free him from his crystal box and thus he vanishes. What is more, according to Leet, Metatron did not grant the Authority this relief because the false ruler needed him as a justification for his own "'religious' policies" (Leet 186). The author claims that Pullman thus criticizes religious institutions which justify their actions with a God long dead.

In accordance with the uncertainty of God's existence mentioned above, Hartney (6) explains that in the trilogy God remains a Gnostic possibility; what is more, God is not dead at all. This, however, does not refer to Pullman's Authority, but to a truer God. Hartney quotes Rayment-Pickard, who writes the following in his book *The Devil's Account: Philip Pullman and Christianity*: "Pullman is presumably saying that religious power lies with human theocracies rather than with God himself. There is no real theological power, only theocratic power, the power of religious institutions" (qtd. in Hartney 6, Rayment-Pickard's emphasis). This assumption will be confirmed by other authors' insights into the trilogy, which will be quoted later. What is more, God is substituted by something else – this issue will be addressed in the next chapter.

Hartney (ibid.) discusses Pullman's openness for a distant Gnostic possibility of God, and quotes a 2004 discussion on the trilogy between Pullman and Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury. At that moment, Pullman is discussing the binary of the material and spiritual realm, and sees the material one disdained by Christianity:

[t]he word that covers some of these early creation narratives is gnostic - the Gnostic heresy, as it became once Christianity was sort of defined. The idea that the world we live in, the physical universe is actually a false thing, made by a false God, and the true God, our true home, our true spiritual home is infinitely distant, far off, a long, long way away from that. (*Dark Materials Debate*)

4.1.3 Presence and absence of God

Filmer-Davies wrote an article which is relevant in this context because it deals with the presence and absence of God in fantasy literature. She explored five fantasy works, namely Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising*, Alan Garner's *The Owl Service*, Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* and Le Guin's *Earthsea Tetralogy*. Filmer-Davies argues that, despite the fact that God is denied in various ways in these works, He is actually present. She explains that "Fantasy fictions ponder the nature of the world, the order of existence, and the hierarchies of being. They contemplate the possibility and the power of the supernatural and, in many cases, affirm, even when denying, the presence of God" (Filmer-Davies 72). In *Cat's Cradle*, for example, there is a God, but he is so ridiculous that by his presence he is actually denied. In other fantasy works, such as *The Owl Service*, God is present by means of qualities that are attributed to Him, such as the Comforter. In addition, Filmer-Davies (73) explains that human goodness and the hero's rejection of evil becomes valid and logical in the face of a good God. She concludes that the presence or reality of God is independent from the author's attitude regarding this issue – he or she can even give his or her work overtly atheistic characteristics; it rather depends on "a sense of presence that breaks through absence in matters of morality and judgment, mercy and compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation, kindness and comfort, depending upon the needs of the characters and the demands of the narrative itself" (ibid.).

In *His Dark Materials*, God is also denied, or at least remains a vague option. Despite the fact that He is indirectly negated by means of a tyrannical ruler who masquerades as the Creator, it can also be argued that God is present in the trilogy through some of His qualities, personified especially in Lyra. These qualities are addressed in the chapters "Egalitarian tendencies" and "Lyra"; what may strike the reader most is her caring and loving nature, as well as her readiness to sacrifice her life and future.

Regarding the possibility of God in the trilogy, Hartney (7) quotes Peter Hitchens, who asks the following questions:

> If there is no God, then who makes the rules of the supernatural world which Pullman creates, in which people have visible souls called daemons; magic knives cut holes between worlds and spectres devour life? How is it that the dead live on in a ghastly underworld of unending misery and torment, yet there is no heaven? (Hitchens)

Neither Hitchens nor Hartney answer these questions in the respective sources. The point Hitchens is making above is that there is no God behind all the Christian aspects mentioned in the quotation. In the next chapter, this issue is further discussed.

Exploring the existence of God in fantasy, I want to consider another relevant aspect, namely the opposition between good and evil. In *The Lord of the Rings* and in the *Narnia* stories the border between the two is very clear: Frodo and his helpers and Aslan and the children are on the respective good sides, and Sauron, Saruman, and the White Witch on the respective bad sides. Let us now reflect theologically on the relationship between the Christian God and the binary good/evil (cf. Toner). If God in the Christian sense exists, then He is an absolute, i.e. universal God. And if there is an absolute God, then the absolute Good also exists, because, according to Christian teaching, God is absolutely good. But what is the relation between good and evil? Sharpe (*Evil*) compares these two notions with the relationship between light and darkness and explains: "[a]s darkness is nothing but the absence of light, and is not produced by creation [i.e. by God], so evil is merely the defect of goodness." In other words, evil is a lack of goodness.

Applying the Christian God to a fantasy world, this means that there is an absolute moral point of reference – the epitome of goodness. Pullman presents us with a universe where God does not exist or is at best a vague possibility. I would argue that the lack of this moral point of reference is reflected in the fact that some of the more important characters in the trilogy are morally ambiguous. Hatlen (79) states that "[e]very time we imagine we've sorted out the good guys and the bad guys, Pullman pulls the rug out from under us." The moral ambiguity in Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel are two examples, discussed in the chapters "Villains in His Dark Materials" and "Lord Asriel". In contrast to the "metaphysical dualism" (good – evil) we find in *The Lord of the Rings*, Hatlen argues that Pullman's notions of good and evil are no "cosmic forces", but rather "describe certain potentials mixed together in every human being, and the relationship between them is worked out within the human heart" (Hatlen 80). This means that good and evil are relative notions within every human being, without an objective point of reference.

4.2 Dust

With the following chapter I intend to point out the central relevance of Dust. First, I will discuss its profound and at the same time multiple nature, as well as its religious implications. At the end, I will address the enemies of Dust. Above, it has been said that the spiritual or supernatural is the driving force in fantasy. This also applies to *His Dark Materials*.

4.2.1 Universal principle

The main contribution for the discussion of Dust comes from Bird, because she explores the philosophical and religious relevance of Dust. The author (191) claims that the trilogy reveals Pullman's longing for a universal foundation to build his world on: "an alternative reading of Pullman's narrative and its desire for one elemental – an absolute universal substance – is that it reveals the longing for a central point of reference." Bird goes on to describe Dust as the prime element in the trilogy, the "Total Being", the "First Cause" (ibid.), which is the origin of everything else. These attributes remind the reader strongly of God. There is an additional relevant detail: the Alethiometer, the truth-measure, seems to work with Dust because Lyra says that she thinks so (*Subtle* 91). If this is the case, Dust is connected to truth and consequently one can assume that Dust is true, which would be in agreement with what Pullman wants to communicate.

Bird (192) points out that it is precisely Dust that is the origin of the Authority (and the other angels). In addition, the universe is made of this principle: "under the term 'dark matter', Dust is the cosmic material from which the universe is composed" (ibid.). In addition, in *The Amber Spyglass* we learn that "sraf [i.e. the *mulefa* word for Dust] came from the stars" (*Amber* 289). Bird concludes that Dust is a pantheistic principle[37]. Pullman describes the evolution of the creation we find in the trilogy and states that

> [i]n the sort of creation myth that underlies His Dark Materials, which is never fully explicit but which I was discovering as I was writing it, the notion is that there never was a Creator, instead there was matter, and this matter gradually became conscious of itself and developed Dust. Dust sort of precedes from matter as a way of understanding itself. (*Dark Materials Debate*)

This quotation by the creator of the trilogy himself reveals that the actual universal and original essence of all things is matter, which is the basis for Dust. The distinctive

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[37] Levine (*Pantheism*) defines pantheism, in a broad sense, as the philosophy in which "God is everything and everything is God … the world is either identical with God or in some way a self-expression of his nature."

feature of Dust is that it is a combination of spirit and matter – considering that in traditional fantasy the spiritual or supernatural is the driving force, Dust is a novelty in the genre.

4.2.2 A multiple concept

In accordance with Pullman's explanation above, we read in the third part of the trilogy that "Dust is only a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself [...] It seeks to know more about itself, and Dust is formed" (*Amber* 31). In other words, Dust comes into being when consciousness is created or increased. This assumption is confirmed by the wise angel Xaphania: "Conscious beings make Dust – they renew it all the time, by thinking and feeling and reflecting, by gaining wisdom and passing it on" (496). Thus, Dust is a specification of matter; without it, we could say, matter is undefined and therefore the form of matter which really matters is its conscious form, i.e. Dust. Xaphania makes clear that Dust, apart from being conscious, has two further aspects: knowledge and love towards others. Addressing Lyra and Will, Xaphania explains that

> if you help everyone else in your worlds to do that [i.e. to make Dust], by helping them to learn and understand about themselves and each other and the way everything works, and by showing them how to be kind instead of cruel, and patient instead of hasty, and cheerful instead of surly, and above all how to keep their minds open and free and curious... Then they will renew enough [Dust]. (ibid.)

Gray (174) points out that Pullman takes a revolutionary approach to the concept of dust that we find in the Book of Genesis. Towards the end of *Northern Lights*, Lord Asriel explains Dust to Lyra and points out the following passage from Genesis: "'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return...'" (371). Genesis refers to dust in the literal sense; Pullman, however, makes it the prime entity of his universe.

We have already seen that Dust is a multiple concept which takes many forms. Bird (195) explains that in the three parts of the trilogy Dust refers to different things: in the physical realm, it stands for original sin and conscious sexuality; above, we have seen that it is used in a literal sense; in a metaphorical sense, it refers to the "pure spirit itself: particles of consciousness, rebel angels, God, self-awareness and wisdom" (ibid. 196). The various forms of Dust are also reflected in the fact that it is called differently according to the world the reader is in: in Lyra's world it is called Dust, in Will's it is "Shadows" and the mulefa call it "sraf". Bird argues that the changing appearance of

Dust prevents a comprehensive interpretation of its nature and function. It is remarkable that literal dust is characterized by "intrinsic amorphousness", as the author points out (196). Thus, it is widely adaptable and particularly appropriate for the concept Pullman uses.

4.2.3 A new theology?

Considering the points mentioned in the last chapter, Bird (195-196) concludes that due to the "radical instability of Dust [...] what the trilogy actually presents is a shifting field of relations in which there is no secure and stable point." And entering the philosophical sphere, the author declares that "[f]or this reason, Dust can never be the final explanation" – the system of Dust constructed by Pullman is contingent and uncertain and thus cannot be considered universally true. Relating the trilogy to contemporary philosophy, Bird (197) argues that *His Dark Materials* is not postmodern in a pluralistic sense, because this would imply at least two universal essences, but there is only one. Pullman's emphasis on one singular entity as a foundation for everything implies a rejection of dualistic[38] and pluralistic worldviews. At the same time, however – and this is the paradox – Pullman says that there are numerous different and maybe incomparable types of things included in one universe, all of equal importance, because they are all Dust (cf. Bird 195-197).

Bird asks the question whether Pullman's Dust can be considered a new theology in the sense that it is the origin of everything. It is helpful to remember that Dust is pantheistic, which means that it is present in everything. Pantheism does not imply, however, that Dust is the origin of everything. Consequently, pantheism does not fully describe the nature of Dust. At this stage, I would like to make a few explanations about pantheism. In philosophy, it has often been argued that pantheism is a form of atheism, if it is taken for granted that God is personalistic, i.e. God is a person (cf. Levine). However, there is one more aspect that needs consideration: as Artigas (1996) explains, pantheism seems to answer the ultimate questions we ask about the universe. If we acknowledge that God is actively present in the whole universe, i.e. in every little aspect of it, then we cannot identify Him – neither in the individual things, nor in things as a whole – because all things are limited; and God, speaking in the strict (and Christian) sense, has no limits. In other words, God cannot be split up into smaller units. As a consequence, pantheism is a kind of atheism, and therefore Dust is also a kind of

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[38] The term "dualism" refers to the differentiation between body and soul, or the spiritual and the material realms in the world (cf. Bird 195 and King 116).

atheism. At the same time, this conclusion loses importance in the light of the insight mentioned above, namely that Dust is no universal truth. So as a conclusion one can state that Dust is not a satisfactory answer regarding the origin of the universe and the things inherent in it; this is in accordance with King Ogunwe's statement above, which leaves the possibility of a Creator open.

In this chapter, the nature of Pullman's Dust has been explored. It is the prime element of the trilogy, pantheistic and conscious, and takes material and spiritual forms. As the concept of pantheism implies, it takes the forms of all things present in a universe and is therefore unstable, uncertain and contingent. As a consequence, it cannot be the ultimate foundation for everything and thus does not challenge God.

According to Bird (189), "Pullman [...] uses the concept of Dust in order to disturb traditional Christian hierarchies [...] namely [...] the value-laden binaries of innocence-experience, good-evil, and spirit-matter that lie at the core of the Fall-myth." Bird is referring to the Christian teaching that one of the two respective terms is better or more valuable than the other. The author makes the point that due to the fact that Dust comprises both realms, the physical and the spiritual one, they are equally important, in contrast to Christian teaching.

4.2.4 Enemies of Dust

After having discussed the nature and the philosophical and religious implications of Dust, one more aspect needs to be addressed, namely its enemies. In Lyra's and Will's time the number of gaps between different worlds is very large. These have been created by philosophers and by Will, mainly by means of the Subtle Knife. This has a fatal consequence: Dust drifts out of the worlds through these gaps. More importantly, every time a gap is cut between two worlds, a Spectre is created. Spectres are horrible ghosts only visible to adults, and they increase in size and number by feeding on Dust and on the daemons of adults. They are also called "Spectres of Indifference" because their objective it to eliminate all "conscious and informed interest in the world" (*Subtle* 279). Therefore, these creatures are the enemies of knowledge and mature people. As soon as they encounter an adult, they dart at him and devour his daemon, leaving the person in a state of indifferent trance. Daemons are their prey because one of their functions is to help humans gain wisdom, i.e. knowledge (*Amber* 476). Angelica, a girl in Cittagazze, has witnessed adults being attacked by Spectres and describes it (as she is a child, she cannot see the Spectres):

> They eat the life out of them [...] I don't want to be grown-up, for sure. At first they know it is happening, and they're afraid, they cry and cry, they try to look away and pretend it ain happening [...] It's too late [...] Then they get pale and they stop moving. They still alive, but it's like they been eaten out from inside. You look in they eyes, you see the back of they heads. Ain nothing there. (ibid.)

So far, we have seen that Dust has two enemies: the gaps between the worlds and the Spectres. A further important champion of Dust-elimination is the Church, as explained in the chapter "The Oblation Board". Generally speaking, the consequence of its eradication is horrible: when Dust disappears from a place, all its conscious beings cease to be (*Amber* 453) – as has been explained above, Dust is the basis of all (conscious) beings.

4.3 The fall

The notion of the fall is a central element in the trilogy. Pullman provides us with two accounts of it, which are both alternatives to the Fall we find in the Book of Genesis. As will become clear in this chapter, the author's interpretation of this event has far-reaching consequences.

4.3.1 Two accounts

In the preceding chapters it has been explained that Dust is conscious and that it is the source of the angels. This is also reflected in the fact that when the physicist Dr Mary Malone attempts to contact Shadows (i.e. Dust, on which she has been investigating for some years) via the computer in her laboratory, angels suddenly respond. She types questions into her computer and receives immediate answers that appear on the screen. Dr Malone types this: "The mind that is answering these questions isn't human, is it?" The answer is: "No. But humans have always known us." She goes on: "Us? There's more than one of you?" – "Uncountable billions." – "But what are you?" – "Angels" (*Subtle* 248). Remembering what she learnt about angels as a Catholic nun, namely that these beings are angels in terms of their office, but spirits in terms of their nature, she continues asking: "Are you creatures of Shadow-matter? Of Dust?" – "Structures. Compexifications. Yes." – "And Shadow-matter is what we have called spirit?" – "From what we are, spirit; from what we do, matter. Matter and spirit are one" (ibid. 249). This is a confirmation that Dust is the common foundation for both matter and spirit.

After this, Dr Malone learns that the angels have interfered in human evolution because of vengeance and the physicist remembers: "Vengeance for – oh! Rebel angels!

After the war in Heaven – Satan and the garden of Eden – but it isn't true, is it? Is that what you – but why?" The immediate answer is: "Find the girl and the boy. Waste no more time. You must play the serpent" (ibid.). This quotation leads us to original sin, i.e. the first sin, committed by Adam and Eve. In *The Amber Spyglass*, the fall through original sin is described analogously in the mulefa's discovery and use of sraf, another word for Dust. Atal, When Dr Malone's has already learnt some of the mulefa language, her mulefa-friend Atal tells her that before discovering sraf they did not know anything. One day, a female mulefa encountered a snake in a seed-pod. Atal explains:

> The story tells that the snake said What do you know? What do you remember? What do you see ahead? And she said Nothing, nothing, nothing. So the snake said Put your foot through the hole in the seed-pod where I was playing, and you will become wise. So she put a foot in where the snake had been. And the oil entered her foot and made her see more clearly than before, and the first thing she saw was the sraf. It was so strange and pleasant that she wanted to share it at once with all her kindred. So she and her mate took the first ones and they discovered that they knew who they were [...] They gave each other names. They named themselves mulefa. They named [...] all the creatures and plants. (*Amber* 224)

This passage reminds the reader of the respective one in the Book of Genesis: the snake, the issue of gaining wisdom, female and male together, and their first discovery after having taken from offer. There is a decisive difference, however: the female mulefa does not act against the will of a Creator, and therefore this account exhibits no tension at all and the mulefa's behaviour seems only logical and a good thing.

There is a further account of the Fall, namely the one of Lyra and Will. As becomes clear in the course of the trilogy, Lyra is the new Eve and Will is the new Adam[39], and the temptation is supposed to be brought about by Dr Malone (*Subtle* 313). Fra Pavel, one of the Church's priests, reports what a tortured witch confessed about Lyra's destiny: "if it comes about that the child is tempted, as Eve was, then she is likely to fall. On the outcome will depend… everything. And if this temptation does take place, and if the child gives in, then Dust and sin will triumph" (*Amber* 68). The phrase "On the outcome will depend... everything" has two meanings: for Metatron and the church it means the loss of power, for the rest of the universe it means life.

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[39] Harris Russell (212) calls Lyra the "new Eve". The terms "new Eve" and "new Adam" are ambiguous: in Pullman's trilogy they refer to the two persons who bring about a new fall, and in traditional Christian teaching these two terms refer to the Virgin Mary and to Jesus Christ, respectively: this is because Jesus Christ brings Redemption from the consequences of the first Fall, and his mother Mary also contributes considerably to Salvation. In contrast, Pullman inverts these terms.

4.3.2 A different interpretation

Indeed, the child gives in: after Dr Malone has told Will and Lyra how it is to fall in love, they realise that this is exactly what has happened to them. In the meantime, the priest Father Gomez, whose task is to prevent the two protagonists from falling into temptation, has found them and is about to kill them with a rifle, when suddenly the invisible angel Balthamos hurts him by catching his daemon and forcing the priest to follow him[40] (*Amber* 467-468). Thus, Lyra can kiss Will and the fall has happened.[41] Pullman's inversion of the Christian teaching becomes clear again: as Gray (164) points out, Lyra and Will bring about the restoration of "the true image of what human beings always could be" (*Amber* 497). In his article about religious subversion in *His Dark Materials*, Schweizer refers to Christopher Hitchens, who explains that "Pullman's daring heresy is to rewrite the Fall as if it were an emancipation [...] Our freedom and happiness depend on that 'first disobedience'" (qtd. in Schweizer 162). As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the fall means the decrease of the church's power. At the end of the trilogy we can read that after the fall this power "had waned as quickly as it had grown: upheavals in the Magisterium had toppled the zealots and brought more liberal factions into power. The General Oblation Board had been dissolved; the Consistorial Court of Discipline was confused and leaderless" (*Amber* 515).

Like Harris Russell on the preceding page, King (116) suggests that, in the way that traditional theology sees Christ as a second Adam in the sense that He atones for the first sin committed by Adam and all its consequences, Lyra might be considered a second Eve: "Pullman offers a second mother [...] who redeems not the soul, but the body. Her passion provides a kind of redemptive carnality." In this context the following has to be explained: Pullman criticizes the relevance given to afterlife in Christianity because he does not believe in it. Therefore he stresses the importance of the world we live in and of the human body. Lyall (*The Man*) states that Pullman believes in the "republic of heaven", to be explained in the eponymous chapter, where people lead the richest possible life because it is the only one they have. Pullman says: "I wanted to emphasize the simple physical truth of things, the absolute primacy of the

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[40] Touching another person's deamon is taboo, unless there is a close relationship. This is because it means intruding his or her private sphere, and, as becomes clear in the scene described above, it can also hurt, especially if the daemon is pulled away from the respective person.

[41] Original sin in the Book of Genesis consists in the breaking of God's commandment not to eat from the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. In Pullman's version, it refers to falling in love and kissing. More generally speaking, it seems that in Pullman's Fall-myth sexuality plays a central role, in contrast to the Christian Fall, in which there is no explicit mentioning of sexuality.

material life, rather than the spiritual or afterlife" (qtd. in Lyall). Therefore, Pullman focuses on the redemption of the body.

King goes on the say that this does not mean that Pullman negates the existence of human virtues such as courage and love – traditionally, these have been considered expressions of the immortal soul; rather, Pullman emphasizes that these virtues are exclusively manifested in the physical realm, i.e. through human bodies – they are materialized, so to speak; Pullman's claim that the human body is the means for expressing virtues is comprehensible; however, keeping in mind Pullman's statement of the "absolute primacy of the material life, rather than the spiritual or afterlife", one might hastily conclude that Pullman claims that there is *no* afterlife, which he does not do. If he did, then it would be contradictory to accept the existence of an immortal human soul, which is immaterial and thus cannot die like the body does. The second noteworthy aspect in King's statement above is that Pullman inverts the term "passion": in the context of the Christian Fall it is Christ's Passion which brings redemption for humanity. In Pullman's fall, however, passion refers to the love Lyra and Will feel towards each other for the first time.

Gray (1) agrees that Pullman's interpretation of the Fall is that it was something positive. The author compares this to the Christian notion of the Fall as "felix culpa" ("happy fault"). I would like to add that this term only refers to the redemptive work of Christ as an answer to the Fall – the fault is positive in the sense that Jesus Christ became man: "In the incarnation […] original sin is destroyed and its power is broken […] The Incarnation makes the doctrine of original sin a doctrine of hope" (Otto 790). The notion of felix culpa does not refer to the Fall as such, which, according to Christian teaching, was undoubtedly evil.

In this paragraph I would like to explain the Catholic teaching regarding the Fall in more detail (cf. *The Fall*) and compare it to Pullman's fall. The Church teaches that original sin caused the death of human beings regarding their friendship with God. Pullman claims that it brings life. According to the Church, every evil in the world, such as envy, wars etc., can only be understood in connection with the Fall of Adam and Eve because they are its consequence. This is because all humans, as descendants from Adam and Eve, are born with the inherited negative inclinations that come from original sin. At the beginning, Adam and Eve lived in friendship with God. Then, original sin

caused the death of the human soul.[42] According to Christian teaching, the true image of man, destroyed by original sin and all its consequences, has to be restored through the redemption of Christ, whereas Pullman's fall restores humanity's true image. In summary, Pullman inverts Christian teaching and depicts the respective evil as good and vice versa.

After Lyra's and Will's fall, Dust ceases to drift out of the world they are in: "The terrible flood of Dust in the sky had stopped flowing. It wasn't still, by any means [...] but it wasn't flowing away any more. In fact, if anything, it was falling like snowflakes" (473). We already know what the consequences of this change are; a further one is that plants, especially the seed-pods, vital for the mulefa, will be fertilized again – this is a further function of Dust.

We also find a parallel of the Fall in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Edmund, one of the main characters, starts to dialogue with the White Witch, despite his initial dislike, and eats from the Turkish delight she offers him. What is more, the enchanted sweet makes him addicted in the sense that it dominates all his thoughts so that he has no other desire than getting more of it – this is how the Witch manages to see him again. Regarding *The Lord of the Rings*, temptation and fall are also important themes. Sauron, the creator of the "one Ring to rule them all", intends to control all others and therefore transfers parts of himself to this Ring. This is the reasons why the tendency to rule over others is evident in all the bearers of this Ring. Kocher (56-57) explains that the Ring is the temptation to subject others to his or her own will: "any gifted person who elects to make the Ring his permanent mode of action inevitably becomes another Dark Lord." These examples show that in Tolkien's and Lewis' fantasy works the Fall is described in an orthodox way, i.e. according to Christian teaching, in contrast to Pullman's account and interpretation of events.

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[42] This statement needs further explanation. According to Catholic teaching, Sin is always an offence towards God, because it is disobedience to God's commandments. The important point is that God has given these rules to man as guidelines for a happy life – when he or she follows them, they will be happy – God, the Father of his human beings, has created us knows what is best for us. What is more, He loves us infinitely. Now, if a person chooses to act against the commandments, he or she will not be happy and thus rejects the loving Will of God. The Church distinguishes two types of sin: venial sins, i.e. they weaken but do not destroy friendship with God, and capital sins, also called deadly sins because they destroy the friendship with God and thus bring about the death of the human soul in this respect (cf. *CCC*, passim).

4.4 Lyra

Lyra is the central character in the trilogy. The reasons for this will become clear in the course of this chapter: I will discuss her destiny and her quest, one particularly striking character trait, and her gaining of knowledge.

4.4.1 Destiny

Due to various prophecies made by different characters in the trilogy, the reader becomes aware of the central role Lyra plays in the future of the universe. Dr Lanselius, the witch consul in Lyra's world, assumes that Lyra is the child the witches have been waiting for. Talking about a prophecy from the witches, he says: "The witches have talked about this child for centuries past [...]", a child "who has a great destiny [...] Without this child we shall all die" (*Northern* 175). Additionally, an organization of the Church, namely the Society of the Work of the Holy Spirit, believes her to be "the most important child who has ever lived" and that everything is dependent on her behaviour in the imminent crisis (*Amber* 59). A cardinal and some priests refer to another relevant prophecy about the child from a witch: "The witch has hinted at something extraordinary [...] I dare not believe what I think it means. If it's true, it places on us the most terrible responsibility men and women have ever faced" (*Subtle* 36).

4.4.2 Her quest

Generally speaking, Lyra's quest is one for liberation, such as regarding the kidnapped children from the research centre in Bolvangar. In the course of her stay there, she does not only free the children but also the daemons that have been cut from the children by means of intercision. This part of her role is further confirmed in the land of the dead, where she liberates the ghosts of the dead entrapped there. These two types of liberation remind the reader strongly of Jesus Christ, the Son of God in Christianity, who descended to the world of the dead in order to set the just people free (*CCC*, *Christ descended*). This example leads us to further comparison with Jesus Christ. Intended or not, Pullman creates an allusion to a scene in the Gospels. When talking about the protagonist, and having mentioned that the witches have been waiting for a child for centuries, Dr Lanselius says the following, referring to Lyra: "I am glad to have seen this child before I die" (*Northern* 175-176). This calls to mind the scene in the Gospel of St. Luke where the old, pious and just man Simeon, led by the Holy Spirit, goes into the temple in Jerusalem in order to see the Son of God before he dies. The Virgin Mary has brought the baby Jesus into the temple. The passage goes as follows:

> He looked forward to the time when the Lord would comfort Israel […] Simeon took the child in his arms and blessed God, saying, "Now, O Lord, you can dismiss your servant in peace, for you have fulfilled your word and my eyes have seen your salvation, which you display for all the people to see. Here is the light you will reveal to the nations and the glory of your people Israel." (Luke 2, 25-32)

In order to understand Simeon's happiness, one has to be aware of the great longing of the Jews in the Old Testament for the Messiah, who "will bring salvation [...] triumphing over their enemies by force of arms" (Geddes). This quotation can be compared to the witches' longing for the chosen child, expressed in a prophecy. Simeon statement is also a prediction of the future.

Lyra's liberation-quest comprises various parts. Above, the liberation from Bolvangar, from the land of the dead, and the fall (as the liberation from the death of all conscious beings) have been addressed. Regarding the liberation from imprisonment and death, the quest reminds us of what Jesus Christ has done, although it has to be noted that Pullman's fall is an inversion of the Christian Fall. In addition, Pullman's fall is not the end of Lyra's and Will's quest – Dust has been prevented from escaping from the worlds, but the republic of heaven has to be spread and Dust increased.[43] In order to complete this part of the quest together, Lyra and Will have to return to their respective worlds, which requires their separation. This means a great sacrifice for both of them, after having fallen in love shortly before. Still, they must separate because if they left a gap between their worlds open in order to be able to physically meet, Dust could escape and thus their quest would not be completed.

4.4.3 Truth

Lyra's quest is not only characterized by the liberation of others, but also by a longing for knowledge. Harris Russell (217-218) establishes a link between the central aspect of gaining knowledge in the Christian Fall and Lyra's quest.[44] When she is younger, her knowledge is mainly "experiential", such as exploring the roofs of Jordan College in Oxford. Later, it becomes more abstract, e.g. knowledge regarding Dust. Also, in the course of the trilogy, the reader realises that Lyra's opinion is widely accepted due to the fact that she is well-informed about important issues: one example is the scene in which the gyptians are discussing what to do about the kidnapping of their children:

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[43] The republic of heaven will be described in the eponymous chapter.
[44] The serpent said to Eve: "the day you eat it [the forbidden fruit], your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3,5)

they take her opinion seriously, despite the fact that she is a child and the rest of the company are adults (*Northern* 204).

Leet (183) discusses Lyra's movement from innocence to experience/ consciousness in the context of truth. At first, she is an innocent child who is ignorant of the central issues of the universe. When she is eavesdropping Lord Asriel, who is giving a presentation to some Oxford scholars at the beginning of book one, she cannot make sense of what she hears: "Lyra was following this with puzzlement: what the Palmerian Professor said made no sense at all. Besides, she was impatient to hear more about scalping and the Northern Lights and that mysterious Dust" (*Northern* 28). Nevertheless, she can engage her quest by learning from others and, most importantly, from the Alethiometer. Gray (164) calls this gift of intuitive Alethiometer-reading an innocent grace. It is striking that after the fall Lyra has lost this grace. This is reminiscent of the Christian Fall in which Adam and Eve, after having sinned, lose supernatural grace. When Lyra laments the loss of this grace, the wise angel Xaphania consoles her:

> You read it by grace [...] and you can regain it by work [...] your reading will be even better then, after a lifetime of thought and effort, because it will come from conscious understanding. Grace attained like that is deeper and fuller than grace that comes freely, and furthermore, once you've gained it, it will not leave you. (*Amber* 495)

This quotation makes clear that innocent grace is inferior to the "grace" gained through personal effort. Leet (183) talks about childhood innocence and adult experience in this context. Conscious learning and using of the Alethiometer implies knowledge, not just intuition; what is more, here we are talking about knowledge regarding the Alethiometer, the truth-measure. Thus, it is knowledge about the truth. Lyra's introduction in the knowledge of truth starts with the fall, through which she learns about the truth of love. Gray (182) explains that Lyra's fall "is precisely the great rite of passage, the initiation into the journey towards maturity and wisdom, both sexual, intellectual and spiritual." Therefore, Pullman's fall is also an inversion of Christian teaching in the sense that it leads to the knowledge of truth. In contrast, the Christian Fall, resulting from Satan's lie that the Adam and Eve "will be like gods, knowing good and evil", separates them from God, the epitome of Truth.

4.5 The Republic of Heaven

After having discussed various parts of the liberation-quest in the chapter "Destiny", one component remains to be dealt with, namely the Republic of Heaven. King Ogunwe, Lord Asriel's ally, expresses his pride to support him in what he does and explains what this republic is:

> Lord Asriel is 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. (*Amber* 211)

This quotation contrasts the kingdom of heaven with the republic of heaven; the latter is an entity which Lord Asriel intends to establish and which Metatron seeks to destroy. We learn from Baruch, one of Will's companions, that its destruction is the first step towards the implementation of an inquisition for all times that is under Metatron's direct control – for, according to Baruch, Metatron thinks that "[t]he churches in every world are corrupt and weak […] [and] they compromise too readily" (*Amber* 61). Therefore, Metatron wants to ensure his control over the whole universe by controlling it more directly.

In order to promote the establishment of the republic of heaven, Lord Asriel has built a fortress at the edge of the world, which will be attacked later by all the forces allied to the Church. In this fortress he is preparing for the war against the Authority – only a victory makes the establishment of his republic possible. In fact, this part of the quest is also (though partly) achieved. One decisive moment in the confrontation between good and evil, is the following one: Lord Asriel and Mrs Coulter, after having fought on opposing sides for the majority of the trilogy, finally join forces and lure Metatron to the abyss where they overcome him, but also lose their own lives.

More important for the establishment of this the republic, however, is the fall: as Fra Pavel explains above, if this fall happens, then Dust will win – in other words, in the fall the foundations for the republic of heaven are laid. After Lord Asriel's death, the promotion of the republic of heaven has to be put into practice by Lyra and Will. Gray (165) points out that the ultimate triumph is still to come and will be achieved through work; he explains that the "so-called Fall of Christian tradition is thus presented by Pullman as a decisive, if ultimately provisional, victory; if the Fall is the great

catastrophe of traditional [...] Christianity, then in Pullman's version it is the great *eucatastrophe*."

Lyra explains that the building of this republic requires the following: "No one could [build it], if they put themselves first. We have to be all those difficult things like cheerful and kind and curious and brave and patient, and we've got to study and think, and work hard, all of us, in all our different worlds, and then we'll build [...] [t]he republic of heaven" (*Amber* 522).[45] Its foundation is laid through the fall, but its building in the various worlds needs to be promoted in the future. In addition, it is necessary to prevent Dust from disappearing, by closing all the gaps between the worlds except for one, through which the ghosts in the land of the dead can escape from there; A further requirement is the creation of Dust by passing on knowledge and by being kind to others and loving them.

The republic of heaven is a realm that is located in the worlds of the protagonists. The question is to what extent it resembles the Kingdom of heaven. As regards one of the Kingdom's traits, namely eternity, the following can be said: what we know is that the republic is founded at the end of the trilogy; we cannot predict how long it will exist: its future depends on the increase of Dust and on the power of future enemies. In principle, its universal basis Dust is a promising foundation. The republic of heaven also resembles the Kingdom of Heaven in the sense that it is built by loving others.

As has been explained in the previous chapter, Pullman opposes the kingdom of heaven with his republic of heaven. The central difference is that in the latter there is no ruler such as God or the Church. As Pope (*Kingdom*) points out, the "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven" in Catholic teaching is the summary of doctrine of the Old Testament, but also means ruling, and is thus the opposite of Pullman's republic. Pope explains that in the New Testament, the Kingdom of Heaven, or Kingdom of God, has many meanings:

> The kingdom of God means, then, the ruling of God in our hearts; it means those principles which separate us off [sic] from the kingdom of the world and the devil; it means the benign sway of grace; it means the Church as that Divine institution whereby we may make sure of attaining the spirit of Christ and so win that ultimate kingdom of God Where [sic] He reigns without end in "the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." (Pope, *Kingdom*)

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[45] By the way, the virtues mentioned in this quotation (apart from curious maybe) are all relevant for a Christian, because Jesus Christ lived these virtues and thus gave us a model to imitate. In this sense, God is again reflected in the desirable virtues that are needed for the building of the republic of heaven.

This quotation makes clear that the republic of heaven is an inversion of the Kingdom of Heaven in the sense that there is no Church and that it is an immanent realm, opposed to the Kingdom of Heaven, which (among other meanings) refers to a transcendent one. We find another striking inversion of Christian teaching in the fact that Pullman's republic begins with what in a way ends the Kingdom of God in the hearts of Adam and Eve, namely disobedience to God (i.e. the opposite of God's ruling in our hearts, see quotation above), and also means the loss of His Grace.

4.6 Afterlife

In *His Dark Materials* there is afterlife: not in the form of heaven and hell, but in the „land of the dead". As Schweizer (165) points out, it is described as "a prison camp" which the "Authority established in the early years" (*Amber* 33). This is no pleasant place at all, but a grey and dreary location in which the ghosts of the dead long for liberation. If they were not freed from it by Lyra and Will, they would be entrapped there forever. When Lyra and her friend Roger reunite in the land of the dead, the boy says: "I been wishing I could, and wishing so hard… Just wishing I could get out, me and all the other dead 'uns, cause this is a terrible place, Lyra, it's hopeless, and there's no change when you're dead" (ibid. 308). The ghosts long for liberation from their sad state and from the terror of the harpies, horrible creatures that were allowed by the Authority to do the following, as Roger explains:

> and them bird-things… You know what they do? They wait till you're resting – you can't never sleep properly, you just sort of doze, and they come up quiet beside you and they whisper all the bad things you ever did when you was alive, so you can't forget 'em. They know all the worst things about you, they know how to make you feel horrible, just thinking of all the stupid things and bad things you ever did. And all the greedy and unkind thoughts you ever had, they know 'em all, and they shame you up and they make you feel sick with yourself… But you can't get away from 'em. (ibid.)

I assume that all the aspects of the land of the dead mentioned above make the reader rather think of hell than of heaven. According to Catholic teaching (Hontheim, *Hell*), it is "the place of punishment for the damned". Hell lasts forever and the most painful aspect is the eternal separation from God. After having read Roger's description, one may suggest that Pullman refers to the bad conscience one has after having done something immoral. This would then be Pullman's negative critic of it.[46] As explained

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[46] In contrast to Pullman's view on human moral conscience, the Catholic Church (*CCC*, *Moral conscience*) teaches that this conscience is oriented according to a law that "man has not laid upon himself". It is the law inscribed in the human heart by the Creator, and the voice of this conscience calls man to do good and to avoid evil. "His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is

in the chapter "God", Pullman does not believe in afterlife. The depiction of the land of the dead corresponds to this view. What is more, the ghosts of all people go there, the faithful of the church as well as all other people. Baruch says to Lyra and Will that the churches "tell their believers that they'll live in Heaven, but that's a lie" (ibid. 33). Even a martyr has to go there, like all the other people, regardless of what they have done in their lives.

Lyra and Will free the ghosts from the land of the dead. After having consulted the Alethiometer, Lyra explains what happens when the ghosts leave this land: "This is what'll happen […] When you go out of here, all the particles that make you up will loosen and float apart […] They are part of everything […] You'll drift apart, it's true, but you'll be out in the open, part of everything alive again" (*Amber* 319-320). From this quotation it can be concluded that the ghosts of human beings, after having passed through the land of the dead and after having escaped through the gap created by Will, become a part of Dust, the principle of everything.

In *Narnia* there is also afterlife, but an orthodox one in the Christian sense. As Wilson (176-177) explains, there is a new Narnia to which the children pass after their death in a railway accident in *The Last Battle*, the last of the seven books. The children "discover that the worlds they knew before – both their own world and Narnia – are just shadows of the ultimate reality, heaven, which incorporates the true essence of all worlds and is ruled by the one true creator" (ibid.). Regarding afterlife in *The Lord of the Rings*, Kocher (51) states that there is no explicit reference, but that the trilogy is full of allusions to a life after death. As an example, the author mentions this: "the dying Aragorn, when taking leave of Arwen, encourages her to believe that they will meet again: 'Behold! we are not bound forever to the circles of the world, and beyond them is more than memory'" (ibid.).

4.7 Lord Asriel

Lord Asriel, one of the main characters in the trilogy, is clearly ambiguous: in the coming paragraphs it will be described why it is hard to allocate him either on the good or the evil side. In the trilogy there are explicit characterizations that portray him in a positive light: he has helped the gyptians in various ways and this is why one of these people points out that it is a shame to forget all the favours he has done them (*Northern*

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alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths" (ibid.). In other words, the Catholic Church teaches that the conscience is a protection from all bad things that God the loving Father wants to keep from his human beings.

136). Although Dr Lanselius, the consul of the witches, does not know him very well, but affirms his "ardent and powerful nature", and does not consider him a despotic ruler (*Subtle* 42). Probably the most reliable reference comes from his personal servant Thorold; the problem is that he also gives an ambiguous description: "with one part of me, I say he is mad, wicked, deranged. Yet with another part I think, he's Lord Asriel, he's not like other men" (ibid. 47). Moreover, the reader finds important implicit characterization when he considers his actions. First and foremost, he kills Lyra's best and innocent friend Roger in order to open a gap into another world where he wants to go. In addition, his daughter Lyra does not really trust him (*Amber* 167), which is a rather important point when keeping in mind that she is the good hero-protagonist – the reader will probably identify with her views. However, it also has to be pointed out that Lord Asriel has numerous supporters in this war against the Authority and its forces, and more importantly, they are all portrayed in a positive light: King Ogunwe and his fighters, a number of angels, such as Balthamos and Baruch, the Gallivespians, a number of witches, and many, many more (*Subtle* 269-270). Ruta Skadi, the queen of a witch-clan, who helps Lyra on her quest, is certain about the goodness of Lord Asriel's plan and tries to win her clan for it, by saying that

> [h]e [Asriel] showed me that to rebel was right and just, when you consider what the agents of the Authority did in his name... And I thought of the Bolvangar children, and the other terrible mutilations I have seen in our own south-lands; and he told me of many more hideous cruelties [...] how they capture witches in some worlds, and burn them alive, sisters, yes witches like ourselves [...] He opened my eyes. He showed me [...] cruelties and horrors [...] all designed to destroy the joys and the truthfulness of life. (*Subtle* 271)

There are two reasons for Lord Asriel's numerous supporters: one is the conviction that his doings are right and just, and the second one is that many believe that due to his great power he is the only person who can actually triumph over Metatron and the church. Thorold is impressed by his power and reports that his lord is disappointed in the angels who rebelled for the first time and were thrown out of heaven. Thorold says that

> [t]hey failed, you see, that's the point. They couldn't do it. And they had the power of angels. Lord Asriel is just a man, with human power, no more than that. But his ambition is limitless. He dares to do what men and women don't even dare to think [...] If it was ever going to be possible, it'd be done by him and by no one else. (ibid. 47)

Ruta Skadi, being more than 400 years old, claims that Lord Asriel is younger than the witches but still has started building his fortress before the witches' birth. She concludes

that he must be capable of controlling time (ibid. 269). However, this is never confirmed in the trilogy. The points mentioned above show that Lord Asriel is both mysterious and powerful. His plan is to fight the Authority and to establish the republic of heaven. According to Will's father, the shaman John Parry, this is the greatest undertaking in whole human history (ibid. 215). It is also a war against the institution related to the Authority, the Church. Lord Asriel hates everything related to it, e.g. religious and the sacraments (e.g. ibid. 45). In a Christian context, considering what has been said about the revolt against the Authority, Lord Asriel is reminiscent of Satan. However, this equation lacks foundation due to the fact that Pullman's character is morally ambiguous.

4.8 Daemons

Daemons play an important role in the trilogy because they are the souls of their respective human or human-like beings: we find them in humans and witches. This, together with some other characteristics, has been explained in the chapter "Animals". Pullman uses a rather irritating name, as Will rightly points out when he learns about them: "In my world demon means... It means devil, something evil" (*Subtle* 21) – this probably also reflects the reader's association. According to Catholic teaching, the term "demon" refers to the fallen angels and their chief, the devil (cf. Knight, *Demons*). Pullman contrasts demons with his daemons, whose purpose is to help their humans, and to give them guidance and encouragement to gain wisdom (*Amber* 476).

Despite the fact that Pullman's daemon is a person's soul, it is also reminiscent of the Guardian Angel, a relevant spiritual being in Christianity as well as in other religions. I would argue that Pullman has merged the soul and the Guardian Angel in his daemon for the following reason: Catholic teaching, according to Hontheim (1910), says that every human person has a guardian angel from birth, whose task is to guard this person and to guide him or her, if they are willing, to the Kingdom of Heaven. Again, however, we find an inversion of traditional Christian teaching in Lyra's and Will daemons, who also accompany them and guide them, but towards a different objective, namely the republic of heaven, which is, to some extent, the opposite of the Kingdom of Heaven, as explained in the chapter "The Republic of Heaven".

The relationship between a person and his or her daemon is characterized by mutual need. The further away they are from each other, the worse the consequences: once, Lyra has to separate from her daemon Pantaleimon only for a few moments, and

both suffer intense pain (*Northern* 194). A second scene is very explicit: it is when Lyra must leave Pan behind temporarily in order to enter the land of the dead. There is simply no alternative. What is more, she cannot be certain about their reunion.

> Lyra was doing the cruellest thing she had ever done, hating herself, hating the deed, suffering for Pan and with Pan and because of Pan; trying to put him down on the cold path, disengaging his cat-claws from her clothe, weeping, weeping […] the sound was too unhappy to bear. Time after time she pushed her daemon away, and still he cried and tried to cling [...] What animal was he now [...] He seemed to be so young, a cub, a puppy, something helpless and beaten, a creature so sunk in misery that it was more misery than creature. (*Amber* 284)

This extract shows what a temporal separation of human and daemon causes. Therefore, it is even more comprehensible to the reader how cruel the Oblation Board, one of the Church's branches, is.

4.9 The Oblation Board

The Oblation Board is a branch of the Church which intends to become the most important among the branches (*Amber* 70). The Board has set up a research centre in Bolvangar for the investigation into the effect of Dust on children. What they do there is to cut daemons from children, which a method called intercision – the implied cruelty and horror has already been made clear in the preceding chapter. What is more, the respective person is left in a stupefied trance, half-dead in fact (*Subtle* 25). In this case, we find a parallel to Christian teaching regarding the human soul: the natural separation of human and daemon happens when a person dies.

Now I want to answer the question why the Church fights Dust and is even prepared to perform acts of extraordinary brutality on children. According to Lyra, the Church thinks that Dust is original sin (*Subtle* 85) – this is their first justification for eliminating Dust. The Church is prepared to prevent sin even by means of mutilating children through intercision. It is done in childhood because after the beginning of puberty it is too late, as in the case of Lyra and Will: the daemons of adults have already become conscious in the sense that they have discovered Dust, i.e. knowledge and love.

As has been made clear in the chapter "Dust", the Spectres feed on daemons because they intend to eradicate all conscious interest in the world, which leads us to the conclusion that this is the precise purpose of daemons: to help their human beings gain conscious knowledge about the world; in other words, to produce Dust. This is the reason why the church puts much effort into preventing the discovery of knowledge that endangers the power of the church, such as the fact that Dust is actually a good thing:

"Every philosophical research establishment […] had to include on its staff a representative of the Magisterium, to act as a censor and suppress the news of any heretical discoveries" (ibid. 124). This description is reminiscent of the Church's Inquisition, which, according to Blötzer (*Inquistion*), usually refers to "a special ecclesiastical institution for combating or suppressing heresy."

Keeping in mind Pullman's prime importance of the material world, it is not surprising that he has a purely profane approach to the notion "Church" – he sees it as an organisation like many other ones. Applying this view to the Catholic Church, the most important point about it is that it is a supernatural, i.e. divine institution.[47]

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[47] This description has several implications. I just want to give a few explanations. As Joyce (*Church*) points out, the Catholic Church is comparable to other societies in the sense that it consists of human beings. However, it is primarily divine because the majority of its aspects are of divine origin: e.g. the sacraments (including e.g. the ordination of priests) and the teachings. As such, the Church provides the supernatural means (most importantly the sacraments) for Catholics to lead a Christian life, i.e. deepen their friendship with God, and obtain Heaven after death. This does not mean that the Church is flawless as a whole, as history has proven. A helpful distinction in this context is the following one: Human beings are not faultless, of course. However, God wants them to contribute to his Church in order to make the means for a Christian life, which the Church offers, available to all people, as e.g. a priest does. So the elements of divine origin in the Church comprise the means to lead a Christian life (e.g. the sacraments). Human beings contribute to making these perfect means available to all people, but they themselves are not perfect (cf. ibid.)

5 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to answer the question in which ways fantasy deals with religious elements, on the basis of *The Lord of the Rings, The Chronicles of Narnia,* and *His Dark Materials.* In order to discuss this question in an adequate way, I have explored the most important traits of the genre: the otherworld, typical fantasy characters, including the relevance of gender issues, and the fantasy quest. During the discussion of these traits, it has become clear that high fantasy takes place in a world separate from the reader's, but is nevertheless very closely related to the world of the reader: it is about human or human-like characters and their experience gained during a quest. What is more, this quest is spiritual or religious, and is also intended to communicate something about the reader him or herself.

J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis address the supernatural in a more or less explicit way, but at any rate adhere to the Christian religion in a traditional, orthodox way. In the case of *His Dark Materials*, this is different: Pullman uses Christian elements in a very explicit way, but does not adhere to traditional Christian teaching – he changes or inverts some of its elements; this is the reason why they have been related to traditional Catholic teaching where possible. What is more, *His Dark Materials* does not exclusively belong to the genre of Christian fantasy: Pullman makes use of Christian elements, but the trilogy's interpretation from a Christian perspective is too narrow. In other words, the trilogy contains more than just a number of inversions of Christian teaching – they need to be seen in a broader context: Pullman takes the opportunities the fantasy genre offers him in order to challenge not only religious aspects, but, more generally, the Western philosophical notions of the binary of material-spiritual and good-evil. The following paragraphs are a summarizing answer to the question how Pullman deals with Christian elements in his trilogy, and the supernatural in a broader sense.

The first point that can be made is that, on the one hand, Pullman's universe is characterized by the "absolute primacy of the material life"; on the other hand, however, we do find supernatural elements: first and foremost, Dust, the universal principle, which is material as well as spiritual. Therefore, it can be said that the supernatural and the material are the driving force in shaping fantasy plot and characters. Additionally, there is magic in objects and beings (witches, shamans, angels), which are all related to Dust. A further element, namely the land of the dead, has traditionally been associated

with the spiritual rather than the material realm, but in *His Dark Materials* it is the place where the human body (which changes into a kind of ghost) goes, but not the soul (i.e. daemon). As Pullman himself explains, the fantasy genre is useful for him because it gives him the possibility to say something true about human nature – so far, this is in accordance with the general fantasy tradition; the novelty, however, is that in his universe the material is more important than the spiritual. This is also reflected in the fact that the soul, i.e. the spiritual dimension of humans, is embodied in a physical being, namely the daemon.

In this thesis, I have emphasized the relevance of the spiritual/supernatural insights the fantasy hero gains in the quest, and the effect these can have on the reader. What can be said in this context regarding *His Dark Materials*? Firstly, the two protagonists Lyra and Will learn about Dust, the mythic principle on which Pullman founds his universe. It is inherent in everything, thus pantheistic, and consequently atheistic. In this sense Dust does not challenge God, if understood in a strict (Christian) sense. However, I would argue that not every reader of the trilogy will realise this; as a consequence, some will interpret the Authority, depicted as a cruel tyrant and aging liar, as God, or better, as the negation of God. The question which arises, of course, is to what extent this portrait of God is comprehensible to the reader. What is more, Pullman invites the reader to question the binaries of material-spiritual and good-evil.

Other insights which might have an effect on the reader are Pullman's interpretation of the Fall and the description of the notion "church". We have also seen that some of God's qualities as well as Christian virtues are depicted as desirable and thus echo positively in the trilogy. The author offers the republic of heaven as a substitute for traditional religion; this republic is located exclusively in the world of the protagonists, in contrast to the Christian Kingdom of Heaven, which exists in the real world as well as outside of it. In accordance with Pullman's emphasis on the material, the eucatastrophe in the trilogy, namely the fall, also concerns the physical realm more than the spiritual one: it is not the redemption of the soul, but the body.

In this thesis, I have interpreted the religious/supernatural elements in the trilogy in the light of Catholic and, more general, Christian teaching. Therefore, it has to be pointed out again that this is no comprehensive approach to the religious/supernatural elements in *His Dark Materials* because it limits the perspective and interpretation of notions which are not exclusively Christian, such as Dust and the republic of heaven. In

order to comprehend all the implications of Pullman's approach to the supernatural and the neutralization of the binary of material-spiritual and good-evil, further relevant literature needs to be consulted.

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7 Index

8 Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Literarische Genres entwickeln sich im Laufe der Zeit und werden von vergangenen bzw. zeitgenössischen Denkrichtungen mitgeprägt. Dies gilt auch für das Genre der Fantasy. In den letzten Jahrzehnten wurden zahlreiche Abhandlungen mit dem Ziel verfasst, dieses Genre zu definieren. Je mehr Beiträge (u.a. auch aus verschiedenen Disziplinen) jedoch geleistet wurden, desto schwieriger ist dieses Unterfangen geworden. Zwei Werke von J.R.R. Tolkien werden noch heute als Meilensteine und Orientierungspunkte in der Entwicklung und Definition der Fantasy gesehen: die Trilogie *Der Herr der Ringe* und Tolkiens genretheoretische Abhandlung „On Fairy Stories".

Der Herr der Ringe gehört zur sog. „High Fantasy", ein Sub-Genre, in dem die imaginäre Welt örtlich und häufig auch zeitlich getrennt von der Welt der/s Leserin/s ist. Die Glaubwürdigkeit dieser Welt ist besonders wichtig, weshalb für die Erschaffung der Flora und Fauna besonderes viel Fingerspitzengefühl von Nöten ist. Noch wichtiger sind jedoch die Hauptcharaktere, da sie für die Identifikation seitens des/r Lesers/in von besonderer Bedeutung sind; denn Charaktere und Handlung in der Fantasy haben mit dem Leben der/s Leserin/s viel zu tun: es geht um Menschen oder menschenähnliche Protagonisten/innen, die während einer Queste spirituelle und/oder religiöse Erfahrungen und Einsichten sammeln. Dadurch, dass der/die Leser/in aus seiner/ihrer Welt mit den entsprechenden Erfahrungen kurzzeitig ausbricht, kann er/sie Einblicke in neue Sphären gewinnen, durch welche sie ihr Leben und ihre Rolle darin in einem neuen Licht sehen. Dies nennt Tolkien die „Wiedergewinnung" des klaren Blickes. Die notwendige Bedingung dafür ist, dass der/die Leser/in sich über bestimmte Dinge, die in der Fantasy passieren, wie ein Kind wundern kann, oder es mithilfe des/der Protagonisten/in erneut lernt.

War das Genre in der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts noch von geschlechtsspezifischen Rollen gemäß dem Mittelalter geprägt, so haben sich in den letzten Jahrzehnten egalitärere Entwicklungen abgezeichnet, in welchen auch Frauen die Rolle des Protagonisten einnehmen. Das zentrale Werk dieser Diplomarbeit ist Philip Pullmans Fantasy-Trilogie *His Dark Materials*, welche auch für genrespezifische Veränderungen steht. Neben der gerade erwähnten zentraleren Stellung von Frauen bietet dieses Werk neue Perspektiven im Bereich des Spirituellen bzw. Religiösen:

traditionellerweise wurden diese Aspekte als die treibenden Kräfte für die Gestaltung von Handlung und Figuren in der Fantasy gesehen; dies wird in dieser Diplomarbeit anhand von zwei Beispielen aus der christlichen Fantasy, nämlich des *Herrn der Ringe* und der *Chroniken von Narnia*, erläutert. In Gegensatz dazu beschreitet *His Dark Materials* neue Wege, insofern als das Materielle eine wichtigere Stellung einnimmt als das Geistige/Übernatürliche. Aufgrund der traditionell zentralen Rolle des Nicht-Materiellen ergeben sich für Pullman bestimmte Herausforderungen, die in dieser Arbeit beschrieben werden. *His Dark Materials* ist nicht ausschließlich zur christlichen Fantasy zu zählen, obwohl es einige christliche Elemente enthält, welche nicht implizit eingebaut (wie z.B. im *Herrn der Ringe*) sondern sogar explizit erwähnt werden, was für das Genre traditionellerweise untypisch ist.

Die Neuheit von Pullmans Trilogie liegt einerseits darin, dass er alternative Zugänge zur christlichen Religion aufzeigt: dies umfasst Auffassungen von Gott, dem Sündenfall oder dem Begriff „Kirche". Der Autor führt uns z.B. einen Engel vor Augen, der sich selbst zu Gott gemacht hat; darüber hinaus erfindet Pullman ein universelles Prinzip, das die Dualität von Materie-Geist aufhebt, und er stellt die menschliche Seele als ein den Menschen begleitendes, individuelles Tier da. Darüber hinaus wird auch die Dualität von Gut und Böse in Frage gestellt. Die Behandlung dieser Aspekte ist der Fokus dieser Arbeit. Gleichzeitig muss jedoch darauf hingewiesen werden, dass die christliche Perspektive auf das Spirituelle/Übernatürliche in der Trilogie eine Einschränkung der Interpretationsmöglichkeiten darstellt, weil diese Aspekte nicht ausschließlich christlich sind. Um die Implikationen von Pullmans alternativen Zugängen zu Materie und Geist bzw. zum Übernatürlichen umfassend zu verstehen, muss somit auf einschlägige weiterführende Literatur verwiesen werden.

Curriculum Vitae

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