"Breaking Binary Constructs by Exploring Duality and Multiplicity in
Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*"

Prepared by:
Nami Lee Montgomery

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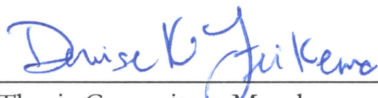Master of Arts in English Education

Approved by:

Susan M. Cannato   4-17-14
Thesis Advisor   Date

Denise K. Juikewo   4.17.2014
Thesis Committee Member   Date

                             4-17-14
Thesis Committee Member   Date

                             4/17/14
Dean of Graduate Studies   Date

Abstract

This paper explores ideology, identity and power within Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*. The contextual framework explores the adult/binary to show that it, like all binaries, is unstable and contradictory. The idea of the child as an Other is explored using theories from children's literature critic Perry Nodelman. The framework also defines ideology and proposes a dialogic construction of identity, using Louis Althusser, Mikhail Bakhtin and Robyn McCallum as the critical theorists, while Michel Foucault's theories are used in the framework of power. These frameworks illustrates that ideology, identity and power are multi-faceted and complex. They are not unitary or essential ideas and they are explored in terms of their duality and multiplicity in the textual analysis of *His Dark Materials*. This paper shows that within *His Dark Materials*, binary constructs are dismantled because characters, ideas and settings are portrayed in terms of their duality and multi-dimensionality. This is accomplished through Pullman's use of complex characters whose identities are affected by their encounters with Others. Ideologies are adapted or accepted as characters are exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world, thereby showing the fluid nature of ideology. The origins, contexts and uses of power are also examined through various scenes and characters of the trilogy. Due to rich complexity of Pullman's trilogy, it can be seen as a work of realism – as well as a work of fantasy – because it reflects the real-world complexity in all people, places and ideas.

Table of Contents

<u>Philip Pullman: Breaking Binaries, Embracing Duality</u>

Philip Pullman is an author who is particularly adept at breaking genre boundaries, challenging binary constructs and embracing both duality and multiplicity. Pullman deviates from much of children's literature and the fantasy genre by introducing realistic and complex characters, various plot lines and multiple settings. His trilogy *His Dark Materials* explores ideas about religion, philosophy, science, spirituality, knowledge, power and ideology in a way that critical child and adult readers can understand and appreciate. Pullman does not assume that children are incapable of enjoying a trilogy that is complex. He states that "[t]he line dividing the stupid from the intelligent goes right down the middle of our heads… I pay my readers the compliment of assuming that they are intellectually adventurous" (ACHUKA). Pullman's statement about stupidity and intelligence reveals that he does not ascribe to the belief that someone or something can be essentially one thing and not another. His works reflect his belief that people are complex; they are not entirely good, evil, smart or stupid – they embody a variety of traits that at times seem to contradict one another but coexist nonetheless. Pullman's characters reflect the idea that duality and multiplicity reside in all individuals, both on and off the page. As characters navigate their way through the world, the people, settings and ideas they encounter also embody complex layers of meaning.

The trilogy's content also reflects Pullman's attitude about literature, genre and audience. His books reflect the complexity that is inherent in the real world and it is for this reason that readers are able to extract real meaning his from works of fiction. Pullman explains, "I'm trying to write a book about what it means to be human, to grow up, to suffer and learn…Why shouldn't a work of fantasy be as truthful and profound…as the work of George Eliot or Jane Austen?" (ACHUKA). Pullman challenges the idea that a work of

children's fantasy fiction cannot have the same value as classic works in adult literature. Readers of all ages are capable of appreciating the challenges and triumphs of literary characters in any number of genres. The trilogy presents dynamic layers of meaning where people, places and things are not always what they seem. Child and adult characters must make sense of these various meanings and "grow up," "suffer and learn" from the challenges they meet (ACHUKA). Pullman challenges the boundaries that separate children's literature and adult literature, fantasy and realism, and childhood and adulthood, because the real world is too complex to understand it according to strict binaries. His works, particularly *His Dark Materials*, demonstrate this complexity.

His Dark Materials addresses a variety of issues by showing how complex and multidimensional they are. The characters, ideas, places and situations in the trilogy are influenced and shaped by a variety of contexts. As the characters in *His Dark Materials* navigate through coexisting worlds and societies with vastly different ideological constructs, they are shaped by their experiences and interactions. As characters explore ideas about consciousness, identity, self, Other, good, evil, power, perception and reality, they realize that the world cannot be essentialized or understood in absolute terms. They come to understand people, places and concepts in terms of duality and multiplicity where seemingly opposing or contradictory entities can and do coexist and co-depend on each other. As a result, this newfound knowledge affects the way characters see themselves as well as how they perceive other characters and the world at large. In order to critically examine these various elements of *His Dark Materials*, ideas about binary constructs, identity, Otherness, ideology, genre and power will form the basis of this paper's contextual framework.

The Child/Adult Binary Construct

Most of reality is constructed and understood in terms of unstable binaries – binaries that are used to distinguish and classify every aspect of the world. A very pervasive binary construct exists with regards to children and adults. To illustrate this claim, an examination of the modern discourse surrounding binary construct will provide some context. There are several pervasive assumptions about what defines children. Renowned critic and scholar of children's literature Perry Nodelman illustrates the instability of these common assumptions. He states that children are often thought of as "innocent by nature" and "blissfully naïve" on one extreme and "inherently wild" and "animal-like" on the other (*Pleasures* 87). They view the world through rose-colored lenses and are unaware of the dangers lurking in the world. On the other hand, if they left to their own devices will become wild and revert to an anarchic state of being. They are both weak and capable of great harm at the same time. What naturally follows from such assumptions is the belief that children must be guided and instructed in the proper ways to think and behave in society. It is also assumed that children have a "limited understanding" (86) of the world and will be resistant to anything that is "different from what they know and like already" (87). Therefore, the means by which children are taught must be relatively simple for the children to comprehend and enjoyable as well. However, these binaries assumptions do not always have negative connotations. Adults are reminded of the value of children's innocence and imagination when they observe the games that children play and the questions they ask. As a result, they have the power to inspire, excite and revitalize adults by helping them get back in touch with their own childlike enthusiasm and youthful energy. Positive associations of children are esteemed even into adulthood, while the more negative ones can be the quite unfavorable. This is

exemplified by the negative reaction most adults have to being described as "immature," "naïve" or "weak."

Binary assumptions are certainly contradictory, but they serve a very important function: separate adults from children according to some observable phenomenon and create a power dynamic that places adults above children. These assumptions, nonetheless, tend to essentialize children and adults and fail to contextualize the realities that manifest themselves outside of these binary constructs. While children are different from adults in obvious physical ways and in several cognitive and emotional aspects, binaries fail to account for individuals who do not fit into either the "child" or "adult" category. Adolescents, for example, sometimes exhibit both childlike and adult qualities – they inhabit a gray area somewhere between childhood and adulthood. There are also children who behave more like adults due to the experiences they have gone through and the responsibilities that are placed on them. Additionally, there are adults who do not seem to have matured intellectually, emotionally or socially. Children and adults who seem to break the binary mold are outliers but they exist nonetheless and demonstrate that the binary construct is unstable and restricted in the first place. Nevertheless, the binary construct exists and it serves the purpose of maintaining distinction and asserting power.

The Child as an Other

Although assumptions about children are polarizing and inconsistent, like all binaries, they carry a lot of power. One of that ways that power is exerted on children is by classifying them as an Other. Nodelman explores the idea of the child as Other in his article "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature." Here, he defines the Other as "that which is opposite to the person doing the talking or thinking or studying"

(29). The Other can also be understood in terms of anything or anyone that is foreign, unknown or inferior. Nodelman draws a compelling analogy between the adult/child and the West/Orient binary constructs, both of which rely on this conceptual meaning of the "other." He states that the Western construct of the Orient had "little to do with actual conditions in the East" and was merely a "Western invention" (29). In a similar fashion, adults have constructed children as an Other in order to exert power and maintain a particular perception of children. These constructions of children may or may not be based on reality. Because it is adults who are "thinking" about and "studying" children, it is they who construct the child Other (29). These perceptions affect how adults think about and behave towards children and in particular, how they use power over them. The child is made into an Other based on its dependent status on adults. It is adults who provide the basic living necessities for children. Adults also have the power to determine what is good or bad for children beyond the level of subsistence – they determine what movies, books or toys that children can have as well as what realms of society are appropriate for them, such as schools, churches and social groups. In the exercise of power over children, there is another binary construct at work and that is the determination of what is "good" for children and what is "bad" for children.

The ways in which something is determined as good or bad for children says as much about adults as it does their perceptions of children. One of the things that is determined appropriate or inappropriate for children is the literature that is written for them. It is often believed that literature is appropriate for children when it fits into and validates preconceived notions about them, when it is loaded with "values and…images…*we* approve of or feel comfortable with" (30). Literature that is infused with ideas that align with those of the adults is a tool by which assumptions are reinforced and power is exerted. Adults

write children's literature – they speak for and to a group that typically does not speak for itself (as there are few published children writers) – and therein lies the power dynamic of the genre of children's literature. What Nodelman's article fails to address is that the relationship between the self and the Other is one that is cyclical and dynamic. Perceptions about children are slowly changing and this is evident in the literature that is being written for and about them. As this literature enters into the mainstream, ideas about what it means to be an adult, a child, a self and an Other are being examined and reconceptualized. What happens as a result is that it gets increasingly difficult to categorize and differentiate these seemingly polarized concepts.

Breaking Boundaries in Children's Literature

As children's literature is becoming increasingly diverse, the reality of children's literature is at great odds with the perceptions surrounding it and therein lies an immense grey area in this so-called "genre." Beliefs about what children's literature should be is heavily informed by the assumptions that are made about children. Many adults assume that children's literature should be either edifying or entertaining; children should learn about the world and how to behave according to a particular set of societal expectations – and they should enjoy it as well. Stories for children should have clear binary distinctions between "good" and "bad" or "safety" and "danger" – ambiguity and complexity are undesirable and are not easily understood by child readers. Issues like death, violence and sexuality should be avoided and fantasy elements, like witches, fairies and talking animals should be featured in order to engage the child's imagination. Plots are linear and engaging and provide a resolution that offers some closure, preferably a happy one. Although these are features that one might expect from children's literature, the reality is that modern children's literature is

much more complex and is breaking many of the traditional boundaries that previously defined it.

As children's literature breaks these boundaries, it becomes increasingly difficult to define children's literature. Some might even argue that there is no such thing as children's literature. Maria Nikolajeva explains that children's literature has been and will continue to exhibit some of "the most prominent features of postmodernism" (222). These features of postmodernism contrast with the aforementioned assumptions. Multiple narrative threads, complex characters, various settings and previously unexplored themes are making their way into children's literature, making it undistinguishable from adult literature. They also borrow from various genres at once, making the task of categorizing particular works of children's literature as either "fantasy," "historical fiction" or "realistic fiction" that much more difficult. The mixing of genres is what Nikolajeva refers to as "genre eclecticism" and it is this mixture that is making children's literature more complex than it has been in the past (223). As children's literature incorporates elements from postmodernism, the line between what is strictly children's literature and what is strictly adult literature becomes blurred. The field of children's literature is compelling for the fact that it is deconstructing binary constructs and crossing into thresholds previously thought inaccessible or inappropriate for readers of the genre.

As children's literature has undergone tremendous changes, so has its readership. Previously thought of as a genre that was uninteresting or stigmatizing to adults, children's literature is witnessing an historic increase in adult readership. This phenomenon is what Rachel Falconer refers to as "border crossing" (1). As children's and young adult literature has changed, the readership has expanded to include adults – but not without some cultural

backlash. Falconer notes that these shifts in children's literature and its adult readership has been accompanied by "major cultural anxiety" (2) because some view this as a need for escapism or simply the dumbing down of society. There is still a pervading assumption that books written for children and adolescents are "unworthy of thinking adults" (3). As the constructs and boundaries of a society change and shift, there will naturally be those who resist change and strive to maintain the status quo, particularly "traditional distinctions between childhood and adulthood" (3). As children's literature incorporates certain content and form that was previously restricted to adult literature, the line between what is children's literature and what is adult literature becomes blurred. As genres become harder to define, the audience does too. Literature that was previously reserved for children is now being enjoyed by readers of all ages. Instead of being defined by its limitations, children's literature is entering a modern age where it is exploring depths and spaces never before encountered. New standards are being set and by every indication, those standards are being met. Evidently adults are gaining something by reading works in this genre, otherwise they would read other books more "appropriate" for them.

As children's literature breaks boundaries in its content and form and incorporates readers of all ages and backgrounds, it reflects the real-world difficulties of defining the world in terms of strict binaries. Literature is one of the ways through which ideas within a particular society are articulated. The way that characters are portrayed reflects some of the ways that real-life people understand themselves and the world they live in. The themes that are presented in a work of literature also suggest something about the ways that ideas are understood in the real world. The relationship between literature and society is cyclical because literature is shaped by society and society is in turn shaped by literature. Sometimes literature represents an Other because the setting or the characters therein differ from the

reader and his/her own world. Literature is one of the ways that readers encounter an Other and this encounter informs the way that readers perceive themselves and the world at large. Literature that presents "others" help to deconstruct binaries both on and off the page. The genre of children's literature if it can be called a "genre" reflects changing ideas about what it means to be a child, adult, self and "other." As readers vicariously experience various places and people through the characters of literature, they become increasingly aware of how and why the world is viewed in particular ways. As children's literature incorporates a variety of genres, it invites readers from of all ages and backgrounds to partake in a critical examination of how the world is constructed and understood.

Ideology

One of the best ways to explore the ways in which the world is understood is to examine the concept of *ideology*. At most basic level, ideology is a set of beliefs, ideas and customs that guide a nation, region, community, institution or family unit. Ideology is a group dynamic that carries significant implications at the level of the individual, because they are shaped by various levels of ideology. Because ideology works at the macro and micro levels of society, it can be difficult to identify ideology. One of the ways to identify ideology is to consider ideology as anything that feels natural or seems like common sense. Louis Althusser reminds us that:

> It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are "obviousnesses") obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we *cannot fail to recognize* and before which we have made the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out […]: "That's obvious! That's right! That's true!" (172)

Ideology seems natural, just like breathing, but it operates at an unconscious level. Ideology does not become obvious until a character encounters something that seems unfamiliar or unnatural. Ideology can only be defined and understood when it is contrasted with something that it is not; it becomes articulated in its subjectivity. In literature, ideology is articulated through characters, settings, and dialogues. Characters are shaped by their experiences at home and then venture into new worlds where they encounter realities that are different from their own. In these situations, the character can reject, resist, adapt or accept those ideas and beliefs that run counter to their own. In many cases, individuals have a reaction that is some combination of the four. Ideological differences are a compelling subject in literature because they have their origins in language.

Language & Ideology

Language and meaning have important implications for how ideology is understood and articulated in literature. Language can be understood in the broadest sense as the system of signifiers and meanings understood by a particular nation, region or ethnic group. At the broadest level, speakers of a particular language will agree on particular words to mean a particular object or concept. In more specific contexts, however, language reveals itself to be very subjective and fluid. Bakhtin argues that "[a]t any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at the time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (428). Context will determine what meaning(s) a particular word or phrase has in a given time and place. Meaning is also constructed through the speaker. Language is contextual and the meanings produced by words and phrases will depend on when and by whom those words and phrases are uttered. Ideological differences

become obvious when the meanings of particular linguistic constructs become obvious. Just like a translator must attempt to articulate a message from one language to another, characters engage in their own form of reconceptualizing ideas into meanings that they know. Characters resolve ideological conflicts by reconstructing different meanings into something they understand – they adapt the unfamiliar into the familiar. This incorporation of new meanings into their own understanding expands the way that they view a particular person or place.

Identity & Subjectivity in Children's Literature

Language and ideology have significant implications for the way that identity is portrayed in literature. The way that characters understand the world is through language. Because language is subjective, identity is also subjective because it is constructed externally. This idea differs from ideas in the humanist tradition which emphasize "essential humanness" and "insist on the inherent value of individual human beings" (McCallum *Ideologies* 5). An individual's value is based on their "uniqueness" and their identity is something that is constructed from within (5). Several modern critics disagree with these notions of the self and are concerned with the ways in which identity is externally constructed. Robyn McCallum explains that "identity is formed in dialogue with the social discourses, practices and ideologies constituting the culture which an individual inhabits" (4). Identity is not essential, but engages in a "dialogue" with the world outside of the self – a dialogue that shapes and defines it (4). Identity is sometimes subject to the external influences of an "other," and therefore it becomes increasingly difficult to make a distinction between the identity of a "self" and that of an "other." Identity is no longer essential or entirely unique because it is placed in a subjective relationship with everything outside of it.

The concept of *subjectivity* places a character's identity in a proximal and dependent relationship with one or more "others." Subjectivity, according to McCallum, is defined as "the sense of being subject to some measure of external coercion" (4) and is "dependent on the recognition of the position of the other" (70). Subjectivity is a character's awareness of themselves as subject to various forms of external influence. It is also a character's knowledge that their sense of "self" relies on the presence of everyone and everything that is *not* their "self." Identity and subjectivity are important concepts in the study of children's literature because it allows readers to examine how characters are constructed by their environments and how they understand their place in that environment. Both concepts are dependent on characters' interactions with new people, places and ideas – their dialogues with the world around them. As characters move away from the familiar and the known, their identities are subject to change as they make sense of the new and the unknown. How they understand their sense of place in new environments is important for how they understand their subjectivity – what influences are at work around them and which ones have the power to exert some level of influence on them. Subjectivity demonstrates that identity is constructed externally by society, people, language and ideology. It highlights the various powers at work in identity construction.

Power

The idea of *power* can be seen in almost any work of literature and it, like ideology and identity, is full of various meanings and contexts. It is common to see power as operating within a binary relationship where power is held by some and exerted on others and whereby the movement of power follows a downward trajectory. Power, however, is much more complex and subjective. French critic and historian Michel Foucault states:

> [P]ower must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force
>
> relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute
>
> their own organization…Power is everywhere, not because it embraces
>
> everything, but because it comes from everywhere…[It] is not an institution,
>
> and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is
>
> the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular
>
> society. (*History* 92-93)

Power does not function within a binary and its movement is multi-directional. It comes from many sources and is used in different ways depending on its origins, contexts and intentions. Power is not always invested in an individual, it can come from society, an idea or a single utterance of language. Foucault affirms this when he notes that power "is elaborated, transformed, organized; it endows itself with processes which are more or less adjusted to the situation" ("Subject" 792). It is not a singular concept, it depends on and must be understood in the context of a variety of conditions that all affect how it is used and what effects it will have. In the realm of literature, characters must negotiate their own power and the power of others with respect to how it affects their identity and their perception of reality. Power is also seen in a variety of ways with regards to its origins, influences and uses. Foucault's concepts of pastoral power and the Panopticon also function within this framework of complexity and will be explored in more detail later on. *His Dark Materials* addresses issues of power and explores the different ways that power is articulated and used. Foucault's ideas of power serve as an effective framework from which to explore these ideas about power.

<u>Dust</u>

The most important concept in the trilogy – and one that is full of a variety of ideological implications – is that of Dust. Dust is the major driving force in the trilogy precisely because of its varied meanings to different characters. It has implications for power as some characters fear the power of Dust and other try to control it. Dust is also concerned with ideas about children and adult, as adults have more Dust, and it also has implication for the self and o/Others as characters begin to wonder whether consciousness is an individualized concept or a universal concept of all selves. For the purpose of this analysis, however, the focus will be placed in the essentialism, duality and multiplicity of Dust as it is understood in the text.

At the most basic level, it represents human consciousness, but what this means to characters determines how they perceive it. According to the angel Xaphania, "[c]onscious beings make Dust—they renew it all the time, by thinking and feeling and reflecting, by gaining wisdom and passing it on" (*AS* 491). Consciousness, for some, is what makes humans human and what makes life worth living. Others, like the Church in Lyra's world, fear Dust precisely because it represents human consciousness. They believe that Dust is "physical evidence for original sin" because consciousness was the precursor to sin and death (*GC* 371). One of the Church's most powerful agents, Mrs. Coulter, is adamant when she says that Dust is "something bad, something wrong, something evil and wicked" (*GC* 282). These varying notions of Dust carry a lot of power with regards to how characters perceive the idea of human consciousness. It represents the potential of human consciousness and the many ways that it can manifest itself. Like human consciousness,

Dust cannot be strictly defined or understood because it has a variety of meanings and implications depending on who is defining it. It embodies the vast potential of human existence and cannot be understood through a single lens of understanding.

Dust is complex because of the variety of meanings associated with it, but also because it is an entity that simultaneously embodies essentialism, duality and multiplicity. It is difficult to conceptualize a single entity in all three ways, but the trilogy demonstrates Dust in just this way. Dust is essential in itself because it is composed on individual "particles of consciousness" (*SK* 88) that cannot be broken down to smaller units of matter – "there's nothing inside them but themselves" (*GC* 370). From a scientific perspective, Dust particles are indivisible and this suggests that Pullman sees human consciousness as inseparable from the human condition. Dust is also dual in nature because it is composed of both matter and spirit. Dust does not separate binary concepts, but encompasses both sides of them. When Dr. Mary Malone asks Dust what it is, it answers, "FROM WHAT WE ARE, SPIRIT; FROM WHAT WE DO, MATTER. MATTER AND SPIRIT ARE ONE" (*SK* 249). The nature of Dust is dual in nature because it is both matter and spirit. Dust also embodies duality because it is the "energy that links body and daemon" – it is the means by which characters express duality through their daemons (*GC* 375). Dust has a dualistic relationship with humans because they have an interdependent relationship. Without human consciousness, Dust would cease to exist and without Dust, humans become lifeless zombies. Lauren Shohet notes that Dust "expresses and constitutes the interrelation of all beings, the participation of all mind and all matter in a cosmic ecology of consciousness" (29). This statement is certainly true in the context of human consciousness, but this also applies to the concept of Dust as something that is multiple things at once. Dust is composed of billions of particles and refers to itself as "WE" (*SK* 249) – Dust is multiple

forms of consciousness at once. The quantity of its particles is never constant and has no

"fixed quantity" (*AS* 491) which suggests that consciousness is not quantifiable either. If

Dust is a symbol of human consciousness, then consciousness is equally complex. Due to

the complexity of Dust, it carries an important significance in the development of the

characters Lyra and Mary as they learn the importance and interconnected of all

consciousness.

As Lyra and Mary learn more about Dust, the importance and complexity of human

consciousness is revealed to them. Lyra learns she must protect Dust from the Church

because it is the key human life; without Dust or daemons, humans would wander the earth

in a lifeless, meaningless stupor. Lyra brings her extensive knowledge of Dust back to her

own world at the close of the trilogy and uses it to establish the "Republic of Heaven" (*AS*

518). The Republic of Heaven which is not a place or an institution, but rather, a state of

mind. Milicent Lenz argues that Lyra's Republic of Heaven is a state of human awareness

that is characterized by "the creativity and wholeness of mind" and "an open and joyful

awareness of the splendors of life" (9). Mary learns that consciousness is the complex entity

by which all living things are connected. Mary learns in the mulefa world that Dust, or *sraf*,

is what lets them know that they are sentient beings. Once Mary is able to visually perceive

it through her spyglass, she begins to "sense that the whole universe was alive, and that

everything was connected to everything else by threads of meaning" (*AS* 44). This

statement is powerfully succinct because it illustrates the interconnectedness and diversity of

the human experience as it is manifested through consciousness. As consciousness

expresses itself into various beliefs, ideas and behaviors, life becomes more diverse and

complex. In the awareness of this complexity, Mary is able to see herself in a larger life

context. Consciousness is to be celebrated and experienced within this context. Lyra's

Republic of Heaven also acknowledges and celebrates the complexity of Dust; it is essential

to human life and is informed by its connection to other sentient beings.

Daemons

Just like Dust, daemons also represent the duality and multiplicity of all conscious

beings wherein seemingly opposite entities coexist and co-depend on one another. Anne-

Marie Bird observes that Pullman uses daemons to emphasize "that neither term in the

spirit-matter binary is hierarchically superior or capable of existing independently of the

other term" (190). Daemons cannot exist with humans because when a human dies, the

daemon drifts "away like the atoms of smoke" and dies (*GC* 104). Humans also depend on

daemons, because without them their bodies become "ghost-like" (*GC* 259) and they are

"half dead" (*SK* 25). Without daemons, human life is devoid of consciousness, pleasure and

passion. They represent an aspect of personhood that is inseparable from what it means to

truly be human. They are, in other words, *essential.* Body and spirit cohabitate and neither

can exist without the other. Pullman includes the concept of daemons in the trilogy in order

to provide a physical space for what goes on in the internalized human psyche. Pullman

shows the disastrous effects of living without a daemon when Lyra witnesses children being

cut from their daemons at Bolvanger. The world of Cittagazze is also portrayed through the

lens of a world devoid of human consciousness. As children grow into adults, the Specters

feed on their internal daemons and they become walking corpses devoid of any essence or

meaning. Only in the absence of daemons do Lyra and Will realize the importance of their

daemons, whether they are external or internal. In a similar fashion, Lyra's experiences at

Bolvanger and the world of Cittagazze reveal to readers the importance of their inner

daemons – their inner voice that reminds them that they are conscious beings capable of thought and action.

Daemons not only represent the body/spirit duality of characters, they also represent the coexistence of self/Other construct and the male/female construct. Daemons are used in a similar way that the concept of the "double" is used in other literature. McCallum observes that the "double" "is frequently used in narrative to explore the idea that personal identity is shaped by a dialogic relation with an 'other' and that subjectivity is multiple and fragmented" (75). Daemons represent both self and Other because they are inseparable from and codependent on their humans, therefore they can be analyzed in the context of a "double." Pan is both self and "other." Lyra's daemon Pantalaimon (Pan) is capable of his own thoughts and actions. In private, he will criticize Lyra and offer unsolicited comments like "[h]iding and spying is for silly children" (*GC* 9). Pan acts as Lyra's conscience because he has more common sense and is typically a better judge of character. Whenever Lyra must fight an adversary, Pan fights to defend her. In her most vulnerable moments, he comforts her. Pan is capable of his own thoughts and utterances so he is an embodiment of the "other," but because he and Lyra cannot exist without each other, they both comprise the idea of Lyra's "self." The concept of the self in Lyra's world is inseparable from its dialogue with the daemon "other." Daemons and humans are used in the trilogy to suggest that both aspects of the self/other construct inhabit individuals. Neither the daemon nor the human is superior to the other and they rely on the other for their existence.

Daemons also illustrate the coexistence of male and female within a single human entity. Almost every character mentioned in the trilogy has a daemon that is the opposite sex of themselves. By portraying every character with some aspect of maleness and some

aspect of femaleness, Pullman shows that the male/female binary is largely constructed and the boundaries between them are fluid. Tyson Pugh makes the claim that Pullman wants readers to "consider how modern paradigms of gender and sexuality" often "inhibit the quest for personal identity and love" (61). In the absence of physical daemons, John and Will Parry are unaware of the feminine aspects of their identity. For Parry, a daemon is "a silent voice in the mind and no more" (*SK* 213). When his daemon is revealed to him in Lyra's world, he is astonished "at learning that part of [his] own nature was female, and bird-formed, and beautiful" (*SK* 213-14). Will is likewise thrilled when he sees his daemon, Kirjava, for the first time, noting "the sweet rightfulness of her coming back to him" (*AS* 482). Having felt the pain of separation from this aspect of himself, he never wants to be parted from her again. The physical description of her "lustrous and rich" fur with its "thousand different glints and shades" echoes the sentiment that identity is multi-faceted (*AS* 498). Kirjava's presence completes Will's sense of self with elements of femininity and subtle complexity. Daemons call into question the heavily constructed ideas of what it means to be a "male" or a "female." They also suggest that the key to self-discovery and self-love is acknowledging elements of both "maleness" and femaleness" in one's identity. Instead of portraying males and females as opposites, the trilogy suggests that the male/female binary construct should be reconceptualized into a duality that exists in all people.

The Self & the Other

The trilogy presents several instances where characters interact with an Other. The Other is a person, place, community or concept that differs in some way from the character. The presence of the Other is articulates what Bakhtin calls *heteroglossia*. *Heteroglossia* is best

understood in a multi-lingual context, whereby each character's speech is "verbally and semantically autonomous" and "possesses its own belief system" (315). Different ideologies are articulated through individual languages and characters must engage with various layers of meaning as they interact with Others. As characters interact with Others, the limitations of their own conceptual realities are revealed. Characters engage in an act similar to translating, whereby they translate ideological meanings into a framework that they can understand. Characters adapt ideas and concepts from their own society in order to connect with, influence and be influenced by Others. These interactions are often two-fold, where both the character and their perceived Other are affected and changed by each other. What characters realize is that their own worldviews are limited and the reality of the world is more complex because it is loaded with various levels of meaning and perception.

The Self & the Other: Lyra & the Gyptians

Lyra is both shaped by and resistant to the ideology of Jordan. Jordan is defined by its patriarchy, class-consciousness and cultural homogeneity. Patriarchy affects Lyra's attitudes about women – this is evident when she is surprised that the alethiometer tells her to seek help from Dr. Mary Malone, a female scholar. Lyra is also very class-conscious and believes that she is entitled to a certain level of respect. She is appalled when Will tells her what to do, because she is "an aristocrat" and "[n]o one should speak to her like this" (*SK* 104). Although Lyra's perceptions of the world are shaped by the ideology of Jordan, she is resistant to other aspects of it, particularly those that cast her into the position of an Other because she is a female and a child. She is expected to behave according to prescriptive gender roles by keeping herself clean and wearing dresses that are "beribboned and pink-frilled" (*GC* 37). She resists these expectations because she prefers to get dirty and play

rough with the various children around Jordan – she is the epitome of a tomboy figure that rejects strict notions of gender as they apply to her. Lyra is also othered by the fact that she is a child. Neither the Master nor the Librarian believe that Lyra is curious about or capable of learning about Dust. "'Why" they ask "would a distant theological riddle interest a healthy, thoughtless child?'" (*GC* 31). They conclude that she'll "half listen for five minutes" and completely forget everything they might try to teach her. Lyra is essentialized and othered on the basis of her gender and her age. Perhaps it is because Lyra is perceived as an Other that she is able to more easily identify with the gyptians.

Due to Jordan's cultural and ethnic homogeneity, the gyptians and other cultural groups are the subject of stereotypes and myths that serve to reinforce the superiority of Jordan. What is interesting about the gyptians is the fact that Pullman does not capitalize their name. This is significant. The label by which the gyptian people are known by implies ambiguity. Is it an adjective or a description? Or it is used as a purposeful and deliberate diminutive? The ambiguity of the label reinforces the idea that labels are fluid, unstable and unclear. It also suggests an interesting dynamic of the textual othering of this particular group. The gyptians are not the only group that fit into this category, as the witches, the mulefa and the panserbjørne also fit into this textual and linguistic category. The gyptians, the witches and the panserbjørne are groups that are on the fringes of mainstream, human society and they are also Others, while the mulefa inhabit a different world altogether. It is worth considering why Pullman chose to use lowercased descriptors for some groups, while opting for proper names in other groups, like the Scholars, the New Danes and the Muscovites.

According to the ideology of Jordan, the gyptians are an example of an Other. Although they live within the realms of Jordan society, they are a disenfranchised group that is perceived as barbaric and inferior. When gyptian children begin to disappear, only a few of the citizens of Jordan seem to give it a second thought, because, after all, they are *just* gyptians. As a result of the perceptions about them, the gyptians are a disenfranchised Other with none of the same rights as other Jordan citizens. John Faa, the king of the gyptians, reminds Lyra that "we gyptians got little standing in the law" (*GC* 123). As a female and as a child, Lyra can likely identify with the gyptians in this context. Although she is not an outsider of Jordan, she is not in a position that regards her much value or respect, she is somewhere between a ward and a pet. Lyra is able to accept and embrace gyptian society because their ideology dictates that children are a valuable element of their society and each individual – regardless of age, gender or class – is seen as playing an important role within their society.

Lyra is able to accept and embrace the gyptians because they have more flexible delineations with regards to power and community. The implication of Jordan is that power is held by few and is exerted in a dictatorial manner. Power relations seem simpler and less complex than they are in gyptian society. Gyptian government more closely resembles a democratic government where the views of many individuals are taken into account by selected leaders. Although the gyptians have a king, they conduct meetings where urgent matters are discussed and they are encouraged to ask questions and express concerns with their king. John Faa, the king, embodies a balance of power and strength as well as fairness and compassion, he is a figure of "power tempered by courtesy" whom Lyra greatly respects (*AS* 501). The power of the community is also expressed in the responsibilities expected of all gyptians. In gyptian society, Lyra is expected to contribute her part by cooking, cleaning

and helping with boat maintenance. The core values of gyptian society cast Lyra into an important role: she is valued because she is a child and she is treated as a member of their society (not merely a guest) because she contributes like all other gyptians. Unlike Jordan, which often casts Lyra off as an Other, Lyra feels as though she belongs and the gyptians are no longer an Other to Lyra.

Because Lyra contributes, she begins to feel that she serves a purpose in gyptian society and begins to feel a true sense of belonging. She quickly begins to feel "at home with this new life as if she'd been born gyptian" (*GC* 110). Lyra's first encounter with an Other reveals itself to be a valuable one as she abandons some of her own misconceptions about power, gender and class. The perception of the gyptians at Jordan and the reality manifested in the narrative prove to be quite different so that the gyptians are no longer an "other." This relationship is two-fold. Although Lyra starts off as an Other to the gyptians, they bring her in as one of their own and give her their loyalty and protection for the remainder of the trilogy.

The Self & the Other: Lyra & Iorek

Lyra's first interaction with Iorek is an example of one character adapting their ideology in order to understand the ideology of an Other. The panserbjørne are an Other because they have no daemons and they are fundamentally different from humans – they have a different type of intelligence, one that can detect human deception. When Lyra first meets Iorek, she projects her own understanding of identity onto him. She cannot believe that he has no daemon and sadly concludes that he is a "solitary bear" who is "alone, always alone" (*GC* 196). For armored bears, there is no concept of loneliness. However, their armor is tantamount to what it means to be a panserbjørne. Iorek explains to Lyra that "[a]

bear's armor is his soul" (*GC* 196). Iorek is able to identify a central component of Lyra's

ideology and translates his ideology into a meaning that she can understand. Daemons and

armor are not the same things, but they mean similar things to Lyra and Iorek. Lyra is able

to reconcile her understanding of daemons with Iorek's armor. As he rubs seal oil on his

armor, he does so with a "care and attention…[that reminded] Lyra of her own devotion to

Pantalaimon" (*GC* 202). Not only does Lyra reconcile this, she fully accepts this as a reality

of all armored bears.

After Lyra adapts the panserbjørne way of life into her own understanding, it

informs the way that she views them from that point onward. At Iofur Raknison's court,

she observes that the bears wear ornamental armor, not fighting armor. They also carry

manikins that they pretend are their daemons. All of this seems unnatural to Lyra because

Iorek has taught her about the traditional beliefs and practices of the armored bears. The

panserbjørne are an Other because they are a different species from Lyra – a species that

lacks a daemon. The lack of a daemon presents a significant ideological shift between their

society and hers. Lyra is able to adapt her concept of daemons in order to understand the

analogous concept of the bears' armor. She internalizes this new awareness and is able to

accept this Other into an expanded view of the world. When individuals or groups deviate

from this newly accepted concept of the panserbjørne, they become a new Other that seems

unreal and unnatural.

The Self & the Other: Lyra & Will

Lyra and Will's interaction also represents a significant ideological progression for

both characters – one that moves from projection into empathy. The result of their

empathy for each other is that they begin to examine and reevaluate their own ideologies and their senses of self.

The implications for identity as it relates to empathy is nicely articulated by Falconer when she states that "[e]mpathy is not the same as identification, but it still requires becoming unfixed from one's own habits of thinking and self-interests" ("Recasting" 24). Empathy is the ability to understand or internalize some aspect of an Other, for example, their feelings or thoughts. In order to do this, a character must be able to step out of their own ways of thinking about the world. Failure to step out of one's own way of thinking results in projection, not empathy. The first – and more important – example of ideological conflict between Lyra and Will has to do with daemons and presents an example of ideological projection. When they first meet, Lyra is shocked that Will does not have a daemon, she cannot understand how he is even "*alive*" (*SK* 21). She reasons that people from his world *must* carry their daemons on the inside, otherwise they "wouldn't be human" (*SK* 25). In this instance, Lyra has not become "unfixed" from her own ideology, because she refuses to believe that Will could live without a daemon (Falconer "Recasting" 24). Lyra cannot accept what Will believes to be true – that he does not have a daemon (at least not one that he can see at this poin). Because Will's world does not have a similar concept that Lyra can assimilate into her own ideology, she projects her own onto Will. As time goes on, however, both Lyra and Will are able to shift away from projection and move into empathy.

Will's reaction to Lyra's daemon Pan is somewhere in between projection and empathy. Will cannot fully comprehend that a person can have an animal that is both separate and a part of themselves. However, the longer he observes Lyra and Pan, the more he begins to feel "profoundly alone" (*SK* 25). His interaction with Lyra forces him to examine aspects of himself and consider what his lack of daemon might mean for him. Will

does not project his own ideology into Lyra, but his exposure to Lyra allows him to consider himself from another's perspective. Lyra's increased exposure to Will allows her to identify and sympathize with him – to the point where she rejects a critical aspect of her own ideology. Lyra's biggest ideological shift occurs when Pan feels such a deep empathy for Will that he commits the biggest taboo from his world: he touches a person other than Lyra. After Will's fingers get severed, he writhes in pain and Pan "licked Will's wounded hand" and "laid his head on Will's knee" (*SK* 182). Lyra understands why Pan does this, but wonders why he did it without asking her. He responds "because he didn't have a daemon, and he needed one" (*SK* 260). Although it is Pan and not Lyra who commits the taboo, they are part of the same entity. Pan's actions coincide with what Lyra knows to be right in the first place. This scene presents a compelling example of the conflict between personal ideology and social ideology. Pan acts according to what he believes is the right thing to do even though this is a forbidden act in his own world. Pan, has in essence, become "unfixed from [his] own habits of thinking" and doing and this enables him to act out of empathy and not ideology (Falconer "Recasting" 24). The ideological context for Pan's actions is worth considering. Pan's action as a "taboo" is debatable because Will is not from Lyra's world in the first place and this action takes place in Citagazze, not Lyra's own world. Perhaps it is because Will is still an Other, it seems more acceptable to Pan to touch him. Lyra, Pan and Will operate under the assumption that Will does not have a daemon, but his daemon is physically manifested at the end of the trilogy. By this point, however, neither Will nor Lyra see each other as an Other.

The Self & the Other: Mary & the Mulefa

Mary is a character that embodies seemingly contradictory ideologies into her own belief system. As a former nun, she was devout and pious. In time, however, she realizes

that the strict doctrine of the Church will deprive her of many joys in life – a life that is "full

of treasures and strangeness and mystery and joy" (*AS* 445). She is clearly in touch with the

joys of life that were previously restricted. As a scientist, she is constantly exploring and

analyzing the world around her. Although she has left the church, Mary is a spiritual person

who is open to ideas and phenomena that science cannot explain. She acknowledges that

some of the spiritual answers she seeks cannot be provided by science alone. Despite her

knowledge of the world, she acknowledgse "how narrow her scientific horizons" are (*AS*

87). Mary's duality is also portrayed through contrasting religious allusions to her name.

Her name is reminiscent of the Virgin Mary and indeed her former calling as a nun implies

that she did live a virginal, pious existence at one time – she was at some point *a* virgin Mary.

In the trilogy, Dust tells Mary that she "MUST PLAY THE SERPENT" (*SK* 250). At the

end of the trilogy, Mary acts as the proverbial Serpent from the story of the Fall. After

explaining to Lyra and Will how and why she left the church – in order to engage in the

pleasures of life, including sexual awakening – they enact a similar scene of sharing fruit (like

Adam and Eve) and consummating their feelings for one another. Mary's seemingly

divergent personal beliefs and functions in the novel help to portray a character that is

balanced and trustworthy. For these reasons, Pullman places her in a central role in the

second and third part of the trilogy.

Mary's interaction with the mulefa – an Other – not surprisingly, reveals itself in a

way that suggests that the "self" and the Other are both capable of acknowledging and

appreciating the differences between them. When Mary enters the mulefa world, her science

cannot explain the natural environment and she realizes that she is "as ignorant as a baby"

(*AS* 87). In this acknowledgement, Mary strips her ideology down and becomes open to the

possibility that she must learn the reality of this new world through a clean, untainted lens.

The mulefa have no hands, so they must work in pairs using their trunks to accomplish their tasks. Naturally, Mary "felt that this gave her an advantage," but she realizes that by working alone, it "cut her off from others. Perhaps all human beings were like that" (*AS* 128). Autonomy is something that Mary's world takes for granted, it is part of an unconscious ideology. The longer that Mary lives among the mulefa, the more she becomes aware that autonomy is a limited way of operating in the world. The mulefa embody the inter-connectedness of all living beings – both conscious beings and the natural world of plants and animals. In time, this way of being seems so natural to Mary that she does not even think about returning to her own world. The mulefa also see value in Mary because she can work autonomously and has scientific knowledge – they enlist her help to find out why *sraf* is leaving their world. She becomes an integral part of the mulefa society despite her being an Other. Mary's experiences with the mulefa are not unlike Lyra's with the gyptians, because both characters are able to live in and want to stay in the world of an Other. Her experience with the Other demonstrates the potential for beings to work together despite differences, enhancing the lives of all.

<u>Good & Evil</u>

Although many works of fiction have clear distinctions between good characters and evil characters, this is not the case with *His Dark Materials*. Pullman craftily portrays characters that embody aspects of both good and evil with regards to how they use their power. Power in relative and contextual, therefore no characters are essentially good or bad, but manifest various forms of each concept in their thoughts and actions. These characters present a different way of seeing good and evil – rather than seeing them as opposing ideas, they are concepts that exist along a continuum – a continuum that is defined by various contexts and circumstances. Circumstances may affect the way a character behaves and the

outcomes of those actions depend on a variety of factors. The way that characters use their

power manifests itself in ways that make the character good in some instances and evil in

others, depending on the knowledge and intention behind that power. Because power is a

broad context from which actions arise, no character is defined in absolute terms, rather,

they are defined by their actions and the circumstances through which their actions arise.

Good & Evil: The Master

The Master is Jordan is a character that represents the complex context out of which

certain decisions arise. His portrayal suggests that a character's quality is often determined

by the intentions behind actions and less by their outcomes. The various contexts and

influence through which he exercises power also illustrates Foucault's idea about power.

From Lyra's initial perspective he is a villain because she sees him trying to poison her uncle,

Lord Asriel. Readers discover, however, that poisoning Lord Asriel is the lesser of two evils

and The Master's main desire is to "keep [Lyra] safe as long as possible (*GC* 29). The Master

is in the difficult position of having to navigate opposing sources of power, particularly Mrs.

Coulter and the Church as opposed to Lord Asriel and his allies. John Faa observes that the

Master is "a man having terrible choices to make" (*GC* 128). He must often do something

that will cause great harm for others, but the alternative decision would be far worse for a

greater number of people. This shows that indeed the Master's power arises out of a

"complex strategical situation in a particular society" (Foucault *History* 93). The narrative

provides a fuller context to readers about how and why the Master acts in particular ways.

He is shown to actually be a good man who must choose between two undesirable options.

The Master chooses what he believes is best for the greatest number of people from these

options – what, according to his ideology, will benefit the most people and hurt as few as

possible. He cannot be essentialized as strictly bad because he is acting within a larger

external context relative to his limited position of power as the Master of Jordan. Due to his position at Jordan, his agency is compromised because he must act according to how his actions will affect others.

The close of the trilogy offers a very different character portrayal of the Master than the one given in the beginning. In the beginning, the Master threatens to kill the only father figure she has known but the end of the trilogy suggests that the Master's feelings for Lyra more closely resemble those of a father for a daughter than those of Lord Asriel. At the close of the trilogy, it is implied that the Master is less constrained by the powers of the Church or Lord Asriel as he and Mrs. Coulter are now dead. When the Master reunited with Lyra, it is revealed that the Master "loved the girl dearly, and he felt half-proud and half in awe of the beautiful adult she would be" (*AS* 514). The Master's sentiments differ from Lord Asriel's because he never reveals real feelings of love or respect for Lyra until the very end – and only then, his desire to save Lyra coincides with destroying the Church. Upon her return to Jordan, the Master tells Lyra that Lord Asriel left "an endowment to care for all [of her] needs" as she pursues her education (*AS* 514). This is false, however, and the Master plans on using his own funds to pay for Lyra's schooling. The Master lies so that Lyra can remember her father fondly and think of him during her academic pursuits. He hides the fact that he will act as her benefactor because he does not seek validation or gratitude; he acts according to his love for Lyra and part of that love is giving her the impression that she is cared for by the greatest number of people possible. The Master is less subject to external powers, but his ideology dictates that he will give Lyra the belief that her father truly loved her after all. The ending gives a fuller and more complex depiction of a character who must act according to external powers to one degree or another. The Master's subjectivity is heavily shaped by the fact that he must measure his own decisions in a broader context

outside of himself – a context which is constantly changing. He is measured by the intentions behind his actions because they are subject to a variety of circumstances. This implies that in order to wield power responsibly, an individual will sometimes be required to choose between the lesser of two evils.

Good & Evil: Mrs. Coulter

Mrs. Coulter is a character that surprises other characters and readers in her unexpected ability to embody elements of both good and evil. Because she embodies both good and evil, she becomes an increasingly complex character throughout the trilogy. Margaret and Michael Rustin note that characters like Mrs. Coulter play an important role in the trilogy because characters and readers alike realize that "the truth is more complex than they had initially imagined" because people who "had seemed full of hate" "turn out to be capable of love after all" ("Learning" 417). For the majority of the story, Mrs. Coulter is portrayed as a power-hungry and evil villain who will stop at nothing and for no one to get what she wants. She uses her power with little regard for how it will affect others; she lies, she is physically abusive to Lyra, she kills other characters and does not think twice about cutting children and daemons apart. Most ironically, however, she ends up committing several acts of selflessness and love. In *The Golden Compass*, Mrs. Coulter saves Lyra at Bolvanger when she and Pan are about to be cut apart; in *The Subtle Knife*, she kidnaps Lyra and hides her in a cave to protect her from the Church's assassins; in *The Amber Spyglass*, she seduces and kills Metatron to ensure that Lyra can live and ends her own life in the process. Mrs. Coulter is continually deceiving others to get what she wants but her biggest deception is that she reveals herself to be more complex than originally thought to be.

Mrs. Coulter's complex character is also indicative of a significant ideology shift: as she acknowledges Lyra as her daughter, she begins to reject the Church. Once Mrs. Coulter

begins to identify herself as the mother of Lyra (previously an Other), the way that she uses her power begins to change as well. When Mrs. Coulter saves Lyra at Bolvanger, she realizes that Lyra is not just an ordinary child, she is *her* child. When Mrs. Coulter discovers that Lyra is the new "Eve" and that the Church is sending assassins to kill her, she kidnaps Lyra and keeps her asleep in a cave. When she takes Lyra, she neglects to take the alethiometer, which implies that her own ideology is changing – she is no longer interested in serving the Church if it puts her daughter into danger. The alethiometer would prove to be a valuable bargaining chip were she to change her mind, but she does not take it. In the cave, Mrs. Coulter engages in maternal rituals that seem altogether bizarre. She holds Lyra, she begins "crooning baby songs," and she takes a lock of Lyra's hair and puts "it in a little gold locket" (*AS* 52). By all indications, however, Mrs. Coulter is trying to act in Lyra's best interests and protect her. Also due to this shift, she begins to experience some of the pain that she has inflicted on Others, particularly children. When Will comes to rescue Lyra, Mrs. Coulter has a traumatic emotional reaction. She pleads with Lyra, "Lyra, my love! My heart's treasure…don't leave me!...you're tearing my heart" (*AS* 160). Mrs. Coulter begins to understand the pain that she has inflicted on children and their heartbroken parents. Sadly, by this point, it is too late for Mrs. Coulter to be a mother to Lyra. Mrs. Coulter fails not because she failed at motherhood or because she uses her power for ill means, but because she fails to see the world from another person's perspective or feel empathy for another person until it is too late. Mrs. Coulter's character suggests that the failure to see beyond solipsistic self-interest will ultimately come back to harm the individual.

Perception & Reality

Perception and reality are ideas are occur throughout the novel and relate to issues about the self, the Other and the world in general. Perception and reality are closely linked

to ideology; all three ideas relate to and affect one another. The way a character perceives

themselves and their reality is affected by and affects that character's ideology. These ideas

have a significant influence in how character's identities are formed. Perceptions of others

and "Others" often form the basis from which characters understand reality and their place

in reality. On the other hand, a character's perception of another can also affect the way that

Other sees him or herself. These are not static concepts, they are fluid and under constant

adaptation as characters interact with other characters. Perceptions of others have

significant implication for a character's subjectivity – how they see themselves in relation to

others and Others. All characters are "subject to some measure of external coercion" and in

many cases, the "external coercion" comes in the form of perceptions (McCallum *Ideologies* 4.

Perception (whether it is a character's own perception or the perception or another

character) is a type of power that can affect both reality and identity. The clearest example

of this occurs in the World of the Dead, where Lyra and the harpy No-Name have a

profound influence on one another and change each other in significant ways.

Perception & Reality: Lyra & No-Name

The harpies in the World of the Dead demonstrate the relationship between

perception and reality. No-Name the harpy and Lyra both experience the power of the

"other's" perception in affecting their sense of reality. The harpies have been given the

power to "see the worst in every one" (*AS* 316) and this creates a world that is full of "fear

and remorse and self-hatred" (*AS* 316). People are essentialized into the worst aspects of

their personalities and this creates a reality that is stripped of all goodness, hope and

redemption. Lyra feels the powerful impact of perception when No-Name screams Lyra's

name and the phrase "'*Liar! Liar! Liar!*'" and the two signifiers become "one and the same

thing" (*AS* 293). Margaret and Michael Rustin argue that the World of the Dead scenes

force Lyra to be "reduced to an awareness of her self's vulnerability and fallibility" ("Learning" 421). The experience horrifies Lyra and because her name has become inseparable and indistinguishable from one of her less favorable traits. Up to this point, Lyra has used lying and manipulation to protect herself or help others. In the World of the Dead, however, her tendency to lie completely cripples her. Although Lyra is essentialized by No-Name on the basis of her lying, this is, nevertheless, a turning point for Lyra as she realizes that telling the truth is more powerful than telling lies. Because she is able to experience the wrath of the harpies and see herself through their perception, she realizes her own weaknesses and reexamines the reality of who she is and who she wants to be. Her reality is shaped by the perceptions of an Other.

This inter-relationship between perception and reality is not one-sided as Lyra also demonstrates her own power to shift how the harpies see themselves and change the reality in the World of the Dead once and for all. Lyra realizes that the harpies know no other purpose than the one given to them by the Authority. Their power is used only in the context of the purpose that has been given to them and no other. Their reality and their identity are based on this purpose, which is the one perceived and conceived by the Authority. No-Name admits that their "blood is rank" and their "hearts are sickened" by what they have to do (*AS* 316). Although this duty sickens them, they fear that without this duty, they will have no purpose. Their reality is constructed on the basis of this duty and nothing else, hence, they have no names. However, when the inhabitants of the World of the Dead, including the harpies, are enthralled and renewed by Lyra's *true* stories, they realize they may be able to use their powers for another purpose. Lyra suggests that the harpies become "guardians and keepers" of the World of the Dead by listening to the stories of the souls that enter and leading them to opening in the mulefa world (*AS* 318). The harpies will

no longer see the worst in people, but will be the receivers of people's life stories – the collection of all of their experiences from life. No-Name is hopeful and realizes that this will change everything about the World of the Dead. The final symbol of transformation is when Lyra gives No-Name a new name – "Gracious Wings" (*AS* 386). The new signifier reflects the change in the harpy's perception of herself and the reality of the world she guards. She no longer operates according to demonic anonymity, but rather, a life based on guidance and protection, much like the idea of a guardian angel.

Power

In modern discourse, there are many negative connotations associated with the idea of *power* – many of these assumptions rely on binaries that fail to see power in a multi-perspectival context. Some of these common associations are *corruption*, *oppression*, *force* and *brutality*. What Pullman does is to show power in a much larger context through various characters. While Pullman addresses the harmful potential of power, he also places power in conceptual contexts that might appear to have little to do with power, concepts like *doubt*, *subtlety*, *love* and *sacrifice*. He also examines how *fear* and *hypocrisy* affect power. Foucault observes that "[p]ower relations are rooted in the system of social networks" ("Subject" 793). In the case of *His Dark Materials*, these "networks" include social institutions, personal interactions and past experiences all of which inform the character and his or her ideology. Power is also affected by concepts that might seem to bear little significance to the idea of power. Foucault, however, asserts that power is related to everything when he notes that the "exercise of power…is a way in which certain actions modify others" ("Subject" 788). Power is constantly subjected to previous actions and affects future actions. It is never a unitary or solitary action that stands separate from all other actions. A character's past or presence experiences with doubt, fear or love will all have an effect on how they understand

and use their power. By representing power in various contexts, Pullman illustrates the vast potential of power as well as its limitations. Power is placed in subjective positions with regards to various characters' social positions, experiences and identities. By doing so, Pullman shows that as characters become aware of these factors, they are more likely to use their power for positive means rather than negative ones, because they understand the complex relationship between power and all other area of life.

Power: Iorek

Iorek is a character whose understanding of power is greatly impacted by his involvement with humans. In the beginning of the trilogy, Iorek is a skilled fighter with an encyclopedic knowledge of metals. He starts out as a mercenary figure who is willing to fight for whoever can retrieve his armor. His power comes from his strength and skill as a fighter and he will use that power to whoever can compensate him. Like other armored bears, however, Iorek prefers to stay out of human affairs. He tells Lyra that "[h]uman affairs bring us nothing but sorrow and trouble" (*AS* 182). He is "pure and certain and absolute" and knows how and when to use his power (*GC* 345). As the trilogy progresses, however, he examines his own power and questions whether or not he should use it in particular instances. His reservation is informed by an increased awareness of how power operates in the affairs of humans and other Others. Because of this, he uses his power with caution. The affairs that Iorek has gotten involved in extend beyond the regional battles that he has fought in his own world. The context for power, as a result, is much greater and has more serious implications. Iorek begins exhibit traits of what Foulcault refers to as "pastoral power" ("Subject" 782). There are two aspects of pastoral power that Iorek exhibits and each one changes the way he sees his own power. The first one is the ability to see power as something that can "sacrifice itself for the life and salvation of the flock" and the other is

power that "implies a knowledge of the conscience" (783). With his increased interactions with humans, witches and other types of characters, Iorek begins to see his power in the context of how it affects and helps other. His increased awareness of the depths of his own conscience also affects how Iorek sees power.

The more Iorek involves himself with "[h]uman affairs," he becomes increasingly aware of how his can power can and should be used (*AS* 182). Iorek does not trust the subtle knife; he believes it is too powerful to be in existence and fears that it might have intentions of its own. Will cannot understand this idea, because he sees his power as something that is related to his personal choices. Iorek explains to Will, "What you don't know is what the knife does on its own. Your intentions may be good. The knife has intentions, too…Sometimes in doing what you intend, you also do what the knife intends, without knowing" (*AS* 181). This statement illustrates that Iorek has a broader understanding of how power works and in this situation he is particularly concerned with the power of the subtle knife. Iorek realizes that power is not limited to individuals, but comes from many places. The effect of power is not limited to the intentions of the user, it can have other unintended consequences. Iorek does not trust the knife partially due to his own instincts but he is also concerned about the effects the knife may have for the fate of the world. Iorek's concept of his "flock" is not limited to the armored bears anymore, but extends to include the fate of all the worlds that can be affected by the power of the subtle knife. Although he eventually fixes the knife out of his loyalty to Lyra, he seriously wonders if his decision will have disastrous consequences for the world. Iorek's personal conflict with fixing the knife illustrates another aspect of pastoral power.

The second implication of pastoral power "implies a knowledge of the conscience" ("Subject" 783). Foucault's definition is used more generally with an individual's knowledge

of *other* people's conscience, but the definition applies in the case of Iorek because it is the first time he becomes aware of his *own* conscience. Up to this point, Iorek has never experienced human emotions, such as fear or doubt – he acts according to instinct and tradition. Reflecting on his decision to fix the knife, he wonders to himself, "'[m]aybe I should not have mended it. I'm troubled, and I have never been troubled before, never in doubt. Now I am full of doubt. Doubt is a human thing, not a bear thing" (*AS* 191). Although Iorek has never experienced doubt, the implications of power are far greater in this war of the worlds than any other battle he has fought in. Because he uses his power to fix the knife, he now knows that his decision may have far-reaching consequences that will affect a significant number of lives. This causes him to become aware of his own conscience, something that until now has been a part of the world of humans, not a part of his own.

Because Iorek cannot understand all the forces of power, he begins to reflect on and doubt the ways in which he uses his power. Iorek's intuition about the subtle knife turn out to be true when it is revealed that the subtle knife has caused a great deal of pain and disorder in the world. The knife indeed had its own intentions – intentions that were not perceptible to its creators. As Iorek exerts his power in new ways, the way that he understands power is changed. He can no longer act according to his bear instincts because his power has far-reaching consequences that might affect countless beings in various worlds. He becomes familiar with his own conscience when he must use his power in a new way.

Power: Will

Will is one of the strongest characters in the trilogy, yet his power comes from a complex context of subtlety, love, and personal sacrifice. His power is informed by his past

experiences and his compassion for others. It is implicated in "system[s] of social networks" (Foucault "Subject" 793). These networks include his unique relationship with his mother. In the first twelve years of his life, Will has had to protect his mother, who is afflicted with paranoia and delusions. In order to ensure that his mother is not taken away, he learns the art of becoming invisible and inconspicuous. He "learned to conceal himself" and "remain unnoticed at school" (*SK* 11). This skill serves him throughout the trilogy as he avoids the police, break into homes and defeats various assailants. This skill is one of the most valuable ways that Will's exerts power over situations and ensures the protection of himself and his mother. His subtlety and his ability to adapt to a variety of situations put him in a place of power that would otherwise be stripped from him because he is a child. He understands the importance of using subtlety, not force. Power is not a singularly concept that stands apart from all other aspects of life. Due to his past with his mother, Will is a driven by love and compassion for others. His power is constantly informed by his past and the people around him. The way that he uses his power is in the context of the various people that affect and will be affected by it.

Will also exemplifies elements of pastoral power as he is constantly thinking of the wellbeing of others and acts out of love, whether it's for his mother, his father or for Lyra. He is constantly putting the well-being of others – those in his "flock" – ahead of his own. When he is first introduced, it is revealed that Will "would have died to protect" his mother (*SK* 9). His search for his father serves his own needs, but he also believes that bringing him back will help his mother get better. After Will and Lyra build trust and friendship, he decides to help her find Lord Asriel and delay his own search for his father. As Foucault notes, the "exercise of power…is a way in which certain actions modify others" ("Subject" 788). Although Will is an extremely driven character, his actions are always in the context of

serving others. Other characters affect how and when he decides to use his power – they indeed "modify" his actions. His character shows that love is just as powerful as power itself, because it is often the driving force behind it. In the trilogy, love is the only thing stronger than the formidable subtle knife – a knife that can cut through any form of matter. When the knife breaks the first time, it is because he thinks of "his own mother's face" and feels his own heart breaking (*AS* 153). His love for Lyra is the only thing that can break the subtle knife in the end of the trilogy.

Will's power is also accompanied by physical and emotional sacrifice and this suggests that power comes with consequences and responsibilities. This also demonstrates the idea of Foucault's pastoral power, which emphasizes serving others rather than demanding "a sacrifice from its subjects" ("Subject" 783). Will's use of power does not come at the expense or harm of others, but it is he who must endure sacrifices. Will sacrifices his own desires for others, but there is another sacrifice that Will must endure: the loss of his fingers. The loss of his fingers is "the badge of the bearer" which indicates that the power of the subtle knife is accompanied by the idea of personal sacrifice (*SK* 180). Shohet comments on this symbolism when she observes that Will "can execute action better than anyone in the trilogy, but is made incomplete and bleeds continually from his left hand" (27). Will must endure the continual pain of his hand which compromises his ability to focus on using the knife. His inner and outer strength is tested by this sacrifice and, at times, interferes with his ability to use the knife at all. The ultimate sacrifice comes at the end of the trilogy, when Will must close every remaining hole between worlds, forever separating himself from Lyra. The price of power is that he must say good-bye to the girl he loves. He must also destroy the knife in the end, thereby relying on his own innate skills and powers in his own world. Will's character suggests that power comes from a complex system of life

experience and social interactions. It must be understood in various contexts with ideas that may seem to contradicts it, such as love and sacrifice.

Power: The Authority, Metatron & the Panopticon

The characters of the Authority and Metatron represent another dimension of power, specifically power that aims to control its subjects and ensure their obedience. Foucault's analysis of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon provides a nice context from which to examine how power is manifested through the Authority. The Panopticon is a circular prison structure with a surveillance tower placed in the middle. Prisoners cannot see one another nor can they see whether or not an individual is watching them, therefore they must act as if they are being watched at all times. The physical structure of the prison imitates other forms of power that seek to ensure good behavior, submission and obedience. While the Panopticon "induces in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power," religious institutions like the Church function in a similar way. (Foucault "Discipline" 201). While the Authority is not technically invisible, he is a figure that functions from an assumed position of power within the Church. What is significant is that he is not a truly supernatural being, but one that is constructed by mankind. He is "formed of Dust" which is "a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself" (*AS* 31). The Authority, therefore, is a construct that comes out of human consciousness. Andrew Leet points out that "[t]he male angel that Pullman visually creates is only a godlike representation of what mankind has designed for its own purposes and needs" (185). The "purposes and needs" within the Church are not unlike the "purposes and needs" of the Panopticon, which include the use of fear to guarantee obedience (185). Individuals in the Church use the Authority as a primary vehicle of power in order to "suppress and control every natural impulse" (*SK* 50) and "destroy the joys and

the truthfulness of life" (SK 272). The Authority believes that "conscious beings of every

kind have become dangerously independent," not unlike inmates in a prison (*AS* 61).

Allowing humans to think and act for themselves in a way that is humanly natural – is not a

risk that the Authority is willing to take and his role within the larger power structure of the

Church functions in a similar way that the surveillance tower of the Panopticon functions.

Although Foucault articulates the immense power and efficiency of the Panopticon,

what is ironic is that Pullman portrays the Authority as a figure that is ultimately powerless,

thereby dismantling the Panopticon in the trilogy. Foucault notes that, within the

Panopticon system, "one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees

everything without ever being seen" ("Discipline" 232). Very few individuals in the trilogy

actually see or meet the Authority. In a strange irony, however, the Authority is also cut off

from much of the world as he is confined to a small glass enclosure. His power is illusory

and he himself is actually subjected to external forces that are out of his control. When Lyra

and Will find him – when they actually *see* him, they realize that he is "powerless" and has

"no will of his own" (*AS* 410). He is such a pitiful figure that he can "only weep and

mumble in fear and pain" (*AS* 410). He is so powerless, in fact, that Lyra and Will do not

kill him, but rather, they release him from his little prison. Upon his release he lets out "a

sigh of the most profound and exhausted relief" (*AS* 411). This pivotal scene implies that

the Authority has become increasingly powerless and has become a subject of his regent

Metatron and the Church at large. Once the Authority is released and Lyra spreads her

vision of the Republic of heaven, the Church's power will slowly dissipate because the

source of the power is now a non-entity. More significantly, Pullman begins to destroy the

Panopticon of the Church.

The character of Metatron also functions in a power structure that is like the Panopticon. Metatron, like the Authority, believes that humans have too much choice and free and wants to "intervene much more actively in human affairs" (*AS* 61). Indeed, until his eventual death, Metatron is a successful figure of the surveillance tower. He instills fear in most of his enemies and it from fear that many of the adherents to the Church's faith act according to prescribed modes of behavior. His power, however, is undermined by a great deal of hypocrisy. While he wants to suppress human impulses and free will, he himself shows no ability to control his own impulses. He is a "lover of the flesh" and this will be the source of his demise when Mrs. Coulter successfully seduces and kills him (*AS* 63). Unlike the release of the Authority, Metatron is killed due to his own weakness and susceptibility. He is an actual figure of control who is undone less by Mrs. Coulter and more by his own lack of control and power over himself.

Innocence & Maturity

Although Pullman's trilogy break binaries and portrays various elements in terms of their complexity, he does seem to make some distinction between the ideas of innocence and maturity. Pullman's trilogy is after all a coming-of-age story. Innocence may have childlike associations, but the concept is broader with regards to the characters in the trilogy. Innocence might be defined as some void of knowledge or awareness. Through various experiences, characters fill in those voids and grow as individuals. For Pullman, coming-of-age is not necessarily something that is limited to a child character like Lyra; Mary Malone is also a dynamic character who grows and progresses in the trilogy – in some sense, she also comes of age. The trilogy does not suggest that the transition between innocence and experience is linear, but rather, cyclical. Experience reflects itself in very realistic ways throughout the trilogy. Lyra and Will must endure several mental, emotional and physical

hardships and confront these challenges. They make mistakes along the way and fall victim to other characters, but they survive and are made stronger characters for it. As they learn from these experiences, they begin to lose their innocence. Lyra transitions from a careless storyteller into a thoughtful and focused young woman. While it might seem as though Will has gone through a fair number of experiences when he is first introduced, he nonetheless grows in the trilogy as well. In addition to the challenges in the physical world, Will also confronts inner emotional battles as he negotiates his own power with his love for others. By the time the trilogy introduces Mary, she has already gone through at least one major life change, but she continues to learn and explore. These characters all move from stages of innocence and mature in significant ways.

Another perspective from which to analyze innocence and maturity is to consider the various instruments that the books are named after. The alethiometer and the subtle knife offer a symbolic contrast with the amber spyglass in the context of innocence and maturity. What differentiates Lyra and Will from Mary is that the children receive their instruments and are the only ones who have the power to use them. Mary must use her intellectual and physical resources in order to make the spyglass and she is not the only person who can see through it once it is made. Innocence is sometimes accompanied by ideas of fantasy and it is fantasy that allows for magic. In the case of Mary, she is a conscientious adult and must work for her ability to see the *sraf*. At the end of the trilogy, Will must destroy his knife and Lyra loses the ability to read the alethiometer. They will now have to work for their power. Margaret and Michael Rustin argue that Lyra and Will are forced to "move to a deeper sense of reality as the trilogy proceeds" ("New" 236). No longer bestowed with objects of great power, Will will have to navigate his own world without the possibility of escaping. Lyra will also have to dedicate years of study in order to read the alethiometer again. They will be

challenged and molded from these experiences. They can no longer live in a fantasy world of magic and innocence, they must accept that they are growing up and be willing to confront the challenges that lie ahead. The greatest testament that Lyra and Will have left their innocence behind is not in their consummation, but in the heartbreaking decision to split up forever. They must acknowledge that they cannot live in each other's worlds nor can they leave a hole between them because Dust would leave again. They must do what is best for everyone even at the expense of themselves. They are no longer innocent nor can they escape into other worlds, they have matured and must accept the challenges that lie ahead as well as be open to the various possibilities of exploration, discovery and joy.

Conclusion

His Dark Materials is not only a riveting and engaging story for children and adults, it is also an exhaustive exploration of binary constructs and multidimensional themes. Pullman tackles the adult/child, male/female, good/evil and self/Other binaries in a way that illustrates that these ideas are not in fact opposites. Everything that exists in the text is a shade of gray in a long continuum, nothing is essentially one thing and not another. The trilogy also explores themes that are very multidimensional, such as ideology, language, power and growth. These ideas are constructed from a variety of inter-connected and sometimes contradictory elements. The overall sense that readers get from a piece of work like *His Dark Materials* is that the world is a very complex place; it cannot be understood in absolute terms and there are many things that exist beyond a limited understanding of the world.

Pullman addresses and deconstructs the child/adult binary. His character portrayals suggest that the ways that children and adults are understood tend to oversimplify matters

that are actually more complex because his characters reject several of the general assumptions that pervade our social discourse. Child characters are shown to be resourceful, resilient and capable of great depths of compassion, while several adult characters are shown to be short-sighted, selfish and deeply flawed. Lyra breaks down the child/adult binary because she is resourceful, resilient and intellectually curious about complex matters like Dust. Will, in a similar way, disrupts this binary because he acts as his mother's caretaker, rarely needs protection from adults and, on occasion, kills. Mary possesses childlike curiosity of the world and expresses wonder in the things she does not understand. These three characters, as well as many others in the trilogy, seem to exhibit a complex mixture of childlike and adult-like qualities; their portrayals are not limited to their age. Pullman uses these characters in order to suggest, like Nodelman, that the ways that we understand children and adults are sometimes limited and do not account for the vast gray area that defines our world.

Pullman also addresses the male/female binary by addressing gender, gender roles and sexuality. He challenges and ultimately rejects strict divisions with regards to these issues. The presence of opposite sex daemons explicates the idea that all individuals manifest some level of duality with regards to masculinity and femininity. However, Pullman is careful not to create a male/female homogeneity among his cast of characters. He also mentions a rare individual whose daemon is the same sex as himself, thereby illustrating the vast continuum by which gender expresses itself. He also introduces characters that challenge the prevailing heteronormativity in children's literature. The characters of Balthamos and Baruch are portrayed in such a way as to suggest a homosexual partnership between the two angels. Although the language itself is never explicit, the deep love they feel for one another is nonetheless clear to other characters and readers alike. Pullman also

explores gender roles and portrays characters that are not confined by them. Lyra is a tomboy who is not submissive or delicate. She learns domestic skills from Jerry the ship hand who "showed her how to sew, an art she learned willingly from him" (*GC* 166). Will, though strong, has deep wells of emotion. He also assumes all domestic responsibilities in order to care for his mother. Through these characters, Pullman demonstrates the unstable binary constructs that separate males from females. The texts suggests that every individual embodies some elements of maleness and femaleness, as well as elements that cannot be understood as either of the two.

The trilogy treatment of good and evil and self and Other is also interesting for the fact that it completely breaks the mold of children's literature. Characters are inherently complex and no single character is essentially good nor is any single character essentially evil. No single character is completely separate from o/Others either. This is because Pullman provides a realistic context for his characters. He portrays them in order to show their strengths, weaknesses, uncertainties and triumphs. The characters are also positioned in complex societies with different ideologies and they are affected by their external world in a way that suggests that actions are not independent of their origins, intentions or outcomes. What is determined to be good to one person may be evil to another. One of the greatest accomplishments of the trilogy is that it demonstrates the importance of being able to see from the perspective of another. By interacting with an Other, characters are forced to examine their own beliefs and what seemed obvious and natural to them at first is shown in a different light. The Other is an important foundation for the self because it casts a mirror onto the self and allows the self to see him/herself for what s/he is and what s/he could be. The trilogy's treatment of good and evil and self and Other can relate to the real world with respect to the fact that humans are naturally xenophobic. We are quite often wary, even

fearful, of things that are unfamiliar or strange. Human history and the current reality of our world demonstrates this. What readers of *His Dark Materials* might gain is a sense of being open to new ideas and explore the possibility of seeing everything in the world as various shades of gray and every other individual as a source of new perspectives.

The trilogy also addresses ideas that are multidimensional, such as ideology, power and growth. The ideology of a particular country or society often operates within a framework that is constructed from binaries. The ideology helps to create a distinct body of ideas, beliefs and customs that differentiates it from others. *His Dark Materials*, however, suggests that ideology is in constant dialogue with itself and other ideologies. This is accomplished at the individual level. As characters interact with others and encounter new places, they adapt and shift their ideology in order to understand what they are seeing. Ideology is not a static structure, it is constantly evolving because it operates at the individual level as well as the macro level. In a similar fashion, power also operates from a complex network of various influences. As Foucault illustrates, power is subject to a multitude of institutions, past actions, and social contexts. It does not function within a binary, because it is subject to a variety of elements. Pullman shows the multidimensionality of power through many characters, particularly the Master, Iorek, Will and the Church. Each character or entity within the trilogy is placed in a contextual framework that suggests that the sources, intentions and outcomes of power are vast. Power cannot be understood as a top-down phenomenon, it is everywhere and everyone has some of it.

His Dark Materials is a rich body of work that sets a paradigm for all of literature. Its use of fantasy and riveting plot make it accessible and enjoyable for children, but its exploration of deep theological, philosophical and existential questions make it a fascinating

read for adult readers. Carole Scott notes the vast richness of the trilogy with regards to its content when she states that Pullman "melds this wide continuum of philosophies and perspectives, old and new, into a unique world picture, creates a panoply of extraordinary characters representing many dimensions of the imagination" (95). It is due to this richness that the trilogy can be seen as a piece of realism, because it addresses real issue that exist in the world. It does not oversimplify people or places in order to make them easily digestible, it explores the complexity of all things. The trilogy's ending does not deliver a dramatic fight scene between forces of good and evil, rather it ends with two young adolescents having to accept a variety of changes that will forever affect their reality. The battle at the end of the trilogy is not so much external as it is internal. It ends with sadness, but also hope. Readers of all ages, but particularly adolescents and adults, can gain a heightened awareness of the complexity that exists all around them. They might be compelled to reconsider their own ideas and explore new ones.

Although *His Dark Materials* is considered a work of children's literature, its value to readers of all ages cannot be overstated. Works like *His Dark Materials* transcend the boundaries of genre and readership because they dare to see the world for what it really is: complex, simple, beautiful, ugly, desperate and hopeful – all things at once. Pullman challenges readers to examine and reconsider their own world. We are in an age where the world is not only becoming smaller due to technology, but it is becoming even more complex as a result. People must to be open to the vast possibilities that lie outside of their own ideology. Only then, can we begin to repair some of our present-day problems. The characters of *His Dark Materials* show readers that this not a fantasy, but a real possibility. Lenz poignantly asserts that "Pullman has created a cross-age trilogy with the power to move people at the deepest levels, the potential to change their consciousness, and even…the

possibility to transform themselves and the world they inhabit" (1). If the world of literature

has any value in the real world outside of enjoyment of edification, it is in its power to

influence those who partake in it the lesson and insights that it offers. One might hope that

works of literature like *His Dark Materials* will continue to have the power to shape and

change our world in profoundly positive ways today and tomorrow – indeed, for all time.

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