

HUSSE
HUNGARIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ENGLISH / MAGYAR ANGLISZTIKAI TÁRSASÁG

HUSSE 11

Proceedings of the 11th Conference
of the Hungarian Society
for the Study of English

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L'Harmattan

BUDAPEST

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Graphic design and cover: Marcell Piti
Typesetting: Veronika Ruttkay

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ISBN 978-963-236-943-3

**Eve Discovering Adam or the Bloom of Romance:
Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* and
Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* Trilogy**

ZSUZSANNA TÓTH

Sexuality and reproduction have been at the centre of interest in most ancient and traditional societies' religions. Christianity, however, has never been comfortable with either the emphasis on life here and now, or sexuality as "a potentially noble part of [man's] being" (Davies 578). As Robertson Davies points out, there have always been literary works protesting against that attitude, embodying "a demand that religion should include sexuality and the distinctively feminine element in the human spirit as it shows itself in both sexes" (578). In line with the English literary tradition of John Milton (1608–1674) and William Blake (1757–1827), Philip Pullman's (1946–) fantasy book trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, consisting of *Northern Lights* (published in the U.S.A. with the alternative title *The Golden Compass*) (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997) and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000) (hereafter abbreviated as GC, SK, and AS), belongs to this group of books. The reason is that the mythopoesis (i.e. fictional mythology) of Pullman's trilogy is embedded in the Western tradition of *memento vivere* (a Latin phrase meaning 'remember to live'), instead of the tradition of *memento mori* ('remember that you will die') widely propagated by Christianity. Accordingly, in the trilogy special emphasis is given to the body itself, to multitudes of sensory impressions and sensual pleasures, and sophisticated representations of erotic desire from the low-key to the almost bestial.

Any analysis of the representation of religious myths in literary fiction invites the method of 'archetypal criticism' or 'myth criticism,' which regards literary works as an expression or embodiment of recurrent mythic patterns and structures. This theoretical view is primarily connected to the name and work of Northrop Frye. Fascinated by the transtextual connection between the Bible and William Blake's visionary prophecies, Frye expounded holistic thinking about literature first in *Fearful Symmetry: A Study on William Blake* (1947), then ten years later in *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957), the theoretical basis of my paper, with the aim of giving "a rational account of some of the structural principles of Western literature in the context of its Classical and Christian heritage" (Frye, *Anatomy* 133). Being convinced of the unity of all literature in a natural cycle, Frye defined four "narrative pregeneric elements of literature," called *mythoi*, that are broader than or logically prior to ordinary literary genres: the romantic, the tragic, the comic, and the ironic or satiric (*Anatomy* 162).

With regards to Pullman's adventure story, I wish to argue that in terms of Northrop Frye's genre typology, *His Dark Materials* is nothing else but a quest-

romance. The skeletal structure of romance shows that it is basically a love story rooted in the medieval ideal of chivalry: a knight with heroic qualities goes on a quest through marvel-filled adventures, triumphs against a supernatural enemy, and is rewarded with love and marriage to a princess, which brings prosperity to the kingdom. For Frye, it is exactly the major adventure, the heroic quest that gives literary form to the romance (*Anatomy* 187).

A Tale as Old as Time Is Retold: The Myth of the Fall

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the myth of the Fall of Man recounts the transition of Adam and Eve from a state of innocent obedience to God to a state of guilty disobedience, and it is also the main story of Northrop Frye's myth-criticism and Philip Pullman's juvenile fiction. According to Augustine of Hippo, the Fall from God's grace resulted from either pride or the disobedience of the first human couple; it was an accident providing an explanation to "a new situation in the world that is recognized as a decline or degradation when contrasted to the original[ly pure] state of man and the cosmos" (Ries 256).

Northrop Frye shares this canonical view of the Fall. He distinguishes myth from romance by the former's canonical position: certain stories, such as that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, are regarded with more reverence than others in Western Judeo-Christian cultures because they bear "a heavier weight of conceptual meaning," regardless of whether poets believed in the historicity of these stories or not (*Anatomy* 188). He attributes importance to the quest-myths of the Bible¹ because myth in literary criticism is identified with "the metaphorical key to the displacement of romance" (*Anatomy* 188). The antagonist of Frye's Biblical scenario is a sea-monster called Leviathan who in the Book of Revelation turns out to be identical with Satan as well as the Edenic serpent; it is "associated with the natural sterility of the fallen world, with the blasted world of struggle and poverty and disease" (*Anatomy* 189). The protagonist is of course the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In the so-called "dragon-killing metaphor in Christian symbolism" Frye confers on Christ the role of the hero, and on Satan that of the dragon, while Adam is described as the impotent old king whose son, Christ rescues the bride, the Church (*Anatomy* 189). Frye concludes that "if the leviathan is the whole fallen world of sin and death and tyranny into which Adam fell, it follows that Adam's children are born, live, and die inside his belly. Hence if the Messiah is to deliver us by killing the leviathan, he releases us" (*Anatomy* 190).

Philip Pullman, however, turns Augustine's, as well as Frye's, interpretation of the Fall upside down. The mythopoesis of his trilogy revolves around self-awareness, as the target of man's spiritual quest, and also the culmination of man's development. Accordingly, for the English author this myth—still named 'fall' but meaning 'ascent'—symbolises the necessary road toward maturation and self-knowledge, yet is

¹ These are "a Genesis-apocalypse myth" and "an Exodus-millennium myth" (Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* 191).

not necessarily identical with the loss of purity: it narrates the birth of intellectual *and* sensual consciousness, in parallel with the recognition of imperfection and vulnerability. Pullman states that the Fall is “something that happens to all of us when we move from childhood through adolescence to adulthood” (qtd. in “The Dark Materials Debate”). In more detail:

This is exactly what happens in the Garden of Eden. They [Adam and Eve] become aware of sexuality, of the power the body has to attract attention from someone else. This is not only natural, but a wonderful thing! To be celebrated! Why the Christian Church has spent 2,000 years condemning this glorious moment, well, that’s a mystery. I want to confront that, I suppose, by telling a story that this so-called original sin is anything but. It’s the thing that makes us fully human. (qtd. in Rosin)

Ergo the sexual maturation of Pullman’s pre-adolescent protagonists is the foundation on which the whole story is built, while the trilogy offers an unorthodox, humanistic religion of Eros which celebrates the dignity and the sanctity of human life. Through all this, the anti-clerical, but not anti-religious author subversively criticises the grand narrative of Christianity. The reader of *His Dark Materials* follows the adventures of a twelve-year-old girl, Lyra Belacqua, and a twelve-year-old boy, William Parry, through different parallel universes, in the company of their daemons who, as creatures of authorial fantasy, are the visible and audible materializations of one part of the human soul in animal form.

Although Fry and Pullman relate inversely to the myth of the Fall, the adventurous life of Pullman’s heroine largely, but not entirely fits into Frye’s genre typology. The literary critic defined six distinct phases of romance that form “a cyclical sequence in a romantic hero’s life” (*Anatomy* 198): (1) the myth of the birth of the hero; (2) the innocent youth of the hero; (3) the normal quest theme; (4) the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience; (5) a reflective, idyllic view of experience from above; (6) the end of a movement from active to contemplative adventure (*Anatomy* 198-202). With regards to the necessary generic transformations, I adapt these chronological phases to Pullman’s story, focusing on the heroic quest of the female protagonist: (1) the need of a whole cosmos for a heroine, (2) the recognition of the heroine, (3) the progression of the heroine, and finally (4) the fulfilment of the heroine’s fate.

A seemingly promising contrast immediately arises from the fact that while Frye identified the representative example of romance with the Bible, which tells the story of a male Messiah, Pullman stars a female saviour. Pullman’s choice of a female protagonist seems to be motivated by his dissatisfaction with the patriarchy of the Christian clergy and the misogyny of Christian theology. While Joel P. Brereton considers female sexuality to be sacred, standing as “the positive condition contrary to both infertility and asexuality” (520), Christianity has been reluctant to recognize motherhood as the divine creative power of women. That is why Margaret Bertilsson claims that “[t]o control sexual love and to make it subservient to religion has always

been a central task for the Christian religion” (301). Moreover, she reports on Max Weber’s observation that “the more developed and the more rationalized the religion, the stronger is its agony of sex and of women” (301). Pullman’s gesture, however, is not as subversive or revolutionary, as it appears to be *within* Frye’s system, where the sex of the hero(ine) does not influence the sequence of the generic patterns of romance.²

Before the Journey Begins: Why a Heroine is Needed?

Quest-romance is framed according to the dichotomy of fertility and sterility. Northrop Frye states that “[t]he central form of romance is dialectical: everything is focused on a conflict between the hero and his enemy” (*Anatomy* 187–188). In this way, “[t]he enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life, and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigour, and youth” (*Anatomy* 187–188). The mythopoetic structure of *His Dark Materials* is based on the existence of Dust, a mysterious, usually invisible substance consisting of self-conscious particles, the divine life-force animating the whole cosmos. It is the vulnerable source and the condition of vitality, consciousness, curiosity, imagination and free will:

Dust came into being when living things became conscious themselves; but it needed some feedback system to reinforce it and make it safe . . . Without something like that, it would all vanish. Thought, imagination, feeling, would all wither and blow away, leaving nothing but a brutish automatism. (AS 403)

Accordingly, following the tradition of the ‘combat myth’ (a battle between order and chaos), there is a cosmic struggle revolving around Dust:

There are two great powers . . . and they’ve been fighting since time began . . . Every little increase in human freedom has been fought over ferociously between those who want us to know more and be wiser and stronger, and those who want us to obey and be humble and submit. (SK 283)

In other words, those who are either directly or indirectly against Dust and everything it represents are considered to be the adversaries associated with an unnatural state of affairs; those who in any way support Dust, the meaningful life itself, are the positive characters.

Pullman’s story starts with the troublesome disappearance of children by unknown kidnapers, generally called ‘the Gobblers,’ in the England of one of the uncountable parallel universes. It gradually turns out that a politically stronger and

² See Fry, *The Secular Scripture*, especially chapter 3, for a detailed elaboration of his system.

stronger religious organisation called the Magisterium stands behind these events. The reason for the nation-wide kidnapping is the churches' fear of consciousness and vim, in theological terms the Original Sin, whose physical sign is identified with Dust, the "physical proof that something happen[s] when innocence change[s] into experience" (GC 327) in early adolescence. Their motto is "better a world with no Church and no Dust than a world where every day we have to struggle under the hideous burden of sin" (AS 63). In Hugh Rayment-Pickard's sarcastic words, "[t]he church's fear of Dust is really just a fear of 'being human'" (65).

Unfortunately, the Magisterium succeeds in recognising the connection between Dust and the natural process of growing-up. "During the years of puberty [children] begin to attract Dust more strongly, and it settles on them as it settles on adults" (GC 325). In parallel, "daemons bring all sort of troublesome thoughts and feelings, and that's what lets Dust in" (GC 248). However, "[a] quick operation before that, and you're never troubled again. And your daemon stays with you, only . . . not connected" (GC 248). This means that if the intimate and sacred bond between preadolescent children and their daemons is cut (an operation called *intercision*), years later these severed patients will not attract Dust, thus will escape from the 'sin' of self-knowledge and sexuality associated with growing-up. This totally anti-life operation—when part of the human psyche remains maimed for a lifetime in the state of a soulless zombie, making the child indifferent to anything and easily dirigible—is the perfect method for not only destroying Original Sin, but also turning the individual into an obedient subject.

In compliance with Pullman's anticlericalism and his heterodox interpretation of the Fall, while Frye considers Satan the enemy, Pullman does the same with representatives of religious fanaticism. Their institutions are portrayed as having no mercy: "[f]or all its history . . . it's tried to suppress and control every natural impulse. . . . [E]very church is the same: control, destroy, obliterate every good feeling" (SK 44–45). This threatening clerical control does not only concern one single world but all parallel worlds at the same time.

The Advent of the Life Giver: The Recognition of the Heroine

The impending disaster necessitates the appearance of a hero(ine) who, according to Frye's first phase, must have some mystery around his/her birth. While Frye's main hero, Jesus Christ, is known to be conceived through Immaculate Conception, other heroes in their infancy are placed in "an ark or chest floating on the sea" or "nurtured by animals in a forest" (*Anatomy* 198). The hero's true identity is usually concealed (*Anatomy* 199). In contrast to Frye's depictions, Lyra is in no way supernatural; however, the recognition of her mythic role is foretold by superior forces.

The twelve-year-old Lyra Belacqua is living in that alternative world where the Magisterium rises to power. As a secret and abandoned love-child, "conceived in sin and born in shame" (SK 33) of a bachelor aristocrat, Lord Asriel, and a respected politician's wife, Mrs. Marisa Coulter, Lyra is brought up as an orphan among the walls of Jordan College of Oxford. Although she lives in the citadel of science, this

resourceful, brave and usually disobedient child spends most of her time on the streets in the company of gutter children, as “a coarse and greedy little savage” (GC 33)—this life-style prepares her for the difficulties she will have to overcome later. Her motivation for beginning her quest is that one day her best friend, Roger Parslow, disappears, and the loyal Lyra, for whom promises are sacred—“[o]ur business is to keep promises, no matter how difficult they are” (AS 174)—, decides to rescue him from the hands of the Gobblers.

Prophecies announce the future arrival of the saviour so that her identity can be revealed. As David Adams Leeming argues, “[t]he hero must be clearly recognizable and ordained for his task, a task . . . that is a matter of life and death for us all” (148). In connection with Jesus Christ, traditions talk about, for instance, the Annunciation and Three Wise Men. Similarly, the appearance of Pullman’s child saviour who will restore the distorted harmony of the cosmos has already been predicted by supernatural beings, probably angels:

“The witches have talked about this child for centuries past,” said the consul. “Because they live so close to the place where the veil between the worlds is thin, they hear immortal whispers from time to time, in the voices of those beings who pass between the worlds. And they have spoken of a child such as this, who has a great destiny that can only be fulfilled elsewhere—not in this world, but far beyond. Without this child, we shall all die. So the witches say.” (GC 154)

The subject of this prophecy turns out to be Lyra. However, she is more than a sympathetic child heroine: “there was a name that would bring to mind a parallel case, and which would make the Church hate and fear her” (AS 59). Lyra is “in the position of Eve, the wife of Adam, the mother of us all, and the cause of all sin” (AS 60). The reason for Pullman’s identification of Lyra with the biblical Eve is his subversive reinterpretation of the Judeo-Christian myth of the Fall, in which ‘sexual awareness’ is the key concept. Accordingly, “[n]ature and opportunity will come together like spark and tinder” (AS 292), that is, a *pre-adolescent* Eve is to be tempted. In this way, with the true purpose of “giv[ing] life back to the [diseased] universe” (Freitas and King 123), she is the key figure in a cosmic war fought by the fundamentalist, obscurantist churches on the one side and the rebellious free-thinkers on the other. As soon as the enemy becomes aware of Lyra’s grandiose task, the girl becomes the target of their obsession to destroy ‘sin.’

Nevertheless, the question of predestination versus free will is problematic in Pullman’s trilogy. “We are all subject to the fates” (GC 271), that is, all events and actions are subjugated to fate according to the novels. At the same time Lyra has “the power to make a fateful choice, on which the future of all the worlds depend[s]” (AS 59), so free will also plays a role. Importantly, she is aware that she has to perform a grandiose task because she overheard the consul’s (above quoted) words: “I *know* I got something important to do, and Dr. Lanselius the Consul said it was vital I never

found out what my destiny was till it happened, see—I must never ask about it . . . So I never did” (AS 277). In other words, like God’s Son, Lyra accepts her destiny.

With the Worthiest Companion: The Heroine’s Progression in Her Mission

Contrary to Frye’s prototype of all heroes, Jesus Christ, Pullman’s heroine neither preaches, nor performs miracles, or kills dragons. Instead, her fate is unconsciously fulfilled in the bloom of first love, for which—given the Biblical scenario of the Fall—an Adam is also needed. “[S]he must fulfil this destiny in ignorance of what she is doing, because only in her ignorance can we be saved” (AS 154). Here ‘ignorance’ probably refers to Lyra’s unawareness of the significance and power of her love.

The extraordinary Lyra meets a no less extraordinary boy from another world, the also twelve-year-old, also semi-orphan William Parry. Born to be a warrior (SK 283) with “a nature that was savage, and courteous, and unhappy” (SK 24), he is of course the other key figure in the cosmic war. As the Biblical Adam is complete with Eve, Lyra and Will are not only “worthy of each other” (AS 175), but they also seem to be soul-mates who can “recognize sadness in the other, the weary signs of battles fought, and past experience deserving of respect” (Freitas and King 128). Pullman himself reinforces the equality of his heroine and her companion:

They’re equal. She [Lyra]’s realizing that. There was always going to be this form to the book. The first one starts with the word *Lyra*, the second one starts with the word *Will*, and in the third book they’re of equal importance. . . . Eve is the equal of Adam and shares in whatever it is that happens. (qtd. in Parsons and Nicholson 127)

In Millicent Lenz’s convincing opinion, Pullman models a ‘partnership’ quest by giving balanced roles to Lyra and Will: “[i]n an era of increasingly fluid gender roles, Pullman shows masculine and feminine qualities in a balanced yin-yang relationship” (165). This androgynous unity of female and male recalls David Adams Leeming’s definition of the true goal of quests: it is the preservation of *fertility* by the ritual marriage ending many quest tales that “expresses the achieved goal of wholeness,” when “[t]he masculine principle is joined to the feminine” (150).

Accordingly, the relationship of the two children develops from *phialial* or *agapic* love between friends or siblings, beginning in *The Subtle Knife*, into true and mutual *erotic* love, expounded in *The Amber Spyglass*. Donna Freitas calls attention to an age-old experience:

Before ecstatic or erotic love becomes possible, a strong bond of trust must be forged between them. Without trust, there can be no mutuality in love, and without utter mutuality, they cannot truly become “conscious of” or “know” the other in *eros*. Before real trust is possible, Lyra and Will must become equally vulnerable to each other. (130)

In this light, their shared adventures serve to reinforce a relationship in which Will has a good influence over the often bossy and reckless Lyra: “[h]e was truly fearless, and she admired that beyond measure; but he wasn’t good at lying and betraying and cheating, which all came to her as naturally as breathing. When she thought of that, she felt warm and virtuous, because she did it for Will, never for herself.” (AS 152)

The two protagonists’ greatest trial, their Harrowing of Hell in the third book, signifies a symbolic rebirth. In general, “[t]he penultimate test of the hero is the descent into the underworld and confrontation with death itself” (Leeming 149). In particular, Frye’s hero, who has to enter the leviathan’s body, has to die and then rise from death (*Anatomy* 192). In Pullman’s book, a terrible journey for the dead Roger’s forgiveness precedes the final fulfilment of Lyra’s fate as Eve. Without their daemons (who are forbidden to enter this desolate space), surrounded by uncountable billions of lethargic ghosts, Lyra and Will are “the only two human beings in that vast gulf of death” (AS 323). The painful separation from their daemons is as if “both children needed to let go of a part of themselves before each could make space for a new level of relationship to emerge between them” (Freitas and King).

After leading out the ghosts from the Land of the Dead as a kind of Exodus, which the second Eve mistakenly thinks to be her destiny—“[w]hat I got to do, Roger, what my destiny is, is I got to help all the ghosts out of the land of the dead forever” (AS 277)—, Lyra and Will come out of the Land of the Dead safe and sound, but something has changed. It is the perfect trust and a connection between them that, as Freitas ingeniously notes, “grow[s] to resemble the bond between human and daemon” (129). At the same time, the reliable sign of their emerging erotic love also appears: “[Lyra] happily used to swim naked in the river Cherwell with all the other Oxford children, but it would be quite different with Will, and she blushed even to think of it” (AS 387). It is embarrassment or shame. Frye’s archetype of erotic innocence, which is “less commonly marriage than the kind of ‘chaste’ love that precedes marriage” (*Anatomy* 200), is partly over.

As Above, So Below: The Fulfilment of the Heroine’s Fate

While the fulfilment of Jesus’s fate involved betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension, Lyra’s recognition of love seems to be not only easier, but also more pleasant. As Frye’s last phase of romance marks “the end of a movement from active to contemplative adventure” (*Anatomy* 202), what remains for Pullman’s heroine to do seems episodic, but it is central in the outcome of the adventures of Pullman’s heroine.

The fulfilment of Lyra’s fate as Eve is finally facilitated by Pullman’s temptress, the symbolic Serpent who is called Dr. Mary Malone, an apostate ex-nun, currently a physicist, and one of Lyra’s supporters. The English author obviously opposes Frye’s identification of the serpent of the Genesis with Satan (*Anatomy* 189), and considers this animal as the simple tool of supernatural powers. In accordance with this, angelic messengers inform Mary through her computer that “[she] must play the serpent” (SK 221) and “[she has] been preparing for this as long as [she has]

lived” (SK 222). The task that Mary *consciously* decides to undertake is to arouse Lyra’s curiosity for sensual knowledge in an alternative Paradise (the strangely amazing world of the *mulefa*’s), with the help of her probably invented narratives about how she fell in love, and why she chose to live her own life instead of a total subordination to the Catholic Church:

As Mary said that, Lyra felt something strange happen to her body. She felt as if she had been handed the key to a great house she hadn’t known was there, a house that was somehow inside her, and as she turned the key, she felt other doors opening deep in the darkness, and lights coming on. She sat trembling, as Mary went on . . . (AS 396)

As the result of Mary’s vivid recollections of the erotic desire preceding her first kiss at a party at the age of twelve, Lyra is tempted. She is ready for the erotic love resulting in the second Fall: “Lyra knew exactly what she [Mary] meant, and half an hour earlier she would have had no idea at all. And inside her, that rich house with all its doors open and all its rooms lit stood waiting, quiet, expectant.” (AS 396) This female to female initiation scenario also invokes a motherly bond between the woman and the girl—it may not be a coincidence that Pullman named the Temptress of his Saviour after the mother of Jesus, Virgin Mary.

Thanks to Mary’s story, Will and Lyra are enabled to express their love for each other. They simultaneously do it in words and, according to Donna Freitas, more significantly through their bodies because in Pullman’s mythopoesis the truth about oneself and the other can only be known through the body (43–44). The expression of their love comes about twice with two different purposes, in two different ways. First, there is a kiss as the sign of the recognition of the mutuality of their love:

She could see from his eyes that he *knew* at once what she meant, and that he was *too joyful to speak*. Her fingers were still at his lips, and he felt them tremble, and he put his own hand up to hold hers there, and then *neither of them could look*; they were confused; they were brimming with happiness. Like two *moths clumsily bumping together*, with no more weight than that, their lips touched. Then before they knew how it happened, they were clinging together, *blindly* pressing their faces toward each other. (AS 416–417) (My emphasis)

Despite the impossibility of verbalization, of spectatorship and unknowing unawareness, Pullman rejects those critics who have accused him of advocating underage sex. He argues that “[n]owhere in the book do I talk about anything more than a kiss. And as a child, a kiss is enough. A kiss can change the world.” (qtd. in Meacham) Nevertheless, if anything follows Lyra and Will’s kiss at all, it is left to the reader’s imagination due to the author’s preservation of “an aesthetic distance and ambiguity in his treatment of the rapture of first love” (Lenz 137), “[w]ith a delicacy and subtlety” that Millicent Lenz finds rare in contemporary literature (137). Another

possible explanation might be what Georges Bataille states: that eroticism, which is defined by secrecy, traditionally cannot be public (252).

While Lyra and Will kiss in the absence of their daemons, the two protagonists' love is finally completed with the contribution of their daemons. "It was a gross violation of manners to touch something so private as someone else's daemon. It was forbidden not only by politeness, but by something deeper than that—something like shame." (AS 409) This means that touching another's daemon can be as much a sexual act as touching the most intimate part of the other's body. Nevertheless, while taboos are generally respected, according to Bataille, in the so-called profane time of work, they can be transgressed in the sacred time of celebrations (257). In accordance with the French philosopher's train of thought, the girl and the boy are empowered by the sacredness of love to consciously break the taboo concerning daemons:

Knowing exactly what he was doing and exactly what it would mean, he moved his hand from Lyra's wrist and stroked the red-gold fur of her daemon. Lyra gasped. But her surprise was mixed with a pleasure so like the joy that flooded through her when she had put the fruit to his lips that she couldn't protest, because she was breathless. With a racing heart she responded in the same way: she put her hand on the silky warmth of Will's daemon, and as her fingers tightened in the fur, she knew that Will was feeling exactly what she was. (AS 446–447)

With this erotic and emotional excitement, in parallel with conscious mutuality, the protagonists' innocence is permanently lost: "neither daemon would change now, having felt a lover's hands on them" (AS 447).³ Rayment-Pickard considers this second act as a more 'spiritual' intimacy which is more powerful than the kiss: "Lyra and Will make contact, symbolically, with each other's private, inner and vulnerable selves" (67–68). The reason, he thinks, must be the supposition that for Pullman the sexual interaction of bodies must have a spiritual meaning, too (69–70). As opposed to this, Freitas insists on the purely material aspect of the two already-not-children's love-makings: "[i]f Dust is made when matter begins to 'know' itself, it makes sense that created beings would begin to attract Dust when their bodies discover themselves through loving other 'matter,' other bodies" (138–139). The fact that both Rayment-Pickard's and Freitas' arguments make sense testifies to the complexity of Pullman's text.

These two kinds of ecstatic unions—quasi sex-rites—constitute the enigma of Lyra's unconscious saving of Dust. Mary Malone, who recognizes the positive change in the movement of Dust, wonders what might have happened:

³ Daemons in childhood can change their shape in accordance with the current mood of the child, but in early puberty they settle into that animal shape that best expresses the human being's true self. In Pullman's world, this is the unquestionable sign of the end of childhood (i.e. innocence) and the beginning of adulthood (i.e. experience).

Something tiny but crucial . . . If you wanted to divert a mighty river into a different course, and all you had was a single pebble, you could do it, as long as you put the pebble in the right place to send the first trickle of water *that* way instead of *this*. Something like that happened yesterday. I don't know what it was. They saw each other differently, or something . . . Until then, they hadn't felt like that, but suddenly they did. And then the Dust was attracted to them, very powerfully, and it stopped flowing the other way. (AS 428)

As soon as Pullman's second 'Fall' befalls, the grown-up second Eve and the second Adam start attracting Dust in one of the parallel universes and they indirectly become the so-called 'axis mundi,' either world pillar or world tree, meaning the centre of the world,⁴ or the point around which the universe revolves, closely "associated with creation" (Eliade and Sullivan 170), "saturating the macrocosm with loving awareness" (Lenz 136–137). This process is compared to the pre-modern theory of correspondences which Antoine Faivre defines as one of the fundamental characteristics of esoteric spirituality:

The entire realm of nature in all its constituent levels of being . . . [is] considered to be linked through a series of correspondences or analogies. This connection is [rather understood] symbolically through the ancient idea of the macrocosm (the universe or heavens) being reflected in the microcosm (the constitution of the human being) and expressed in the Hermetic axiom "As above, so below." (Goodrick-Clarke 8)

In other words, what happens to Lyra and Will in some tiny particular place of one of the parallel worlds has influence over the entirety of all parallel universes. Frye also declares that "[t]he mythological universe is . . . a gigantic or macrocosmic body, with analogies to [the] human body" (*Anatomy* 119).

As a result of this reviving power, Dust stops leaking out of the universes; moreover, in the cosmic war the promoters of free thinking win a victory over the colonizers of the mind; therefore growing-up accompanied by awakening sexuality is again considered to be natural. This is not surprising, since the goal of quest-stories is life-renewal or, in Frye's words, "the victory of fertility over the waste land" (*Anatomy* 193), "the real source of wealth" (*Anatomy* 198). The end of Lyra's quest is also the discovery of the self-knowledge of the divine inside the human: "[t]hey would seem the true image of what human beings always could be, once they had come into their inheritance" (AS 421). Knowing yourself is recognizing the image of the divine who is not an external entity but an internal possibility. On this basis, Pullman's version of the Fall, which is a spiritual completion of woman and man

⁴ In Christian mythology it is the Garden of Eden where Adam was created, and the hill of Golgotha where he was buried and Jesus was crucified. Mircea Eliade reports on an Eastern Christian folk tradition according to which when Christ was crucified, his blood is said to have fallen on Adam's skull at the foot of the cross, and redeemed him (14).

together, should be renamed, in my opinion, the Ascent of each and every person at the appropriate time.

Conclusion

In the light of Northrop Frye's myth-criticism, my article argued that Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is constructed as a quest-romance with religious implications. The strong emphasis on the transition from childhood to adulthood and the *desirability* of corporeality for spiritual completeness comprise ingenious artistic elaborations of the author's *biophilia* (love of life) and anticlericalism.

The question immediately arises: to what extent can there be any novelty in Pullman's postmodern narrative, both as a quest story and as a romance? In the light of his subversive decomposition of generic, literary and religious themes and forms, while there is a large-scale cosmic-social restoration to wholeness (as going back to the original state), there is also a particular spiritual improvement (as going ahead to a new state) in line with the protagonist's physical, emotional and moral growth—in other words, character development. Eventually, David Adams Leeming argues that, on the one hand, every quest tale is characterized by a so-called “consciousness of linear time” which means that “[t]o see a beginning, a middle, and an end is to see a ‘road of life,’ and to see such a road is to see a potential quest” (147). On the other hand, the ultimate spiritual question of each quest tale is “who am I?” (Leeming 147).

It follows that stock characters and allegories so typical of Frye's romance are absent. What Lyra Belacqua finds at the end of her quest is a mature and wise Lyra. In this way, Pullman's trilogy as a twentieth-twenty-first century *Bildungsroman* by and large fits, but sometimes pushes aside, the frames of the literary critic's genre theory of romance.

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