

***The Republic of Heaven:  
A Return to Mother Earth in Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials***

Sunshine Williams, University of Texas, United States

The European Conference on Arts & Humanities 2020  
Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy dabbles in theology, philosophy, and ecology, while pushing the boundaries of ideological and religious traditions, encouraging deep questioning of dominant social constructs. I argue that the novels implore the reader to deconstruct hegemonic systems of patriarchy in favour of ancient consciousnesses that centre around nature, the feminine, and connection with the universe. To elucidate the necessity of this intellectual and spiritual shift, Pullman crafts a revision of patriarchal histories, establishing a Republic of Heaven, wherein the female returns to a revered position and human beings are reintroduced to their birth right as conscious, physical beings at one with the world around them. Originally written for Queen Mary University of London, this dissertation consists of 17,000 words and six chapters. It is an in-depth analysis of Pullman's series, supported by extensive research. Due to limitations, the following text merely offers brief summaries of each chapter.

Keywords: His Dark Materials, Philip Pullman, Fantasy, Religion, Patriarchy, Sexuality, Paganism, Consciousness, Hegemony, Goddess, Earth, Nature

**iafor**

The International Academic Forum  
[www.iafor.org](http://www.iafor.org)

## Introduction

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is primarily regarded as an attack on religion. However, the novels show no signs of the cynicism expected from an apparent atheistic venture to free humanity from its faith. Instead, the series brims with uplifting themes that are traditionally religious, such as love, sacrifice, and truth, with the main character, Lyra Belacqua, serving as an undeniable humanist. Distracted by an enticing theological discussion, critics have failed to envision the ecological forces in Pullman's trilogy. A palpable focus on the energy of the universe and the importance of nature is woven unmistakably throughout the entire epic. The story bears strong resemblances to ancient matriarchal Earth cultures, imploring the reader to embrace more tangible sources of awe, such as the consciousness of humanity, the strength of woman, and the omnipotence and grace, not of a patriarchal god, but of Mother Nature. It is more an idealistic revision of religion than a rebuttal of it, a deconstruction that takes the origin story of a patriarchal hegemony and turns it on its head. The oppressive powers that brought to life "the abstract and alien concepts of a Father God who was the enemy of the Great Mother"<sup>1</sup> are meticulously scrutinised and remonstrated. These tyrannical ideologies are replaced with ancient ideals, "based on the understanding that Earth is alive and also a community of related living beings".<sup>2</sup> *His Dark Materials* is a study of humanity and its capacity, a petition beseeching that we rebuke the oppressive systems of organised religion and return instead to Earth-centric avenues of mindfulness that revolve around the human body's presence within nature and the human spirit's connection to all that is living.

## Imagine Dust with a Capital D

Dust penetrates every crevice of *His Dark Materials*. In fact, it is the dark material to which the title eludes. This phrase is borrowed from *The Bible* itself, wherein God curses Eve and Adam for eating of the tree of knowledge: "for dust you are, and to dust you will return".<sup>3</sup> The most significant element of Pullman's religious revision is the upheaval of this Biblical "dust" from the foreboding connotations of shame and death, into the empowering connotations of knowledge and consciousness. The word is used with reverence throughout the novels, spoken with fear by those in the Church who want to suppress it, and spoken with wonder by those seeking answers to its mysteries. The Church believes that Dust is "the physical evidence for original sin".<sup>4</sup> The use of the word *physical* brings attention to the earthiness of Dust. What is of this Earth – physical, separate from "god" – must be eliminated. This is reminiscent of the dualisms that juxtapose "reason to nature, mind to body, emotional female to rational male,"<sup>5</sup> an othering process that operates via separation. It is through these ideological binaries that the powers of both our world and Lyra's perpetuate the concept of nature as separate from, and inferior to, humanity.

In Pullman's revision, the man-made god is unmasked as a power-hungry authoritarian, and reverence is brought, instead, to the spiritual forces of the Earth and our role as human beings, to be stewards of nature, seekers of knowledge, and lovers

---

<sup>1</sup> Mor, Sjoo, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Harvey, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3:19.

<sup>4</sup> *NL*, p. 369.

<sup>5</sup> Plumwood, p. 52.

of connectedness. Dust establishes a connection between all living beings that joins humanity with Mother Earth in the mutual cooperation required for the survival of both. Just as this energy links the human body with its daemon, so is the human body linked to the Earth. Dust is part of this connection, the knowledge of our own existence. Lyra becomes “aware of how small they were, she and her daemon, in comparison with the majesty and vastness of the universe”.<sup>6</sup> This awareness, for Lyra, is the guiding light on her spiritual journey.

Those operating outside of the patriarchal societies of man - the witches, the bears, the angels, and the *mulefa* - have very different views of Dust when compared to those of the Church; they understand it to be the physical proof that “the universe is sentient and meaningfully alive and, in turn, Dust is revealed as the physical manifestation of God/love/consciousness”.<sup>7</sup> The *mulefa* offer the greatest example of this. Mary Malone believes that they are “so strongly rooted in the physical everyday world”,<sup>8</sup> so much closer to enlightenment, that they are able to visibly detect Dust, which is imperceptible to humans. Dust exists indiscernibly, the same way as do the electromagnetic forces of our beating hearts and the radio waves by which we communicate – not visible to the human eye, but no less real and detectable. The *mulefa*’s evolutionary interdependence with the seed pods has brought them to a higher state of being and an understanding that if we continue to neglect and damage the Earth, we will lose our oneness with her and with each other. We will lose Dust. However, Xaphania advises we can create Dust by helping others “to learn and understand about themselves and each other and the way everything works, by showing them how to be kind instead of cruel, patient instead of hasty, cheerful instead of surly, and above all, how to keep their minds open and free and curious”.<sup>9</sup> It is through seeking deeper connection – with ourselves, with others, and with the world around us – that we truly thrive within our existence and are able to share a universal love.

Though each of us has the potential (however latent) to become more deeply cognisant of our own being and of our birth right to an intimate and loving relationship with everything around us, there will always be forces working to suppress such connections: “The established patriarchal institutions all have a vested interest in keeping the individual mind disconnected from the experience of cosmic oneness”.<sup>10</sup> Systems of power work within *His Dark Materials* to keep Dust from “infecting” children, in order to create a world full of mindless adults who are unable to access their humanity. By declaring that we are made human by our opposition to nature, the colonising forces are, in actuality, mutilating our humanity. Dust is the mechanism by which that separation can be healed, the undeniable energy of the universe that sits outside the margins of our awareness, the matter that calls us back to our human nature and to Mother Earth, from whence we came, from dust to Dust.

---

<sup>6</sup> *NL*, p. 396.

<sup>7</sup> Cox, p. 139.

<sup>8</sup> *AS*, p. 222.

<sup>9</sup> *AS*, p. 496.

<sup>10</sup> Mor, Sjoo, p. 139.

## The Fall and the Divine Feminine

The appearance of Dust arose upon “the great change in human history symbolized in the story of Adam and Eve”.<sup>11</sup> If we understand that Dust is the awareness of being, we can see that the series redeems original sin as knowledge, something wonderful that should be desired. The moment that Eve and Adam fell, then, would be the moment that they realised their creator, Mother Earth, and their connection with her and all her living beings. “*Ever since we have had the sraf, we have had memory and wakefulness. Before that, we remembered nothing*”,<sup>12</sup> Atal tells Mary. Though the *sraf* (Dust) is always in existence, the awakening of Eve and Adam made it accessible to humanity.

Pullman’s reconsideration of the Fall is reminiscent of ancient Earth religions, which centred around the female. In almost every archaeological exhuming of ancient civilisations, we have discovered images of the Great Goddess. The female is shown to be dominant in these societies, while the male is depicted most often as a labourer.<sup>13</sup> These relics point to “a once gynocratic world. The further back one traced man’s history, the larger loomed the figure of woman”.<sup>14</sup> *His Dark Materials* turns attention back to the Divine Feminine by weaving a cast of remarkable women. Lyra is prophesied to be an Eve figure whose ability to read the alethiometer derives from “grace that comes freely”,<sup>15</sup> a deep connection to spirit. Similarly, Atal explains *sraf* through a tale featuring a female protagonist who interacts with the oil from the tree of knowledge and becomes conscious via Dust.<sup>16</sup> Though patriarchal structures have woven a falsity wherein Eve is “at fault” for “The Fall” of humanity, Pullman’s Republic of Heaven positions females as the saviours of humanity.

In stark contrast to the Biblical tale, where “*Adam named his wife Eve*”,<sup>17</sup> the female *mulefa* invites her male counterpart to join her in creating a relationship with the Earth and its creatures.<sup>18</sup> Matriarchal societies are known for this kind of harmonic existence between both sexes and between humans and the Earth, consisting of non-possessive intergroup relationships, everyone working together to support the society and the Earth on which it relies for shelter, sustenance, and life.<sup>19</sup> Females like the *mulefa* and Lyra are the link between humanity and Mother Earth. The revision of the Fall that unfolds within the novels reconstitutes the ideologies surrounding the attainment of knowledge. The reading of Genesis that Lord Asriel imparts upon Lyra has an entirely different moral from that of the Divine Feminine:

*‘But when the man and woman knew their own daemons, they knew that a great change had come upon them, for until that moment, it had seemed that they were one with all the creatures of the Earth and the air, and there was no difference between them: And they saw the difference, and they knew good and evil; and they were ashamed...’*<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> *AS*, p. 222.

<sup>12</sup> *AS*, p. 223.

<sup>13</sup> Boulotis, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> Gould Davis, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> *AS*, p. 495.

<sup>16</sup> *AS*, p. 224.

<sup>17</sup> Genesis 3:20.

<sup>18</sup> *AS*, p. 224.

<sup>19</sup> Gould Davis, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> *NL*, p. 370.

Our *Bible* corroborates Lord Asriel's reading:

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was... desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked.*<sup>21</sup>

In both passages, the punishment for desiring knowledge is death, being banned from the tree of life, and hence, suffering mortality at the hands of a vengeful and unnatural god. No such horror resides in Pullman's revision, which instead centres around the females' essential roles in bringing something wonderfully human more tangibly into the world. When the female *mulefa* connected with the oil and the seedpods from the trees, the knowledge to which she awakened was not something for which she was then punished, being made to feel guilt and shame. Instead, she and her people were given the realisation that "the world was rich and full of life, and the *mulefa* lived with their trees in perpetual joy".<sup>22</sup>

Female wisdom is aligned with ancient cultures that lived in a harmonic ecosystem with nature and considered the female to be the source of all life, worthy of celebration and respect. "The first 30,000 years of Homo sapiens' existence was dominated by a celebration of the female processes in the Great Round of the Mother".<sup>23</sup> These civilisations were matrilineal, wherein possessions were inherited by the daughters, and matrifocal, wherein the mothers were the heads of the families. The Lycians, for instance, living in Turkey around 500 B.C., were "under the rule of women... monuments and inscriptions corroborates that information".<sup>24</sup> Ancient agricultural village communities of Greece and Italy offer proof "recognising in every significant phase of life the mystery of the female power, symbolised in the mother goddess Earth".<sup>25</sup> Çatal Hüyük was a settlement thought to have existed since 7500 B.C., and excavations have found their culture to be "a ceremonial centre for the Goddess religion... no signs of warfare or weaponry have been found... The people were peaceful agriculturalists, mostly vegetarian".<sup>26</sup> Most records and proofs of these matriarchal societies were purposefully destroyed in the service of "the assumption that women are a subgroup... and patriarchy is equivalent to culture".<sup>27</sup> Patriarchy found footing by expunging and perverting this true history of humanity through the designation of the female as "exemplifying an earlier and more animal stage of human development".<sup>28</sup> Women resemble the ways in which animals mother their young, the ways of *nature*. By stressing this similarity, patriarchal forces could paint both woman and nature as weaker than, and inferior to, man. But this evidence is far more indicative of the power and consciousness of woman, whose role as a mother requires her to preserve another life, to rise to extraordinary selflessness. Furthermore, deeply in tune with nature through childbearing and menstrual cycling with the moon, woman has always been "closer to the deity than was man, [with] a superior understanding of the laws of nature".<sup>29</sup> The relationship between mother and child is

---

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 3:2-7.

<sup>22</sup> *AS*, p. 132.

<sup>23</sup> Mor, Sjoo, p. 58.

<sup>24</sup> Briffault, p. 283

<sup>25</sup> Bachofen, p. 104.

<sup>26</sup> Mor, Sjoo, p. 290-91.

<sup>27</sup> Rich, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Plumwood, p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> Gould Davis, p. 45.

akin to the relationship between Mother Earth and humanity, “two biologically alike bodies, one of which has laboured to give birth to the other”.<sup>30</sup> Only the female body can create life, as Mother Earth created humanity, and while estrangement from the giver of this life is devastating, the joining of the two bodies produces a spirit of harmony and elation. And so, it is only fitting that the female awakens humanity to Dust.

### **Earth Religions and Eternal Life**

Upon the dawn of humanity, we knew only the Earth that gave us nourishment and the animal and plant life that required our mutual care. *His Dark Materials* seems to harken back to these values, and to call for their return. The natural way of life experienced by the *mulefa* was ripped away from sentient beings in Lyra’s world and ours, upon the rise of patriarchal colonisation. Ideological myths and masculine gods were invented by these new forces, overshadowing the culture of nature worship and matriarchal leadership. Ruta Skadi speaks passionately of the Church: “For all its history... it’s tried to suppress and control every natural impulse... obliterate every good feeling”.<sup>31</sup> Patriarchal religion has always endeavoured to cleanse humanity of its memories of the past, including the ecstasy of oneness with the Earth. Pullman’s trilogy revitalises “the sense that the whole universe [is] alive, and that everything [is] connected to everything else by threads of meaning”.<sup>32</sup> Ancient Earth religions encouraged communion with one another and with the Earth. We were not ego-driven beings, disconnected from one another and from source, functioning on a sense of greed and individualism, until patriarchal structures interpellated us into these mindsets. In Akrotiri, Greece, a 6,000-year-old settlement preserved by volcanic ash, wall paintings have been found that convey “the ritual gathering of saffron by young girls... under the gaze of the Great Goddess of Nature”.<sup>33</sup> There is unequivocal proof within ancient history of our oneness with nature. Human beings did not exist within dualities – male and female, good and evil, light and dark – until religions discovered those ideas as effective tools of control that Ruta Skadi condemns as “cruelties and horrors all committed in the name of the Authority, all designed to destroy the joys and the truthfulness of life”.<sup>34</sup> Hegemonic influences have long implemented cruelties, especially against women, relegating them to subservient roles, stripping them of any sense of power, convincing them that their natural bodies are shameful, and dominating them both physically and psychologically in ways that are entirely against nature. *His Dark Materials* shines a critical light on these crimes, and subsequently, opens a dialogue regarding the desperate need to return to our “true story” of existence as physical beings in relationship with the Earth.

Throughout the novels, death is spoken of without fear, and instead, intention remains on a “Republic of Heaven where we are, because for us, there is no elsewhere”.<sup>35</sup> Life on Earth is what matters in this new Republic, where human bodies are to be celebrated and enjoyed, nature is to be mutually nourished and respected, and a divine consciousness, a “heaven on earth”, is attainable. The series rejoices in the physical

---

<sup>30</sup> Rich, p. 32.

<sup>31</sup> *SK*, p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> *AS*, p. 451.

<sup>33</sup> Boulotis, p. 84.

<sup>34</sup> *SK*, p. 271.

<sup>35</sup> *AS*, p. 364.

world and “shifts focus from the intangible to the tangible; from hopes for a future paradise in an uncertain afterlife to creating your own paradise in the definite present”.<sup>36</sup> These sentiments of presence are reminiscent of ancient Earth religions, which experienced “a union between the divine cosmic cycle, the cycles of life, and the recent dead. All ancient and contemporary aboriginal people conceive death as naturally continuous with life”.<sup>37</sup> This mindfulness is emphasised within the series, and the fear of death is alleviated by the trilogy’s explanation for the afterlife, wherein death becomes the joyful moment when your consciousness returns to oneness. Lyra describes this ecstasy when talking to the souls in the land of the dead: “When you go out of here, all the particles that make you up will loosen and float apart... into the air and the wind and the trees and the Earth and all the living things... part of everything alive again”.<sup>38</sup> This idea that death leads to the blissful return of consciousness into all other conscious matter is prominent among Earth religions, where physical realms like heaven and hell do not exist, and instead, the soul is able to reconvene with the energy from whence it came, “the same in nerve cells as in stars and in human consciousness... surging through all life-forms”.<sup>39</sup> This energy field is the same space to which the dead return in *His Dark Materials*.

The afterlife created by the Church – heaven or hell – is a lie; instead, all souls end up together in a sort of purgatory world. When Will cuts a portal into the world of the living, the dead are able to escape purgatory and commune again with the Earth. Roger’s soul is the first to exit through the portal, and he “laughed in surprise as he found himself turning into the night, the starlight, the air... and then he was gone, leaving behind such a vivid little burst of happiness that Will was reminded of the bubbles in a glass of champagne”.<sup>40</sup> Mary later witnesses similar emergences when she stumbles upon the window that Will has left open: “They took a few steps in the world of grass and air and silver light, and looked around, their faces transformed with joy... and held out their arms as if they were embracing the whole universe; and then... they simply drifted away, becoming part of the Earth”.<sup>41</sup> These descriptions of life after death are a vital element to Pullman’s deconstruction. They pay homage to the ancient Earth religions of the past, in which death is not truly death at all, but a jubilant rebirth into oneness, the true eternal life.

### **Daemons as Representations of Sexuality**

In the typical *bildungsroman*, the coming of age of the protagonist rarely involves their sexual awakening. Pullman, however, does not shy away from what he feels is perfectly expected within human nature, and the novels aim to eliminate damaging principles regarding sex and reclaim it as a joyous and natural act. This sex-positive philosophy resonates with ancient Earth religions, wherein “everything that exists is encouraged to become increasingly intimate”.<sup>42</sup> These cultures celebrated familiarity with the Earth and her living creatures, especially fellow human beings, and this includes the intimacy of sex.

---

<sup>36</sup> Myers, p. 35.

<sup>37</sup> Mor, Sjoo, p. 250.

<sup>38</sup> *AS*, p. 320.

<sup>39</sup> Mor, Sjoo, p. 108.

<sup>40</sup> *AS*, p. 365.

<sup>41</sup> *AS*, p. 433.

<sup>42</sup> Harvey, p. 1.

The daemon is possibly Pullman's most powerful metaphoric device. Appearing in a variety of forms, daemons are signifiers of nature, of all that is innate and unadulterated, untouched by the egoic mind. Throughout the series, the daemon proves itself to be not the spirit, not the soul, but the *sexuality* of its human companion. At puberty, a person's daemon will settle into one true animal form, one true nature. As this happens for Lyra at the end of the series, we see that it is not her soul that changes, but her sexuality; she becomes aware of its existence for the first time. Like the Eve after whom she is modelled in this retelling, Lyra chooses knowledge, and her innocence blossoms into experience. Unlike in the "Fall", this new consciousness is empowering and triumphant.

In a world subjugated by the Magisterium, lapsarian shame is considered an integral part of femininity. Lyra even thinks of the word *shame* when pondering the taboo (touching another person's daemon), deeming it "a gross violation" and "forbidden by... something like shame".<sup>43</sup> Due to this shame, the natural body, at one with the Earth, becomes, instead, a subject, performing the behaviours it has been taught are acceptable. Hines submits that "the word 'taboo' suggests something created by human beings, something constructed rather than natural".<sup>44</sup> *His Dark Materials* promotes a reconnection with the natural, with our physical bodies through the invention of the daemon as a manifestation of sexuality, residing outside of the body, an animal to which we must recouple in order to heal the tear between ourselves and our true natures.

In three very different instances, Lyra's daemon is touched by another human – first, by an attacker; second, by Lady Salmakia in a show of dominance; and third, lovingly by Will. Each of these events is described with highly sexualised language, but never with Lyra feeling ashamed. The first was as if an alien hand "wrenched at something deep and precious".<sup>45</sup> The second is called a "violation";<sup>46</sup> and the third is praised as "pleasure and joy".<sup>47</sup> In these varied scenarios, Lyra is becoming increasingly aware of her sexuality and the privateness of a daemon, but she is present in the experience and is not feeling indignity or fault. Inversely, Mrs. Coulter believes that "daemons bring all sort of troublesome thoughts and feelings, and that's what lets Dust in".<sup>48</sup> Steeped in ideologies of female subjugation, she uses her sexuality as a weapon, as in the interaction with Carlo: "The monkey raised [the snake] slowly to his face and ran his cheek softly along her emerald skin. Her tongue flicked blackly this way and that, and the man sighed".<sup>49</sup> Just as the descriptions of human hands touching Pantalaimon feature sexually-charged vocabulary, so does this scene. Mrs. Coulter appears keenly conscious of the prominence of her sexuality and its power, though unaware of how she has internalised patriarchal ideals into her own perception of herself. She believes that she is doing the right thing by tearing sexuality away from children before they feel the shame that she endures. "Intercision is a way to avoid sexual feelings... daemons are connected with natural sexual animal/feelings, which should be

---

<sup>43</sup> *AS*, p. 459.

<sup>44</sup> Hines, p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> *NL*, p. 274.

<sup>46</sup> *AS*, p. 168.

<sup>47</sup> *AS*, p. 503.

<sup>48</sup> *NL*, p. 283.

<sup>49</sup> *SK*, p. 310.



eliminated”.<sup>50</sup> However, in the Republic of Heaven, the maturing of sexuality is a wonderful event to be welcomed and celebrated.

Lyra’s sexuality is sparked by Will quite early in the series, “as if he were simply more in focus than anyone she’d known before”.<sup>51</sup> This budding sensation expands when Mary is telling the story of a man she once loved, who fed her marzipan with his fingers:

Lyra felt something strange happen to her body... exciting and frightening at the same time... 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... she felt other doors opening too, and lights coming on.<sup>52</sup>

This “great house” is Lyra’s sexuality, and the lights are coming on inside of her, awakening her consciousness. This delightful description from Pullman aligns with his revision of sexuality as a desired and exciting expansion of self. Lyra’s new wonder about the joy that accompanies physical experience comes to fruition when she mimics Mary’s love story by feeding Will a piece of fruit that is only described as a “little red fruit”,<sup>53</sup> symbolising the same fruit that Eve shared with Adam:

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 towards each other...<sup>54</sup>

This beautiful and respectful moment implies sexual contact and awakening, promoting a world wherein pleasure is celebrated, just as it once was in ancient Earth religions. This new outlook on “the Fall” gives us two human beings, at one with the Earth and with their natures, and shows us the true glory of love and of sex. When the children engage intimately with each other’s daemons, it is a romantic scene that further infers intercourse. Despite the taboo, Will reaches out to stroke Pantalaimon, and Lyra responds, putting “her hand on the silky warmth of Will’s daemon, and as her fingers tightened in the fur, she knew that... neither daemon would change now, having felt a lover’s hands on them”.<sup>55</sup> When Mary sees Will and Lyra returning to the village after their awakening, she considers what she might see if she viewed them through her amber spyglass: “They would seem the true image of what human beings always could be, once they had come into their inheritance. The Dust pouring down from the stars had found a living home again, and these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love, were the cause of it all”.<sup>56</sup> In *His Dark Materials*, what human beings are intended to be is one with love and knowledge, one with their bodies, in the ultimate manifestation of ecstasy.

---

<sup>50</sup> Hines, p. 43.

<sup>51</sup> *SK*, p. 307.

<sup>52</sup> *AS*, p. 445.

<sup>53</sup> *AS*, p. 469.

<sup>54</sup> *AS*, p. 469.

<sup>55</sup> *AS*, p. 503.

<sup>56</sup> *AS*, p. 473.

## Conclusion

In a fervent rewriting of the Biblical myth of “the Fall”, Pullman crafts a world where human nature, physical life, and Mother Earth are celebrated. The series serves as a reflection of our world, exposing the oppressive authority that insists on assimilation to sanctioned social structures and harmful ideologies. Dust represents sin, the prevailing panopticon that allows for unmitigated hegemony, both in the series and in our world. But in Pullman’s revision, sin (Dust) signifies consciousness and knowledge, the mechanism through which humanity’s separation from the Earth can be healed. *His Dark Materials* remythologises patriarchal religions by creating a Republic of Heaven where it is not only acceptable to return to the values of the Divine Feminine and ancient Earth religions, but it is encouraged as a path to salvation. If we are willing to shift our intention from dominating nature, to co-creating with her instead, we may discover peace and a renewed sense of wonder, restoring the long-elusive sense of feeling at home on the Earth. Our true place is not found in fabled heavens or hells, but here on this planet, amongst the nature from which we came.

## References

- Bachofen, Johann Jacob, translated by Ralph Manheim, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right* (Princeton University Press, 1992)
- Boulotis, C., “The Fascinating Polyptych of the Wall Paintings”, *Akrotiri, Thera 17<sup>th</sup> Century BC: A Cosmopolitan Harbour Town 3,500 Years Ago* (Athens: Society for the Promotion of Studies on Prehistoric Thera, 2015), p. 75-99.
- Briffault, Robert, *The Mothers: The Matriarchal Theory of Social Origins* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931)
- Cox, Katherine, “‘Imagine *Dust* with a Capital Letter’: Interpreting the Social and Cultural Contexts for Philip Pullman’s Transformation of *Dust*”, *Critical Perspectives on Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials: Essays on the Novels, the Film, and the Stage Productions* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), 126-42
- Gould Davis, Elizabeth, *The First Sex* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971)
- Harvey, Graham, *Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 1997)
- Hines, Maude, ed. by Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott, “Second Nature: Daemons and Ideology in *The Golden Compass*”, *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman’s Trilogy* (Wayne State University Press, 2005), 37-47
- Mor, Barbara, Sjoo, Monica, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2013)
- Myers, Brendan, *The Earth, the Gods, and the Soul – A History of Pagan Philosophy: From the Iron Age to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Moon Books, 2013)
- Plumwood, Val, ed. by William M Adams and Martin Mulligan, “Decolonizing Relationships with Nature”, *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-colonial Era* (London: Earthscan, 2003), 51-78.
- Pullman, Philip, *The Amber Spyglass: His Dark Materials 3* (New York: Scholastic Point, 2000)
- Pullman, Philip, *Northern Lights: His Dark Materials 1* (New York: Scholastic Point, 1995)
- Pullman, Philip, *The Subtle Knife: His Dark Materials 2* (New York: Scholastic Point, 1997)
- Rich, Adrienne, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995)
- Contact email:** [sunshine.williams@utdallas.edu](mailto:sunshine.williams@utdallas.edu)