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Owen Hodkinson

‘His Greek Materials’: Philip Pullman’s Use of Classical Mythology

Introduction

Philip Pullman’s popular and critically acclaimed trilogy *His Dark Materials*,¹ a reworking of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*,² is naturally pervaded with allusions to Judaeo-Christian mythology and to some of the most influential texts within that tradition, from the Christian Bible to Dante, and Blake.³ Scholarship on the trilogy to date has focused primarily on its engagement with this tradition;⁴ but there is a strong undercurrent of Greek mythology and allusion to

¹ Consisting of *Northern Lights* (US title *The Golden Compass*), first published 1995; *The Subtle Knife*, 1997, and *The Amber Spyglass*, 2000. Notabene, for reasons of space, this chapter will focus only on the original trilogy, not the various spin-offs: Philip Pullman, *Lyra’s Oxford* (Oxford–New York: David Fickling Books, 2003), *Once Upon a Time in the North* (Oxford–New York: David Fickling Books, 2008), to date, with a third, *The Book of Dust*, long awaited. See now Susan R. Bobby, “Persephone Ascending: Goddess Archetypes and Lyra’s Journey to Wholeness,” in Catherine Butler and Tommy Halsdorf, *Philip Pullman (New Casebooks)* (London: Palgrave, 2014), 146–163, with further references for some suggestions on Greek mythical parallels with these supplementary stories of Lyra’s universe. I shall refer henceforth to the trilogy as *HDM*, and to the individual books as *NL*, *SK*, and *AS*. Page numbers in the trilogy are those in the UK editions in the Point imprint of Scholastic Books: see Philip Pullman, *Northern Lights* (London: Scholastic Children’s Books, 1998), *The Subtle Knife* (London: Scholastic Children’s Books, 1998), and *The Amber Spyglass* (London: Scholastic Children’s Books, 2001).

² See below, text to n. 10.

³ In the acknowledgements to *AS* at p. 550 Pullman acknowledges Blake’s works along with *Paradise Lost* and von Kleist’s essay *On the Marionette Theatre* as the three most significant debts owed by his trilogy. The protagonist Lyra’s surname, Belacqua, is one of several allusions to Dante.

⁴ But see now C. Butler and Halsdorf, *Philip Pullman (New Casebooks)*, for a more comprehensive approach; for an orientation in the rapidly expanding bibliography about Pullman’s work, see their “Selected Bibliography and

classical literature which, though undoubtedly secondary (both in terms of the sheer number of allusions to Christian materials and its primary hypotext being *Paradise Lost*), deserves a detailed exploration, which I begin with this chapter.⁵

I shall first consider the question of the intended and actual readership(s) of *HDM*, especially as it relates to the ‘child’ (broadly defined) reader and her ability to recognise the

Further Reading,” ch. 11, 170–178; see also Catherine Butler “Modern Children’s Fantasy,” in Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 224–235, for context. For the predominance of studies examining the interplay with Christian materials and the question of religion, see, e.g., David Gooderham, “Fantasizing It as It Is: Religious Language in Philip Pullman’s Trilogy, *His Dark Materials*,” *Children’s Literature* 31 (2003), 155–175; Hugh Raymond-Pickard, *The Devil’s Account: Philip Pullman and Christianity* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 2004); Burton Hatlen “Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*, a Challenge to the Fantasies of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, with an Epilogue on Pullman’s Neo-Romantic Reading of *Paradise Lost*,” in Millicent Lenz with Carole Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2005), 75–94; K.D. Robinson, “*His Dark Materials*: A Look into Pullman’s Interpretation of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*,” *Mythlore* 24 (2005), 2–16; Shelley King, “*Without Lyra We Would Understand neither the New nor the Old Testament*: Exegesis, Allegory, and Reading *The Golden Compass*,” in Lenz with Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 106–124; Andy Leet, “Rediscovering Faith through Science Fiction: Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” in Lenz with Scott, *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 174–187; Anne-Marie Bird, “Circumventing the Grand Narrative: Dust as an Alternative Theological Vision in Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” Lenz with Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 188–198; Richard Greene and Rachel Robison, eds., *The Golden Compass and Philosophy: God Bites the Dust* (Chicago: Open Court, 2009); U.S. Scherer, “*Dream Not of Other Worlds*”: *C.S. Lewis, Philip Pullman and the Ghost of Milton* (Otago: PhD Diss., 2010); Pat Pinsent, “Philip Pullman’s ‘Religious Reaction against Religion’,” in C. Butler and Halsdorf, *Philip Pullman (New Casebooks)*, 19–35; Naomi Wood, “The Controversialist: Philip Pullman’s Secular Humanism and Responses to *His Dark Materials*,” in C. Butler and Halsdorf, *Philip Pullman (New Casebooks)*, 76–95.

⁵ Pullman’s engagement with Greek material has of course been noted and discussed to some extent in scholarship, but this is the first investigation to focus on and draw together all of the major classical hypotexts and references.

classical allusions discussed in the chapter. As we shall see, Pullman has publicly expressed views on education (especially literary) which may imply a certain type of ‘ideal reader’ or ‘implied audience’ for his novels. Secondly, Pullman has spoken in several interviews about his knowledge and use of Greek mythology and literature in his earlier career as a teacher; this reduces the need to rely on speculation about the author’s familiarity with materials which could be identified as possible classical hypotexts for the trilogy, making it more likely that deliberate allusion, imitation, or reworking is indeed in play. In the main body of the chapter, I shall then argue that although allusions to the literature of and about Christian myth⁶ are in some ways indisputably more important to the fabric of the trilogy, references to ancient Greek myths and texts are also important, and stand in a complex array of interplay with the Christian allusions;⁷ indeed, in some cases the Greek mythological referents are likely to be more familiar to the trilogy’s target audience; and some of them, relying on that assumed familiarity, are employed in order to set up and provide a shorthand for an alternative worldview to the Christian hypotexts.

The Child Reader and the Ideal Reader

For a trilogy targeted at the children’s literature market – albeit the teen/young adult end of it⁸ – *HDM* is extremely long (a total of almost 1,300 pages), complex, and rich in allusions.

⁶ In order to avoid repeating such cumbersome formulations throughout the chapter, I shall sometimes use ‘Christian’ to designate all literary texts alluded to in *HDM* to which a Christian worldview and/or a basis in or understanding of the Christian Bible or Christianity are central, as distinct from the Greek myths and texts referred to; no implication about the beliefs of the authors is intended.

⁷ This can of course only be the beginning of a thorough investigation into the many classical references and allusions in such a long and allusive trilogy; I survey several allusions to Greek myths and texts, but there are no doubt more to be found, and there is certainly more that could be said about those discussed here.

⁸ See n. 12 and surrounding text below.

Recognition of this led the author to be surprised at its huge success (15 million copies sold worldwide in 40 languages, in addition to film and theatre adaptations and spin-off books). In an interview in *Intelligent Life* magazine, Pullman said:

I thought there would be a small audience – a few clever kids somewhere and a few intelligent adults who thought, “That’s all right, quite enjoyed it.”⁹

This confirms the author’s aim to include children as at least a part of his readership, while at the same time acknowledging the complexity and potential difficulty of the material. The target market is also confirmed by the publisher: the books were first published in the UK by the *Point* imprint of Scholastic Children’s Books, an imprint specialising in the teen/young adult fiction market. Fortunately, Pullman left the marketing to the publishers, since his summary of his concept for the novels does not seem likely to draw in the vast readership of adults and children he received: in an interview in *Books for Keeps* he said:

What I really wanted to do was *Paradise Lost* in 1,200 pages.¹⁰ It’s the story of the Fall which is the story of how what some would call sin, but I would call consciousness, comes to us.¹¹

⁹ Robert Butler, “Philip Pullman’s Dark Arts” (interview with Pullman), *Intelligent Life*, Dec. 2007, available online at <http://www.moreintelligentlife.co.uk/story/an-interview-with-philip-pullman> (accessed Aug. 31, 2014).

¹⁰ *Sic.* He overshoot by nearly 100.

¹¹ Julia Eccleshare, “Northern Lights and Christmas Miracles,” *Books For Keeps: The Children’s Book Magazine Online* 100 (1995), available at <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/100/childrens-books/articles/awards/northern-lights-and-christmas-miracles> (accessed Nov. 27, 2015).

A similar statement in another interview also confirms the author had a specifically teen audience in mind:

Well, what I'd really like to write is *Paradise Lost* for teenagers in three volumes.¹²

That *HDM* has sold so well despite the potentially difficult subject matter and complexity is undoubtedly owing to Pullman's great gifts as a storyteller: the pace of the story carries the reader along, and while only the reader as well-read in Christian and classical literature as the author will spot all the allusions or understand their point, they are evidently incorporated in such a way that this fact does not prevent enjoyment of the story by large numbers of readers. (I assume, of course, that the alternative explanation – that all those readers had first read Milton, Dante, Blake, and the whole Bible, among other important hypotexts – does not need refuting.) Pullman's reference to an audience of 'clever kids' and 'intelligent adults' tallies with the fact that the novels reward re-reading, perhaps coming back as an adult and noticing more than one does as a teenager first time around, or being inspired to read one or more of the important hypotexts and then to come back to Pullman.¹³

¹² Wendy Parsons and Catriona Nicholson, "Talking to Philip Pullman: An Interview," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 23 (1999), 126.

¹³ In an attempt to take advantage of this potential, an edition of *Paradise Lost* has been produced with an introduction by Pullman, see John Milton, *Paradise Lost: An Illustrated Edition with an Introduction by Philip Pullman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). On the dual audience of children and adults for *HDM*, see Susan R. Bobby, "What Makes a Classic? Daemons and Dual Audience in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," *The Looking Glass* 8.1 (2004), pages not numbered, available online at <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/ojs/index.php/tlg/article/view/188/187> (accessed Nov. 27, 2015). *AS* was the first (and to date the only) work of 'children's literature' to win the prestigious Whitbread Book Award (starting in

To focus on the child reader: how likely is it that she – or that Pullman would expect that she – has read *Paradise Lost* (the acknowledged model of *HDM*), let alone other important but secondary Christian hypotexts? On both counts, I would argue that it is very unlikely. Pullman worked as an English teacher in his native UK before his writing took over, and is therefore aware of the reading set on the National Curriculum, begun in 1988 and obligatory for state-funded schools (the new GCSE [General Certificate of School Education] qualification examining 16-year-olds, part of the same impetus to educational reform, began in 1986, with the first pupils examined in 1988). The National Curriculum in 1999, for example, allowed for selections from Milton and Blake to be chosen (by the school or the teacher) for study between ages 11–16 from among 28 prescribed pre-1914 poets (alongside prescriptions for post-1914 poets, Shakespeare and other drama, pre- and post-1914 fiction).¹⁴ That is, only a relatively small proportion of pupils would be obliged to study these particular poets (and then only selections from their works) at school before the age at which they are in the publisher's Teen/YA-target market; his experience as an English teacher means that Pullman's expectations of the average pupil's breadth of reading would not be unrealistically high. At best, then, the author perhaps hoped that a minority of readers might have read such texts before coming to *HDM* – and perhaps rather hoped to inspire more to read them through reading *HDM*.¹⁵ The Christian Bible could not be assured of detailed familiarity among child

1971) outright in 2001, defeating the shortlisted works in other ('adult') categories including best novel, making it and *HDM* one of the most apposite works to consider the perennial children's literature studies questions of dual audience and the importance or otherwise of 'children's literature' as a category.

¹⁴ Department for Education and Employment, *English. The National Curriculum for England: Key Stages 1–4* (London: DfEE/Qualifications and Curriculums Authority, 1999), 35–36, available at <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/pdfs/1999-nc-primary-handbook.pdf> (accessed Nov. 12, 2015).

¹⁵ Pullman's contribution to Milton, *Paradise Lost* indicates a desire to encourage reading of *Paradise Lost* by his readers, as well as his statement quoted above, text to n. 11.

readers, in an increasingly secularised and multicultural society, beyond the most famous passages. Pullman himself implicitly acknowledges this decrease in familiarity in discussing the role certain foundational texts should play in education, speaking at the Oxford Literary Festival in 2013:

I think it's very, very important that your children should know these stories [Grimm's fairy tales]. [...] Not all of them obviously, but the great ones, the famous ones. They should also know stories from the Bible and from Greek mythology. I think it's important almost more than anything else – that's what they need most of all.¹⁶

As an atheist/secular humanist,¹⁷ Pullman naturally does not single out Christian writings, but gives them a place for their literary qualities – note the phrase “stories from the Bible,” as well as the company in which he places them. With such pleas for the continuation of telling great stories once considered central to Western culture,¹⁸ Pullman implicitly acknowledges that it is becoming ever less likely that most children are familiar with such classic tales, let alone with the traditions built upon them (e.g., Milton and Dante for the Bible). But in arguing for a canon of central stories to be told to children, he also constructs

¹⁶ Hannah Furness, “Philip Pullman: Teach All Children Fairy Tales and Bible Verses,” in *The Telegraph*, March 18, 2013, available online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/9936241/Philip-Pullman-teach-all-children-fairy-tales-and-Bible-verses.html> (accessed Nov. 27, 2015).

¹⁷ On Pullman's religious views and their manifestation in *HDM*, see C. Butler and Halsdorf, eds., *Philip Pullman (New Casebooks)*, section entitled “*His Dark Materials* and polemic,” 1–18, for a brief but suitably nuanced introduction, with references to further reading (for the section referred to in this footnote see especially pp. 7–10).

¹⁸ See the rest of the interview for the context including on the modern decline of storytelling.

an ideal child reader for his novels, one who comes to the latter with a good knowledge of at least the foundational texts – some Bible stories, if not Milton, and some Greek myths. Indeed, without at least an outline knowledge of the story of Adam and Eve with its concept of the Fall and of sin, as told in the Bible (or perhaps one of the countless adaptations in collections of Bible stories for children), *HDM* would certainly lose something, even though it would still be perfectly comprehensible; and quite apart from any question of the lowest level of familiarity necessary, the more the reader is familiar with Christianity and its texts, the better able to understand the depth of Pullman's richly allusive novels.

I would suggest, then, that the author did not expect that he would have so many readers because he assumed (rightly) that most readers would not be familiar with *HDM*'s many Christian hypotexts and references (Milton and others in the later Christian tradition); that in his view all children's education should include at least some central texts which would make his novels more accessible and rewarding (stories from the Bible itself, and some Greek myths). Pullman believed initially, however, that this might not be enough to make *HDM* accessible to many, only the 'clever kids' who could appreciate at least more of the references than average readers who might have gone on from Pullman's ideal early upbringing on Bible stories and Greek myths to read, e.g., Milton or Homer for themselves. In the event, sales of *HDM* suggest that it is widely enjoyed by those who are likely to have had less prior familiarity with its hypotexts than such an 'ideal reader.'

Pullman's Greek Materials¹⁹

¹⁹ I became aware of Randall E. Auxier "Thus Spake Philip Pullman," in Greene and Robison, eds., *The Golden Compass and Philosophy*, 3–24, only via Bobby, "Persephone Ascending," 146–163, and too late to take account of either fully in this chapter: Auxier argues for a reading of *AS* that has Lyra as Persephone, Mrs. Coulter as Demeter, and Will as Hades (Hades abducts Persephone from her mother Demeter and takes her forcibly to the Underworld); as Bobby points out, however, there are several aspects of this which reading do not fit the text

Apart from his statement on the inclusion of Greek myths in a kind of ‘children’s canon,’ Pullman has elsewhere discussed Greek myth and literature and its use in education in a way which also gives some insight into his own familiarity with them. One of his earlier publications was a children’s educational book, *Ancient Civilisations*.²⁰ As a school teacher, he used to tell the stories of the Homeric epics and other Greek myths – not reading, but oral storytelling, and several times over.²¹ Telling the stories of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* from memory a number of times, rhapsode-style, means that Pullman had a very good familiarity with these texts in particular, over and above other Greek texts which he engages with in his work but did not re-tell in this way. Indeed, in answer to a question from a fan on his website about the use of classical myth in *HDM*, he writes:

very well, and as I argue below, Orpheus is a far closer parallel for Lyra’s pro-active, heroine’s quest to the Underworld to bring back ghosts of the dead than is Persephone’s passive journey to the Underworld against her volition. Bobby’s chapter compares some central characters in *HDM* with figures of Greek myth *qua* archetypes in a Jungian sense rather than specific intertextual models. Another possible echo of classical myth is argued for by Karen Patricia Smith, “Tradition, Transformation, and the Bold Emergence: Fantastic Legacy and Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” in Lenz with Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 146: two hospitable couples in *AS* resemble Baucis and Philemon, but these allusions (if deliberate) are fleeting and localised.

²⁰ Philip Pullman, *Ancient Civilizations* (Exeter: Wheaton, 1981).

²¹ See Pullman interviewed in Robert Butler, “Philip Pullman’s Dark Arts,” and his statement on using Greek myths in his teaching career – “I have a feeling this all belongs to me,” in George Beahm, ed., *Discovering the Golden Compass: A Guide to Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads, 2007), 26: “I must have told each story thirty-six times. The result is that I now have those stories entirely clear in my head, from beginning to end, and I can call them up whenever I want to.” More from Pullman on the importance of specifically oral storytelling in Furness, “Philip Pullman: Teach All Children Fairy Tales and Bible Verses.”

If I were to give you one tip, I'd say that you might find just as many places where the book was alluding to Norse or northern myths, or to the Bible. But I was conscious of classical stories, of course: Homer, principally.²²

In the same response he also points to his use of “epic similes” in battle scenes, which are evocative of Greek and in general classical epic, as we shall see.

Pullman's knowledge of at least one specific Greek text with which he is engaging is guaranteed by a direct reference (as opposed to an allusion) within the trilogy: this is the use of Plato's myth of the Cave in the *Republic*: “Shadows on the walls of the Cave, you see, from Plato” (*SK*, 92). This reference is thus a different kind of engagement with Greek materials, both in the manner of the intertextuality and in the fact that it is not a myth in the primary sense but one of Plato's invented philosophical ‘myths’; this intertextuality will therefore be explored in a separate section. Plato's Cave as a metaphor for consciousness, an important theme throughout *HDM*, is of course known to many indirectly through modern philosophers and writers; and there is reason for thinking that Pullman's engagement with the Cave is mediated through the Christian tradition.

Socrates is also mentioned by Pullman in an interview in which he acknowledges Socrates' *daemonion* or personal deity as the inspiration for daemons, the embodied souls in animal form which all characters in the primary alternative universe of *HDM* possesses.²³

These few specific pieces of Greek knowledge aside, there is little if anything which can be pinned down as an allusion to a specific Greek text, despite many features of Greek myth being present (the Underworld and the harpies in *AS*, for instance). This is because

²² Pullman (no date, in an answer to a question asked Dec. 1, 2010), Official Website: <http://www.philip-pullman.com/questions-frequently-asked/> (accessed Aug. 31, 2014).

²³ Quoted in Raymond-Pickard, *The Devil's Account*, 56. Cf. Juliet Marillier, “Dear Soul,” in Scott Westerfeld, ed., *The World of the Golden Compass* (no place of publication listed: Borders, Inc., 2007), 114–115.

many of the allusions are precisely to Greek myths, as opposed to any specific text's telling of those myths. However, given Pullman's very wide reading, evident from the novels themselves (especially the Christian texts) and from the interviews he has given about them, and his expressed attitudes towards reading and a 'canon' including the Greek classics, it is a fairly safe assumption that he had read, and alludes to, far more Greek and classical literature than can be definitively stated in the way it can be concerning Homer.

A final point to consider is the use of words and names derived from Greek. The main character 'Lyra' is of course the Greek word for lyre, and it is impossible not to see this as deliberate given Pullman's use of speaking names for so many of his characters, and the clear associations between Lyra and Orpheus, the greatest musician and lyre-player of Greek myth, which will be discussed below. Another example is the 'Alethiometer,' a device resembling a barometer and used to reveal hidden truths and guide Lyra throughout her adventures: this evidently derives from Greek *aletheia*, 'truth.' Pullman does not (so far as I can establish) know ancient Greek, but of course Greek derived terms are used copiously in English literature, philosophy, and theology; in particular, many Greek terms have come to be used in Christian theology drawing on Platonism, and then in later literary texts (such as Christianised epic), and Pullman shows in the novels and in his interviews an interest and knowledge of this Platonism-influenced theology, or Platonism mediated through Christianity.

Greek Elements in *His Dark Materials*

a. 'Epic simile'

As noted above, Pullman himself describes his use of simile as 'epic'; on this point what he says precisely is: "Then there are the epic similes in the description of the fight between the bears,"²⁴ in answering the fan's question about his classical influences. These similes are

²⁴ See above, n. 22.

indeed very striking for a reader who has read Homeric epic, introducing a very different tone and style to the fight scene compared with much of the narrative. An example:

That was when Iorek moved. Like a wave that has been building its strength over a thousand miles of ocean, and which makes little stir in the deep water, but which when it reaches the shallows rears itself up high into the sky, terrifying the shore-dwellers, before crashing down on the land with irresistible power – so Iorek Byrnison rose up against Iofur, exploding upwards from his firm footing on the dry rock and slashing with a ferocious left hand at the exposed jaw of Iofur Raknison. (*NL*, 353)

Homeric nature similes are justly famous, and a great number and variety of them are found throughout the epics. I would not suggest that Pullman is modelling his on a specific Homeric simile, but rather imitating the style (note especially the way the comparandum is returned to at the end after ‘so’) and the use of a natural feature, in this case a wave, as the comparatum. His great familiarity as a storyteller with Homer means that he had very likely absorbed the style of simile, rather than necessarily looking at his copy of the *Iliad* for an example to imitate. The sea is a frequent comparatum in Homeric simile: here is a close example, also a battle scene:

[Hector attacks the Greeks] as when a wave, wind-fed to high fury under the clouds, falls on a fast ship and shrouds it wholly in foam: the fearful blast of the wind roars in the sail, and the sailors’ hearts tremble with fear, as they are

carried only just out of the grip of death – so the Achaians’ spirits were troubled in their breasts. (Homer, *Iliad* 15.624–629)²⁵

As in Homer, so in Pullman, this kind of simile gives an impression of the great power of the combatants, who are great forces of nature and not mere humans.

b. Lyra and Orpheus²⁶

A more complex case of interaction with Greek myth is the central character Lyra, and her speaking name, meaning in Greek ‘lyre’ as noted above. Lyra’s is a speaking name in another and perhaps more overt way – she is an inveterate liar, often using untruths to get herself out of trouble (or attempt to). This aspect of her character is noted by others, including approvingly by Iorek, who nicknames her ‘Lyra Silvertongue’ after a particularly effective piece of persuasion using untruths (*NL*, 348). The similarity of her name to ‘liar’ – and the even greater similarity of the Greek meaning of her name, ‘lyre’ to ‘liar’ – is obvious, and is in fact emphasised by the text itself, when she is called “Liar, liar!” (*AS*, 308). This, and other important uses of speaking names in *HDM*,²⁷ make it very convincing to see Lyra as in some sense associated with the lyre too – as indeed Lauren Shohet has done, arguing that Lyra is a metaliterary figure for the novels and is programmatic for Pullman’s alignment with lyric and against canonical (Christian) authors. She compares *HDM* to C.S. Lewis’ Christian allegorical Narnia series as follows:

²⁵ Transl. Michael Hammond in Homer, *The Iliad* (London: Penguin, 1987).

²⁶ Since writing earlier versions of this chapter I have seen Bobby, “Persephone Ascending,” 149, which also briefly notes the parallel of Lyra’s and Orpheus’ journeys to the Underworld.

²⁷ Discussed by Lauren Shohet, “Reading Dark Materials,” in Lenz with Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 22–36.

Unlike Lewis's novels, which obediently parrot [...] their canonical sources, Pullman's narrative art lies, steals, and transforms. Lyra inveterately spins tales [...].²⁸

Shohet goes on to argue that lyric (i.e. Blake and the Romantics) can be seen as leading an "emancipating rebellion against tradition"²⁹ (i.e. the Bible and Milton). This reading is persuasive, placing Pullman as it does among other later writers to engage with Milton from a post-Enlightenment perspective. But this is not where the Lyra~lyre association ends.

Arguably a more apparent association which Lyra and the lyre share is with the figure of Orpheus. Lyra has in common with him a descent (in *AS*) to the Underworld while still alive, in order to bring back the soul of a dead loved one (albeit her childhood friend Roger rather than a lover). And the lyre is of course Orpheus' instrument, accompanying his enchanting and beguiling words – something for which Lyra is also noted. I would argue therefore that Lyra evokes not just any lyre, but specifically the lyre of Orpheus and thereby Orpheus himself. This parallel is seen not only in their journeys to the Underworld and their charming use of words, but in specific details connected with both of these features, details which are found in famous classical literary versions of the Orpheus myth with which Pullman was no doubt familiar.³⁰ The impression each makes on the souls of the dead in the

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 25–26.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 26.

³⁰ Kiera Vaclavik, *Uncharted Depths: Descent Narratives in English and French Children's Literature* (London: Legenda, 2010), touches on Pullman only briefly in a useful study of katabasis in modern English and French children's literature. Claire Squires, *Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials Trilogy: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 62, compares Lyra's journey to the Underworld with those of Greek heroes in general, but there are several very specific parallels with Orpheus, as I show in this section.

Underworld is very similar: the ghosts are attracted to each figure and eager to listen to them, so that the verbal (and Orpheus' musical) powers are seen to hold sway over the dead as well as the living. This feature of Orpheus' katabasis is mentioned in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "[...] the bloodless spirits wept as he uttered these words and accompanied them on the lyre" ("[...] talia dicentem nervosque ad verba moventem exsanguis flebant animae," *Met.* 10.40–41).

Ovid's picturesque account of Orpheus' katabasis is probably the most famous extant ancient version, and the source for most modern collections of Greek myths, so it is hard to believe that Pullman was not aware of it in his extensive katabasis episode in *The Amber Spyglass*. Lyra is treated similarly by the ghosts:

And then Lyra reached the tree and sat down on one of the thick roots. So many figures clustered around, pressing hopefully, wide-eyed. (*AS*, 329)

A further parallel is the rebellion of each character against god(s) in his or her world, resulting ultimately in Orpheus' death at the hands of followers of Dionysus, but also encompassing the attempt by each to subvert divinely-ordained order by bringing the dead back to life.

Pullman's Lyra–Orpheus interplay is not simple imitation, however, but is rather a case both of a more complex allusion which alters significant details, and a 'capping' allusion, which offers an 'improved' version of its hypotext. One significant detail which is a parallel between the two stories but alters the Lyra–Orpheus relation is the point at which Lyra, on the ascent out of the Underworld leading the souls of the dead, looks behind her, falters, and slips back; Orpheus too looks back, but of course it is the ghost of Eurydice and not Orpheus who slips back, and she is lost to him. This detail, including the imagery of sliding or slipping, is

again reminiscent of Ovid's version: "[...] he looked behind, and suddenly she slipped back down..." ("[...] flexit amans oculos, et protinus illa relapsa est...", *Met.* 10.57). Compare:

She looked back... But the little boy's whispering voice said, "Lyra, be *careful* – remember, you en't dead like us –" And it seemed to happen so slowly, but there was nothing she could do... helplessly she began to slide. (*AS*, 378)

So in Pullman's story it is the Orpheus-figure who slides and falls down on the ascent out of the Underworld; and here the parallels and differences in the allusion multiply and become more complex. The ghost of Eurydice slips and is lost to Orpheus forever, while Lyra slips and never sees Roger – one of the ghosts she is leading out of the Underworld, the one she descended for – again. Lyra and Eurydice both fall, but Lyra's fall does not resemble Eurydice's, because she is rescued from it by the harpies and makes it out of the Underworld. Importantly, her mission is not a failure in the way Orpheus' is, despite her failure with regards to Roger. She has taken on a wider mission since arriving in the Underworld to see him, that of rescuing all the souls of the dead from the Underworld, and in that, she succeeds, with the help of Will opening a window into another world through which the souls can all gradually escape, and where they dissipate into Dust, their constituent particles of consciousness.

Each (original) mission is doomed to failure, as Lyra must learn, like Orpheus, that the basic rules of life and death cannot be overturned. But for Lyra, having learned that, freeing the souls from a wretched existence in a dismal Hades-style Underworld is ultimately a triumph. In this respect, then, Lyra trumps Orpheus – she succeeds where he fails, releasing not only one ghost (he could not achieve even that much) but all ghosts, leaving a way out through which all souls can escape from now on. The falling episode in her story is only

temporary and the upward journey continues, and all souls are freed from the Underworld forever. So if Lyra is an Orpheus-figure, she is a more successful one. Taking in the role of Orpheus as psychopomp (guide of recently departed souls to the Underworld), which he acquired in the Christian tradition,³¹ adds an extra point to this image of Lyra as an improved Orpheus: she leads the souls in the opposite direction. This version of Lyra–Orpheus, if Pullman was aware of his role as psychopomp, constitutes an allusion to the Orpheus figure filtered by his Mediaeval Christian reception, as with other uses of classical intertexts in *HDM*.

c. The Underworld and the Ghosts of the Dead

The Underworld itself in *The Amber Spyglass* differs from most features of the alternative universe which bear close resemblance to a view of the world informed by Christian theology and literature, since it is clearly not the Christian hell but rather the Underworld of Greek mythology. That is, it is neither a place of fire and torture, nor one of two places where the souls of the dead ultimately go, but rather a more neutral albeit miserable place, and the final destination of the souls of all the dead. To begin with, it is reached by crossing a river helped by a ferry-man, like Charon and the river Styx of the Greek Underworld. Once arrived at, it is described in a way which is reminiscent of the Greek Underworld – full of wretched ghosts, but no devils with pitchforks or hot poker:

[...] there were no true shadows and no true light, and everything was the same dingy colour.

³¹ See John Block, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000, ed. pr. 1970), 36–37, 58, 79, 84.

Standing on the floor of this huge space were adults and children – ghost people – so many that Lyra couldn't guess their number... No one was moving about, or running or playing. (*AS*, 310)

Comparisons with 'Christian' (or its equivalent in Lyra's universe) versions of the afterlife are actually made, in the voice of ghosts whose expectations are confounded or confirmed by this place:

[A ghost who had died a martyr speaks:] 'They told us when we died we'd go to heaven. And they said that heaven was a place of joy and glory and we would spend eternity in the company of saints and angels praising the Almighty [...]. [But] the land of the dead isn't a place of reward or... punishment. It's a place of nothing.' [...]

But her ghost was thrust aside by the ghost of a man who looked like a monk [...], he crossed himself and murmured a prayer, and then he said:

'This is a bitter message, a sad and cruel joke [...]. The world we lived in was a vale of corruption and tears [...]. But the Almighty has granted us this blessed place for all eternity, this paradise [...]. *This* is heaven, truly!' (*AS*, 335–336)

Thus it is made quite clear that this is something other than the expected 'Christian' hell (or heaven), and readers even vaguely familiar with Greek myth will automatically relate it to the Greek Underworld, especially with the presence of harpies (although see further section 'd.' below on the latter).

Indeed, in an answer to a fan society's letter, Pullman confirms that in creating his world of the dead he had in mind "Homer and Virgil."³² Given this statement and the particular features of the Underworld and its inhabitants in *HDM*, Pullman no doubt had in mind specifically the descriptions of the Underworld in *Odyssey* 11 – the fullest description in Homer (see further below on Virgil). In this context, the poignant descriptions of attempts by a living and a dead character to embrace are particularly close:

I [Odysseus] wondered how I might embrace my dead mother's ghost [...], she escaped my arms like a shadow or a dream [...]. My [...] mother replied: '[...] this is the way it is with mortals after death. The sinews no longer bind flesh and bone, the fierce heat of the blazing pyre consumes them, and the spirit flees from our white bones, a ghost that flutters and goes like a dream.' (*Od.* 11.204–222)³³

Compare:

He [Roger] rushed to embrace her [Lyra]. But he passed like cold smoke through her arms [...]. They could never truly touch again. (*AS*, 321–322)

The initiator of the attempted embrace is in the second case the child ghost and not the living character; in contrast to the ghost of Odysseus' mother, who is so well aware of the limitations of her metaphysical state that she explains them in detail to her son, we witness the

³² Pullman quoted by The Dark Matter Society (fan club) website *The Bridge to the Stars*, http://www.bridgetothestars.net/index.php?d=pullman&p=pullman_letters, Pullman's original letter scanned here: <http://www.bridgetothestars.net/images/ppletter2.jpg> (accessed Nov. 27, 2015).

³³ Transl. Martin Hammond in Homer, *The Odyssey* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

moment when Roger finds out that he cannot embrace Lyra. This is a small reconfiguration of the situation in the hypotext, but one which arguably even adds a further touch of pathos to the already very poignant scene it imitates.

d. The Harpies

Another feature of the Underworld with a Greek origin is the harpies. The creatures themselves, at least, are figures of Greek mythology, but their place in the Underworld is probably not. The closest that harpies seem to get in classical literature to the Underworld is outside its entrance: in the *Aeneid*, they and “many monstrous forms besides of various beasts are stalled at the doors...” (“multaque praeterea variarum monstra ferarum: Centauri in foribus stabulant...,” 6.285–289, in H.R. Fairclough’s translation of 1887). This is one feature which cannot come from Homer³⁴ but may owe a debt to Virgil; however, despite Pullman’s response to a question about his “hell” being inspired by Dante – “not so much Dante as Homer and Virgil, in fact”³⁵ – in this particular feature his Greek materials are most likely (unconsciously?) mediated through a later, Christian filter: Dante’s Hell at least contains harpies (though they only feature in a very minor way: *Inf.* 13.13–15; 101–102); Milton’s Hell, like Homer’s and Virgil’s Underworlds, contains none. The far larger role given to the harpies in Pullman’s Underworld can be seen simply as a creative expansion of the kernel of an association found in the *Aeneid* and in Dante. But there do seem to be other possible associations between harpies and the souls of the dead which go back to Antiquity and may also have entered into the mix that formed Pullman’s harpies. There is some confusion between what is a harpy and what is a siren when it comes to ancient visual representations,

³⁴ Pace Squires, *Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials Trilogy*, 62, who says that Pullman’s harpies come from the *Odyssey* – where, however, they have no association with the Underworld at all.

³⁵ Pullman quoted by The Dark Matter Society (see above, n. 32).

as they may resemble one another;³⁶ however that may be, there are some ancient images which seem to be (to readers brought up on Greek mythology) representations of harpies, in contexts which suggest they had a psychopompic role. For instance the Attic red-figure column-krater (ill. 1) depicting the death of Procris features what looks like a harpy, but is described by modern scholars as a ‘soul-bird,’³⁷ since no ancient texts assign harpies a soul-guiding role, nor before Virgil even an association with the Underworld. (The British Museum’s catalogue entry labels the figure as “Harpy(?).”) Such an association, even if these creatures in ancient art are in fact incorrectly labelled as harpies, might have suggested the idea of the harpies as soul-guides to Pullman. In that case, as with Orpheus-Lyra as psychopomp, the tradition is again reconfigured, since his harpies do not lead the souls of the dead down to the Underworld, but are won over and join with Lyra to help lead them out.



Illustration 1. Hephaistos Painter (?), *The Death of Procris*, red-figured column-krater, ca. 460–430 BC, British Museum (BM 1772,0320.36).

³⁶ Emily Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 169 and figs. 13–14. I am grateful to Emma Stafford for this reference.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 74, 175–176, and index s.v. ‘soul-bird’ for further discussion and references.

e. Pandora and Pantalaimon

This allusion is less overt or direct than many discussed so far: no mention by name to the Pandora myth is made in *HDM*, but an allusion to it might be activated, for the reader aware of the associations, by the long-standing association elsewhere between Pandora and the Eve of Genesis,³⁸ with whom Lyra is more clearly comparable.³⁹ Eve, Lyra, and Pandora all stand at the beginning of a new era, which in the Christian and Greek traditions is a worse era – Eve being the catalyst for humanity’s Fall – but in Lyra’s case is the reverse. Further associations come in the form of Lyra’s father, Lord Asriel, whose role is that of Azrael the fallen angel, the Satan of *Paradise Lost*; Satan’s role in bringing about humanity’s ‘Fall,’ or coming to consciousness, is paralleled in Greek myth by Prometheus stealing fire from the gods for humanity, and the figures of Prometheus and Satan, like Pandora and Eve, have a long association.⁴⁰ In *HDM* the ‘Fall’ is very much a positive event, and in this Pullman has precedent in the Romantics’ reimagining of *Paradise Lost*; as Burton Hatlen puts it, for Blake,

³⁸ The comparison between Eve and Pandora is explicitly made in *Paradise Lost*, 4.714, 718, and has a long history; see, e.g., Samuel Tobias Lachs, “The Pandora-Eve Motif in Rabbinic Literature,” *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974), 341–345.

³⁹ Lyra as Eve has been discussed in the many studies on *HDM* and *Paradise Lost*, cited above n. 4, and specifically on this theme see Mary Harris Russell, “Eve, Again! Mother Eve!: Pullman’s Eve Variations,” in Lenz with Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 212–222.

⁴⁰ This comparison is not overtly made in *Paradise Lost* but has long been noted by critics – see especially Raphael Jehudah Zwi Werblowsky, *Lucifer and Prometheus: A Study of Milton’s Satan* (London: Routledge, 1952), and, no doubt more importantly for the formation of Pullman’s characters, developed by the Romantic poets mediating between Milton and our author: see especially Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, with Shelley’s own preface comparing Prometheus to Satan “the hero of *Paradise Lost*”; cf. Frederick L. Jones, “Shelley and Milton,” *Studies in Philology* 49 (1952), 488–519.

Shelley, and Byron, Milton's Satan is the hero, "a Promethean rebel fighting on in a cause that he [...] insists is just."⁴¹

There is nothing to connect Lyra to Pandora and Lord Asriel to Prometheus in *HDM* directly, but I would argue that the clear parallels between them and Eve and Satan in its major hypotext *Paradise Lost* can activate for the reader aware of them these secondary associations with the figures of Greek myth. That is, there is in this intertextuality a triangulation between the Greek and the Christian hypotexts and *HDM*, as illustrated by the diagram below (ill. 2). Milton and other Christian texts make the connection between the Greek and the Biblical figures; and in *HDM* the parallels between Lyra and Eve and between Lord Asriel and Satan are relatively clear, both partaking in a version of the story of the Fall. The third side of the triangle, the connection between Pullman's characters and their Greek counterparts, is in this case more implicit, being realised only through the intermediary of the Christian counterparts of each.

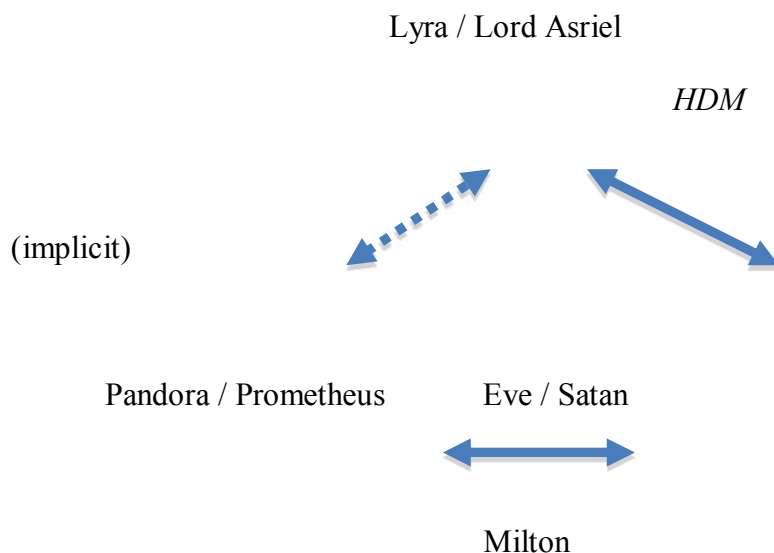


Illustration 2.

⁴¹ Hatlen, "Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," 86.

Once this is seen, the name of Lyra's daemon, Pantalaimon, reinforces the parallel. A person's daemon in Lyra's universe is her embodied soul, just as essentially her as the human form, born when she was born and destined to die with her. So in a sense Lyra is Pantalaimon. Pandora, the first woman, was sent by Zeus as a scourge for humanity, as retaliation for Prometheus having given them the secret of fire; her name, literally "all gifts," is heavily ironic, since she releases all sufferings and woes for humans from her jar ('Pandora's box'). Lyra, and Pantalaimon as part of Lyra, are created by her father Lord Asriel, whose role is Promethean: so the roles in the Greek myth, as well as the Christian, are reconfigured. Lyra (Eve/Pandora) and Pantalaimon are not created or set up by the Authority (God/Zeus) to bring punishment on humanity (respectively through bringing about the Fall/for having taken a Fall-like rebellious step towards independence of the gods, helped by Prometheus). Rather, Lyra and Pantalaimon are created by Lord Asriel (Satan/Prometheus), and their role is to come to full consciousness in defiance of the Authority: to bring about the 'Fall,' certainly, but this is a good thing, which the repressive Church is trying to prevent in order to send humanity back to an Edenic state. Pantalaimon's name, literally "all-forgiving," can be linked with other aspects of the narrative (most obviously, he must forgive Lyra for the excruciating separation in the Underworld when she could not cross the river without leaving him behind); but the analogous formation with Pandora connects with the Lyra-Pandora parallels too. If Pandora brings, and is, a punishment for humanity from Zeus, Lyra-Pantalaimon brings and is the means of mercy instead of that punishment, born to and prepared for the role by the Prometheus-figure Lord Asriel.

f. Daemons, Daemones, and the Daimonion

The animal-form daemons that all humans in Lyra's world have attached to them, as physical manifestations of their soul, are linked explicitly by Pullman to Socrates' *daimonion*,⁴² his so-called 'personal deity.' This is referred to in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, in which Socrates is made to say:

[...] something divine (τό δαίμόνιον) and spiritual comes to me, the very thing which Meletus ridiculed in his indictment. I have had this from my childhood; it is a sort of voice that comes to me, and when it comes it always holds me back from what I am thinking of doing, but never urges me forward. (31d; compare 40a)⁴³

This is essentially a personified conscience, and this is indeed one of the roles taken by daemons in *HDM*: where a human in our world has an internal dialogue, in Lyra's world she discusses and argues with her daemon over an intended action. Beyond this simple parallel, which Pullman identifies as an allusion to Socrates, we might infer some reference to the context in which the *daimonion* is found. Socrates is accused (*Apol.* 24b–c) of not believing in the gods of the state but introducing other, new divine beings (δαίμονια), and for this (among other things) he is persecuted by the establishment, and put to death. Pullman may well have been thinking of this aspect of the *daimonion* too, since the establishment in Lyra's world – the Church – wants to eradicate full human consciousness and conscience, or independence of thought, and make humans passive and obedient; to this end, it is behind an experiment ('intercision') to separate forcibly daemons from their humans; so it is a case of the individual

⁴² See n. 23 above.

⁴³ Transl. Harold North Fowler, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 1, *Introduction* by W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press–William Heinemann Ltd., Loeb, 1966).

soul and conscience embodied – the daemon – being seen as a threat to traditional religious authority, as with Socrates' *daimonion*.

Besides the Socratic *daimonion*, daemons also recall the Gnostic idea of a human divided into the mortal, bodily part (*eidolon*) and the immortal soul, the spiritual part, called the *daimon*. This Gnostic idea derives from and agrees with in some part the Platonic ideas that the immortal soul and not the physical body is the true self, which discards (or should seek to discard) lower, mortal pleasures and goals as it strives for higher, philosophic truths, and which survives the death of the body. (There is a shift in terminology from Plato, for whom the soul is the *psyche*, to the Gnostics for whom the soul is called *daimon*; but given the use of English 'soul' for both, this slippage in the later tradition is understandable.) Here there is a difference in *HDM*: the daemons in Lyra's world do not outlast their humans but die with them. This is bound up with the author's humanist and atheist worldview: there is no higher or spiritual reality to strive for, only humanity and human consciousness, which must make the best of their one life guided by conscience (the daemon). Pullman makes this connection in an interview in *Booklist*:

The Gnostic worldview is Platonic in that it rejects the physical created universe and expresses a longing for an unknowable God who is far off. My myth is almost the reverse. It takes this physical universe as our true home. We must welcome and love and live our lives in this world to the full.⁴⁴

The Platonic ideas ultimately behind this statement are primarily to be found in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, though of course it is impossible to say for sure whether the author has specific Platonic texts directly in mind or their appropriators. However that may

⁴⁴ See Ilene Cooper, "Pullman on the Theology of *His Dark Materials*," *Booklist* 97 (2000), 355.

be, in this instance, Pullman's knowledge of Platonic and the later Gnostic ideas about souls, and about various uses of the Greek word *daimon* and its cognates, shows that we have a complex reception ultimately going back at least to Plato but mediated through a cumulative tradition of later Christian (mainstream and other) theological discussions. Here, because of the ways in which Christian theologians of various bents have adopted and adapted Platonic ideas over the centuries, the classical and the Christian are for once in agreement; and so in contrast to, say, Pullman's presentation of the Underworld, a Greek hypotext is not used to mark an ideological difference from his primary, Christian hypotexts, but is rather aligned with them.⁴⁵ Here, then, a Greek author is called to mind only to create an antithesis between his worldview and that of the heroine of the novel and her allies – and indeed, that of the author as attested in interviews.

g. Plato's Cave and Consciousness

A second example of this agreement between Pullman's Greek and Christian hypotexts is seen in the references to Plato's Cave, mentioned above. In Lyra's world, particles of human consciousness are referred to as Dust, and for the Church in that world they are connected with original sin and should be destroyed. The Alethiometer which helps Lyra in her quest functions by responding to these particles. It emerges in *SK*, when Lyra comes to 'our' world, that these same particles, here called 'Shadows,' are not widely known, but are being studied by a small research team who are barely starting to understand what they are or how they function before being shut down to divert research funding elsewhere... Without

⁴⁵ It would be too speculative without further testimony to suggest that Pullman might be thinking directly of Aristotle's understanding of *daimon* rather than Plato's – i.e., something tied to one specific human that dies with it, rather than something immortal that becomes part of many humans – but even if not directly and specifically intended as Aristotelian, this contrast does map on to Pullman's daemons and what he has said about them in interviews, and to the quoted statement about the Platonic worldview.

understanding how it functions or what it means, they have developed a computer-based machine which reads the ‘Shadows,’ which they have called the ‘Cave’: Dr. Malone explains the nickname thus: “Shadows on the walls of the Cave, you see, from Plato” (*SK*, 92). The Cave–Shadows relationship therefore borrows the very famous image from Plato (*Republic* 514a–520a) for the inadequacy of human consciousness: it is trapped in a cave, able only to look towards the wall and see the shadows cast by the real objects behind it, which it can never perceive – the Platonic idea of a higher reality implicitly discounted by Pullman in the previous quotation. Once Lyra is attached to the ‘Cave,’ it soon becomes clear to her that what the scientists have invented is an Alethiometer, through which she is able to ‘read’ the consciousness particles in the same way as through the device from her own world; and thus that ‘Shadows’ are identical with ‘Dust.’

The same kind of misconception is operating in both worlds about the nature of the particles, in a way which again aligns an idea from a Greek text with Christian thinking rather than opposing them. In Lyra’s world there is a deliberate attempt to counteract the force of human consciousness by destroying Dust (as too by the process of intercision discussed above) by the followers of the Authority, in order to retain control of a humanity rendered docile and in order to bring the world back to its pre-Fall state of ‘blissful’ ignorance. This fails to recognise the particles’ importance: they are essential to humanity, consciousness being what makes us human. In our world, there is no such widespread knowledge of the particles’ existence, and the few scientists who are or were investigating them (Dr. Malone being the last one still active on the project by the time Lyra encounters it) have no idea what they are dealing with. For them, labelling the Alethiometer-analogous machine the ‘Cave’ is no more than a witty and learned allusion by one of the scientists, based on the prior naming of the particles as ‘Shadows,’ not knowing what they are or do – the quotation continues: “That’s our archaeologist [...]. He’s an all-round intellectual” (*SK*, 92). But at the level of the

reader, if not the characters, this creates an analogous misapprehension about the particles with that in Lyra's world: 'Shadows,' like 'Dust,' are thus connected because of the original Platonic context with a lower state of consciousness and a lower reality, to be contrasted with and naturally opposed by the teachings of the Authority in Lyra's world. In 'our' world there is no such widespread opposition because there is no widespread knowledge of 'Shadows'; but the parallel between the 'Christian' and Platonic worldviews and their attitudes to the everyday experience of human consciousness, as expressed in the quoted *Booklist* interview, can be seen behind the naming of the 'Shadows' and the 'Cave.' Dr. Malone and the others began to investigate accumulations of the unknown particles around ancient artefacts made by humans and ancient skulls; they are as unaware as most in Lyra's world that they are dealing with the fundamental components of human consciousness and thus humanity – not mere shadows cast by them, as they thought.

In both these cases, the 'Cave' and the soul, a Greek hypotext can be found which derives ultimately from Plato, but has been appropriated and adapted by, and filtered through, centuries of Christian theological thinking. Because of the alignment of some fundamental ideas between the two, Pullman here does not use a Greek text to draw a contrast with the Christian worldview of his primary hypotexts (and with the analogous worldview of the supporters of the Authority in Lyra's world), but rather marries the two together and contrasts them with the reality of Lyra's and 'our' worlds as perceived by his heroine and those on her side – and with his own humanist and atheist worldview as related to interviewers and elsewhere.

Conclusions

In examining many of the most significant allusions and references to Greek and classical materials in *HDM*, we have seen a complex variety: in the kinds of material alluded to, the

manners in which they are referred or alluded to, and their connections and interplay with other significant hypotexts from the Christian tradition. It is clear that the classical allusions are not only 'decorative' – although adding to the literary texture is of course part of their purpose. Nor is it simply that the classical and Christian allusions are combined or used at different points for variety of effect, although again, this may be part of the point. But the interplay of classical and non-classical allusions in *HDM* is in fact rather more complex: there are instances both of classical material referenced 'directly,' without the intervention of Christian 'filters,' and also of the classical coming down to Pullman complete with its mediaeval and later Christian reception history. Of course, the reception of classical myths which have become intertwined with Christian stories during their reception history cannot really be stripped entirely of those intervening layers: especially in the context of *HDM*, we are well aware what is missing when this is attempted. But this is the choice of a sophisticated author who configures his 'received' texts and their relations with one another and with his text differently for different examples, and to different effects. So we notice that many Greek elements come to *HDM* indirectly, via Christian filters, but others are stripped of the intervening tradition by the author, e.g., the Underworld, which is then explicitly compared to and distanced from the Christianised version of it, from which the accretions have been stripped back. This process of returning to the classical myth without the Christianising adaptations may be seen as quite deliberate: a way of showing that a different world order from the Christian one is in effect in *HDM*. Pullman uses a classical myth (e.g., the Underworld) which is so often mixed up with its Christian equivalent (e.g., Hell in this case) from Milton through to C.S. Lewis and indeed in part elsewhere in *HDM*; but he then all the more pointedly separates the two traditions when he goes back to the classical form. But nor is it the case throughout *HDM* that Greek versus Christian mythology are always opposed with the classical always emerging the winner: some of the Greek elements (e.g., the Platonic)

are equally argued against, and do not form part of the ‘true’ world order of the *HDM* universe. It is true that the Platonic ideas expressed in *HDM* are mediated via Christianity too; in the case of the Cave and the conception of the soul, however, there is a core that goes right back to Plato with which Pullman’s worldview in *HDM* fundamentally disagrees.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ I would like to thank: the organisers and audience at Warsaw for the discussion; Francesca M. Richards for discussion and useful references in preparing the conference paper; Cathy Butler for allowing me to see pre-publication extracts from C. Butler and Halsdorf, *Philip Pullman (New Casebooks)*; Penelope Goodman for several helpful comments on the first draft of this chapter; and Eleanor OKell for a very useful discussion of its themes on the road from Durham to Leeds and some references in a follow-up email.