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**Transgressing the gender borders:
the subversive re-inscription of Eve in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials***

Introduction

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 - 2000), an award-winning fantasy trilogy, is prominent among recent children's literature in the U.K. and the U.S. One of the most intriguing features of Pullman's series is its brave reinvention of gender representation. In *His Dark Materials* conventional gender roles are denaturalized and overthrown. Eve, the stereotypical female figure, is taken apart from the *Holy Bible*, re-inscribed and reassembled to form a fresh and subversive ideological configuration. Pullman's rewriting of Eve has, in many ways, transgressed traditional gender boundaries, implicating new possibilities in gender representation. With the aim of raising gender awareness, in this article I will compare the parallel yet drastically different biblical pre-text and re-version, showing how gender borders are transgressed and female stereotypes re-written, reinterpreted and re-invented in Pullman's trilogy. First of all, the source which Pullman based his series on, i.e. the representation of Eve in *Genesis*, will be examined. A discussion of gender stereotypes arising from the Eden myth will also be looked into. From themes such as Adam and Eve in Eden before the Fall of Man, to what happens in the Fall and the consequences of the Fall, I will discuss how Pullman subverts the Myth of the Fall in the *Holy Bible* and introduces a new gender configuration through Lyra Belacqua, the new Eve in *His Dark Materials*.

The Representation of Lyra, or the Subversive Re-inscription of Eve

According to Sakenfeld (1985) one of the emphases of contemporary Christian feminists is to counteract famous Biblical texts used against women, which include:

...the themes that woman was created second (Genesis 2) and sinned first (Genesis 3 and the reinforcement of this view in 1 Tim. 2:13-14); that women must keep silent in church (1 Cor. 14:1 Tim. 2); and that they should be submissive to their husbands (Ephesians 5) (Sakenfeld 1985: 57).

Having recognized "explicit patriarchal bias" (Sakenfeld 1985: 56), as well as the "more subtle androcentrism in the worldview of the biblical authors" (Sakenfeld 1985: 56), Christian feminists try their best to reinterpret some of these texts and suggest "fresh interpretations that are not so negative toward women" (Sakenfeld 1985: 57).

To a certain extent Pullman's *His Dark Materials* shares a similar focus with the Christian feminists. It acts as a critique of patriarchy, counteracting the Biblical texts used against women. Yet, rather than suggesting "fresh interpretations that are not so negative toward women" (Sakenfeld 1985: 57), Pullman rewrites the Eden story and subverts conventional gender roles propagated in *Genesis*. One of the crucial themes of Pullman's *His Dark materials* is that "Lyra [the female protagonist] is to become the new Eve" (Hodgson 2005: 151) and then "the saviour of the world" (Gray 2009: 181). Indeed, from the beginning to the end of the trilogy the protagonist plays the role of a heroine. She goes on an adventurous journey when she rescues her friend Roger from the Gobblers (the evil child-snatchers), destroys Bolvangar (a human experiment station), saves the kidnapped children, helps Iorek Byrnison, the exiled successor to regain his throne, restores the Dust (life force),

and begins to build a 'Republic of Heaven' at the end of the story. However, as Nikolajeva (2003) points out, Pullman's Lyra is not a kind of romantic hero, like Harry Potter, who is morally pure and innocent. She is morally flawed, and there is ambiguity in her character. Nikolajeva (2003) explains that the "dubious moral qualities" are due to "the postmodern concept of indeterminacy, of the relativity of good and evil" (136 - 137), which makes Lyra more human-like.

The young protagonist may be undetermined and morally flawed, but my main concerns are with the manipulation and transformation of the archetype of Eve. How does Pullman manage to transgress the conventional gender borders and break the negative perception of women as suggested in the *Holy Bible* and many subsequent Christian representations? While the female protagonist does not have to be perfect, how does the retelling of the Myth of the Fall successfully introduce signs of the subversion of the traditional gender roles and stereotypes? In the following section, I will compare the creation story in the Biblical text and Pullman's re-version, with a special focus on gender border transgression and subversion.

Before the Fall: 'Adam and Eve' Becomes 'Eve and Her Helper'

As numerous feminist critics have noticed, the discourse of the *Bible* is almost totally patriarchal (Milne 1997). The Grand Narrative in the *Book of Genesis* introduces a binary opposition of male and female that is overwhelmingly sexist, if not misogynistic. Here, I will present the patriarchal ideology implied in the Eden myth. First, at the beginning of the Garden myth, God, Yahweh, creates the whole world for Adam, the man. Woman is created later. As Tribble (1978) notes, first means superior and later means inferior or subordinate. Similar to other gender pairs, such as man and woman, male and female, he and she, husband and wife, boys and girls, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, etc., the ordering of Adam-Eve reflects a sexist basis. It implies that Adam is primary and normative, whereas Eve is an adjunct, less important, perhaps even deviant. More noticeably, the woman is created for the sake of the man. The male God creates a woman only because Adam cannot find a "suitable helper" (*Genesis* 2:20). She is a helpmate to cure man's loneliness. Such male-centredness becomes more apparent when it is described that Eve, the first woman, is only a derivative made from Adam's rib, whereas Adam is made from the breath of God. Because of the deficiency, women are also said to be initially flawed in their creation. In *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486)¹ it is said that:

It should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man (Cited in Norris 1998: 327).

Although the book was disowned by the church, and the claim of the bent rib and the initial flaw is now considered a heresy, the notion of woman being taken out of the man still deprives women of an autonomous existence (Abraham 2002). This male-biased view is also in line with Aristotle's infamous view on women, which contributes to the notion that women are deformed, incomplete, unfinished men. Seeing Eve as a derivative in his possession, Adam has the power to name her after him, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my

¹ The *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), or the "Hammer of the Witches" in English, written by a German Catholic clergyman called Heinrich Kramer, is a medieval text of sheer superstition and misogyny. Yet in the 15th century this infamous witch-hunt manual was taken seriously as "a guide for civil and ecclesiastical authorities to the successful detection and prosecution of witches" (Broedel 2003: 4).

flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’², for she was taken out of man” (*Genesis* 2:23). Later on, he also gives her a name – ‘Eve’, meaning “the mother of all living” (*Genesis* 3:20). With the name, she is assigned the traditional sex-role by Adam.

In *His Dark Materials*, however, such male-centeredness does not occur. As Eve, Lyra Belacqua is never portrayed as inferior or subordinate. Firstly, instead of being the last to be mentioned, Lyra and her daemon are the first to appear in the first book. Then, as the story develops, it becomes increasingly apparent to the readers that the trilogy is not about Adam, but Lyra, the new Eve, and her adventurous journey. The whole plot of *Northern Lights* (1995) revolves around Lyra, with her being the most important and significant protagonist of the series. Through different characters, Pullman highlights the importance of Lyra and her role as the new Eve. In *Northern Lights* (1995), for instance, Serafina the witch foretells how and why Lyra matters so much to them and their worlds:

There is a curious prophecy about this child: she is destined to bring about the end of destiny. But she must do so without knowing what she is doing, as if it were her nature and not her destiny to do it. If she’s told what she must do, it will all fail; death will sweep through all the worlds; it will be the triumph of despair, for ever (1995: 310).

Apparently, the new Eve and the importance of her free will are addressed as primal concerns. Then, in *The Subtle Knife* (1997), Lena Feldt, the witch, emphasizes the notion of Lyra-as-Eve again. It is prophesized that Lyra “will be the mother – she will be life – mother – she will disobey” (328). Lyra is named “Eve! Mother of all! Eve, again! Mother Eve!” (1997: 328). In *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), the final episode, Fra Pavel, the representative and alethiometrist of the Consistorial Court of Discipline, also emphasizes that Lyra is the new Eve:

The child...is in the position of Eve, the wife of Adam, the mother of us all, and the cause of all sin...if it comes about that the child is tempted, as Eve was, then she is likely to fall (2000: 71).

The new Eve is described as the sole person who makes the decision of going against the evil church, rescuing kidnapped children, and tricking the powerful Ice Bear King. Interestingly, while Eve becomes the centre of attention, Adam, or the idea of Will Parry as the ‘Father of all’, is hardly mentioned in the books. As the male protagonist Will only joins Lyra in the second book, *The Subtle Knife* (1997), after Lyra has experienced a lot of dangerous adventures on her own. Reversing the conventional heroic quest pattern Will plays the secondary role of being an assistant, bodyguard and companion of Lyra, the heroine.

As Lyra’s assistant Will plays the atypical role of a domestic helper. He does the cooking, cleans the working surfaces in the kitchen, washes the floor, empties the rubbish into the bin, and teaches Lyra how to do domestic work and take good care of herself. In the second episode Will makes an omelette for Lyra, who has not had a proper meal for days because she thinks only “servants do the cooking” (1997: 24). He also shows Lyra how to open a tin with a can-opener. After supper he asks Lyra to wash the dishes and tidy up. When Lyra refuses to do so, like a mother he nags her about her responsibility of taking care of the place:

We’ve got to eat, so we’ll eat what’s here, but we’ll tidy up afterwards and keep the place clean, because we ought to. You wash these dishes. We’ve got to treat this place right (28).

² The derivation occurs in the most common Bible translations in English, including the King James Version. However, the derivation cannot be shown in other languages such as Chinese.

Yet Lyra does not belong to the domestic sphere. She has no experience in doing the washing up. She does not know that to clean oily cooking utensils washing-up liquid is needed. She only manages to complete the task by trial and error. Besides domestic chores Will also teaches Lyra the need to take care of herself. Lyra, who is boyish and unkempt, is spoiled and indulged. She does not know how to wash her hair properly. Body care and hairstyling are done by her servant, and she never needs to do it herself, she explains. Seeing that Lyra has not washed herself for days, Will plays the part of a nurturer. He patiently reminds Lyra to take care of her personal hygiene, "...the first thing is you better wash yourself. You need to look clean...go and wash your hair for a start. There's some shampoo in the bathroom" (64). Compared to Lyra, who is incompetent in handling domestic chores, Will is definitely a keener housekeeper and carer. The ideological notion of women being 'the angel of the house' is broken, satirized and inverted. Readers are shown that the domestic sphere, a sphere that is often thought to be "more or less defined by the predominance in it of biological reproduction and motherhood, of emotional ties and kin relations" (Lechte 2001: 194) is not necessarily the exclusive province of women. A male, like Will, can be more nurturing than a female. The female has to learn how to take care of the household and hygiene from the male instead. Likewise, a female, like Lyra, can be more powerful, successful and influential than any male in the public sphere. Gender roles are not ordained by nature. The association between women and the private, domestic sphere is only a myth.

In brief, Lyra, the new Eve in Pullman's re-version, turns the gender stereotypes of the Biblical text upside down. In *Genesis* Adam was the first human created by God. He was also the first human character mentioned in the text; on the contrary, in Pullman's trilogy the new Eve is the first and foremost character to be introduced to the readers. In the *Holy Bible* Eve is the derivative, subordinate other who is tied to her natural passions and desires; now, in Pullman's version, she demonstrates that she is a person who strives for reason, justice, autonomy and freedom. Better still, the new Eve is no longer the "suitable helper" (*Genesis* 2:20) of man. In Pullman's rewriting, she transgresses traditional gender borders and becomes the most significant protagonist.

In the next section I will discuss how Pullman's rewriting allows Eve to be transformed from an immoral, faithless ensnarer into a courageous follower of knowledge and truth.

In the Fall: Sin and Shame Glorified

In the story of the Garden of Eden Eve is linked to moral weakness (McKenzie, 1954). Both Adam and Eve are well-informed of God's command, namely "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die" (*Genesis* 3: 3). The crafty serpent picks the "weaker person" (Foh 1999: 393). Enticed by the serpent, Eve takes the forbidden fruit, eats it and disobeys God. Afterwards, she "usurp[s] her husband's place by leading him into sin". She "entice[s] or seduce[s] Adam into sin" (ibid), causing the wrath of God and finally the Fall of Man. The impact of this negative portrayal of Eve has been so deep and powerful that over the millennia, according to Daly (1973), Eve has been continually considered as the universal woman and as the incarnation of evil. The instructions on worship in 1 *Timothy* 2: 11 – 14 is a good example that illustrates the blaming of Eve and all women:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed

first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

Trible (1999) comments that “the Women’s Liberation Movement is hostile to the Bible” and feminists “read to reject” (431). From a critical perspective, however, the notions of male supremacy and female subordination legitimated before the Fall, as well as the negative portrayal of the female in the Fall, do need to be re-read and rewritten. Based on the pre-text, Pullman rewrites the Fall and unfixes the gender role demarcation. In *His Dark Materials* God, the creator, is not mentioned. Instead, a false, self-proclaimed deity is introduced. The trilogy makes it clear that the false deity did not create the world and everyone. He is merely the oldest among all conscious beings. In chapter 2 of *The Amber Spyglass* (2000) Balthamos the angel explains:

The Authority, God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty – those were all names he gave himself. He was never the creator. He was an angel like ourselves...He told those who came after him that he had created them, but it was a lie (33).

Like a dictator the oldest angel demands that all others worship and obey him as the “Authority”. The Fall, in this light, is interpreted as a chance to overthrow a false deity.

Also, Eve’s personal consciousness, free will, desire for knowledge, truth, and justice, as well as her disobedience to her parents and the church are not punished, but celebrated. Readers are invited to witness Lyra’s growth and maturation. She continues to grow into a wiser, stronger, and better person. For instance, at the beginning of the first book, *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra is simple-minded and she tends to pass judgment on people just by looking at their physical appearances. She regards female scholars with disdain because they look dull and unattractive. She thinks that those women are “poor things” (67) who “could not be taken more seriously than animals dressed up and acting a play” (ibid). She goes so far as to describe the female scholars as “dowdy” (71) and says they “smelt of cabbage and mothballs” (ibid). Contrastively, she looks up to, and thinks highly of, Mrs Coulter, just because the woman looks beautiful and classy. As the trilogy unfolds, however, Lyra learns from her experience, gradually becoming more mature in her reasoning. Shocked by the fact that Mrs Coulter is in charge of the horrible guillotine for children and their daemons (souls), Lyra realizes that Mrs Coulter is a “wicked liar” (285). She reflects on her own superficiality and wonders how she could be so blind as to find “this woman... so fascinating and clever” (286).

Lyra’s level of moral reasoning also escalates at a dramatic speed as the story develops. According to Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral reasoning development (1981, 1984), a person will normally go through three different levels of moral reasoning before s/he becomes fully mature in his / her cognitive moral development. First of all, a person will enter “the pre-conventional level” (Jarvis et al 2003: 35). At this level reasoning is based on the consequences of his / her actions. Like a child, a typical pre-conventional moral reasoner will only stick to rules to avoid punishment. Although s/he may be aware of other people’s interests, his / her primary concern is always his / her personal needs and interests. Then, as the person continues to grow in his / her cognitive moral development, s/he will reach “the conventional level” (ibid). At this level, laws, social norms and the expectations of others are taken into account. To a person at this level what is ‘good’ and ‘right’ means what pleases and is approved of by others, especially authority figures. Finally, at the highest level, i.e. “the

postconventional level” (ibid), reasoning is a matter of individual conscience and personal principles, which are not defined by laws or social norms. People operating at this moral level realize that judgments are based on abstract concepts such as justice, equality, human dignity, etc. It is understood that there are universal ethical principles which all societies should agree to. To postconventional moral reasoners the highest value should be placed on universal ethical principles. Even when they are in conflict with laws or any authority figures worshipped by the majority, one should still stick to one’s conscience and ethical principles, stand up for the greater good, and fight for the welfare of all.

With regard to Kohlberg’s ideas of moral reasoning, at the start of the series Lyra, like all children, only shows the most primitive form of morality:

She is self-centered and egocentric. She does whatever she finds to be fun, and is only obedient so that she can avoid being punished. She is not concerned about how her actions affect others (Dolgin 2005: 75).

For instance, Lyra plays a trick on some dead scholars by switching around the daemon-coins in the dead scholars’ skulls. The daemon-coins “shows its owner’s lifetime companion” (1995: 50) and it is improper to disturb the tombs and coffins of the dead just for fun. Pantalaimon, her daemon, is upset by her tricks. He becomes so agitated that he flies up and down, utters shrill cries, and flaps his wings in her face. Still, Lyra takes no notice. She merely restores the daemon-coins to their rightful places and says sorry to the skulls when the angry ghosts of the dead scholars haunt her at night. Simply put, this corresponds to Kohlberg’s pre-conventional level (Dolgin 2005). Interestingly, as Lyra grows older and gets over the primitive stage, she apparently skips the next level, i.e. the conventional moral reasoning level, entirely and leaps into the final, highest level: postconventional moral reasoning. The headstrong protagonist does not care about what others think of her. She remains indifferent to others’ expectations. Both she and Pan would feel disgusted if she had to pretend to be a “universal pet” that is always polite, “light-hearted and charming” (1995: 88). She does not desire other people’s approval for her actions, either. Nor is she concerned with following conventional rules. The advice and warnings of authority figures such as her parents and the Church have no effect on her. She only follows the truth, i.e. what she reads from the golden compass. She does what she believes is right, even when it is contradictory and puts her life at risk. In short, the moral weakness of Eve is replaced by the adolescent maturational change and cognitive moral development of Lyra. Her constant urge for self-reinvention and improvement has gained her glory, victory, friendship, respect and honour.

Pullman’s re-version empowers the female protagonist with the strength to resist hierarchical power, but it was considered by some as promoting atheist messages. On 9th October, 2007 a U.S.-based Catholic league criticized Pullman for his attempt to “denigrate Christianity” and promote “atheism for kids” (*Catholic League* 2007). They then called for a boycott campaign of the movie version. Similarly, shortly after the release of the movie, an editorial was published in the Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano*, in which the movie adaptation was denounced as godless and the “most anti-Christmas film possible” (Owen 16 January 2008, *Times Online*).

Irrespective of whether the books contain elements of anti-Catholicism, most of the critics, although having different positions on the issue, agree that the representation of the new Eve signifies a completely different set of gender ideologies. In the Biblical version Eve is portrayed as weak in mind, unreliable, untrustworthy, faithless, greedy and insatiable. She

eats the forbidden fruit because she is tempted and deceived. At the time she picks the fruit she knows very well that she is sinning against God. Still, to obtain knowledge, she “t[akes] some and [eats] it” (*Genesis* 3: 6). Yet, in *His Dark Materials*, the story does not start with greed, temptation or deception. At the beginning Lyra knows nothing about ‘the knowledge of good and evil’, the forbidden fruit, or the Authority’s commandment. She starts her dangerous and toilsome journey to the icy wasteland only because she vows to rescue her missing best friend, Roger, as well as other kidnapped children. To save others Lyra selflessly risks her own life.

In chapter 16 of the *Northern Lights* Lyra almost has her daemon (her soul) removed by a silver guillotine when undergoing the mission of saving children from the Gobblers. Similarly, to find Roger and set the dead free, Lyra risks Pan’s life, her dearest daemon’s life. In chapter 21 of *The Amber Spyglass* Lyra needs to go into the land of the dead to find Roger. She is warned that to do so she will have to separate from her soul, “Your daemon vanishes into the air, and you vanish under the ground” (2000: 282). Nonetheless, Lyra sets her mind to do “what’s proper” (281):

...I feel sad and wicked and sorry about my friend Roger...it’s a torment and sorrow to me that I never said goodbye to my friend Roger, and I want to say sorry and make it as good as I can...if I have to die to do what’s proper, then I will, and be happy while I do. (280 - 281)

To find Roger, Lyra separates from her “heart’s companion” (296) and continues her journey to the land of the dead. Pullman describes in detail how Lyra suffers the heart-tearing agony and anguish of leaving Pan:

Will could hardly watch. Lyra was doing the cruelest thing she had ever done, hating herself, hating the deed, suffering for Pan and with Pan and because of Pan, trying to put him down on the cold path, disengaging his cat-claws from her clothes, weeping, weeping. Will closed his ears: the sound was too unhappy to hear. Time after time she pushed her daemon away, and still he cried and tried to cling (298).

In an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald* Pullman said that his “books are about killing God” (2003). Intriguingly, in the scene mentioned above, Lyra, the new Eve, becomes a Christ-like figure who beautifully reaffirms Christian virtues such as love, courage and self-sacrifice. In favour of truth and rightness she suffers great pain to bring hope, freedom and happiness to others. Will witnesses the whole ordeal. Unlike Adam in the Biblical text, who hides when trouble comes, Will admires Lyra for her courage, stands by her and feels the pain with her, “he admired her honesty and her courage at the same time as he was wretched with the shock of their [Lyra and Pan’s] parting” (298).

Apart from manifesting Christ-like virtues Lyra also subverts the negative perception of Eve as “the first temptress”, “a liar in nature” and “responsible for the widespread female tendency to dupe and lie” (Norris 1998: 327).

In chapter 23 of *The Amber Spyglass* Lyra saves the ghosts in the land of the dead and makes friends with the harpies by telling the truth. She nourishes the ghosts and harpies, and brings them hope and joy with true stories of her life and true things about the world. It is the truth, not lies and fantasies that empowers Lyra. When she speaks the truth the audience listens with passion:

As well as the ghosts, silent all around, and her companions, close and living, there was another audience too; because the branches of the tree were clustered with those dark bird-forms, their women's faces gazing down at her, solemn and spellbound (331).

The harpies stop their mocking and attacks on hearing the truth from Lyra. In exchange for Lyra's story they "take the travellers and their knife to a part of the land of the dead where the upper world was close" (334). The bird-forms are also willing to make a treaty with the ghosts – when the ghosts tell them the true stories of the world, the harpies will guide them faithfully "from the landing-place by the lake all the way through the land of the dead to the new opening out into the world" (334).

Deception, temptation and betrayal do not occur at the critical moment of the Fall either. Firstly, Lyra is neither tempted nor deceived. The so-called encounter with the serpent is just a sharing with Mary Malone, the physicist and former nun who talks about her true feelings of love and how she left the Church. As Mary shares her thoughts she addresses both Lyra and Will. In other words, Mary, who is supposed to be the serpent in the re-version, treats both protagonists as equals. She does not pick and persuade the one with a 'weaker mind'.

Then, at the moment when Lyra and Will 'taste the forbidden fruit', both of them are described as ignorant of their roles as Eve and Adam. They are not torn between the options of obeying God and obtaining the knowledge of good and evil, as Adam and Eve are in *Genesis*. The Eden story in Pullman's text is not about the human misuse of moral freedom and inherited guilt. Instead, it is about coming of age and the awakening of sexuality. As shown in the excerpt below, the protagonists fall in love and enjoy the moment as all lovers do:

Then Lyra took one of those little red fruits. With a fast-beating heart, she turned to him and said, "Will..."

And she lifted the fruit gently to his mouth.

She could see from his eyes that he knew at once what she meant, and that he was too joyful to speak. Her fingers were still at his lips, and he felt them tremble, and he put his own hand up to hold hers there, and then neither of them could look; they were confused; they were brimming with happiness.

...their lips touched. Then before they knew how it happened, they were clinging together, blindly pressing their faces towards each other (2000: 491 - 492).

Lyra does not play the role of a deceitful, alluring seductress in Pullman's work. There are no tricks, plans or stratagems set beforehand. It just happens that the two teenagers fall in love and experience love for the first time. The love, passion and attraction between the lovers are real, sincere, natural and mutual.

Critics such as Russell (2005) suggest that Pullman's trilogy may have borrowed the notions of Gnostic Christianity, where the serpent in the *Book of Genesis* is worshipped as the bestower of knowledge, and that Eve's disobedience against God is viewed as an utterly necessary move for gaining wisdom. Indeed, like a rediscovery of the alternative Gnostic Eve, Lyra subverts the binary oppositions in the *Holy Bible* and transgresses the conventional gender role boundaries. She plays the Christ-like role and manifests Christian virtues such as love, self-sacrifice and devotion to the truth. The negative connotations of Eve in the Fall are also inverted. The Fall has become an allegory of the coming of age, and Lyra's Fall is

portrayed and celebrated as the key to the awakening of human wisdom. The gender stereotypes in the Biblical text are broken and subverted.

The consequence of the Fall: A Return of Life Spirit

In the *Holy Bible*, immediately after Adam and Eve have eaten the fruit, “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked” (*Genesis* 3: 7). They feel so afraid and ashamed that they hide and make coverings for themselves. As a punishment for their disobedience God curses Eve and all women, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (*Genesis* 3:16). For Adam, God gives him a life sentence of hard labour on the ground, “through painful toil will you eat of it all the days of your life” (*Genesis* 3:17).

Regarding the double punishment cast on Eve, a French medieval guidebook known as *The Goodman of Paris* (1393) explains that Eve is twice cursed because she sins twice. Eve’s first sin is her pride. She sets herself up to be like God. Accordingly, she is cast down into a position of subjection to her husband. Her second sin is the same as Adam’s – she eats the forbidden fruit, and thus her second penalty is the terrible pain of childbearing (Cited in Norris 1998). Though some contemporary scholars explain that in the *Bible* the Eden story is not meant to be an explanation for evil (Phipps 1989), sexist implications remain influential in Christian belief, as well as in our mainstream culture. To this day fundamental Christians still believe that women are the first in the order of sin, women are more sinful, and that they are more susceptible to and responsible for evil, etc.

Picking up this motif, Pullman reconfigures the consequences and implications of the Fall. In *The Amber Spyglass* (2000) sin, guilt and punishment after the Fall are replaced by serenity, universal balance and self-sacrifice. In chapter 35, after Lyra and Will eat the fruit and kiss each other, “around them there was nothing but silence, as if the world were holding its breath” (492). Shortly afterwards, Atal (a peaceful and happy creature created by Pullman) feels the difference in the air. When Mary Malone looks up to the sky with her spyglass she finds that the Dust-flood has stopped and the Dust-stream is returning:

The terrible flood of Dust in the sky had stopped flowing...it was in perpetual movement, but it wasn't flowing away anymore. In fact, if anything, it was falling like snow-flakes...The Dust pouring out of the stars had found a living home again, and these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love, were the cause of it all (496 - 497).

Because of the Fall, Dust, the life spirit returns and nourishes long-starved Nature. For that, Lyra and Will feel no shame or guilt. Instead, they feel like they are “melting with love” (509). Their time together is saturated with love and sweetness. As Pullman (2000) puts it, “they looked dazed, as if some happy accident had robbed them of their wits...They talked, they bathed, they ate, they kissed, they lay in a trance of happiness” (ibid). In the re-version, Lyra, the new Eve, plays the role of the mother of all living not by giving birth, but by re-diverting the flow of life spirit into the universe.

What is remarkable is that Pullman’s re-version does not conclude with a blissful ending. Towards the end of *The Amber Spyglass* Kirjava (Will Parry’s daemon) and Pan (Lyra

Belacqua's daemon) reveal that Dust leaks out into nothingness whenever an opening is made between the worlds. Worse still, every time they open a window with the Subtle Knife a Spectre that feeds on Dust and daemons is made, "It's like a little bit of the abyss that floats out and enters the world" (515). To restore stability and bring ultimate peace to the worlds Lyra and Will must close every single opening and destroy the Subtle Knife. Kirjava suggests that she and Will can leave their world to stay in Lyra's world forever, or that Lyra and Pan can leave theirs and go to Will's world. However, this is not a good idea because no one can leave his / her world for more than ten years. A person will "get sick and ill and fade away and then die" (516) when staying in a different world for ten years, like Will's father. The dilemma gives the protagonists great pain.

He [Will] thought she [Lyra] would die of her grief there and then. She flung herself into his arms and sobbed, clinging passionately to his shoulders, pressing her nails into his back and her face into his neck, and all he could hear was, "No-no-no..." (513).

For a moment Will is tempted by the selfish notion of secretly opening a window between his world and Lyra's, where "they could go through whenever they chose, and live for a while in each other's worlds" (521). His idea is rejected immediately by Lyra. In spite of her own suffering, Lyra shakes her head and says "No, we can't" to Will. She insists and reminds Will that they have to follow what is genuinely right. In the end Lyra and Will act in favour of ultimate universal balance and the welfare of all. With broken hearts they close all windows and separate forever. They sacrifice their personal happiness and suffer intolerable loss, rage and despair.

Conclusion

To sum up, in this paper I explored the representations of Lyra Belacqua, the female protagonist in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000). I argued that through the portrayal of Lyra, the new and perfected Eve, gender stereotypes in the *Holy Bible* are turned upside down. Traditional gender borders are transgressed and unfixed.

In the Myth of the Fall in *Genesis* the narrative is a traditional, patriarchal voice that violently dominates the Biblical text, setting up a series of hierarchical oppositions: 'Man' and 'woman' are distinguished from one another. 'Man' is considered primary, while 'woman' is relegated to a mere derivative, supplementary, and inferior position. In the Bible, Eve, the mother of all humans, has no autonomous existence of her own. She comes into the world only because Adam tells God that he is lonely and needs a partner. Compared to Adam she is also the weaker sex, and is deceived and tempted by the serpent. In brief, the binary differentiation in the Biblical text reduces and pigeon-holes 'woman' as a category that is different from the category of 'man'. In differing and classifying male and female, masculine and feminine, what is originally fluid, free-floating and flexible in 'women' (as well as in 'men') is oppressed, controlled and reduced to something essential and definable in *Genesis*.

Challenging the gender relations as set in *Genesis* Philip Pullman subverts the traditional gender roles and stereotypes before the Fall, in the Fall, and after the Fall of Man. Instead of portraying Lyra, the new Eve, as the subordinate, inferior other, Pullman makes Lyra the first autonomous being. She is now the most significant protagonist, whereas Will (the new Adam) becomes her caring male helper who is keen on doing domestic chores. More significantly, rather than playing the role of a faithless, untrustworthy seductress, Lyra shows

a high level of moral reasoning and self-discipline. For the welfare of all, she restrains Will and herself from the temptation that comes up in Will's mind. Christ-like virtues, such as self-sacrifice, devotion to friendship, and truth become her attributes. In the land of the dead the fearless Lyra nourishes the ghosts and harpies with true stories of her life and true things about the world. In times of danger and need she selflessly risks her life, sacrifices her dearest daemon, and then gives up the chance of staying with Will in order to rescue her friend, liberate the ghosts, and stop Dust (the life force) from leaking out into emptiness. As the mother of all living she re-diverts and restores the flow of life spirit in the worlds, bringing hope and energy back to all. Though controversial, Pullman's *His Dark Materials* crosses conventional gender borders. It can be read as a feminist rewriting of the *Book of Genesis*.

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