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THE GEOGRAPHY OF SHADOWS: SOULS AND CITIES

IN P. PULLMAN’S *HIS DARK MATERIALS*

The soul is an elusive thing, and anyone who wants to describe it must do so with metaphors, painting it in a picture of words. The metaphors one chooses for this task will reflect the aspects one is most eager to promote of what it is to be a person, a living, breathing, thinking presence in the world. Popularly, the soul is often pictured as a little fellow inside one’s head, a homunculus with whom one is in constant communication. Such a picture lends color to the idea that to be a sentient being is to be in a condition of inner dialogue with oneself, reasoning things out, talking things over, and perhaps also being guided by one’s conscience, an inner voice heard only by oneself. Notice that the soul so portrayed is not merely a “special” friend, but an entirely private one, and other metaphors for the soul emphasize that element of privacy, even at the expense of the “inner conversant.”

This is especially the case with the topological metaphor of the soul as a thing lying within the walls of one’s body, inhabiting the body and reigning over it—a charioteer, a rider. We are encouraged by such metaphors to think that human beings have an inner and an outer: the inner self is what we know in our hearts, while the outer self is that public appearance of ourselves we project for the benefit or misdirection of others. A geography of inside and outside, of walls and boundaries, is the expression in metaphor of a conception of human beings as creatures whose essence is the capacity for deceit and self-deception. Can we tear down the walls of this defamatory self-conception, this portrayal of the natural condition of persons as one of hiding? Can we replace it with new metaphors for the human soul, and in doing so breathe new life into our sense of our place in the world in which we live? With its rich fictional menagerie of angels and ghosts, daemons, witches, and specters, talking bears and impersonal but sentient matter, Philip Pullman’s *His* *Dark Materials* invites us to do just that.1

**I**

The city of Oxford is a city of high walls: stone boundaries that separate off the cloistered seclusion of college lawns and courtyards from a bustling outer network of narrow lanes, market stalls, and shops. Visiting Oxford for a short time, one is easily seduced into thinking that its heart beats inside the college walls, and that to be on the other side is to be severed from its soul. But look more closely, dwell longer, and one can discover more complex topologies in this unrepublic city. Lyra began her adventure scampering over the college walls, equally at home in the company of scholars and Gyptians, gownies and townies—but her journey’s end was the Botanic Garden, one of the few places that genuinely belongs to both, a place where the city is turned inside out. What transformation of the soul happened on the way?

We decided to go to Oxford in search of Pullman and his shed and, in the process, to rediscover the layout of an invisible city. We started our exploration where Lyra left off, at the gates of the Botanic Garden, following the eponymous Longwall Street as far as Jowett Walk, named after Plato’s famous English voice. Then doubling back and meandering, winding our way along Queen’s Lane, a dark and narrow passage skirting the perimeter of New College, before suddenly emerging in front of a ring of comic stone heads that surround the Sheldonian Theatre, their ghostly smirks frozen in time. Weaving like this in between and among the colleges, it struck us that we could not be more deeply within the city than this, and yet we were aware at the same time of being outside.

In other words, we saw a city folded into itself: “Folds within folds, corners and edges both containing and being contained; its inside was everywhere and its outside was everywhere else. The Clouded Mountain . . . manipulating space itself to enfold and stretch and layer it into galleries and terraces, chambers and colonnades and watch-towers of air and light and vapour*”* (*AS*, p. 415).2

Oxford, we reflected, is not a divided city in the same way that Berlin used to be, with a wall right down the middle. No, it is a city like the Clouded Mountain, involuted but still retaining an inner and an outer, a labyrinth in which one is never really sure whether one is on the inside or the outside of any given wall. Staring up at those stony-eyed gargoyle faces, we paused to interpret the metaphor.

Human beings are not like Berlin, sharply bifurcated into body and mind, external appearance and internal reality. Human beings are more like the involuted city we had begun to discover, still subject to a distinction between appearance and reality, fact and illusion, truth and deceit, innocence and experience—but it is now far more difficult, nay impossible, to tell which is which. A human being, we are now told, is a creature of crippling moral uncertainty, lacking in the ability to discriminate, unable to be certain of whether her actions are for the better or for the worse, her motives pure or corrupt. We remembered how hard it was for Lyra to know which *side* Lord Asriel was on, and whether

Mrs. Coulter was an angel or a devil.3 The picture of an involuted city represents the human beings as hopelessly morally ill equipped, not able to depend on themselves, desperately needing an external guide, an Authority.

We turned our backs on the figures carved in stone, and looked across Broad Street. The modest facade of Blackwell’s Bookshop confronted us, a building whose interior, we would later discover, was like the Tardis, Dr. Who’s time machine, expanding in an interior vastness unimaginable from the outside. But this was not the only curious topological feature of the bookshop. We noticed too that a small pub called the White Horse was quite literally embedded in it, surrounded on both sides, above and behind, but retaining its own distinct frontage and identity. Sitting inside this tiny pub symbiotically connected with Blackwell’s, we wondered if that is how it would be for buildings, if buildings had daemons as, in *His* *Dark Materials*, people do.4 The puzzling combination of dependence and independence was there, the distinct but inseparable occupancies of space. What metaphorical resources would this provide for thinking about ourselves as human beings? What aspects of our personhood would it bring to the fore?

The radical distinction between inner and outer, between private and public, is now largely dissolved—that part of one’s own nature which is one’s daemon can be seen and touched by others, it knows things thatone does not know; separation from one’s daemon is a real possibility, if a deadly one. One’s daemon also encourages one toward wisdom—it is a good part of oneself. As we sat there, and tried to remember everything that Pullman had said about daemons, it all seemed to be telling us that our own goodness or virtue (even if that is a golden monkey’s “virtue”) is a part, but a distinct part, of our nature; and also that it is not and cannot be hidden from others. The human condition, according to this new view, is neither one of concealment and deceit, nor one of moral confusion and darkness; rather, we are self-reliant creatures with a tangible core of goodness. Lyra, once a liar, had learned to tell the truth; this was the self-transformation she underwent, and with it, her relationship with the daemon changed: while still remaining external, Pantalaimon assumed for her a fixed form.5 But can a person really stand in an external relationship with a part of themselves without becoming schizophrenic? And even if possible, wouldn’t the special character of that relationship make intimacy with others more difficult or less necessary? In the ever-rewarding company of a shadow, would we not tend toward solitude?

Reluctantly leaving the tangible and nourishing soul of Blackwell’s bookshop, we again wandered the Oxford streets, in search both of Pullman and of answers to our questions. Would we find that Pullman’s shed at the bottom of his garden, rather more separated from its house than the pub from the bookshop, was a kind of witch’s daemon, and that

Pullman himself, writing away inside the shed (as it is believed), was its inner voice, a daemon within a daemon? Perhaps in this recursive fractal geometry of self lay the solution to the riddle. A soul’s shape repeats itself, and finds echoes of itself in every nook and cranny of the world it inhabits. “I am my world,” said Wittgenstein. As human beings, we live in symbiotic isomorphism with not only some one thing, but with everything that is external to us. The world is my shadow, even as I am the shadow of the world. Lyra and Will could not leave their respective worlds, any more than they could leave their respective daemons: the first is the core of one’s being, the second the core of one’s worth.

**II**

In our search for Pullman’s shed, which in our imagination had become the vortex of an intentional universe, the echoes of *His Dark* *Materials* seemed to haunt us. Socrates, we remembered, never (save at times of war) stepped outside the walls of his native Athens, and thisbecause Athens was for him, as it was probably for most of his fellow citizens, the center of the world. In a sense, to be in the center of a world is like traversing this world all at once, especially since, as Plato wills Socrates to claim in the *Republic*, there is a desirable and due symmetry to be revealed or restored between the soul of a person and the soul of the ideal city. Lyra, Will, Mary, and others embarked on a long journey searching for answers—only to return to Oxford, the heart of their universe, even if this meant that part of their own hearts had to be left behind.

By now we had reached Carfax, the crossroads at the heart of Oxford.

Being at the center of the city, of the world, of one’s own self, places the person “inside” each of these spheres and at the same time, therefore, at a distance from all the things that surround the center. The surroundings are nothing other than the multiple layers and furnishings of reality, or at least of what reality appears to be in our ordinary experience of the world. Things, happenings, and actions, everyday preoccupations and distractions, are kept at a distance. Like the crossbar holding a marionette’s strings, which, though at a remove from the puppet itself, hosts its soul-center, its principle of movement and life, so too the soul, though absent, is immediately present all the more. Thus, it is from this center that one is able to see more clearly, to make sense of the waxing and waning of the fabric of the world. Yet here, the center, the place wherefrom everything is lucid, is itself dark, like the other side of the mirror where shadows cast by things concentrate more densely. Is then the person who finds herself therein able only to see clearly, but not also to be seen? Can we see darkness, and have our own most intimate, most precious “darkness” shared by others? So it was for the Upanis≥adic sage, Yajñavalkya: “You can’t see the seer who does the seeing; you can’t hear the hearer who does the hearing; you can’t think of the thinker who does the thinking; and you can’t perceive the perceiver who does the perceiving. The self within all is this self of yours.”6

The soul, the very being of everything, is in that sense a shadow, which can be made visible by the intervention of an author (or an “authority”), be it the author of a book or of one’s own life, revealed in the story we tell about ourselves. Plato in the *Philebus* (38e) likens the soul to a book, thus underlining how our opinions about ourselves and the world are but inscribed images of an artist working within; the truth or falsehood of the concealed images reflects on the goodness or wickedness of ourselves. Doesn’t the otherwise “concealed” soul, whether absent or imaginary, play a game of hide-and-seek around that which we taketo be real? After all, the story begins when Lyra, hidden behind the armchair—and later in the wardrobe—of the forbidden Retiring Room in her college, by accident caught just enough of a glimpse of truth to make her an initiate, and a seeker of the mysteries that envelop it (*NL*, p. 3ff). Lyra and her companions, seekers all of truth, for the most part of their adventures strive to remain themselves hidden. Climbing up Carfax tower (like the panopticon, a former jail), we surveyed the whole of Oxford below, unable only to see the very tower itself, and unnoticed by those small figures below upon whom our gaze fell.

An absence is not a mere emptiness or vacuum, but is always the absence of something, or someone, a thing or a person, whose presence therefore makes itself felt, but in a different way from ordinary “presences.” This at least was the Platonic vision, which wished the Ideas, the metaphysical makeup of the world and of ourselves, to be that which our thoughts and our lives are of or about. An absence of this kind is like an imperfect pane of glass, which refracts, distorts, and colors what we see.

Although from our perspective in the here and now it is itself unseen, it makes itself present in the specific way in which it mediates our sight of that which either rests on its surface or lies hidden in its depths. And it is precisely in this sense that it makes no difference whether we talk about this absence in terms of (Northern) Lights or Shadows. But would it be possible for us to concentrate our gaze on the invisible and see the absent? Shifting the philosophical vocabulary, this would amount to seeing the Kantian “thing in itself,” the ever-transcendent and imaginary focus of being. Mary Malone, in her first attempts to see the Shadows through the amber spyglass, could only see “light rays split in two,” a doubled reflection, but could still feel and even more passionately long for their presence.7 And there is no presence more intolerable, more tantalizing, than the felt absence—the absence which in life’s game we strive to find and capture, while not by any means be found or tagged by “it.” Looking out at the entire city of Oxford from the tower, we were suddenly struck by the fact that only one thing was absent from our field of vision, and that was our *selves*. Could it be that in this search for answers, in this game of hide-and-seek, we had all the time been looking in the wrong place?

At first, this tension between presence and absence is introduced to mark the difference between Lyra’s and Will’s worlds. In Lyra’s world, something of a soul-nature, the daemons, are seen, and with them, or rather through them, is also seen something of the innate structures of consciousness: a widen spectrum of reality is available to Lyra andthe other inhabitants of her world. The metaphysical-turned-physical nurtures a certain aspect of our understanding, thus shedding new light on the unlit corners of our consciousness. In this sense, Lyra’s preindustrial world seems more stable, comforting, affectionate—these are the elements of which we instantly feel deprived as we leave behind the first volume to enter into Will’s world, setting the scene in the second.

His world, guided by strong will rather than embodied symbols, is more familiar to our present world. The world of supermarkets, buzzing traffic, and fizzy drinks, a world occupied mostly by enemies rather than friends, is a world one is more eager to abandon before it is too late; that is, before one becomes a zombie or a catatonic, like Will’s mother, or even a killer, just like Will himself (*SK*, pp. 1–13). On the effervescent clothing of the Coca Cola universe, the bubbles of technological advance and capitalistic certainty burst very easily when pierced by an inquisitive and restless mind. Surveying Oxford from Carfax tower, it seemed to us that both of these two worlds, the one charming and the other disenchanted, were present there, that they were orthogonal polarizations of the light of the real world. We looked north, along the length of Cornmarket Street, a brash temple to consumerism; then, swiveling our line of vision, we stared out east, down High Street and toward the cobbles of Merton Street and Magdalen College, a more pastoral, more protective place.

In order for the concealed daemons to be seen, for people to ground their beliefs in “soul,” to shape their lives accordingly and find consolation therein, a set of spiritual exercises needs to be practiced. With her “eyes half-closed,” and “holding a special kind of mind,” the eccentric Mary, herself belonging to Will’s Oxford, “had to hold on to her normal way of looking while simultaneously slipping into the trance-like open dreaming in which she could see the shadows. But now she had to hold both ways together, the everyday and the trance, just as you have to look in two dimensions at once to see the 3D pictures among the dots” (*AS*, p. 535).

We do wish to be able to see our soul and the soul of another, we do wish to see goodness and beauty, or as Plotinus would put it, “not to be left without a share in the best of visions” (“On Beauty,” I.6[1].7.30–34).

However, is Pullman’s decision to take the soul away from the center, to place it “out there” by giving it a tangible form, an effective way of achieving this? And again, doesn’t this run counter, in Kant’s words, to the “well-known scholastic maxim, which forbids us unnecessarily to augment the number of entities or principles”?8 When the world has beenmultiplied, we shall need a razor or a knife to cut through its new walls, and rejoin its parts into a single whole. To preserve the greatest possible unity of the world is not an idiosyncratic preference of philosophers and scientists alike: it is necessary not only for the intelligibility of the world but also of ourselves, since we rest in a microscopic-macroscopic relationship with the world.

And then, we wondered, doesn’t Pullman’s multiple universe, when viewed as a whole, resemble a universe that echoes itself? That is, a universe in which, since one cannot comprehend the subtle whisperings of truth, one starts shouting, only to hear one’s own words reflected back ever more tediously? This reminded us of the story of Echo and Narcissus in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Book III, 359–510). Echo is the Nymph who was punished by Juno for deceiving the Goddess with her endless stories; her punishment was to duplicate the last phrases of everything said. She fell in love with Narcissus, but he was already doomed to be in love only with himself. In a way, Echo, like Pullman’s voice, multiplies reality, offering us more to hear and thus more to experience as present and at present. In another way, however, this duplication makes reality much less than it is. How so? Because to echo another person is to conceal oneself. Echo makes her presence felt by repeating the voice of another, but it is precisely in this way that she remains always hidden, unapproachable, undiscovered; and the “other,” the object of attention or affection, hears but never listens. Everyone is hidden behind and lost among the echoes: to make part of the soul an external of oneself only hides it, rather than making it more visible both to others and to ourselves.

In the distance created between the inner and the outer planes of consciousness and our relations with others, one cannot help but feel this emptiness: a world multidimensional, but hollow, poor, deprived. One hears the echo of her own voice in the absence of and lack of immediacy with the other; and there, in this crowded-with-“dots,” yet empty, shapeless, space, lies untouched and untouchable the withered body of an Echo, or of a Narcissus who drowns in the waters while attempting to catch his own reflected image with which he is in love.

The same fate awaits the body of the universe, which cannot be experienced and loved as one with its soul. By allowing too much room for “knowledge” of the sort one might gain through the external senses, we take away from the space in which faith grows: faith in one’s own self and in another.

Echoes and shadows—we were struck once again by the correspondence between the topology of the city in which we were hiding and the structure of the soul we were seeking to discover. Our bird’s-eye view of the city from the top of its central tower allowed us to look directly and simultaneously into all its many colleges, each one with its porter’s lodge, square medieval courtyards, creeping wisteria, and bicycle sheds.

Did this reduplication, this echoing of the same layout again and again within a single city, add to or subtract from the city as a whole? Where is the unity in this collage of repeated forms? We started to feel queasy, as the city seemed to unravel and fall into fragments before our very eyes; trembling, we slowly descended and returned to the relative solidity of the ground, Mauni’s haunting question resounding in our ears: Of what, then, are we the moving shadows?9

**III**

Our lives are collections of all sorts. Part of the fun in living must have to do with the ways and the circumstances in which we acquire objects, images, thoughts, dreams; these are the decorations that furnish our private worlds. To create a world that is familiar to us is a very important and common practice, part of which involves nicknaming people, giving names to our toys and to our pets. Our “things” give identity to life and the world: both become our own. Then again in this way, reality, “our reality,” operates as a mirror that reflects an image of ourselves back to us: in retrospect or in reflection, our things confirm and complete our identity and make us feel secure and comforted. In this context, thinking of daemons means seeing myself as another (seeing myself as in the world out there), but it also means that I see the other as an image of my own self. Or, as Kipling notes in *Something* *of Myself*, to listen to the commands of his daemon, an inner voice inside his head, was “his first attempt to think in another man’s skin.”10

Whether visible or invisible, our daemon’s voice “speaks to us” more directly, more effectively, than any other voices. We tend to refer to this voice as our “conscience,” and it is in these terms that we understand today the function of one of the most popular daemons in the history of philosophy, Socrates’s. But this conscience is often personified: it assumes the faces of the people whom we love, respect, or fear. Would they approve of what I am doing, be surprised? Especially when we are children, the “daemon” takes many forms: it could be our parent, our best friend, our teacher, people we trust and look up to, people whose opinion matters to us. But as we grow older, or fall in love, this “voice” takes a much more definitive shape: it assumes first and foremost the image of our beloved. And in this sense, we talk about our beloved as if he or she were “our other half.” Aristophanes, in his famous speech in the *Symposium* (189c–193d), relates a story according to which humans were initially spherical beings with two sets of all bodily organs, including heads, stuck together. But human beings became too powerful, too proud and vain, and thus the gods decided to bisect them so that they would be weaker. According to this myth, the love that we experience for another is our innate desire to reunite with our tally and heal the wounds that the original split has caused.

For Pullman’s characters, we wondered, what would it mean to find their other halves? His human beings seem to be complete enough: they are wholes made up of “them” and their daemons (most often, but not always, of the opposite sex—rather as in Aristophanes’s story). And the love and intimacy they feel for their daemon can in no way compete with what they feel for another human being. Or else, even if we allow for Lyra’s feelings for Will to be of real love and real longing, doesn’t her relationship with her daemon create the ideal on which all other relationships should be modeled? To love another as if they were a part of you, to listen to them speak as if they were your daemon, exposes the human being to even greater danger. Thinking of Narcissus again, falling in love with an image of himself—being too familiar, too content with the patterns he could recognize as his own—made it impossible for him to take his eyes away from his image. Narcissus, it seems, was unable to see the other as “another,” as someone who does not belong to him but who retains a singular identity. Praja\pati spoke ironically when he told Indra that he could find his true self in a reflection: “Adorn yourself beautifully, dress well, and spruce yourself up, and then look into a pan of water. That is the self; that is the immortal; that is the one free from fear; that is brahman.” Seeing Indra depart contented, Praja\pati could only mock: “There he goes, without learning about the self, without discovering the self!” (Cha\ndogya Upanis≥ad 8.8.4; trans. Olivelle). In both cases, the search for oneself in one’s reflected image is a forlorn quest.

We shouldn’t wish to reduce the beloved to a ghost in our head, nor should we wish the world to be the figment of our imagination. It is only when we can recognize otherness, and appreciate that there is a whole wealth of reality out there which is not the extension of our own selves, that we can save ourselves from drowning in our own narratives, or becoming oblivious to voices that don’t resound in our ears. We need to preserve the mysteries of that which will always escape our understanding, that which will remain free and impossible for us to possess, but amply available for us to admire. Like an exquisite work of art, a painting or a sculpture—none of which, remarkably, features in any of these novels.

We had begun to feel uncomfortable in Pullman’s Oxford, in Pullman’s world, a world in which the threat of quite literally either losing oneself by becoming severed from one’s daemon, or losing the world by being lost in the multiple echoes of one’s self, seemed very real. The excited sense of exploration with which we had arrived was turning slowly into a feeling of claustrophobia and panic. We were suddenly eager to leave this labyrinth and return to a real city, a city with a messy, vibrant, hungry heart, with an Athenian forum—an agora*—*instead of a market, with

Delhi’s whirling Connaught Place instead of the sturdy Carfax tower*.* We hurried back to the station, comforting ourselves with the thought that we would soon be able to board our northbound train. As we passedthe racks of bicycles and groups of college students, we realized that,through this trilogy, we had followed the journey of two charactersfrom childhood to maturity. There are various ways of identifying thistransition: physical symptoms, the awakening of desires, the realizationof dreams, the experience of loss. But above all, this is a passage from astate of confusion to a state of wisdom, from a state of frail certaintiesto pregnant questions. Growing older, if one grows older well, bringswisdom. Characteristically, when Mary befriended the Mulefa and graduallyacquired the missing pieces in the puzzle, “the more she learned,the more difficult it became, as each new thing she found out suggesteda dozen questions, each leading to a different direction.”11

To speak thus of wisdom would seem rather a banal thought, but surprisingly this thought, or rather this ideal, no longer shines in our contemporary vocabulary. In our common understanding, growing older involves financial and professional success, fame, designer homes, and “settling down.” Reading Pullman’s novels helps make wisdom relevant again. Wisdom is what one would gain with the help of the philosophical tools: the alethiometer, the subtle knife, the spyglass.12 We practice not only on seeing patterns but also on interpreting them. We also learn how to cut through the patterns, try out new connections, new realities, new levels of being: we are not simple spectators of our world, but also its creators. And then we learn to look ahead, outside our own limitations: we project our gaze to past and future, to wherever things are really happening or have happened. In other words, where it matters. As we become wiser, living well in the here and now bestows significance on events whose meaning is still up for grabs, actions whose value is still in doubt.

Pullman in a sense has attempted to rewrite the history of the world from the beginning: his word became a knife as if in the hands of God. As Philo remarks in the *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*: “Word is the power that enables God to sever at will the whole succession of things material and immaterial whose natures appear to us to be knitted together and united.”13 The idea is repeated in *De Cherubim*, where logos is “a flaming sword” (Genesis 3:24). Maybe this enterprise is beyond our reach, too big a goal for human beings to set themselves: after all, the opening of passages between different worlds—just as the cutting off of daemons—leads to the destruction of meaning, to insanity. But still, imagining what it would be like if we were gods, even for a while, results in fertile metaphors to live by. And these metaphors, these “tools,” are not factual truths, but compasses necessary for reaching wisdom.

*His Dark Materials*, like any good metaphors, are valuable not only for what they “tell” us—that is, for what they succeed in doing—but also for their shortfalls. Where a metaphor fails is where a better one may be born, and in the process we do learn more about ourselves. Thinking through the daemon, as a metaphor of the attempt to situate the self out there in the world, had taught us to appreciate better why it is that we associate the self with unity and interiority. And we had found out something else. In our journey to Oxford, we did not find the Author, no sign of either Pullman or his shed, but we did find our way home just before nightfall, having also found out the most important thing of all: why it is that our real world, and not his imaginary one, was the lovelier place to be.

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**Notes**

1. *His Dark Materials* is a series of three novels—*Northern Lights* (Witney: Scholastic,

1995), hereafter abbreviated *NL*; *The Subtle Knife* (Witney: Scholastic, 1997), hereafter abbreviated *SK*; and *The Amber Spyglass* (Witney: Scholastic, 2000), hereafter abbreviated

*AS*—presenting the adventures of Lyra Silvertongue, or Belacqua, Will Parry, and other characters, as they travel through a multiple universe—of which Oxford seems to be at the very center—in their attempts to discover the truth and thus save themselves and theworld. The criticism of philosophical, religious, and scientific principles and beliefs are intertwined with the plot and fate of the characters, a fact that has made the novels both popular and controversial. Lyra is also the leading character in the shorter *Lyra’s Oxford* (New York: Knopf, 2003) and *Once Upon a Time in the North* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

2. The Clouded Mountain is the citadel of the Authority, the first angel made out of

Dust, that is, the mysterious sentient substance responsible for most of the cognitive or spiritual aspects of Pullman’s fictional universe.

3. Lord Asriel and Marisa Coulter are Lyra’s biological parents; they both play a crucial role in the development of the story line, but their true identity and motivation are for the most part opaque—as is Lyra’s identity and destiny.

4. A daemon is an animal manifestation of a person’s soul.

5. Pantalaimon, echoing the Christian Orthodox Saint Panteleimon, which means the “all compassionate” in Greek, first appears as a moth (*NL*, p. 3) and through a series of transformations becomes, toward the end of the trilogy, a pine-marten: through an act of true love, he acquires a permanent form. Neither Lyra’s nor Will’s daemon (Kirjava, a cat) “would change now, having felt a lover’s hands on them. These were their shapes for life: they would want no other” (*AS*, pp. 527–28).

6. Brh≥ ada\ranyaka Upanisa≥ d 3.5.2, *The Early Upanisa≥ ds*, trans. Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

7. See *AS*, p. 238ff. Mary Malone is a scientist whose aim is to see Dust; she is the creator of the amber spyglass, initially a device made from two reflective amber-colored lacquer sheets, treated with a special oil, which were later arranged at each end of a bamboo tube, resulting in something like a telescope (p. 287).

8. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn (New York: Dover

Publications, 2003), p. 365.

9. *Mauni: A Writer’s Writer*, trans. Laksmi Holmström (New Delhi: Katha, 1997), p. 48.

10. Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

1990), p. 122.

11. *AS*, p. 237. The Mulefa are sentient creatures inhabiting one of the parallel universes presented in the trilogy. They are first introduced in *AS*, “Mary Alone.”

12. Each novel is marked with the introduction of a symbolically heavily charged instrument: the alethiometer, a truth-measuring instrument resembling a compass; the subtle knife, a double-edged knife able to create passageways between worlds and to slice through any sort of matter; and the amber spyglass, a telescope with which one can see Dust. These can be used either as a key into the unraveling of the mysteries of the fictional universe or as a weapon, which, if landing in the wrong hands, could lead to the world’s destruction.

13. Philo, Heres 130, *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (1932; repr., Cambridge:

Harvard University Press, 1958).