

From Kings to Kingliness : Evolving Models of Holy Authority from Milton to Pullman

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From Kings to Kingliness: Evolving Models of Holy Authority from Milton to Pullman

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王者から王にふさわしい存在へ

——聖なる模範的権威者の、ミルトンからプルマンへの進化——

ケイト・ボウズ

拙論は、よろいをつけたクマ、パンサービョルネの王国が復活する理由が、作者フィリップ・プルマンとその文学に大きな影響を与えたジョン・ミルトンが強く共和制を尊重し、王制を蔑視したためであることを検証する。本論文では、神学面からアプローチし、旧約聖書から始めて、王権の起源を神に対するメタファーと見る。この考えは、初期の一神教の伝統にある神を聖なる戦士と見る考えとほぼ時を同じくして生じたものだ。キリスト教会が制度化されると、「王」すなわち「戦士」というメタファーが、政治には都合のよい模範へと広げられていった。その間、キリスト教会の窃盜的、鬭争的、支配的傾向は正当な非難を浴び続けてきた。イエスの伝統は「従来の政治」を直接、逆転するものであり、それはクマの闘いに見られると私は考える。プルマンの『黄金の羅針盤』に登場するクマの諸王は（王制の）権威者の中で最も極端な可能性のあるものをあらわしており、彼らの劇的な闘いの後には、聖書が人間たちに戻るように呼びかけている権威者の真の意味について、疑う余地は残っていない。

キーワード：諸王、権威者、プルマン

Why does Philip Pullman, the anti-authoritarian, church-dissenting, 'most dangerous'ⁱ writer in all Britain choose to have the Svalbard kingship restored in the first part of his trilogy, *The Golden Compass*? A similar question is often asked of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*: why does Milton, who publicly defended before all of Europe the beheading of Charles I, subsequently choose to portray God as a king in his epic poem? Since Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy acknowledges its debt to Milton's epic poem, the issue of kingship is an interesting study. For Milton, the political implications of kingdom elide with the theological, and over time much scholarly ink has flowed over

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the 'God-as-king' question. In *The Golden Compass*, the kings in question are polar bears (a nod perhaps to C.S. Lewis's animal-Christ figure, Aslan), and although Pullman offers nothing directly to suggest that the bear kings of his novel are representative divinities, it is clear that he illustrates in each king great forces of good and evil and pits them against one another in a battle to end all battles, in a chapter entitled '*À Outrance*' (to the death; or 'Mortal Combat'). This dramatic apex surely contains resonance of the Miltonic war in heaven. That the archetypal 'evil' king is overcome by good is purposeful and multilayered. As a children's story conforming to a mythic pattern of the triumph of the good, it is plain enough. However, readings which juxtapose *Paradise Lost* with *The Golden Compass* might recognize that both Pullman and Milton belong, as Bradley and Tate suggest, to a 'recognizably Judeo-Christian tradition of heresy and theological rewriting' (57). As such, they make deliberately challenging mis-readings of powerful figures in the face of a complacent elite. I shall trace the progression in *The Golden Compass* of the notion of kingship from the person of the (sitting) king, Iofur Raknison, whose monumental image towers over the humbled exiled would-be king, Iorek Byrnison. Iorek's ostracism has emptied and broken him, and made him, counterintuitively but truly, 'kingly' and, subversively perhaps, most likely to preside over the restoration of the kingdom. This kingdom, however, that he will lead, bears no resemblance to what has come before, and instead shows the kind of possibility of the mysterious kingdom that one might identify with the words and life of Jesus. Kingdom in both Milton and Pullman's narrative economies has nothing to do with the external governance performed by monarchy. Instead, the republican or commonwealth ideas are favoured.

There is a long history of kings in the Hebrew bible. The first appearance in the Hebrew scriptures of the word *mamlakah* (or kingdom) is not a reference to Yahweh, but to Nimrod, 'a mighty hunter before the Lord' (*King James Version*, Genesis 10:9) whose 'kingdom was Babel' (Gen. 10:10). After Nimrod's kingship, Yahweh is given the title *melekh* or king, but early biblical narratives offer ample evidence that conceiving of God in monarchical terms is a human custom, one that according to the Bible originated not with the people of the 'true' God, but with those peoples who worshiped the 'false' gods of the other nations. The model of kingship then flows from Man to God, not from God to Man, and represents not only a rebellion against God, but an adoption of ways foreign to the chosen people (Bryson 120). In fact to have a king is a sign of the corrupting influence of living among nations not in the service of Yahweh.

The roots of kingship are intricately entangled with the roots of place, specifically cities. To wit: Nimrod was the builder of multiple cities: Babel, Erech, Accad, Calneh, Ninevah, Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen. By contrast, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dwell in tents, each living as 'a stranger and a sojourner' (Genesis 23:4). Politically, kingship concerns itself with material and territorial expansion, by means of war and

colonization. Actually, the warrior pattern is central to the narrative of kingship. Bryson remarks that 'Both Marduk and Yahweh win their respective kingships by successfully playing the role of Divine Warrior: Marduk's victory is over Tiamat, while Yahweh's is over the pharaoh of Egypt' (121). The Divine Warrior pattern, however, like kingship itself, is a foreign import. Marduk is Nimrod's god, not the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Nevertheless, each deity's rise to power follows a similar pattern as Baruch Halpern explains: Yahweh 'rescued Israel from its foes, as the Divine Warrior rescued the world from Chaos; therefore [Yahweh] has gained kingship over Israel, as the Divine Warrior earned dominion over the cosmos' (qtd. in Bryson 121). It is thanks to the role of the Divine Warrior that Yahweh's kingship is established and universalized.

This rescue notwithstanding, the new life out of slavery in Egypt is not easy. The Book of Judges demonstrates the difficulties of violence, decay and the corrupting influences on God's people living among the nations. Under the circumstances, the urge to centralize power is a temptation too great to resist indefinitely. Though in the early part of Judges a refusal of kingship is considered virtuous (Judges 8: 22-23) a sign of a healthy and ongoing relationship with Yahweh, the influence of the surrounding nations soon takes root in Israelite soil and Yahweh becomes "king", assuming, unavoidably, a syncretic, corrupted image.ⁱⁱ Naturally enough, a centralized, king-based system of governance is instituted (1 Samuel:8), and soon after Saul is anointed the first king of Israel. Michael Bryson observes that, '[w]ith Israel's shift from a commonwealth . . . to human kingship, the practice of imagining Yahweh as a king becomes permanently entrenched' (123). The role of king has been enthusiastically adopted by tyrants the world over, ever since. Now Milton's epics can be seen as being devoted to the project of indictment and rejection of a God imagined in terms of military and monarchical power. For Milton, when God is conceived in terms of human kingship and the all-too-human desires for power and glory, God is scandalously and blasphemously imagined in such a way as to be nearly indistinguishable from the devil. 'The Father,' Bryson writes of the character in *Paradise Lost*, 'is not Milton's illustration of how God is, but Milton's scathing critique of how, all too often, God is imagined. . . . Milton writes to reimagine God' (116).

The kings of Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* are members of the Svalbard *panserbjorne*, "armoured bears", a tribe of warriors who, though they maintain mostly solitary lives, have a king. The king is called Iofur Raknison and he is described as a greedy, duplicitous impostor, certainly reminiscent of Nimrod whom Milton called, with skewering reference to Charles I, 'the first that hunted after faction' (*Eikonoklastes* 172). This Nimrod is given further iteration in Milton's portrait of God the Father in his *Paradise Lost* poem, and he is also brought to life by Philip Pullman in the character of Iofur Raknison. His opposite character is a bear called Iorek Byrnison who has committed a great sin against the community, by (accidentally) murdering a bear in

battle and as punishment has been exiled. Iofur and Iorek can, respectively, each be read as loosely based on the *Paradise Lost* characters of the Father and the Son.

Iofur Raknison, the sitting king, has assumed the throne under dubious circumstances, and demonstrates an impressive appetite for all that is corrupt and life-denying about power. Like Milton's God the Father, we can well imagine Iofur uttering words to this effect:

Nearly it now concerns us to be sure
Of our Omnipotence, and with what arms
We mean to hold what anciently we claim
Of deity or empire . . . (*Paradise Lost*, *PL* henceforth 5, 721-724)

Such words were used to express John Milton's disgust with the monarchy and its thieving, warring and imperial tendencies. Likewise, in *The Golden Compass*, the Svalbard kingdom is drawn to seem off balance with Iofur at the helm. He is ensconced in a massive and gaudy castle high in the Svalbard cliffs, that recalls in many ways the ill-fated buildings of the early scriptures, from the Babylonian tower to Solomon's temple. Buildings are used to great metaphoric effect in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, and Iofur's castle is no exception. It surely is modeled on Satan's castle, Pandemonium, 'the high capital of Satan and his peers' (*PL* 1, 756-7). As Stephen Blakemore has pithily remarked in his short essay on Pandemonium and Babel in *Paradise Lost*, 'In hell and earth, imitation is the tribute vice pays virtue' (142). Milton knew that evil can only imitate and parody goodness, and Pullman's portrait of Iofur Raknison offers us a full description of the vulnerabilities that are disguised, if only temporarily, by the accoutrements of power.

Lyra, the trilogy's questing heroine, has her first face-to-face encounter with the sitting king as a result of her being taken captive following an air-crash that leaves her lost and separated from her party. She is taken by bear-soldiers to the palace at the top of the cliffs, and it is by way of the palace that the king is introduced. His castle is a

vast building of stone . . . carved all over with representations of warfare, showing bears victorious and Skraelings surrendering, showing Tartars chained and slaving in the fire mines, showing zeppelins flying from all parts of the world bearing gifts and tributes to the king of the bears, Iofur Raknison. (325)

The connection drawn between place and character gives a depiction of this king as an imperial force: one who engages in war and exploitation for the enlargement and enrichment of his kingdom. The narrator lays on the irony describing Lyra's response: 'At least, that was what the bear sergeant told her the carvings showed. She had to take his word for it . . .' (325). The reason she has to go on trust is made clear when the next layer of the image is revealed: '. . . every projection and ledge on the deeply sculpted facade was occupied by gannets and skuas, which cawed and shrieked and wheeled constantly around overhead, and whose droppings had coated every part of

the building with thick smears of dirty white' (326). The sensory onslaught is powerful and only gets stronger as Lyra enters further into the castle where, in addition to unpleasant sights and sounds, 'repulsive' smells are added: 'rancid seal fat, dung, blood, refuse of every sort' (326). She, like the reader, is struck by a deepening sense of contradiction. All these symbols of the power of the king are 'filthy with the spatter of birds' but the 'bears seemed not to see the mess' (326). Lyra also notes how the armor of her captors was 'polished and gleaming, and they all wore plumes in their helmets' (326). This, too, strikes a false note when she reflects on and compares what she has learned of warrior bears from the noble and honest Iorek: 'he was more powerful, more graceful, and his armor was real armor, rust-colored, bloodstained, dented with combat, not elegant, enameled, and decorative like most of what she saw around her now' (326). Later, being shown into the inner chambers to await her actual audience with the king, she finds that

it was no cleaner here, and in fact the air was even harder to breathe than in the cell, because all the natural stinks had been overlaid by a heavy layer of cloying perfume. She was made to wait in a corridor, . . . and she had time to look around at the preposterous decoration: the walls were rich with gilt plasterwork, some of which was already peeling off or crumbling with damp, and the florid carpets were trodden with filth. (335)

Eventually she is shown in and she sees 'A blaze of light from half a dozen chandeliers, a crimson carpet . . . the faces of a dozen or more bears, . . . none in armor but each with some kind of decoration: a golden necklace, a headdress of purple feathers, a crimson sash' (335). There is no mistaking Pullman's scorn as these overblown scenes are gradually revealed, each more repulsive than the last.

John Milton inspires Philip Pullman's iconoclastic approach to the architectural loci of power, highlighting an important and biblically-sourced difference between the statesman, Iofur, and the sojourner, Iorek, focused around the notion of idolatry. Iofur stands for the human willfulness fundamental to kingship, analogous with Solomon and his eponymous temple. In Milton, the parallels between Pandemonium and Solomon's Temple are clear [see Book 12, 332-4]ⁱⁱⁱ. In *The Golden Compass*, Iofur's castle is clearly identified with Pandemonium. Solomon's temple is a place where, over time, stasis accumulates and idolatry begins inevitably to cling. Should the ark, the material artifact of God's promise, be enshrined or should it be free? Jesus and Milton would argue for the latter, and so would Pullman. Their anti-establishment attitudes are well-known. Joseph Lyle, analyzing architecture and idolatry in *Paradise Lost*, likewise argues in favor of the 'nomadic existence of the ark' and suggests that 'the freedom to wander like a cloud connotes majesty' (140). In fact, it is not too much of an imaginative stretch to connect enshrinement with imprisonment. Once the ark is immobilized, it is exposed to pollution and, as Lyle tenders, 'offenses can accumulate around it, growing

into an urban fabric from which the immobile holy site cannot escape . . . [because the] glory of enshrinement comes at the cost of liberty,' which he notes is the death-knell for holiness, since 'nothing can endure without the liberty to respond to historical change' (140). Does Pullman not also echo the several scholars who have identified St. Peter's with Pandemonium?^{iv} The perversion of power embodied in the palace causes confusion throughout Iofur's kingdom for these solitary, wandering bears. Through this exposition, Pullman drives home the point about the corruptibility of institutions, so very contrary to the revolutionary simplicity and freedom of early Christianity.

Iofur's greed and idolatry, his 'seeking after faction,' in the manner of Nimrod, make plain his vanities and thus his vulnerabilities. We learn that from Iorek: 'You cannot trick a bear . . . We see tricks and deceit as plain as arms and legs' (225, 226). But Pullman shows that Iofur has come so far away from his true nature in his pursuit of power and all its trappings that he falls for Lyra's trick, and this marks the beginning of his undoing. Iofur, in fact, spends so much of his reign doing all that he can to be other than what he is—erecting a castle, planning to open a university, replacing the traditional sky iron armor of the *panserbjorne* with more ornamental metals and even carrying around a stuffed doll resembling Mrs. Coulter—that his actions are reminiscent of many a postcolonial people, who, intoxicated by the very imperialism they sought to be liberated from, come to rule, are corrupted, and inflict havoc and oppression in similarly wicked ways that were the impetus of the original struggle for liberation. (*Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose.*) So intent is Iofur on replacing bear ways with human ways, that unsurprisingly, confusion reigns among his subjects. During Lyra's captivity, she obtains information about Iofur's 'difficult game' of playing both sides by doing what rivals Lord Asriel and Mrs. Coulter want. No one is allowed to mention Lord Asriel (who is getting all the scientific equipment he wants in his place of incarceration) because Iofur has accepted a charge from the shady Oblation Board headed by Mrs Coulter, with whom Iofur was 'besotted', to 'keep Lord Asriel out of the way' in exchange for 'all kinds of rewards' (332). Among her (false) promises was one 'that she'd get the Magisterium in Geneva to agree that [he] could be baptized as a Christian even though [he] hadn't got a dæmon . . .' (341-2).^v Iofur's desires and delusions of grandeur, wanting 'to be a human being, with a daemon of his own' (333) and his own deep divisions within himself, erode the armor of his dignity and the unassailable strength of an individual's inner virtue. Of his subjects, Lyra observes that, following their sovereign, they adopt fetish dolls, meant to represent dæmons, in an effort to 'curry favour . . . by imitating the fashion he'd begun' (345). She recognizes, too, that 'They weren't sure who who they were. They weren't like Iorek Byrnison, pure and certain and absolute; there was a constant pall of uncertainty hanging over them, as they watched one another and watched Iofur' (345).

Whereas Iofur Raknison, in power, does all he can to be other than what he is,

Iorek Byrnison, exiled in captivity, does all he can to forget what once he was: 'highborn . . . a prince . . . [who] if he had not committed a great crime, . . . would be the king of the bears by now' (316). In Pullman's re-imagining of the fall of humanity from grace, Iorek Byrnison is light to Iofur Ragnison's darkness. The author, however, inverts the values of their respective associations so that we see Iofur's traditional markers of success—riches, property, powerful 'friends', slaves, and prisoners—against Iorek Byrnison's brokenness, humiliation and failure, and this is a very powerful opposition which comes to reenact Milton's 'trial by what is contrary' (*Areopagitica*) and William Blake's well-known later reformulation from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, that 'without contraries is no progression' (l.7). Iorek is the wayfarer to Iofur's war-faring ways.

The majesty of the wayfarer is similar to those who feature in the stories of the Old Testament because the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived as strangers and sojourners where they found themselves at home, not geographically, but with God. Their liberation, founded on the covenant, is signaled by what looks like a tent-dwelling rootlessness and poverty, but amounts to empowering non-attachment (in what, today, might be more readily identified with a mystical sense) of being everywhere at home. A sense of not belonging in a place or among a people is a sign that something is amiss with regard to right relation with life or God (if those are not understood synonymously). There is a deep longing for safety and for what is familiar but as to the challenge of living on the margins and the radical trust that it demands, as the patriarchs did, from this we have shied away. Iorek's story then is instructional for reclaiming and recovering the inner strength and dignity to be true to this radical Christian calling to move away from the centres of power to its outskirts. Iorek's story begins as most liberators' stories do in the midst of crisis.

The reader first encounters Iorek Byrnison in a port town called Trollesund after dark at Einarsson's Bar, 'a crude concrete shed with a red neon sign flashing irregularly over the door and the sound of loud voices [coming] through the condensation-frosted windows.' In the 'dim yellow light' they see 'a vast pale form crouching upright and gnawing at a haunch of meat... hideous growling, crunching, sucking noises' emitted and the sight of his 'bloodstained muzzle and face, small malevolent black eyes, and dirty matted yellow fur' (179). Thus we are introduced to the broken, ostracised, usurped king of the Svalbard bears. He has been ejected from his home and his community for wrongdoing and is paying the price in humiliation. Farder Coram, a member of the 'gyptian party' traveling north to rescue abducted children with the novel's protagonist, Lyra, approaches Iorek with an offer of work to accompany them into the dangers of the far northern territory. Lyra is intrigued by the creature with whom she immediately experiences an intense sympathy. Iorek evokes 'a profound admiration and pity' (180) in Lyra who forms a number of impressions in their first encounter, undaunted by her awe of him. She admires his power, 'a power controlled by intelligence' (180) of an order quite different to what she knows of human intelligence,

which is informed and enlivened by the presence of the *dæmon* companion. Iorek, being an animal, has no *dæmon*. Lyra also senses his loneliness, a heroic motif that is deepened in the narrative which both recalls and foreshadows the loneliness that Lyra must endure to fulfill her prophetic destiny.

When Iorek speaks it is up on his hind legs in a show of might, and he speaks to the humans from 'on high.' His 'voice was so deep it seemed to shake the earth' and combined with 'the rank smell that came from his body' (180) the supplicants find themselves very nearly overwhelmed. Iorek appears to be in no hurry to accept the offer of employment offered him, even in response to Farder Coram's challenging observation that he is far from being true to his calling as a warrior bear:

'What do you do at the sledge depot?' Farder Coram asked.

'I mend broken machinery and articles of iron. I lift heavy objects.'

'What kind of work is that for a *panserbjorne*'?

'Paid work.'

Farder Coram learns that his pay at the sledge depot is his 'keep . . . in meat and spirits' (181)—enough to feed the body, but plainly not the soul. When the bear asks about remuneration for his work on the rescue mission he is unmoved by their offers to pay him in gold. Gold holds no value for him in the least. The portrait of this lonely broken bear, 'sent out to live at the edge of the human world and fight when [he] could find employment at it, or work at brutal tasks and drown [his] memory in raw spirits' (223), who is dirty, smelly and limping through existence quite defeated, is characterized by a deep sense of regret and powerlessness.

It is not just that he has been exiled and forbidden from identifying himself as a Svalbard bear, Iorek has also been deprived of his rank and his wealth and his (original) armor. In addition, as he tells Farder Coram and Lyra, his recently crafted armor has also been confiscated by the locals for fear of him and 'without that, I can hunt seals but I can't go to war; and I am an armored bear; war is the sea I swim in and the air I breathe.' Iorek knows how far he has fallen (for he is surely meant to represent the archetype of the Fallen One^{vi}), but without his armor, he seems unable to move in any meaningful way. Made from 'sky iron' and irreplaceable, a 'bear's armor is his soul. . .' (196-7). It is the stolen armor that is the last salvageable fragment of his identity as a *panserbjorne*. Therefore, the price he commands for his participation in the rescue mission is for someone to 'get me back my armor. Do that, and I shall serve you in your campaign, either until I am dead or until you have a victory. My price is my armor. I want it back, and then I shall never need spirits again' (182).

From the outset, Iorek is a bear concerned with soul-power, representing Milton's 'inner man', in contrast with Iofur who is concerned particularly with earthly and external powers, specifically those which extend control over others and their resources. It is tempting to ignore Iorek's significant flaws and the apparent hotheadedness that has gotten him into trouble. Initially, he is ostracized because of a serious ritual trespass

involving a female bear (317) and then when the people of Trollesund took away his armor, 'he went rampaging round looking for it. He tore open the police house and the bank and I don't know where else, and there's at least two men who died' (191). He is sentenced 'to labor in the town's interest until he's paid off the damage and the blood money' (191). Iorek is scrupulously honest in carrying out this punishment, keeping a promise to work until sunset even when the news comes that Lyra has located his confiscated armor. His thanks is expressed as indebtedness, and why not? Lyra has told him where to reclaim his figurative soul. His self-control however is challenged again, however, once his armor/soul is restored. Amid the chaos of Iorek's break-in to get back his armor from 'the cellar of the priest's house' (197), he attacks a sentry. Lyra quickly recognises that Iorek's decisions at that moment are going to significantly affect not only the bear's future, but the future of the entire rescue mission. She intervenes using, remarkably, the language of redemption: 'Listen! You owe me a debt, right. Well, now you can repay it. Do as I ask. Don't fight these men. Just turn around and walk away with me. We *want* you, Iorek, you can't stay here. Just come down to the harbor with me and don't even look back . . . Leave go this man and come away with me. . . .' (200). Iorek obeys and by this action releases himself from the bonds of enslavement and inauthenticity, and into the duties of service required by Lyra and the gypsians for their mission to rescue the children abducted into the farther reaches of the north. Thus he demonstrates his first likeness to the character of the Son in the *Paradise* epics of Milton, proving himself to be a 'kingly' character. Bryson usefully suggests that:

"Kingly" is a term that need not necessarily be limited to its most literal sense—being, or partaking of, the nature of an actual monarch; it can also refer to traits of character such as nobility, dignity, passion governed by wisdom, justice tempered by mercy, confidence without arrogance, intellectual weight, empathy, and patience. (138)

According to the Son in *Paradise Regained*, to be truly kingly (rather than merely a king) is to exercise spiritual dominion, to govern the 'inner man, the nobler part' (*PR*, 2. 477). The restoration of Iorek's armor ripens his latterly dormant virtues and resurrects his true powers, which, following Milton, Pullman shows to be inner powers rather than external glories and successes. Where Milton uses a theological formulation to elucidate 'man's greatest achievement' as knowing God 'aright' (*Of Education*), Freitas and King formulate the notion in Apollonian terms, describing Iorek's achievement as embodying the aphorism: 'Know thyself, be thyself' (74).^{vii} Because 'dignity comes from being true to who you are' and because, following Aquinas' definition of *the good* as 'that which perfects or fulfills,' they point out that 'Each creature, each species, each community—all created things—are *intended* to live a certain kind of life in the universe. When we fulfill the purpose for which we are created, we are doing what is right' (77). To do, or more accurately, *to be* what is right (since action has its genesis in being) is a sign that God has come home and we are there too and able to show hospitality. Iorek's humility

and trust in following Lyra's reasonable advice marks an important breakthrough and a turnaround from his descent into further estrangement from himself. From the depths of his loss and emptiness (a *kenosis*^{viii}, perhaps, considering all that he has lost) he begins to know himself again, albeit as an exile, and his restoration is begun simply in the way of service.

As an exile, Iorek is reminiscent of the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures, whose frequent clashes with the kings of the ages are well-known. He does not contest his punishment ever, but once Lyra has inveigled a battle between the two bears, Iorek is all too ready to fight for the kingdom and release the bears from the slavishness and inauthenticity that pervades Iofur's kingdom, and, as such act as a liberator of his tribe. Iorek's experience of ruin^{ix} has interiorized his power and rather than submitting to defeat, instead he finds in himself a salvific energy that will work through him for the common good of his community.

The idea of a battle comes from Lyra who appeals to Iofur's vanity persuasively: "Tell them . . . that to make your kingdom completely secure, you've called Iorek Byrnison here yourself to fight him, and the winner will rule over the bears forever. See, if you make it look like *your* idea that he's coming, and not his, they'll be really impressed. They'll think you're able to call him here from far away. They'll think you can do anything." (343)

Iofur falls for anything that holds the promise of consolidating his power; indeed, the narrator tells us that 'The great bear was helpless' (343) to resist this tantalizing possibility. Along with defeat of his old rival, Iofur stands to secure at last a *dæmon*, Iorek's *dæmon*, Lyra. Lyra has Iofur believing that the only way he can attain her as *dæmon* is to kill the wicked Iorek.

The battle chapter is entitled 'Mortal Combat', and opens with the narrator's explanation that while fights between bears 'were common, and the subject of much ritual,' actual killing only happened rarely. Nonetheless, there were 'circumstances in which the only way of settling a dispute was a fight to the death. And for that, a whole ceremonial was prescribed' (344). The return of the exiled bear, Iorek, makes necessary this mode of resolution and here is a chapter in which all of the bears' differences are on display and where each must struggle viscerally to survive. It is gladiatorial in splendor and brutality; it is cosmic in significance.

As soon as Iofur knows Iorek is approaching Svalbard, the centre from which he has been banished, the king readies himself, having the combat ground cleared and checking his armor. Earlier we made reference to armor, and here, ready for battle, the contrast is sharpest. This after all represents the soul being readied for combat; the kingdom is at stake. Iofur has 'every rivet . . . examined, every link tested, and the plates . . . burnished with the finest sand . . .' For his claws, the 'gold leaf was rubbed off, and each separate six-inch hook was sharpened and filed to a deadly point' (344). The

raison d'être of bears being war, it is not long before crowds of the local bears gather around the combat ground to watch the warriors settle once and for all this old strife that has begun to erode the bears' sense of identity and purpose. Lyra sees that the gathered bears, both 'the courtiers' and 'the common bears . . . weren't sure what they were. . . . there was a constant pall of uncertainty hanging over them as they watched one another and watched Iofur' (345). All the 'plumes and badges and tokens they all seemed to wear . . . [carrying] little mannikins . . . imitating the fashion [Iofur]'d begun' might well be the cause of this precariousness but what should not be missed amid the general, if ludicrous, splendor is Lyra's tone of ridicule, for it is in these descriptions that the mental aspect of the battle is gradually set up. Nor can we fail to recognize Lyra's truly dangerous gambit—she is really a very small creature in the world of the bears and has put in motion an awesome fight, with far-reaching implications. Iorek, though, does not know what is ahead because Lyra 'had let him in for this fight without his knowledge.' (344)

Iorek arrives and Lyra immediately finds a way to tell him the results of her possibly dreadful error: 'I made him agree that he'd fight you instead of just killing you straight off like an outcast, and the winner would be king of the bears.' Instead of anger or fear, Iorek is filled with admiration for Lyra's rare ability to trick a bear because to 'fight him is all I want.' Inspired, he claims her and sanctifies their ties by renaming her 'Lyra Silvertongue' (348). For a solitary warrior bear to find in a human child a worthy ally is a truly special moment of crossing between worlds, cultures and boundaries and it is one that is easy to miss in the preparations for the fight.

Prior to the battle, fully armoured, Iofur stands 'like a great metal tower shining in polished steel' (346), 'glossy and powerful, . . . immense in his strength and health, splendidly armored, proud and kinglike' (349). By contrast, his opponent, Iorek, journey-wearied, 'in his battered armor, lean and ferocious' (348), is 'smaller . . . and poorly equipped, his armor rusty and dented.' (349) The difference between these two titans ready for battle is that Iorek's 'armor was his soul. He had made it and it fitted him. They were one.' Iofur 'was not content with his armor; he wanted another soul as well.' (349) Once, at another critical juncture in the story, Lyra had touched 'the one vulnerable spot in the bear's armor' (197) to steer him away from violence, and we see the gesture repeated, but the words now are quite different: 'Fight well, Iorek my dear. You're the real king, and he en't. He's nothing' (348). Iorek has built himself up, redeemed himself from his tremendous fall and made himself worthy of the kingdom via loss and suffering and humiliation. This is a pattern wholly reminiscent of Jesus' story, though the destiny of the Jesus figure, Iorek, differs in important ways. The differences have, as we shall see, important ramifications for the understanding of the concept of kingdom, in much the same way that Milton's character of the Son has.

Iorek commences the first phase of the ritual, outlining the terms of the combat to the community to which Iofur responds with his own terms. The terms are

particularly telling. Iorek's terms demonstrate the purpose of his fighting as oriented toward the future by reclaiming the values of the past; and outward, toward restoration and justice for the community in the sense of balancing and returning the tribe back to its true roots, including a righteous king, by way of 'cleansing' the corruption that has nested in Svalbard under his rival's reign. 'Iofur Raknison has polluted Svalbard,' says Iorek Byrnison in his challenge, and 'I have come to cleanse it' (349). It is a big and compelling idea, and entirely other-directed. Iofur, on the other hand, directs his fighting words to Iorek, individually. He fights not for the greater good of the tribe at all and instead his threats are directed at Iorek whose 'flesh shall be torn apart', his 'head shall be displayed above my palace,' his 'memory shall be obliterated' and it 'shall be a capital crime to speak his name' (349). The purpose of Iofur's fighting is, unsurprisingly, oriented toward further self-aggrandizement. As Lyra reflects: 'Iorek and Iofur were more than just two bears. There were two kinds of beardom opposed here, two futures, two destinies.' The victor in this battle, which has become a cosmic metaphor for apocalypse, would cause 'one future [to] close forever as the other began to unfold' (349).

It is a tight battle and remarkably suspenseful, looking like it could go either way through most of the fight. However, Iorek has the key to the battle thanks to Lyra. He knows that Iofur is vulnerable to trickery unlike 'real' bears because 'Iofur did not want to be a bear, he wanted to be a man . . .' (353), and this is the weapon Iorek uses to outmaneuver his opponent, recalling the words of Zechariah, the prophet: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by . . . spirit' [4:6]. Thus, after a grand and violent and grotesque struggle, Iofur is killed, deposed by his own vanity and weakness as much as by a worthy foe. Iorek performs the last part of the ritual reaching into the ribcage and plucking out Iofur's heart, 'red and steaming, and ate it there in front of Iofur's subjects' (354). This gesture is symbolically potent. To what end is the ingestion of the rival's seat of passion performed? If the bears' battle signifies a kind of spiritual warfare—the centralised powers of the established church, for example, versus the marginalised and excluded fringes—the consumption of the core of meaning (the heart) signals a deepening integration of opposites. Walter Wink calls this adaptation 'heavenly homeopathy' maintaining that 'we must swallow what killed us in order to come to life' (157).^x Does it not also have resonance of the precursor to the sacred eucharistic feast in the bitterness that Jesus had, figuratively, to swallow? We are bidden to assimilate the other for there is no other way to give birth to the new.

And so, representing the new order, Iorek's first act as victor is to have the tribe name him king. Having named him king, the 'bears knew what they must do' (354) and so the annihilation of delusion begins, recalling William Blake's lines in the poem *Jerusalem*: 'All that can be annihilated must be annihilated/ That the children of Jerusalem may be saved from slavery . . .' (Blake, *Milton*, plate 42, 31-2). All traces of fakery in attire are 'thrown off at once and trampled contemptuously underfoot, to be forgotten in a moment' (354). The palace is summarily dismantled, all that phony marble,

the battlemented walls, all destroyed and hurled over the cliffs into the sea. Iofur's palatial temple to power is destroyed. The significance of Iorek's nomination followed by the apocalyptic cleansing brings to mind the biblical-historical accounts of temples being destroyed. Surely, too, the breakdown evokes Jesus' prophetic mission, the dream, centred on kingdom, but not of the material kind.

It is informative to remember that in the Hebrew scriptures 'King' is synonymous with the 'anointed' which in Hebrew is *masiah*, or as it is pronounced in English, messiah. 'Anointed' in Greek is *christos*, or christ. Jesus is identified by Peter (Mark 8: 29) as the Christ/Messiah/Anointed, following the tradition begun in the Hebrew Bible. As I have discussed earlier in this essay, there was significant ambiguity regarding the establishment of a monarch in the Bible as well as to the extent of divine inception. Gideon refuses the crown, and Samuel's reluctance to grant the people a king is plain (1 Sam 10:19). The inauguration of kingship, as Milton so vigorously argued in his time, constitutes a human foray into divine territory. How purposefully ironic then, that in the New Testament, Jesus is identified as Christ. Could it be that the incarnation of Jesus signifies, as Friedman suggests, a 'divine re-appropriation of kingship' (230)? Jesus' first words in the book of Mark are: 'The kingdom of God is at hand' (1:14). The concluding section of this paper will examine a view of kingdom from radical theological perspectives (including liberation theology) and look at the characteristics of Iorek's recovered kingdom to learn why and how Pullman solves the problem of replacing one king with another.

John Milton's *Paradise Regained* shows the Son's contempt for the idea of kingship, a recovery from his position in *Paradise Lost* in which his dreams of 'Glory' and 'Sceptre and Power' (6.730-31) have completely faded. The true purpose of government must have as both its motivation and reward 'knowing . . . God aright' (*PR* 2.475). And Milton has the Son lambaste the existing forms of rule which have not enabled people to properly know God. Bryson summarizes Milton's views when he writes that 'Kingship, churches, external threats, and the demand for outward compliance—all of these things have not only *not* enabled mankind to know God "aright," but have actively led mankind astray' (134). To know God 'aright,' Bryson parses persuasively, is to know 'God as the Son himself knows God, to know that the rule of heaven is not external, but internal. The regime of the Son is not "o'er the body only," but of the "nobler part," a rule where there is no first, but only equality' (135). Milton has created a Son for whom to be truly kingly is to lay down a kingdom, an action the Son considers 'Far more magnanimous than to assume' (*PR* 2.483).

Philip Pullman reiterates this plot development in *The Golden Compass*, as Iorek Byrnison's rise signals the ending of an old form to be replaced with the promise of a new dispensation. No longer will the stupid bears allow themselves to be led astray, to co-create and participate in their own oppression. The 'Imposter God'^{lxi} killed and

the new order being birthed after a life-threatening labor, demands nothing short of metanoia—a total reorientation of the mind, particularly in relation to authority, as well as in the figure(s) of authority. As such, this forms the basis of the liberation tradition in theology. And a liberation tradition is foundational to the cosmic order, argues Dorothee Soelle (qtd. in Freitas and King 121). Without it, slaves cannot be reconciled; they cannot be empowered to free themselves. Is this not the very lesson the Exodus narrative teaches? Liberation from the explicit aberrations of Iofur's reign, his avarice and ambition in particular, give us reason to hope for self-renewal, the return of virtue, self-mastery and authenticity. As Milton wrote in one of his anti-monarchical tracts: 'The happiness of a Nation consists in true Religion, Piety, Justice, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, and the contempt of Avarice and Ambition. They in whomsoever these vertues dwell eminently . . . are the architects of thir own happiness' (qtd. in Fixler 159). What need would such liberated individuals have for a king? As the prophet Jeremiah prophesied: 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and I will write it in their hearts; and will be their God and they shall be my people.' (Jeremiah 31: 33) The virtuous, in other words, have little need of the (external) law.

Of the notion of kingdom, Pullman has commented:

The kingdom of heaven promised us certain things . . . But now that, for me, anyway, the King is dead, I find that I still need these things that heaven promised, and . . . [since] I don't think I will continue to live after I am dead, . . . if I am to achieve these things I must try to bring them about—and encourage other people to bring them about—on earth, in a republic in which we are all free and equal—and responsible—citizens.' (qtd. in Spanner)

Here is no supernaturalism, no metaphysics, no delay in the arrival in, or attainment of, heaven but an assumption of God's immanence and therefore, membership and responsibility in the here-and-now of the heavenly kingdom (better still rendered as '*kingdom*'). This worldly, wise and grounded attitude embraces the assumption of the duty to be ethical and moral human beings, and to encourage others. This ethically ideal world is Jerusalem, the promised land, and in it is embodied an ethic which has its seed in the age-old dream of 'the future establishment of a fully free and good society on earth . . .' (Cupitt 18). In the new Jerusalem God is internalized and is no longer an objective sovereign 'out there.' Instead, God is so fully internalized, as Cupitt envisions it, that God dies into the individual heart. And from such a seed arises

the dream of a fully liberated society [where] there will be no need of any external religious discipline, nor of any religious motivation. People will then have "hearts of flesh", soft hearts; they will have the divine Spirit within them, or they will have "the law written on their hearts . . ." (19)

Here, people will live totally at ease with one another, for this is 'a world in which God has come down from heaven and has disappeared into the flowing world of human personal relationships' (71). The person of Jesus, abiding by the Jewish hopes for a

better world, can be seen to have been acting out, not waiting for, the *fulfillment* of the traditional prophetic dream: 'He had his eye upon the traditional 'Dream' of a better world to come—not above, but on this earth—but he sees the way to it as involving severe criticism of what currently passes for orthodox religion and conventional social morality' (Cupitt 67). The objective of a Kingdom theology seeks to 'return us to ourselves and to everyday life, in such a way that we are no longer fretful,' writes Cupitt: 'Instead, we are content' ("A Kingdom Theology" np). Examining the matter of kings and their expressions of authority with this theological background enables us to resolve the question of this essay, namely, how it is that Pullman replaces one king with another, compromising neither his strangely refreshing orthodoxy and his apprenticeship to past British masters of dissent (like Milton and Blake) nor his strong anti-pharisaical Jesus-like bent.

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NOTES

- i Hitchens
- ii Friedman shows how the establishment of monarchy in the Bible is ambiguous. He writes 'Gideon refuses the crown on the grounds that "I shall not rule you, and my son will not rule you; Yahweh will rule you." Yahweh tells Samuel, "They have not rejected you, but rather they have rejected *me*." [Author's emphasis] And Samuel tells the people as he gives them a king, "You have rejected your God today." Friedman continues with the observation that 'the deity had already provided for the institution of monarchy in the laws that He gave to Moses back in Deuteronomy, which included the Law of the King.' Therefore, he concludes, "one cannot regard the people's desire for a king as purely a human plan when, the first time that the notion of a king in Israel is mentioned, it is God who raises it—and expressly allows it (113-114)
- iii [Solomon was] for wealth and wisdom famed,
The clouded art of God tell then in tents
Wandering, shall in a glorious temple enshrine. (*PL* 12, 332-34)
- iv William McClung in "The Architectonics of *Paradise Lost*," *Via* 8 (1986): 32-9; Stephen Blakemore in "Pandemonium and Babel: Architectural Hierarchy in *Paradise Lost*," *MiltonQ* 20,4 (Dec. 1986): 142-5; Ernest B. Gilman in *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation: Down Went Dagon* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986).
- v Pullman's representation of a human's soul takes animal form in the trilogy. Freitas and King explain: 'Best understood as something like "soul-creatures," dæmons

- manifest themselves outside the body, making each human and that human's animal-formed "soul" (both changing infintely and whimsically until the onset of puberty) an interdependent pair' (*ix*).
- vi In Christian iconography the risen Christ and Lucifer are indistinguishable, writes Don Cupitt in *Jesus and Philosophy*. 'The former is "the only-begotten Son of God", and the latter is the greatest and most beautiful of all the angelic sons of God. . . . [T]he ambiguity is persistently emphasized . . . In Revelation 22.16 Jesus is 'the bright Morning Star'; that is, the planet Venus, Lucifer the light-bringer' (74-5). This merging offers intriguing possibilities for the Fall narrative against which the *His Dark Materials* is set and an avenue for examination outside the scope of this essay.
 - vii Considering Pullman's wariness around God language, it seems wise and no loss at all to the authorial intentions, to go with the Greek gloss.
 - viii The Greek word *kenosis* means 'emptiness' and is used in Philippians 2:7: '. . . Jesus made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant . . .' (KJV). It is appears to have a few variations. In the NIV, the translation reads: 'Jesus made himself nothing' where in the NRSV, it reads '. . . he emptied himself . . .' The idea of *kenosis* points to a purposeful emptying of one's own will and becoming open and receptive to divine will, a larger story than simply one's own.
 - ix Luke 17:33: 'Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. Those who try to make their life secure (set a boundary/property lines) will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it.' See Wink, 159.
 - x It is true that Iorek has not been killed in battle, but it is equally true that he has risen from a different kind of death.
 - xi A designation coined by Freitas and King which they claim 'would have fit very well into this Death-of-God movement, which sought to shock Christians out of the juvenilia of believing in a Superman-type false God who rules from the clouds and into a more worldly vision of the divine, suited to the realities of science and the truths of the Enlightenment' (*xix*).