

More on Gnosticism (Pullman)

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 06 May 2001

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Alice Turner — 06 May 2001, 12:20

Thinking randomly in print here, and grateful for illumination.

The pre-adolescent Lyra has gnosis--she can read the alethiometer. Puberty sets in and she cannot. Does this imply sinful boinking? Yes, though in the world of US juvenile publishing it is forbidden to say so (the UK may be different: I look forward to Harry Potter's First Time). Yet she is told that with study and hard work she can master it once more. So gnosis is a gift (Gnosticism) but it can also be earned: Christianity, but **not** in strict Protestantism, which in a sense reverts to Gnosticism.

Now does this mirror the banishment from Eden situation? I've been looking over the first chapters of *-Compass-* which predict Lyra's journey; the Master appears to have a bit of gnosis himself. Where does he stand? Status quo, of course; he's presented as something of a bureaucrat. He sucks up to Mrs. Coulter, though he doesn't trust her. He attempts to murder Asriel, an agent of change (I won't say Good or Evil; it's too complex), but he does it, perhaps, out of love for Lyra. Or so he says. "She will be the betrayer, and the experience will be terrible." (p 29, paperback) That puts Lyra as the uncomprehending Eve, and of course she is explicitly compared to Eve later.

Dust. It registers as Light on Asriel's photo-prints. In a parallel world, Dr. Malone calls it Shadow. What do we think about it? (Lyra, we are told, will eventually know more about Dust than anyone in the world, her world, that is -35.) Pullman may not have pulled this off entirely, but he is certainly an interesting thinker. Quite apart from having given us wonderful witches and an incomparable bear.

-alga