

Phillip Pullman

The Urth list — 5 messages, 5 voices, 18 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2588>

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akt — 18 Apr 2001, 10:33

Is Phillip Pullman that children's-book writer. The Golden Somethingorother? I've noticed his name and thought I might look into him, maybe at the library. What are the names of the books in the trilogy? (Too lazy to consult Amazon.)

-alga

mark millman — 18 Apr 2001, 11:12 · follows akt

alga,

You're thinking of the right person; his series is titled His Dark Materials, and comprises three volumes:

The Golden Compass; _The Subtle Knife_; and
The Amber Spyglass.

It's been strongly recommended to me by my book-seller and by other friends, though not with the . . . fervor . . . that Harry Potter seems to engender.

Mark Millman

At 10:33 AM 18-04-01 -0400, you wrote:
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-alga

John-Paul Wellcoat — 18 Apr 2001, 15:49 · follows mark millman

I was taken aback when I learnt the Dark Material trilogy was classed as childrens fiction. I would recommend it heartily. (note. the third book is not all it could have been) I haven't read much of Harry Potter, but what i did read didn't come close to the Dark Material trilogy. However, it may be I just dislike the whole glamourisation of one author and her work.

Just thought I say something. I hate being classified as a lurker.

JP

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| | mark millman |
| | <millman at us.nc|
| | ipher.com> |
| | |
| | 18/04/01 16:12|
| | Please respond|
| | to urth |
| | |
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| |
| To: urth at lists1.ba.best.com |
| cc: (bcc: John-Paul Wellcoat/OMT/OMGROUP) |
| Subject: Re: (urth) Phillip Pullman |
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William Ansley — 18 Apr 2001, 12:33 · follows John-Paul Wellcoat

I have read them. First, let me say that I like children's books. (Probably because I have a childish personality, err... I mean childlike sense of wonder.) I am also a big fan of the *Harry Potter* books, although I don't understand all the hoopla.

As far as the Pullman books go, I thought *_The Golden Compass_* was wonderful. The writing is superb, the characterizations excellent and the plot fascinating. Practically the only reason this is considered a children's book is that the protagonist is a eleven-year-old girl. In nearly every other way, this book is on an adult level.

The Subtle Knife is just as good, but it leaves you with an uneasy feeling that Pullman will not be able to pull off a satisfying conclusion. And he does not. In spades.

In *_The Amber Spyglass_* the whole works just blows up in your face. The plot clanks; endless

needless complications and characters are introduced. The characters, at least some of them, including major ones, start acting unlike themselves. And Pullman evidently regards the success of the first two volumes in the series to be a license to turn parts of the third book into a virulent anti-Catholic screed (thinly disguised but unmistakable). I consider myself agnostic, but this aspect of the book made me uncomfortable. A certain anti-church bias is evident in the first two books as well, but nothing like what comes out in the third.

In short, I might recommend this series on the merits of the first two volumes, but only to someone who is not likely to be offended by a very anti-Christian message. (This seems to be a real bugaboo for Pullman. He apparently gave an interview some time ago in which he attacked C. S. Lewis and the Narnia books, which garnered him much ill will from their fans.)

William Ansley

At 11:12 AM 4/18/2001 -0400, you wrote:
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Michael Straight — 25 Apr 2001, 10:33 · follows William Ansley

On Wed, 18 Apr 2001, William Ansley wrote:
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Interestingly, First Things, a conservative, mostly Roman Catholic journal has a mostly positive review of Pullman's series this month (May issue) by Daniel Moloney. He's not so concerned about the anti-church stuff as what he considers the artistic/philosophical failure to create a convincing alternative metaphysics. He argues that the parts that work the best artistically owe the most to the Christian story/worldview. Not having read the books yet, I can't say whether the article makes a good case or not, but it and this discussion have convinced me to give them a try. The article will be available on their website (www.firstthings.com) in a few weeks.

-Rostrum

Here's a quote that may be a spoiler (so beware!):

"As is, I can fairly characterize His Dark Materials in this fashion: imagine if at the beginning of the world, Satan's rebellion had been successful, that he had reigned for two thousand years, and that a messiah was necessary to conquer lust and the spirit of domination with innocence, humility, and generous love at great personal cost. Such a story is not subversive of Christianity."