

Phillip Pullman [Digest urth.v030.n091]

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 23 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2598>

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John Bishop — 23 Apr 2001, 16:10

I'll chime in to agree with the Pullman consensus: the third book fails to close the arc started in the first two, and drops the ball thematically and practically.

(*mild spoiler*) A reviewer elsewhere [on the Bujold list] spoke of "boinking to save the universe". I therefore re-read that section closely, and it's not certain they did "boink", but it's likely--and it just doesn't make sense, given what went before, or how things were shown to work in the multiverse he proposed. (*end spoiler*)

I liked Golden Compass enough to buy one of Pullman's other novels, Ruby in the Smoke, which turns out to have all the same virtues and flaws as the "His Dark Materials" trilogy in one volume: really good characters, a wonderfully detailed portrayal of an imagined world (in this case 1878 London), an interesting situation--and a total collapse into nonsense at the end, when the author can't seem to figure out how to end the story without breaking his own rules.

(*Serious spoiler for Ruby in the Smoke)

The villian is Mrs Holland (a nasty old lady who runs a lodging house in Wapping and a gang on the side, and who I hoped would continue because she was such a wonderful, clever, perceptive villian) confronts the heroine at the climax of the book. When all is almost in her grasp, she suddenly goes mad and kills herself in a couple of paragraphs! This absurd action is completely unforshadowed, no matter how convenient for the heroine it is. (*end spoiler)

There were other things to boggle at, but that one truly shocked me--how could an author so competent would let that text even get written, let alone printed escapes me.

What a shame.

-John Bishop

William Ansley — 23 Apr 2001, 23:10 · follows John Bishop

At 4:10 PM -0400 4/23/01, John Bishop wrote:

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Thank you, John!

This is so much better put than my messages. That's exactly how I felt; the last book collapsed into nonsense and he broke his own rules.

I wish I hadn't brought up the anti-religious aspect of the books at all now. It really was a side issue.

William Ansley