

Pullman gleanings from the Web

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 13 Jun 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2678>

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Adam Stephanides — 13 Jun 2001, 09:48

I was doing some surfing the other day, and I came across a number of sites, and pieces of info, of interest to fans of HDM.

1) There is a site -- http://www.geocities.com/torre_degli_angeli/pics.htm -- with reproductions of the drawings Pullman did for the British editions of Northern Lights (the British title of GC) & SK. They're very good: simple, even stark, black & white drawings, much like woodcuts; nothing like stereotypical children's book or fantasy illustrations. For Hester fans, the illustration for chapter 14 of SK is a drawing of Hester.

There are also reproductions of the chapter epigraphs for AS, presumably in their original typography: they're shown as if carved in stone, with words & phrases of varying size. Personally I would have preferred more drawings, and the epigraphs printed like ordinary epigraphs.

This site has other goodies, including a message board (seemingly inhabited mainly by adolescents), interviews (some of them incomplete), and links to three brief supplemental thingies Pullman did for the official website, which don't provide any crucial information, but are interesting. There's a collection of unreliable lore on angels; a brief essay on how to read the alethiometer, including a table of all the symbols with their primary meanings and a couple secondary meanings each; and a very brief piece on the history of the alethiometer (fans of Crowley will be pleased to learn that it was invented in Prague in the reign of Rudolf II, and used images from the theater of memory).

2) There is a good discussion of AS at <http://booktalk.guardian.co.uk/WebX?128> at 138.UAehbrYW3km^0@.ee7bf2f

The participants seem to be mainly, or all, adult, and most seem to agree that AS is disappointing compared to the first two books.

3) In an interview with Amazon (for URL see below) in which, among other things, Pullman explains what HDM owes to Kleist's "On the Marionette Theater (and incidentally makes clear why Lyra stopped being able to read the alethiometer). It also contains another bit of external, indirect evidence that Lyra and Will do have sex:

Amazon.com: There are also times, just for a second--or a sentence--when you're appealing a little bit more to your adult readers. For instance in The Subtle Knife, when the queen of the Latvian witches flies off to Lord Asriel's, you write: "Every witch there knew what had happened next, and neither Will nor Lyra dreamed of it. So Ruta Skadi had no need to tell."

Pullman: I don't spell it out. It's there if you can see it, but it's not there if you can't. One of the gratifying things about this series is that I've had a lot of response from adults as well as from children.

So Pullman acknowledges that he sometimes writes in the dual mode I argued he employed for the Lyra-and-Will love scenes. (One might argue that this quote also shows that Lyra and Will were not thinking of sex, but this scene comes before Mary "tempts" them.)

4) Here's the real shocker: Pullman likes Terry Brooks! If you find this incredible, here's the quote:

"I don't read fantasy; I have read Tolkien, but many years ago, and I've never read McCaffrey or L'Engle. I would always much rather read realistic fiction. I make an exception for Terry Brooks because of his sheer skill as a storyteller, which I admire, but most fantasy doesn't nourish in the way that good realistic fiction does."

This is from another Amazon interview. Both interviews are available at <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/browse/-/170810/103-5385864-6925461> along with brief essays by Pullman, Amy Bloom & Margot Livesey.

--Adam