

The Golden Compass

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 01 Aug 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2745>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Jesper Svedberg — 01 Aug 2001, 21:24

From: "Alice Turner" <pei047 at attglobal.net>

Said Dan'I re =The Golden Compass=:

I think it just might be the best juvenile, and even the best fantasy of the 20th century. Contenders, please? (Single books, only.)

Well, I haven't read The Amber Spyglass yet, but I have to say that I thought the series that far was good, perhaps very good, but not as earth shattering as some seem to have found it. There are at least two authors of juveniles that I would rate higher than Pullman, Diana Wynne Jones and the brilliant, but sadly forgotten Geraldine Harris. Jones has writtens lots of books and naturally not everything is as good, but she has written a couple of novels that are great, most notably Archer's Goon, Howl's Moving Castle and my own favourite, The Lives of Christopher Chant (which resembles The Golden Compass quite a bit, I've always wondered if it's been an influence on Pullman). Nothing she's written is quite as ambitious as His Dark Material, but I think she is a superior craftsman. Harris wrote a wonderful series called The Seven Citadels, starting with Prince of the Godborn. Another writer who seems to get a lot of respect for his juveniles is Alan Garner, but I haven't read any of his books. If we're talking of fantasy in general, I don't think that The Golden Compass would stand up very well. I'd take any of Jack Vance's fantasies over it any day and the same goes for the Gormenghast Trilogy, Tigana and The Lions of Al-Rassan by Guy Gavriel Kay, The Anubis Gates by Tim Powers and anything by Lord Dunsany (and if we're stretching the definition of fantasy a bit, a lot of the work of Borges or Calvino).

I saw that Peace is going to be reprinted in the UK by Gollancz next year, probably in the Fantasy Masterworks series (a really good list if you're looking for contenders for the title of best fantasy of the 20th century, and if we're going by their definition of fantasy, BotNS is another novel that beats The Golden Compass) along with a collection of Clark Ashton Smith stories, Vance's Sultrun's Garden (finally) and John M. Ford's The Dragon Waiting.

// Jesper Svedberg