

Philip Pullman - sheer genius

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I'm re-reading His Dark Materials ahead of the movie release at Christmas of Northern Lights - renamed The Golden Compass, which I predict will be the smash of the decade.

And Lyra will be your all time favourite heroine.

I seriously advise you to read these books before the movie madness kicks in and the summer is the perfect time for them; all three should take you most of your vacation.

They mean more to me than to most as I was sent the hefty hardback of all three novels into Belmarsh during my first 6 months of incarceration (intended to break my spirit, which it absolutely failed to do) and reading these (no electricity or TV in cells at that time) helped me to survive that difficult time, the Christmas period.

I think they are arguably the best books of the century so far (along with Never Let Me Go and the Harry Potter books)... those of you who don't like JK Rowling (I think she's marvellous) will adore Pullman I promise you. He has that extra literary quality of being a really brilliant writer as well as being a great story teller like JKR.

Anyway, I've now completed Northern Lights and second time around spotted huge chunks of very clever satire which you don't see first time (until the climax of Book Three).

In Belmarsh my favourite of the three was the second, The Subtle Knife, which can cut through the fabric of this world into a totally different parallel universe. Imagine how much pleasure that gives someone locked up 23 hours a day in Britain's top high security prison!

Remember my prediction - you will adore Lyra and so will the world's public, as you will love Will in Book Two and as you will love Pan (Lyra's Daemon). These are the finest novels in our language from the 21st Century. Please, grab them (now in paperback), read them, love them and post on our Your Views board after you've agreed (or disagreed).

Now - back to The Subtle Knife in the sunshine!