

"And When They Appear"

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 20 Sep 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2390>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 20 Sep 2000, 09:45

Adam wrote:

I finally got around to reading STRANGE TRAVELLERS, though I'd read a number of the stories in it before. On a first reading, I'd say the major one I'd missed is "And When They Appear." This is one of Wolfe's grimmest stories (which is saying a lot), made more powerful by the matter-of-fact narration and by the deceptive "Christmas story" atmosphere of the first half. (It just struck me that this first half reads a lot like a Bradbury pastiche.)

I, too, thought of Bradbury with this story . . .

<http://www.english.bham.ac.uk/ultan/st.htm>

there's not much more than that, but I provide the link anyway.

=mantis=

Adam Stephanides — 20 Sep 2000, 15:33 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

I, too, thought of Bradbury with this story . . .

And the link you provide cites "There Will Come Soft Rains." I actually hadn't been thinking of that one; just the idea of a boy meeting a whole bunch of fictional or legendary Christmas figures on Christmas struck me as very Bradbury-like. Of course, if Bradbury had written it, it would have ended very differently (although he did write some dark stuff early in his career).

While I'm thinking of it: the man who takes Sherby is referred to several times as "Corporal Charlie" (as he instructs Sherby) but once as "Uncle Charlie." Is this last a typo?

--Adam

Tony Ellis — 22 Sep 2000, 12:40 · follows Adam Stephanides

Adam Stephanides wrote:

Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

I, too, thought of Bradbury with this story . . .

And the link you provide cites "There Will Come Soft Rains." I actually hadn't been thinking of that one;

'And when they appear' does seem to have something of a Bradbury vibe. 'There Will Come Soft Rains' is the obvious choice, but even when I was reading the story for the first time I thought of another: 'Jack-in-the-box', collected in 'The Small Assassin'.

That too is a story of a boy living in a house that is at once his whole world and his prison. Like House, the boy's mother wants to keep her little boy from going out into the real world. House uses holograms, she uses lies. Both stories share the sense that the protagonist has to escape this situation in order to be fully alive, that Jack can't stay in his box forever.

Both seem to be, among other things, rite-of-passage stories. They're about the bittersweet process of growing up and leaving behind the world of childhood with all its pretty lies. Wolfe's story, as I read that ambiguous ending, seems to be saying that we should take something with us from childhood. Sherby isn't nice to Santa, he doesn't want to play let's-pretend any longer, but he's left at the end wishing that he had.

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