

"Petting Zoo"

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 25 Mar 2002

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Matthew Davis — 25 Mar 2002, 14:28

I suspect the book you're thinking of is "Danny and the Dinosaur" and its subsequent follow-ups by Syd Hoff.

"Petting Zoo" struck me as Wolfe working in the Ray Bradbury vein, but maybe that's just me.

Michael Andre-Driussi — 26 Mar 2002, 02:07 · follows Matthew Davis

Matthew Davis wrote:

I suspect the book you're thinking of is "Danny and the Dinosaur" and its subsequent follow-ups by Syd Hoff.

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I went to the library to check. Yep, that's the one. Thanks!

Danny/Dinosaur, alliterative like Rodrick/Rex. Danny says, "Let's go."

The adult who sees them and stares is a policeman who sees Dinosaur stop at a red light. Later on Dinosaur gives rides to all the kids that are Danny's friends.

So it is this book, plus Calvin of "Calvin & Hobbes" (with his city-destroying monster daydreams) or Bart Simpson (Bart buys a sponge t.rex from a bubblegum machine, and as he puts the water from the garden hose on it he has visions of it becoming life-sized) or Dennis the Menace. The boy single-handedly creates a monster ala Jurassic Park but the creature is really just a big Barney and that's okay. But the petting zoo is sad, and both characters are sad for each other (but not sad for themselves).

Hmm, Bradbury. From my perspective, Bradbury stories about childhood are either nostalgic for a real (more authentic) past (Bradbury's childhood years) or dread for a nightmarish present/future from around 1960 onward ("The Playground," "The Little Assassin," eek, these two are quite Ballardian).

So "Petting Zoo" would be an inversion of Bradbury (at least my sense there of): nostalgia for the future from a point a few decades later. Definitely a sense of things being "more authentic" in the earlier stage, even though we think it is funny for how much less-authentic it is from our situation. A funny story, really funny.

=mantis=

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Mar 2002, 17:08 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Though I haven't read "Petting Zoo" I can repsond to this. Mantis wrote:

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years) or dread for a nightmarish present/future from around 1960 onward ("The Playground," "The Little Assassin," eek, these two are quite Ballardian).

Ummmm... well, "The Small Assassin" was written _well_ before '60, and (if I'm not mistaken) appeared in Bradbury's first collection, "Dark Carnival." Indeed, a number of Bradbury's childhood stories are exaggerations/portrayals of the very real dreads children feel - i.e., "Fever Dream."

The nostalgic element you mention (summed up in DANDELION WINE) is neatly combined with the "childhood fears" element in at least two of Bradbury's finest novels: SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES (ignore the movie) and THE HALLOWE'EN TREE.

--Dan'l

Michael Andre-Driussi — 26 Mar 2002, 21:46 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Dan'l wrote:

Ummmm... well, "The Small Assassin" was written _well_ before '60, and (if I'm not mistaken) appeared in Bradbury's first collection, "Dark Carnival." Indeed, a number of Bradbury's childhood stories are exaggerations/portrayals of the very real dreads children feel - i.e., "Fever Dream."

I wrote 1960s when I really wanted to convey the unbounded time past the Bradbury childhood decade. I didn't mean to suggest that "The Small Assassin" was written in any particular time, but that it represented a contemporary or near-future setting that was horrific, in contrast to the melancholy sweetness of the authentic childhood time.

The nostalgic element you mention (summed up in DANDELION WINE) is neatly combined with the "childhood fears" element in at least two of Bradbury's finest novels: SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES (ignore the movie) and THE HALLOWE'EN TREE.

As a matter of fact, as I was keying in the original post I did check myself against SWTWC, and found myself still in agreement. While I read it ages ago, I've never degraded its memory with a movie version. Yes, it is frightening, but it is the fear of an evil intrusion upon the golden land of the authentic childhood rather than the hopelessness of living in a demonic world of the less authentic present/near future.

That is, my sense of it is that its horror elements no more change the overall picture than the frightful/ugly bits change the idyll of HUCKLEBERRY FINN.

But more to the point, "Small Assassin" and "The Playground" are more about the adult's fears/perceptions about children/childhood in the less authentic present/near-future; and this has direct bearing upon "Petting Zoo."

It is just my vague opinion. I'm not a Bradbury expert at all, and if you manage to come up with a body of short stories that I have already read (and can remember!) that contradicts what I'm saying here, then I will gladly agree with you.

Or you can read "Petting Zoo" and see whether it perfectly matches your personal sense of Bradbury stories.

Mainly you should read "Petting Zoo." I like it a lot! After all this build up you are bound to hate it, alas.

=mantis=

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