

Thou Spark of Blood [SPOILERS]

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 18 Jul 2002

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 18 Jul 2002, 20:14

Nacre wrote:

Or could you make the same observations about "When I was Ming the Merciless" (which is so much easier to find)? I can't easily think of a story that treats the aspects of "Spark" that aren't similar to "Ming", (maybe "The Other Dead Man" or "Silhouette", though the other point is more difficult) but perhaps a good analogue will occur to you.

O Nacre! I would not have thought of pairing "Spark" and "Ming" (I had not yet paired it with any other story, which might be odd in itself -- don't I reflexively do that sort of thing?), but I can see how you did it. Interesting. "The Other Dead Man" and "Silhouette," yes, but less, as you suggest . . . was I thinking more along the lines of "Redbeard" (something neither psychological nor spaceship)? But no, that's further than "Ming," really. Can't leave out the mystery genre works by Wolfe, of course (in general, since no specific story springs to mind).

First I'd like to set the context of my reading: having recently read and re-read the earliest Wolfe stuff, my expectations were accordingly calibrated downward; likewise, Wolfe said in some interview somewhere something disparaging about "Spark," so I thought of it as probably his least favorite.

All of the story's flaws are in the end, or so it seems to me. Up to that point it is pretty intense, surprisingly intense. In an eyewitness way, where "Ming" is all being reported after the fact, iirc. And "Spark," a short story, is almost shockingly graphic -- I cannot think of a similar Wolfe story, except maybe the casual descriptions of torture in TBOTNS that turned away the faint of heart. Such folk must STAY AWAY from "Spark."

So anyway, I find it flawed but very interesting, probably more memorable to me than "The Blue Mouse" or "King Under the Mountain," or one that I can't even recall enough to know that I can't remember it. The nature of the flaw is such that I can see why it has been passed over.

Yes, good call: it is like "Ming" but, imho, much more intense and graphic, with Wolfe's mystery genre folded in, all packing a big punch for a rather short story.

(Hmmm, "Hero as Werwolf" has some of that . . . but no, the "Ming" context is completely lacking from "Hero," which is more like hierarchies in Nature's food pyramid . . .)

=mantis=