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The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 13 May 1999

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Patri10629 — 13 May 1999, 17:17

Buds

All this speculation about Wolfe "speeding through," "making it up as he goes along," "backfilling mistakes," "multiple drafts," "no idea where it's going" are, in my opinion fruitless. How a writer gets to where he's going doesn't matter. Nobody knows which corner Picasso started in, how many sketches he had to do before the final "draft", which mistakes he covered over, which mistakes were happy accidents. It doesn't tell you anything about the book to know which order the author wrote it in, what pencils he used, if he was drunk or sober, or having a bad or good day, or had previously named a character "Benjie" before he became "Bob." And while we may be curious about Wolfe's methods (as I am), I'm doubtful any insights we may learn will be useful to me as a writer or a reader. Or will be relevant to the text. Who cares how he got there? Let's talk about the "there." That's slippery enough.

Don't mean to sound cranky. I've just sensitive to discussions with implied value judgments based on moonshine theories of methodology. "Planned and plotted" or "just babbling along," can never be the issue. It's magic, don't you think? Who cares how the wizard does it?

Patrick O'Leary

Tony Ellis — 13 May 1999, 17:56 · follows Patri10629

Patri wrote:

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<snip>

...I'm doubtful any insights we may learn will be useful to me as a writer or a reader.

My mistake, Patri. I didn't realise this list was all about you.