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The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 08 Feb 2000

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Alice Turner — 08 Feb 2000, 10:44

Wm Ansley noted that:

"Jeremy W. Crampton" <jcrampto at gmu.edu> wrote:

Publishers Weekly
(December 20, 1999; 0-312-87227-5)

[...]

Opening with "Bluesberry Jam," Wolfe (The Book of the Long Sun series, etc.) creates an intriguing speculative future in which an entire culture arises from people who have been stuck in a traffic jam for decades. This conceit is ultimately negated, however, by the most tired of clichés in the closing story, "Ain't You 'Most Done," which is set in the same world.

Does anyone else remember the Jean-Luc Godard movie "Weekend," about a massive traffic jam that stopped cars leaving Paris? It was visually arresting and quite funny. Much more sophisticated in tone than the Wolfe story (which I found annoyingly sentimental and corny--I dislike nearly all his "modern" material," though I'll make a provisory exception for "The Ziggurat"), but I wouldn't be surprised if it was the original impetus.

I have to agree with the last review that Jeremy W. Crampton was kind enough to provide for us. My feeling on reaching the end of "Ain't You 'Most Done" was, "Oh, no! Not again!".

Wolfe has so many characters in this kind of predicament that I think the primary thing you should keep in mind when reading him is not "Find the wolf" (which doesn't strike me as being particularly helpful, even in the case of "The Ziggurat") but "When did the main character die and does he know it yet?".

Ted Klein, the original editor of the Twilight Zone magazine, long dead now (the mag, not Ted), once published a hilarious list of the hoariest cliches found in the slush pile. "Hey, I'm really dead!" was near the top of the list.

-alga