

# Two Wolfe Comments

The Urth list — 5 messages, 4 voices, 25 Feb 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1390>

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CRCulver — 25 Feb 1999, 11:58

1) I don't know the origin of the word "Madregot" (the name of the Brook beyond Briah), but perhaps it is related to the Spanish word "Madrugada," which means "dawn." This seems to fit, being another example of the solar motif which is predominant in the Book of the New Sun. Maybe Mantis could clear this up.

2) We've discussed before the influence of T.S. Eliot on Wolfe, particularly from "The Waste Lands." However, the poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," also by Eliot seems to be an inspiration for \_Peace\_. The narrator of "Prufrock" is an elderly gentleman who is looking back on his life, and the message is that old age is basically a living death. However, I've always favoured the notion that maybe Prufrock is actually dead, as Weer is. For those interested, the J. Alfred Prufrock Company, [www.prufrock.org](http://www.prufrock.org), has the poem on their website, where it can be viewed for free (under "Poem"). However, the rest of the site is retail tripe.

Cheers,

Christopher R. Culver <crculver at aol.com>  
President Pro-Tempore of USEJ  
Prezidanto Dumtempa de USEJ

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<http://ttt.esperanto.org/us/USEJ/welcome.html>

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Tony Ellis — 25 Feb 1999, 15:36 · follows CRCulver

Christopher R. Culver wrote:

1) I don't know the origin of the word "Madregot" (the name of the Brook beyond Briah), but perhaps it is related to the Spanish word "Madrugada," which means "dawn." This seems to fit, being another example of the solar motif which is predominant in the Book of the New Sun. Maybe Mantis could clear this up.

Madregot is a kabbalistic term which can be translated either as "the stages" or "the steps". I think. Ties in with the whole Briah-Yesod kabbalah thing, clearly.

2) We've discussed before the influence of T.S. Eliot on Wolfe, particularly from "The Waste Lands." However, the poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," also by Eliot seems to be an inspiration for \_Peace\_. The narrator of "Prufrock" is an elderly gentleman who is looking back on his life, and the message is that old age is basically a living death.

I couldn't agree that the message of "Prufrock" is "old age is a living death". If it's summed up anywhere, it's in the lines "Do I dare\Disturb the universe?" It's about a life wasted in hesitation and self-doubt, and for that reason I don't really see it as an inspiration for Peace: Weer never seems to leave the small town where he was born, but surely he's more dynamic than poor old spineless Prufrock?

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CRCulver — 28 Feb 1999, 22:25 · follows Tony Ellis

<<I couldn't agree that the message of "Prufrock" is "old age is a living death". If it's summed up anywhere, it's in the lines "Do I dare\Disturb the universe?" It's about a life wasted in hesitation and self-doubt>>

I disagree. My English teacher and most of the literary criticism about the poem think that "Prufrock" is about the an "embittered and horny old man" (I can provide the source for this tomorrow once I get to the library) who cannot accept his lack of power when it comes to seducing women. And so, without the ability to propogate, his life begins to be without attraction. The poem, does, however, go on to a sort of nihilistic viewpoint in which the lives of people, no matter how old they are, are basically pointless.

I shall review the literary criticism tomorrow and prepare an explanation of why I think the poem is applicable to PEACE.

Christopher R. Culver <crculver at aol.com>

President Pro-Tempore of USEJ

Prezidanto Dumtempa de USEJ

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Alex David Groce — 28 Feb 1999, 18:51 · follows CRCulver

On Feb 28, 5:25pm, CRCulver at aol.com wrote:

Subject: Re: Re: (urth) Two Wolfe Comments

<<I couldn't agree that the message of "Prufrock" is "old age is a living death". If it's summed up anywhere, it's in the lines "Do I dare\Disturb the universe?" It's about a life wasted in hesitation and self-doubt>>

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\*More Wolfe info & archive of this list at <http://www.urth.net/urth/>

-- End of excerpt from CRCulver at aol.com

Well, I don't really think that Prufrock is about anything so Freudian as inability to procreate or seduce--Prufrock's failure to declare his love for the "That is not what I meant at all" woman is merely symptomatic. I think the epigraph from the Inferno is telling--this is a vision of Hell in life. Prufrock is incapable of "disturbing the universe," of offering love, in general of facing the transcendent--"I have seen the moment of my greatness

flicker,/ And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,/And in short I was afraid."

The poem is in the line that develops into "The Waste Land," a far more complete vision of Hell in life, but with a hint of possible redemption, to the explicitly religious vision of "Four Quartets." As to relevance to PEACE, there's probably some in that Wolfe and Eliot would have somewhat similar views of the theme of a man exploring his life, but beyond that I'm not convinced. It seems to me that PEACE is not concerned precisely with Weer's inability to act or love, but with something more difficult to grasp--something about the way the story of his life is really other people's story. I also would say that PEACE offers more hope for the repose of the soul of Weer than "Prufrock" does for poor Prufrock.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." - John 8:32

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William H. Ansley — 28 Feb 1999, 23:51 · follows Alex David Groce

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precisely with Weer's inability to act or love, but with something more  
difficult to grasp--something about the way the story of his life is really  
other people's story.

Alex David Groce,

Thank you. I think this is the single most insightful comment I've ever read about \_Peace\_, which is my favorite work by Wolfe. As soon as I get a chance I'm going to have to read \_Peace\_ again with this in mind. I think it will help me make more sense of it.

William Ansley