IMAGE AND SYMBOL

IN

THE ALEXANDRIA QUARTET

"THE HERALDIC ASPECT OF REALITY":

A CONSIDERATION OF

CERTAIN IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

IN

THE ALEXANDRIA QUARTET

By

SANDRA ELIZABETH COWAN, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

October 1965

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I

INTRODUCTION

> "Fact is unstable by its very nature. Narouz once said to me that he loved the desert because there 'the wind blew out one's footsteps like candle-flames.' So it seems to me does reality. How then can we hunt for the truth?"[1]

So Balthazar, in the book of the same name, attempts to give Darley some insight into the protean nature of the reality he is attempting to "rework". In an interview recorded by the Paris Review on April 23, 1959, Balthazar's creator discusses in far more colloquial terms the same problem.

> Einstein torpedoed the old Victorian material universe -- in other words the view of matter -- and Freud torpedoed the idea of the stable ego so that personality began to diffuse. Thus in the concept of the space-time continuum you've got an absolutely new concept of what reality might be, do you see? Well, this novel is a four-dimensional dance, a relativity poem . . . . The thoughts which followed from it [the continuum concept] and which I hope will be sort of visible, as it were, in the construction of the thing, will be, first of all, the ego as a series of masks, which Freud stated, a depersonalization which was immediately carried over the border by Jung and Groddeck and company to end up -- where ... but in Hindu metaphysics? In other words, the non-personality attitude to the human being is a purely Eastern one; it is a confluence that is now approaching in psychology. Simultaneously, this fascinating theory of indeterminacy -- which I'm told you can't demonstrate except mathematically -- is precisely the same thing in space-time physics, so to speak.

---

[1] Lawrence Durrell, Balthazar (London, 1958), 102. In subsequent references to the four volumes of the Quartet, only the initial letter of the title and the page number will be used.

> So that I regard those two things as the cosmological touchpoints, as it were, of our attitude to reality today.[2]

In effect Durrell uses the pronouncements of modern science and psychology as a basic metaphor for his particular representation of the cosmology. If, as Balthazar states, truth is what most contradicts itself in time (B. 23), if there is no longer any such entity as an object-in-itself, if personality is no longer understood as a discrete, self-willing ego, twentieth century man is indeed wandering in that very desert whose obliterating wind Narouz loved. Durrell believes that it is the role of the artist to attempt some kind of representation of this new concept of reality. Again to quote Durrell in the Paris Review interview:

> The theme of art is the theme of life itself. This artificial distinction between artists and human beings is precisely what we are all suffering from. An artist is only someone unrolling and digging out and excavating the areas normally accessible to normal people everywhere, and exhibiting them as a sort of scarecrow to show people what can be done with ourselves.

He continues --

> . . . in every age we are all trying ... we're all as artists, attacking as a battalion on a very broad front. Individual and temperamental personalities are incidental to the general attack and what we as artists are trying to do is to sum up in a sort of metaphor the cosmology of a particular moment in which we are living.[3]

---

[2] "Lawrence Durrell", in Writers at Work, introduced by Van Wyck Brooks (2nd series; New York, 1965), 279.

[3] Ibid., 277.

The artist is involved in the development of one aspect of a culture, and culture for Durrell has the expected universal application.

> What is this "culture"? I take this word to mean the sum, at any given time, of all the efforts man is making to interpret the universe about him.[4]

Yet in the preface to Balthazar, after his "space-time soup-mix" explication, Durrell categorically announces that "the central topic of the book is an investigation of modern love." (B. 7) But as Lionel Trilling points out,

> No one who has formed an idea of love from contemporary American and British fiction is likely to take for granted what Mr. Durrell is writing about; no one is going to find it easy to believe that what he is investigating is really modern love.[5]

The love Durrell investigates, according to Trilling, is "obsessive, corrosive, desperate, highly psychologized."[6] It can be so qualified because Durrell regards the concept of love in a special sense -- the Old Testament sense of "knowing". Love so regarded -- as Durrell points out -- is related to the basic theme of art and life, the development of that awareness which constitutes the coming of age of the artist. I quote from an interview published by Encounter:

> When you read Clea I hope you will feel that Darley was necessarily as he was in Justine because the whole business of the four books, apart from

---

[4] Lawrence Durrell, A Key to Modern British Poetry (University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 1.

[5] Lionel Trilling, "The Quartet: Two Reviews", in Harry T. Moore, ed., The World of Lawrence Durrell (New York, 1964), 52.

[6] Ibid., 53.

> other things, shows the way an artist grows up. The books are really a sort of thesis in poetic illumination. I wanted to show in the floundering Darley, how an artist may have first-class equipment and still not be one.

When asked whether this theme is not contradictory to that stated in the Balthazar Preface, Durrell replies:

> . . . it ties in in numerous ways. For example I am trying to illustrate the bi-sexual Eros which Freud disinterred after it had been lost, virtually since Plato. That is why I deal so freely with love in all its aspects. But in the last volume . . . I am trying to develop the idea that the sexual act is our "knowing" machine. It is the point d'appui of the psyche; and you can determine much about a culture or a civilisation from its approach to sex.[7]

Because of the nature of this "investigation of modern love", a consideration of Durrell's delineation of character is unavoidable. He is artistically concerned with the blurring of the old precise subject-object view of the universe which he sees Einstein's relativity theory as achieving. The portrayal of character (which I shall be considering primarily in terms of imagery) is therefore functionally important in the bodying forth of reality as it can be known, since the subjective element is both philosophically (if that is not too august a term for Durrell's theorizing) and artistically inescapable. The phrase "modern love" itself is left ambiguous, and probably

---

[7] Kenneth Young, "A Dialogue with Durrell", Encounter (December, 1959), 62. The view of sex as knowledge, it should be noted, is not Lawrentian. In the same interview Durrell states, "Lawrence cuts the tree down, and emphasizes only the dark roots; I would like the tree to blossom the other way round, and this can come about only from the happy marriage of reason and intuition." Loc. cit.

deliberately so. The word "modern" is meant, I believe, to involve all those aspects of the twentieth century climate of thought which Durrell discusses in his one book of criticism, Key to Modern British Poetry. Part of that climate of thought which Durrell regards as of utmost importance is the new view of personality promulgated by psychology. Especially significant for Durrell are the writings of Georg Walther Groddeck, who used Freud's discoveries to develop his own theory, the essence of which is that the willing "ego" is only a function of a much larger unknown and ultimately unknowable force which he designates the "It". In his view this force, not the conscious will, governs human personality. It is interesting in this regard to note that Trilling in the second of his two reviews of the Quartet, published after the emergence of the final volume, confesses himself bothered that "all the novels, and the Quartet as a whole, stand in a peculiar negative relation to the will."[8] They do so because Alexandria itself to an extent functions like Groddeck's "It" in the influence it exerts on the lives of its inhabitants.

The most important aspect of Durrell's characterization is the emergence of the true artist, which implies the discovery of symbolism -- an insight into the nature of that Durrellian entity, the "heraldic universe." And this in turn involves the attempt to resolve and integrate the art-life dichotomy, to apprehend and express the significance of human experience. Durrell's own use of image and

---

[8] Trilling, in Moore, 57.

symbol is therefore intimately related to his portrayal of character and to his delineation of the world those characters experience.

II

THE MIRROR

Leon Edel has not much respect for what he calls Durrell's "pseudoscientific terms".[9] In his criticism he stresses not the element of space-time -- where he considers Durrell's theorizing to be "only throwing dust in the reader's eyes"[10] -- but the subjective-objective elements. Charles Glicksberg, who shares Edel's psychological interest, refers also to this literary version of scientific Indeterminacy:

> The same action is presented from both "subjective" and "objective" points of view. What one gets in this way is not "truth", which can never be apprehended, but a closer approximation to the bewildering many-sidedness of "lived" or "existential" truth. In striving to reveal the infinite complexity of the modern soul, Durrell holds up a series of mirrors in his fiction: subjective, objective, impressionistic, introspective, environmental.[11]

The mirror is not an unlikely metaphor for Glicksberg to choose. In presenting that modern blurring of the subject-object relationship, the necessary one-sidedness, and therefore incompleteness of any one character's view; indeed in presenting any of the aspects of

---

[9] Leon Edel, The Modern Psychological Novel (New York, 1964), 186.

[10] Ibid., 188.

[11] Charles I. Glicksberg, The Self in Modern Literature (Pennsylvania, 1963), 93.

a situation particularized by Glicksberg, Durrell makes extensive use of the mirror image. In fact in his portrayal of Alexandrian character the mirror, the mask (as the Paris Review interview indicates) and the "spirit of place" (which bears a certain resemblance to the Groddeckian "It" concept) in their various manifestations are outstanding images. The "modern love" which Durrell purports to be examining provides a focus for this "contemporary" delineation of character. The Coptic conspiracy is only a plotting device which by its gradual revelation gives a stable structure to a novel series whose very premise -- indeterminacy -- would otherwise seem in imminent peril of obliteration. That Durrell is aware of the problems of giving form to a novel based on flux, on ever-changing conceptions of personality and the world as experienced, is evidenced by his discussion of Ulysses in Key to Modern British Poetry.

> Their [Joyce's and Proust's] books do not proceed along a straight line, but in a circular manner, coiling and uncoiling upon themselves, embedded in the stagnant flux and reflux of a medium which is always changing yet always the same. . . . Joyce in his Ulysses restricted himself to the events of a single day, magnified upon the screen of the new time-idea. Fully aware that in treating time like this he might lay himself open to formlessness in his art, Joyce took the wise precaution of modelling his book upon The Odyssey. The relationship is a very artificial one and if Ulysses has form in the ordinary sense we must thank Homer for it.[12]

Durrell seeks a form natural to the work itself. Significantly the conspiracy is most fully revealed in the "naturalistic" novel, Mountolive which Durrell, in a letter to Henry Miller dated January,

---

[12] Durrell, Key, 31-32.

1958, describes as the "fulcrum" of the series.[13] The complexities of the novel balance on the political plot; significances radiate from this centre, connected, not causally but by a sort of prismatic refraction. Pursewarden's suggestion to Darley in "My Conversations with Brother Ass", the central section of Clea, seems a fairly concise statement of Durrell's own intent:

> . . . if you wished to be -- I do not say original but merely contemporary -- you might try a four-card trick in the form of a novel; passing a common axis [the Coptic conspiracy?] through four stories, say, and dedicating each to one of the four winds of heaven. A continuum, forsooth, embodying not a temps retrouvé but a temps délivré. The curvature of space itself [a non-logical interconnection of events?] would give you stereoscopic narrative, while human personality seen across a continuum would perhaps become prismatic? Who can say? I throw the idea out. I can imagine a form which, if satisfied, might raise in human terms the problem of causality or indeterminacy.... And nothing very recherché either. Just an ordinary Girl Meets Boy story. But tackled in this way you would not, like most of your contemporaries, be drowsily cutting along a dotted line! (C. 135-36)

A prism breaks a whole into its component parts. Durrell's structural metaphor, the continuum of space-time, must similarly shatter the whole in terms of human personality into its constituents. The various aspects of personality -- the facets -- are themselves frequently reflected by the mirrors, both actual and metaphoric, which recur in the Quartet.

---

[13] Lawrence Durrell, in George Wickes, ed., Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller A Private Correspondence (New York, 1964), 327.

It is significant that both Arnauti and Darley meet Justine in the mirror. Of the whole gallery of characters in the Quartet Justine is the one most often reflected, since she is also the one who most consistently, in her phrase, presents "more than one profile at a time." (J. 23) She is frequently found at her dressing table, confronting her reflection in the mirror; she is in the habit (as are several of the Quartet characters) of soliloquizing to herself in the mirror; and very frequently her interlocutors are incapable of reassembling the prismatically reflected facets of her being to apprehend her true nature. Of these Arnauti and Darley are outstanding for their failure to comprehend.

The mirror in which Arnauti meets Justine is symbolic of their ensuing relationship. His description is imbued with the subjectivity of his own view of Alexandria and its inhabitants, and it is to stress this essential, this ineluctable subjectivity that Durrell has his narrator quote the actual words of Arnauti's book:

> "In the vestibule of this moribund hotel the palms splinter and refract their motionless fronds in the gilt-edged mirrors. Only the rich can afford to stay permanently -- those who live on in the guilt-edged security of a pensionable old age. I am looking for cheaper lodgings. In the lobby tonight a small circle of Syrians, heavy in their dark suits, and yellow in their scarlet tarbushes, solemnly sit. Their hippopotamus-like womenfolk, lightly moustached, have jingled off to bed in their jewellry. The men's curious soft oval faces and effeminate voices are busy upon jewel-boxes -- for each of these brokers carries his choicest jewels with him in a casket; and after dinner the talk has turned to male jewellry. It is all the mediterranean world has left to talk about; a self-interest, a narcissism which comes from sexual exhaustion expressing itself in the possessive symbol: so that, meeting a man you are at once informed what he is worth, and meeting his wife you are told in the same breathless whisper what her dowry was.

> They croon like eunuchs over the jewels, turning them this way and that in the light to appraise them. They flash their sweet white teeth in little feminine smiles. They sigh. A white-robed waiter with a polished ebony face brings coffee. A silver hinge flies open upon heavy white (like the thighs of Egyptian women) cigarettes each with its few flecks of hashish. A few grains of drunkenness before bedtime. I have been thinking about the girl I met last night in the mirror: dark on marble-ivory white: glossy black hair: deep suspiring eyes in which one's glances sink because they are nervous, curious, turned to sexual curiosity. She pretends to be a Greek but she must be Jewish. It takes a Jew to smell out a Jew; and neither of us has the courage to confess our true race. I have told her I am French. Sooner or later we shall find one another out." (J. 57)

It is a long passage, but worth quoting in full. Arnauti, like Darley, is himself attempting to rework reality, and this initial account of his encounter with Justine is ordered according to the dictates of his own personality. The details are significant. The room, through Arnauti's eyes, is both effete and decadent, the atmosphere suffocating and drugged. Particularly striking is the visual pun in the conjunction of "gilt-edged" and "guilt-edged", the one bearing associations of rigidity and fragility, transforming the palms, surely alive and natural, into images of artificiality, lifeless, easily shattered; the other similarly corrupting the human beings, changing them into the soft unhealthy victims of a creeping psychological disease. The disease itself is seen in terms of sex, a loss of vitality, spontaneity, potency, and a cancerous growth of inverted narcissism made manifest by the effeminate delight in jewellry. Into this ambiance comes Justine, herself reflected in those very gilt-edged (and by association guilt-edged) mirrors. And for Arnauti she is forever in the throes of that wasting sexual disease of

possessive narcissism with which his own subjectivism infects her. Later he refers to their love as "a sort of mental possession which trapped us both and set us to drift upon the shallow tepid waters of Mareotis like spawning frogs, a prey to instincts based in lassitude and heat. . . ." (J. 59) Like Darley, believing Justine to be a prey to the anxieties which haunt him, Arnauti assumes her love for him to resemble his for her. Later still, reverting to their meeting, Arnauti considers it symbolically appropriate. His meaning is up to the reader to decipher:

> "I have already described how we met -- in the long mirrors of the Cecil, before the open door of the ballroom, on a night of carnival. The first words we spoke were spoken, symbolically enough, in the mirror. She was there with a man who resembled a cuttle-fish and who waited while she examined her dark face attentively. I stopped to adjust an unfamiliar bow-tie. She had a hungry natural candour which seemed proof against any suggestion of forwardness as she smiled and said: 'There is never enough light.' To which I responded without thought 'For women perhaps. We men are less exigent.' We smiled and I passed her on my way to the ballroom, ready to walk out of her mirror-life forever, without a thought. Later the hazards of one of those awful English dances, called the Paul Jones I believe, left me facing her for a waltz." (J. 62)

The symbolically appropriate mirror here is both a barrier (they see only the shallow reflected image of each other) and a revelation of narcissism. Not unnaturally under the circumstances, but still significantly, both are concerned with personal appearance. The reference to light is perhaps also symbolic. As events prove, it is not Justine but Arnauti who frets about insufficient light. It becomes his obsession to atomize her in the harsh glare of scientific investigation. No wonder the poor girl gets hysterical. Even the

seemingly innocent Paul Jones later attains cosmic proportions and becomes almost a kind of Shiva-dance of creation and destruction. (B. 233-34) But this last is an insight of Darley's and beyond Arnauti's destiny ever to achieve.

The meeting of Justine and Darley is similarly involved with his attitude to Alexandria. A more literary writer than Arnauti (who is, in Pursewarden's phrase, a "psychopomp") Darley is confronted by Justine after a lecture he has given on the Old Man of the City, the poet Cavafy. Where Arnauti's preoccupations with psychology are to the fore in his attribution of narcissism to the Syrian businessmen, and by association to Justine, Darley's rather academic interest in Alexandria and his characteristic "longing to be on the right side of the Mediterranean" (J. 27) are strongly juxtaposed. After his lecture he is lured into a grocer's shop by a tin of olives in the window:

> . . . sitting down at a marble table in that gruesome light I began to eat Italy, its dark scorched flesh, hand-modelled spring soil, dedicated vines. . . . She came into the shop with swift and resolute suddenness and said, with the air of authority that Lesbians, or women with money, assume with the obviously indigent: "What did you mean by your remark about the antinomian nature of irony?" -- or some such sally which I have forgotten.
>
> Unable to disentangle myself from Italy I looked up boorishly and saw her leaning down at me from the mirrors on three sides of the room, her dark thrilling face full of a troubled, arrogant reserve. . . . She looked to me a trifle unbalanced, as she watched me with a candour I found embarrassing -- it was as if she were trying to decide to what use I could be put. (J. 27)

Of course she is trying to decide precisely that, but the reader doesn't discover her real purpose till the revelations of the third

volume. Darley is here surrounded by reflections of Justine. Throughout his relationship with her he is unable to disentangle himself from her overbearing image. She appears to him tortuously and torturingly complex. As there are here three reflections he becomes aware of a multiplicity of Justine's -- the dissatisfied wife of Nessim, the Lesbian lover of Clea, the Rachel-like mother searching for her child, the unrequited lover of Pursewarden, the coarse Jewish labourer of Clea's report, and the moody, empty victim of life he finds on his return to Alexandria in the final volume. All of them are true images in that they mirror a reality, but it is a reality that Darley perhaps never wholly apprehends. Again it is the objective volume, Mountolive, which makes this revelation to the reader. Nessim, the omniscient author tells us, is able to penetrate to the reality beyond the reflections, to reassemble the perplexing prisms of her personality. By entrusting her with the secret of the conspiracy, he offers her a life lived in the presence of death:

> His image had suddenly been metamorphosed. It was now lit with a new, a rather terrifying grandeur. As she smoked and watched him, she saw someone different in his place -- an adventurer, a corsair, dealing with the lives and deaths of his men; his power too, the power of his money, gave a sort of tragic backcloth to the design. She realized now that he was not seeing her -- the Justine thrown back by polished mirrors, or engraved in expensive clothes and fards -- but something even closer than the chamber-mate of a passional life.
>
> This was a Faustian compact he was offering her. There was something more surprising: for the first time she felt desire stir within her, in the loins of that discarded, pre-empted body which she regarded only as a pleasure-seeker, a mirror reference to reality. There came over her an unexpected lust to sleep with him -- no, with his plans, his dreams, his obsessions, his money, his death! (M. 201)

In another chapter we shall have occasion to examine Justine's connection with masks and death. Certainly she represents one aspect of the modern love Durrell purports to be examining -- a profound world-weariness which presents different images, subjectively interpreted, to the lover, but which is, in essence, a desire to unite with the nihilism which is felt to be the basis, the fond of human life. Darley represents an opposing aspect, the creative, not the destructive, and so he perceives Justine only as she impinges on his personality. Again it is in Mountolive that this mirroring quality of love becomes explicit:

> . . . cafés sweet with the trilling of singing birds whose cages were full of mirrors to give them the illusion of company. The love-songs of birds to companions they imagined -- which were only reflections of themselves! How heartbreakingly they sang, these illustrations of human love. (M. 286)

Darley is attracted by Alexandria, and by Justine almost as an embodiment of the city. He has an artist's sensitivity to her surroundings, he studies Alexandria's poetry, but he remains an outsider. It is perhaps this very studiousness that most links him to the other side of the Mediterranean. This Durrell would seem to be implying early in Justine. Justine, in her characteristic pose at the dressing table -- "She is combing that dark head in the mirror, her mouth and eyes drawn up about a cigarette" -- speaks to Darley:

> Regard dérisoire . . . . How is it you are so much one of us and yet ... you are not? . . . You are a mental refugee of course, being Irish, but you miss our angoisse. (J. 34)

And Darley launches forth, using her remark, in his narration, as a cue

to expatiate on the spirit of place. Here the problem of the commentator becomes complex. The book explicitly is a subjective account of Darley's view. And yet the author's artistic purpose lies behind the narrator's purported one. We have Justine in the guise of temptress, combing her hair, and we have a sensitive artist pouring forth his impression of place, his awareness of history. Justine's angoisse is surely an expression of the spirit of place as we shall see when we come to consider the Alexandrian milieu in detail, but Darley somehow misses the significance. He perceives the influences, but misunderstands them. To him their love is a "mental tenderness which emphasizes loneliness rather than expurgates it." (J. 35) The loneliness for him is there because Justine does not really love. Alexandrian love is not lonely but, in Clea's phrase, "death-propelled" (M. 197) -- as Darley himself will later realize in Clea's arms as the bombs fall. He is as yet isolated by his habit of analysis (and one must remember that the whole account is written in the isolation of a Greek island, "on the right side of the Mediterranean"); he attributes to Justine, and all Alexandrian lovers, the "mental tenderness" which is both his characteristic and all Justine can offer him. But what of the mirror here? It can, on a first reading, be simply the manifestation of narcissism on Justine's part. Justine herself, however, is rarely narcissistic in this sense. We are told, for example, on two occasions (once, interestingly enough, in Darley's account and once in that of the omniscient author) that "she knew her beauty was only an advertisement and kept it fresh with disdain." (B. 63, and M. 203) The difference is that Darley immediately qualifies

his sentence by the ambiguous phrase, "No, somewhere she was truly a woman." In the scene we have been discussing, Justine's contemplation of her reflection has none of the marks of self-admiration. The unattractive pucker of mouth and eyes is evidence of this. More likely she is seeing herself as Darley sees her, thereby realizing how very far he is from perceiving her as she is. Her angoisse is not emptiness as he believes, but a kind of quest for knowledge of the absolutes of life and death. For the conspiracy she deceives Darley, and through the conspiracy she tries to achieve that quest.

For this and other similar reasons I would disagree with the perhaps too limited view of George Steiner when he remarks of Durrell's characters that

> . . . they are cut from the same fragile and luminous stone and so they reflect each other like mirrors disposed in cunning perspectives. Mirrors play a crucial symbolic rôle throughout the action (as they do in Sade). And it is a dangerous rôle; for although they multiply vision and drive it inward, they also shut it off from the outside. In Durrell even the sea is a pool for Narcissus.[14]

Mirrors do not necessarily shut off vision from the outside. Often they reflect an exterior which is subjectively interpreted, not by the subject himself, but by a second observer. Often too the mirror symbolizes preoccupation not with self-admiration, but with the perception of some flaw. And frequently the very mirror itself in which the character examines himself illustrates some aspect of his life, or his situation.

---

[14] George Steiner, "Lawrence Durrell: The Baroque Novel", in Harry T. Moore, ed., The World of Lawrence Durrell, 21.

There are several examples of this latter use. Moeurs tells us, in one instance, of those long journeys to European specialists which Arnauti undertook in his attempt to restore Justine to what he felt to be mental health. The mirror occurs in a physiological context of disease.

> ". . . the flickering of steel rails over the arterial systems of Europe's body: steel ganglia meeting and dividing away across the mountains and valleys. Confronting one's face in the pimpled mirrors of the Orient Express. We carried her disease backwards and forwards over Europe like a baby until I began to despair, and even to imagine that perhaps Justine did not wish to be cured of it." (J. 70)

The reflected face becomes one with the ganglia, with the disease that is being so carefully nursed, and itself receives the imprint of the lesions which disfigure the whole relationship. Again Darley, despairing over his relationship to Justine, enters the booth of a prostitute in the native quarter.

> There was a tarbush lying upon the chair beside me and absently I put it on my head. It was faintly warm and sticky inside and the thick leather lining clung to my forehead. "I want to know what it really means" I told myself in a mirror whose cracks had been pasted over with the trimmings of postage stamps. I meant of course the whole portentous scrimmage of sex itself, the act of penetration which could lead a man to despair for the sake of a creature with two breasts and le croissant as the picturesque Levant slang has it. (J. 164)

The mirror is of course suitable to its locale, but it is more than a merely naturalistic image. Darley, in donning the ubiquitous tarbush (as does Mountolive in a later volume) reduces himself (and his sexual acts, symbolized by the prostitute) to the lowest common denominator. The mirror reflects him as such, but it is a mirror cracked, flawed, pasted over with postage stamp trimmings -- themselves

ubiquitous and commercial in their implications. It is a scene of denigration, investigating the crassness which remains when all aura of romance and tenderness has been stripped away from the commerce of man with woman. This impression is emphasized in Balthazar when it is discovered that the occupant of the booth during Darley's mirror-gazing is Narouz who is loving the image of Clea through the medium of the Arab prostitute. The whole experience of love indeed appears again only the "love-songs of birds to companions they imagine -- which are only reflections of themselves." (M. 286) Through the prostitute Darley seeks to see himself as he is, Narouz as he would wish to be. The mirror itself perhaps reveals the truth of that particular situation -- an image of man cracked and partially obscured by the opaque patchings of a commercial substitution.

Again, the mirror in Melissa's dressing-room at the cabaret is an evocation of her situation. Nessim has sent his servant to bring her to his car.

> Melissa's dressing-room was an evil-smelling cubicle full of the coiled pipes which emptied the lavatories. She had a single poignant strip of cracked mirror, and a little shelf dressed with the kind of white paper upon which wedding cakes are built. Here she always set out the jumble of powders and crayons which she misused so fearfully. In this mirror the image of Selim blistered and flickered in the dancing gas-jets like a spectre from the underworld. (J. 175-76)

Melissa is wholly a pathetic creature. Durrell emphasizes the meanness of her way of life through the unsavory details of smell and lavatory piping. The mirror image itself is well handled. Significantly it is not patched, for Melissa is a woman of no pretense. The wedding-cake paper beneath it is again a detail

emphasizing the pathos of her life. Because she is so vulnerable (her wasting disease and her solitude are evidence of this) she is a woman who should be married, should have a constant protector. But it is her destiny never to achieve this state and to die in that very solitude she feels she has become, even though Pursewarden considers her a woman to whom one could be married, though it is Cohen's dying wish to place on her finger the rings he confides to Darley's care, and though Darley himself considers marriage imprecisely, in terms simply of a vague feeling that his future is somehow bound up with hers. Durrell may be open to the charge of obviousness in his explicit treatment of Selim as a Mephistophelean figure. It is a charge, however, from which Unterecker exonerates him. "The obvious and its importance," he remarks, "are sometimes missed by supersubtle minor novelists and major critics."[15] Here Durrell is preparing the ground for his later (in Mountolive) revelation of Selim as a suborned servant. He is not only an imagined threat to Melissa here -- the flickerings of the gas-jets being perhaps an objective correlative for the flickerings of her own fear at her indiscretion -- he is a threat as yet unrealized to the master to whom Darley believes him so faithful.

In another passage the mirror image is used in conjunction with an image of opaque glass to further delineate Melissa's character. Pursewarden, moved by her solitude, pays her well to return to his hotel -- the "Mount Vulture" -- with him:

---

[15] John Unterecker, Lawrence Durrell, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers, No. 6 (Columbia University Press, 1964), 37.

> The old dirty lift, its seats trimmed with dusty brown braid and its mirrors with rotting lace curtains, jerked them slowly upwards into the cobwebbed gloom. . . . Outside the door he kissed her slowly and deliberately, pressing into the soft cone of her pursed lips until their teeth met with a slight click and a jar. She neither responded to him nor withdrew, presenting her small expressionless face to him (sightless in the gloom) like a pane of frosted glass. (M. 170)

The sordid surroundings are suitable to Melissa in her role as prostitute, (indeed it is significant that in the final volume of the Quartet Pursewarden's erstwhile hotel has become a brothel), but they embody only the external view. Melissa protects herself against her position by a deliberate opacity. She reflects nothing, she reveals nothing. Durrell's use of the image of frosted glass in contrast to the multifarious mirror images which interreflect throughout his work effectively isolates Melissa from her acts. Unlike Justine she is not deliberately promiscuous, and unlike the Arab prostitute she preserves a kind of integrity in her dealings with men.

Mountolive is perhaps the character of the Quartet most subject to narcissism. The mirrors in which he examines himself trace the course of that self-admiration, from its beginnings to its ebb. Significantly it is Leila, in their rather overtly Oedipal relationship, who sets him contemplating what he becomes aware are his perfections. His first venturing into that fascinating terrain of the self is suitably associated with a mirror.

> At the outset his own feelings somewhat confused him, but he was unused to introspection, unfamiliar so to speak with the entail of his own personality -- in a word, as he was young, he successfully dismissed

> them. (All this he repeated in his own mind afterwards, recalling every detail gravely to himself as he shaved in the old-fashioned mirror or tied a tie. He went over the whole business obsessively, time and again, as if vicariously to provoke and master the whole new range of emotions which Leila had liberated in him. (M. 27-28)

His tendency towards narcissism reaches its peak with his appointment as ambassador to Egypt. He revels in the admiration of his chancery, collects press-clippings, and delights in the image he presents in full ambassadorial rig, despite its discomfort:

> Mountolive wrestled in a desultory tormented fashion with his uniform. Skinners had done wonders with it -- it fitted like a glove; but the weight of it. . . . At any rate, it became him. He was quite surprised to see how handsome he looked in a mirror. (M. 131)

Steiner's judgement that mirrors multiply vision, drive it inward, and shut it off from the outside is most applicable to Mountolive. Immersed in the kind of self-admiration his position promotes he becomes more an estimable diplomatic figure than a man. Frederick Karl perceives Mountolive as he appears to the world: he is

> complacent, believes in the mystique of the British Empire and pursues his affairs with a sharp sense of self-control -- he has little left over for imagination. Prosaic, expedient to a degree, a figure operating in the large social world, Mountolive is a successful diplomat, and that, as Pursewarden recognizes, precludes the man from becoming fully human.[16]

What Karl apparently fails to recognize is that Mountolive himself progressively becomes aware of his own deficiencies of character, and through that awareness does in time become "fully human".

---

[16] Frederick Karl, A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel (New York, 1962), 57.

As gradually he loses the illusion that he is free to act, as he becomes emmeshed in the sticky web of political stalemate, the mirror becomes, not a "pool for Narcissus" but a disturbing revelation of inner emptiness.

> He bathed and dressed slowly, deliberately, concentrating his mind on a choice of clothes suitable for his mid-morning official call, tying his tie carefully in the mirror. "I shall soon have to change my life radically" he thought "or it will become completely empty. How best should that be done?" Somewhere in the link of cause and effect he detected a hollow space which crystallized in his mind about the word "companionship". He repeated it aloud to himself in the mirror. Yes, there was where a lack lay. "I shall have to get myself a dog" he thought, somewhat pathetically, "to keep me company." (M. 239)

The lack of companionship, of "something to look after" (ibid.) is perhaps the result of the inversion upon the self which an ambassador's life can entail. Certainly this would appear to be the situation of that other ambassadorial figure, Sir Louis, communing with his reflection. The emphasis there seems to be not on narcissism as such, but on a kind of lack of personal communication with others caused by the imprisonment in the self which a position of power necessitates. Sir Louis talks to Mountolive by addressing his own reflection:

> [He] whistled dispiritedly at his own reflection in the great mirror as he dressed himself. (M. 76)

> Sir Louis retired to the bathroom and began scrubbing his false teeth under the tap. "And the next Honours List?" he shouted into the small mirror on the wall. "You'll wait for that?"

And again:

> Recently the Foreign Office had complained that the Mission's despatches were lacking in balance. This had infuriated Sir Louis. He was fired even by the most fugitive memory of the slight. Putting down his empty glass he went on to himself in the mirror. . . . (M. 77)

The loneliness of his position is forcibly brought home to Mountolive by the Hosnani's involvement in an anti-British conspiracy. It is a shattering of his idealistic view of Egypt, his Egyptian friends, and his own position there. His growing despondency -- which reaches a climax, as we shall later see, in the house of child prostitutes -- is reflected by the mirrors in which he has occasion to see himself.

> Hate for an image of Nessim whose features had somehow -- as if by a trick of double-exposure -- become merged with those of a saturnine Maskelyne, flooded him again. Crossing the hall he caught sight of his own face in the great pier-glass and was surprised to notice that it wore an expression of feeble petulance. (M. 252)

Gradually Mountolive, in realizing this essential feebleness, loses all sense of admiration for himself.

> The next ten days passed in a sort of dream, punctuated only by the intermittent stabbings of a reality which was no longer a drug, a dissipation which gagged his nerves; his duties were a torment of boredom. He felt immeasurably expended, used up, as he confronted his face in the bathroom mirror, presenting it to the razor's edge with undisguised distaste. He had become quite noticeably grey now at the temples. (M. 275)

Characteristically the disgust is seen in terms of physical attributes.

Mountolive is the objective volume, and in it this use of the mirror at least is relatively straight-forward -- a device to emphasize the progressive degeneration of character, and that character's awareness of his degeneration. Thus far we have seen mirrors emphasizing the subjectively interpreted view of one

character (Justine) by another; mirrors which in themselves reveal to the reader a predominant aspect of a situation; and mirrors which reveal a progressive self-awareness. There remain to be considered mirrors which reflect a kind of deliberate deception undertaken by a particular character or which stress a momentary awareness that the image one presents to the world is calculated, and mirrors which involve a yet wider symbolic significance intended by the author himself.

Nessim, after (as Mountolive so explicitly tells us) deliberately lying to Clea concerning his motives for marrying Justine, looks in the mirror for a kind of confirmation of his deception.

> Then, remembering, he brushed his dark hair back swiftly, impatiently, in the mirror, trying suddenly to imagine how he must look to Justine. (M. 196)

Of his reaction to her final acceptance of his suit we are given two versions. In both he has returned to his office. Balthazar's version, reconstructed by Darley, is as follows:

> . . . appalled by the thought that whatever he might write to Clea might sound mawkish, he tore the note up and folded his arms. After a long moment of thought he picked up the polished telephone and dialled Capodistria's number. "Da Capo" he said quietly. "You remember my plans for marrying Justine? All is well." He replaced the receiver slowly, as if it weighed a ton, and sat staring at his own reflection in the polished desk. (B. 64)

It is interesting to compare directly with this the account of the same incident in Mountolive. There is no attempted letter to Clea.

> It was some hours later, when he was sitting at his desk, that Nessim, after a long moment of thought, picked up the polished telephone

> and dialled Capodistria's number. "Da Capo," he said quietly, "you remember my plans for marrying Justine? All is well. We have a new ally. I want you to be the first to announce it to the committee. I think now they will show no more reservation about my not being a Jew -- since I am to be married to one. What do you say?" He listened with impatience to the ironical congratulations of his friend. "It is impertinent," he said at last, coldly, "to imagine that I am not motivated by feelings as well as by designs. As an old friend I must warn you not to take that tone with me. My private life, my private feelings, are my own. If they happen to square with other considerations, so much the better. But do not do me the injustice of thinking me without honour. I love her." He felt quite sick as he said the words: sick with a sudden self-loathing. Yet the word was utterly exact -- love!
>
> Now he replaced the receiver slowly, as if it weighed a ton, and sat staring at his own reflection in the polished desk. He was telling himself: "It is all that I am not as a man which she thinks she can love. Had I no such plans to offer her, I might have pleaded with her for a century. What is the meaning of this little four-letter word we shake out of our minds like poker-dice -- love?" His self-contempt almost choked him. (M. 203)

The two accounts form one of the more outstanding examples of a sliding panel sliding in the novel's structure. Balthazar's Interlinear, we discover in Clea, is itself both revelation and deception. He cannot divulge to Darley any cognizance of the conspiracy, and what knowledge he does have is presumably imperfect. His account, then, is a limited one, limited both by a necessarily distorted knowledge of the persons involved (for personality is seen only prismatically) and by a deliberate reticence. The objective recounting of the episode in Mountolive reveals the limitations of the subjective view. That the expanded account repeats in part the language of Balthazar is evidence of this.

Polished surfaces -- the telephone and the desk -- are prominent in both. Prominent then are the ideas of gloss and surface texture. Extended to personality, (the gloss is after all a reflecting medium) they tend to emphasize the sense in Nessim of playing a role, of presenting to the world a considered exterior. Seeing himself in the deliberately polished surface, he becomes aware of the essential artificiality of his position. Balthazar stresses the business aspect of the marriage -- the proferred cheque, Justine's misunderstanding of Nessim's purported motives, his stated unconcern with her confessed inability to love, his view of their marriage as "a delicate affair, . . . very much a question of manners." (B. 63) Nessim's later self-contemplation, left imprecise in its significance, conveys the impression of an accepted suitor seeing himself in his new role without exultation, the deliberation of his movements revealing a vague dissatisfaction with that role, perhaps because he does in fact too clearly "imagine how he must look to Justine." Mountolive clarifies the implications of the scene. Nessim can awaken love in Justine only -- and this is the important point of difference -- only by becoming for her a mirror as artificial as the desk. In the polished, deliberate surface he presents to her -- the image of himself as corsair and adventurer -- she can see herself a woman of power, gratifyingly embroiled in the issues of life and death. To revert to the quotation, it is in fact she and not he who is seeing "The Justine thrown back by polished mirrors, or engraved in expensive clothes and fards." Like those symbolic canaries Justine is in a sense loving the image of herself reflected in the confidences of an arch-

conspirator. He, on the other hand, seeing himself in the surface of his desk, realizes the extent of his artifice. And this realization, it seems, is the essence of that self-contempt here made explicit, in Balthazar only implied. Because he loves he deceives -- he offers an image of himself knowing it to be false; because he deceives he loathes himself. Appropriately enough the marriage of Justine and Nessim is haunted by mirrors which, as the conspiracy fails, become frozen into images of immobility -- masks and effigies. But that belongs to a later chapter.

The mirror when used symbolically may have associations of death about it, associations which seem at times rather reminiscent of Jean Cocteau's Orpheus, where Death comes and goes through the mirrors. The most extended association of the mirror with death occurs in that strange nocturnal confrontation of Narouz with his father. We are given a first intimation of its significance enigmatically in the "Workpoints" appended to Balthazar:

> Narouz always held in the back of his consciousness the memory of the moonlit room; his father sitting in the wheel-chair at the mirror, repeating the one phrase over and over again as he pointed the pistol at the looking-glass. (B. 249)

The "Workpoints", as the "Author's Note" of Clea tells us, are intended to indicate the implications which radiate from the main axis of the story-line. Narouz is an indistinctly sketched figure in Balthazar; the "Workpoints" indicate the development which follows in Mountolive. And there we have a detailed delineation of this crucial scene. Narouz awakens after a sleep to find his invalid father, whom he is accustomed to help to bed, gone. He discovers

him in his room:

> The moonlight shone directly on to the mirror, and by its reflected light he could see his father sitting upright in his chair, confronting his own image with an expression on his face which Narouz had never before seen. It was bleak and impassive, and in that ghostly derived light from the pier-glass it looked denuded of all human feeling, picked clean by the emotions which had been steadily sapping it. The younger son watched as if mesmerized. (Once, early in childhood, he had seen something like it -- but not quite as stern, not quite as withdrawn as this: yet something like it. That was when his father was describing the death of the evil factor Mahmoud, when he said grimly: "So they came and tied him to a tree. Et on lui a coupé les choses and stuffed them in his mouth." As a child it was enough just to repeat the words and recall the expression on his father's face to make Narouz feel on the point of fainting. Now this incident came back to him with redoubled terror as he saw the invalid confronting himself in a moonlit image, slowly raising the pistol to point it, not at his temple, but at the mirror, as he repeated in a hoarse croaking voice: "And now if she should fall in love, you know what you must do.") (M. 37-38)

Durrell is of course being highly psychological in the Freudian (and Groddeckian) sense. The basis of the scene rests in a kind of castration fear made explicit by Narouz' childhood memory. Narouz' dog-like solicitude for his father is apparently grounded in the ramifications of the castration fear raised by Freudian psychology. Leila's love for Mountolive is quite explicitly (again by means of a mirror reflection) related to her slightly incestuous love for Nessim. Narouz himself has somewhat Oedipal feelings for his mother, and thus, obscurely, his physical deformity is associated in the depths of his mind with the sexual impotence of his invalid father. Impotence is associated with death, both in the gruesome story

of the execution of the factor, and in the more general terms of a permanent loss of vitality, the power to engender life. The light in the room is ghostly, emphasizing the fleshlessness, so to speak, of the invalid. The use of light here could perhaps be interpreted archetypally. Opposed to the masculine principle of the life-giving sun we have the cold derived light of the passive, and therefore feminine moon. And psychology claims to find in the female a castrated male. More explicit is the confrontation of the father with the image of a sexually wounded man. The mirror-image is the image of his fear -- that the loss of potency will lose him his wife. It is the invalid in him that he wishes to destroy. After this confrontation the attitude of Narouz to Mountolive changes. The pistol which the threat of Mountolive's vitality directs at the ghostly image of his father is also directed at his own deformity. The mirror reveals a kind of sexual death.

Mountolive himself experiences with Leila a kind of Liebestod which is symbolically represented in terms of a mirror image. The visual effect here at least is reminiscent of Cocteau's film version of Orphée where liquid mirrors ripple at the passage of Death and the Death-led.

> . . . she was there so close, harmlessly close, smiling and wrinkling up her nose, that he could only take her in his arms, stumbling forward like a man into a mirror. Their muttering images met now like reflections on a surface of lake-water. His mind dispersed into a thousand pieces winging away into the desert around them. (M. 28)

To continue the analogy, Durrell's obliterating and dispersive desert is not unlike the surrealistic landscape which lies the other side of Cocteau's mirrors.

Darley, meditating in Justine on Pursewarden's death (and the death of the artist is the predominant theme of the Orpheus myth) again uses the image of the mirror, and again in this liquid sense. Pursewarden, for the purposes of Darley's writing, has not ceased to exist:

> . . . he has simply stepped into the quicksilver of a mirror as we all must -- to leave our illnesses, or evil acts, the hornet's nest of our desires, still operative for good or evil in the real world -- which is the memory of our friends. (J. 104)

And on the next page he describes Pursewarden's speaking of the tremendous ignorance which is needed in order to approach God:

> . . . I remember, too, that in the very act of speaking thus about religious ignorance he straightened himself and caught sight of his pale reflection in the mirror. The glass was raised to his lips, and now, turning his head he squirted out upon his own glittering reflection a mouthful of the drink. That remains clearly in my mind; a reflection liquefying in the mirror of that shabby, expensive room which seems now so appropriate a place for the scene which must have followed later that night.

I am not claiming an influence here, (Durrell, in discussing the influences he has felt has not to my knowledge mentioned Cocteau), but I do see a certain resemblance of visual effect, and perhaps of symbolic intent. Certainly Leon Edel would disagree with this last instance. He stresses, not the obliterating (and therefore death-like) effect of the liquefying image, but the act of spitting itself, not symbolism but realism. Durrell, according to Edel, is studying "the duplications and substitutions of love", and he speaks of "the self-love (and self-contempt) Pursewarden shows when he sees his visage in a mirror and spits out his drink upon

that image."[17] If the act of spitting denotes self-contempt, it is self-contempt of a very special kind, the self-contempt of the artist. God is perhaps an aspect of that "heraldic reality" which both Durrell and Pursewarden believe to be the true realm of art and which is explicitly linked to symbolism:

> Symbolism! The abbreviation of language into poem. The heraldic aspect of reality! (C. 137)

And symbolism itself is explained in terms of mirrors --

> . . . symbolism contained in form and pattern is only a frame of reference through which, as in a mirror, one may glimpse the idea of a universe at rest, a universe in love with itself. (C. 143)

Pursewarden's gesture signifies self-contempt only to the extent that he is momentarily obliterating the reflection of the self, symbolically perhaps to clear the surface for that greater reflection. And this may explain to a degree Pursewarden's habit of writing messages and quotations on his shaving mirror. (In his final telephone call to Nessim he remarks, "There is a message for you in an appropriate place: the mirror." (M. 215)) One further instance of this association of mirror and artist deserves mention. Here Pursewarden is advising Clea.

> "'First you have to know and understand intellectually what you want to do -- then you have to sleepwalk a little to reach it. The real obstacle is oneself. I believe that artists are composed of vanity, indolence and self-regard. Work-blocks are caused by a swelling-up of the ego on one or all of these fronts. You get a bit scared about the

---

[17] Leon Edel, The Modern Psychological Novel, 189.

> imaginary importance of what you are doing! Mirror-worship. My solution would be to slap a poultice on the inflamed parts -- tell your ego to go to hell and not make a misery of what should be essentially fun, joy.'" (C. 110)

The liquefying reflection seems then to combine the ideas both of death and of contempt -- the artist's contempt for himself, which leads to the destruction of the ego, and enables him to make the leap into that greater world which implies a kind of eternity -- the heraldic universe.

Durrell takes as epigraph to Balthazar an enigmatic quotation from de Sade.

> The mirror sees the man as beautiful, the mirror loves the man; another mirror sees the man as frightful and hates him; and it is always the same being who produces the impressions. (B. [8])

Curtis Cate hazards the following interpretation:

> All knowledge, in the prismatic universe of human relationships, is fragmentary at best; and just as it is from others that we sometimes learn the truth about our closest friends, so it is from others that we learn the truth about ourselves. This is the key to Durrell's fascination with mirrors; also, it explains the quotation from the Marquis de Sade's Justine which Durrell has prefixed to Balthazar.[18]

The mirrors literal and figurative reflect, as we have seen, the prisms of personality. Again, because they are representational and subjectively or symbolically interpreted they are also inextricably related to the underlying theme of art in the Quartet. There are,

---

[18] Curtis Cate, "Lawrence Durrell", The Atlantic Monthly (December, 1961), 67.

however, still other mirrors in the novels, mirrors natural to Alexandria itself: its harbour reflections, the flat salt mirror of Lake Mareotis, the mirages of the desert. They, like the others, see man as beautiful or frightful, but unlike the others are themselves a function of something larger -- the spirit of place.

III

THE SPIRIT OF PLACE

To many commentators, Alexandria is the main character of the Quartet. In The Self in Modern Literature Glicksberg feels that "Alexandria is deployed as if it were in itself a living force, a character in its own right, a determining if obscure agent of fate. . . ."[19] His view is backed by Carl Bode:

> As to the setting: it is much more than a setting; that is the most striking thing about it. It is the main character itself. In its richly described changes, in its brilliant mingling of the magnificent and the mean, in its assault on every sense, it is to me the most memorable element in the Quartet.[20]

The city functions as a character in that it has motivating force. This Durrell makes clear on the first page of Justine.

> . . . I see at last that none of us is properly to be judged for what happened in the past. It is the city which should be judged though we, its children, must pay the price. (J. 11)

But the force of Alexandria is greater than that exerted by character in the conventional sense, greater even than would be possible for

---

[19] Glicksberg, 91.

[20] Carl Bode, "Durrell's Way to Alexandria", College English, XXII (1961), 535.

the hypothetical "super-character" suggested by Cecily Mackworth.[21] The spirit of place must be seen in more comprehensive terms, both psychological and metaphysical.

Durrell has variously indicated his interest in the writings of the psychoanalyst, Georg Groddeck.[22] Reading the Book of the It, one cannot fail to be struck by the resemblance between Groddeck's "It" and Durrell's Alexandria. A few quotations from Groddeck will suffice to outline his concept.

> I hold the view that man is animated by the Unknown, that there is within him an "Es," an "It," some wondrous force which directs both what he himself does, and what happens to him. The affirmation "I live" is only conditionally correct, it expresses only a small and superficial part of the fundamental principle, "Man is lived by the It."[23]
>
> I am by no means "I," but a continually changing form in which the It displays itself, and the "I"-feeling is one of its tricks to lead man astray in his self-knowledge, to render his self-deception easier, to

---

[21] Cecily Mackworth, "Lawrence Durrell and the New Romanticism", in Harry T. Moore, ed., The World of Lawrence Durrell, 28.

[22] See Durrell's discussion of Groddeck in A Key to Modern British Poetry, pp. 72-90, and his Introduction to Georg Groddeck, The Book of the It, trans. V. M. E. Collins (New York, 1961). This Introduction originally appeared in Horizon, XVII (June, 1948). In the interview conducted by Kenneth Young, Durrell remarks, ". . . ideas mean a great deal to me. Groddeck is particularly precious to me as he represents a type (doctor, poet, priest) which I feel is going to come again as soon as the sciences realize how near they are to one another." Encounter (December, 1959), 62.

[23] Georg Groddeck, op. cit., 11.

make of him life's pliant tool.[24]

> It is wholly a mistake to prize man's conscious intelligence and to ascribe to it the merit of everything that occurs; an understandable error, since it rests on man's feeling of omnipotence. In reality we are the tools of the It; it does with us what it will. . . . [25]

Many of Darley's (and therefore Durrell's) observations on Alexandria and the Alexandrian milieu are strongly reminiscent of Groddeck. I quote only two:

> I am thinking back to the time when for the four of us the known world hardly existed. . . . A tide of meaningless affairs nosing along the dead level of things, entering no climate, leading us nowhere, demanding of us nothing save the impossible -- that we should be. Justine would say that we had been trapped in the projection of a will too powerful and too deliberate to be human -- the gravitational field which Alexandria threw down about those it had chosen as its exemplars. . . . (J. 16)

> I see us all not as men and women any longer, identities swollen with their acts of forgetfulness, follies, and deceits -- but as beings unconsciously made part of place, buried to the waist among the ruins of a single city, steeped in its values; like those creatures of whom Empedocles wrote "Solitary limbs wandered, seeking for union with another," or in another place, "So it is that sweet lays hold of sweet, bitter rushes to bitter, acid comes to acid, warm couples with warm." All members of a city whose actions lay just outside the scope of the plotting or conniving spirit: Alexandrians. (B. 225)

---

[24] Ibid., 238.

[25] Ibid., 77.

Empedocles is the Pre-Socratic philosopher of Love and Strife: Love which of the Many forms One, and Strife which divides the One into many parts. As the elements of Empedocles move at the impulse of the dual forces of Love and Strife, so the Alexandrians act in accordance with the city's complex forces, and so in Groddeck's theory man moves as a function of the unknown force which governs him.[26]

In the essay on Groddeck previously referred to, Durrell discusses the role of the artist in terms which apply to Darley.

> [Groddeck] is the only psychoanalyst for whom the artist is not an interesting cripple, but someone who has, by the surrender of his ego to the flux of the It, become the agent and translator of the extra-causal forces which rule us. [He] . . . sees that the artist's dilemma is also that of everyman, and that this dilemma is being perpetually restated in art, just as it is being restated in terms of disease or language. We live (perhaps I should paraphrase the verb as Groddeck does), we are lived by a symbolic process, for which our lives provide merely a polished surface on which it may reflect itself. Just as linguistic relations appear as "effective beliefs" in the dreams of Groddeck's patients, so the linguistic relations of symbolism, expressed in art, place before the world a perpetual picture of the penalties, the terror and magnificence of living -- or of being lived by this extra-causal reality whose identity we cannot guess.[27]

Here is an explicit inter-relating of art and life: both reflect

---

[26] Durrell's reference to Empedocles in a rather Groddeckian context is itself an illustration of his view that modern science is approaching metaphysics.

[27] Lawrence Durrell, "Introduction", in Groddeck, xxi.

the unknowable reality of which art is the "heraldic aspect". (C. 137) Durrell's essay was originally published in 1948 but the mirror image used there has applicability to the Quartet. To press this association of Durrell's Alexandria with the Groddeckian "It" (for which I have the backing of Frederick Karl[28], Bonamy Dobrée[29], and Walter Allen[30]), it is not surprising to find a force which mirrors itself in the lives of men appearing symbolically in other mirror guises.[31]

Early in Justine we are given what amounts to a "character-squeeze" of Alexandria itself: "Five races, five languages, a dozen creeds: five fleets turning through their greasy reflections behind the harbour bar." (J. 11) The polyglot nature of the place, and the harbour reflections, are greatly expanded in this passage from Balthazar. Darley writes of

> . . . the hundred little spheres which religion or lore creates and which cohere softly together like cells to form the great sprawling jellyfish which is Alexandria today. Joined in this fortuitous way by the city's own act of will, isolated on a slate promontory over the sea, backed only by the moonstone mirror Mareotis, the salt lake and its further forevers of

---

[28] Frederick Karl, The Contemporary English Novel, 49.

[29] Bonamy Dobrée, "Durrell's Alexandrian Series", The Sewanee Review, LXIX (Winter, 1961), 71.

[30] Walter Allen, Tradition and Dream (London, [1964]), 287.

[31] Cecily Mackworth, without making explicit this association, still implies something like it when she sees operating through Durrell's description ". . . an Alexandria inflated into the Sadean dream of the unleashed subconscious -- everywhere and nowhere, the world with its polite lid off." "Lawrence Durrell and the New Romanticism", in Moore, 29.

> ragged desert (now dusted softly by the spring
> winds into satin dunes, patternless and beautiful
> as cloud-scapes) the communities still live and
> communicate -- Turks with Jews, Arabs and Copts
> and Syrians with Armenians and Italians and Greeks. (B. 151)

This is Alexandria in its quasi-Groddeckian aspect -- organic, self-creating, a congeries of disparate elements which together make up that image of reality which directs the life of its inhabitants. It should be noted that in Groddeck's theory not only does man as a psychological being have his "It" but each cell of his body is similarly governed by its distinctive "It".[32] But there are other aspects as well. Darley's description continues:

> And when night falls and the white city lights
> up the thousand candelabra of its parks and
> buildings, tunes in to the soft unearthly
> drum music of Morroco or Caucasus, it looks like
> some great crystal liner asleep there, anchored
> to the horn of Africa -- her diamond and fire-
> opal reflections twisting downwards like
> polished bars into the city harbour among
> the battleships.
>
> At dusk it can become like a mauve
> jungle, anomalous, stained with colours as if
> from a shattered prism; and rising into the
> pearly sky of the sunset falter up the steeples
> and minarets like stalks of giant fennel in
> a swamp rising up over the long pale lines
> of the sea-shore and the barbaric cafés
> where the negroes dance to the pop and drub
> of a finger-drum or to the mincing of clarinets.
>
> "There are only as many realities as
> you care to imagine." writes Pursewarden. (B. 151-52)

And there are many realities here implied. In such descriptions -- and there are many in the Quartet -- Durrell uses (in Dylan Thomas' phrase) "prose with blood-pressure" to evoke the city, to give

---

[32] Groddeck, 22.

its aspects an "heraldic" expression. The reflections in this and the foregoing passage reveal two facets of the city. Mareotis leads to the desert and to the depths of Egypt, the harbour to Europe and Western civilization. Those mirrored battleships are an ominous presence all through the Quartet, symbolic in an Eliot-like sense of "death by water". They reach a kind of epiphany in the death-scene of Fosca in the final volume. Sea-born like Aphrodite -- (elsewhere Alexandria is called "the winepress of love" (J. 12) and love there has the marmoreal features of the "austere mindless primeval face of Aphrodite" (J. 97, B. 167, M. 206)) -- Alexandria is at once an organism, as we have seen, and an artifact, glittering and self-contained as a night-moored ocean-liner): these are two more facets of its "reality", the one indigenous to it, the other produced by it through the desires of its inhabitants.[33] Again, Alexandria incorporates both jungle and minaret, the one primitive and ruthless, the other aspiring toward the good, the God-head. This sense of aspiration is more strongly suggested, in juxtaposition with a more explicit treatment of the ominous aspects, in the following passage, also from Balthazar. Darley sees the "selected fictions" of his Alexandrian experience as

> . . . a projection of the white city itself
> whose pearly skies are broken in spring only by
> the white stalks of the minarets and the flocks
> of pigeons turning in clouds of silver and

---

[33] In Groddeck's psychology, "all conscious thought and action are the unavoidable consequences of unconscious symbolization." Mankind, dominated by the "It" is "animated by the symbol" through which the "It" expresses itself. Groddeck, 49.

> amethyst; whose veridian and black marble harbour-water reflects the snouts of foreign men-of-war turning through their slow arcs, depicting the prevailing wind; swallowing their own inky reflections, touching and overlapping like the very tongues and sects and races over which they keep their uneasy patrol: symbolizing the western consciousness whose power is exemplified in steel -- those sullen preaching guns against the yellow metal of the lake and the town which breaks open at sunset like a rose. (B. 104-105)

Here birds and minarets with their delicate colouring are in deliberate contrast to the bestial, snouted and self-devouring images of the Western battle-ships.

Because of the structure of the Quartet we can add to all these aspects of the city yet another, the subjective view. For this is Darley's private Alexandria. Seen subjectively through the medium of memory, it is less a mirror image than a mirage.

> I cannot say that I forgot the city, but I let the memory of it sleep. Yet of course, it was always there, as it always will be, hanging in the mind like the mirage which travellers so often see. Pursewarden has described the phenomenon in the following words:
>
> "We were still two or three clear hours' steaming distance before land could possibly come into sight when suddenly my companion shouted and pointed at the horizon. We saw, inverted in the sky, a full-scale mirage of the city, luminous and trembling, as if painted on dusty silk: yet in the nicest detail. From memory I could clearly make out its features, Ras El Tin Palace, the Nebi Daniel Mosque and so forth. The whole representation was as breath-taking as a masterpiece painted in fresh dew. It hung there in the sky for a considerable time, perhaps twenty-five minutes, before melting slowly into the horizon mist. An hour later, the real city appeared, swelling from a smudge to the size of its mirage." (B. 16)

Why, the reader may wonder, does Pursewarden make an appearance here? I would suggest that he does so because he is Darley's artistic mentor. By the trio of writers, Arnauti, Pursewarden and Darley as past, present and future, Durrell is, by his own admission, hinting at "the continuity of literature". It is the duty of a writer always to educate and shape "the psychical responses of the younglings who are going to take over from you and walk on your face. . . ."[34] When one considers the context of the foregoing description (the receipt of Balthazar's first letter, hinting that Darley's "reworking of reality" -- as yet unread -- is itself tenuously mirage-like) it is not, I believe, over-reading to find in it Durrell hinting darkly about the nature of life and art. For were Alexandria nothing more than an objectified "It"-concept Durrell would be writing only a derivative thesis. The Quartet is a "poetic parable"[35] and its subject is both art and love. The mirage is described by the arch-artist of the series, and it is described in terms of art -- a painting masterly in its execution, yet inverted and needing for interpretation the resources of memory. It fades (as does Darley's Justine Alexandria) to be slowly replaced by the reality, of less entrancing beauty but solid and replete with that earthy richness which Durrell believes an essential ingredient of good art. "Every good work should have a good deal

---

[34] Durrell, speaking on "The Kneller Tape" from Hamburg, in Harry Moore, ed., The World of Lawrence Durrell, 165.

[35] Ibid.

of bone meal and manure mixed with it, or the cultural humus won't be rich enough to allow for the growth of future flowers."[36]

Alexandria, then, besides being a moulder of men in an almost Groddeckian sense, is, on another level, a mythic place not unlike Yeats' Byzantium. Professor Karl believes that

> The mere choice of Alexandria (Yeats' Byzantium) as the place indicates Durrell's desire to remove himself from a mechanical world to a world in which easy sensuality allows man to flower or become corrupted, in either instance freed from the demands of civilization and industrialization.[37]

But Alexandria is more than a kind of Never-Never Land -- though that too is part of it -- and becomes in fact a metaphysical symbol. Again Durrell's remarks on the Kneller Tape are to the point:

> I chose a modern frame in which to recount what I take to be an age-old truth. Once you travel through the Schoolmen back to the New Testament, and out and beyond into Alexandria, you get an extraordinary new sense of the religious continuity of things -- which the Jews denied. Hermes is the chap Jesus took over from, and he from Aesculapius, and so back through Chaldea and Persia to India. A continuous line; so that from an imaginative point of view Alexandria is the hinge of the whole Christian culture, historically bridging Eleusis and Rome. And here of course the Jewish betrayal took place. . . . The imaginative link with Plato and Heraclitus was snapped forever. Poets find this out for themselves instanter. I suppose you could write

---

[36] Ibid.

[37] Frederick Karl, The Contemporary English Novel, 59.

> a book about European poets trying to re-forge this vital link with a primordial world which really knew itself. . . . . Anyway this is only background stuff to explain why I said that the city was really the central character; it is from the poetic point of view -- the seat of our culture.[38]

Alexandria itself embodies therefore a linking of science and metaphysics. On the more-or-less realistic level of the "yarn"[39] it is a powerful force asserting itself through character and event in a manner not unlike Groddeck's "It"; on the level of "poetic parable" it is a kind of ideogram for the testing-ground of a poet who by re-forging that vital link between the modern world and the metaphysical wisdom of the ancients can achieve true artisthood, that integrating of the art-life dichotomy through the Durrellian recognition that "the so-called act of living is really an act of the imagination" (C. 153), through the "enigmatic leap into the heraldic reality of the poetic life."

The past of Alexandria enters the Quartet not only through Nessim's dream-cycle --

> He would wake to see the towers and minarets printed on the exhausted, dust-powdered sky, and see as if en montage on them the giant footprints of the historical memory which lies behind the recollections of individual personality, its mentor and guide: indeed its mentor, since man is only an extension

---

[38] Durrell, "The Kneller Tape", in Moore, 168.

[39] "The Quartet is a yarn on one plane, and a sort of poetic parable on another." Ibid., 165.

of the spirit of place. (J. 156)

-- but through a spatial use of time, as in the following passage:

> The quarter lying beyond the red lantern belt, populated by the small traders, money-lenders, coffee-speculators, ships' chandlers, smugglers; here in the open street one had the illusion of time spread out flat -- so to speak -- like the skin of an ox; the map of time which one could read from one end to the other, filling it in with known points of reference. This world of Moslem time stretched back to Othello and beyond. (M. 286)

Frequently the city is described in terms of the meeting of East and West. And significantly it is most often so described with relation to Mountolive, a character more expatriate than Darley, a wanderer at the dictates of the Foreign Office, the son of a father who renounced his colonial heritage to don the robes of an Indian fakir. (M. 97)

> The Alexandrians themselves were strangers and exiles to the Egypt which existed below the glittering surface of their dreams, ringed by the hot deserts and fanned by the bleakness of a faith which renounced worldly pleasure: the Egypt of rags and sores, of beauty and desperation. Alexandria was still Europe -- the capital of Asiatic Europe, if such a thing could exist. It could never be like Cairo where his whole life had an Egyptian cast, where he spoke ample Arabic; here French, Italian and Greek dominated the scene. The ambience, the social manner, everything was different, was cast in a European mould where somehow the camels and palm-trees and cloaked natives existed only as a brilliantly coloured frieze, a back-cloth to a life divided in its origins. (M. 147)

In the light of such a passage one can qualify an earlier assertion. Alexandria symbolizes not so much the linking itself of

science and metaphysics, of ancient and modern, of the Eastern and Western conciousnesses, as the possibility of that link. The malaise of its inhabitants is a parable of the malaise of modern man; the artists in turn symbolize the struggle of everyman to enter "the domain of self-possession" which Durrell equates with art. For Durrell, "life is really an artistic problem, all men being sleeping artists."[40]

Interestingly, at this point there seem to be certain similarities between the Quartet and T. S. Eliot's Waste Land, some of which Eleanor Hutchens has noted in her article, "The Heraldic Universe in the Alexandria Quartet".[41] It is perhaps dangerous to press the comparison too far, but Durrell himself in his discussion of The Waste Land in A Key to Modern British Poetry gives us some grounds to claim, if not an influence, at least a comparable intent. He suggests there that Eliot's poem becomes more lucid if we imagine it read -- in radio fashion -- by several voices because

> . . . [it] was indeed written for a number of voices -- but they are the voices of the unconscious, and if we are to get the hang of it we must supply them for ourselves. . . . The poem turns the whole time like a mirror, taking us backwards and forwards between reminiscence and description, between the present and the past: and packed closely into it, among the images, are the fragments of the culture to which we belong, our art, our religion, our mythology.[42]

---

[40] Ibid., 167.

[41] Eleanor N. Hutchens, "The Heraldic Universe in the Alexandria Quartet", College English, XXIV (October, 1962), 56-61.

[42] Durrell, Key, 151.

Not an inaccurate description of the Quartet itself!

Durrell's Alexandria, like Eliot's Waste Land, is "simply a great metaphor which describes the aspirations [and despairs] of the individual soul in collective form." (C. 143) Both poets, then, will write to set up those "vibrations in the inner ear"[43] which, to Durrell, are the distinguishing characteristic of poetic language. It is in this evocative sense (rather than, as Miss Hutchens tends to suggest, a derivative one) that the perceptive reader will hear in Durrell's description echoes of Eliot.

> Here only giant reeds and bulrushes grow or an occasional thorn bush. No fish could live in the brackish water. Birds shunned it. It lay in the stagnant belt of its own foul air, weird, obsessive, and utterly silent -- the point at which the desert and the sown met in a death-embrace. They rode now among towering rushes whose stems were bleached and salt-encrusted, glittering in the sun. The horses gasped and scrambled through the dead water which splashed upon them, crystallizing into spots of salt wherever it fell; pools of slime were covered with a crust of salt through which their plunging hooves broke, releasing horrible odours from the black mud beneath and sudden swarms of small stinging flies and mosquitoes. But Narouz looked about him with interest even here, his eyes alight, for he had already mentally planted this waste with carobs and green shrubs -- conquered it. . . .
>
> And then: the first pure draughts of desert air, and the nakedness of space, pure as a theorem, stretching away into the sky drenched in all its own silence and majesty, untenanted except by such figures as the imagination of man has invented to people landscapes which are inimical to his passions

---

[43] Durrell, "The Kneller Tape", in Moore, 164.

and whose purity flays the mind. (B. 84-85)

And later

> They halted for a short rest in the
> shadow of a great rock -- a purple oasis
> of darkness, panting and happy. (B. 86)

Their destination appears --

> . . . out of the trembling pearly edges of
> the sky there swam slowly a high cluster of
> reddish basalt blocks, carved into the
> semblance (like a face in the fire) of a
> sphinx tortured by thirst; and there, gibbering
> in the dark shade of the rock, the little
> party waited to take them to the Sheik's tents --
> four tall lean men, made of brown paper, whose
> voices cracked at the edges of meaning with
> thirst, and whose laughter was like fury
> unleashed. (B. 87)

It is tempting here to compare Durrell's desert waste land with Eliot's. Consider these two passages, one from the first movement, one from the third.

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
> There is shadow under this red rock,
> (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
> And I will show you something different from either
> Your shadow at morning striding behind you
> Or you shadow at evening rising to meet you;
> I will show you fear in a handful of dust.[44]

> A rat crept softly through the vegetation
> Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
> While I was fishing in the dull canal
> On a winter evening behind the gashouse

---

[44] T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land, ll. 19-30, in Maynard Mack and others, (eds.), Modern Poetry (New Jersey, 1961), 143.

> Musing on the king my brother's wreck
> And on the king my father's death before him.
> White bodies naked on the low damp ground
> And bones cast in a low dry garret,
> Rattled by the rat's foot from year to year.[45]

The points of comparison which strike one are the images of decay, the desert, and the rock. There is water in Durrell's waste land but it is stagnant and the suggestion of its death-dealing powers is as strong as Eliot's Jacobean insistence, in the second passage, on rats and bones. The Eliot of The Waste Land is pessimistic; Durrell is an optimist. The oppressive effect of the sour land is lightened by Narouz' vision, for it represents a temporary situation. Eliot's is an enduring one. Similarly Durrell's desert is not merely the adumbration of aridity. If it is barren it is rather to evoke a sense of unbearable clarity and purity than the sterility of despair. Miss Hutchens has said that "the desert is a figure of speech in The Waste Land but a physical reality in the Quartet."[46] As a physical reality it is experienced, and in accordance with the dictates of the omnipresent spirit of place, must have its effect on character. The clarity of the desert reveals to Nessim the extent of his separation from his brother -- "He was suddenly jealous of his brother's familiarity with the desert they had once equally owned." (B. 86) -- and for Narouz confirms his birthright. Here the image of the rock gains importance. Eliot's rock is associated with the Grail as rock, and bears Christian connotations. For Durrell the implications

---

[45] Ibid. ll. 187-95, p. 150.

[46] Hutchens, 57.

are religious, but not specifically Christian. They prepare for the later revelation of Narouz as mystic. The whip gradually accretes significance as the symbol of Narouz' power, and that power is mystic in its origins. Where Eliot's rock-sheltered Wastelanders are shown "fear in a handful of dust," Nessim is shown the aggressive power of the whip. "'If we put up a desert wolf' said Narouz, 'I'll run it down with my kurbash,' and he caressed the great whip lovingly, running it through his fingers." (B. 86) We have noted the sense of alienation from his brother that Nessim experiences in the desert. The alienation reaches the state of open division, of feudal defiance in Mountolive when Nessim, attempting to dissuade Narouz from his dangerous preaching, is strangely intimidated by the ever-present whip. Narouz' power, of which the whip becomes the symbol, is desert-born. He visits Taor, the allegedly three-breasted desert saint, and from the visions he sees there draws his mystic strength. Eliot's rock is a shelter in a dry land. Durrell's, in the association of the whip, has intimations of mystic power, which grow stronger in the second instance where the rock acquires the features of the sphinx.[47] Under this rock the Arab tribesmen shelter, as they shelter under their tents. And the tents are given cosmological implications which can perhaps be extended to any shelter adopted by man. They ride

> . . .through mirages of pasture which only the

---

47 In ancient Egyptian sculpture the reigning king is often represented as a sphinx, and the sphinx is referred to as a sun god. Ency. Brit., 14th edition, XXI ([1937]), 213.

> rain clouds imagined, until they came there, to
> the little circle of tents, manhood's skies of
> hide, invented by men whose childish memories
> were so fearful they had had perforce to
> invent a narrower heaven in which to contain
> the germ of the race; in this little cone of
> hide the first child was born, the first
> privacy of the human kiss invented....
> Nessim wished bitterly that he could
> paint as well as Clea. (B. 88)

It is again apparent that Durrell's desert, though it bears comparison with Eliot's waste land, is quite different in kind. Human intimacy (not the dreadful lovelessness of Waste Land relations) is seen in primeval terms, itself a kind of shelter against the unknown. For it is the unknown (or, in the mystic sense, the Unknowable) that the desert most embodies. To express his insight Nessim would need the medium of art. Groddeck agrees, for he sees in the imaginative act a greater wisdom than knowledge.

> . . . by search and effort we can extend
> the limits of our consciousness, and press far
> into the realm of the unconscious, if we can
> bring ourselves no more to desire knowledge
> but only to phantasy.[48]

The terms of Nessim's insight ally love and art. Both are ways of dealing with the Unknown, the one through an act of tenderness, the other, heraldic expression. And both together comprise the dual theme of the Quartet.

Durrell has said that sexual love is our "'knowing' machine. . . the point d'appui of the psyche."[49] It is not surprising, therefore,

---

[48] Groddeck, 11.

[49] Durrell, Encounter, 62.

to find many love scenes occurring in the desert. For Darley love in the desert partakes of the etiolating (and therefore despairing) aspects of Alexandria, but there is in contrast a recognition of positive value, the note of optimism which is present in the Quartet, but lacking in The Waste Land. Both aspects occur in Darley's account of a desert meeting with Justine, after the murder of Toto, in Balthazar. Knowing as he does at the time of writing that Justine's love for him was a pretense, he can nonetheless see the enriching value of it. They drive into the desert.

> I studied her harsh Semitic profile in the furry light flung back by the headlights from the common objects of the roadside. It belonged so much to the city which I now saw as a series of symbols stretching away from us on either side -- minarets, pigeons, statues, ships, coins, camels and palms; it lived in a heraldic relation to the exhausted landscapes which enclosed it -- the loops of the great lake: as proper to the scene as the sphinx was to the desert. (B. 222)

According to Egyptologists the most famous sphinx was originally a lion-shaped rock in the desert on which Khafra, the builder of the second Pyramid, had his own features carved.[50] The sphinx then is a product both of the desert itself, and of man's imaginative ingenuity. Justine similarly belongs to her environs -- the saline shores of Mareotis and the city. She is indigenous to them. But they are seen symbolically, and the perception of symbols is to Durrell the perception of that greater whole, the heraldic universe. As human features were given by man to the sphinx-rock, so Darley is able to

---

[50] Ency. Brit., XXI, 213.

give a universally human meaning to his experience. The harshness and the exhaustion are subsumed in something else.

> We walked hand in hand across the soft sand-dunes, laboriously as insects, until we reached Taposiris with its tumble of shattered columns and capitals among the ancient weather-eroded sea-marks. . . . A faint wind blew off the sea from the Grecian archipelago. The sea was smooth as a human cheek. Only at the edges it stirred and sighed. Those warm kisses remain there, amputated from before and after, existing in their own right like the frail transparencies of ferns or roses pressed between the covers of old books -- unique and unfading as the memories they exemplified and evoked: a plume of music from a forgotten carnival-guitar echoing on in the dark streets of Alexandria for as long as silence lasts. . . . Justine, lying back against a fallen column at Taposiris, dark head upon the darkness of the sighing water, one curl lifted by the sea-winds, saying: "In the whole of English only one phrase means something to me, the words: 'Time Immemorial'." (B. 225)

Desert, sea and ruins give even the simulacrum of love (which is not without tenderness) a "stereoscopic" setting. It is, of course, an heraldic one. The kisses are like the ruins themselves, still existing, "amputated from before and after". And like the ruins they partake of the nature of "Time Immemorial". The phrase connotes a kind of eternity, if not a deathlessness, at least a life-in-death -- not the gruesome Coleridgean spectre with its death emphasis, but a complex multiple state. In the conjunction of Alexandria and Taposiris, two cities founded together on the same spur of land,[51] the one living, the other in ruins, Durrell gives the effect of cyclic continuity. The intimacy of Darley and Justine confers the

---

[51] E. M. Forster, Alexandria: A History and A Guide (New York, 1961), 206.

continuity of life on Taposiris. But in accordance with the concept of space-time, it is a life involved with death.[52]

In the almost Dali-esque setting of the moonlit desert --

> . . . the attentive desert stretched away on either side with its grotesque amphitheatres -- like the empty rooms in some great cloud-mansion. (B. 223)

-- death is described in terms of birth.

> It is astonishing now for me to realise, as I record this scene, that she was carrying within her (invisible as the already conceived foetus of a child) Pursewarden's death. . . . (B. 223)

Earlier we noted the Cocteau-like imagery that accompanies the first love-making of David Mountolive and Leila. There too is a desert setting. Discussing the nature of his work on the Kneller Tape, Durrell remarks that the love scenes "are really a mime about rebirth on the parable plane."[53] Mountolive is in a sense reborn in Leila's arms. For one thing those arms are explicitly maternal. "He was both a lover to her and a sort of hapless man-child who could be guided by her towards his own growth." (M. 30) For another, he comes thereby to know himself, to practise self-examination,

---

[52] In A Key to Modern British Poetry, Durrell writes, "It is one of the paradoxes of the new space-time that, if time is really spread out in this way, we can just as easily situate death in the present as in the future. It is this multiple state birth-life-death in one which the poet is trying to capture." P. 36. One may note also that the sound of the carnival-guitar is not unlike the music which legend claims sounded through Alexandria as the god abandoned Antony, and therefore implies the same acceptance of life in its totality, of life intensified by death.

[53] Durrell, "The Kneller Tape", in Moore, 166.

to be reborn into a new awareness. Pursewarden, making love to Justine in the desert, passes painlessly from life into literature.

> "Reality, he believed, was always trying to copy the imagination of man, from which it derived. . . . Riding beside her in the great car, someone beautiful, dark and painted with great eyes like the prow of some Aegean ship, he had the sensation that his book was being rapidly passed underneath his life, as if under a sheet of paper containing the iron filings of temporal events, as a magnet is in that commonplace experiment one does at school. . . ." (B. 116)

But Justine's is the real rebirth. She learns laughter, which for Durrell has grave importance. "'He discovered to her the fact that she was ridiculous, with a series of disarming and touching pleasantries at which she found herself laughing with a relief that seemed almost sinful.'" (B. 117)[54] Heraldically, the desert seems to represent the raw material of experience within the psyche, and in that sense the Unkown upon which increasing self-awareness, the imaginative leap which is true knowledge, makes encroachments. It is in this sense in contrast to water -- to be examined presently -- which is a positive regenerative force through its rebirth association.

We have seen the spirit of place manifesting itself in Alexandria and the surrounding desert landscape. There remains to be considered its operation beyond the Mediterranean. As Eliot in The Waste Land makes of his Unreal City a complex of cities: "Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/ Vienna London"[55], so Durrell incorporates into the Alexandria Quartet evocations of London, the

---

[54] Significantly, Pursewarden's magnum opus is entitled God is a Humorist. (J. 149)

[55] Eliot, The Waste Land, ll. 374-75.

English countryside and central Europe. There the prevailing image is snow whether the setting is Yugoslavia, Russia, England or Germany. This use of the snow image is reminiscent of Durrell's first important work, The Black Book, where the suffocating deadening presence of snow is symbolic of what he calls "the English death." In the Quartet it has a similar significance. Alexandria is polyglot, the mixture of races and creeds producing a sense of freedom which the inhibiting social conscience of Europe forbids. Snow in Yugoslavia becomes the embodiment of "a solemn Slav foreboding". (M. 50) In Russia the figures of the sentries "crossing and recrossing the snowlit entrance" (M. 74) of the Embassy symbolize the repressive militarism of the Soviet world. In England the snow, as in The Black Book, often signifies the death of the spirit which the suffocating weight of conventional morality, in Durrell's view, brings about. In London this oppressive weight is most heavily felt, and yet Pursewarden, that essentially "alien" spirit, (M. 65) can transform it. With his sister he waltzes through Trafalgar Square in celebration of the birthday of that other spirit alien to the "lowing herd" (C. 127) procession of moralistic English poets, William Blake.[56] The scene, described impressionistically through the eyes of Mountolive, has about it a poetic, dream-like

---

[56] It is interesting to note that Pursewarden's nickname for Darley, "Lineaments of Gratified Desire" (B. 110) is taken from Blake's 1793 notebook: "The Question Answered" or "Several Questions Answered". William Blake, The Complete Writings of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London and New York, 1957), 180, 184.

quality.

> "'The snow was falling fast, the last sodden leaves lying in mounds, the pigeons uttering their guttural clotted noises.
>
> 'We will dance for Blake' said Pursewarden, with a comical look of seriousness on his face. . . . They moved in perfect measure gradually increasing in speed until they were skimming across the square under the bronze lions, hardly heavier than whiffs of spray from the fountains. Like pebbles skimming across a smooth lake or stones across an ice-bound pond. . . . So they went, completing a long gradual ellipse across the open space, scattering the leaves and the pigeons, their breath steaming on the night air. And then, gently, effortlessly spinning out the arc to bring them back to me -- to where I stood now with a highly doubtful-looking policeman at my side." (M. 66)

Before the dance, snow and sodden leaves dominate the scene. The pigeons here are in contrast to the air-borne creatures circling Alexandrian minarets. Their choked sounds emphasize the dead dreariness of London snow. To this scene Liza and Pursewarden in their dance bring the vividness of uninhibited life. In her hair snowflakes become "dissolving jewels". (M. 66) Their movement gives the life of motion to leaves and pigeons and is itself imaged as spray -- refreshing and life-giving in contrast to the heavy static imperial lions. But the dance is something else as well. It adumbrates the imtimacy of the relationship between Pursewarden and his sister, effectively isolating them from Mountolive and that symbol of British sobriety and decorum, the "doubtful-looking policeman."

To this scene snow is a necessary background, embodying generally the English spirit as opposed to the Alexandrian, and specifically the view of life in defiance of which the Pursewarden

brother and sister attempt to move. Their happiness is as perfect and as ephemeral as the dance. Snow in the "ritual landscape" (M. 95) through which Mountolive returns to his mother's house is also symbolic of restraint, though of a different kind. London snow is heavy and sodden; in the country are "Ice-Age villages, their thatched barns and cottages perfected by the floury whiteness of snow, glistening as if from the tray of an expert confectioner. . . ." (M. 94) Mountolive walks through a landscape of mystery and fragility.

> A ritual landscape made now overwhelmingly mysterious by the light of an invisible sun, moving somewhere up there behind the opaque screens of low mist which shifted before him, withdrawing and closing. It was a walk full of memories -- but in default of visibility he was forced to imagine the two small hamlets on the hill-crown, the intent grove of beeches, the ruins of a Norman castle. . . .
>
> Once over the crown all space was cut off. . . . The tall plumed grass had been starched into spikes by frost. Here and there came glimpses of a pale sun, its furred brilliance shining through the mist like a gas mantle burning brightly but without heat. . . . Fingers of ice tumbled about the trees with a ragged clatter -- a thousand broken wineglasses. He groped for the cold Yale key and smiled again as he felt it turn, admitting him to an unforgotten warmth which smelt of apricots and old books, polish and flowers; all the memories which led him back unerringly towards Piers Plowman, the pony, the fishing-rod, the stamp album. He stood in the hall and called her name softly. (M. 95-96)

It is indeed a formalized landscape. The prominent objects without are the hamlets, the hill-crown and the Norman ruins: an "heraldic" expression of British social tradition with its stratification, villagers, nobility, and, in the suggestion of "hill-crown", royalty. Conjoined to these are the images of fragility

best seen in relation to Mountolive and the interior "heraldry". They are illumined by a light more artificial than natural, a cold gas light. Mountolive's Oedipal tendencies have been noted. His mother, as the phenomenon of the ear-ache makes clear (M. 100), represents refuge and security. So the warm house, seen in terms of heraldic images, is a refuge against the exterior cold. The "pony, the fishing-rod, the stamp album" are all images evocative of the security of his childhood. Piers Plowman joins these as the voice of the moral social tradition they in their own way represent. That tradition in turn is a refuge developed by the English "It" seen here in terms of brittle images. In a world so inimical that its heraldic emblem is snow, where the sun is transformed into a gas-light, grass into brittle spikes, leaves into fingers of ice, the fear of frozen lifelessness is expressed symbolically by the need to construct edifices of security, whether a familiar house, an established social order or the strictures of a definite moral code. Durrell finds this codification inhibiting and therefore a kind of mortal sickness of the psyche, for it prevents the full development of the human soul. Groddeck sees in any illness the symbolic manifestation of the desires of the "It".

> . . . It is the unknown It, not the conscious intelligence, which is responsible for the various diseases. They do not invade us as enemies from the outside, but are purposeful creations of our microcosmos, our It, just as purposeful as the structure of the nose and the eye, which indeed are also products of the It. . . .[57]

---

[57] Groddeck, 24.

Snow is, however, more than the emblem of a specifically English spirit of place. We mentioned briefly its significance in Yugoslavia and Russia. In a larger sense, then, snow represents the European spirit of place as opposed to the Mediterranean. Germany in the pre-war years has its own variant which Durrell makes explicit.

> Berlin was also in the grip of snow, but here the sullen goaded helplessness of the Russias was replaced by a malignant euphoria hardly less dispiriting. The air was tonic with gloom and uncertainty. (M. 81)

The "malignant euphoria", however, while related to snow, is given a more precise objective correlative in the Berlin Tanzfest.

> The network of candle-lit cellars, whose walls were lined with blue damask, was filled with the glow of a hundred cigarettes, twinkling away like fireflies outside the radius of white lights where a huge hermaphrodite with the face of a narwhal conducted the measures of the "Fox Macabre Totentanz". . . .
>
> Berlin, dein Tanzer ist der Tod!
> Berlin, du wuhlst mit Lust im Kot!
> Halt ein! lass sein! und denk ein bischen nach:
> Du tanzt dir doch vom Leibe nicht die Schmach.
> denn du boxt, und du jazzt, und du foxt auf dem Pulverfass!
>
> (M. 82)

The use of chiaroscuro in a subterranean setting produces a nightmare effect which is further heightened by the monstrous figure of the hermaphrodite and the gruesome purport of his song. The theme is of course the danse macabre with the emphasis not on corpse and skeleton which signify only the inevitable end of man, but on monstrous forms, filth, shame and weapons of war. It is a dance of willed destruction. Later Clea asks Mountolive, "'Can they really raze whole capitals, these bombers? I've always believed

that our inventions mirror our secret wishes, and we wish for the end of the city-man, don't we?'" (M. 146) The Tanzfest is the objectifying of that wish. Mountolive's thoughts explicate the significance of the scene, for Tacitus, according to Highet, is the historian of "hidden rivalries, complex motivations, treachery, suffering, hatred and inexplicable folly",[58] and Valhalla implies the whole teutonic mythos of race and military power. Nessim's appearance in such a setting foreshadows the destruction of personal relationships wreaked by the conspiracy and the spread of war, in Clea, to Alexandria.

The Berlin nightclub is symbolic of the prevailing spirit of an entire country. Certain of the interior settings in Alexandria which Durrell describes are similarly symbolic, but on a personal rather than a national level. Such a one is the house of child prostitutes, detailed descriptions of which occur three times in the Quartet and which, though it seems to embody the vilest aspects of Alexandrian life, nonetheless effects for two of the characters a kind of purgation.

Eleanor Hutchens, in her consideration of heraldic significance in Durrell's work, finds in the nightmare brothel a Waste Land equivalent:

> . . . there is the dark house of flitting
> child prostitutes, their hand prints on the

---

[58] Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition (New York, 1957), 348.

> walls, more than faintly evocative of Eliot's "bats with baby faces in the violet light" who "crawled head downward down a blackened wall/ And upside down in the air were towers/ Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours/ And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells" -- "exhausted" being one of Durrell's favorite words for Alexandria life.[59]

She might have mentioned also that line from Verlaine incorporated into The Waste Land, "Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!" (l. 202), for there Eliot implies what is specific in the Quartet -- the corruption of children.

Of the three accounts of the brothel Justine emphasizes most strongly the horror.

> . . . the light, pushing up from the mud floor, touched out the eyebrows and lips and cheek-bones of the participants while it left great patches of shadow on their faces -- so that they looked as if they had been half-eaten by the rats which one could hear scrambling among the rafters of the wretched tenement. . . . There in the dimness, clad in biblical nightshirts, with rouged lips, arch bead fringes and cheap rings, stood a dozen fuzzy-haired girls who could not have been much above ten years of age. . . .
>
> On a rotting sofa in one corner of the room, magnetically lit by the warm shadow reflected from the walls lay one of the children horribly shrunk up in its nightshirt in an attitude which suggested death. The wall above the sofa was covered in the blue imprints of juvenile hands -- the talisman which in this part of the world guards a house against the evil eye. (J. 39)

Particularly reminiscent of Eliot is the light, its direction reversed not unlike those towers in the air, which themselves recall the

---

[59] Hutchens, 58-59.

mirage-Alexandria, the Unreal City. Eliot's bats are baby-faced; Durrell gives us a conjunction of rats and children, the rats seeming in that unnatural light to have half-devoured the children. Where Eliot's bats crawl downward on the wall, there are children's hand-prints on Durrell's wall, their talismanic significance ironic in such a place. Death is suggested in Eliot, explicit in Durrell. One must beware of too intense reading, of bringing to the work too many ready allusions, yet it is interesting to note that the Verlaine line has to do with the perversions encountered by Parsifal in quest of the Grail, and that in Mountolive Clea associates the Grail and romantic love. (M. 155) Certainly the depravity embodied by these child prostitutes perverts the growth of love, and for Justine the child she lost, dead in such a place, constitutes a large part of her "check".

For Mountolive, too, the nightmare brothel is a necessary stage in his life's quest for true love: he is there purged of that in him which has shadowed his relations with women, love for the mother figure. He is led there by an aged Sheik who seems to him an emissary from "that unseen world, the numinous carefully guarded world of the hermetic doctors." (M. 290) The terms of Durrell's description invite a symbolic reading of the scene.

> . . . the darkness was so complete that the light, when it did come, gave him the momentary illusion of something taking place very far away in the sky. As if someone had opened and closed a furnace-door in Heaven. It was only the spark of a match. But in the soft yellow flap he saw that he was standing in a gaunt high chamber with shattered and defaced walls covered in graffiti and the imprint of dark

> palms -- signs which guard the superstitious against the evil eye. It was empty save for an enormous broken sofa which lay in the centre of the floor like a sarcophagus. A single window with all the panes of glass broken was slowly printing the bluer darkness of the starry sky upon his sight. He stared at the flapping foundering light, and again heard the rats chirping and the other curious susurrus composed of whispers and chuckles and the movement of bare feet on boards. . . . Suddenly he thought of a girls' dormitory at a school: and as if invented by the very thought itself, through the open door at the end of the room trooped a crowd of small figures dressed in white soiled robes like defeated angels. (M. 291)

These children, unlike Verlaine's do not sing, but their sounds are to an extent the sounds of innocence -- the sounds of schoolgirls. Similarly they are seen in terms of angels slightly soiled -- here "defeated" later "heartbroken". Patently the worm-eaten rat-infested brothel is not a cupola, but it is so described that it takes on the suggestion at least of such a dome as Verlaine's debased singers inhabit. The darkness is encircling; the appearance of light like the opening of "a furnace-door in heaven" -- the conjunction of the demonic and the God-like suitable to the character of the children themselves, and the "purgatorio" suggestion implying the cathartic nature of Mountolive's experience there. Above him is the vault itself of the sky, star-covered but, in accordance with the dual vision throughout, perceived through a shattered window. Finally it should be noted that the chamber is both "high" and "gaunt" and that inseparable from the sounds of the children are the scufflings of the rats.

Central to the scene is the couch. Darley saw it as "rotting" and "magnetically lit" in that odd reversed light. Here it is "like a sarcophagus." The reader, remembering Justine, associates with the tomb-couch the death that there took place. Mountolive experiences another kind of death, a "mime" death which leads to his ultimate rebirth. Afterwards, as he comes to himself in the "pale rinsed dawn" he feels "cast up helpless in a foreign port at the other end of the world." (M. 294) The nature of his release is made quite explicit in his self-communings as he drives back to Cairo.

> He had, he realized, reached a new frontier in himself; life was going to be something completely different from now on. He had been in some sort of bondage all this time; now the links had snapped. (M. 295)

Pursewarden assures us that Justine's haunting sorrow for the lost child is genuine. (C. 144) He lists in fact the whole tormenting complex of emotions she felt on learning that it was dead, that it had died in the brothel. She can, it appears, find appeasement only by returning to the rotting tenement. There a kind of epiphany is achieved, through art significantly, both for Justine and for the children. Again there is a physical description of the house -- its darkness, the match-flame, peeling plaster, talismanic imprints "as if a lot of pygmies had gone mad with blue paint and then galloped all over the walls standing on their hands," and most striking, the couch: "a large gloomy divan, floating upon the gloom like a Viking catafalque." (C. 147-48) The slight air of frivolity is characteristic of Pursewarden. He is the great exponent of the importance of laughter. What is more important is the placing of

the incident in his posthumous "Conversations". It occurs right in the middle of a wry dissertation on the nature of art and specifically of symbolism. Art is a "manuring of the psyche," "the purifying factor merely" which "predicates nothing" and is "the handmaid of silent content essential only to joy and to love." (C. 141-42) Through art Justine finds a cathartic release for her emotions and the children are able to leap, for the moment, into true childhood. Significantly the couch retains its death association, but is here ritualized. It becomes the platform on which a coffin rests, the stage on which Justine at last rests the death of her child. There to the gathered children Justine declaims the story of Yuna and Aziz.

> It was a wild sort of poetry for the place and the time -- the little circle of wizened faces, the divan, the flopping light; and the strangely captivating lilt of the Arabic with its heavy damascened imagery, the thick brocade of alliterative repetitions, the nasal twanging accents, gave it a laic splendour which brought tears to my eyes -- gluttonous tears! It was such a rich diet for the soul!
> . . . [The children] sank into the imagery of her story like plummets. One saw, creeping out like mice, their true souls -- creeping out upon those painted masks in little expressions of wonder, suspense and joy.
> . . . The poetry had stripped them to the bone and left only their natural selves to flower thus in expressions faithfully portraying their tiny stunted spirits. (C. 149-50)

The quiescence which the story effects in the souls of its auditors is the quiescence of art itself. To Pursewarden the object of all art is simply "to invoke the ultimate healing silence." For him, and for Durrell, ". . . symbolism contained in form and pattern is only a frame of reference through which, as in a mirror,

one may glimpse the idea of a universe at rest, a universe in love with itself." (C. 143) As mirrors in the Quartet reflect the prisms of personality and by their symbolic significance link human experience to the "heraldic aspect of reality" (C. 137) which is art, so the spirit of place expresses itself heraldically in the Quartet in setting and experience and by this patterning reveals a kind of mirror image of itself which in turn is art. For the objective correlatives of place embody art, whether minarets and harbour reflections, whether desert, or snow or the darkness of rooms, for they "place before the world a perpetual picture of the penalties, the terror and magnificence of living."[60]

---

[60] See above, p. 38.

IV

MASKS, WOUNDS AND WATER

Durrell has said that all men are sleeping artists. The problem, then, is one of awakening. As mirrors and setting tend to reflect the prisms of reality, that "extral-causal reality whose identity we cannot guess",[61] other images in the Quartet objectify states of mind in the leading characters as they struggle towards awareness. In many cases this struggle is represented by a progression of images, from the stasis of the mask and the effigy, the anonymity of the disguise, through the awakening itself in which a physical wound represents the impact of fully realized life on the psyche, and emerging, characteristically, in a "mime of rebirth". Because water combines the dual forces of destruction and creation it is, as we shall see, associated strongly with the rebirth theme. The forces of destruction and creation ally it also with the creative act of art.

Of the masks in the Quartet, the most striking is that which hangs on the wall of Justine's bedroom, "an idol, the eyes of which are lit from within by electricity." Darley (in Justine) tells us that "it is to this graven mentor that Justine acts her private

---

[61] Ibid.

role." The mask, like the room which it dominates, is described in ritualistic terms.

> Imagine a torch thrust through the throat of a skeleton to light up the vault of the skull from which the eyeless sockets ponder. Shadows thrown on the arch of the cranium flap there in imprisonment. When the electricity is out of order a stump of candle is soldered to the bracket: Justine then, standing naked on tip-toes to push a lighted match into the eyeball of the God. Immediately the furrows of the jaw spring into relief, the shaven frontal bone, the straight rod of the nose. She has never been tranquil unless this visitant from distant mythology is watching over her nightmares. Under it lie a few small inexpensive toys, a celluloid doll, a sailor about which I have never had the courage to question her. (J. 119-20)

The mask is the focal point of the room, and the room itself is symbolically appropriate to Justine's character. Darley notes, "It is strange that I should always see Justine in the context of this bedroom which she could never have known before Nessim gave it to her." (J. 120) There, besides the mask, are ikons and works of philosophy, incense, and a parchment drawing of the Universe of Ptolemy. The Ptolemaic Universe and the atmosphere of luxury link Justine by suggestion at least, with Cleopatra.[62] The philosophers are described in medical terms. They represent for her not the pursuit of knowledge but an attempt to ease the sickness of her soul:

---

[62] Discussing Justine in an interview, Durrell remarks, "I think Cleopatra was probably something like her." "Lawrence Durrell Answers a Few Questions", in Moore, 158.

"Justine surrounded by her philosophers is like an invalid surrounded by medicines. . . ." (J. 119) But religion (symbolized by the ikons) and philosophy both are overshadowed by the fearsome mythical face. The toys, concerning which Darley has not the courage to ask, bear some relationship to the lost child whose possessions they may well be, and so are associated with death. The mask, to which the toys seem almost offerings, has itself strong suggestions of death. It is skull-like, and the interior light gives it an infernal, even diabolic appearance. Durrell's images are violent. Either a torch is "thrust" through a skeletal throat or, in a manner evocative of some strange pagan ritual, a lighted match is "pushed into the eyeball of the God" by a naked woman. "God" is capitalized, but it has no reference to the Christian God implied by the ikons. It is, in fact, somewhat reminiscent of Moloch in whose furnace mouth children were burned as living sacrifices.[63] The mask is, however, paradoxical, its paradox underlined by that odd sentence: "She has never been tranquil unless this visitant from distant mythology is watching over her nightmares." In its making tranquility of nightmare the mask appears in some sense purgative. It is too a "grave mentor" and a "Noble Self" and to it she "acts her private role." (J. 119-120) In this sense the light in the idol is not diabolic but merely other-worldly. This sense becomes clear as Darley's description continues. He and Pursewarden are with Justine in the bedroom. As before, gesture is ritualistic. Justine "sinks on to the bed and

---

[63] The Bible, II Kings 23: 10.

holds out her ringed fingers as with an air of mild hallucination the negress draws them off the long fingers and places them in a small casket on the dressing table." (J. 121) She speaks of the mask:

> "It sounds cheap and rather theatrical I know. I turn my face to the wall and talk to it. I forgive myself my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me. Sometimes I rave a little and beat on the wall when I remember the follies which must seem insignificant to others or to God -- if there is a God. I speak to the person I always imagine inhabiting a green and quiet place like the 23rd Psalm. (J. 121-23)

Darley has associated the mask with Justine's acting of a role; here she accuses herself of theatricality in apostrophizing it. Later we learn through the omniscient author of Mountolive that acting in this sense is necessary to Justine. There Nessim laments the continual pretense necessitated by his involvement in the conspiracy: "'If only we did not have to keep on acting a part, Justine.'" Her response is to regard him "with an expression suggesting something that was close to horror or dismay" and to remark, "'Ah, Nessim! Then I should not know who I was.'" (M. 233-34)

Justine has been acting a role in her relations with Darley, and to a lesser extent with Pursewarden. But it is not a role she relishes. The role which is to her most satisfactory -- as we have seen -- is that which Nessim offers her, the dangerous role of conspirator. There experience is intensified by its proximity to death. The wall-mask, through its death's head appearance, gives Justine a quietude in life. It is again involved in paradox: a Jewess uses

in connection with this "visitant from distant mythology" the words of Christian prayer; the mask is and is not God, for God may not exist; it represents the "person inhabiting a green and quiet place like the 23rd Psalm." The Psalm may in fact provide a clue to the mask's significance. The "green and quiet place" is there a refuge in the midst of death. By making of a graven skull a mentor and a "Noble Self" Justine transforms the "deathward drift" of her life into tranquility.

For this reason she is unmoved by the failure of the plans, is unmoved by the fear of death and the dealing of death, which almost deprives Nessim of his sanity. As what Durrell calls the "historical process" gains ascendency over the exercise of the individual will for both the conspirators and Mountolive, we find associated with the wall-mask figurative masks and effigies. Justine and Nessim, when they learn that they must continue as though everything had not changed, are described as "expressionless as knights nailed into suits of armour," the chivalric image appropriate because of the crusading purpose of the conspiracy. The idea of nailing of course emphasizes the helplessness of their position. Yet knights nailed into armour are still able to move, to enter "the field of battle" in obedience to "an iron will which exhibits itself in the mailed mask of duty." (M. 217) Their action is now dictated by their position. Volition is impossible and they lie "motionless as the effigies upon Alexandrian tombs, side by side in the dark room, their open eyes staring into each other with the sightlessness of inhuman objects, mirrors made of quartz, dead stars." (M. 215)

More often the image of an undifferentiated effigy upon a tomb is used to delineate Justine while Nessim is likened specifically to a crusader. In his impotency of will he feels, "as a beleaguered knight must feel in the silence of a fortress who suddenly hears the clink of spades and mattocks, the noise of iron feet, and divines that the enemy sappers are burrowing inch by inch beneath the walls." (M. 215-16) Having drunk a sleeping potion he lies on his bed, "hands and feet folded like the effigy of a Crusader." (M. 212) Justine on the other hand, is seen as an effigy which is pharaonic rather than chivalric, and which bears some relation to the wall-mask. Justine is impassive, Nessim retching with the sickness engendered by his brother's feudal defiance. She lies there, "at length under the shelf of books with the mask smiling down ironically at her from the wall." (M. 231) To this seemingly insentient wife he makes the plea that Narouz not be hurt.

> He looked at her once more with longing, with the eyes of his imagination. She lay there, as if afloat upon the dark damascened bed-spread, her feet and hands crossed in the manner of an effigy, her dark eyes upon him. A lock of dark hair curled upon her forehead. She lay in the silence of a room which had housed (if walls have ears) their most secret deliberations, under a Tibetan mask with lighted eyeballs. (M. 232)

This is the woman who, in a manner not unlike Lady Macbeth's, harangued the fluctuating Nessim concerning Narouz: "'I would offer to go out and kill him myself, if I did not know that it would separate us forever. But if you have decided that it must be done, I have the courage to give the orders for you.'" (M. 220) We have seen how Durrell through his imagery implies the kinship of Justine with

Cleopatra. Miss Hutchens has noted with relation to another scene in this room an "Eliot-like atmosphere":

> . . . the opacity of Justine and Nessim, their remoteness from each other, the luxurious artificiality of their surroundings in the house, even the actual closeness of the Nile to match Eliot's adduction of Cleopatra's barge.[64]

Here there is a suggestion of that barge in the "dark damascened bed" on which Justine seems to float. But there is too the hint of something more ancient still, for the single dark curl on her forehead is not unlike the uraeus, the symbol of pharaonic power. Her crossed hands and feet too are reminiscent less of medieval than ancient Egyptian effigies. Over this tableau presides the mask with lighted eyeballs, the symbol of the death-oriented tranquility in Justine which allows her to accept so calmly both Nessim's danger, and the prospect of murdering Narouz.

There are other kinds of masks in the Quartet -- the mask of diplomatic reserve behind which Mountolive hides his feelings, the mask-like eye make-up with which Leila tries to compensate for her vanished beauty, the purely social masks which characters present to the world in order to veil their motives. Outstanding, however, is the total mask of the carnival domino, the black shroud which hides not only identity but sex itself. Groddeck has written:

> If we like, we can think of life as a masquerade at which we don a disguise, perhaps many different disguises, at which nevertheless we retain our own proper characters, remaining ourselves amidst

---

64 Hutchens, 58.

> the other revelers in spite of our disguise,
> and from which we depart exactly as we were
> when we came.[65]

Durrell's use of the domino in the carnival scenes is related to Groddeck's analogy. Because life is un ballo in maschera, because characters do present to an observing world "selected fictions" rather than their own "proper characters" the enveloping anonymity of the domino is both a disguise which hides the accustomed disguises of reputation, position in society and the like, and a symbol of the lowest common denominator in human character: the unalterable thing that we are which the social disguises of life itself hide.[66] These two aspects are closely related. Because of the anonymity conferred by the domino, humanity feels free to manifest itself on a more primitive level.

> . . . concealed beneath the carnival habit
> (like a criminal desire in the heart, a
> temptation impossible to resist, an impulse
> which seems preordained) lie the germs of
> something: of a freedom which man has seldom
> dared to imagine for himself. One feels free
> in this disguise to do whatever one likes with-
> out prohibition. . . . The dark tides of Eros,
> which demand full secrecy if they are to
> overflow the human soul, burst out during
> carnival like something long dammed up and
> raise the forms of strange primeval creatures. (B. 190)

Justine's Tibetan wall-mask we found to be related both

---

[65] Groddeck, 13.

[66] This aspect is also stressed by the association of the Tiresias song -- "Old Tiresias/ No one half so breezy as,/ Half so free and easy as/ Old Tiresias" (B. 202) -- with carnival, for, embodying both sexes, Tiresias is also a symbol of what is common to both.

to God and to death. Similarly the masking dominos are described in terms of perverted religion. The revellers "spring up in the pale moonlight cowled like monks" (B. 188); the domino is a "demented friar's habit" (B. 190); pictures taken of the festivities reveal themselves "each a fearful simulacrum of a death-feast celebrated by satyr-monks in some medieval crypt, each imagined by de Sade." (B. 216) Finally, the carnival habit is described as the "very symbol of the Inquisitor, the cape and hood of the Spanish Inquisition." (B. 192) Always associated with carnival, we are told, are vampires, symbolic too of the masked violence in man. Miss Hutchens has not unaptly seen a resemblance between the destructive "hooded hordes" of Eliot's Waste Land and these demonic cowled figures of the Alexandrian carnival.[67] Monks in the accepted sense represent asceticism and denial, the desire to repress all human impulse save that to holiness. The denial they embody is the denial of earthly life. It is appropriate, therefore, to represent another extreme, the denial of civilization, of propriety, of tenderness itself, the denial of all impulse save that primitive one of destructive self-indulgence in terms of demented monks. It is appropriate too that the domino should most resemble the garb of the Inquisitor. Both are uniforms which by their authority free the practice of cruelty and injustice from guilt. Durrell, however, is on the side of life, not asceticism. The licence, the violence of carnival in his view can work ultimately

---

[67] Hutchens, 58.

for good.

Wounds are important in the Quartet, and the violence of carnival leads to wounding. As Justine is not allowed to rest in the immobile tranquility of her deathward drift, as Nessim is released from the stasis of the effigy, wounds -- and disease -- whether through suffering itself or the perception of suffering -- destroy the static in personality and make growth possible. Two types of wound result from the carnival sequence, and both in their varying degrees are good. By the surgical knife Amaril is able to restore the beauty and the life (in the social sense) of the sequestered Semira with whom he fell in love at carnival. Narouz inflicts a wound, and finds through its consequence a kind of peace. Unterecker has noted the symbolic significance of wounds and disease.

> . . . Just as Justine is most conspicuously the book of mirrors, Balthazar the book of masks, and Mountolive the book of intrigues -- the first two volumes offering private false faces and the third offering the public false faces of political action -- Clea must take its place, it seems to me, as Durrell's book of wounds, the damaging but in a way life-giving wounds that strike through all of the false faces to the quick body beneath and that can be healed only by proper questions, proper concerns for others, such as those we find displayed in the tenderness of human affection.[68]

Amaril is a kind of Pygmalion, with the difference that instead of creating and then loving he first loves and then creates. Like Pygmalion he is an artist, and the painter Clea is appropriately the recounter of his story. In several respects his story involves

---

[68] Unterecker, Lawrence Durrell, 39-40.

the interrelating of art and life. There is first of all the considerable contrast between the romantic, almost Gothic carnival experience, and the detailed account of surgical procedure. Semira is an unknown cowled figure who appears, uninvited, two successive years at the Cervoni ball in a manner not unlike the vampire lover of Pursewarden's Sadean tale; on first beholding her ruined face Amaril makes the sign of the cross and touches a clove of garlic in fear of a vampire; her father sleeps "in an old-fashioned four-poster bed covered in bat-droppings", the unsavory detail emphasizing the Gothic atmosphere. Yet what will help her is not a charm, not a quest as the best romantic tradition would suggest, but a difficult and detailed operation:

> "First you cut off a strip of the costal cartilage, here, where the rib joins the breastbone, and make a graft from it. Then you cut out a triangular flap of skin from the forehead and pull downwards to cover the nose -- the Indian technique, Balthazar calls it; but they are still debating the removal of a section of flesh and skin from inside the thigh.... You can imagine how fascinating this is for a painter and sculptor to think about." (M. 155)

The romance of art impinges on life in her sequestered existence and the "romantic frenzy" (M. 151) of Amaril's devotion. Alexandria again emerges as a mythic place where all things are possible. The detailed operative technique embodies at once realism in its precision, and the methodological aspect of art itself as Clea's comment makes clear. The whole account, then, makes a unity of art and life. But there are wider implications yet. One may note in passing that it is rib tissue which will form the structure of the transforming nose, that once again a woman is almost literally

to be formed from a rib. Unterecker would go further yet in the perceiving of implications:

> Like the medieval quests of Arthurian legend that underlie Eliot's Waste Land, Durrell's quests involve almost always a ritual journey across water either to or from a sick land ruled by an ailing monarch. In many variants of the myth, the sickness is both physical and spiritual.[69]

It is not perhaps over-reading to see in Semira's father such an ailing monarch. Their house is a type of the sick land: the filth, the darkness, the neglect of her disease. To perfect the surgical techniques Amaril is sailing to England. "'How many months he will be away we don't know yet, but he is setting out with all the air of a Knight [capitalized] in search of the Holy Grail.'" (M. 155) The completion of the operation, the working of the cure, is a self-imposed duty. The successful completion of the endeavor is again described in medieval terms, for the happy lovers "'are drunk with the knightly love one reads about in the Arthurian legends -- knight and rescued lady.'" (C. 93)

That other, final carnival wound, the murder by Narouz of Toto de Brunel is otherwise symbolic. Toto is in fact the unwary victim in a ritual murder, the murder of Justine. The prima facie cause is revenge. The cowled homosexual, Toto, wearing Justine's ring, makes advances to Narouz who promptly vindicates his brother's damaged honour by unthinking murder of the offender.

> "'I swear I did not mean to do it. It happened before I could think. She put her hand upon

---

[69] Ibid., 30.

> me, Clea, she made advances to me. Horrible. Nessim's own wife.'" (B. 230)

Durrell makes quite explicit that the meting out of justice should be associated with the act. At the party Athena Trasha, sitting on a pile of cloaks on the sofa, hears a ghostly voice murmuring, seemingly, "'Justice...Justice.'" (B. 205) It is of course Toto whispering the name of the woman in whose guise he has been stabbed. That he should appear to be asking for justice is appropriate since he has been unjustly slain. The word "justice", however, suffers a transference of meaning in Narouz' telling of his deed to Clea. He whispers "'something incoherently to himself, Justine's name, I think, though it sounded more like "Justice".'" (B. 230) There is implied the rough justice of vindication, but Durrell's imagery has yet larger implications which reach out to Narouz' own eventual death.

Clea's first impression of Narouz on his sudden apparition is of "'a man standing there, hanging in the corner of the door like a bat.'" (B. 229) This is a foreshadowing on Durrell's part of Narouz' later association with bats, an association which is linked to his dangerous fanaticism with regard to the Coptic conspiracy. That fanaticism is, as we have seen before, related to his whip as a symbol of death-dealing, desert-born power. At Karm the slaughter of bats has the effect of intimidating Nessim. Feudal defiance cannot go so far as laying violent hands on an elder brother, (M. 227) but the shattered bodies of bats, "like fragments of torn umbrella" (M. 222) are a symbolic substitution. That the supposed murder of Justine is the result less of the patent cause, vindication, than of

the conspiracy itself is made clear both by this anticipatory use of the bat simile and the exclamation Narouz utters to Clea: "'This Jewish fox has eaten my life.'" (B. 231) The proverbial significance of the phrase is fully explained in Mountolive. It expresses "the absurd Coptic terror of Jews." (M. 83) Again a sliding panel slides, and the later occurence of the phrase changes the significance it appears to have when spoken to Clea. In Mountolive, too, the dangerous nature of Narouz' role in the conspiracy is revealed. For him it is no longer an attempt to achieve an acceptable status in Egypt, but "a holy war of religion". (M. 218) According to Serapamoun, Narouz talks of "'taking over Egypt and setting it to rights.'" (M. 219) The attempted murder of Justine then is a ritual murder in another sense. Seizing upon the excuse of her supposed advances, Narouz strikes to destroy the Jewish influence on his brother. In this sense the murder is symbolic of his wish to eradicate Palestine from the conspiracy. The "Jewish fox" has eaten his life for it stands in the way of his dream of a totally Coptic Egypt. That same fanatic zeal which incites Narouz to murder is in part the cause of his being murdered. Justice is dealt in a double sense. Because of the dangers inherent in his preaching there is pressure within the Coptic group to have him removed, permanently if necessary. To this extent the manipulations of Memlik coincide with the wishes of the conspirators whose plans, as Clea's concluding letter makes clear (C.281), are merely deferred by discovery. Narouz, having destroyed Toto in place of Justine, is himself slain in Nessim's stead, his death wounds inflicted, significantly, beneath the sacred nubk tree with its

fluttering rags, his whip coiled about his own body, a sacrifice to the forces which ruled his life.

There is still another aspect of the murder of Toto to be considered, however, and that is its relation to love -- specifically, to Narouz' unrequited love for Clea. Here we are dealing not with the eye for an eye exigencies of justice, but with something greater -- tenderness. Earlier I quoted Unterecker's view that wounds in the Quartet are in some sense life-giving, that they can be healed only "by proper questions, proper concerns for others, such as those we find displayed in the tenderness of human affection."[70] The violence of Narouz' deed provides a release for his violent emotion, different though it is. He has when he arrives so strangely at her door "'two sentences jammed together in the front of his mind'" which emerge as one: "'"I have come to tell you that I love you because I have killed Justine."'" (B. 230) It is his desire to make the one confession before he is constrained to make the other. Clea's response is not entirely the right one. She does not ask the "proper questions" nor show the "proper concern". While he weeps she feels "sorry" and this weak emotion gives him a kind of peace. "When you are in love you know that love is a beggar, shameless as a beggar; and the responses of merely human pity can console one where love is absent by a false travesty of an imagined happiness." (M. 311) The mere presence of the faintly pitying Clea gives Narouz great happiness: "'"Clea, this is the happiest day of my life, to have seen and

---

[70] See above, p. 78.

touched you and to have seen your little room."'" (B. 233) But Clea herself has still to suffer before her emotional education is complete. Faint pity is neither tenderness nor compassion. Her strongest feelings are disgust and revulsion. She is "furious, disgusted, wounded, and insulted" by his love, which is to her only a "grotesque passion". (B. 231-32) The wounds therefore which finally release her from egocentricity, which allow her to "'cross the border and enter into the possession of [her] kingdom'" (C. 278) are first the abortion, perhaps the ultimate wound of love, for it destroys the link between man and woman which a living child could perpetuate; and second her death and rebirth by water which, as we shall see, cannot be dissociated from Narouz' dying wish to see her.

Clea is wounded, Cohen and Melissa die of wasting diseases, but the three are linked through the medium of the hospital room which they all at their various times occupy. It is approached by corridors which are twice described in the same words, the first time in Justine, the second in Clea. If, as I have been endeavouring to show, sickness and mutilation, the physical disabilities which are so prevalent in the Quartet are the "heraldic" expression of psychic wounds, these hospital corridors can be taken to represent an almost Jungian passage into the depths of the psyche:

> . . . long anonymous green corridors whose oil-painted walls exuded an atmosphere of damp. The white phosphorescent bulbs which punctuated our progress wallowed in the gloom like swollen glow worms. (J. 94, C. 254)

Green darkness, damp and eery phosphorescent light -- a dim variety of that same unearthly phosphorescence through which Darley and

Clea later dive -- produce the impression of "unnatural" nature. It is perhaps through this conjunction in the description of natural and artificial -- green forest-like corridors lit by glow-worms, but which are in fact oil-painted and lit by eery white bulbs; it is through this conjunction that Durrell indicates that other nature, the territory of the human soul. It is significant too that this description occurs only in connection with the two characters who suffer a transformation through their experience -- Cohen and Clea. Melissa dies there, but for her there is no journey to another state.

Early in Justine Darley describes Melissa as she is and must be.

> I found [her], washed up like a half-drowned bird, on the dreary littorals of Alexandria, with her sex broken. (J. 21)

I have had occasion earlier to refer to Groddeck's theories of disease. Durrell's portrayal of Melissa in life and in death is, I believe, an explicit example of Groddeck's influence. Melissa dies of consumption, and for Groddeck, consumption is the creation of an "It" so wounded sexually that it must deny life itself. Consumption in German is Schwindsucht:

> . . . The pining to die away (Sucht zum Schwinden). The desire must die away then, the desire for the in and out, the up and down of erotic love, which is symbolized in breathing. And with the desire the lungs die away, the representatives of symbolic conception and birth; the body dies away, the phallus symbol, it must die away, because desire increases during the illness, because the guilt of the ever-repeated symbolic dissipation of semen in the sputum is continually growing greater, because the longing for death is forever being renewed by the suppression of these symbols as they strive to reach the

> conscious level, because the It allows pulmonary disease to bring beauty to the eyes and cheek, alluring poisons.[71]

Melissa's death is thus a denial of her way of life. She appears "pale and somehow wizened" (J. 208) for, in Groddeck's terminology, the "It" which lived her has destroyed a life which offended it. The "acute embarrassment" from which Darley suffers has a probable basis in guilt, for with greater tenderness he could perhaps have saved her. Her body, the expression of her sexuality, is appropriately hidden from view, swathed in bandages. Her face reveals "the terrible marble repose of the will which one reads on the faces of the dead." (J. 208) Groddeck has written, "he alone will die who wishes to die, to whom life is intolerable."[72]

For Darley the silence of the dead is "elaborate and forbidding". Like Clea who could feel only disgust mingled with a little inadequate pity for the sufferings of Narouz he is not yet fully and humanly awake. Yet like Clea he is aware that his response is not sufficient. Significantly he expresses this sense of his failure as a man in terms of his failure as an artist, both explicitly and metaphorically. "I suppose we artists are cruel people," Darley writes. "The dead do not care. It is the living who might be spared if we could quarry the message which lies buried in the heart of all human experience." (J. 209) The measure of Darley's awareness is his recognition that it is the duty of the artist to quarry that message. His artistic

---

[71] Groddeck, 101-102.

[72] Ibid., 101.

immaturity is revealed in his supposition that therefore artists are cruel, that the "message" in some way discards the dead as the "putrefying bodies" of the metaphoric tortoises are discarded because "there are plenty more where they came from." (J. 209) At this point Darley grasps only the evolution of life implied by death. It will take Balthazar's revelations to make clear to him the meaning of "Time Immemorial" which is, as we have seen the tenor of that "message buried in the heart of human experience": not the discarding of death to make room for life, the cruel belief that "there are plenty more where they came from", but a vital sense of life-in-death, the "multiple state birth-life-death in one" which the poet should capture.[73]

Narouz is a victim of the fanatical forces which rule him, Melissa of her way of life. To both these sufferers Clea and Darley give, respectively, the wrong response. Cohen's illness can also be seen in Groddeckian terms, but there the significance is not in the response of others, but in the actual awakening of the sufferer. Darley, paying his last respects to the dead Melissa, recognizes the room as that in which he had visited Cohen, and notes, "It would be just like real life to imitate art at this point." (J. 208) The coincidence of lover and loved dying in the same room is all Darley intends. Durrell intends more. The room is in fact a symbol linking the worlds of experience and awareness, the interpenetrating worlds of life and art. Darley is unaware of the significance of

---

[73] See above, p. 55.

Melissa's death and leaves to walk "lightly effortlessly about the town like an escaped prisoner." (J. 209) To emphasize his unawareness Durrell does not on this occasion describe the room or the corridors. Similarly the awareness of Cohen and Clea is stressed by the description whose psychological overtones we have noted and which varies only in one significant detail. During Cohen's occupancy the little room is the one "reserved for critical cases whose expectation of life is short." (J. 94) On Clea's arrival it has become "the emergency casualty ward." (C. 254) Clea's awareness leads to fuller life, Cohen's only to the dignity of an expiatory death.

The damp green corridors along which Darley walks to Cohen bear some resemblance to the "dense jungle of his illusions" (J. 96) into which Darley is metaphorically led. The corridors are the approaches to that terrain of the psyche through which the dying man probes to expunge his guilt. For the guilt engendered by his treatment of Melissa is, in the Groddeckian sense, the cause of Cohen's poisonous uraemia.

> Illness has a purpose; it has to resolve the conflict, to repress it, or to prevent what is already repressed from entering consciousness; it has to punish a sin against a commandment, and in doing that it goes so far that one can draw conclusions as to the time, the place, and the nature of the sin that is to be punished by considering the time, the place, and the nature of the illness.[74]

The stream of Cohen's consciousness reveals to Darley what time, place and nature revealed to Groddeck. Cohen's sin is his failure

---

[74] Groddeck, 101.

to treat Melissa honourably, to love her, to marry her. The illness, as much as his desire to give her the sable and the rings, is the symbolic expiation of his guilt, the latter undertaken by his consciousness, the former by his "It". Medical symbolism in fact emerges in his delirium.

> Unkown fronds of trees arched over him, brushing his face, while cobbles punctuated the rubber wheels of some dark ambulance full of metal and other dark bodies, whose talk was of limbo. . . . The hard white edges of the bed turned to boxes of coloured bricks, the white temperature chart to a boatman's white face. (J. 96)

There are here strong suggestions of a passage to the underworld, a passage towards death, limbo. Significantly the vehicle his unconscious chooses is the ambulance, as it has chosen mortal illness for a punishment. The chart which plots the progress of his passage into death seems to him the face of a boatman, a type of Charon, who will surely ferry those other bodies into death. But the boatman too is explicitly associated with his guilt, for the delirium continues:

> They were drifting, Melissa and he, across the shallow blood-red water of Mareotis, in each other's arms, towards the rabble of mud-huts where Rhakotis stood. (J. 96)

Mareotis, as we noted in another chapter, is the shallow salt lake, the prototype (almost) of Alexandrian exhaustion. Melissa, too, is a prototype of exhaustion, and here, in the conversation of delirium she is pleading with a temporizing Cohen, imploring him to marry her, revealing to him (as never to Darley) "the depth of her weakness and exhaustion." (J. 96) The "blood-red" water symbolizes both his awareness of her fatal disease, and his own present deathward drift,

the two combined into one image of spilt blood by his unconscious, and heightened by the destination, Rhakotis -- a town dedicated to Osiris, the "god of the world beyond death".[75]

Neither disease nor delirium, however, can rob Cohen of the dignity conferred on him by this expiatory death. Darley is "amazed at the masterful, thoughtful reserve of the face", for in mortal sickness it has regained "a buoyancy, a spirit which must have characterized it in earliest youth." He has the look of "one of the beasts of the Apocalypse." (J. 94) And like Antony in the poem by Cavafy referred to so often in the Quartet, and translated by Durrell, music sounds at his passing. It is music of his own making -- if we discount the whooping sirens -- and it is that leitmotiv of Alexandria itself, Jamais de la vie. With it we come to the complex group of images which must conclude this investigation. The song itself is associated with Mountolive's liberation from psychological bondage and that liberation is partially described in terms of water imagery. The poem by its relation to the Timonium is involved in Clea's rebirth by water, her birth as an artist which is in a sense analagous to Pursewarden's sacrificial death.

The blood-red water of Cohen's dream lake is not wholly threatening, for though it objectifies the guilt of spilt blood, it has also its redemptive aspect. Similarly the song, "Jamais de la vie,/ Jamais dans la nuit/ Quand ton coeur se démange de chagrin...." (M. 276), when sung by the dying Cohen carries along with its

---

[75] Forster, 7, 20.

accustomed despairing implications the serenity of acceptance derived from its association with the dying Antony. Cavafy's poem is worth quoting in full. I use Durrell's translation rather than the others available[76] not only because it forms part of the appendex to Justine, but because as poetry it seems least like translation.

> When suddenly at darkest midnight heard,
> The invisible company passing, the clear voices,
> Ravishing music of invisible choirs --
> Your fortunes having failed you now,
> Hopes gone aground, a lifetime of desires
> Turned into smoke. Ah! do not agonize
> At what is past deceiving
> But like a man long since prepared
> With courage say your last good-byes
> To Alexandria as she is leaving.
> Do not be tricked and never say
> It was a dream or that your ears misled,
> Leave cowards their entreaties and complaints,
> Let all such useless hopes as these be shed,
> And like a man long since prepared,
> Deliberately, with pride, with resignation
> Befitting you and worthy of such a city
> Turn to the open window and look down
> To drink past all deceiving
> Your last dark rapture from the mystical throng
> And say farewell, farewell to Alexandria leaving. (J. 221-222)[77]

Cohen "goes out to his own music." (J. 99) But like Antony, like

---

[76] Forster, in Alexandria: A History and A Guide, quotes the translation by George Valassopoulo (p. 104); Durrell in the Quartet mentions "the fine thoughtful translations of Mavrogordato" (J. 220); the Hogarth Press has published The Complete Poems of C. P. Cavafy in a translation by Rae Dalven (London, 1964).

[77] Forster tells us that after Actium Antony, following Cleopatra to Alexandria, formed with her a suicide pact and ". . . to imitate the misanthrope Timon, built a hermitage in the Western Harbour which he called Timonium. Nor was religion silent. The god Hercules, whom he loved and who loved him, was heard passing away from Alexandria one night in exquisite music and song." P. 29. In Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra too there is reference to the music which sounds "i' the air" and "under the earth" as Hercules leaves Antony: IV, iii, ll. 12-21.

in fact Cavafy himself, his resignation is not simply "the stoic acceptance of death"[78] but the serenity born of the total acceptance of life. Antony was an exemplar of ancient Alexandria, Cohen of modern. The city has changed, life has changed, but the attitude has not.

Melissa and Narouz through their deaths emerge as victims. Semira is transformed by the surgical knife, Cohen by death. The ultimate transformation, though, is that undergone by Clea and Darley. It too is accomplished by a wound which itself exemplifies a type of that truth enunciated by Eliot in another work,

> . . . that action is suffering
> And suffering is action. Neither does the agent suffer
> Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
> In an eternal action, an eternal patience
> To which all must consent that it may be willed
> And which all must suffer that they may will it,
> That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action
> And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
> Be forever still.[79]

We noted earlier that poetically Alexandria is a kind of ideogram for the testing-ground of a poet who must re-forge the link between art and life which the progress of civilization has destroyed. It is appropriate therefore that the Alexandria to which Darley returns after his self-imposed exile on the metaphoric island of withdrawal, the Alexandria where he and Clea will complete the term of their initiation into artisthood, is itself a city torn by the wounds of war.

---

[78] Peter Bien, Constantine Cavafy, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers, No. 5 (Columbia University Press, 1964), 23.

[79] T. S. Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, in his Collected Plays (London, [1962]), 17.

The distancing effect of withdrawal has created in Darley a preparatory state of awareness. He realizes that he is returning to a city which "memory had peopled with masks". (C. 23) What he does not expect to find is a city transformed by the explosions of nocturnal bombs. Yet this is appropriate. As the masks of memory are shattered by war, so the masks of the characters themselves, the "selected fictions" of their lives, are destroyed and dissipated by painful experience. The Quartet is always stressing that "it hurts to realize." (C. 153) What is important, however, is not the hurt but the response. The proper response destroys the stasis, the unawareness of the mask, penetrates by insight the relativity of the actual to reach the reality beyond. In this sense the pattern of Durrell's "heraldic reality" resembles Eliot's pattern. Action and suffering, Darley's action and Clea's suffering, are subsumed in one another: the wheel continues to turn as two more sleeping artists awake to awareness.

The wounds in the Quartet are all in some sense related to love. Love to Durrell is our "knowing machine". True knowledge is imaginative insight. Darley returning to Alexandria in Clea is only negatively aware of these truths. Because he has forgotten Melissa he regards her as "simply one of the costumes of love." (C. 41) Similarly he sees Justine stripped of all the romance in which his love had wrapped her:

> Under all these masks there was only another woman, every woman, like a lay figure in a dressmaker's shop, waiting for the poet to clothe her, breathe life into her. (C. 56)

The image of the dressmaker's shop recalls that earlier image in Justine whose subject is art:

> I remember her sitting before the multiple mirrors at the dressmaker's being fitted for a shark-skin costume, and saying: "Look! five different pictures of the same subject. Now if I wrote I would try for a multi-dimensional effect in character, a sort of prism-sightedness. Why should not people show more than one profile at a time?" (J. 23)

The poet and the lover thus become equated. Love has its costumes but love is knowing. Disillusioned by the older Justine Darley begins to realise

> . . . the enormous reflexive power of woman -- the fecund passivity with which, like the moon, she borrows her second-hand light from the male sun. (C. 56)

His mistake is generalization. Durrell gives us, in the terms of Darley's theorizing, the means to relate what the latter as yet cannot. The mask, like the costume, like a mirror reflection, is purely relative. And all are relative to the perceiver. Loving, whether truly or falsely, Darley cherishes a view of these two women which he later denies. But the cosmic theory on which Durrell bases the Quartet maintains that perceiver and perceived, that subject and object are not separate and distinct, that both are part of one totality. Love in the Quartet objectifies this linking. Darley, like Eliot's Chorus, knows and does not know the nature of love. Melissa was indeed a costume of love, and the Justine he loved borrowed her light from his passion. To see her, however, as "only another woman", to deny her that multi-dimensional aspect which he would accord to fictional character, is not as he thinks to perceive the reality, but to dissect it, for he cuts away the dimension of his own involvement. In these relationships he was in fact passive. To

gain a true perception of reality he must be made aware of that involvement, in the action which complements and complete Clea's suffering.

The action and the suffering take place under water and, moreover, at the little island which is associated both with Narouz and the Timonium. We have had occasion to note in passing the prevalence of water imagery in the Quartet through reference to water reflections, the brackish water of the sour land, Lake Mareotis and the sea. The symbolic significance of water resides in its natural functions: water cleans and refreshes, it gives life, it causes death. Water imagery adumbrates Mountolive's release from the bondage of devotion to Leila, and is the objective correlative of that "multiple state birth-life-death" in Clea's vital wounding.

The water imagery associated with Mountolive's traumatic meeting with Leila, and his subsequent experience in the house of child prostitutes is embodied first in rain, and then in the sea. Driving to Alexandria he encounters a winter storm which is indicative of the coming encounter.

> He glimpsed the pearly city through the dark cloud-mat, its minarets poked up against the cloud bars of an early sunset; linen soaked in blood. . . . Higher still roamed packages of smoking, blood-stained cloud throwing down a strange radiance into the streets and squares of the white city. . . .
> . . . It was the ancient city again; he felt its pervading melancholy under the rain. . . . The brilliant unfamiliar lighting of the thunder-storm re-created it, giving it a spectral, story-book air -- broken pavements made of tin-foil, snail-shells, cracked horn, mica; earth-brick buildings turned to the colour of ox-blood. . . . (M. 277)

The emphasis on blood, fragility and spectral light is a foreshadowing of the coming destruction of Mountolive's image of Leila who, through the years, had embodied for him all of Egypt, "his own private Egypt of the mind". (M. 284) In the penumbrance of the storm Alexandria seems only the debased ghost of its ancient self, for the images of fragility -- tin-foil, snail-shells, cracked-horn, mica -- are also images of denigration. Similarly Leila, seen in the light of the "sharp blue street-lamps" is not the Leila he has imagined but a "pitiable grotesque" -- "a plump and square-faced Egyptian lady of uncertain years, with a severely pock-marked face and eyes drawn grotesquely out of true by the antimony pencil." (M. 281) Rain restores Alexandria, not to its story-book past but to the actuality of the present.

> . . . the tears were trickling down the wind-screen under the diligent and noiseless wipers.... A little period in this strange contused darkness, fitfully lit by lightning, and then the wind would come -- the magistral north wind, punching and squeezing the sea into its own characteristic plumage of white crests, knocking open the firmament until the faces of men and women once more reflected the open winter sky. (M. 278)

It is the cold, wintry but clear actuality which Mountolive must face. Rain-swept Alexandria first presents it, but it is the "cold dawn sea" which finally symbolizes Mountolive's new awareness. Escaping from the house of child prostitutes, he find himself "leaning upon the icy stone embankment of the Corniche with the dawn sea beneath him, rolling its slow swell up the stone piers. . . ." (M. 293) The quiescence which Justine achieves in the same improbable place is similarly expressed in terms of water imagery. She and Pursewarden

stand "for a long time leaning upon the cold stone piers above the sea, smoking and saying nothing." (C. 150) Water in these passages appears in its cleansing and refreshing aspect. It is therefore only by implication symbolic of rebirth, for it symbolizes not the cradle of life itself, but the washing away of the grime of past experience.

As we have noted, however, there is associated with the water imagery of Mountolive's liberation the song, "Jamais de la vie", which the dying Cohen sings.[80] That song, as was earlier indicated, is the expression of the despair and etiolation of Alexandrian love. In Mountolive's case its implications are softened and to an extent healed by the regenerative connotations of rain and sea. (Hearing the song as he drives back to Cairo Mountolive snaps off the radio.) For Cohen the song is analagous to the music with which the god abandoned Antony, and confers on the dying Jew the dignity of the dying Roman. Cavafy's poem now assumes importance. It advocates, as we have seen, the acceptance of life as it has been lived. Cohen, like Antony, in accepting his life accepts also the suffering which consequentially ensues. He is therefore involved in something very like the "eternal action" and "eternal patience" of Eliot's lines. We have seen Clea's failure of response with regard to Narouz. The wheel turns, and she who hurt must in turn be hurt.

Durrell's "character-squeeze" of Clea at the end of Justine -- "still waters of pain" (J. 216) -- foreshadows the underwater

---

[80] That the title is also the name of Justine's perfume indicates further implications which for reasons of space are impossible of investigation here.

wound she suffers in the final volume, a wound which is, explicitly, a mime of rebirth. I have already indicated that the island site is not only related to water as the objective correlative of that "multiple state, birth-life-death" but also to Narouz, and the Timonium. The episode is in fact the climax of the Quartet, for its implications reach out to past and future and involve them inextricably in the present. Time in its multiplicity coalesces with space to form a single entity, the axis of the continuum itself.

Significantly it is Clea who first discovers "the little island of Narouz." (C. 224) There Narouz was accustomed to fish. It is in this guise that Miss Hutchens finds him analagous to Eliot's Fisher King.[81] Fishing is in fact glancingly associated with Narouz' desert-born fanaticism. When Narouz is absent from Karm, Nessim tells Pursewarden, "he has either gone to the island to fish with his new gun or to see Taor. Always one or the other." (M. 126) Narouz' death is involved with his fanaticism. "'As for Narouz,'" Justine tells Darley in Clea, "'his death hangs heavy on Nessim because people say that he ordered it himself -- the Copts say so. It has become like a family curse to him.'" (C. 57) And Narouz dies, calling for Clea with all the power of his fanatical soul.

> The name of Clea sounded through the whole house, drenched by the splendour of his anguish, silencing the little knots of whispering servants and visitors, setting back the ears of the hunting dogs. . . ringing in Nessim's mind with a new and

---

81 Hutchens, 58.

terrifying bitterness too deep for tears. (M. 313)

It is a call that sounds through the realm of death itself and almost draws Clea from life, a call transmitted by that strange character, the English sailor who becomes a Coptic saint, Scobie.

> "'His lips are split here, and I see him covered in little wounds, lying on a table. There is a lake outside. He has made up his mind. He will try and drag you to him. You will be in a dark place, imprisoned, unable to resist him. Yes, there is one near at hand who might aid you if he could. But he will not be strong enough.'" (C. 207)

The lake of Cohen's delirium is partly the image of his guilt, partly a promise of redemption and partly the image of that water which demarcates and joins the worlds of life and death. The lake of Scobie's prophecy embodies only the latter aspect. Like the "dark place" it connotes the Underworld. The redemptive aspect of Cohen's lake derives from his expiatory suffering. Scobie's prophecy denies Clea help, for the possible rescuer "will not be strong enough" to act. And yet in the event Darley is strong enough. His suffering, his passivity, turns to reveal its opposite and integral aspect, action. Confronted with a death which only he can prevent he is carried out of himself, carried out of the normal range of his emotions.

> It was as if I were for the first time confronting myself -- or perhaps an alter ego shaped after a man of action I had never realized, recognized. (C. 249)

The island is not only the island of Narouz, but the island of the Timonium, and the Timonium, though it implies the death of Antony, is nevertheless a positive symbol embodying the total acceptance of life.

The imagery of the island's rock-pool combines and unites the duality of life and death. Life appears in terms of art and religion. In another chapter I suggested that the "God" of whom Pursewarden spoke was not God in the religious sense, but an aspect merely of that heraldic reality which both Durrell and Pursewarden believe to be the true realm of art, the object of an artist's quest.[82] Similarly cathedral imagery in the rock-pool is associated with the religion of art.

> Its beauty was spell-binding. It was like diving into the nave of a cathedral whose stained-glass windows filtered the sun-light through a dozen rainbows. The sides of the amphitheatre -- for it opened gradually towards the deep sea -- seemed as if carved by some heartsick artist of the Romantic Age into a dozen half-finished galleries lined with statues. . . . These blurred caryatids were wave-born, pressed and moulded by the hazard of the tides into goddesses and dwarfs and clowns. (C. 226)

The cathedral and the statues are both carved by the sea which thus appears in its creative aspect. The creative is however inseparable from the destructive, which is immediately exemplified in the wreck. The wreck is associated, appropriately, with Narouz, for Clea had learned of its existence from his brother.

> Here, too, was the wreck. . . . She had been rammed astern. Her back was broken. She was full of a dead weight of dark sponges. . . . Her wood was crawling with slime and every

---

82 One may note in this connection that other remark of Pursewarden to Darley: "If God were anything he would be an art." Pursewarden relates the nature of God also to water, "a glass of spring-water, tasteless, odourless, merely refreshing. . . ." (J. 124)

cranny winked full of hermit crabs. (C. 226)

The shattered rotting wreck suggests the possibility of death by water within the pool. The cathedral-like amphitheatre, however, contains within it not only the shattered hulk of a ship, but the bodies of seven drowned sailors which contrast strikingly with the wave-carved statues.

> This conclave of silent figures formed a small semicircle across the outer doorway of the pool. They had been roped in sacks and lead-weighted at the feet, so that now they stood upright, like chess pieces of human size. One has seen statues covered in this way, travelling through a city on a lorry, bound for some sad provincial museum. (C. 230)

It is possible too to find in these grim figures a relation to Narouz. The tide has carried their bodies to Narouz' island and planted them like guardians at the egress of the pool. Darley associates them with the dead who are everywhere:

> One feels them pressing their sad blind fingers in deprivation upon the panels of our secret lives, asking to be remembered and re-enacted once more in the life of the flesh -- encamping among our heartbeats, invading our embraces. (C. 229)

And the dead do invade Clea's embraces -- the dead child, the murder of her love for Amaril, and the dead Narouz whose power can call to her from the grave. Both are aspects of the horror which overtakes her, the horror which all but destroys her love for Darley, and which takes the guise of "a visitation of an agency, a power initiated in some uncommon region beyond the scope of the ordinary imagination." (C. 233) Darley, attempting to pry from her hand the murderous steel shaft of Narouz' harpoon which impales her to

to the wreck, feels that

> . . . this was part of some incomprehensible dream, fabricated perhaps in the dead minds of the seven brooding figures which attended so carefully, so scrupulously to the laboured evolutions we now performed. . . . (C. 249)

Water through its dual forces of creation and destruction has made of the rock-pool both a cathedral and a tomb. Life and art are opposed to the ominous presence of death. But life and death in the Quartet are not disparate elements. They coalesce, as we have had occasion to note throughout, into a multiple entity, birth-life-death. The tomb, then, must carry within it the seeds of life. This Durrell demonstrates with reference to an actual tomb, the catacombs of Kom El Shugafa, the description of which is dovetailed into the account of the rock-pool. These actual tombs, "carved out of the black chocolate soil, one upon the other, like bunks in a ship", (C. 229) are not physically unlike the galleries of sea-carved statues which almost become Clea's tomb. The emergence of Darley and Clea from the catacombs is described in archetypal terms.

> . . . with what pleasure one stepped from the darkness into the roaring, anarchic life of the open street once more. So the sun-god must have risen, shaking himself free from the damp clutch of the soil, smiling up at the printed blue sky. . . . (C. 229)

This image is a foreshadowing indeed, with the terms slightly altered, of Clea's "rebirth", for there Darley, swimming upward with the mutilated and dying body of Clea

> [hits] the sky with a concussion that knocked the breath from me -- as if I had cracked

my skull on the ceiling of the universe. (C. 250)

Rebirth, moreover, is inseparable from love. Clea's resuscitation reverses the earlier image of love as a "mime of rebirth". Darley's efforts to revive her water-logged body are a "pitiful simulacrum of the sexual act -- life-saving, life-giving." (C. 251) Sexual love, the "modern love" which Durrell is investigating, is a means of knowing, a means of attaining to a new state of awareness. The pain of this "simulacrum of the sexual act" brings Clea back to a consciousness which is explicitly termed "rebirth". (C. 252) Two themes of the Quartet are thus brought into conjunction: love and wounds. Pain and emotion, "(Yes, but it hurts to realise)", restore Clea to life and destroy "the pale set mask of death." (C. 252)

The universe into which the reborn enter is the heraldic expression of the universe of art. Darley comes of age as an artist when suddenly "on a blue day, quite unpremeditated, quite unannounced" he puts pen to paper and feels "as if the whole universe [has] given [him] a nudge." (C. 282) Clea's Hand, that "delicate and beautiful steel contrivance" allows her to "cross the border and enter into the possession of [her] kingdom."[83] (C. 278) Earlier Pursewarden wrote to Darley, "The heraldic reality can strike from any point, above or below: it is not particular." (C. 154) And for Darley and

---

[83] In a letter to Durrell (dated 7/ 9/ 59) Miller writes, "One will never forget that steel Hand, never! or the wonderful 'lesson' imparted by implication -- to wit (as you have stated explicitly or implicitly through one person or another throughout), that the hand, or whatever the implement, resides in the psyche." Correspondence, 363.

Clea it does strike. Pursewarden is different. The "Conversations" anticipate his suicide:

> Somewhere at the heart of things you are still lazy of spirit. But then, why struggle? If it is to happen to you it will happen of its own accord. You may be quite right to hang about like this, waiting. I was too proud. I felt I must take it by the horns, this vital question of my birth-right. For me it was grounded in an act of will. So for people like me I would say: "Force the lock, batter down the door. Outface, defy, disprove the Oracle in order to become the poet, the darer!" (C. 154)

The supreme defiance is to destroy the self. For this reason Pursewarden's suicide is symbolically analagous to Clea's rebirth. It is "the sacrificial suicide of the true Cathar."[84]

---

[84] Durrell, "The Kneller Tape", in Moore, 168.

V

IN CONCLUSION

The "heraldic aspect" of the Durrellian "reality" emerges through image and symbol. George Steiner, discussing two aspects of Durrell's reputation, puts it as follows:

> There are critics who assert that Durrell is a pompous charlatan; a mere word-spinner and gatherer of flamboyant clichés; a novelist whose angle of vision is grotesquely narrow; a late Victorian decadent and minor disciple of Henry Miller. Elsewhere, and particularly in France, it is held with equal vehemence that the Alexandria Quartet is the highest performance in the modern novel since Proust and Joyce, and that Durrell is a genius of the first rank. The main source of controversy is Durrell's style. And that style is, in fact, the vital center of Durrell's art. It meets the reader like a bristling parapet when he first enters the world of Justine; and when he has finished Clea, he will realize that that style is also the inward sanctuary of Durrell's meaning.[85]

There is in the Quartet a progression, as I have tried to demonstrate, from images of refraction and stasis (the mirrors and the masks) to images of involvement and awareness (the rebirth, the realization which hurts and yet is a consummation devoutly to be wished). And uniting them all is the setting of Alexandria, a mythopoeic place which nonetheless retains enough of actuality to embody the link which resolves and integrates the art-life dichotomy; a microcosm which

---

[85] Steiner, "Lawrence Durrell: The Baroque Novel", in Moore, 13.

turns like a mirror, "taking us backwards and forwards, between reminiscence and description, between the present and the past"[86] to reflect all aspects of Durrell's ultimate macrocosm, the heraldic universe.

Henry Miller has perhaps best expressed the total significance of the Quartet is a letter to its author.

> Alexandria -- your Alexandria -- is the whole pantheon of Homer's bloody, senseless gods -- doing what they will, but conscious of what is done. The Homeric gods are more like blind forces, components of the now exposed psyche -- atomic, in other words. Whereas Alexandria -- through and by her inhabitants, climate, odors, temperament, diversity, freaks, crimes, monstrous dreams and hallucinations (but why imitate you?) -- gives the impression of living herself (her pantheonic self) out, of washing herself clean through complete enactment. Alexandria enacts for us -- that's it. The act and the actor, the dream, or vision, and the drama -- all in one.[87]

---

[86] Durrell, Key, 151.

[87] Miller, letter dated 7/ 9/ 59, Correspondence, 364.

VI

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Durrell, Lawrence. Balthazar. London: Faber and Faber, 1961.

--------. The Black Book. Introduction by Gerald Sykes. New York: Dutton, 1963.

--------. Clea. London: Faber and Faber, 1961.

--------. Collected Poems. London: Faber and Faber, 1961.

--------. The Dark Labyrinth. New York: Dutton, 1962.

--------. Justine. London: Faber and Faber, 1963.

--------. A Key to Modern British Poetry. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964.

-------- and Henry Miller. Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence. Edited by George Wickes. New York: Dutton, 1964.

--------. Mountolive. London: Faber and Faber, 1961.

--------. "No Clue to Living", in The Writer's Dilemma. Introduction by Stephen Spender. London: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 17-24.

Groddeck, Georg. The Book of the It. [Translated by V. M. E. Collins]. Introduction by Lawrence Durrell. New York: Random House, 1961.

Moore, Harry T. ed. The World of Lawrence Durrell. New York: Dutton, 1963.

Writers at Work, 2nd ser. Introduced by Van Wyck Brooks. New York: The Viking Press, [1963], pp. 259-282.

Young, Kenneth. "A Dialogue with Durrell", Encounter, December, 1959, pp. 61-68.

Secondary Sources

Allen, Walter. Tradition and Dream. London: Phoenix House, [1964].

Bien, Peter. Constantine Cavafy. Columbia Essays on Modern Writers, No. 5. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964.

Blake, William. The Complete Writings of William Blake. Edited by Geoffrey Keynes. London: The Nonesuch Press, 1957.

Bode, Carl. "Durrell's Way to Alexandria", College English, XXII (1961), 531-538.

Burgess, Anthony. The Novel Today. British Council Pamphlet. Great Britain: Longmans, Green and Co., [1963].

Cavafy, Constantine. The Complete Poems of Cavafy. [Translated by Rae Dalven]. Introduction by W. H. Auden. London: Hogarth Press, 1964.

Cate Curtis. "Lawrence Durrell", The Atlantic Monthly, December, 1961, pp. 63-69.

Cocteau, Jean. Jean Cocteau Five Plays. New York: Hill and Wang, [1961].

Dobrée, Bonamy. "Durrell's Alexandrian Series", The Sewanee Review, LXIX (1961), 61-79.

Edel, Leon. The Modern Psychological Novel. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, [1964].

Eliot, T. S. Murder in the Cathedral, in his Collected Plays. London: Faber and Faber, [1962].

--------. The Waste Land, in Maynard Mack and others, eds. Modern Poetry. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961, pp. 142-161.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed., Vol. XXI ([1937]), 213.

Fiedler, Leslie. Waiting for the End. New York: Dell, [1964].

Ford, Boris, ed. The Modern Age. Vol. 7 of The Pelican Guide to English Literature. Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1963].

Forster, E. M. Alexandria: A History and A Guide. New York: Doubleday, 1961.

Fraser, G. S. The Modern Writer and his World. Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1964].

Glicksberg, Charles I. The Self in Modern Literature. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, [1963].

Green, Martin. "A Minority Report", The Yale Review, XLIX (1960), 496-508.

Hartt, Julian. The Lost Image of Man. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, [1963].

Highet, Gilbert. The Classical Tradition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Hutchens, Eleanor N. "The Heraldic Universe in the Alexandria Quartet", College English, XXIV (1962), 56-61.

Karl, Frederick. A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel. New York: Noonday Press, [1962].

Kermode, Frank. Puzzles and Epiphanies. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.

Lawrence Durrell: A Checklist. Compiled by Robert A. Potter and Brooke Whiting. Los Angeles: University of California Library, 1961.

Meyerhoff, Hans. Time in Literature. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960.

Moore, Harry T. ed. The World of Lawrence Durrell. New York: Dutton, 1963.

de Mott, Benjamin. "Grading the Emanglons", The Hudson Review, XIII (1960), 457-464.

Romberg, Bertil. Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel. [Translated by Michael Taylor and Harold Borland]. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wicksell, 1962.

de Sade, Marquis. Justine. New York: Castle Books, [1964].

Shakespeare, William. Antony and Cleopatra. The Arden Edition. Edited by M. R. Ridley. London: Methuen, 1960.

Smith, T. V. ed. From Thales to Plato. Chicago: University Press, 1957.

Tindall, William York. Forces in Modern British Literature. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.

Unterecker, John. Lawrence Durrell. Columbia Essays on Modern Writers, No. 6. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964.

West, Paul. The Modern Novel. London: Hutchinson, [1963].