

DURRELL'S REMEDIAL CYCLE

"DESPAIR, REPENTANCE, AND LOVE":

DURRELL'S REMEDIAL CYCLE

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ABSTRACT

The Relativity Proposition has displaced the concept of objective truth in favour of a truth that is relative to the viewer, his time, and his place. Durrell ascribes a significance previously reserved for scientific truth to poetic or psychological truth - a pattern or order perceived in human experience. The pattern Durrell perceives is cyclical, an endless repetition of annihilation, precipitated by the defective human heart, and rebirth. The experience of destruction creates the possibility for spiritual growth. As an individual becomes aware of his participation in what is in fact a universally experienced cycle, he may apprehend what Durrell calls the heraldic universe, the symbolic representation of archetypal human behaviour. Knowledge of the heraldic universe, the embodiment of human potential, frees the individual from the cycle by releasing him from the confines of his own imagination.

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INTRODUCTION

Critical commentary on Lawrence Durrell's The Alexandria Quartet reveals extensive interest in four aspects of his work: (1) his translation of the Relativity Proposition into artistic terms; (2) his investigation of the nature of love; (3) his postulation of an heraldic universe; and (4) his writing style.

Durrell's examination of the nature of truth has been exhaustively studied. His presentation of factual reality as illusory, as relative to the observer's time and place, has been praised, and criticized, equally. His metaphysics of love has excited a similar quantity of comment, similarly divided. Critics - Carl Bode, for example, Eleanor Hutchens, and more recently Carol Peirce - have written articles that assist in the definition of Durrell's heraldic universe. Because of its intense visual quality, Durrell's style is usually defined in artistic terms, as pointilliste, baroque, impressionistic, surrealist, cinematic, or like a collage, a Byzantine Mosaic, an illuminated manuscript, or a collection of jewelled miniatures. While all of these terms usefully identify some element in Durrell's style, for the most part their usefulness is limited. They do

In this abundance of criticism one finds little mention of the cyclical in Durrell's writing. Frank Baldanza I recall mentions it in passing. But there is no discussion of the nature of the cycle, the way it works in our lives, or the techniques by means of which it is inserted into the text of the Quartet. These, therefore, are my concerns, as I believe them to be central to our understanding of Durrell's perception of truth, of love, and of his style.

Chapter One: The Cycle

Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria reverberates with a light and sound peculiarly its own. So effectively does Durrell create the spirit of the place, it seems to interfere with our perception of Alexandria as a metaphor. The characters, however, look to the city to provide them with an understanding of time. Balthazar hunts "among these grey paving stones for the key to a watch which is Time" (Clea 701). Darley, meditating on his "total failure to record the inner truth of the city" feels he has "come face to face with the nature of time" (Clea 658).

Alexandria, in its embodiment of time, subsumes all human behaviour. It is "the Alexandria of the human estate" (Clea 828). Its streets and walls echo with the courage and the folly of its past and its present citizens:

Walking these streets again in my imagination
I knew once more that they spanned, not merely
human history, but the whole biological scale
of the heart's affections - from the painted
ecstasies of Cleopatra ... to the bigotry of
Hypatia. (Clea 660)

Darley seeks an understanding of his experience in Alexandria, and by implication of all human history, that will be eternally valid. While logic and artistry dictate that this understanding emerge in the final book

of the Quartet, its evolution can be traced through the preceding books. Darley senses its direction in Justine: "Somewhere in the heart of experience there is an order and a coherence which we might surprise if we were attentive enough, loving enough, or patient enough. Will there be time?" (178).

The concluding question is significant, as it is only through time that an order or coherence can emerge. Not only must the individual experience the passage of time himself but he must also submerge his personal history in the history of humanity to confirm the pattern he perceives. Haltingly Darley makes his way towards this truth. In Justine, he thinks "the whole story through from beginning to end":

I say that I thought it through, but strangely enough I thought of it not as a personal history with an individual accent so much as part of the historical fabric of the place. I described it to myself as part and parcel of the city's behaviour, completely in keeping with everything that had gone before, and everything that would follow it. It was as if my imagination had become subtly drugged by the ambience of the place and could not respond to personal, individual assessments. (154)

Towards the end of Balthazar, he reveals a clearer understanding of his endeavour:

Perhaps then the destruction of my private Alexandria was necessary ... perhaps buried in

all this there lies the germ and substance of a truth - time's usufruct which, if I can accommodate it, will carry me a little further in what is really a search for my proper self. We shall see. (370)

"We shall see" reaffirms the necessity of the experience of time for the perception of its truth. By the time of Clea enough has happened to make manifest that pattern, that coherence for which Darley seeks. In personal and historical time he perceives "The sadness and beatitude of this human conjunction [the sexual encounter] which perpetuated itself to eternity, an endless cycle of rebirth and annihilation which alone could teach and reform by its destructive power" (Clea 700). If one pays careful attention, one may discern the cycle inherent in human experience, and thereby become aware of the opportunity for the development of a better self. Only through the experience of the cycle, of sexual misadventure and the psyche's accommodation of it, can one improve.

Pursewarden presents, in a memorable image, the pattern in human experience as contingent on the passage of time:

The sexual and the creative energy go hand in hand. They convert into one another - the solar sexual and the lunar spiritual holding an eternal dialogue. They ride the spiral of time together. They embrace the whole of the human motive. The truth is only to be found

in our own entrails - the truth of Time. (Clea 762)

"The spiral of time" identifies even more clearly Alexandria's symbolic significance. In Monsieur, Durrell writes, "The snake symbolizes process, even time itself" (39). Although Monsieur was published in 1974, it would appear that Durrell had this gnostic apprehension of the snake in mind when he wrote the Quartet. In his hands, it becomes the perfect image of the cyclical nature of time, and the experience we must live to learn. Alexandria, "basking like some old reptile in the bronze Pharaonic light of the great lake" (Clea 660), "coils about the sleeping lives like some great anaconda digesting a meal. Among those shining coils the pitiable human world goes its way, unaware and unbelieving, repeating to infinity its gestures of despair, repentance and love" (Clea 701). Durrell's association of Alexandria with a snake confirms figuratively its representation of time, and the cycle embedded within it.

Pursewarden again relates sexual experience to spiritual development when he discusses culture: "For culture means sex, the root-knowledge, and where the faculty is derailed or crippled, its derivatives like religion come up dwarfed or contorted" (Clea 762). Civilization, perhaps best understood here as the sum of

the derivatives, Pursewarden perceives "as great metaphor which describes the aspirations of the individual soul in collective form" (Clea 764). Clea, through her own experience, verifies Pursewarden's conclusions: "Sexual love is knowledge, both in etymology and in cold fact; 'he knew her' as the Bible says! ... When a culture goes bad in its sex all knowledge is impeded" (Clea 739).

This belief explains the subject matter of the Quartet, often referred to as a study of the metaphysics of love. Certainly it encompasses all the manifestations of human affection imaginable. The point of departure is

desires engendered in the forests of the mind, belonging not to themselves but to remote ancestors speaking through them. Lust belongs to the egg and its seat is below the level of psyche. (Balthazar 325)

Narouz, experiencing these desires, makes his way towards the brothels, "where the archetypes of these marvellous images waited for him" (Balthazar 525). This love is redescribed as "the austere, mindless face of Aphrodite," who "permits every conjugation of the mind and sense in love" (Balthazar 326). It emerges again during carnival:

The dark tides of Eros, which demand full secrecy if they are to overflow the human

soul, burst out during carnival like something long damned up and raise the forms of strange primeval creatures - the perversions which are, I suppose, the psyche's ailment - in forms which you would think belonged to the Brocken or to Eblis. (Balthazar 344)

Durrell envisages the eternal dialogue between Cupid and Psyche as concluding with a sophisticated apprehension of the other as a being in process with his own integrity. Arnauti exemplifies this development. Darley refers to Arnauti's description of this understanding as an accurate account of his own:

'You tell yourself that it is a woman you hold in your arms, but watching the sleeper you see all her growth in time, the unerring unfolding of cells which group and dispose themselves into the beloved face which remains always and forever mysterious - repeating to infinity the soft boss of the human nose, an ear borrowed from a sea-shell's helix, an eyebrow thought-patterned from ferns, or lips invented by bivalves in their dreaming union. All this process is human, bears a name which pierces your heart, and offers the mad dream of an eternity which time disproves in every drawn breath. And if human personality is an illusion? And if, as biology tells us, every single cell in our bodies is replaced every seven years by another? At the most I hold in my arms something like a fountain of flesh, continuously playing, and in my mind a rainbow of dust.' (Clea 729)

This is not the same Darley who searched for a scientific objective truth about love in the laboratory of the brothel, in the grotesque coupling of Narouz, with a prostitute. His experiences of love, despair, and re-

penitance have led him to an understanding of process. This recognition is not the result of the exercise of reason or logic. It is divined, realized:

The greatest thoughts are accessible to the least of men. Why do we have to struggle so? Because understanding is a function not of ratiocination but of the psyche's stage of growth. (Clea 759)

That the development of an ideal self is the abiding objective of Durrell's characters is never left in doubt. Pursewarden says: "There is no Other; there is only oneself facing forever the problem of one's self-discovery" (Clea 729). Again: "The world - which we always visualize as 'the outside' World - yields only to self-exploration" (Clea 772). Darley characterizes his effort as "really a search for my proper self" (Balthazar 370). He exults in each successive truth: "truth was nourishing - the cold spray of a wave which carried one always a little further towards self-realization" (Clea 694). Justine meditates: "I suppose we are all hunting for the secrets of growth" (Clea 770). The inimitable Scobie states Durrell's case most strikingly: "Cheer up, me boyo, it takes a lifetime to grow. People haven't the patience any more" (Clea 675).

When Darley returns to Alexandria, in Clea, he possesses a greater awareness of what has happened pre-

viously. He has not yet, however, achieved an understanding of his experience that is eternally valid - of artistic significance. When Balthazar asks him how his writing is progressing, Darley replies:

It has stopped. I don't seem to be able to carry it any further for the moment. I somehow can't match the truth to the illusions which are necessary to art without the gap showing - you know, like an unbasted seam. I was thinking of it at Karm, confronted again by Justine. Thinking how despite the factual falsities of the manuscript which I sent you the portrait was somehow poetically true - psychologically if you like. But an artist who can't solder the elements together falls short somehow. I'm on the wrong track. (Clea 708)

Significantly, it is when Darley finally meets Clea, an event subtly accorded meaning throughout the preceding novels, and they enter the town together, that the pattern becomes clear, the cycle is repeating itself:

... and all at once it seemed that past and present had joined again without any divisions in it, and that all my memories and impressions had ordered themselves into one complete pattern whose metaphor was always the shining city of the disinherited. (Clea 723)

In the following passage, as Darley speaks of his new awareness, Durrell doesn't let us forget that it is rooted in a sexual encounter and that one must submit to the ministrations of time to acquire it:

But if I walked here with attention and even a

certain tenderness it was because for me the city was something which I myself had deflowered, at whose hands I had learned to ascribe some particular meaning to fortune. (Clea 701)

Perhaps not the necessity of sex, but its inevitability, should be stressed. Not only can it teach and reform by its destructive power, it is the psyche's ailment in the first place. Pursewarden writes, "Possession of a human heart - disease without remedy" (Mountolive 525). Later he states sex to be "the veritable nub and quiddity of this disordered world, and the only proper field for the deployment of our talents, Brother Ass" (Clea 754). Darley calls love a "synonym for derangement or illness": "It was rather like saying 'My poor child, you have got cancer'" (Clea 855).

Logically, then, as Pursewarden has indicated, love is the only supportable subject of literature:

Our topic, Brother Ass, is the same, always and irremediably the same - I spell the word for you: l-o-v-e.... the point faible of the human psyche, the very site of the carcinoma maxima! (Clea 754)

And, like Durrell, he means "The whole bloody range from the little greenstick fractures of the human heart right up to its higher spiritual connivance with the ... well, the absolute ways of nature, if you like" (Clea 755).

Pursewarden sees this study of love as "nourishing the psyche" (Clea 762). He doesn't write for the enlightened lover but for the "casualties", those who are experiencing "the sins, perversions, displeasing points which we are reluctant to accept" (Clea 763). He describes the symbolism - "the heraldic aspect of reality" (Clea 759) - "contained in form and pattern" (Clea 763) as "the great repair-outfit of the psyche" (Clea 759). The pattern perceived is the cycle of rebirth and annihilation, evidenced in literature, and in life, by their emotional adjuncts, laughter and pain. Awareness of the cycle and one's movement through it enables spiritual growth.

Although within the text of The Alexandria Quartet there is ample evidence of the thematic significance of the cycle, its presence is justified in theoretical terms as well. In his Preface to the Quartet, Durrell describes its form as roughly analogous to the relativity proposition. The first three novels

were related in an intercalary fashion, being 'siblings' of each other and not 'sequels'; only the last novel was intended to be a true sequel and to unleash the time dimension. The whole was intended as a challenge to the serial form of the conventional novel: the time-saturated novel of the day.

Pursewarden explains the relevance of this model to

Durrell's work:

the Relativity proposition was directly responsible for abstract painting, atonal music, and formless (or at any rate cyclic forms in) literature. (Balthazar 306)

It is Durrell's concept of the cycle and his incorporation of it into his text that compels my further attention.

Chapter Two: Repetition

... for the Interlinear now raises for me much more than the problem of objective 'truth to life', or if you like 'to fiction'. It raises, as life itself does - whether one makes or takes it - the harder-grained question of form. How then am I to manipulate this mass of crystallized data in order to work out the meaning of it and so give a coherent picture of this impossible city of love and obscenity? (Balthazar 338)

It would appear that Durrell's response to Darley's dilemma parallels Pursewarden's, for it is the concept of the cycle that informs his material. One discerns it in the recurrence of similar human experience, evident in the present, extended into the past, and predicted for the future. It predicates the creation of, and verifies the abiding relevance of, an heraldic universe, that symbolic manifestation of "poetic or transcendental knowledge [which] somehow cancels out purely relative knowledge" (Clea 791).

i) Moeurs

Arnauti's Moeurs, a novelette written in the form of a diary, re-creates the author's marriage to Justine. Darley describes this book as "a document, full of personal pain and astonishment" (Justine 60), marked by "painstaking and loving observation" (Justine 68). His description is disconcerting, for the

novelette's title, translated as (a) morals, (b) customs, habits, or (c) manners, ways, (Atkins 241) suggests a sociological study. In fact, it becomes apparent that Moeurs is indeed a textbook on human behavior.

Significant details, which identify Arnauti and Justine's experience as cyclical, indicate its broader significance. For example, both Arnauti and Darley first meet Justine in the same place - the mirror in the foyer of the Cecil Hotel. And the Paul Jones, a cyclical dance if ever there was one, first pairs Justine with Arnauti, then later with Nessim. More importantly, Darley and Arnauti characterize their relationship with Justine in similar terms, as "a sort of mental possession" (Justine 43,60). Justine too sees a similarity in the relationships. To Arnauti, she protests, "but there is no gluttony or self-indulgence in my pleasure, Jacob" (Justine 61). To Darley, she reiterates, "I would not mistake it for gluttony or self-indulgence" (Justine 43), a conviction of which she seems less certain later - "We were not simply gluttons, were we?" (Justine 111). Darley's experience so closely approximates Arnauti's that it precipitates similar responses:

At times I was almost provoked like Arnauti, on a similar occasion, to shout. 'For the love of God, stop this mania for unhappiness

or it will bring us to disaster. You are exhausting our lives before we have a chance to live them.' (Justine 111)

More specifically, he writes, "so closely did our relationship echo the relationship [Arnauti] had enjoyed with Justine that at times I too felt like some paper character out of Moeurs" (Justine 73).

Inevitably the "Durrellian reader" must question the usefulness of Arnauti's observations to anyone but Arnauti himself. Clea finds his chapters entitled "The Check", "shallow and infected by the desire to explain everything" (Justine 68). Darley, however, believing everything to be "susceptible of more than one explanation" (Justine 69), values the chapters as one clue to understanding. Balthazar, too, although he judges the book to be well written, faults it for not drawing conclusions of universal import. He blames Arnauti's youth:

[Arnauti] found Justine too young to be more than hurt by her. It was ill luck. Had he found another a little older - all our women are Justines, you know, in different styles - he might have - I will not say written better, for his book is well written; but he might have found in it a sort of resolution which would have made it more truly a work of art. (Justine 81)

Unlike Balthazar, Darley recognizes, in Moeurs, data that facilitate a resolution. His experience veri-

fies Arnauti's, and attests to its cyclical nature. He uses Arnauti's words on a number of occasions to describe his own experience. Their aptness posits an intrinsic sameness in the experiences described. When Melissa leaves Alexandria, to rest at a sanatorium, Darley quotes a passage from Moeurs, in which Arnauti describes his emotional state when Justine left him. The paragraph immediately following this quotation begins, "The night after Justine went away ..." (Justine 180). Confusion arises as to whom Darley misses - intentionally, for it is the experience that recurs while the person changes. Similarly, Arnauti's description of the loved one in his arms, quoted in Chapter One, fulfills Darley's needs when he falls in love with Clea. While the experiences correspond, the principal actors change.

Yet it is Arnauti's sense of process that lends the greatest authenticity to his writing. Like the characters in the Quartet he defines love, the motive force,

as a cancerous growth of unknown origin which may take up its site anywhere without the subject knowing or wishing it. How often have you tried to love the "right" person in vain, even when your heart knows it has found him after so much seeking? No, an eyelash, a perfume, a haunting walk, a strawberry on the neck, the smell of almonds on the breath - these are the accomplices the spirit seeks out to plan your overthrow. (Clea 733-734)

The "overthrow" - or "annihilation" - occasioned by the destructive force of love provides the opportunity for personal growth, the cycle resumed in the imagery of death and rebirth embedded in the novel and in the discussion it provokes. Pombal introduces the book to Darley, as a "post-mortem on [Justine]" (Justine 58), figuratively positing her death. Darley, familiar with the new, the reborn Justine, sees in Claudia "a younger, a more disoriented Justine" (Justine 58). Arnauti contributes to this sense of development by describing Justine as "caught in the Pleistocene stage of her development" (Justine 66). Justine herself, effectively identifying the causative force, says of love, "I would like to spell it backwards as you say the Elizabethans did God. Call it evol and make it a part of 'evolution' or 'revolt'" (Justine 66). When Justine leaves him, Arnauti describes the effect her departure has on him, concluding with an image of death: "and he carried the consciousness of her going heavily about with him - like a dead baby from which one could not bring oneself to part" (Justine 180). "Posthumous Life", the title of the last section of Moeurs, suggests his rebirth after the failure of his relationship with Justine.

The close correspondence between Arnauti's ex-

perience and that of the characters in the Quartet should persuade the "Durrellian reader" that Moeurs provides reliable documentation of the heart's affection. It confirms the cyclic pattern in human behavior and contributes to the cyclic form of the Quartet.

ii) moeurs

Having encountered the Moeurs of Arnauti, one should not be deceived by the context within which the term appears again - a context in which it seems to signify, not personal this time, but cultural, differences, specifically the apparent differences between England and Egypt. Mountolive, staying with the Hosnanis, "suddenly began to feel himself really penetrating a foreign country, foreign moeurs, for the first time" (Mountolive 406). (How delightfully ironic this passage becomes when Durrell points up the inherent similarities between Mountolive and Nessim, in effect making Mountolive a member of the family.) Scenes representative of "the moeurs of Egypt" (Mountolive 415) follow one another with exhilarating speed and colour. Yet Durrell's explicit and relentless identification of Mountolive with Nessim denies the significance of these differences. Once again, his interest is in moeurs that unite, not moeurs that divide, - in "the delusive nature of human

division" (Clea 791).

In essence, Mountolive and Nessim are very much alike. When they first meet, Mountolive immediately recognizes Nessim as "a person of his own kind, a person whose life was a code. They responded to each other nervously, like a concord in music" (Mountolive 409). So similar are the two that, on Mountolive's return to Egypt, as British Ambassador, the "concord" continues:

Despite a difference of age they were well matched - even to the tastes they shared, which the years had done nothing to diminishIndeed, since Mountolive's return they had become once more almost inseparables.... By candle-light the two men seemed exactly of an age if indeed not of the same family. (Balthazar 235)

Their similar natures function within similar interpersonal configurations. Both have very close relationships with their mothers. Mountolive recreates this relationship with Leila, thereby even more closely approximating Nessim's place in the world, while Leila wonders if she has invested her feeling for her son in her relationship with Mountolive. (Her correspondence with both men supports this suspicion.) As well, both Nessim and Mountolive perceive themselves to be men of action, yet both suffer the humiliation of submission to forces they cannot control:

But it was not only for Mountolive that all the dispositions on the chessboard had been abruptly altered now by Pursewarden's solitary act of cowardice.... Nessim too, so long self-deluded by the same dreams of a perfect finite action, free and heedless as the impulse of a directed will, now found himself like his friend, a prey to the gravitational forces which lie inherent in the time-springs of our acts.... Indeed, now the masters were beginning to find that they were, after all, the servants of the very forces which they had set in play, and that nature is inherently ungovernable. (Mountolive 565)

Both men, embroiled in the same débâcle, experience a similar conflict between "familial" love and duty.

Nessim must endure a break with his brother: "Dispossessed of the authority vested in the elder son by the feudal pattern of life, he felt all at once a prodigal, almost an orphan" (Mountolive 577). Mountolive, betrayed by Nessim and uncertain of Leila, responds similarly: "Cut off in this way from Leila, he felt dispossessed, orphaned" (Mountolive 584).

Nessim and Mountolive are not the only characters who exemplify the principle of recurrence in human behavior. Leila sees herself in Justine:

Yes, she is just like me - merciless in the pursuit of pleasure and yet arid - all her milk has turned into power-love. Yet she is also like me in that she is tender and kindly and a real man's woman. (Balthazar 276)

Leila's analysis is verified by Justine herself - by her

eager, ruthless participation in Nessim's political intrigue, and by her "pliantly feminine" (Justine 23) response to the men she favours.

Darley defines several other parallels that Durrell has carefully developed throughout the Quartet. He perceives three writers - Arnauti, Pursewarden, and himself, "like Past, Present and Future tense" (Clea 752) - committed alike to a reality more real than the relative life, a reality represented by the heraldic universe, a construct of the symbolic manifestations of the eternal verities of living, revealed to them through their own experience in time. When Darley "conjugates" his writers, he has not met Keats, transformed by the war. Keats demonstrates in dramatic terms the development they all undergo.

Darley also identifies the moods of the great verb, Love: Melissa, Justine and Clea (Clea 792). His relationships with Melissa and Justine, and their ultimate failure, afford him the opportunity to divine what is significant in experience and alter his behavior accordingly. His relationship with Clea reveals the nature and extent of the spiritual growth each has undergone.

I have discussed, at some length, characters

that resemble one another essentially. Durrell presents as well, as frequently as does Arnauti in Moeurs, behaviour that recurs independent of character, Pursewarden's "habit-patterns" (Clea 768). The Check, for example, from which Justine suffers, she ascribes as well to Pursewarden with good reason, fixated as he is on his sister. Clea too, traumatized by Scobie's prophecy, exhibits behaviour reminiscent of Justine's under the Check. Also repeated is Cohen's decision to marry Melissa before he dies. Darley makes the same decision as he prepares to leave for Alexandria, to see Melissa, seriously ill in the same hospital room in which Cohen died. Her death intervenes. But Durrell's most startling artistic manoeuvre, to stress the interchangeability of human behavior, is his use of the diary entry of a madwoman as an accurate representation of Clea's emotional imbalance during her affair with Justine.

iii) "A new cycle will begin. It is all there inside me, intact. I feel it."
(Justine 179)

The cyclic pattern in human experience, evident in the life of each major character in the Quartet, emerges most clearly in Darley's. The new cycle he anticipates is a new beginning in his relationship with Melissa. With her death, however, "The enormous vistas

of the future which in all my vagueness I had nevertheless peopled with images of her had gone by default now" (Justine 187). "By default." Darley recognizes how inadequate he has proved in his relationship with Melissa. His failure leaves him "bankrupt" once more, as both he and Melissa had been before they met (Justine 25, 187).

The cycle recommences when Darley meets Clea on his return to Alexandria, "where once (that first day) Melissa had been sitting The exact station in place and time, where I had once found Melissa" (Clea 711). Durrell stresses the inevitability of the cyclic pattern by having Darley observe that they met "by chance, not by design" - and yet the design is clear: "A new cycle which was opening upon the promise of such kisses and dazed endearments as we could now exchange - where would it carry us" (Clea 729). Darley is amazed at the transformation in Clea. He sees in her a new vitality and a new confidence; we recognize a mature Melissa, bestowing Melissa's "kiss broken off by ... laughter" (Justine 55): "It was with a queer interior shock, almost like a new recognition that I felt her warm laughing mouth on mine" (Clea 712). As the kiss of laughter suggests, both relationships are life-giving: Melissa elects "to blow some breath of life into [Darley's] nostrils"

(Justine 25); Darley and Clea exchange "kisses which burst like bubbles of oxygen in the patient blood" (Clea 727).

Durrell's most daring use of repetition, however, to emphasize the cyclic nature of Darley's experience, is his repetition of an entire passage, with only a few words changed or omitted. It is a passage that bears further repeating:

In that early spring dawn, with its dense dew, sketched upon the silence which engulfs a whole city before the birds awaken it, I caught the sweet voice of the blind muezzin from the mosque reciting the Ebed - a voice hanging like a hair in the palm-cooled upper airs of Alexandria. 'I praise the perfection of God, the Forever existing' (this repeated thrice, ever more slowly, in a high sweet register). 'The perfection of God, the Desired, the Existing, the Single, the Supreme: the perfection of God, the One, the Sole'

The great prayer wound its way into my sleepy consciousness like a serpent, coil after shining coil of words (Justine 27)

Durrell's sensual evocation of a spiritual state of grace I find one of the most skillful and effective pieces of writing in the Quartet. The changes he makes in the passage, when repeated in Clea, identify the development this new cycle reveals. The "great prayer" is released from Darley's consciousness, set free over the city. It has become archetypal, and, as such, becomes part of Durrell's heraldic universe. The prayer, "with its marvellous healing powers, the intimations of a grace

undeserved and unexpected" (Justine 27), is a language Melissa will never know. While she sleeps through the prayer, Clea stands at the window, "rapt and awake" (Clea 730). A confident sense of self and an awareness of the potential for personal growth mark these characters as they approach their next trial.

As the cycle winds once more to its end, Darley finds himself, once more, in the Jewish hospital, in the room where Cohen and Melissa died. This time, however, Darley has not forfeited his future with Clea by default. He has found himself able to meet the exigencies of the relationship. The quotation with which this section opened might, without wrenching, close it, for the Quartet concludes with the strong suggestion that Darley and Clea, reborn, will meet in France, and the cycle will re-commence.

- iv) "I described it to myself as part and parcel of the city's behaviour, completely in keeping with everything that had gone before, and everything that would follow it." (Justine 154)

Durrell further develops his perception of the cyclic pattern in human experience, revealed through time, by developing correspondences between his present and the historic past. His characters, paralleled with historical figures, and his action, paralleled with

historical action, are contemporary manifestations of the universals in the "human estate". Thus Hitler becomes "the new Attila" (Mountolive 454), Mountolive echoes Pontius Pilate, and Donkin, Mountolive's third secretary, recalls Lenin.

Durrell develops more extensively the reappearance of Antony and Cleopatra. Balthazar sees Arnauti as "a sort of minor Antony, and [Justine] a Cleo" (Justine 82), because Arnauti cannot sustain "his artist-hood" (Justine 82), cannot maintain the integrity of his work in the face of his passion for Justine. We are not allowed to forget that Justine is "a historical figure" (Balthazar 276), reminiscent of

that race of terrific queens which left behind them the ammoniac smell of their incestuous loves to hover like a cloud over the Alexandrian subconscious. The giant man-eating cats like Arsinoe were her true siblings. (Justine 23)

When Justine/Cleopatra remarries, we suspect an even more striking identification. Both Nessim and Justine, like Antony and Cleopatra, are strong characters, united in their struggle for worldly power, for political ascendance. Each is passionately attracted to the strength of the other. Both, as well, display weaknesses of character that jeopardize the success of their enterprise and threaten their love. For each couple, Egypt is the the-

atre and the prize.

While Darley, too, re-enacts Antony's loss of will in his relationship with Justine, the identification is most interesting when Clea becomes his Cleopatra (Cleo 852). Clea believes Narouz' island to be Antony's Timonium, to which he retired to await Octavian's arrival and his own death. The significance of the allusion becomes clear when Darley fiercely engages with "fate", behaviour in marked contrast with Antony's resignation to his fate. (I would like to defer a more complete consideration of Darley's rescue of Clea to Chapter IV, a discussion of the rebirth inherent in Durrell's cycle.)

Durrell universalizes his characters even more by describing them in generic terms. Justine is "a shallow twentieth-century reproduction of the great hetairae of the past, the type to which she belongs without knowing it, Lais, Charis and the rest" (Justine 68). Darley is a modern-day cicisbeo (Mountolive 481). Occasionally, as he classifies, Durrell effectively reinforces parallels already drawn between characters. Leila has "the magnificent eyes of an Egyptian sibyl" (Balthazar 259), while to Justine is ascribed "the unmoved sibyl's eye" (Mountolive 567). Nessim and Mountolive alike recall the medieval crusader. On the

other hand, Durrell's comparison of both Justine and Liza to Arsinoe illuminates a parallel that might have escaped the reader.

An initially disconcerting mingling of past events with present further demonstrates Durrell's understanding of the immutability of human experience. As Nessim and Melissa drive towards Abousir, they pass "a biblical figure on a mule with two children escaping from Herod" (Justine 162). Pursewarden imagines the newsboys "proclaiming ... the fall of Byzantium" (Mountolive 523) as they peddle their papers in the street, and Darley redefines Alexandria's economic prosperity as Alexander's dream of conquest, realized (Clea 676). Nessim's historical dreams, similar to his mother's dreams fifteen years earlier, vividly interweave the past with the present, exemplifying how, for Durrell, they are of a piece. These dreams insinuate themselves into the present, "disregarding congruence and period, disregarding historic time and common probability" (Justine 145).

Nessim's experience dramatically illustrates Durrell's "continuous present". That which is significant for an individual, exists; that which is not significant, does not exist. The hardships of earlier "soldiers" attempting to gain access to Alexandria, be-

come significant to Nessim, a clandestine soldier wrestling with his own setbacks, thereby granting his predecessors new life. Similarly, Pursewarden, though dead, has not "ceased to exist; he has simply stepped into the quicksilver of a mirror as we all must ... which is the memory of our friends" (Justine 99). Conversely, the living, when no longer significant to a person, are in effect dead to him: "Cohen was in a sense already dead and buried. He had lost his place in our history" (Justine 88).

One must realize the intensity with which historical echoes sound in Durrell's present, if one is to read him with understanding. The Mediterranean sea, "whose edges were at one and the same moment touching lost hallowed Carthage and Salamis in Cypress" (Justine 165), is an especially potent image for Durrell. He has lived most of his life on its shores, and has made his own desperate dash across it, to escape the Germans when they invaded Greece during the Second World War. When Darley returns to Alexandria, he sees in its harbour, "an anthology of masts and spars and haunting Aegean eyes; of names and rigs and destinations" (Clea 676). This passage gives R. A. O'Brien pause:

Anthology? Aegean eyes? What does "anthology" mean in this context? And what eyes, Aegean or otherwise, could be seen from this distance? (23)

What eyes? Those eyes to which Justine's have been compared: "someone beautiful, dark and painted with great eyes like the prow of some Aegean ship" (Balthazar 286); those eyes painted on the prows of Aegean ships to guide them through the perilous sea. It is entirely natural for Durrell to see in the harbour a scene representative of all that has gone before, and to hear in the Mediterranean "a mythology of yellow-maned waves attacking the Pharos" (Justine 101), another apparently ineffectual description. For Durrell, each one of those waves resounds with stories of our origins, our history, as it crashes on the beach, where he still sees "the long boats drawing in" (Balthazar 368): "the length and greatness of its history makes us dream it larger than it is" (Balthazar 213).

While the preceding discussion implies a repetition of the past in the future, the action that concludes Clea qualifies the "fatidic" nature of time (Justine 153), as does Amaril's action, described by Clea in Mountolive. Darley has already told us of Amaril's anxious anticipation of a reunion with his lover during Carnival. Yet, should she not appear, "years later, in another book, in another context, he will happen upon her again, almost by accident, but not

here, not in these pages" (Balthazar 344). The prediction that the cycle will repeat itself is superfluous, for Semira has the courage to keep her promise and meets Amaril, while Amaril, confronted with Semira's disfigured face, does not evade the responsibility real love entails. Together, they provide an early example of a future not forfeited by default. They demonstrate how the imaginative response frees one from the dictates of time. (The importance of the imagination will become more clear in the discussion of Darley's underwater rescue of Clea.)

- v) "They had attained a new dimension in his view of them already - the unsentimental projection of figures in a primitive fresco." (Mountolive 543)

Just as Durrell sees his characters again and again in time past, he glimpses them as well in the art of that past, in effigies, in frescoes, in friezes, in statues - artistic equivalents of the literary endeavour to divine, and capture, abiding truths, shorn of merely relative fact. Durrell reveals the intent of these allusions in the passage quoted above. "They" are Nessim and Justine. Mountolive studies them with new understanding, aware now of their participation in the Copt conspiracy. The image the two figures project is unsentimental, in that the characters are no longer

"in the grip of the emotional field which we throw down about one another" (Clea 698). The imperatives of friendship no longer condition Mountolive's understanding. Nessim and Justine, extricated from his "sentimental" expectations, achieve a reality hitherto denied them. The "new dimension" they attain suggests the heraldic universe, within which they will endure, as archetypes of a kind of human character and dilemma.

Durrell suggests his purpose even more succinctly as he describes Balthazar, in attendance on a dying Narouz. Initially, the allusion is a simile, the image, vivid: "and Balthazar sat like an effigy, one hand upon his brow and the other fiercely holding the contorted muscles of [Narouz'] wrist" (Mountolive 646). Eighteen lines later, Narouz now dead, the allusion becomes metaphoric, the image, emblematic: "Immobile, ageless as pain itself, sat the defeated effigy of the doctor at the bedside of pain" (Mountolive 646). The repeated use of "the" stresses the definitive intent behind the writing.

Occasionally, the page itself becomes the fresco, as Durrell projects an image on it, an image that becomes emblematic as it is suddenly released from specific time and place. Darley speaks to Justine:

The beloved head turned with its frowning

deep-set eyes and once more I see the long boats drawing into the Pharos, the tides running, the minarets a-glitter with dew; noise of the blind Hodja crying in the voice of a mole assaulted by sunlight; a shuffle-pad of a camel-train clumping to a festival carrying dark lanterns. (Balthazar 368)

Just so have heads turned, in similar response, since time immemorial. Just so will they continue to turn, as Justine herself demonstrates:

and at another time Justine added like a coda 'A woman's best love letters are always written to the man she is betraying' as she turned an immemorial head on a high balcony, hanging above a lighted city (Clea 700)

Here again Durrell depersonalizes the gesture, setting it free against the backdrop of time. Like the artistic depictions to which he refers, such passages as these point to the universality of human behaviour, the inevitable replaying of the human predicament.

(vi) "Blend as a mole, I had been digging about in the graveyard of relative fact piling up data, more information, and completely missing the mythopoeic reference which underlies fact." (Clea 791)

As Durrell multiplies the correspondences in his fictive universe - in intimations so numerous one cannot acknowledge them all - he "nudges" (Clea 877) his characters, and his readers, inexorably into his heraldic universe, that reality which the archetypes of

myth and the symbols of poetry embody. John Unterecker describes the transition that Durrell encourages:

Balancing on the fulcrum of his two identities, man corrupts his internal landscape in much the same way that he corrupts his external one. Internally, however, the necessary distortions which he makes serve strangely to put him in touch with the world rather than to hold him off from it. The mountains, gates, and rivers of his obsessive dreams and daydreams arrange themselves into what Jung called archetypal patterns - man's secret means of ordering the accidental imagery of his life into a useful design. More satisfying than those he imposes on his external world, these internal patterns offer man roads on which he takes some of his longest journeys, those which lead him beyond the limits of self and into the mythical kingdom of the collective conscious. (27)

Unterecker perceives in Durrell's work his ordering of personal experience into a design that incorporates an "isolated snow-covered peak ... an isolated island, Mediterranean, sun-washed, sea-stroked" (16), and a road that leads "as most good roads should, in two directions" (27). While the Mediterranean island survives in the Quartet, Alexandria evokes her own symbols: "sea, desert, minaret, sand, sea" (Balthazar 217). Darley's progress toward the heraldic universe is marked by his growing ability to order his own experience into a symbolic pattern:

[Justine's harsh Semitic profile] 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 - loops of the great lake: as proper to the scene as the Sphinx was to the desert. (Balthazar 367)

The heraldic universe, however, is "the mythical kingdom of the collective conscious" (emphasis added), the distillation of human experience embodied in myth, allegory, parable, epic - for Pursewarden, "'The prolongation of childhood into art'" (Clea 764). While Pursewarden believes his phrase would mean nothing to Darley, Darley has in fact reached the same understanding, for he recounts to the child Justine the events of her life "in images from a fairy story" (Clea 660):

There had been no other way to explain it to her, except in terms of myth or allegory - the poetry of infant uncertainty. I had made her word-perfect in this parable of an Egypt which was to throw up for her (enlarged to the size of gods or magi) the portraits of her family, of her ancestors. But then is not life itself a fairy-tale which we lose the power of apprehending as we grow? (Clea 661)

Pursewarden effects the same kind of conversion on himself, his human image dissolving after his death "into the mythical image he had created of himself in his trilogy God is a Humorist" (Justine 137). While Darley and Clea attempt to retain an image of Pursewarden as they knew him, they acknowledge that "the

myth belonged to the world" (Justine 137). El Scobe is another, truly delightful, manifestation of the human inclination to mythologize.

The most potent symbolic construct for Durrell, however, is embodied in the Tarot cards, specifically in the twenty-two cards that make up the Major Arcana. His references to playing cards and the painted images on them mount compellingly in Clea, the culmination of his argument. He has provided three books of experiential evidence. Now, in Clea, we must draw the right conclusion - make that "leap throw the firmament to a new status" (Clea 764). We must see that the lives we lead are but "'selective fictions' which life shuffles out like a pack of cards, mixing and dividing, withdrawing and restoring" (Clea 873), and that we are but "playing-card characters" (Clea 661).

In an interview following the publication of Justine, Durrell stated: "I'd like to hope that seen from the other end of the continuum my characters seem not just 'people' but symbols as well like a pack of Tarot cards. But I'm still not sure if I can build the books the way I want" (Moore 157). Carol Peirce, in her article "'Intimations of Powers Within': Durrell's Heavenly Game of the Tarot", illustrates in convincing detail the nature of his success. As Durrell lays each

card/character on the page/table, he follows "the Tarot story about the young initiate's striving for manhood, artistry, and vision" (202). He recreates the affinities among the cards in the relationships among his characters. And at the halfway point of the Tarot, when "cards representing people yield to cards representing abstractions, forces, or life events" (208), Durrell follows their lead, his action exploring the cards' concerns, in the same order. Since it is neither my purpose, nor my prerogative, to repeat Peirce's argument, I refer you to her article for a complete, and rewarding, study of the way in which the Tarot informs the Quartet. I would like, however, to refer to her once more, to stress the success with which the Tarot has isolated essential human experience:

... though nothing is actually documented, many have thought it a pictogram of the paths of the Jewish Cabala (Cavendish, 49-58; Case, 1-5). It has been seen as closely related to Gnostic initiation rites or possibly Knights Templar Mysteries; and, most recently, it has been suggested as a design to be "followed" in the Renaissance Art of Memory (Douglas, 24-30). It seems to incorporate Celtic, Norse and Christian myth as well; and, thus, significantly, both its symbols and symbolic figures seem to tie it to the Grail quest legend and its equally mysterious origins and symbolism (Douglas, 31-33). Both can be read to tell the tale of a journey to self-knowledge and understanding. In modern terms it can be seen as both expressing Jung's theory of archetypes and as realizing Campbell's hero myth. Thus, finally, like a touchstone it seems to draw to it many different mysteries and philo-

sophies and somehow to reconcile the paths of the past to Illumination. (201-202)

Such intensive relevance qualifies the Tarot to be a most potent manifestation of an heraldic universe.

Obviously, the divination of a fundamental human experience stripped of the camouflage afforded by the particulars of an individual situation is not new. What is original is Durrell's understanding of the way that fundamental experience is ordered - his perception that it is a cyclical experience of annihilation and rebirth, perpetuated by the human heart. Furthermore, while the replaying of this human predicament is inevitable, the quality of one's performance may improve, if one is patient, pays attention, and exercises tenderness. Durrell's purpose, the purpose of any responsible writer, is to facilitate this growth, by identifying the cycle, and showing how, within that cycle, we can become better people.

Darley, towards the end of Justine, senses this purpose: "It is the living who might be spared if we could quarry the message which lies buried in the heart of all human experience" (189). Pursewarden, interestingly, speaks in despair against this possibility. He writes of the artist's role in life:

'Aware of every discord, of every calamity in the nature of man himself, he can do nothing to warn his friends, to point, to cry out in time and to try to save them. It would be useless. For they are deliberate factors of their own unhappiness. All the artist can say as an imperative is: "Reflect and weep."' (Balthazar 305)

Darley wonders if this "consciousness of tragedy irremediable contained - not in the external world which we all blame - but in ourselves, in the human conditions" (Balthazar 305) explains Pursewarden's suicide. Certainly, earlier, Pursewarden has derided man's search "for a co-ordinating scheme, the syntax of a Will which might stabilize everything and take the tragedy out of it" (Justine 117). In his "Conversations with Brother Ass", however, Pursewarden affirms his faith in the heraldic universe, the artist as psychic therapist, and the possibility of the Ideal Commonwealth.

Clea defines the artist's, and the non-artist's, problem in terms suggestive of Durrell's solution: "how to harness time in the cultivation of a style of heart Not to force time, as the weak do, for that spells self-injury and dismay, but to harness its rhythms and put them to our own use" (Balthazar 383).

Balthazar, still searching for the truth of time, questions the relevance of any pattern an artist might divine. He imagines with fine accuracy Darley's

response: "I suppose you would reply that it is the duty of the pilot to make comprehensible the shoals and quicksands, the joys and misfortunes, and so give the rest of us power over them" (Balthazar 333). Durrell leaves no doubt as to his response. While "it is curious that [Narouz' island] remains to this day unmarked on the Admiralty charts, for it would constitute quite a hazard to craft of medium draught" (Clea 828), Durrell takes careful note of the hazard it represents for our psychic development.

Chapter Three: Pain

Through their experience of the cycle, Durrell's characters achieve a new understanding of those "two great forgotten words 'helpmeet' ... and 'loving-kindness'" (Balthazar 296). Love dictated by a wilful ego destroys. Homosexual love and incestuous love entail a like consequence. Scobie tries to articulate precisely what he has learned about "Tendencies": "It's the lack of tenderness, old man. It all depends on cunning somehow, you get lonely" (Balthazar 227). Darley renders a comparable judgement on incest: "[Justine] could not help but remind me of that race of terrific queens which left behind them the ammoniac smell of their incestuous loves to hover like a cloud over the Alexandrian subconscious" (Justine 23). Durrell's succinct description of Toto de Brunel, a pederast, seems relevant here as well: "His smile dug one's grave, his kindness was anaesthetic" (Balthazar 219). The pain resulting from these ill-considered relations may induce psychic growth. The annihilation effected by the destructive force of love manifests itself variously - in anxiety, shame, exhaustion, drug addiction, alcoholism, promiscuity, physical sterility, creative sterility, physical violence, physical

disfiguration, occasionally in death itself.

Darley describes his affair with Justine as

a banal story of an adultery which was among the cheapest commonplaces of the city ... it did not deserve romantic or literary trappings and yet somewhere else, at a deeper level, I seemed to recognize that the experience upon which I had embarked would have the deathless finality of a lesson learned. (Justine 76)

The only good that can come of the affair into which he has tumbled unwittingly is a "lesson learned". Justine has engineered it out of political necessity. Darley continues it despite the affection he feels for Melissa, and the grief it causes her - and the pain it causes him, for he is endlessly anxious that Nessim not be hurt, and deeply ashamed because Melissa is. His pain reaches a climax during his retreat to the island, as he recalls Amaril's "last desperate prescription" for Melissa: "'If only she could be loved!'":

the memory of those days haunts me afresh, torments me with guilts which I might never have been aware of before! ... I walk beside the child ... on these deserted beaches like a criminal, going over and over these fragments of the white city's life with regrets too deep to alter the tone of voice in which I talk to her. (Balthazar 300)

Melissa, already a victim of the very human misuse of sex, resorts to hashish to escape the depression she feels when she contemplates her past. She tells

Darley, "If you only knew how I have lived you would leave me" (Justine 49). It is an escape that lasts for days, a blankness that approximates death. It is one to which Darley resorts as well, teaching in Upper Egypt, waiting for Melissa to send for him. He achieves "a gradually increasing numbness, a mental apathy which made [him] shrink from contact" (Justine 186). When Melissa dies, Darley "escapes" to his island to "heal" himself (Justine 17). Significantly, when he returns to Alexandria, he feels as if he is "returning from the other side of the grave" (Clea 710).

Justine herself suffers the trauma of sexual misadventure - her own and suspicion of her daughter's. She accords sex no real value: in her promiscuity she strives to regain the feeling she has lost. She has become "a hunter of pain, in search of herself" (Justine 124). Characterized as "death-propelled" (Mountolive 551), her commitment to Nessim's cause and a marriage she has hitherto avoided accords the description some validity. She has found "a purpose which might lead them both to death! This was all that sex could mean to her now" (Mountolive 558). Sleeping pills, and after Nessim's failure, alcohol, as well as a small stroke which leaves an eyelid drooping - all evidence the small deaths she lives.

Nessim persuades Justine, whom he loves, to marry him by presenting the marriage as a political alliance. His feelings however are demonstrably ambivalent. Certainly his brother's defiance of his authority, as well as the discovery of his plot, cause his disorienting dreams and hallucinations and his use of valium. But it is his mother's refusal to communicate with him after Narouz' murder as much as Justine's acrid taunting that constitute the "air-raid" that destroyed one eye and a finger. Only after Leila's death do the new Nessim and the new Justine arise from the ashes. The sequence of events lends some credence to Nessim's statement that he would only be able to love properly after his mother had died.

For Mountolive as well, it is "the unresolved problem of Leila" (Mountolive 583) that arrests his movement through the cycle:

Somehow [this long-awaited meeting with Leila] would determine, not the physical tangible meaning of his return to Egypt so much as the psychic meaning of it in relation to his inner life It was a sort of barrier in himself which had to be crossed, a puberty of the feelings which had to be outgrown. (Mountolive 616)

Still entangled in an affair that ended years before, instigated by an invalid husband to protect his marriage, Mountolive turns to his official duties just as

Darley, Melissa, Justine and Nessim turn to drugs. They become for him "Time-killers and pain-killers ... almost a narcotic" (Mountolive 583-584). His reunion with Leila effectively concludes their relationship, for just as he is no longer the decisive, romantic, manly person he once was, she is no longer "the brilliant, resourceful and elegant Leila" (Mountolive 619). His response to her age and her entreaty effectively points up the death of both his youthful self and the mature Leila. With nothing to replace it, Mountolive attempts to recapture this lost self by dressing up. A tarbush and dark glasses, and he is completely transformed. The "new and quite delightful feeling of self-possession" (Mountolive 624) he experiences, however, is illusory. The final image we have of him is as Gulliver, overcome by the army of Lilliputians.

Clea's successive human conjunctions, which lead her from innocence through inexperience to readiness for "the once-for-aller" (Clea 855), conclude in annihilistic terms. Her unfortunate liaison with Justine assumes "the consuming shape of a sterile love" (Balthazar 239). Once more Durrell focuses attention on his cycle: "Poor dear, she was to go through the same ridiculous contortions as the rest of us - feeling her body like a bed of quick-lime clumsily slaked to burn away the corpse of

the criminal it covered" (Balthazar 241). Clea's creative sterility, which always marks her passage through this extremity of the cycle, reinforces the diction of physical sterility, guilt, and death. During her affair with Amaril, Clea allows herself to become pregnant. When she realizes a child would jeopardize Amaril's marriage to Semira, she has an abortion. Their child becomes, after Melissa, the second casualty of sexual inadvertence. Finally, Clea suffers a failure of will during her relationship with Darley, allowing Scobie's prophecy to terrorize her. Emotional instability, barbiturates, and the cataclysmic underwater accident which results in the loss of a hand, conclude this turn of the cycle.

Balthazar's self-satisfied denial of any value in love, his relief at never having been thus involved, reveal him in need of a lesson and unaware of the means by which he may learn. His search for his "key", however, is forwarded by his finally, and catastrophically, falling in love - with someone who could not be less suitable. His nemesis,

a Greek actor, was the most disastrous that anyone could hit upon. To look like a God, to have a charm like a shower of silver arrows - and yet to be simply a small-spirited, dirty, venal and empty personage: that was Panagiotis! I knew it. It seemed to make no difference whatsoever. I saw in him the personage

of Seleucia on whom Cavafy based his poem.
(Clea 704)

The devastation such an unwise liaison must wreak is exemplified in Balthazar's attempted suicide, in his scarred wrists. As he accedes to his false teeth and his grey hair, he acknowledges his subjection to the human condition.

The relationship Liza and Pursewarden enjoy is an understandable outcome of their unnatural childhood isolation. Denied other familiars, they turn to one another. As Durrell waltzes them through the snow in Trafalgar Square, he defines their love. While their waltzing is perfect, while they go on "magnificently in accord" (Mountolive 442), the figure they draw is elliptical and closed. Durrell acknowledges their love in a truly magical scene. However, he signals the destructive force insidiously inherent in it by the death of their child, a signal Pursewarden recognizes: "[He and Liza] were united by [their] guilt from that moment" (Clea 789). Pursewarden presents his suicide to his sister as a marriage present, thereby freeing her to begin a new relationship untrammelled by the old. Only this decisive act can free the two lovers, mired as they are in guilt. The event recalls several lines from a telegram Pursewarden sent Justine: "Fourth neurosis is

no excuse. Health must be won and earned by a battle. Lastly it is honourable if you can't win to hang yourself" (Balthazar 293). After the ceremonial burning of her brother's letters, Liza acknowledges, "'It is over at last'" (Clea 804). She can proceed through the cycle once more.

Because of their physical disfiguration, Leila and Narouz choose to isolate themselves from the world, thereby denying themselves access to the remedial cycle, which requires human intercourse. They exemplify, perhaps more than Justine, a "suffocating self-enclosure where sex could only be fed by the fat flames of fantasy" (Justine 71). Leila's relationship with Mountolive during his first stay in Egypt, while not ideal, benefits them both. Leila, whose husband is an invalid, experiences a sexual rebirth and the satisfaction of extending Mountolive's interest in the world around him. Mountolive learns "to make love honestly and to reflect" (Mountolive 415). The continuation of this intimate relationship, by correspondence, effectively places both people outside time's cyclical influence. Just as Mountolive seems suspended in his development, unable to move forward, Leila cannot accommodate her participation in the relationship to a changing reality. While she believes she can accept Mountolive's commitment to

another woman, ultimately she finds this impossible. When Mountolive writes to her of his love for Liza, she knows "then that everything [is] ended" (Clea 864). Exiled to Kenya, she writes to Balthazar that she is "dying of heartsickness" (Clea 864).

Narouz' love for Clea is nurtured in isolation as well. Clea vaguely recalls Narouz from a time when she went riding with Nessim on the Hosnani estate. Narouz admits, when asked, that he has seen Clea only three times in his life. Even when talking to Clea of his love for her, he talks "in the tone of a man talking to himself. He seemed almost oblivious of me, never once looking up into my face" (Balthazar 375). His love, another "variety of the animal" (Balthazar 374), is described as "this disaster" and "this grotesque passion". It is conducive to nothing good, inciting only anger, disgust, and "apologetic horror" (Balthazar 375) in Clea, while Narouz dies, calling her name, his love unreciprocated - a dead end for him. Narouz' religious and political fanaticism is associated as well with isolation, that imposed by the dry, empty desert, where he kneels with Taor, "for hours in the sand, under the blazing sun, and [they] pray together" [Mountolive 569]. Narouz has, significantly, always felt at ease in the desert. Eventually, however, his ease in isolation des-

troys whatever tenuous human links he has, his fanaticism leading him to drink heavily and to alienate his fellow Copts and his brother.

Durrell's description of Capodistria, snake-like in both appearance and behaviour, effectively distinguishes him from the rest of his characters:

Capodistria has the purely involuntary knack of turning everything into a woman; under his eyes chairs become painfully conscious of their bare legs. He impregnates things. At table I have seen a water-melon become conscious under his gaze so that it felt the seeds inside it stirring with life! Women feel like birds confronted by a viper when they gaze into that narrow flat face with its tongue always moving across the thin lips. (Justine 37-38)

According to Justine, "His heart has withered in him and he has been left with the five senses, like pieces of a broken wineglass" (Justine 34). His sexual relationships appear to be purely sensual encounters, lacking any psychic dimension. His death, apparently necessitated by the unravelling of the Copt conspiracy and his financial affairs, reflects as well the fate of a bankrupt spirit.

As if this compilation of private pain were not enough, Durrell incorporates eruptions of violence into his text, further evidence of the diseased human heart. These eruptions usually proceed from the emotional

aberrations of his characters. Balthazar and Mountolive are strewn with victims of Narouz' megalomania: the rooster, killed to demonstrate his skill with his hippopotamus-hide whip; Abdel-Kadar, killed to discourage a Bedouin labour uprising; the youth, whose ear was cut to punish him for "lying"; the bats, massacred to provide Narouz with practice and sport; Toto de Brunel, murdered, mistaken for Justine. Narouz' own violent end seems the inevitable consequence of his life. Scobie provokes his own brutal beating at the hands of the ratings of the H.M.S. Milton, irrational as the sailors' response is. Balthazar's arrogance, his emotional adolescence, cause two similarly senseless deaths.

Further instances of cruelty casually committed contribute to the horror that builds through the first three novels and culminates in Narouz' murder. The wife of the Swedish vice-consul is beheaded while awaiting her husband (and help!) in their broken-down car on the Matrugh road. Panayotis has had his tongue cut out at some time in his past. Memlik Pasha, an exceedingly sinister figure, maintains his political power through terror.

Durrell extends this calamitous cruelty into the animal world, most obviously through the extremity of the duck-shoot and the fish-drive. His accounts of the

fate of tortoises used for ballast (Justine 188-189) and camels cut up for food (Justine 56, Mountolive 488), serve as metaphors for the human condition. Uncomprehendingly, unaware, people encounter their fate. Naively they put their trust in talismans to guard them against the "evil eye", yet Durrell's catalogue of manifestations of the evil eye renders devastatingly ironic his references to such talismans. In fact, evil has already infiltrated the houses of prostitution with their handprints on the walls, and the manor house of Karm Abu Girg with its tiny wooden windmills in the shape of men with revolving arms on the corners of its outer wall. Until we recognize that the cause of evil is not external to ourselves but lies within, there is no help for us. With awareness of Durrell's cycle comes understanding that we need not be victims, that we can make the cycle work for us. Until such time as awareness dawns, diction and imagery that threaten, that pre-
sage disaster, prevail. Darley typifies the prevailing mood:

What was I thinking? The foetus in its waxen wallet, the locust squatting in the horn of the wheat, an Arab quoting a proverb which reverberated in the mind. 'The memory of man is as old as misfortune.' The quails from the burst cage spread upon the ground softly like honey, having no idea of escape. (Balthazar 368)

The context within which the pain discussed in this chapter blossoms is clearly defined:

That second spring the khamseen was worse than I have ever known it before or since. Before sunrise the skies of the desert turned brown as buckram, and then slowly darkened, swelling like a bruise and at last releasing the outlines of cloud, giant octaves of ochre which massed up from the Delta like the draft of ashes under a volcano. The city has shuttered itself tightly as if against a gale. A few gusts of air and a thin sour rain are the forerunners of the darkness which blots out the light of the sky. And now unseen in the darkness of shuttered rooms the sand is invading everything, appearing as if by magic in clothes long locked away, books, pictures and teaspoons. In the locks of doors, beneath fingernails. The harsh sobbing air dries the membranes of throats and noses, and makes eyes raw with the configurations of conjunctivitis. Clouds of dried blood walk the streets like prophecies; the sand is settling into the sea like powder into the curls of a stale wig. Choked fountain-pens, dry lips - and along the slats of the Venetian shutters thin white drifts as of young snow. The ghostly feluccas passing along the canal are crewed by ghouls with wrapped heads. From time to time a cracked wind arrives from directly above and stirs the whole city round and round so that one has the illusion that everything - trees, minarets, monuments and people have been caught in the final eddy of some great whirlpool and will pour softly back at last into the desert from which they rose, reverting once more to the anonymous wave-sculptured floor of dunes....

I cannot deny that by this time we had both been seized by an exhaustion of spirit which had made us desperate, reckless, impatient of discovery. Guilt always hurries towards its complement, punishment: only there does its satisfaction lie ... These days were full of omens and warnings upon which our anxiety fed. (Justine 121)

Although the sun occasionally shines and water occasionally refreshes - intimations of the on-going cycle, the passage quoted above is a fair representation of the artistic preoccupation of the first three novels of the Quartet. Pain, guilt, exhaustion and anxiety, key notes in these novels, are sounded in a setting characterized as threatening, sunless, arid, and sandy. Such nouns as "swelling", "bruise", and "conjunctivitis", such adjectives as "harsh", "sobbing", and "raw" develop the sense of pain. Other words suggest the aridity of the environment: "ashes", "sand" (used twice), "desert" (used twice), "powder", "wind", variants of "dry". Human vitality and creativity founder in this parched landscape, as "clouds of dried blood walk the streets", lips become "dry", and fountain-pens, "choked". Repeated use of "sand", elsewhere described as "dead" (Balthazar 261), and "desert", which Egyptians believed to be "an emptiness populated entirely by the spirits of demons and other grotesque visitants from Eblis, the Moslem Satan" (Balthazar 264), emphasizes the sterility of the setting, what Mountolive describes as "the dusty, deathward drift of the place [as it settles] year by year more firmly into the barren dunes of Mareotis" (Mountolive 567). Reference to the desert contributes as well to a sense of impending disaster, exaggerated by such phrases as "like the drift of ashes under a volcano", "as if

against a gale", "like prophecies", and "by ghouls". They justify the city's shuttering itself against "invading" sand, against "the final eddy of some great whirlpool", the final cataclysmic annihilation that will return it once more "to the anonymous wave-sculptured floor of dunes".

Narouz' funeral concludes Mountolive, the third novel of the Quartet. In Durrell's hands, it becomes a formal, communal accommodation of personal grief, despair, and pain. The "ritual of this ancient sorrow" (Mountolive 647) epitomizes the way in which artists can transform significant private events into universal, and unifying, experience. The zagreet, that "blood-curdling signal of death" (Mountolive 647); the dances of ritual grief, "recaptured from long-forgotten friezes upon the tombs of the ancient world" (Mountolive 648) and accompanied by ritual drums and tambourines; the body decoration - dresses of dirty dark blue cotton, faces smeared with indigo, hair loosened and rubbed with ashes from the fire; and eulogies "couched in the finest poetic Arabic" (Mountolive 649) - this "poetry of mourning" (Mountolive 649) liberates the individual from his own private hell by enabling the communal expression of grief, and by re-interpreting his pain in mythopoeic terms. Durrell writes:

since the people of the Delta often use a wake as an excuse to discharge private griefs in communal mourning, [Mohammed Shebab, the old schoolmaster and friend of the Hosnanis] too found himself thinking of his dead sister and sobbing, and he turned to the servant, pressing money into his hand as he said: 'Ask Alan the singer to sing the recitative of the Image of Women once more, please. I wish to mourn it through again.' And as the great poem began, he leaned back luxuriously swollen with the refreshment of a sorrow which would achieve catharsis thus in poetry. There were others too who asked for their favourite laments to be sung, offering the singers the requisite payment. In this way the whole grief of the countryside was refunded once again into living, purged of bitterness, reconquered by the living through the dead image of Narouz. (Mountolive 650)

I suggest the purpose of "the ritual of this ancient sorrow" is to purge the pain accumulated in the preceding books. Furthermore, it tempers the trauma of pain, exemplified in its most extreme form as death, by eternalizing it within the cycle of human experience.

The pain in Clea is given a perspective, unlike the pain that ambushes one in the earlier novels. The death of Fosca is, literally, placed within the context of a painted canvas, seen (and not heard) from a distance, and "all the time, outside the centre-piece of the picture, so to speak, with its small tragic anecdote, normal life goes on unheeding" (816).

The acceptance of death as inevitable and eternally imminent predicates successful living. What Purse-

warden calls "the dictates of the death-divining second" (Clea 764) should alter the choices we make. The war has created a similar awareness in Keats:

I believe the desire for war was first lodged in the instincts as a biological shock-mechanism to precipitate a spiritual crisis which couldn't be done any other how in limited people. The less sensitive among us can hardly visualize death, far less live joyfully with it. So the powers that arranged things for us felt they must concretize it, in order to lodge death in the actual present....the presence of death out there as a normal feature of life - only in full acceleration so to speak - has given me an inkling of Life Everlasting! And there was no other way I could have grasped it, damn it. (Clea 797)

In this context, the reader equates "Life Everlasting" with the heraldic universe, that symbolic construct of "time which is not calendar-time [when] you become in some sort a ghost" (Clea 667), and therefore not subject to the dictates of historical time. Darley's "Vale!", his time-honoured acknowledgement of Keats' death, reveals his understanding of its place in the scheme of things. Durrell, in his notes for Clea, makes a useful observation on the significance of this growing ease with death: "As you get older and want to die more a strange kind of happiness seizes you; you suddenly realize that all art must end in a celebration" (879). He attributes these notes to Pursewarden who has died before the beginning of Clea. Are these the notes

Pursewarden made in an effort to clarify his thoughts before he "tidied up" the last volume he wrote? About this volume he says:

I want above all to combine, resolve and harmonize the tensions so far created. I feel I want to sound a note of ... affirmation - though not in the specific terms of a philosophy or religion. It should have the curvature of an embrace, the wordlessness of a lover's code. It should convey some feeling that the world we live in is founded in something too simple to be over-described as cosmic law - but as easy to grasp as, say, an act of tenderness, simple tenderness in the primal relation between animal and plant, rain and soil, seed and trees, men and God. (Balthazar 380)

In Clea, his "last volume", Durrell sounds the note of affirmation towards which Pursewarden was working. It is the note on which I too would like to conclude.

Chapter Four: Laughter

"Yet I must in this last book insist that there is hope for man, scope for man, within the boundaries of a simple law; and I seem to see mankind as gradually appropriating to itself the necessary information through mere attention, not reason, which may one day enable it to live within the terms of such an idea - the true meaning of 'joy unconfined'. ... Perhaps the key lies in laughter, in the Humorous God?" (Balthazar 381)

The "simple law" to which Durrell refers, too simple to be described as a "cosmic law", is the law of tenderness, "simple tenderness in the primal relation between animal and plant, rain and soil, seed and trees, man and God." It is a law individuals can divine, as they work their way through the inevitable cycle of human experience, if they pay attention to how they are living, the consequences they and others suffer, and why these consequences ensue. They can learn to love without guilt, without egotism, committing their own best self to another, and accepting the other's best self unconditionally. In Clea, Durrell's characters evidence a hitherto unacknowledged awareness of the cycle of human experience. Their interrelations evince a new accord, no longer based, as they were, on deception or self-indulgence. By the conclusion of Clea, their behaviour indicates they have emerged once

more from annihilation and are experiencing a rebirth, usually made manifest in laughter, youthful vitality, and artistic creativity, sometimes explicitly acknowledged as a resurrection, or, as in Scobie's case, a reincarnation.

The devastating consequences of Balthazar's foolhardy passion for Panagiotis make him more sensible of the educative potential in living: "I said to myself 'Life is the master. We have been living against the grain of our intellects. The real teacher is endurance.' I had learned something, but at what a cost!" (Clea 706). He posits "a full recognition of its measureless extents of good and evil" (Clea 706), which could be reworded as "a full recognition of archetypal human behaviour", in order to accept the world. Balthazar's friends supervise and celebrate his "resurrection from the dead" (Clea 707). He emerges from his room in the Rue Lepsius with his wrists bandaged, his false teeth in place, and his hair undyed - tangible evidence of his further initiation into the mysteries of life, of his greater wisdom. Only towards the end of Clea does he reassume his youthful appearance by dying his hair, the final indication of his rebirth.

Durrell's introduction of Scobie reaffirms the intent behind all of his characters: "No mythology of

the city would be complete without its Scobie" (Justine 102). Scobie, however, is more obviously mythicized than the other characters: "Origins he has none - his past proliferates through a dozen continents like a true subject of myth" (Justine 102). Durrell then provides Scobie with one of those proliferating pasts, as fantastic and as incredible as Scobie is himself:

Spawned in the Ark by a chance meeting and mating of the bear and the ostrich; delivered before term by the sickening grunt of the keel on Ararat. Scobie came forth from the womb in a wheel chair with rubber tyres, dressed in a deer-stalker and a red flannel binder. On his prehensile toes the glossiest pair of elastic sided boots. In his hand a ravaged family Bible whose fly-leaf bore the words 'Joshua Samuel Scobie 1870. Honour thy father and thy mother'. To these possessions were added eyes like dead moons, a distinct curvature of the pirate's spinal column, and a taste for quinquereemes. It was not blood which flowed in Scobie's veins but green salt-water, deep-sea stuff. His talk is a green-water jargon swept up in five oceans - an antique shop of polite fable bristling with sextants, astrolabes, porpentines and isobars. (Justine 106)

Scobie is water personified, "a sort of protozoic profile in fog and rain" (Justine 103). Although he is not the pure spring-water that qualifies God and Clea, the green salt water that flows through his veins is the element in which sea-changes occur, the element in which both Darley and Clea are reborn. It is the element in which he feels most comfortable, born as he was with a taste for quinquereemes. Durrell stresses

Scobie's affinity with the sea by likening him to a mollusk: "He clings to life like a limpet, each year bringing its visible sea-change" (Justine 102). Further mention of "a sea-change for the old pirate" (Justine 104) encourages recollection of Ariel's song in Shakespeare's The Tempest:

Full fathom five thy father lies;
 Of his bones are coral made;
 Those are pearls that were his eyes;
 Nothing of him that doth fade
 But doth suffer a sea-change
 Into something rich and strange.
 (I,ii,11 397-402)

The poetic allusion alerts the reader to the magical transformation Scobie has undergone, and continues to suffer. His physical disintegration provides evidence of a man who has worked his way countless times through the cycle. Each annihilation, of course, assumes a rebirth, for Scobie, a sea-change. Scobie, who has had a lifetime in which to grow, illustrates the efficacy of Durrell's cycle. Not only has he divined the overriding importance of tenderness, he practises that "tenderness without mercy" which Pursewarden advocates: "the sort of tenderness I mean is utterly merciless! 'A law unto itself' as we say" (Balthazar 381). It is Scobie, we learn later, whom Narouz glimpses running from the circumcision booths, holding a child in his arms. He considers the circum-

cision of Moslem girls to be a cruel mutilation, and works against it when he encounters it. By pitting this "frail", "quavering", staggering old man against "a crowd of Arabs yelling and growling like savage but cowardly dogs" (Balthazar 325), Durrell points up Scobie's courage. Even more significant is Scobie's reporting of Abdul to the authorities, for Abdul is a "true friend":

"I set him up in his business, just out of friendly affection. Bought him everything: his shop, his little wife. Never laid a finger on him nor ever could because I love the man. I'm glad I did now, because though I'm getting on, I still have a true friend."
(Balthazar 227)

Scobie warns Abdul against the circumcision of girls and the use of unclean razors on boys, which spreads syphilis. When Abdul ignores these warnings, Scobie reports him, in spite of the fact that the friendship of Abdul and his wife "was the best I ever had with anyone except Budgie" (Balthazar 304).

Through Clea, Durrell offers a definition of Scobie's achievement:

"There is a kind of perfection to be achieved in matching oneself to one's capacities - at every level. This must, I imagine, do away with illusions too. I myself always admired old Scobie as a thoroughly successful example of this achievement in his own way. He was quite successfully himself, I thought."

(Clea 745)

Scobie's agelessness, his laughter, his singing, his vitality, all attest to his successful realization of a better self. His reincarnation as El Scob should not surprise us, for the example he provides of paying attention inspires, and the laughter he releases within us heals and regenerates: "So we walked back, arm in arm, through the shadowy archway, laughing the compassionate laughter which the old man's image deserved - laughter which in a way regilded the ikon, refueled the lamps about the shrine" (Clea 721). Often recreated through imitation by his friends, Scobie remains eternally significant, alive in the continuous present, identified in archetypal terms with the Old Man of the Sea, Tiresius, and Joshua.

Capodistria's imminent "death" provokes in him an introspection and a self-assessment unremarked heretofore. He sees himself in Parr the sensualist, a character in Pursewarden's third volume, and corroborates Pursewarden's understanding of this character: "His apology for a voluptuary's life is fantastically good - as in the passage where he says that people only see in us the contemptible skirt-fever which rules our actions but completely miss the beauty-hunger underlying it" (Justine 171). We glimpse a better Capodistria in

his desire to leave behind a legacy equal to his father's, a few incidents and sayings revealing "a coherent view of life" (Justine 171). His philosophical monologue prepares us for his resurrection in Clea, inspired by a beauty-hunger uniquely transformed.

In his "new life" (Clea 807) with its "new orientation" (Clea 808), Capodistria's preoccupations parallel Durrell's. His line of enquiry is "concerned with increasing man's interior hold on himself, on the domains which lie unexplored within him" (Clea 808). In the course of his enquiry, Capodistria has actualized himself more fully. He has "discovered at last something which eminently fitted [his] nature" (Clea 808-809). Ten homunculi, "exquisitely beautiful and mysterious objects, floating ... like sea-horses" (Clea 809), now satisfy his hunger for beauty. Their predictions for the future, recorded in "the annals of Time", release Capodistria from the confines of historical time. Paracelsus' writings, which he seems to accept, echo Durrell's understanding of the "diseased human heart":

Innumerable are the Egos of man; in him are angels and devils, heaven and hell, the whole of the animal creation, the vegetable and mineral kingdoms; and just as the little man may be diseased, so the great universal man has his diseases, which manifest themselves as the ills which affect humanity as a whole. Upon this fact is based the prediction of future events. (Clea 812)

Capodistria has indeed achieved something, has progressed some distance toward his "own light" (Clea 812). Like Balthazar, his acceptance of the world stems from his understanding of "its measureless extent of good and evil".

Keats' laughter swells appreciably the sound of laughter that reverberates through the final novel. Expecting the kind of person who "[drags] his tail of slime over the pitiful muddled life of which the artist, with such pain, recaptures these solitary jewels of self-enlightenment" (Clea 793), Darley is confronted with a Greek God:

"I was so surprised at the transformation that I sat down abruptly on the lavatory and studied this ... apparition. Keats was burnt almost black, and his hair had bleached white. Though slimmer, he looked in first-class condition. The brown skin and ashen hair had made his twinkling eyes bluer than ever. He bore absolutely no resemblance to my memories of him." (Clea 793)

The twinkling eyes, the ringing laughter, the confident manner, the exuberance, the physical appearance, all signify a man reborn. When Keats claims he could be regarded as "permanently disfigured" (Clea 796), he acknowledges the necessity of experiencing some form of annihilation before one can be reborn. The war has

provided him with this experience, and, at the same time, "an inkling of Life Everlasting" (Clea 797).

Keats develops further Durrell's belief that artist and reader should be engaged in the same endeavour, the creation of an ideal self living an ideal life. Pursewarden has already stated: "Heed me, reader, for the artist is you, all of us - the statue which must disengage itself from the dull block of marble which houses it, and start to live" (Clea 744). A work of art must serve only as a "frame of reference" (Clea 763). Darley as well has perceived the real fiction to be life itself. Keats, although believing himself at last to be a writer, isn't concerned about actually writing. The most important outcome of his rebirth is his re-creation of himself.

Unlike most of the characters in the Quartet, Justine works her way through Durrell's cycle several times. She outgrows the devastation occasioned by Capodistria's rape of her as she tells Pursewarden how she confronted Capodistria, demanding he sleep with her again, thereby loosening the hold the past event has on her. Her request horrifies Capodistria, who does not recall the incident. Justine, remembering his discomfiture, becomes convulsed with laughter, "the first effortless, musical laughter [Pursewarden] had ever heard

her give" (Balthazar 308); a sure sign of her rebirth. In Clea, Pursewarden recounts Justine's emergence from the devastation she experiences on learning of her daughter's death. She has denied the truth of the news, waiting until she feels prepared to deal with it. When Pursewarden accompanies her to the brothel in which her daughter died, she reveals her development. Sitting at ease by the divan on which her daughter died, described as a "Viking catafalque" (Clea 768), she recounts the story of Yuna and Aziz. The story, with its "epic contours" (Clea 769), is Justine's acknowledgement of the heraldic universe. Just as Pursewarden bore witness to her previous rebirth, he acknowledges her progress here as well:

How could I help but admire her for giving me one of the most significant and memorable moments of a writer's life? I put my arm about her shoulders and sat, as rapt as any of them, following the long sinuous curves of the immortal story as it unfolded before our eyes. (Clea 769)

Such a stunning manifestation of personal growth should prepare us for Justine's final appearance. Her understanding of the inescapable influences exerted by the human heart now compels her laughter. While she ostensibly was laughing at Narouz' ill-fated love for Clea, she was "really laughing at ... all of us. One stumbles over it at every turn of the road, doesn't one;

under every sofa the same corpse, in every cupboard the same skeleton? What can one do but laugh?" (Clea 698). Although her will has faltered at this time, she lives in the certain knowledge that this will pass. Inevitably, it does, and she emerges at the end with "a peal of laughter". "She has never looked happier or younger" (Clea 876). She is joined by an equally rejuvenated Nessim. Balthazar has prepared the reader for Nessim's transformation by reporting his response to Leila's death: "While I loved her and all that, her death has freed me in a curious sort of way. A new life is opening before me. I feel years younger" (Clea 863).

Pombal, following the death of Fosca, hurts until he laughs, abiding by the second of Pursewarden's two imperatives. Although devastated by her loss, suddenly old, he understands his place in the cycle: "I suppose it will all pass. Everything does. In the very end, it passes" (Clea 825). Pombal's faith in the turn of the cycle is justified, as we glimpse him, at the end of Clea, celebrating the women of France.

Like Justine, Clea experiences a number of rotations through the cycle. Early, chronologically, in the story, unable to paint, she approaches Pursewarden, in the hope that he will rid her of her problematic virginity, a notion she now perceives to be "stupid".

Pursewarden refuses, saying she should not have let him know she really did not care for him. It would appear that his determination not to misuse sex in their relationship has an ameliorating effect, as she "started work again, clear as a bell, the next morning" (Clea 737). Later, in Syria, Clea is tempted to fall in love with a strange young painter until she views his work, for in it she sees "weakness and poverty of heart and a power to do mischief":

It is wonderful whenever one can overcome one's treacherous heart. Then I went home and was hardly in the door when I picked up a brush and started on the painting which has been holding me up for nearly a month; all the ways were clear, all the relations in play. The mysterious obstacle had vanished.
(Balthazar 382)

The pain with which her affair with Amaril concludes again nourishes Clea as an artist. When Darley returns to Alexandria, he is intrigued by her change to abstract painting, a change Clea describes as just a phase.

While Clea has learned, through her successive experiences of annihilation and rebirth, to control her "treacherous" heart, she has still to learn that she can step outside the cycle, that she need not remain entangled in its turning. Awareness of the heraldic universe implies awareness of all the possibilities in human behaviour. Such knowledge frees one from the

limitations of personal experience. One can imagine behaviour that is not the apparently inevitable outcome of a situation. Balthazar states, "We achieve in reality, in substance, only the pictures of the imagination" (Clea 701). Pursewarden reiterates, "the so-called act of living is really an act of the imagination" (Clea 772). When Clea and Darley have first made love, one asks, "Did you ever imagine this?" and the other replies, "We must both have done, otherwise it would not have happened" (Clea 728).

In Clea, Durrell opposes the rock-pool to the desert of the first three novels. The beatitude Clea and Darley experience there recalls "the illusion of a beatitude" (Justine 137) Darley experienced at Abousir, where whatever life the spring nurtured was constantly threatened by the invading desert sands. In the rock-pool, the two revel in a happiness that is not illusory. In an atmosphere suffused with light and colour, they enjoy "a curious sea-engendered rapport" (Clea 832). Significantly, while Darley had not been a good swimmer, he became proficient during his stay on the island. Now he and Clea play underwater, "as thoughtlessly as fishes of the fifth day of Creation":

Eloquent and silent water-ballets which allowed us to correspond only by smile and gesture. The water-silences captured and

transformed everything human in movement, so that we were like the coloured projections of undines painted upon these brilliant screens of rock and weed, echoing and copying the water-rhythms. Here thought itself perished, was converted into a fathomless content in physical action. I see the bright figure travelling like a star across this twilight firmament, its hair combed up and out in a rippling whorl of colour. (Clea 832)

The harmony, movement, and splendour of this passage effectively distinguish Durrell's rock-pool. On the day of the accident, its water becomes phosphorescent, inspired lighting for the drama played out in its depths.

Darley imagines two outcomes to Clea's impalement underwater; either he will bring her up alive or he will stay at the bottom of the pool with her. While he does not know "from which territory of the will such a decision had come" (Clea 851), he feels as if he were confronting himself for the first time, "or perhaps an alter ego shaped after a man of action [he] had never realized, recognized" (Clea 849). The heraldic universe offers a universe of "alter egos", the sum of human potential, in which the aware are free to participate as they explore their own potential.

While Clea's new laugh and new confidence attest to the maturation of her heart, her new hand, the consequence of her underwater annihilation and

subsequent rebirth, leads her into the heraldic universe: "I have crossed the border and entered into the possession of my kingdom, thanks to the Hand" (Clea 874). When she writes of her certainty that Darley will follow her to France, Clea makes her meaning clear: "I speak of certainty not prophecy - I have done with fortune-tellers once and for all!" (Clea 875)

Darley's entry into his "kingdom of the imagination" concludes the Quartet. It is the final cause for celebration, although, as Darley observes, celebration has been in the air since his return to Alexandria. It culminates in the procession honouring El Scob, more specifically in the dance of the six Mevlevi dervishes. With this dance, Durrell plays the card known as The World (XXI) in the Tarot deck, which according to Peirce celebrates the cosmic dance:

The dancer moves in space within a mandala or mandorla, an image of psychic wholeness, of perfected achievement. An end has been reached, but an end that is to Durrell a "continuous present". The dancer turns "at the still point where past and future, evolution and involution, action and inaction all intersect and interact (Douglas, 108). Truth, love, or poetic consciousness - even the great globe itself dances in harmony and joy. Each who achieves the quest becomes the dancer. (211)

As each of Durrell's characters achieve an awareness of the cycle within human experience, thereby

gaining entry into the heraldic universe, they, inevitably, must leave Alexandria, the city of "exiles" (Clea 772), of "the disinherited" (Clea 723). They are no longer exiles of the heraldic universe. They are in full possession of their mythopoeic inheritance.

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