Structure in relation to the artist in "The Alexandria Quartet"

Carole Ann Granger

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STRUCTURE IN RELATION TO THE ARTIST IN

THE ALEXANDRIA QUARTET

By

Carole Ann Granger

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Approved by:

[Signatures]

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

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This thesis is an investigation into Lawrence Durrell's space-time and Plotinian structuring of The Alexandria Quartet in relation to his conception of the "heraldic" development of the artist.

Chapter I deals with the space-time structure, which Durrell claims is based on his adaption of the relativity proposition of Einstein.

Chapter II deals with the Plotinian structure which is based on certain aspects of the philosophy of Plotinus. The four-part Quartet is structured according to the progression of the human consciousness from the senses, through the mind, the rational faculty, to the spiritual apprehension of God, as understood by Plotinus.

The developed artist, through his vision of the "heraldic universe", creatively reflects the metaphysical realities that concern man, the world, existence itself and God. In Chapter III, the goal of artistic consciousness is consciousness of the heraldic universe. The total consciousness of reality necessitates the transcendence of man's sensory perceptions and of human reason.

Chapter IV deals with the examination of Durrell's space-time structure and its theoretical basis in the theory of relativity. In the examination of Durrell's space-time structure, the problems of the modern artist emerge: the relative nature of truth makes it impossible to present characters and events as discrete facts or unities, because they are subjectively realized.

Through the dual structuring device, Durrell illustrates the heraldic development of the artist as one who finally sees the 'truth' of reality, subjectively and spiritually conceived in a constant prismatic relationship to his characters and to the events they live through.
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INTRODUCTION

Notes for landscape-tones... Long sequences of tempera. Light filtered through the essence of lemons. An air full of brick-dust — sweet smelling brick-dust and the odour of hot pavements slacked with water. Light damp clouds, earth bound, yet seldom bringing rain. Upon this squat dust-red, dust-green, chalk-mauve and the watered crimson-lake. In summer the sea damp lightly varnished the air. Everything lay under a coat of gum.

Lawrence Durrell is beautifully apt in creating "notes for landscape-tones" throughout The Alexandria Quartet, but his best "landscape-tones" are subjective — especially those which color the mind of the artist. The subjective world of the artist underlies the theme I wish to deal with in the Quartet: the growth and development of the artist, as human being as well as artist, and the relationship of life to art implicit in Durrell's treatment of this theme. It is the traditional theme of the examination of art, the artist, and the relationship of both to self, society, and finally the universe. The 'novelty' which Durrell contributes to this traditional theme, in my judgment, lies not in the elements of form "—specifically, upon modern usage in point of view and the handling of time", but rather in Durrell's personal philosophy of the "heraldic universe", a philosophy that gives Durrell a coherent vision of human life, art, and the universe. The philosophy of the heraldic universe pervades, and is thoroughly assimilated into the four novels of

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the Quartet and, though it is not readily apparent in a cursory reading, Durrell's philosophy of the heraldic universe provides the theoretical basis for the structure of The Alexandria Quartet. In the second chapter, I hope to clarify Durrell's conception of the heraldic universe as the goal of all human endeavor, since to Durrell the artist cannot create successfully until he has attained consciousness of the heraldic universe, of heraldic reality, and strives to attain oneness with it.

In this thesis, then, I will deal only with Durrell's space-time and Plotinian structuring of the Quartet in relation to his conception of the "heraldic" development of the artist. Chapter I deals with the space-time structure, which Durrell claims is based on his adaption of the relativity proposition of Einstein. Chapter II deals with the Plotinian structure which appears to be based on relevant aspects of the philosophy of Plotinus: the four parts of the Quartet are described as structured according to a progression of the human consciousness away from the senses, through the mind, the rational faculty, to the spiritual apprehension of God, as understood by Plotinus. In Chapter III the goal of artistic consciousness is defined as growing consciousness of the heraldic universe. The developed artist, through his vision of the "heraldic universe", creatively reflects the metaphysical realities that concern man, his world, existence itself and God. Such a consciousness of reality necessitates the transcendence of man's sensory perceptions and human reason. Chapter IV deals with the examination of Durrell's space-time structure and its theoretical basis in his understanding of the theory of relativity. In the examination of Durrell's space-time structure, the problem of the modern artist emerge: the relative nature of truth makes it impossible to present characters and events as discrete facts.
or unities, because they can only be subjectively realized. As a consequence, the examination of structure will not include in-depth consideration of Durrell's approach to character delineation, his style, his view of time, and his treatment of the human will, though thorough consideration of these issues would certainly be essential to an inclusive interpretation of the four novels that make up the Quartet. I will, of course, touch on these issues as the need arises, since it is not possible to deal with the structuring of the Quartet, or the "heraldic" development of the artist without tangential comment on them.

In the preface to Balthazar, the second novel of the sequence, Durrell states that his central theme is "an investigation of modern love", but this theme coincides with (and is finally subsumed in Clea, the fourth novel) his concentration on the theme of the artist's growth to maturity. In an interview in *Encounter*, Durrell insists that "the whole business of the four books, apart from other things, shows the way an artist grows up. The books are really a sort of thesis on poetic illumination." Admittedly, this is a theme typical of many modern writers, but Durrell is remarkable in that, for him, the end of art and the artist's search is not nihilistic but affirmative -- as naturally affirmative as an apple lying ripe upon a sun-warmed wall.

G. S. Fraser calls Durrell a "lyrical comedian":

I take comedy in Northrop Frye's wide sense as that area of literature that is concerned with life and fulfillments, with sympathetic not cruel laughter at failure in life and fulfillment...He should be contrasted with Samuel Beckett, a writer as much in

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3Kenneth Young, "A Dialogue with Durrell", *Encounter*, XIII, 6 (December, 1959), 62.
phase with his time as Durrell is out of phase
with it.

This is not to classify Durrell categorically as a romantic who
writes to please his own imagination, but rather as a man and artist
opting for life. The artistic sensibility can be, and has been in the
past, driven into ambiguity when confronted with the protean shape of
reality, of 'truth'. Durrell, however, illustrates in the Quartet the
artistic sensibility shaped by the influence of Einstein and Freud as he
defines it in his A Key to Modern British Poetry:

...In listening to me you must adopt some of the
humility of the modern scientist for whom there
are no more facts but simply 'point-events' strung
out in reality. The relations we see, or think we
see, between ideas, are only useful if we use them
as spring-boards from which to jump into reality
ourselves. Art describes the kind of reality which
is already dead for the artist...In reality we are
simply making a rough and ready star-map of a uni­
verse which we do not perfectly understand.

But the end of Art for Durrell is not mere ambivalence. It "points",
as Pursewarden -- the Quartet's enigmatic novelist who introduces the
concept of the heraldic universe to Darley, the narrator of the Quartet --
states in his notebook: "Conversations with Brother Ass [Darley]":

Good art points, like a man too ill to speak, like
a baby! But if instead of following the direction
it indicates you take it for a thing in itself,
having some sort of absolute value, or as a thesis
upon something which can be paraphrased, surely you
miss the point.

(Clea, pp. 133-134)

Pursewarden is not saying that art points to nihilism but rather to a

5 Norman, Oklahoma, 1952, p. 39. Hereafter referred to as Key.
conception of the heraldic universe: to "greater consciousness...its fundamental object was only to invoke the ultimate healing silence" (Clea, p. 134), where the psyche is at one with itself, other men, God, and the universe. Thus, art, for Durrell, is a means of transcending the limitations of mind and personality, of history and of time; it is a means of entering a reality which lies outside the limited scope of human reason in a state of spiritual refinement called by Durrell the heraldic universe.

Finally, it must be noted that The Alexandria Quartet has received, generally, rather cursory interpretation from the reading public and from many literary critics, both British and American. Durrell is accused of having no coherent theme, no control of style, of being over-romantic and pseudo-intellectual, and of having written the Quartet hurriedly (and solely) for money. In point of fact, when one pays close attention to this modern "science fiction" as Durrell calls it in the preface to Balthazar, one discovers that The Alexandria Quartet is extremely complex both in its structure and in its development of theme. It does not develop as one might expect nor can it be effortlessly absorbed. But if it is read in the light of Durrell's heraldic philosophy, it becomes meaningful. Thus, The Alexandria Quartet is not beautifully written trash but is a beautifully written work of art whose main theme involves the growth of the artist.
CHAPTER I

DURRELL'S 'METHOD'

The Alexandria Quartet consists of four novels, Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive, and Clea, and is an experiment in the "space-time" novel -- a term conceived by Durrell for a novel which illustrates structurally Durrell's conception of the influence of scientific relativity upon twentieth century literature. In the preface to Balthazar, Durrell specifically explains the structure, the 'method', he has adopted:

Modern literature offers us no unities, so I have turned to science and am trying to complete a four-decker novel whose form is based on the relativity proposition.

Three sides of space and one of time constitute a soup-mix recipe of a continuum. The four novels follow this pattern.

The three first parts, however, are to be deployed spatially (hence the use of 'sibling' not 'sequel' [to describe them] and are not linked in a serial form. They interlap, interweave in a purely spatial relation. Time is stayed. The fourth part alone will represent time and be a time sequel.

The subject-object relation is so important to relativity that I have tried to turn the novel through both subjective and objective modes. The third part, Mountolive, is a straight naturalistic novel in which the narrator of Justine and Balthazar becomes an object, i.e., a character.

This is not Proustian or Joycean method -- for they illustrate Bergsonian "Duration" in my opinion, not 'Space-Time...'

These considerations sound perhaps somewhat immodest or even pompous. But it would be worth trying an experiment to see if we can not discover a morphological form one might appropriately call 'classical' -- for our time. Even if the result proved to be a science fiction in the true sense.

Durrell believes that modern literature cannot provide traditional
unities because it reflects the uncertainties of modern science. As Durrell understands it, modern science reveals a provisional non-pragmatic conception of the universe. Durrell is, of course, presenting his own interpretation and subjective application of Einstein's theory of relativity; Durrell's application bears only a scanty resemblance to Einstein's theory, wherein relativity is restricted only to a physical conception of the universe and does not imply moral relativism, though intellectuals in our time have been prone to assume that it does. Durrell accordingly adapts his form for the Quartet to the relativity theory of Einstein because it "implies" that each individual view of reality is, to a large degree, subjective; thus, in the first three novels -- Justine, Balthazar, and Mountolive -- Durrell presents characters and events in a spatial continuum wherein the reader sees the same characters and events recurrently from different points of view: their relative 'truth' is relative to the subject viewing them. These three novels are siblings in the sense that they deal with essentially the same subject matter while Clea is a "true" sequel to all three. The fact that Mountolive is a naturalistic novel adds less to Durrell's space-time structure than to his philosophic structuring of the Quartet: the four-part ascent to the heraldic universe, to be discussed in Chapter II. He is using, then, two structuring devices in the Quartet: one, a space-time method, based on the relativity proposition of Einstein, and the other -- unique to modern literature -- a philosophical development of his character-artists in terms of their Plotinian ascent to the heraldic universe. On the other hand, his space-time structural method is neither "immodest" nor "pompous", for it parallels in its own way also the philosophical considerations of many modern writers and is, therefore, not as unique as
it seems. In my judgment, however, Durrell's philosophical structuring is the dominant structural device. The space-time form is mainly important in the initial stages of the Quartet, though the ultimate form of the Quartet is derived from these two interwoven structural devices.

In case the reader has skipped the preface to Balthazar, or failed to heed it, the structure of the Quartet is again discussed in Clea, this time by Pursewarden in his "Conversations with Brother Ass":

No, but seriously, if you wished to be -- I do not say original but merely contemporary -- you might try a four- and trick in the form of a novel; passing a common axis through four stories, say, and dedicating each to one of the four winds of heaven. A continuum, forsooth, embodying not a temps retrouve but a temps délivré. The curvature of space itself will give you a stereoscopic narrative, while human personality seen across a continuum would perhaps become prismatic? Who can say? I throw the idea out. I can imagine a form which, if satisfied, might raise in human terms the problems of causality or indeterminacy...And nothing very recherché either. Just an ordinary Girl meets Boy story. But tackled in this way you would not, like most of your contemporaries be drousily cutting along a dotted line. (Clea, p. 126)

In some sense, however, Durrell's 'considerations' are more contemporary than original. It could be said that Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier is a forerunner of the Quartet with the "form all tucked in and painless.

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1 Early in Justine, Justine comments on the possibility of 'prismatic' structuring in reference to character; she is sitting before the multiple mirrors at her dressmaker's salon, being fitted for a costume:

'Look!' five different pictures of the same subject. Now if I wrote, I would try for a multi-dimensional effect in character, a sort of prism-sightedness. Why should not people show more than one profile at a time? (p. 18).

This is the first hint in the Quartet of Durrell's use of relativity as a structuring device.
But Durrell did not read The Good Soldier until after writing Justine. He believes, too, that he goes beyond Ford's structure in deliberately adding the "consequential Data" as afterthoughts to his novels in the Quartet to illustrate the infinite expansion possible to it. Durrell's structuring of the Quartet is so skillfully executed that the influence of relativity upon artistic form ceases to be merely an intellectual concept and enters the reader's nerve reality. The reader very soon realizes with Darley (the principal narrator of the Quartet), that truth is relative; as Durrell notes in his Key to Modern British Poetry, "there is no final truth to be found -- there is only provisional truth within a given context." Truth, like space in modern physics, is conceived of as relative to a moving point of reference.

The first two novels of the Quartet, Justine, and Balthazar, need, then, to be examined briefly as plot to illustrate Durrell's space-time structure.

As Justine opens, Darley, the Anglo-Irish schoolteacher narrator, is living on a tiny Aegean island from which he plans to return in imagination to Alexandria:

...link by link along iron chains of memory to the City [Alexandria] which we inhabited so briefly together....The solace of such work as I do with brain and heart lies in this -- that there, in the silences of the painter or the writer can reality be ordered, reworked, and made to show its significant side.

(pp. 3 and 7)

Darley means to 'rework' past reality by ordering it into what he

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2 See Young, p. 65.
3 Key, p. 7.
conceives mistakenly to be objective significance. The events related in *Justine* are not presented in chronological order but are presented by means of sensory relationships: time literally does not exist in *Justine*. The technique for recording this 'reworked' reality of the memory approaches that of stream of consciousness in places; the principal technique, however, is a bringing together of even s non-chronologically which reflects Darley's unexamined but closely linked perceptions.

Darley's island is similar to Proust's cork-lined chamber; it is a place for retrospection outside the linear flow of time. *Justine* is a novel founded in personal memories. Darley accepts these memories as aspects of objectivity and means only to 'rework' them in order to discover their reality. Against the exotic background of Alexandria, he recounts his almost-happy affair with Melissa, a Greek cabaret dancer whose child (by Nessim) he is caring for on the island. Melissa, whom he had found "washed up like a half-drowned bird on the dreary littorals of Alexandria" (pp. 14-15), has been dead for several years.

In this novel Darley recounts his helpless adultery with the Jewess, Justine, the beautiful and exotic wife of Nessim, an intelligent Copt, one of Alexandria's richest bankers and one of its most mysterious inhabitants. Darley meets Justine after his public lecture on the poetry of C. P. Cavafy, the modern Greek poet of Alexandria. She follows him after the lecture, picks him up in a grocery store, and drives him home to meet Nessim. So begins the love affair, the sensual significance of

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which the events in this first novel center upon. Darley's friendship with both Justine and Nessim is the catalyst which allows him to move through the exotic cobweb of the spiritual and social aspects of "the City", Alexandria.

In *Justine*, as an aid in creating a prismatic structure, Darley utilizes the diary-novel, *Moeurs*, which Justine's first husband, Arnauti, had written sometime before the novel begins. In it he discovers much that seems to make Justine more understandable, but the most important psychic 'fact' is that as a child she was raped and has resorted finally to nymphomania to overcome the 'check' (the resulting frigidity), which inhibits her from finding any "normal" love relationships. In *Balthazar*, Pursewarden tells Balthazar that he regards Justine:

...'as a tiresome old sexual turnstile through which we must presumably all pass -- a somewhat vulpine Alexandrian Venus. By God, what a woman she would make if she were really natural and felt no guilt! Her behavior would commend her to the Pantheon -- but one cannot send her up there with a mere recommendation from the Rabbinate -- a bundle of Old Testament ravings. What would old Zeus say?

(p. 106)

Though she has the potential to love, Justine never develops beyond being a sexual turnstile; she remains too locked within the self to progress toward the heraldic universe. She has also had a child who was subsequently kidnapped and for whom she is still searching obsessively. One of her motives for marrying Nessim has been the hope that his great wealth might facilitate this search.

Nessim finally becomes aware of Justine's affair with Darley and seemingly assumes the role of the jealous husband. At the end of the novel, he invites Darley to his annual duck hunt on Lake Mareotis and Darley accepts in spite of his fear that the hunt will be the setting for
his own murder. Someone is, indeed, killed, but it is not Darley; rather it is Capodistria, a descendant from one of Alexandria's wealthiest and most neurotic families. He turns out to have a somewhat ambiguous role in the Quartet --'even his death is ambiguous, though it is connected with Nessim's political activities, but the connection is only alluded to. Later we discover that Capodistria has not been killed at the duck hunt; instead, the corpse of some stranger who looks like him is produced to legally "prove" his death. After this hunting accident, Justine leaves Alexandria suddenly for a kibbutz in Palestine, supposedly in fear for her life.

Justine's departure and similar incidents in Justine are not presented by Durrell/Darley in chronological order but in their psychological order; i.e., the structuring of events has a subjective significance which the reader realizes only in retrospect, as he follows the four-stage ascent of the characters in the Quartet toward the heraldic universe. Durrell does give the reader the hint that "there is order and coherence which we might surprise if we are attentive enough, loving enough. Will there be time...Does not everything depend on our interpretation of the silence around us? (Justine, pp. 225 and 250). But the "order" which Durrell hints at here is not the order of a rational objective world; it is the order of a subjective world known only to the individual psyche.

In some respects the exotic atmosphere of Alexandria is perhaps of more interest in Justine than the plot. Darley calls Alexandria "the great wine press of love" and (the key characters are, in fact, "wounded

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5 Gordon, p. 12.
one might call it as well the wine press of history and philosophy, both systematic and occult. In this city that Mark Antony loved, "a drunken whore walks in a dark street of night, shedding snatches of song like petals", and the ghost of Plotinus takes issue with Balthazar's Cabal. Certainly the city is peopled by a bizarre collection of human beings:

(1) Scobie -- a retired English merchant seaman, now a Bimbashi in the Egyptian police, who has homosexual "tendencies": he is a transvestite and as a converted Catholic, delightfully pious; later in the Quartet, after being kicked to death in his old "Dolly Varden" by infuriated British sailors, he is transformed into a Coptic saint by the Alexandrian populace.

(2) Balthazar, who gives his name to the second volume and is its co-author -- a Jew, a homosexual, a physician. In Justine, Darley calls him "one of the keys to the city" because he knows all the major characters in the Quartet and their secrets. A leader of the mysterious Cabal, his insights into character and psychological truth are theosophical, ironic, intelligent, and compassionate.

(3) Clea, who gives her name to the last volume -- an Egyptian, virginal, blonde, beautiful, and superstitious. She is a painter who is aesthetically blocked in the first three novels; her developing awareness of the nature of the heraldic universe is a motif increasingly discernible in the relative but clarifying happenings of the Quartet.

(4) Pursewarden -- famous author of a trilogy called God is a Humorist. Enigmatic in his relationship to the other characters, he adopts an ironic tone and attitude deliberately calculated to make people misunderstand him. His significance is increasingly apparent in the later
parts of the Quartet, especially after his equivocal suicide which leads to his "heraldic" vision becoming more apparent. To a large extent he is a mouthpiece for Durrell's theories of art.

The novels are peopled with other strangely real though less important characters, such as Toto de Brunel, who in the carnival season, as related in Balthazar, is fatally stabbed in the head with a hat pin; he is, perhaps, typical of the average amoral Alexandrian. There is Paul Capodistria, a Mephistophelean character, nicknamed the "Great Porn" because of his vast collection of pornography. He is descended from suicides and neurotics, is a member of the Cabal, is adept at black magic, and in Balthazar turns out to be Justine's childhood seducer. (p. 136).

Justine is, then, an introductory novel; in it Durrell introduces his themes and major characters and their inter-relationships within the multi-dimensional City which has its own breathing soul, bathed by the dry desert wind, its air full of brick dust and lemons. "Five races, five languages, a dozen creeds: five fleets turning through their greasy reflections behind the harbour bar." (p. 4).

In the second novel, Balthazar, Durrell clarifies for the reader his structural method and concomitantly displays it within the novel's structure. Darley is brought to realize by Balthazar that the past he "reworked" in Justine was not composed of "real", objective truths that he had only to reinterpret and reshape into a unified novel. Soon after the beginning of this second novel, Balthazar comes to the island where Darley is caring for Melissa's child to return the manuscript of Justine which Darley had sent him. Balthazar has radically emended the "truths"
of Darley's manuscript—hereafter to be called the "interlinear", because in his extended comments on the manuscript of Justine Balthazar gives his more sophisticated and in some sense more "factual" interpretations of the events in Justine. Darley muses over the "interlinear" and its reduction of the events in Justine to misunderstood interpretations:

"it seemed to me to be somehow symbolic of the very reality we had shared -- a palimpsest upon which each of us had left his or her individual traces, layer by layer" (Balthazar, p. 12). This being so, the question for Darley is what to do with the "truths" of Justine:

It was almost dawn before I surrendered the fascinating mound of paper with its comments upon my own real (inner) life and like a drunkard stumbled to my bed, my head aching...I could hear the dry voice of my friend repeating as I fell asleep: 'How much do you care to know...how much more do you care to know? -- 'I must know everything in order to be at last delivered from the City,' I replied in my dream.

(Balthazar, p. 13)

Darley then proceeds to rework and retell the events of Justine by referring to and including great chunks of the interlinear within a second manuscript that becomes Balthazar. He must go back to the beginning:

...like a man who at the end of a tremendous journey is told that he has been sleepwalking. 'Truth' said Balthazar to me once, blowing his nose in an old tennis sock, 'Truth is what most contradicts itself in time.'

(Balthazar, p. 13)

In many ways the validity of Darley's view of reality in Justine is destroyed by Balthazar's interlinear. Darley has, for example, been deceived about Justine's passion for him and Nessim's presume jealousy. According to Balthazar, Justine really loves Purswarden, if she loves anyone, and both Darley and Purswarden have been pawns in Nessim's
political schemes (as we discover later). His love for Justine, Darley begins to realize, has been a selfish and futile illusion, a misinterpretation of sexual experience as love. The Justine that Darley had known was only the projection of one of his own many selves and the selves of Melissa, Justine, Nessim and Pursewarden:

Where must one look for justifications? Only I think to the facts themselves; for they might enable me to see now a little further into the central truth of this enigma called 'love'. I see the image of it receding and curling away from me in an infinite series like the waves of the sea; or, colder than a dead moon, rising up over the dreams and illusions I fabricated from it -- but like the real moon, always keeping one side of the truth hidden from me, the nether side of a beautiful star. My 'love' for her, Melissa's 'love' for me, Nessim's 'love' for her, her 'love' for Pursewarden... no two contained the same properties... And just as Justine used my love, so Nessim used Melissa's... One upon the back of the other, crawling about like crabs in a basket. (Balthazar, pp. 121-122)

It is not an "investigation of modern love" which Durrell/Darley is exercising here but an investigation of love as a timeless concept and human emotion. At this point in the Quartet, Darley views love as selfish and somewhat narcissistic (a view quite similar to that, mentioned later, of Justine which she records in her "diary"). Love, in Pursewarden's sense of love as "'loving-kindness' which is so much greater than 'Love' or even 'passion'" (Balthazar, p. 119), Darley must later learn from Clea who helps him transcend the physical and narcissistic stages of love to the spiritual level, the level of the heraldic universe.

In Balthazar, Darley now becomes aware of the nature of Nessim's Coptic, religious, and political fears; he fears the rise of Arab nationalism which will inevitably follow the decline of English and French occupation of Egypt. Nessim's decision to run guns to Palestine
is based on his hope in a Jewish Palestine's probable protection of the non-Moslem Coptic Egyptians. Naturally, the fact that his wife, Justine, is Jewish encourages his belief in the success of his plans. The seductive female of Justine has now become a political instrument.

Almost every "reality" in Justine is now viewed and re-viewed in Balthazar from another point of reference from that of Justine so that Balthazar becomes as Balthazar says, "like some medieval palimpsest where different sorts of truth are thrown down upon the other..." (Balthazar, p. 177). Balthazar uses this simile to suggest a technique by means of which Darley might incorporate the "truths" of the interlinear in his revised novel:

'I suppose' (writes Balthazar) 'that if you wished somehow to incorporate all I am telling you into your own Justine manuscript now, you would find yourself with a curious sort of book -- the story would be told, so to speak, in layers. Unwittingly, I may have supplied you with a form, something out of the way! Not unlike Proust's idea of a series of novels with 'sliding panels' as he called them. Or else, perhaps, like some medieval palimpsest ...one truth obliterating or perhaps supplementing another!' (p. 177)

The interlinear raises for Darley the writer the problem of form, truth, and the possibility of finding the real self -- his own and the 'real selves' of the people he proposes to create as characters in his novel.

By the end of Balthazar, he muses:

From the vantage point of this island, I can see it all in its doubleness, in the intercalation of face and fancy with new eyes....Perhaps then the destrucion of my private Alexandria was necessary ("the artifact of a true work of art never shows a plane surface"); perhaps buried here in all this there lies the germ and substance of a truth -- time's usufruct--which if I can accomodate it, will carry me a little further in what is really a search for my proper self. (P. 222)
Darley is groping toward a new understanding of the nature of relative (and later—transcendental) truth which cannot be structurally represented in a novel with a "plane surface". Even so, he is left to grope toward transcendental truth until well into Clea where his initiation into consciousness of the heraldic universe and the significance of a space-time novel is brought to its culmination by Pursewarden, who reveals his apprehension of the heraldic universe through his diary and his personal letters to Clea and his sister, Liza.

Mountolive, the third volume of the Quartet, is a throw-back into naturalistic structuring. An omniscient author (who is not Darley) projects the story further back into the past. Essentially, it is the story of David Mountolive — his coming to Egypt as a young foreign office careerist to improve his Arabic, his friendship with the Hosnani family and his love affair with Leila, mother of Nessim and Narouz. Throughout, Durrell describes and defines the diplomatic career of Mountolive who gradually becomes disillusioned with power and the sham integrity of being a statesman. His career has consisted of a series of stations in diplomatic missions all over the world until finally he is returned to Alexandria where, like Pursewarden, he is placed in the unhappy position of dealing with the treachery of a beloved friend — Nessim — Whose interests are anti-British and anti-Egyptian.

The importance of Mountolive in the Quartet lies in the fact that in it Durrell examines and ascribes political motivations to his characters; even Pursewarden's suicide is given a possible political motivation. Political motivation is now suggested as the sole cause of Justine's marriage to and her curious passion for Nessim:
Oriental woman is not a sensualist in the European sense; there is nothing mawkish in her constitution. Her true obsessions are power, politics, and possessions—however, she might deny it. The sex ticks on in the mind, but its motions are warmed by the kinetic brutalities of money. In this response to a common field of action, Justine was truer to herself than she had ever been, responding as a flower responds to light. And it was now, while they talked quietly and coldly, that she could at last say, magnificently, 'Ah, Nessim, I never suspected that I should agree. How did you know that I only exist for those who believe in me?'

Since Mountolive is largely devoted to the political career of Mountolive, it seems at times—except for the casual link between politics and love—rather an odd member of tetralogy designed, so Durrell insists, to illustrate a new space-time structure. Never heless, it adds to the development of Durrell's 'method' through the scattered examples of relative truth existent in Mountolive.

The most important revelation of relative truth is Pursewarden's accidental discovery of Nessim's political treachery. Melissa, to supplement her income as a dancer, resorts to prostitution, and because she needs money for a new winter coat, she spends a night with Pursewarden. The following morning she inadvertently reveals Nessim's anti-British activities to a startled Pursewarden. Melissa got this information from a primary source—Cohen; before his death, she had been his mistress. Cohen had been one of Nessim's political agents and had talked in his sleep. Melissa's fact are conclusive:

'He [Cohen] is dead now. I think he was poisoned because he knew so much. He was helping to take arms into the Middle East, into Palestine, for Nessim Hosmani. Great quantities. He used to say, 'Pour faire sauter les Anglais.'...That is why I hate the Hosnanis....they secretly hate the British'.

(p. 160)
Pursewarden had completely trusted Nessim and his explanation of his "political activities"; shortly after he obtains his new information, he commits suicide -- an act motivated in this novel as both political and honorable in a conventional human sense.

This revelation of another side of prismatic truth necessarily alters Mountolive's actions; he, too, had trusted Nessim, because in his youth he had once stayed at the Hosnani country estate and had fallen in love with his mother, Leila (p. 168). Now the "real" truths of that past are altered. Mountolive

*discovered something like a new landscape opening before him; for here was something which could not help but alter all the dispositions of chance and friendship, alter every date on the affectionate calendar his mind had compiled about his stay in Egypt: the tennis and swimming and riding. Even these simple motions of joining with the ordinary world of social habit and pleasure, of relieving the taedium vitae of his isolation were all infected by the new knowledge.*

(p. 168).

In *Mountolive* love is also seen from a different prismatic angle: Justine's passion for and marriage to Nessim are here "motivated" by her enthrallment with Nessim's secret political plans. They become subjectively-physically united by an underground political purpose. When they make love "*with the passionate detachment of succubi*", their sensuality is a "true sensuality" with

*nothing of the civilized poisons about it to make it anodyne, palatable to a human society constructed upon a romantic idea of truth....The passion of their embraces came from complicity, from something deeper, more wicked, than the wayward temptings of the flesh or the mind.*

(pp. 185 and 186).

Justine had recorded her views on love in her "diary" which in *Justine* Darley thought were rather masculine -- not unnaturally as it
turns out because the diary is not Justine's diary at all; the notes which she had loaned to Darley were a part of the notes for Moeurs, the biographical novel written by her first husband, Arnauti. Arnauti had broken his wrist while writing the novel, Justine tells Nessim, and she had come to his aid by copying his notes by hand. The so-called diary amounts simply to all the notes, bound together which Arnauti finally did not use in the novel (p. 188). Darley was much entrall by this "diary" because he thought it gave him great insight into Justine's enigmatic self, and, of course, it does in the sense that it is Arnauti's reflections on Justine. But the diary does not give direct insight into Justine's own self.

In Mountolive we see other aspects of the political conspiracy, aspects viewed differently from those implied in the first two novels — truth is objective, not subjective in this novel. Here, we discover that Justine and Nessim had used Darley as a political pawn and had attempted to use Pursewarden; Nessim's jealousy of Darley was a deliberate misrepresentation (he is, in fact, worried that Justine may fall in love with Pursewarden whom she is genuinely attracted to). The fake murder of Capodistria cited at the end of Justine is also revealed for what it was. Nessim was suffering from nervous strain (a fact noted by Darley in Justine and Balthazar), because he feared he might have to have his brother Narouz killed, for Narouz's political fervor is dangerous to the anti-British Coptic plot (p. 192).

Speaking of Pursewarden's suicide, Balthazar sums up the essence of relative truth as presented in Mountolive; Balthazar believes Pursewarden commits suicide as an expression of his "contempt for the conduct of the world" (p. 211) and concludes:
Truth is naked and unashamed. That's a splendid phrase. But we always see her as she seems, never as she is. Each man to his own interpretation. (p. 212)

Curiously, Pursewarden makes one of his most important comments on art in the "naturalistic" (rationalistic) novel. He writes to Mountolive before he arrives in Alexandria as the new ambassador and tells him, among other things, that he hates discussing art with Darley because art is not open to objective consideration:

For the artist, I think, as for the public, no such thing as art exists; it only exists for the critic and those who live in the forebrain. Artists and public simply register, like a seismograph, an electromagnetic charge which cannot be rationalized. One only knows that a transmission of sorts goes on, true or false, successful or unsuccessful, according to chance. (p. 99)

The metaphysical reality of art is transferred subjectively, "spiritually", between psyches; its true essence, therefore, cannot be rationally transmitted -- a point fully developed in Clea.

In Clea, there is a return to the 'method' for Clea is the fourth card in Pursewarden's "four card trick in the form of a novel." One critic feels it is a failure of Durrell's 'method':

The only truths in Justine and Balthazar are provisional; there is no objective reality, no single truth which can logically be traced back through a series of causes. In Mountolive, however, cause and effect are clearly distinguished, subjects and objects clearly differentiated from one another -- Darley, subject in the first two movements, becomes an object in the third -- and truth is clearly revealed. The attempt in Clea to re-establish a sense of relativity is doomed by the absoluteness which precedes it.

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5 Levitt, p. 130.
But there is no failure of Durrell's 'method' in Clea; rather Durrell develops within it the artist's growing absorption into consciousness of the "heraldic universe" (a term coined by Durrell/Pursewarden) -- a universe where self has been transcended and individual identity becomes inconsequential. Subjective and relative truth ceases to be primary to Darley who says midway in Clea, "It is only now...that I realized that poetico or transcendental knowledge somehow cancels out purely relative knowledge..." (p. 167).

Transcendental knowledge reveals that "truth" is endlessly prismatic. For example, at the beginning of Clea, Darley muses that after living, secluded, on a Greek island for several years, he still cannot capture, in memory, the essential reality of Alexandria:

An ancient city changing under the brush-strokes of thoughts which besieged meaning, clamouring for identity; somewhere there, on the black thorny promontories of Africa the aromatic truth of the place lived on, the bitter unchewable herb of the past, the pith of memory. I had set out once to store, to codify, to annotate the past before it was utterly lost -- ...I had failed in it (perhaps it was hopeless?) -- for no sooner had I embalmed one aspect of it in words than the intrusion of new knowledge disrupted the frame of reference, everything flew asunder, only to re-assemble again in unforeseen, unpredictable patterns....

(Clea, pp. 3-4)

When Darley wrote Justine, he had supposed his memory would be utilized to "rework" reality; in Clea he realizes that "It is reality which works and reworks us on its slow wheel" (p. 4). The "truth" of Alexandria and Darley's experiences there cannot be realized through factual knowledge. It can only be realized, as Pursewarden says, through transcendental (subjective) knowledge:

Brother Ass, the so-called act of living is really an act of the imagination. The world--which we
always visualize as 'the outside' world -- yields only to self-exploration.

(p. 144)

The world of the artist is "extra logical", subjective, and is found in the poetic leap into the "heraldic" reality of spiritual apprehension of "truth".

In Clea, Scobie is immortalized as a Coptic saint in his old native neighborhood, his "tendencies" forgotten; prayers of the faithful are murmured in the name of El Scob -- a saint whom worshippers believe "will cure sterility and enable them to conceive" (p. 72). His old bathtub, in which he brewed a foul alcoholic liquor, has become a shrine. His final reality is that of a holy man. Durrell seems to be saying that truth of character is a question of viewpoint and viewpoint is always, necessarily, relative.

Pursewarden's suicide is also given another relative turn. Instead of being politically motivated, it appears to have been motivated by his desire to "free" his sister, Liza, from their subjective/physical bond. Pursewarden had written a letter to Liza on the same day that he received a letter from her telling of her love for the "dark stranger", David Mountolive; on the same day, Pursewarden had discovered Nessim's political treachery. In his letter to Liza, he says:

    I must really abandon you, really remove myself from the scene in a manner which would permit no further equivocation in our vacillating hearts....it is the completest gift I can offer you as a wedding present.

(p. 162)

Here is one prismatic motivation; the earlier novels have revealed others.

Clea is a true sequel to the first three novels. Darley is now affected by time -- "that ailment of the human psyche" (p. 4). He sees
Alexandria no longer as an exotic but as a typical harbour town, suffering the blight of war; it is "the same city made now somehow less poignant and less terrifying than it had been in the past by new displacements in time" (p. 93).

When Darley finally sees Justine at Karm, she had, of course, been changed by time and events, but he also realizes that her former reality, her "real" personality, had been his subjective creation:

I was discovering that truth was nourishing — the cold spray of a wave which carried one always a little further towards self-realization. I saw now my own Justine had indeed been an illusionist's creation, raised upon the faulty armature of misinterpreted words, actions, gestures; the real culprit was my love which had invented an image on which to feed. Nor was there any question of dishonesty, for the picture was colored by the necessities of the love which invented it.

(p. 47)

Darley stays overnight at Karm and Justine comes to his room for company out of remembrance of Darley's tenderness and charity of soul. But now he feels for her only forbearance and disgust. She is now only a woman, a middle-aged "tiresome old sexual turnstile" stripped of the illusion of his love had once created. The reader notes the significance of Balthazar's remark: "We achieve in reality, in substance, only the, pictures of the imagination" (Clea, p. 55).

Melissa, also, lacks her former importance. Darley looks at a faded photograph of her that Pombal shows him and cannot recapture one shred of emotion--pain, pity, not even joy--concerning a woman characterized by charity of soul.

Was she simply a literary cross-reference scribbled in the margins of a minor poem....I even tried...to force her to reappear by an act of will, to re-evoke a single one of those afternoon kisses which had once been for me the sum of the city's many meanings.
The experiment yielded nothing. (Pp. 33-34)

Like Justine and Melissa (now dead), almost everyone out of Darley's past has changed so much that he feels like "an ancient inhabitant of the city, returning from the other side of the grave to visit it" (p. 66). He is shocked when he sees Balthazar who no longer dyes his hair and has greatly aged. As he explains to Darley, the sensual, the irrational emotions in himself have temporarily overwhelmed his philosophical vision of life: he had fallen in love with an irresponsible, shallow Greek actor who spurned his love psychologically and publicly. Completely at the mercy of his own deviant emotions, Balthazar had lost his medical practice and taken to wandering the streets of Alexandria, dulled by drugs and alcohol, and participating in humiliating street scenes now and again with his Greek lover. He had attempted suicide and had failed. He confesses to Darley that the Cabal, now disbanded, had been his means of achieving "philosophic calm and balance", of releasing him from "the knowledge of his appetites" (p. 58); but he had not apprehended "heraldic reality" and the peace of cosmic consciousness and, as a result, the Cabal and Balthazar's philosophic (rational) balance "went the way of all words" (p. 58).

As the last novel of the Quartet, Durrell is primarily interested in illustrating the growth of Clea and Darley as 'real' artists. Clea, even at the beginning of Clea, has grown as a woman, a human being, and as an artist as a result of her love affair with Amaril, an Alexandrian doctor. But her artistic growth culminates in the symbolic rebirth following her near drowning from which Darley, willfully, saves her. Almost miraculously she becomes a real artist, creating out of full cosmic consciousness. Darley also attains apprehension of the heraldic universe.
Both are at last becoming 'real' artists, seers of cosmic reality.
CHAPTER II

THE HERALDIC UNIVERSE

Through his central artist-characters (Clea, Pursewarden and Darley) Durrell maintains in the Quartet that the ultimate goal of the artist is to gain an awareness of the "heraldic" universe—a universe often alluded to in the novels, a universe esoteric by nature and associated with occult philosophy. Durrell had been speculating upon the nature of the heraldic universe long before he wrote the Quartet. In a letter to Henry Miller written as early as 1936 he confided:

"...I have got a bad cold so I lie in bed and compose my hundred points of heraldry. I chose the word 'heraldic' for a double reason. First, because in the relation of the work to the artist it seemed to me that it expresses the exact quality I wanted. Also, because in heraldry I seem to find that quality of magic and spatial existence which I want to task onto art. Of course, as you say, one must make allowances for storing, parturition, experience, and all that, involving time. But what I am trying to isolate is the exact moment of creation, in which the maker seems to exist heraldically. That is to say, time as a concept does not exist, but only as an attribute of matter—decay, growth, etc. In that sense, then, it must be memory-less. I am afraid I cannot make this very clear even to myself until I

1 The occult philosophy of Balthazar's theosophical group composing the Cabal in Justine underlies the Quartet and strengthens Durrell's philosophic structure; for Durrell believes, with Balthazar, that the study of the Cabala is both a scientific and a religious experience, that the psyche has an ability to perceive order in the universe. "Disciplines of the mind could enable people to penetrate behind the veil of reality and to discover harmonies in space and time which corresponded to the inner structures of their own psyches" (Justine, p. 97). The reality perceived through psychic awareness is the reality of the heraldic universe, and so Durrell is implying that the subjectivity of experience, focal to Justine and Balthazar, though real in its own way, does not exclude some kind of objective reality, however mysterious, in a Plotinian sense.
examine all the terms and see precisely what they mean. But for myself, I am beginning to inhabit this curious Heraldic Universe when I write. If it seems a bit precocious of me to be trying to invent my own private element to swim about in, it can't be helped.

Nine years later, in the spring of 1945, Durrell wrote to Miller from the British Information Office in Alexandria, Egypt:

Now something vastly more interesting. I have unearthed some facts about a cabalistic group, direct descendants from the Orphics, who, throughout European history, have been quietly at work on the morphology of experience which is pure Pythagoras. There are about six or seven in the Mediterranean area...I am going along to see Mr. Balthazar one of these days to find out all about the circle and the square. He is a small banker here. What they have to say is interesting; the pure symbol which is not formulated in the rational sense...It is a calculus of pure aesthetics, a game like heavenly chess; it brings out the meaning of the Tarot and all the kindred morphologies....It is as if everything to date had taken place on the minus side of the equation—with the intention of producing One-ness.

There follows a passage in the letter that reveals that Durrell's idea of the heraldic universe is basically derived from the philosophy of Plotinus. The heraldic universe is the final Plotinian state—the end of all human endeavor being to identify with the 'cosmic consciousness' or the One, God, the Absolute. Not every human psyche can realize this state, but, nevertheless, the psyche yearns for it, searches for it, on one level or another. Durrell's letter is divided into two

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2 Lawrence Durrell—Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence, ed. George Wickes (London, 1963), p. 23 - hereafter cited as Correspondence. The letter quoted from here is dated "Corfu, Fall, 1936".

3 Ibid., p. 201.
columns, marked "The Minus Side" and "The Plus Side: Pure Form"; each column is descriptive of how an individual readies himself to begin the journey to the heraldic universe and the three stages of consciousness through which the mind ("at rest") must move if the individual is to realize heraldic consciousness:

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<th>THE MINUS SIDE</th>
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All human searching for perfection as strain or disease, all concepts from Tao to Descartes, from Plato to Whitehead aim at one thing; the establishment of a non-conscious, continual STATE or stasis: a point of cooperation with time. In order to nourish conceptual apparatus, moralities, forms, you employ a deficit in the self. Alors all this work or striving—even Yoga—aims at finding Rest or relaxation in time. It aims at the ONE.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT IN THE FIELD OF PURE REPOSE?

You enter a field or laboratory of the consciousness which is not dangerous because it is based in repose. It does not strain you because having passed through the impurities of the ONENESS of EVERYTHING, you are included in time. Now FORMS EMERGE. Because "contemptible" numbers are the only way to label them, you can say 1st. State, 2nd. State, 3rd State, like an etching. This is what I have called the HERALDIC UNIVERSE. You cannot define these forms except by ideogram: This is "non-assertive" form.

THE HERALDIC UNIVERSE

This aspect of Durrell's thought has not gone unnoticed. J. Christopher Burns is one of the few critics of Durrell who attempts to establish the heraldic universe within a meaningful philosophic context. Burns examines the similarities between Durrell's concept of the heraldic universe and pertinent ideas in the philosophy of Plotinus. These

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4 Ibid., pp. 202-203.
5 Ibid.,
similarities are, Burns contends, undeniable and are best exemplified in Durrell's structure, his design, of the Quartet wherein the three-stage ascent to the heraldic universe, as Durrell understands it, provides the basis for the four-part structure of the Quartet.

Although Durrell is rather vague in his early letters to Henry Miller about the "states" through which an individual must pass to arrive at the "heraldic" consciousness, Plotinus is more explicit. Plotinus divides man's nature into (1) Body, which objectively reflects the world as perceived through the senses; (2) Soul, which objectively reflects the world interpreted by the mind as spatial and temporal order; and (3) Spirit, which subjectively reflects the spiritual world through intuitive knowledge. Only the spirit is capable of knowing reality. Plotinus insists that through a rational ordering of experiences, one can achieve cosmic consciousness—full consciousness of God, oneself, the universe, and one's place in that universe. Durrell terms this cosmic consciousness the heraldic universe, the final stage in the ascent to total consciousness of reality, a reality which finally lies outside the scope of human sensory perception and of human reasoning by transcending both so that the Soul identifies with its spiritual source in God.

Burns loosely paraphrases Plotinus with respect to the "states" through which the self must pass to arrive at the heraldic universe. Burns states that it is a progression through the four faculties of the mind: the faculty of sense, the faculty of imagination (linked by Plotinus with the faculty of memory), the faculty of reason, and the

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faculty of self-knowledge (linked by Plotinus with the faculty of creativity and the knowledge of God). The progression of the individual consciousness from state to state, through the four faculties of the mind, is operative within the structure of the Quartet. Burns summarizes as follows:

Plotinus stated that an individual is capable of rising through the lower faculties of knowledge of self by means of introspection and the rational ordering of experiences... One senses the simple integers of experience; he does not examine them, he does not attempt to understand them in relation to himself or the universe. This is the first stage.

The second stage is achieved by the mind. One remembers the sensations and imagines new extensions of experience. A preliminary order is discovered to exist in the integers of experience. The third stage requires that one objectify himself, in an ordered system. This order may be chronological, spatial, or both. The key is the objectification of self and the imposition of a rational order. The fourth stage, which Plotinus called the knowledge of self and which Durrell calls the heraldic universe, lies just over the threshold. The final step may be impelled by great love, or by a new vision of one's self, or by what Plotinus calls the sudden 'cosmic consciousness'.

Here it must be again noted that in his essay on Durrell, Burns does

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Burns, p. 378. Durrell is primarily interested in the final stage, the spiritual, which, alone, apprehends the heraldic universe to which the imagination of the artist responds creatively; this responsiveness is not wholly outside the control of the artist. He may prepare himself by raising his own consciousness from state to state until he stands at the threshold of the heraldic universe.

Throughout the Quartet, Durrell presents Pursewarden as writing out of the fourth stage of consciousness; the reader should remember Darley's saying that Pursewarden's "transcendental knowledge somehow cancels out purely relative knowledge...[his] enigmatic knowledge whose field of operation was above and beyond the relative fact-finding sort" (Clea, p. 167)
not directly quote Plotinus, but paraphrases from The Enneads in respect to the "states" through which the self must pass to arrive at heraldic consciousness. Burns appears to take liberties with Plotinus in order to parallel more conclusively the progression of the self upward to cosmic consciousness in the Quartet; the most apparent liberty is Burns' addition of a fourth stage to Plotinus's essentially three-stage progression. That is, Burns' second faculty (imagination/memory) should in a Plotinian sense be combined with his third faculty (reason and objectification of self) if he is to adhere strictly to the philosophy of Plotinus. Plotinus conceives memory and imagination as inherent in the Soul (reason). Burns manipulates Plotinus to suit his own particular purposes in his attempt to correlate the four-part Quartet to his four faculties of the mind. This manipulation does not necessarily invalidate Burns' general thesis that the structure of the Quartet is based on the philosophy of Plotinus—a thesis that reflects one of the most brilliant critical insights into the structuring of the Quartet—but it does indicate his eagerness to present a neat critical analysis of Durrell's Plotinian structure which admits no gaps, no lapses. On analysis, however, the Quartet is not a paradigm of Plotinian structuring although Burns' four faculties can be finally approximated with the three stages of Plotinus.

Burns writes persuasively, but it is not possible, in my judgment, to directly parallel Durrell's heraldic universe with specific aspects of the philosophy of Plotinus, which Durrell seems to have absorbed

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indirectly through the Cabals of Alexandria. Further, I do not believe, as Burns insists, that Durrell consciously organized his four novels so as to directly parallel Burns' four faculties or the three stages of the Plotinian ascension to heraldic consciousness—i.e., with respect to every detail of every part of each novel. The Quartet does, however, illustrate that Durrell believed that the self does undergo an ascension from sensuality to reason to spiritual existence: the "reality" which is the ultimate goal of the artistic psyche. Therefore, some approximation of Plotinian philosophy does seem relevant to the four-part structure of The Alexandria Quartet in that each novel has to do with one faculty of the mind, with one step in the four-stage (Burns) ascent (or the three-stage ascent), to 'cosmic consciousness'.

The complex structure of the Quartet is, then, in some sense Plotinian; i.e., each of the two spatial books (Justine and Balthazar), and Mountolive and Clea, are roughly analogous to the four stage ascent to the heraldic universe, and "to compound this, Justine views the ascent from the first stage—sensation, Balthazar views it from the second—imagination/memory, and Mountolive views it from the third—reason and objectification." In Clea, the fourth stage, cosmic consciousness and self-knowledge is on the threshold of achievement by Clea and Darley. Once they attain knowledge of self and, hence, of "God",

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10 Henceforth, it must be noted that Burns' discussion of the four faculties is his interpretation and application of Plotinus' three stage ascent to heraldic or cosmic consciousness. Since Burns organizes his essay in terms of four instead of three "states", it is difficult to discuss unless one concedes his divisional arrangement.

11 Burns, p. 379.
they respond creatively: Clea's artificial green velvet hand paints, possessed presumably by the cosmic spirit, and Darley, at the end of Clea, finally is able to write the familiar fictional opening line: "Once upon a time..."

The thesis which Burns postulates—that the four part structure of the **Quartet** is related to the Plotinian three stage ascent to cosmic consciousness—makes sense, in my experience of reading the **Quartet**. However, he pushes his thesis too hard. For example, his statement that each novel of the **Quartet** is analogous to one of the four stages in the ascent toward the heraldic universe, has, as I have noted, some general validity but he goes further by stating that the four stages of ascent are also surveyed in each of the first three novels. It is true, indeed, that Durrell has divided each novel of the **Quartet** into four parts, but they do not always represent one Plotinian faculty of mind nor one stage in the progression toward the heraldic universe. That Burns sometimes bends the events, characters, and divisions of The Alexandria Quartet to fit his thesis is a weakness that I will try to avoid in discussing each of the novels in terms of Durrell's general Plotinian structuring. I have added documentation from the **Quartet** which I believe supplements the essential validity of Burns' thesis.

1. **Justine** is conceived psychologically according to the Plotinian first stage; that is, the novel amounts to a recording of Darley's essentially lived-through, but unexamined subjective (and sensual)

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12 In **Mountolive**, only the third stage is analogous to the novel; in **Justine** and **Balthazar**, with some exceptions, each part of each novel is analogous to one of the stages of the ascent toward the heraldic universe.
responses to Justine and Melissa.

In Part One, Darley records his memories of his relationship with Justine, with Alexandria, and with the exotic Egyptian landscape. His descriptions of the city capture its characteristic romantic quality:

(Six o'clock. The shuffling of white-robed figures from the station yards. The shops filling and emptying like lungs in the Rue des Soeurs. The pale lengthening rays of the afternoon sun smear the long curves of the Esplanade, and the dazzled pigeons, like rings of scattered paper, climb above the minarets to take the last rays of the waning light on their wings. Ringing of silver on the money changers' counters. The iron grille outside the bank still too hot to touch....The city unwrinkles like an old tortoise and peers about it.

(Justine, pp. 9-10)

Of the landscape he writes:

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 a cloud, giant octaves of ochre which massed up the Delta like the drift of ashes under a volcano.

(Justine, p. 147)

And of Justine:

She talked like a man and I talked to her like a man. I can only remember the pattern and weight of these conversations, not their substance.

(Justine, pp. 15-16)

Justine symbolizes the sensuality of the City, especially the narcissistic quality of the sensuality; in her diary she writes of love:

Idle...to imagine falling in love as a correspondence of minds, of thoughts; it is a simultaneous firing of two spirits engaged in the autonomous act of growing up. And the sensation is of something having noiselessly exploded inside each of them....The loved object is simply one that has shared an experience at the same moment of time, narcissistically; and the desire to be near the beloved object is at first not due to the idea of possessing it, but simply to let the two experiences compare themselves, like reflections in different mirrors. All this may precede the
first look, kiss, or touch...precede the first declarations which mark the turning point -- for from here love degenerates into habit, possession, and back to loneliness.

(Justine, p. 42)

To which Darley adds:

How characteristic and how humourless a delineation of the magical gift: and yet how true...of Justine.

(Justine, p. 42)

As we discover, Darley's vision of the reality of love is, like Justine's, narcissistic--or the peculiarly relative side of prismatic truth which he alone sees. As noted in Chapter I of this thesis, Darley's love for Justine is a sensory experience mainly expressed through sexuality; it is this limited 'reality' of love which Darley later transcends in the more tender and spiritual emotion that he feels for Clea.

Part Two of Justine is mainly concerned with Balthazar who, though on the sensual level is an unabashed homosexual, utilizes the faculties of mind (memory/imagination), in confronting experience. He is the 'Soul' of the city in the Plotinian sense; Darley, in fact, calls him "one of the keys to the City" (Justine, p. 87). As a doctor, he lives at "the centre of the city's life -- its genito-urinary system" (p. 88); he is also the leader of a mystical Cabal and an erudite amateur philosopher. He is presumably well-established at the second stage of the journey to the heraldic universe -- "I imagine, therefore, I am free" (p. 89) -- although the faculty of reason and the desire for self-knowledge are his also. Balthazar occupies simultaneously the second and third of Burns'

13 In so far as Balthazar represents both Soul and Spirit, he represents the belief of Plotinus that the Spirit is father of the rational Soul; the Soul can, however, recognize spiritual law in the natural world and thereby become even more spiritual. (See Inge, II, 91).
stages, a situation Burns does not stress, since it would weaken his own
four-stage structural pattern.

Through the Cabal, Balthazar seeks to discover the order underlying
reality; note his description of the Cabal:

None of the great religions have done more than
exclude, throw out, a long range of prohibitions. 
But prohibitions create the desire they are in­
tended to cure. We of this Cabal say: indulge 
but refine. We are enlisting everything in order 
to make man's wholeness match the wholeness of 
the universe.

Earlier, Balthazar has told Darley that a function of the Cabal is the 
reconciliation of the two extremes of sensuality and intellectual
asceticism.

Burns believes Balthazar's descriptions of the Cabal
parallels Durrell's 1945 letter to Miller describing the plus and minus
side of the heraldic universe ("Durrell's Heraldic Universe"), p. 380.

Durrell associates the second stage of the ascent toward the
heraldic universe with sexual deviation, Burns maintains, because in Part
Two, Alexandria is portrayed as a "nest of intellectual perverts": (Scobie,
Balthazar, and the incestuous Pursewarden). "The imagination and
intellect [somehow] impose upon the natural sensation and deny or pervert normalities" (Burns, p. 380). Here I disagree with Burns, deviation is
not limited to the second stage--rather it pervades all the stages of
ascent (and all the novels). Durrell does not seem to regard "sexual deviation" as perversion and, in fact, the deviates in the Quartet often
seem more normal and healthy than their more conventional heterosexual
companions. That this is a possible illusion on this reader's part may
be suggested by the fact that many of the sexually perverted Alexandrians
have tragic ends: Scobie is kicked to death; Balthazar tries to commit
suicide over a rejected homosexual love; Pursewarden commits suicide,
possibly over his guilt feelings concerning incest; Toto de Brunel is
stabbed to death by a hat pin. Nevertheless, we note "sexual deviation" and its effects at all levels of the ascent to the heraldic universe
because sex—in all its variations—is a first step toward transcending
the limitations of the physical world. Pursewarden later says "...sex
is a psychic and not a physical act....But most people are stuck in the
physical aspect, unaware of the poetic rapport which it so clumsily
tries to teach" (Balthazar, p. 115).
The Third Part of *Justine* is mainly devoted to Nessim Hosnani, the Alexandrian banker, Coptic-political activist, and husband of Justine. As noted earlier in this chapter, Burns' third Plotinian stage involves the objectification of the self in an ordered rational system; this Plotinian stage is not as clearly analogous to the Third Part of *Justine* as the first and second stage to Parts One and Two, though Burns would present it so. Nessim seems to be operating in a rational fashion, but we do not know the facts of his political intrigues and motivations -- we know only that their nature is political. This is another instance of Burns' assertion that each Plotinian faculty is illustrated in sequence in the four parts of each novel. In *Justine*, Darley says he does not wish to write of "Nessim's outer life -- those immense and boring receptions, at first devoted to business colleagues but later to become devoted to obscure political ends" (*Justine*, p. 27). Darley believes that he suffers from Nessim's sexual 'jealousy' over Justine's affair with him. Intrigue hovers over this domestic situation and the political situation; Scobie becomes a member of the British Secret Service and insists that Darley investigate Balthazar's Cabal and its meetings -- harmlessly devoted to the study of Hermetic philosophy -- because they are believed to be political functions! Darley, on the other hand, is certain that Nessim is having him watched and plans to have him killed:

"...not having the content and direction of Nessim's thoughts I could in no way set his inmost fears at rest: by telling him that Justine was merely working out with me the same obsessive pattern she had followed out in the pages of Arnauti."

(p. 167)

But it is not until later that the full import of Nessim's rationality
becomes known. Therefore, I am not convinced that the Third Part of Justine is expressive of the third stage in the ascent to the heraldic universe -- the stage marked by rationality and objectification of the self.

In Part Four of Justine, Clea predominates. In Clea she represents the final stage of the ascent to the heraldic universe at the end of the Quartet, but here her future significance is only foreshadowed. Contrary to Burns who states that Clea stands "at the threshold of the final stage", Clea does not identify artistically with the heraldic universe until after her love affair with Amaril and her near drowning and symbolic rebirth in Clea, the final volume. In Justine Darley finds that association with Clea brings him a welcome peace of mind; they talk about Justine, and Clea speaks of her "with a wonder and a tenderness such as people might use in talking of a beloved yet infuriating queen" (p. 232). It is Clea's enormous tenderness that reduces Darley's anxieties, which overwhelm him with Justine's sudden and unexplained disappearance from Alexandria.

The gentle Clea is, at this point, only an aspiring artist whose success is limited to the work she does for Balthazar: illustrations of the ravages of syphilis upon the human body; she has not yet entered the heraldic universe. That she is yearning for something heraldic is revealed in the letter she writes to Darley after he has been living on his Greek island for two months:

...I, too, have been changing in some curious way.... Somewhere deep inside a tide seems to have turned in

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16 Burns, p. 384.
my nature. I do not know why but it is towards you, my dear friend, that my thoughts have turned more and more of late....Is there a friendship possible this side of love which can be sought and found? I speak no more of love -- the word and its conventions have become odious to me. But is there a friendship possible to attain which is deeper even, limitlessly deep and yet wordless, idealess? It seems somehow necessary to find a human being to whom one can be faithful, not in the body...but in the culprit mind?

(p. 249).

2. Balthazar, Burns says, focuses on the "second stage" in the ascent to the heraldic universe (memory and imagination), but memory and imagination are inherent to the Plotinian Soul. Burns' insistence, therefore, upon creating a separate faculty of memory and imagination is contrary to the belief of Plotinus, who asserts that Memory and Imagination are closely related and belong to the reasoning part of the mind, as Dean Inge explains:

The Soul is in the centre, if not at the summit of Plotinus' philosophy. It stands midway between the phenomenal world of which it is the principle, and the world of spirit, which is its Spirit....Within the Soul all metaphysical principles are represented. It touches every grade in the hierarchies of value and of existence, from the super-essential Absolute to the infra-essential Matter....The Soul is the last Logos of the spiritual world and the first of the phenomenal world and is thus in vital connection with both.

Memory and imagination are a part of the reasoning faculty as delineated in Balthazar, for at the beginning of this novel Darley is musing:

17 Plotinus, The Enneads, 4. 3. 30.
18 Ibid., 4. 3. 31.
19 Ibid., I, 203.
Have I not said enough about Alexandria. Am I to be reininfected once more by the dreams of it and the memory of its inhabitants? Dreams I had thought safely locked up on paper, confided to the strong rooms of memory....A single chance factor has altered everything, has turned me back upon my tracks. A memory which catches sight of itself in a mirror.  

(p. 4)

Shortly afterwards, he receives Balthazar's "interlinear" on Justine, the result of Balthazar's rational (memory/imagination) reworking of Darley's sensually created characters and events. In Balthazar, Darley is also elevated to the "second stage" of the ascent to the heraldic universe: he is now forced to utilize his imagination whereas in Justine he had simply registered and recorded sensual impressions and experiences and left them largely unexamined.

Burns believes that Durrell structurally organizes Balthazar in terms of the "four-stage" ascent to the heraldic universe by paralleling the divisions of Justine. Part One, for example, focuses on the sensuous Justine, but her affairs with Darley and Clea, even her marriage, are portrayed as coldly rational; Nessim tells her that "All Alexandrian marriages are seen as business ventures, after all" (Balthazar, p.52).

Part Two is concerned with Pursewarden in his role as artist and philosopher. Of him Balthazar writes:

"Pursewarden...I won't say you have been less than just to him -- only that he does not seem to resurrect on paper into a recognizable image of the man I knew."

(p. 99)

Burns simply dismisses Pursewarden as the philosophical extension of Balthazar but Pursewarden is more than Balthazar's "extension" in the Quartet. For instance, the following:
In Part Two Pursewarden’s most penetrating literary comments are recorded as part of a lecture given to a literary group of Jewish children. Its key theories can be summarized as follows:

1. Each of our five senses contains an art.
2. In questions of art great secrecy must be observed.
3. The artist must catch every scrap of wind. (p. 105)

These particular comments are "penetrating" because they are succinct; Pursewarden plays the role of literary critic in the Quartet and much of what he says about literature and art is cryptic, idiosyncratic, even dogmatic. Pursewarden believes that art points toward and reflects knowledge gained from an enigmatic something residing in full cosmic consciousness; in its enigmatic transferral of knowledge to an audience, art reflects cosmic reality to man. "Great secrecy must be observed" because the overanalysis of art will destroy its meaning, in that meaning is not revealed through or by logic. For Pursewarden, art is a theosophical consideration. We learn also that his ironic attitude toward life and esthetic theory has been developed to protect a hidden tenderness. Pursewarden, who is already a tenant of the heraldic universe in Part Four, suggests in a letter to Clea that he wishes to transcend the first three stages in the Plotinian ascent to the One:

*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 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 relationship between animal and plant, rain and soil, seed and tree, man and God. A relationship so delicate that it is all too easily broken by the inquiring mind....I'd like to think of my work simply as a cradle in which philosophy could rock itself to sleep, thumb in mouth....*After all, this is not simply what we most need
in the world, but really what describes the state of pure process in it... In my art, indeed through my art, I want really to achieve myself shedding the work, which is of no importance...

( pp. 235-236)

In this 'second part' Burns again insists that Durrell associates sexual deviation with the second stage. It is Burns, however, who associates it with the second stage: he sees Scobie's deviation as another extension of Balthazar, belonging to "Balthazar's Alexandria where the imagination runs freely in the streets." Burns' view strikes me as erroneous and irrelevant.

Part Three is loosely representative of the "third stage" of the ascent (reason and objectification); Balthazar scrapes away layer after layer of Darley's 'truths' until the interlinear becomes like "some medieval palimpsest." Darley is now obliged to concern himself seriously with the question of form in his projected novel: "How am I to manipulate this mass of crystallised data in order to work out the meaning of it and to give a coherent picture of this impossible city of love and obscenity?" (p. 178).

Hence, the intrigue surrounding Nessim's suspicions of Darley's affair with Justine is here objectified: the murder of Toto de Brunel comes about because he is wearing Justine's ring during the carnival season; Narouz, Nessim's brother, thinks he has killed Justine when he fatally stabs Toto with a hat pin in defense of the honour of the Hosnani family. It is Nessim whom Darley suspects, however, since he has the cuckold's motive.

20 Burns, p. 382.
In Part Four of *Balthazar*, Durrell again ends the novel, as he ended *Justine*, with a letter from Clea in which, as noted earlier, Pursewarden's longing for the heraldic is presented. At this point, we perceive too that Darley has attained some measure of self-knowledge in his unconscious preparation for the ascent toward heraldic universe:

From the vantage point of this island I can see it all in its doubleness, in the intercalation of fact and fancy, with new eyes; and re-reading, re-working reality in the light of all I know, I am surprised to find that my feelings themselves have changed, have grown, have deepened even. Perhaps then the destruction of my private Alexandria was necessary ('the artifact of a true work of art never shows a plane surface'); perhaps buried in all this there lies the germ and substance of a truth—time's usufruct—which, if I can further accommodate it, will carry me a little further in what is really a search for my proper self.

(p. 222)

Burns believes that Darley is now somewhat conscious of the "four-stage" ascent, has surveyed it with Balthazar, and has a firm grasp on the second stage—memory/imagination. Such a view is questionable in my judgment. Rather than presenting Darley as having a firm grasp on anything, Durrell presents Darley as stumbling up the ladder of ascension, groping via feeling, memory and reason for some understanding of himself and the "reality" he tried to grasp in *Justine*.

Though Burns' thesis is generally valid, as I have suggested (i.e., the four novels generally fit his "four-stage" ascent to heraldic consciousness), when he attempts to parallel the four part division of each novel to the overall "four" part ascent, he rides his thesis too hard. *Balthazar* (all four parts) is analogous to Burns' second faculty

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21 Burns, p. 383.
of memory/imagination (or Plotinus' second stage: reason). But it is
Justine that lends itself most easily to Burns' thesis. Mountolive, the
third novel, simply does not fit Burns' thesis, though it does represent
the rational stage of the progression of the consciousness upward to the
heraldic universe.

3. Mountolive reflects the "third stage" in the ascent to the
heraldic universe; for the first time in the Quartet rational order is
imposed on experience—the self becomes objectified as part of a
rationally ordered system. In Mountolive, Darley ceases to be the
narrator and is himself objectified as a character. The events and
motivations in this novel are grounded in rational causation not in the
prisms of chaotic chance. In Justine Darley could not establish causal
relationships between character and plot because they are always sub­
jective—never objectified, never divorced from the senses.

Mountolive, the main character, is more completely a man of reason
than any of Durrell's other characters in the Quartet; as a diplomat, he
sees all of life as touched by political significance. Indeed, in this
novel, Durrell objectifies many of the main characters and events in the
Quartet by placing them in a distinctly political light; we see the
marriage of Justine and Nessim as a political alliance.

Mountolive, concurrently, hesitates to marry Liza Pursewarden because
it would be eccentric to have a blind ambassadress!

Love and friendship in Mountolive are not enveloped in tenderness as

^22 Unlike Justine, Balthazar, and Clea, it does not survey all "four
stages" of the ascent to the heraldic universe. It is, as Durrell says,
"a straight naturalistic novel" (Preface to Balthazar), written from
the omniscient author point of view.
in Justine and Balthazar; Mountolive and Pursewarden are forced to choose between friendship with Nessim (as political activist) and honour as public servants to England. Their choice of the latter destroys Pursewarden whose quirky 'personality' is inwardly tempered by an enormous tenderness: In his suicide letter to Mountolive, he says:

...I simply am not equal to forcing the simpler moral implications raised by this discovery. I know what has to be done about it. But the man happens to be my friend. Therefore...a quietus. (This will solve other deeper emotional problems too). Ah! what a boring plot and counterplot. I have just recognized that it is not my world at all....I'm just tired, my dear chap; sick unto death as the living say.

(p. 166)

And so Pursewarden commits suicide, but Mountolive, true to his ordered and conventional nature, operates wholly within official political channels, though he is shaken by Nessim's betrayal and Pursewarden's suicide:

'It is folly....Utter folly! Nobody kills themselves for official reason!' He cursed the stupidity of the words as he uttered them....Mountolive felt his innermost soul become as dusty, as airless as an Egyptian tomb.

(pp. 166, 172)

Compared to Pursewarden, Mountolive's innermost soul is dry and colorless because it is governed almost solely by reason; though reason is essential to human existence, it is emotionality that lends beauty to life. Mountolive is completely in tune with the world of governments, embassies, and policy-makers: the monuments of reason are set against the more sensory reality of lust and love, even of religion and virtues like 'honour'.

23 Note Durrell's preface to Mountolive: "The dream dissipated, were one to discover one's common sense mood, the thing would be of but mediocre import..." Human existence becomes bland beyond analysis when it is reduced only to reason.
It is impossible to directly correlate the four parts of Mountolive with the four stage pattern of ascent to the heraldic universe which is illustrated in Justine and in Balthazar. Even Burns admits that it would be difficult to align the specifics of Mountolive with the four stage pattern which we (i.e., Burns) have seen in Justine and Balthazar. Only the third stage (the objectification of self and the imposition of a rational order) finally dominates all the parts of Mountolive.

By centering on the third stage of the ascent to the heraldic universe, Mountolive makes a great deal of sense in terms of Durrell's Plotinian schema. As a naturalistic or 'rational' novel, it is a deliberate contrast to the non-naturalistic Justine and Balthazar. Durrell in the preface to Balthazar, calls it a 'spatial' novel (a sibling of Justine and Balthazar), in which the narrator is objectified as a character. What he is perhaps illustrating is the limitedness of life (Mountolive's) when existence is concerned only in spatial, not space-time terms. Justine and Balthazar, because they are space-time fictions, seem peculiarly alive. Mountolive is an attempt to show how lifeless life can be when lived in a universe man's present culture has outfrown. The world contains realities which are "extra-logical"; hence, to live fully, even realistically, man must live through the senses and the spirit as well as the mind; Mountolive is dominated only by the rational habits inculcated in him by long years in the British Diplomatic Service.

4. Clea, as the culmination of the Quartet exemplifies the last stage through which consciousness must pass to reach the heraldic universe: this is the stage leading to self knowledge as well as cosmic knowledge. If, like Clea, one is of an artistic temperament, he responds
to such knowledge creatively.

In *Clea* Burns makes no attempt to apply his four stage thesis to the four parts of *Clea*. Indeed, he argues that the entire novel has to do with the final stage—which may be a tacit admission of the failure of every part of the novels to be a coordinate of one of the four faculties of the mind. When Darley returns to Alexandria, he finds with Clea a love such as he has never known—it is Pursuwarden's definition of love as "tender loving kindness". Such love is related to the cosmic love of God, for when, after making love with Clea, Darley awakes to see her standing at the window, they both listen to the blind muezzin reciting the *Ebed*, a Moslem prayer:

> 'I praise the perfection of God, the forever existing; the perfection of God, the desired, the Existing, the Single, the Supreme; the Perfection of God, the One, the Sole'...the great prayer wound itself in shining coils across the city....The buoyancy of a new freedom possessed me like a drought from what the Cabal once called 'The Fountain of All Existing Things'. I called 'Clea' softly but she did not hear me; and so once more I slept. I knew that Clea would share everything with me, withholding nothing.

(p. 90)

Part Two is largely devoted to Pursuwarden's ideas about literature. In his "Conversations with Brother Ass", he berates Darley for his philistine views on art and warns him that he must make the "poetic jump" into self-exploration if he wants to discover the heraldic reality of life which results from "an act of the imagination".

> The heraldic reality can strike from any point, above or below; it is not particular...perhaps even in the physical world by a blow between the eyes or a few lines scribbled in pencil on the back of an envelope left in a cafe....But without it the enigma will remain.

(p. 145)

In the *Quartet* Pursuwarden has always written from the point of view
of the heraldic universe. Clea, however, does not achieve this state until Part Three of Clea, after Darley symbolically saves her from drowning off the island of Narouz; she is "born again" and is lifted upward toward the heraldic universe and begins to enjoy an artist achievement such as she had never suspected possible. She writes to Darley, "I have the feeling that you, too, have stepped across the threshold into the kingdom of your imagination, to take possession of it once and for all" (Clea, p. 274). She is right. Darley, too, is about to take possession of the kingdom of his imagination as the final paragraphs of Clea illustrate:

But it was to be a little while yet before the clouds parted before me to reveal the secret landscape of which she was writing, and which she would henceforth appropriate, brushstroke by brushstroke. It had been so long forming inside me, this precious image, that I, too, was as unprepared as she had been. It came on a blue day, quite unpremeditated, quite unannounced and with such ease I would not have believed it....

Yes, one day I found myself writing down with trembling fingers the four words (four letters! four faces) with which every storyteller since the world began has staked his slender claim to the attention of his fellow man. Words which presage simply the old story of an artist coming of age. I wrote: "Once upon a time..."

And I felt as if the whole universe had given me a nudge.

(p. 275)

Burns' view of Pursewarden's function in the Quartet strikes me as odd: "Pursewarden's life has run through the books as a side plot, and his philosophy has been dragged through the books as one might drag the coughing bleeding body of a dying horse. Like the long aesthetic discussion in Joyce's Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man, Part Two of Clea falls to the heavy and often uninteresting record of the author's ideas on the novel". (p. 386). It is Pursewarden who has largely prepared Clea and Darley for the heraldic reality which they will finally begin to apprehend!
Burns' thesis that the Plotinian design (the "four-part" structure of Darley's ascent to the heraldic universe) is "the essence of the content of the Quartet" and not merely a superficial structural schema, is, then, essentially valid. So structure, the Quartet provides its own thematic solution in Clea with the achievement of the heraldic reality by Clea and Darley. At this point, Darley, like Plotinus, feels that the only truths worth knowing lie outside the scope of human reason and human sensation. The One is the only source of the truths of reality and existence. Its being and all being radiates outward into the world as we experience it. Durrell feels that the artist is spiritually capable of creatively reflecting this sense of cosmic and individual being when he has attained a stage of spiritual development called by Durrell the heraldic universe. Thus, Durrell's heraldic philosophy is illustrated thematically as well as structurally in the Quartet.

The heraldic universe is alluded to directly, very seldom in the Quartet, but it is indirectly alluded to many times. Its influence becomes more pronounced as Darley and Clea develop spiritually as people and artists. Whenever Pursewarden theorizes, he does so out of a firm consciousness of the heraldic universe; he criticizes Balthazar's interest in the occult work of the Cabal because, unlike Balthazar, he believes that "Truth is a matter of direct apprehension -- you can't climb a ladder of mental concepts to it" (Balthazar, p. 133). Truth is intuitively apprehended whether between man and man or man and God. Pursewarden also believes that art is not an end in itself but is a means

25 Burns, p. 387.
to transcend the limitations of the physical and rational worlds: "The object of writing is to grow a personality which in the end enables a man to transcend art" (Balthazar, p. 133). Art, then, finally is a contemplation of the spiritual world (for Plotinus, The One, The Infinite, The Good, The Absolute).

In the first part of Justine Darley acknowledges Plotinus as one of the intellectual founders of the City: "...that great Negro head reverberating with a concept of God conceived in the spirit of pure intellectual play -- Plotinus" (p. 31). Elsewhere in the Quartet Darley does not directly refer to Plotinus though his philosophy is often indirectly alluded to in the comments of his artist-characters concerning theories of art and truth. It must again be noted that Burns does not directly quote Plotinus in his critical essay; admittedly, Burns does push his thesis too hard here and there in the Quartet but on the whole it remains valid. It is adequately supported (1) by Durrell's concentration throughout the Quartet on the artist's ascent to the cosmic consciousness of the heraldic universe; and (2) by implicit parallels to the philosophy of Plotinus concerning the apprehension of The One. The following material should strengthen Burns' thesis that the philosophy of Plotinus is the source of Durrell's philosophy of the heraldic universe as expressed through the "four-part" design of the Quartet. According to Plotinus, consciousness of God is the ultimate reality toward which the Soul of man is always yearning since all existence emanates from God and longs to return to Him.

We are in search of unity; we are come to know the principal of all, the Good [God seen morally], and the First; therefore, we may not stand away from the realm of Firsts [realm of spirit] and lie prostrate among the lasts [the realm of the senses]:
we must strike for those Firsts, rising from things of sense which are the lasts. Cleared of all evil in our intention towards the Good, we must ascend to the Principal within ourselves... We shape ourselves into Intellectual-Principal... It is through the Intellectual-Principal that we have this vision of the Unity; it must be our care to bring over nothing from sense, to allow nothing from that source to enter into Intellectual-Principal...

The Unity, then, is not Intellectual-Principal but something higher still: Intellectual-Principal is still a being but that First is no being but precedent to all Being: it cannot be a being, for a being has what it may call the shape of its reality but the Unity is without shape, even shape intellectual.

To come to the ultimate reality--God--the individual consciousness moves from the things of sense, through the mind (which for Plotinus has affinity with the world of spirit and the lower world of the senses), to "the Principal within ourselves"; i.e., to that part of the universal spirit residing in each individual. Another way to say this is that when the spirit of God visits the Soul (mind) of man, the Soul transcends itself, becoming one with God:

In such a state... the Soul, without motion (but by right of its essential being) would be intent upon its intellectual act, and in possession, simultaneously, of its self-awareness; for it has become one simultaneous existence with the Supreme.

Man, then, may potentially dwell on three different levels of existence:

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26 Plotinus, Enneads, 6.9.3. In Inge's interpretation of Plotinus, the Intellectual-Principal is an emanation of God, which the Soul of man, characterized by its reasoning faculty, apprehends. (The Philosophy of Plotinus, II, 123).

27 Ibid., 4.4.2.
(1) The sensual -- indulging his natural instincts and not reflecting on them (Darley in Justine).

(2) The rational -- indulging in discursive reason (Darley's "state" in Balthazar and Mountolive, especially in the latter).

(3) The spiritual -- indulging the subjective spirit (Clea and Darley in Clea).

The plane characteristically occupied by man is the second, that of discursive reason, since the sensual life is "infrahuman" and the life of the spirit so above the conditions of earthly existence that no human can live permanently on this level.

Nevertheless, the rational faculty of man—insomuch as it attains an understanding of man's finite human existence—thereby attains self-awareness and reflects the spiritual reality of God, cosmic consciousness. The Soul (rational faculty) contains all metaphysical possibilities by being the intermediary between the world of sense and the world of spirit.

When the soul begins again to mount, it comes not to something alien, but to its very self; thus detached, it is in nothing but itself; self-gathered it is no longer in the order of being. It is in the Supreme.

Durrell's "heraldic universe" is a condition of superconsciousness just as the achievement of the One, knowledge of God, is a condition of super-consciousness for Plotinus. This super-conscious state possesses a higher form of consciousness than discursive reason. Plotinus calls it "immediate apprehension". Man is the partial source of this super-

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28 Burns, pp. 257-258.

29 Plotinus, Enneads, 6. 9. 11.
conscious state because God, the spiritual, dwells also in the human psyche:

...we must withdraw from this extern, pointed wholly inwards; no leaning to the outer...the self put out of mind in the contemplation of the Supreme....

God—we read—isoutside of none, present unperceived to all; we break away from Him, or rather from ourselves; what we turn from we cannot reach; astray ourselves, we cannot go in search of another. A child distraught will not recognize its father; to find ourselves is to know our source.

The artists in the Quartet (especially Clea and Darley), do find their spiritual source within themselves; having found it—whether "it" be termed the heraldic universe, cosmic consciousness, or God is immaterial—they enter a spiritual/subjective state which Durrell calls "the kingdom of the imagination" (Clea, p. 274): this subjective state is reflected through their creativity: art becomes the purveyor of their unconscious knowledge of spiritual reality.

Thus, just as the intellectual history of Alexandria is inextricably shaped by the philosophy of Plotinus, so The Alexandria Quartet is also inextricably shaped by the philosophy of Plotinus. The four-part structure of the Quartet parallels the Plotinian ascent to cosmic consciousness through the four faculties of the mind: sense, imagination/memory, reason, and knowledge of self and God. The structured thesis which Burns proposes is, then, a brilliant and valid critical insight.

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30 Inge, II, 113. In Clea, Pursewarden carefully points out to Darley that heraldic understanding is a function not of ratiocination but of the psyche's final stage of growth (p. 129). For Pursewarden, all knowledge is transcendental, all understanding "immediate apprehension".

31 Plotinus, Enneads, 6. 9. 7.
into the structure of the *Quartet*
CHAPTER III

THE ARTIST'S RELATION TO ART AND LIFE

An unusual number of artists are prominent in The Alexandria Quartet: Clea, a painter; Darley, Arnauti, Pursewarden—all novelists; and Keats, a journalist who hopes to write a novel about the war but is killed in the North African desert before he can turn to creative efforts. Even Nessim Hosnani paints and Justine keeps a "literary" diary. Durrell himself is one of the major artists, for his initials are the same as L. G. Darley's and any one of his artist characters Durrell utilizes as his spokesman when the occasion arises.

Certainly Pursewarden is the prime exemplar of Durrell's prophetic artist in his vision of the heraldic universe. The views which Pursewarden expresses on art in Clea, "Conversations with Brother Ass", and elsewhere in the earlier novels, are perhaps the most important in the Quartet; by means of them, Durrell enfolds his theme of love within his theme of art. Furthermore, Justine's way of narcissistic loving epitomizes to Pursewarden the stultifying self-love possible in the artist and in most of the Alexandrians. Justine believes people "in love" like to "let the two experiences [of love] compare themselves, like reflections in different mirrors" (Justine, p. 42). Pursewarden condemns the typical artist on just these grounds; this kind of artist reflects a puritan culture's conception of art. Artists, after all, are simply poor co-workers in the psyche of our nation, what can we expect but an automatic rejection from a public which resents interference....A Puritan culture's conception of art is something which will endorse its morality and flatter its patriotism. Nothing else....It explains everything. A puritan culture, argues, does not know what art is—how can it be expected to care? (Clea, p. 120)
Art, in the view of Pursewarden, should not be a bromidic pacifier which justifies either the artist or society's way of life; rather it should be a reflection of metaphysical realities about people and the world. By its very nature, the reflection of reality given by art is enigmatic, much like

...the little white stick which is given to the blind man and by the help of which he tap tap taps along a road he cannot see but which he is certain is there. (Clea, p. 125)

In the Quartet Durrell is suggesting the basis for a new and critical development in the individual and artistic psyche in the escape from narcissism. The artist can succeed only through his apprehension of direct reality as Pursewarden and the "heraldic" development of Clea and Darley illustrates. All three are enabled to transcend the emptiness of self (ego) which is the chief affliction of the average artist and Alexandrian, and enter the heraldic universe where the consciousness is cosmic as well as individual, where the "realities" encountered cannot be directly represented through traditional art forms. The enigmatic metaphysical reality of existence is reflected indirectly in art--hence the audience must have attained some degree of spiritual development in order to apprehend art's transfer of metaphysical reality. Narcissism has no place in this apprehension of reality. As Durrell notes in his Key to Modern British Poetry:

...in the last analysis great poetry [art] reflects an unknown in the interpretation and understanding of which all knowledge is refunded into ignorance.

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It points towards a Something which itself subsists without distinction... A good poem is a congeries of symbols which transfers an enigmatic knowledge to the reader. At its lowest power you can find the faculty in the nickname or the nursery rhyme; at its highest it reflects a metaphysical reality about oneself and the world.

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Love and art maintain thematic contact throughout The Alexandria Quartet. L-O-V-E, as Pursuewarden explains in his conversation with Darley, his "Brother Ass", must always be the central topic of the artist. Love is what makes this world go:

I will spell the word for you: l-o-v-e. Four letters, each letter a volume!... If I am wrong you have only to say so! But in my conception of the four-letter word—which I am surprised has not been blacklistened by the English printer—I am somewhat bold and sweeping. I mean 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. Surely, Brother Ass, this is the improper study of man? The main drainage of the soul? We could make an atlas of our sighs. (Clea, pp. 122-123)

In the Quartet Durrell presents "the whole bloody range" of love—the love of those "wounded in their sex". The range extends from the relatively "normal" love of Darley and Melissa to child prostitution, incest, lesbianism, homosexuality, and finally—the bodily and eventually spiritualized love of Clea and Darley. But "in this great wine press of love", a curious amoral normalcy is lent to the aberrations; those who are somehow "wounded in their sex", Melissa, Darley in Justine,

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2 Key, p. 90. Such knowledge is 'enigmatic' because on the spiritually heraldic level, it escapes definition and rationale; it takes place in the mind's imagination where understanding is a synapse, (immediate). Durrell calls "real knowledge" the apprehension of comprehension heraldic reality but even this is an imperfect statement of what happens in the imagination's apprehension of 'reality', of universal truth.
Justine, and Scobie, for example, are treated with enormous tenderness. "Tenderness", a recurring word in the Quartet, is not usually associated with love in contemporary western literature; but it is crucial for Durrell who defines love in an evolutionary sense when Pursewarden gives his definition of "love":

> English has two great forgotten words, namely 'helpmeet' which is much greater than 'lover' and 'lovingkindness' which is so much greater than 'love' or even 'passion'.

*(Balthazar, p. 119)*

Tenderness, gentleness and similar words recur constantly in the word flow of *Justine* and the succeeding novel, as an early indication that man and the artist are looking for and are moved by this "main drainage of the human soul"—love as loving kindness. A series of examples should suffice:

1. In reply to Justine's admonishment that he smiles at the most serious things, Darley says: "If she ever knew me at all she must later have discovered that for those of us who feel deeply and who are conscious of the inextricable tangle of human thought there is only one response to be made, ironic tenderness and silence" *(Justine, pp. 33-34)*. Indeed, as Darley moves through sensory to spiritual development in *Justine*, *Balthazar* and *Clea*, he exudes warmth and tenderness—even in the face of utter bewilderment. He is exhibiting Pursewarden's tender "lovingkindness" at the beginning of the Quartet.

2. Melissa initially penetrates Darley's defences "not by any of the qualities one might enumerate in a lover—charm, exceptional beauty, intelligence—no, by the force of what I can only call her charity, in the Greek sense of the word" *(Justine, p. 8)*. Melissa is the epitome of altruism: her kindness is extended as a disinterested favor for which she expects nothing in return. Like Darley, Melissa exhibits the full

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3 See Ambrose Gordon, Jr., p. 16.
ramification of Pursewarden's terms "helpmeet" and "loving-kindness".

(3) The amoral imagination of the artist is also tempered by tenderness: "Here we [Darley and Justine] clasped hands—in that amoral world of suspended judgments where curiosity and wonder seem greater than order—the syllogistic order imposed by the world" (Justine, p. 65). This is, of course, directly related to the first example above; "ironic tenderness" is the only means whereby the artist can confront the mysterious tangles of metaphysical reality, individual and cosmic. Durrell does not see the artist as the "angry young man" of the avant-garde; rather he is a soul quietly wondering at existence, experiencing spiritual revery of something (God—divine knowledge of and in the heraldic universe—human terminology cannot express this spiritual reality).

(4) Tenderness, in Pursewarden's meaning of loving-kindness, replaces in Clea the limited western definition of love: Clea, instead of harbouring resentment and jealousy against Justine, speaks of her "with a wonder and tenderness such as people might use in talking of a beloved yet infuriating queen" (Justine, p. 232). The western definition of love has a multitude of erroneous ramifications, one of which is the idea that love implies possession—physically and psychically—of the beloved. Since love is a spiritual state it cannot be possessed either by those who give it or those who receive it; it must simply be registered with "wonder and tenderness".

(5) When Cohen, her former lover, is dying, Melissa refuses to visit him and Darley is appalled at the lack of tenderness possible between people under the guise of love: "I realized when the truth about love: that it is an absolute which takes or forfeits all. The other feelings, compassion, tenderness, and so on, exist only on the periphery and belong to the constructions of society and habit. But she herself—austrere and merciless Aphrodite—is a pagan. It is not our brains and instincts she picks—but our very bones" (Justine, p. 102).

"Love" here is used by Darley in its Western sense of being narcissistic, selfish, and possessive. Darley is gently condemning Melissa for not feeling any tenderness for Cohen simply because he was a lonely spirit thirsting, as everyone does, for "loving-kindness". It is Darley who finally visits Cohen in the hospital as he lies on his death bed; Darley tells him that Melissa is away but Cohen knows better: "I know she is here", he said, and his hands come running over the counterpane like a frightened rat to grope for mine. "Thank you for your kindness" (Justine, p. 104).
Darley notes the gentleness of the philosophic and homosexual Balthazar "whom he sometimes surprised in his little room in the Rue Lepsis, asleep with a sailor. Balthazar would sometimes turn and tuck the sheet round his partner's sleeping form" (Justine, p. 88). Love -- as tender "lovingkindness" -- is amoral of necessity in The Alexandria Quartet: it is not limited by morality or social values of any kind. It is a profound feeling of tenderness toward man, woman, and child. Hence, when Durrell presents love in all its guises, he does not illustrate the "perversions" of love--simply the ramifications of love, of a human tenderness taking so many forms it becomes asexual and, finally, transcends sexuality to exist on a spiritual level. One remembers Clea's letter to Darley wherein she tells him it is necessary to "find a human being to whom one can be faithful, not in the body...but in the culprit mind" (Justine, p. 249).

The need for and the implications of tenderness, as opposed to the contemporary western literary fashion of conceiving love as love-as-sickness (narcissism, selfish sensuality), literally breathes with the curtains in Justine. Significantly, at the conclusion of Justine Clea relates in her letter to Darley that she has discovered the essence of Pursewarden as artist and man. He is a man of feeling: a man "tortured beyond endurance by the lack of tenderness in the world" (p. 249). Durrell is not eulogizing love, his initial pronounced theme of the Quartet nor is he eulogizing modern lovers, whom he compares to the "trilling of singing birds whose cages were full of mirrors to give them the illusion of company. The love songs of birds to companions they imagined--which were only reflections of themselves." In retrospect, Darley discovers that his narcissistic love for Justine is a similar case of mirror-love; even so, he treats her tenderly and continues to. Tenderness is greater

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4 This analogy is very similar to Justine's diary-considerations on love, cited earlier.
than love and, like art, "points"; it is a resting condition in a
spiritual progression of the conscious being upward into the heraldic
universe.

Durrell does not seem to regard sex with the religious feeling of
D. H. Lawrence, who is said in the Quartet to be an acquaintance of
Pursewarden; Durrell does not equate sex with Lawrence's "blood
knowledge". To Pursewarden man's rational and spiritual knowledge is
finally more important than sexual knowledge. Pursewarden, in
Balthazar, writes a letter to Lawrence, commenting that he will not build
a Taj Mahal around the act of copulation (p. 104), and neither does
Durrell. Even so, sexual love, Pursewarden believes, is ideally, symbolic
of a psychic coupling, the root source of metaphysical investigation.

"we might discover in sex the key to a metaphysical search which is our
raison d'être here below" (Clea, p. 130). To Darley, also, sex
eventually becomes psychically rather than sensually significant: "the
sexual and creative energy...convert into one another--the solar sexual
and the lunar spiritual holding an eternal dialogue" (Clea, p. 132).

Just as love is the primary consideration of the artist, the artist
should be the primary consideration of society; for, as Pursewarden says,
"it is only the artist who can make things happen" (Mountolive, p. 194).

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5 John Weigel considers the incestuous love of Pursewarden for his
sister as the dramatization of complete self-renunciation in that, he
believes, incestuous love is an attempt to possess oneself as a member
of the opposite sex (Lawrence Durrell[ New York, 1965], p. 100). This
view, in my opinion, is not valid. I do not believe Durrell is present-
ing incestuous love as an example of narcissism but rather as one more
aspect of love, of psychic tenderness--a sharing that Pursewarden and
his sister express physically as well as subjectively. It seems to be
a weakness of critics and readers alike to theorize too rapidly about
sexual matters in the Quartet.
Hence, society should be founded upon the artist's vision. Not surprisingly, Pursewarden is angered by contemporary society which thinks art is something to which a good education automatically entitles one:

*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...*  

*About art I always tell myself: while they [the audience] are watching the firework display, yeolet Beauty, you must smuggle the truth into their veins like a filter-passing virus.*  

*(Clea, p. 129)*

Pursewarden fears the artist may, unfortunately, be creating for a "million muffin-eating moralists" who think art should be an endorsement of their own morality. Art, however, is a realization that hurts—not an endorsement of convention, a fact which Pursewarden insists on in his trilogy, *God is a Humorist*. Of Pursewarden, Clea writes to Darley that "underneath all of his preoccupations with sex, society, religion, etc.... there is quite simply a man tortured beyond endurance by the lack of tenderness in the world" *(Justine, p. 249)*. The history of literature, according to Pursewarden, is the history of laughter and pain; there is no escape: "Laugh till it hurts and hurt till you laugh!" *(Clea, p. 129)*.

Good art, art that nurtures rather than rapes the mind and spirit, should bring out the true soul, the natural self of people, strip the stunted spirit, as in Justine's story to the child prostitutes, related in *Clea*. After reading Pursewarden's "Conversations with Brother Ass", Darley realizes that all writers, all artists, belong in fact to "one of those pathetic human chains which human beings form to pass buckets of water to a fire or to bring in a lifeboat; they are born to explore the inward riches of the solitary life on behalf of the unheedng, unforgiving community" *(Clea, p. 168)*.
When (and if) society realizes the significance of the artist and his vision of the heraldic universe, Pursewarden believes an "Ideal Commonwealth" will be founded; the artist will be regarded as a sort of unborn child, "the infant joy", in a Blakian sense, which will free the sensual and intellectual in men; thereafter, they can draw their stimulus from one another and not suffer from meta-starvation as they now do.

Pursewarden believes this sexual/intellectual revolution has not happened as yet because artists have been just as narcissistic and lazy as their audience. Only a very few, like Blake—to judge from the many references to him in the Quartet—have been aesthetically aware enough to have experienced the nature of the heraldic universe. They have been, instead, as Pursewarden calls them, "the crybabies of the Western world". The truth of real art is found on the tightrope of time where all humans must walk, joined at the waist; from there, art may nourish the psyche of the artist and audience alike. Real art points the way—not to itself, wherein it has no absolute meaning—but to enigmatic knowledge, a metaphysical reality about people and life (Clea, pp. 130-134). Pursewarden advises Darley that the final end of art is Plotinian: the stepping upward into knowledge of self, God, and aesthetic reality. The value of such knowledge is relative to the degree of spiritual development the artist has attained in his progression toward the "heraldic" apprehension of reality:

Try to tell yourself that its fundamental object was only to invoke the ultimate healing silence and that the symbolism contained in form and pattern is only a frame of reference through which, as in a mirror, one may glimpse the idea of a universe at rest, a universe in love with itself. Then, like a babe in arms, you will 'milk the universe at every breath!' We must learn to read between the lines. (Clea, p. 134)
Although Pursewarden and Darley seem to be the major characters who speak and practice Durrell's theories of art, it is Clea in whom we see the actual flowering of his artistic theory. The honey-gold Clea of *Justine* lives in an attic-studio without family, lovers or pets; her early work is simple and serious, yet "full of a sense of play" (*Justine*, p. 127). Her best things, however, are the clinical drawings she does for Balthazar, sketches of the ravages of syphilis done with great tenderness as well as objectivity. In fact, Darley believes that these sketches are "truly works of art; the purely utilitarian object has freed the painter from any compulsion towards self-expression; she has set herself to record..." (*Justine*, p. 129).

Clea, like Darley, grows as the *Quartet* as four-decker novel grows, but her style alters abruptly after her affair in Syria with the Alexandrian doctor, Amaril, recounted in *Clea*. It is Clea's first love affair. She becomes pregnant and submits to an abortion to free herself from any link to Amaril because he is in love with and committed to someone else. Clea feels that she has no right to perpetuate a link with him. Nevertheless, the cold fact of the little pale foetus, "like a smashed egg yolk", in the anaesthetist's dirty sink hurts her significantly: "It is funny but I realized that precisely what wounded me most as a woman nourished me most as an artist" (*Clea*, p. 102). She now realizes, like Pursewarden, the connection between the spirit and the

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6 Durrell is opposed to art as self-expression; rather he thinks it is a 'tuning in' to the cosmic consciousness—the heraldic universe—which necessarily includes knowledge of self, and to which the artist responds creatively. But art is never, for Durrell, a catharsis in any modern usage of the term.
body:

Through smell, taste, touch we apprehend each other's minds...Paracelsus says that thoughts are acts. Of them all, I suppose the sex act is the most important, the one in which our love is knowledge.

(Clea, p. 103)

Clea paints abstracts for awhile after this experience, but it is not until the end of Clea that she is reborn as an artist. Balthazar accidentally fires Narouz's old harpoon gun into the bay where Clea is swimming under water around an old sunken ship; the harpoon pins her hand "like a frightened squib" to the hulk of the ship. Darley cuts off her hand at the wrist to save her life, a symbolic act, since it frees her imagination, the essential artist in her, to paint creatively.

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7 Eleanor N. Hutchens draws a parallel between elements of Eliot's "The Waste Land" and The Alexandria Quartet; she believes "The Waste Land" was incorporated into the Quartet--especially the archetypical theme of death and rebirth which is made overt when Darley saves Clea from drowning. "The act is, of course, a representation of the old rules drawn upon by Eliot, in which an initiate or an effigy of the fertility god was put into the water and emerged reborn" (p. 57).

By the end of the Quartet, Darley has accepted the world of symbolism over the world of rationalism. Clea's first painful gasp of life after Darley revives her is reminiscent of an earlier remark by Pursewarden (associated with the acceptance of the heraldic world of symbolism and reality): "Yes, but it hurts to realize." However, until Darley exercises his will, Clea is like Eliot's Phoenician sailor, Phlebas, the sea picking her bones in whispers. Miss Hutchens contends that the climax of the Quartet, Clea's drowning, corresponds in roughly reverse order to "Death by Water", and the main passages of "What the Thunder Said", from Eliot's poem.


Ambrose Gordon sees the symbolic drowning and rebirth as the kinetic moment-image for the breakthrough into the heraldic world where we live not as little egos, but rather as reflections of archetypes. Gordon feels this climactic scene is improbable byt symbolically apt: Clea is pinned to the wreck (the unnamed past she fears) and then freed to create, for the artificial hand, "since it is art...can create art." At the end of Clea Darley and Clea are free of Alexandria, the dead past, and romantic love--free "to enter the creative laugh of the heraldic universe; and the amazing and unpredictable future." ("Time, Space, and Eros", pp. 18-19)
When later she writes to Darley with her steel, yet "alive", green-velveted hand, she says happily:

I have crossed the border and entered into possession of my kingdom [of imagination], thanks to the Hand. Nothing about this was premeditated. One day it took up a brush and lo! pictures of truly troubling originality and authority were born. I have five of them now. I stare at them with reverent wonder. Where did they come from? But I know the hand was responsible... I wait serene and happy, a real human being, an artist at last.

(Clea, pp. 271, 275)

Shortly afterwards, Darley is also free to write "Once upon a time. ..," to become a link in history's creative chain of artists (albeit Pursewarden thinks it is at best a "pathetic" chain), and to reflect aesthetically the cosmic consciousness.

The episode of Clea's creative rebirth is the theme of the artist's search for a contemporary theme and a contemporary structure in the Quartet. Concomitantly, there occurs the self-discovery of Darley who in freeing Clea from the harpoon, exercises his will in battling against chance, fate, and despair. Through this brutal but necessary act, he discovers an aspect of himself he has never known: volition. "I had, I realized, decided to either bring her up alive or stay down there at the bottom of the pool with her" (Clea, p. 244). When on the beach, he applies artificial respiration, "I willed my wrists to seek out those water logged lungs....I would not accept that she was dead...I felt half mad with determination to disprove it, to overthrow, if necessary, the whole process of nature and by an act of will force her to live" (Clea, p. 244).

The emergence into action of Darley's will is related both specifically and generally to his artistic development. A. K. Weatherhead believes that the mere fact that the principal characters have left or
are leaving Alexandria by the end of the Quartet shows a development of 
the will since Durrell has repeatedly suggested in the earlier novels 
that "the City" deprives them of will. In Justine, Darley had failed as 
a novelist because, Weatherhead feels, he had submitted himself to his 
material rather than imposed his will upon it. However, considering 
the space-time structure of the Quartet, the structure of Justine is 
the result not of a depleted will but of limited knowledge (of truth) 
which Durrell has explored in his Key to Modern British Poetry.

Durrell seems to be implying that an active will is a necessity for 
the artist but is only one among many necessities; of equal importance 
is Darley's realization that transcendental knowledge obliterates the 
relative knowledge of fact (of Darley's "insight" into Justine's character, 
for instance). When he reads in Clea Pursewarden's letters to Liza, he 
gets the "inkling" Pursewarden had prophesied and "wakes up":

'It was only now, tracing out the lines written by that 
rapid unfaltering pen, that I realized that poetic or 
transcendental knowledge somehow cancels out purely 
relative knowledge....There was no answer to the 
questions I had been raising in very truth. He had 
been quite right....I had been digging around in the 
graveyard of relative fact piling up data, more 
information, and completely missing the mythopoeic 
reference which underlies fact. I had called this 
searching for truth.

(Clea, p. 167)

Finally, there is no distinct line between life, art and the artist. 
Events tend to repeat themselves cyclically. Clea recuperates in the 
"same narrow iron bed" in which Melissa had died and Cohen before her:

"It would be just like real life to imitate art at this point" (Justine,

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8 "Romantic Anachronism" in The Alexandria Quartet, Modern Fiction 
Studies, X (Summer, 1964), 128 and 131.
Liza cannot marry Mountolive until her brother's love letters are destroyed (yet they are his finest literature, Darley asserts). Clea cannot paint until she is kissed into womanhood, i.e., she becomes physically as well as subjectively liberated. Pursewarden constantly composed his novels subjectively out of his life in his mind; "the living and the writing merge simultaneously" (Mountolive, p. 154). Darley comes to realize "that the real 'fiction' lay neither in Arnauti's pages nor Pursewarden's--nor even my own. It was life itself that was a fiction--we were all saying it in our different ways, each according to his nature and gift" (Clea, p. 168).

Hence, Darley and Clea leave Alexandria, the past of selected fictions, relative truths, and romantic aberrant love to become members of the heraldic universe; indeed, to be shaped by the inward, solitary spiritual consciousness lying outside this relative life.
CHAPTER IV

THE IMPLICATION OF DURRELL'S 'METHOD' ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE QUARTET

As I have noted in the explication of the Quartet as a plot, as a structure, Durrell's theory of art dovetails thematically and structurally; in this section, I shall show how the 'method' directly determines the structure of the four novels which compose the Quartet.

In his Key to Modern British Poetry, a compilation of lectures he gave in Argentina in 1948 for the British Council, Durrell examines the impact of science on twentieth century artists. He notes especially the significance of Einstein's theory of relativity. According to Einstein's new relativity theory, "space was conceived as being n-dimensional, with time as the fourth of its dimensions". Einstein joined space and time in a continuum; time became "a new time-space hybrid...which contained all time in every moment of time." Contemporary literature, in its use of cyclic time (where the same events and characters are presented in recurrent situations) instead of extended, linear time (chronological time), "unconsciously produces something like the space-time continuum." In a letter to Henry Miller Durrell had expressed this view as early as the fall of 1936:

What I propose to do, with all dead solemnity, is to create my Heraldic Universe quite alone...I am slowly but very carefully and without conscious thought destroying time; I have discovered that the idea of duration is false. We have invented it as a philosophic jack up to the idea of physical disintegration.

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1 Pp. 23, 28, and 29.
There is only space. A solid object has only three dimensions. Time, that old appendix, I've lopped off. So it needs a new attitude. An attitude without memory. A spatial existence in terms of the paper I'm writing on at this moment.

In *Justine* and *Balthazar* time is "lopped off"—past and present are constantly merging to flow in and out of each other in the consciousness of Darley. This lopping off is structurally achieved through the use of flashbacks which flood into Darley's mind according to their subjective, not their chronological significance. Only in *Mountolive* is time linear: the point of view becomes objective: subjective point of view implies the use of cyclic time (as in Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*).

Pursewarden, who has read widely in scientific literature, says that "the Relativity proposition was directly responsible for abstract painting atonal music, and formless (or at any rate cyclical forms in) literature" (*Balthazar*, p. 134). In the "Consequential Data" at the end of *Justine*, Durrell "quotes" Pursewarden concerning the n-dimensional novel:

> The narrative momentum forward is countersprung by references backwards in time, giving the impression of a book which is not traveling from a to b but standing above time and turning slowly on its own axis to comprehend the whole pattern. Things do not all lead forward to other things; some lead backwards to things which have passed. A marriage of past and future racing towards one. Anyway, that was my idea...

(p. 252)

In *Justine*, Darley is caught up in a space-time milieu but, as the *Quartet* progresses, he progressively develops an awareness of the relative nature of space-time. This awareness results in new self-
awareness as well as a significant development as an artist. By the end of the Quartet, he is not a mere chronologist of dead and dubiously factual events (as in Justine), but an artist, creatively reflecting the transcendental truths realized in the subjective apprehension of the heraldic universe.

The effect of cyclic time on characterization is analyzed acutely by Phillis Read who elaborates on Darley's hypothetical statement in Balthazar: "and as for human characters, whether real or invented, there are no such animals. Each psyche is really an anthill of opposing predispositions. Personality as something is an illusion—but a necessary one if we are to love" (p. 5). For Durrell, there can be no discrete characters in fiction because no human experience is unique—each partakes of an experience that has already occurred to everyone, at one time or another. Miss Read suggests that this conviction led Durrell to one of the principal structuring devices of the Quartet:

Each individual psyche passes through a sequence of personality changes which begins with birth and ends with death. This process is part of a greater whole and therefore each individual has passed through such a sequence before. He is not conscious of time as a linear continuum which extends from the past to the future, but as a continual cycle which perpetually repeats itself. Events occurring along a linear time continuum can be easily located and placed in chronological order whereas events which occur in cyclical time are much more difficult to place. At best, they can be assigned a relative position in the basic cycle, because the individual cycles are so similar as to be virtually indistinguishable. In the strict sense, all repetitions of a cycle are absolutely identical.

As in *The Sound and The Fury*, events in the *Quartet* are recorded in terms of emotional significance with a consequent junking of chronological narration. There is, furthermore, a cyclic recurrence of situations, events, and often a repetition of almost the exact description of an event. For example, in *Justine*, there is a description of Justine "bending over the dirty sink with the foetus in it" (p. 11), later in *Clea* Clea is led by an anaesthetist "to the dirty sink to show me the little pale homunculus..." (p. 102), the aborted foetus which resulted from her love affair with Amaril.

To cite another example, there are three scenes involving a house of child prostitution. In *Justine* Darley and Nessim rescue Justine from an interrupted fight with a French sailor in such a house:

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The scene upon which we intruded was ferociously original, if for no other reason, than that the light, pushing up from the mud floor, touched out the eyebrows and the lips and cheekbones of the participants while it left great patches of shadow on their faces—so that they looked as if they had been half eaten by the rats which one could hear scrambling among the rafters of this wretched tenement. It was a house of child prostitutes.
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(p. 36)

In *Mountolive* a beguiling old sheik entices Mountolive into a similar house of prostitution:

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Then all at once the darkness was so complete that the light when it did come, gave him the momentary illusion of something taking place very far away in the sky. As if someone had opened and closed a furnace door in Heaven....He stared at the flapping, floundering light and again heard the rats chirping and the other susurrus composed of whispers and chuckles and the movement of bare feet on boards.... through the open door at the end of the room trooped a crowd of small figures dressed in white soiled robes, like defeated angels.
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(p. 265)
Later, in _Clea_ Darley learns that Pursewarden accompanied Justine to the house of child prostitution, from which she had formerly been dragged away by Nessim and Darley in _Justine_ (she had been looking for her lost child):

...there was a thin snarl of voices, and the silence
became suddenly padded out with the scamper of feet
on rotten woodwork...I saw a bar of light...like a
distant furnace door opening in heaven. And voices,
now, the voices of ants!

(p. 139)

Similarly, there is a cyclical pattern of love scenes. When Darley returns to Alexandria in _Clea_, he discovers Clea in a coffee shop, "the exact station and time where I had once found Melissa....Yet it was in truth Clea and not Melissa" (p. 67). When Clea and Darley make love for the first time, their conversation is similar to an earlier one Darley had had with Justine:

And when we awoke to find everything silent once more
she lit a single candle and we lay by its light,
looking at each other, and talking in whispers.

'I am always so bad the first time, why
is it?'
'So am I.'
'Are you afraid of me?'
'No. Nor of myself.'

(Clea, p. 88)

The earlier conversation in _Justine_ runs:

When we...lay once more awake, she said:

'I am always so bad the first time, why is
it?'
'Nerves, perhaps. So am I.'
'You are a little afraid of me.'

(p. 80)

These cycles, and other recurrent circumstances, events, conversations, scenes--emphasize Durrell's conviction that no characters in fiction can be completely individualized, be made discrete, because (to
paraphrase Pursewarden) everything is true of everybody in the end.

Durrell has arrived at this radical conception of characterization through the influence of the psychology of Freud, Jung and Groddeck (as well as the thought of Whitehead and Einstein). Durrell does not believe the novelist can create a 'character': "Human character? a sort of rainbow, I should say, which includes the whole range of the spectrum. I imagine that what we call personality may be an illusion, and in thinking of it as a stable thing we are trying to put a lid on a box with no sides.

Personality, character, is, then, the selected fiction of somebody else; Darley's characterization of Justine in Justine and Balthazar illustrates this kind of fiction. Of all the characters in the Quartet she is the most enigmatic in that she remains the most relative, the least understood. As Darley says in Clea:

I...saw that lover and loved, observer and observed, throw down a field about each other...Then, they infer the properties of their love, judging it from this narrow field with its huge margins of unknown....

I had only been attesting, in all I had written, to the power of an image which I had created involuntarily by the mere act of seeing Justine. There was no question of true or false. Nymph? Goddess? Vampire? Yes, she was all of these and one of them. She was, like every other woman, everything that the

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5 Miss Read suggests that Durrell saves his cyclical technique from being fatalistic or deterministic in the love scene in Clea where Darley stands beside Clea's hospital bed. Love then breaks the death cycle of Cohen and Melissa. Time may be cyclical and events inevitably repeat themselves, but it is within the willful capacity of man--informed particularly by the artist's heraldic vision--to shift the cycle into a new orbit (Read, p. 399). Darley's will is functioning against the cyclic death structure of this image of the hospital bed.
6 Key, p. xii.
mind of a man...wished to imagine. She was there forever and she had never existed! Under all these masks there was only another woman, every woman, like a lay figure in a dressmaker's shop, waiting for the poet to clothe her, breathe life into her.

(Clea, p. 47-48)

Durrell accepts the fact that modern physics has discarded belief in strict causality, in strict determinism; the question of the validity of knowing the outer world (subject and object) constitutes a whole. If we are part of a unity we can no longer objectivise it successfully. An artist, therefore, can only strive to create a personality which by reason of the observer's own subjectivity defies total definition. The amazing thing is that Durrell's major characters appear to be individualistic and idiosyncratic--i.e., discrete characters--even after we realize that Durrell is presenting them prismatically. Durrell's characters are multi-sided because they are presented from multi-subjective points of view (which obliterates the traditional cataloguing of character traits). Very early in the Quartet, Durrell hints at this method of characterization when Justine--sitting before multiple mirrors at a dressmaker's salon--remarks to Darley:

'Look! five different pictures of the same subject. Now if I wrote I would try for a multi-dimensional effect in character, a sort of prism-sightedness. Why should not people show more than one profile at a time?'

(p. 18)

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8 Key, p. 230.

9 Durrell's major characters are all prismatically presented and cannot be totally defined; however, he does create minor characters who are more or less discrete characters--notably Pombal: the romantic Frenchman. Yet, even Pombal has surprising depth (i.e., prismatic quality) and is finally capable of loving one woman in Clea, although he easily reverts to his role as amorist upon his return to France.
Or perhaps it is simply that we are under the spell of Pursewarden's aphorism, "there are only as many realities as you care to imagine."

Consider Scobie--storyteller, "prophet" (he is indirectly compared to Old Tiresias, blind prophet of Thebes), moralist, Coptic saint, civil servant, and transvestite--who periodically expresses his tendencies in tramping along the city docks in his old Dolly Varden--under the full moon, of course. Scobie is any of these characters and none of them, depending on how we prismatically imagine them. As "Tiresias" Scobie tells Clea of her love affair with Amaril and foretells her near death by drowning. As storyteller, he has long rambling monologues about Toby Mannering, a sailor friend of his youth, who perhaps functions as Scobie's alter ego. Scobie is both of these characters, depending on how he registers in our imagination. Durrell is more obvious in his shifting presentation of Scobie than in his other characters:

...Scobie looks anybody's age; older than the birth of tragedy, younger than Athenian death. Spawned in the Ark by a chance meeting....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....His walk is the slow rolling grinding trudge of a saint walking on Galilee.

(Justine, p. 125)

Durrell feels 'novel' in his treatment of character; in an Atlantic review in 1961, Durrell believes the Quartet's difference from traditional literature lies in his conception of form, structure: "...what I've tried to do in this series--is break up the personality and show its different facets. There's no such thing as a whole personality...." We observe

10 Curtis Cate, "Lawrence Durrell", Atlantic, CCVII (December, 1961), 63.
the 'change' in personality because of a change of perspective (a change in space), not because of a change in time.

The question, then, of absolute motivation, of absolute causality in the **Quartet** is necessarily begged because to Durrell reality is extracausal. Hence, there is no cause-effect reality in the **Quartet**. Consider Pursewarden's suicide: there are so many facets to his personality that we can never know the full 'truth' about him or understand what explicitly motivates his death. In **Balthazar** we are led to believe it is caused by artistic failure or general disillusionment (one remembers his cynical remark that the "**effective in art is what rapes the emotion of your audience without nourishing its values**"); yet Pursewarden knows that art should be a means of spiritual transcendence (**Balthazar**, p. 105). In **Mountolive** we are led to believe that Pursewarden kills himself over a question of honor and friendship. Melissa reveals to him Nessim's Anti-British, Coptic political plot; as a foreign office official, Pursewarden must report him to the British Intelligence in Egypt, even though he is a trusted friend. To undo, in part, his betrayal of Nessim's friendship, Pursewarden scrawls this information on the mirror of his bedroom before he commits suicide, after arranging for Nessim to see it before it is seen by the police investigators. Nessim has time to erase part of it and we do not learn the total statement Pursewarden left on the mirror until it is disclosed in **Clea**. In **Clea** his death is ascribed to an entirely different motive: he kills himself either to free his blind sister, Liza, so that she can marry Mountolive or because he realizes that Liza no longer loves him and wants to become the blind wife of a British ambassador.

We do not finally know the motivation for Pursewarden's suicide
simply because Pursewarden has no absolute, boxed-in personality to which one can connect causal lines. Pursewarden makes an apt comment on personality when he accompanies Justine to the house of child prostitutes in Clea; he watches her stroke the old divan on which her lost child has supposedly died and reflects:

Human beings are like pipe organs...You pull out a stop marked 'Lover' or 'Mother' and the requisite emotions are unleashed -- tears or sighs or endearments. Sometimes I try and think of us all as habit-patterns rather than human beings. I mean, wasn't the idea of the individual soul grafted on us by the Greeks in the wild hope that, by its sheer beauty it would 'take' --as we say of vaccination?

Since our grip on the external world is uncertain and since truth is relative to the observer; Durrell believes that personality defies categorization. It follows that in fiction motivation is impossible to depict as fact, since 'fact' is portrayed as a succession of personalities --a bourgeois adulteress, a bereaved mother, a femme fatale, a nymphomaniac--yet the essence of Justine, whatever it is, remains undiscernible. The observer of personality is like the mirror in the epigraph by de Sade with which Durrell prefaces Balthazar:

The mirror sees the man is beautiful, the mirror loves the man; another mirror sees the man as frightful and hates him, and it is always the same being who produces the impressions.

Objectively defined reality does not determine the essence of personality because the viewer, like the mirror, alters and creates whatever he

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11 This statement is related to Miss Read's conception of the non-discrete character. Also, it explains why Justine and Melissa are interchangeable in the early part of the Quartet: their personality is only what Darley's imagination creates for himself out of his experience with each.
observes in the very act of observing and creating.

Mirrors and masks are Durrell's device for keeping constantly before us the relativity of human personality. Personalities, Durrell seems to be saying, are very much like the zanies of the masked ball at carnival season: the masks worn by the participants are not more false than the faces we prepare to project onto the faces we meet. Of Justine, Darley says, "under all these masks there was another woman, every woman, like a lay figure in a dressmaker's shop, waiting for the poet to clothe her, breathe life into her" (Clea, p. 47-48).

Clea sees love as a sort of mask which has clouded her understanding of Justine; she would look at Justine and "try to remember what she really looked like on the other side of the transforming membrane, the cataract with which Aphrodite seals up the sick eyes of lovers" (Balthazar, p. 45).

Blindness is not only a condition of people in love in the Quartet; many of the characters are blind or partially so: Liza and her child by Pursewarden, are totally blind; Scobie and Hamid are one-eyed, Nessim is half-blinded by the war. More significantly, some of the characters, especially Darley, are psychologically blind in their determined search for fact/truth.

Yet when 'fact' is shattered prismatically, vision clarifies as it multiplies. Hence, Pursewarden's comment that the "human personality seen across a continuum would perhaps become prismatic" (Clea, p. 126). Durrell has heavily sprinkled the Quartet with mirrors and mirror imagery, all of which are significant in that, as Weigel notes at great length, they are a means to "reflect and to refract the various aspects of reality."

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Weigel, p. 106.
Pursewarden believes that life itself is a mask that imitates art for when he "was deeply immersed in the novel he was writing...he found that his ordinary life, in a distorted sort of way, was beginning to follow the curvatures of his book....any concentration of the will displaces life....Reality, he believed, was always trying to copy the imagination of life from which it derived." (Balthazar, p. 106).

Man's imagination and personality, then, is by nature nebulous; personality is a manifestation of the flux of reality and may become as open-ended as the stream of life itself, rather than multi-faceted—no-faceted. But herein lies a novelistic problem: In Balthazar Pursewarden contends that "the object of writing is to grow a personality which in the end enables man to transcend art" (p. 133). The artist finally opts for life, not art. Certainly, if Durrell has granted any main character self-awareness, it is Pursewarden. His fascination for Justine is that he is "wholly himself" and in his diary he writes of Justine: "Moths are attracted by the flame of personality. So are vampires. Artists should take note and beware" (Balthazar, p. 109)

If we theoretically assign personality a definition which is related to self-awareness, then (besides Pursewarden) Durrell allows Darley's and Clea's characters to grow and suggests continual growth through their varied encounters with life—art imitating life and being the means of transcending it to the healing silence of the heraldic universe.

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13 Ibid., p. 105.

The idea of non-discrete personality has not gone unnoticed by psychologists. The German psychologist Georg Groddeck (1865-1934) seems to have influenced Durrell's theory of character and of consciousness. Groddeck, reacting against Freud's obsession with ego, thought discrete personality impossible to establish:

The sum total of an individual human being, physical, mental and spiritual, the organism with all its forces, the microcosmos, the universe which is a man, I conceive of as self unknown and forever unknowable, and I call this 'The It', as the most indefinite term available without either emotional or intellectual associations. The It-hypothesis I regard, not as a truth--for what do any of us know about absolute Truth?--but as a useful tool in work and life....I assume that man is animated by the It which directs what he does and what he goes through, and that the assertion 'I live' only expresses a small superficial part of the total experience 'I am lived by the It'...

Man is lived and directed by the It, which defies the unique consciousness of personality, Groddeck asserts, "I am by no means I, but only a continuously changing form in which my "it" displays itself, and the 'I' feeling is just one of its many ways of deceiving the conscious mind and making it a pliant tool.

Durrell, Friedman believes, is immeasurably indebted to Groddeck's It-concept which is vague enough to encompass the totality of man's seemingly irrational actions and thoughts. In the Quartet the City is presented as part of the It function: the city lives and breathes in the characters and seems to have a function similar to fate in shaping...

15 Quoted by Durrell, Key, p. 74.
16 Quoted by Durrell, Key, p. 80.
17 Friedman, p. 39.
the course of their actions. The characters are victimized by the City. It is, Darley believes, the "plotting" of the city which makes Justine seem to seek unhappiness. The city is a "gravitational field" in which the characters can be trapped "in the projection of a will too powerful and too deliberate to be human" (Justine, p. 9). The It force emanating from the City works reciprocally, for the same force emanates back toward the city from the characters, and to a degree, affects the City. Later, Darley says, people throw down similar gravitational fields which limit and trap the mind in its chosen fiction. The exotic spirit of Alexandria is strong as well as mysterious; its inhabitants fear they cannot escape.

But the fateful brooding spirit of Alexandria is lessened through Darley's cleared vision in Clea; he now views Alexandria merely as "a shabby little seaport town built upon a sand-reef, a moribund and spiritless backwater" (p. 93). But this "new" Alexandria is suffering realistically from the ravages of war. Darley is no longer in love with the spirit-fate of the City; rather his own unconscious 'It' and conscious will gives him strength to question Alexandria, to leave it for good, and to let the future "form itself upon the emptiness of the present" (p. 233). Alexandria, like the characters of Justine, changes in Clea; objectively viewed, it is no longer associated with fatality.

Groddeck's It-theory supports Durrell's distrust of the discrete personality; it also implies distrust in a single point of view. In the Quartet there is no one point of view, there are many; again the prismatic nature of reality is presented by means of a structural device. Darley is the narrator of much of the Quartet, uncovering truth as if it exists in a multi-layered palimpsest. Both Pursewarden and Balthazar
constantly force him to 'revise' his early reworking of "reality". Only in the third novel, Mountolive, is there an omniscient author with a single persuasive point of view, Darley becoming objectified as a character (though he hardly appears in this novel). Generally, the narrative progression in the Quartet operates not in linear, chronological time but in space-time, where it coils and recoils upon itself. In Justine, Darley believes he has told the story of his love affair with Justine as objectively as he could. In Balthazar another point of view on the love affair is given in Balthazar's "Great Interlinear" (Pursewarden's 'panel' slides back). In Mountolive occurs further reinterpretation of Balthazar's revisions of Justine. And in Clea the events of which occur a few years after the events of the first three novels, the spiritualized love of Clea and Darley helps prepare them for their apprehension of the heraldic universe. Darley realizes the superiority of transcendental truth versus factual truth.

There was no answer to the questions I had raised in very truth. He [Pursewarden] had been quite right. Blind as a mole, I had been digging about it the graveyard of relative fact piling up data, more information, and completely missing the mythopoeic reference which underlies. I had called this searching for truth.

(Clea, p. 167)

Perhaps it is even wrong to speak of "narration" when discussing the Quartet. Though each novel deals with the same characters and events from different points of view, the events and characters are, finally, always illusionary. As story, the Quartet, is retold from novel to novel in Darley's willed search for the never attainable truth of the "real" self. In the 'heraldic' world of Clea, where Darley is once more narrator, symbolically he no longer stoops and wears spectacles because he realizes
the significance of the symbolic world of the heraldic universe as opposed to the rational world. Darley now sees "truth" subjectively, spiritually. As narrator and artist he has profited from all his former misapprehensions for he says:

...if I had been enriched by the experience of this island interlude, it was perhaps because of this total failure to record the inner truth of the city. I had now come face to face with the nature of time, that ailment of the human psyche. I had been forced to admit defeat on paper. Yet, curiously enough, the act of writing had in itself brought me another sort of increase; by the very failure of words, which sink one by one into the measureless cavern of the imagination and gutter out. An expensive way to begin living, yes; but then we artists are driven towards personal lives nourished in these strange techniques of selfpursuit.

(Clea, p. 4)

As an emerging artist, Darley's point of view in Clea begins to merge with that of Pursewarden, of Clea, and even of Balthazar, who reiterates at pertinent points in one way or another that "truth is what most contradicts itself in time."

The technique of multiple point of view is supplemented by the number of secondary sources Darley has at hand; along with Balthazar's "Interlinear", he has Arnauti's novel, Moeurs; Justine's "diary"; Mountolive's diary; Pursewarden's letters to Liza and Clea and that portion of his diary called "Conversations with Brother Ass", and even his trilogy, God is a Humorist; letters from Clea, letters between Mountolive and Liza; and finally--bits and pieces of recollected conversation. All are used to illustrate the relative nature of subjective reality and the non-discrete quality of personality.

In addition, the "Work Points" appended to three of the four novels indicate the infinite possibilities open to the narrator; in the preface to Clea Durrell writes: "If the axis has been well and truly laid down in
the *Quartet* it would be possible to radiate in any direction without losing the strictness and congruity of the word *continuum*." Hence, although the characters and events of the *Quartet* have been presented prismatically, there are still any number of prismatic possibilities which we have not seen. Ends cannot be neatly folded together in "a *Mozartian weave*. For Durrell, that is the nature of reality.

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18 See Young, p. 65.
EPILOGUE

Though it is possible to contend that Durrell's space-time and Plotinian structuring of the Quartet are finally contradictory, the one logically at odds with the other, they are not, in my judgment, so at odds with each other as to injure the unity that exists among the four novels.

In the preface to Balthazar Durrell explains his "method" of space-time structuring and admits the possibility of failure. Yet he justifies the "method" by asserting:

...it would be worth trying an experiment to see if we cannot discover a morphological form one might appropriately call 'classical'—for our time. Even if the result proved to be a 'science fiction' in the true sense.

The Quartet is indeed an experiment—an experiment in which, consciously or unconsciously, the space-time approach is reduced in importance as the Plotinian structure comes more and more to the fore. For this reason I have stressed the analysis of Durrell's Plotinian thought and have spent less time on his space-time thought. It appears to me that the rightness of the Plotinian structure carries the Quartet over the "experimental" gaps in the space-time structure.

I have presented the two structural devices in separate chapters to establish their differences and assess their individual merits. In theory, either device may provide an explanation of Durrell's arrangement of events and characters in the Quartet, though the Plotinian structure is ultimately the more satisfying; in my opinion, the space-time structure, in contrast to the Plotinian structure, operates less and less effectively in the last two novels. The two structures are most at variance in Clea, since the fourth state of the Plotinian
structure—the movement into the heraldic universe—has little logical relationship to the fourth part of the space-time structure—time. Yet since it has not been my intention to contrast these two structural approaches, I have not felt it necessary to take issue with Durrell's conception of what he was doing. In my view, the two structures compliment rather than contradict one another so that the ultimate form of the Quartet derives uniquely from both. Indeed, it is hard to perceive how Durrell could have achieved success without relying upon both, regardless of whether or not they are logically antagonistic.

Durrell, in fact, seems to believe that it is the nature of opposites to compliment rather than contradict one another:

This question of the inherent duality in things, and an acceptance of it as part of the human limitation, you will find both in the relativity-view and later when you come upon the term 'ambivalence' in Freud....

Let me try and make this clearer. When we judge the blackness or goodness of something we are really measuring it against its opposite. If you say something is 'good' you are really using a graduated yardstick of 'evil' to measure it by. Thus, the use of a phrase calls up its opposite—for we had no idea of evil we should be unable to measure goodness—for we measure one against the other. When we say 'good' we at once introduce the category 'evil', and the same with all the other opposites. But language, you will protest, is built upon what seems to be a dualistic foundation. That is the problem. If the opposites are identical then statement is a relative affair, not, as our grandfathers thought, an absolute affair....If then, the opposites are really identical from one point of view, they are perhaps reflections of some third unspecified thing? It is a question I wish deliberately to leave hanging in the air—indeed I must do so because I do not know how to answer it.

1 A Key to Modern British Poetry, pp. 47 and 46. For purposes of clarity, I have intentionally reversed the order of these two paragraphs.
On the basis of this statement, it is not too much to say that the dualistic function of the two structuring devices in *The Alexandrian Quartet* is intrinsic to Durrell's vision of reality and has its influence upon the development as artists of Clea and Darley. Whether they are partially contradictory and/or partially complimentary is left unresolved because of the ambivalent nature of reality, as Durrell sees it. It is a question that is left "deliberately hanging in the air."
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