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TIME IN THE ALEXANDRIA QUARTET

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By

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graphy, 36 titles.

Any study of The Alexandria Quartet would be incomplete without a discussion of Durrell's concept of time. His space-time relativity proposition is central to the work and, therefore, must be fully understood if The Alexandria Quartet is to be appreciated. This investigation proposes to examine Durrell's relativity proposition as it is presented in The Alexandria Quartet.

The study will begin with a general discussion of time from both a scientific and philosophical point of view. This introduction will focus on the modern cyclic view of time, or mind-time, as opposed to the more traditional linear concept of time. After the introductory presentation, the study will deal with the view of time as presented by Durrell in The Alexandria Quartet and will concentrate on time and setting, on time and modern love, on time and reality as seen from the varying points of view of the many characters, and finally on time and the artist.

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CHAPTER I

TIME: A MODERN VIEW

Time has always been a matter of concern for man from both a scientific and philosophical point of view. Indeed, time, or the question "what time is it?" is an essential part of daily life. But more important, time seems to be particularly significant for man because it is inseparable from the concept of the self. Since each individual is conscious of his own physical and psychological growth in time, man's concept of time is merged with his concept of the self. Each person, or what might be called the self, is only that self against a background of successive moments in time. Not only is man superimposed on a background of time, but he is also a victim of temporal succession and change since there is little the individual can do against the ravages of time. Man is also a measurer of time, since he moves through time as he ages, and his memory acts as a depository of conscious moments in experience. Consequently, many questions regarding the nature of man invariably refer to questions of time.

Possibly because many questions relating to man's nature are so closely linked to ideas about time, time has become a fundamentally important concept in contemporary literature. Traditionally, time in literature has been presented in a

linear fashion. Some important twentieth century writers, however, have changed the technique of presenting a story with a neat chronological unfolding of events. In writers such as Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, William Faulkner, and Lawrence Durrell, the view of time is more often than not spherical or cyclical. In Conrad, Joyce, and Durrell, recurring events and motifs serve to emphasize the cyclical nature of time. In this view, time is no longer simply a physical measurement, and indeed the actual progression of time is of little significance in many twentieth century writers. What is significant in modern literature is a concept which can be termed "mind-time." Mind-time can best be described as the intensity with which memories are related to each other in an individual mind. Since it is the intensity with which one remembers an event that dictates its place in the narrator's mind, stories using the concept of mind-time are not told in simple chronological order. Instead, they are told in the order in which events take on significance for the narrator or the protagonist. Actual, or physical, time may have little or no importance, and in some instances time may not move forward more than a few hours in the narration.

Conrad was the first writer in the twentieth century to apply the concept of mind-time to literature. Durrell expanded and refined this technique in The Alexandria Quartet. He states his purpose clearly in Balthazar, the second novel in the series:

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 the soup-mix recipe of a continuum. The four novels follow this pattern.

The first parts, however, are to be deployed spatially (hence the use of "sibling" not "sequel") 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 true 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."¹

In short Durrell here states that he "turned to science" in The Alexandria Quartet for the form which the four novels take. Therefore, in order for the reader to fully grasp what Durrell is trying to do in The Alexandria Quartet, it is necessary to have at least a cursory knowledge of some twentieth century theories on time and the universe.

Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity was proposed in 1915. He undertook at that time to widen and generalize ideas already contained in the specialized theory of relativity.² Einstein pictured the universe as being infinite both spatially and temporally. His view is in direct conflict with the Newtonian concept of an ordered and structured

¹Lawrence Durrell, Balthazar (New York, 1969), Note.

²Milton K. Munitz, editor, Theories of the Universe (Glencoe, Ill., 1957), p. 272.

universe that radiates outward from a dense center until, at the outer reaches of space, stars would ultimately disappear and only a vast emptiness would exist.³ Einstein's universe, however, is one in which there is an equal amount and density of stellar material throughout all space.⁴ Whereas previous theories of the universe had pictured it as a two dimensional plane extending into infinity, Einstein saw the universe as having a spherical surface--much like the inside of a balloon. Therefore, in Einstein's view, the universe would have the unique quality of being finite⁵ but with no definite end.⁶

Other scientists, notably Arthur S. Eddington, have expanded Einstein's general theory of relativity. Both the Eddington and the Einstein universes are spherical, but there are differences in the two. Einstein's universe is static, allowing for a permanent framework within which galactic change can take place.⁷ Eddington's view, however, includes the

³Albert Einstein, "Considerations on the Universe as a Whole," Theories of the Universe, edited by Milton K. Munitz (Glencoe, Ill., 1957), p. 275.

⁴Ibid.

⁵At first glance, it would appear that Einstein's concept of both a finite and an infinite universe is in contradiction. However, this is not the case. Einstein pictured the universe as being much like the inside of an expanding sphere. Since a sphere has no definite end, it can be described as infinite. At the same time, a spherical plane has boundaries in that it can be described as spherical and, therefore, is finite.

⁶Einstein, pp. 76-77.

⁷Arthur S. Eddington, "Spherical Space," Theories of the Universe, edited by Milton K. Munitz (Glencoe, Ill., 1957), p. 328.

theory of an "expanding universe."⁸ Therefore, while Einstein's universe is in equilibrium, Eddington feels that this equilibrium is in an unstable condition.⁹ The unstable condition that Eddington speaks of refers to his idea that even though all spatial areas of the universe contain an equal amount of stellar material throughout, because the universe is expanding, this equilibrium can still change. In simpler terms, whereas Einstein's universe is static, Eddington's is not. Thus, according to twentieth century theories, the universe can be seen as one that is spherical, ever-expanding, unlimited, and with an infinite number of moments in time. Theoretically, the concept of a spherical universe would allow a space traveler to embark from a given point and, without altering his course, return to the same point. Just as life itself is cyclic in its regenerative processes, space and time, as cosmological concepts, have become so in the twentieth century.

Not only is Einstein responsible for the theory of the spherical universe, but he is also credited with the idea of the "spatialization of time."¹⁰ He was the first scientist to view time as not being essentially different from space and, therefore, merely another dimension. Space and time became fused in his view and resulted in the "space-time" that

⁸Ibid., p. 331.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Milic Capek, "Time in Relativity Theory: Arguments for a Philosophy of Becoming," The Voices of Time, edited by J. T. Fraser (London, 1968), p. 434.

Durrell so often speaks of. Other scientists, such as H. Minkowski, have argued that "space and time are particular aspects of a single four-dimensional concept."¹¹ Points in time are represented by "stationary curves in four-dimensional space."¹² Time becomes cyclic and endless when viewed along the curve of spherical space. Therefore, time takes on the aspects of the three physical dimensions of space and, according to the theory of relativity, becomes a "fourth dimension."¹³ Or as Silberstein put it:

There is thus far an intrinsic similarity, a kind of coordination between space and time, or as the Time Traveller, in a wonderful anticipation of Mr. Wells, puts it: "There is no difference between Time and Space except that our consciousness moves along it."¹⁴

The "it" that Wells speaks of is, of course, time.

Despite the fact that many see time as a fourth dimension, it is still a concept rooted primarily in the individual consciousness and not part of a larger whole.¹⁵ Time does not exist by itself, even though it is the one basic determinant of all phenomena. Time exists only in the mind of the individual, and without individual perception there would be no time. And it is man's consciousness of experience, or how the individual remembers what he encounters in life, that dictates

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ L. Silberstein, The Theory of Relativity (London, 1914), p. 134.

¹⁵ Emil Frederickson, A Mistress Called Time (New York, 1965), p. 11.

his concept of time. Thus time and experience coalesce in the mind and merge into a modern notion of the self. Time becomes not an object but rather a way of seeing individuals, since time is an inseparable part of the idea of the self.¹⁶ Consequently, time in experimentalist literature always refers to elements of time as the individual experiences that time.¹⁷ Time in literature is human time or the consciousness of life as experience. The meaning of time, for experimentalist writers, can be sought only within the world of individual experience. Thus time, in the modern philosophical sense, is private, personal, subjective, and psychological.

Besides this view of time as mental experience, there is the more familiar view of time. This is the view of time which is not private, subjective, or psychological but which is public and objective. This objective view is the concept of time which in physics is represented by the symbol "t" in

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷The experimentalist movement in literature came about as a reaction to the so called well-made novel. Conrad was the first in a long line of experimentalist writers. Essentially, the tendency in experimentalist literature is against presenting the story in one continuous passage following a neat chronological order. Instead of "uniformity" and "simplicity" there is "diversity" and "complexity." Instead of a "continuity of action," there is a tendency towards "discontinuity." Time and circumstance interweave and overlap. "Impressions" and "sensations" are relied on more heavily than the traditional modes of logic, sentiment, and intelligence. Therefore, past and present fuse into what might be termed mind-time. Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel (New York, 1932), pp. 332-336.

mathematical equations.¹⁸ This is also public time, which in daily use is represented by watches, clocks, and calenders. Public time allows individuals to synchronize private experiences in time for the purposes of social action and communication. Objective, public time is independent of how the individual personally experiences time and refers to an objective, although somewhat relative, structure in nature rather than a subjective background of human experience.

Yet, according to Bergson, time has no reality "without inserting consciousness into it."¹⁹ The consciousness Bergson refers to is individual consciousness. Herein is the essential difference between objective, public time and private time, and this private time becomes mind-time in experimentalist literature. There is an apparent paradox in that time is an immediate fact of subjective consciousness as well as a logical mode having objective validity. It is this paradox which poses perplexing questions in any philosophical examination of time. When one tries to go beyond immediate experience or the generally accepted common-sense notions of time, he is likely to become entangled in certain difficulties which philosophers have been trying to analyze for centuries.

Saint Augustine was the first thinker to advance a philosophy of time based upon experience and combined with

¹⁸Olivier Costa de Beauregard, "Time in Relativity Theory: Arguments for a Philosophy of Being," The Voices of Time, edited by J. T. Fraser (London, 1968), p. 418.

¹⁹Henri Bergson, Duration and Simultaneity (Indianapolis, Ind., 1965), p. 48.

memory and expectation. He argued that what happens, happens now and that it is always an experience, idea, or thing which is the present. Nevertheless, a meaningful temporal series can be constructed that accounts for past and future in terms of memory and expectation. By "past," Saint Augustine meant the present subjective memory experience of a thing past, and by "future" he meant the expectation or anticipation of a thing in the future.²⁰

Saint Augustine's highly influential theory of the concept of time was echoed by Locke, Berkely, and Hume in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²¹ The strength of the Augustinian theory of time lies in the fact that it has its roots in human experience, and in this particular view the past can have a different nature than the individual's recollection of it. That is to say that objective reality can vary from how the individual perceives and remembers it. Saint Augustine's theory of time is highly subjective and creates a dilemma in the apparent irreconcilability of time-in-experience and time-in-nature. This dilemma would account in part for the many divergent philosophical interpretations of time.

Two fairly recent interpretations of time, however, have probably influenced twentieth century literature as much as,

²⁰A. Cornelius Benjamin, "Ideas of Time in the History of Philosophy," The Voices of Time, edited by J. T. Fraser (London, 1965), p. 15.

²¹Ibid., pp. 15-21.

if not more than, any others. These are the views as expressed by Marcel Proust and Henri Bergson. Contemporary literature is filled with a sense of Bergson's "duration" and Proust's "involuntary memory."²²

Bergson's fame and influence are not essentially a result of the originality of his theories. Instead, his renown is attributable to the fact that he made an extensive study of time at a moment when philosophy, psychology, and physics were about to lend credence to his ideas.²³ Bergson's philosophy is quite complex; however, a brief summary of his main ideas will suffice for this study and will give an additional insight into time as it is often presented in modern literature. Wyndham Lewis comments that "it is Bergson who put the hyphen between Space and Time."²⁴ Bergson felt that ideas of time overlapped into ideas of space.²⁵ His concepts regarding time are very similar to Einstein's "spatialization of time." In Bergson's "duration," time is not set up in any order, but all memory melts into one memory of the past. He further contended that time is "qualitative" and not "quantitative," and that "simultaneity" intersected both time and space.²⁶

²²Margaret Church, Time and Reality (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1963), p. 5.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man (Boston, 1957), p. 419.

²⁵Church, p. 6.

²⁶Lewis, p. 423.

Therefore, the two states, time and space, become confused in the mind. Bergson also argued that there is a lag between the time an action takes place and the time the individual's consciousness registers that action. Finally, in Bergson's concept, there is a continuous flow of the memory of past data and the consciousness of present data.²⁷ But Bergson's chief contribution to the modern writer "has been to indicate for him a sense of time which is humanly meaningful in terms of man's inmost existence and to free him from the artificial distinctions of clock time."²⁸

Proust's notions of time closely parallel those of Bergson. For Proust, "only literature dominated by involuntary memory is realistic, for it is the only device that enables us to experience a sensation simultaneously in the past and present."²⁹ His central theme in literature is the rediscovering of the past through "involuntary memory." In Proust's view, past and present exist simultaneously, with each moment containing both. Each moment does change; however, the change is "qualitative" and not "quantitative."³⁰ The essential difference between Bergson and Proust is that Bergson viewed duration as a continuously flowing process, while Proust saw it as "successive states of being."³¹ In Proust there is, then, a sense of discontinuity not found in Bergson. Since Bergson

²⁷Church, p. 7.

²⁸Ibid., p. 9.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Lewis, p. 89.

³¹Church, p. 18.

and Proust have been so influential on contemporary literature, an experimentalist novel can be seen as either Bergsonian or Proustian, or both.³²

Time in experience exhibits the quality of subjective reality and is characterized by a sort of unequal distribution, irregularity, and nonuniformity. Time in experience differs greatly from the regular, uniform, quantitative units of physical time. Actual measured time is of little significance to the way that individual consciousness arranges and evaluates memories. This is what Proust, Bergson, Saint Augustine, and others mean when they speak of the subjectivity of time. Whether it is Proust's duration as successive moments in time or Bergson's continuous duration, time is experience, and it is highly personal and subjective.

The human mind is a recording device. Like history, it records and recollects the past. But memory is a much more complex device than historical records. The complexity of memory arises from the fact that events are not remembered in any uniform order. Things are remembered as well as fused and confused. Memory modifies facts constantly and reinterprets them in light of present experiences and exigencies and hopes and fears for the future. Any objective order of temporal sequences completely disregards this particular aspect of time. In the subjective view of time as experience, past, present, and future are dynamically fused. It is this quality which

³²Ibid.

lends particular significance to the relationship between time and the self. The fusion of past, present, and future is the matrix of the experimentalist interpretation of time. Just as man fuses time in his memory, so may the artist do so in his work.

For man, time is one of the basic categories of existence.³³ Time is meaningful only within the context of personal experience, not within the context of nature.³⁴ Time as experience is, therefore, an indispensable category for life. Without a personal sense of time, the individual's concept of the self becomes somewhat illusory. Furthermore, an awareness of "continuity" is an essential part of any concept of selfhood.³⁵ Time has the quality of "duration" only because some functions of the self endure through time.³⁶ Both time and the self are characterized by the fact that they are phenomena to be interpreted. Time and the self mutually condition each other by integrating separate moments of experience into some sort of unity.³⁷ Time can then be thought of as the integrator of the mind. There is an interdependency of both time and the self.

³³Frederickson, p. 56.

³⁴Joost A. M. Meerloo, The Two Faces of Man (New York, 1954), p. 57.

³⁵Edmund Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness, edited by Martin Heidegger, translated by James S. Churchill (Bloomington, Ind., 1964), pp. 74-75.

³⁶Benjamin, p. 22.

³⁷Ibid., p. 23.

Modern experimentalist literature has focused on this and translated it to the written page.³⁸ One result is the so called "stream of consciousness" novel, wherein the self becomes time, and the literary form itself integrates time and the self. The two unities of time and the self are merged into one entity composed of past, present, and future expectations to form a composite called consciousness.

Durrell has taken this concept, modified it with his own theories, and incorporated it into The Alexandria Quartet. But Durrell claims that his method is neither "Proustian," "Joycean," nor "Bergsonian."³⁹ The basis for Durrell's concept of time is what he terms "the space-time continuum." Durrell's views are based in large part on Einstein's theory of relativity, with ideas from Bergson and Proust offering additional support. Durrell's concept of time and its relationship to literature are delineated in A Key to Modern British Poetry, which is a series of essays he wrote as lectures while attached to the British Council in Argentina in 1948. Durrell claims he did not write the essays by choice, but in doing so he has provided his reading public today with part of the necessary tools for understanding his work and, in particular, The Alexandria Quartet.⁴⁰

³⁸A. A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel (London, 1952), p. 31.

³⁹Durrell, Balthazar, Note.

⁴⁰Lawrence Durrell, A Key to Modern British Poetry (Norman, Okla., 1952), p. ix.

The focus in A Key to Modern British Poetry is on man's attitude toward the self and the relationship between the self and time. In considering this relationship, Durrell is trying to supply reasons for the form and subject matter that experimentalist literature has, in great part, adopted. The form Durrell speaks of is technically fragmented and is a version of the stream of consciousness mode. The subject matter is the self, thereby making this particular literary form highly subjective and profoundly personal. Durrell uses "Gerontion" by T. S. Eliot as his example of modern literature which is technically and philosophically subjective. Durrell feels that in the poem the hero "allows the contents of memory and reflections to pass through him and emerge in a series of oracular statements, often apparently without any form and with only a superficial resemblance to grammatical proportion."⁴¹ "Gerontion" is a series of fragmented and often disjointed messages. There seemingly is no coherent pattern to them. The poem does not follow the forms of traditional logic nor does it flow in a smooth rhythmical fashion; instead, the words are as tangled as the memory, with its often inextricable web of data.

Not only is the form of "Gerontion" the antithesis of traditional poetic form but also the protagonist does not fit the usual mold of a hero. The hero of "Gerontion" is passive in the flow of time. He is not a man of action nor is he a

⁴¹Ibid., p. 9.

brave man. Rather the hero is simply a "victim."⁴² Gerontion himself states: "I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it / Since what is kept must be adulterated?"⁴³ Gerontion, likewise, has no feeling of being part of the historic process. He cannot advance intellectually but can only sit and think of the past. He is a jumble of memories which "excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled, / With pungent sauces, multiply variety / In a wilderness of mirrors."⁴⁴ For the modern hero, the "myth is dead and . . . only . . . depersonalized masks remain in his memory."⁴⁵ In using this poem as an example of experimentalist literature, Durrell is leading up to a discussion of modern man's concern with time and the self, which are forever bound up in a personalized time separate and apart from historic time.

Durrell feels that in the nineteenth century, several events took place which drastically altered man's view of time. The first event was the geologist Lyell's suggestion that man was perhaps as old as 100,000 years. Then, in 1857, the first remains of Neanderthal Man were discovered. Finally, Darwin published Origin of Species.⁴⁶ These happenings presented a picture totally different from that of the traditional

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³T. S. Eliot, "Gerontion," The Waste Land and Other Poems (New York, 1934), p. 21.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Durrell, Key, p. 12.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 15-16.

Christian view of time. According to the Bible, man was about six thousand years old, but such was not the case in the new scientific view. Man had now become rather distant from his past, and the vast distances of geological time had great and disturbing significance for the individual. Old values lost their meaning and, in a word, post-Darwinian man became disillusioned.⁴⁷ "Time as history and evolution" had been altered considerably by Darwin and Lyell, but "time as an idea" was to undergo an even greater change with the help of Einstein.⁴⁸

Before Einstein's time, the world was an orderly place which could be viewed with total objectivity, and Thomas Hobbes was the philosopher who best epitomized this view. For Hobbes, the whole world consisted of matter and motion. The only reality was matter, and man, being composed of matter, could be viewed with absolute objectivity by the scientist. Man's emotions and thoughts arose from organic processes and, therefore, were not regarded as distinct and separate from the physical body of man. This concept was part of the belief "that an object could be viewed with complete objectivity and a judgement made which was independent of the observer."⁴⁹ This belief was modified somewhat by Einstein's relativity theory. Einstein joined subject and object very much as he joined space and time. Einstein theorized that the picture

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 28.

each observer makes of the world is to some degree subjective. According to Einstein's theory, no two pictures of the world could be exactly alike, even if they were taken at the exact same time and from the same point in space.⁵⁰ In the post-Einsteinian world, therefore, complete objectivity is an impossibility.

Einstein joined space and time and gave time aspects of the three spatial dimensions. He united the two in what he called a "continuum."⁵¹ This gave man a totally new concept of what reality might be. Previously it had been felt that for an object to have reality it need only possess the three spatial dimensions. Now time, as a fourth dimension, was added to this view of reality. Einstein's view of time is quite complex and difficult to grasp, for he sees past, present, and future all joined making a time which contains "all time in every moment of time."⁵² Under this new view of time and the new subject-object relationship, an objective picture of the world outside the individual is impossible. The individual becomes, in essence, the world.⁵³ Consequently, the individual, isolated and fragmented, is able to view the outer world only from the subjective level. Reality becomes, at best, an illusion grounded in the individual consciousness.

The scientific and philosophical examination of time invariably leads to other questions of the significance of time

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Munitz, p. 272.

⁵²Durrell, Key, p. 29.

⁵³Ibid., p. 30.

in experience as it relates to the individual. However, what is important for this study is what Durrell feels is the significance of time in experience, and for him "time is the measure of our death consciousness."⁵⁴ If a man lives with a knowledge of time and death, he then takes on an awareness of himself as an entity. Life takes on a significance that did not exist without the knowledge of the temporal nature of man. Some anthropologists feel that art is a way of dealing with the fear of death and the wish for immortality. Such reasoning implies that if art has any point, it is to remind the individual that to die without having properly lived is a sin against the self.⁵⁵ Thus, as a person becomes aware of time, his personal identity may emerge, and he may begin to understand his relationship to the universe. Because of the irreversibility of death, when man becomes aware of this irreversibility he becomes a time-conscious being, since each moment in time takes him closer to his own death.⁵⁶ Literature helps in the process of bringing people to an awakening of the self and, in a sense, the creation of reality through an awareness of death.

Reality, it has been argued, does not exist outside the individual; therefore, each person has the potential of representing his own truth. If the truth, or reality, belongs

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 5.

⁵⁶Munitz, p. xvii.

to the individual's feelings and actions, then mind-time becomes significant for each person, since his truth has its basis in that time. It is this view of reality that Lawrence Durrell has presented in The Alexandria Quartet and which can best be approached by analyzing his theories of time as they occur in the novels.

CHAPTER II

TIME AND SETTING

In The Alexandria Quartet, Durrell has chosen to combine the three spatial dimensions with time to achieve a four-dimensional continuum. The most obvious use of this four-dimensional concept is in the structure of the work. There are four novels joined together to form a whole. But Durrell alludes to the four-sided continuum in much more subtle ways. His use of locale is one such way.

Before delving into Durrell's use of locale in The Alexandria Quartet, perhaps it would be helpful to try to understand just why place is such an important concept in Durrell's writings. Durrell's life has been characterized by a sense of rootlessness, and, possibly, this may be one of the reasons why place is such an integral part of his works. He was born in India and has spent his life as an expatriate from England in such far-flung places as Corfu, Paris, Athens, Argentina, Alexandria, Rhodes, Yugoslavia, and Cyprus. Consequently, Durrell's works abound with a feeling for the romance of these exciting and exotic points on the globe, and his works would certainly suffer were it not for the colorful and descriptive passages of the many places that Durrell has lived in. Durrell's writings contain none of the regionalism of England that is so characteristic of many British writers. He

apparently has some affinity for England, however, since he finds it "really very pleasant" and "the easiest country in Europe to live in."¹ But Durrell is not an Englishman in the usual sense. A home country, which can act so strongly as a gravitational force and inspiration, is lacking for Durrell, and this lack of a home country is precisely what makes a sense of place so significant for Durrell. Lacking a particular region, or area, around which he can center his works, Durrell needs a place like Alexandria, which is filled with exotic and rootless types, to act as an epicenter for The Alexandria Quartet. Additionally, Durrell's intense awareness of place gives his disparate materials a sense of unity which would otherwise be lacking.

Three places or locales take on importance in The Alexandria Quartet: the city of Alexandria, Darley's island, and the Hosnani estate and surrounding desert. A fourth quality, time, is part of these significant locations. The quality of time gives locale the needed fourth dimension to complete the four-sided continuum that is The Alexandria Quartet. Most of the action in the four novels takes place in Alexandria, and all the major characters return there in the final novel, Clea, when time begins to move forward again. But the other locales mentioned are also significant in Durrell's concept of a space-time continuum. Justine, the first book, opens with Darley,

¹George Wickes, editor, Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence (New York, 1963), p. 240.

the narrator, already absent from Alexandria. He has retreated to an island in the Mediterranean with the child of his dead lover, Melissa. From the vantage point of the island, Darley is trying to reconstruct the events of his tempestuous love affair with Justine. It is only on the island that Darley can discover what he, as an individual, is.² On the island, time is static,³ and Darley discovers "time doesn't count here."⁴ While Darley is on the island, all moments in time merge for him into one moment--the past. In this case, the past is made up of "the iron chains of memory" that Darley is experiencing

²Alan Warren Friedman, Lawrence Durrell and The Alexandria Quartet (Norman, Okla., 1970), p. 46.

³Durrell feels that each person in some way "partakes" of the "sum of human experience." Therefore, "individual experience is not unique because it has already occurred to the whole. That is to say, no individual has a unique experience because every experience has been, or is, shared by some other part of the human community." If one is to accept Durrell's contentions, then it follows that "each individual passes through a sequence of personality changes which begins with birth and ends with death." This sequence of personality changes has been repeated countless times before, at least in Durrell's view; therefore, the individual is not aware of time as a "linear continuum" but sees time as a "continual cycle which perpetually repeats itself." The static time referred to in this paper is a time when no development of any sort is taking place. Physical time advances, but as far as emotional development is concerned, time is at a standstill. In the static time of the island, Darley is not advancing along his time cycle. He is in a state of stasis, and his development is arrested. In other words, Darley is outside the "continuous cycle" of life. This then is what static time means within the context of this paper. Phyllis J. Read, "The Illusion of Personality: Cyclical Time in Durrell's Alexandria Quartet," Modern Fiction Studies, XIII (Autumn, 1967), 389-399.

⁴Durrell, Balthazar, p. 11.

in his own mind.⁵ With the perspective that the passage of time and distance provides, Darley can try to discover the objective reality about Justine and the rest of his Alexandrian world. The island itself is neutral and free from any reference to Alexandria, thereby allowing Darley the opportunity to piece together his feelings about the past in Alexandria into some sort of coherent whole. What emerges from Darley's strivings is Justine, his version of the love affair with Justine and the events surrounding the affair. Darley himself declares, "I had come here in order completely to rebuild this city in my brain--melancholy provinces which the old man saw as full of the 'black ruins' of his life."⁶

While Darley's memory and Balthazar's interlinear carry the reader to Alexandria, time remains static on the island. It is to this static time that Darley has retreated, and in this atmosphere he finds solace:

In the great quietness of these winter evenings there is one clock: the sea. Its dim momentum in the mind is the fugue upon which this writing is made. Empty cadences of sea-water, licking its own wounds, sulking along the mouths of the delta, boiling upon these deserted beaches--empty, forever empty under the gulls: white scribble on the grey, munched by clouds. If there are ever sails here they die before the land shadows them. Wreckage washed up on the pediments of islands, the last crust, eroded by the weather, stuck in the blue maw of water . . . gone!⁷

Darley is like the "wreckage" that has been washed up on the

⁵Lawrence Durrell, Justine (New York, 1969), p. 3.

⁶Ibid., p. 5.

⁷Ibid., p. 6.

island. He is a human wreck and, as a result of the love affair with Justine, has been washed up on the island. In the solitude of the island, Darley can begin to mend his wrecked life and, ultimately, in Clea, return to Alexandria to start his symbolic rebirth:

It was as if they were eager to celebrate our departure from the little island--for at last the long-awaited message from Nessim had come, like a summons back to the Underworld. A message which was to draw me back inexorably to the one city which for me always hovered between illusion and reality. . . .

Darley must return to Alexandria, where time will once again move forward for him and transcend the island's static time.⁹

Like the island, the Hosnani estate and surrounding desert are places where time is at a standstill, for little if any emotional development takes place there for any of the characters. Despite the generally static quality of time at the estate and in the desert, the cyclical concept of time is shown in two key scenes with these locales as the setting. Both events, which attempt to symbolize the cyclical nature of time, take place at the lake on the Hosnani estate. Chronologically, the first scene is the fish round-up in Mountolive. In a literal way, the fish round-up is cyclic in that it occurs

⁸Lawrence Durrell, Clea (New York, 1969), p. 3.

⁹It is interesting to note that symbolically time begins to move forward on the island when Darley returns to it after leaving Alexandria in the final pages of Clea. This movement forward in time is symbolized by the encroachment of civilization on the island. Ironically, it is Darley who brings civilization to the island by setting up a relay station there. Durrell seems to be implying that Darley has moved out of the Justine-Alexandria cycle and is moving on to a new one.

periodically. The fact that the round-up is a repetitive process would imply a cycle. However, the fish round-up is also cyclic in its symbolic representation of life.¹⁰ The men in the boats and the swamp birds both vie for the fish, and the fish and the birds are joined in an unceasing struggle for existence. The men in the boats, though not actually struggling for existence at the time of the fish round-up, are, nevertheless, linked to the struggle in that they are participating in the round-up. By joining the men to the life and death cycle of the fish round-up, Durrell underscores the point that man is part of the never ending birth-life-death cycle of existence. Man is trapped in the cycle much as the fish are trapped within the circle of boats surrounding them, and there is little hope of escape for either the fish or man except death:

The cordon, too, had tightened like a noose and only twenty feet now separated them from the next boat, the next pool of waxen light. The boatmen had begun to utter hoarse cries and pound the waters around them, themselves excited by the premonition of those fishy swarms which crowded the soft lake bottom, growing more and more excited as the shallows began and they recognized themselves trapped in the shining circle.¹¹

The second important event in its depiction of the birth-life-death cycle is the annual bird hunt that Nessim organizes. Like the fish round-up, the duck hunt takes place at the lake on the Hosnani estate. The duck hunt is cyclic in that it

¹⁰See Note 3, p. 23.

¹¹Lawrence Durrell, Mountolive (New York, 1969), p. 5.

occurs on an annual basis, but it is also symbolic of the cycle of life. The ducks are trapped by the hunters, and, in a similar manner, man is trapped within the confines of his life. Neither man nor the ducks have much opportunity for escape except in death. However, death brings rebirth, since the ducks will return again the following year. Likewise, the death of a human being does not signal the end of all life but is instead a part of the total life cycle. The human element of the birth-life-death cycle is further emphasized by the apparent death of Capodistria during this particular duck hunt. It is later learned that Capodistria only faked his death in order to escape financial ruin. So Capodistria's "death" allows him to begin life anew, and in a sense he is reborn.

While the lake teems with life, the desert surrounding the Hosnani estate is an empty place where time seems to stand still. The desert has "the nakedness of space" and is "pure as a theorem."¹² In the desert very little changes; it is a place in apparent equilibrium. Seasonal patterns bring no outward change to the desert, and time seems to be at a standstill. In a literal sense Narouz, Nessim's brother, stops time when Nessim comes to visit the estate by following an ancient custom of stopping all clocks. And as Narouz states, "Your stay with us is so brief, let us not be reminded of the flight of hours. God made eternity. Let us escape from the despotism

¹²Durrell, Balthazar, p. 77.

of time altogether."¹³ The absence of change in the desert and the desert's timelessness act to underscore the fact that the principal residents of the Hosnani estate, Narouz and Leila, do not reach emotional maturity. Narouz and Leila, and to some extent, Nessim, are in an arrested state of development. The static quality of the desert acts as a reminder of these characters' lack of emotional development. In much the same way that the desert exhibits little evidence of change, so there is little psychic change for the better in either Leila or Narouz.

Leila, Narouz and Nessim's mother, has retreated to the family estate in the desert in much the same way that Darley escaped to the island. But unlike Darley, Leila does not wish to return to the present. She is content living in the past because of her somewhat tragic life. Leila has lost her once legendary beauty because of smallpox and hides behind a black veil. She lives in the past, thinking of her affair with David Mountolive years before. When Mountolive returns to Egypt after many years, Leila at first refuses to see him, so much does she live in the past that no longer exists except for her:

Her letters had become her very life, and in the writing of them she had begun to suffer from the curious sense of distorted reality which writers have when they are dealing with real people; in the years of writing to Mountolive, for example, she had so to speak reinvented him so successfully that he existed for her now not so

¹³Ibid., p. 71.

much as a real human being but as a character out of her own imagination.¹⁴

Leila lives so much in the past that she allows no mirrors in her presence to remind her of the passage of time as reflected in her own image. Only the past is real for Leila, and time has no significance for either her or her surroundings. The desert, like Darley's island, stands as a reminder that time is static for many of the characters in the Quartet, since the desert is in a state of equilibrium in both space and time.

It is left to Alexandria, however, as the center of most of the action in the Quartet, to fuse past, present, and future. The majority of the characters in the novel reach their denouement in the city, thus making Alexandria the focal point of the Quartet. The choice of Alexandria as the setting for the Quartet was no accident, as Durrell himself explains:

I knew I was going to write a sort of Big City Poem in a special form. . . . But when it came to choose my city, I (being a romantic) chose the most various and colorful I could remember. . . . I had to have enough color to support four long volumes without boring. At first I started the book about Athens, then switched to Alexandria. There I had everything, different¹⁵ cultures, civilizations, religions, all together. . . .

Alexandria provided Durrell with the variety he needed in the Quartet. However, Durrell's recreation of contemporary Alexandria has the temporal and locative reality of a Dali landscape. Durrell's Alexandria is not real in the sense that it

¹⁴Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁵"Lawrence Durrell Answers a Few Questions," The World of Lawrence Durrell, edited by Harry T. Moore (Carbondale, Ill., 1962), p. 159.

exists, as he describes it, outside the novel. Instead, Durrell has created a city of the mind, and his Alexandria has a spirit of life and love reminiscent of ancient Alexandria. In The Alexandria Quartet, Durrell has given the city a sense of timelessness in that he has successfully merged the romantic past with contemporary realities of life. Since Durrell does merge past and present in Alexandria, the city becomes both mythic and real in the reader's mind.¹⁶ The city is many things--real and imagined. It is a city diverse in culture and the major character in the Quartet:

Capitally, what is this city of ours? What is resumed in the world of Alexandria? In a flash my mind's eye shows me a thousand dust tormented streets. Flies and beggars own it today--and those who enjoy an intermediate existence between either.

Five races, five languages, a dozen creeds: five fleets turning through their greasy reflections behind the harbour bar. But there are more than five sexes,¹⁷ and only demotic Greek seems to distinguish among them.

Alexandria's diverse nature is due in part to the expatriates who abound there. They give the city richness and variety rather than cohesion and discipline. The expatriate is the ideal Durrellian protagonist since he is independent of the normal modes of his own community. This independence allows the individual to act with less restraint, not being subject

¹⁶Robert Scholes, "Return to Alexandria: Lawrence Durrell and Western Narrative Tradition," The Virginia Quarterly Review, XL (Summer, 1964), 411-420.

¹⁷Durrell, Justine, pp. 3-4.

to the norms of society.¹⁸ This is important for the Quartet because the reader encounters characters who act closer to their true personalities than could otherwise be expected. It follows then that a truer picture of many of the characters can be obtained.

With such a proliferation of expatriates in Alexandria, the city is part European, part Mediterranean, part Moslem, and part Christian.¹⁹ The city's diverse nature gives it universality, and while the city is real in its universality, it is illusionary and subjective for many of the characters in the Quartet. Alexandria stands halfway "between illusion and reality."²⁰ Since the city is viewed subjectively, it represents different things for different characters. As subjective reality, the city is an apt symbol for the mind, since much of the individual's reality is basically subjective. Like the mind, the city is filled with complex compartments; like the human personality, the city is multi-faceted.

Alexandria has other functions as well. In a note that precedes the text of Justine, Durrell gives the reader a clue to one of these functions: "The characters in this novel . . . are all inventions together with the personality of the

¹⁸ Stanley G. Eskin, "Durrell's Themes in The Alexandria Quartet," Texas Quarterly, V (Winter, 1962), 43-63.

¹⁹ Gilbert Highet, "The Alexandrians of Lawrence Durrell," Horizon, II (March, 1960), 113-118.

²⁰ Durrell, Clea, p. 3.

narrator and bear no resemblance to living persons. Only the city is real." Durrell does not, as has been stated, mean that his Alexandria is real in a literal sense. Instead, Alexandria is a tangible, orienting time-space point for the characters.

Durrell seems to have gotten his ideas about a psychological focal point for the individual from a German psychologist, George Groddeck, who delineated his theories in a work entitled The Book of the It. Durrell certainly has a working knowledge of Groddeck's concept, because he wrote the introduction to a 1961 edition of The Book of the It. Basically, Groddeck's notion is, unlike Freud's, that there is no autonomous ego. Groddeck, instead, believed in the existence of a supra-individual entity that would function as a "unifying" factor. This entity had to be a still point where "voluntary" processes such as conscious actions and "involuntary" processes such as subconscious memory would meet. He further hypothesized that the individual ego could not bear the strain necessary to become this unifying factor. What can act as a unifier is some mysterious force which Groddeck called the "It."²¹ This mysterious "It" emerges as Alexandria in Durrell's work. The individual, not being strong enough to act as a unifying force, must become part of a vast symbolic whole. This whole is a sort of universal consciousness. Alexandria becomes just such a force and helps guide all its inhabitants

²¹Friedman, p. 67.

and is much more important than any single character in the novel.²²

It is within the milieu of Alexandria that many of the characters try to find themselves. The annual carnival in the city allows some of the citizens of Alexandria an opportunity to give vent to their true feelings, since they go about masked. Amaril is one such person who finds a measure of reality while

concealed beneath the carnival habit (like a criminal desire in the heart, a temptation impossible to resist, an impulse which seems preordained) lie the germs of something: of a freedom which man seldom dared to imagine for himself. One feels free in this disguise to do whatever one likes without prohibition.²³

In this guise, Amaril is able to find love for the first time in his life. Altruistic love, long suppressed in Amaril, emerges as he constructs a nose for his lover, who has lost hers because of a rare illness.

During the carnival, other characters, such as Narouz and Clea, confront feelings of both love and hate that they had heretofore repressed. Narouz tries to murder Justine because of her unfaithfulness to Nessim. He mistakenly kills the wrong person, however. Thinking he has murdered Justine, Narouz flees to Clea and declares his love for her. But Clea is only disgusted by Narouz' feelings and laments, "How disgusting,

²²Ibid., pp. 69-70.

²³Durrell, Balthazar, p. 184.

how unfair love is."²⁴ Clea discovers that at this stage in her life she is truly incapable of love. She cannot respond to another human being even with simple compassion. Narouz, in his open declaration of love, is confronted with the reality that Clea will never love him, and his romantic notions about a possible relationship with Clea are shattered forever.

As the only stable reality in The Alexandria Quartet, the city takes on many of the attributes of a human character. Alexandria has a personality and intensity all its own that is spawned in large part by its history. The history of the city is felt throughout the Quartet, and it even haunts Nessim's dreams:²⁵

At this time he had already begun to experience that great cycle of historical dreams which now replaced the dreams of his childhood in his mind, and into which the City now threw itself--as if at last it had found a responsive subject through which to express the collective desires, the collective wishes, which informed its culture. He would wake to see the towers and minarets printed on the exhausted, dust-powdered sky, and see as if en montage on them the giant footprints of the historical memory which lies behind the recollections of the individual personality, its mentor and guide: indeed its inventor, since man is only an extension of the spirit of place. . . .

But while the gallery of historical dreams held the foreground of his mind the figures of his friends and acquaintances, palpable and real, walked backwards and forwards among them, among the ruins of classical Alexandria, inhabiting²⁶ an amazing historical space-time as living personages.

²⁴Ibid., p. 227.

²⁵Lionel Trilling, "The Quartet: Two Reviews," The World of Lawrence Durrell, edited by Harry T. Moore (Carbondale, Ill., 1962), p. 60.

²⁶Durrell, Justine, pp. 157-158.

The city, with its labyrinthine ways and countless mirrors, is a metaphor for the multi-faceted personality. Like Justine, the city is "neither Greek, Syrian nor Egyptian, but a hybrid: a joint."²⁷ Like the human psyche, Alexandria is complex. The individual's personality is the sum total of all his moments in time. So it is with Alexandria. Since the city does function much like Groddeck's "It," Alexandria is a part of all that happens and, in fact, guides and participates in it.²⁸ To say that Alexandria is the key to the Quartet would be an understatement. The city is what gives the four novels their "content" and "form."²⁹ Like the protagonist in a picaresque novel or the hero of an epic poem, the city moves through The Alexandria Quartet with all the brashness of a giant.

As the geographic and psychological center of the Quartet, Alexandria is a composite of static time, cyclic time, and time that finally moves chronologically forward in Clea. Throughout the first three books, time does not progress but is a series of flashbacks. In these books, Alexandria is the past; it is memory. The city is a past from which the characters find escape difficult. Throughout much of the Quartet, the

²⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁸ John A. Weigel, Lawrence Durrell (New York, 1965), p. 98.

²⁹ Ambrose Gordon, Jr., "Time, Space, and Eros: The Alexandria Quartet Rehearsed," Six Contemporary Novels, edited by W. O. S. Sutherland, Jr. (Austin, Texas, 1962), p. 8.

characters can only radiate outward from the city, tied forever by an umbilical cord of memory. Alexandria is a place that the characters must ultimately

return to link by link along the iron chains of memory to the city which we inhabited so briefly together: the city which used us as its flora--precipitated in us conflicts which were hers and which we mistook for our own: beloved Alexandria!³⁰

Darley exclaims, "I must know everything in order to be at last delivered from the city."³¹ Until the characters do make certain discoveries about themselves, they are inextricably tied to the cycle of destructiveness that Alexandria represents. It is Darley and Clea who ultimately are able to break completely this cycle and begin to practice their respective arts again.

The destructive cycle, which prevents the characters from entering into meaningful relationships with anyone and, thereby, keeps them from being psychically whole, is symbolized by many of the recurring motifs in the Quartet. For example, at one point in the story, Justine is standing over a sink looking at a foetus. Later, Clea relates to Darley a similar scene after she has had an abortion. When he returns to Alexandria after being on the island, Darley first sees Clea at the restaurant where he first met Melissa. When Clea is taken to the hospital after being speared by an underwater gun, she is in the same bed that Melissa lay in during her illness. All these

³⁰Durrell, Justine, p. 3.

³¹Durrell, Balthazar, p. 13.

recurring events symbolize the unceasing, destructive cycle that Alexandria represents in that they repeat unfortunate incidents--Clea's abortion, Darley's less-than-satisfactory love affair with Melissa, and Melissa's death. Only by leaving the city permanently can any of the characters hope to break out of Alexandria's spell.

In the first three books, time is static for most of the characters, since their emotional development is arrested. In Clea, however, time begins to move ahead for some of the characters, notably Darley and Clea. Darley returns to Alexandria and begins to see the city in a different light. Instead of being enamored of Alexandria, Darley sees the city as it really is: "a shabby little seaport built upon a sandreef, a moribund and spiritless backwater."³²

Unlike Darley, Clea has never been held spellbound by Alexandria, and she helps Darley along in the process of seeing the city as it is. In doing so, Darley symbolically faces reality and some ultimate truths about Justine and himself. Clea sees the city as having "harsh, circumscribed contours" with "wicked, pleasure-loving and unromantic inhabitants."³³ And in the final novel, she likens the city to a "great public urinal."³⁴ The implication seems to be that a person must discover

³²Durrell, Clea, p. 93.

³³Durrell, Mountolive, p. 138.

³⁴Durrell, Clea, p. 95.

reality, and that reality is an awareness of the destructive life cycles. With the discovery of these destructive cycles, the individual is given the incentive to break the cycle. Clea and Darley and, to some extent, Justine, Nessim, and Balthazar find reality and are able to move out of the destructive cycles which have held them prisoners. Except for Clea, the characters in the Quartet have been held spellbound by a city that is part real, part illusion, but all pervasive. The characters have been suspended in time, and only by breaking out of suspension can they be reborn. For Darley, Alexandria is the setting where his rebirth begins. Once time begins to move forward for him, the destructive cycle begins to break down and his journey towards completeness begins.

CHAPTER III

TIME AND LOVE

Durrell calls The Alexandria Quartet "an investigation of modern love."¹ The work is, indeed, concerned with the question of love as is evidenced by the fact that all the major characters are to some degree involved in love affairs throughout the four novels. Pursewarden, who seems to be speaking for Durrell, says in his notes:

Our topic, Brother Ass, is the same, always and irremediably the same--I spell the word for you: l-o-v-e. Four letters, each letter a volume!²

The question of love permeates the entire Quartet, and the reader is presented a full range of love relationships. The Alexandria Quartet has heterosexual love, homosexual love, incestuous love, motherly love, altruistic love, and a wide range of other forms of love and sex.

Like many modern psychologists, psychoanalysts, and psychiatrists, Durrell sees love as one of contemporary man's major predicaments. Whereas in the past, love was seen as the answer to many of life's problems, love has now become "the problem."³ But Durrell is somewhat ambivalent in his treatment

¹Durrell, Balthazar, Note.

²Durrell, Clea, p. 122.

³Rollo May, Love and Will (New York, 1969), p. 13.

of love. He sees love not only as the problem but also as one of the solutions to man's questing toward a more completely integrated self. One of the basic themes in The Alexandria Quartet is the search for self-integration and completeness of the individual. Love is a stepping stone toward this self-integration and completeness and, therefore, plays a major role in the Quartet.

Durrell has some definite ideas about the power of love, and these ideas are very similar to those of Erich Fromm, who writes:

Only if I know a human being objectively, can I know him in his ultimate essence, in the act of love. . . .

The male-female polarity is . . . the basis for interpersonal creativity. This is obvious in the fact that the union of sperm and ovum is the basis for the birth of a child. But in the purely psychic realm it is not different; in the love between man and woman each is re-born.⁴

Fromm speaks of love as a creative force. Durrell also sees love as having creative powers, but since he sees love as both a solution and a problem, Durrell examines love in the Quartet as both a creative and a destructive force. An attempt, therefore, will be made to analyze both the constructive and destructive modes of love as Durrell presents them in The Alexandria Quartet.

All the major characters, and a good many of the minor characters, in the Quartet are at one time or another engaged

⁴Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York, 1963), pp. 26-28.

in love-relationships which are destructive. These destructive love affairs comprise a cycle within which the characters are trapped. This cycle is one which does not allow for a complete integration of the self because the destructive love affairs in the Quartet do not become "the basis for the inter-personal creativity" which Fromm speaks of. Destructive as most of them are, these love affairs are a necessary "rite of passage" through which each individual, if he is to achieve complete self-integration, must pass. In terms of Jungian psychology, "the ego must continually . . . re-establish its relation to the Self in order to maintain a condition of psychic health."⁵ Jung felt that the initiation rite most effectively solves the problem of maintaining psychic health:

The ritual takes the novice back to the deepest level of original mother-child identity or ego-Self identity, thus forcing him to experience a symbolic death. In other words, his identity is temporarily dismembered or dissolved in the collective unconscious. From this state he is then ceremonially rescued by the rite of the new birth. . . .

The ritual, whether it is found in tribal groups or in more complex societies, invariably insists upon this rite of death and rebirth, which provide the novice with a "rite of passage" from one stage of life to the next, whether it is from early childhood to later childhood or from early to late adolescence and from then to maturity.⁶

It will be shown below that the purpose of many of the love affairs in the Quartet is to provide a rite of passage through which the individual can experience a symbolic death and

⁵Carl G. Jung, Man and His Symbols (Garden City, N. Y., 1964), pp. 128-129.

⁶Ibid., p. 130.

rebirth. It is important to note, however, that not all the characters in the novel successfully complete their rites of passage. Indeed, a majority of the characters never complete the initiation rites; only Darley and Clea emerge as fully integrated individuals at the end of the Quartet, thereby, indicating a successful passage through symbolic death and rebirth.

Darley is able to endure two destructive relationships as part of his rite of passage. His love-relationships follow a cyclical pattern and help demonstrate Durrell's concept of time. The time which Darley and others experience during destructive love-relationships is static in that the characters do not grow emotionally, and the time is cyclic in its obsessively repeated motifs.⁷ The cyclical nature of Darley's love affairs is shown in the circumstances surrounding them. Darley's first meetings with his lovers, his first love-making with them, and his parting with them are all repetitions of each other.⁸ This use of repetitive scenes and motifs is

⁷Significantly, the initiation rites of primitive man are considered to be a period of non-time or an "atemporal present." According to Eliade, primitive societies have a periodic need to "regenerate" themselves, and this regeneration involves "repetition of an archetypal act." But the really important element in the regenerative acts is the "abolition of concrete time." Primitive man, in an initiation rite, refuses to "grant value to memory . . . and . . . the . . . events that in fact constitute concrete duration." The result of this attitude by "archaic" man is to devalue time. In the initiation rite, therefore, time does not exist, and man, during the rite of passage, does not "bear the burden of time." Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return (New York, 1959), pp. 85-86.

⁸Read, pp. 389-399.

Durrell's way of indicating that his characters are locked within cycles. By examining these repeated scenes and motifs, it will become apparent that the characters in the Quartet are, indeed, trapped within destructive cycles.

In his first unsuccessful rite of passage,⁹ Darley meets his lover-to-be, Melissa, in

the corner of a coffee shop, alone with her hands supporting her chin. Her hat and handbag lay beside her and she was staring into her cup with a wry reflective air of amusement. Impulsively I entered the place and sat down beside her . . . there and then I decided to love her.¹⁰

Their relationship, however, is a somewhat shabby affair, for a variety of reasons. Melissa is a dancer in a cheap club and a prostitute. Despite his claim that he decides "to love her," Darley treats Melissa rather badly. Melissa has left her lover, Cohen, an old Jewish furrier, for Darley. Darley feels little for Melissa, just as Melissa felt little for Cohen. Likewise, Darley ultimately leaves Melissa for Justine much as Melissa left Cohen for Darley. These parallels in the love

⁹The use of the term "rite of passage" here, and elsewhere in reference to the Quartet, refers to Durrell's idea that love is a vehicle of symbolic death and rebirth. In fact, Durrell calls the love affairs in The Alexandria Quartet "a mime about rebirth on a parable plane." It is apparent that Durrell intends for many of the love-relationships in the Quartet to act as rites of passage, some successful and some not, in providing characters such as Darley with a means to achieve rebirth. Therefore, the love affairs in the Quartet are the rites of passage that Jung feels all men must pass through when moving from one stage of development to another. Moore, p. 166.

¹⁰Durrell, Justine, p. 47.

affairs help to reveal Durrell's cyclical concept since repeated motifs would be one indication of a cyclical pattern.

Darley does not meet Justine in the same place he met Melissa, but in itself this is significant since it helps point out that Justine is never quite a real being for Darley. He meets Justine in the lobby of a hotel, and Darley's first conversation with Justine is with her mirror image. Darley is not confronted with the "real" Justine but only a reflection of her.

However, Darley does meet his third and final lover, Clea, with whom he undergoes a successful rite of passage, in the same place he met Melissa:

The exact station in place and time where I had once found Melissa, and with such difficulty mustered enough courage at last to enter the place and speak to her. It gave me a strange sense of unreality to repeat this forgotten action at such a great remove of time, like unlocking a door¹¹ which had remained closed and bolted for a generation.

Durrell is careful in his wording to indicate that Darley finds Clea in "the exact station in place and time" that he found Melissa. By beginning the love affair with Clea at the same point from which the affair with Melissa began, Durrell indicates to the reader that a new cycle is about to begin for Darley.

The meeting scenes are not the only indicators of cyclic continuity in The Alexandria Quartet. Durrell's cyclic concept is also shown in the death scenes of both Cohen and Melissa.

¹¹Durrell, Clea, p. 67.

When Cohen is on his death bed, the hospital sends word that he is dying, but Melissa refuses to go to his side:

"I know," she said. "They sent me word from the hospital. But what can I do? I cannot go and see him. He is nothing to me, never was, never will be. . . ." "But if he is dying?" I said. The question was addressed as much to myself as to her. She cried out suddenly and kneeling down placed her head on my knees. "O it is so disgusting! Please do not make me go."¹²

In a similar manner, Darley does not come to Melissa's side when she is dying. By the time he arrives, Melissa is already dead, lying in the same bed in which Cohen died:

The sense of ghostly familiarity which was growing upon me now was due to the fact that we were approaching the little room in which I had visited Cohen when he was dying. Of course Melissa must be lying, in the same narrow iron bed in the corner by the wall.¹³

In much the same manner that Melissa was absent from Cohen's death-bed, Darley is absent from Melissa's side when she dies. And the parallels between the Darley-Melissa love affair and the Melissa-Cohen love affair are evident in another way-- the one-sidedness of both affairs. In the Darley-Melissa relationship, Melissa loves Darley but receives little, if any, love in return. The Melissa-Cohen affair is much the same, since Cohen loves Melissa and she does not reciprocate.

After visiting the hospital twice before to witness deaths, Darley must return once more to the bed where both Cohen and Melissa died. Darley's third and final trip to the hospital

¹²Durrell, Justine, p. 89.

¹³Ibid., p. 215.

is to see Clea. She has been involved in an underwater accident and is hospitalized as a result. Clea, however, does not die; but she does occupy the same bed that Cohen and Melissa did:

A sense of ghostly familiarity was growing upon me. In the past it was here that I had come to see Melissa. Clea must be lying in the same narrow iron bed in the corner by the wall. ("It would be just like real life to imitate art at this point.")¹⁴

Darley repeats the same action three times, indicating a cyclic pattern to his life. However, after the scene with Clea, Darley is able to leave Alexandria and begin writing again. The implication is that Darley has broken out of the destructive cycles he has been trapped in and is ready to embark on new and more constructive cycles.

The cycles involving Darley and his lovers are exemplified not only in the scenes of first meetings and final partings but also in the descriptions of the first time that Darley makes love with two of his three lovers. A feeling of "deja vu" is created by the two scenes.¹⁵ In the first scene, Darley is with Justine:

We turned to each other, closing like the two leaves of a door upon the past, shutting out everything, and I felt her happy spontaneous kisses begin to compose the darkness around us like successive washes of a colour. When we had made love and lay once more awake she said: "I am always so bad the first time, why is it?"

"Nerves perhaps. So am I."

¹⁴Durrell, Clea, p. 247.

¹⁵Moore, p. 166.

"You are a little afraid of me."¹⁶

The second scene involves Clea, and there are some definite parallels between this scene and the Darley-Justine one. However, the mood shifts in the scene with Clea, indicating perhaps that the Clea-Darley relationship, which is of longer duration than the Justine-Darley relationship, is a more meaningful one:

We had sailed into this calm water completely without premeditation, all canvas crowded on; and for the first time it felt natural to be where I was, drifting into sleep with her calm body lying beside me. . . . And when we awoke to find everything silent once more she lit a candle and we lay by its flickering 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?"

"Did you ever imagine this?"

"We must have both done. Otherwise it would not have happened."¹⁷

Another cycle is begun for Darley in the repetition of a love-making scene, but in the Darley-Clea scene there is hope for a constructive, rather than destructive, relationship. Darley's partner is no longer afraid, and love appears to offer a solution to problems instead of being a problem. Darley's relationship with Clea is to be one of sharing and equal giving and receiving of love. The act of sharing love has a therapeutic effect on Darley. After his affair with Clea, Darley is once more able to write and is, in a sense, reborn as an artist. Darley's affair with Clea is totally unlike the one

¹⁶Durrell, Justine, p. 71.

¹⁷Durrell, Clea, p. 88.

with Justine, in which there was not an equal giving and receiving of love.

It is through these love affairs, both destructive and constructive, that Darley ultimately achieves self-integration and wholeness. The destructive relationships are "deaths," and the constructive relationship with Clea acts as a "resurrection" or "rebirth" for Darley. In a study of initiation rites, Mircea Eliade concludes that "modern man" has a genuine need for an initiatory process:

To return to patterns of initiation: we can still recognize them, together with other structures of religious experience, in the imaginative and dream life of modern man. But we recognize them too in certain types of real ordeals that he undergoes--in the spiritual crisis, the solitude and despair through which every human being must pass in order to attain to a responsible, genuine, and creative life. Even if the initiatory character of these ordeals is not apprehended as such, it remains true nonetheless that man becomes himself only after having solved a series of desperately difficult and even dangerous situations; that is, after having undergone "tortures" and "death," followed by an awakening to another life, qualitatively different because regenerated. If we look closely, we see that every human life is made up of a series of ordeals, of "deaths," and of "resurrections." It is true that in the case of modern man, since there is no longer any religious experience fully and consciously assumed, initiation no longer performs an ontological function; it no longer includes a radical change in the initiand's mode of being, or his salvation. The initiatory scenarios function only on the vital and psychological planes. Nevertheless, they continue to function, and that is why I said that the process of initiation seems to be co-existent with any and every human condition.¹⁸

If Eliade's conclusions are correct, then it follows that Darley's love affairs are most certainly his initiatory process.

¹⁸ Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth (New York, 1965), p. 128.

The love affair with Justine provides Darley with a symbolic death, since Darley retreats to the island to recover psychologically after the break-up of their romance. And only by returning to Alexandria and engaging in a successful relationship with Clea can Darley be reborn. Darley experiences an "initiation through Love," and in the affair with Clea, Darley gains knowledge since "woman symbolizes the transcendent intellect, Wisdom."¹⁹ Durrell seems to be implying that only by experiencing the destructive and constructive modes of love can one come to a complete awareness of the self. Darley's awareness of himself is symbolized by his ability to write and create at the end of Clea.

If love is to act as Darley's initiation rite, then Darley must undergo destructive love, or death, and constructive love, or rebirth. Indeed, Darley does experience both modes of love. In the affairs with Justine and Melissa, which contain destructive elements, Darley is shown as a rather fragmented individual with little purpose in life. In psychological terms, he is immature. However, Darley cannot be expected to be mature, since an attainment to maturity is one of the functions of initiation. Chronologically, the first destructive love affair is with Melissa. Although Darley professes love for Melissa, he simply uses her for his own sexual gratification. Feelings of love on Darley's part are missing from their relationship. Their sex is too casual and easy to stand as a

¹⁹Ibid., p. 127.

basis for any sort of lasting love. Darley merely manipulates Melissa into a situation in which his sexual gratification is of paramount concern in the relationship. The sexual freedom they seemingly share is not a liberation from repressed emotions, but rather a manifestation of what some psychologists call "inner conflicts."²⁰ The rather narcissistic, pleasure-seeking sex that Darley gets from Melissa has that quality of making them, in psychological terms, less "fully human."²¹ But it should be remembered that one of the purposes of initiation is to introduce the individual into the "human community," thereby making him more human.²² Since Darley is not fully human at this point, as evidenced by the immature quality of his love affair, it can be assumed that he is still an initiate and not one who has been totally integrated into the community of man.

Darley's initiation process continues with his affair involving Justine. In the Darley-Melissa affair, it was Darley who was the recipient of affection but gave little in return. Darley's role is somewhat reversed in his affair with Justine, since it is he who loves rather passionately and is not loved in return by Justine. Of course Darley believes Justine loves him, at least in the first novel. However, in Balthazar, Darley finds out that Justine loves Pursewarden. As in his affair

²⁰ May, Love and Will, p. 42.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Eliade, Rites and Symbols, p. x.

with Melissa, Darley's narcissistic qualities are displayed with Justine. When he finds out that Justine did not really love him, Darley is hurt not because his love for her is sincere but because his pride is wounded. Darley learns about Justine's love for Pursewarden in Balthazar, but the complete truth about Justine's affairs does not come out until the final novel, Clea. At best, Justine feels indifference for Darley, possibly even contempt. The truth about Justine's affairs is a staggering blow to Darley's ego, but the psychic wounds he receives are part of Darley's initiatory process and help pave the way for his eventual relationship with Clea.

From a structural point of view, Darley's relationships with both Melissa and Justine are flashbacks; therefore, there is a static quality about the affairs. In his affair with Clea, which is seen structurally in the present time, Darley is again able to move forward in time. Darley's release from the bounds of the initiatory "non-time" that Eliade speaks of is signified by his development as an individual and his ultimate return to artisthood in the final pages of Clea. Eliade claims that, in the initiation of modern man, woman signifies "Wisdom," and "Love" is a means of achieving "rebirth."²³ Clea is the woman who offers Darley wisdom and love, and by loving unselfishly Darley is ultimately able to achieve rebirth. Darley and Clea share a relatively unselfish love based not on mutual need but on mutual desire. The relationship between

²³Ibid., p. 126.

Darley and Clea allows for a more complete understanding of the self since they make a mutual attempt at understanding each other. Only by knowing an unselfish love can both Darley and Clea reach self-knowledge. When they achieve self-understanding, as evidenced by their ability to practice their respective arts, they are both free to move into new life cycles. Both Clea and Darley successfully undergo symbolic death, in the form of tragic love affairs, and symbolic rebirth, in the form of meaningful love. Their successful passage through death and rebirth allows them to emerge as mature individuals, and, indeed, maturity is one of the desired results of the initiatory process.

Clea and Darley are able to achieve the fullest maturity of any of the characters in the Quartet. But other characters, such as Pursewarden, also gain a measure of self-knowledge and self-integration and are, therefore, able to reach a certain level of maturity. In the case of Pursewarden, however, maturity is achieved only in death. Like many of the characters in the Quartet, Pursewarden is romantically involved with Justine. Justine acts as a temple priestess to whom men can come and gain knowledge and wisdom. Justine is the "Wisdom" Eliade speaks of. Involvement in a ritual sex act helps to purify the individual and allows for a symbolic rebirth.²⁴ If Pursewarden is to be reborn, he too must undergo the rites of

²⁴Eliade, Cosmos and History, p. 61.

initiation with the temple priestess, Justine. Pursewarden is very much aware of Justine's role when he comments:

"I regard her as a tiresome old sexual turnstile through which presumably we must all pass--a somewhat vulpine Alexandrian Venus. By God, what a woman she would be 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?"²⁵

Justine can then be seen as a latter-day priestess through whom modern man can purge himself and thus be reborn. Justine certainly does not fit the classic mold of a temple priestess, but she does provide the same psychological and ontological function that temple priestesses once did.

Like Darley, Nessim, Clea, and others, Pursewarden must also submit himself to the goddess of love who is embodied in Justine. As opposed to the Justine-Darley relationship, the Justine-Pursewarden affair is one in which Justine exhibits a measure of love, and the object of her affections shows only contempt for her. Pursewarden, who is rather self-centered and narcissistic, uses Justine for his sexual gratification much as Darley used Melissa. According to some psychoanalysts, narcissistic tendencies often manifest themselves in incestuous love. And, in fact, Pursewarden uses Justine to ease his narcissistic leanings, which are evident in his love for his blind sister, Lisa. Where narcissistic tendencies exist, often a close family member becomes the love object since the narcissistic

²⁵Durrell, Balthazar, p. 105.

individual will often choose to love someone in whom he can see himself mirrored.²⁶ This is the case with Pursewarden and his sister, Lisa, who engage in a destructive relationship whose only fruit is a blind child. The child that results from their incestuous love affair dies in infancy, which may indicate the hopelessness of their love. Like Lisa, who is literally blind, Pursewarden and his sister are blind to the destructiveness of their relationship.

It is Pursewarden's love for Lisa, however, which causes him to commit suicide. Pursewarden's suicide is his one unselfish act in the book, and it might indicate that he has achieved a measure of maturity. Ostensibly, Pursewarden kills himself because he has failed in his duties as a British civil servant, and he leaves a suicide note to this effect. But the primary reason that Pursewarden kills himself is to free Lisa from him so that she will be able to marry David Mountolive, for as long as Pursewarden remains alive Lisa cannot marry Mountolive. While Pursewarden lives, Lisa remains in the grips of their incestuous relationship.

Even though Pursewarden suffers in his relationship with Lisa and engages in a sexual union with Justine, he does not attain full maturity. It can be assumed that Pursewarden's initiatory rites in the form of suffering and ritual sex are not wholly successful. However, he does reach a level of

²⁶Violet Staub De Laszlo, editor, The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung (New York, 1959), p. 408.

self-awareness that heretofore he did not possess, and this self-awareness is manifested in the unselfish act of freeing Lisa to marry Mountolive. As with Darley, Pursewarden must endure two destructive relationships before he can feel true love. Ironically, it is only in dying that Pursewarden can express true, altruistic love.

The giving of unselfish love comes easier to one of the more pathetic creatures in the novel, Melissa. It is also Melissa who aids in the rebirth and regeneration of several of the major characters, and her child, fathered by Nessim, is the only child in the Quartet who does not meet some tragic end. Melissa's relationship with Darley has already been discussed, but she is likewise involved in love affairs with Pursewarden and Nessim. Melissa's brief encounter with Pursewarden is partially responsible for his suicide since it is Melissa who innocently tells Pursewarden about Cohen's involvement in the Palestinian plot. With this knowledge, Pursewarden realizes that his friend, Nessim, is actually involved in the plot, a fact that Pursewarden had previously refused to believe. Although the primary reason he kills himself is to free Lisa to marry Mountolive, Pursewarden's awareness that he has failed in his official duties and will have to compromise his friendship with Nessim are also contributing factors. So in a rather macabre and indirect way, Melissa is responsible for Lisa's rebirth through Pursewarden's death. In her

innocence and naturalness, Melissa gives Pursewarden the superficial reason he needs to kill himself and set Lisa free.

Melissa's child, the product of a brief liason with Nessim, is the only child in the Quartet who appears to have a chance for a normal life. Ironically, Darley names the child Justine. But the child is different from her namesake because she has not been corrupted by Alexandria. Darley takes the child with him when he retreats to the island. Therefore, the child spends her early, formative years in an environment that is more conducive to good psychic growth than is Alexandria. When Darley returns to Alexandria, he brings the child, Justine, with him. Nessim and Justine take possession of the child and plan to rear her. There is a measure of hope for both Justine and Nessim in the child. The child represents a new generation and, therefore, a new cycle. The child is untainted by the psychic problems that Alexandria represents, and there is the possibility that she can impart some degree of love to her new parents. Through her seemingly useless existence, Melissa gives new life to Lisa, Justine, and Nessim.

Almost a complete opposite to Melissa in temperament and life style is Clea. Clea is the detached artist who, like Hilda in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Marble Faun, sits in her room apart from the rest of society and concentrates on her art. As an artist, Clea has detached herself from humanity

and, in a sense, is free from involvement with the rest of her society. Clea has not only exerted her individuality, but she has also isolated herself from the community of her fellow human beings. While Clea is certainly one of the more assertive and free characters in the Quartet, Durrell does not see her as being a complete person. She too must experience love in its destructive and constructive modes before she can emerge as a completely self-integrated individual.

Clea's early affairs exemplify her immaturity. She is a friend to almost everyone in Alexandria, but she can feel no depth of passion for anyone. Her first sexual encounter is with Justine. They have a rather brief liason that begins when Justine poses for Clea. In this lesbian encounter, Clea is obviously unable to achieve the "interpersonal creativity" that comes from a male-female relationship. The homosexual, as Fromm puts it, "suffers from the pain of never resolved separateness, a failure, however, which he shares with the average heterosexual who cannot love."²⁷ Although Clea must submit, as others have, to the temple priestess, Justine, their affair suggests that Clea is neither ready nor able to engage in a meaningful man-woman relationship. In Durrellian terms, Clea is stuck in time in that her development is in an arrested state.

Clea's second encounter with love involves Nessim's brother, Narouz. Although he has seen Clea only three times,

²⁷Fromm, p. 28.

Narouz is passionately in love with her. Narouz loves Clea in much the same way that knights in medieval times loved the ladies whose champions they became. Narouz loves Clea from afar, hoping only for a glimpse of her at the annual carnival. Ironically, Clea does not attend the annual carnival, described in Mountolive, but instead stays home alone. This self-imposed isolation from Alexandrian society emphasizes Clea's isolation from all society.

Narouz goes to the carnival hooded in a domino. He hopes to see Clea, but he has another purpose as well--to kill Justine for her unfaithfulness to Nessim. At one of the many balls in the city, Narouz mistakenly kills someone whom he thinks is Justine. Actually, Narouz kills a man named Toto. The mistake occurs because Justine gave Toto her ring by which she was to be recognized. Out of desperation, Narouz flees to Clea's apartment and, because he thinks he has killed Justine, confesses to Clea that he loves her. But Clea is merely disgusted by his announcement:

"How disgusting, how unfair love is! Here I have been loved for goodness knows how long by a creature-- I cannot say a fellow-creature--of whose existence I had been unaware. Every breath I drew was unconsciously a form of his suffering, without my ever having been aware of it. How did this disaster come about? You will have to make room in your thoughts for this variety of the animal. I was furious, disgusted, and wounded in one and the same moment. I felt almost as if I owed him an apology; and yet I also felt insulted by the intrusiveness of a love which I had never asked him to owe me."²⁸

²⁸Durrell, Balthazar, p. 227.

Clea's calm, ordered world is disturbed by Narouz' passionate intrusion. He forces his animal-like nature upon Clea and makes her aware of his existence. Clea does not want to be jarred out of her tranquil state. She seeks to avoid passion and involvement. Narouz' intrusion into her world forces her to face a reality that exists outside her own being. But Clea is still not ready for any true form of involvement. She rejects Narouz' love and cannot, in fact, even feel pity for him. In much the same way that Melissa refused to go to Cohen's side when he was dying, Clea refuses to go to Narouz' side after he has been fatally wounded by assassins. Her words echo Melissa's when she refused Darley's admonition to go to Cohen's death-bed as Clea says:

"What can I do, Nessim? He is nothing to me, never was, never will be. Oh it is so disgusting--please do not make me come, Nessim."

"Of course not. I simply thought as he is dying--"

"But if you think I should I will feel obliged to."

"I think nothing. He has not long to live, Clea."

"I hear from your voice that I must come. O Nessim, how disgusting that people should love without consent!"²⁹

Unlike Melissa, Clea does make an attempt to go to Narouz' side, but she is prevented from reaching him by a flash flood.

Not only does Clea resent Narouz' rather rough intrusion into her life, but she also experiences an inability to paint as a result of the intrusion. Narouz upsets the delicate balance of Clea's life and makes her realize that as a person she is not wholly self-integrated. Like so many of the

²⁹Durrell, Mountolive, p. 282.

characters in the Quartet, Clea does not truly know herself. Narouz' professed love for her brings Clea to a partial realization of her lack of self-knowledge. Narouz is, like Justine, part of the initiation process for Clea. Clea realizes that she must experience love for someone if she is to continue as an artist. Since her artisthood is emblematic of her completeness, Clea offers herself to Pursewarden:

"I cannot think what possessed me except that I was so worried about my painting. It had dried up on me. I couldn't get any further somehow, canvas gave me a headache. I finally decided that the question of my own blasted virginity was the root cause of the business. You know it is a terrible business to be a virgin--it is like not having one's Matric or Bac. You long to be delivered from it yet . . . at the same time this valuable experience should be with someone whom you care for, otherwise it will be without value to your inside self. . . . I decided--guess what? To offer myself grimly to the only artist I knew I could trust, to put me out of my misery."³⁰

However, the cynical Pursewarden, in his typical fashion, rejects her offer:

"My dear Clea," he said, "it would be anyone's dream to take you to bed, and I must confess that in a corner of my mind I have often allowed the thought to wander but . . . dearest angel, you have spoilt everything. This is no way to enjoy you, and no way for you to enjoy yourself. Forgive my laughing! You have effectively spoiled my dream. Offering yourself this way, without wanting me, is such an insult to my male vanity that I simply would not be able to comply with your demand."³¹

After this encounter, Clea comes to the realization that love must be a mutual pact. Both parties must want each other, or love will be unsuccessful. It is left for Amaril to become

³⁰Durrell, Clea, p. 99.

³¹Ibid., p. 100.

Clea's first true lover. Their relationship is described by Clea as being "wounding" but "good" and "positively nourishing."³² Clea learns through this experience what unselfish love is. As a result of the affair, Clea becomes pregnant. Rather than use her pregnancy as an excuse to hold Amaril, Clea undergoes an abortion. The love affair with Amaril prepares the way for Clea to have a complete relationship with Darley, wherein she can know herself and become completely self-integrated.

It is significant that all of Clea's relationships prior to that with Darley are seen in retrospect. Her encounters with Justine and Narouz are described in Justine and Balthazar, and Clea relates her affair with Amaril to Darley in the final book of the Quartet. The importance of viewing Clea's affairs in retrospect is that all these relationships are seen in time past, time that is memory and, therefore, time that is static. Clea, like Darley, has been unable to break out of the cycle within which she has found herself. Only in her relationship with Darley can she again move forward in time. When time begins to move forward for Clea, it signifies her maturity and psychic wholeness.

Although Darley, Pursewarden, and Clea have somewhat fragmented personalities, it is Justine who most graphically represents this predicament. She is the most discussed

³²Ibid., p. 101.

character in the four novels, yet Justine remains the most illusive and mysterious of them all. Darley, Pursewarden, Capodistria, Nessim, Clea, and many others have known her sexually, but none of them really know her. Justine displays a different personality for each. She is, like Alexandria, of a diverse nature.

Her fragmented personality prevents Justine from loving and from feeling sexual satisfaction. Her personality has a psychic block in it caused by her childhood rape at the hands of Capodistria. Because of this block, Justine seeks love but never finds it, and she is unable to give love herself. Her attempts at love are all based on sex. Like many of those who have sex with her, Justine sees herself as merely a sexual object. She hides her true personality and feelings behind a mask of sexuality. Justine's personality is one that is marked by masochism, and her own inadequacies as an individual are manifested in a desire to be used and, at the same time, to use others.³³

In her role as a temple priestess, Justine is used by initiates, but she in turn uses them to feed her own self-destructive tendencies. Justine is the initiator to whom all those seeking maturity must come. She is part of the maturation process, but she herself, as a temple priestess, cannot escape from the destructive cycle in which she is trapped.

³³Fromm, p. 169.

The same destructive patterns are regularly repeated with Justine as the central figure. Like Alexandria, Justine represents a static time from which escape is difficult. She must escape from her role as temple priestess if she is to move forward in time. The Palestinian plot that she and Nessim are involved in gives Justine the necessary thrust to move out of her destructive role. It is the plot which provides Justine with her maturation process.

Justine has married Nessim because of his involvement in the Palestinian plot. She does not really love Nessim, but the excitement of being involved in the intrigues of the plot allows her to attain sexual passion that she has heretofore been unable to achieve. When the plot is discovered, the basis for Justine's relationship with Nessim is gone. Both she and Nessim are left somewhat empty, and they are much like what Rollo May, quoting T. S. Eliot, terms "the hollow men."³⁴ Their existence is empty because neither of them is self-integrated. The Egyptian government's discovery of the Palestinian plot and the subsequent loss of Justine's and Nessim's power and influence force the two of them to seek a deeper self-knowledge. After successfully undergoing their initiation rites, which take the form of the suffering Justine and Nessim undergo as a result of the discovery of the plot, they both can seek love with each other. Although they are not completely

³⁴Rollo May, Man's Search for Himself (New York, 1953), p. 16.

self-integrated at the close of the Quartet, through love, or understanding of each other, Justine and Nessim are on their way to a psychic wholeness which neither had before. Justine has taken on another role by the end of Clea, and, hopefully, her new role as mother to Nessim's child will allow her to begin a new and less destructive cycle.

Of all the major characters in The Alexandria Quartet, David Mountolive seems the least redeemable. He is the typical British civil servant concerned more with duty than true human involvement. As a young man he has an affair with Leila, Narouz and Nessim's mother. Leila is several years Mountolive's senior, but this does not prevent their affair. Leila becomes the one great love of his life, and after Mountolive leaves Egypt they continue to correspond over the years. Because they continue to live in the past, Mountolive and Leila are caught in a static time whose basis lies in the memory of a few brief weeks together.

Through the years apart, Leila and Mountolive continue to hold a view of each other which is not supported by changing reality. Leila's husband dies, she ages, and her once great beauty is marred by smallpox. Mountolive goes from diplomatic post to diplomatic post. He too ages and he becomes rather stuffy and protocol conscious. Mountolive engages in a brief affair with a rather coarse Russian dancer and a child is born as a result. He subsequently abandons his lover and their

child. Over the years Mountolive and Leila change, but in each others' minds they remain the same. Mountolive longs for the day when he will be posted to Egypt so that he can be reunited with Leila. Leila is somewhat apprehensive about seeing Mountolive because she knows her beauty is gone. Instead, she prefers to live with the memory of what passed between them years ago. Both of them are in love with the past and a reality which no longer exists. In this respect, their love is destructive since it has trapped them in time and does not allow them to grow psychically.

Only after returning to Alexandria is Mountolive able to break the destructive cycle which is represented in his love for Leila. When he finally meets Leila again after many years, Mountolive is repulsed by her. The occasion of their meeting centers around Nessim. Leila asks Mountolive to intercede with the Egyptian government on Nessim's behalf since Nessim is in difficulty because of his involvement in the Palestinian plot. Mountolive refuses to help Nessim, and Mountolive's refusal to intervene on behalf of his old friend signifies the breaking of Leila's hold on him. The years Mountolive has spent waiting to be reunited with Leila have served as his initiation process, and now that process is over.

Mountolive has gone through life denying himself the luxury of total involvement with another human being in the hopes that he would one day be able to continue his affair with Leila.

The psychic suffering he experiences because of his self-denial provides Mountolive with the initiation which Eliade sees as necessary for all mankind. Through the years that Mountolive waits in vain for Leila, he does not mature. His immaturity is shown by his inability to enter into any sort of meaningful relationship. However, after being reunited with Leila, Mountolive is ready to achieve a measure of maturity since he realizes just how empty his life has been up to this point:

All of a sudden there seemed nowhere in particular to go. Every impulse, every desire had faltered and faded out. . . . After a long pause, he drove slowly and carefully back to the Summer Residence. . . . He walked from room to room . . . feeling all of a sudden quite lightheaded with loneliness.³⁵

Mountolive's reason for existence had been his dream of being reunited with Leila. After they meet and Mountolive rejects Leila, he must re-examine his reason for being. His re-examination brings Mountolive to a greater awareness of himself and paves the way for his eventual marriage to Lisa, Pursewarden's sister.

With Leila no longer a block to his maturity, Mountolive is able openly to acknowledge his love for Lisa. With Pursewarden dead, the only impediment to Mountolive's marriage to Lisa is her blindness. He feels that a blind wife would be a hindrance to his diplomatic career. Mountolive is ultimately able to overcome his negative feelings about Lisa's blindness

³⁵Durrell, Mountolive, p. 258.

and, in true Romantic fashion, surrenders to emotion. Through what is genuine love for him, Mountolive is finally able to act in an unselfish way by marrying Lisa. And through love, Mountolive grows into a more nearly complete person.

Other characters such as Balthazar, Amaril, and Pombal also experience love and become better people for it. In fact, all those who are touched by love in the Quartet achieve some degree of self-knowledge, psychic growth, self-integration, and completeness. In Durrell's view, love is both destructive and constructive and in so being is a necessary emotion for all humans. Without love, the individual is incomplete and is separated from the rest of the human community. When the individual is able to experience love that heals as well as wounds, then he is able to move out of the destructive cycle imposed by selfish love. Temporally, the individual can move forward, as is the case with Darley and Clea. Only by moving forward in time can a person achieve maturity.

CHAPTER IV

TIME AND REALITY: CHARACTER AND POINT OF VIEW IN THE ALEXANDRIA QUARTET

In Jungian psychology, major emphasis seems to be placed on the individual's need to achieve psychic completeness or wholeness. The striving towards this completeness is often symbolically represented by the number four. In his psychoanalytical work, Jung found that the number four appeared, in one form or another, in the dreams of many patients. Jung concluded that the recurrence of a quaternity in any form in the individual's subconscious signifies a desire to achieve wholeness.¹ There are countless mythological and archetypal symbols which to some degree substantiate Jung's theories about the number four as representative of completeness. One of the most widespread symbols of wholeness is the mandala, which often features a circle within a square. Both of these geometric figures, the circle and the square, suggest wholeness.² Roundness generally symbolizes "a natural wholeness, whereas a quadrangular formation represents the realization of this in consciousness."³

¹De Laszlo, p. 501.

²Jung, Man and His Symbols, pp. 214-216.

³Ibid.

In The Alexandria Quartet, the number four is also quite significant in its symbolic representation of wholeness. There are four novels in the completed Quartet, each of which is an attempt to arrive at truth or reality. Each novel tells the story in a different way, thereby providing the reader with a variety of perspectives. Since events in the novels are seen from many points of view, it is possible to obtain a relatively accurate picture of reality. Therefore, if one is to more fully understand the Quartet, it is necessary to examine how Durrell employs point of view and how his characters see reality within the context of the Quartet.

Many authors have been interested in time and the "memory" of things past.⁴ Proust is notable among these authors, and because of his interest in memory, Proust's writings are what might be termed "impressionistic."⁵ His works are impressionistic in that they record successive moments in time which are extracted from the memory. Therefore, Proust's writings become a record of individual consciousness, and an objective reality does not exist in his works. Instead of an objective reality, the reader is given the personal view of the narrator, whose subjectivity in the telling of events becomes reality. Durrell differs from Proust in that Durrell

⁴E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1927), p. 236.

⁵Ibid., p. 208.

is concerned not only with memory but with the points of view that supply the memory. In his concern with point of view, Durrell is much like Conrad, who in Lord Jim has Marlow attempt to discover the truth about Jim by relating various incidents in Jim's life as told to him by several characters. For Durrell and Conrad, memory becomes not merely a single point of view but rather a variety of impressions with truth as the ultimate goal. Using Durrell's technique may still provide a truth that is subjective and personal, but at least it is a truth that has been turned through more than one cycle. The result allows the reader a chance to evaluate events from several perspectives and arrive at his own view of reality. Thus, the idea of seeing the same events and characters through more than one pair of eyes has the effect of creating an illusion that perhaps the reader is closer to the actual truth than he would be had he been presented only one point of view.

Conrad uses the "flashback" method in Lord Jim, where the past is revealed through stories that others tell Marlow.⁶ Durrell also uses the flashback method, as in Balthazar, where Balthazar's account of events provides most of the narrative. But Durrell also uses other methods for relating his story. Mountolive is a naturalistic novel, where the narrator of Justine and Balthazar becomes merely a character. In Mountolive, time moves in chronological order along a linear path,

⁶Mendilow, p. 54.

and Durrell does not employ the flashback method at all in this work. In *Clea*, the concluding novel of the Quartet, Darley again becomes the narrator, but this time with a difference. In *Clea*, Darley does not relate events buried in the past. Instead, he is narrating events in a present which is moving forward in a more-or-less linear progression of time, and the only flashbacks are related by Clea, who fills Darley in on some of the events that have been happening in Alexandria while he has been gone.

Since events are seen from different perspectives in each of the four novels that comprise the Quartet, it would be wise to look at the novels individually to see how reality is viewed in each. In Justine, the first novel, Darley is attempting to "re-work reality."⁷ The narration is in the first person with Darley, Justine's former lover, as the narrator. Darley has at his disposal three sources from which to try to sort out the truth of his love affair with Justine. He has his own memory, Justine's diary, and a book entitled Moeurs, by Jacob Arnauti, Justine's former husband. From these sources, Darley will try to get at the truth. However, the truth, at least as presented in Justine, is ultimately a truth based almost entirely on Darley's own subjective view of reality, since he relies most heavily on his memory to reconstruct the events surrounding his affair with Justine.

⁷Durrell, Clea, p. 4.

In Justine, Darley is his own point of departure; consequently, he is able to see things only from his point of view. Darley is, in a manner of speaking, the center of his own little universe. The reality that exists for him exists within himself. Truth, for Darley, is the truth that he alone constructs within his mind, and Darley creates a view of Justine and their love affair that does not necessarily exist outside of his own consciousness. Although Darley's view of reality is subjective in Justine, his view is not a result of his wanting to ignore any objective reality that exists outside of himself. On the contrary, Darley is very concerned with objective reality when he states, "I have had to come so far away from it in order to understand it all!"⁸ However, at this point, Darley's view is limited, since he has access to a limited fund of knowledge regarding the past. Therefore, even though Darley strives for objectivity in Justine, his view remains essentially subjective, and it is not until later in the Quartet that reality takes on a more objective appearance when new vistas of truth are opened up for Darley.

In Darley's mind, truth or reality is closely akin to Justine. If Darley learns the truth about Justine, he will have, in certain ways, discovered a deeper truth about himself. This deeper truth is in the form of knowledge that one gains through the initiatory process. Since Justine is part

⁸Durrell, Justine, p. 3.

of Darley's rite of passage, the more he understands about the experience, the closer he is to the truth of the experience. Unfortunately, Justine is little more than a fleeting image, somewhat akin to a dream in Darley's mind. Her personality is illusionary for Darley, like a dream which "nobody--possibly not even, I believe Nessim himself--knew all about . . . with any certainty."⁹ Not only does Justine have an illusive personality, but she also has a multi-faceted personality. She is somewhat like a prism. Her personality is fragmented, and Darley is privy to a limited view of Justine's fragmented personality. Justine is a real, physical entity, but at the same time, she is an illusion in the minds of those whose lives she touches. Justine is an illusion in the sense that she appears differently to different characters. In many ways, she is like the many mirror images in the Quartet:

I remember her sitting before the multiple mirrors at the dressmakers, being fitted for a shark-skin costume, and saying: "Look! five different pictures of the same subject. Now if I wrote I would try for a multi-dimensional effect in character, a sort of prism-sightedness. Why should not people show more than one profile at a time?"¹⁰

No one ever gets a true look at Justine since she never shows her complete personality to anyone. Even the first time Darley sees her, it is not the real Justine he sees but only her reflection. "I had first seen her in the gaunt vestibule of

⁹Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 16.

the Cecil in a mirror,"¹¹ says Darley. And, indeed, Darley never really knows Justine.

Like its namesake, Justine is a vision comprised essentially of memory, and events in the novel are related in the order in which they become significant for the narrator. Justine is a book composed of flashbacks into time past. Although time does not progress in a linear fashion in Justine, but rather in a cyclic pattern with recurring motifs and parallel events, it would still appear that the events of the past are set in a fixed and unalterable way. Darley tells his story of Justine, and the reader naturally assumes that Darley is a reliable narrator. However, despite Darley's attempts at objectivity, his story is still subjective, and events are not fixed and unalterable, as becomes apparent in Balthazar.

In Balthazar, the second novel in the series, the seemingly fixed view of reality is altered for both Darley and the reader. An entirely new set of facts is presented. The same events are looked at from a totally different perspective. This time it is Balthazar who thinks he knows the truth about Justine. After having written the account of his affair with Justine, Darley has sent the manuscript to Balthazar. Balthazar reads the manuscript, adds to it, amends it, and finally returns it to Darley. This "interlinear," as Darley terms it, becomes the basis for the second novel in the Quartet. Like

¹¹Ibid., p. 51.

Justine, Balthazar is a novel comprised mainly of memory; however, in Balthazar, the memory is that of the Alexandrian doctor, and it, therefore, provides an additional perspective. Balthazar is also told by use of the flashback method. Darley is again the narrator, but he uses Balthazar's words as he tries to get at the truth.

Darley copies the interlinear word for word; he even carries it around with him as he walks along the beach on the island he has retreated to. In Darley's mind, the interlinear "presses like a blunt thumb, here and here, always in bruised places."¹² Learning the ultimate truth becomes an obsession for Darley; therefore, he attempts to rework reality with the interlinear as an aid. Darley tries to understand how the truth of the interlinear differs from his own version of reality. Darley creates different layers of reality by superimposing Balthazar's version of events in Alexandria over his own version. Balthazar comments on Darley's attempt to create reality out of the many versions he has of Justine: "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."¹³ Pursewarden also has some ideas about the varying views of reality, as he states:

"Our view of reality is conditioned by our position in space and time--not by our personalities as we like to

¹²Durrell, Balthazar, p. 180.

¹³Ibid., p. 177.

think. Thus every interpretation of reality is based upon a unique position. Two paces east or west and the whole picture is changed."¹⁴

Since Darley now sees reality through eyes other than his own, his position in "space and time" is changed. Darley's position becomes that of himself as well as that of Balthazar.

As a result of his new vision of the truth, Darley discovers some startling information about Justine and his relationship with her. In the first novel, Darley felt that Justine truly loved him but at the same time loved her husband, Nessim. Darley accounts for most of Nessim's and Justine's actions by the premise that Justine is in love with him, Darley. Darley even thinks that Nessim plans to kill him at the annual duck hunt because of the affair that he and Justine are carrying on. Furthermore, Darley thinks that Justine's rather sudden departure for Israel at the close of the first novel is a result of her love for him.

In Balthazar, these views are altered, and Darley is given a new version of reality to work with. In some instances, the new view totally negates what passed as reality in Justine. The most startling thing that Darley learns from the interlinear is that Justine never really loved him. According to Balthazar, Justine felt, at best, indifference for Darley and possibly even contempt. Balthazar's interlinear indicates that Justine loved Pursewarden, and all her actions,

¹⁴Ibid., p. 5.

instead of being determined by her love for Darley, were based on her love for Purswarden.

Although Balthazar claims to know a great deal, at times it is difficult to believe that he knows as much as he claims to. Balthazar asserts that he knows all the characters well and often discusses one character with another. Despite his assertions, Balthazar is no more a reliable narrator than Darley. Balthazar, like Darley in Justine, selects and interprets material. In spite of his lack of reliability, Balthazar does add new dimensions and new layers to the story as already told by Darley. Balthazar's story, despite its subjectivity, does add new information, new ways of looking at past events, and suggests new theories to explain old facts. Hence, with the second novel, the reader is given additional material from which to sort out the truth.

In Mountolive, the third novel in the Quartet, Darley becomes merely another character. Mountolive is, in Durrell's own words, "a straight naturalistic novel."¹⁵ In the third novel, Durrell is striving for the objectivity that is seemingly lacking in Justine and Balthazar. Considering the prevailing attitude among twentieth century writers that complete objectivity is impossible, it is doubtful that Durrell is successful, from a critical standpoint, in achieving his aim of objectivity. However, in Mountolive, Durrell does turn

¹⁵Ibid., Note.

the story through what has traditionally been considered an objective mode. Mountolive is written from the omniscient author point of view and as such presents a totally new perspective on what has been accepted as reality. This new perspective reveals new facts and new truths about events and characters already dealt with. Among the new facts that the reader is exposed to is the knowledge that Justine never loved Darley but that she might possibly have loved Pursewarden. In any event, the real reason she engaged in affairs with both of them was to learn what the British government knew of the Palestinian plot that she and Nessim were involved in. Since Pursewarden worked for the British Foreign Service, Justine hoped to gain information from him. And to cover up her motives for the affair with Pursewarden, Justine had an affair with Darley. Darley's carefully worked-out view of reality, as presented in Justine and Balthazar, is given an added dimension with the accession of Mountolive. The reality of Mountolive is not purely personal and subjective as in the earlier novels, and perhaps Durrell's attempt at objectivity in Mountolive brings the reader a little closer to the "real" truth.

In the final novel, Clea, Darley resumes his position as narrator, and he also returns to Alexandria in a final attempt to discover the truth. Darley's return as the narrator in the final novel suggests that possibly Durrell feels that ultimate

truth is a personal truth. If each individual contains within himself his own reality, then it is this personal reality which is significant and real for the individual. In Clea, as in Justine, Darley relates events as they appear to him. However, there is an added dimension to the final book: time is finally moving forward for Darley and all the other characters in the Quartet. In his narration, Darley is no longer dealing with time-past; instead, he is dealing with time-present. Since the reality that Darley is now dealing with is a reality of the present, it is different from the reality which he created in his own mind while on the island. Although his reality remains personal, it is now a reality tinged with greater self-knowledge and self-awareness, as suggested by the movement forward in time for Darley and others. Because of his experiences, Darley knows more about himself and the world around him. Consequently, he can give a more nearly complete picture of events and come closer to the truth.

In Clea, Darley tries to see and know everything; therefore, he relies not only on his own point of view but on others as well. The most important of these additional points of view is that provided by Pursewarden. Although he is dead throughout most of the Quartet, Pursewarden's presence is profoundly felt. In Balthazar, one of his letters runs to approximately twenty-eight pages. Additionally, Pursewarden's poetry is quoted and continual references are made to his works.

The influence of Pursewarden's point of view is most deeply felt in Clea. His diary becomes central to the final novel and occupies some thirty pages in the book. In his diary, Pursewarden discourses on truth and reality and how they relate to the artist. At one point he comments "that Truth disappears with the telling of it."¹⁶ This is certainly what happened to Darley in both Justine and Balthazar since the story he wrote down was not in fact entirely true.

Pursewarden comments on much more than truth and reality in the Quartet. At one point, Pursewarden even relates his ideas on how a novel should be written:

No, but seriously, if you wished to be--I do not say original but merely contemporary--you might try a four-card trick in the form of a novel; passing a common axis 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 delivre. The curvature of space itself would give you stereoscopic narrative, while human personality seen across a continuum would perhaps¹⁷ become prismatic? Who can say? I throw the idea out.

Pursewarden seems to be speaking for Durrell as he describes what The Alexandria Quartet is--a four-sided work whose goal is to arrive at the truth of the individual personality.

Because Pursewarden functions as more than Durrell's intrusive voice in the Quartet, the dead poet provides another view of reality. Darley seems almost obsessed with the memory of Pursewarden, and this has the effect of keeping Pursewarden alive as a commentator. The added dimension of

¹⁶Durrell, Clea, p. 135.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 126.

Pursewarden's point of view gives Clea and, indeed, the entire Quartet another view of reality and the truth. Through Darley, Pursewarden comes alive in Clea, and while Pursewarden's presence has the effect of creating another layer of reality, this additional layer is far from objective, since in many instances it is Darley's reflections on Pursewarden's writings that the reader gets.

Another point of view is presented in Clea by the eponymous heroine in the novel. Clea's comments and letters are used throughout the Quartet to give an additional angle to the narration. She also paints, and her two most important subjects are Mountolive and Justine. So another aspect of these two characters is seen through the medium of the portrait. Not only does Clea paint, but she lip-reads as well; therefore, she can observe and report various conversations. Additionally, she spends a considerable portion of Clea telling Darley about her love affairs. With the varying points of view presented in Clea, the final novel becomes something of a synthesis for the Quartet, since time once again moves forward in the concluding book, and as a result, a deeper truth is discovered.

Because of the way in which the Quartet is narratively designed, it would appear that Durrell intended the truth to remain partially hidden throughout the first two novels while the characters are locked in a static time. Durrell hides the

reality of his characters in two rather significant ways in Justine and Balthazar--by the use of mirrors and disguises and masks. Even in Mountolive, the straight naturalistic novel, mirrors and disguises and masks are used, suggesting that a totally real view of anything is impossible; therefore, total objectivity is impossible. The mirror imagery begins almost immediately in Justine. Darley sees Cohen's reflection in a mirror and pities and understands him. Justine is viewed and views herself constantly in mirrors. Darley speaks to Pombal's reflection in the barber shop mirror. Melissa quite often stares at herself in the mirror, and both Darley and Nessim speak to their mirror images. And Arnauti reads the blotting-paper image of one of Claudia's letters in a mirror.

The mirror images reveal additional facets of the personalities of the characters, and the images also serve as a device for keeping true personalities hidden. In the first three novels, much of the communication between characters is through their mirror images and not through the real person. Pursewarden even leaves a death message in shaving soap on a mirror. In Clea, Darley is finally able directly to confront many of the characters. By confronting them and not their mirror images, Darley is better able to know them and, consequently, come closer to a vision of reality. Ironically, Leila and Narouz refuse to look at themselves in a mirror. What is for others an illusion is harsh reality to each of them, since their

mirror images reveal to them their disfigurements--Leila's smallpox scars and Narouz' harelip.

Durrell's use of masks and disguises serves to hide the true identity and, in some cases, the true nature of many of the characters. The velvet domino hides some of the celebrants at the annual carnival in Alexandria. The domino serves the purpose of hiding the wearer and allows him freedom of action. While wearing the domino, Narouz has no harelip, and it does not matter that Semira has no nose. Justine is able to slip away from one of the many balls during the carnival because of the anonymity the domino gives her. The disguise of the domino is even responsible for Narouz killing Toto. Scobie also has his disguise. Periodically, he dresses up like a woman. This rather peculiar habit ultimately causes his death because he is ignobly kicked and beaten to death by a group of sailors who discover him in his disguise. Even in death, Scobie's true self is hidden from the world. He is revered as the Moslem saint, El Scob. Scobie's entombment as a saint is a further disguise of his true personality.

It is Durrell's purpose in The Alexandria Quartet to examine personality, reality, and truth in as many ways as possible. By looking at the many different views of reality, the individual consciousness can form its own view of reality, and this ultimately becomes personal truth. According to Durrell a "precise knowledge of the outer world becomes an

impossibility. This is so because we and the outer world (subject and object) constitute a whole."¹⁸ Durrell goes on to say:

It seems at least conceivable that what is true of perceived objects may also be true of perceiving minds; just as there may be a corresponding picture of consciousness. When we view ourselves in space and time our consciousnesses are obviously the separate individuals of a particle-picture, when we pass beyond space and time (presumably into the continuum which is formed of a mixture of both) they may perhaps, form ingredients of a single continuous stream of life.¹⁹

What Durrell seems to be saying here is that the individual is made up of many different perceptions of himself. These perceptions come not only from the individual but from others as well. If any ultimate truth is to be arrived at, then all the perceptions of the individual must be examined, and this is what Durrell has done in The Alexandria Quartet.

¹⁸Durrell, Key, p. 30.

¹⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER V

ART AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN

THE ALEXANDRIA QUARTET

In The Alexandria Quartet, art is not something to be pursued for its own sake. As Durrell presents it, art is one of the many roads to achieving full consciousness and complete awareness for the individual. In many ways, the creative process is symbolically representative of psychic wholeness. Like love, then, art in the Quartet serves a regenerative function. The function of art and the artist in this sense is articulated rather succinctly by Jung:

In itself, an archetype is neither good nor evil. It is morally neutral, like the gods of antiquity, and becomes good or evil only by contact with the conscious mind, or else a paradoxical mixture of both. . . . There are many such archetypal images, but they do not appear in the dreams of individuals or in works of art unless they are activated by a deviation from the middle way. Whenever conscious life becomes one-sided or adopts a false attitude, these images "instinctively" rise to the surface in dreams and in the visions of artists and seems to restore the psychic balance, whether of the individual or of the epoch.

In this way the work of the artist meets the psychic needs of the society in which he lives, and therefore means more than his personal fate, whether he is aware of it or not.¹

Whenever the artist is able satisfactorily to practice his craft in The Alexandria Quartet, a measure of psychic

¹Carl G. Jung, The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature (London, 1966), p. 104.

wholeness and self-integration has been achieved by him. The creative process restores the proper "psychic balance" to the individual, thereby fulfilling its regenerative function. It follows that the inability to create artistically is a reflection on the society. Pursewarden, in his typically cynical fashion, accurately defines Durrell's Alexandrian society and its artists when he states: "Nothing stands in the way of this Ideal Commonwealth, save that in every generation the vanity and laziness of the artist has always matched the self-indulgent blindness of the people."² Darley and Clea, before they attain artisthood, are reflections of the static quality in Alexandrian society. Neither of them can creatively practice his craft throughout most of the Quartet. Only by undergoing arduous initiation rites can either of them achieve full artisthood. When they are finally able to create again, Clea and Darley are no longer a part of the destructive Alexandrian society and, therefore, no longer reflect the destructive aspect of the community. However, in order to understand more fully the role of art, the creative process, and the artist in The Alexandria Quartet, it will be necessary to examine those who, in some form or another, are involved in the creative process.

There are four writers in the four novels: Johnny Keats, Arnauti, Pursewarden, and Darley. There is only one painter, Clea. The writers in the Quartet exemplify the role of the

²Durrell, Clea, p. 131.

artist as a reflection of his society, and their experiences in the society underscore the regenerative qualities of art. Arnauti, as the author of Moeurs, is a negative example of how the regenerative properties of art and the creative process should work. Arnauti is a psychiatrist who was once married to Justine. Arnauti has psychoanalyzed himself, and he proceeds to do the same with Justine. He never has any real depth of love for Justine; instead, Arnauti merely uses her as a subject to be studied and analyzed. Unlike Darley, Arnauti begins life with Justine from a negative, rather than positive, standpoint. Arnauti learns too late that Justine can be "loved" or "ignored" but not analyzed.³ As a result of his attitude towards her, Arnauti's initiative process with Justine is unsuccessful as exemplified by what results--Moeurs. Moeurs is a psychological novel with the protagonist based on Justine. Because of the cold, analytical approach that Arnauti takes in writing the novel, the work falls short of having literary significance. As a work of art, Moeurs is a failure, and it does not serve the regenerative function that art often does for those involved in its creation. Arnauti's lack of success in understanding the purpose of his relationship with Justine and, likewise, the purpose of art is directly responsible for his downfall as an individual. Arnauti is unable to expunge his basic coldness towards others

³Friedman, p. 97.

and, consequently, finds he cannot enter into meaningful relationships, which are a sign of psychic wholeness for those involved in them. The failure of Arnauti's art symbolizes his failure as an individual.⁴

Opposed to Arnauti is Johnny Keats, who in a positive way epitomizes the regenerative function of art and the creative process. Keats exemplifies how experience taken in a proper context can alter a person for the better and how this experience can further manifest itself in a creative way, which for Keats is in writing. Keats begins as a "shabby journalist," who is rather distant from full artisthood.⁵ His talents are somewhat limited, and it is obvious that Keats is not a born artist. In essence, he is a "non-artist," who is shaken into awareness by active service in the war. For Keats the war serves as "shock-therapy," which jolts him into a greater sense of being than he had heretofore enjoyed.⁶ Keats' participation in the desert campaigns of North Africa acts as an initiatory process for him and helps transform him, both mentally and physically. After his transformation, Keats is a person who understands life more fully, has more humanity, and can successfully create art.

⁴It is ironic that Arnauti fails to achieve even a measure of self-integration, since he is a psychiatrist and deals with psychic problems.

⁵Durrell, Clea, p. 163.

⁶G. S. Fraser, Lawrence Durrell: A Critical Study (New York, 1968), pp. 151-152.

The change in Keats becomes apparent when he is asked by Pursewarden's widow to write a book about the dead author. She wants the book written in such a way so that it discloses the unsavory details of Pursewarden's life. Lisa, Pursewarden's sister, is quite worried about the impending book because she is afraid the affair with her brother will be revealed and her chance for happiness with Mountolive ruined. Lisa entreats Darley to try to find out whatever he can about the book, and he agrees to do so. Darley has not seen Keats for some time, and before meeting him in an attempt to gain information about the book, Darley feels little but contempt for the journalist:

Keats! I thought to myself as I hurried down the street towards the flat; he was also to play his part in this shadowy representation, this tableau of the artist's life. For it is always a Keats that is chosen to interpret, to drag his trail of slime over the pitiful muddled life out of which the artist, with such pain, recaptures these strange solitary jewels of self-enlightenment. After those letters it seemed to me more than ever necessary that people like Keats should if possible be kept away from interfering in matters beyond their normal concerns.

It is to the journalist's credit that Darley is surprised when they meet. Darley has failed "to take into account the operations of Time" on Keats.⁸ He finds that Keats has changed, and Darley's meeting with him turns out "to be as unexpected as everything else about the city."⁹ Keats is totally

⁷Durrell, Clea, p. 169.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

transformed from his former self, and Darley describes him as a "Greek god."¹⁰ Keats bears no resemblance to Darley's memory of him. But the physical transformation that Keats has undergone is merely a superficial indication of the total change that he has experienced with the passage of time and the war. Darley learns from him that Keats has no intention of writing a book about Pursewarden. Keats has refused to write the story out of respect for Pursewarden's memory. In a sense, Keats has reached true artisthood since he will no longer write a story for the sensationalism contained in it. Keats has matured, and in his maturation he has gained some scruples. Even more surprising is the fact that Keats knows he has undergone a transformation; he comments on himself:

"The most unaccountable and baffling thing. It has made a man of me, as the saying goes. More, a writer! My soul is quite clear. I suppose you could regard me as permanently disfigured! I have begun it at last, that bloody joyful book of mine. Chapter by chapter it is forming in my old journalist noddle--no, not a journalist's any more, a writer's."¹¹

As a writer and not a journalist, Keats is a new man. He is no longer merely a recorder of events, but he is now a creator of art. Keats is a more complete individual in both a physical and mental sense. Whether or not the war has helped Keats mature is questionable, but the fact remains that he was involved in the war and he has changed for the better.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 170.

¹¹Ibid., p. 173.

In his new role as a writer, Keats is a rejuvenated individual, and his rejuvenated status is an outward indication of his psychic maturity, since only a mature individual can create.

Unlike Keats, Pursewarden is one who seems to be a born artist, and it is as an artist that his presence is deeply felt throughout the entire Quartet. Pursewarden's role as an artist is continually alluded to in much of the Quartet, and it is primarily in this capacity that the reader is exposed to him. Pursewarden's poetry is quoted throughout the Quartet, and excerpts from his notebook entitled "My Conversations with Brother Ass" occupy a central part in the final novel. In the excerpts from his notebook, it is Pursewarden the artist who dominates.

Despite his presence as an artist and as a proponent of creativity, Pursewarden ultimately fails to achieve full artist-hood. Pursewarden remains a somewhat static character who is locked in time and does not show any appreciable emotional growth during the course of the Quartet. The only sign of regeneration in Pursewarden is his killing himself to free Lisa to marry Mountolive. Pursewarden's greatest artistic achievements, which are the letters to his blind sister, Lisa, are destroyed after Darley reads them. Even though Darley considers the letters a literary masterpiece, they are lost forever to posterity since it is the cynical Pursewarden's request that the letters be destroyed. Only Darley, Lisa, and Mountolive

are privy to these "ferocious, sulky, brilliant, and profuse" works of art.¹² Since these letters are lost to the world, Pursewarden cannot, and does not, fulfill his obligation as an artist to act as the "spokesman of the spirit of his age."¹³ Therefore, despite his creative talents, Pursewarden fails as an artist.

If it is not Pursewarden's fate to achieve full maturity, what then is his function in the Quartet? His great masterpiece must remain unread by the public because of the harm it could do to Lisa, and the other works Pursewarden leaves behind are not adequate to give him the status of a completely mature artist. What Pursewarden does do is restore a "psychic balance" to his society. That is to say, he shows the society its excesses and failures through his writings. Additionally, Pursewarden somewhat epitomizes his epoch. Like the times he lives in, Pursewarden is cynical and uncertain. His actions are not governed by any of the normal restraints of society, as evidenced by his affair with his sister. Pursewarden is very much like the Alexandrian society he lives in, which is amoral in many ways. Even more important, Pursewarden reminds society just what the function of art and the artist is:

Art, like a skilled masseur on a playing-field, is always standing by to help deal with casualties; and just as a masseur does, its ministrations ease up the tensions of the psyche's musculature. That is why it always goes for

¹²Ibid., p. 166.

¹³Jung, Man and His Symbols, p. 250.

the sore places, its fingers pressing upon knotted muscles, the tendon afflicted with cramp--the sins, perversions, displeasing points which we are reluctant to accept. Revealing them with its harsh kindness it unravels the tensions, relaxes the psyche. . . . Art is the purifying factor, merely.¹⁴

So Pursewarden's purpose lies not in achieving full maturity as an artist but in reminding others just what art should do. While Pursewarden does not attain the sought-after goal of full maturation, he does help point the way for others. Although Pursewarden remains static as a creative being, he helps Darley and Clea see what it is they must do to reach full artisthood, and the key is found in Pursewarden's notebook:

The fact of an artist being born affirms and reaffirms this in every generation. The miracle is there, on ice so to speak. One fine day it will blossom: then the artist suddenly grows up and accepts the full responsibility for his origins in the people, and when simultaneously the people recognise his peculiar significance and value, and greet him as the unborn child in themselves, the infant Joy! I am certain it will come.¹⁵

And with Pursewarden helping to point the way, Darley and Clea ultimately do achieve full maturity as artists.

Through most of each of the four books in the Quartet, Clea's development as an artist is arrested. Her inability to mature as both an artist and an individual keeps her locked in an atemporal present.¹⁶ Only when she is able to create again near the conclusion of Clea is there an indication that she has reached full maturity. In the case of Clea, the

¹⁴Durrell, Clea, p. 133.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁶See Note 7, p. 42.

process towards complete artisthood is a long and painful one. Her journey begins when she is confronted with the fact that Narouz, Nessim's brother, loves her. His animalistic display of emotion in revealing his feelings towards her only precipitates revulsion in Clea. Narouz' declaration of love also triggers an inability to paint on Clea's part. Clea finally attributes her inability to paint to her virginity, which she tries vainly to lose with Pursewarden. Only after she has an affair with Amaril and an abortion is Clea again able to paint. Although Clea is able to paint again after the affair, she still has not reached a state of full maturity since she has not experienced true love in the form of equal giving and receiving of love with another human being. Clea does not reach full maturity until after her relationship with Darley and the loss of a hand.

Darley and Clea have been friends for many years, but it is not until Darley returns to Alexandria after being on his island that they become lovers. Their affair is significant because it breaks with the past when neither of them had been participants in love relationships that involved equal giving and receiving of love. Unfortunately, their love turns sour. Clea becomes irritable; she and Darley quarrel, and they decide to separate. Darley determines he must give Clea "the time and space necessary to . . . what?"¹⁷ What, he does not

¹⁷Durrell, Clea, p. 231.

know, but he knows they must part. Darley manages to secure a position at a relay station on his island. He hopes the separation will do both himself and Clea some good and that they can ultimately get back together.

Before Darley departs, he plans an outing with Balthazar and Clea on an island that Darley and Clea have discovered. The island and the pool near it where they swim are laden with symbolism. They call the island "Narouz' island" since they determine that Narouz used to come here before his death. The pool is the burial place of seven Greek soldiers, and there is also an ancient sunken ship in the pool. It is here, where symbols of death abound, that Clea will undergo her near-death, which in turn will allow her to be symbolically reborn.

It is Balthazar who is inadvertently responsible for Clea's near death. He and Darley are sitting in a boat while Clea swims underwater in the pool. Balthazar accidentally discharges a speargun, and the spear strikes Clea in the hand and lodges itself in the sunken ship. Thus, Clea is pinned to the ship underwater and is unable to return to the surface. Significantly, it is Narouz' speargun which is responsible for Clea's accident. Narouz was originally responsible for triggering Clea's inability to function as an artist, and now he is indirectly responsible for the event that will bring about her rebirth as an artist. Darley dives into the pool to try to save Clea, but he must cut off her hand in order to free her.

Darley acts as the instrument that severs Clea's useless member, and he also literally breathes life back into her when he gives her artificial respiration after raising her from the water.

In a very real way, Clea must be separated from her useless hand so that she can be made whole again, both psychically and physically. And since an initiatory process often involves ritual or symbolic death, Clea must almost die in order to be reborn. It is Darley who saves Clea from death; therefore, it can be said that Clea is saved with love. Later Clea is fitted with an artificial hand that makes her complete both as a person and as an artist:

"Of course I was frightened and disgusted by it at first, as you can imagine. But I have come to respect it very much, this delicate and beautiful steel contrivance which lies beside me so quietly on the table in its green velvet glove! Nothing falls out as one imagines it. I could not have believed myself accepting it so completely--steel and rubber seem such strange allies for human flesh. But the hand has proved itself almost more competent even than an ordinary flesh-and-blood member! In fact its powers are so comprehensive that I am a little frightened of it. It can undertake the most delicate of tasks, even turning the pages of a book, as well as the coarser ones. But most important of all--ah! Darley I tremble as I write the words--IT can paint!"¹⁸

Darley is unlike the other major characters in the Quartet in that he undergoes no physical disfigurement. All his wounds are internal and psychic in nature. Clea's love for Darley helps the wounds to heal, but during his relationship with Clea, Darley does not create, nor is he in the proper frame of

¹⁸Ibid., p. 271.

mind to create. Although he is moving forward in time, his artistic endeavors remain in a static state of being, as they have been since his affair with Justine. Darley needs the love that Clea has provided him in order that he might be reborn as an artist, but he must be free of involvement so that he can, as a single self, participate in the creative process again. In a sense, Darley symbolically frees himself from Clea when he cuts off her hand in the underwater pool. The cutting off of Clea's hand signifies the separation that Darley and Clea will soon experience in their personal relationship. Both Darley and Clea are able to create again only after they have severed their relationship and are operating independently of each other.

After Darley leaves Clea, he returns to the island where he retreated after the affair with Justine, thus coming full circle and completing a cycle. Darley's return to the island is significantly different from his first arrival there. Time is now moving forward for him, and it would appear that it will continue to do so. Darley has completely broken out of the destructive cycle that Alexandria and Justine represented to him, and he has been rejuvenated as an individual and as an artist. Once again he is able to write:

Yes, one day I found myself writing down with trembling fingers the four words (four letters! four faces!) with which every story-teller since the world began has staked his slender claim to the attention of his fellow-men. 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!¹⁹

¹⁹Ibid., p. 275.

CONCLUSION

How successful has Lawrence Durrell been in The Alexandria Quartet? In order to answer that question, it would be prudent to reiterate briefly what this examination has dealt with and comment on the success of the Quartet as a whole in relationship to the various features of it that have herein been analyzed.

The Alexandria Quartet is, among other things, an attempt by Durrell to present his ideas about space and time. Many of Durrell's ideas come from modern theories of time, notably Einstein's theory of relativity, but Durrell's ideas also parallel those of many contemporary psychologists, psychiatrists, philosophers, and literary figures. Essentially, Durrell sees actual or clock time as having little significance. The only significant time for Durrell is that which the individual experiences. Time, in Durrell's view, is significant only within the context of the individual's consciousness, and because of the way Durrell views time, time is relative.

In order to help one understand Durrell's concepts regarding time, this investigation has examined time as it is seen in the twentieth century by various scientists, writers, and philosophers. The opening chapter focuses first on the modern view of time as seen from a scientific point of view,

which is a view of time that is largely contrary to previous ones. In the twentieth century, time is looked upon as relative. This relative approach to time is examined as dealt with by many twentieth century writers. What emerges from this examination is the essential idea that clock time is no longer important. What is important is the relationship of time and the self, since they are inseparable for the individual as Durrell sees him. Time and the self merge into a single entity, and it is important to deal with both if one is to understand the individual as Durrell interprets him.

The Alexandria Quartet, then, is Durrell's attempt to combine space, time, and the individual into what he calls a "continuum." He divides the Quartet into four separate novels that can be read singly or as a whole. When looked at as a unit, four distinctive features of the Quartet emerge as significant and worthy of study. This investigation has been based on a study and analysis of these four features: setting, love, character and point of view, and art and the creative process.

In setting, Durrell's work centers around Alexandria, a city which represents static time for Darley and others in the Quartet. But two other locales, the desert and Darley's island, are also significant. All three places represent static time, and it is only near the end of the final book, Clea, that time begins to move forward for some of the characters in Alexandria

and finally for Darley on his island. What is important in looking at Durrell's use of setting is to keep in mind that he wants his settings to evoke a sense of timelessness and therefore to emphasize the static quality of the characters who populate the various localities in the novels. Setting is a significant feature of the Quartet because it does what Durrell intended it to do. Alexandria, the desert, and Darley's island all stand as reminders that there is little emotional development in the characters throughout much of the four novels, and therefore there is no movement forward in time. Only after breaking free of the destructive cycle that Alexandria represents can the protagonist, Darley, be completely whole and move forward in time.

Chapter Three focuses on love and the importance of love in the development of the individual. Love dominates the Quartet, and it does so for a very good reason. Durrell apparently sees love as part of the initiatory process that individuals must successfully undergo if they are to be completely mature. Modern man no longer has the formalized initiation rites that many past societies possessed and which some present day primitive societies still possess. Consequently, love has replaced the ritualized initiation rite or rite of passage. Since initiation rites often involve some form of ordeal and even maiming, the love relationships in the Quartet also involve ordeals for those participating in them. The wounds resulting

from the initiation through love are not always physical and are most often psychic. Durrell's point seems to be that one must experience love in order to become psychically whole, but only by entering into a relationship of equal giving and receiving can one truly become a mature individual. Durrell's point is emphasized rather emphatically throughout the four novels, and it is only those characters who are able to enter into fulfilling human relationships who ultimately mature. In order to express his views on love and integrate these views with his ideas on time, Durrell keeps his characters in an emotionally static time until they have experienced love with an equal share of giving and receiving. What Durrell has done, and rather successfully, is combine time, love, and the individual in a composite view of one of man's essential predicaments: the inability of many people to enter into meaningful human relationships.

Although love and its effect on the individual are at the core of the Quartet, there are other features which Durrell sees as significant. Chapter Four focuses on two of these less obvious but no less important features, character and point of view, which are closely inter-related in the Quartet. Durrell is certainly existential in that he places the individual at the center of all experience. In so doing, Durrell confronts a basic problem that many other twentieth century writers have also dealt with. This problem is that if the individual is at the center of all experience and therefore at

the center of his own little universe, then an objective view of reality is virtually impossible. To put it another way, reality, as Durrell sees it, no longer exists outside the individual, and all reality becomes subjective in the Durrellian view. To compensate for this lack of objectivity, Durrell tells the story in the Quartet in a variety of ways. He uses memory, diaries, novels, flashbacks, and even a straight naturalistic novel to tell essentially the same story in numerous ways. His purpose in doing this is to come as close as possible to the truth. Like Einstein, Durrell seems convinced that there is no such thing as an objective reality, but Durrell strives to come as close as possible to some sort of objectivity. Hence, the Quartet takes the form it does, and each of the four novels presents a separate picture of reality. While Durrell may not have achieved the desired goal of complete objectivity in telling a story, a feat which he thinks impossible, he does make a concerted and genuine effort to turn the story through several modes, thereby giving the reader more than one way of looking at a story. If nothing else, Durrell's method creates the illusion that one is closer to the truth than one would be had only one point of view been presented.

The penultimate chapter deals with art and the creative process. Art, like love, serves a regenerative function in Durrell's view. The ability to successfully create is an

indication of maturity. Durrell also sees the artist as a spokesman for his society. But more than a spokesman, the artist is representative of the culture in which he lives. Therefore, throughout much of the Quartet, the artists are unable to create because they live in a static society. Only after breaking the hold of the static society can the artist create and again move forward in time. Art becomes an outward manifestation of an individual's having undergone his initiatory process and emerged psychically whole. It is significant that the two artists, Clea and Darley, do not create until the very end of the Quartet. Durrell seems to be implying that new life cycles are beginning for each of them, and the events throughout the Quartet have served as their rite of passage. Durrell's message seems clear. Without the artist, a society is doomed, and likewise the individual is doomed. But Durrell is no pessimist, and hope is evident in the creative forces that emerge from Clea and Darley at the close of the Quartet.

Durrell set himself a mammoth task in attempting to deal with many complex issues in the Quartet. It is to his credit that he succeeds so well; the Quartet is mammoth in scope. But despite the sheer volume of the novel, Durrell knows he is not finished. The ending of the Quartet suggests that Durrell might possibly advocate a return to the traditional mode of story telling, since he has Darley beginning his new work with "once upon a time." This idea is dispelled by the

"Workpoints" at the end of Clea. Durrell injects the "Workpoints" to indicate that the Quartet is not finished and could, in fact, go on indefinitely. Much like Einstein's universe, Durrell's work is both finite and infinite. Durrell apparently wants his novel to be open-ended in much the same way that life is open-ended. Durrell's attempt at seeing time as cyclic and relative is probably as successful as a writer could make it within the context of the written page. Durrell is aware that art is merely an imitation of life and that life is too varied, complex, and intangible to deal with wholly from a literary standpoint, and it is because of this awareness that Durrell's Quartet is as successful as any literary undertaking can be.

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