CHARACTERS AND THE CITY IN THE ALEXANDRIA QUARTET

by

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Date April 30, 1965.
The Alexandria Quartet by Lawrence Durrell has received great notice from critics both as a distinguished work of art in its own right and as an indication of a new development in contemporary literature. Particular interest has been shown in Durrell's techniques of characterization and in his handling of point of view in these novels. My object has been to analyze Durrell's concept of the psyche and to show how it gives rise to his techniques of characterization and to his handling of point of view. In analyzing Durrell's concept of the psyche, I have tried to show how this concept has been influenced by the writings of the German psychologist and doctor, Georg Groddeck, and by the concept of relativity which has had so profound an influence not only on the physical sciences but on many other areas of human thought. Durrell believes that this concept of relativity must necessarily alter our view of the nature of the human psyche and that as a result the traditional view of the psyche as a separate and stable entity existing distinct from the rest of the world and
subject in the main to the dictates of a conscious personal will must be superceded. The view of the human psyche presented in The Alexandria Quartet is strikingly like that of Groddeck, and throughout the novels Durrell stresses the supreme importance of the powers of the imagination, powers which Groddeck identified with the It and which both he and Durrell consider as alien to the ego and inhibited by man's ratiocinative faculty. But the idea of free will has traditionally been linked with the ego; will has been thought of as a conscious function. To anyone who retains this view of the will, Durrell's characters inevitably appear as willless people whose lives are in every instance directed by forces beyond their control. My initial study of Durrell's imagery (see Chapter II) substantiates this claim. However, a further analysis of Durrell's imagery leads one to modify this view of the characters. It becomes apparent that Durrell conceives of will not as a conscious function in man but as a function of the imaginative powers that belong to man's unconscious being. Freedom then becomes a matter of the subjection of the ego to the imaginative life, and what looks initially like a deterministic account of human life is actually an account of how the
human being may, and in some cases does, achieve true freedom by a full submission of conscious self to the powers of the imagination. Such submission is most clearly shown in the lives of those characters who strive for artisthood and most notably in the life of Darley. The role of the City is important in the characterization, because in various ways it represents the powers of the imagination. Durrell depicts the nature of the human psyche by showing the necessary and inevitable conflict between ego and imagination and by showing how this conflict can and should lead to an increase in imaginative power. In doing this Durrell presents three distinct but related views of his characters: the view of man-within-Larger Man, the view of the City as identical with Grodeck's It and of the characters as egos, and the view of the City as the only character in the Quartet. This last view of the characters may prove to be Durrell's most notable technical achievement in these novels, for here, with his technique of elaborate "prism-sightedness," he presents the human psyche in unusual depth and detail.
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"The sort of pattern we make should be of interest to someone; or is it just a meaningless display of coloured fireworks, the actions of human beings or of a set of dusty puppets which could be hung up in the corner of a writer's mind?"

(from Clea)
When Darley, the struggling novelist and narrator of *The Alexandria Quartet*, reveals to Clea that he is considering writing a book of criticism, she slaps him full across the mouth. That in itself is a powerful deterrent to anyone approaching the *Quartet* with intent to analyze and, if possible, clarify some of the strands of imagery and thought in this remarkable work. However, I take courage from the fact that Durrell himself has seen fit to devote time and energy to the appraisal and evaluation of other people's writings, notably in his *Key to Modern Poetry* which is in itself, surely, proof that such endeavour is on occasion worthwhile. To be sure, the critical approach to literature is at most a "second best" approach, the ideal being a direct apprehension compounded of sensuousness and intuition. ("It is a great pity", says Durrell in *Key to Modern Poetry*, "that we cannot inhale poems like scents ....") Nevertheless, the critical approach has its uses: it enables one arbitrarily to arrest the flux of an artistic experience and concentrate upon the still image, the details that go to making the whole. The attempt to arrive at a conceptual syntax is both useful and constructive when it is a supplement to
the direct experience of the work of art, rather than the substitute for such experience.

Well then, where is one to begin with The Alexandria Quartet? As I have chosen to deal with the presentation of character in these novels, it seems reasonable to begin with one of the ideas that Durrell emphasizes most in Key to Modern Poetry when speaking of the characteristically modern in today's literature: the contemporary idea of the psyche. Durrell discusses this at length, relating it to the concept of relativity which is coming to affect not only the physical sciences but all areas of contemporary thought. The writer Arnauti, a character invented by Durrell and much quoted, though he never actually appears in the Quartet, puts it most succinctly:

"For the writer people as psychologies are finished. The contemporary psyche has exploded like a soap-bubble under the investigations of the mystagogues. What now remains to the writer?"

That is, the idea of personality as a distinct and stable entity, subject in the main to the dictates of a conscious personal will--this idea has been questioned if not disproved by psychology as it has developed since Freud. That, at any rate, is Durrell's conviction.
Durrell has clearly indicated the source that influenced him in forming this view of the psyche: it is not so much Jung as the little-known German psychologist and doctor, Georg Groddeck (1866-1934). This man, a brilliant doctor who made much use of psychoanalysis in his own work of healing, remained throughout his career outside the mainstream of medical practice based, as that practice was, upon a devotion to study of the external causes of disease. Now it is the philosophy upon which that practice was based that has so much interested Durrell--though perhaps "philosophy" is not quite the right word to use when dealing with Groddeck. Certainly his is a philosophy without the strict concern for completeness and logical inter-dependence of parts within the whole that one associates with philosophical systems. Groddeck had a deep and abiding distrust of all systematizing--a distrust Durrell seems to share. He was always aware of the alarming ease with which living thought can be reduced to a system of deadening concepts, to the dogma which then becomes a formidable obstacle to the man in search of further understanding. He himself refused to tidy his ideas into a "system" and discouraged would-be disciples from trying to do so. Perhaps right here is the chief reason for his having been so long neglected
as a thinker with something of importance to say. Those of Groddeck's books that have appeared in English, some in abridged form, have long been out of print, except for the limited circulation of The Book of the It among medical students, and one wonders how Durrell came across him in the first place. But come across him he did, and was so much impressed by what he found that he once did a critical study of Groddeck for Horizon's "Men of Genius" series and devoted an entire chapter in his own Key to Modern Poetry to a presentation of Groddeck's ideas as being among the most distinctly modern and enlightening of contemporary thought. This is not to say that Durrell sees in Groddeck a man who breaks with all previous thinking. On the contrary, Durrell finds him "a philosopher whose It-concept is positively ancient Greek in its clarity and depth" and he links him with Lao-tse and the teachings of ancient Taoism, but he sees in Groddeck's philosophy an invigorating liberation from the rational, causality-based thinking which has dominated in the western world since Descartes and which, Durrell believes, has succeeded only in leading western man into a philosophic dead-end. Hence Durrell's relative disregard of Freud, whom he regards as hearkening back to
the nineteenth century and Darwin in his emphasis on the ego, the conscious I, as being a vital and active part of a stable and separate entity, the total psyche. For Durrell this view of the psyche, despite the deep insights it has afforded modern man, is limited because based on "the natural belief in causality." Here is what he says in his article in *Horizon*:

> The sciences of the day have devoted almost the whole of their interest to the outward cause; they have not as yet succeeded in escaping from the philosophic impasse created by the natural belief in causality, and side by side with this a belief in the ego as being endowed with free-will. In all the marvellous pages of Freud we feel the analytical intellect pursuing its chain of cause—and effect; if only the last link can be established, the whole pattern will be made clear. Yet for Groddeck such a proposition was false ....

What, then, are Groddeck's ideas on this subject? In his critical discussions of the psychologist, Durrell touches on what to him are the essential ideas, leaving much aside, and as these are the ideas which show so clear an influence upon the characterization of *The Alexandria Quartet*, it seems profitable to examine them in some detail at this point.

In contrast to Freud who thought of the psyche in terms of the conscious and unconscious mind and the
relationship between these two, Groddeck emphasized something much more inclusive and far-reaching, an unknown something to which he gave the most neutral name he could find, the "It":

The sum total of an individual human being, physical, mental, and spiritual, the organism with all its forces, the microcosmos, the universe which is a man, I conceive of as a self unknown and forever unknowable, and I call this the "It" as the most indefinite term available without either emotional or intellectual associations. The It-hypothesis I regard not as a truth—for what do any of us know about truth?—but as a useful tool in work and in life; it has stood the test of years of medical work and experiment and so far nothing has happened which would lead me to abandon it or even to modify it in any essential degree. I assume that man is animated by the It which directs what he does and what he goes through, and that the assertion "I live" only expresses a small and superficial part of the total experience "I am lived by the It" ....

Thus, while Freud's emphasis on the ego as the essential thing in psychology enabled him to think of the processes of life as being to some extent within the control of the conscious mind, the ego for Groddeck was merely a function of the unknown, unknowable, all-powerful It. The ego, in Groddeck's view, was a sort of mask that the It assumed in order to convince man's intellect of its own worth and to enable man to orient
himself intellectually in a world which must then be seen as "tailored" to man's particular specifications. That is, it is an illusion to suppose that the laws and entities perceived by the intellect have any objective existence or validity. They are the fantasies--largely unrecognized--of the conscious self. That this is so has now been supported by science, says Durrell:

Another aspect of the Relativity theory is the manner in which it sidetracks causality. Our belief in causality is a very strongly grounded one .... Yet the new theory of the physicists invites us to modify this conception if not actually to question its validity. So far as phenomena are concerned, we are told, the uniformity of nature disappears. The Principle of Indeterminacy, as it is called, is founded upon the theory that we cannot observe the course of nature without disturbing it. This is the complete opposite of the strict determinism which has reigned in science up to now: and this is one of the great revolutions in thought which characterize the age we are thinking about.6

Again,

Under the terms of the new idea a precise knowledge of the outer world becomes an impossibility. This is because we and the outer world (subject and object) constitute a whole. If we are part of a unity we can no longer objectivize it successfully.7

And where does this leave the psyche? One may
indeed agree with Arnauti that it has "exploded like a soap-bubble" and that if we are to use the concept at all it will have to be dealt with in another way. Durrell has chosen to deal with it in the way suggested by Groddeck, but before I go on to discuss the techniques of characterization that arise from that choice, I would like to quote Groddeck once more, at length. Here is his description of the origin and nature of the It as he sees it:

Some moment of beginning must be supposed for this hypothetical It, and for my own purposes I quite arbitrarily suppose it to start with fertilization ... and I assume that the It comes to an end with the death of the individual ... Now the hypothetical I-unit, whose origin we have placed at fertilization, contains within itself two It-units, a male and a female ... It is perhaps necessary here to comment upon the extent of our ignorance concerning the further development of the fertilized ovule. For my purposes it is sufficient to say that after fertilization the egg divides into two separate beings, two cells as science prefers to call them. The two then divide again into four, into eight, into sixteen and so on, until finally there comes to be what we commonly designate a human being ... Now in the fertilized ovule, minute as it is, there must be something or other--the It, we have assumed?--which is able to take charge of this multitudinous dividing into cells, to give them all distinctive forms and functions, to induce them to group themselves as skin, bones, eyes, ears, brain, etc. What becomes of the original It in the moment of division? It must obviously impart its powers to the cells
into which it divides, since we know that each of them is able to exist and re-divide independently of the other ... It must not be forgotten that the brain, and therefore the intellect, is itself created by the It ... Long before the brain comes into existence the It of man is already active and "thinking" without the brain, since it must first construct the brain before it can use it to think with. This is a fundamental point and one we are inclined to ignore or forget. In the assumption that one thinks only with the brain is to be found the origin of a thousand and one absurdities, the origin also of many valuable discoveries and inventions, much that adorns life and much that makes it ugly ... Over and against the It there stands the ego, the I, which I take to be merely the tool of the It, but which we are forced by nature to regard as the It's master; whatever we say in theory there remains always for us men the final verdict "I am I" ... We cannot get away from it, and even while I assert the proposition is false I am obliged to act as if it were true. Yet I am, by no means, I, but only a continuously changing form in which my "It" displays itself, and the "I" feeling is just one of its ways of deceiving the conscious mind and making it a pliant tool ....

Durrell at one point defines culture as "the sum, at any given time, of all the efforts man is making to interpret the universe about him". Truth then, in such a form as it is available to man, is a matter of how, at any one time, most satisfactorily interprets the universe to himself. As we have seen, the traditional concept of the individual ego no longer satisfies Durrell and thus, in his view, has no important part in modern
culture. But the moment we agree with Durrell on this, grave problems arise. For are not our concepts of morality, of good and evil, of free-will and responsibility, rooted in this traditional concept of the ego? What happens to these concepts if we substitute for Descartes' first premise a statement like "I am lived by the It"? Do they not disappear, and are we not left with the portrait of an Alexandria that "lives" its characters? It is easy enough to find passages in which Durrell says as much:

I see all of us not as men and women any longer, identities swollen with their acts of forgetfulness, follies, and deceits—but as beings unconsciously made part of place, buried to the waist among the ruins of a single city, steeped in its values .... 10

Again,

We are the children of our landscape; it dictates behaviour and even thought in the measure to which we are responsive to it. 11

The reaction of critics to this view of human character has been mixed, though few of the critics whose views are presented in The World of Lawrence Durrell 12 have really examined Durrell's characterization closely. The ones who have dwelt most on it, established men like
Bonamy Dobrée and Lionel Trilling, have reacted with marked uneasiness, if not with condemnation, to Durrell's presentation of character, while at the same time praising his obvious talent. For Lionel Trilling, the absence of individual will as a force in the Quartet brings some misgivings and speculation about a possible change in the function of the novel. Having indicated in an early review of Justine and Balthazar that there were "aspects" of Durrell's work with which he was not quite at ease, Trilling in a later review of the entire Quartet goes on to say just what it is that troubles him:

Now that I have read the third and a fourth of what Mr. Durrell calls the Alexandria Quartet, Mountolive published earlier this year and the recent Clea, I know what disquieted me. It is that all the novels, and the Quartet as a whole, stand in a peculiar negative relation to the will. Having identified the disturbing element, I must admit that I cannot put it forward as an aesthetic fault. Who would undertake to say that the faculty of the will should be manifest in any given novel to this or that extent, or that it must be judged to have one or another degree of importance in human life? Yet the history of the novel shows it to be the genre which is characterized by its pre-occupation with the will, and we naturally respond with some surprise or uneasiness when the traditional tendency does not show itself, or is reversed.

Trilling goes on to observe that such will as we have come to expect in the novel is, if it appears in The
Alexandria Quartet, an attribute of the city itself, not of the characters, and that morality as such has no place in these novels:

It is not ... that the human virtues that we know have no existence and no appeal. Loyalty, devotion, tenderness, concern for the welfare of others are, indeed, displayed in a notable way by all the characters of the Quartet. "Moral" is a word that would be beyond their powers of utterance, perhaps beyond Mr. Durrell's, yet their lives are touched by considerations of goodness at every point; what is lacking is the binding force of the will which keeps steady the objects of their desire, and creates the idea of permanence and intention. This accounts for the ease and grace of their existence, for their never being torn between two possible ways of behavior, for their never displaying the harshness of moral judgment of each other. Two things only are of undoubted value in the Quartet and both are beyond the reach of the moral will. They are love and art—love which must follow its own laws and is not to be constrained; art which submits to no rule or purpose, existing for itself.  

So it is that, despite his initial misgivings, which incidentally are never quite stilled in his review, Trilling can go on to say that, however unorthodox his methods, Durrell has achieved something of importance with his characters: he has made them objects of wonder ... like Clea and Darley in one of their underwater scenes, flaming with phosphorus. I find it possible to suppose that if they were to be taken "in themselves," as we say, that would not be so
very interesting, but in their ambience of Alexandria and of wonder they exist with a quite splendid intensity of live.15

On the whole, Trilling seems to have come to terms gracefully with the "new" approach of Durrell. Not so Bonamy Dobrée. While he acknowledges that reading the Quartet is a "splendidly colored, vivid experience,"16 he attacks it severely because it offers to the reader no sense of values, no help towards a social orientation, no clarification of the problems inherent in the human condition.

For whom in these volumes can we feel admiration, or even respect? Which of these people has any trace of nobility, even of that self-discipline without which the bonds of society are loosed? Among the women, Clea, in her will to paint, claims some regard, and Leila, the Coptic materfamilias, in her care for Mountolive's intellectual health and in her love for her son Nessim, is a person one can respect. Among those men who figure as main characters it is only Mountolive and Nessim that we can at all, in some degree, admire; and it is to be noted that when Mountolive met Nessim for the first time he "instantly recognized in him a person of his own kind, a person whose life was a code." (M. 26) A pleasant meeting for us also, after companioning with amoral people in whom there is no real central conflict, and so no really dramatic being.17

Dobrée goes on,
... what is it that Mr. Durrell wants his novel to do? What kind of vision of humanity does this work provide? His object in writing may be, as Pursewarden's was, "to grow a personality which in the end enables man to transcend art," (B. 141) but the object of reading, one imagines, is not only to deepen and illumine one's experience of living, however vicariously, but also to adjust, strengthen, and develop one's sense of values, notably, where the novel is concerned, one's social values, those which make society livable. Mr. Durrell has lately asked (Times Literary Supplement, 27 May 1960), "Can the artist offer no clues to living? Alas, no; his public does that for him." Surely that is too easy an evasion of responsibility. Not that one would wish for a prêchis-prêches... but one asks for clarification ... What problems are presented here? What sense of humanity do the characters give us? ... what is it one can feel about them? On the whole, just pity ....

While I disagree deeply with Dobrée's criticism here, I have quoted his views at length because I think they most fully reflect the kind of mind which thinks of the human being in the traditional, accepted way, as a relatively independent being endowed with a conscious will and some measure of freedom, and which sees that freedom exercised most fully in moral choice. That the critical judgment which he makes on the basis of this way of thinking is unjust in the case of Durrell and a misconception of The Alexandria Quartet I hope to prove by a thorough analysis of Durrell's character-
ization and the philosophy inherent within it. My approach to the characterization is through Durrell's imagery, and as there is a variety of kinds of imagery which in the end can be seen to work together for a common effect, I will begin by discussing these kinds in turn. Most will be seen to confirm, at least initially, the opinions of Trilling and Dobrée that the characters of the Quartet are without a will of their own.


7 Ibid., p. 30.


11 J. p. 41.


14 Ibid., pp. 61-62.

15 Trilling, "Two Reviews", p. 65.

17 Ibid., pp. 199-200.

18 Ibid., p. 202-203.
CHAPTER II

There is a whole host of images showing characters as animals and birds. This imagery is put to various uses by Durrell, from simple but delightful thumbnail sketches of character ("Mrs. Telford was a fattish little duck who used mauve lipstick and wore hats like pincushions") and unforgettable, description ("The English consular group has the disconsolate air of a family of moultng turkeys"), to its use as a means of suggesting the personality and the function of characters. Here Durrell provides a gamut from the relatively simple characters who can be summed up in one or two images (Capodistria, whose sexual and predatory nature is suggested in the image of him as a snake; Balthazar, whose Pan-like and mysterious nature is presented through images of him as a goat and a crow; and the gentle and lovely Melissa whose poignant predicament is that of "a gazelle harnessed to a water-wheel") to the more complex people who show more than one profile to the observer. Among these are Clea, the artist whose nature is sometimes described as that of a swallow or a wild bird, whose laugh is a nightingale's laugh and whose pain at her love for Justine is that of "a young
stag with a broken ankle." On the whole, hers is a gentle nature that, like Melissa's, becomes "a target for the forces of destruction", but there are other characters in whom one discerns both the destroyer and the victim, the ugly and the admirable. Narouz, the hare-lipped younger brother of Nessim Hosnani, is of a strength described as that of a bull or a mastiff, yet he can be gentle and solicit his mother's affection like a colt. Deformed, his ugliness on occasion is that of "some great brown toad," and when he seeks out Clea during the carnival he hangs in the corner of the door "like a bat." In death he is magnificent, a "wounded lion", but once dead the ignorant, loutish beadles who have come to wash the body turn him over like the body of a dead hare on a kitchen table. Justine, too, is a many-sided character and is variously described as a cat, a snake and a swallow. Her obviously predatory nature shows in the images of her as a lioness, a leopard, and an eagle, yet she is herself a prey to a stronger forces, a "ruffled black dove" who, in the last image Darley gives of his once so magnificent love, is only "a dead bird in a gutter."
It would be impractical, in the space available here, to deal with all the animal imagery in the *Quartet*—sooner or later everyone in the novels is presented in imagery of this kind—but the total effect of it is that one comes to see the characters less as purely human (in the ordinary, everyday sense of the word) than as parts of the natural world, as creatures assigned a certain place and function and unable to do other than conduct themselves in the way laid down by nature. Thus some have been given the role of predator while other characters are their prey. There is no choice in either case.

This helplessness of the characters is made even clearer by means of another kind of imagery pervading the *Quartet*: the imagery of insects and webs. Individual human beings are often seen as ants and the larger human community as an ant hill. In Clea Darley speaks of the city stirring to life "like an ants' nest"; in *Mountolive* the British ambassador, assaulted by a hoard of child prostitutes, feels like a man attacked by ants; the hooded revellers at carnival are like "a new form of insect life"; Darley, in his efforts to comprehend the city and its inhabit-
ants, sets about "to examine the shapes and contours made by human beings with the detachment of an entomologist studying a hitherto unknown species of insect". Nor is he the only one to set himself up as "entomologist" in such a manner. The father of the virtuous Semira adopts that attitude towards his daughter's romantic suitor, Amaril; and Nessim too, when faced with having to try to bribe the Minister for Interior, feels "all the passionate curiosity about the man which an entomologist might have for an unclassified specimen".

In line with images of the city as an ant-hill are other images showing it as "a hive of white mansions" and "a great honeycomb of faces and gestures", the city's streets at the approach of a procession buzzing "like a great hive with the contagion of the knowledge". The effect is a view of human beings as creatures unconditionally subject to the laws of nature, whose life and function are to be fully understood only in terms of the group or community to which the individual is always and completely subordinate.

There are images which focus on the individual insect, so to speak, and do not attempt to show
him as a "community-member" to the same extent as
the ant-hill and hive images do, and here the pre­
dator-and-prey relationship, described earlier by
animal imagery, shows up again. Narouz is "hairy as
a spider," and the man he kills during carnival, the
homosexual Toto de Brunel, is found with the huge
hatpin driven sideways into his head "pinning him
like a moth into his velvet headpiece." The death
of Narouz himself is ironically forecast by an un­
witting Nessim who, in his own apprehension for his
fate at Memlik's hands, draws "a tiny gallows in
pencil on the back of an envelope with a small fly­
like victim hanging from it." Memlik decides to
"misunderstand" information gathered up by his spies
and orders the younger Hosnani murdered instead of
Nessim, in order that he may seem to have complied
with the demand of Egyptian authorities and yet con­
tinue to extract money from the wealthier older brother.
Narouz' last breath is "a long death-rattle, fading
into the buzz of a fly caught in some remote spider's
web." Darley and Justine, before the break-up of
their affair, move through the cobweb of their pre­
occupations like people already parted; later, when
Darley meets Justine again, this image is reinvoked and
it becomes plain that Justine was, and remains, the predator spider "moving obsessively up and down the cobweb of her own devising" while Darley was the victim who, however, has managed in the meantime to escape. ("... this new self-possession of yours! You have escaped me somewhere.")

This, however, does not prevent Justine from becoming herself a victim in turn. When Nessim first urges her to join him in the intricate political design which for him passes for a marriage, Justine suddenly feels as if she "had become caught up in some great cobweb, imprisoned by laws which lay beneath the level of her conscious will, her desires...." There is also an image of her later as Nessim's wife: "the wife he had married and hung up in a cobwebbed corner of his life, by the wrists, like a marionnette on strings!" And so the grim business of predator and prey goes on. One sees it on a large scale in the war, when an air raid on Alexandria is rendered as an attempt by searchlights to seek out prey:

...the searchlights had begun to congregate, quivering and sliding in their ungainly fashion, like daddy-long-legs. They intersected and collided feverishly, and it was clear that some signal had reached them
which told of the struggles of some trapped insect on the outer cobweb of darkness. Again and again they crossed, probed, merged, divided. Then at last we saw what they were bracketing: six tiny silver moths moving down the skylanes with what seemed unbearable slowness.  

But the greatest predator of all, seen through this imagery of insects and webs, is in some way identified with the city itself. Darley describes it once in approaching dusk, "as the lights began to prickle the oncoming darkness, as the backcloth of the European city itself began to light up window by window, street by street, until the whole looked like a cobweb in which the frost has set a million glittering brilliants".  
The creator of that cobweb is never finally revealed, though one guesses that it is man himself, city man, whose mechanical inventions like his limousines "lie webbed in a winter light, expressing only the silence and power of all machinery which waits for the fall of man ...."  

The fall of man! The words evoke the old picture of man as just a little lower than the angels, man as the creation of God, made in His image, endowed with a free spirit and the power wilfully to damn himself if he so choose, man as a truly free being. But
surely the words have an ironic ring as they are used here in the *Quartet*. For where is man's freedom? The novels are steeped in imagery emphasizing the passivity and helplessness of human beings. It confronts the reader at every turn of the page. Some of these images actually show man as a sort of mechanical contrivance (indeed, one character who appears but briefly is described as precisely that) as when Melissa, placed in a hot bath, uncurls from sleep "like one of those marvellous Japanese paper-flowers which open in water", or as when the old furrier Cohen drops out of Darley's life ("... the kaleidoscope had tilted once more and he had sunk out of sight like a vanished chip of coloured glass").\textsuperscript{25} It is more common, however, to find the characters described as completely caught up by natural law, sometimes at its mercy, sometimes in obedient response to it. There is an early image of the city's inhabitants "drifting like a bed of seaweed towards the lighted cafes of the upper town",\textsuperscript{26} and images of men's lives as governed by the tide become increasingly frequent after that. Clea, at the end of *Justine*, speaks of a tide that has turned in her nature; the essence and the fascination of carnival are the "dark tides of Eros" which "burst out
during carnival like something long dammed up, overflowing the human soul. Darley, having returned once more to the city in Clea, feels himself "turned adrift again to float upon the shallows of Mareotis with its old tide-marks of appetites and desires"; the change in his relationship with Clea, troubled by her agonizing sense of past guilt and imminent punishment, waxes and wanes like a tide; and at the end of the Quartet when she and Darley, as well as other main characters, at last finally leave the city, Clea speaks of its being "as if the whole composition of our lives were being suddenly drawn away by a new current".27

Again, there are images showing human beings living in obedient response to natural law, as when Balthazar describes Justine as moving "like some sulky planet in the social life of the town" or as when Darley, looking at dancers at the Cecil hotel, observe the women moving round the floor "unconsciously following the motion of the stars, of the earth as it curved into space".28 But the most absorbing imagery of this kind is that from the plant world. Love, we are told, is a plant of many varieties and, like any other plant, it can wither.29 Human beings too are
a kind of plant life. Women gravitate to Amaril "as flowers do to sunlight"; their faces turn towards the diplomatic Mountolive "like flower-traps". Justine "takes love as plants do water, lightly, thoughtlessly"; she responds to Nessim "as a flower responds to light", and the two of them, absorbed in their intrigue, bend towards each other "like flowers". Clea too, as Darley comes to see her, is "smiling and irresponsible as a flower". Leila's love for Narouz comes to seem a threat to her son, like "some brilliant parasite ivy which strangles the growth of a tree". One memorable picture of a religious figure is that of the famous blind preacher Hussein "who stood like an oak tree, magnificent in the elf-light, reciting the ninety-nine holy names."

For the most part, then, it would seem that human beings, when responding fully to the natural laws governing their lives and growth, are not unhappy. There are cases, however, where characters can be seen not to respond in this way, if not actually to rebel, and in each case the result is suffering for the human being and leads to destruction. The obvious examples here are Mountolive and Nessim Hosnani. Having begun his
ambassadorial career with a vertiginous feeling of freedom of action, Mountolive soon finds himself "gripped by the gravitational field of politics."\(^35\) Nessim too, "so long self-deluded by the same dreams of a perfect finite action, free and heedless as the impulse of a directed will, now found himself, like his friend, a prey to the gravitational forces which lie inherent in the time-spring of our acts, making them spread, ramify and distort themselves..."\(^36\) Indeed,

...now the masters were beginning to find that they were, after all, the servants of the very forces which they had set in play, and that nature is inherently in-governable. They were soon to be drawn along ways not of their choosing, trapped in a magnetic field, as it were, by the same forces which unwind the tides at the moon's bidding, or propel the glittering forces of salmon up a crowded river ...\(^37\)

At this point I would like to turn to a different type of imagery from the Quartet, imagery which in one sense complements what I have already dealt with and yet, I feel, points the way towards still other things in the novels and ultimately towards a solution to this problem of "character-and-will" which I have so far presented. This imagery is of three
kinds: images from playing-cards, from the game of chess, and from the drama.

Images from playing-cards are numerous in the *Quartet* but they are, I think, significant, though I should mention here that I see no evidence of Durrell's having used the Tarot as an extensive basis for characterization.\(^{38}\) On the contrary, the one time that Durrell is explicit and says exactly what card Justine suggests, it is a card from our conventional deck: the Queen of Spades.\(^{39}\) Various other people, too, are likened to playing-cards, though not as exactly: the Sheik and his sons whom the Hosnanis visit in the desert are "a gallery of playing cards"; Amaril, Clea's first lover and long unidentified, is "like a playing card which had always been there, lying ... face downwards"; Melissa's child by Nessim numbers herself among "the playing-card characters of the living" that Darley has described for her and she is impatient to take up her own place in the "gallery."\(^{40}\) Lastly there is the significant reference to the "'selective fictions' which life shuffles out like a pack of cards, mixing and dividing, withdrawing and restoring."\(^{41}\) Here surely is a clear picture of human beings as allo-
gether in the hands of a larger power which, for lack of a more exact term, we can here call life. There is the indication that these human beings vary in value as they do in function, that they are all nevertheless parts of a whole, and that the process in which they are taking part is not meaningless, since a game is carried on in accordance with certain rules and must in the end be either won or lost.

Much the same picture emerges from Durrell's use of chess imagery, though here there are cases where, at least ostensibly, the characters are in control of the game. Mountolive and Balthazar very often play chess together. Balthazar's frequent communication by postcard to friends elsewhere in the Middle-East, the subject being both chess and the Cabal, is believed by the Egyptians to be a relay of political information; and as the various characters and their situations are more than once described, from the political point of view, as a chessboard, the link between politics and chess seems pretty clear. This makes sense, for most of the chess imagery enters the Quartet with Mountolive and serves as a good illustration of his attempts at political strategy. It also
makes for a perfect illustration of the stalemate very soon reached by himself and Nessim. But the imagery from chess does not apply solely to the political game. It is clear that it applies also to a much larger "game", one like that carried on by life with the aid of playing-card characters. The seven drowned sailors discovered by Clea in the rock-pool where she and Darley swim are "like chess pieces of human size" with their leadweighted, upright figures roped in canvas sacks. Moreover, their air is one "of scrupulous attention, as if listening to some momentous debate which would decide everything for them". These sailors are surely symbolic and meant to suggest the situation of all the characters in the Quartet, since these too are engaged in, are part of, a game which has yet to be concluded.

Then there is the imagery from drama. There is a great variety of it, including the Greek drama performed with masks (indeed masks of all kinds, not just Greek, play a big part in the Quartet), the commedia dell'arte, Shakesperean tragedy, masque, toy and marionnette theatre, silent films, and the latest in cinema art. When Darley first meets Melissa she is very ill, having been drugged at a party, and her
features are "like a catastrophic Greek comic mask". Voiceless in her stupour, she looks "like a film of herself without a sound-track." When Nessim and Narouz pass ceremoniously through the gallery at Karm, they are for a brief moment transformed into harlequins. Mountolive, caught up by conflicting loyalties in the political game, wakes up in the morning "to the sound of his curtains being drawn—slowly and reverently as one might slide back the curtains of Juliet's tomb." His strange involvement with Liza Pursewarden and her brother is described as a "weird masque." Darley, observant of life in the Arab quarter, sees "scenes of domestic life which (lighted like toy theatres) seemed filled with a tremendous dramatic significance." The figures of the dead sailors in the rock-pool stand "flinching and flickering softly like figures in an early silent film." The Alexandrians, living on in their tormented city, move "inside the murex-tinted cyclorama" of the life they imagine.

The city is a stage. The Virtuous Semira "makes her first appearance on the public stage" when she goes to the Auberge Bleue with Amaril the day after
their wedding. Melissa quietly leaves the same stage when she takes the train to Jerusalem, and "quick as a scene-shifter the station packs away advertisement after advertisement, stacking them in the darkness." For others, the exit is more painful. The old homosexual, Scobie, dressed as a woman, is kicked to death by enraged sailors on leave, and the last image of him is of a "withered old hand, now beginning to settle with the approach of the rigor into a histrionic gesture--as of someone warding off a stage blow." Pursewarden, whose life becomes unbearable so that he commits suicide, simply steps behind the curtains, vanishing from the scene. "Each man goes out to his own music." Darley reflects, witnessing Cohen's lonely death in a hospital room. Despite a shabby record Cohen manages to die with some measure of dignity. Others, like the air raid victims of the war, are not given the chance; "a stretcher-party walks apathetically offstage with a sagging load from a bombed building." 

Though some of the characters taking part in these varied human dramas feel that they have chosen to act the way they do, all have in fact been assigned
their roles. That is made very clear. Their roles do not always sit easy with them or convince the audience, as when Liza appears like "a child dressed up as Queen Elizabeth for a charade", or as when Nessim sighs over "the pretence, the eternal play-acting one has to indulge in even with one's friends." 

"If only we did not have to keep on acting a part...", he says to Justine. Yet Justine's answer makes it clear that for her her role is the essence of her life and that without it she would be nothing. "Ah... Nessim! Then I should not know who I was." Earlier she says to Darley; "It would be silly to spread so much harm as I have done and not to realize that it is my role." Nessim's role, too, is essential to him, though Justine realizes it more clearly than he does himself. When for a while the role is taken from him and the pair are put under house-arrest at Karm, Nessim loses all his fascination for Justine and she finds it impossible to love him.

You see, when he does not act, Nessim is nothing; he is completely flavourless, not in touch with himself at any point. Then he has no real self to interest a woman, to grip her. In a word he is really a pure idealist. When a sense of destiny consumes him he becomes truly splendid. It was as an actor that he
magnetised me, illuminated me for myself. But as a fellow prisoner, in defeat—
he predisposes to ennui, migraine, thoughts of utter banality like suicide!

"When he does not act...." It is curious how, while we so often use the word in either of its
two senses, we rarely use it with both meanings apparent to us at the same time. Yet how admirably
the word suits Durrell's purposes here! "Action" in the Quartet may be regarded either as the doings of
people who feel responsible or as a performance given at a stage-master's direction. Durrell surely in­
tended us to see it both ways, for action ("free" action!), even if it is an illusion, has meaning in
the novels. Though "engaged" by an unknown management for as long as the performance shall go on, the actors
yet retain a sense of responsibility, often of guilt, for what they do and are made to do. This too is part
of the design. About the ultimate meaning of these dramas, the characters can only guess. Mountolive re­
acts with despair when the nature of his own role be­
comes clear to him:

Yet if he himself were powerless, now, how much more so the others? Like the etiolated projections of a sick imagination, they seemed, drained of meaning, empty as suits of clothes; taking up emplacements in
this colourless drama of contending wills. Nessim, Justine, Leila—they had an unsubstantial air now—as of dream-projections acting in a world populated by expressionless waxworks. It was difficult to feel that he owed them even love any longer.  

Indeed, the meaning that can be construed by an observer is often as sinister as Mountolive here perceives it. The actors, like costumes, can become unsatisfactory, expendable, and at that point are simply gotten rid of by an implacable director. Balthazar once speaks of "useless lives (lives impossible to live, shed like ill-fitting garments)"; and Darley, brought face to face with the realization that Melissa has forever disappeared from his life—leaving scarcely a memory and no pain in her lover except the pain of his feeling callous—Melissa was "simply one of the many costumes of life!"  

As a matter of fact, these dramas never have what one would call happy endings. In the story of Fosca and Pombal the sheer pointlessness of death oppresses the reader. "How ironically it had been planned by the invisible stage-masters who direct human actions, and with what speed!" How inexplicably, too, at least if one does not look beyond this one
"performance" and seek for a larger pattern. What that larger pattern may be is suggested by the story of Clea and Darley and of the dreadful accident that terminates their life together in Alexandria. That whole, perfect summer they spend together upon Darley's return to the city was, says Darley, planned long before and without their knowledge:

...it had all already happened, had been ordained in such a way and in no other. This was, so to speak, only its "coming to pass"—its stage of manifestation. But the scenario had already been devised somewhere, the actors chosen, the timing rehearsed down to the last detail in the mind of that invisible author—which perhaps would prove to be only the city itself: the Alexandria of the human estate. 65

He goes on to describe it again in terms hearkening back to the plant imagery dealt with earlier:

The seeds of future events are carried within ourselves. They are implicit in us and unfold according to the laws of their own nature. 66

And so we are back to a view of man as an integral part of the natural world and, like the rest of that world, subject to the laws that govern it. But there is something very interesting about this integral relationship between man and nature, and it is this:
just as man is shown as being at one with the natural world, so that world can be seen to manifest human characteristics.
FOOTNOTES


2 J.231.


4 See J.76, C.96, C.77, J.227-228.

5 J.200.

6 B.68.


8 B.96.

9 See B.232, B.229.

10 See M.312, M.318-319.


13 See C.96, M.292, B.201, B.221.

14 See M.153, M.253.

15 See C.63, C.64, C.267.

16 See B.68, B.211.

17 M.267.

18 M.313.
Carl Bode, in his essay "A Guide to Alexandria", takes up the matter of Durrell using the Tarot in his characterization; he even goes so far as to say at one point that the Tarot is "the chief source of symbolic suggestions" (See The World of Lawrence Durrell, p. 211); but while he goes on with varying degrees of certainty to link some of Durrell's characters to Tarot cards—
Pursewarden to the Fool, Capodistria to the Devil, Balthazar to the Magician, Narouz to the Hierophant and (very tentatively) Clea to the Star, Melissa to the High Priestess and Justine to the Empress, Bode does no more than posit a connection and fails to say in what way this has served to enrich the symbolism of the Quartet or even what additional understanding of the characters this provides.

39C.15.
41C.276-277.
42M.127.
43See C.230, C.230.
44J.55.
45J.55.
46B.74.
47M.237.
48C.173.
49J.99.
50C.230.
51C.65.
52See C.89, J.102.
53B.172.
54C.155.
55J.112.
56C.31.
57 See C.188, M.233.

58 M.233.

59 M.234.

60 J.87.

61 C.58.

62 M.270.

63 See B.139, C.41.

64 C.209.

65 C.223.

66 C.223.
CHAPTER III

The human and the natural worlds interpenetrate. The extent to which this is so in the Quartet was perhaps not made fully apparent in my earlier discussion of Durrell's nature imagery. It is not only that man's lack of free will is best presented in terms of his being a creature fully dependent upon nature as a plant is dependent; everything in man's life is best understood when seen as part of natural processes. Man's love and man's suffering, his silence and his conversation, his ill-temper and his songs, his body, personality, family origins, his thoughts and inventions, his very religion and art, all can be seen to be integral aspects of the natural world, coming into being and passing away like the wind, the tides and the vegetation. Much of man's life is like a landscape, changing slowly over years, altering suddenly in harsh weather. When Melissa dies, a block of Darley's life falls into the sea.¹ She and others belonging to the past of those who live on "sink slowly deeper and deeper into the ocean of mem-
ory."

In the case of Clea, "The deep still river of her heart hoarded its images, ever reflecting them in the racing current, letting them sink deeper into memory than most of us can." A more superficial person like Pombal "flows in great good humour over the shallow river bed of his experience." When Narouz is drawing close to death he lies "all night long now ... in troubled sleep among the luxuriant growths of his own fantasy, dense as a tropical vegetation"; he walks "in a forest of his own heart-beats." Silence pours between him and his brother "like a drifting dune." Nessim's own silence stretches away on every side "like the desert itself." Yet he and Justine spend "long evenings ... in a wilderness of conversation, a forest of plates and wine-bottles," evenings when a thousand conversations seek out for each other "like the tap-roots of trees for moisture." Their great house is "perpetually alive to the cool fern-like patterns of a quartet, or to the foundering plunge of saxophones crying to the night like cuckolds." Outside, "a drunken whore walks in a dark street ... shedding snatches of song like petals." Justine, coming from a meeting with a lover, is "as if still dusted by the pollen of his kisses." The light
in a Coptic desert church is "soft and confused by incense to the colour of pollen". The sound of the choir is one of "deep voices running like a river over the gravel-bottomed Liturgy of St. Basil." The structure of the church itself, with its grouped cells, calls forth the observation from Purser/warden that "all early religions were built on a cell pattern, imitating who-knows-what biological law."

In everything man's life imitates that of the rest of nature. Melissa's slender body with its slanting ribs has the "structure of ferns." The little village on the island where Darley works is "so tightly woven ... beautiful and symmetrical like a swallow's nest." The shy but persistent attempts of the English brigadier, Maskelyne, to impress his subordinate, Telford, impress Darley as resembling the courting practices of a male bird:

I detected, in the slow elaborate figure he traced between our desks, the traces of an unconscious coquetry--I was reminded of the way a peacock spreads its great studded fan of eyes before the female ... I am sure it was quite unconscious.

Even man's mechanical inventions fit into the whole. His battleships squat under their guns "like horned toads";
elsewhere, the guns themselves are described as "self-conscious ... nesting awkwardly as cranes in incongruous nests of tarpaulin and webbing." Even man's death, sudden, unjust or meaningless as it may seem to him, has a place. There is the "rich harvest of spent cannon-shells ... an almost continuous splashing of golden metal tumbling from the breeches of the sky-pointed guns." And there is the stretcher with the dying Fosca being carried ashore "swinging like a cradle, like a basket of fruit upon the dark shoulders of an Arab."

The examples are innumerable, but two great images especially stand out to show man's integral relationship to nature, and with these I will rest my case. One comes from Arnauti's reflections upon a woman he has loved:

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

The other is Darley's description of his feelings when,
free at last from Justine, he returns to the city:

I felt like the Adam of the mediaeval
legends: the world-compounded body of a
man whose flesh was soil, whose bones were
stones, whose blood water, whose hair was
grass, whose eyesight sunlight, whose breath
was wind, and whose thoughts were clouds.

It is just a short step from this view of man
as compounded of his environment to a view of that en­
vironment as a kind of greater man. Indeed, so short
is the step that one scarcely notices when it is that
the landscape is first described in organic and in human
terms. The images seem so right, so accurate as sheer
description. In a light wind the palm trees "sway their
necks with a faint dry formal clicking" Desert skies
swell "like a bruise" with the oncoming of the Khamseen
in spring. Dawn is "a pale disjunctive shudder" at
the horizon. The desert stretches away with "knuckles
of rosy limestone", "bronze knuckles of ... sandstone
ridges" and "shadowy flanks" of dunes. Friable
sandstone "forms the backbone"\textsuperscript{31} of a whole desert promontory. Some miles away the sea pounds at "the long-drawn white scar of the empty beach."\textsuperscript{32}

The city, too, is accurately described in this way. "Nippled minarets"\textsuperscript{33} rise there, and beyond them the Moquattam hills, "pink and nacreous as a finger-nail."\textsuperscript{34} Through the city runs "the long bony spine of the Canopic Way."\textsuperscript{35} Yet certain images go beyond just accurate description and suggest that the city as well as the landscape around and beyond it are a giant organism with a life of its own. Darley, taking a close look at the landscape through a telescope, observes it seemingly breathing "softly and irregularly."\textsuperscript{36} Technical explanations of this phenomena follow, but still the idea of a living landscape has entered the reader's mind. In Justine Darley speaks of "streets that run back from the docks with their tattered rotten supercargo of houses, breathing into each others' mouths, keeling over."\textsuperscript{37} In the city's harbour, "idly bending and inclining, effortlessly breathing as if in rhythms of the earth's own systole and diastole, the yachts turn their spars against the sky."\textsuperscript{38} There are "abandoned and disembowelled houses."\textsuperscript{39} Shops fill and empty "like lungs" along the Rue des Soeurs. "We turn
a corner and the world becomes a pattern of arter-
ies," says Darley. Elsewhere he speaks once of "the
membrane of gravity," and at the beginning of Clea
when he faces a return to the city, he speaks of
"the grotesque organism of which we had all once been
part, victors and vanquished alike." Clearly then,
man is somehow "contained" within this larger organ-
ism. Even man's communities are so contained: the
"shudders of monetary transactions ripple through them
like wind in a wheatfield."

"Society is an organism, not a system," says Pursewarden once. If we take this view literally,
where does that leave the human characters "contained"
within such an organism? Moreover, how are we to look
at this larger organism, the city (for the city is
society in the Quartet)? What is its nature? Durrell
uses a fascinating and significant illustration in
Key to Modern Poetry when he is trying to show how the
part is related to the whole:

There is an organism which floats about in
the Gulf Stream, called the siphnophora.
It can be found as a single cell and also
as a large cluster of cells. Now this is
the curious thing about it: the single cell
is a complete animal, equipped with digest-
ive apparatus, entire unto itself. However
when several thousand of these cells join up they undergo a radical modification and become parts of an equally entire but much larger animal. Some of the single cells take on the work of the digestive apparatus, some shape themselves into an alimentary tract, and so on. Soon there is only one big animal, and no trace of the individuals composing it.

To be sure, in this particular context Durrell is discussing the relation of any single idea to the whole body of thought, but I think the image of the siphnophora nevertheless casts considerable light on his conception of Alexandria. There is another image, strikingly like it, in which he attempts to sum up Alexandria:

The city ... moves not only backwards into our history, studded by the great names which mark every station of recorded time, but also back and forth in the living present, so to speak--among its contemporary faiths and races; the hundred little spheres which religion or lore creates and which cohere softly together like cells to form the great sprawling jellyfish which is Alexandria today. Joined in this fortuitous way by the city's own act of will, isolated on a slate promontory over the sea ... the communities still live and communicate.

What is man in this "jellyfish organism" but a cell within the whole? The thought suggests itself again and again through the organic imagery in which the city is presented. Its streets radiate out "like the
arms of a starfish from the axis of its founder's tomb.\textsuperscript{47}

Memlik's house, with its grotesque mixture of architecture from different epochs, suggests "a sort of Ottoman-Egyptian-Gothic ... For all the world as if Euston Station had multiplied by binary fission!"\textsuperscript{48}

Having returned once more to the city, Darley reflects that it is

something which I myself had deflowered, at whose hands I had learned to ascribe some particular meaning to fortune. These patched and faded walls, the lime wash cracking into a million oyster-coloured patches, only imitated the skins of the lepers who whined here on the edge of the Arab quarter; it was simply the hide of the place itself, peeling and caking away under the sun.\textsuperscript{49}

There are many other images of the city as not only organic but specifically human. A walk down a narrow native street where prostitutes' booths crowd one another at either side leads to the thought that "a city like a human being collects its predispositions, appetites and fears. It grows to maturity, utters its prophets, and declines into hebetude, old age or the loneliness which is worse than either."\textsuperscript{50} That the fate of its inhabitants is bound inextricably to that of the city is suggested by the picture of the prostitutes outside their booths.
Unaware that their mother city was dying, the living still sat there in the open street, like caryatids supporting the darkness, the pains of futurity upon their very eyelids; sleeplessly watching, the immortality-hunters, throughout the whole fatidic length of time. 51

Yet the city is without pity for those who become its victims. The morning after Melissa's death, the city smiles "with a heartbreaking indifference, a cocotte refreshed by the darkness," 52 Elsewhere, Darley talks of "Alexandria, princess and whore!" 53 From either point of view, both of which are those of a subordin­ate, the city's human inhabitant, the city is really indifferent to man's moral considerations. It would have to be to be the "author" of such painful dramas as were mentioned earlier.

So far the idea of the city as a sort of larger human being containing individual characters within it has been advanced largely on the basis of the organic imagery through which the city is presented and of a linking of the siphnophora image with the Quartet's image of the city as a giant sprawling jelly­fish. There are, however, other things in Durrell's writings which strengthen the supposition. Purse­warden, in the course of much philosophizing, says
that "a civilization is simply a great metaphor which describes the aspirations of the individual soul in collective form ...." 54 This is very close to a suggestion that we see society, or in this case the city whose life reaches far back into history, as a sort of man on a large scale, whose long-range aspirations and endeavours are seldom or never really understood by individual human beings. Durrell suggests something similar when, in his article on Groddeck, he deals with the rationalist's objections to Groddeck's It-hypothesis. The rationalist is imagined as saying

'That a case of inoperable cancer, say, which defies every other form of treatment, can be made to yield before a Grodeckian attack by massage and analysis, is within the bounds of belief. Even the It-hypothesis might be conceded as a useful working tool in this case ... But if a thousand people contract typhoid from a consignment of fruit are we to assume that the individual It of each and every one of them has chosen this form of self-expression in a desire for self-punishment? 55

And here is Durrell's answer:

It is the sort of question to which you will find no answer in Groddeck's books; yet if he seems content to present the It as a partial hypothesis it is because his major interest is in its individual manifestation. Yet there is nothing in the hypothesis as such to preclude a wider application. Had he addressed himself to
such a question he might very easily have asserted that just as the cell has its It-ego polarity, and the whole individual his, so also could any body or community develop its own. The conventions of the logic that we live by demand that while we credit the individual with his individuality, we deny such a thing to concepts such as 'state', 'community', 'nation'—concepts which we daily use as thought-counters. Yet when our newspapers speak of a 'community decimated by plague' or a 'nation convulsed by hysteria' we accept the idea easily enough, though our consciousness rejects these formations as fictions. Yet in time of war a nation is treated as an individuality with certain specified characteristics; politicians 'go to the nation'; *The Times* discusses the 'Health of the Nation' with the help of relevant statistics. This unity which we consider a fiction—could it not reflect, in its component parts, the shadows of the individual unity, which is, according to Grodeck, no less a fiction? If a national ego why not a national It?56

To return to characterization in the *Quartet*, my own feeling is that Durrell has incorporated this view of man-within-Larger Man into his novels. But I also feel that this view is only one possible way in which to regard human character, and that there are at least two other ways in which that character can also be seen, one being a view of the city as identical with Grodeck's It, and the other a view of the city as the only character in the novels. I believe all three ways were intended by Durrell to become apparent as one reads
through the Quartet, and what I propose to do here is consider each of these views of human character in turn. I shall start with the view already touched upon, that of man-within-Larger Man.
FOOTNOTES

1 J. 18.
2 J. 235.
3 B. 53.
4 B. 104.
5 See M. 300, M. 301.
6 B. 92.
7 B. 128.
8 M. 207.
9 B. 47.
10 M. 207.
11 J. 14.
12 J. 15.
13 M. 122.
14 M. 122.
15 M. 122.
16 M. 171.
17 C. 273.
18 C. 159.
19 M. 277.
20 C. 27.
22. 211.
23. 98.
24. 63.
25. 103.
26. 147.
27. 214.
28. 131.
29. 146.
30. 295.
31. 164.
32. 161.
33. 132.
34. 132.
35. 237.
36. 169.
37. 24.
38. 221.
39. 156.
40. 139.
41. 55.
42. 11.
43. 151.
45. Key to Modern Poetry, pp. 2-3. In a footnote to his illustration Durrell does admit that this view of the siphnophora organism has been questioned by some biologists.

55. "Studies in Genius: VI Groddeck," Horizon, p. 394. The idea of self-punishment for the It comes in with Groddeck's belief that the It, in infancy, experiences the well-known Freudian complexes and consequently develops an inevitable feeling of guilt which has to be expiated.

CHAPTER IV

In this view, man becomes really a sort of "cell" whose individual identity, like that of the single-celled siphnophora, disappears when he becomes merged with the larger, collective entity. That being the case, man's role becomes that of any cell within a larger organism: to fulfill its functions as dictated by that organism. The cell is in all things subservient. Eventually, like any cell, it will die and be replaced; its life will not be fully understood if one focuses only on it. It must ultimately be seen in relation to the life of the larger organism. This, of course, is highly unsatisfactory to the ego--the conscious "I"--of the "cell." The ego may indeed be used for purposes other than those it conceives of as its own. It is a disquieting, unsettling thought. Indeed, it is rather like the thought of a child in a science class who, when confronted with our day's picture of the atom, sees in its structure a reflection of the structure of the great universe in which he himself lives. The idea irresistibly presents itself: "Just suppose that this atom, this tiny 'universe' with its electron planets circling about
a central sun ... just suppose that it is indeed a universe, that it contains in it worlds and men who are themselves made up of lesser atoms which in turn ... And again, suppose the great universe I live in is in fact another 'atom' like the one on the picture and that it is only an infinitely small part of some unknown, larger being who in turn ...." The child's mind, indeed any mind, reels at that point. That way lies vertigo. The thing to do, if one is practical and sensible, is to keep the immediate world in focus, even if doing so means distorting or foregoing one's view of a larger reality. Yet if one wishes to see one's life in its true setting, one has to see it as part of a larger process. After much suffering and struggle to understand, Darley comes to regard his own life in Alexandria that way:

... I thought the whole story through from beginning to end, starting in the days before I ever knew Melissa and ending somewhere soon in an idle pragmatic death in a city to which I did not belong; I say that I thought it through, but strangely enough I thought of it not as a personal history with an individual accent so much as part of the historical fabric of the place. I described it to myself as part and parcel of the city's behaviour, completely in keeping with everything that had gone before, and everything that would follow it. It was as if my imagination had become
subtly drugged by the ambience of the place and could not respond to personal, individual assessments. 1

A little later he adds:

I took it as a measure of my maturity that I was filled no longer with despairing self-pity but with a desire to be claimed by the city, enrolled among its trivial or tragic memories—if it so wished. 2

To take yet another look at this man-within-Larger Man proposition, it is not so fantastic as it may seem at first, nor is it an idea new to the human mind. On the contrary, much religious thought, for example the Christian idea of the Mystical Body, is based on this concept. St. Paul writes,

... we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love. 3

But Paul posits some control on the part of the individual "cells" or members as to whether or not they will merge and "grow" within the larger body. Groddeck, when discussing the relation of the ego to the It, dismisses the idea of such control as mere ego-illusion and, for the purposes of his novels anyway, Durrell
appears to do so too. Nevertheless, though free-will is ruled out, the individual "cells" that are Durrell's characters are not always found to live harmoniously within the greater whole that controls them. Characters like Mountolive, Nessim, to some extent Balthazar, and even Justine (to the extent that she wilfully aids Nessim in his plans), these characters at least appear to rebel against the nature of things and insist on a will of their own, assuming a power of individual action. Mountolive and Nessim, of course, do this through their political strategy and counter-strategy. Balthazar does it through his attempts to use the Cabal to overcome his inversion or at least its overt manifestations and so "expunge the passional nature." As shown earlier with the imagery of man's passivity and helplessness, such attempts are doomed to failure; they invariably lead to suffering if not also to death.

There is a great deal of death imagery throughout the Quartet, and much of it is used in connection with these characters and their attempts at will-directed action. Nessim's office, from which he directs his industrial and political concerns, is a "sarcophagus of tubular steel and lighted glass." Even the elevator that takes him to it is "like a Byzantine
When the stalemate with Mountolive is reached and Nessim and Justine fear death is imminent, they lie "motionless as the effigies upon Alexandrian tombs, side by side in the dark room, their open eyes staring into each other with the sightlessness of inhuman objects, mirrors made of quartz, dead stars." It is during this time, too, that Nessim rendezvous with Justine and Balthazar at the museum one night and finds the two of them sitting, like two statues, on a marble sarcophagus lid; they make room for him when he arrives. Mountolive, Nessim's opponent in the political game, feels his innermost soul "become as dusty, as airless as an Egyptian tomb" when his own and his former friend's predicament becomes clear to him. Forced to go to the Egyptian authorities for action against Nessim, he presents himself there "like some fretful mummy." Darley, whose deception by Justine is at least partly a political necessity of the Hosnanis, recognizes intuitively his mistress' death-tending nature all the while that he loves her; and when he meets her and Nessim again in Clea the death imagery associated with them indicates their situation beyond a doubt. Karm, at which they have been confined under house-arrest, has "a somewhat funereal flavour."
Justine's kiss when she greets Darley is "cold as an obituary," and her "dead white overpowdered face" has "the passive beauty of some Propertian mummy which had been clumsily painted to give the illusion of life." Her anguished, guilty words rattle down "like a hail of sods on an empty coffin." Nessim too has suffered, and in his loss of an eye and a finger (with what that suggests of castration) there is the indication of his having been largely deprived of life. His injuries come about as a result of air raids on the city, and in this connection it should be noted that man's invention of machinery is everywhere in the Quartet associated with destruction and the wish for death. The cars of the Alexandrians are "like gleaming sarcophagi." The French warships in the harbour remind Darley of "malevolent tombstones." The rusting litter of tanks and guns left behind by the war on the beaches lie there "like the skeletons of dinosaurs," reminding man of the extinction that awaits him too. Elsewhere in the Quartet there is an overt reference to "the death-bringing tools with which man expresses his fear of life," and the reference here is not to weapons of war but simply to those technological inventions of man with which he tries to establish his control over
Lastly, in this discussion of death imagery, there is Balthazar, whose story unfolds apart from that of the other characters mentioned here. The extent to which Balthazar relies on the intellect of the conscious self in controlling life, the life of others as well as his own, is revealed with particular clarity in an incident to which Clea once refers and of which he himself once tells Mountolive. He had claimed that he could induce mutual love in two total strangers by a sort of control-experiment, and during carnival he actually carries out that experiment, hoping to humiliate an old enemy by doing so. He is "caught pretending to be God, and learns a bitter lesson." The love affair he instigates ends in the suicides both of the girl involved and of her father, his old enemy. Balthazar himself suffers much both mentally and physically as a result of his attempt at directing his own life (one gathers from his own account that the attempt backfired and pushed him into a passionate, hopeless, degrading love for a worthless Greek actor), and when Darley meets him again in Clea he is recovering from attempted suicide. Even so, he
speaks of his recovery as his "return from the dead." 

But if free-will is ruled out for the human "cells" within the Larger Man, what is one to say of such apparent rebellion as these characters attempt? While on the surface it looks as though they can refuse their subordinate roles, even if this results only in suffering and defeat for themselves, yet a closer examination of further imagery in the Quartet reveals that such apparently rebellious and independent action is in actual fact only another way in which the purposes of the Larger Man are fulfilled. For life as it is shown in the Quartet strives always towards self-realization, this to be understood in other and larger ways than the merely rational, and such self-realization seems inevitably to be obtainable only at the cost of suffering.

Perhaps the best way to explain it is to say that the picture here is strikingly like that in the Christian account of the rebellion in Heaven by the Satanic angels, the Fall of Man and the subsequent Redemption through the Christ. Somehow these events of the Christian mythology are both inevitable and desirable; in no way the sole result of ill-used freedom.
on the part of Satan or of man, but somehow mysteriously part of the divine plan. Theologians, dedicated to making religion logical, have of course wrestled with the illogicality of this for centuries without ever, in my opinion, making it seem logical. But that does not mean that it is not nevertheless the heart and core of Christian thinking. Similarly, the spectacle of fully controlled "cells" who are nevertheless able to "rebel" against the dictates of the Larger Man containing them—only to succeed in actually fulfilling the purposes of that greater and mysterious being—this too is completely illogical. Does that necessarily make it less valid as an observation on human life? After all, it is disturbing and unsatisfactory to man only (only!) so long as he persists in conceiving of purpose in purely individual and rational terms.

I will now leave this particular view of man-within-Larger Man and turn to the second possible view of Durrell's characters, because to some extent it is similar to the first view, and imagery that illustrates this second view will usually also be significant with regard to the first. In this second view of Durrell's characters, the city is again seen as living and can be seen as parallel to Grodeck's It. The human characters
that live in the city and are controlled by it are egos. Thus, from this second point of view, we find the human psyche split into its two components. A combination of the ego, the individual Durrell character, with the It that is the city gives a complete human being—or rather, it gives a variety of complete human beings, since there is a great number of individual characters. Seeing the characterization of the novels this way does not solve the problem of free will if one insists on seeing freedom as a prerogative of the ego, of the conscious "I". But why not see it as a function of the It instead? For Groddeck, the It was the source of all creative energy and was completely free in the sense that it operated beyond the frame of causality erected by man's intellect. Its purposes (even like the purposes of God!) were not to be understood by that intellect but only by such intuition as a man might have. Indeed, the It for Groddeck was of the nature of God, and such reality as Christ had for him was only to be grasped by a submersion of the ego into the It, at which point a symbolic Christ became apparent.

Well then, surely those of Durrell's characters which are most open to the influences of the It must also
be the most creative people? A close look at the characters in the *Quartet* proves this supposition to be correct. Nessim, as was already indicated by the images of his symbolic castration, has somehow been cut off from life. He once had some measure of creativity and a talent for painting, but an Oxford education "succeeded in developing his philosophic bent to the point where he was incapable of practising the art." 21 From time to time he voices a desire to paint again, and once he actually paints Justine, but the artistic impulse remains thwarted in him.

In contrast to Nessim there is Clea who has considerable artistic talent and who keeps on painting regardless of what happens—except for that one ludicrous instance when she finds herself stuck and goes to Pursewarden for help for her "misery"! 22 In the end she attains full artisthood and a place among the Real Ones (Pursewarden's phrase). She has become "a real human being, an artist at last" 23 as a result of suffering, the "death" of her ego-consciousness (which is clearly symbolized in her accident and near-drowning) and an awakening to awareness of the unconscious powers in life, of which the Hand is symbolic. The fact that Clea can talk about her new status in completely object-
terms is an obvious indication of her having surrendered the illusion of being in control of her life. The road to her salvation starts from her agonizing sense of guilt about Narouz. The crying that haunts her for months is that of Narouz when he came to see her during carnival and she felt only disgust at his declaration of love; then again, she refused out of disgust to come to Narouz when he was dying. From this the way leads through an experience which makes her realize that such guilt has no claim whatever on the human being, and thus leads on to what one might truly call a free life.

In Pursewarden's "Conversations with Brother Ass" there is an explicit reference to the sort of experience Clea undergoes. Pursewarden is talking particularly of the artist's creative function and hence he calls the experience "the poetic act":

But this act, the poetic act, will cease to be necessary when everyone can perform it for himself. What hinders them, you ask? Well, we are all naturally afraid to surrender our own pitifully rationalised morality—and the poetic jump I'm predicating lies the other side of it. It is only terrifying because we refuse to recognise in ourselves the horrible gargoyles which decorate the totem poles of our churches—murderers, liars, adulterers and so on. (Once recognised, these papier-mâché masks fade.)24
That is to say, in some way the human being must come to terms with his sense of guilt in order to dispel that guilt and attain freedom. A thinker with a Christian bent would call this expiation, but that word hardly fits into Durrell's thought in the *Quartet*. Rather, the "poetic act" should be seen as a sort of birth into a new and different life; indeed, this is the image that Durrell uses for it when he describes Darley's revival of Clea:

> It must have hurt, as the first few breaths hurt a newly born child. The body of Clea was protesting at this forcible rebirth. And all of a sudden the features of that white face moved, composed themselves to express something like pain and protest. (Yes, but it hurts to realise.)

The pain that accompanies this "birth" of a human being into a new state of awareness is such pain as invariably accompanies growth.

But what of the other *Quartet* characters who are artists? Arnauti, Justine's first husband, is a writer with considerable talent. He has insight, but not enough, as Balthazar points out in his criticism of him. His art is hampered by his French bent for rationality and order. His account of Justine in the novel
Moeurs has been pruned of all the things that Arnauti either did not understand or feared would make for melodrama. In other words, ego-consciousness is strong in Arnauti. What awareness he does have of the unconscious powers of life he channels in the direction of Freudian psychoanalysis. His response to Justine's neurosis is to take her from one psychoanalyst to another, back and forth across Europe. He is far from understanding that he cannot control either the life of another or his own.

Then there is Pursewarden whose position is strangely ambivalent. He refers at one point to his "classical head and romantic heart," and perhaps right here is the best summation of his duality. From one point of view he seems to develop towards despair. Seen from this angle his life is a failure in spite of his deep insights; he has failed to come to terms with the guilt he feels for having committed incest. (One should note in this connection the destructive nature of his relationship to Liza, the blindness that afflicts their child as well as her, the early death of that child, and the sombre effect of Liza throughout the Quartet until, in the last picture of her, she sits beside the ashes of their life together; his love letters
to her which she has burned.) Pursuwarden's suicide would then be what some critics have claimed it is, a final negation of the value of life. Yet from another point of view his suicide can be seen as a rejection only of the sort of life his ego-consciousness has led him into—that is, of the stale and destructive political game in which he comes to meddle—while his writing to Liza that he wanted to free her from their relationship must be credited with some truth. In that case, his death takes on the overtones of willing sacrifice for others, a sacrifice through which he simultaneously frees himself from bondage to the ego; his death becomes the fullest submission of ego-self to the It. I advance this second view partly because of Pursuwarden's own account of his suicide, partly because of Durrell's explicit statement in an interview that "Pursuwarden's suicide is the sacrificial suicide of a true cathar." There is also
the striking image of him in death as a "resurrected Pan." In any case, it is hard to write him off as ending in despair since we are made to feel that his stature as an artist is greater than that of anyone else in the Quartet. Liza's statements about her brother's writings and Darley's own reaction when reading Pursewarden's letters to Liza contribute to this impression, as does the esteem that almost everyone in the Quartet has for Pursewarden as an artist. Again, the views on life that Pursewarden expresses in his works as well as in the Quartet are quite similar to the views of Groddeck, and they emphasize above all the validity of hope and the possibility of joy to be attained if man strives hard enough for it. Such views simply would not be available to anyone who in the end could deny that life has value. There is still one more thing that could be said about Pursewarden's suicide, though, and it is this: like so many other events in the Quartet it changes shape and meaning depending upon who is looking at it and when. Surely Durrell's intention with this is to suggest not that the truth about an event or a person is difficult to discern but that there are at least as many "truths" of these things as there are observers to consider them. To quote Pursewarden,
We live ... lives based upon selected fictions. Our view of reality is conditioned by our position in space and time—not by our personalities as we like to think. Thus every interpretation of reality is based upon a unique position. Two paces east or west and the whole picture is changed.  

Again,

There are only as many realities as you care to imagine.

Keats might just get mention here. He is presented in Clea, somewhat unconvincingly, as having become a writer in potential if not in fact. But his real function in the Quartet, surely, is to illustrate the contrast between journalism and literature in the clearest possible way. For Keats, what matters are the facts of any given case. He suffers from "the mania to perpetuate, to record, to photograph everything." As a result he remains, until the change in Clea, "on the superficies of real life (acts and facts about acts)." He does not understand what Darley comes to understand, that poetry is "more real than observed truth."

Darley, of course, finally becomes a full-fledged writer at the end of the Quartet. His development is similar to that of Clea and its last stage is
the same as hers. The decisive point for Darley comes when, trying to free Clea from the wreck, he decides—the determination comes not from his conscious self but from the depths of the It—to bring her alive to the surface or remain in the rock-pool with her. This is the decisive submission of his ego-self to the It, and it enables him to become creative as never before. It is through this new power that he is able to revive Clea. His intellect tells him that she is already dead, but he literally wills her to life, and again the source of this will is not the ego but the It. It will be useful here to look again at Groddeck's view of the human psyche or personality. We are used to thinking of will as a conscious force in man and to linking it with the ego as the director of human action. But such a view was false to Groddeck. This is how Durrell explains it in his article in Horizon:

... the Whole was an unknown, a forever unknowable entity, whose shadows and functions we are. Only a very small corner of this territory was free to be explored by the watchful, only the fringes of this universe lay within the comprehension of the finite human mind which is a function of it.36
Thus, what gives direction to man's life is always the inaccessible, unconscious part of his nature. At best his conscious will can only concur with it. At worst it can try to oppose it and thus create disorder in man's conscious being. But conscious will as the effective director of human life is an illusion. It should be noted of Darley, in this connection, that his development towards artisthood is facilitated at every stage by a tendency on his part not to attempt to direct his own life. Early in the Quartet, before he meets Justine, Darley confesses to having reached a dead end in himself.

I lack the will-power to do anything with my life, to better my position by hard work, to write: even to make love. I do not know what has come over me. This is the first time I have experienced a real failure of the will to survive.  

When, after Melissa's death, he retires to the Greek Island to think over his life in Alexandria and to write, this is a fortuitous choice, "born of impulses which I am forced to regard as outside the range of my own nature." His summons back to Alexandria comes without his having solicited it, and his significant meeting there with Clea comes about "by chance, not de-
Few things in Darley's life are consciously willed.

So far I have dealt with self-realization through submission to the creative. It only with regard to artists or would-be artists. But there are significant characters in the Quartet who lay no claim to being artists. Old Scobie for example, in spite of ailing health, creaking bones and artificial appendages, is surely magnificently alive and successful as a human being. Clea says of him,

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

One could endeavour to tie Scobie in with the artist group by saying that the elaborate "mythology" he has built up about his friend Toby Mannering (and to a lesser extent about Budgie), and from which he quotes with relish at the first opportunity, constitutes an artistic creation in its own right. But it is simpler to regard art as only one road leading to self-realization. Other roads, those of sexual love, of religion
(though this road gets less attention than any other from Durrell) and even quite simply of patient attentive living in harmony with the larger world of the It, these too lead to self-realization. Scobie has taken the road last mentioned. In truth, he is probably the one human being in the Quar tet who comes closest to a full identification with the city. It is significant in this regard that he is often described as a wrinkled old tortoise, the same image used for the city.41 And just as the city is variously regarded by the characters in the Quar tet, so there are different opinions of Scobie. To Maskelyne, whose life is a code more than even Mountolive's or Nessim's, Scobie is simply a foolish old pervert, useless in the administration and a scandal on the police force. But to his friends Scobie is a delightful human being, and to this reader at any rate he is a fine comic creation. His "Tendencies" and odd little habits are no qualification of his warm humanity. On the contrary, I feel they are intended by Durrell to point up the extent of his identification with the unconscious forces of life. The "Tendencies" eventually prove his undoing, but in his resurrection as El Scob, patron saint of the native quarter, they are triumphantly emphasized as incontestable evidence of his
holiness, and barren women invoke his ancient bathtub for fertility, apparently with results. It is significant that Durrell suggests a link between old Scobie and the mythical figure of Tiresias who is celebrated in a popular song current in the city. Just as Tiresias is both man and woman, so Scobie through his bisexual nature sums up humanity and shows the extent of his submission to the It which is always double-sexed. Here too is at least a partial explanation for the homosexual nature or tendencies so often encountered among the characters of the Quartet. Being to an unusual extent divorced from accepted morality and having highly introspective and perceptive natures, they are almost bound to confront the bisexuality of the human psyche and to some extent express it in their lives.

There remains yet a third road to self-realization for man, the road of sexual love, and in this connection something must be added to what I have already said about the relationship of Clea and Darley. I dealt with Clea's near-drowning and her revival by Darley in terms of the artist's submission of his ego-consciousness to the creative It. But the experience
also is an illustration of how love becomes a means by which the human being draws closer to a recognition of his own essential nature. Here is what Durrell himself says on that score:

The scenes you mention, which some critics find silly—the love scenes and the underwater scenes—are really a mime about rebirth on the parable plane. Perhaps it was a silly idea, I don't know. The love-act is symbolized by the breathing-trouble, the break through to poetic illumination, the stark choice which must be accepted. You know what "breath" means in its Alexandrian connotation? In the Trismegistic sense I mean? Sex and knowing become primal here where I try to symbolize the achievement of "artisthood"—the mysterious secret of which Pursewarden was trying to pass on to Darley. Yes, in the Hermetic sense it is a matter of life and breath!

Love is a means by which most of Durrell's characters approach their goal of self-realization. Love in the Quartet is always a means to this end, though the characters usually do not fully realize it, at least for a while. The belief that love is an end in itself and is necessarily linked with the life of another human being is an illusion that arises out of the human being's ego-oriented nature, and it is essential to love. The illusion can be dispelled, but when that happens the love in question invariably dies, like Darley's love for Justine, or is transformed into something else. Clea
puts it this way:

There is something about love—I will not say defective for the defect lies in ourselves: but something we have mistaken about its nature. For example, the love you now feel for Justine is not a different love for a different object but the same love you feel for Melissa trying to work itself out through the medium of Justine. Love is horribly stable, and each of us is only allotted a certain portion of it, a ration. It is capable of appearing in an infinity of forms and attaching itself to an infinity of people. But it is limited in quantity, can be used up, become shop-worn and faded before it reaches its true object. For its destination lies somewhere in the deepest regions of the psyche where it will come to recognize itself as self-love, the ground upon which we build the sort of health of the psyche. I do not mean egoism or narcissism.  

Groddeck's thinking is very similar here:

We can only love what is within ourselves, what we recognize as symbolic of ourselves, something that we believe in, something allowed us by our human nature.

Love, like art, is a means by which man grows in spirit. "I suppose we are all hunting for the secrets of growth," Justine says once. As a result of such growth, man will eventually pass beyond the need for love in the form he has previously known it. This will come about, according to Pursewarden, because the human psyche will have attained that state of "original innocence" which for
him is full self-realization. In the extracts from his notebooks given in Clea he talks at length—too great a length, for it tires the reader—about what this will mean for man's life and culture. But in the relationship of Darley and Clea, especially at the end of the Quartet, there is a clear example of the kind of art and love man will know when he has reached full stature. Art will be completely freed of the domination of the ego and become an harmonious expression of the complete human psyche. Love will cease to be the passionate and painful illusion it was and will become something like deep and abiding friendship; here too the ego will cease to dominate. And right here, I suspect, is the reason for some of the criticism of the last volume of the Quartet. Critics have voiced their disappointment over the relationship of Darley and Clea which seems so tame a thing after Justine. As always the ideal, when deliberately presented for observation, is less interesting than the prevalent and painful human condition.

For the greater part of the Quartet, however, Durrell focuses on love as illusion, love as an intense form of suffering. Suffering is everywhere in the novels and would seem to be almost a natural condition
of life, inevitable like Leila's smallpox, Fosca's sudden death, or the blindness that helps lead Liza into incest. But more than any other force it is love that causes suffering, and the fullest expression of the nature of such love is of course Justine. As mentioned earlier, the animal imagery through which she is presented shows repeatedly her predatory nature, but this is only one way in which Justine's role as destroyer is brought out. There are numerous other and varied images emphasizing it. Her eyes are "orbits of the Sphinx at noon." For Arnauti she is "a woman whose every kiss was a blow struck on the side of death." In her passional life she is "direct—like an axe falling." When at Nessim's instigation she seeks out Darley, she thereby cleaves his life in two "like an axe falling." A whispered word from her sings "like the whistle of a bullet" in Darley's mind. Nessim, listening to her voice, finds it "jumbled in the back of his brain like the sound-track of an earthquake run backwards." Darley, having fallen in love with her, feels as if the whole city had crashed about his ears, leaving him an aimless survivor in the rubble. So great is the emphasis on Justine as destroyer that in two memorable images she seems no longer human but
rather one with such figures of destructive divinity as can be found in myths. One image is used repeatedly throughout the Quartet, and though it is never directly linked with Justine the reader is tempted to make that link, between the face of Justine and "the austere mindless primeval face of Aphrodite."^54 This image of Aphrodite is strikingly like a second image which is specifically used for Justine: her face, when she has accepted Nessim's pact, is "expressionless as a mask of Siva."^55 Siva is a Hindu divinity, the third member of Hinduism's trinity, known also as "The Destroyer."^ As a character Justine, then, functions at least partly as a superhuman figure of mythical significance. This is so particularly in the first novel of the Quartet before Darley is forced to modify his original impression of her. But Justine also functions throughout the Quartet as a human being, or rather a human ego, since we are still considering the characters as egos more or less alienated from the It. Like all the Alexandrians, Justine too is "a hunter of pain in search of herself."^56

As such she is one with the many other figures in the Quartet who seek to find themselves through love for another. The search is bound to end in suffering, for though sexual love for Durrell is the source of all
real knowledge, yet man persists in the illusion that what he loves is separate from himself, "out there" in the external world which he perceives with his ego. He loves an illusion; he is like the singing birds in cages that Mountolive sees in the native quarter:

...singing birds whose cages were full of mirrors to give them the illusion of company. The lovesongs of birds to companions they imagined—which were only reflections of themselves! How heartbreakingly they sang, these illustrations of human love!

This is for me the one most memorable image in the entire Alexandria Quartet, and to follow it with a paraphrase is infelicitous to say the least. Yet it is important to note that this image, clear and unforgetable as it is, is not the only means by which Durrell makes explicit his view of love. Justine very early says exactly the same, though Darley then brushes it off as being true only of her. "It is idle," she writes,

to imagine falling in love as a correspondence of minds, of thoughts; it is a simultaneous firing of two spirits engaged in the autonomous act of growing up. And the sensation is of something having noiselessly exploded inside each of them. Around this event, dazed and preoccupied, the lover moves examining his or her own experience;
her gratitude alone, stretching away towards a mistaken donor, creates the illusion that she communicates with her fellow, but this is false. The loved object is simply one that has shared an experience at the same moment of time, narcissistically; and the desire to be near the beloved object is at first not due to the idea of possessing it, but simply to let the two experiences compare themselves, like reflections in different mirrors. All this may precede the first look, kiss, or touch; precede ambition, pride or envy; precede the first declarations which mark the turning point—for from here love degenerates into habit, possession, and back to loneliness.59

So long, then as a human being's love remains founded in illusion, so long will love be a cause of suffering, for it will in the end only confirm him in his loneliness. Hence the many images of destruction, disease and blindness in the Quartet, all of which are linked with love. Clea's love for Justine leaves her, in her father's eyes, like "a small child skipping near a powerful piece of unprotected machinery."60 Though injured, Clea is not destroyed, but not everyone is so fortunate. Ostensibly Melissa dies of tuberculosis; in truth she dies because Darley has failed to love her and because she herself is incapable of living any longer with the realization that love as a tie to another human being is an illusion. "Monsieur, je suis devenue la
solitude meme. " Her quiet words to Pursewarden do much to explain her resignation and fatigue. Melissa is not strong enough, physically or spiritually, to live for long. Her body in death is "bandaged and swaddled as if after some consuming and irreparable accident." Darley feels guilty, but no one can be blamed. "Possession of a human heart—disease without remedy." The truth of Pursewarden's observation is only too often confirmed elsewhere in these novels. Here, love is a sore that will not heal, a "synonym for derangement or illness," a "cancerous growth of unknown origin which may take up its site anywhere without the subject knowing or wishing it." Pombal certainly never wished to fall in love. When he does he is at once deeply disturbed and, for a time, ecstatically happy. Yet Fosca's death leaves him "like a man recovering from a severe stroke" and he talks to Darley of his irreparable loss like a man who is under anaesthetic. Even Justine, who causes so much harm to others, herself falls victim to love. The self-possession that Darley acquires severs the ties between them and leaves her to suffer through her increased loneliness, "a patient on an operating table, hardly breathing." In love the way of suffering so often leads to
destruction. As with religion, another road towards the final truths, those who approach the closest suffer the most. One thinks of the fanatic holy man, the Magzub, who "had sought the final truths of religion beneath the mask of madness."\textsuperscript{70} And there is Narouz whose eyes, towards the end, are "full of the pain of a new sort of knowledge which owed little to the sterile revolutions of reason."\textsuperscript{71} Above all there is Liza Pursewarden,

\begin{quote}
Blinded as Eros by surprise.\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

Her blindness is symbolic evidence of the utterly destructive power of love when it cuts across all that society seeks to impose upon it. And yet is there not, in this story of Liza and her brother and of their blinded child who dies, at least a partial explanation of the artisthood of Pursewarden himself? All his poetry is dedicated to her, and the letters he has written her and that Darley comes to read are said to be an instance of the fullest artistic achievement. It is surely a mistake to see this incestuous relationship as a symbol of sterility, "of everything coming to a dead end," which is how Cecily Mackworth sees it.\textsuperscript{73} Out of this relationship, precisely because it is so destructive, comes in-
sight and increased understanding of self. "But at a price unbearably high," someone will say. To that one can only answer that no price seems to be too high in this Alexandrian world. Moreover, the human beings who must pay the price do not control the course of their lives and so have no conscious say about such payment. What sort of justice then rules this world? How is it that some of its inhabitants, like Darley and Clea, achieve their goal with less suffering than others, while still others apparently perish? Clearly such justice as there is in Durrell's world is unlike the justice of man. One is reminded of Christ's parable of the harvest where some ground yields a hundred fold, some much less, some nothing or only tares. The biblical harvest is dependent upon grace; the outcome of human lives is dependent not on man's conscious intentions or strivings but on how closely his life has approached the forces of imagination that are grounded in the It. "We become what we dream," says Balthazar. "We achieve in reality, in substance, only the pictures of the imagination."^74

Seen in this light no one who has submitted to the life of the It can be counted a human failure, however painful, destructive or even self-destructive his
life may seem to observers. Pursewarden is not a failure, nor is Liza, nor Melissa. The real failures are those who have remained ego-ridden, like Maskelyne. Like the masks or costumes mentioned earlier in the discussion of life as drama, such people are never put to use. The ego must be animated by the It before it can be part of the drama. Where that animation does not come about the ego remains, like an unused mask, in the wings. What we have here is an unaccountable failure of life to express and perpetuate itself. In the end such failure cannot be blamed on the ego. Rather, I believe, it is evidence in Durrell's view of the trial and error by which life, like natural evolution, develops towards increased self-realization. Some individuals fulfill the purposes of nature or of life; others do not and are lost. Again, the process of self-realization is once described as a process whereby the idea of the individual soul is grafted on to human beings. The graft may or may not be successful; man may or may not grow a soul, depending upon how strong is the life within him.

And yet at the heart of that life is a paradox. The more fully man comes alive by submitting to
the It, the more certain he is of a swift destruction. It is as though the very fullness of life is too much for the human being to bear, so that before long it consumes him. I think the figures of Liza, of Pursewarden and of Narouz are most fully understood when seen in this way. All three are for a short time magnificently alive. "The so-called act of living," says Pursewarden, "is really an act of the imagination." Right there is the central idea of The Alexandria Quartet, and surely its truth is nowhere more explicitly demonstrated than in Liza's account of her own and Pursewarden's childhood:

We had no resources except in each other. He converted my blindness into poetry, I saw with his brain, he with my eyes. So we invented a whole imperishable world of poetry together—better by far than the best of his books.... This is how I became the strange mythological queen of his life, living in a vast palace of sighs—as he used to say. Sometimes it was Egypt, sometimes Peru, sometimes Byzantium. I suppose I must have known that really it was an old farmhouse kitchen, with shabby deal furniture and floors of red tile. At least when the floors had been washed with carbolic soap with its peculiar smell I knew, with half my mind, that it was a farmhouse floor, and not a palace with magnificent tesselated floors brilliant with snakes and eagles and pygmies. But at a word he brought me back to reality, as he called it.
Poetry is indeed more real than observed truth. For Liza and her brother it is the poetry of fantasy and fairy tale. For Narouz it is the poetry of the Psalms:

... he saw the world, not so much as a political chessboard but as a pulse beating within a greater will which only the poetry of the psalms could invoke and body forth. To awaken not merely the impulses of the forebrain with its limited formulations, but the sleeping beauty underneath—the poetic consciousness which lay, coiled like a spring, in the heart of everyone.  

Narouz, as Nessim rightly perceives, has the makings of a religious leader. As it is, Narouz attempts through his preaching to combine the roles of preacher and leader of a political cause. His aim is similar to the artistic aims described by Pursewarden: both men seek to "inflame the sleeping will."  

That is, they emphasize the importance of subordinating man's ego-identity to the It, if human life is ever to approach the ideal. But Nessim, looking at his brother, sees that he will never succeed in sustaining the imaginative gift for long.

He was a prodigy of nature but his powers were to be deployed in a barren field which could never nourish them, which indeed would stifle them forever.
The fault, though, is not really in man's environment. There is something inherently faulty in human nature which makes it unable to sustain the full imaginative life for more than a brief duration. For Liza and her brother, too, the perfection of a poetic life comes quickly to an end.

... when the guilt entered the old poetic life began to lose its magic ...

Nevertheless, this poetic experience has lasting effect. I pointed out before that Pursewarden's insight and the art he creates out of it come both in large measure if indeed not completely from their poetic life together. On the one hand guilt is a deadly force that extinguishes the brightness of their life together; on the other hand it must also be seen as a necessary development towards the expressing (for Pursewarden) of that poetic imagination in an artistic form that will reach others and not remain only with himself and Liza. And there is this strange image of Pursewarden in death as a "resurrected Pan!" It links up with something Liza says about their life together.

Later, when he started looking for justifications for our love instead of just simply being proud of it, he read me a quotation from
a book. 'In the African burial rites it is the sister who brings the dead king back to life. In Egypt as well as Peru the King, who was considered as God, took his sister to wife. But the motive was ritual and not sexual, for they symbolised the moon and the sun in their conjunction. The king marries his sister because he, as God the star, wandering on earth, is immortal and may therefore not propagate himself in the children of a strange woman, any more than he is allowed to die a natural death.'

A similar note is sounded at the death of Narouz. The servants who come to take him back to the house bring "an enormous purple curtain" in which to carry him. They reach the house "like some grotesque religious procession bearing the body of the younger son," and in the chants of the women who come to mourn his death are echoes of the old fertility myths, of women weeping for the god who has died.

Resurrection and the possibility of resurrection is an important theme in the Quartet and to some extent it can be linked to the cyclic nature of the characters' lives. Darley's life, for instance, develops cyclically. It is one of encounter with the city and withdrawal from it, and at each encounter certain experiences are relived in slightly but significantly modified form. This is how man's life develops, like the life of nature through the changing seasons, moving
through cycle towards a greater realization of life. But the full significance of this cyclical development in these novels can only be grasped if we take yet another look at the pattern created by the characters and their city. In this third and final view, the city is the only character in the Quartet.
After all, if we go back to St. Paul and the Christian teaching considered earlier, he himself speaks of man's slavery to the Law, meaning man's attempts to justify
himself, by himself, without relying on the power of God. Freedom as St. Paul conceives of it is something that man attains when, and only when, he becomes identified in purpose with the larger community and the Christ of whom all are members, willing or otherwise.

21 J. 28.
22 C. 109.
23 C. 281.
24 C. 153.
25 C. 153.
26 B. 239.

27 See for example Cecily Mackworth, "Durrell and the New Romanticism," The World of Lawrence Durrell, p. 35.

28 I am positing here an It going beyond that of the individual man, and in so doing I really go beyond the bounds I have set for my three-way analysis of the characterization. Nevertheless, it seems the only satisfactory account that agrees with Durrell's explicit view on the subject (see comment immediately following), and it really extends rather than contradicts the ideas I am presenting.


30 M. 215.
31 B. 14-15.
32 B. 152.
33 B. 26.
34 B. 26.
35 C. 30.
36 J. 21-22.
37 J. 21-22.
38 J. 113-114.
39 C. 76.
40 C. 120
41 Compare C. 88 and J. 19.
43 J. 129-130.
45 C. 150.
46 C. 141-142.
47 B. 15.
48 J. 73.
49 J. 81.
50 B. 130.
51 B. 204.
52 J. 119-120.
53 J. 88.
54 M. 206.
55 M. 206.
56 J. 151
57 M. 286
58 In actual fact—if one can talk of fact in these novels—these are the words of Arnauti, not Justine, since the notebooks she gives to Darley, saying they are her diaries, are really notes made by Arnauti (and copied out by her) in the course of his own work.
59 J. 49-50.
60 B. 49.
This view develops quite naturally out of the view of the city as the It expressing itself through a variety of egos. That second view permitted a look at a great variety of human beings, city-ego combinations, whose lives could be seen as more or less successful depending upon how fully the ego responded and submitted to the It. Nevertheless, such a view is limited. While it reveals much that Durrell considers to be the truth of human nature, it is still far from showing the complexities of the individual human psyche. For that there are too many characters on hand.

But in the third view of character that emerges from this work, Durrell does depict the human psyche in unusual depth and detail, and the techniques that bring about this view will perhaps prove in the end to be the one most outstanding technical achievement of Durrell. For here he has as good as overcome what he considers the obstacles hindering the artist in his attempt to present the truth. I have discussed how he considers the concept of a stable psyche, of "personality as something with fixed attributes" to be an illusion. That
illusion, in his view, has been dispelled in our day, and with it must go the old techniques that presented a stable psyche. That is, it will not do to present the one-sided and one-dimensional view of character which is all that any one observer sees. It will hardly even be enough to present a series of such views coming from different observers and at different times. That would be closer to the truth, however, like the dressmaker's mirror which gives back five different pictures of Justine seen from different angles. But what is needed is such a technique of "prism-sightedness" which will also give an idea of the workings of time within a psyche that in itself is really "an ant-hill of opposing predispositions." This is what Durrell sets out to accomplish when he implicitly presents the city as a single human psyche seen in close-up from innumerable angles and seen in continuous movement from present to past and back again. One starts with the idea, presented in my second view of the characterization, of the combination of It and ego as forming a whole. But whereas in the second view I went on to show the outcome of this as a presentation of a great variety of human beings, all city-ego combinations, here I go on to a view of the city as a single psyche manifesting a vari-
ety of simultaneously existing egos. In the second view, the impression was given that the ego at least was a relatively fixed entity. But just as there is no stability in the entire psyche, so there is none in the ego either. It is only the over-simplification inherent in human vision that leads to such a view. Here is what Groddeck says about the manifestation of ego, of "I-feeling" that in itself is only one of the ways in which the It manipulates the conscious mind for purposes of its own:

What is usually understood by the ego is what I have been calling the general-I, but even this is no simple phenomenon to be easily dismissed. Within a few moments the observer will see it turn to him the most diverse aspects of its serried and scintillating surface. At one moment it is an I from childhood, then it is a grown-up, even magisterial; now it is moral, now sexual, or again it is the I of a murderer or of a saint. Now it is pious, a moment later, impertinent. In the morning it may be the professional I, the officer or civil servant, at mid-day perhaps the married I, and in the evening a card-player, a sadist or a thinker. When you consider that all these I's—and untold others—are simultaneously existent in the man, you will be able to imagine how great is the power of the unconscious which calls them forth ....

Whether or not Durrell owes his idea of the nature of the ego-self directly to Dr. Groddeck would be difficult to determine, but certainly there is a striking similarity between this view of Groddeck's
and Durrell's own presentation of character in the *Quartet*. It will be readily seen that what Durrell has done is depict the various and simultaneously existing egos of a human psyche in great detail by treating them on one level as separate human beings and following up their development, while on another level suggesting that all are minute aspects of one complete psyche revealing its complexity to the beholder. Such a technique is a natural enough outcome of his view that the separation of subject and object, of observer and observed, that always results from human vision, is an illusion and that reality, if it were accessible to man, would comprise both in unity. He talks at length about this concept in *Key to Modern Poetry*, and in doing so he comes close to suggesting the sort of technique I feel he has used in the *Quartet*.

'It seems at least conceivable that what is true of perceived objects may also be true of perceiving minds; just as there are wave-pictures for light and electricity, so there may be a corresponding picture for 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. As it is with light and electricity, so it may be with life; the phenomena may be individuals
carrying on separate existences in space and time, while in the deeper reality beyond space and time we may all be members of one body. In brief, modern physics is not altogether antagonistic to an objective idealism like that of Hegel."

This third view of Durrell's characterization, (which, incidentally is much like that of the Caballa so often mentioned in these novels) clearly is akin to the man-within-Larger Man idea that I discussed first of all. However, this third view permits an insight into the depth and detail of the human psyche, whereas the first stressed the dependence of the subordinate human units within the larger whole.

Now then, if one looks closely at the nature of the human psyche as Durrell presents it, it will be seen that it expresses itself in a sort of cyclical development towards the fuller realization of self which everywhere in the Quartet is the human goal. And the simplest way to begin understanding that cyclical development is to observe it, first of all, as it is found in the "life" of one of the psyche's "ego-manifestations", in the life of Darley. I mentioned before that his life is one of alternating encounter with the city and withdrawal from it, while at each encounter certain experiences are relived in similar but significantly
modified form. What I had in mind was this: each of Darley's three love affairs develops through quite similar stages, and at certain points an almost identical note is struck. It is clearly intentional on Durrell's part and impossible to miss on a careful reading.

In *Justine*, at the beginning of Darley's relationship with Melissa, she comes unexpectedly to visit him wearing "a new summer frock of a crisp vine-leaf pattern."\(^6\) Towards the end of the *Quartet*, Clea surprises Darley by coming to his flat to invite him on the outing to the island: she too is wearing "a brilliant summer frock of a crisp vine-leaf pattern."\(^7\) Melissa had just been released from hospital at the time of her visit; Clea is to be hospitalized by her accident that same day. Again, when Melissa has left Darley after that first visit, he goes out a little later to find her

sitting 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.\(^8\)

In the last volume, Darley's first meeting with Clea when he returns to the city is an exact echo of that
earlier meeting with Melissa;

... she was sitting where once (that first day) Melissa had been sitting, gazing at a coffee cup with a wry reflective air of amusement, with her hands supporting her chin. 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 door which had remained closed and bolted for a generation.9

The door he refers to is the one he feels close when, in Justine, he returns to the city to find Melissa already dead in hospital. Looking at her then he reflects that her face in death bears no resemblance to the faces of the living Melissa:

She bore no resemblance to any of them—and yet she set them off, concluded them. This white little face was the last term of a series. Beyond this point there was a locked door.10

Clea later reveals that Melissa, before she died, asked her to love Darley in her place:

Cannot a friend make love on another's behalf? I ask you to sleep with him as I would ask the Panaghia to come down and bless him while he sleeps--like in the old ikons.11
And indeed it is as if, at the end, Melissa has somehow turned into Clea. Melissa's body in the hospital lies "bandaged and swaddled as if after some consuming and irreparable accident"; there is a marked similarity to the bandaged form of Clea, hospitalized with her shattered hand, in a room scented with forget-me-nots. What is even more striking, in going to see her in that room Darley relives in detail a part of his past:

I followed a duty nurse down the long anonymous green corridors whose oil-painted walls exuded an atmosphere of damp. The white phosphorescent bulbs which punctuated our progress wallowed in the gloom like swollen glow-worms. They had probably put her, I reflected, in the little ward with the single curtained bed which in the past had been reserved for critical cases whose expectation of life was short. It was now the emergency casualty ward. 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.")

One should add that it is not just the going to see Melissa that he relives. There is also the earlier visit--hinted at in the last bracketed sentence--to the dying Cohen whom Darley went to see when Melissa refused. The descriptions of these three visits to the same hospital room contain word-for-word echoes of each
This then is what I mean by cyclical development in Darley's life. That it is development and not mere repetition is nowhere more apparent than in two key passages, one of which comes very early in the Quartet and the other towards the end, in Clea. Here is the passage from Justine where Darley listens to the Moslem morning prayer while lying beside Melissa in a room near the Mosque:

In that early spring dawn, with its dense dew, sketched upon the silence which engulf's a whole city before the birds awaken it, I caught the sweet voice of the blind muezzin from the mosque reciting the Ebed—a voice hanging like a hair in the palm-cooled upper airs of Alexandria. "I praise the perfection of God, the Forever existing" (this repeated thrice, ever more slowly, in a high sweet register). "The perfection of God, the Desired, the Existing, the Single, the Supreme: the perfection of God, the One, the Sole: the perfection of Him who taketh unto himself no male or female partner, nor any like Him, nor any that is disobedient, nor any deputy, equal or offspring. His perfection be extolled."

The great prayer wound its way into my sleepy consciousness like a serpent, coil after shining coil of words—the voice of the muezzin sinking from register to register of gravity—until the whole morning seemed dense with its marvellous healing powers, the intimations of a grace undeserved and unexpected, impregnating that shabby room where Melissa lay, breathing as lightly as a gull, rocked upon the oceanic splendours of a language she would never know.
And here is the comparable passage from the last volume, where Darley wakes up to find Clea standing by the window listening to that same prayer:

She was standing at the drawn curtains to watch the dawn break over the tumbled roofs of the Arab town, naked and slender as an Easter lily. In that spring sunrise, with its dense dew, sketched upon the silence which engulfs a whole city before the birds awaken it, I caught the sweet voice of the blind Muezzin from the mosque reciting the Ebed—a voice hanging like a hair in the palm-cooled upper airs of Alexandria. "I praise the perfection of God, the Forever existing; the perfection of God, the desired, the Existing, the Single, the Supreme; the Perfection of God, the One, the Sole".... The great prayer wound itself in shining coils across the city as I watched the grave and passionate intensity of her turned head where she stood to observe the climbing sun touch the minarets and palms with light: rapt and awake .... The buoyancy of a new freedom possessed me like a draught from what the Cabal once called "The Fountain of All Existing Things".

Two things stand out here. First, Melissa was asleep, and even had she heard the prayer she would not have understood it; Clea is "rapt and awake" and she understands. Secondly, the "intimations of a grace undeserved and unexpected" that come to Darley through his love for Melissa become, in Clea, the "buoyancy of a new freedom...." The two passages are alike in stressing the
possibility of a release for the characters from an otherwise limited life. They differ slightly in that the first passage has to do with release through passional love, and here only Darley is aware of it. In Clea the feeling of new freedom comes also through love, though here love comes closer to being a "friendship ... this side of love"¹⁶ such as Clea once mentions. Again, both Darley and Clea are aware of what this means, and there is a hint here of man's ability to act with new freedom whereas in Justine there was largely just passive awareness. Free action is the prerogative of the artist, of the person whose imaginative powers have been liberated, and such liberation is achieved only through the growth of the psyche, growth coming through the experiences of love and suffering. "The so-called act of living is really an act of the imagination," says Pursewarden. If that is so, then a man is truly alive and free only to the extent that his imaginative powers have developed. The ratiocinative faculty inhibits these powers; the experience of sexual love augments them. Hence the great stress laid upon the value of the love experience for the human being. Hence also the presentation of Darley's growth as an artist in terms of his love experience.
The two passages quoted above are signposts in Darley's life; they indicate his gradual development from a point of awakened insight to a state where such insight makes artisthood a real possibility.

So far I have dealt with cyclical development in Darley's life mainly with regard to the way in which Melissa's and Clea's roles seem to "overlap". There are many other instances, however, in which such overlapping of characters occurs or where events repeat themselves for Darley. "A city becomes a world when one loves one of its inhabitants,"\(^{17}\) writes Darley in *Justine*, and it is not clear whether he is referring to Melissa or to Justine. Much later exactly the same phrase occurs, and here Darley uses it in reference to Clea.\(^{18}\) There are a number of other instances that suggest that Clea is an "extension"\(^{19}\) of Justine as much as she is of Melissa. At the beginning of Darley's affair with Justine, the following dialogue occurs:

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

The same dialogue, with only slight differences, comes
again at the beginning of Darley's relationship with Clea. Again, when the affair of Darley and Justine comes to its end, Justine lies in the hollow of his arm "like a dead bird." Clea, the first night with Darley, sleeps in his arms "like a wild bird exhausted by its struggles with a limed twig." The similarity is striking, especially as the two images come quite close together; yet there is all the difference between death and life. If Clea is an extension of Justine, she is an extension that lives on when the predecessor has ceased to matter. This is true, too, of her role in connection with Melissa, and realizing it Darley reflects that in a way he has now retraced his steps to that point in the past where Justine's departure had shattered his life and Melissa too had gone away.

My steps had led me back again, I realised, remembering the night so long ago when we had slept dreamlessly in each other's arms, to the locked door which had once refused me admission to her. Led me back once more to that point in time, that threshold, behind which the shade of Clea moved, smiling and irresponsible as a flower, after a huge arid detour in a desert of my own imaginings. I had not known then how to find the key to that door. Now of its own accord it was slowly opening. Whereas the other door which had once given me access to Justine had now locked irrevocably.
But it is not just in Darley's life that such cyclical development and patterning of experience is to be found. It is evident in the lives of other characters as well, though to a lesser extent. For example, in Justine's marriage to Nessim there are a few echoes of her former marriage to Arnauti. This is once explicitly mentioned by Darley who has read Arnauti's novel about those years. "In a queer sort of way this relationship echoed the psycho-analytic relationship described in Moeurs by her first husband." Again, in Justine's "diaries" (notebooks of Arnauti's) it is recorded how one moonlight night they gained access to the Museum and sat for an hour among the statues "sightless as nightmares" listening to him talk.

During her marriage to Nessim this scene is repeated when Nessim meets her and Balthazar one night at the museum.

So much for cyclical development in the lives of the individual characters—the "ego-manifestations" as I am here considering them. If the reader now goes on, as I feel Durrell intends him to, and sees the Quartet as a lengthy and highly detailed study of a
single human psyche seen in close-up from innumerable angles and from different points in time, a great many things become clearer. Such cyclical development as could be seen in the lives of the individual characters (ego-manifestations) also shows up in the life of the one great character which, for convenience's sake, we can call the City. In fact, so recurrent is the repetition and patterning of images and events that one can hardly account for them unless one posits that they are somehow part of the life of a single psyche. It is not enough to see such repetition as part of the lives of individual characters. Much of the pattern will not make sense that way. For instance, certain images recur many times in relation to different characters, and certain events of striking similarity are "relived" not by the same individual but by different ones. In other words, the cyclic development is something in which all the individual characters take part from time to time, but only when seen as the experience of a single human psyche does it form a meaningful whole. This is particularly so in regard to the part played by history in the Quartet, for incidents and figures of the past often converge with those of the present, becoming apparent in the life now
of this Durrellian character, now of another. Of this I shall have more to say later.

The way in which images recur in these novels is interesting. In my outline of cyclical development in Darley's life I showed how the three women seem, at times, to melt into each other, as when Melissa "becomes" Clea (or Clea becomes an "extension" of her). A somewhat similar effect is achieved by the recurrent use of images elsewhere. For example, at the marriage celebration of Nessim and Justine, Leila (who hates her new daughter-in-law) says of Justine that she is "like a small dark snake coiled up at the centre of Nessim's life." Later Darley sees Liza Pursewarden the same way, like "a small hateful snake" at the centre of Mountolive's peaceful life. More is involved here than a superficial similarity between the two women. A depth of resemblance between Justine's situation and that of Liza becomes apparent as soon as one looks. When she marries Nessim, Justine already has one marriage behind her, the marriage to Arnauti during which she lost her small daughter. The family into which she marries is rich and distinguished, and her husband's mother is a remote figure living in retirement, widowed.
Compare Liza Pursewarden's situation: Liza previously lived with her brother by whom she had a child. The little girl's death ended their life together, and later Liza moves on to a relationship with Mountolive who wants to marry her. Like Nessim he is rich and distinguished; like Nessim, too, he tries repeatedly to get the woman of his choice to agree to marriage. Again, Mountolive's mother lives in retirement and alone like Leila, and between her and Mountolive there is a very close relationship, as there is between Leila and her son. One could go on and point out that Nessim and Mountolive are much alike: "by candlelight the two men seemed exactly of an age, if indeed not of the same family."\(^{30}\) Leila's attitude towards Mountolive when he first comes to Karm is "the faintly apprehensive solicitude of a woman towards her only man-child,"\(^{31}\) and just once she mentions her uneasy fear that perhaps, at the bottom of their relationship, is a feeble incest wish on her part.\(^{32}\) Going still further in this tracing of a pattern, there is even the similarity of Mountolive's affair with the ballerina Grishkin and Nessim's brief encounter with Melissa who dances at the Etoile. Melissa's child by Nessim is brought to him and Justine long after Melissa's death, while in a "work-
point" at the end of Clea Durrell broaches the matter of Grishkin's little girl being brought to Mountolive and Liza after her mother's death.

All that from the recurrence of a single image! The "yield" is not always this great, but invariably the recurrence of imagery or the repetition of events is revealing and suggestive of a larger pattern. Leila, for example, is a figure in many ways like Justine, and recurrent imagery makes the similarity apparent. Leila has "the magnificent eyes of an Egyptian sibyl"; the phrase "the unmoved sibyl's eye" once sums up the silence and dignity of Justine when she anticipates death. Again, Leila lives in retirement at Karm "like a dethroned Empress"; Justine under house-arrest at Karm has the sombre air of "a dispossessed empress". Together at the marriage of Nessim and Justine, they sit side by side, "the veiled sphinx and the unveiled." Durrell's purpose in establishing the similarity here, if considered from the point of view of individual characters, appears to be both to widen the incest theme by suggesting that Nessim loves his mother through Justine (Nessim feels "freed" by his mother's death) and to display the political intrigue of the Hosnanis from yet another
angle. For just as Justine goes into the affair with Darley at Nessim's suggestion, so Leila much earlier takes Mountolive as her lover at the suggestion of her husband. In Justine's case the motive is at least initially political; in Leila's case it might well be political too to a degree unsuspected by the young Mountolive. It is only much later that he begins to suspect that Leila is the real driving force behind the Hosnani intrigue. Then again, when Mountolive meets his former lover again, he is surprised and disgusted at the change that has come over her: "she smelt like some old Arab lady!" Darley reacts in the same way at the meeting with Justine: "the perfume! At such close quarters the spilled perfume was overpowering, almost nauseating."

If one now returns to the view that the Quartet has only one character, this patterning of events and situations has the effect of showing the reader two or more versions of what might then be seen as a single action engaged in by the psyche that is the sole character. The Hosnani intrigue, for example, would appear as the story of Leila's intrigue at the urging of her husband if seen from one observer's angle of vision. Seen by a second observer at another
time it would "become" the story of Nessim and Justine. Similarly, Justine is Liza, and vice versa; their stories are the same story seen from different angles by different observers, and each version of that story is as true as the other. We are back to the view of action as an illusion, as depending for its semblance of clarity and uniqueness upon the restricting properties of individual vision.

If two or more explanations of a single human action are as good as each other then what does action mean but an illusion—a gesture made against the misty backcloth of a reality made palpable by the delusive nature of human division merely?41

The "delusive nature of human division" being unavoidable, what Durrell has done is to present always more than one version of the same event or character. This is obvious enough on the level of characterization where there are many individual characters. Here, for example, one gets continuously different views of Justine or of Nessim, even of Pombal who, relatively simple as he would seem to be, gives out widely different impressions of himself to different observers. Again, there are the many different accounts of Pursewarden's suicide, of what happened to Justine's
little daughter, even of so simple a thing as how the wiring in the Hosnani car got filed down. Transposed to the level of characterization where all action is the action of one character, this technique gives the effect of highly complex "prism-sightedness" with which Durrell tries to suggest if not to encompass the multitudinous possibilities and divergent impulses within a single human psyche. Like Groddeck's illustration of a man who discloses innumerable egos in a single day, so this central psyche that dominates the Quartet discloses itself in an astounding variety of egos and in various relations whose precise significance can be followed up over a period of time.

"What becomes of plot?" someone will ask. Seen in this way action in the Quartet would seem to be there only as a way of indicating the meaning of the various egos by having them act it out; it would not be an attribute of the central character at all. There are at least two things that can be said in answer to this. First of all, a close-up of a psyche, such as Durrell here attempts, does not leave room for that psyche to act in the way an individual character would. Anyway, such plot is there as soon as one looks upon the characterization as one in which many individual
characters appear. Secondly, the kind of action that most interests Durrell is not strictly speaking action at all but a process of realization. To repeat a quotation already used:

... the so-called act of living is really an act of the imagination. The world—which we always visualise as "the outside" World—yields only to self-exploration!

Now this process of self-exploration can be observed in the one sole character in the Quartet. It shows up in much the same way as it does in the lives of the individual characters who are its ego-manifestations. Again, an illustration from the life of an individual character is helpful. Darley, for example, grows spiritually by having to "relive" the same experiences a number of times. At least that is one way of looking at it. Another way is to see these experiences, similar but nevertheless significantly varied, as deriving their qualities from the vision of Darley himself when he is living through them. "Let us define 'man' as a poet perpetually conspiring against himself," says Darley in Clea. He has suddenly realized that in the Justine he has loved, as in the other women, there has never been anything but the qualities with which he himself has endowed them:
I had only been attesting, in all I had written, to the power of an image which I had created involuntarily by the mere act of seeing Justine. There was no question of true or false. Nymph? Goddess? Vampire? Yes, she was all of these, and none of them. She was, like every woman, everything that the mind of a man (let us define "man" as a poet perpetually conspiring against himself)—that the mind of man wished to imagine. She was there forever, and she had never existed! Under all these masks there was only another woman, every woman, like a lay figure in a dressmaker's shop, waiting for the poet to clothe her, breathe life into her.

A man experiences what he is, then, and spiritual growth will manifest itself in his ability to increase experience until he becomes aware, through it, of his own innermost nature, the heart of all reality for him.

Self-realization on the part of the one main character, the City, manifests itself in a similar way. Certain events are lived and relived, now by this ego, now by that. In Nessim's fears of being murdered by the Egyptian authorities there is an echo of Darley's earlier fears when Cohen was threatening him. The figure of the fanatic Narouz wielding his whip in a courtyard scattered with dead or dying bats recalls the earlier figure of the fanatic holy man, the Magzub, standing among the hypnotized victims that his power has
reduced to crawling on the ground. The meaning of such repeated events is not always immediately clear, but in some cases there can be little doubt of it. When Melissa refuses to see the dying Cohen, the following dialogue occurs:

"O it is so disgusting! Please do not make me go."
"Of course not."
"But if you think I should I will have to."

Melissa does not go; Darley goes in her place. When Clea is asked to come to Karm to see the dying Narouz, almost exactly the same dialogue recurs. Nevertheless, Clea does agree to go, whereas Melissa does not. Melissa never shows any sense of guilt about her refusal, but for Clea (she does not make it to Karm) this, in conjunction with her original disgust when Narouz revealed his love for her, becomes the beginning of a haunting sense of guilt. This leads to suffering and on to a greater self-realization for Clea, as I tried to show earlier on. For the City, then, the "reliving", through Clea, of this experience of refusal is an advance over the experience as Melissa had it. Through it the City itself comes that much closer to an understanding of its own inner nature.

This was an example of an event which recurs
only once. Others recur more frequently and must consequently be more important as means towards self-realization for the City. There is for example Darley's experience of catastrophe and desolation when Justine first enters his life:

It was as if the whole city had crashed about my ears; I walked about in it aimlessly as survivors must walk about the streets of their native city after an earthquake, amazed to find how much that had been familiar was changed.

Darley has the experience again when Justine suddenly leaves for Palestine, and the entire passage quoted above is repeated exactly, save for a change from past to present tense. A third time it is Pursewarden who lives through this experience of catastrophe when Melissa suddenly confirms for him the existence of the Hosnani intrigue:

It was as if the whole city had crashed down about his ears.

Each time the individual character who undergoes the experience is left to make what life he can out of the ruins. Darley, whose life with Melissa has clearly been shattered by the advent of Justine, lives on and learns, but Melissa is deprived of love and eventually dies.
With Justine's departure Darley's life is again violently upset, and this time it takes him two years even to begin to rebuild it. Pursewarden, however one may interpret his suicide, cannot rebuild. Too much has been destroyed.

Other events lived through by the City, while distressing, show a more fruitful result. There is a whole complex of experiences through which the individual characters are brought face to face with the nature of love and madness, two related phenomena. The essence of love is illusion arising out of the human desire to overcome loneliness; out of it, eventually, comes not victory over loneliness but an increased ability to live with that loneliness and grow in spirit. "At first" writes Pursewarden,

we seek to supplement the emptiness of our individuality through love, and for a brief moment enjoy the illusion of completeness. But it is only an illusion. For this strange creature, which we thought would join us to the body of the world, succeeds at last in separating us most thoroughly from it. Love joins and then divides. How else would we be growing? 49

However, growth inevitably means growth of imaginative power and of insight. The individual character dispels his illusions only by recognizing them for what they are,
but once they are so recognized they enrich his life. He acquires a new insight into the nature of the act of living, that supreme "act of the imagination" by virtue of which he exists. Seen in this light, love is a quite involuntary, early form of art. It is man's first amateurish expression of his imaginative power.

"The etiology of love and madness are identical except in degree," writes Darley when he is describing the effects upon Clea of her relationship to Justine. Madness is like love in that here too the reality perceived by the conscious mind is shattered, giving way to illusion or, as it is generally called in the case of madness, to delusion. Here too, as in love, man comes against a feeling of guilt which he must somehow learn to overcome.

The example of Clea is a good one in this connection, for here love and madness are virtually the same phenomena, madness being the later manifestations of what began as love. In her love for Justine, Clea is "not spared anything in the long catalogue of self-deceptions which constitute a love affair." Despite the most determined efforts, she cannot free herself from the relationship. On the contrary, the more she
struggles, the more compelling the experience becomes, and the more it encroaches on her normal sense of what is real. Here too guilt is apparent:

... the distortions of reality were deeply interesting to someone who recognised that for the artist in herself some confusions of sensibility were valuable. Walking towards the studio she would suddenly feel herself becoming breathlessly insubstantial, as if she were a figure painted on canvas. Her breathing became painful. Then after a moment she was overtaken by a feeling of happiness and well-being so intense that she seemed to have become weightless. Only the weight of her shoes, it seemed, held her to the ground. At any moment she might fly off the earth's surface, breaking through the membrane of gravity, unable to stop. This feeling was so piercing that she had to stop and hold on to the nearest wall and then to walk along it bent double like someone on the deck of a liner in a hurricane. This was itself succeeded by other disagreeable sensations--as of a hot clamp round her skull, pressing it, of the beating of wings in her ears. Half-dreaming in bed, suddenly horns rammed downward into her brain, impaling her mind; in a brazen red glare she saw the blood-shot eyes of the mithraic animal. It was a cool night with soft pockets of chemical light in the Arab town. The Ginks were abroad with their long oiled plaits and tinselled clothes; the faces of black angels; the men-women of the suburbs.  

The "mithraic animal" is a symbol of Mithra, the ancient Persian god of light and truth, opponent of darkness and evil. Its appearance surely is meant to illustrate the destructive nature of man's moral sense.
and to indicate how, through its destructive influence, through the guilt which it forces him to feel, it helps to lead the human being on towards greater insight. The guilt that rears up clearly is the guilt of homosexuality. Out of the pain of this experience of love comes, as I see it, what creative ability Clea has in the early parts of the Quartet. Later new relationships sustain her development as artist.

The example of Clea is similar to those of Arnauti and of Leila, though the madness of these two are not given great attention. Arnauti's experience of delusions and anguish after the departure of Justine is not even called madness, yet it bears a resemblance to Clea's experiences as well as to those of Nessim during his madness. Leila's intermittent periods of mental instability are "a quiet surrender of the real world" stemming from her relationship with Mountolive. It is noteworthy that she and her sons learn to accept this as almost natural part of her life and that it is during these periods of retirement that she writes her long letters to Mountolive and so creates the new relationship that replaces the original one.

These examples lead on to that of Nessim whose
madness is described in great detail and is the type of all similar experiences in the Quartet. It too is rooted in love—Nessim's love for Justine—and in the delusions that are described at length guilt is apparent as well as jealousy.

He felt that his mind had become a battleground for the forces of good and evil and that his task was to strain every nerve to recognize them, but it was not easy. 54

At the same time, the irrational that has broken loose within him appeals irresistibly for allegiance:

These, he knew, were not delusions but links in an occult chain, logical and persuasive only to the mind which had passed beyond the frame of causality. It was becoming harder and harder to pretend to be sane by the standards of ordinary behaviour. He was going through the Devastatio described by Swedenborg. 55

Here is a striking illustration of the connection between all illusion—even that of madness—and the imaginative insight that the artist or the philosopher strives to attain. For at the very end of the Quartet, when Darley sets out for himself the problem of acquiring (or of creating?) insight and understanding, he uses the following image:

One day I caught a tortoise at my front door; on the beach was a smashed turtle's egg. Small items which plant themselves in
the speculative mind like single notes of music belonging to some larger composition which I suppose one will never hear. 56

The task of the artist is to strive to comprehend—and in the last analysis that means to create for himself—that "larger composition." This Darley, at the end, is prepared to try to do. Nessim does not progress as far. His long, almost lifeless stay at Karm is somewhat comparable to Darley's withdrawals from the city, and at the end Nessim is enabled to return to it, as Darley does earlier, to learn what more he can from it before, like Darley leaving it forever.

This brings me to the last general observation I want to make about the life of the greater character, the City, which manifests itself through its many egos. There are certain themes, historical and mythical-religious, which appear and reappear as the experiences of the individual characters. One such theme emerges with exceptional force during Nessim's madness when his mind is completely given over to memories of the City's past. Distant human history becomes immediate and personal to Nessim as he is suddenly caught up by the memory of Alexander the Great and
relives a part of the conquerer's Alexandrian experience. The details of the external world are completely submerged in this delusion. Elsewhere in the Quartet there are repeated images linking a number of individual characters to the historical Antony and Cleopatra whose lives are also significant in the City's memory. It is as though the most significant, the most meaningful experiences for the City, those that most allow it to approach self-realization, are to be found here in the experience of the famous conqueror and in that of the great lovers who brought ruin on themselves through their consuming love. Through Nessim the City remembers and relives the experience of the conqueror—the attempt to dominate and control, the reliance upon strategy and force and will—which must necessarily end in despair and disintegration. Nessim's own political intrigue mirrors the military strategy of the conqueror whose role he relives. It is a negative lesson thoroughly gone over by a City with a long memory.

The love of Antony and Cleopatra is remembered and relived in the lives of many individual characters. In a short explicit reference, Arnauti and Justine are linked to the historical lovers. "He is when all is
said and done a sort of minor Antony, and she a Cleo,"\(^{57}\) says Balthazar. His view is that she has wrecked Arnauti's career as a writer the way Cleopatra ruined Antony's generalship. Other women are also seen in the role of Cleopatra. "Like Cleopatra, we unrolled her,"\(^{58}\) says Darley of the sick Melissa, whom they have wrapped in a Bokhara rug and taken away from the party at which he first sees her. The image comes again when the wounded Clea is being taken to hospital:

The sailors brought a tarpaulin ashore and softly we baled her up like Cleopatra.\(^{59}\)

Both Melissa and Clea, in their relationship to Darley, suggest the figure of Cleopatra, but the role of the great queen is supremely reenacted by Justine. Through her he learns the meaning of love and suffering, and at her departure he is left to grope for a way, like Antony deserted at Actium. Brought back to the city by the death of Melissa, Darley leaves it once more and retires to the Greek island, like Antony to his Timonium, there to go over the whole story again and again in his mind.\(^{60}\)

But other men than Darley are seen in the role of Antony. The old furrier, Cohen, dies in hospital
with some of the tragic dignity of Antony. To him too Melissa has been a kind of Cleopatra, and she refuses to come to him at his death. Narouz also suggests the figure of Antony; in death he is like "some dying conqueror, some lost king, conscious of the body and breath dissolving within him." And Mountolive, who sets out so determinedly to succeed as a diplomat only to find his plans hopelessly wrecked by the influence of a woman who for him symbolizes Egypt, Mountolive too relives the experience of Antony. His career is to some extent a duplicate of Antony's, and in a dream he puts himself clearly in the place of the Roman General.

... on the confines of the dream there moved another boat, in silhouette, with two figures in it—the brothers: both armed with long-barrelled rifles. Soon he would be overtaken; but warm in the circle of Leila's arms, as if he were Antony at Actium, he could hardly bring himself to feel fear. They did not speak, or at least, he heard no voices. As for himself, he felt only the messages passing to and from the woman in his arms—transmitted it seemed only by the ticking blood.

The Antony and Cleopatra theme is beyond a doubt the one that most occupies the City's mind, yet other themes too can be discerned in the actions of the
individual characters who act out its thoughts. The mythical and religious theme of the Fall of Man is apparent, especially in the rock-pool scenes that end with the accident of Clea. Darley and Clea playing in the rock-pool are like the undines of mythology, creatures as yet without a soul. When their figures are made phosphorescent by the strange effect of the thunderstorm, they suggest "an early picture of the fall of Lucifer, literally on fire." The accident itself, Clea's near-drowning and Darley's own risk in diving to free her, symbolizes, as Durrell himself has pointed out, both the sexual act and spiritual rebirth, and thus sums up the mystery of the Fall of Man through which man grows up to soul by a submergence in his sexual nature.

It will be seen that the theme of the Fall of Man reinforces the Antony and Cleopatra theme, for there too the final meaning is one of affirmation. Suffering and destruction are not the final truths of human life. Out of them come soul or the imaginative powers that make of man "a real human being, an artist at last." This is the meaning also of the last two themes that I see occupying the City's
mind. One is the mythological-religious theme of the death and resurrection of a god. This is touched upon at the death of Pursewarden, at the visit of Darley and Clea to the tombs of Kom El Shugafa, and finally at the death of Narouz who in some ways suggests the figure of Christ. It is not a theme that is felt extensively in the Quartet, but in so far as it is there it reinforces the meaning of the themes already mentioned. So does the theme of the knightly search for the Holy Grail. In a sense this theme is only fulfilled in the romantic figure of Amaril who, when he sets out to create—literally create—the woman he loves, does so "with all the air of a knight in search of the Holy Grail." For the rest, the images of knights and knighthood refer to the Hosnanis and to Mountolive who are engaged in the negative, self-defeating efforts at political strategy, like irreligious and disillusioned crusaders.

Having now demonstrated at some length the way in which the City emerges as the central character of the Quartet, it will be useful to consider here what is the exact human nature of this character. Can one form a clear idea of the human nature of this central psyche
seen, as it is, in close-up from so many angles and at different points in the present and the past? My answer must be that, while the City is unquestionably presented as a character, it is hardly possible to describe it in such terms as are generally used in discussions of fictional characters, and the difficulty arises out of the very thoroughness with which Durrell has presented his City. Because his technique here does away with the over-simplification of ordinary human vision, it is impossible to see the City in the way that one ordinarily sees human beings: as fairly definite, ego-dominated and consciously controlled entities. Instead, it must be seen as a great complex of various and simultaneously existing egos—old and young, male and female, admirable and contemptible, moral and immoral—all called forth by the unconscious depths of the psyche that are beyond the reach of the inquiring mind. Since I have already discussed the "ego-manifestations", any question about the nature of the City as a character had better be revised and made into a question about the nature of this unconscious core of the psyche which controls the whole. Of this unconscious core, only one thing can be said with certainty: it expresses itself in continuous attempts to
realize and increase imaginative power. How this is accomplished, through the inevitable and intended conflict between the ego(s) and the unconscious forces, the result being suffering leading to greater insight, I have already tried to show. But what happens to the individuality of character? If all that can be said with certainty is that the unconscious core of the human psyche (which controls all of the conscious life) strives for increased imaginative power, then surely there is no longer any grounds for seeing the differences between human beings as anything but superficial, since such differences are ego-based and the product of unconscious motives that never vary essentially from one person to the next but remain always the same. Only in the matter of how strong is the imaginative life within them can human beings be distinguished essentially from each other and the failures (those with little or no capacity for such life) pointed out. That being so, the City, as the central character of the Quartet, sums up humanity and can be seen at once as essentially simple in its basic nature and, at the same time, incredibly complex in its ways of expressing the urgings of that nature towards a still fuller imaginative life. It is the great variety of such ways of
expression, coupled with the limiting nature of ordinary human vision, that creates the idea of there being essential differences between human beings.

In summary, I want now to go back to a consideration of the various individual characters in the Quartet and their relationship to the City that directs their lives. This brings us back to the view I presented at the outset of my discussion, the view of the individuals as entities controlled by the city much as puppets are manipulated by a puppeteer. But this image, so readily suggested by the abundance of imagery from drama, is misleading, as the reactions of critics like Trilling and Dobrée show. The assumption so readily made is that the human being is represented by the puppet, while the puppeteer is environment or something equally deterministic. But this is an unsatisfactory view that cannot begin to account for all the things that are going on in The Alexandria Quartet. In place of it I have suggested three ways in which this relationship of the characters to their city may, and probably should, be regarded. None yields up the deterministic picture of agitated but essentially lifeless puppets. Instead, they yield three different views of real human beings. Human beings who are parts
of a larger living whole cannot be lifeless, nor
are their lives meaningless and mechanistically deter-
mined. Rather they become meaningful parts of an
organic whole whose life and growth is also theirs.
Again, recognizing as we do the limitations of the
rational processes in man's life, it is not just to
dismiss a life lived in harmony with the unconscious
forces of life as being less than fully human. More-
over, it is at least as meaningful to see will as an
aspect of the unconscious life as it is to hold that
will must necessarily be conscious and deliberate.
Lastly, out of his conception of life as an interplay
of conscious and unconscious forces, Durrell has
created the splendid image of man as generating and
expressing his own life by means of his imagination.
The unconscious, creative ground of his being gives
rise to an often antagonistic conscious nature, and
out of the intended and inevitable interplay of these
forces come suffering and illusion, love and knowledge,
art and above all understanding. Life, as Durrell
presents it here, is truly an act of the imagination,
and living man the artist sans pareil. Hence the image
of man as a "statue which must disengage itself from the dull
block
√
of marble which houses it and start to live." Hence the
imagery, so very prevalent in the *Quartet*, of the fresco,70 a Byzantine painting,71 a cartoonist's drawing,72 or a Greek statue come to life.73 Hence also the persistent presentation of the events in man's life as artistic achievements. Things which otherwise would be only destruction and cause for despair are seen as somehow purposefully arrived at and lived through as a means of attaining self-knowledge, self-realization. An air raid over the city becomes a stupefying but beautiful tableau;74 Darley's reunion with Justine is a *tableau vivant*;75 the scene of Fosca's fatal accident draws the eyes of the observers "as if by the lines-of-force of some great marine painting."76 All things can be borne and are meant to be borne.

Durrell's presentation of the mourning for Narouz is a magnificent statement of how man grows towards a full humanity. Out of suffering endured and purged of bitterness man gathers the insight that gives him a soul. For, whatever may have been the bitterness of Narouz, in the grief for his death, wherein each mourner experiences again his own personal sorrows, all such bitterness is purged: "the whole grief of the countryside was refunded once again into living, purged of bitterness, reconquered by the living through the dead image of Narouz.77
"What kind of vision of humanity does this work provide?" asks Dobrée, and goes on to talk of his pity for the characters. But pity is out of place. Here surely is something deserving admiration, a convincing and artistic affirmation of the worth of human life.
FOOTNOTES

1 B.15.
2 J.27.
3 B.15.
4 Groddeck, The World of Man, p. 85.
6 J.59.
7 C.241.
8 J.60.
9 C.76-77.
10 J.238.
11 B.135.
12 B.28.
13 C.254.
15 C.99.
16 J.244.
17 J.63.
18 C.228-229.
19 Darley uses this term a number of times in such connection.
20 J.86.
21. 97.
22. 62.
23. 96.
24. 95.
27. J. 177.
29. C. 168.
30. B. 46.
32. M. 53-54.
33. B. 77.
34. M. 217.
35. M. 78.
36. C. 196.
37. B. 100.
38. C. 266.
40. C. 53.
41. C. 176.
42. C. 153.
43. C. 56.
44C, 55-56.
45J, 104.
46J, 88.
47J, 220.
48M, 178.
49B, 234.
50B, 56.
51B, 55.
52J, 226.
53B, 69.
54J, 194.
55J, 193.
56C, 277.
57J, 96-67.
58J, 57.
59C, 253.
60C, 227.
61J, 111.
62M, 312.
63M, 250.
64C, 228.
65C, 246.
66C, 281.
67C. 229.
68M. 155.
69C. 119.
70M. 118.
71M. 221.
72M. 281.
73C. 117.
74C. 25.
75C. 48.
76C. 208.
77M. 317.
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