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Introduction

The writer, Lawrence George Durrell's most renowned work of fiction, *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-1960), has been considered by certain Durrell scholars to be one of the canonical texts of twentieth century Modernism (Zahlan 1999: 87). Others contend that his position in modern literature is strained. The reputation of Durrell's work seems to have shifted with time, and the novels of *The Alexandria Quartet* (henceforth *Quartet*) have taken on the aspect of minor works of art. An exploration of memory lies at the heart of Modernist literature and of *The Alexandria Quartet*. My own pleasurable memories of the poetical and sensuous descriptions in Durrell's tetralogy were what motivated my re-examination of these novels. This reading raised questions in my mind concerning the obvious grotesque, carnivalesque and Gothic traits of Durrell's style and the lack of critical engagement with these elements in other studies specifically devoted to the *Alexandria Quartet*. More disturbing for me was the representation of the female characters within the four novels and the paucity of scholarly and feminist theoretical scrutiny of this particularity of Durrell's work. The luminous visual descriptions of the city and its landscape seemed to cloak a darker abject fear, disgust and hatred of the feminine. This assumed uncannily sadistic and Gothic overtones that were repellent and fascinating. Durrell's construction of his female characters is visually suggestive of the fragmentation of the female body, which is central to the corpus of Surrealist artists. I concluded that the construction of the female form in the tetralogy necessitated a critical evaluation of the largely negative and misogynistic attitudes that were fleshed out through the deployment of Gothic motifs. The fact that no previous or current studies had paid serious attention to the Gothic thematic style of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, or approached it from an in-depth feminist theoretical stance, prompted me to embark on this study.

Written after the Second World War, the themes and ideas contained in the *Quartet* still hark back to the Modernist concerns with time-space, the experiments with narrative voice and structure, the fragmentation of reality and identity, the urban landscape, memory, the invasion of the past into the present, and the repetition of ideas in the form of a palimpsest. A palimpsest is a parchment or document upon which a layering of texts occurs. The original text is imperfectly erased and a new text is superimposed upon the old text. However, ghostly traces of the first text remain. However, I shall also employ the term

“palimpsestuous” when referring to this overlaying or superimposition of states. I have adopted the word “palimpsestuous” from Sarah Dillon’s work on the palimpsest. In her book on the palimpsest as a metaphoric device in literature, Dillon coins the neologism, “palimpsestuous”, which she indicates betokens “a simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation ... preserving as it does the distinctness of its texts, while at the same time allowing for their essential contamination and interdependence” (2007: 3). I will favour this term when describing Durrell’s use of time-space-memory with its continual return of the past into the present. Durrell, like Proust before him, employs the palimpsest of time-space and memory as a framework to structure the novels of the tetralogy.

Yet, when re-evaluating the *Quartet* as a Modernist work, it becomes apparent that it falls aesthetically short of works by writers such as William Faulkner, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann and other luminaries of the Modernist movement. Both literarily and artistically, Modernism is an accepted and profusely expounded upon term in the history of the twentieth century and its critical practice. This term and its history, with relation to the many movements that belong to it, are extensively considered in many other critical works. Therefore, I will refrain from adding to this large corpus of work. Instead, I shall engage with concepts and themes appearing in the *Quartet* that seem to place this novel cycle within the overarching style and thematic concerns of Modernism.¹

Any scholar or critic will be acutely aware of the problem of appending any encompassing term when considering a creative work. By classing Durrell’s work as falling stylistically within the over-arching category of Modernism, I might be as guilty as Durrell’s character Darley of searching for a truth by means of annotation and categorisation. I am all too aware that any attempt to use a delimiting device acts to restrict the concepts of multiplicity, ambiguity, fragmentation, oscillation and blurring found in Durrell’s narrative. Stylistically, the novels rely on ambiguity. Malcolm Bradbury has indicated this was integral to Modernism’s own inculcation of the “both/and and/or either/or” (1991: 27), derived from physicist Werner Heisenberg’s *Uncertainty Principle*. The oscillation between opposites, combined with the relativity of space-time, ensures that measured and distinct

¹ See Tim Armstrong (2005); Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (1991); Martei Calinescu (1987); Peter Childs (2000); Hal Foster and Rosalind Krauss, *et al* (2004), Stephen Kern (1983) and Robin Walz (2008).

dimensions cease to exist autonomously, but become functions of one another. Durrell's conceptualisation of physicist Albert Einstein's *Theory of Relativity*, I will later show, is superimposed on philosopher Henri Bergson's notion of duration, so that relativity and time in flux are layered like a palimpsest. Modernism's conception of Bergsonian duration entirely altered the reliance on the notion of linearity and established the idea of synchronic time where a multiplicity of events passes rapidly through time. However, where Bergson's duration is that of memory, in which the past is prolonged into the present and the future; Einsteinian relativity concentrates on the spatial where no exact determination of the simultaneity of distant events is possible. Though Durrell makes no mention of Heisenberg's *Uncertainty Principle per se*, this theory seems implicit within the structure of the ambiguity of events in the novels of the *Quartet*.

I intend to show that Durrell's concern with the themes of time-space, ambiguity, multiple perspectives and place are contingent upon certain Gothic features and forms. All these concerns are already present in the early novels, *The Pied Piper of Lovers* (1935) and *Panic Spring* (1937), the last written under the pseudonym of Charles Norden. Both these novels set the tone for the major works that follow: *The Alexandria Quartet*, *The Revolt of Aphrodite* (*Tunc* (1968) and *Nunquam* (1970)), and *The Avignon Quintet* (1974-1985). *The Pied Piper of Lovers* and *Panic Spring* have not, except in Ray Morrison's book *A Smile in His Mind's Eye: A Study of the Early Works of Lawrence Durrell* (2005), received extensive critical attention. These two books mark the beginning of Durrell's exploration of certain themes continued and developed throughout his mature works, so the lack of scholarly engagement with them seems injudicious. These early novels reveal experimentation with narrative voice and style, the use of frames or sliding panels for set pieces, and the use of multiple viewpoints that fragment the narrative. The multiple perspectives of these two early novels distort the volume of space and time so that reality is undermined. These are ideas that Durrell would develop with consummate skill in the *Quartet*.

Durrell's obvious interest in the devices of space and time in the novel is alluded to in *The Pied Piper of Lovers*, where the main character of the novel, Walsh Clifton, an aspiring writer, notes: "I think sculpture is the medium in which to express. Space against Time curves and stresses, structures and dimensions. How in hell can I express the *volume* of things by daubing ink on paper" (2008a: 250). The idea of daubing ink will be re-invoked in

the cross-hatchings, different coloured inks and typescript mentioned in *Balthazar* (the second volume of the *Quartet*). In *The Pied Piper of Lovers*, the need to “express the volume of things” causes Durrell to fragment and fracture the book’s narrative by employing multiple perspectives. Morrison proposes that in the early novels Durrell is relying on the ideas and work of Cézanne to achieve these differing perspectives and points of view, thereby setting up fictional volumes that provide tensions in space and time (2005: 154). Cubist fragmentation and multiple perspectives will become structural and stylistic devices in the *Quartet* as well. Durrell places the fragmentation in *Pied Piper* and *Panic Spring* within frames, episodes or panels to offset certain metaphorical stories. In *Pied Piper*, Durrell uses dreams; in *Panic Spring*, he does it through the inclusion of headings that break the narrative into panels. One section in particular is entitled *The Mummy*.

Whilst Morrison notes the Gothic nature of this particular story about the embalming of a woman and her apparent return to life, which seems to refer to certain fantastic stories (*Contes fantastiques*), he does not further engage with the obviously Gothic aspects manifested by this and other stories within the novel. Nor does Morrison mention the possible intertextual connection between Durrell’s mummy and the mummy stories of the late nineteenth-century novelist Théophile Gautier. One such story of Gautier’s, in particular, entitled *The Mummy’s Foot*, might indeed have influenced Durrell’s own depiction of the mummy in *Pied Piper*. Morrison notes a great reliance on the almost fetishised motif of the ankle in this first book. The Gothic nature of Durrell’s themes is mentioned by Gordon Bowker, in his biography on Durrell entitled *Though the Dark Labyrinth* (1997). Bowker finds *Panic Spring* to be filled with the later concerns expressed in Durrell’s work, such as death, burial alive, mummification, lesbianism, medical details, women’s bodies and the spirit of place (cited in Morrison 2005: 150). Though this list is somewhat mechanical, it does provide insight into the obvious Gothic motifs present in Durrell’s novels.

Morrison’s brief allusion to the Gothic in *Panic Spring* does not go further to relate this back to narrative events in *The Pied Piper of Lovers*. Morrison misses the fact that the *grotesquerie* and Gothic conventions that appear in *Panic Spring* are located in Durrell’s use of language, the framing technique, the story of the mummy as well as the mood of the island of Mavrodaphne itself. What is also apparent in these early novels is the importance

of the landscape: whether it is the landscape of India and England in *The Pied Piper of Lovers*, or the 'unreal/real' landscape of the imaginary Greek island of Mavrodaphne in *Panic Spring*. Morrison astutely notes that the landscape, particularly in *Panic Spring*, represents a powerful spirit of place that "haunts and shapes lives" (2005: 158). This spirit of place will be fully realised in the hugely powerful space and place of the real/unreal cityscape of Alexandria.²

Writing on the city in Modernism, Malcolm Bradbury indicates that it represents the natural setting for Modernist literary works. A magnetic environment, the city both attracts and repels, thereby exhibiting one of the major characteristics associated with psychoanalytical theorist Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, which will form one of the central theoretical underpinnings of my argument. Bradbury goes on to observe, "Modernism substitutes for the 'real' city ... the 'unreal' city, theatre of licence and fantasy, strange selfhoods in strange juxtapositions that ... convey an unresolved and plural impression" (1991: 99). Durrell's representation of Alexandria partakes of nearly all these features. His depiction of the city shows it filled with licence, perversion, fantasy and very strange identities and selfhoods. These selves act as extrusions or children of Alexandria, which creates and destroys them. The way in which Durrell evokes this spirit of place, presenting it through the gaze and horrified reactions of the narrator, creates the immediacy of the urban landscape and its inherent indifferent malignancy. I will examine how the narrator's interaction with the city results in him transferring his ideological perspectives onto the city's embodied outlines thereby fashioning how the reader perceives and constructs the space of the city and its landscape.

Durrell's lyrical and symbolist style in his descriptive passages representing the city, landscape and events in the *Quartet* has been the focus of much criticism. When reading the early novels it becomes obvious that they were the playground for the development of the ideas, themes and excessive stylistic devices consummately employed and explored within the *Quartet*, and later in *The Revolt of Aphrodite* and *The Avignon Quintet*. Durrell's writing definitely aims to evoke sensation and his excessive, decadent and symbolist style is the focus of certain Anglo-American critics' dislike of his work. Charles Tomlinson considers this style as "dangerously opulent", "clogged prose", "stylistically overdressed" with a

² For recent explorations of the cityscape of Alexandria in Durrell's tetralogy see Corinne Alexandre-Garner and Isabelle Keller-Privat (2012: 63-81); James Gifford (2012: 13-31); Ray Morrison (2013) and Jack Stewart (2008).

“proliferation of adjectives” (1961: 53). Literary critic and philosopher George Steiner, on the other hand, considers this style to be “the vital center of Durrell’s art” (1964: 13). Opposed to Steiner’s view is that of Martin Green who, while intimating that the descriptions in the *Quartet* possess a “Parnassian glitter”, is quick to condemn the writing as “bloated to the point of absurdity” and unable to “sustain such an elaborate and pretentious structure” (Green 1964: 133). Whilst I can concur with Green that Durrell’s writing can appear over-elaborate and pretentious at times, I am entirely in agreement with Steiner when he writes that Durrell’s style uses “sensuous, rare expressions” with “long, glittering arabesques of adjectives” that offer a “command of the light and music of language” (Steiner 1964: 15: 18). The beauty of the descriptive landscape set pieces remain, arguably, the main power and strength of the *Quartet*. Steiner refers to Durrell’s work as possessing a “mosaic” style (1964: 15), which perfectly accords with the fragmenting structural effect Durrell is trying to create.

This fragmentation is reliant on Durrell’s employment of a multi-voiced and multiple-perspectival narrative. In order to achieve this Durrell utilises multiple narrators, focalisation and focalisers. A narrative text such as Durrell’s is dependent on an agent or agents that relate a story using text and imagery; in this instance the different narratorial voices Durrell employs. Events within the story are presented and experienced by the characters in a subjective manner. These events are envisioned, as visual textual theorist Mieke Bal explains, from a certain angle in which a specific and subjective point of view is presented to the reader (1997a: 142). Determining how and from where events or characters are being visually constructed is what Bal has termed focalisation. Bal indicates that the “relation between the vision and that which is ‘seen’” determines focalisation (1997a: 146). She calls the characters from which the events are viewed focalisers (146). The focaliser is not necessarily the narrator. In Durrell’s novels, there is the narrator-focaliser Darley who is dependent on character-focalisers such as Balthazar and Clea for interpretations of events. Bal further suggests that character-bound focalisers bring bias and limitation into the narrative (146). Durrell’s external narrators rely on character-focalisers for the relating of events in the story, raising questions about their reliability as ‘objective’ narrative voices. His complex employment of narrators and focalisers, I will show, provides the foundation for

Durrell's excessive "mosaic" style with its imaginative use of jewel-like words, which evoke an atmosphere of rococo Gothic decadence.

Durrell's writing, I suggest, belongs to the decadent aesthetic style of the Symbolists of the late nineteenth century. Ben Hutchinson, in his book *Style in Modernism*, discusses how this decadent or Symbolist style is integral to the Modernist novel and observes that this style has a relation to the development of both psychoanalysis and impressionism (2011: 120). He goes on to consider how the decadent style of the late nineteenth century, with its colour symbolism, offers a "microcosm of modernist style" that is not only rhythmical but "seeks to evoke 'sensation' as accurately as possible" (126). So, when a consideration of Durrell's style is undertaken in accordance with Hutchinson's discussion, it becomes apparent that Durrell remains within a Modernist decadent tradition that is founded on glittering surfaces that are jewel-like and become overloaded (2011: 127). Durrell's writing is also comparable with that of the literary impressionists, who, according to Clive Scott, attempt to restore a "primordial power to colour" (1991: 221). Scott indicates that literary impressionism uses linguistic techniques to make language an act of perception; it becomes an experiential activity, rather than a description of activity (1991: 222). Durrell's use of syntax, metaphoric imagery, plots that explore buried or not-so-buried acts of sexual transgression, violence and the return of the past into the present through the device of memory, seems to accord with decadent or impressionist forms of Modernist prose as well as those of the Gothic.

Fred Botting, when discussing the critical response to eighteenth century literary Gothic, suggests it was considered to be a "writing that failed to conform to standards of neoclassical taste" (2001: 3). If, as I propose, Durrell's work invests heavily in the Gothic tradition, then the adverse reaction of certain critics to Durrell's style reveals that little has altered with regards to 'standards of taste'. Durrell's excessive style can still be seen to have the ability to shock and disturb, inspiring both an appreciation of its "Parnassian glitter", with its obvious reference to Symbolist writers, and an antipathy towards its dangerous opulence. This attraction for and disgust with Durrell's style can be extended to his exploration of the darker and seedier Gothic desires contained in his themes and visual depictions. Consequently, the transgressive sexual behaviour and savage violence at work in

the narrative of the *Quartet* are simultaneously horrifyingly distasteful and pruriently fascinating.

My argument in this study is therefore double: an assessment in literary as well as feminist terms. Based on an analytical reading of the *Quartet*, I will convey how certain Gothic features inform the structural devices of the novels and how these actively fashion the female characters into gothicised objects. According to Chris Baldick, the term Gothic is a “name for a sinister corner of the Western imagination” (2009: xi). It seems that there is no definable history of this genre, nor is there accord over whether it is a genre, or a mode. Instead there are many and varied critical responses to the literary Gothic, indicating that this genre defies definition because of its ambivalence and ability to mutate and blur boundaries. In my examination of Durrell’s work, I will not engage in providing a definition of the literary Gothic because this area of study has and continues to be explored by many critical voices in many other works.³

In considering the multiple perspectives from which the Gothic has been discussed, I decided to approach Durrell’s novels through a reading of this genre’s stock features or conventions along with its representative themes. I use the terms modes, tropes, features, elements or motifs interchangeably. In Durrell’s novels, the use of the literary mode will follow what Botting calls “torturous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious events, horrible images ... spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons ... the monstrous double” (1996: 2). Besides these aspects, Durrell’s narrative will also be seen to reference what Maria Beville indicates are the themes of the mysterious house, uncanny and charismatic villain, supernatural haunting and an oppressed heroine who seems doomed (2009: 42). Beville further observes that the Gothic’s connotations of the dissolution of order, meaning and identity, closely align this genre with Kristeva’s similar hypothesis in her theory of abjection (2009: 52). Accordingly, I will explore the deployment of the Gothic in Durrell’s

³ See the following works, listed in date order that represent merely a brief indication of the vast nature of Gothic studies: Montague Summers (1938); Devendra Varma (1957); Tzvetan Todorov (1973); Ellen Moers (1977); Coral Ann Howells (1978); David Punter (1980; 1998; 2001; 2004); Rosemary Jackson (1981); Juliann Fleenor (1983); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1986); Kate Ferguson Ellis (1989); Michelle Massé (1992); Robert Miles (1993); Emma J Clery (1995); Judith Halberstam (1995); Fred Botting (1996; 2001; 2008); Kelly Hurley (1996; 2007); Robert Mighall (1999); Susanne Becker (1999); Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace (2001); Andrew Smith (2002); Dani Cavallaro (2002); Julian Wolfreys (2002; 2000); Catherine Spooner (2004; 2006; 2007); John Riquelme (2008); Marie Mulvey-Roberts (2009); Maria Beville (2009) and María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (2013).

work with extensive reference to abjection as a site of discursivity founded in fear, horror and anxiety of the female Other.

In order to formulate my discussion of this fear, horror and anxiety and its relation to the Gothic, I will adopt a feminist psychoanalytic theoretical position. I demonstrate that anxiety and fear of the loss of identity, or lack of a whole and true self, results in the male characters violently projecting their deep-seated fear of sexual difference onto the female characters, thus othering them as uncanny and monstrous. As I will demonstrate, the male characters remain attracted to feminine others, which results in an oscillation between fear and uneasiness that is contradicted by longing and fascination. I will intimate that, through Durrell's manipulation of certain themes that shape the female characters, these women become gothicised surfaces lacking interiority. I use the term "gothicisation" to refer to the process of the transfer, layering or superimposition of visual motifs onto the female body. Through this superimposition, I contend, Durrell moulds his female characters into artificial empty constructs that lack any complexity of character or personality. These one-dimensional characters remain merely the vehicles for Durrell's articulation of patriarchal ideology, perspectives and standpoints. Therefore, as indicated, instead of providing a definition of the literary Gothic, I propose a fusion of conventions and themes as sites to read the representation of the fragmented truth, reality and lack of identity that fashion the female characters in Durrell's tetralogy. Specifically, I read the visual textuality of Durrell's narrative as replete with Gothic motifs and, I would suggest, my approach offers insights into and illuminates the under-explored role these motifs play in the narrative of the *Alexandria Quartet*.

An indication of the ominously dark and aggressively violent themes present is visible in the quotations taken from the Marquis de Sade, which Durrell places at the start of each novel. By referencing de Sade, Durrell indicates that his concern in the novels is to put on display all the hatred, prejudice and irrationality of the perverse desires found at the core of human interactions. I consider the way events and experiences are recollected and portrayed in the *Quartet* conforms to an abject conceptualisation of *othered bodies*. Each novel of the tetralogy demonstrates the savagery, hatred and perversity that exists between the characters. It is the real/unreal presence of the city itself that controls these actions and feelings. The spectral presence of de Sade haunts the city and its characters throughout the

Quartet. I found my exploration of the *Quartet* on my discovery that, hidden within the structuring device of the space-time-memory continuum resides a significant reliance on Gothic motifs and structural forms. I argue that these motifs are important in fashioning how the female characters are objectivised by the male gaze as distorted and misogynistic representations of feminine subjectivity. In my appraisal of this fabrication of feminine embodiment and subjectivity, I engage in a visual textual analysis. I will demonstrate how intertextual and visual references form a major aspect of Durrell's narrative style. Durrell's textual imagery, I will suggest, shows affinities with visual artistic works, ranging from the Renaissance through to Surrealism. Confronting and juxtaposing textual imagery with visual art works will not only set up the obvious links between these two fields in Durrell's work, but will also open up the novels to further prismatic perspectives and more nuanced possibilities. I plan to highlight the influence of Cubism and Surrealism on the thematic and structural concerns of Durrell's visual textuality in my interrogation of the fragmented and mutilated female forms presented in the narrative of the *Quartet*.

The Alexandria Quartet consists of four novels, *Justine*, *Balthazar*, *Mountolive* and *Clea*. These books can be read as independent works of fiction, but can only be fully understood when seen in relation to one another. The complexity and dense nature of the novels makes it almost impossible to provide a basic plot outline that does not appear nebulous or convoluted. Nevertheless, the following delineation attempts a basic outline. The opening novel *Justine* narrated from the perspective of the narrator-focalisor L.G. Darley is a textual record of his personal experiences in Alexandria, which he recalls from his self-imposed exile on a Greek island. Memory is the device that structures the novel and Darley arranges and selects episodes using the strange logic of memory so that this edited version of the past becomes unreliable. The novel introduces the characters who will be present, in one manner or another, throughout the remaining novels of the tetralogy. The reader encounters the doctor Balthazar, the cabaret dancer Melissa (Darley's lover), the artist Clea, the diplomat Gaston Pombal, the writer Ludwig Pursewarden, the doctor Amaril and the banker Nessim Hosnani, husband of Justine. Justine holds centre stage and is the dark, human queen of the novel, the exemplar of the city – and Darley's ex-lover. His recollections revolve around the impact of his failed relationship with her.

In *Balthazar*, the reader becomes more aware of the nature of Darley's unreliability as a narrator. At the start of this novel, the doctor Balthazar arrives on the Greek island to see Darley. Balthazar brings with him the annotated manuscript of Darley's memoirs that Darley had sent to him and entitled *Justine*. This annotation attempts to correct Darley's view of events, but at the same time offers an alternate and unreliably subjective focalisation on past events. The presentation of the main characters found in *Justine* is from another angled. Balthazar provides different motivations for their behaviour, as he sets out to provide answers to some of Darley's questions in *Justine*. *Balthazar* is a palimpsest consisting of a complex multi-layered and multi-voiced plot that questions the meaning of reality and truth.

The third novel *Mountolive* is the only novel of the four, which does not have Darley as narrator. An external narrator tells the story in the form of a diplomatic 'biography'. The naturalistic form of this novel, whose plot predates the narratives of *Justine* and *Balthazar*, and leads into the present of *Clea*, again alters perspective as it offers another angle on the characters and events in the preceding novels. *Mountolive* moves from the preoccupation with intimate relations between the characters into the realm of the political and the struggle for power in Egypt. The structure of the plot takes on that of a political thriller and moves to resolve motives behind the sexual intrigues presented to the reader in *Justine* and *Balthazar*.

The final volume *Clea* is in the present when the narrator Darley returns to Alexandria from the Greek island and through a process of memory and renewed interaction with the city and its characters provides the final focus on place, events and relationships. Darley begins a new relationship with Clea and his subjective account of this present relationship provides him with a clearer perspective on his relationships with Justine and Melissa. Darley moves continually between the past and the present setting up the haunting repetition of situations, sentences and ideas from the preceding novels that provide a palimpsestic and uncanny déjà vu. The novel ends with an underwater accident that severely injures Clea and Darley's return, once more, to the Greek island.

The city dominates the entire tetralogy and Durrell's powerful visual textual evocation of Alexandria's presence will form the opening chapter of this study. A constant invasion of past into present is prevalent in the multi-layered portrayal of the city and this haunting is

located in the narrative act of memory which deploys historical, intertextual and cultural references as structural devices of the plot. This palimpsestic layering enables Durrell to create the depth and power of the city and her influence on her inhabitants. In this chapter, I aim to address how the city's power and influence is central to her being gendered as feminine, leading to her portrayal as both 'real' and 'unreal'. I will contend that the ambivalent space of Alexandria closely aligns it with the idea of the heterotopia developed by philosopher Michel Foucault (1986), which, I will further argue, can be related to the play of the Gothic (distorting) mirror. This distortion between real/unreal ensures the representation of Alexandria as a dangerous feminine entity simultaneously beautiful, alluring and desirable as well as grotesque and dangerous. The city is a vampiric entity who consumes her inhabitants whilst, simultaneously, creating its inhabitants as fragments of its own consciousness. This metaphoric space moulds and embodies Melissa, Justine, Leila, Liza and Clea as gothicised others.

In the second chapter, I consider the role of the narrative voice, the focaliser and focalisation within the tetralogy. The narrative voice and the focalisers, I argue, are obviously central elements in establishing the textual visual nature of the tetralogy. In my exploration of the narrative voices and focalisation, I consider how they act to establish the multi-layered and palimpsestic nature of the novels. This narrative technique, I suggest, references the Gothic novel with its framework of multiple narrative voices. In addition I will suggest that the narrative and focalisation technique of the tetralogy, premised on the device of memory, allows for what the writer V.S. Pritchett termed Durrell's "vivid pictorial illusions" (1965: 30). In the excess of this vivid pictorial textuality, I argue, is where the Gothic resides.

In chapters three and four, I adopt a feminist theoretical approach consonant with the conception of abjection posited by psychoanalytical theorist Julia Kristeva. I will consider the relation of the abject, castration anxiety, fetishism and the uncanny to the focalising mastery of the male gaze. This gaze, I argue, constructs the ideological fantasy of woman. The nature of memory is integral to the stereotypical perception of the feminine in the novels. The male gaze objectifies the female characters as other; an Other against which the male characters found their own sense of identity. Abjection, the fetish, castration anxiety and the uncanny form the mainstay of the visual textuality of Durrell's writing. I align

Kristevan psychoanalytic theory with the work of Mieke Bal, as well as that of art historian Griselda Pollock, and feminist psychoanalytical film theorists Laura Mulvey, Barbara Creed, Mary Ann Doane and Kaja Silverman. I deploy this combined theoretical approach in order to reveal how Gothic motifs, fused with psychoanalytical features, function to establish the manner in which the male gaze textually fashions and metaphorically represents the female forms in the novels of the *Quartet*.

Chapters five and six represent the core of my argument as they focus on the manner in which Durrell deploys the psychoanalytical and Gothic concepts discussed in chapters three and four in a misogynistic figuration of the two central characters: Justine and Clea. I will demonstrate how the function of the gaze is the pivot that determines how the uncanny acts to install the male characters' fear of castration based on sexual difference. I go on to discuss how castration anxiety and the uncanny are employed to project the fantasy object that is the female form. Made of a palimpsestic layering of stereotypical attributes, Justine and Clea, I argue, are merely surfaces with nothing hidden beneath. Visual textuality is fundamental to my argument throughout this chapter because it is instrumental in the metaphoric figuration of each of these female personae. Motifs such as veils, automatons, vampires, paintings, mirrors, transgressive sexual relationships, hybridity, mutilation, live burial and the monstrous, actualises these characters as abject and gothicised others. The Surrealists, and their concerns with and portrayals of the fragmented body, particularly the female body, perhaps offer a point of reference that is relevant to Durrell's own representation of female embodiment. Durrell's narrative images mirror the inherent violence, sadism and perversion located in Surrealist art that is aimed at the feminine. Further points of congruence are provided by the Surrealists' interest in the uncanny, the supernatural and fantasy with the ambiguous possibilities these themes offer. I will examine the parallels between Durrell's narrative and Surrealist concerns in order to show how these are relevant to Durrell's depiction of the gothicised and fragmented female body.

In an interview with French critic Marc Alyn, Durrell claimed that the novel *Justine* was a "spiritual butcher shop with girls on slabs" (1974: 61). This is perhaps the most accurate assessment of the nastiness of the representation of the female characters in the tetralogy. Durrell's words exhibit a sense of glee at the image of dead and quartered feminine bodies. Even though this refers to the female characters in his novels, this attitude possesses

horrific and sickening connotations. In light of this statement and from evidence in the text, Durrell's representation of women takes on problematic aspects. Therefore, I will tease out the questions surrounding his representation of gender. The city of Alexandria remains the most powerful feminised body in the tetralogy, and provides both backdrop and foreground for Durrell's Modernist theatre. Strange narrative voices, multiple perspectives and vibrant visual textuality are the background against which the silhouettes of his minimal character cast act out their roles as vehicles for themes, style and narrative form. Durrell's coruscating and excessive language, with its obvious roots in a tradition of terror, perversity, violence and transgression, adds imaginative appeal. In contradiction of Fredric Jameson's disparaging view of the Gothic (1991), I posit that in Durrell's hands this tradition is neither boring nor an exhausted paradigm. Instead, the novels of the *Quartet* open up the possibilities for a renewed exploration of this many-faceted literary genre. The value of the *Quartet* remains, I assert, not only in the fact that it is an extended work of the imagination, but because it remains a work that elicits more than one critical reading. Although the position I have adopted might appear to yield a rather negative image of Durrell's work, yet, I find, the innovative narrative techniques, the lyrical evocation of place, luminous style and command of language worthy of intensive critical engagement. In addition, I submit that a reading of the Gothic conventions Durrell employs to construct his narrative offers a rich opportunity for further exploration of his depiction of masculinity and monstrosity.