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The elegant velvet glove: A textual and visual reading of the gothicised female form in Lawrence Durrell's 'The Alexandria quartet'

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Chapter 6: Kisses, Gloves and the Gothic Heroine - Clea

Introduction

From the time of her creation in Ann Radcliffe's novels *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), the Gothic heroine has been a figure of persecution, a passive victim who remains innocent and virginal. This heroine is chased by evil forces and her suffering ensures that she remains what Michelle Massé calls a "good girl" (1990: 680). The heroine seemingly lacks sensual desires or sexual longings and does not exhibit passion. Stereotypically she is blonde with blue eyes and exhibits feminine decorum. Throughout the narrative she remains an innocent victim, whose sufferings are a punishment for her transgressive but repressed desires. Her entrapment in space, whether in the house, castle or tomb, is overcome and the heroine finally triumphs with her marriage to the hero. Gothic novels are premised on the uncanny where the shudder of horror at something that is known but unknown, the return of the past into the present, of the monstrous, abject other, threatens subjectivity. In the case of the heroine, this takes on aspects of masochistic victimisation, nightmarish entrapment and the unspeakable. The fear the heroine experiences during her persecution remains premised on something unspeakable that is terrifying and demonic.

In his work on the psychopathology of the Gothic romance, Ed Cameron argues that the uncanniness of the Gothic, in the same manner as the fetish, is a fear of what is felt but is never really acknowledged or known (2010: 16). In his essay on the uncanny, Sigmund Freud wrote about the sensation of dread and the shiver of horror that accompanies the experience of the uncanny. This feeling of fear indicates the return of the repressed, something long known and familiar which is now unfamiliar. Freud employed the terms *heimlich* (homely) and *unheimliche* (unfamiliar, something hidden that is inadvertently revealed) when writing about the nature of the uncanny. For Freud, the uncanny was most prominent in the return of the repressed castration anxiety and, as I have indicated in my examination of the gaze and the fetish, castration anxiety is fundamental to the constitution of masculine subjectivity.

Silverman, discussing Freud's theory of castration, suggests that he considered castration anxiety as being the cause of the most dramatic division of the subject, because it sets up the differentiation between the sexes (1988: 17). In his later arguments on the

subject of castration, Freud posited that when woman's lack of a penis became apparent it was regarded as uncanny and traumatic. Silverman exploring Freud's theory has indicated that Woman, because of this perceived lack, is installed as Other, and her difference is disavowed in order for the male subject to believe he is not the one who is castrated (1988: 17). However, Silverman also indicates that the inability of the male subject to confront the absence he sees in the female anatomical difference does not take into account the fact that the female subject is deprived of being and marked by language and the desires of the Other (1988: 15). Therefore, whilst it may appear incongruous to relate the uncanny and castration anxiety to the Gothic heroine, it is the belief in her own lack as trauma that firmly places her within the ambit of the uncanny and its establishment of sexual difference.

The heroine is in complicity with this dominant sexual ideology so that her behaviour, desire and body are shaped by the nature of her lack with its concomitant projected image of loss. It becomes apparent that vision, or the gaze, is the crucial agency involved in establishing sexual difference and the determination of how the body is marked as abject or clean. The heroine's repressed desires and controlled body are the markers that allow the male characters to establish self-identity. The heroine is the known but unknown sexualised other in who resides the thrill, horror and terror of the abject. For Dolar the uncanny, like the Gothic, blurs the border between the interior and exterior, making them coincide. He goes on to talk about the uncanny as an intimate kernel and a foreign body (2001: 6). This immediately raises the question of the link between the uncanny Gothic and the Kristevan abject. Discussing the nature of the abject in her work *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva indicates that the abject is what calls all boundaries into question. This is terrifying and repulsive but simultaneously fascinating and intriguing. The abject, like the uncanny, resides in an in-between space and is not easily contained. The abject remains a foreign object that needs to be expelled. The fascination and terror associated with the uncanny Gothic and the abject, along with their blurring of boundaries, places them outside Symbolic discourse. Situated outside the rational, the abject shares characteristics with the spectral, another aspect pertinent to my examination of the uncanny Gothic and the palimpsest with relation to the horrors that Clea, as heroine, is subjected to.

In accessing the concept of the spectral, I will concentrate on the notion of presence and absence, the trace and excess. The concept of the palimpsest exhibits both presence

and absence caught in traces of past and present, so that the repressed, erased past continually invades the present. These properties of the palimpsest are mirrored in the concept of the spectral. The study of the spectral is divided between two theoretical standpoints: the psychoanalytical one of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1994; 2005), and that of Jacques Derrida. Abraham and Torok's work concentrates on the notion of the phantom and the crypt in relation to the work of Sigmund Freud. In their theory of the phantom and the crypt, it is words of desire that become the inaccessible object incorporated into the body as "fantasy" and hidden in the crypt. In her work on Derrida's spectres, Jodey Castricano considers that the words in Abraham and Torok's crypt act as repressed things and their absence in the preconscious is a denial that any trauma occurred; only to return and haunt through other word structures (2001: 23). The return of the repressed can be considered as traces of an other's words which return, phantom-like, to haunt, in what psychoanalytical theorist Esther Rashkin has called "the silence or gap in the speech of someone else" (2008: 94). This appears to parallel Kristeva's work on the semiotic and the Symbolic as well as abjection. Language is the means used to attempt to heal lack, but retained within the semiotic drives, drives predating language formation, are 'repressed' others. These repressed drives return through an irruption that takes on the form of gaps, silences, laughter and the voice speaking from between the spaces and margins of words. These semiotic desires are rejected and abjected by the Symbolic, but they continue to haunt language.

In contrast to Abraham and Torok, Derrida's work *Spectres of Marx*, in which he coined the term hauntology, offers a deconstruction of the spectre which hovers between life and death, presence and absence, existing in the in-between, much in the manner that the Kristevan abject resides in the liminal place between boundaries. Colin Davis suggests that for Derrida the spectre is "the structural openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future" (2005: 379). In the Gothic, Spooner argues that it is the horror of the past that smothers the present and prevents any attainment of personal enlightenment (2006: 18-19). In my reading of Durrell's work, when using the word spectre or spectral, I am not attempting to employ the deconstructive approach of Derrida's spectre or hauntology, nor am I doing a psychoanalytical exploration indebted to Abraham and Torok's reading of the phantom.

Rather, my aim is to integrate certain concerns raised in their respective positions, in an effort to tease out strands relevant to my examination of Gothic motifs in Durrell's novels. The structural devices of memory and time in the tetralogy aid the uncanny spectral return of a past that keeps invading the present and will govern the future.

The haunting of Clea is the result of an uncanny supernatural return of the dead that I will argue takes on aspects of the Gothic death drive and the unspeakable. Clea's innate horror of the possible return of the dead leads to her masochistic responses and passivity. This will ultimately lead to her victimisation and punishment for her expression of sexual desire. The blonde, blue-eyed heroine, Clea appears to conform to the masculine ideal, but her compliance hides her need to subvert this control. Clea instead becomes an ambivalent heroine combining both compliance and sexual transgression in an effort to attain autonomy. However, Clea is denied any form of identity when Darley traumatically sacrifices her creative ability and transmutes her into a fragmented monstrous body. As indicated, the spectral, uncanny and abject can be interwoven. However, it is Kristeva's theory of abjection that I will deploy in the examination of Clea's physical punishment and her monstrous disfigurement. The consequences of this disfigurement, I will suggest, enforce Clea's return to complicity with the dominant masculine hegemony within the *Quartet*.

Cornflowers and Sapphires

The reader only encounters the figure of Clea through the eyes of the male characters. She is visualised as golden-headed, beautiful, innocently naive, a passive daughter and an object of the patriarchal exchange system. Darley describes Clea as a "generous innocent" (J: 43); "noble" and "passionate" (44); a "schoolgirl" and "an unmarried goddess" (194). Her innocence is further emphasised in Balthazar's description of her. His gaze takes in the "warm gold of her hair and a skin honeyed almost to the tone of burnt sugar" and her eyes "blue as cornflowers and set in her head like precision-made objects of beauty" (B: 40). This description of her eyes, like those sapphire-like gemstones found in a perfect porcelain doll, makes her appear to be handcrafted by men, a beautiful object for them to gaze upon, covet and attempt to own. In the novel *Balthazar*, Darley, through the focalisation of Balthazar, constructs Clea as a 'good girl' who is unaware of her sexuality. This perfectly equates with the presentation of the virtuous heroine in Gothic novels, who is the desirable

and idealised woman - a mere abstract cipher. However, it also erases any sexual desire the heroine might have, retaining an image of her as a chaste object of desire.

Personified in the manner of the stereotypical Gothic heroine or princess, Clea is blonde and fair-skinned with blue eyes. The reliability of Darley's visualisation, and his remembrances of her eyes, seems questionable because in the novel *Justine*, he talks about Clea's "grey eyes" (J: 117), but later in the same novel describes them as "grey-green" (113-114). In *Balthazar*, Clea's eyes are cornflower and sapphire blue. The unreliability of Darley and Balthazar's remembrances of Clea's physical attributes adds an instability and lack of definition to her portrayal. This ambivalence is indicative of how perceptions of reality and truth are slippery and subjective. Darley in the present-past tense narrative of *Clea* says "I thought suddenly of Clea – her thick eyelashes fragmenting every glance of the magnificent eyes – and wondered vaguely when she would appear" (C: 57). Again, the focus is on Clea's eyes, but their glance is concealed and fragmented by the thick fringe of the eyelashes. Clea is looked at, but she does not return the look. Her glance is a sideways flicker of the eyes, one that seems elsewhere and can convey, according to Bryson, a message of "hostility, collusion, rebellion and lust" (1983: 94). Clea's brief look could be considered disconcerting, concealing transgressive and abject emotions that Darley intuits, but chooses to disregard. Instead, he prefers to focus on the surface changes her body has undergone since his departure.⁴⁰

These changes reveal a disturbing and new independence in Clea's behaviour and looks and Darley apprehensively notes:

New gestures, new tendrils had grown, languorous yet adept to express this new maturity. A limpid sensuality which was now undivided by hesitations, self-questionings. A transformation ... into this fine, indeed impressive, personage, quite at one with her own body and mind. (C: 91)

In this description Clea is transformed into an erotic, sexual other. Darley's voyeuristic gaze negates her previously perceived innocence when his description equates her with the natural world and its fertility or "new tendrils". Her previous incarnation as Flora is reinforced by the adjective "languorous" that acts as the descriptor of the noun

⁴⁰ It is possible that Durrell based the descriptions of Clea's varying eye colouration on Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* where Emma Bovary is described with eyes that vary in colour. This ambiguity underscores the unreliability of perception and of the narrator.

“sensuality”. Darley’s description offers Clea’s passive form up to the hidden viewer in an image filled with an indolent air and a touch of enticing, if decadent, sexual invitation. This is reminiscent of the painting of the *Venus of Urbino* (1538) by Tiziano Vercellio known as Titian:



Figure 25 Titian: *The Venus of Urbino*

Titian’s painting is openly sexual and erotic. A lovely female figure reclines on a bed and her sensuous, rounded body erotically draws the viewers gaze. The curves of her body contrast with the clean horizontal and vertical lines of the bedroom and the bed. The tones of her body are nuanced from the pink blush on her cheeks to the pale-rose pink of her nipples and the ivory tones of her stomach and legs.

Her ringed left is hand placed over her pudenda giving it a mysterious allure. This gesture, known as the ‘pudica’ pose, is commonly associated with representations of Venus. The placement of this hand denies access to her, in spite of the eroticism of her reclining form. A chaste gesture this hand functions to both attract and rebuff the voyeuristic viewer. What hold the viewer’s attention are her serenely beautiful face and her direct and inviting gaze. A gaze aimed, perhaps, at a lover, it reveals an assertive self-awareness and oneness with her body. I suggest the visualisation of Clea portrays her as exhibiting similar traits to Titian’s Venus in that for Darley she seems “quite at one with her own body and mind” and exhibits “a limpid sensuality which was now undivided by hesitations, self-questionings”. This could be a perfectly apposite description of the *Venus of Urbino* as well.

The luxurious, almost excessive, nature of the painting and the sensual textual description of Clea take on the baroque nature of the Gothic. There is no frisson of fear associated with Clea or the Venus, but only a plush over-abundance of texture and meaning

transferred onto the surface of their forms. Idealised beauty that is erotically desirable and inviting, these women are terrifying because their beauty is untouchable and out of reach. Throughout the descriptions of Clea, Darley presents her as possessing this perfection and a resemblance to the great artworks of the past with their portrayals of Venus or Aphrodite. The male characters construct Clea into a fantasy of the sublime splendour associated with the eroticised sexual allure associated with a goddess. A desirable and disquieting man-made fantasy object, Clea's mature sexual and bodily awareness fascinates Darley, but repels him because he fears her carnality. In his reaction, Darley constructs her as a rigid binary entity: she is the visualised fantasy of the idealised, radiant goddess-heroine and the sexually aware temptress.

The masculine ambivalence towards Clea's beauty and sexuality establish her as a modified version of the Gothic heroine. Darley introduces Clea to the reader as beautiful, asexual, innocent, virtuous, mostly passive, the object of the pleasurable and voyeuristic gaze and a semi-orphan. However, Clea transgresses sexual roles, lives alone, is independent, an artist, emotionally self-contained, travels, is not without talent in her painting, undergoes an abortion and remains unmarried. Like the heroine, she is a composite creation, one with which the reader finds it hard to identify. Lacking, as she does, sufficient characterisation she remains a formulaic figure. Darley enforces her composite typecasting when he describes her as having independence and skill (J: 114), but then proceeds to call her "disarmingly simple, graceful, self-contained" (113). Downplaying Clea's attributes is suspicious because the statement "disarmingly simple" is ambivalent. It could mean that she lives a life of simplicity, or that her intellectual response to the world lacks depth and complexity. Her physical grace and her enigmatic distance allot to her the abstract role of Woman with its stereotypical mysteriousness: a constructed figure of male discourse.

Clea's image is caught in snapshots, in which she is seen concentrating on her drawing or painting. Working in chalk, with "swift, flowing strokes" or "rubbing" the drawing with her finger, she is always turned away, head bent, her look directed at the art she is busy with. On his return to Egypt, Darley sees her

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 ...
Yet it was in truth Clea and not Melissa, and her blonde head was bent with
an air of childish concentration over her coffee cup. (C: 66)

In this description, Durrell clearly superimposes the image of two women, the dark and the blonde. In a repetition of scenes, Durrell writes the past into the present and blends these two character's postures and expressions. Marking the spectral return of Melissa, her ghost invades Darley's memory in an uncanny *déjà vu* of place, space, time and image. Metaphorically superimposed over Clea's surface, these traces of memory force her to partake in a process of spectralisation. The past returns once again when Clea finally tells Darley about her previous love for another woman, and admits the object of her love was Justine.

Clea's sexual secret detracts from the golden heroine and adds a darker tone to her representation. All the renderings of her as a conventional, asexual Gothic heroine are destabilised, because her relationship with Justine transgresses heterosexually defined borders. Clea appears to have rejected heterosexual desire in her own love for a fantasy image of a woman. Depicting the relationship between the two women allows the voyeuristic gaze to enter the scene. This gaze subjectively envisions the intimacies between Clea and Justine by means of a staple device - a portrait.

Mirrors

In the novel *Balthazar*, the image of Justine's portrait causes Balthazar, on his visit to Darley's Greek island retreat, to say: "That portrait' he said 'which was interrupted by a kiss'" (B: 17). The reader is left to wonder how Balthazar would know this. His focalisation becomes an unnatural intrusion and the description becomes imaginatively unreliable because he was not present. From Balthazar's statement, Darley visually recreates the imagined incident in memory. Darley presents the reader with the image of a kiss, along with his own creative portrayal of Clea and Justine's relationship. He indicates that the kiss falls "where the painter's wet brush should have fallen. Kisses and brushstrokes" (B: 44). These brushstrokes impart an erotic verbal movement to the image, as does the use of the plural noun "kisses" with its aural nature. Sound, movement and paint intertwine to form a picture imbued with sensuality. Placed in the position of a puppet-voyeur, the complicit reader only sees these women through Darley's slanted outlook. However, Darley is very quick to deny the controlling nature of his construction saying:

How am I to make comprehensible scenes which I myself see only with such difficulty – these two women, the blonde and the bronze in a darkening studio ... It is hard to compose them in a stable colour so that the outlines are not blurred. (B: 42)

Blaming his inability to provide clarity of vision on the fuzziness associated with remembrance, Darley's picturing of the lesbian interaction between Clea and Justine is an attempt to un-see this event. The contrast between the blonde and the bronze woman is softened and smudged in a *sfumato* haziness that lessens perception. Colours are blended and outlines are vague caught in the darkening studio's ambiance of intimacy and mellow lambency.

Smokily fugitive, this visual memory represents the otherness of these women, which Darley wants to fix in place. However, they remain beyond his ability to affix them, as Bal writes concerning Proust's depiction of Marcel's need to possess Albertine in *A la recherche du temps perdu*: "the object of this fugitive fixing is the love object of whom the focalising narrator is unable to fix the essence, which for him is represented by her sexual orientation" (2006: 72). Darley's effort to pictorially fix this interplay between Clea and Justine is imbued with eroticism. His textual description conforms to what Bal has termed a verbalising of the

gaze (1993: 383). This verbalised perspective entraps Clea and Justine as iconographic objects lodged in the focalisation of creative recollection. The image of the love between the women, so carefully offered to the reader, takes on the features of what Doane has referred to as the sexualised spectacle of desirable otherness (1982: 75).

Darley's perception of desirable otherness is located in the kiss, which he indicates Clea did not "for a moment expect ... to be answered by another – to copy itself like the reflections of a moth in a looking-glass" (B: 43). Implying a lack of sexual insight on Clea's part, Darley presents her as caught unawares. Her kiss might have initiated what followed, but she is not Justine's equal and is imposed upon by the power of Justine's persona. From Darley's point of view, Clea is a passive vehicle for Justine's exploration of alternate sexual expression. The passion between the two women is erotically stimulating for Darley, but also a sign of excessive female sexuality. Therefore, it arouses the fear of the hungry qualities of monstrous femininity. Yet, in order to retain his idealised image of her as Gothic heroine Darley continues to exculpate Clea from all blame with regards to this expression of her sexuality.

The words "copy" and "looking-glass" solicit interpretation. The looking-glass reflects the kiss, rendering it a copy or simulacrum because, as Bram Dijkstra observes, when "a woman kissed another woman it was indeed as if she were kissing herself" (1986: 152). A kiss between women was seen to offer just a haunting echo or an uncanny mirror image of the narcissistic repetition of self. Mirrors and repetition, with their doubling effect, are prevalent in the Gothic and in the novels of the *Quartet*, which, I argue, is an allusion to this mode. The mirror fragments the body, at the same time as it doubles it, into multiple and unstable images. Using the effects of the mirror, Durrell explores the nature of truth, reality and identity and how these are ambivalent and multiple. In the tetralogy, the mirror is the object that simulates and reflects the shadowy, uncanny or perverse nature of desire and its image.

In the arts of the late nineteenth century, the representation of woman's desire to embrace her reflection was a prevalent theme and is particularly apparent in the red chalk drawing entitled *Study of Women* (1887) by the Belgian artist Fernand Khnopff:

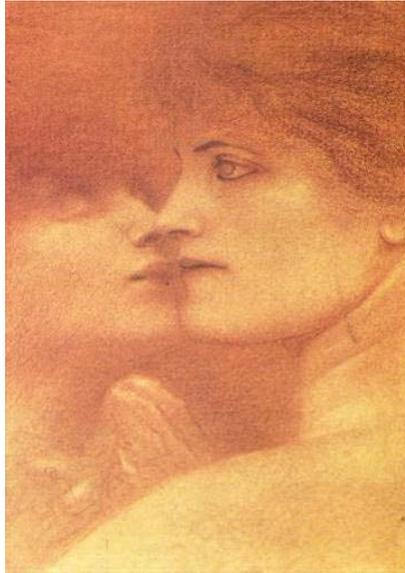


Figure 26 Fernand Khnopff: *Study of Women*

Representative of both the notion of the double and of the mirror, this image fully accords with Darley's description of Clea and Justine. The two women in Khnopff's drawing seem to be kissing one another through a mirror, or looking-glass. However, Khnopff's image is exceedingly ambivalent because the mirror image seems not to represent a true reflection. Instead, it offers the image of two different women. It seems the mirror has uncannily altered the reflection or entrapped one of the women beneath its surface. The entrapment is reminiscent of the Gothic trope of live burial. Just below and to the left of the women's chins, in a darker patch of shadow, what looks like hands or clawed skeletal appendages, seem to touch against one another. A disturbing indication of something monstrous and illicit links these two faces. Though the secondary title to this work is *The Kiss*, only the chins of the women appear to overlap.

The sphinx-like visage, with long, androgynous jaw and open, kohl-lined, pale eyes seems distanced and unaware of the second face in the mirror. This second face, with closed eyes, seems to be moving in for a kiss with a plumped-up and pursed mouth. The foregrounded face steadily and abstractly stares into the distance. Filled with an uncanny and haunting sense of total silence and mystery, the muted tones add to the stillness and self-containment of the image. There is no verbal communication, but only narcissistic solipsism and self-absorption. Christopher Ricks writes about this form of solipsistic kiss that: "You cannot kiss your own mouth (except in the mirror and there – with perfected narcissism – it is the only part of you that you can kiss)" (1974: 99). Dijkstra suggests the

“kiss in the glass” represents an extension of autoerotic and narcissistic desire in women marked by a predilection for the mirror image (1986: 150). Perhaps, then, the visualisation of the kiss between Justine and Clea, like that in Khnopff’s drawing, is perceived by Darley to be an ill-fated expression of auto-eroticism and narcissistic desire.

In depicting this reflected image of Justine and Clea, Durrell makes use of the word “looking-glass” instead of mirror. The looking-glass image, I imagine, might represent a heterotopic space where the image is caught between the space of the mirror and that of memory. This mirror reverses perception because it is outside of the real and according to Foucault:

... it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connect with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (1986: 24)

The gaze is central. Alessandra Bonazzi, writing on Foucault’s heterotopia, has argued that the mirror functions to allow the observer to be reconstituted through the gaze (2002: 46). Bonazzi has suggested that the mirror makes the locus of the relationship between the self (gaze) and the appearance (reflection) visible (46). The mirror is a space before it reflects an image and its space is what allows for the doubling of the visible. The disorientating real/unreal nature of the mirror represents an ambivalent world that is unpredictable and menacing. A place of the in-between, the uncanny reflection and inversion of the mirror’s space and what it reflects, I consider central to both the Khnopff drawing and the looking-glass image in Durrell’s narrative. In both instances, the mirror represents the space of the ambiguous subject and its inverted object projected by the gaze. The projected and reflected world of the two women makes the space of Durrell’s narrative the locus of transgressive desire.

Justine and Clea’s reflection in the looking-glass reveals their otherness; the heterotopic other space of their bodies and sexual difference. What was hidden is made visible and it threatens the familiarity of heteronormative behaviour. They become objects in excess, and Darley perceives their desire to be horrific. Intrusively entering this space, Darley’s disgust at his self-created and imaginative scene of autoerotic desire reveals his sense of threat. Creed has argued that the perfectly sealed world of female desire poses an

exclusion of masculine desire and a denial of the voyeuristic spectator (1995: 97). However, the scene between Justine and Clea is an imaginative creation of Darley's. This establishes him, and the reader, as hidden spectators, who are able to direct exactly what happens to accord with their own needs and desires. It is interesting that the desire is limited to the brief mention of the kiss; all other physical intimacies along with the bodies of the two women are elided.

Darley's horror at the physical intimacy he has alluded to and creatively described is visible when he says "how distasteful all this subject matter is" (B: 42). This distanced disavowal transforms the relationship between the two women into a disgusting abject thing that the male observer needs to deny. A similar reaction to the enactment of female desire is located in Pursewarden's scornful words: "the insipid kiss of familiars" (B: 42). This statement is indicative, I assert, of the disdain and animosity directed towards any expression of sexual desire by women in the tetralogy. Darley's advancing of Pursewarden's position is a substantiation of his own standpoint so that misogyny is a reflective doubling bolstering phallogocentric ideology. The choice of the word "familiars", though it means having a close and intimate association, also means "familiar spirits", normally animal demons, that attend witches. However, a "familiar" can also represent a double or alter ego, which need not exactly resemble the person it echoes. This is visible in the Khnopff drawing where the two women are not exact reflections of one another, as is also the case with Justine and Clea. The implied figuration of Justine and Clea as witches, whose reflective doubling is inverted by their expression of transgressive desire, metaphorically veils their surfaces.

According to Kosofsky Sedgwick, in her study of the meaning of the Gothic veil, the attributes of either the veil or the flesh it hides are contagious and transferable. The surface of the body can transmit its qualities to other surfaces, spreading these particular qualities (1986: 149). Susan Wolstenholme, in her book on the female Gothic, notes that this mode makes use of "visual patterns of veiling and hiding, both on a verbally explicit level and structurally also as a way of simultaneously hiding and giving form." (1993: 12). The hiding and reflecting of the image located in the heterotopic space of the mirror functions like a veil. This space allows Clea and Justine to occupy an ambiguous visual state of both spectacle and narcissism that by denying the gaze acts to threaten it. The properties of the

reflected images in the space of the mirror, and the image in the space of Darley's imagination, constitute Justine and Clea's feminine forms.

Their bodies are marked with the stain of darker motifs, those of excess, sexual transgression, abjection and monstrosity. Their relationship is seen to question the values of heterosexuality and its gender codes, so that Darley regards it as "unspeakable", an "illicit relationship" (B: 40) and the "consuming shape of a sterile love" (42). The use of the word "sterile" plays into the ideology that women are there only to be fertile and produce offspring. Any transgression of this feminine role is regarded with hostility. The bodies of both these women are, for Darley, excessive surfaces of desire whose abject difference transgresses the boundaries of the proper role of a woman. Clea's idealised status of stereotypically pure, asexual heroine becomes blurred and she bears the dark traces of her 'inverted' love. Her golden light and Justine's darkness play off against one another, creating contrast, depth and dappled shadow, so that the two women seem to become palimpsestuous reflections of one another.

Throughout Darley's focalisation of the relationship between Clea and Justine, Clea lacks a voice. In her work on the Gothic heroine, Massé asserts that masculine discourse scripts the innermost thoughts and emotional reactions of the heroine according to certain subjective requirements (1990: 681). Clea's purported statement, significantly in free indirect discourse, in which she claims that she was "a woman at last and belonged to men" (B: 46), reveals her as merely a submissive object of what Stevi Jackson has called the patriarchal control of heterosexist ideology and identity (1999: 154). The idea that to be a woman you need to belong to men is indicative of this heterosexual bias exhibited throughout Durrell's narrative. It remains a foregone conclusion, in Darley's opinion, that once Clea has experienced a relationship with a man, she will happily re-enter the heterosexual fold. This is what Creed parenthetically alludes to when she mentions the belief present in popular male mythology that "what the lesbian really needs is a good fuck, that is, phallic intrusion to break up the threatening duo" (1995: 96). This underlying mythology is present in the responses of both Darley and Pursewarden to Clea and Justine's relationship.

Although Durrell sets up the sexual transgression of lesbianism, he never allows it to have a voice or a defined image. Instead, it is alluded to in the dream-like visual image of the

kiss. This vagueness ensures that, both textually and visually, the relationship remains a veiled space. Therefore, this apparently brief lesbian relationship is a spectral trace introduced by Durrell, only to be negated and made to vanish. I see Durrell's introduction of this lesbian desire as a device; one used to unsettle and reveal the ambivalent nature of sexuality and sexual relationships. Be that as it may, this attempted articulation of a taboo is given no real substance and seems tacked on as just another allegedly perverse sexual practice within the context of the *Quartet*. Durrell's introduction of this relationship fails, reliant, as it is, on excess and fakery. The situation described lacks depth causing its transgressive impact to become negligible. This allows the narrative rapidly to return to an exploration of the heterosexual status quo.

Nonetheless, Darley refuses to acknowledge any loss of innocence with regard to Clea. He continues to describe her in an idealistic manner as being a "generous innocent" (B: 43), "noble" and "passionate" (44), a "schoolgirl" and "an unmarried goddess" (194). This identification of Clea as innocent and passionate continues when Darley and she become lovers. Lying in bed and secretly observing her, Darley describes her slender nakedness. He notes, "the grave and passionate intensity of her turned head" (C: 86). She seems unaware of either Darley's or the reader's gaze. Her head is turned away in contemplation of something that cannot be seen, a pose that reveals an unwillingness to communicate. She is denying the viewer's outside gaze, which negates her inclusion in Darley's narrative description. It is only how Clea's presence impacts on his feelings and subjectivity that is important, not Clea herself. She remains merely an object or cipher against which to found his emotions.

Darley makes this plain when he says she "would share everything with me, withholding nothing – not even the look of complicity which women reserve only for their mirrors" (C: 86). Darley denies Clea any inner self; instead, she is fashioned to be an extension of himself and in the process is deprived of any will. The referral to her relation with the mirror links back to the mirroring seen in her relationship with Justine, but also to the male belief that the sin of vanity is inherent in woman. This *vanitas* theme, seen in Darley's use of the word "complicity", is what Berger regards as a cover for morally "condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure" (1972: 45). Berger proposes the function of the mirror betokens something vastly different because

it forces woman to “connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight” (45). For Clea, the mirror becomes a heterotopic borderline space or Gothic site of abjection. It is a space of surface and textual images that entrap her into conformity. In order to establish her own autonomy, she needs to separate herself from the image and in so doing escape from Darley’s need to possess her.

Darley does question his image of Clea: “was I simply deluding myself once more, refracting truth by the disorders inherent in my own vision?” (C: 90). This seems to be a case of what Samuel Beckett indicated about a narrator’s narrative “devising figments to temper his nothingness ... Devised deviser devising it all” (1980: 46). However, Darley carries on inventing visual truths in an effort to deny his lack of identity or what Beckett terms “nothingness”. Voyeuristically gazing on the sleeping form of Clea, Darley transforms her into an image of food and drink to slake his hungering need:

I would turn to the sleeping Clea and study her quiet profile in order to ... to ingest her, drink the whole of her up without spilling a drop, mingle my very heart beats with hers. (C: 90)

Clea’s flesh is symbolically associated with Christ and the transubstantiation. The cannibalistic need to ingest her and the vampiric desire to drink “the whole of her up without spilling a drop” bring to this description the darkness of supernatural and excessive Gothic desire. A fantasy of sadistic violence is present in Darley’s need to penetrate the permeable flesh and otherness of Clea’s unaware and dormant body. Perceived as an edible object, Darley imbues the image of Clea with the horrific and abject. She is the victim of unspeakable and monstrous desire impressed on her by Darley’s textual seal of phallic domination.

The passion and love in the phrase “mingle my very heart beats with hers” represents an overwhelming need to own and control. In this description there is no ‘you’ and ‘I’ implying an ‘us’; it remains firmly founded in the masculine subject position of ‘I’. Enmeshed in Darley’s portrayal of her, there seems to be little escape for Clea. She remains a gothicised surface trapped in the reflection of the mirror. Imprisoned, she is an objectified image fixed in the stereotypical role of golden innocent who is “white of heart” (B: 44). This perception of Clea also fuels the fantasy of Nessim Hosnani’s brother Narouz, who wants to conquer and acquire Clea for himself. In the novel *Balthazar*, Narouz’s mastery and breaking

in of a white Arabian horse is, I will demonstrate, a powerful figuration that stands in symbolically for Clea, who Narouz desires to subjugate, control and possess.

A Mythical White Arabian

Durrell's male characters harbour an overwhelming need to forcibly control the female characters. This is nowhere more apparent than in the behaviour and appearance of Narouz. When the reader first meets him in the novel *Balthazar*, Narouz is described as a peasant corsair with "bandolier", "Turkish trousers" and "peasant's blouse" (B: 56). His body is depicted as short, incredibly strong, ungainly and "hairy as a spider" (57). However, the focalisation of his face is what holds the reader fascinated. An upper lip that is "split literally from the spur of the nose" (56), this harelip reveals the "ends of a white tooth" (56) and "two little pink tongues of flesh in the centre of his upper lip which were always wet" (56 - 57). His eyes, almost like those of Clea, with their "splendid blueness and innocence" both detract and enforce his monstrous ugliness (57). Accompanying these eyes is a spellbinding voice of a "deep and thrilling" timbre (57).

Narouz is a creature whose actions and responses represent the uninhibited outward flow of semiotic drives. Anger, lust, violence, sadism, physical power, all emanate from his physical presence. He is possessed of a magical almost supernatural charisma located in his gaze but even more specifically in the sound of his voice. When Narouz speaks, it is either in grunts, short brusque phrases, or when in a state of ecstasy, a flood of incomprehensible outpourings that hold the listener spellbound. Narouz is the most blatantly extreme Gothic figure in the novels. A combination of villain and bestial, ape-like monster, he is an amalgam of many villainous male figures. Possessed of thrilling attributes offset by darker more evil desires and designs, his incredible strength and carnality are nowhere better exhibited than in his confrontation with a free-spirited and wild animal.⁴¹

Narouz chooses this horse, a present to him from a group of Arab Bedouins, from a group of horses. The voice of the external palimpsestuous narrator terms them a "group of colts", from which Narouz picks out "the white one" (B: 75). He swiftly bridles the creature and mounts it:

⁴¹ Similar Gothic villains are the monk Ambrosio, Melmoth the Wanderer, Vathek, Mr Hyde, Frankenstein and Count Dracula.

The mythical creature stood quite still, its eyes wide and lustrous as if fully to comprehend this tremendous new intelligence of a rider upon its back, then a slow shudder rippled through its flesh ... Horse and rider stood as if posing for a statue, buried in thought. (75)

White Arabian horses are mythical and sacred animals and were the bearers of the figure of the hero. The legends surrounding the Arabian horse are varied, from that of the Queen of Sheba giving an Arabian mare called Safanad to King Solomon, to Mohammed's five favourite mares from which the bloodline of the five Arabian horse strains came. The description of this mythical white Arabian horse, eyes wide and lustrous with rippling muscles, imparts a sensuous eroticism as well as an overt fearfulness to the image. Stillness is contrasted with movement, as the pulsation of flesh oscillates from light to dark, like ripples in water. Contained in this picture of horse and rider lurks a semiotic abjection of fear, desire, and violence. The Gothic moves on the borderlines of the narrative discourse threatening to rupture the Symbolic through an excess of unnameable horror.

The abject semiotic fright of the animal is released through a "low whistling cry" and the horse tries to dislodge the masculine body attempting to dominate it. The external narrator indicates Narouz only "growled something in its ear that drove it frantic" (75). The imposition of words is a rite of defilement releasing into the text the frantic, mad and jagged movements of the horse's "curvetting", "ragged plunging", "tossing canter" and "ducking" (75). This frenzied abjection of terror allows the semiotic to burst through the Symbolic with the physical eruption of the horse breaking into a "long tireless gallop" whirling "away across the dunes with its rider secured by the powerful scissors of his legs" (75-76). The violence and exaggerated movement of this image exemplifies the struggle between the man and the animal, in what is tantamount to a rape. Narouz is seen to pin the creature "with the powerful scissors of his legs".

This description of Narouz seems to recall a passage from D.H. Lawrence's work *Women in Love*. In this passage, Gudrun recalls the manner in which Gerald Critch controls his horse:

... as if numbed in her mind by the sense of the indomitable soft weight of the man, bearing down into the living body of the horse: the strong indomitable thighs of the blond man clenching the palpitating body of the mare into pure

control; a sort of soft white magnetic domination from the loins and thighs and calves, enclosing and encompassing the mare heavily into unutterable subordination, soft-blood-subordination, terrible. (2007: 72)

In his analysis of this passage critic David Lodge has indicated that the passage seems a premonition of the sexual relationship that will occur between Gudrun and Gerald. The domination of the mare, Lodge points out, is a form of sexual possession and the similarity between the mare and Gudrun herself is both metaphorical and metonymic (1991: 492). The holding of the horse between “indomitable thighs” has a direct parallel in Durrell’s “powerful scissors of his legs”. There are extensive similarities between Lodge’s analysis of this passage from Lawrence and my argument with regards to the passage in Durrell. In the Lawrence passage, the reader is immediately aware that the horse is female. Durrell’s description hides this through the narrator’s initial reference to the horse as being a colt – a young male horse.

Only once Narouz returns with the defeated horse does the narrator suddenly employ the pronoun ‘her’. He describes the horse as “dejected, staggering, with only fight in her to blow dejectedly and stamp, conquered” (76). Narouz’s exertion of brute force to obtain domination and control results in the utter subordination of the horse and is indeed remarkably similar to the terrible actions of Gerald Critch. Durrell’s entire passage, like that of Lawrence, is perversely sexual and horribly distasteful. Narouz now in control utters “endearments” to her, like a satisfied lover. His powerful masculine body has overcome her resistance and in the process of the “long savage battle”, he has experienced an “orgasm” (76). The drive towards a sadistic *jouissance* has been achieved both by use of language in the narrative, and the depravity of Narouz’s actions. All Narouz’s baser drives, those of savagery, sadism, animalism, perverse sexuality and desire, are viciously imposed onto the bodily surface of the white filly. The portrayal of this incident ensures the horse’s body becomes the symbolic stand-in for Clea. The link between the two female forms, the white filly and Clea, is contained in a play on the word “filly”, which can mean a young female horse and, colloquially, a young woman. Therefore, the violent domination of the horse’s body is metaphorically transferred onto Clea. Both their physical landscapes represent the otherness of the unknown object, which Narouz considers it his right to conquer.

The grotesque subduing and symbolic rape of the white filly reads like a lived-out fantasy of the manner in which Narouz would like to treat Clea. Critic Steven Bruhm writing about pain and the Gothic body indicates that the “‘Gothic body’ is that which is put on excessive display, and whose violent, vulnerable immediacy gives Gothic fiction its beautiful barbarity and troublesome power” (1994: xvii). The vulnerable immediacy and the violence involved in the subduing of the white filly, I suggest, provides the incident in Durrell’s narrative with the troublesome and disturbing barbarity Bruhm mentions. This is an intense and bothersome representation of an inordinate misuse of power. Unlike Gudrun and Gerald in Lawrence’s book, Narouz and Clea will never become involved in a sexual affair. Yet Narouz’s death, and the supernatural forces it invokes, will represent his concerted attempt to lay claim to Clea.

The Call of Death and Uncanny Premonitions

Attacked under mysterious circumstances, the dying Narouz has requested Clea’s presence. Her response to the request is one of uncanny perturbation and abject repulsion as she says “Oh Nessim, how disgusting that people should love without consent! ... My flesh quails upon my bones” (M: 309). Through his demand, Narouz has again attempted to exert control over Clea, resulting in her experiencing a *frisson* of terror and repulsion. Her statement about quailing flesh is almost Biblical, though with a hint of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s *Penitential Psalm 38* (1549). There is an expectation of something transgressively evil or wicked attached to Narouz’s “love without consent”. The external narrator reveals Narouz’s innermost, dying thoughts which are filled with a desire, similar to that of Darley’s, to possess Clea body and soul: “voice and odour of a girl who had become embalmed by his senses, entombed like some precious image” (M: 312). Approaching death has heightened the controlling force of Narouz’s sensory projections in which he attempts to trap and envelop fetish fragments of Clea: her odour and her voice. She is an object whose presence is so alive and physically real for him, but which he wishes to entomb so that she can accompany him into death embalmed by his exigency. Her body is a “precious image”, an icon, which helps him to continue his existence beyond death. Visualised like a figurine, an alter ego, Clea is inscribed with his name and the spells of his beliefs and desperate passion.

Clea's essence and body become gothicised by the power of death and Narouz's overwhelming need for existence beyond the grave. As Narouz dies, he calls out:

The name of Clea, uttered in the cavernous voice of a wounded lion: a voice which combined anger, reproof and an overwhelming sadness in its sudden roar ... So nude a word, her name ... yet it sounded as if upon the lips of some dying conqueror, some lost king ... The name of Clea sounded through the whole house, drenched by the splendour of his anguish. (M: 312-313)

Employing the Symbolic, he attempts to strip Clea bare through the supernatural and magical use of her true name. The place of woman, the Gothic house, is saturated by this shout, the horror of which invades the enclosed space. In his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* Chris Baldick writes about the association between castles, houses and Gothic fictions:

Gothic fiction is characteristically obsessed with old buildings as sites of human decay. The Gothic castles or house ... is a house of degeneration, even of decomposition, its living space darkening and contracting into the dying-space of the mortuary and the tomb. (2009: xx)

It is in the confines of the house as dying-space, mortuary and tomb, that Narouz's voice summons Clea. The roar of the male voice demands submission to its wishes. This voice releases a terrible and destructive force in an expression of what Gary Farnell terms the Gothic death drive. Farnell considers this drive as leading to the 'site of the Thing', or the place of absolute otherness where the unnameable exists in the borderland state between inside and outside (2011: 598). This death drive closely resembles the Kristevan abject with its "violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable" (1982: 1). I contend Durrell is employing this semiotically explosive howl to portray the human revolt against the unnameable horror and abjection of death. He allows Narouz's cry to remain "hanging in the air" even after death, thereby evoking the abject borderland between the living and the dead. This establishment of the monstrous entity of the cry caught in limbo is a device employed by Durrell to enact the uncanny supernatural tension that will pre-empt the almost catastrophic events that will result when a cry returns to haunt Clea.

Clea's superstitious nature and belief in the preternatural ensure only she is troubled by the mysterious sounds of weeping. Darley comments on her trust in the occult when he sees her on his return to Alexandria "in the act of shaking the dregs three times and emptying them into the saucer to study them as they dried into the contours from which fortune tellers 'scurry' – a familiar gesture" (C: 67). This dependence on horoscopes and fortune-tellers is jokingly mentioned during a conversation that takes place on a day Darley remembers as a "spring day without a flaw" (C: 179). During this conversation Balthazar blithely, and with obvious amusement, reveals what is bothering Clea: "I mean that stuff supposedly about Narouz: that was altogether too dramatic to be taken seriously" (177-178). The immediate questioning of the validity of what was said, "that stuff", casts Clea in the role of credulous dupe. The use of the phrase "too dramatic" makes the prediction seem excessive. Balthazar then says: "It had the ingredients of a novelette". A novelette is a short work of prose the contents of which is sentimental, romantic, empty and trite. Critic Robert D Mayo, in his article on Gothic romance in magazines, writes, "the tale, the fragment, and the novelette are the dominant forms of Gothic romance" (1950: 765).

Obviously Balthazar regards what Clea has been told about Narouz returning from the dead to be a trite and excessive manipulation, or fakery because he goes on to heedlessly and cruelly rubbish what she was told about Narouz: "trying to drag you down into the grave with him ... and about the weeping you would hear" (C: 177). During Balthazar's speech, Darley becomes aware of Clea's reaction, noticing she "had turned quite white and was looking away" and "a spot of red had appeared in both her cheeks. She shook her head, though she said nothing, but bit her lips as if with vexation" (C: 177). Darley interprets, perhaps rightly, Clea's physical reactions, as vexation, in visibly semiotic gestures. These actions both consciously and unconsciously attempt to challenge and counteract the male discourse and gaze. Clea is subject to the relations of power Foucault examined in his work *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Foucault employed the ambivalent term subjectivation, which contains the meaning of becoming a subject, whilst simultaneously being constrained and made subordinate through discourses of power. Judith Butler, adopting Foucault's concept of subjectivation, took this further by relating it to the theory of the performativity of gender (1990; 1993; 1997). Butler argues a subject has to be performatively formed to make

sense as a subject and to “produce that which it names ... a performative functions to produce that which it declares” (1993: 107).

Clea’s performative response has been to acquiesce to phallogentric expectations of a woman’s role of passive modesty in what Sandra Lee Bartky calls self-policing. Clea enacts this because she is aware the gaze permanently inscribes her as a body designed to please (1998: 107-108). However, there is also defensiveness in this response, an adoption of a passive-aggressive position that Diane Long Hoeveler (1998) has attributed to the Gothic heroine. Long Hoeveler discusses the Gothic heroine as one who performs the role of innocent, suffering victim who pretends female weakness in a masquerade of apparent conformity to prescribed roles (1998: 107; 115). The construction or performance of gender, in Hoeveler’s argument, adopts Irigaray’s concept of ‘miming the mime’ in order to explicate the victimised, masochistic and passive-aggressive characteristic of the heroine. The line between mimicry and the idea of female masquerade is blurry, so I intend to employ the terms interchangeably in the discussion that follows. When exploring the transgressive possibility of mimicry or masquerade Irigaray writes:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus begin to thwart it ... To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it ... It also means ‘to unveil’ the fact that if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply reabsorbed in this function. (1977a: 76)

In this critique, Irigaray criticises the construction of femininity through masculine discourse. She indicates that the feminine, by adopting a position of mimicry, is able to escape the exploitation of this discourse. In doing so, women can avoid the binary male reduction of sexual difference to male self and female Other.

Hoeveler’s engagement with Irigaray’s concept of mimicry or masquerade leads her to posit that the Gothic heroine, caught in the masculine discourse of power, attempts to free herself by adopting a ‘miming of the mime’. In the assumption of this mimicry, the heroine inculcates what Hoeveler terms a “mystic of masochism” (1998: 114). Hoeveler indicates this adoption of a masochistic stance represents a repressed need to seek out situations of pain and abuse, which are central to the heroine’s passive-aggressive strategies (115). The

heroine's assumption of the passive-aggressive strategies mentioned by Hoeveler accords with Irigaray's position on the deliberate assumption of the feminine role to manipulate and thwart the patriarchal system's construction of her as 'passive', 'weak' and 'submissive' by 'miming the mime'.⁴²

I take issue with the conception of the possible subversive potential of 'miming the mime' and with Hoeveler's deployment of this concept in her discussion of the Gothic heroine. I suggest 'miming the mime', instead of thwarting the heroine's subordination, makes her complicit in her own victimisation. This complicity is squarely located in the concept of miming or masquerade, which Doane considers dependent on "masculinity for its very definition" (1991: 38). Women, constructed as text or image, become what Kristeva, in *Tales of Love*, calls beings of masquerade: "empty at times, inauthentic, obviously lying ... a mask or a written sign – dazzling outside, nothing inside" (1987: 380). Kristeva's position supports the contention of Doane that feminine masquerade is "a decorative layer which conceals a non-identity" (1991: 25). Indeed, masquerade in its excessive emptiness becomes solely a surface on which discourse can be written. A textual construct of discourse that contains spectral traces of other texts within it, masquerade is reminiscent of the nature of a palimpsest. I argue that the masquerade of Clea could be considered to represent a palimpsestic surface identity of Gothic fakery.

Through her own silent bodily reactions and gestures; biting her lip, turning red and shaking her head, Clea can be regarded as complicit with the masquerade of passive-aggressive victimisation. However, Clea's fright and anger are visible when she recounts what was prophesized concerning the figure resembling Narouz:

his lips are split here, and I see him covered in little wounds, lying on a table, there is a lake outside. He has made up his mind. He will try and drag you to him. You will be in a dark place, imprisoned ... unable to resist him. Yes, there is one near at hand who might aid you if he could. But he will not be strong enough. (C: 178- 179)

The Gothic device of a story within a story acts to accentuate the uncanny and supernatural components of the tale - the return of the dead. For Clea the image conjured is definitively

⁴² The heroine as masochist is explored in the work of Michelle Massé (1990; 1992) who offers a different psychoanalytical reading of the reasons for this behaviour.

that of Narouz and his violated body laid out on a table evokes a mortuary. The wounds on his body are representative of an abject penetration of its wholeness in a rape of death. In the image of Narouz, his body is almost aerated by wounds and thus becomes a site penetrated through excessive violence. In Gothic tales, this form of violent death always results in a ghostly return, which represents a search for restitution or vengeance. Clea's response to this image is one of breathless horror, which might explain the short, brusque descriptive phrases in the quote.

These phrases offer a staccato, juddering motion similar to the slowed down sequence of old film frames. This shallow, jumpy movement relates to the flickering look that catches brief snatches of a scene, as if in a dream or a nightmare. What haunts the passage, invoking Clea's deep-seated fear, is the desire emanating from the alien space of the dead. This desire is transgressive in nature because it is suggestive of a second death: a dragging down of Clea into a dark imprisoning space. Gary Farnell observes that the Gothic death drive's impetus is aimed at achieving a second catastrophe and in so doing heightens the "Gothic terror ... the sort of horror, in other words, that invades, undermines and mortifies our flesh, much like desire" (2011: 594). Desire and death co-mingle and become centred on the spectre of Narouz, which aims to achieve what it could not previously manage – secure Clea for itself. Hogle regards the apparent return of the spectral as more fake than real; a counterfeiting of the past, or what he terms "Gothic spectres of counterfeits" (2001: 295). He relates this return of the fake spectral to Kristeva's process of abjection. In this process, Hogle writes, the traumatic aspects of the betwixt and between state of being are "thrown off" onto monsters or ghosts (2001: 295).

Hogle indicates Kristeva regards this form of projection as a means to interpret the self and establish a seemingly solid sense of identity that denies the unnameable otherness inside the self (295). The prediction of Narouz's return brings the past into the present and the dead back into the world of the living. For Balthazar this is fakery, but Clea seems to be projecting onto the monstrous spectre of Narouz her abject fear of the unnameable with its threat to her identity. Clea's lot now resembles what Mario Praz considered that of the Gothic heroine, "anxiety with no possibility of escape" (1968: 20). In positing the possibility of the supernatural return of the dead, Durrell transgresses the Symbolic order by allowing Narouz's metaphorical presence to invade the text. The need to return, to repeat, points to

a destructive and lawless semiotic force that challenges the symbolic order. This is an inherent aspect of the Gothic and is, according to Botting, predicated on selfish and voracious passion whose need is to acquire the lusted after object from the place of the unnameable (1996: 6). Positioned as the frightened, credulous heroine, Clea's increasing withdrawal leads to a brief hiatus in her relationship with Darley, who again decides to leave the city to return to the island.

When writing about this at a later stage, Darley smugly and pompously says, "The fatality of human wishes. For me the future lay open, uncommitted ... But for Clea the future had already closed, was already presenting a blank wall." (C: 208). What he writes is indicative of firmly rooted ideologies of the freedom of the male and the confinement of the female. Where Darley's future is "open and uncommitted", Clea's is "closed". Architectural space, whether imaginary or real, usually has an enclosing boundary - a house, ship, asylum, tomb, mirror - all spaces Foucault considers heterotopic. This confinement will finally be validated in the stifling horror of Clea's live burial underwater.

Timonium Isle of the Dead

Clea's fears will be realised in the beauty of a rock-pool located at the island she refers to as Narouz's island or Timonium. The rock-pool is associated with the deadly harpoon-gun Clea shows to Darley. Originally belonging to Narouz, who used to hunt with it in the rock-pool, the harpoon gun was given to Clea by Nessim. Darley, gazing on it, says "It was an ugly-looking contrivance ... It fired a slim steel harpoon about a metre and a half in length ... It looked deadly enough to kill quite a large fish" (C: 194). This weapon with its svelte evilness will lurk in the background, a deadly presence. Initially, only the beauty of the pool fills Darley's excessively descriptive images:

The rock-pool glowed beneath the glimmering keel of the boat like a quivering emerald, the long ribbons of milky light penetrating it slowly, stealing down like golden probes ... Its beauty was spell-bounding. It was like diving into the nave of a cathedral whose stained-glass windows filtered the sunlight through a dozen rainbows. The sides of the amphitheatre – for it opened gradually towards the deep sea – seemed as if carved by some

heartsick artist of the Romantic Age into a dozen half-finished galleries lined with statues ... But these blurred caryatids were wave-born, pressed and moulded by the hazard of the tides into goddesses and dwarfs and clowns. ... Terracotta baked in a dozen hues of mauve and violet and gold ... the deeper lining of water faded from emerald to apple green, and from Prussian blue to black ... Here, too, lay the wreck of which Clea had spoken. (C: 195- 196)

Durrell's descriptions of this undersea world are, arguably, some of the most evocatively beautiful passages in the entire *Quartet*. This passage is a luminous jewel-like canvas of prismatic colours. A sensual vision filled with light, it recalls a seascape by the artist Claude Monet with hues and dabs of emerald and apple green, mauve-violet, Prussian blue, gold, terracotta and black. These colours, many of them a haunting repetition of the colours used to paint the city and its landscape, act as a kaleidoscopic palimpsest joining sea to land.

In the excessiveness of these adjectives of colour and their focalisation resides what George Steiner termed the "baroque" style of Durrell's narrative (1962: 15). The "sheer abundance" of this style provides an ornate mysteriousness to this alien natural space, whose age and power are not subject to human control. Durrell attempts to humanise and structure the space by employing architectural and artistic symbols, the nave of the cathedral, the space of the amphitheatre and the gallery of statues. He uses figures from religion, fairy-tale and farce to people this watery world - caryatids, dwarves and clowns. The magnificence of this underwater space with its play of light, shadow and depth provides a feeling of infinity held in a moiréd movement. In the first line of this passage, the phrase "ribbons of milky light" are seen as "stealing down like golden probes". The image is of a halo surrounded by the diffuse light of a nimbus, a glowing religious image. Durrell extends this imagery in the mention of the nave of a cathedral and how the prismatic light resembles a rainbow of stained glass.

The intimations of divine power are eloquently present and reminiscent of the manner in which, Botting argues, Gothic romance partook of the sublime located in the natural world (1996: 39). The sublimity of this scene, unlike beauty, represents an excess that confronts Darley with a warning of the frailty of human life in the remains of the shipwreck. This surreptitious insertion of death into this ravishing world produces a *frisson* of unease, but the scene is so tranquil and seductive the threat goes unremarked. The words of the

poet Rainer Maria Rilke seem apposite: "For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror" (1987: 151). Terror enters the beautiful environment of the rock-pool on:

That brilliant morning, for example, with everything so deceptively normal, when bursting from the pool like a rocket she gasped, deathly pale: '*There are dead men down there*'... there they were in very truth, seven of them, sitting in the twilight of the basin with an air of scrupulous attention, as if listening to some momentous debate which would decide everything for them. This conclave of silent figures formed a small semicircle across the outer doorway of the pool ... Slightly crouched, responding to the ligatures which bound them, and faceless, they nevertheless stood, flinching and flickering softly like figures in an early silent film (C: 199).

The scene is suddenly tinged with the horror and fear provoked by the appearance of the non-living. Darley visualises Clea as "deathly pale", a living body that has assumed the attributes of the corpse. Death invades the pool in the form of seven linked bodies "sitting in the twilight of the basin". The atmosphere established is suitably Gothic and the brilliant morning light has become edged with the chiaroscuro of twilight. The interesting observation that there were "seven of them" strikes the reader into wondering why especially seven? The number seven is associated with many religions, but particularly the Biblical Old Testament. In this work, it symbolises punishment, penitence and purification. This continues the darker religious themes that are being associated with this underwater world. Seven is also the number of renewal and metamorphosis with its promise of a new future. The strange deceptiveness that resides at the heart of Durrell's novels is again present. No situation or word has one single meaning, but possesses numerous possibilities.

The dead figures in the pool seem to be sitting and listening as though waiting for something to occur. The use of the word "conclave" immediately reinforces the religious nature of the description. It also stresses the occurrence of a death, because a conclave only meets to elect a new pope upon the death of the old. There is an uncanny and religious menace about these figures who guard the threshold of the pool. Their cloaked bodies and movements are reminiscent of the figures of The Mourners from the tombs of the Dukes of Burgundy. These small alabaster figures seem to circulate around the tombs like monks in a

cloister. They reflect all the aspects of mourning from wiping away tears, to being lost in solemn contemplation, or with faces hidden in the folds of their robes.⁴³

The bodies of the corpses in the rock-pool, sailors bound together in sacks, are Other – a topography of body and thing, of inside and outside. Kristeva writing on the horror and fear associated with the presence of the corpse indicates:

It upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. ... No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live ... There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border ... the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. (1982: 3; emphasis in text)

The return of the dead forces a confrontation with the living's repressed realisation of the self's mortality. A sense of defilement, of fascination and terror, causes the living to 'thrust' this knowledge aside, because this state of abjection cannot be conceptualised and remains the uncanny, unnameable thing. The presence of the dead bodies threatens the intrusion of death over the border into the space of the living. They seem to act as the guardians just waiting for the command to allow something darker and unnameable entry. They are a promise of the void, of the return to the maternal with its subsuming of identity, of the 'I'.

Floating in the crypt of the maternal water these are bodies without souls; ghosts in the space of the rock pool. Durrell furthers this spectral haunting when he writes "flinching and flickering softly like figures in an early silent film" (C: 199). Early film in its black and white chiaroscuro of shadow seems ghostly and Gothic. The phantom-like quality of the now dead are, in the film, resurrected to a seeming animation of life (Mulvey 2006b: 36). The use of the word "flickering" to describe the movement of the bodies perfectly represents the manner in which light moves in water, the rippled luminescent effect. This movement is, in essence, in the form of a palimpsest, where bright light is edged with a slightly offset shadow of more softened hue. This multi-layering of words and image blurs the boundaries between the living and the not living evoking, in the reader, a fascination and fear of something foreboding that increases the tension of the storyline. Time under water, like

⁴³ There are 37 of these figures which are 16 inches in height. They were carved by Jean de la Huerta and Antoine le Moiturier between 1443- 1456 for the ducal tomb of John the Fearless of Burgundy.

time in a film, seems preserved in a blending of two different times, those of then and now. In this passage, Durrell indicates the nature of time, the frailty of human life and the slightness of the boundary that exists between life and death. The threat of death that these bodies bring with them will horrifically trace itself onto Clea's body gothicising it.

Mutilation and Rebirth

The violent horror inflicted on Clea happens on the day of a final outing planned before Darley returns to the Greek island. The trio of Clea, Darley and Balthazar arrive at the rock-pool on what Darley himself calls a "fatal" day, but whose appearance is deceptive with its smiling, spring sunshine (C: 209). The word fatal, with its connotations of destined by fate, as well as ominous with its attached sense of something disastrous resulting in death, sets the premonitory tone. Heightening this sense of uneasiness is the uncanny alteration in the mood emanating from the pool. Darley's awe when describing the metamorphosis of the water is obvious:

The waters of the pool darkened appreciably, curdled, and then became phosphorescent ... we plunged side by side ... transformed into figures of flame, the sparks flashing from the tips of our fingers and toes with the glitter of static electricity. A swimmer seen underwater looks like an early picture of the fall of Lucifer, literally on fire. So bright was the electrical crackle that we could not help wondering how it was that we were not scorched by it. So we played, glittering like comets, among the quiet mariners who sat, watching us ... Clea surfaced with a swish of delight ... just long enough to cry: 'The fire is so beautiful' doubled her lithe body back and ducked downwards again. (C: 214)

The coruscating beauty of the phosphorus bloom is multifarious in its play on a religious and cosmological theme. The word phosphorus with its etymological relation to the word phosphoros (the morning star or light bringer) plays on the allusion to Lucifer's relation to the Morning Star. The effect of phosphorescence on the surface of the sea comes from small creatures that emit light from a pigment known as luciferin, which is a cold light. The light from this phosphorescent bloom is eerie and ghostly in its blue-green luminescence

and the whole description of the pool becomes filled with the sharp crackle of flames. Darley describes the swimmers as on fire, “figures of flame” like the sinners in Dante’s inferno. In this golden world of fire and water, Clea and Darley play like “glittering comets”.

This brilliant glitter, visualised as fire, does not burn the swimmers, even though Darley uses the word “scorched”. This alludes to the artistic practice of pyrography, where surfaces are etched and written on using fire to create images. Through all of this, the dead bodies in the pool seem to sit and broodingly watch the fire-lit swimmers. There is an atmosphere redolent of uncanny anxiety. The architectural space of the pool, previously described as a nave of a cathedral, transforms into the realm of Lucifer’s fire and the kingdom of the dead. It is Clea who says, “The fire is so beautiful”, a fraught statement in the context of the metaphorical links to hell-fire and death in this passage. Her sensuous attraction to the fire and its beauty is a harbinger of calamity. Her passionate desire is symbolised in the sexualised surface of her body, which is central to the focalisation of Darley. The element of liquid fire pyrographically marks her “lithe body”. Her “downwards” movement represents a descent into an underworld of violence, suffering and live burial where the much-feared prophecy will play out.

Balthazar is the unwitting force instrumental in causing the grim horror that follows. Inspecting Narouz’s harpoon gun Balthazar accidentally drops it and Darley hears:

the slight snick of steel settling into a target, somewhere down there in the pool ... I felt a sudden darkness descend on my spirit – a darkness which lifted and trembled at the edges; and a rushing like the sough of giant wings ... I crashed back into the water ... At the far end, by the wreck, I distinguished a convulsive coiling movement, and dimly recognized the form of Clea ... Though the green thread led to her I felt a wave of relief ... she rolled drunkenly ... As for her face I could not read the despairing pain which must have been written on it ... she arched out and flung her head back ... the gesture of someone throwing open a robe to exhibit a wound. And I saw. Her right hand had been pierced and nailed to the wreck by the steel arrow. (C: 215-216)

Darley’s first reaction is more concerned with his own feelings “I felt a sudden darkness descend on my spirit”. He marks the dread and horror of the vicious steel sinking easily into

a target somewhere in the depths of the pool. Terror is aroused as the passage is coloured by the use of the word “darkness” and the menacingly imaginative “sough of giant wings”. The moaning rush and whistle associated with the word sough brings with it an intimation of death passing in some Luciferian form, adding a Miltonic or Dantesque edge to this turn of phrase. The fear and supernatural nature of these metaphorical wings conform markedly with Gothic imagery and conventions. In the midst of this fear, Darley proceeds to search for Clea underneath the water.

He dimly sees her form next to the wreck describing it as moving in a “convulsive coiling” manner. The noun convulsive means a sudden and violently irregular movement often associated with seizures. When placed alliteratively with the adjective “coiling”, the movement created is rather like that of an octopus when it is speared: a writhing and uncontrolled flailing. However, the noun coil has another more archaic meaning of confusion or turmoil most noted in the quote from Shakespeare’s work *Hamlet* “to shuffle off this mortal coil” with its reference to death. There is simultaneously a sensuousness to the movement of Clea’s body and a repellent semiosis of pain, suffering and approaching death. Clearly able to see the green thread of the harpoon line that leads to Clea, Darley, strangely, can only see her form “dimly”. Clea appears to have faded and become ghostly, a blurred shadow. The whole description of the scene is centred entirely on Darley’s reaction and response, his “wave of relief” accompanied by his prurient depiction of Clea’s body as an object of alluring, erotic attraction. His gaze overwrites Clea with his own point of view enveloping her with certain perceptions. Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests that writing on flesh gives “primacy to surfaces” (1981: 260). The “characters” written on the surface of the skin, particularly on the body or countenance, can be regarded as figurative formulae impressing the idea of ‘self’ onto this surface from the outside (261). Sedgwick considers the human face in Gothic novels to remain non-memorable, the physical presence of the face and body being entirely absent (263).

Clea’s body and facial features are verbally figured onto her skin, her countenance is impressed with the formulaic “despairing pain”. Yet, Clea’s visage, hidden by her hair, is absent, so Darley is unable to gaze upon it. What he does see, and graphically represent, is her body’s movements. Darley’s textual descriptions write her suffering onto the outside of her body. Watching her, Darley sees how Clea “arched out” and “flung her head back”, a

representation possessing elements of erotic desire and almost mystical qualities, similar to those associated with martyred female saints. The religious connotations are enhanced through the possible allusion to Christ when Clea appears to throw “open a robe to exhibit a wound” much in the manner of Caravaggio’s painting *The Incredulity of Thomas* also entitled *Doubting Thomas* (1601-2):

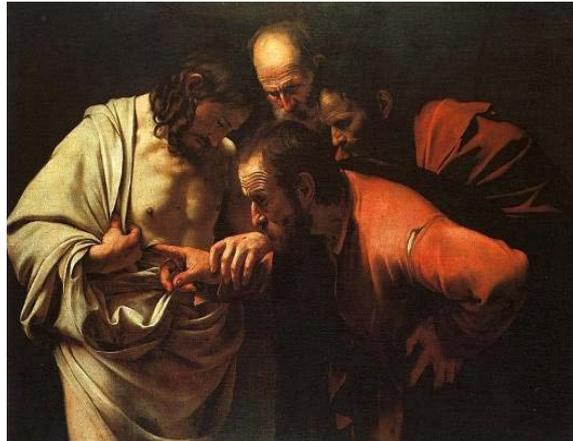


Figure 27 Michelangelo de Merisi de Caravaggio: *The Incredulity of Thomas*

In this painting, the viewer’s eye is led to the wound in Christ’s side because of the large hand with finger pointing at, and inserted into, the lips of the wound. The light from the left highlights the white skin of Christ and the folds of his white robe thrown back from the wound. The light also catches the forehead and shoulder of Thomas and brings the tear on his red garment into focus. In direction and size, this tear replicates the tear in Christ’s skin. The bright focused light and the dark background establish a chiaroscuro effect enhancing the stillness of the scene. The concentration on the violation of the skin being probed is presented in a manner Bal calls “frighteningly painful” (1999: 31). The detail of the wound repels and fascinates both the figures in the painting and the viewer with its abject ambivalence (32).

The wound Darley ascribes to Clea is equally ambivalent. Like that of Caravaggio’s Christ, Clea’s wound is a visual one, torn right through her flesh. However, there is also the underlying reference to the visually obscure wound that Bal has noted is also penetrable and is within the domain of the erotic (1999: 32). The allusion to Christ acts to veil the wound of the female sexual organs. This obscuring and denial hides the masculine fear of castration, of being feminised and penetrated in the manner Thomas’s finger is doing to Christ. The religious nature of Clea’s wounding goes further, for Darley now “sees” that the

harpoon has gone through her right hand pinning her to the wood of the wreck in the manner of a crucifixion. Narouz's harpoon has brutally penetrated Clea's body in a metaphoric rape, which Darley, in his description, evokes in a sadistic and cruel manner. Clea's struggles are watched by the dead bodies that guard the pool, like a convocation of judges, they are harbingers of a death sentence. The hole in Clea's hand represents an orifice for the incursion of the other - in this instance the black desire of Narouz, which has extended beyond the grave. There is a raging and unrestrained sense of perversely erotic exchange between this demonic ghostly presence and Clea, which is eerie and disturbing.

Yet, Durrell's portrayal of Clea as if nailed to the cross of the wooden wreck, I contend, is one of the most transgressive events in the *Quartet*. The explorations of alternate sexualities pale in comparison; the only comparable scene of such unreasoning violence is Narouz's murder of Toto de Brunel. The brutality of Clea's wounding and crucifixion, with its savage, vicious cruelty and hatred startles the reader. The overt eroticism figured onto Clea's body throughout the description is repellent. There are relatively few portrayals of crucified women and as a representation of a Christ-like pose, Durrell's depiction of Clea could be considered to verge on what would be regarded as scandalous and blasphemous, a challenge to traditional religious symbolism. The potency of Durrell's representation lies in the enactment of power and eroticism whose aim, according to Massé, seems to be the subordination of Clea to the perverse will of a spectre in the name of 'love' (2000: 158). The dominant forces of mastery in this scene exercise aggression, sadism and a vicarious pleasure in watching Clea's pain. Truly, the hapless, masochistic victim, Clea is a Gothic heroine close to physical destruction. Competing motifs, such as the nightmare of live burial, the transgression of the threshold between the living and the dead, and the violence of her transgressive crucifixion, are all transferred onto Clea's body. It is as if an awful power is in control and its sinister presence flows over her body in a frisson and *jouissance* of approaching death.

Bodily pleasure and death seem indistinguishable when Clea's form is visualised hanging in a passive and sensual manner "stretched languorously out, while her long hair unfurled behind her" (C: 217). Caught in the womb of the sea, Clea is melded to the phallic form of the harpoon's steel-arrow. The overtly dark and demonically evil atmosphere of Durrell's narrative, with its exaggeratedly violent act, unleashes a ghostly and ghastly

passion. Narouz might be dead, but he has not released his grip on the living form of Clea. Instead, the flat surface of her lithe body has been twisted with the stigmata of martyrdom. I consider these embedded marks as violent wounds of gothicised identity rammed onto the skin's surface and the interior of her body. Clea's repressed guilt over Narouz's death and, possibly, her abortion, seems to have facilitated the magical release of malevolent ghosts who act as agents in the perpetration of this horrifying deed.

Threatened by the womb-like otherness of the anarchic watery environment, where identity is threatened through the transgression of bodily borders, Darley finally decides to act. Throughout the novels, Darley has been constructed as the ineffectual, non-virile, non-sensuous, enfeebled, feminised and wounded 'hero'. He is now faced with a monstrous all-consuming force against which he reacts by reverting to the role of sexually aggressive force, generally associated with the Gothic hero. His battle is not only against the power of the sea as the archaic mother, but against his own fear of death. Yet, what he does to Clea is even more horrific than that accomplished by the supernatural presence of Narouz. In order to rescue her, Darley takes a knife to Clea's pinned hand "I began to hack her hand ... It was not very long before I felt the body disengage under this bitter punishment. The water was dark" (C: 217). Violated by her wounds, the boundary between Clea's exterior and interior is disrupted. Ruptured, Clea's body becomes disturbing, unsettling as it darkens the water with her blood, a symbolism of menstruation and death, and the fear and disgust this inspires. There is nothing surgical or clean in the removal of Clea's hand, rather there is a tearing and mutilation of an extremely gruesome nature. Darley has meted out the final exorbitant punishment due to Clea for her infringement of the required norms. He has castrated her by mutilating her painting hand, which is a synecdoche for her body and her creative power. In this mysterious and jealous phallic clash for possession of Clea, the living wages war on the dead in order to repress death's unwanted intrusion into the present. Clea's body bears the brunt of these two violent rape-like acts, which visually tear the proper wholeness of her body, making it gothically monstrous and abject.

Darley now enacts another form of rape. Rather like Christ with Lazarus, he tries to raise the seemingly dead by thumping and crashing down on Clea's back in a crude attempt to remove the water from her lungs:

Again and again, slowly but with great violence I began to squeeze them in this pitiful simulacrum of the sexual act - life-saving, life-giving ... Up and down, up and down in this slow cruel rhythm, I pumped at her ... The body of Clea was protesting this forcible rebirth. (C: 218-219)

Clea lies, a limp doll, metaphorically and robotically violated by Darley in a sexualised parody of the mechanics of birth. A mixture of erotic delight and horror are present in this description with overtones of necrophilia. This description epitomises Darley's, and dare I suggest Durrell's, masculine fantasy of the control of the act of creation by playing 'God'. Darley's "forcible rebirth" of Clea is an active denial of the procreative ability of the female body. Usurping the maternal role, Darley is producing Clea as a new creature. In this process her body is gothicised through its movement from inanimate 'dead' to reanimated living form that abjectly challenges the boundary between the two states. Darley's resuscitation of Clea resembles Michelle Bloom's suggestion that such animation of dead forms renders the reader, no less than the author, into Pygmalionesque figures (2000: 304). Whilst I would agree with Bloom that Darley's act makes him a Pygmalionesque figure, I would submit that Durrell is also referencing the figure of Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein.

The resurrection and reconstruction of Clea is furthered by another male character, the doctor Amaril. Clea will become uncannily monstrous: part human, part non-human when Amaril reconstructs and replaces her hand with a prosthetic device. In this embodiment Clea becomes an abject site of suspension between contradictory states, a challenge to the rules of identity and of feminine beauty



Figure 28 British Science Museum: Prosthetic Hand

An image of a prosthetic hand from the British Science museum, which dates from between 1840-1940, seems rather apposite to Durrell's narrative. Made from steel and brass, the

wrist can reticulate and the fingers are able to curl closed and then open out. This is a sinister device. The reader can image that Clea's prosthesis might be like this and, in order to disguise this uncanny creature, she would have recourse to a glove.

Clea tells Darley not to postpone his departure back to the island because she says she will "need a little time to come to myself now that at last I am free from the horror. That at least you have done for me ... It's done and will never come back" (C: 223). The heroine has, thanks to the intervention of this ostensible hero, managed to triumph over the forces of the dead with their evil intention. Instead, the horror has been written onto her surface and she has become a different form of monstrous horror and fright or what Botting calls a 'womachine' (2011: 176). Darley's rescue of Clea by means of his physical violation of her body is considered an act that has freed her from "the horror", an exorcism of traumatic terror experienced by heroines in Gothic plots. In the process of this rescue, the surface of Clea's bodily topography has altered and she will take this into the future as a mark of retribution and atonement.

A letter from Clea follows Darley to the islands, which, much in the same way her letters mark the culmination of *Justine* and *Balthazar*, brings this final novel in the tetralogy to a close. Clea's letter reaches him in a script that is markedly strange, and she indicates it is written by the new hand:

It is the first serious letter I have attempted, apart from short notes, with my new hand: this strange accessory-after-the-fact with which the good Amaril has equipped me! ... Of course I was frightened and disgusted by it at first ... But I have come to respect it very much, this delicate and beautiful steel contrivance which lies beside me so quietly on the table in its green velvet glove! ... steel and rubber seem such strange allies for human flesh. (C: 242-243)

No longer whole, Clea is physically able to fragment her body by removing the hand. Darley and Amaril seem both to have exacted some form of revenge on Clea's body. Now unnatural, Clea assumes the form of an automaton, along the lines of E.T.A. Hoffmann's Olympia in *Der Sandman* and Villiers d'isle Adam's automaton, Hadaly, in the novel *l'Eve Future*. In fact, Clea's reconstruction into part-machine part-human gives a foretaste of the female automaton Durrell will present in his work *The Revolt of Aphrodite*. In this work, the

female character Iolanthe is brought back from the dead as a sophisticated automaton, rather like Hadaly created by Edison in *L'Eve Future*. Iolanthe is not pulled apart like the doll, Olympia, in Hoffmann's tale. Instead, she falls to her death from the whispering gallery in Saint Paul's cathedral and is then 'murdered' by her creator, who plunges a knife into her throat stopping her mechanical workings. Luckily, only being partly artificial and the heroine, Clea escapes Iolanthe's fate.

The terms in which Clea describes her new appendage are suitably abject. She is fascinated and disgusted by the Thing, which supernaturally seems to come alive. The member represents an uncanny commodification of her body, a melding of steel and rubber that confuses the animate and the inanimate. Her body has been disciplined in a manner that Foster suggests represents the mechanistic model of the machine, which is woman's double (1991: 51). Removing Clea's hand eliminates her autonomy and makes her a victim. The hand strips her of any sexual allure, unless it is the perverse attraction to the dismembered and mechanical, found in the dolls of the Surrealist artist Hans Bellmer.⁴⁴

Mechanical and artificial though the hand is, it still has something supernatural and uncanny about it. Clea almost jubilantly indicates:

– IT can *paint*! I have crossed the border and entered into the possession of my kingdom thanks to the Hand ... One day it took up a brush and lo! pictures of truly troubling originality and authority were born ... I know that the Hand was responsible ... Yet it is a bit frightening; the elegant velvet glove guards its secret perfectly ... There is nothing, it seems, that it cannot do impressively better than I can. (C: 242)

There is something uncanny, weird and disturbing about Clea's new hand. The object seems to be in control of her and not the other way around. Clea is frightened of the hand and its ability, yet is equally delighted by what it can do. The Surrealist Andre Breton regarded hands as having a life of their own. Mirroring Andre Breton's view, Clea attributes to the hand supernatural agency. The hand becomes "IT", the capital letters enforcing the Thing-ness and inanimate attributes of the hand. Clea proceeds to write, "One day it took up a brush and lo! pictures of truly troubling originality and authority were born ... I know that

⁴⁴ For a consideration of the nature of Hans Bellmer's dolls, see Foster (1993) and Taylor (2002).

the Hand was responsible.” The hand is the agent of a unique creativity, which Clea indicates has nothing to do with her. However, there is a hint of uneasiness in the use of the word “troubling”. Made into a living support system, Clea is controlled by the hand and placed at the will of her mechanistic double. She denies all responsibility for the hand’s actions, thus situating herself within the role of passive, manipulated heroine, who possesses no will of her own.

The fact that the hand was created by a man seems to enforce the idea that whatever the hand is creating is controlled and inspired by a masculine force. This denies Clea any agency in the act, and her statement “I have crossed the border and entered into the possession of my kingdom thanks to the Hand!” begs the question whose kingdom she has really entered. Is it perhaps the one of phallogocentric control through a supernatural man-made object? Consequently, the hand has assumed the subject position and relegated Clea to that of mere object. The kingdom belongs to the uncanny hand and not to Clea. All the attributes of the clichéd 'iron fist in the velvet glove' seem to inform this object and are brought to the fore when Clea writes: “This delicate and beautiful steel contrivance which lies beside me so quietly on the table in its green velvet glove!” going on to add “Yet it is a bit frightening; the elegant velvet glove guards its secret perfectly” (C: 243). Providing the glove with a specific colour and material makes it the focal point of the image. Acting as a veiling device, the glove masks an absence.

The colour green with its associations of rebirth, renewal, hope and immortality imputes certain characteristics to the hand through the metonym of the glove. The artificial hand is indeed immortal and as an object will remain long after Clea has died. Perhaps there is also an aspect of jealousy in Clea's wearing of a green glove; she seems to exhibit this trait with regards to the hand. The glove adds to the uncanniness of the hand because it acts as the hand's double, because it can be the hand when worn and retain the shape of the hand when it is removed. This uncanny form of the glove as *doppelgänger* is expressed in the photograph of artist Peter Liversidge’s marble glove (2011, which pays homage to the glove cycle by German artist Max Klinger:



Figure 29 Peter Liversidge: *Glove*

Although empty, this glove possesses solidity and remains an uncanny reminder of the hand that might have been inside it. Like the bronze glove in Andre Breton's book *Nadja*, this marble glove possesses a weight that Clea's glove would lack. Art theorist Kirsten Powell has argued that the glove is the uncanny double of the hand and works as a simulacrum, or fragmentary shell, which can act metonymically for the entire body (1997: 520). Clea's glove, which covers her artificial hand, hides her doubly wounded body. The glove, I argue, could represent Clea's repressed desire, the monstrous hand being seen to possess an inherently perverse eroticism, which she finds "frightening". The glove clings to the Thingness of the artificial hand and Clea's bodily form vacillates eerily on the border between animate and inanimate. The secret of her monstrousness remains hidden by the "elegant velvet glove" and this glove is the final fetish object that gothicises the surface form of a female character in the novel cycle. All that remains is for Darley to attain his imaginative kingdom, his 'Once upon a time'.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have examined the concept of the Gothic heroine as represented by Clea. Initially presented in the novels *Justine*, *Balthazar* and *Mountolive* as an idealised image of the stereotypical heroine in looks and passive, gentle behaviour, this alters in the novel *Clea*. The central character of this eponymously entitled book, Clea is faced with the horrific challenges and trauma that plague the heroine. Moving slowly from the dreamy

ideal image, Clea starts to be tainted with expressions of darker sexual desires. She is subjected to the uncanny horror of the return of the repressed in the form of spectral presences which haunt the living and exact retribution. This haunting and the return of the past are a central theme to this novel and the return of the figure of Narouz dominates and demands the retribution that ghosts tend to require of the living.

Clea acts out the masochistic behaviour associated with the Gothic heroine by scholars such as Michelle Massé and Diane Long Hoeveler. This masochism lies at the root of not only the Gothic but also of the heterosexual relationships produced in the novels. Massé writes about the Gothic heroine that she has “been taught to want love, in whatever guise, above all else” (1992: 4). She goes on to suggest that normal feminine development is a trauma that is paralleled by its repetition in the Gothic novel (7). I have suggested that Clea’s trauma is one related to the heterosexual demands and desires perceived as written over her body. This overwriting of Clea’s body is very suggestive of what Massé has considered the ideology of the Gothic which she claims “uses the woman’s whole body as a pawn: she is moved, threatened, discarded, and lost ... the subtext metaphorically conveys anxiety about her genital risk” (1992: 108). Massé further argues that the Gothic exhibits a “genteel abuse” (1992: 108), but Durrell’s punishment of Clea seems rather less than ‘genteel’. Its violence and horror are Sadean in the perverse sexual eroticism presented to the reader. At the centre of this horror remains the spectral return of the past and the repressed, and the seemingly inescapable enclosure of live burial with its promise of death. Yet this is defeated through Clea’s rescue and the closure this brings with regards to the spectral and supernatural nightmare of Narouz. Clea is cured through not only a denial of her identity, but a stripping of her autonomy achieved by Darley and Amaril’s Pygamlionesque/ Frankensteinian re-creation of her. She has, through the violence of what Kate Ferguson Ellis calls “men on the rampage”, been made compliant, because her existence is dependent on her relation to these masculine others (Ferguson Ellis 2001: 265-266).

Safely back on his Greek island, Darley will experience his own entrance into the fairy tale landscape of the imagination, which is associated with the sky’s blue light:

It came on a blue day, quite unpremeditated, quite unannounced, and with such ease I would not have believed it. I had been until then like some timid-

girl, scared of the birth of her first child. Yes, one day I found myself writing down with trembling fingers the four words (four letters! four faces!) with which every story-teller since the world began has staked his slender claim to the attention of his fellow-men. Words which presage simply the old story of an artist coming of age. I wrote: 'Once upon a time....'

And it felt as if the whole universe had given me a nudge! (C: 246)

His, not Clea's, becomes the fairy tale ending. His textual creativity is likened to the birth of a child. Durrell allows Darley to take the creative process away from the female principle and make it a male domain. By doing this, the monstrous-feminine landscape of Alexandria is defeated and replaced with the creative blue masculine heavens overarching the place where Occidental patriarchal culture evolved. Darley believes that through his written narrative he can contain and conquer Alexandria to attain his selfhood. However, as Creed, discussing Kristeva's theory of abjection, has observed, meaning is also, "spoken by the abject, the place of meaninglessness – thus, the subject is constantly beset by abjection which fascinates desire but which must be repelled for fear of self-annihilation" (1986: 48). The four slight words "Once upon a time" are the pivot on which Darley stakes his slender claims to identity, artistry and his narcissistic break from the abject mother. This phrase is one that opens fairy tales with their particular form of Gothic space and time. This space and time remain outside linear time and inhabit mythical, primordial or cyclical time.

The world in fairy tales is a magical place where the ordinary and the fabulous exist simultaneously. Durrell has premised the structure of his novel on time and space that is outside the linear and the world evoked in the *Quartet* is trapped in memory where the ordinary and the fabulous co-habit. Durrell's ornate and mosaic-like style with its reliance on Gothic inserts furthers the intertwining of ordinary and fabulous happenings. Writing on the motif of time distortion in fantasy, Maria Nikolajeva notes it is especially influenced by the theory of relativity (2003: 142). Opening his novel with the words "once upon a time", Darley is playing on the magical nature of the story world he will write into being, and indicating how the device of relativity and the distortion of space and time will shape this world. Darley can now go on to objectify and gothicise the female landscapes in the four faces of his fictional confection of "Once upon a time" in Alexandria, a modern version of *A Thousand and One Nights*.