

**'Orts of her love':**

**Darley's Fragmented Desire within Lawrence Durrell's**

***Alexandria Quartet***

**THESIS**

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'Orts of her love':

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*The sea is high again today...*

In the following pages I have collected and considered Lawrence Durrell's ideas concerning romantic love in the first two books of his *Alexandria Quartet*: *Justine* and *Balthazar*. The act of collecting resulted in what I formally call an impression. Carved into the malleable form of my perceptions on love, the novels had a great effect on me. After each subsequent encounter, the lines initially carved grew deeper. These encounters not only reinforced the lines already sketched, but also grooved the surfaces that, up until that time, had been left untouched. The word impression has the connotation of wholeness. This act of impressing solidified the result, as in the making of a woodblock print. When lifted, the image of the form remains whole upon the paper, while the movement of ink has stained the form. Thus, I noted the source of pressure from the paper—*Justine* and *Balthazar*, described the movement of the ink—love, and fell into the impressed form—this essay.

I concentrated my efforts on *Justine* and *Balthazar* to maintain the tension within this pressing. There are two reasons I focused on the first two books and neglected the second half of the *Quartet*. The first was Durrell's creation of Darley to narrate the first two books. This creation establishes a resonance that links the two novels. They delightfully intertwine by presenting facts in *Justine*, and then contradicting them with the introduction of *Balthazar*. The second reason was that the first two books, along with

the third, *Mountolive*, address the same events and time period. However, Durrell drifts from the pattern established in the first two books and tells *Mountolive* through the use of an omniscient narrator. So, the tension slackens and the book follows a clean, unobtrusive narrative. As for the fourth book, *Clea*, Durrell once again has Darley narrate the story, yet the distance and time supposedly between *Clea* and the events of the first three books is substantial. *Clea*'s chronological distance separates it from *Justine* and *Balthazar*. This distance acts as a postscript to the initial action and conveniently adds to the earlier tensions.

The impression I have gathered echoes the objective Durrell states in the "Note" of *Balthazar*: "The central topic of the book is an investigation of modern love" (Durrell *Balthazar* 9). Durrell implies that each of the other three books are also "investigation[s] of modern love." However, even though my task echoes his intentions I hesitate to use Durrell's word "investigation." "Investigation" normally means that a systematic examination will be implemented to reach a conclusive answer from the data collected. Durrell doesn't shape the *Alexandria Quartet* upon this premise. Even though he uses the word "investigation," Durrell harvests a set of novels absent of traditional linearity, absent of a systematic examination. This organic construction betrays the word "investigation." As he states earlier within the "Note": "[The four books] are not linked in a serial form. They interlap, interweave, in a purely spatial relation" (*Balthazar* 9). Durrell uses the "purely spatial relation" to distinguish these novels as equal parts of one mass. Durrell commands through his writing that the reader gauge the "four-decker novel" (*Balthazar* 9) as a single, complete mass, not as a linear form in the narrative tradition. He favors a random sampling of his characters' interactions, ruminations, and

progressions. He divides this sampling into sections that focus on one character, yet overlap and tie into other areas. Coincidentally, he permits the characters this same faculty when they attempt to understand the world he has created around them; Durrell's current "investigation" becomes the motive and procedure common to each character. They attempt to solve the mass Durrell has created specific to their own circumstance. As the character Pursewarden, the witty, British expatriate writer, states in "Consequential Data," the closing section of *Balthazar*, "And events aren't serial in form but collect here and there like quanta, like real life" (245). It seems the characters intend to sample "real life" in the same fashion as Durrell. Therefore, to gain a similar cadence I have echoed this procedure by conducting my own sampling. By considering the "quanta" of my research, I have judged each section of this essay on its own merit. Then, by submersing each section into a narrative mass, I have produced an essay similar to the form woven by Durrell.

If these "events aren't serial in form," then in what manner were they to be collected? Habit forced me to start at the beginning and catalogue the novel according to its sequential presentation of events. This would have been a plausible undertaking if I had not planned to echo Durrell's "investigation." If I intended to remain true to Durrell's objective I knew I would have to rework the critical apparatus I planned to operate. I would have to evaluate the contents of my impression by collecting them as the "quanta" of my encounters with these books. Gathered in one mass, I strained the excess and recalled the experiences that seemed fruitful; not only within the two books examined, but within secondary readings concerning love. The guidelines I used to retrieve these

experiences followed the statement Darley makes about his own efforts: “What I need to do is to record experiences, not in the order in which they took place—for that is history—but in the order in which they first became significant to me” (Durrell *Justine* 115). I intertwined the significant moments with theories and speculations about why they occurred within the course of the novel and what they showed about love. The secondary readings fuel these arguments and provide a different slant on the subject presented. Therefore, consistent with Durrell’s construction and love’s inexplicable presence, the essay grew organically.

For practical purposes, I streamlined the proposed topic by setting parameters on my research. I didn’t have the space or luxury to conclusively examine love as presented in *Justine* and *Balthazar*. I concentrated my efforts by specifically examining Darley and his amorous intent within these two novels. By tracking Darley’s desire, its successes and failures, I opened the forum for a metaphysical probing of love’s principles as told by Durrell. This plausible approach grounded my efforts in examples and actions. Obviously, the surrounding characters shared the space of my impression, perhaps stealing too much of my efforts at times. However, Darley helped realign me on my intended course.

*Darley: Art like life is an open secret.*

If Durrell has his character Darley (functioning as the supposed writer of *Justine* and *Balthazar*) construct a pattern to recall his experience according to “significance,” then what raw events make up the material of his construction? What sources ignite Darley’s mania to justify and examine love? It would be an understatement to say that

Melissa and Justine represent the fabric of this pattern. Melissa, Darley's live-in, working-class cabaret dancer, and Justine, the adulterous, Alexandrian socialite, affect Darley differently. His affairs with both women constitute the experiences he continuously references. The other characters—Nessim, Balthazar, Pursewarden, Clea, etc.—support or refute the initial claims made by Darley. His interaction with both women drives him to seek justification and, like all thwarted lovers, possible redemption. This search takes place in the act of writing, in the act of notating the how and why of failed affairs. He comments, "I feel the confines of my art and my living deepened immeasurably by the memory of them [Melissa and Justine]" (*Justine* 17). Darley wishes to solidify these memories and extract the relevance from past experiences. This mania stirs from the desire to gain self-respect and to help re-negotiate his newly acquired solitude. Darley fails to identify his solitude but senses its possibility, as seen in the quotation above. He just needs time to work out its composition. Which memories will he seek, those of pleasure or those of pain?

The reader hopes he will choose the memories that are easier to navigate, yet fruitful in exploration: "I want them [Melissa and Justine] to live again to the point where pain becomes art" (*Justine* 17). Darley reanimates the two lovers to feed his aspirations. Pain becomes easier to write than pleasure. His imagination serves as the entrance to the physical. Stendhal, in his book simply titled *Love*, comments on the use of the imagination:

Crystallization goes throughout love almost without a break. The process is something like this: whenever all is not well between you and your beloved, you crystallize out an *imaginary solution*. Only through the imagination can you be

sure that your beloved is perfect in any given way. After intimacy, ever resurgent fears are lulled by more real solutions. Thus happiness never stays the same, except in its origin; every day brings forth a new blossom. (51)

In my observation, the lover, stained with the indelible mark of the beloved, starves for reunification. The stain curses the lover's body and darkens the appendages. It starts in the mind then spreads to the extremities. It returns to the mind when the lover pronounces the ache and becomes aware of the situation. Worn down by the stain's indifference, this awareness forces the lover to crave the solace of the beloved's presence. Imagination then establishes a pattern that will identify the lover and the beloved. Darley must negotiate the stain by selecting the memories of this pattern.

Memories of pleasure attempt to recreate the congruity of two wills that flourished. The lover easily extracts the beloved's actions in these memories: the susurrus of a nighttime whisper, the pressure of a hand on the lover's wrist, the closing of a door. This ease opposes the difficulty the lover has trying to recreate the unpredictability of the beloved's will: what was the reason for the whisper, how does that touch differ from the one at the table this morning, why did they leave the room in such a hurry? Memories of pleasure are temporary because they cause us to desire the unobtainable—the reunification with the beloved. In pleasure, the imagination must sustain both the action of the lover and the response of the beloved. This differs from the actual events of intimacy because the push and pull of the beloved has been erased by time. In re-creation, the lover never falls subject to the needs of the beloved. Thus, memories of pleasure can never be fulfilled.



Memories of pain differ from pleasure because they bond to the present solitude of the lover. Pain magnifies the lover's present state of loneliness, signifying the relationship now gone. The present-time only extends the original solitude, increases the degree of separation. The lover attempts to gain control of his emotions through pain. Thus, pleasure seems foreign to the lover who concerns himself only with his own safety. Graham Greene confirms this notion in his novel, *The End of the Affair*:

The sense of unhappiness is so much easier to convey than that of happiness. In misery we seem aware of our own existence, even though it may be in the form of a monstrous egotism: this pain of mine is individual, this nerve that winces belongs to me and to no other. But happiness annihilates us: we lose our identity.

(47)

Greene's concerns, shown through his invention of the narrator, Maurice Bendrix, derive from the same kinds of events Durrell places Darley within: lover takes on beloved, beloved is married, lover wants to fight for beloved, beloved refuses, lover is left, lover writes about the affair. Both Bendrix and Darley, through their writing, reflect themselves against the fading image of the beloved. Their writings and adherence to pain seek to stabilize the remains of adulterous affairs. Darley's words are clumsy and inefficient in clotting the wound (as opposed to the Durrell's clarity in expressing Darley's doubts). Darley's words don't service the unpredictability of the beloved's will, that which the lover greatly desires in the memories of pleasure. The blunt demeanor of pain calls the words into service because they are only responsible to depicting the self. They can only state what Darley forces upon them and they prove untrue.

*Alexandria: Landscape-tones*

There is always an entrance to these memories. Re-experienced grief can only employ the imagination with the help of the physical world, things gathered by the senses. By the second paragraph of *Justine*, Durrell has the character Darley acknowledge the entrance to these memories: “I return link by link along the iron chains of memory to the city which we inhabited so briefly together” (13). Durrell has Darley excavate an entrance through the physical place inhabited during his affairs with Justine and Melissa—Alexandria. Darley separates Alexandria, in all its former physicality, from his present home on an unidentified island in the Mediterranean. Darley removes Alexandria from present-time and accesses it through past interactions. Removed from its original space and time, Alexandria becomes what Shakespeare succinctly describes as, “many a thing I sought” (*Son.* 30, line 5). Shakespeare’s reluctance to describe his entrance through “thing[s]” doesn’t inhibit him from recognizing their function in the previous line, “I summon up remembrance of things past” (*Son.* 30, line 4). For Shakespeare, cataloging the qualities and characteristics of “things” mean little when they act as the means to the “remembrance.” The “remembrance,” which can be a variation of either grief or joy, is most valuable. This entrance can have many configurations. Durrell has Darley enter the “remembrance of things past” through a detailed description of Alexandria. Durrell has Darley go so far as to continue the line above with, “the city which used us as its flora—precipitated in us conflicts which were hers and which we mistook for our own: beloved Alexandria!” (*Justine* 13). Alexandria becomes a character.

The size of the city becomes an asset for Durrell when creating Alexandria’s will. Layered with a magnificent past, Durrell has Alexandria press upon its inhabitants

“conflicts which were hers.” Then, unbeknownst to them, it masks its intentions and acts according to its own pulse. Durrell creates in Alexandria an indifferent volition.

Alexandria doesn’t recognize the single inhabitant, i.e. Darley, but depends upon its inhabitants as a whole to furnish as “flora.” Its strength of will convinces the inhabitants into thinking these “conflicts” could be “[mistaken] for our own.” It randomly chooses the instances to apply its will. Durrell allows Darley the faculty to recognize Alexandria’s indifferent volition and identify the events that occur accordingly: “I am beginning to believe that the wish is inherited from the site; that man depends for the furniture of the will upon his location in place” (*Justine* 112). Alexandria becomes too strong to negotiate in present-time. It not only evokes the memories for Darley, but chooses, when physically encountered, to apply a force greater than his own. Thus, as stated, Darley can only control the entrance to his memories, Alexandria, by physically separating himself from place and time. Darley identifies the island where, “I have come here to heal myself” (*Justine* 13), and enters the haunts of his city. In recollection, assertions can be made, conflicts can be resolved, and statements become insightful since, “man is only an extension of spirit of place” (*Justine* 175). Darley’s recognition of Alexandria as a character derives from Durrell’s own thoughts about place. Durrell, in his essay “Landscape and Character,” in the book appropriately titled *Spirit of Place*, recognizes, “I have evolved a private notion about the importance of landscape, and I willingly admit to seeing ‘characters’ almost as functions of a landscape” (156). The line between Durrell’s thoughts and the creation of Darley’s perceptions seems to blur. Durrell transfers this quality of recognition to the character Darley. Darley, in turn, discloses his own weakness

in comparison to Alexandria. This presents a city unpredictable in its actions and indifferent towards the repercussions of its convictions.

Durrell begins *Justine* by entering through Darley's physical interpretation of his own weakness and, subsequently, through his re-experienced grief on the island he has moved to after the events of the first two novels have occurred: "I had to come here in order completely to rebuild this city in my brain—melancholy provinces which the old man [whom Durrell references as the poet C.P. Cavafy] saw as full of the 'black ruins' of his life" (*Justine* 15). Cavafy, exhumed from Alexandria's layered history, supports Darley's recognition of the city's indifference. Cavafy, in his poem "The City," dwells upon his own dealings with Alexandria. Quoting from the poem, "How long can I let my mind moulder in this place? / Wherever I turn, wherever I look, / I see the *black ruins* [my italics] of my life, here" (27, 5-7), Darley plays with the many facets of Alexandria's past. The grief he encounters is not new to his own experience; the "old man" also felt this despair. With this source, he reinforces the claims that "man is only the extension of the spirit of place." He begins to notice the grief that Alexandria instigates is not singular in experience.

Durrell has Darley confirm these notions in the beginning of *Balthazar*: "The city, half-imagined (yet wholly real), begins and ends in us, roots lodged in our memory" (13). Darley questions the reason behind his return to what may be a worn gem depreciated in value: "Have I not said enough about Alexandria? Am I to be reinfected once more by the dream of it and the memory of its inhabitants?" (*Balthazar* 13-14). These questions aren't founded in doubt but preface the reason for a second examination: the introduction of the gnostic physician Balthazar's "Interlinear." The love that was engraved by the end of

*Justine* is undermined by the contradictory facts sent to Darley in *Balthazar*. Darley must go through the physical to entertain those memories, through Alexandria. He reacquaints himself with Alexandria and notices the shift that has occurred. Durrell, by supplying Alexandria with volition, forces Darley to apply the faculty used in *Justine* to decipher *Balthazar*. The situations are similar, yet the layer of *Justine* beneath *Balthazar* intensifies his recollection.

Lush descriptions of Alexandria permeate both novels. The plumes of detail lent to Darley aren't ostentatious in intent, but necessary for texture: "In the harbour of Alexandria the sirens whoop and wail. The screws of ships crush and crunch the green oil-coated waters of the inner bar. Idly bending and inclining, effortlessly breathing as if rhythm of the earth's own systole and diastole, the yachts turn their spars against the sky" (*Justine* 221). Unpredictable in its convictions, Durrell styles a city highly sensitive to its physical attributes: both the appeal of its glittering Corniche and the fearful degradation in its alleys. The physical attributes, captured in Darley's faculty, hold the emotional pulse of Alexandria:

Five races, five languages, a dozen creeds: five fleets turning through their greasy reflections behind the harbour bar...The sexual provender which lies to hand is staggering in its variety and profusion. You would never mistake it for a happy place. The symbolic lovers of the free Hellenic world are replaced here by something different, something subtly androgynous, inverted upon itself. (*Justine* 14)

Durrell, using language, crushes into a powder the flesh of Alexandria's current impulses and the bone of its past lovers. What seems like Durrell's excess at times is only the

powder of Alexandria's lust. Durrell reduces description to basic granules of physical qualities: "Notes for landscape-tones...Long sequences of tempera. Light filtered through the essence of lemons. An air full of brick-dust—sweet-smelling brick-dust and the odour of hot pavements slaked with water" (*Justine* 14). He culls from this paste the separate flavors of the city. He describes the city as if it were the beloved described to a friend the beloved has not met: what she looks like, her size, and the manner in which she lifts a spoon. Durrell uses this simple technique in the daunting task of following up *Justine* with the beginning of *Balthazar*. "Landscape tones: brown to bronze, steep skyline, low cloud, pearl ground with shadowed oyster and violet reflections. The lion-dust of desert: prophets' tombs turned to zinc and copper at sunset on the ancient lake" (13). He wears down each ingredient to the lowest dominator—the distinction of its taste.

Through Darley's ruminations, Durrell positions Alexandria as, "the capital of Memory" (*Justine* 188). Inhabitants learn involuntarily from the city's history, from its past lovers: "The triumphs of polity, the resources of tact, the warmth, the patience... Profligacy and sentimentality...killing love by taking things easy...sleeping out a chagrin...This was Alexandria, the unconsciously poetical mother-city exemplified in the names and faces which made up her history" (*Balthazar* 45). The inhabitants translate the unavoidable dust of the city's desire into their own experiences. Durrell constructs this "mother city" with the premise that if a city has a will than it must have a body to act out its impulses. The "mother-city," in turn, gathers the tokens of its emotions—its inhabitants. Darley comments, "I walked slowly among these extra-ordinary human blooms, reflecting that a city like a human being collects its predispositions, appetites and fears. It grows to maturity, utters its prophets, and declines into hebetude, old age or the

loneliness which is worse than either” (*Justine* 188). Thus, the tokens, once appraised, remind Alexandria of the process of aging and press the fear of eventual extinction upon its will.

When Durrell includes the fear of its own death as one of Alexandria’s attributes, he extends the anthropomorphism of the city. Human qualities become prevalent and the city recognizes the importance of objects, of things collected. The value of objects, according to the character Darley, helps to identify fellow characters. Although not as large a presence as the city, these objects serve as smaller entrances to the memories retrieved. The objects become static references. The edge of a face can fade, but an object recalls the events that transpired. However, in recollection, if the objects, and other points of entrance, overwhelm the lover they serve, an unbalance occurs. Darley supports this claim, “sometimes I wonder whether these pages record the actions of real human beings; or whether this is not simply the story of a few inanimate objects which precipitated drama around them—I mean a black patch, a green fingerstall, a watch-key and a couple of dispossessed wedding-rings” (*Justine* 245). Alexandria evokes these static objects because it “precipitates drama” among its inhabitants. And, it is similar to its corporeal inhabitants because it has taken on human destiny—its own death.

Darley recognizes this pattern in reference to the rings Melissa was promised by a former lover, Cohen the furrier. These rings were handed from Cohen, while on his deathbed, to Darley. Darley intended to present them to Melissa but failed to do so before her own death. He posits, “I stood for a while looking at them [the rings] and wondering if inanimate objects also had a destiny as human beings have “(*Justine* 235). This clouds our perception of Alexandria’s will. If objects have a destiny then a source of divinity is

implied, a source that prescribes the fate of objects and people. Naturally, Alexandria could be worked into the position of deity. It could be fitted with the clarity of omniscience. However, Durrell doesn't permit Alexandria to both act as deity over its inhabitants and fulfill its own destiny. Durrell only enlists Alexandria to act as a host to its parasitic inhabitants and the objects they collect. The city's size provides nourishment for these parasites while retaining its own shape. The suckling inhabitants depend on the host, yet the host feels little effect. Its indifferent volition causes Alexandria not to react to their movements.

This indifferent volition furnishes the reasons why Durrell doesn't allow Alexandria the property of deity like omniscience. Durrell wants Alexandria to remain a character in its nature, only larger. It needs the static tokens of its inhabitants to define its perimeters and personality. This human act is similar to Darley's need for entrances to his memories. These entrances must be kept stable, yet they easily layer amongst one another to create his reality. Alexandria just has a wider scope of experiences and a deeper past to interweave. Durrell establishes the paradox that he is the deity that animates Alexandria's will. Durrell reinforces that he dictates Alexandria's grandness through Darley's experiences. Darley remembers a note of Pursewarden's, "'We live' Pursewarden writes somewhere, 'lives based upon selected fictions. Our view of reality is conditioned by our position in space and time—not by our personalities as we like to think. Thus every interpretation of reality is based upon a unique position'" (*Balthazar* 14). What are the various positions in *Justine* and how are they contradicted in *Balthazar*? What are these fictions?



*Melissa Artemis: patron of sorrow.*

These fictions of the heart are what place Darley at the shore of the magnificent ocean of his desire. He has been here before, yet cannot distinguish where he is among the continuous dunes. The markers of the past have fallen victim to the storms of regeneration. The familiar lap of the worn blue waves informs him this is ocean. From the comfort of the shore, the ocean's lungs demonstrate possibility and chance. The silver press of the waves and the knowledge that she might enter the water from an opposing shore establishes his intent. To encounter love's irrepressible fluidity he must enter the ocean. He imagines himself among the waves seeking her. He catches sight of her, paddles to her side, and holds her temporarily before being pulled apart. They increase the volume of the water with their presence. Their movements heighten the motion of the waves. He fears the possibility of drowning, yet will risk his own safety for this primal interaction. He seeks solace in her touch and moves towards her again. Where has she gone? He wishes to define his progress, yet holds no map and easily loses the horizon. His only familiarity rises from the twitch of his exhausted muscles ordering his limbs to sustain buoyancy. His pulse increases. The saltwater marks his lips with its indifferent spray. Necessity drives him towards her. What can he use to define his progress? His confidence grows stronger: "Of course, of course. I am an expert in love—every man believes himself to be one: but particularly Englishmen" (*Balthazar* 185). The ocean's affinity towards present-time overwhelms his identity. The past means little to an ocean content with its present currents. His claims are smothered by the wind's accompanying yawp. He seeks to mirror his intentions against hers, define himself within her embrace. What is she going through? Where am I? Who am I?

Anne Carson, in her book *Eros: The Bittersweet*, comments: “A space must be maintained or desire ends” (26). This principle works in both directions. If the “space” is not “maintained” the lovers become disinterested and drift apart. Or, if the lovers attempt to dissolve the “space,” hoping to lose identity within one another, they are easily thwarted. Carson, by transferring the classical Greek god Eros into modern terms, elaborates on this barrier:

Eros is an issue of boundaries. He exists because certain boundaries do...the boundaries of time and glance and I love you are only aftershocks of the main, inevitable boundary that creates Eros: the boundary of flesh and self between you and me. And it is only, suddenly, at the moment when I would dissolve that boundary, I realize I never can. (30)

The physical limitations of the self force the lovers to recognize their positions. Even if their correspondence intensifies to a state signified by amorous pledges, they are still bound to flesh. Their physical actions derive from separate wills. They recognize the space between each other in the “moment when I would dissolve that boundary, I realize I never can.” The failure to surrender the identity of the self increases this recognition. When the self isn’t delivered to the beloved, it illuminates the barrier between the two lovers. The single lover recognizes that “Love...” as Octavio Paz describes in his book, *The Double Flame: Essays on Love and Eroticism*, “...is a bet, a wild one, placed on freedom. Not my own; the freedom of the Other” (51). The lover uncovers the threat hidden within the beloved’s will; the beloved can choose either to reject or return the affection. This freedom contradicts the instinct described by Michael Ondaatje’s Count Almásy, in *The English Patient* as, “[falling] into propinquity or distance” (150). The

flesh constructs the space between the lovers while the will (Paz's "freedom of the Other") erects the boundaries of desire. The temporary terms of "propinquity or distance" only establishes the two directions the lovers can take when defining the space formed.

Darley, acting as the lover, consistently defines and re-defines the boundaries in his relationships with his two beloveds: Melissa and Justine. Clea, the amiable painter, advises Darley, "There are only three things to be done with a woman... You can love her, suffer for her, or turn her into literature" (*Justine* 22). Darley replies with the dry retort, "I was experiencing a failure in all these domains of feeling" (*Justine* 22). By pointing out his "failure" Darley reasserts his complexities within his "domain of feelings." The boundaries must be renegotiated after each interaction with the beloved. The layers of emotions can't be simply categorized into "three things." Considered in the abstract, the lover might start to define the edge by establishing what exists beyond the boundaries. Through the use of paradoxes, the lover begins with the simplest and most common form of possible affirmations: "You must know that I do not love *and* that I love you, / because everything alive has its two sides; / a word is one wing of the silence, / fire has its cold half" (Neruda 95, 1-4). Neruda, by first establishing the chance of "not [loving]," compares the edge of his own desire against that of the beloved. He measures the distance between the lovers by stating his position. Neruda's self-examination details the fixed point used to interpret this distance. His direction dictates the progress to be undertaken and factors in the possibilities within "the freedom of the Other." This paradox includes not only what Neruda may love, but what he may also fear. Clea's own affair with Justine can attest to the origin of these fears and desires: "I pray to God she [Justine] has not come, is ill, has gone away. How eagerly I would welcome

indifference!’ Surprised too, for these disgusts came from precisely the same quarters as the desire to hear once more that hoarse noble voice—they too arose only from the expectations of seeing her beloved once more” (*Balthazar* 54). The basic structure between good and bad, desire and fear, against and for, qualifies the position of both lovers.

These basic paradoxes gestate into the detailed qualities of a relationship: does she enjoy the taste of cinnamon, does she favor candlelight over the comfort of a lamp, does she prefer black or brown slacks? The lover affiliates his judgment with what the beloved cherishes. He sacrifices his own comfort to ensure her satisfaction and her own satisfaction with him. The lover examines the external influences upon the space within the boundaries he defines:

The sight of anything beautiful, in Nature or the arts, makes you think instantly of your beloved...everything sublime and beautiful becomes a part of your beloved’s beauty and the unexpected reminder of happiness fills your eyes with tears on the instant. In this way a love of the beautiful, and love itself, inspire each other.

(Stendhal 62)

The beautiful constructs a platform upon which to re-enter the set of given paradoxes. Even when not specifically thinking of the beloved, the lover accesses the given paradoxes to gain approval from his newly formed interests. Returning to my earlier metaphor, Darley would then notice from the water the shore he had left. Darley, temporarily within the arms of the beloved, would recognize the external in relation to the ocean of his desire. When the beloved loosens her grip, he defines, through paradoxes, his intended direction—toward her or away from her.

Darley reflects on the beginning of the affair with Melissa: “A door had suddenly opened upon an intimacy with Melissa—an intimacy not the less marvelous for being unexpected and totally undeserved” (*Justine* 18). The first interaction between Darley and Melissa has obviously taken place even though Durrell does present the details. Darley establishes the fixed point of his desire for Melissa within the space opened by the proverbial “door.” This opportunity provides hope for the “marvelous” and acknowledges the “unexpected and totally undeserved” nature of its arrival. Hope blooms into possibility while still being tethered to the restrictions of the flesh. Darley must make a choice on whether or not to entertain the “unexpected” opportunity that has been served. However, as shown, Darley cannot choose Melissa because of the boundaries left intact by what Paz would name as the intangible “freedom of the Other.” He can only choose to define and pattern his own intentions by reacting to choices she makes. This action develops into a circular motion: he acts, she reacts, she acts, he reacts. This chaotic fluidity, spurred on by the restrictions of the flesh, seeps into the will of each lover. The lover seeks to extend the hope of an intrinsic interaction with a beloved beyond their physical bodies. Paz adds:

Love is attraction towards a unique person: a body and a soul. Love is choice; eroticism is acceptance. Without eroticism—without a visible form that enters by way of the sense—there is no love, but love goes beyond the desired body and seeks the soul in the body and the body in the soul. The whole person. (26)

Earlier in his book, Paz graphs a system that adds volume to the quotation above. He starts, “Sex is the primordial source. Eroticism and love are forms derived from the sexual instinct...which transform sexuality, very often into something unknowable. As in

the case of concentric circles, sex is the center and pivot point of this geometry of passion” (7). He begins the system of human desire with sexuality: the inherent physical attribute of being either male or female and the animalistic need to reproduce. It escalates into the erotic: “Eroticism is, above all else, exclusively human: it is sexuality socialized and transfigured by the imagination and the will of human beings” (8). He crowns the triptych with love. Love is a body’s ontological quest within the body of another—hoping to define its own existence. As Paz points out, “love goes beyond the desired body and seeks the soul in the body and the body in the soul.”

Paz’s system of human desire illuminates the labyrinth of Darley’s own longings. Darley must differentiate between the erotic and the amorous. When this opportunity with Melissa begins, Darley feels the erotic by acknowledging a physical “intimacy.” The erotic employs Darley’s will and toys with his imagination. The erotic confers meaning to the sexual while outlining the obstacles that must be negotiated to reach love. If Darley hopes to receive love and continue his ontological quest he must choose to pattern his intentions upon Melissa’s intentions. The shaping of this pattern will expose his singular identity and jeopardize the present safety of his solitude. As I pointed out earlier, Darley didn’t choose that the door to Melissa open, but he could choose whether or not to enter this passageway towards love. The forces that conceive Darley’s fate only allow him a limited set of realities or fictions (to conjure Pursewarden) from which to choose. A divine source, unnamed by Durrell, distributes these realities. Darley’s doubts and expectations influence the following response to Balthazar’s astute advice in dealing with one’s own fate:

‘To intercalate realities’ writes Balthazar, ‘is the only way to be faithful to Time, for at every moment in Time the possibilities are endless in their multiplicity. Life consists in the act of choice. The perpetual reservation of judgment and the perpetual choosing.’

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

*(Balthazar 226).*

Even though Darley recalls this quotation after the events have occurred, sampling from numerous experiences, Balthazar’s theory of “intercalating realities” weighs upon Darley’s present-time decisions. Darley’s “intercalation” alludes to a series of strands (choices) that must be braided together to support his weight. These ropes become taut with the expectation that the climbing will lead to a “proper self.” The ascent up the escarpment travels across the chaotic precipice of love. He only has an allotted number of ropes from which to choose. This predicament will dislodge difficulties along his course toward love, yet a choice must be made from the ropes provided.

Frank Bidart, in his poem “The Second Hour Of The Night,” transfers this predicament of choosing to his interpretation of Ovid’s myth of Myrrha and her father, King Cinyras:

what draws her forward is neither COMPULSION nor FREEWILL:—

or at least freedom, here *choice*, is not to be

imagined as action upon

preference: no creature is free to choose what

allows it its most powerful, and most secret, release. (46)

Bidart eliminates the falsity of “FREEWILL.” He clarifies that Myrrha’s situation, which is similar to Darley’s adopted theory of “intercalation,” doesn’t contain a “preference” of route. Fate instructs her from within by raising her animalistic tendencies, as “no creature is free to choose.” Her intellectual justification warps under the presence of divinity, “*I fulfill it, because I contain it—/ it prevails, because it is within me* (Bidart 46). She honors the desires that have been placed before her and can choose to entertain them or not. Her obligation reprimands her, she is “not free not to choose” (Bidart 46). Under this “heavy burden,” she chooses to “[set] up longing to enter that/ realm to which I am called from within” (Bidart 46). Her act of “setting” describes the choice she has made to bed-down with her father under the given mandate of her being “not free not to choose.” This obligation, heeded by both Myrrha and Darley (though Darley is relieved of the social taboo Myrrha’s choice contains), consists of a limited number of realities meshed together to form the simple choice—to engage with another or not.



This obligation, as presented through Bidart's Myrrha and implied in Durrell's Darley, contradicts an edict Durrell has Justine state. She reflects upon her own fate and the relationship she develops with Darley: "'You talk as if there was a choice. We are not strong or evil enough to exercise choice. All this is part of an experiment arranged by something else, the city perhaps, or another part of ourselves. How do I know?'" (*Justine* 27). By observing, "an experiment arranged by something else," Justine confirms Darley's belief of the divine intervention of fate upon lovers. However, Darley's apparatus, when translated through Myrrha, accepts the mechanics of being "not free not to choose." Justine isn't aware of this mobility of choice—in the penultimate yes or no. She doesn't allow this "not free not to choose" construction to interfere with her belief in the predestined course of a lover's fate. She blames her position on "the city perhaps, or another part of ourselves," yet doesn't recognize the implications within the fractures of the self. Darley, on the other hand, possesses the flexibility to proceed in either the direction of affirmation or decline. He knows he must make a choice. This action solidifies his relationship with Melissa after her overdose and eventual return: "that there and then I decided to love her" (*Justine* 60). His decision pauses at the intersection of choosing. His will instructs his instinct to extend the erotic into the amorous. He identifies the space between himself and Melissa, defines the parameters, and takes a step towards love.

When Darley begins his affair with Melissa, he soaks within the brine of his own desperation. Melissa stirs the stagnant pattern he has inhabited. He documents what she encounters:

In the last year I have reached a dead end in myself. I lack the will-power to do anything with my life, to better my position by hard work, to write: to even make love...This is the first time I have experienced a real failure of the will to survive...I record this only to show the unpromising human material upon which Melissa elected to work, to blow some breath of life into my nostrils.

*(Justine 21-22)*

Implied within this sulk, Melissa would need to employ a diligent effort in hopes of sparking Darley's rejuvenation. To complicate matters, Darley observes: "We had not a taste in common. Our characters and predispositions were wholly different, and yet in the magical ease of this friendship we felt something promised us" (*Justine* 61). Darley recognizes this paradox and notates the two opposing traits that he thinks distinguish his relationship with Melissa. The first quality defines the charitable nature of her "passion to serve" (*Justine* 52). She is pleased, or so Darley thinks, with the simple tasks of perpetuating the "happiness we had shared" (*Justine* 52) by completing tasks of convenience for Darley: "My shabby clothes—the way she picked up a dirty shirt seemed to engulf it with overflowing solicitude" (*Justine* 52). This unrequited attention "[provoked] me to give my life some sort of shape and style that might match the simplicity of hers" (*Justine* 52). Darley appreciates Melissa's prodding and recognizes the root of her concerns: "Being poor was also a deep bond" (*Justine* 52). Their individual destitution doesn't dwell only in monetary pitfalls, but deepens, "for she too had reached the dead level of things, as I myself had. We were fellow bankrupts" (*Justine* 23). The negative realization of their own means actually enhances their relationship. Darley comments that, "She paid me the compliment of saying: 'For the first time I am

not afraid to be light-headed or foolish with a man” (*Justine* 52). Darley and Melissa form a relationship of convenience. Their low-risk cohabitation derives from the fact that both Darley and Melissa had bottomed-out from past experiences.

Charity and convenience overpower the need for passion and reconstruct a substance over the charred framework of each of their pasts. Melissa, through sexual episodes of “honey-sweating” (*Justine* 54), ties the lovers’ emotional bond to Darley’s physical room. Melissa chalks her impression against his objects, establishing the relics he exhumes for analysis of her. Their erotic action within a specific place marks the territory of their private Alexandria: “watching the yellow curtains breathing tenderly against the light—the quiet respirations of the wind off of Mareotis which matched our own” (*Justine* 54). Darley finds in Melissa the quietness he can’t find elsewhere. What Darley finds comforting is how Melissa’s charity qualifies the convenience of the relationship. Melissa’s servitude doesn’t threaten Darley; he appreciates the simplicity in which she opens up to him. However, Darley discreetly notices the boundaries established within this comfort: “Melissa penetrated my shabby defenses not by any of the qualities one might enumerate in a lover—charm, exceptional beauty, intelligence—no, but the force of what I can only call her charity” (*Justine* 18). This “magical” relationship becomes tainted by its own good fortune.

On the other hand, Darley recognizes Melissa’s horrific and drug-enhanced depressions as the second trait of their relationship. He positions these tendencies against her glorious charity. He realizes his ineptness when these depressions occur: “At such times there was nothing to be done with her; she would become pale, melancholy, exhausted-looking, and would be unable to rouse herself from her lethargy for several

days together” (*Justine* 54). Her horrid “hashish-pipe” (*Justine* 53) fogs their channel of communication. She wails the deprecating mantra of the self-abused, “If you knew how I have lived you would leave me. I am not the woman for you, for any man. I am exhausted. Your kindness is wasted” (*Justine* 53). The religion of her failures washes away the hope of revival. Melissa’s implosion borders the fatalistic. She calls upon Darley to perform the deed, hoping his guilt and affection will increase her chances: “If it were love you would poison me rather than let me go on like this” (*Justine* 53). Even in her state of depression, Melissa realizes the flimsy layers they have built upon their unstable beginnings. These layers only consist of the unfulfilled erotic couplings that she has experienced elsewhere. Factoring in Paz’s thoughts on human desire, Melissa attempts to destroy the vehicle that carries her unfulfilled soul—her body. Her occupation as a cabaret dancer and part-time prostitute fuels her depression. Her body acts as a means in solving her financial burden, “Of her experiences in love she would never speak, turning from them with a weariness and distaste which suggested that they had been born of necessity rather than desire” (*Justine* 52). Darley, ironically, takes pleasure in the body that produces the “honey-sweating” and his private Alexandria. Her depressions might stem from the realization that she wishes to be removed from the consequences of sex, yet sex produces the ease and gaiety within her relationship with Darley. The simplicity of Melissa’s charity and the funk of her depression allow her only to get so close to Darley.

Well into their relationship, Melissa’s self-destructive tendencies can be symbolized by the drug-induced fit she has at the party of the witty expatriate writer, Pursewarden. Darley finds her on the floor and retrieves medical assistance. Strapped

with a variety of illnesses, the local doctor sarcastically labels them, “malnutrition, hysteria, alcohol, hashish, tuberculosis, Spanish fly...help yourself” (*Justine* 57). Melissa ends up in the infirmary of the Greek hospital. After a month long convalescence, in which Darley has no contact with her, she suddenly knocks on his door with a bundle of flowers and obvious shame: “The flowers were for me, yes, but she had not the courage to thrust the bouquet into my arms” (*Justine* 59). Her shame prohibits her from trying to revive desire. Darley, after a short deliberation, realizes her inability to express gratitude for, in her eyes, his noble act. She craves his forgiveness, expects him to show signs of re-acceptance. Darley concedes to his own sense of pity and they spend the day leisurely touring the city. This charity, taken to the extreme, leads him to proclaim, “that there and then I decided to love her.” However, Darley would never have made such an amorous choice had Melissa not begged to him shortly before she entered the hospital: “If you have no girl when I come, think of me. If you call me I will come to you” (*Justine* 58). Darley senses the qualities that Melissa admires in him. He believes that his strength and duty, symbolized in the ability to retrieve simple medical help, forces Melissa to beg for forgiveness. He convinces himself that his supposed strength complements her lack of emotional fortitude. Darley, acting as the savior, imagines which of his characteristics his beloved admires.

When the lover plans such tactics, he emphasizes that which he thinks is significant to the beloved. Of course, out of self-respect, the lover doesn't highlight his own faults, but skews the boundaries of their maintained space: if she thinks he is wise, he pontificates more often; if she thinks he is funny, everything becomes a joke. The lover can allow the beloved to learn certain faults at his discretion to obtain intimacy.

Following this pattern, Darley accentuates how his supposed strength dictates whether or not he will let Melissa back: “She only knew that my strength supported her where she was at her weakest—in her dealings with the world. She treasured every sign of my human weakness—disorderly habits, incapacity over money affairs, and so on. She loved my weaknesses because there she felt of use to me” (*Justine* 198). He allows Melissa access to his trite “human weaknesses” as opposed to the deeper weaknesses common to character and moral construction. He describes their kiss of forgiveness: “It symbolized the passion we enjoyed, its humor and lack of intenseness: its charity” (*Justine* 61). Darley’s own self-induced charity justifies his amorous choice. He imagines that his strengths are what Melissa desires.

However, contrary to Darley’s perceptions, Melissa describes to Clea the origin of her desire. Clea passes this information on to Darley after Melissa’s death, “‘She loved you’ said Clea again, ‘because of your weakness—this is what she found endearing in you. Had you been strong you would have frightened away so timid a love’” (*Balthazar* 135). The skewed boundaries Darley has erected begin to crumble because he lacks Paz’s “freedom of the Other.” Melissa, by being touched by his lack of supposed strength, amplified her own charity and exposes Darley’s foolishness. Darley becomes frustrated with Balthazar for including these facts in the “The Interlinear,” “I bang the pages of the manuscript shut with anger and resentment against Balthazar” (*Balthazar* 135). At Melissa’s death, Darley gathered a set pattern of transpired events and resulting emotions. He believed he granted her access to the topical “human weaknesses.” He was mistaken. Balthazar introduces facts that demand Darley to reexamine the pattern of his own justifications. Clea, through Balthazar’s telling, includes another statement made by

Melissa concerning Darley, “with his departure *everything in nature* disappeared” (*Balthazar* 135). Melissa’s love was unconditional in its charity, yet addictive in its application. Darley becomes angered over such a brash statement, “But nobody has the right to occupy such a place in another’s life, nobody!” (*Balthazar* 135). He despises the attention Melissa distributed. It forces him to acknowledge his own weakness of character. Durrell positions this conflict within Darley’s imagination, demonstrating the tension within Melissa and Darley’s love and the reason it fell apart.

Alain de Botton, in his novel, *On Love*, notices how the lover tightens the muscle of his attention towards the beloved:

We fall in love hoping that we will not find in the other what we know is in ourselves—all the cowardice, weakness, laziness, dishonesty, compromise, and brute stupidity. We throw a cordon of love around the chosen one and decide that everything that lies within it will somehow be free of our faults and hence lovable. We locate inside another a perfection that eludes us within ourselves.

(17)

Darley hoped that not only would Melissa be “free of [his] faults and hence lovable,” but also that his own faults would prove undecipherable to her. When Darley chose to step towards the amorous, he did so in hope of finding his “proper self.” Or, as Anne Carson illuminates about the lover, “When he inhales Eros, there appears within him a sudden vision of a different self, perhaps a better self, compounded of his own being and that of his beloved” (35). Melissa, on the other hand, perverts her own ontological quest for a “proper self.” She symbolizes this perversion in the statement made to Clea about “*everything in nature*” disappearing. Even though she recognizes the consequences of her

flesh, she still desires to abolish the boundaries established and dissolve Darley's sense of self with her intrusion. This is why she finds his weakness so attractive. Melissa wishes to destroy the private space that forms Darley. Rainer Maria Rilke defines this space and its related tensions:

All companionship can consist only in the strengthening of two neighboring solitudes, whereas everything that one is wont to call giving oneself is by nature harmful to companionship: for when a person abandons himself, he is no longer anything, and when two people both give themselves up in order to come close to each other, there is no longer any ground beneath them and their being together is a continual falling. (*On Love* 28)

A portion of this individual solitude contains the lover's fear of weakness and the realization that in love's flight the only reality a lover may know is his own emotion. This is not to say that these emotions don't fluctuate according to the pulse of the wind, but the lover can only be sure of his own unraveling. This solitude must be protected for love to flourish in its own fluidity and shape. Melissa doesn't heed this instruction and harmfully recognizes her "nature" within the self of another. By perverting the ontological quest, she doesn't respect the fluidity of love's chaos. This justifies her statement, "If you have no girl when I come out, think of me. If you call me I will come to you." She desires to revert back to their old patterns when, in reality, the lovers cannot share the same love twice (either from the effects of time or circumstance, or a combination of both). She desires that love become the fixed point of reference. This contrasts with Darley's realization that he can only measure the change in himself. Darley becomes frustrated not only because she reveals his weakness of character, but also because she attempts to



breach his solitude. His charity stems from the pity he feels towards these attempts. Her charity stems from the desire to obliterate herself. Durrell delineates the nacreous origin of these opposing forces, yet establishes overall that love cannot be sustained by charity.

Melissa tries to enhance the fading desire by attempting to spark jealousy within Darley. She pays off Darley's debt to Capodistria through a night of prostitution. She admits to Darley the rift that opened between them: "'Besides, even though you no longer care for me I wanted to do something for you—and this was the least of sacrifices'" (*Justine* 35). However, Darley fails to take the bait she dangles. Melissa's sacrificial sexual act damages the only form of communication Darley shares with her—the body. He moves further away from what they had. He seeks ascension while she descends into obliteration. Instead of inflicting anger and revenge, Melissa forces Darley to retreat further into his own analysis. He wants the passion his relationship with Melissa lacks, yet he doesn't forcefully seek rejuvenation. His submissive approach to pursuing fulfillment factors into the beginning of his affair with Justine.

*Justine Hosnani: arrow in darkness.*

Durrell, in generating the currents of Darley's love for Justine, believes in Socrates' perception about the nature of desire, as presented in Plato's *Symposium*: "'Then he and everyone who desires, desires that which he has not already, and which is future and not present, and which he has not, and is not, and of which he is in want; these are the sort of things which love and desire seek?'" (191). Simply, Darley desires in Justine what he lacks in Melissa. Durrell breeds this desire from Darley's discontent with

Melissa's charity and his affinity towards seeking a sense of passion in spirit. When presented in the abstract, the lover first identifies what he lacks as an individual in present-time. He "desires that which he has not already," emphasizing his temporary condition. Implicated within the eventual future, and its subsequent forms of love, is the satiation the present-time lover desires. Carson reinforces this claim: "The Greek word *eros* denotes 'want,' 'lack,' 'desire for that which is missing.' The lover wants what he does not have. It is by definition impossible for him to have what he wants if, as soon as it is had, it is no longer wanting. This is more than just wordplay" (10). The lover positions the limits of present-time against the possibility of the future. The lover may think this movement progresses toward a specific objective, a specific form of love. Socrates also includes this movement into his theories. Even though Darley may not genuflect before Socrates' essence of "absolute beauty" (Plato 202), he recognizes the pattern of ascension established by Socrates. Socrates points out that the lover must take the first step to, "'consider that the beauty of the mind is more honorable than the beauty of the outward form'" (Plato 201). This coincides with Darley's desire to shed the "outward form" in search of his self-proclaimed "proper self." Darley obviously considers himself moving towards a more advanced form of love than what he presently has. The reader wonders if his desire for Justine will ascend towards an ideal love, eventually moving through her. Or, will Darley be satisfied with what he finds in his relationship with her?

If Durrell has Darley mark the lack he feels and wishes to address that lack in a person other than Melissa, then it may be necessary for Darley to love Justine. If Darley were satisfied with his relationship with Melissa he would thwart Justine's advances. He

would choose to reject what Justine offers and glance towards the future in hopes of fulfilling himself continuously with Melissa. However, since this doesn't occur, when Justine presents herself he accepts. His primary necessity is to fill the lack. Justine isn't his specific destiny. Rather, the absence in a heart, "'tormented by the desire to be loved'" (*Balthazar* 240), as Clea labels it, is what determines his fall. Thus, elaborating on Clea's musings, Darley "'felt the sudden predisposition to fall in love'" (*Balthazar* 240). He chooses to enter the door and his specific destiny with Justine (to recall the language Durrell uses in Darley's encounter with Melissa). In the chaos that follows Darley can't control the degree of annihilation once this choice has been made.

Darley's involvement with a new beloved construes the lack he once needed to address. Justine's presence overwhelms the reasons behind his desire. The lover forgets the origin of his lack and concentrates on the new beloved. Alain de Botton points out this lapse through the narrator of *On Love*: "My mistake had been to confuse a destiny to love with a destiny to love a given person" (13). Darley's "predisposition" craves the passion that the relationship of convenience couldn't germinate. Sappho comments on the chaotic nature of a passion similar to the sort that Darley desires in his choosing:

For now

as I look at you my voice

is empty and

can say nothing as my tongue

cracks and slender fire is quick

under my skin. (19, 6-11)

He desires the encounter with Justine in hopes of re-defining his ontological quest through a new beloved. Rilke, echoing the reference to Sappho, elaborates on Darley's desire to know Justine, in his poem coincidentally titled "Sappho to Errana":

I want to flood you with unrest,  
want to brandish you, you vine-clasped staff.  
Like dying I want to pierce through you  
and pass you on like the grave  
to the All: to all these things. (*New Poems* 13, 1-5)

The process starts again where the lover defines the boundaries of his solitude within the beloved. Darley encounters a new self within his passion for Justine. What events facilitate this regeneration?

Durrell decides not to have the character Darley fall immediately in love with Justine. Durrell extends the tension between Melissa and Darley into the blossoming interactions with Justine. If he quickly severs Darley's relationship with Melissa then the affair with Justine would lack its sustained intensity. Durrell slowly pushes Darley into the affair in hopes of conveying multiple and, sometimes, contradictory thoughts on the nature of desire. Durrell uses this technique to his advantage. He contrasts the multiple truths Darley finds against the lover's willingness to believe the beloved. Durrell has Darley simply add, "in matters of love everything is easy to explain" (*Balthazar* 185). Specifically, Durrell chooses to detail Darley's initial interaction with Justine to emphasize her importance as the beloved who shatters Darley's heart. Durrell doesn't permit Darley to reveal the same interaction with Melissa because Darley wouldn't find

this recollection significant. Exhibiting both of Darley's initial interactions would confuse the reader and draw attention away from Darley's impression of Justine.

In recollection, why is the lover's first interaction with the beloved so important? First, it establishes the point of interaction within a social context of human behavior. The love begun becomes subject to the linearity of calendar time: the date and hour confined to the human propensity to catalogue events. It allows the lover to compare his experience to that of others and answers the inevitable question—how did you two meet? Second, it begins the esoteric time the lover gestures concerning his knowledge of the beloved. The interaction becomes the starting point from which the relationship proceeds. The lover wonders how he has gotten from that first moment to the current point of reminiscence. The point of interaction etches into the lover the initial characteristics of the beloved: what she wore the first day, the first words she spoke to him, where the interaction took place. It normally dictates the location that the love-scenes are reflected against: Austin, Oslo, Alexandria. (Although Durrell, as exhibited, adds a twist to this concept by removing the stability from place. The first interaction happens there only coincidentally.) When the lover reminisces, he imagines the effect that they, as a pair, defeated the claws of time and fooled the deity that distributes individual fate. The lovers believe they had a hand in their destiny together by choosing one another.

This pattern can be seen in Durrell's account of the beginning of the affair between Justine and Darley. Darley's first interaction with Justine surely lacks the florid locutions expressed by Shakespeare's Romeo in his first wooing of Juliet:

If I profane with my unworthing hand

This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:

My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand

To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss. (*Rom.* 1.5.94-97)

Darley's response is quite the opposite. He neither addresses Justine's physical appearance, nor her attack on his lecture of the poet, C.P. Cavafy: "What did you mean by your remark about the antinomian nature of irony?" (*Justine* 31). He can't even be sure that was the angle of her thrust: "...or some such sally which I have forgotten" (*Justine* 31). Darley's ineptness remains even when Justine attacks his pride: "Your Greek is good. Doubtless you are a writer" (*Justine* 31). Far from Romeo, the only word he conjures in his transcription of the scene parrots Justine: "Doubtless. 'Not to be known always wounds'" (*Justine* 31). Darley doesn't perceive Justin's intentions. Justine tries to control the interaction through flirting. She waits for Darley to approach her after the lecture. Darley doesn't flirt. His indifference won't even recognize the sexual tension Justine knots while waiting: "I was flattered to think that perhaps one person had appreciated my difficulties" (*Justine* 30). Oblivious to her intent, Darley permits Justine to deliver him to her husband, Nessim Hosnani: "racing to him [Nessim] like a gun-dog she metaphorically dropped me at his feet and stood back, wagging her tail. She had achieved me" (*Justine* 32). Justine quickly rakes her dominance over Darley. She imposes her Alexandrian social rank upon him. Darley would later come to acknowledge and detest this ranking: "It can come to nothing, this love-affair between a poor schoolteacher and an Alexandrian society woman" (*Justine* 26). Confusion sets in and Darley realizes that he "could offer no explanation of my presence, since I did not know for what purpose I had been brought here" (*Justine* 32). He is oblivious to the initial

sensory bombardment that Rilke, Sappho, and Romeo feel in the samplings I have offered above. Darley progresses much more slowly to Justine's proverbial door.

Darley quite "boorishly" (*Justine* 31) responds to Justine's first question with an, "indifference that was not assumed" (*Justine* 31). He takes on this air of "indifference," yet willingly submits to Justine's prodding. Nevertheless, Darley does express the rift between himself and Melissa through his actions. He gravely wanders home towards Melissa after the lecture, but is sidetracked, "by a sudden longing to be on the right side of the Mediterranean" (*Justine* 31). The simple joy of purchasing Orvieto olives cleanses the stain of Melissa: "I felt that Melissa would never understand this. I should have to pretend I had lost the money" (*Justine* 31). His desire to relieve his discontent extends into the eating of the olives. Darley begins to enjoy this purely physical act. An epiphany doesn't occur, but, rather, Darley's gesture hints towards the eventual future. He sublimates his discontent for Melissa through his eating and desires what he does not have—present-time satisfaction.

Darley, upset with the present-time, fails to observe the coincidence in Justine's appearance at the lecture. His esoteric justification comes after the event occurs. The justification is actualized for the lover in the erotic acts that follows the first moment. Looking back, Darley notices the beginning of his and Justine's calendar time. Darley's delivery to Nessim marks how the adulterous affair with Justine will begin to cleave the husband and wife into separate individuals: "Never have I been closer to them both—closer, I mean to their marriage; they seemed to me then to be the magnificent two-headed animal a marriage could be" (*Justine* 32). He begins to compare his relationship with Justine against Nessim's relationship with her. With this interaction, Darley initiates

the paradoxes and contradictions that diagram the social forum they occupy. The organic quality of his decision to entertain Justine's advances fails to recognize her underlying motive. His submissive qualities allow her dominance and the relationship begins.

Durrell's attentive hand seals the relationship between his characters Justine and Darley. Darley's desire turns toward the specific desire for Justine. After the initial interaction, the relationship spins into a heightened platonic gathering. Before Darley and Justine consummate the physical form of their relationship, they perform a mental sparring: "we were possessed only by a desire to communicate ideas and experiences which overstepped the range of thought normal to conversation among ordinary people" (*Justine* 24-25). Darley begins to signal his path towards exclusion. The lover concentrates on securing the exclusive attention of the beloved. The lover prays for the beloved's reciprocation, yet cannot be sure it will arrive. Darley's desire to fill the lack fires the timber of this exclusion when suggesting that, "the flirtation of minds prematurely exhausted by experience...seemed so much more dangerous than a love founded in sexual attraction" (*Justine* 26). In the beginning, sex is the least of what Darley seeks in his relationship with Justine. Exclusion heightens his awareness of the cerebral. After a bundle of conversations, the beloved's ideas become lush and attractive. The beloved's responses to questions and her repartees to opinions stain the lover. Darley adheres to, "a sort of mental possession in which the bonds of a ravenous sexuality played the least part" (*Justine* 45). Darley banks on past experiences with others to satiate his physical urges. He dedicates the present-time to the cerebral. Darley, "weathered and seasoned by the disappointments of love in other places" (*Justine* 45), hopes to excuse himself from his physical desire for Justine. He attempts to create the erotic without the



body and through the controlled recollections of his past. However, the erotic can't be formed without implicating the hope for future sexual encounters, or, at least, denying the possibility that they might occur. He refuses to let the future pervert his present-time situation and introduce the amount of risk needed to fully obtain Justine. He hopes to extract the risk from bodily passion while retaining the pulp of exclusion. Jack Gilbert examines a similar error in his poem, "The Great Fires": "The passions which are called love/ also change everything to a newness/ at first. Passion is clearly the path/ but does not bring us to love" (12, 8-11). Unlike his relationship with Melissa, Darley desires to dissolve the risk needed into reason. He wants "newness" without having to sacrifice.

Justine, realizing Darley's affinity for the cerebral, appeals to his imagination: "'And if it [the affair] should happen to us—what would you say?'" (*Justine* 46). She escalates the flirtation begun with the initial interaction. Darley, ripe for her ambushes, is drawn into her attempts. She scampers around his flank to attack him with "derisively, antagonistically" (*Justine* 46) placed kisses. She continues to dislodge the physical while appealing once more to his imagination: "'But let us *suppose*. What if it did?'" (*Justine* 47). Justine's flirtation is similar to the seduction Michael Ondaatje's character Patrick Lewis tries on his beloved, Clara Dickens, in the novel *In the Skin of the Lion*: "They had been outrageous and flamboyant in each other's company, their arguments like duets...he argued just so they could remain together on that porch deep in moonlight, half-laughing at each other's ploys. She wouldn't let him kiss her or hold her standing up—didn't want all their bodies touching, that possibility" (62-63). Patrick, like Justine, attends to the cerebral in hope of acquiring the elusive kiss. On the other hand, Darley and Clara, even though they probably expect the inevitable, don't loosen their grip on physical restraint.

Darley's restraint, like Clara's, doesn't derive from prudishness but from the fear of what "that possibility" may bring. Justine continues her instigation by clamping down on his imagination: "...simply we have something to learn from each other? What is it?" (*Justine* 47). Clara, in Ondaatje's *In the Skin of the Lion*, matches Justine's intent: "When I know a man well socially, the only way I'll ever get to know him better will be to sleep with him. 'Seduction was the natural progression of curiosity'" (69). Darley stutters, "And is this the way?" (*Justine* 47), yet expresses the language of re-awakened passion in the description of the scene: "the fragile quivering context of every kiss found a sort of painful surcease—like cold water on sprain" (*Justine* 47). He slips from the self-imposed restraint to equally weigh the value of the physical and the mental flirtation. Darley ignites his physical desire for Justine. Spliced from this "curiosity," Justine navigates Darley's newly formed expectations: "She was in a towering rage. 'You thought I simply wanted to make love? God! haven't we had enough of that? How is it that you do not *know* what I feel for once?'" (*Justine* 48). Justine wounds Darley to enhance the flirtation. Through insults she forces him to see the risk involved. When the beloved offers to consummate the physical but then quickly rescinds her offer, the lover wants it even more. The desire forces the lover to acknowledge the future in hope of quenching his newly realized lack. The lover increases the heat of the pursuit. Darley recognizes the beginning of their esoteric time by establishing the erotic. Or, at least, he establishes the possibility that physical world is not congruent to his thoughts:

It was as if some long-disused mineshaft in my own character had suddenly fallen in. I recognized that this barren traffic in ideas and feelings had driven a path through towards the denser jungles of the heart; and that here we became

bondsmen in the body, possessors of an enigmatic knowledge which could only be passed on—received, deciphered, understood—by those rare complementaries of ours in the world. (*Justine* 48)

Darley tangles his own identity within the boundaries of the beloved (without the self-destructive tendency Melissa entertains). The “enigmatic knowledge” pushes Darley forward. He hopes in the future to obtain the knowledge Justine presents. Knowledge of the beloved may, if pursued rigorously, contain the answers to the self. Darley might untangle himself by beginning to define the *we*: the recently actualized boundaries of both individuals.

Throughout the course of a love the lover must continuously retreat back to the solitary fountain of the self. The lover must renegotiate the pool’s familiar lap of water falling into water. Information pressed upon the senses changes the course and pulse of the water’s flow. The lover must filter the exchanges with the beloved through these various levels, through Carson’s “maintained space.” The lover must work at repairing the source of this space—what constitutes the individual. The boundaries are set in times of solitude. Darley claims, “we were both dying to get away from each other, in order to examine our own feelings” (*Justine* 48). He recognizes that the “possibility” Ondaatje speaks of has blossomed into what he now knows in present-time. Ironically, he “was seeing Melissa for the first time...to see Melissa as she really was—and to recognize my love for her” (*Justine* 49). Darley confirms his love for her, yet accentuates the fallacy between them. He accepts the terms forced upon him after choosing Melissa. Darley reaffirms Rilke’s precept that solitude is necessary for love’s fruition. He measures his destitution in relation to Melissa as a, “fellow bankrupt” (*Justine* 23), and in relation to

Justine he justifies their action, “this sort of thing always happens to bankrupts when they fall in love” (*Justine* 48). When he forfeits the lien on his heart he seeks the “the magical ease of this friendship” (*Justine* 61) with Melissa and watches Justine soil “the magical gift” (*Justine* 50). The language is similar because Darley is the one who is measuring in both cases. He doesn’t measure the reaction of the beloved necessarily, but the effects the beloved has on the boundaries of his solitude. Durrell, by repeating Darley’s language, solidifies that Darley’s ascension is toward a specific goal. Darley, sure of his own system of measurement, drives toward the attraction he feels for Justine.

Stendhal, in *Love*, dissects the initiation before the ensuing love: “The phenomenon that I have called crystallization springs from Nature, which ordains that we shall feel pleasure and sends the blood to our heads. It also evolves from the feeling that the degree of pleasure is related to the perfections of the loved one, and from the idea that ‘She is mine’” (45). Darley, when fitted with Stendhal’s precepts, illuminates a variety of consequences. First, Darley’s “degree of pleasure” isn’t rooted in the “perfections of the loved one.” The direction of his pursuit moves toward assuring Justine’s satisfaction. Contrary to Stendhal, Darley doesn’t scribble the “perfections” of a psalter, but, rather, scribes Justine’s faults and disturbances: “How well I recognized her now as a...[voluptuary] not of pleasure but of pain, doomed to hunt for what they least dare to find!” (*Justine* 47). Ironically, Darley’s inability to find pleasure in Justine’s “perfections” actually turns into its own form of desire. His own bankruptcy takes pleasure in finding the inherent human disorder of Justine. Faults presented at the

“crystallization” only enlarge into the desire for multiple incongruities. Darley, bordering on the nihilistic, seeks to find a companion in pain.

Second, Stendhal’s precept of ownership that, “She is mine,” secures the erotic that Darley culls from the pain. Justine’s marriage to Nessim and Darley’s cohabitation with Melissa impedes the possibility of completeness, but increases the illicit eroticism of the affair. The taboo magnifies the enjoyment of pain while pointing out Darley’s earlier oblivion: “I saw then what I should have seen long before: namely that our friendship had ripened to a point when we had already become in a way part-owners of each other” (*Justine* 48). Repeating a principle I stated when addressing Melissa, ownership demands that the lover expose weakness to secure intimacy. Risking damage heightens the relationship: the paradox that what hurts more, pleases more; that exposing more of the self to the chaos of the other drives the lover wild. Yet, Justine, disguising the writings of her first husband, the author Jacob Arnauti, in her own hand, appears to hold onto the established boundaries: “The loved object is simply one that has shared an experience at the same moment of time, narcissistically; and the desire to be near the beloved object is at first due to the idea of possessing it, but simply to let the two experiences compare themselves, like reflections in different mirrors” (*Justine* 50). Justine and Darley proceed like parallel tracks; sharing the same direction while occasionally weaving between one another. They crave destruction differently than Melissa. Melissa wanted to obliterate herself in a foreign self, while Justine and Darley seek obliteration within their solitude. Darley, by securing the erotic, may see this obliteration as the path to the “proper self.” Nevertheless, the boundaries remain intact because of the restrictions of the flesh, their obligation to other lovers, and a willingness to “let the two experiences compare

themselves.” Revisiting my earlier metaphor, Darley notices that there is more than one body of water. He chooses (through the default of Bidart’s “not free not to choose”) to enter the ocean of the new acquaintance—Justine.

Durrell grants the sardonic writer Pursewarden the informative phrase: “sex is a psychic and not a physical act” (*Balthazar* 124). This brief assessment, though blunt in delivery, serves as Durrell’s pattern concerning his analysis of intercourse and its ramifications on the human spirit in both *Justine* and *Balthazar*. This pattern heavily echoes within the cavernous reaches of Darley’s experiences. Darley signals the pattern’s presence in his first sexual encounter with Justine. Abstractly, the first act of sex punctures the heart: relieving the erotic tension built up to that point while eliminating the controlled distance of conversation. The form of communication previously established in the relationship cannot hold the volume of information passed on in sex: the pace and heat of her breath, her forearm gently placed on a shoulder, the manner of the room and their disposition afterwards. The primordial act of sex has the possibility to become the highest form of communication. The gaze between two sets of eyes evolves into the opportunity for illumination. This illumination resides in the extreme amount of risk in sex. This vulnerability raises the passion and awareness of the lovers. It marks new territory for ownership and hopes to free the lovers from their illusive adversary—time. Pablo Neruda eloquently delivers to his beloved, the lines: “You are the trembling time, which passes/ between the vertical light and the darkening sky” (105, 7-8). In sex, the beloved pauses time with the stain of desire. Thus, through imagination, as Pursewarden

states, “sex is a psychic...act.” Durrell reveals sex as the heightened form of communication it has the possibility of becoming.

The tension before Darley and Justine consummate their relationship has Justine burst into his room and hastily strike out: ““I want to put an end to all this as soon as possible. I feel as if we’ve gone too far to go back””(Justine 84). She continuously extends the physical into Darley’s cerebral comfort. Her campaign breaks Darley into imploring: “Let her lead me where she will. She will find a match for her. And there’ll be no talk of *chagrin* at the end” (Justine 85). His ambition closes their preliminary mental sparring. However, he, “[does] not dare use the word love” (Justine 83), for fear of committing too quickly to the inevitable psychic gambit—sex. He understands the path to the amorous, yet seeks to justify the action before it even takes place. He juxtaposes this inevitability against the supposed “*chagrin*” he expects he should feel. He accepts her challenge and exposes his vulnerability. After they make love, Justine excuses her performance not because of her incapability, but because of the emotional risk involved: ““I am always so bad the first time, why is it?”” (Justine 86). By justifying their frailty, Justine tempers Darley’s worries and lessens her own vulnerability. Darley agrees, ““Nerves perhaps. So am I”” (Justine 86). Sex solidifies the elusive emotional value they have placed on the correspondence of ideas between one another. Graham Greene’s Bendrix, in *The End of the Affair*, recalls his first adulterous act with his beloved, Sarah: “but I remember nothing else—how Sarah looked the first time or what we did, except that we were both nervous and made love badly. It didn’t matter. We had started—that was the point” (45). Bendrix, similar to Darley, notices how the relationship has turned.

Darley, worn of innocence once thought dear, tries to justify the consequences of their love making: “But Justine, what on earth are we going to make of all this?” (*Justine* 86). What stings Justine is how Darley pledges innocence without responsibility for what nevertheless occurs: “For Godsake no justifications!’...And getting out of bed she walked over to the dressing-table with its row of photos and powder-boxed and with a single blow....swept it clean. ‘*That*,’ she said, ‘is what I am doing to Nessim and you to Melissa’” (*Justine* 86). She addresses Darley’s self-imposed guilt by obliterating his private Alexandria. She undercuts the fragile innocence he falsely clings to by destroying the physical comfort of his past. Durrell has her establish that the psychic engagement can ruin the weakened physical foundations. With this “single-blow” Darley confronts his own volition; there was choice involved in the conception of his action. His physical desire rises as a bruise upon the falsity of his pretenses. Darley becomes aware that, “strangely enough I experienced no sense of despondency or anguish” (*Justine* 86). This behavior not only corrodes his relationship with Melissa, but also, ironically, draws him nearer to the adulterous Justine. Justine notices his betrayal: “Balthazar says that the natural traitors—like you and I...are dead and live this life as a sort of limbo. Yet the living can’t do without us. We infect them with a desire to experience more, to grow” (*Justine* 86-87). By reasserting the possibility of self-growth, Justine reverberates her earlier quip that she and Darley, “simply...have something to learn from each other” (*Justine* 47). Cormac McCarthy, in his novel *All the Pretty Horses*, frames John and Alejandra’s illicit act with the lines: “Sweeter for the larceny of time and flesh, sweeter for the betrayal” (141). Darley begins to unfasten the doubt from his “larceny.” Darley begins to let loose his own inquisitiveness. Slaked by sexual afterthought, Darley



proverbially falls through the door. His choice to enter has been made. Desire, sealed by the honesty of the sexual act, now rides through his nacreous assumptions of the past: “And yet somewhere else, at a deeper level, I seemed to recognize that the experience upon which I had embarked would have the deathless finality of a lesson learned” (*Justine* 87). The beacon his heart devises forms him into the lover he has wanted to become. Darley marks himself with the wicked, stays time, and gains the glorious possibility of love. Sex with Justine shadows the pleasure and pain of these experiences.

Durrell heavily weighs the circumstances of sex upon the psyche of each of his characters. The characters (through his positioning and re-positioning) must negotiate the degree of pleasure bequeathed to them. Durrell has them evaluate the experience of sex by gauging their ability to give and receive pleasure, or, paradoxically, how they negotiate the pain that naturally accompanies it. Durrell, by structuring the story through Darley’s telling, has Justine become the focus of much of Darley’s energy. She represents a strong portion of Durrell’s opinion about a lover’s response to the sensual.

Clea, in her own analysis of her affair with Justine, dissects the motive of Justine’s licentiousness: “‘She gave everything, knowing the value of nothing...her body really meant nothing to her’” (*Balthazar* 56). Why then does Justine manipulate the body’s primal function? What does Justine lack? Her first husband, Jacob Arnauti, references her anxiety in his book, *Moeurs*: “‘She is as untrustworthy as she is beautiful. She takes love as plants do water, lightly, thoughtlessly’” (*Justine* 82). He degrades her supposed lack into the base floral need for nutrients, relinquishing control to these primal

urges. He infers that sex becomes her sustenance. She, earlier in Darley's sampling of Arnauti, defends herself from these claims of sexual perversion:

The doctor I loved told me I was a nymphomaniac—but there is no gluttony or self-indulgence in my pleasure... You [Arnauti] speak of taking pleasure sadly, like the puritans do...I take it tragically, and if my medical friends want a compound word to describe the heartless creature I seem, why they will have to admit that what I lack of heart I make up in soul. (*Justine* 68)

Arnauti, dammed with habitual stubbornness and prevailing ignorance, fails to comprehend the struggle Justine lives: “It was as if somehow her world lacked a dimension, and love had become turned inwards into a kind of idolatry” (*Justine* 68). Arnauti thinks that her neurosis is just the erotic jewelry of her behavior. However, he mistakenly points to her “idolatry” without considering that her compulsion may be rooted in her misappropriation of the flesh. Her desire for sex germinates from the need to exorcise the ghosts of her past. She believes in Durrell's principle that sex contains the possibility for the heightened communication between two spirits, yet is parasitic in her exploitation of that principle. With various and constant sexual encounters she increases her possibility of gaining self-knowledge.

These opportunities for self-knowledge force Justine to repeat certain patterns with a variety of lovers. The lover, taken aback by her forward nature, fears his own sexual incompatibility. So, he overcompensates the amount of pleasure he distributes. He doesn't demand reciprocation from Justine in a healthier form. Justine, warped by her inability to know the value of giving, can only receive pleasure. Her neurosis, if it may be labeled that, over-saturates the lover with sex, perverting his self-worth in relation to her.

Justine hopes that the information concerning the removal of her ill-named “The Check” (the disappearance of a daughter and her childhood rape by Capodistria that congeals into the psychoanalytically tagged barrier) transfers with the sexual act. The lover destructs when trying to sustain the idea that they—he and Justine—have the opportunity to grow together, yet Justine leaves him unfulfilled. As Darley points out: “if I could break ‘The Check’ I could possess her truly, as no man had possessed her” (*Justine* 79). Containing Justine becomes a matter of pride. Justine wounds the lover by focusing only on her own maturation: to supposedly find her lost daughter and exorcise the haunts of her childhood. Thus, this provides the reason behind Arnauti’s quip that, “somehow her world lacked a dimension.” Justine renegotiates her past through principles sacred within her boundaries. Sarah, in Greene’s *The End of the Affair*, elaborates on this principle: “I was trying to escape from the human body and all it needed. I thought I could believe in some kind of a God that bore no relation to ourselves, something vague, amorphous, cosmic, to which I had promised something and which had given me something in return” (109). Principle changes to function in times of devastation. Like most lovers, Justine can only measure herself in the emotional reality that progresses around her.

How Justine measures these boundaries is faulty not because of her effort, but because of her technique. Plagued by narcissism, “[she] could not put a precise frame around the frightening image of her own meaninglessness in the world of ordinary action. The sort of abyss which seemed to lie around her was composed of one quality—a failure of value, a failure to attach meaning which kills joy” (*Balthazar* 57). As Justine narrows her focus, the principle, as function, turns toward pain. Her narcissism removes itself from the pleasure normally associated with sex. Her continual self-obliteration through

the sexual act feeds from the circumstances in which she has been placed. She has been instructed through default to consistently seek another form of herself through pleasure. This pushes her to say, “that nothing matters except pleasure—which is the opposite of happiness, its tragic part, I expect” (*Balthazar* 53). However, unlike Ovid’s Narcissus, she recognizes that the face in the pool is hers, yet she cannot stop from bending towards it. Being aware of a different, perhaps more advanced, self perverts her mental facilities and forces her to purposely control her lovers. She leads them to believe in the possibility of their own imagination, even beckoning it from them at times. She uses them to reach that other self (the face in the pool of water). A succubus born from her own shadow, she then extracts their imagination from the body she controls in sex. Arnauti, the first documented victim, realizes her heavy hand after she has gone: “In this way she controlled his imagination and taught him how feeble reason was” (*Justine* 226).

How does her relation to pleasure and pain affect her other lovers? Durrell has his character Balthazar curtly write, in his supposed response to Darley’s initial collection of ideas titled “The Interlinear,” in the section labeled “Some Fallacies and Misapprehensions”: “Number 4. That Justine ‘loved’ you. She ‘loved’, if anyone, Pursewarden. ‘What does that mean?’ She was forced to use you as a decoy in order to protect him from the jealousy of Nessim whom she had married. Pursewarden himself did not care for her at all—supreme logic of love!” (*Balthazar* 22). Durrell has the expatriate writer Pursewarden offset Justine’s seriousness, clarify Darley’s simplicity and bid a guffaw at the expense of his own life. (The circumstances behind Pursewarden’s suicide remain hidden until the later novels, like an answer within the leathery petals of an un-bloomed flower). Durrell juxtaposes Pursewarden’s casual demeanor against Justine’s

angst, purging the burden of narcissism with a simple afternoon rendezvous. So, rephrasing Balthazar's question, why is Justine attracted to Pursewarden? Briefly, Justine loves Pursewarden because she cannot achieve him. Pursewarden amplifies Justine's own misgivings while pestering her system of seduction. Pursewarden confuses Justine because he doesn't stigmatize their sex with the pain of its consequence, "for him sex was the nearest thing to laughter—quite free of particularity, neither sacred nor profane" (*Balthazar* 118). Pursewarden exemplifies Darley's earlier statement: "I saw that pain itself was the only food of memory: for pleasure ends in itself" (*Justine* 197). Pursewarden purges the meaning from sex because he realizes the psychic value that could be attached to it. Unlike Justine, Pursewarden knows too well the value of giving, but chooses not to exercise the option.

Pleasure, specifically through sex, forces lovers to mark ownership of what they have gotten. Nevertheless, they must receive sex repeatedly in order to reassert their primal desire and reestablish communication with one another. The present-time creates the lack of not having it *now*. Fear possesses the lover because the channel to another self may be lost. Pursewarden dissolves this sense of fear from the sexual act. Pursewarden doesn't need this form of communication to nurture his attempts at another self. He doesn't concern himself with ascension. The muscle of his rationale, by approaching sex as mere procreation, sloughs off ownership. This forces Justine to realize her incapability to corral him: "For her, the moiety which remained after love-making then was not disgust or despair as it usually was, but laughter...she realized with a pang that he could never be achieved, attained as a man, nor would he even become a friend, except on his own terms" (*Balthazar* 123). For Pursewarden, pleasure becomes pleasure because pain

remains pain. His imagination separates these two factors of sex because he adheres to the present moment by not connecting it with other sexual encounters: ““but your [Justine’s] humourlessness has made you an enemy of pleasure. *The enemy*. You have a premeditated approach to experience. I am a truer pagan”” (*Balthazar* 120). He doesn’t adhere to fixating sex with the “premeditated approach” that Justine culls from her lofty ideal. His attention to the process of thought bypasses Justine’s unavoidable attempts to control his imagination (the industry that Darley, Arnauti and even Nessim fall subject to). She is removed from the pattern she employs with other ex-lovers: ““Justine hated anyone she could be certain of; and you must remember she has never had anyone as yet whom she could wholly admire...here at last was someone she could not punish by her infidelities”” (*Balthazar* 123). Pursewarden refuses to be victimized by her pain. He doesn’t compromise his desire with the truth that Justine supposedly claims through sex. Simply, Balthazar recalls of him: ““He absolutely refused to command sympathy or share the solitude from which he drew so much of his composure and self-possession”” (*Balthazar* 116). His boundaries (ideas) contain a fortitude and constitution that Justine has not previously encountered. (However, ironically, these boundaries are eventually breached and crumble, not from sexual discussion, but from the political distrust he finds in Nessim). Durrell’s clever juxtaposition doubts the validity of the theories pressed through Darley. Pursewarden’s nature allows Durrell to move the conversation from the psychoanalytic trenches to the ease of the brothel: where sex is removed from the ideals that love instigates. Pursewarden’s fault is in too quickly qualifying that sex, and its retaining pleasure, might be an end in and of itself. However, Durrell supplies

Pursewarden with the wit and imagination to acts as the medium between the truths that Darley seeks and Pursewarden's own epicurean habits.

*Darley: It was as if the whole city had crashed about my ears.*

Well into the novel *Justine*, Durrell has Darley assess with difficulty the consistency of his relationship with Justine: "I was gradually, inexplicably, becoming more and more deficient in love, yet better and better at self-giving—the best part of loving...how difficult it is to analyze these relationships which lie under the mere skin of our actions; for loving is only a sort of skin-language, sex a terminology merely" (197). Darley's hesitancy balances between the love he wants to achieve and the exhaustion Justine's parasitic nature causes. Darley's weariness amplifies when he tries to decipher the "terminology" in which their sexual acts are coded. This inquisitiveness turns into the mania for possession when he attempts to know the complete Justine, not just her sexual trappings. Clea comments on the course that Darley's traverses, "we are born to love those who most wound us" (*Balthazar* 236). Darley attempts to surcease his pain, unbeknownst to him, with the desire for more pain. Darley supposes that his suffering will abide in time. Penance for his mistakes lies within removing the present "wound." The salve may be in either removing the beloved (source of pain) or changing the relationship with the beloved into something new. The risk involved with the latter task rejuvenates the giving and receiving the lovers once shared. Nevertheless, Clea, once again acting as sage, positions the contradiction that can present itself, "it is quite possible to love those whom you most wound" (*Balthazar* 48). Within the extreme of each of these divergent forms of wounding, the crimes of our desires wash away the rules

of normal communication. The trust that the lover confers on the beloved is susceptible to the beloved's use, the amount of time the love occurs in and the lover's reassessment when reciprocation begins.

Paradoxically, according to Durrell, love cannot be born in attrition. The surface between two lovers must be broken. The spirit of the other must be breached to expose where vulnerability distinguishes that something could be lost. For Darley, after he is wounded, pain becomes necessary because it forces him to once again renegotiate his solitude. Darley seeks clarity by simply dividing his emotions into either love or hate: what he backs away from, the pain he needs, and the thorn of his inability to leave. Frank Bidart, in his poem "*Catullus: Excrucior*," wisely maintains this simplicity of terms: "*I hate and—love*. The sleepless body hammering a nail nails/ itself, hanging crucified" (8, 1-2). Bidart (through Catullus), by first addressing the hate, hypothetically descends from Darley's solitude into the depths of his own loneliness—solitude torn down from within. Then, the love that remains scatters from fragments of the beloved. Bidart's "body," similar to the "terminology" that Darley attempts to translate, continues to "[nail] / itself, hanging crucified," within the mire that the beloved's residue forms. Hate precedes love because, as I pointed out earlier, the pain leaves a heavier imprint on the lover. Darley assembles the contradictory terms in which he represents his destitution—to love, to hate, to hate, to love. The pattern he fills confuses the aim of his desire. Pablo Neruda explains Darley's confusion: "I love you only because it's you/ I love; I hate you no end, and hating you/ bend to you" (141, 5-7). Even though the "terminology" seems to be translated, the emotions whirl within the erratic pulse of Darley's experiences.



Durrell has Nessim, Justine's husband, declare in relation to his wife, "hate is only unachieved love" (*Justine* 207). Similar to Darley's terms of distinction, Nessim's statement implies that love can be formed from the ingot of hate, its opposite, if the lover vigorously attends to the work. The statement simplifies the phases of the inexplicable heart and places the emphasis on the lover's duty rather than luck. However, this statement omits the fluctuation of love as a medium. Respectively, he believes that the descent to hate doesn't fully occur because even Darley cannot remain there. The statement attempts to position these terms into contradictory points of stability. For Durrell, love, if achieved, is only temporary. He has Darley comment: "There should be a whole vocabulary of adjectives with which to qualify the noun—for no two contained the same properties; yet all contained the one indefinable quality, one common unknown in treachery. Each of us...could turn the lying face of 'unlove' towards the person who most loved and needed us" (*Balthazar* 131). Darley cools Nessim's position by acknowledging the "indefinable quality" of chaotic reversals. Love and hate become terms of classification, not ideals. Durrell believes that love cannot be ascended to because of this multiplicity of forms. The lover's parameters shift according to the given beloved, the situation, and ever-impending time. Cursed by this attempt, the lover seeks to identify the wound that has been struck. The lover wants to fill the amorous situation with the reassurance of the necessary word—love. John Berryman, in his sonnet "They may suppose, because I would not cloy your ear," satirically delivers:

With 'love' and 'love', I love you not, but blurred

Lust with strange images, warm, not quite sincere

.....

I want a verse fresh as a bubble breaks,  
 As little false...Blood of my sweet unrest  
 Runs all the same—I am in love with you. (23, 3-13)

Love's elusive qualities (it changes with each beloved) cause the lover to accentuate the "Blood of sweet unrest" Berryman so poignantly woos. Classification attempts to cage this instability of emotions.

Darley admits the false pretenses that love and hate contain: "the words that lovers use at times are charged with distorting emotions. Only their silences have the cruel precision which aligns them to truth" (*Justine* 226). Durrell, as a writer, obviously creates Darley in such a position to offset the exactitude in this statement. But in silence the lover must attend to the action. The action whittles away to the single gesture in which the beloved may "align them to the truth" that the lover craves. Or, in the least, Durrell sets the cherished honesty contained in the gestures of sex against the force in which Justine and Darley tear them down. Silence increases the function of these gestures and juxtaposes the fluctuating betrayal of the words 'love' and 'hate'. The paradox of using 'love' comes from the ease in which the lover could say 'hate'. The lover who uses them lightly and thoughtlessly destroys the integrity of the words as representation of emotions. The force of each state must be gathered in the experience of the lover. For Darley, as I have stated earlier, the memories of pain are necessary to his survival and the ability in which he justifies the cause between 'loving' and 'hating' Justine. Balthazar posits that, "Truth is not what is uttered in full consciousness" (*Balthazar* 146). The truth Darley attempts might fail because he desires to express his malleable emotions behind this thin, worn veil of the words 'love' and 'hate'.

For Darley, the words 'love' and 'hate' are separated from the muscle of their normal use. Darley samples their irregularity in conversations with Justine and realizes that he needs a commitment from her. Emotions need a tangible event in which to signify a beginning or an end. Darley overlooks the gestures of sex because the sexual act for Justine has been abused. Communication remains stuck in the oblique shadows of their vocal affirmations. Silence loses its power. A 'love' is piled on 'love' while the 'hate' is buried within 'hate'. Darley contradicts his own observation that "distorting emotions" must be abated with silence. Like most desperate lovers, he pledges in an extreme emotional state to risk his life by informing Nessim their affair. "Justine, what is to become of us?... We shall have to stop this altogether. I can't bear to think you might be in danger... Or else I should go straight to Nessim and confront him with..." (*Balthazar* 222-23). Inviting danger enhances the worth of the risk while strengthening the sacrifice that Darley will make for his beloved. However, Darley realizes his feeble attempt to inform Nessim of information the husband probably already has: "...With what? I did not know" (*Balthazar* 223). Darley, unsure of a solution, wants the affirmation that Justine will sacrifice for him, yet asphyxiates in his own utterances. The commitment he hoped to conjure flattens when he senses Justine's inability to draft the edict he desires. She calms his wild flailing into a fizzle. The position of commitment, using new words of revival, is not reached. Justine resorts to the comfort of distance: "...simply wait...simply love, above all...and we shall see..." (*Balthazar* 223). Her words seal the pattern of communication while reinforcing their destination. Justine fails to extend the risk Darley craves.

Darley, sewn with seed of the unrequited, nourishes his ambition for an absolute love by pledging his dedication to Justine: “the last few months...I had lived only for one person—Justine”(Balthazar 215). Justine becomes addictive for Darley. In reflection, removed from the events that caused such a pledge, the mark that Justine left could easily be surmised as tainted: “I suppose that in all this Justine had surrendered to me only one of the many selves she possessed and inhabited” (Balthazar 130). Events pressed through the sieve of time gather in the silt of Darley’s emotions. The experiences still sting in recollection. The falsity in encountering “one of the many selves” at first shocks Darley, yet he quickly removes the surprise to assess the damage: “The really horrible thing is that the compulsive passion which Justine lit in me was quite as valuable as it would have been had it been ‘real’” (Balthazar 140). The truth and revolving love to which Darley swore sheds the husk of its appearance. Justine had created a self that corresponded to Darley’s desire. Durrell tills the argument: would have Darley’s expectations been fulfilled had Justine loved with all of her capacity? No, because Durrell provides Darley with the facility to supplement Justine’s lack with his imagination. Darley takes the truth he has been given and layers upon the necessary fill. His imagination hardens under the burden. By revealing so little, Justine demands that Darley imagine not only the self into whom he evolves, but also Justine’s corresponding self. Darley admits this weakness in his dissection of Justine’s attraction towards him: “Beleaguered thus, I was nevertheless defined and realized in myself by the very quality which (of course) hurt me most: selflessness. *This* is what Justine loved in me—not my personality” (Justine 197). Thus, unlike Pursewarden, Justine deftly handles Darley’s imagination because she demands that he work so heavily to achieve the “proper self” he so gloriously admires. However,

when Balthazar blemishes the validity of Darley's experiences, Darley wisely doubts his perception of Justine. His imagination considers facts outside of the two identities he has created. The truth becomes skewed. The Justine he loved differs from the image Balthazar presents. Shakespeare, in his play *Troilus and Cressida*, presents a similar conflict in which Troilus must distinguish between the Cressida he knew and the Cressida that really was:

This she? No, this is Diomed's Cressida.

If beauty have a soul, this is not she;

If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,

If sanctimony be the gods' delight,

If there be rule in unity itself,

This is not she. O, madness of discourse,

That cause sets up with and against itself!

Bifold authority, where reason can revolt

Without perdition, and loss assume all reason

Without revolt! This is and is not Cressid. (5.2. 141-150)

Shakespeare disarms Troilus with "that cause," pinning the variations of the Cressida others know against the Cressida he knew in times of love. Troilus, similar to Darley, finds that insight forces choice, choice stains earlier perceptions, and these perceptions gestate into the truth now believed. Thus, doubt pulsates within each lover, conflicting with the experiences deemed by Darley as "real."

In Darley's claim, "even this half-love filled my heart to overflowing" (*Balthazar* 223), he understands the flexibility and forcefulness of the delusion he is permitted. Once

again Arnauti, Justine's first husband, enlightens Darley's "half-love": "There is no pain compared to that of loving a woman who makes her body accessible to one and yet who is incapable of delivering her true self—because she does not know where to find it" (*Justine* 136). Darley should be at fault for believing in the lie that adorns Justine. This insight excuses Darley's behavior in trying to create a communication of ascension. Justine could not provide the "true self" (risk) that Darley believes he exposes to her. Justine's values are misconstrued because she does not know the value of giving. Durrell posits that because of love's multiplicity, the lover cannot know the "true self" of the beloved. And, specifically, because various truths can be peeled from what he experiences, the lover cannot consistently know his own boundaries in love.

Darley attempts to reconstruct the pattern of his relationship with Justine. His inquisitiveness echoes in Ondaatje's Count Almásy, in *The English Patient*: "He has been disassembled by her. And if she has brought him to this, what has he brought to her?" (155). Count Almásy, like Darley, wants to betray the visage of convenience common to their beloveds. He wants to disrupt the patterns. Darley attempts the same search, to be "disassembled," but is eventually content in the patterns that Justine sets as features of this mask. Darley senses the self lying behind each lover, common to Pursewarden's earlier quotation on the "selected fictions...conditioned by our position in space and time" (*Balthazar* 14). He realizes the lover's habit of reinventing what he wants the beloved to see: "Personality as something with fixed attributes is an illusion—but a necessary illusion *if we are to love!*" (*Balthazar* 15). For the lovers, truth vibrates in this masking and re-masking, reinforcing Durrell's perspective that love cannot ascend towards an absolute. For Durrell, the lover doesn't have the strength to hold that position.

Durrell grants Balthazar the wisdom to point out that “fact is unstable in its nature” (*Balthazar* 102). This is not to say that Darley cannot continuously seek what he may not find.

Darley’s resolution must once again derive from a choice he has to make concerning Justine. However, the choice this time is not whether to love her, but that he must choose whether or not to believe that his love, now recently passed, was the love he needed. Troilus concludes the speech I have excerpted above by distinguishing which visage of Cressida he will choose:

Cressid is mine, tied with the bonds of heaven

.....

The fractions of her faith, orts of her love,

The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy relics

Of her o’createn faith, are bound to Diomed. (*Tro*.5.2.158-164).

Troilus places his Cressida among the celestial and thinks he forces Diomedes, his competition, to feed on the “orts of her love.” Darley, like Troilus, must believe that which pertains to the “proper self.” Straying from this path, he reverts to the ill-conceived pattern of Justine’s deceit. Ultimately, he doesn’t obtain Justine in the harmonic “bonds of heaven” like Troilus, but notices the fallacy of truth and multiplicity of love. This is because Darley, rather than turning from the “orts of her love,” feeds off of them. Durrell’s emphasis of love’s chaotic temperament causes Darley to re-examine these events. He must resolve his desire by gathering his losses where, “from among many sorts of failure each selects the one which least compromises his self-respect: which lets him down the lightest” (*Justine* 196).

Durrell ironically provides Darley with what might be the answer to his desire not within Darley's own musings, but in his dialogue with Pursewarden. Pursewarden's keen insight rises through the bedrooms of his licentious behavior. He delivers, through Balthazar's telling, profound opinions on the capabilities of lovers. He praises the profitable use of the imagination, noticing its link to the amorous: "The truest form of right attention is of course love" (*Balthazar* 141). He praises the attentive mind that can separate itself from the flanks of sexual actions. However, he believes in a potency of the pure moment that relies on the cohesion between the rambling mind and the indifferent body. Unlike Darley, Pursewarden realizes these moments are temporary. Within these moments illumination, not ascension, may be acquired: "I want above all to combine, resolve and harmonize the tensions so far created. I feel I want to sound a note of...affirmation—though not in the specific terms of philosophy or religion. It should have the curvature of an embrace, the wordlessness of a lovers' code" (*Balthazar* 238). His resolution, warmed by this "affirmation," provides shelter for Darley's examination of his boundaries. His desire is to let go that which he most wants. Pursewarden, and coincidentally Durrell, believe that the penitent will receive mercy in the storm. Love's chaotic pulse swells too much to be maneuvered with skill. Only the lovers that relinquish to its sway shall receive illumination. The moment, Rilke describes in *The Sonnets to Orpheus*, where the lover may "Be—and yet know the great void where all things begin/ the infinite source of your most intense vibration" (*Selected Poems* 245, 9-10).



For Durrell, love cannot be dissected completely. Its volatile nature doesn't allow such operations. The illumination granted does not forgive or favor. The lover must respect the body and mind, cherishing the solitude that lives within this temporary form of chaos. A purpose might be evident. Neruda reaffirms the lover's situation:

thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,  
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

.....

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where

.....

so I love you because I know no other way  
than this: where *I* does not exist, nor *you*. (39, 7-12)

The lover cannot pursue darkness, but only be willing to let it fall upon him. Pursewarden develops this purpose:

At first...we seek to supplement the emptiness of our individuality through love,  
and for a brief moment enjoy the illusion of completeness. But it is only an  
illusion. For this strange creature, which we thought would join us to the body of  
the world succeeds at last in separating us most thoroughly from it. Love joins  
and then divides. How else would we be growing? (*Balthazar* 234)

Darley's quest continues in the second half of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. Other fictions will be peeled from the events that have transpired, unlayering what is already known. Darley's quest will continue to define itself in various forms, the "proper self" worn from a sea-change. For Darley, as the lover, the inexplicable ocean of desire presses

him to keep afloat. Each immersion strains the muscle of his heart while illuminating his surroundings. For the waves will remain constant in their chaos.

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## **VITA**

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**This thesis was typed by Jamison Panko.**