

**Narouz Hosnani: A Significant Character in Lawrence Durrell's
*Balthazar, Mountolive, and Clea.***

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Abstract

This paper argues that Narouz Hosnani is not an insignificant character as many critics believe. Despite malformation, cruelty and passivity, Narouz is a significant character because he possesses what most characters in *Balthazar*, *Mountolive*, and *Clea* have lost, genuine tenderness, poignant affectivity, and affluent fertility. He is the only character in these novels who survives the devastating feminization and castration that men like Darley, Mountolive and Pursewarden undergo, and he emerges as the most potent, virile figure. Though presented as a cruel, relentless, and primitive figure, Narouz, unlike all other characters, lives a spiritually fertile life compared to the impoverished lives of the city Alexandrians.

ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى إثبات أن نروز حسناني ليس بالشخصية غير المهمة كما يظن كثير من النقاد. بل هو برغم خلقته الشائنه وقسوته وخشونه طبعه شخصية مهمة لأنه احتفظ بما فقدته معظم شخصيات بلنزار ومونتليف وكلها من عواطف حادة متدفقة وحنان صادق وقدرة على الإحصاب. فهو الرجل الوحيد في هذه الروايات الذي ينجو من تيار الإخضاع الذي وقع فيه أمثال دارلي ومونتليف وبيرسواردن ليرمز كأكثر شخصيات هذه الروايات فتوة وفحولة. وعلى الرغم من تصويره في هذه الروايات كرجل بدائي قاس لا يعرف الرحمة إلا أن نروز دون غيره من شخصيات هذه الروايات يعيش حياة مليئة بالخصب الروحي وليس كغيره من سكان ألاسكندرية ممن قنعوا بخياة يطبعها الفقر الروحي الشديد.

**Narouz Hosnani: A Significant Character in Lawrence Durrell's
*Balthazar, Mountolive, and Clea.***

At many points in Lawrence Durrell's *Balthazar* (1958), *Mountolive* (1958), and *Clea* (1960), Narouz Hosnani is presented as a deformed figure. In *Balthazar*, for example, Narouz resembles camels, "His upper lip was split literally from the spur of the nose—as if by some terrific punch; it was a harelip. . . [that] exposed the ends of a white tooth and ended in two little pink tongues of flesh in the centre of his upper lip which were always wet" (68). Later, the narrator tells us that Narouz "had a curious hissing shy laugh," and that "the whole sum of movements was ungainly—arms and legs somewhat curved and hairy as a spider" (68). In *Mountolive* Leila makes the comparison overt: "the children teased him, calling him a camel, and that hurt him. You know that a camel's lip is split into two" (27). When sad or hurt, Narouz makes the sounds of a camel. In the carnival he thinks he has murdered Justine; an act that puts him in an unusual agony. To relieve himself, Narouz goes to the woman he genuinely loves, Clea. She describes how Narouz kneels, like camels, and starts to sob. In *Balthazar*, Clea sees Narouz's suffering and sob not as a human cry, but merely as "the noise of a she-camel crying" (230). A further association between Narouz's voice and the sounds of camels is found in *Mountolive*, after Narouz delivers his sermon, where Pursewarden tells us: "when we got back to the tent the new preacher [Narouz] was lying wrapped in his blanket sobbing in a harsh voice like a wounded she-camel" (126).

In other places, Narouz is portrayed as a cruel and violent character. His cruelty is most obvious on animals: bats, roosters, and camels. Narouz's violence is suggested

and further stressed by the whip that he uses to cut animals with. One of the most malevolent scenes in *Mountolive* occurs when Nessim, Narouz's brother, visits him, and witnesses his cruelty to birds. To stress Narouz's savagery against birds, Durrell creates a sort of romantic, peaceful backdrop against which the bloody incident takes place: "The violet light of dusk was already in the air and the earth-vapours were rising from the lake. The gnats rose into the eye of the dying sin silvstreams, to store the last memories of the warmth upon their wings. The birds were collecting their families. How peaceful it all seemed!" (222). Immediately after this scene, the focus shifts to Narouz and his whip. Nessim hears "the sullen crack of the whip," and then he sees his brother:

"The man with the whip, standing there, so intently peering into the sombre well of the courtyard, registered in his very stance a new, troubling flamboyance, an authority which did not belong . . . to the repertoire of Narouz's remembered gestures" (222). Then, the focus shifts to Narouz's victim, the bat:

A bat ripped across the light and he saw Narouz's arm swing with an involuntary motion and then fall to the side again; from his vantage point at the top of the stairway he could shoot, so to speak, downwards upon his target . . . the factor came out of the outhouse with a broom with which he started to sweep up the fragments of the fluttering bodies of Narouz's victims which littered the earthen floor of the courtyard (223).

The choice of bats as victims exaggerates the physical brutality of Narouz and his whip; bats are traditionally thought of as sinister birds as they do their business in darkness. In *Birds With Human Souls*, Beryl Rowland writes: "Appearing mainly at night, they [bats

and owls] are commonly thought to be predatory and sinister, emblems of spiritual darkness" (7). Furthermore, bats are often associated with vampires. In the above scene, the bat, a terrifying predator, is reduced into a victim of Narouz's terrifying whip.

Narouz, like his camels, ends up passive. The men who kill Narouz are as indifferent to his agony and suffering as the workers who cut up the camels. Like his camels, Narouz ignores the fact that he is being murdered and even ignores the pain of his death: "Despite the internal hemorrhages, the drumming of the pulses in his ears, the fever and pain, the patient was only resting—in a sense—husbanding his energies for the appearances of Clea" (M, 310). Like the camels that are axed in the civilized city, Narouz is not able to understand why he is being killed by the city's agents. In addition to the men, Clea takes part in axing Narouz. The dying Narouz wishes to see Clea for the last time. Nessim begs her to see his dying brother, but she feels disgusted and refuses to come, thus allowing the final blow of the city's axe to fall. "What could I do Nessim?" she asks. "He is nothing to me, never was, never will be. O it is so disgusting" (M, 309).

Based on such textual portrait of Narouz, critics have regarded him as an insignificant character, and have thought of him as an evil, primitive, savage, passive and bestial figure. In "A Note on Lawrence Durrell," Richard Aldington sees Narouz simply as "a Victor Hugo figure of horror" (10). Critic Gerald Jay Goldberg thinks that Narouz's physical deformity is a reflection of his mind, and describes him as "the harelippped and harebrained younger brother of Nessim" (389). In "Durrell's Heraldic Universe," Christopher Burns views him as a power-hungry figure, and that he must be destroyed because "he has become obsessed with power" (384). In "The Alexandria

Quartet: Form and Fiction,” Lee Lemon ignores Narouz’s humanly nature and his potential for genuine affectivity only to view him as a representation of bestiality. Describing Narouz in love with Clea, Lemon writes: “[Narouz is] the beast in love with beauty” (334). Other critics view him as a deformed figure with “a murderous character” (Kacvzinsky, 54), a cruel farmer, and “a religious fanatic” (Bode, 137).

However, Narouz is not an insignificant character as many critics believe. What most critics have ignored or failed to see is that despite malformation, passivity and cruelty, what characterizes Narouz most is genuine tenderness, poignant affectivity, and affluent fertility. Besides violence, sensitivity marks Durrell’s romantic “savage.” He is an epitome of the simple country as opposed to the cruel, yet seductive, city of civilization, Alexandria. Narouz is thonly character to escape the devastating fand castration that many city dwellers undergo, and emerges as the most potent, virile figure. Despite malformation, passivity and cruelty, Narouz lives a spiritually fertile life compared to the impoverished lives of the city Alexandrians

When associating Narouz with camels, physical deformity (his harelip), and passivity are highlighted. However, critics, as well as readers, often fail to discern the animal’s sexuality which, of course, form an important aspect of Narouz’s character. In *Animals with Human Faces*, Beryl Rowland writes: “The camel’s most conspicuous role was sexual” (49). To stress the sexuality of the animal, Rowland gives examples of its lavisicious nature:

It was a medieval nymphomaniac. Alan of the Isles stated that the camel ministered to the wants of men like a bought slave (*quasi servus*

emptitius), and this idea may have contributed to a belief in the camel's passion for sexual intercourse. In the Old Testament the camel in heat was a metaphor for Israel whoring after foreign gods (Jeremiah: ii, 23) (49-50).

The association of Narouz with the camel, seen in this regard, is very effective. While the inhabitants of the civilized city are "wounded in their sex" (*J*: 14), Narouz's primitive sexuality remains intact. He survives sexual fragmentation, castration, and feminization that haunt many male characters in Durrell's novels. Probably the best witness on Narouz's potency and hypervirility is the most successful writer in the novels, Purswarden, who finds himself "Fecundated" by Narouz. With this phallic imagery before us, we remember how the young Durrell pays homage to his literary master, Henry Miller. Durrell proudly boasts, "in telling anyone about myself these days, I always say I'm the first writer to be fertilized by H.M." (*Private Correspondence*: 90). In both cases, the two novelists, Purswarden and Durrell, assume a sort of procreative role in a "creative" intercourse. Purswarden's and Durrell's wording places them in a specifically "feminine" relation to more masculine figures, Narouz and Miller who can "fecundate" and "fertilize."

Durrell chooses Narouz to embody Darley's, as well as the city European's ideal of masculinity. Narouz wears loose peasant clothes that "expos[e] arms and hands of great power covered by curly dark hair" (*B*: 68). Unlike the majority of Alexandrians, Narouz possesses a powerful body that gives off "a sensation of overwhelming strength held rigidly under control" (*B*: 68). Narouz's physical appearance is that of an untamed

savage who epitomizes sensual virility. This image is backed by the phallic symbol that accompanies Narouz all the time, the whip. Narouz is so skilled a man that, with his whip, he can single out and mutilate animals. Unlike most Alexandrians in Durrell's fiction, he does not fear the threat of feminization that haunts men like Darley, Mountolive, and Pursewarden.

Narouz's virility and potency are so overwhelming that he can project his love, sensual and psychical, onto any woman he chooses. Unlike Darley, Mountolive and many citizens of the city, Narouz's sexual authority is neither threatened, nor blocked. For example, in the night of the Mulid, Narouz's easy movements culminate in a feverish intercourse with an aged, fat prostitute, in whose voice and body he imagines Clea's presence:

a voice spoke out of the shadows at his side—a voice whose sweetness and depth could belong to one person only: Clea. He was stabbed to the quick—drawing his breath sharply, painfully, and joining his hands in a sudden gesture of childish humility at the sound. The voice was the voice of a woman he loved but it came from a Moslem woman who sat unveiled before her paper hut on a three-legged stool. As she spoke, she was eating a sesame cake with the aid of some huge caterpillar nibbling a lettuce—and at the same time speaking in the veritable accent of Clea! . . . Blind now to everything but the cadences of the voice he followed her like an addict . . . Then he sought her mouth feverishly, as if he would suck the image of Clea from her breath.

(B: 166)

Narouz ignores the ugliness of the aged prostitute only to create his desired object of love. Narouz's potency and virility enable him to imbue the prostitute with his blocked desires for Clea. His encounter with the prostitute reveals a fact about the nature of sexual attraction. According to Freud, it is not necessary to have a link between sexual instinct and object choice. The objects of our desires are what we really construct in our fantasies (*Three Essays*: 13-13, 37-38). When Balthazar says "Sex has left the mind and entered the imagination" (*J*: 96), Narouz puts this theory into practice as he encounters the prostitute.

Darley has witnessed Narouz's copulation with the prostitute. About this incident he writes: "my memory revives something which it had forgotten; memories of a dirty booth with a man and woman lying together in a bed and myself looking down at them, half drunk, waiting my turn" (*B*: 167). The words "waiting my turn" may have two interpretations: he is waiting his turn to take Narouz's place and projects, as does Narouz, the images of his love for Justine on the prostitute; or, he means to take the place of the prostitute and thus be "fecundated," like Pursewarden, by Narouz. The second interpretation is based on the obstruction of Darley's sexual and masculine authority, which results in castration and emasculation at the hands of Justine. In this incident, however, the first interpretation seems highly plausible as Darley remarks:

And this woman, with her 'black spokes of toiling hair', that lay in Narouz's arms—would Clea or Justine recognize themselves in a mother-image of themselves woven out of moneyed flesh? Narouz was drinking

Clea thirstily out of this old body hired for pleasure, just as I myself wished only to drink Justine (*B*: 167).

Whether Darley was waiting his turn to take the place of Narouz or the prostitute, Narouz emerges, in this scene, as Darley's masculine ideal. Unlike Darley, Narouz is never "wounded in [his] sex"; he is a hypervirile, hyperpotent person who is powerful enough to feminize, castrate, and "fecundate" the city's citizens.

Narouz's masculinity is stressed in another incident. This time at the annual carnival at Cervoni's house. The Cervoni ball climaxes in the death of Toto de Brunel, a homosexual character. Wearing Justine's ring, Toto becomes a feminized, an "unmanned" man. By wearing Justine's ring Toto achieves "a miracle long desired . . . to be turned from a man into a woman" (*B*: 200). The threat of Narouz as a monstrous man comes from the fact that he has killed a human being in his own sphere. Toto's murder by Narouz is quite significant and symbolic: the hypermasculine Narouz has slain a feminine self-image. While Pursewarden is "fecundated" by Narouz, Toto gets "pinned." Like Toto, Clea's hand is "pinned" to a submerged wreck by Narouz's harpoon while in his island. It is symbolic that Narouz's harpoon, a phallic symbol, hits Clea's means of independent creative productivity, her hand. In a sense, Clea's creativity and artistic fertility has been castrated by Narouz's phallus, the harpoon.

Critics like Lee Lemon ignore Narouz's humanly nature and his potential for genuine affectivity only to view him as a representation of bestiality. Describing Narouz in love with Clea, Lemon writes, "[Narouz is] the beast in love with beauty" (334). However, unlike all other love affairs in Durrell's novels, Narouz's is a psychical, not

physical, love. It is a sort of "mutual masturbation" (Fraser: 156). Narouz's physical love making to the elderly prostitute whose low, rich voice reminds him of Clea, is also a psychical love-making to the absent Clea. Whereas the carnival gives Narouz a golden opportunity to conceal his harelip, Clea avoids the carnival at all costs. Narouz's love is heavily blocked by intimidation. He writes letters to the woman he loves, but he never mails them. He has made preparations for marriage; but again his intimidation prevents him: "After he died I discovered some letters to Clea; in his cupboard along with the old circumcision-cap there was a nosegay of wax flowers and a candle the height of a man. As you know a Copt proposes with these. But he never had the courage to send them!" (C: 60).

In *Balthazar*, Narouz recreates Clea in the form of a prostitute with a voice that is as low and rich as Clea's: "Blind now to everything but the cadences of the voice he followed her like an addict" (B: 166). After Narouz finishes copulation with the elderly prostitute he becomes "swollen with a relief he could barely stand" (B: 167). His relief comes from the fact that this psychic love-making to Clea has led him to "completely forg[et] Clea at this moment" (B: 167); or even that "the act had delivered him from her image" (B: 168). The act makes Narouz feel that he could have "the courage to *hate*" Clea (B: 168). Like the child prostitutes of the Arab quarter's brothels, Narouz yearns to make contacts with the people he admires. He loves Clea, and by extension the city of Alexandria to which she belongs, "passionately," but "with an exile's love" (B: 152).

Clea, in Durrell's novels, functions as everybody's confidante. She makes intimate friendships with Scobie, Darley, Balthazar, Melissa, Justine, Nessim,

Mountolive, Pursewarden, Amaril—almost everybody except Narouz. She befriends Nessim, comforts the dying Melissa (*B*: 134), listens to Scobie's "interminable monologues" (*J*: 127), designs Semira's nose (*C*: 90), seduces Pursewarden as she commands him to take her virginity (*C*: 109), and shares thoughts with her lover, and would-be-artist, Darley. She extends compassion almost to all except Narouz. Durrell presents her as "gentle, lovable," but "*unknowable*" (*J*: 127). Her unknowability is most evident in the scene in which Narouz confesses his love for her. At the carnival, Narouz thinks he has killed Justine while actually he has killed Toto who was wearing Justine's ring. After this act, Narouz goes to Clea's. In the only instance they speak to each other, Clea describes how he arrives at her door:

Then he drew a great breath and forced his muscles to obey him and said in a small marionette's voice: "I have come to tell you that I love you because I have killed Justine." . . . "What?" I stammered. He repeated in an even smaller voice, a whisper, but mechanically as a child repeating a lesson: "I have come to tell you that I love you because I have killed Justine (*B*: 230).

Narouz knows that Clea and Justine are lovers. His repetition of the statement "I love you because I have killed Justine" makes clear Narouz's conviction that he is now able to love Clea "because" he has eliminated Justine. Compared to all lovers in Durrell's fiction, Narouz's affectivity is the strongest, but Clea's rejection of this love is, nonetheless, the most firm. She responds to his noble love with "intense embarrassment and disgust" (*B*: 232). As an intimate friend to every body, the reader expects that the

“gentle” Clea will respond gently to Narouz’s appeal for recognition; but she proves unpredictable, “unknowable.” She reacts to his kissing her hand by seeking to “obliterate the kisses once and for all, to expunge the memory of them,” rubbing her hands “palms upward, up the red plush arm of the chair” in the Cecil hotel (*B*: 233). Narouz’s fertile and genuine affectivity finds only sterility and “disgust.” Clea has turned Narouz’s noble love into “sadness.”

Then lastly burst from the hairy throat of the dying man a single tremendous word, the name of Clea, uttered in the cavernous voice of a wounded lion; a voice which combined anger, reproof and an overwhelming sadness in its sudden roar (*M*: 312).

After his death, Narouz makes a final appeal for recognition. This time, however, it is in his own space that he seduces Clea and her new lover, Darley. Early in *Clea*, both lovers find themselves rapt, as if it were during a dance:

And so we joined the thronging dancers in the great circle which blazed with spinning prismatic light hearing the soft drum-beats punctuate our blood, moving to the slow grave rhythms like the great wreaths of coloured seaweeded swinging in some under-water lagoon, one with the dancers and with each other (*C*: 93).

Clea and Darley exist in an imaginary lagoon, but Narouz is the only character to have a physical lagoon. By the end of the novel Clea finds Narouz’s island; she and Darley then begin to enter his space. Both lie on the beach, “the quiet rhythms of the blood responding only to the deeper rhythms of the sea and sky” (*C*: 228). In Narouz’s island,

“thought itself perished, was converted into a fathomless content in physical action” (C: 228). Darley and Clea enjoy Narouz’s island. However, Clea starts to feel ill-tempered. She first identifies the cause of her malaise as the sound of weeping, “a frail cry of a small child, or a pet locked out” (C: 233). Later, however, it begins to sound like “a she-camel in distress or some horrible mechanical toy” (C: 235). As discussed earlier, Narouz has been consistently associated with camels. Moreover, these are almost exactly the terms Clea uses to describe Narouz’s weeping when he arrives at her apartment to confess his love: “a she-camel crying, or some dreadful mechanical toy” (B: 230). Narouz’s appeal for recognition, even after his death, returns to haunt Clea.

By understanding their appeal for recognition, Scobie realizes the stand-off between Clea’s will and Narouz’s appeal. Scobie predicts that Narouz will drag Clea into his grave: death (C: 206). Clea, who turns white after hearing this prediction, realizes that Narouz might punish her for her sterile response to his declaration of noble love. Scobie’s prediction almost comes to pass. Balthazar, Clea, and Darley sail in Clea’s boat to the little island of Narouz. There, while swimming underwater, Clea is struck by a harpoon from the dead Narouz’s gun, which Balthazar has been carelessly handling. Clea’s hand has been pinned to the submerged wreck of a ship by Narouz’s spear, and she can not free herself. Darley gives in to save Clea, freeing her by chopping off her hand, and leaving it underwater.

Once again, Clea does not heed Narouz’s appeal for recognition. She prefers to sacrifice her hand, her means for artistic creativity, rather than respond to Narouz’s appeal. Like Pursewarden who first views the child prostitutes as “ants,” Clea can not

share affectivity with Narouz, whom she sees as “a creature—I can not say a fellow creature” (C: 231). Unlike Pursewarden, however, Clea’s response to Narouz’s appeal remains sterile. She leaves her mortal hand in Narouz’s space, and she becomes a true artist with the help of the mechanical hand. Though Darley rescues Clea, her true artishood is achieved at the hands of the dead Narouz. As Jennifer Linton Fruin puts it: “it is completely valid that Clea becomes a true artist through Narouz, in that it is his harpoon which destroys her mortal hand, which is then replaced by the truly creative hand which lets her slip into the company of the immortal ones” (9).

In Durrell’s above mentioned novels Alexandria is presented as a place of devastating suffering and innumerable varieties of pain. In the city, all are “wounded in their sex” (J: 14); children are victimized, reduced into beggars, prostitutes, and “ants,” (C: 148), and they are juxtaposed with filthy rats. Alexandria has become a cage that entraps the wild with the tame, predators with preys, bestiality and humanity, thus creating an arena of violence and suffering. Durrell’s Alexandria is “the dead tree” that “gives no shelter,” and “the cricket” that gives “no relief.” However, Narouz is the only Durrellian character to be associated with fertility, nature and the communal hunt. Such an association is established in the vivid fish-kill at the beginning of *Mountolive*, and is symbolically reinforced when we enter the Hosnani estate at Karm Abu Girg, “an old house” whose “rooms hung with dervish trophies, hide shields, [and] bloodstained spears” (C: 47). Narouz’s association with the hunt is important in making him a symbol of nurturing, creation, and fertility. Narouz’s plantations at Karm Abu Girg are surrounded by salt, a symbol of the wasteland, desert “gradually eating into it,

expropriating it year by year, spreading their squares of cultivation . . . and pumping out salt which poisoned it" (B: 66). Desert and "rotten salts had poisoned the ground and made it the image of desolation" (B: 84). In this context Narouz becomes like the Grail Knight; he is a fisherman who lives trying to bring life to the wasteland that fringes his plantations. He becomes a sort of fertility god who nurtures the wasteland.

Narouz's attachment to fertility and life, however, are brought out bellicosely: Narouz fights a "battle against drought and sand-drift" (B: 72). All he needs from Nessim, and by extension the civilized city, is the machinery with which "he proposed to keep up and extend his attack on the dead sand" (B: 80). When both brothers ride into the desert, Narouz "had already planted this waste with carobs and green shrubs—conquered it" (B: 85). Narouz's association with fertility becomes stronger when we learn that he spends weeks in his egg incubator. In *Dreams, Myths, and Mysteries*, Mirea Eliade points out that in ancient religious rites, eggs are used as a symbol of fertility (216). In *Mountolive*, Faltaus, Narouz's father, tells Leila that "[Narouz] has been locked in the incubators for forty days" (M: 26). When Mountolive and Leila open the door of the incubator, the narrator's reflection on this act is that "they had intruded upon some tousled anchorite in a cliff-chapel" (M: 27). Narouz's nurturing his eggs is sacred. He becomes ascetic Sufi in mystic communication with god.

Though Durrell presents him as a primitive figure, Narouz helps widen our perspective of Alexandria, modern and ancient. In *Justine*, the city is Darley's world, the city that we see through his eyes. The perspective widens in *Balthazar* to include ancient Alexandria, and by extension Egypt—the ancient land and its mores, so remote from the

civilized world of Alexandria and, yet, the cradle of the city. Through Narouz and the Hosnani estate at Karm Abu Girg, we glimpse a more primitive life. There, cyclical time and archaic ritual determine existence, as Nessim notes on his visit with Narouz to the desert Arabs:

A knowledge of forms only was necessary now, not insight, for these delightful folks were automata . . . The fierce banality of their lives was so narrow, so regulated. If they stirred one at all it was . . . without expressing anything above the level of the primitive . . . They came there, to the little circle of tents, manhood's skies of hide, invented by men whose childish memories were so fearful they had perforce to invent a narrower heaven in which to contain the germ of race; in this little cone of hide the first child was born, the first privacy of the human kiss invented (B: 88).

In that "ragged territory like the edges of a wound" (B: 84), where the cultivated lands meet the desert, Narouz is the master who extends his power with his great whip.

Contact with the spirit overwhelms Narouz's psyche. Nessim notices that his voice is different; it sounds "drugged—the harsh authoritative voice of someone drunk on *hashish*, perhaps, or opium" (M: 223). He further notices that Narouz speaks with "the voice of someone signaling from a new orbit in an unknown universe" (M: 223). The voice of Narouz is free from all the social dictates of Alexandria's civilization. The new Narouz finds that his brother's life in the city "among people as insubstantial as waxworks, the painted society women of Alexandria" (M: 302) is of no interest to him.

The settings created in Durrell's novels can be viewed as either civilized, or primitive. Seen in this context of the civilized Alexandria, Narouz is a psychotic whose mysterious acts render him a primitive savage who threatens the beauty and artishood, represented by Clea. On the other hand, at Karm Abu Girg and in the culture of the desert the same acts make him a sacred shaman who strives to bring life, fertility, and beauty to the wasteland. He transcends Alexandria's hideous sterility and fragmented civilization through his incarnation of the fertile divine spirit; he "seek[s] to embody the frame of the eternal in nature here upon the earth," to give the "ruler and ruled . . . a divine consciousness of their role, of their inheritance in the divine" (*M*: 320).

Alexandria, however, is not interested in Narouz's spiritual fertility. In such an ambience, Narouz becomes "a prodigy of nature" whose "powers [are] . . . deployed in a barren field which [will] stifle forever" (*M*: 231). Consequently, he is to be sacrificed. His speech at the festival of Sitna Damiana reveals the threads of the Coptic conspiracy. To warn his brother to stop preaching Nessim rides out to Karm Abu Girg. But Narouz would not succumb to his brother's threats, and by extension, those of the city's. Bribed by Nessim with a Koran stuffed with dirty money, and pressured by the British to act against the Hosnanis, Memlik Pasha sacrifices the novels' main hunter, Narouz.

When the fertility god is executed, his fertile space turns into a wasteland: "The land, *his* land, now brown and greasy as an old wineskin under the rain, compelled him. It was all he had left now to care for—trees bruised by frost, sand poisoned by desert salt, water—pans stocked with fish and geese" (*M*: 301). Narouz is assassinated next to the holy tree at Karm, with his whip coiled about him. The image of the dead Narouz

resembles that of Jesus, a hanged god. The ritual mourning that follows Narouz's death is reminiscent of the death-rebirth cycle of the ancient mythologies (*The Golden Bough*: 5: 247, 6: 225). In "Some Sources of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*" (370-71), Leigh Godshalk notices that the details of Narouz's funeral are drawn from a chapter on Coptic burial customs in S. H. Leeder's *Modern Sons of the Pharaohs*. When killed, Narouz is described as a "lost king" who surrenders to "the tuggings of the Underworld" (*M*: 311). At his funeral, the women dance "a dance recaptured from long-forgotten friezes upon the tombs of the ancient world" (*M*: 314) and call upon "the beloved body full of seed" to rise (*M*: 314). His death makes its demands on the surroundings: "Everything that might suggest the order and continuity of earthly life" is destroyed, until finally "the whole grief of the countryside [is] refunded once again into a living, purged of bitterness, reconquered by the living through the dead image of Narouz" (*M*: 315-17).

Despite his portrayal of the sterility, fragmentation, and cruelty of modern civilization—represented in the city of Alexandria, Durrell does not call for a "return to innocence" or a primitive way of life, as epitomized by Narouz. Nonetheless, Durrell makes clear the point that the primitive Narouz possesses something that most men of modern civilization have obviously lost. Compare, for example, Narouz's performance to that of Mountolive, whom we see lead the British diplomatic corps in their weekly bible lesson. Unlike Narouz, Mountolive is not a conduit of divine spirit or power. In his performance, Mountolive "enunciate[s] the splendors—incomprehensible to them all—of the passage in the Gospel of St. John" (*M*: 71), and in "a spiritless silence" (*M*: 70), he leads the singing of "the banal text of 'Onward Christian Soldiers' in the seventh edition

of the Foreign Service Hymnal" (*M*: 71). Compare, too, Narouz's effect on his audience who were "taken," "deeply moved," "absolutely captured," and—like Pursewarden—"Fecundated." On the other hand, Mountolive's audience, who loom "in the shadowy gloom of the ballroom," "looked morose and ill"; their "faces gleaming white and sunless"; Mountolive sees his audience as "bodies of trapped frogs gleaming upwards through the mirror of ice" (*M*: 70). Narouz sees life sacred, part of a sublime spirit. However, Mountolive has been "bricked up by the historical process" (*M*: 216) for so long that he "hesitate[s] to ascribe any particular meaning to life" (*M*: 138).

The stercivilization of the city traps men like Mountolive and Nessim and render them preys "gripped by the gravitational field of politics" (*M*: 270). Both Mountolive and Nessim, and by extension all Alexandrians, are "powerless" in a materialistic civilization "drained of meaning," "in a world populated by expressionless waxworks" (*M*: 270). Despite the image of savagery that Durrell projects onto Narouz, he remains a strong figure whose fertility the other characters have obviously lost. Though presented as a cruel, relentless, and primitive figure, Narouz lives a spiritually fertile life compared to the impoverished lives of the city Alexandrians.

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