Waterscapes as Other Spaces in Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*

Allyson Kreuiter

Summary

The mirage with its disruptive and deceptive phantasmagorical features is an image repeated in many of the numerous waterscapes located in Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*. Viewed through memory, the topographical reality of the *Quartet*'s waterscapes becomes a space of illusion and yet, at the same time, a real space perfectly ordered, except that it seems to remain outside of time. Hence, Durrell's waterscapes ambivalently play between the real and unreal of Other spaces in a single space. This essay examines selected waterscapes in *The Alexandria Quartet* through the theoretical and imaginative lens of Michel Foucault's conceptualisation of the heterotopia. It is contended that the mirror of the heterotopia, with its distortion of time, offers an important theoretical entry into reading Durrell's waterscapes as Other spaces. However, related to this, the article argues that Durrell's excessive and uncanny representation of these waterscapes, as remote and unreal places, acts to disturb a sense of reality, thereby establishing these Other spaces as both heterotopic and Gothic loci.

Opsomming

Die mirage met sy ontwrigtende en bedrieglike fantasmagoriese kenmerke is 'n herhalende beeld van die verskeie waterskappe in Durrell se *The Alexandria Quartet*. Die tipografiese realiteit van die *Quartet* se waterskappe word wanneer dit deur herinnering beskou word 'n ruimte van illusie. Terselfdertyd word dit egter 'n werklike ruimte wat volmaak geörden is, behalwe dat dit buite tyd bly. Durrell se waterskappe speel dus dubbelsinnig tussen die werklike en onwerklike van Ander ruimtes in 'n enkele ruimte. Hierdie artikel ondersoek geselekteerde waterskappe uit *The Alexandria Quartet* aan die hand van die teoretiese en verbeeldingryke lens van Michel Foucault se konsep heterotopie. Die betoog is dat die heterotopiese spieël met sy verwronging van tyd 'n belangrike teoretiese intrede bied tot die interpretasie van Durrell se waterskappe as Ander ruimtes. Verder word daar geargumenteer dat Durrell se oordadige en buitengewone uitbeelding van hierdie waterskappe as afgesonderde en onwerklike ruimtes dien om 'n realiteitsin te versteur, waardeur hierdie Ander ruimtes gevestig word as heterotopiese asook Gotiese lokusse.

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In his travel book *Old Calabr*ia (1915), Norman Douglas briefly mentions the Fata Morgana, those enchanting and ephemerally beautiful mirage fairy castles that are mythically associated with sorceresses and the luring of sailors to their death. Douglas writes:

> I have never beheld the enchantment of the Straits of Messina, that Fata Morgana, when, under certain conditions of weather, phantasmagoric palaces of wondrous shape are cast upon the waters – not mirrored, but standing upright; tangible, as it were, yet diaphanous as a veil of gauze.
>
> (1994: 344)

This description of a seascape mirage, with its fantastical shapes, is similarly evoked in an image found in *Balthazar*, the second novel of Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*. In this book, the city of Alexandria is seen from a boat at sea and described as being:

> Inverted in the sky, a full-scale mirage of the city, luminous and trembling, as if painted on dusty silk; yet in the nicest detail …. It hung there in the sky for a considerable time … before melting slowly into horizon mist. An hour later, the real city appeared, swelling from smudge to the size of its mirage.
>
> (1968: 13-14)

Douglas's description is perhaps a little pedestrian in comparison to that of Durrell, but both evoke the nature of the Fata Morgana and their fantastical visual effects.[1] The mirage with its disruptive and deceptive phantasmagorical features is an image repeated in many of the numerous waterscapes located in Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*. Relatively little scholarship has been conducted on the role that water plays within Durrell's tetralogy, as most critics, according to James M. Decker and Kenneth Womack, read the tetralogy as a work dominated by that landscape of a city, that of Alexandria (2003: 40). Besides Decker and Womack's 2003 article, "Lawrence Durrell's Mediterranean dream: reading *The Alexandria Quartet* and the ethical voice of the sea", there are a few other scholars who consider the nature of water in Durrell's work, see Mellard (1975) Corinne Alexandre-Garner (2005) and Wussow (2006).

Durrell scholar Isabelle Keller-Privat in her 2005 article "La chasse aquatique dans le *Quatuor d'Alexandrie* de Lawrence Durrell: un motif obsessionnel aux sources de la création" carefully considers the function of certain waterscapes in the *The Alexandria Quartet*. Exploring Durrell's obsession with water, based on the scenes of the hunts that occur both on and under water, Keller-Privat argues for the dreamy temporality of the

1. See Bruce Redwine's article *The Melting Mirage of Lawrence Durrell's White City*, which provides a brief discussion of a textual reference Durrell might have drawn upon for his own description of this mirage scene in *Balthazar*.

mirroring and reflective qualities of the waterscapes and their symbolic association with death, memory, geographical and metaphysical journeying. However, in the scholarly articles on Durrell's water-imagery, the imaginative possibilities contained in Michel Foucault's concept of the heterotopia have not been explored as a means to perform a critical reading of these waterscapes. It is through the theoretical and imaginative possibility of the heterotopia, and the Gothic elements I consider present in this spatial field, that I will examine three selected waterscapes in Durrell's *Quartet.* My choice of waterscapes from the *Quartet* mirrors those of Keller-Privat, but my aim, in contrast, is to establish Durrell's waterscapes as representative of the heterotopia as a gothically Other space. Scrutinising the real/unreal otherness of the waterscapes in the narrative of the tetralogy, I will show how as heterotopias these waterscapes act to expose behaviour that Fred Botting claims fits "only partially within dominant norms" (2004: 242). My contention is that this form of subversion represented by the spatial field of the heterotopia can be associated with the crossing of boundaries, which is a central feature of the Gothic genre. Viewed through memory, the topographical reality of the *Quartet*'s waterscapes becomes a space of illusion and yet, at the same time, a real space perfectly ordered, except that it seems to remain outside of time. Durrell's waterscapes offer an ambivalent interplay between the real and unreal where elements associated with the Gothic trope of the mirror can be related to Foucault's concept of the mirror of the heterotopia, with its dislocation and distortion of spatio-temporal relations. Thus, an exploration of the space of the heterotopia with its Gothic aspects, I suggest, offers an important and under-explored theoretical entry point into a critical reading of Durrell's excessive and uncanny representation of waterscapes in the tetralogy.

Michel Foucault first mentions the heterotopia in his book *The Order of Things* (1966). In the introduction to this book, Foucault discusses heterotopias as centring upon a "discursive/linguistic site" that transgresses and questions the coherence of the ordering system of language (Genocchio 1995: 37). However, in a 1967 lecture that Foucault gave to a group of architects and planners he focused on the spatio-temporal nature of the heterotopia. This lecture was published in 1984 in the architectural journal *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* and was later translated into English in the journals *Diacritics* and *Lotus International* and entitled "Of Other Spaces".[2] Peter Johnson regards this minor published essay on the

2. There has been much discussion about the English translations of Foucault's essay. While I am employing the translation by Robert Hurley, who entitles the essay as "Different Spaces", I prefer original English translation by J Miskowiec, in the journal *Diacritics*, who entitled it "Of Other Spaces" which, I consider, is more applicable to my exploration of Durrell's waterscapes with their real/unreal spatiality.

heterotopia as having provoked much discussion and interpretation across a wide-range of disciplines, where theorists such as Soja (1989, 1995, 1996); Hetherington (1997), Genocchio (1995); Harvey (2000); Bonazzi (2002); Barnes (2004); Thrift (2007) and Saldanha (2008) have considered the heterotopia in relation to socio-spatial real places. Unlike these aforementioned theorists, my discussion of the heterotopia in Durrell's work will not localise its approach to the heterotopia in this socio-spatial manner, nor will I look at the heterotopia as an implicit value judgement, or as a geographical, or architectural spatial differentiation.[3] Rather, in my article, I shall deploy the concept of Foucault's utopia/heterotopia as an imaginative spatio-temporal site, or Other space.

Discussing the relation between the concept of utopia and heterotopia, Foucault writes that utopias have "no real space" being "essentially unreal" (1994: 178).[4] In seeming opposition to the utopia stands Foucault's concept of the heterotopia, which he considers a real place that maintains and constitutes the boundaries of society (Botting 2004: 243). However, for Foucault the utopia and the heterotopia are spaces that remain inclusive of one another, as they are both emplacements (situated sites) that simultaneously partake of the real and the unreal. The interplay between the real and the unreal creates what Foucault (1994: 184) indicates is a "space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory". The mirror enables the illusory space, or "placeless place", of the utopia and Fred Botting (2004: 244) indicates that this mirror allows the subject to see the reflection of him/herself where they are not. The heterotopia, too, is a part of this reflective space as it disturbs the position of the viewing subject in which "I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there … I come back toward myself; I begin again … to reconstitute myself there where I am" (Foucault 1994: 179). Whilst the mirror acts as the reality of place it is simultaneously "connected with the entire space surrounding it, and utterly unreal" (Foucault 1994: 179). The subject is thus trapped inside an "unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface" of the mirror and it is against this unreal absence that the formation of the subject occurs, as the mirror and its accompanying uncanny reflection invert and transgress the rule of social spaces (Botting 2004: 243). Determined by other rules, heterotopias, with their alternative ordering, are rendered Other, which

3. For a brief analysis of the numerous criticisms with regards to Foucault's conceptualisation of the heterotopia, see Johnson (2013).

4. Many scholars have debated and provided definitions of the utopia see Bloch (2000); Jameson (2004); Marin (1984) and Siebers (1994). For a specific discussion of the utopia in Foucault's essay see Defert (1977) and Harvey (2000).

allows them to function as possible "counter sites" that "suspend, neutralize or reverse the set of relations that are designated, reflected, or represented [*refléchis*] by them" (Foucault 1994: 178). Foucault goes on to suggest that the alternative ordering of the heterotopia in the mirror is also determined by the manner in which time seems held in suspension or what he terms "slices of time" or temporal distortions. The stasis associated with the heterochrony of the heterotopia allows space and time to function more fluidly so that they defy the accepted idea of linearity.

The mirroring aspects of the heterotopia, along with the alteration of time and the haunting movement between inside and outside, parallels what David Morris regards as the repetition or doubling of events associated with the terror and uncanny nature of the Gothic (1985: 303). Fred Botting has also linked the heterotopia to the Gothic stating that the Gothic genre "reflects, inverts, contests and reproduces in often vague, obscure or fantastic terms, but no less powerfully for that, a world markedly different from the social order" (2004: 246). It is, therefore, apparent that for Botting the heterotopia is an important feature of the Gothic because it functions as a place/space where the real and the unreal simultaneously exist (Beville 2014: 38). As a site of distortion and of unreality, the Gothic exhibits heterotopic qualities that lead to the disruption of boundaries and the pleasurable *frisson* of loss and desire that this establishes, I suggest, are located in the Other spaces of Durrell's waterscapes.

This imaginary pleasure of the waterscapes and the disruption of time they represent work upon Durrell's characters, ensuring they are "no longer shaped by external hierarchies but by an uncertain internalised consciousness of his or her own position within … space which remains physically and metaphysically other" (Botting 2004: 246). Durrell's representation of the waterscapes acts to challenge and produce spatial structures that create a "placeless place" that turns what it reflects upside down, resulting in a confusion of the real and the unreal (Botting 2012: 19). Mediating narrative loci, the dreamy and fantastical waterscapes, with their disturbance of spatio-temporality, will form the focus of my critical reading of the manner in which Durrell's characters experience and represent these watery sites.

Reflective Doubling

The unreal/real space of the waterscapes in the *Alexandria Quartet* is evoked in two hunting scenes that occur on the waterscape of Lake Mareotis (Mariut), just outside Alexandria. There is the duck-hunting scene at the end of the first novel *Justine* (1966), and the fish-hunting scene that opens the third novel *Mountolive* (1963). These scenes act as heterotopically inverted reflections of one another, where the narrative action recalls events that seem to inhabit a present and a past. These scenes, as slices of time, act to

situate the two different protagonists, the narrator Darley in *Justine* and the character-focaliser David Mountolive in the novel *Mountolive*, in relation to the vision of the different, but similar, waterscapes they each encounter. The repeated mirroring and embedding of the site of the waterscape, and the sameness of Darley and Mountolive's experiences, unsettles and inverts the spatio-temporal nature of the narrative in the two novels. This heterotopic distortion is produced through a "play of relations and resemblances" and a recurrence of common elements (Johnson 2013: 794). These resemblances and the play of relations, along with the obvious narrative repetition of these scenes in the two different novels, are aspects David Morris calls basic to the terror of the Gothic, where repetition "challenges the concept of a world in which everything and everyone is unique" (1985: 304). The space of the waterscape, and the events that recur upon it, exposes the excessive and disturbingly fluid nature of the world in which Durrell's characters find themselves.

Visually and textually rich descriptions of both the early morning duck hunt and the fish hunt at twilight place the characters outside of the everyday and into a dreamlike space. Invited by his friend, the banker Nessim Hosnani, to participate in a duck hunt on the lake, the narrator Darley's description opens in the deep darkness before dawn. Sitting in the small punt on the water of the lake, Darley notes that he and the boatman are suddenly:

> scoring across the heart of a black diamond. The water is full of stars, Orion down, Capella tossing out its brilliant sparks. For a long while now we crawl upon this diamond-pointed star-floor in silence.
>
> (Durrell 1966: 188)

Writing in what appears to be the present; Darley's portrayal of the dark waterscape with the icy points of the stars mirrored on its surface is redolent of the four elements of sensory experience, fire, air, water and earth. Metaphorically likened to a light absorbing black diamond, this dark yet translucent watery space reflects the lustre and luminescence of the stars. The silent scene, with its illusory utopic mood, seems filled with an underlying music of the spheres and of written notation contained in the polyvalent word "scoring" and a sense of movement is provided to the mirror surface of the lake. According to Keller-Privat (2005: 2), this dark water functions as an "abyss that continually threatens to swallow man and this majestic spectacle is one in which he gazes at his mirrored reflection".[5] A "placeless place", Darley stares into an "unreal, virtual space" reflected by the surface of the water that reveals an inversion of sky and earth in its "diamond-pointed star-floor" (Foucault 1994: 179). The optical illusion of this waterscape as star-floor is held in a disturbance of time, which seems to

5. Ce gouffre qui menace à chaque fois d'avaler l'homme et ce spectacle majestueux dans lequel il se mire (author's translation).

have slowed to a crawl. The "real" world appears interrupted, so that whilst an effectively enacted utopia seems apparent, the counter-space of a heterotopia remains present, so that the waterscape fluidly moves between being a space of reality and illusion. However, the fathomless black water of this nocturnal lake is a participant in the uncanny anticipation of violence and death that will ensue at dawn when the hunt commences.

As the sun rises over the water, an altered but equally fantastical waterscape is revealed. Drifting on the surface of the water, Darley notes that:

> Premonitions of the dawn are already in the air as we cross the darkness of this lost world. Now the approaches to the empty water ahead are shivered by the faintest etching of islands, sprouts of beard, reeds and sedge .... Suddenly at the end of the great couloirs my vision is sharpened by a pale disjunctive shudder as a bar of buttercup-yellow thickening gradually to a ray falls slowly through the dark mass of cloud to the east .... Slowly, painfully, like a half-open door the dawn is upon us, forcing back the darkness. A minute more and a stairway of soft kingcups slides smoothly down out of heaven to touch our horizons, to give eye and mind an orientation in space which has been lacking.
>
> (Durrell 1966: 188-189)

The evocation of the waterscape now slowly alters from starry darkness into the streaks of light that presage the dawn, which is caught in the word "premonitions". This word offers a sense of foreboding and uncanny qualities that afford to the scene a creeping ghostliness. The water lies "empty", a reflective surface that is "shivered", through a *frisson* of movement that disrupts the lake's mirroring effect, fragmenting and splintering the visible experience of space and place (Bonazzi 2002: 45). This disturbance of location seems highlighted in the phrase "this lost world". The waterscape seems to reside outside of time in a stasis where all is fluid, folded back on itself, and with the threat of something violent, dark and fearful under its surface. There is a probable intertextual reference to Arthur Conan Doyle's novel *The Lost World* (1912), a story where dinosaurs still roam a swamp in South America. This intertextual relation, I suggest, offers the waterscape Darley is describing primordial qualities marked by a chaos that undermines the rationality associated with visual perspective. The scene seems to fuse reality and fantasy and, upon the surface of the lake, Darley's boat becomes a "floating part of space", the "placeless place" of the sailing vessel that Foucault regards as "the heterotopia par excellence" (1994: 185).

Entering from the East, dawn's light fills the waterscape, but the light is not yet of a clarity that defines form. Instead, this early shaft of partial light offers a slow opening up of the textual-visual plane allowing other areas to remain touched by shadows of darkness. Reed islands are "faintly etched", vague outlines visually incised into the textual description, resulting in a separation of the image into horizontals and diagonals. However, the space

of the surrounds is suddenly and quickly filled with a more lambent light that is imaged like a halo, challenging the "dark mass of cloud in the east". A sense of the world as a postlapsarian utopia is juxtaposed with the heavy Gothic tenebrosity of the clouds, so that the light seems equally suggestive of death and rebirth.

The beauty of the dawn is infused with a sense of an almost sacralised fantasy, as Darley describes the light as a "bar of buttercup-yellow" which alters the perception of the scene. According to Carolyn Korsmeyer, the visual is never free from interpretation and a person can experience visual illusions such as a patch of sunlight on a carpet appearing to look like a dropped scarf (2011: 66). She goes on to indicate that perception can alter depending upon the volume of what is seen and argues that this experience of seeing becomes a "seeing as sunlight" or the "illusory seeing as scarf" (2011: 66). This form of seeing as visual illusion Korsmeyer suggests is an "ambiguous, shifting and even inchoate experience" and is a form of "not seeing" (2011: 66). Darley's seeing and experiencing sunlight as a "bar of butter-cup yellow" emulates this illusion of 'seeing as sunlight' in which the light "thickens gradually" rather like butter, changing the volume and the depth of what Darley observes around him. This fantastical light transforms itself becoming a "stairway of soft kingcups" that appears to slide "smoothly down out of heaven". The beams swathe the space of the waterscape in this patch of yellow, in what Darley terms "great couloirs" of moving and reflected light. This light has allowed a return of visual perspective, providing to the "eye and mind an orientation in space which had been lacking". The separation between sky, horizon and the space represented by the waterscape now allows Darley to draw the reader into his optical and mental perspective, yet this visualisation turns the waterscape into a water gilding, as the rays of the sun adhere in an illusory metallic gold leafing to the mirror of the water, and the light illuminates and burnishes the scene. Durrell establishes an arousal of the visual senses, evoking a space that is outside the location of the real lake; a space that might be considered to represent an aesthetic heterotopia.[6] The tone of Darley's voice is filled with wonder and there is a sense of slowness in the writing, which mirrors the description of the calm of dawn. Nevertheless, at the heart of this visual representation of the waterscape there resides an uncanny space holding within itself a frisson of anticipation of something terrible about to be experienced. Darley mentions seeing "teal across my vision" and his bones as being "soaked in darkness" (Durrell 1966: 189). Unsettling phrases, they presage the Gothic horror of the visually embodied images of the hunt, which brings death into the space of the waterscape, where the beauty of the hunted ducks, teal, widgeon and mallard, is destroyed by the hunters' guns.

6. For more on the concept of the aesthetic heterotopia see Jacques Rancière (2010) and Gianni Vattimo (1992).

Darley describes the bodies of the ducks staggering and spinning as they are shot down and he indicates that the birds are "quite out of their minds with panic". The "placeless place" of the waterscape has been transformed into a graveyard heterotopia where the punts acts as coffins filled with the "sodden bodies of the victims, red blood running from the shattered beaks on to the floor-boards, marvellous feathers dulled by death" (Durrell 1966: 190). The word "victim" seems to connote that the birds have been murdered and alerts the reader to Darley's subjective response to the scene. The ducks have lost any individuality and are merely a singular mass of "sodden and lifeless bodies". Shattered by the sombre darkness and savage reality of death, the previous fantasy of an ethereal light-filled waterscape alters. Chaos and disintegration inform the excess of the brutal description of the death scene, transforming the waterscape into an extreme space of illusion. The interplay of the real and unreal space of the heterotopia moves between the tranquil and harmonious depiction of the beauty of the light, and the dark disturbing Gothic violence associated with death. My contention is that the initial idealised and ordered space of Durrell's waterscape suffers an inversion as it transforms into a space of difference marked by death-driven excess and terrifying destruction. Yet, the utopian-heterotopian aspects of this waterscape remain dependent upon the "difference that articulates them", so that their imaginative opposition results in the uncanny interplay between real and unreal space and pleasure and revulsion (Botting 2004: 245). In a repetition of place and event, the experience of David Mountolive during the fish hunt in which he participates on lake Mareotis, acts as an inverted mirror image of Darley's duck hunting experience. As with Darley, it is the Hosnani brothers, Nessim and Narouz, who take David Mountolive on the fish drive, during where he encounters the disruptive and fantastical Gothic beauty of the lake as Other space.

Fish Hunt and Heterotopia

Spatio-temporally, the narrative of *Mountolive*, the third novel of the *Quartet*, pre-dates that of the first novel *Justine* in which the duck hunt occurs. The mirrored repetition of Darley's and David Mountolive's experience of the waterscape unsettles and makes space and time ambivalent within the structure of the tetralogy's story world. Where Darley is the narrator of his experience, the narrative of the novel *Mountolive* is hetero-diegetic and the narration of events occurs through an unidentified external narrator's voice.[7] Details of the fish hunt and the waterscape are presented

7. There has been much scholarly debate about who the narrator might be in *Mountoliv*e see Friedman (1967); Weden (1972); Hollahan (1990) and Kaczvinsky (1997).

from a removed stance, yet are rendered with an immediacy of picturesque detail that is visible in the description of the waterscape at sunset:

> The Egyptian night fell – the sudden reduction of all objects to bas-reliefs upon a screen of gold and violet. The land had become dense as tapestry in the lilac afterglow, quivering here and there with water-mirages from the rising damps, expanding and contracting horizons, until one thought of the world as being mirrored in a soap-bubble trembling on the edge of disappearance .... The spokes of darkness which reached out to them only outlined the shapes of the reed-fringed islands, which punctuated the water like great pin-cushions, like paws, like hassocks .... With the land and the water liquefying at this rate he kept having the illusion that they were travelling across the sky rather than across the alluvial waters of Mareotis.
>
> (1963: 11-12)

The external narrator cannot share Mountolive's thoughts or emotional responses, but only watch silently from an outside position channelling what this character sees, hears, smells and feels. The visualisation of the waterscape resides within the perception of Mountolive as focalising presence. The past tense associated with an objective external narration is still present, but moves into and out of the consciousness of Mountolive, apparent in the phrases "until one thought" and "he kept having the illusion". Mountolive and Darley portray the waterscape in similar terms, but Darley uses a simpler, more muted, metaphoric manner, where Mountolive resorts to piling up similes to express perceptions, an indication of his enslavement to the waterscape's beauty. The two different perspectives act visually and textually to reveal the waterscape as a hauntingly sinister but beautifully alluring space. Durrell's employment of this unnatural movement between external narrator and focaliser's internal thought process is, I contend, a disruption of the conventional presentation of a single consistent subject in the context of a narrative. It playfully destabilises the narrative form through the employment of strange narratological devices. Time and space become fluid, moving backwards and forwards, adding immediacy to the scene within the context of recollection. The narrative structure itself seems to take on attributes of the heterotopia as it contests the rules and relations of its own space. The obverse repetition of the utopia/heterotopia mirroring space of the waterscape in the scenes found in *Justine* and *Mountolive*, I argue, ensures that Darley and Mountolive become merely effects of the reflective spaces and relations of this interplay between fantasy and reality. Kevin Hetherington (1997: 8) has noted that this alternative ordering of space is established through an Othering reliant on the difference within Other sites so that "their presence either provides an unsettling ... or an alternate representation of spatial ... relations". The strangeness of Durrell's narrative acts to subvert the apparent "realist" structure of the story world in *Mountolive*. The disruption of the structural narrative boundaries distorts the

perception of past and the present that exists between a reading of *Justine* and a reading of *Mountolive* where the waterscape becomes an intermediary and agent of Durrell's unsettling spatio-temporal and heterotopic narrative. The reader is drawn into a moment in an unreal/real space, which remains specific to the past/present of the narrative within the two novels and results in what Botting (2012: 9) identifies as a disturbance of any "sense of reality along with the aesthetic values supposed to sustain it". Durrell's narrative structure, alongside the representation of the waterscape, acts as the disturbing and distorting Gothic mirror of the heterotopia, causing the place that Mountolive, and Darley, occupies to become both real and unreal (Foucault 1994: 179).

The waterscape as a space of unsettling discourse is caught in the disruption of time in the quoted passages from the different hunting scenes in *Justine* and *Mountolive*. Whilst there are similarities between the opening sentences describing dawn and dusk; Darley's opening sentence reveals a sense of slow continuous movement, where Mountolive's does not. The separating dash that breaks up the first sentence in the cited passage from *Mountolive* allows the phrase "the Egyptian night fell" to stand alone, as though a curtain has been brought down upon a stage. Water and sky are framed as absolute and sensuous presences that dominate the solitary consciousness experiencing it. Like the opening or closing of a theatrical scene, visibility becomes vague as the light dims on the screen of the painted horizon. Instead of etchings, objects become bas-reliefs, and figures meld with the background, as depth smudges into a *sfumato* effect. The buttercup yellow of early light in Darley's description of dawn has now changed into the mellow colours of the sky at sunset: gold, violet and lilac. David Mountolive sees the sky as a tapestry of woven coloured-threads of light, making it appear flat and dimensionless. A Gothic ambience spreads over the waterscape and an intangible deceitfulness, with the appearance of water mirages or *Fata Morgana*, is established. These mirages owe their being to the reflected light on the mirror of the water as they rise from the body of the lake like ghosts. Quivering upwards from the rising damps, they catch the last light. Durrell uses the present participles and synonyms "quivering" and "trembling" in the passage, and these words offer a moiréd movement to the waterscape. Through the veil of the water-mirages, the horizon pulsates deceptively, distorting perspective and building a luminescent fairy world "mirrored in a soap-bubble trembling on the edge of disappearance". Caught inside this spectacular and transient image there resides a hint of the sorcery and magically unreal nature of the waterscape. Durrell devises a visually idealised world in order to establish the blindness inherent in Mountolive's response to the lake. A need to live in his illusion of the idyllic beauty of the moment, he ignores the darker, betraying shadows. Instead, he visualises a fairy tale Utopia caught in the mirror of the water and the trembling "soap-bubble". As an imaginary place of perfection and idealisation, a place of

projected spatial desire, the Fata Morgana, and the world Mountolive sees reflected by them, bewitch him. However, the strange space of the soap-bubble is also the "Other space" represented by the heterotopia with its shifting positions and meanings that act as the inverse mirror-double of the utopia. I contend that the world held in the mirrored reflection of the mirage represents a space that conforms to both the utopia and heterotopia. The Fata Morgana become a fantastical illusion and represent the liminal boundary between the desire to enter the utopia and the fear of the subversive Other space of the heterotopia.

The unreal/real space of the iridescent soap-bubble is, however, haunted by shadows as "spokes of darkness reached out to them" and the horizon rapidly alters, shape-shifting into an uncanny optical inversion "with the land and the water liquefying". Mountolive feels that he is under the "illusion that they were travelling across the sky rather than across the alluvial waters of Mareotis" (Durrell 1963: 12). The waterscape has morphed into a wondrous and uncanny optical inversion on the mirror of the dark water, causing sky and waterscape to alter position. This magical scene played out on the stage of the waterscape will come to resemble the heterotopia that Foucault associates with the theatre as "a succession of places that are unrelated to one another" (1994: 181). Like Darley, Mountolive notes the strange reflective inversion of the sky and water and he, too, experiences the uncanny distortion of spatial perspective, trapped in the waterscape's treacherous and magical heterotopic space. The strange movement between narrative voice and focaliser fosters a loss of perspective as past and present tense seem to fuse. The waterscape acts as a mirror for the text and it is on this metaphoric instability that Durrell constructs an unreal dream world, which attempts to transcend representation and perception through repetition. Yet, in a direct reversal of the ray of light in the passage from *Justine*, the dark now radiates in tenebrous fingers as though to claim objects on the lake, both animate and inanimate in a presage of the hunt to come. With the beginning of the hunt, everything about the waterscape will transform and become entirely antithetical to the idyllic beauty previously ascribed to it.

During the hunt, Mountolive visualises the trapped and leaping fish as having "taken fright … their panic-stricken leaps ripped the whole surface of the pan" (Durrell 1963: 15). He further sees, and is enthralled by, the "exciting death-struggles" of the fish and how this frenzy of death is contagious. Then the birds attracted by the light and the sound of the fish join the hunt so that the "water and air alike seethed with life" (Durrell 1963: 16). In the mêlée, the fishermen fight off the birds until "amid the swarming scrolls of captured fish one could see surprisingly rainbow feathers of magical hue and broken beaks from which blood trickled upon the silver scales of the fish" (Durrell 1963: 16). The description of the panicked fish and the bloodied bodies of the birds collected together in the

bottom of the boats, if not an exact repetition of Darley's description of the dead bodies of the duck hunt, is very similar. Keller-Privat notes that the corpses unite water and sky through the rainbow colouring of the feathers and the silvery scales of the fish. This rainbow tinting combined with the silvery shimmer of the scales is referred to as magical and seems to mirror the beauty of the magical soap-bubble and the mirages. However, the scene of the fish hunt is an inverted space where living beauty has been replaced by the inanimate beauty of death. In similar manner to the description of the ducks as "sodden bodies", the fish and the birds have become merely patches of glittering and iridescent colour lacking all individuality. This representation of death is an image of imaginative excess where the delight in the beauty of what is seen is a denial of the death that is present within this space. The waterscape has altered as social inhibitions are released in what Foucault terms an "inverse analogy with the real space of society" (Foucault 1994: 178). The excessive pleasurable thrill that is apparent in Mountolive's reaction to the "exciting death-struggles" of the fish reveals the inversion of his response to the waterscape, as his baser Gothic instincts are mirrored in the pleasure he experiences in the violent destruction around him. His almost orgasmic excitement at the death struggle is part of a darkly imagined and ambivalent counter-world (Botting 2012: 19). The previous idyllic and phantasmagorical beauty of the waterscape's space has transformed into a counter-site where reality is disturbed.

The mirror of the lake has made the place that Mountolive and Darley occupy at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds the waterscape, and simultaneously absolutely unreal (Foucault 1994: 179). Instead, the destructive power of human desires in Durrell's narrative resembles what Foucault indicates is an aspect of the heterotopia that results in "monstrous combinations that unsettle the flow of discourse" (1994: xviii). The savagery and carnage of both hunts unsettles and makes the discourse of Durrell's narratives transgress the boundary between the veneer of social behaviour and the primitive within the space of the waterscape. The mirrored hunting scenes belong to both a utopian space of ideal perfection and a "darkly imagined counter-world" of chaos and distortion associated with the heterotopia and I suggest that this liminal site disrupts, contests and inverts the characters and reader's "margins of consciousness" (Beville 2014: 13). Durrell's waterscapes in the *Alexandria Quartet* remain places outside of all places that, through their illusory nature, are able to expose all real space as being "still more illusory" (Botting 2004: 244). It is within this space of the real/unreal of the waterscape, with its mirages, that the death of one of the Hosnani brothers, Narouz will occur.

The unreal dream world associated with the waterscape is again present on the day that Narouz is killed. The time period is again noted to be "the hunter's season" when "screens of mist, low lying clouds through which the dawns and sunsets burst with unexampled splendour each one the end of a

world, a dying into amethyst and nacre" are seen and experienced (Durrell 1963: 269). This description is opulently and idyllically beautiful, but is also touched with hints of changeability in the Gothic mist and premonitory warning held in the word "dying". The death of the season and the sun are a presage of Narouz's own death that will take place in the early morning. Narouz takes his early morning horseback ride through a landscape covered in "marsh mist full of evanescent shapes and contours" (Durrell 1963: 271). Deliquescent, the watery landscape through which Narouz moves seems pervaded with haunting spectres, which drift across and back into the surroundings. This unearthly image possesses an aura of menace, mirrored in the description of the lake:

> The whole surface of the lake was rising into the sky like the floor of a theatre, pouring upwards with the mist; here and there reality was withered by mirages, landscapes hanging in the sky upside down or else four or five superimposed on each other with the effect of a multiple exposure.
>
> (Durrell 1963: 273-274)

This description is a counterpart to Mountolive's description of the inversion of the water and the sky during the fish drive. However, the surface of the lake, compared to a theatre floor, is ascending in a rather Gothic "ghost glide", in what appears to be a special stage effect.[8] This waterscape is different to the ones visualised by either Darley or Mountolive because it is neither coloured like a stairway of soft king-cups, nor beautiful and frivolous like a soap-bubble, instead it seems to be an inversion of the previously cited portrayal of the seascape mirage in *Balthazar* (1968) with which this article opened. The mirages that confront Narouz appear to wither reality, providing an impression of dissolution and decay. The utopic fantasy Mountolive and Darley experienced has metamorphosed into an inverted dystopic nightmare. The waterscape becomes an uncanny heterotopia as it ruptures familiar time through the multiple superimposed images of water and sky evoked by the mirages (Johnson 2006: 79).

These illusions seem frozen in a moment of visually prismatic time captured in photographic "exposures" or cinematic frames. The photographic or film-like images repeat one another, representing a displacement of time and space caught between the real and the unreal, life and death. Christian Metz (1985: 83) discussing what he sees as "photography's deeply rooted kinship with death" indicates that this kinship "has been noted by

8. The Corsican Effect or "ghost glide" was a trap used in Victorian theatre that allowed for the apparition of a ghost to rise through the floor. It was devised to stage Dion Boucicault's adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *Les Freres Corse* or *The Corsican Brothers* and the disgorging of the ghost was accompanied by the well-known Ghost Melody. See Michael R Booth (1991).

many different authors, including Dubois, who speaks of photography as a 'thanatography', and ... Roland Barthes whose *Camera Lucida* bears witness to this relationship". In the images held in the photograph or film life is halted, in what Mulvey (2006: 56) refers to as "embalming" a moment of time so that the past is carried into the future. Durrell's narrative, which is a recollection of what is in the past, seems to focalise the action of the plot as if it is still in the present tense, mirroring the knowledge that the reading of the narrative is always within the present/past of the reader. Durrell's description of the almost photographic or cinematic nature of the super-imposed images evoked by the mirages seems to attempt what Ann Banfield (1990: 76-77) refers to in relation to novelistic structure as the "was" that implies "a now-in-past" and which, in Durrell's narrative, becomes a "this was now here" or an emanation of past reality. I suggest that in *Mountolive*, Durrell has, through his play with narrative technique and language, created a heterotopic heterochrony that ensures a disruption of time and space. Through this spatio-temporal structure, Durrell establishes a movement between the present of the character-focaliser and the narrative voice's retelling of the events in the past, in what Laura Mulvey considers "a symptom of the presence of death and its inevitability" (2006: 58). The multiple reflected images held in the mirages mark the uncanny strangeness of Durrell's portrayal of the scene, in which the heterotopia of the waterscape forms an utter dislocation of space, time and place in a textual-visual "thanatography" that presages Narouz's fatal wounding. The reader is not privy to the murder of Narouz, which becomes a distanced part of the everyday life of the landscape, where the "sound of distant shooting upon the lake was a commonplace among the vocabulary of lake sounds" (273). It is the aftermath of the attack in which the reader encounters the still alive Narouz seeming to study "the pistol-wounds in his own body" and his body seems like that of a "wounded stag" (274-275). Yet, the violence of the scene, unlike that in the fish and duck hunts, is far less overtly descriptive. Rather, there remains an uncanny sense that the waterscape has betrayed Narouz through its deceptively ambiguous spatio-temporal otherness, which is entirely indifferent to his murder.

The death of Narouz reveals what Foucault (2004: 63) has called the alterities of life and death with a resultant transgression of the boundaries between these two states. This position between life and death is a liminal space, which I consider acts as a heterotopic counter-site. In Durrell's story world, this boundary between life and death represents what Gary Farnell terms the Gothic death-drive, which heightens the horror and terror that invades the narrative with a resultant inversion of the "real" world into a heterotopia. Durrell's waterscapes become sites where, as previously indicated "subjects and behaviours" can be seen to only partially accord with the dominant norms. In the hunting scenes in which Darley and Mountolive participate this move outside the norm resides in the physical and emotional

thrill they feel during the slaughter and death of the hunted creatures, which they seem to find horrifyingly enjoyable. The "real" space occupied by the complicit reader, who is caught in the beauty and seeming realism of the narrative descriptions, now becomes implicated in the "unreal" space of the characters' experiences and responses. This "real" involvement is slightly different in the case of Narouz, where, the horror that accompanies this killing emanates from the thought that death resides as much within the unreal/real space of the waterscape, as it does in the actions of his unknown assailants.

Water plays a central role in Durrell's work and this element of his narratives deserves much closer scrutiny. My suggestion has been that the waterscapes act as heterotopic mirrors that expose the ambivalent doubleness that exists between the real/unreal in Durrell's tetralogy. These Other spaces of reality and illusion, I have contended, are mirrored in the structure of the narrative with its strange use of past and present and its alterations in time. My contention throughout this article has been that Durrell's story world reflects as well as distorts the "real" world by inverting an apparently ideal space into one of violence and death. Through Durrell's descriptive evocations of the waterscapes these watery-sites are transformed into Other spaces, which, while alluringly beautiful, are equally death driven and so remain "horrifically enjoyable" (Farnell 2011: 594).

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Allyson Kreuiter
University of South Africa
kreuiad@unisa.ac.za