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SPIRIT OF PLACE:
THE ROLE OF LANDSCAPE
IN THE POETRY OF LAWRENCE DURRELL

by

Ann Carton MacDonald, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate
Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
May 29, 1988

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Spirit of Place:
The Role of Landscape
in the Poetry of Lawrence Durrell

submitted by Ann Carton MacDonald, B.A.
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

This thesis interprets the central theme in Lawrence Durrell's poetry as the relationship between landscape and the growth of the self. It demonstrates that his outlook derives largely from Tao, a Chinese philosophy emphasizing man's unity with nature. Chapter One outlines his theory of place as a literary criterion and indicates that through art he aims to evoke a condition of mystical one-ness he calls heraldic reality. Chapter Two illustrates that the rebellion in Durrell's early work represents his desire to transcend the ego, chronology and reason. Chapter Three delineates his belief that the self can grow beyond ambiguity and pain by integrating its child-like, male and female elements. Chapter Four links personal growth and the creative process and examines the parallel between the religious dimension in Durrell's poetry and his receptivity to landscape. Chapter Five explores the poet's resolution of despair and his affirmation of the healing power of love in his later poetry. The final chapter reveals that he belongs to that branch of modern literature aligned with the comic vision. As he celebrates the gentle, happy and loving aspects of the self uncovered through empathy with the spirit of place, Durrell achieves his goal of a visionary unity.

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To my son, David Carton MacDonald

Nothing is lost, sweet self,
Nothing is ever lost.
The unspoken word
Is not exhausted but can be heard.
Music that stains
The silence remains
O echo is everywhere, the unbeckonable bird! (CP 119)

Legend

<u>AQ</u>	<u>The Alexandria Quartet</u> (Faber, 1968).
<u>BB</u>	<u>The Black Book</u> (Dutton, 1963).
<u>BS</u>	<u>The Big Supposer: A Dialogue With Marc Alyn.</u>
<u>COR</u>	<u>Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence</u> (Faber, 1963).
<u>CP</u>	<u>Collected Poems</u> (Faber, 1980).
<u>DA</u>	"Lawrence Durrell Answers a Few Questions" <u>The World of Lawrence Durrell.</u>
<u>DD</u>	"A Dialogue With Durrell" <u>Encounter</u> XIII (December, 1959).
<u>HG</u>	"Studies in Genius: Groddeck". <u>Horizon</u> XVII (1948).
<u>HM</u>	"Studies in Genius: Henry Miller". <u>Horizon</u> XX (1948).
<u>K</u>	<u>A Key to Modern British Poetry.</u>
<u>KT</u>	"Kneller Tape (Hamburg)". <u>The World of Lawrence Durrell</u> (Southern Illinois University Press, 1962).
<u>LL</u>	<u>Literary Lifelines: The Richard Aldington-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence.</u>
<u>PC</u>	<u>Prospero's Cell</u> (Faber, 1945).
<u>PL</u>	<u>Personal Landscape I: 4</u> (1942).
<u>PLD</u>	<u>The Poetry of Lawrence Durrell</u> (Dutton, 1962).
<u>PR</u>	"Lawrence Durrell" <u>The Paris Review</u> , No. 22 (1959-60).
<u>SM</u>	<u>A Smile in the Mind's Eye</u> (Wildwood House Ltd., 1980).
<u>SP</u>	<u>Spirit of Place: Letters and Essays on Travel</u> (Dutton, 1969).
<u>SR</u>	"An Interview with Lawrence Durrell" <u>Shenandoah: The Washington and Lee University Review</u> , XXII: 2 (Winter 1971).
<u>TG</u>	"Tao and Its Glozes". <u>The Aryan Path</u> Vol. X (12) (1939).
<u>WI</u>	<u>Wordsworth: Selected Poetry.</u> Introduction by Lawrence Durrell (Penguin Books, 1973).
<u>WM</u>	"From a Writer's Journal " <u>The Windmill</u> (1947).

Chapter One

From the Himalayas to Heraldic Reality

. . . roses--outworn by our literature . . .
It would take more than this loving imagination
To claim them for you out of time. (CP 225)

In "A Bowl of Roses" Lawrence Durrell states that his poetic intent is to revitalize poetic imagery and make even common symbols of love and beauty fresh and powerful. When he speaks of the "deathless ideogram for love we writers hunt" (CP 225), he designates love as literature's primary concern and depicts poetry as possessing a special imaginative potency. Substance and method merge in his poetry, for he finds it "expresses what is most intimate, most profound" (BS 89) in men and women as they relate to the world. As a result, Durrell locates the quiddity of love in the fusion of man, the physical world and poetry. With a broad scope and ambitious intent, he aims to understand love through revealing and celebrating a total self. In that it shapes human nature and inspires the imagination, external landscape uncovers for him a world of beauty and value. Durrell underlines this sentiment when he speaks of his "awakening" into poetry accompanied by a feeling that "everything [made] sense" (SM 29). Additionally, his description of his work as a mix of "reality . . . sensuality and intellectual acuity" (BS 126) expresses most strongly his vision of poetry as an all-encompassing experience.

Durrell's attachment to landscape deepens with maturing imaginative vision and growing creative ability. What begins as a personal stimulant

develops into a dominant force. In an early poem, "Happy Vagabond", he celebrates youth by linking subjective emotion and landscape where "sunset and moon / Found [him] a place in their hearts" (CP 18). By 1958 he claims: "I firmly believe that places have their own rhythm and compulsion" (COR 349). Expanding this, he states later: "I have evolved a private notion about the importance of landscape and willingly admit to seeing 'characters' almost as functions of landscape" (SP 156). Such statements refute G. S. Fraser's contention that Durrell's poetry does not demonstrate development but rather turns on a set of ideas acquired in mid-adolescence (1970, 18). His interpretation of Durrell's writing fails to perceive the modifications and growth in the central theme of the interrelation of place and the self.

Throughout his literary and critical work Durrell refines the concept of place as a catalyst for vision. In 1971 he states: "I firmly believe in the theory that landscape shapes people and behaviour patterns . . . I have tried to see people through landscape" (BS 90). To accomplish his goal of understanding the self, he explores man's emotional and sensuous interactions with his setting. Ultimately, he suggests that more attention should be paid to the sense of place "as a purely literary criterion" (SP 163). An important influence on Durrell, D. H. Lawrence claims that "the essential quality of poetry is that it makes a new effort of attention and discovers a new world within the known" (1956, 90). He further develops this concept, maintaining that "the spirit of place is a great reality" (301), not merely an imaginative or literary fiction but a genuine human experience. Adopting and extending this view, Durrell exhibits strong spirituality in his idea that the interplay of man and landscape leads to mystical experience.

He writes:

Deus Loci . . . you can become . . .
all the heart's profit or the loss. . . . all
refreshed again in you O spirit of place. (CP 217)

By being in harmony with this spirit, man can become whole and discover "the deathless ideogram for love".

Durrell's interest in this interrelation of physical landscape, mystical experience and the self seems to have grown out of personal circumstances. Born in Jalunda in the Himalayan region of India in 1912, he alludes to "childhood dreams of Tibet" (SM 53) and recalls seeing from the Jesuit school in Darjeeling "Tibetan lamas setting off on their long pilgrimages to the distant plains of India" (SM 19). These powerful images of beauty and mystery have endured for Durrell and lead him to claim that such scenes made "an unforgettable impression" (BS 24) on him. On one level his poetry is an attempt to renew this early connection with place. He states: "All creative people struggle to get back to their childhood" (BS 86). At the age of ten Durrell was sent to St. Edmund's School, Canterbury, to receive a traditional British education. The contrast between the vitality and majesty of India and what he saw as the dullness of England resulted in his disillusionment with that country in particular and Europe in general. Unhappy in "Pudding Island" (CP 160) and unable to fit into the rigid educational system, he failed the entrance examinations to Cambridge University.

In 1936 the Durrell family moved to the island of Corfu where they remained until 1939. During the latter part of World War Two and until 1947 Durrell occupied a number of government and journalistic posts in Egypt and Greece. In 1948 he spent a year working for the British

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Council in Argentina, where, among his other duties, he delivered a series of lectures on modern British literature, eventually published as A Key to Modern British Poetry. Later, he served as press attaché in Belgrade from 1949 to 1952. In the mid 1950's during the tensions surrounding the Greco-Turkish conflict over Cyprus, he functioned as Director of Public Relations for the government there. Since 1957 he has lived in France and now makes his home in Sommières in the Provençal region. In 1985 he completed his ambitious Avignon Quintet, which he claims is his last major work of fiction. Durrell, however, continues his long-time interest in Taoism, enthusiastically supporting such activities as the construction of a Taoist temple in Autun, France.

Durrell's concept of place incorporates ideas from ancient Greek metaphysics and modern theories in physics about space and time. Originally intrigued by the Greek attempt to define man's essence, destiny and relation to nature, Durrell is especially inspired by their aim to free the mind from ignorance and superstition. Their commitment to discovery, wisdom and the improvement of the human condition appeals to him. He praises the Greeks' "passionate desire to conceptualize things metaphysically" (SP 159). In the concept of nous, a primordial spirit or mind that sets all things in motion, Durrell perceives a mystical quality in Greek philosophy. He finds this absorbing in itself and also for its parallels with Gerddeck and Tao. The Einsteinian notion of space-time as process increases for Durrell the possibilities and responsibilities of language. He demands that language be able "to render a sort of immediacy of impact--[what he calls] the impact of all time crowded into one moment of time" (K 36). Furthermore, Durrell believes that this joining of space and time links subject and object,

with the result that man can no longer view the outer world objectively. He is in keeping with modern physics when he insists that "we cannot observe the course of nature without disturbing it" (K 29). In consequence, the deterministic cause-and-effect view of the world breaks down. Calling this "one of the great revolutions in thought" (K 30), he declares that it makes "experience double-sided" (SR 52) and language a dichotomy so that "one can't approach truth without being ironic" (SR 52).

Certain ideas from modern psychology have also helped shape Durrell's concept of place. He recognizes in such a theory of the unconscious as Freud's "ideas which shaped and altered the use and application of language" (K 50). Likening creativity to the resolution of psychic tension, he writes that a poet engages in a "long process of triumphantly surmounting his anxieties, his complexes, the wounds his infant psyche bears, by the act of exteriorizing them, of giving them form" (WI 13). This conveys Durrell's belief in creativity as an agent of psychological health. The thought of psychologist Georg Groddeck (1866-1934), Freud's contemporary, influences Durrell profoundly. Replacing Freud's dualistic vision of opposing elements of the psyche, Groddeck delineates "the mystical regions" (K 73) at the source of life. He posits the existence of the "It", a mysterious force anterior to the ego defined as "the sum total of an individual human being . . . the organism with all its forces" (K 74). Perceiving in Groddeck the potential to "learn the mystery of participation with a world of which we are a part and from which the pretensions of the ego have sought to amputate us" (K 78), Durrell uses Groddeck's theory to amplify his presentation of the self. He tells Richard Aldington, with whom he corresponded during the 1950's

and 1960's, that Groddeck's Book of the It is the text in which he finds all of his "psychosexual ideas" (LL 114).

. In Taoism, a form of ancient Chinese mysticism, Durrell finds an orientation most sympathetic to his own vision. At once a deeply mystical state, a practical means of living well and the sum of all creation, Tao is by its nature beyond definition. Arthur Waley, a popularizer of certain Chinese ideas, conceives of Tao as "the unchanging unity underlying a shifting plurality . . . the impetus giving rise to every form of life" (51). Durrell's poetry, though, reflects more closely J. C. Cooper's interpretation of Taoism as "deal[ing] with the whole of Nature and man's place in it . . . the philosophy of the rhythm of life and simplicity of mind and spirit" (1981, 8). On first reading the Tao Tê Ching at the age of twenty-three, Durrell intuitively recognized therein his own beliefs. He asserts that the "whole thing made immediate sense to [him]" (SM 2) and that his "youthful preoccupations . . . crystallized round the notion of Tao" (SM 29). Attracted by the freedom from dogma, the happy, light-hearted outlook and the imaginative possibilities inherent in the multiple perspectives of Taoism, Durrell, in an early essay, describes this view as a "gigantic landscape of the spirit" (IG 589). The mature poet explains this philosophy as "total availability, a total and comprehensive and whole-hearted awareness of that instant where certainty breaks surface . . . the flashpoint where the mind joins itself to the nature of all created things" (SM 1). By underlining the point where one experiences Tao, Durrell links this philosophy with his own vision of creativity.

Within this framework of multiple interests Durrell writes poetry pervaded by a "romantic/classic tension" (LL xi). His modernism surfaces

in his claim that "poetry is all a question of density . . . a terrifying form" (BS 89), which distils, synthesizes and translates a complex experience. Paradoxically, he maintains that a successful poem involves action, liberation and grace and should be approached delicately, intuitively, without the unnecessary convolutions of rationality. Likening poetry to an arrow in flight (BS 89), he highlights as essential the qualities of autonomy, directness and spontaneity. Remarking that "writers each seem to have a personal landscape of the heart" (SP 160), he sees poetry as a highly individual creation. However, when considered from a critical perspective, Durrell's belief that art belongs to its age and his statement that poetry should be "referred to other departments of human thought" (K 1) point to a need to assess his work in a larger cultural context. While affirming the primacy of language and structure, he also views poetry as an act of psychic growth. When evaluating poetry he explains that he adheres to Wordsworth's dictum: "'each work of art creates the public by which it is to be judged'" (LL 148).

No full-length examination of Durrell's poetry has been written to date although chapters within three critical works¹ have discussed his poetry. Consequently, this thesis traces his presentation and celebration of the self through the spirit of place. It follows a chronological pattern, commenting on the poet's developing vision. In stating that "language is terribly important, metaphysically and in every other way, and that it changes like an organism" (SR 57), Durrell indicates that place, at its most profound, becomes language itself. Accordingly,

¹ See G. S. Fraser's Lawrence Durrell, Elizabeth Jennings' Seven Men of Vision and A. T. Tolley's Poetry of the Forties.

this examination of his poetry uses a method involving close textual analysis of key poems in the light of Durrell's interviews and essays. Additionally, his impressions of the work of Freud and Groddeck, especially as they pertain to the ego and illness, along with his growing commitment to Tao, are used to explicate his poetry.

Ultimately, Durrell wishes to use language in such a way that even ordinary objects and experience are made poignant, beautiful and mysterious. To accomplish this he writes from a perspective where "sunlight and the inner light meet" (BS 128) so that his poetry often detaches itself from "the temporal continuum of association and live[s] out a separate existence in a sort of stasis" (WM 52). Durrell chooses the term heraldic reality to convey the quality of this new kind of life beyond chronology. Like heraldic representation, which, through symbols, transposes valued characteristics to crests and armorial bearings, the poet substitutes words for thoughts and feelings engendered by a particular place or emotional encounter. Language is so used that it becomes "a kind of sculpture [symbolizing] what cannot be directly expressed: the heraldry of language is called into play to accentuate, to attest to, to pierce through the rind of the merely cognitive (sic) impulse" (SM 55). For author and reader the experience of such reality can yield a deep and satisfying liberation. In this sense heraldic reality resembles strongly the central action of Tao wherein an interpenetration of man and nature occurs. The critic Jacques Maritain is helpful in explaining this process; he writes: "Through interpenetration things are spiritualized. When the artist reveals the reality concealed in things, he sets it free and, in turn, liberates and purifies himself. This is the action of Tao" (Chang 1963 8). This is in keeping with

Durrell's belief that heraldry implies a jettisoning of the ego and facilitates "the pure nonentity of the entity for which the poem stands like an ideogram" (SM 53). In a paradoxical way poetry portrays the essence of the object of attention and in so doing vanishes save for a set of abiding symbols.

Durrell's heraldic reality can also be seen as a revelation of his comic vision. By exposing human flaws gently and with humour, he shows that man can realize his potential for goodness and happiness. Ultimately, Durrell's poetry moves to free man from his enslavement to the will and to transform him into a loving being. He wishes to celebrate the gracious and generous characteristics of the self. Coupled with his "love of the non-human world both for its own sake and in its relations with human beings" (Lawrence Intro. 1935 viii), this gives his poetry a delicate, spiritual quality. Durrell confirms his commitment to such a vision when he states that "the function of the poem is to win over the will in man and produce that inner order which is love-in-time" (WM 54).

Chapter Two

Rebellion and Redefinition

Enter into the creative activity in which you do not need
your understanding . . . the continents roll by in a vertigo
of heraidry. (SP 253)

Typical of young writers, Durrell, in his twenties, rebelled against the literary establishment. He did not subscribe to the social and political concerns of such poets as Day Lewis, Spender and MacNeice. G. S. Fraser notes: "In the 1930's, a period of much polemical political verse, [Durrell's] poems did not harangue" (1970, 16). Impatiently claiming that some poets had "confused the inner struggle with the outer one" (COR 18), he was disparaging about their focus on political issues and remarked that they "deal[t] in averages" (COR 18). Despite this, Durrell, as a mature poet, discerns "in all the poetry of this period . . . the values of the human heart, the human individual" (K 183). Consistently, his subject matter lies in the artist's struggle to evoke wholeness. Consequently, during the 1930's, Durrell rejected England and made his home on the Greek island of Corfu. There, in search of his own voice and artistic control, he immersed himself in such studies as philosophy, Groddeck's psychology and Taoism. He produced The Black Book, which he says "puts the case for the difficulty of self-liberation" (BS 45) and marks his own spiritual birth. Outwardly a violent attack on things English, it presents a humorous and passionate delineation of what Durrell calls "real problems of the Anglo-Saxon psyche" (BB 14). Much later he reiterates this sentiment, likening his

early writing to a kind of therapy through which he sought "to see things more clearly, to find a way out" (BS 18). Durrell's poetry of this period examines similar concerns, focusing on the interrelation of fragmentation, pain and the creative process. He attempts to transform what he saw as "the English death" (BB 7) into a creative landscape where "art no longer exists to depict man but to invoke God" (BB 249). Furthermore, his search for "the land where God is a yellow man, an old man brooding over his swanpan" (BB 239), reveals Durrell's "God" as a Taoist figure. As a result, he attempts to portray a landscape mirroring the great unity of Tao where the self and God become one.

Durrell realizes that to experience and convey this essentially mystical vision he must explore areas outside of logic and a rational view of the world. His formulation of heraldic reality as the cornerstone of his artistic endeavour marks the beginning of his metaphysical inquiry and imaginative development. He first tries to explain heraldry in a 1936-letter to Henry Miller, with whom he had initiated an intense literary correspondence. Calling it "that quality of magic and spatial existence" (COR 23), he adds that he seeks "to isolate the exact moment of creation, in which the maker seems to exist heraldically" (COR 23). Repeatedly, Durrell stresses that achieving a heraldic level of consciousness requires a break with the usual modes of perception. For him, objects and experience, when freed from the distorting burden of time and memory, become symbols in a landscape where they acquire an independent vitality and authenticity. In turn, this calls for new dimensions in understanding and language.

As Durrell evolves his view of the imagination and begins to investigate the impact of landscape on the self, his sympathy with Tao

and Groddeckian psychology significantly affects both his choice of poetic priorities and his adoption of a particular style, predominantly psychological. Accordingly, this chapter begins by examining how such key Taoist ideas as the need to repudiate rationalism and materialism and embrace simplicity and spontaneity help to shape the presentation of the self in Durrell's early poetry. As well, this chapter considers the poet's imaginative use of Groddeck's claim that man creates his own pain in order to "gain" pleasure [because] every human has the feeling of guilt and tries to get rid of it by self-punishment" (1951, 81, 82). Durrell has written that Groddeck's theory of the "It", "a method for attacking the real under its many and deceptive masks . . . bears a startling resemblance to the Tao-concept of the Chinese" (HG 392). Essentially, both the "It" and Tao represent a wholeness and purity inaccessible to those dominated by the ego. Where Taoism stresses harmony and acceptance, Groddeck emphasizes "liberation through self-knowledge" (388) and healing through "less painful modes of perception" (390). Cumulatively, Tao and Groddeck engender in Durrell a new comprehension of the nature and purpose of poetry. He espouses the view that

poetry by an associative approach transcends its own syntax in order not to describe but to be the cause of apprehension in others . . . relations between ideas are sympathetic and mysterious--affective--rather than causal, objective, substitutional . . . this [is] the Heraldic Universe, because in Heraldry the object is used in an emotive and affective sense . . . to body forth or utter. (PL 7)

The last aspect, involving Durrell's personal conception of the working of the creative mind, represents the crux of his vision. As a result, this chapter delineates these connections between Tao, Groddeck and

heraldic reality.

Before Durrell's development during the 1930's can be assessed, Quaint Fragment, a book of poems written in his teens and published in 1931, merits some consideration. Even in this early work, clearly the product of an adolescent sensibility, the physical world occupies a pivotal position. From the outset, Durrell investigates the nature of the creative process and defines his vision through landscape. Dedicating these poems to his mother, the young man claims that "from the dawn / And from the sunset [he has] fashioned them" (CP 25). They exhibit a disarming awareness of their own flaws and limitations as well as a firm sense of their being the initial products of an imagination that will later create works of substance and power. He says: "Pity these lame and halting parodies / Of greater, better poems" (CP 25). Another element prominent throughout Durrell's poetry and fiction, "the wish not to be tied down, the recurrent need for a fresh start, the impulse of the wanderer" (Fraser 1970 15), appears in Quaint Fragment. Here he introduces also his enduring concern with experimentation in literary form. In the poem "Sonnet Astray" he contends that we pathetically "caress / The tawdry fragments of old dreams" (CP 19), if we do not seek a voice appropriate to our experience. Furthermore, his exaggerated vow "to leave [such outworn forms as the sonnet] forever alone" (CP 19) underlines his resolve to change traditional forms in order to address modern concerns. On the other hand, he conveys respect for tradition and a lack of conceit in confessing that his decision leaves him "wonder[ing] at [his] great foolishness" (CP 19). His youthful search for a means of expression signifies his urge to grow and manifests little of the unfocused hatred of authority and discipline common to

adolescent experience.

Although Durrell's verse of this period demonstrates imaginative potential, a degree of graceful styling, and often a gifted use of words, it also displays some of the weaknesses inherent in immature writing. Occasionally florid and overstated, this poetry suffers from a lack of control. In "Echoes: II", for example, the poet describes himself as "bound with [his] huge grief, / Stooping beneath the desolation of [his] tears" (CP 23), and crying his "great sorrow to the sky" (CP 23). Conversely, in the collection called Ten Poems, published in 1932, a rapturous tone and ebullient, inflated language accompany his discovery of love. When he perceives his lover, "a secret holiness" (CP 26) transforms the world into "an autumn dancing place" (CP 26). Deliriously happy, he becomes "a traveller in an enchanted land" (CP 26). Whether depressed by unexplained world-weariness or carried to ecstasy by an intimate relationship, Durrell frequently indulges in excessive emotion, thereby weakening his impact. This, however, seems to be an integral stage in his development. Like many poets he goes through an early period of over-writing but fortunately he seems to recognize quickly that this tendency is a defect.

Considered as a whole, Durrell's early work demonstrates a fine sensibility attuned to nature, a definite facility with language and a distinct promise of growing technical skill and imaginative insight. Such lines as "Strew some rich largesse where the best may throw / Some broken toy" (CP 24) and "the ink has dried, / And found its own perpetual circuit here / Cast its own net / Of little, formless mimicry around itself" (CP 25) provide evidence of an exceptional ability.

Quaint Fragment begins what is to become an enduring examination of man's connection to place in an elegant manner and, for the most part, with an appealing content.,

Durrell's first "adult" poem, "The Death of General Uncebunke", melds autobiography, social criticism, tender respect for a passing era and experimental use of language. Functioning on many levels and interweaving a number of diverse elements into a rich and moving statement on man's mortality, "Uncebunke" represents Durrell's earliest handling of a mature theme. Drawing on his childhood in India where his father served as an engineer, he explores his "attitudes to his British colonial roots" (Tolley 1985 38). In terms of technique, he fashions a "seemingly discordant association of lyricism, nonsense and bathos [resulting in] a multiple focus on [the] subject" (39). Some critics interpret this approach as evidence of an affinity with the surrealists. Durrell does share their attempt to express the working of the unconscious and their belief that a higher reality can be captured by freeing the mind from logic and rational control. The mystical texture and heightened consciousness of heraldic reality recall the dream-like, irrational state of surreality. Durrell, however, claims little knowledge of surrealism and expresses a dislike of the flavour of much of its art. Calling himself a "Durrealist", he emphasizes his standing apart from this movement.

In "The Death of General Uncebunke" Durrell's primary aim seems to be a confrontation of English values through Uncebunke, a symbol of nineteenth-century rationalism and Victorian morality. Durrell admits a great respect for the creative potential of England, yet observes also

the spiritual energy of the individual diminished by the strictures of its materialistic ethos. Speaking through the character of a nephew, reflecting on his uncle's life and death, Durrell at once connects himself with and successfully distances himself from Uncebunke. This ambivalent vision pervades the poem and establishes coherence. It gives form to Durrell's theory that in the twentieth century the pedestrian values of the middle class have supplanted the English ideal of "courage, dignity [and] unselfishness" (K 96). The poet sustains this ambiguity by creating a simultaneity of past and present in the repetition of the line, "My uncle sleeps in the image of death" (CP 44, 45, 47, 50). The illogical syntax removes Uncebunke from death through the intermediate states of "sleep" and "image". This introduces one of the primary themes in Durrell's poetry, the fundamental unity and reciprocity of life and death. It reflects his acceptance of the Taoist idea that life and death represent different aspects of one underlying unity as well as particular stages in a continual process of becoming. It also marks his first use of the Taoist technique of "strip[ping] off layer after layer until only the essential remains" (Cooper 1972 13). Additionally, in this poem he first makes reference to Groddeck's theory, calling the dead Uncebunke a "sudden IT between two tropical thumbs" (CP 45). Free of the distortion of his ego, the essential self of Uncebunke appears.

Here Durrell makes his initial statement on ironic compassion, an abiding concern in his work. By using the carol, a joyous religious song, usually dealing with the birth of Christ, to express feelings about death, the poet undermines expectations. In Taoist fashion, gently and with humour, he highlights the interrelation of life and

death. Furthermore, Durrell's choice of fourteen sections sets up a resonance with the pattern of the traditional sonnet and extends the social criticism at the heart of the poem. It allows him to reconcile, in ironic fashion, his conflicting sentiments of personal attraction and spiritual antipathy for Uncebunke. Following the Taoist precept of "an open-hearted acceptance of life, which regards the universe as basically good" (Cooper 1972 16), he presents this character accurately, yet kindly. Without malice he exposes Uncebunke as the product of nineteenth-century jingoism. He portrays this character's lack of insight about his own motives through a parody of Tennyson in the line, "His not to reason why, though a thinking man" (CP 44). Throughout, Durrell responds with sympathy tempered by comedy to Uncebunke's "mesmeric incomprehension" (CP 44), his inability to penetrate surface reality.

Durrell employs irony to particular advantage in "Carol IV". A passionate traveller and explorer, Uncebunke fears "suffocation by marble" (CP 45). Ironically, burial, his becoming part of the earth he so loved, terrifies him. Untamed and unfocused in death as it was in life, his spirit now takes on a nightmarish quality:

. . . the hypnotic horseflesh
 Champ, stamp, yawn, paw in the straw . . .
 Gallops all night the dark fields of Dis. (CP 46)

Symbolic of the Victorian reverence for motion and progress without much regard for their object, Uncebunke's very name manifests a restless, springing play of vowels and consonants. Sad and ridiculous, yet somehow noble, his surname conjures up a sense of action without clear purpose. It encapsulates Durrell's conception of the Victorian period as that of

"a magnificent barbarism . . . a certainty and directness of principle . . . touching and uplifting . . . [with] also an element of self deception, of hypocrisy" (K 92).

Durrell interweaves musical imagery with that of motion to reinforce Uncebunke's central flaw, his failure to grow spiritually. Phrases such as "he lies in the status/Of death's dumb music" (CP 48) and "In the sad womb he plays the trump, of doom" (CP 49) signify his undeveloped artistic sensibility. As a result, when death stops physical activity, making him a "daft ankle-bone among stars" (CP 46), the poet repeatedly describes him as hard and rocklike. Since he had neither valued nor cultivated spirituality in life, death does not liberate him. He remains trapped in "dank slag, the deathward sediment" (CP 47). Uncebunke's petrification in death contrasts powerfully with his constant movement in life. The dashing Victorian soldier-explorer, who "[w]heeled back the screaming mares, / Crossing the Jordan" (CP 47), now experiences his soul "folded like a little mouse" (CP 49). Durrell intimates that Uncebunke's narrow emphasis on the physical in life has crippled his spirit.

Landscape, in the sense of a restrictive social ethic, rather than any innate evil, emerges as the reason for Uncebunke's failure to achieve transcendent life. Durrell suggests that the self cannot be fully integrated in Western society where comfort and rational knowledge are valued over passion and the spirit. By setting up an implied comparison with Taoism, which advocates an harmonious balance of yin, the passive, creative force within the self, and yang, the active, intellectual self, the poet demonstrates that the strictly rational approach to life "produces hardness and petrification" (Cooper 1972 33). Unable to

accommodate his emotions and intuitions within his culture, this noble character, who should have died majestically, comes to an abrupt and ironic end. Uncebunke sought always to control his environment; yet he dies in circumstances beyond his control, in a plane crash, conveyed in the line, "snow on the wings altered the altitude" (CP 45). Durrell's delineation of Uncebunke exemplifies the Taoist philosophy of sin as "ignorance, or stupidity . . . a violation of the harmony of the universe [which] creates disharmony within the individual in particular and thence in society in general" (Cooper 1972:22). Through a combination of deflating and celebratory language, Durrell reveals Uncebunke as a great man diminished by society.

In "Five Soliloquies Upon the Tomb of Uncebunke", a companion to "The Death of General Uncebunke", Durrell again uses the nephew as narrator, thereby reinforcing the conflicting sense of connection with and separation from the subject. Placed at the General's funeral, the protagonist contemplates the fragmentation of modern man. This Durrell attributes to one of the philosophical bases of Western society, Cartesian dualism, and its view of man as an exclusively logical being. The poem constitutes an attack on the Christian religion, in Durrell's opinion, one of the most pernicious forms of dualism. With its stress on sin and the imperfection of the individual, Christianity, Durrell feels, fosters a morbid sense of guilt. Tacitly, he compares its patriarchal and rationalistic qualities and their destructive effects with the balanced vision of Tao from which arises creativity, well-being and happiness. Expressed most forcefully in the line, "The puma swoons among the silken candles" (CP 51), Durrell indicates that the rarefied atmosphere of the church cannot admit physicality. Later, when the puma

"[c]ovets the blood, but does not dare to sip" (CP 54), he portrays Uncebunke's desire for integration with the spiritual denied due to his entrapment in rationalism. Like the puma he shares the "fierce humour" (CP 52) of the primitive "numen", a presiding spirit in ancient Roman pantheism. He remains, however, like Hamlet, a figure who appears throughout the poem, a victim of the Western intellect, haunted by "the question, to know or not to know" (CP 51). As a result, Uncebunke's funeral becomes an "entry into soliloquy" (CP 52), a prelude to isolation and a confirmation of his fragmented condition.

Durrell's depiction of religion in this poem may well draw on a traumatic childhood experience at the Jesuit school chapel in Darjeeling where he saw a "life-sized figure of Christ crucified" . . . liberally blotched with blood" (SM 19) and felt complete fear and horror. At that moment he perceived a basic brutality and savagery inherent in Christianity and forever connected this religion with the "doom-laden symbol of unhappiness" (SM 19). He calls this poem his "black humour" (CP 51) and uses the devices of absurdist comedy, shock tactics, ridicule, irrationality and exaggeration to mock the flaws and dangers of Christianity. As well, he parodies the diction and cadence of familiar prayers such as the "Glory Be" to expose the facile, reductive quality of Uncebunke's spiritual life.

Allusion to the great Shakespearean heroes, who fail to unite their strengths and consequently destroy themselves and their societies, adds ironic depth to Durrell's presentation of Uncebunke. By echoing Antony's speech at Caesar's death, he insinuates a tenuous similarity between Caesar and Uncebunke. Unlike Caesar, Uncebunke does not represent greatness, but rather the potential for greatness. As such

he symbolizes the tragedy of waste. Having Uncebunke's nephew narrate the poem and choosing the soliloquy evoke Hamlet, the hero driven to madness and murder through self-scrutiny and rationalization. In such lines as "A breaker of skyline, [who] took first prize / In the regatta for men past menopause" (CP 54), he at once admires and shows disdain for Uncebunke. The nephew's sustained ambivalence towards Uncebunke underscores Durrell's belief in the duality at the heart of the modern vision. It derives from Einstein's theory of relativity which gives us a "completely new idea of reality" (K 28). In revolutionizing the relationship between subject and object, relativity alters the nature of truth; because the observer enters into the nature of what he observes truth becomes relative to each individual and "two contradictory ideas [can be] simultaneously true" (K 49). The nephew's embrace of conflicting attitudes also resembles Tao wherein "all opposites are blended, all contrasts harmonized" (Waley 52). In fact, Durrell speaks of an affinity between Einsteinian physics and the mysticism of Tao (KT 167). Both involve a move away from absolutes and underline the need to include all in search of truth. Consequently, the poet can, through comedy, criticize Uncebunke, yet still esteem and show compassion for him.

In death Uncebunke's state mirrors his lack of integration in life. He exhibits an uneasy mixture of hope and horror, for

[he] shares with the smiling paranoiac,
 Shares with the baby in the creeping-suit,
 An amniotic balance, the diver's grief. (CP 54)

Lacking the wider perspective essential to spiritual peace, he becomes the restless, pathetic figure first seen in "The Death of

General Uncebunke". In fact, the topic of death, which seems to fascinate the narrator, enforces the theme of the limited vision of dualism. Contrast with Taoism's stress on the relative insignificance of physical existence reveals it as ridiculous. Creel points out that "the great Taoist philosophers [viewed] the death of the individual [as] simply of no importance at all" (42). Durrell plays upon this idea in the lines, "Simple reflection, simple refraction. / Plus or minus, but never just ONE" (CP 54), implicitly juxtaposing the obsessive soliloquies on Uncebunke's death with a vision of the ultimate unity of life and death.

In the final soliloquy the poet explicates the reason for the General's inability to integrate his divergent energies. The landscape changes from England to "the nazarene evenings" (CP 55) of Galilee. Recollection of the blend of mysticism and poetic theory expounded by Wordsworth, with whom Durrell claims great empathy, helps to shed light on this metaphor. A distinct similarity exists between the texture of Wordsworth's "spiritual love [which] acts not nor can exist / Without Imagination" (The Prelude XIV 188, 189) and Durrell's description of Peter and Paul walking arm in arm, "[m]oved . . . by pure imagination" (CP 55). Both signify the genuine spirituality available in poetry, religion or any activity to which man devotes his full self as opposed to the smaller experience of organized religion. A lighter tone and harmonious rhythm intimate the liberating effect of this atmosphere. Through landscape Durrell communicates his theme: human abilities and potentialities require integrated development. This, in turn, demands the cultivation of a relativistic vision, seeing "[c]haos itself as a form of order" (CP 55). This recalls the first principle of Taoism,

"the relativity of all attributes" (Waley 51). Based on moral, scientific and political absolutes, the Victorian world view became rigid, stringent and, finally, corrupt. Degenerating into the "false gentility and the gross superiority complex of the middle classes and the colonial elements of the Empire" (K 97), it produced men like Uncebunke, powerful yet unfulfilled. Durrell expresses the idea that modern man, to be "hale and whole" (CP 55), must align himself with a cultural landscape that fosters development of all his potential. He urges man to accept "duality and a non-moral view" (K 46).

An interesting footnote to the Uncebunke saga takes place almost thirty years later in "Down the Styx", an article published in the literary journal, Two Cities. Again narrated by Uncebunke's nephew, the prose-poem re-examines the theme of reconciling life and death. The main character, however, is now Aunt Prudence, Uncebunke's humble, self-effacing wife. Prudence, who stayed home in the village of Uncebunke while her husband travelled the globe, now makes her first journey, "down the styx", to death. Heraclitus' theory of the world in perpetual flux and change as the only certainty underlies this poem. Having lived a mundane and uneventful life, Prudence feels intensely the great drama of death. Her "affectionate nephew, Lawrence" (SP 422), perceives that his aunt, as a sheltered and somewhat xenophobic English-woman, "with hair-pins in her hat and the hymn book in her fingers" (SP 421), requires reassurance before her journey and offers this in the form of practical travel advice set against a background of classical mythology and nightmare images. As Aunt Prudence sails "toward the great beginning of nothing . . . [and] the ending of everything" (SP 420), her memory fades and she cannot remember Uncebunke. She enters a

heraldic reality where time and memory cease to function. Urged by Lawrence to "sit there primly in [her] Sunday clothes while the great black barge noses down into the abyss of gestation" (SP 421), she experiences "the placental nightmare" (SP 421) and undergoes a violent and painful spiritual rebirth. Unlike Uncebunke, Prudence, "in the person of [her] foetal self break[s] the bread and partake[s] of the first supper" (SP 421). Herein Durrell does not mean that Prudence's religiosity contains the key to vision. Rather, his satirical "essay" satisfactorily concludes the Uncebunke story. Prudence, Uncebunke's counterpart, the yin to his yang, achieves a mystical transcendence denied Uncebunke, yet made possible through his experience. Wisely, Prudence follows the advice of her nephew and accepts passively all that she encounters. Her accomplishment illustrates Durrell's belief in the Taoist theory of wu-wei, non-doing or non-assertion, as the means whereby man gains spiritual insight. Lawrence assures her that "there is no cause for alarm" (CP 417) and advises "not to ask" (SP 419) Charon her destination. When confronted with a beatific vision, he instructs her simply to "sit down and trust in [her] inner ghost" (SP 422). As a result, Prudence adopts a submissive attitude completely antithetical to Uncebunke's conscious striving for control over his environment. Her passivity and intuition demonstrate that "action in accordance with Nature [reflects] the yin-yang aspects in balance" (Cooper 1981 41). As a result, Prudence achieves the deep and lasting content which eluded Uncebunke.

The successful resolution of the Uncebunke story makes the flaws in "Themes Heraldic" more apparent and unattractive. Abandoning the comic element and the compassionate outlook of the Uncebunke poems,

Durrell loses also the brilliant, natural flow of language and cogent blend of emotion, irrational thought and broad vision which gave those poems power and appeal. In the nine poems gathered under the title "Themes Heraldic" Durrell uses the concept of place to delineate the difficult process of reaching heraldic reality. He fails, however, to synthesize these disparate pieces into an organic whole. Perhaps a reason for this lies in the fact that the poet becomes caught up in the logical and linear thought he means to criticize. Marred by incoherence and an imposed, esoteric manner, "Themes Heraldic" is best regarded as a sign of Durrell's own complex and troubled maturation, an uncomfortable blend of his adolescent sensibility and his mature voice. Despite the poem's lack of structural and thematic unity and its strained character, it remains important for what it attempts. In "Themes Heraldic" Durrell seems to be endeavouring to portray a movement from isolated sterility to creative fecundity.

Initially Durrell observes the intuitive desire to unite with another prevented through sensuality and self-consciousness. "[T]his garish album of the flesh" (CP 58) deters love's mystical insight. In the second poem he gives form to his idea of "cementing reality with the dream" (COR 19) by describing physical love in terms of a series of vivid and startling images of gravity. This highlights both the potency and the impulsive nature of man's desire for fusion. The bonds of chronology and rationality break in the dream, and coalescence with the other becomes possible. The I-persona tells us:

Tides
Shine between your ribs, my moon's
White suicidal tides. (CP 59)

Here Durrell asserts that a change in the self and landscape requires some violence, some creative disturbance. The references to suicide signify that both artist and lover undergo a kind of self-inflicted death, a breaking away from the ego. Influenced by Groddeck's "philosophy of non-attachment" (HG 398) and his stress on man's need to align himself with the "It", Durrell here presents the ego's power diminished through the dream and gives a glimpse of the wonderful possibilities of art and love.

Next he explores sex on a metaphysical level. Equated with the female principle, desire yields visionary knowledge as it "[a]pprehend[s] morning, meaning / In all things" (CP 60). Through an elliptical style, the poet implies that physical love leads to intuitive understanding of the world. This poem discloses Durrell's belief that the sexual act "awaken[s] the psychic forces latent in the human being" (KT 161). It is, in a sense, a precursor to Clea, the final volume in The Alexandria Quartet where "the sexual act becomes identified with all knowledge" (KT 161). The symbol of the knife relates the double nature of desire: destructive of the ego and creative of a new fusion. In rendering love as an act of balance, Durrell alludes to his view of the artist's need for control of his material. In the fourth poem he intensifies the parallel between sex and artistic creation by replacing the knife imagery with the metaphor of the sword. More potent, the sword symbolizes that passion, an outcome of desire, animates both sex and imaginative action. Attempting to convey the view that passion assumes a pivotal role in both art and love, the line, "My theme is simply visionary paper" (CP 61), offers a weak and obvious account of a poet's aim. This echoes Durrell's earlier characterization of heraldic reality as "an attitude

without memory. A spatial existence in terms of the paper [he is] writing on" (COR 19). Also, it recalls his definition of poetry as a "power of compression [enabling one] to resume life and death" (WM 58).

In the fifth poem Durrell exposes the limitations of passion detached from love and tenderness. The girl's "four partners in heraldry" (CP 63), the joints, suggest that physical love can engender spiritual vision. Reference to the "four bone gates" (CP 63) strengthens the concept of the body as a means of entry into another state. Drawing on the Christian doctrine of transubstantiation, the poet pleads for art to acquire vigour, asking that ink change to wine and wine become blood. However, repetition of the word "girl" and the phrase "lie still" (CP 61) show that this landscape lacks some element necessary for growth. By insisting that death too, "[t]he stiff, victorious grin o' the skull" (CP 62), must be accommodated within the imagination, he proclaims the oneness of the heraldic vision. Now seen as an experience permitting the creation of new form, death allows the self to take on new dimensions, "woven to rock, to water, a new manufacture" (CP 62). This reinforces Durrell's view that by displaying certain qualities of nature, such as simplicity, spontaneity and renewal, man becomes like the Taoist sage and comprehends "the divine in nature and in himself" (Cooper 1981 42).

In poem seven Durrell delineates the essence of the creative process. Summer, figurative of energy and productivity, provides an appropriate setting for the blacksmith, representing the strong, mature artist. Through his integrative ability he joins desire and action to generate art, a "[s]teel for the new flint" (CP 62). Similarly, the female principle, vital to this activity, develops into a woman who "lies open . . . folding / Secret, growth upon growth" (CP 63). No

longer the girl of poem five, this woman is able to create new form.

Durrell, however, neglects the emotional component essential to creativity. He makes no mention of love or tenderness as the inspiration for this fecundity and, moreover, maintains the separateness of the male and female figures.

The poet picks up the Taoist theme in poem eight where "the paladin", a metaphor for the artist as knightly hero, unites, in his body, all forms human and divine. Stripped of the superfluities of the ego and chronology, he manifests pure sentience, yet remains "[s]tark stone, the prime ingot" (CP 63). This description echoes the Taoist belief in ch'ang tao, the permanent or supreme Tao, "an ineffable essence" (Kaltenmank 34), "a superior reality that transcends the perceptible and imperceptible modalities of being" (35). Moreover, Durrell here depicts the creative process in terms of intersecting landscapes reminiscent of the portrayal of the process of interpenetration of man, nature and divinity in Chinese art. He writes:

God in the marrow
Borrows the belly's zone . . .
God
Prime in the black rock (CP 63),

thereby evoking the liberating and spiritualizing power of creativity. Like the chih or intuitive knowledge of Tao, creative vision allows "immediate, direct, primitive penetration . . . between the knower and the known" (Chang 1963 41).

Finally, in the process of creation the artist becomes a father figure and is subsumed in other forms such as "the sun's attic" (CP 64) and the "floating chambers of the sea" (CP 64). > "[S]trangled in his vine"

(CP 64), he loses himself in his own creation. Here Durrell again surmounts the inadequacies of this poem and presents a trenchant, moving picture of the artist who sustains at once the most profound consciousness and suffers the complete loss of self. As such, he discovers the quality of heraldic reality. This section does much to redeem a flawed, uneven poem; however, it cannot compensate entirely for such defects as an imposed pattern, lack of clarity and too little attention to an emotional dimension.

In "A Soliloquy of Hamlet", published in 1939, the concerns occupying Durrell during the 1930's combine to form his most powerful statement on the interrelation of fragmentation, death and the creative process. In this re-creation of the dilemma of Shakespeare's Hamlet, he sets forth his poetics. He states in a letter to Miller that Hamlet's conflict represents "every great artist's struggle" (COR 42). His movement from emotional and intellectual dislocation to creative harmony constitutes the central action. Calling himself "Hamlet's little godchild" (BB 141), the poet feels an affinity with the brooding young prince. Like him, he seeks to reconcile a private landscape of violent emotions and horrific, irrational speculations with a seemingly placid, ordered environment. Like him, he fails in his specific quest but gains an unexpected greatness when, through love and the displacement of his ego, he penetrates to the source of creativity. This poem uses as background Durrell's concept of the virtue of the Elizabethans. He sees their culture as exuberant and vital because of its whole-hearted embrace of everything. At once enormous, volatile, pest-ridden, aching, vile and repentant (COR 50), they moved beyond the idea that "writing was separated entirely from living" (COR 50). Durrell's Hamlet, through

the sheer magnitude and velocity of his perceptions, achieves a heraldic consciousness that links art and life. Tellingly described as "living in his own chronology" (COR 28), Hamlet encounters, intimately and simultaneously, love in "the beautiful harbours of the heart" (CP 74) and a pain "deeper than the fish's fathom" (CP 78). Here Durrell manipulates syntax to expose the inadequacy of logic in understanding man and produces poetry of great potency. In declaring, "I take this image on a screaming nib" (CP 73), he draws an analogy between birth and creativity to convey the poet's intent to transform language and so revitalize landscape.

The structure of the poem itself imparts meaning by highlighting the relationship of the modern artist and landscape. As in "The Death of General Uncebunke", Durrell plays upon the sonnet form to embody his theme of the need to cultivate a loving, all-embracing spirit. Fixed in a barren situation of "embalming winter" (CP 72), the artist plans to "cobble this sonnet" (CP 72) or repair an outworn literary form so that it can express genuine emotion. The critic Paul Fussell notices in the sonnet a fundamental structural instability accompanied by an "elaborate scheme of rhyme and logical relationships" (114). He claims that "the poet who understands the sonnet form is one who has developed an instinct for the principle of imbalance" (115). Durrell's choice now seems clear: he presents the workings of a mind imbalanced by living simultaneously in two worlds in a poetic form itself a fitful synthesis of stress and contradiction. He employs also that quality of the sonnet "imply[ing] a particular, highly personal, usually somewhat worshipful attitude toward experience" (126). Lines such as "I kneel at the keyhole of death's private room / To meet His eye, enormous in

the keyhole" (CP 78) indicate his strange condition. Finally, Fussell observes the "universal appeal of the sonnet structure of complication followed by resolution--an archetype of the common act of problem-solving, or deciding, or even rationalizing" (124). Durrell adds depth to this pattern by using Hamlet, the figure of the man incapable of action due to entrapment in rationalism, as his protagonist. At the extreme of self-consciousness, Hamlet continually analyses his actions and his situation, thus intensifying the theme of self-concern prominent in the sonnet and soliloquy. By using these forms Durrell suggests two of his key beliefs: the poet's urgent need to communicate and the integrity of language, action and attitude.

To reinforce Durrell's main theme of the need to revitalize landscape, Hamlet relates his desire for love and wholeness in terms of place. He seeks "a pardonable city" (CP 72), imbued with charity and forgiveness. Essentially, this involves a treatment of landscape similar to a physician's action against disease. Durrell states: "I believe in artists as healers" (COR 90) and enforces this concept through many images of physical pain and sexual torment transcended through a new outlook on landscape. Moreover, his approach shows the influence of Groddeck's theory that man's "It" inflicts suffering in order to relieve the burden of guilt arising when the ego dominates the self. In fact, he actually enjoys the pain the "It" creates. Man requires the artist, "the unspeaking surgeon" (CP 73), to transform pain to joy, to "[g]rant like a bruise his sweetest homecoming, / Find laughing Hamlet sitting in a tree" (CP 74). Through a selfless perspective, hideous and frightening visions such as "sleepless murders combing out the blood" (CP 74) give way to the heraldic landscape of

magic and beauty, "the sweet spherical music [that] / Makes in heaven a tree-stringed oracle" (CP 79). These lines also highlight Durrell's alignment with the Taoist philosophy of a positive, charitable view of man as "freedom-loving, detach[ed] from wordly things . . . [embodying] all that is laughter-loving and light-hearted" (Cooper 1972 32).

Throughout the poem, guilt is symbolized by Hamlet's equation of himself with Christ in lines such as "Hamlet is nailed between the thieves of love" (CP 75). When he feels instead "roses like disciples can / Aim at the heart their innocent attention" (CP 79), he gains awareness that the beautiful and the simple are part of the self too. The artist, by revealing the fundamental self, illustrates that a vision of man as continually changing and growing toward goodness renders the human condition more accurately than the fragmentation, sterility and pain associated with the ego. Like the father figure in "Themes Heraldic", Hamlet's sacrificial death signifies the working of the creative process. Having jettisoned the power of the ego, Hamlet feels the joy of "danc[ing] upon the void" (CP 79), thus demonstrating Durrell's belief in impersonal charity as a motive force of art.

During the 1930's Durrell fulfills the promise evident in his early poetry. He progresses from the elegant though vague display of ordinary adolescent emotions in Quaint Fragment to control, eloquence and exciting innovation in "A Soliloquy of Hamlet". Now able to fuse the complex elements of a serious theme into a moving statement, he finds his own voice. Inspired by Tao and Groddeck, he develops a concept of creativity and his personal signature, heraldic reality, which opens new areas of thought and allows him a deeper range of expression. As the 1940's begin, Durrell, investigating further the nature of the creative act,

finds that landscape, in the form of political and military aggression, diverts his energies into darker concerns. His attention turns to the painful and difficult growth of the self in the midst of horror and destruction.

Chapter Three

A Search Through Many Negatives

All indeed whom war or time threw up . . .
Were objects for my study or my love. (CP 154)

The years 1940 to 1945 represent an era of dislocation and destruction in world history. Charged with increasingly demanding government and journalistic responsibilities, Durrell lived primarily in Alexandria and saw at first-hand some of the horror of the war. There he again sensed the powerful force of place, feeling the city's "two extremes of habit and behaviour which are not due to the intellectual disposition of the inhabitants, but to their soil, air, landscape . . . extreme sensuality and intellectual asceticism" (AQ 83). He suffered an emotional crisis when his marriage to the artist Nancy Meyers ended. Later he drew on his memories of this period in writing The Alexandria Quartet, his tetralogy, designed to investigate modern love. His first imaginative focus on this material, however, took place in the poetry of the early 1940's and on one level it figures as an attempt to find order within emotional confusion. Recognizing this as a key period in his development, Durrell claims that he "date[s his] poetic appearance from the publication of A Private Country in 1943" (PLD v).

Ironically, in the midst of fragmentation and destruction, he discovers the human urge to achieve psychic wholeness and happiness. In "Alexandria" he states his resolve to "study" and to "love", suggesting at once a native curiosity about life and a joyous, celebratory attitude

toward it. To this end he adopts "the reborn self" (COR 224) as his principal theme and often chooses solitary, inchoate artists to delineate the modern predicament. Through the characters of Fangbrand, Conon and Melissa, the poet shows how the self grows through pain. These protagonists serve as cathartic vehicles for his own emotional progress, allowing him to "move / Through many negatives to what [he is]" (CP 154). Eventually, he drops the use of such figures and confronts his own experience directly. In "Cities, Plains and People" he undertakes a comprehensive, honest and passionate examination of himself and outlines some of the intellectual and emotional forces that have shaped the texture of modern thought and his life. Having outgrown the self-consciously rebellious stance of his early work he now creates a more reflective, compassionate poetry. Careful to follow his own tenet that morality "should not have an explicit place in an art context" (KT 163), he avoids overt ethical inculcation. He "teaches by example" (KT 163) that the self can reach the point where the physical and the mystical intersect to forge a new vision of human potential.

This chapter explores Durrell's developing theme of the interrelation of landscape and growth. He moves from seeing "landscape as a field dominated by the human wish" (AQ 95) to an understanding "that the wish is inherited from the site [and] man depends for the furniture of the will upon his location in place" (AQ 95). Most significantly, he learns "the irresistible growth [through man] of nature's own blind unspecified doctrines of variation and torment" (AQ 95). Informed by a simple yet sincere belief in chance, his poetry displays at once an ancient wisdom and an exhilarating fecklessness. Primarily, this chapter discusses how Taoism, through its emphasis on the shedding of the ego

and its movement toward a more passive acceptance of nature, deepens the poet's vision. It explains how Durrell's use of the Taoist theory of the integration of male and female in the self radically alters his outlook and results in poetry that appears original for the 1940's. As well, this chapter continues the examination of the impact of the Groddeckian hypothesis of man's unconscious self-infliction of pain for the purpose of growth and how Durrell interweaves this with the Taoist view of man's potential for good.

"Fangbrand" stands as one of Durrell's most significant achievements in poetry, not only for its thematic importance to his total work but for its passages of beautiful description and narrative merit. Like much modern poetry, it questions the spiritual nature of the self and debates the problems of action and fulfillment. Here Durrell departs from the traditional Judeo-Christian approaches to this subject and views his material from a fresh perspective, that of Taoism. In twentieth-century poetry, where the Christian, agnostic and atheist outlooks predominate, Taoism, with its emphasis on receptivity to one's environment, permits greater insight into man's struggle for wholeness. Influenced by the Taoist theory of landscape painting where the "simplicity and directness . . . the completeness and movement (of the object presented) flow out from the picture and penetrate . . . our inner being" (Chang 1963 92), Durrell gives poetic form to the Taoist concept of landscape as a means to vision. Similar to the Taoist painter, Fangbrand wishes to liberate himself by reproducing in his life "the deep underlying harmony that interfuses and interpenetrates between man and man, between men and things" (93). Transformed through intimate contact with landscape he can move from ego-centricity and

despair to a radiant unity with creation.

Irony, mystery and ambiguity, suggestive of new potential, surround the initial description of Fangbrand. First Durrell sets the puzzle as to why this "missionary" man comes to an uninhabited island. By presenting Fangbrand's story as a biography he creates a sense of significance and raises expectations of an account of an exemplary life. Next he implicitly asks why one so immersed in Western civilization is drawn to the island through the influence of Eastern philosophy. In the language of the poem, why is Fangbrand "[b]orne down by the Oxus" (CP 92), a river in Asia? He does tell us that Fangbrand, attempting to evade death is "[p]ursued by the lilies / Inhabited by the old voice of sorrows" (CP 92). As such, Fangbrand typifies the modern self trapped in the past by the memory of painful emotions. He wears "a black hat and sanitary boots" (CP 92), symbolic of his sterile modes of thinking and outworn doctrines. A professional grammarian (CP 95), Fangbrand ironically lacks insight and imagination, for he "saw this rock and the seal asleep, / With the same mineral stare" (CP 92). Subtly, Durrell reveals that Fangbrand's mission is to grow beyond the limitations and pain of rationalism.

At the outset the poet establishes a dualistic relationship between man and landscape corresponding to the Taoist belief in the double nature of man achieved through the union of the creative forces of nature, the feminine yin and the masculine yang. Unconscious of his purpose Fangbrand resembles the unintentional action of Tao; moreover, he too seeks to resolve dualities. The island takes on a female cast through its portrayal as a mother figure. Accepting Fangbrand passively, she "recognized him, / [yet gave] no welcome" (CP 92), evoking the idea of Tao

as the empty yet powerful "mystical womb" (Kaltenmark 47). When Durrell states that the island "trembles" he strengthens the birth imagery and adds the impression of a woman anticipating her beloved, thereby intimating the rich, multi-dimensional texture of Tao and the totality Fangbrand seeks. Furthermore, Fangbrand's journey to the island exemplifies the Taoist concept that "all life is governed by the same permanent law: the return to the origin" (47). By going back to the primordial human landscape, the womb, he takes on the chief characteristic of the holy man who realizes Tao within himself by returning to the source of life. The quality of Fangbrand's mystical quest marks an intellectual and spiritual advance on Uncebunke, who also strove for integration with the female principle. Unconscious of his need, Uncebunke manipulated his environment crudely, using primitive, peremptory methods and ultimately failed to gain enlightenment. Aware of some exigent, yet unspecified deficiency in his life, Fangbrand begins his search at the point where Uncebunke left off.

At first he coerces vision through the rational means of "argument and confusion" (CP 93). This method, however, leaves him "[a]lone in a melancholy hat" (CP 93), trapped in the intellect's "vicious circle of contradictions" (Kaltenmark 48). Figuratively, he persists in regarding his intellect as the chief means of growth, enshrines it, and so remains unhappy. His predicament illustrates Durrell's accord with Cooper's view that the "critical, rational, analysing mind names, defines and limits . . . mistaking the naming of a thing for the understanding of it" (Cooper 1972 33). Ultimately, this perspective falsifies and debases reality. An important breakthrough occurs when Fangbrand responds to the symbolic life of landscape. Forsaking logic, he imaginatively

interrogates the external world, increasing his vision as he wonders "how / A rock can become a parish" (CP 93). Fangbrand queries not only the cultural and imaginative processes whereby a certain object or place takes on a larger meaning, but the inherent nature of the phenomenal world and why some elements of it are regarded as holy. Undercut by his adherence to rationalism, this insight recedes, displaced by the strident voices of the ego demanding that he "'Renounce'" and "'Be'" (CP 93). Divided against himself because he has mistaken the "partial, incomplete and false" (Kaltenmark 48) vision of rationalism as absolute, Fangbrand approaches despair. Still trapped in time, the voices of his fragmented self cry: "'Too late'" (CP 93). Miraculously, though, he progresses toward Tao, sensing "always the awareness / Of self like a point, the quiver / As of a foetal heart asleep in him[self]" (CP 93). In this simile Durrell combines two ideas central to the attainment of Tao: "concentrating the soul in a single point" (Kaltenmark 95) and recovering the innocence (and energy of an infant. However, the strength of the ego and past memories continue to obscure vision. Again, under the sway of rationalism, Fangbrand appears "[f]rowning, exilic, upon a thorn" (CP 94). He is aware that he cannot force a transformation and becomes angry that his continual failure to synthesize his rational, imaginative and spiritual energies has resulted in an incomplete perception of the world and a loss of his own potential. Fangbrand then transfers his emotions to his landscape and feels hostility in "everything".

Suddenly, mysteriously, Fangbrand rejects all ego-based definitions of himself: "His age, his time, his sex even / Were struck and past" (CP 94). Rationalism and self absorption, his "idols", vanish) "[]] into

the darkness" (CP 94), signifying that "Tao in its essence is not merely incommunicable but secret" (Waley 55). Freed from doubt by a new consciousness of unity, Fangbrand is now identified as "the pathfinder". His transformation into a Taoist sage or holy man, tellingly depicted through a series of images delineating his fusion with nature, evinces his successful penetration to the essential self. Deeply appreciative of beauty, he marvels "for the first time / At the luminous island, the light" (CP 94). The experience of Tao allows him to perceive light, the universal symbol of goodness, with fresh impact. Durrell highlights the purity and vitality of Fangbrand's state through simple, poignant language such as "Spring water blown through sand, / Bubbled on mineral floors" (CP 95). These lines acquire additional import in that they resonate with a line from one of the basic texts of Taoism, Huai-nan-tzu, describing Tao as "an origin from which a spring wells up, bubbles, and begins to overflow" (Saso 60). Paradoxically, Fangbrand's mystical state is best conveyed through sensuous diction such as drinking the night "like coolness from spoons" (CP 95). Nevertheless, as he mentions that Fangbrand discarded his body "like an old / White cloth" (CP 95), Durrell reveals that his vision of holiness involves a movement beyond sensuality typical of mystic illumination.

Durrell's heraldic figure for this condition of pure, timeless beauty, "[a]n old man holding an asphodel" (CP 95), counters the earlier picture of Fangbrand "[p]ursued by the lilies" (CP 92), a Christian metaphor for death. His eyes, no longer occluded by the false vision or "crystal-gazing" (CP 92) of rationalism, reflect "[a] travelling mirror, the earth" (CP 95). A familiar Taoist symbol of the holy man, the mirror suggests Fangbrand's spiritual purity. Included in nature,

Fangbrand attains "the creativity of Tao" (Chang 1963 66) and sees the world spontaneously and directly. Eventually, looking into the water, he exclaims: "Self, you are still alive" (CP 95). Durrell situates Fangbrand's self-realization in water because, as "the emblem of the unassertive" (Waley 56), it represents "strength in apparent weakness . . . acceptance and passionlessness" (Cooper 1972 110) as well as fertility, purity, gentleness and power. Its paradoxical qualities of perfect stillness and constant flux portray the dual condition of Tao, passive and eternally motionless, yet dynamic and energetic. The clarity of vision associated with water contrasts sharply with the image of logical thought, the "sea blotted with fictions" (CP 92).

Finally, Fangbrand adopts the most prominent feature of the Taoist holy man, silence. Disciples attach themselves to him, but "the Taoist master teaches in silence" (Kaltenmark 88). Essentially, "his life . . . is so completely identified with the rhythm of the great forces of nature that it is indistinguishable from them" (94); now he has no need or desire to speak. He possesses an intuitive comprehension of the world completely antithetical to the pitiful "crumbs of doctrine" (CP 96) offered in Western systems of knowledge. Organic and eternal, "like a vase" (CP 96), his perception matches the integrity of artistic vision. As a result, his "[d]eath interrupted nothing" (CP 96); undiminished, his spirit continues in pure process. More effectively than Uncebunke, Fangbrand illustrates the Taoist principle that "life and death are merely two aspects of the same reality, and the change from one to the other is . . . natural" (Kaltenmark 81). A statement Durrell made to Miller approximately a year before composing "Fangbrand" discloses the personal significance of this poem. Lonely and disheartened

in London, Durrell claimed: "Inside I pine for the island, the weird premonition of the landscape" (COR 150), a reference to his happy existence on Corfu and an allusion to his view of landscape itself as visionary. In the poem Durrell expands this idea, characterizing human potential as "the luminous island/Of the self" (CP 96). The final image of the island embracing "[t]he dying lives and the unborn smiles" (CP 96) intimates the reconciliation of opposites, the joy and potential available in Tao.

In the poems, "Conon in Exile" and "Conon in Alexandria", Durrell again presents a modern intellectual unhappy with his arid and narrowly cerebral life. Like Fangbrand, Conon too probes his long-neglected spiritual dimension in search of a better understanding of himself. Significantly, Durrell places both Conon and Fangbrand in similar physical settings. Fangbrand, portrayed as "exilic", and Conon, described as "in exile on Andros" (CP 108), live alone on islands, separated from their homes, figuratively alienated from vital parts of themselves. Durrell's personal experience of isolation renders his portraits of these figures acute and intense. He explains: "That vague sense of exile has never quite left me . . . everywhere belongs to the [expatriate] because he belongs nowhere" (BS 24, 25). Poignant and exhilarating, this personal note surfaces in Durrell's attitude toward these characters; touching and heroic, they blend sadness and joy. Unlike Fangbrand, however, Conon remains fundamentally caught in the grip of the ego and the will. Although he gains some enlightenment, he never makes Fangbrand's mystical leap to integrate himself. The voice of each poem provides a subtle indication of this critical difference. Since he has transcended the external world and now exists in silent harmony with the creative

principle of Tao, Fangbrand's biographer speaks for him. In contrast, Conon, who composes "notes upon [him]self" (CP 108), narrates and analyses his experience.

With Conon Durrell continues his exploration of the theme of the pain man inflicts on himself and others when he disregards his spiritual and emotional aspects and cultivates only the intellect and the will. In the Uncebunke and Fangbrand poems he investigates this theme primarily from a Taoist perspective; with Conon he uses Groddeckian psychology as an imaginative framework. He relates Conon's dilemma to Groddeck's theory that modern man should be aware that he is "both male and female, both child and adult" (Groddeck 1951 1287). Closely connected to the Taoist notion of the fusion of yin and yang in human nature and its urge to recapture the emotional peace and pure vision of childhood, this essentially spiritual outlook evades Conon. Durrell conveys his ambiguity toward this character in the curious Author's Note appended to the first poem, "Conon in Exile". Explaining Conon both as "an imaginary Greek philosopher" (CP 107) and as a "real" figure, he fashions a contradiction. By examining both points of view he discovers the truth and makes a profound metaphysical statement on the corresponding natures of man and language. When the poet maintains the reality of his imaginative creation, he asserts the emotional validity and spiritual worth of the visionary world, particularly that of poetry. In light of this interpretation, Weigel's reading of the Conon poems as "clearly personal, even autobiographical" (38) appears superficial. Durrell's own remark that his fictive and poetic creations "are personae . . . not people" (PR 49) clarifies the point. Interestingly, he does admit to an element of autobiography in his work, but only in the form of "places, scenes

and ambiances" (PR 49). Often, he draws on his rich and varied travels and designs a landscape so vivid that in terms of emotional and aesthetic impact it becomes a character.

"Conon in Exile" introduces this character as a famous, respected philosopher and author but as a man he is distant from his own emotions. His terse, prosaic style of analysing his love relationships exposes his basic flaw, an inability to connect the various aspects of his life. Durrell purposefully leaves it unclear as to whether Conon's pompous self-assessment, evident in such phrases as "admirers of the ballads" (CP 107), is accurate. Factual information, however, such as his abandonment by his first wife or lover Penelope, the suicide of his second wife Ariadne, and the madness of his third Ion, can be accepted. Ironically, the titles of his books, "The Universe", "The Art of Marriage", "Of Peace in the Self" and "Of Love", signify an altruistic, comprehensive vision at odds with the small, pathetic quality of his spiritual life. Although he knows love intellectually and conveys it to others, he cannot translate this knowledge into actual loving. Pondering his relationships, he discovers that he has "put down women's names like some / Philosophical proposition" (CP 108). A kind of mental vampire, he has derived creative energy from women but has failed to respond to their subjective reality. In Taoist terms he has only partially accommodated his yin. Furthermore, he perceives that "women have slept with [his] books" (CP 107), that one "was hardly aware of [him]" (CP 107), and that another only "lay with [his] words" (CP 107). With his admissions that in his relationships he "lay with [him]self" (CP 108) and that he has known "only coitus with the shadows" (CP 108), Conon sees that his love has been merely an expression of his ego.

Now an old man, Conon arrives at this critical realization on the Greek island of Andros. This fundamental change in Conon Durrell underscores by altering the narrative style of the last stanza. A more flowing, melodious cadence replaces the former crisp and clipped manner of rational analysis. By coming into harmony with the rhythms of nature, Conon encounters key parts of himself. Through him the poet expresses his acceptance of Groddeck's hypothesis that when man goes "beyond the ego" (K 73) he reaches the "It" where a multiplicity of energies previously inaccessible come alive and give him an intimation of his vast potential. Appropriately, Conon now writes on a subject central to Groddeck's philosophy, the affinity of love and death. Beside "our blue Aegean" (CP 108), symbolic of both the creative power of the unconscious and the womb, Conon comes to understand that "we die when we love; our personality is wiped out" (Groddeck 1977 200). His final setting and actions demonstrate Durrell's concurrence with Groddeck's belief that "man has a longing for love because he craves death, the mother's womb" (201). Spiritually and creatively awakened, Conon feels that he has come "home". Figuratively, his glimpse of the "It" allows him to emerge at last as a primordial figure, happy with his approaching death because it brings him closer to the source of love. With Conon landscape does not function as a catalyst to mystical vision as it did with Fangbrand; but Conon does achieve through it greater awareness of his creative, "feminine" side and a more integrated vision of life.

In "Conon in Alexandria" Durrell melds impressionistic technique and a pattern of psychological order to assess the factors behind a life in crisis. Here he investigates Spengler's view of Western civilization as largely doomed because it has reached that point in its cyclical

progression from which decline seems certain. Spengler rejected linear progress in history and hypothesized that cultures "go through prescribed stages which he calls spring, summer, autumn and winter and then fade away" (Spengler, Intro. viii). He differentiated between "culture" and "civilization", claiming that a civilization is "the inevitable destiny of a culture . . . a conclusion, the thing-become succeeding the thing-becoming, death following life, rigidity following expansion"

(24). The modern Western world, with its imperialistic tendencies, signifies to Spengler the final stage of civilization. "Daemoniac and immense" (28), imperialism represents the doom of a civilization because it does not embody the conscious will of the individual but is rather an acquisitive force which overtakes man. Tragically, this urge to dominate permeates the soul of Western man, producing in him a feeling of inadequacy and a deep sense of guilt when he fails consistently in his attempt to subjugate other people and nature.

A Spenglerian character in his search for total mastery in his relationship and perfection within himself, Conon displays also the intense self-scrutiny, the concern with the past and the constant rationalizing peculiar to products of Western civilization. Although set in a specific time and place, Alexandria during World War Two, the action of this disturbing poem occurs primarily in Conon's mind. By juxtaposing Conon's agonized psyche and the ugliness of Alexandria, Durrell reinforces the sterility and destructive potential of the passion controlling both, the urge of the ego to rule. From Alexandria, described in 1944 for Miller as "a nervous breakdown . . . coming into the open . . . crippled by an anemia and an apathy and a censorship which prevents the least trace of the human voice" (COR 187), Durrell constructs

a complex and moving statement on the misery of isolation and man's heroic attempt to surmount this condition. Organized into five sections or fragments of thought, the poem manifests little obvious intent or confessional purpose. Rather, as Canon enters into a dialogue with his former selves, confronts his past, questions his behaviour and poses alternatives to decisions, he moves gradually toward deeper self-awareness. As he relinquishes his ego and cultivates sympathy for others, he turns away from the futility and sadness of Western civilization and aligns himself with a comic vision of life.

The first section establishes the exterior situation as one of waste, entrapment and enervation. Economically, yet graphically,

Jurrell draws a vivid picture of the devastating effect of war.

Alexandria, once a beautiful and vibrant city, degenerates to an "[a]sh-heap" and Lake Mareotis, now a symbol of imprisonment, "bounds" the city. The use of sound in the third line is particularly trenchant: repetition of the "w" and "r" sounds protracts the ugly image where "the winter rain rings and whitens," (CP 127). Here he portrays

Groddeck's hypothesis that seeing is a "mixture of external and internal images and that the human mind changes all things to suit the image of man . . . the real image we eventually receive is a mixture of factual or real and humanly contingent images", (Groddeck 1977 174). Moreover, according to Groddeck, in artistic creation a related process takes place which explains the universal accessibility and appeal of symbols. All symbols, Groddeck claims, are ambivalent and multi-faceted because each work of art exists independently of its creator. "The symbol . . . throws up new symbols which make up the body of the poem. The artist's conscious activity consists . . . in the shaping of the

form" (162). Poetry, therefore, shares with sight an ability to join subjective and objective experience and, like seeing, has its origin and greatest impact in the individual unconscious. Here the waters of the lake "stiffen", correspond to "eyes" and symbolize the atrophying of visual and creative power. This interpretation is strengthened by Groddeck's remark that "every eye is subject to the male-female-child symbolism (fertilisation, pregnancy, birth, death), and that all illnesses of the eye are governed by these principles" (192). Made sterile due to the fixity of his ego, another "I", evoked through sound, Conon lacks the ability to create on any level. Durrell has stated that for Groddeck "the concept of disease is metaphysical" (K 73); through the rich associative properties of this one simple image, he conveys his firm grasp of this theory. In Durrell's view Groddeck offers a "vitalist" as opposed to a mechanist view of human personality, the self as a continually emerging, mysterious fusion of multiple, interdependent forces rather than a product of mere cause and effect. From this he concludes that Groddeck can think "in terms of liberation" (K 73); and with Conon Durrell investigates this process.

As the first section continues, multiple images of confinement exacerbate the sense of powerlessness produced by the frightening union of psychological and physical landscapes. Conon sees himself as "bound", serving a "sentence". Signs of deprivation and emptiness follow; Conon remains "[a] solitary" (CP 127) even among those who have "lost their character" (CP 127). He seeks out landscapes such as "the long beaches" (CP 127) to complement his isolation. In the second section he speaks of "[s]teps [going] down to the port (CP 127), suggesting his desire to leave this condition. However, his "attentive",

"exacting" character, a result of the ego's imposition of impossible goals, renders him incapable of action. Lacking spontaneity, he needlessly complicates ordinary life and eventually becomes controlled by such quotidian objects as the "plate of olives and the glass of wine" (CP 128). Victimized by his unconscious he endures "nightly visitations/ Of islands" (CP 127). This dream admits a dual interpretation: the islands underscore his present solitude or they represent essential parts of his self to be encountered before he can grow. Durrell's use of the dream as a method of revealing character demonstrates his receptivity to Groddeck's belief that "human beings think, act and suffer . . . symbolically" (Groddeck 1977 175) but that modern man represses symbols in his conscious life, admitting them only in dreams. Subliminally, Conon comprehends the cause of his suffering; yet he cannot acknowledge this consciously.

A specific event forces Conon's crisis of self. The lines, "A gown stained at the arm-pits by a woman's body. / A letter unfinished because the ink gave out" (CP 127), contain impressionistic images of ugliness and imperfection. They signify that Conon gives either too much or too little energy to his relationship and destroys the necessary balance in love. Lacking the Taoist ability to accept affection simply and light-heartedly, he changes the nature of love, causing it to appear "[f]ragmented everywhere by conscience and deceit" (CP 129). Partial and debased, his liaison perverts the normal intimacy of love, for the "lovers [separate] each other / Further with every kiss" (CP 129). Conon's relationship seems to have been a narrowly sexual one. Consequently, it has fostered no mutually binding tenderness. Yet the poem itself, as an act of self-realization, manifests his awareness of

the destruction inherent in this type of association. Durrell relates Canon's predicament, in part to his immersion in a decadent civilization. In stating that "Spring . . . compels these separations" (CP 128), he draws on Spengler's notion that the "future of the West is not a limitless tending upwards and onwards for all time . . . but a single phenomenon of history, strictly limited and defined as to form and duration" (30). Canon's situation, Durrell seems to indicate, may arise from exercise of the will-to-power, the historical force Spengler sees as driving Western civilization into decline. Yet through the self-mocking tone of the poem, Canon admits responsibility for his condition and appreciates the irony of being victimizer and then victim in an egocentric version of love.

Canon's suffering also points to a larger, metaphysical disturbance. Although a dispassionate critic, fundamentally Canon typifies Durrell's concept of a romantic; that is, "one who always look[s] for the maximum in culture, in love, in everything" (BS 28). Striving vainly for perfection like the Faustian hero, he ruins the possibility of happiness. His life, based on "thoughts so long rehearsed / Like the dry friction of ropes in the mind" (CP 128), becomes arid and intolerable; and he plunges into despair. However, this despair signals release from the ego and rationalism. Durrell explains: "You begin to live only when you have abandoned, rejected all solutions . . . It's joy . . . Once the void has been recognized . . . you have the beginnings of a sort of happiness" (BS 111). Canon's despair initiates an emotional and spiritual healing. Again Durrell shows the duality in emotion, sorrow ironically engendering peace. Additionally, this state produces a heightened sensitivity to landscape. Canon feels "the stars pressing

idly on the nerves" (CP 128) and discovers "sides of the self . . . In an emergency of anguish always, / Waiting for parents in another" (CP 128). Contemplating "a universe too large / Too formal" (CP 128), he realizes that man too is terrible in his multiplicity. Evident here is the Taoist urge to oneness, but perhaps more significant is Groddeck's theory of the "human trinity--male, female and child--indivisible, inseparable . . . present in everyone" (1951, 127). This coalescence of the different stages of life as the means to spiritual fulfillment emerges as one of the major themes in Durrell's poetry. He states that it is the "multiple state birth-life-death in one which [he] is trying to capture" (K 36). Canon's pain symbolizes the birth of a new consciousness, brought about by perceiving in landscape man's multiple dimensions. This leads him to accept his full self. He lets go of his constant analysing and plays the flute. Figuratively, he accommodates his "child" component, illustrating Groddeck's concept that man "is forever striving towards some blissful state which is what he was . . . in infancy" (1951, 207). Growth begins as Canon learns that love, like music, harmonizes emotion and intellect, passion and tenderness, man's adult and childlike natures.

In the Author's Note to "Canon in Exile" (CP 107), Durrell says that Melissa too is one of his masks. Use of a female character in this capacity underlines his acceptance of a cardinal aspect of both Groddeckian and Taoist thought, the double-sexed nature of the self. To fortify this concept he uses a male voice to tell Melissa's story. This voice undergoes constant transmutations, changing from Melissa's lover speaking to her directly, to someone addressing himself in the third person, to the poet talking with the reader. A subtle expression

of Durrell's enduring theme of the multi-faceted character of the modern self, this technique also implies the narrator's complete empathy with Melissa and so alludes to the main theme of this poem, the nature of love in the twentieth century. Durrell defines love as "a way of growing . . . a form of metaphysical inquiry" (DA 157), and conceives of his characters as "not just 'people' but symbols" (DA 157). Melissa represents the modern self challenged by and developing because of love. Through her role as mask for the poet, revelations concerning her serve as insights into the poet's self and his function.

The narrator presents Melissa by examining the central event in her life, a failed love relationship. This causes him to meditate on love in a larger sense, and he searches for the essential component in a variety of manifestations of love. To scrutinize this Durrell continues his use of Tao and Groddeck and once again employs Spengler's theory of history. He demonstrates that Spengler's pessimistic ideas concerning the collapse of Western civilization can be countered by a romantic, humanist vision of man in harmony with landscape. Additionally, in this poem Durrell explodes what he sees as the overriding flaw in existentialism, its "lack of crisis" (COR 224). Repugnant to Durrell for its dark view of man as the outcome of a controlling will and reactive behaviour against a hostile universe, this philosophy embodies what he calls the twentieth-century "art of stasis" (COR 224). A crisis, Durrell feels, saves art from the aesthetic flatness and accompanying despair brought about by existentialism, allowing "the cathartic principle of [a] change of stance--the reborn self" (COR 224). In terms of his poetics, crisis and catharsis are integral to the heraldic vision. He maintains: "[C]atharsis . . . is everyone's property, since

all men are artists in the egg, and what we call genius is really the norm--the self awake" (KT 161).

In the first section Durrell conveys Melissa's lack of a strong, enduring self through the brilliant mirror image: "If seen by many minds at once [her] image / As in a prism falling breaks itself" (CP 146). The mirror captures the split between Melissa's apparent self-indulgent sensuality and her complete selflessness. "[C]onfirmed by the smallest / Wish or kiss" (CP 146), she seems to live only when sex reflects her image back to her. Through Melissa the poet communicates his idea of love as eros. Although grounded in Platonism, where eros or "love of the divine" (Lilar 45) motivates man to regain his original condition of blissful union with God, Durrell's vision requires a wider interpretation, for he rejects monotheism and believes in "every kind of God" (KT 164). His antipathy to "the political idea inherent in religions claiming to be the only exclusive path" (KT 164) implies a broader, all-embracing spirituality. Within this framework, romantic love and sex express an attempt to achieve a higher form of existence. Lilar points out: "Love is . . . the intermediary between things opposed: a daimon" (44). The opposite natures of flesh and spirit join in love and yield a state of heightened consciousness. Untouched by sex herself, Melissa functions as a daimon, leading her lovers to a spiritual dimension. The fact that one of her lovers speaks here with compassion and beauty reveals subtly his greater awareness. Yet her detachment establishes her in a void where she corrupts loving words into "total silence" (CP 146). Sadly, her lover realizes that he has "increased [her] by very little" (CP 147).

Exclusively sexual, Melissa's relationships, based on "pleasure", exhibit a static quality similar to Conon's. Durrell places this aspect of Melissa "by the lake", probably Lake Mareotis near Alexandria, to evoke the association of water and the unconscious, to symbolize the psychic and emotional energies dormant in her. In "Cairo", the second part of the poem, he moves the scene more deeply into Egypt, paralleling a descent into Melissa's interior world. Melissa and Cairo, both "[c]ut from the joints of this immense / Darkness upon the face of Egypt" (CP 147), shed light on each other. Both signify human isolation, the knowledge that "[w]e move in the possession of our acts / Alone" (CP 147). Against this sad fact the poet juxtaposes a scene depicting the mysterious amalgam of landscape and emotion felt in life's simple, intense experiences. With vivid, sensuous detail, he pictures Melissa crying at a window, children in the street below "rapt" in their game and the carpenter's three sons bending "over a bucket of burning shavings" (CP 147). Mysteriously, these disparate images form a potent imaginative union. Through this beautiful vision Durrell suggests the human need to connect with something outside the self and intimates the vital link between landscape, love and the imagination.

"The Adepts" investigates traditional concepts of love and traces its failure to dominance of the ego. The speaker observes that love divorced from the total self and subjugated as "lesser" degenerates into something "animal, unstable, heavy as lead" (CP 147). Careful not to use the word "love", the speaker refers to "it". This plays upon Groddeck's "It" and so permits such a relationship to include elements of mysticism, romance, sex and friendship. "It" cannot be gained through manipulation or by imposing the nature of one thing on another. When,

for example, sex is approached in a mechanical way, "[l]ike a science of known relations" (CP 148), man becomes "weary". Using sex to find "[a] God proved through the flesh--or else a mother" (CP 148) also spoils what Durrell believes should be an enjoyable physical activity. This relates to the ancient Taoist view of sexuality as the "basic mechanism upon which the happy and healthy functioning of the whole man depended" (SM 15). As in "Fangbrand", Durrell emphasizes the spontaneous nature of love and mystic vision. Lack of preconceptions or expectations, receptivity to life and an ego integrated within the self coalesce in love's "mad friendship" (CP 148). Moreover, a true adept, "[l]aughing, and completely undecided" (CP 148), acquires the ability to write poems, "the diminutives of madness" (CP 148). Here Durrell highlights his belief in eros as the impetus to art. He would concur with Lilar's statement that "Eros is the aspiration of our mortal nature towards immortality, and is therefore impatient to procreate" (47). Like Plato, Durrell recognizes two types of procreation, physical and spiritual, and here refers to the second. The recurring image of Melissa crying at a window completes this section and serves as a reminder of opposites held in balance in the romantic perspective.

In the fourth section the poet makes an analogy between the sterility and failure of Melissa's love and Spengler's theory of cultural defeat. Using Spengler's symbolism of the seasons to delineate the destructive forces behind this process, he portrays love "going into a decline" (CP 148). Set in autumn when maturity falls into decay, the lovers adopt an inappropriate adolescent hesitancy and self-consciousness. Ironically entitled "The Encounter", no genuine communication occurs in this halting half-world of "the last yet second meeting" (CP 148). The

lovers, trapped in a deterministic cycle of instinct and pride, sense their doom but cannot change. Sensually agitated, they "ferment", impeded by a restrictive propriety and their own vanity. Their actions, controlled by the ego, are scrupulously planned, allowing no real contact. When compared with the ingenuous laughter in "The Adepts", "[t]he painful rehearsal of the smile" (CP 148) discloses the tragic influence of the ego. Ultimately the ego destroys love, separating and isolating the characters and fixing Melissa "forever in the same place" (CP 149), the distorting sphere of the speaker's memory. Because of her ego's fear of the change demanded by love, Melissa deteriorates into a pathetic creature with "long hare's features, the remarkable sad face" (CP 149).

The story of Petron deals with another aspect of love, man's need to foster spirituality. "A pioneer in pleasure" (CP 149), who eventually rejects sensuality and power, finding "no meaning in the flesh's weakness" (CP 149), Petron seems to resemble another mystic and spiritual leader from North Africa, Saint Augustine. His passion for God originates with a contemplation of physical landscape, as illustrated in the line, "Waterbirds sailing upon the darkness / Of Mareotis, this was the beginning" (CP 149). Unlike Augustine, who saw divinity in all things, however, he cannot discern the spiritual dimension in landscape and so the lake "ring[s] . . . With the insupportable accents of the Word" (CP 149). Deaf to the mystical harmony of man, landscape and God, Petron comprehends only a burdensome noise. Denying landscape as a medium of vision, it becomes for him "dense as clouded urine" (CP 150), an ugly thing obscuring perception. Paralysed by fear and prejudice, he restricts opportunities for growth and is left with "the harsh creed

of waterfowl and snake" (CP 150), alone in a debased landscape.

His pathetic cry, "'I dare not ask for what I hope / And yet I may not speak of what I fear'" (CP 150), identifies him, like Melissa, as a victim of his ego, prevented from loving and growing. Petron represents the stasis of existentialism, unable to reach a crisis. Completely self-involved, ironically, he lacks self-knowledge and fails to understand that "the passion of love is an access to the divine" (Lilar 48). Since he does not give love, he cannot know that the catharsis effected through love makes possible the mystical transcendence he seeks.

"The Rising Sun" reverses the traditional symbolism of the sun, thereby giving it fresh impact. Usually associated with life, action and the male principle, the sun appears as a "bloody convict" (CP 150), resonant with Spengler's "era of blood", wherein Western civilization is destroyed by the forces of pride and greed. Multiple images of guilt, determinism and limited vision increase the irony of the title. Use of monetary terms such as "bonds", "debentures" and "the revising of money" (CP 150) establish power, deception and acquisitiveness, expressions of the ego, in control of this landscape. This situation typifies Spengler's vision of Western civilization as "the stage of culture at which tradition and personality have lost their immediate effectiveness, and every idea, to be actualized, has to be put into terms of money" (406, 407). Against this malignant drive Durrell counterposes the lovers. Caught in the web of civilization, they seem minuscule and irrelevant, a "pious ant and groom" (CP 150). They assume heroic proportions, though, in their disdain of this "bloody" era. Cursing the sinister character of this sun's light, they remain in their "darkened bed-room" (CP 150). As they kiss, they illuminate the poet's

belief in the healing power of physical love. Their eroticism breaks the bond of determinism, strips away ego and allows them to achieve an essential human form, spiritual and depersonalized. Further to this, Durrell sees sex as a "psychic act, a biological paraphrase of the truth" (DD 64) and says that the "play of human passions [suggests] that the personality as such is an illusion" (DD 64). In this regard it is significant that the lovers are nameless. Their anonymity allows them to stand for those modern men and women who repudiate materialism and the quest for power. Additionally, through their passivity they demonstrate wu-wei, what is called "actionless action" (Cooper 1981 40), and reveal themselves as Taoist lovers of the universe. Like Fangbrand, they attain holiness through passivity and surpass him in the sense that as male and female they display more cogently the balance of desireless non-assertion and passionate energy of Tao.

In the seventh section, "Visitations", Durrell again answers Spengler's argument that modern man, because of his imperialistic ethos, lives in eternal restlessness, longing for the unattainable. In declaring that "[t]he enchanters, the persuaders" (CP 150), deliver only the mundane, such as "ash in saucers . . . Lipstick-marks upon a cup" (CP 150), Durrell re-affirms the tragedy implicit in any system based on an expectation of perfection. The second stanza explains how all man's attempts to create the ideal, from religion to art, fail, and "[r]ot within us bit by bit" (CP 151). Without the truth of a relative vision, man, fixed in a distorted landscape, becomes "trouble[d] and confuse[d]" (CP 151). The complexity of love, Durrell intimates, cannot be appreciated in an ambience of rigid values and moral absolutes.

While acknowledging Spengler's theory of cultural decline as fundamentally correct, the final section transcends it by presenting an individual able to overthrow such hopelessness. By rejecting the myth of perfection the protagonist cultivates a unified self, the basis for all the aspects of love. Here Durrell examines his contention that the real substance of art involves a writer's frantic search "for something [he] lost in childhood" (WM 53). In summer, figurative of maturity in Spenglerian terms, the lover watches children playing. Children, traditional figures of innocence and energy, are seen as "gruesome little artists of the impulse" (CP 151). Functioning in "perfect anarchy" (CP 151), they too recall Spengler's "era of blood", operating on pride and instinct. Although Durrell offers a thoroughly unsentimental portrait of children, he expresses genuine sympathy for the human dilemma. The sleeping children signify Western culture unaware of the forces shaping it. Herein, the imago, an idealized memory or phantasy of a person beloved in childhood, assumes an horrific proportion. The psychic equivalent of the hero, it is an image of perfection, by nature unattainable. The poet shows how modern man's desire for absolutes yields only emotional pain. No advancement occurs; and man remains like the children, "[b]egot by passion and confirmed in error" (CP 152).

Delicately countering this serious content stands Durrell's beautiful evocation of childhood as "[a] brilliant apprehension of the present" (CP 151). Linked to Tao by its references to light and timelessness, this line owes much also to the poet's study of Groddeck. Particularly significant is Groddeck's idea that the child symbolizes what "both is and is becoming, wherein truth lies" (1951, 201). Free from the ego and its rationality, shame, and guilt, the child gives

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 himself totally to the activity of the moment and so enters into its texture. Although in his games he practices violence, even murder, he remains pure because he is "beyond good and evil, is amoral and therefore innocent" (212). Durrell draws on Groddeck's definition of shame as "thinking too highly of one's ego, setting it up in opposition to the world of nature and taking oneself to be a whole instead of only a part of something infinitely greater than oneself" (212) to explicate how the child can carry out vicious acts and still retain goodness. In Durrell's opinion the child perceives the world as a timeless unity and therefore experiences heraldic reality. Happy and creative because he is integrated with the world, the child serves as a model for both lovers and artists.

Finally, the "watcher at the window" (CP 152), one of Melissa's lovers, or the poet, realizes that his desire for perfection in love parallels the falsity of an idealized vision of childhood that has "[t]rapped [him] in the same limitation of his growth" (CP 152). This adoption of relativity as a guiding principle in human relations signals emotional advance. Durrell's "Eight Aspects of Melissa" depicts eight different perspectives on love ranging from physical environment to mystic experience. Herein the poet portrays one of his primary themes: man needs to achieve a larger vision complementing a relative view of human nature. Liberated by this outlook, the poet drops the mask of Melissa as he had previously discarded the Fangbrand and Conon characters. One of Durrell's most successful refutations of Spengler, the poem displaces pessimism with humanism and asserts that love and growth can prevail.

Having explored in considerable depth his theme of the growth of the self through the use of various protagonists, Durrell now enters the "personal world" (CP 169) of the poem, "Cities, Plains and People". Although certainly autobiographical, the poet maintains detachment, rarely permitting his passionate involvement with his material to become confessional. Like Wordsworth, whom he so admires, Durrell investigates maturation by reviewing his own life. In this modern "Prelude" he probes the notion that "the child is father of the man" and questions whether, in the twentieth century, man does "trail clouds of glory" into adulthood. Using the journey motif as a structural principle, he inquires into the process whereby the outlook of the child is transformed into artistic vision. The poem takes on a universal dimension as he designs this outline of his life to demonstrate that progression from the "idle" boy to the sleeping Prospero represents an enduring human pattern.

Maintaining that "the river image is absolutely fundamental in [h]is work" (BS 18), Durrell uses it as a complex metaphor to suggest at once the flux of time and an eternal stability. Technically, it connects the poem's disparate narrative clusters. Reversing the typical view of growth as a linear progression, Durrell describes it as "descending / The long sad river" (CP 159). This conveys his belief that pain inevitably accompanies development and communicates his view that the self needs to make a conscious plunge into the past to understand its present situation. A statement from The Alexandria Quartet illuminates this theme. Durrell writes: "At each stage of development man resumes the whole universe and makes it suitable to his own inner nature . . . each thought fecundates the universe anew" (AQ 144). He asserts that

the symbiotic relationship of man and landscape enhances their mutual creativity.

In "Cities, Plains and People" he links these two thematic concerns and offers his most ambitious and expansive treatment of his primary interest, the critical effect of landscape on the growth of the self. Elizabeth Jennings sees in this, "the longest [of Durrell's] poem[s], [a revelation of his] unique vision, a wholeness that is never shown quite so satisfyingly [elsewhere]" (100). Conversely, Tolley thinks the poem over-written (1985, 47); and Fraser too deems it a limited accomplishment, remarking that "Durrell's poems, like his prose works, are perhaps all in the end oblique essays in self-portraiture" (29). Perhaps enthusiasm or distaste for such a poem reveals the critic's preferences as much as it exposes the poem's flaws. However, especially with regard to the charge of over-writing, the poem displays weakness, for Durrell too admits that his poetry can lack concision (COR 343). Nevertheless, "Cities, Plains and People" occupies a landmark position in terms of his artistic growth.

Appropriately, the poem begins in Durrell's childhood at the foot of the Himalayas in India. He lives in "perfect idleness" (CP 158), "innocent of surface" (CP 158), undifferentiated from place. Anthropomorphizing landscape, he relates how the mountains laid "[a]gainst his innocent thigh a stony thigh" (CP 158). The sensuous diction implies that first knowledge of landscape compares in kind and significance with one's first sexual encounter. Simple words and a quick measure such as "pure lakes" (CP 158) and "feathers fell or flew" (CP 158) depict the boy's awakening to the beauty and vitality of the world. Although in this setting sex and death, the paramount concerns of the

adult world, are "small", the relentless thrust toward maturity continues. An unsettling note is struck, for example, when he notices that "[w]omen made their water like thieves" (CP 159). The last stanza of the first section conveys a sense of slow, painful descent. This effect is reinforced by the thickening of measure and the discord in the line, "tidebound, tepid, causeless" (CP 159), where he expresses sympathy for himself as a child, leaving the landscape of India and entering the unfamiliar, uninviting environment of England. The last line reiterates the necessary pain of growth but intimates a valuable outcome, the possibility of "pain [becoming] a literature" (CP 159).

Echoing Eliot's description of the artist as "the man who suffers and the mind which creates" (41), Durrell pronounces that personal pain transcended can reach the potency of art. To symbolize the death of his happy Indian way of life he sets up a series of contrasts highlighting what he sees as the virtues of India and the defects of England. Directly opposed to the Eastern philosophy of life as a "honeycomb of silence" (CP 159), English values, manifest in "steel and running water" (CP 160), produce a pragmatic, venal culture operating on mechanistic rather than passionate or spiritual terms. The transferred epithet "prudish cliffs" (CP 160), alludes to the repression of passion in this landscape. Durrell calls England "Pudding Island" (CP 160), soft and indistinct, both physically and metaphysically. Antipathetic to his new environment, he vents his hostility in witty yet scathing criticism of England. He finds that creativity is scorned in this setting, for [h]ere all as poets were pariahs" (CP 160). His enigmatic statement that for the poet it is "never landfall" (CP 160) signifies the poet's delineation of the unknown territories of human experience. In satirizing

the socialist poets of the 1930's as the "many representative young men" (CP 160), he gently yet effectively discloses the way political concerns can sometimes restrict imaginative vision. Too similar, their poetry, for Durrell, falls flat and loses impact. He also reviles the British class system, apparent in "the earls from their cockney boxes" (CP 160). England, for this young poet, comes to mean "only . . . a promise-giving kingdom" (CP 160), a landscape of unrealized potential.

His anger cooled, he understands that England, at a geographic and cultural remove from Europe, provides an ideal locus for assessing a civilization based on rationalism. A tone of mockery underscores the poet's contempt for "the great sick-room, Europe" (CP 160). Ironically, Durrell, the "lame and awkward newcomer" (CP 160), believes he has the clearest view and perceives that Europe, like, England, denies passion and transfers its energy into more socially acceptable outlets such as religion. Exemplified in the double entendre of Bede, who "[b]lew out desire and went to bed" (CP 160), this prurient attitude corrupts the genuine experience of religion and results in "unconquered guilt in atrophy" (CP 160), a deadly spiritual malaise. In this faded world, a Spenglerian "[d]eath like autumn falls" (CP 161). Doomed, the human spirit shrinks; and "everything is made more marginal" (CP 161), weak and irrelevant. Recognizing that this cultural decline causes a parallel degeneration in literature, Durrell claims that we can only "[r]eflect. how Prospero was born to a green cell" (CP 161) of imaginative unity. Through his presentation of Dante's Beatrice as a shadow, no longer the substance of inspiration, he suggests that modern man receives little creative nourishment from his landscape. The Romantic vision too has worn thin, for Durrell observes the "potential passion hidden, Wordsworth /

In the desiccated bodies of postmistresses" (CP 161). In maintaining that "at last we did outgrow ourselves" (CP 161), the poet insists that the passions of the past cannot sustain man in the present. As he pulls "the green stalk . . . from the earth, / With a great juicy sob [that turns] him from a Man / To Mandrake" (CP 161), he urges modern man to create a new ethos by cultivating his primitive origins.

The lucidity and beauty of the following section imply the success of this action. Short rhythmic lines using occasional alternate rhyme and simple, direct diction show that spontaneity and simplicity, not doctrinal systems, yield vision. Furthermore, the poet explains that truth arises "by paradox" in that a "saint or seer [discovers it when he] [c]onquer[s] for the truth his thirst" (CP 162). Surprisingly, man attains creative or mystic ability only when he relinquishes the impulse to acquire it. Indirectly, the poet advocates passivity and openness as the means to imaginative and spiritual power. Durrell continues his quest for enlightenment and gains important insights during his stay at Henry Miller's Villa Seurat in Paris. With Miller as iconoclastic guide he realizes the rational bias of "black-hearted Descartes" (CP 162) and his "sterile apparatus" (CP 162) of logic as antipathetic to creativity. Moreover, he learns the actual craft of writing, "mat[ing] now / To the hard frame of prose the cogent verb" (CP 162). He comes to appreciate the role of the intellect in art and concludes that the poet's emotions must be tempered by the exigencies of balance and control. Expanding his concept of poetry, he sees "the heart [as] / A critic and a nymph" (CP 162). Study and discussion of Tao give Durrell an awareness of the fundamental unity of male, female and nature, beautifully portrayed in the lines:

She sleeping in his awkward mind.
 Taught, of the pace of women or birds
 Through the leafy body of man. (CP 163)

His intimate relationships in Paris lead him to comprehend sex as a catalyst to mystical experience: "sex became / A lesser sort of speech, and the members doors" (CP 163). Over thirty-five years later he maintains that "there is a profound link between sexual and psychic energies" (BS 33). Spiritually enriched, his poetic principles strengthened and reaffirmed by his stay in Paris, Durrell reiterates his thesis that individual human passion, not a controlling society based on reason, is the key to growth. Simply, "man, not manners, makyth man" (CP 163). Jennings notes Durrell's witty portraits of those trying to liberate man through sex but offers no critical comment. The serious import of such humorous images as "savage Chatterleys of the new romance / Get carried off in Sex, the ambulance" (CP 163), lies in Durrell's encouragement of balance in life and literature. Through satire the poet conveys his view that over-indulgence of passion restricts growth as surely as complete dependence on reason.

The form of the poem mirrors the stages in psychic growth and, as a calm state often replaces intense emotion, a sombre, reflective mood overtakes the previous comic ebullience. Dark and hopeless, the self takes on the qualities of a Spenglerian November. Placed in the city, the primary twentieth-century landscape, the poet feels weak and dispirited. Striving to discover the source of creativity, he speculates that "the unconscious eaters of the apple" (CP 164), those living simply and intuitively, hold the key. Suddenly, his desire changes to a Taoist state of peaceful desirelessness. He undergoes a "mystical purification

[bringing] [him] back to [his] natural condition" (Kaltenmark 92) of calm passivity. As in "Fangbrand" the image of shedding behaviours and possessions prepares the protagonist for the central Taoist activity, loss of the ego. Accordingly, the self enters a timeless landscape: "We surrendered arms, hearts, hands . . . Eyes for the hourglass sands" (CP 164). Durrell underlines the paradoxical method of this process; actions seemingly opposed to progress accomplish revelation. He instructs man, therefore, to "[u]ncomb and unlock" (CP 164), to reverse the usual order of perception and open himself to a new perspective. Illuminated through Taoist openness and passivity, man discerns his true nature, double-sexed, creative and loving; he writes:

The luckier lover who's waiting,
As, like a spring coiled up,
In the bones of Adam, lay Eve. (CP 164)

A stronger expression of the self as a fusion of yin and yang than in "Fangbrand", this image continues the motif of the Biblical apple and supplies us with "a new vision of the Book of Genesis" (Jennings 101). More importantly, it repudiates the "perversion of Original Sin, that filthy obscenity of the West" (AQ 762), the traditional Christian association of passion and the imagination with sin and guilt. It communicates Durrell's theme that in Tao, where love, God and art are all aspects of unity, the individual is divine and self-creating.

The tension between the dual imperatives of creativity, solitude and union, raises the autobiographical content of section eight to a debate on poetics. Durrell's first marriage, his child and his life in Greece form the backdrop. "[I]n the pattern of all solitaires" (CP 165), he seems married only to landscape, "the sad perfect wife" (CP 165).

The influence of Groddeck is felt strongly here as Durrell investigates the psychologist's idea concerning man's "love of solitude" (1977, 142). Taught by "the experience of separateness in the womb . . . to retreat from the world into his deepest feelings, thoughts and creative activities, to become a world in himself and to find everything in himself" (152), man, according to Groddeck, becomes both creator and creation. Characterizing his poetry as the "only child, of introspection got, / Her playmates, lovers, in herself" (CP 165), Durrell indicates the solitary nature of the poet's work. He alludes also to his view of poetry as the outcome of a spontaneous interaction or "play" of the poet's multiple selves. Additionally, contemplative thought, symbolized by the miraculous landscape where "rivers [run] upside down" (CP 165), induces imaginative action. Receptive to the spirit of this landscape, the poet senses "worlds . . . confirmed in him" (CP 165). Juxtaposed to this union of man and landscape, quixotic human relations seem to destroy creative balance. The repetition of the phrase, "never finding peace" (CP 166), emphasizes the tension in Durrell's personal life. Jennings observes that this pattern of conflict repeats itself in historical process and so allows him to give "an account of his views of love and link them with Time and history" (101). More precisely, Durrell demonstrates that a force identical to that subjugating Poland in World War Two makes "terrible verbs / Like 'I adore, adore'" (CP 166). In personal relations or in political action the ego's desire for power turns the "lovers" in man's self into a "wild pack" (CP 167).

A mature decision, appositely made in a Spenglerian autumn, to grow "[t]hrough the bodies of other selves, / In books" (CP 167), acquaints the poet with his dark side. He laments the primacy of the ego in such

writers as Dostoevsky, yet admits this as a part of his cultural heritage. Like Compton, such figures as Fedor and Anna prey on each others' emotions, experience only "introspection and disease" (CP 168), and end up sad and isolated, "[c]ompanied each [with] their darkness" (CP 168). Consequently, Durrell rejects the ego as the chief means of defining man and reveals himself as the "naked sprite / Whose flesh and noise [he is]" (CP 167). His distanced, passive diction recalls Groddeck's writings on the "It", such as "I am being lived by the It" and "the I is merely an outward appearance, an expression of the It" (1977, 132). Therefore, Jennings' reading of this critical insight as Durrell's "learning how to be objective without being either cold or remote" (102) is correct as far as it goes, but it misses the mark when it ignores the crucial influence of Groddeck on Durrell's view of the development of the self. Furthermore, personal pain, not objectivity, instills in him the principle that "knowledge has an end, / And virtue at the last an end" (CP 168). Although valuable in their finite ways neither contains the matrix of the self. Rather,

In the dark field of sensibility . . . [and]
 On the negative's dark screen
 Grow the shapes of other selves. (CP 168)

Reminiscent of the image of Tao as "darkness full of light which surpass[es] our . . . understanding" (Kaltenmark 65), this description of man's search for himself intimates a basic similarity between the natures of man and Tao. Mysterious and pluralistic, an intuitive approach discloses them most faithfully but never completely. Accordingly, the poet urges man to pursue happiness, not wisdom, for wisdom, an absolute concept, only brings bondage to time, "the sad valour / Of

endurance through the seasons" (CP 169), whereas happiness, a more relative state, engenders freedom. Within this ambience Durrell depicts the horror of World War Two as "darkness comes to Europe" (CP 169). This kind of darkness, the antithesis of the creative darkness of Tao, forces "greater hearts [to] contract their joys / By silence to the very gem" (CP 169). As in "Fangbrand", external landscape thrusts the self into a concentrated, healing silence.

The poet interprets the gaining of Tao as "turning" to "the yellow emperor" (CP 169), Lao Tzu, the purported author of the Tao Tê Ching and the primary Taoist "deity". The gentle word "turning" suggests the unconscious way an individual acquires this new perspective. Curiously, the poet discovers that the Taoist eradication of the ego brings him to "a personal world" (CP 169). This conveys also the difficulty of giving poetic form to a state beyond linguistic denotation. As he puts it, "confession can only gloze" (CP 169). Fittingly, he adopts the Chinese symbolism of numbers to explain how Tao achieves new form by moving from unity to duality and on to new unity. In this process of continuous creation wherein all reflects the central unity, Durrell perceives a "[d]ark Spirit" (CP 170), a force corresponding to Tao in its female manifestation as a void or womb. Paradoxically, this negative power animates all life, becoming the "source of all manufacture and repair (CP 170). Since creation in Taoism requires the interaction and balance of yin and yang, Durrell mentions the presence of the "temporal sun" (CP 170), an energetic, masculine entity. This adds poignancy to his portrait of European art, locked at the stage of duality. Replying to Spengler's theory that divided psyches such as Hamlet and Faust represent Western man most accurately, Durrell delineates their constant agonized

self-scrutiny. Grandiose desires, inspired by imperialism, leave these characters eternally separate, magnificent but doomed. Ironically, they never realize that love and liberation, the qualities they claim to champion, lie within the self; in Durrell's words, "feeling and idea, / Must fall within this space / This personal landscape" (CP 170).

The simplicity and beauty of Tao, contained in "ferns and birds and ordinary people" (CP 170), contrasts sharply with the Faustian protagonist's futile striving for spiritual predominance. The metaphor of the dance, connoting harmonious union of separate identities, captures the quiddity of Tao. Furthermore, Durrell, faithful to Taoist thought, notes that the darkness functions "[o]n the great table of the Breath" (CP 170), illuminating the Taoist belief that "man's essential life principle is composed of Primordial Breath" (Kaltenmark 130).

Incorporating the great and the small, the "measure of perfection or of pain" (CP 170), Tao resolves all antinomies resulting from false notions of the ego. Existing without reference to time, it destroys man's sense of separateness: "Our Here and Now become your Everywhere" (CP 170). In Lao Tzu, Durrell finds the physical emblem of mystical enlightenment. He personifies the Taoist master repudiating worldly values, letting "[h]is palace [fall] to [ruin]" (CP 171), while devoting himself to spiritual development. Altering technique to highlight theme, Durrell uses short lines and rhyme to render the openness and integrity of Tao. Beyond personality, its essence recurs "in Lawrence or in Blake" (CP 171), for in his view the creative imagination engenders a sense of wholeness akin to that found in mysticism. Transposing his concept of artistic vision to the real world, he articulates his central theme, man's desire for growth. The profound yet simple sentiment

expressed in "All cities, plains and people / Reach upward to the affirming sun" (CP 171) displays his rich humanism. In this comic vision of the integration of man and landscape the poet attests to the fundamental goodness of man, his need for warmth and love.

In the fifteenth section Durrell orders his poetic priorities. The poet lives in and must be aware of the contemporary landscape, even when it opposes life. In World War Two "Athens or Bremen seem / A mass of rotten vegetables" (CP 172), portraying the ugliness of the ego in its most hideous voice, fascism. Disillusioned with a civilization based on the will, the poet explicates the folly of imposing his own will in the form of hope. His declaration that "[t]here is nothing to hope for" (CP 173) does not mean despair, but rather a calm faith in the inevitability of good. Throughout the poem Durrell has explored the parallel drives for personal growth and artistic integrity. Finally, in the figure of Prospero he synthesizes these themes. In Shakespeare's hero Durrell sees the artist keeping vision alive not by conscious effort, manipulation or imposition of order on his materials, but by uniting the landscapes of conscious knowledge and imagination. Appropriately, Durrell places Prospero in an "evergreen / Cell by the margin of the sea and land" (CP 173), an ambience eternally alive, part psychic, part physical. Prospero's sleep after viewing "many cities, plains, and people" (CP 173) recalls the "idleness" of the child at the beginning of the poem. Both symbolize Durrell's heraldic reality, "a field or laboratory of the consciousness . . . based in repose" (COR 202). Prospero demonstrates Durrell's belief that "to achieve great poetry, you must give up everything" (BS 93). The artist surrenders power and his ego and so aligns himself with landscape in a manner reminiscent of

the little boy at the beginning of the poem. For Durrell this signifies imaginative and spiritual growth.

Chapter Four

All the Heart's Profit and Loss

We suffer according to the terms we make
With time in cities. (CP 183)

A variety of difficulties including financial worries, political uncertainty, marital problems and bouts of depression made the decade after the war a turbulent one for Durrell. With Eve Cohen, a beautiful Alexandrian, whom he met in 1944 and married in 1946, he travelled extensively. He seemed to find in physical movement an outlet for a mostly unacknowledged spiritual unrest. Usually, he hid this, either in cheerful exuberance or excited political criticism. Nineteen forty-six marked a watershed for Durrell in that Cities, Plains and People became the first volume of his poetry to be issued by a regular publisher, Faber. Also in that year, a reprint of Personal Landscape, An Anthology of Exile, was issued; and Durrell produced another book of poetry, On Seeming to Presume. In 1947, during a brief stay with his family in Bournemouth, England, Durrell became restless and melancholic. Eagerly, he accepted a position with the British Council to give a series of lectures on modern British poetry in Buenos Aires. This proved a bitter disappointment, and a year later he broke his contract: To Durrell, Argentina appeared to be "morally the final circle of hell" (COR 251, 252). Fundamentally, a metaphysical writer, he found the "queer lightness of the spiritual atmosphere . . . [where] the personal sort of European [was] . . . out of place" (COR 247) deeply disturbing.

He produced nothing during his time there although his lecture notes later formed the basis for A Key to Modern British Poetry. Ironically, in an ambience he found materialistic and spiritually arid, he explored ideas critical to his concept of creativity. He was particularly inspired by the psychologist Otto Rank's radical view of the artist devoting "his whole creative force to life . . . [thereby enjoying] in personality, creation, and expression, a greater happiness" (K 89).

Sick and disillusioned, Durrell returned to Bournemouth in late 1948. He confided to Miller that he was experiencing "bad nerves . . . periods of gloom and exhaustion . . . [and] frightful melancholia" (COR 258). Like many creative people he found it difficult to "reconcile the conflicting claims of jobs and writing" (COR 258). When the Foreign Office sent him to Yugoslavia as Press Attaché in 1949 he seemed relieved. Again, though, he was disappointed. In communism he observed a "systematic moral and spiritual corruption by every means at hand" (COR 264), and he deplored the complicity of the intellectuals with such an oppressive government. Busy with official travel and journalistic duties, he found little time to write the novel that increasingly occupied him. As Alan Thomas, Durrell's long-time friend and the editor of Spirit of Place, a collection of Durrell's essays and letters, puts it, "the frustration . . . became almost unbearable" (SP 92). In 1952, in order to concentrate his energies on The Alexandria Quartet, he resigned from the Foreign Service and took a job as the Director of Public Relations on Cyprus.

Unfortunately, Durrell's plan did not unfold as he had hoped. Lonely because of the failure of his marriage to Eve, under financial pressures which forced him to teach once again and busy caring for his

baby daughter, Durrell nevertheless pushed to complete Justine. When he left Cyprus in 1956 he had done so. Alan Thomas claims that "despite the dark undertones this was one of the happiest periods of [Durrell's] life" (SP 77). Some of his poetry of the post-war decade shows this, reflecting a sense of life as precious, tender and fragile. Despite the fact that Durrell directed most of his creative attention to fiction at this time, he wrote a number of exquisite poems.

Chiefly, this chapter deals with Durrell's formulation of an intensely personal philosophy for his poetry. Durrell seeks to awaken in man "the sleeping beauty underneath [the conscious mind]--the poetic consciousness . . . in the heart of everyone" (AQ 579). He hopes to demonstrate that when creative potential is made a reality, a human being reaches his finest self. First, chapter four examines Durrell's radical notion that ultimately the poet becomes his poem, living his art and entering into a symbiotic relationship with his creation. Several key poems are examined wherein he links the concept of the developing writer with Rank's idea of the artist as "a new kind of person, a seer" (K 89). Finally, this chapter explicates the religious dimension in Durrell's poetry. Although he abhors the practice of proselytizing or inculcating a particular moral position in poetry, he stresses that modern poetry is "deeply moralistic in implication" (K 87).

"In the Garden: Villa Cleobolus" encapsulates many of the themes occupying Durrell at this time. On a quiet night in the garden of his Turkish villa on Rhodes the poet contemplates the nature of poetry. He knows that his innate ability with language and his sound intellectual capacity give him an "[a]uthority over the word" (CP 175). Yet he admits

that to convey "[t]he full round of this simple garden" (CP 175) demands a further, more elusive quality. When he wonders "[h]ow to adopt and raise [the] pleasure" (CP 175) the garden brings to man he communicates his conception of art as both a sensuous delight and a metaphysical construct. In describing the object of his quest as a "simple shape, like wine" (CP 175), he is influenced by the Romantic poets' emphasis on clarity of thought and the use of natural language. He evinces an additional and deeper sympathy with the Romantics in his belief that art involves something "[b]eyond . . . this treasure hunt / Of selves" (CP 175). That is, art issues from the artist's most intense personal experience and, moreover, provides a resolution for conflicting elements of the self. Durrell states: "The meaning [of a work of art] resides not only in the work as a whole unit, but also in the life of its creator, and in the struggle that went into the making of the work" (HM 45). Through an appealing mixture of understatement and graphic images this poem depicts Durrell's philosophy of the visionary artist. As in "Cities, Plains and People", he envisions art as a healing process, a way to "outflank the personal neurasthenia . . . [and] [b]ring joy" (CP 176). Toward this end he recognizes the central role of desire, the most primitive, yet the most refined human urge, the impetus to create. In Durrell's view, as the artist "describ[es] for us all / The natural history of the human wish" (CP 176), he goes beyond the personal self. His philosophy culminates in the coalescence of passion and pain in the ecstasy of eternal creation.

Somewhat oracularly Durrell proclaims that "the meaning of life is to make us become [human]" (KT 164). Sometimes this involves shock, pain and loss, as he illustrates in a violent, almost pessimistic poem

called "Elegy on the Closing of the French Brothels". He mourns the fact that modern people, because of their preoccupation with material possessions and empty sensuality, have lost the tenderness, humour and joy of love. Trapped in a milieu where the ego dominates, such figures, in their search for intimacy, experience sex as a "[s]ymbol of unrecognized desire, pain, pain" (CP 182). Like the "fermenting lovers" (CP 148) in "Eight Aspects of Melissa", they are "crude". Sad and incomplete, they search in vain their "self-infection" for compassion and charity. Acknowledging that human nature makes us "[h]oly and ridiculous at once" (CP 182), Durrell maintains that man can accomplish more than "translated business never quite his own" (CP 182). He perceives that man "[d]erives from the obscure medium of the body . . . a retrieved sprite" (CP 182). The poet takes up the theme he introduced in "Eight Aspects of Melissa", the power of physical love to transmute man from the shallowness and misery of self-interest to a realization of his emotional potential and his possible spiritual fulfillment.

This type of radical transformation is neither easy nor without pain, for man has erected many barriers to his own growth. First he remains foolishly "asleep", unaware. Additionally, he binds himself to the false and superficial world of time and the ego; and he pays for his folly. Durrell explains; "We suffer according to the terms we make / With time in cities" (CP 183).. In a brilliant, yet bitter thrust at man's cupidity and blindness, the poet attacks modern man as a "common brute [who has built] like a rat the rotten shanties / Of his self-esteem" (CP 183). This invective, meant to inspire in man the desire to change, reinforces Durrell's theme of the healing process of art and recalls an aphorism from the The Alexandria Quartet: "Vision is

exorcism" (AQ 881). Moreover, it underscores another of the poet's key beliefs--the pain attendant upon growth. When enlightenment comes, however, it does so suddenly, mysteriously and completely. Durrell portrays this gaining of insight along Taoist lines, much as in "Fangbrand": what occurs is a "miracle", an instantaneous and total transformation from fragmented self-absorption to beauty, energy and happiness. Again he invokes the primary Taoist virtues of simplicity and integration with nature as he pictures both the "beloved" and the "unloved"

. . . ineffably disclosed
In their own natures by simplicity
Like roses in a giving off of grace. (CP 183)

This passage illuminates one of Durrell's cardinal tenets: man, whether he has led a good or bad life, is in essence valuable and beautiful. For Durrell, humanity is fundamentally good and tends toward harmony and unity. This outlook may be inspired by the Taoist belief that "there is nothing inherently evil in the universe" (Cooper 1972 23). Moreover, in the poet's view, grace, the capacity to participate in such goodness, appears to be a matter of luck. Grace is not a reward for positive moral action, but a gift all the more precious for its mysterious origin and unexpected arrival. In this reworking of Keats' Romantic premise of "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" from his "Ode on a Grecian Urn", Durrell overturns with shining optimism the egocentric pessimism threatening to destroy man.

In "Anniversary", one of two poems¹ dedicated to T. S. Eliot, his editor at Faber, Durrell celebrates Eliot's contribution to modern

¹ See also "The Parthenon" (CP 134).

literature and reveals much about his own theory of poetry. He asserts his appreciation for the "kind forbearance and generousness" (SP 83) shown him by the experienced critic. Also, Durrell states that his reputation for "exactitude and rigorous precision comes purely from having had Eliot as a guide" (BS 126). Calling poetry a "science of intimacies" (CP 187), he highlights the great poet's stress on the need to "look into [the heart], the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts" (Eliot 66) when "transmuting ideas into sensations" (66). An intimate act in that it brings every aspect of man into play, poetry, in Durrell's interpretation of this artist, does not consist of "intimacies" but rather makes a "science" or study of them. This resonates with one of Eliot's most prominent contentions, that the object of poetry is not "to find new emotions, but to use ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions" (43). In so doing it engenders "an escape from emotion . . . [and] an escape from personality" (43). Lest this depiction seem cold Durrell alludes immediately to Eliot's belief in the poem as an organic, living thing through such images as "roots . . . compost . . . [and] new veins" (CP 187).

As he continues his description, Durrell offers an important insight into Eliot's main objective. He shares his editor's view that "the author of a work of imagination is trying to affect us wholly, as human beings" (101). Durrell pictures the older man "giving / Quotations from the daily treaty poets make / With men, possessions or a private demon" (CP 187). Eliot, he comprehends, devoted himself to portraying, through poetry, the multiple conflicts, tensions and struggles comprising human life. Moreover, he demonstrated that through a transcendence of

personality, man can surmount individual pain and terror. Durrell expands this idea in an essay on Eliot in A Key to Modern British Poetry; he writes: "[W]e can never fully understand a good poem until we can fully understand ourselves. Our job then is to make ourselves accessible to the poem and use both sensibility and intelligence to this end" (K 148). He respects but does not share fully Eliot's insistence on the ethical purpose of art expressed in his delineation of the quiet American "patiently repeating / That art is determined by its ends / In conscience and in morals" (CP 187). Durrell considers Eliot's thesis that literature "affects our moral and religious existence" (103) to be "startling" and would probably disagree with it in the sense of promoting a direct relationship between art and behaviour. Also, this man's belief in the "primacy of the supernatural over the natural life" (105) and his faith that as an Anglo-Catholic it was incumbent upon him to "maintain consciously certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world" (105) would not be accepted by Durrell, who supports a relativist and humanist approach to literature and to life.

In the second stanza Durrell presents a more personal account of the man who has exerted such a great influence on modern literature and criticism. At different times he has characterized Eliot, particularly to Miller, as gentle, sweet, prim and humorous. Now he claims that Eliot inspired him "with his feeling for thought" (BS 102) and that in the shy elitist he observes a "hidden tenderness" (BS 102). Anecdotes, however, fail to capture the essence of such an artist. Durrell confesses that stories "[a]lluding and delimiting can only mystify / The singer and his mystery more" (CP 187). Herein he probes, through intimation,

Eliot's notion that the "poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium" (42). As the cornerstone of formalist criticism, this theory holds that a work of art should be evaluated on its own aesthetic terms, without reference to the life of the author. Moreover, Durrell suggests that Eliot's greatness lies in his perception of the secret, elusive quality at the heart of human nature and his powerful rendering of it. Fittingly, he concludes with an understated tribute to one of his mentor's most significant contributions toward the understanding of poetry, the theory of the objective correlative. The "high window . . . a lamp, / Some crumpled paper, a disordered bed" (CP 187) signify the poet's interior landscape, his painstaking search for the exact word to convey emotion. Eliot states: "A set of objects, a situation, a chain of events . . . shall be the formula of that particular emotion" (48). These concrete objects evoke the poet's "rage for order", his need to reshape chaotic experience into significant new wholes. Out of this difficult, often painful process emerges the "new vision" (CP 187) of art, a paradoxically personal yet impersonal impression of life charged with meaning and beauty. He probably would have been uncomfortable with Durrell's use of the term heraldic reality, but Eliot's "new art emotion" (43), embodying "an experience different in kind" (41) from ordinary reality, has much in common with the texture of heraldic reality. Both concern the "experience of a moment and of a lifetime" (26) and both revolve around the capacity of the imagination of the poet to "realize the inapprehensible in visual images" (229).

In "The Anecdotes" Durrell returns to the ancient story-telling tradition of literature and relates an entertaining tale in a striking manner. Although the poem contains a definite autobiographical element,

it moves beyond Durrell's personal experience and explores the modern self in its search for wholeness. The I-persona of "The Anecdotes", therefore, is a multi-faceted, construct, speaking from different places and different intellectual levels. Cooper's explanation of the Taoist gaining of enlightenment sheds light on Durrell's purpose in "The Anecdotes": when the multiple I-personae of the ego are "noted, unrepressed and accepted, insight is gained into their true meaning--or meaninglessness--and the watcher and watched cease to have separate and opposed existences" (1981, 63). Thematically similar to "Fangbrand" and "Cities, Plains and People", the poem displays a more complex structure and richer import. Again Durrell enters familiar territory and attacks reason and the ego as the chief means of understanding human nature. He attempts to "show that so-called rational methods have finally led us to dethrone the 'ego', to seek in it the source of our malorientation to the world of reality" (K 82). Advocating "balance and harmony" (K 87) as both personal and artistic goals, Durrell urges man to replace the idea of knowledge with the idea of wisdom.

To convey this theme Durrell sets up a series of tensions or antitheses, in themselves representative of only one side of human experience. As such they establish in man a sense of incompleteness, malaise, longing, and, in the extreme case, great psychological pain. He develops a symbolism of shapes which brings into play the concept of the poem as a physical entity and contemplates in metaphysical terms the association of language and reality. He ponders how certain words, because of their unique sounds, so appositely denote certain thoughts and feelings. Herein, round, smooth objects such as the heart, the wheel, boats, the body of a young girl, the egg, seeds, grapes, apples,

and the rose signify the beautiful, sensitive and tender parts of man and point to his creative ability. Juxtaposed to these, angular or sharp things like scythes, diamonds, an ilex, prisms, a cartridge, the knifeblade, the scissors and the sickle suggest the sadness and destructive potential inherent in a dominant rationalism. Moreover, these groups of symbols correspond to the natural and artificial worlds. Through their location in particular places Durrell sets up a complex network of meanings demonstrating the power of landscape to shape the self. Adopting a technique similar to that which he uses in The Alexandria Quartet, he tells the same story from different points of view. In the novel he hoped to create a "continuum [where] the curvature of space itself [gives a] stereoscopic narrative, while the human personality seen across a continuum would perhaps become prismatic" (AQ 757, 758). His ambition in "The Anecdotes" is more modest: he uses the method of double and sometimes multiple perspective to present a more balanced, accurate picture of reality. He offers two perspectives on each place: the first, a narrative, descriptive passage; the second, a meditation on the import of this content.

The first two anecdotes underscore the risk of comprehending only the grossly physical dimension of man. Without some thought as to the connection between the external world and human nature Cairo becomes a minimalist landscape of absurdity, fear and pain where "[t]he fox has its head under the madman's shirt" (CP 203). When the same scene is appreciated as a nostalgic memory, however, the violence and crudity are displaced. Moreover, it leads to the cognizance that there exists a primary relation of man and landscape. The odours that "hit and rebuff in some garden" (CP 203) show the I-persona that he "beget[s]

light / But darkness is also of [his] nature" (CP 203). An interplay of sensuous experience and emotion engenders the ontological revelation that human nature represents a blend of energy and passivity, positive and negative, masculine and feminine forces. Here Durrell draws on the Taoist symbolism of darkness and light, traditional Chinese metaphors for yin and yang. As he does this in a non-judgemental manner, he communicates the Taoist idea that "opposites are always connected as well as opposed" (Cooper 1981 16). That is, neither "light" nor "darkness" is fundamentally more valuable than the other. In fact, they achieve their true essence and greatest significance in relation to each other. Furthermore, he intimates here his espousal of the basic aim of Taoism, "the attaining of balance and harmony between yin and yang . . . both in one's self and in the world until the two are resolved into the One" (8). Only through such integration, Durrell believes, can man be wise and happy.

In the first two sections on Rhodes Durrell delineates the inadequacy of any one-sided view of reality. He indicates that neither sensuous beauty nor stringent rationalism alone provides the totality of experience man requires. First he depicts a primitive, innocent landscape "some time before the fig-leaf" (CP 204). Through repetition of the word "idle" he reinforces the uninspiring character of an idyllic, yet unexamined life. Gently, he criticizes the falsity and superficiality of the kind of literature that glamorizes such an unthinking existence. In its failure to enhance life, he sees it as "twelve sad lines against the dark" (CP 204). Here Durrell implies the human desire for imaginative materials rich and powerful. Similarly, he renounces a narrow philosophical outlook. Claiming that man will discover "fulness of being . . . not

in refinement" (CP 204), as in a philosophy that reduces reality to a set of propositions, but in "the embosoming of the Real" (CP 204), he again aligns himself with the Taoist position. Cooper explains: "Tao is everywhere and unlimited, there is no need to seek it along narrow and limited paths" (1981, 34). In fact, Tao could be described as an all-inclusive, eternal embrace of reality.

Furthermore, Durrell chooses "[t]he egg, the cone, the rhombus: orders of reality / Which declaim coldly against the reason" (CP 204) as symbols for his vision. This recalls the Taoist concept of the circle as the emblem of perfection. The circle and cyclic movement suggest "renewal, infinitude, revolution, change, movement, with endless possibilities" (Cooper 1981 24). Durrell's statements, "the rectangle is the system; the circle is the organism [and] Man requires nourishment for both aspects of his nature" (BS 42), further clarify these symbols. He maintains that man must find a way to fuse successfully his dominant energies, reason and passion. Moreover, the poet admonishes that historically man has approached this task incorrectly, seeking to learn the limits of his nature such as his "greatest appetite" or his "least . . . [fear]" (CP 205). Since the self is, in Durrell's opinion, of boundless potential, this reductive assumption has clouded man's vision and resulted in disappointment and failure. Lacking self-knowledge man enters the diminished state of the "unapprehended within" (CP 205). To give some hope to this condition Durrell once again introduces Melissa, the feminine side of the self. She seems to inspire the I-persona to a realization that he must begin to understand the self through "people". In this way philosophy comes alive; it not only "exhaust[s] ideas" (CP 205) but it "use[s] experience up" (CP 205). This too resonates with

the Taoist principle of "total economy in every field [which illustrates] the immortality principle" (SM 3). Durrell interprets this as a means of living completely and claims that "there should be nothing left over when you die and 'go into the round' . . . Everything must be refunded into the happy silence of the Tao" (SM 3).

Searching for the right way to live, Durrell explores his theme of place as the key to successful integration of passion and intellect. In "Athens" he observes the effect of the overdevelopment of the fundamental beauty of analysis. What has the potential for value degenerates into the repellent image of "four peroxide whores . . . conscripted / From our passions by the tedium and spleen" (CP 205). These ugly, artificial figures contrast sharply with the natural beauty, the laughter and singing of the young girl in "Rhodes" and signify the malignant consequences of neglecting emotion, a vital aspect of the self. This leads the I-persona to consider a specific occurrence and its larger meaning in terms of his life. Here Durrell brings into play his memories of the war in Alexandria where he feels sex was "a way of death" (COR 181, 182). Isolated and discontent, "[a]lone again, awake again" (CP 206), the persona feels burdened by his physical self. Durrell had told Miller that his life in Alexandria was "a frenzy of apathy" (COR 181) and that Alexandrian women seemed to him like "neglected gardens" (COR 181), lovely yet empty. This section captures precisely the texture of such excited, meaningless activity. A brilliant simile, "[j]ammed like a cartridge in the breech" (CP 206), conveys the nature of this experience: tense, mechanistic and destructive. "The married shoes" (CP 206) suggest the pathos of a situation where objects ironically enjoy a closer union than people. This echoes Durrell's

account of Alexandria as a place where "the shrieking personal unhappiness and loneliness [show] in every face" (COR 188). Suffering and confused, the I-persona asks: "Is life more than the sum of its errors?" (CP 206), indicating an awareness of subjectivity as the cause of his pain.

Next, the poet presents his vision of the ideal nature of art. Juxtaposed with the previous physical experience it strengthens his argument on the necessity of balance. As a counter to one-dimensional sex, art promotes a sense of wholeness and yields satisfaction. Jettisoning the superfluous, it allows "the Word Prime repose" (CP 206). Another link between Durrell's poetics and Taoism can be observed in the fact that Chuang Tzu, an important Taoist master, "speaks of yin as 'Repose, the influence of the negative'" (Cooper 1972 28). Durrell's repose parallels the passive creativity of yin. Form and content marry, enhance each other, and a liberating, healthy repose, the antithesis of the wakeful, isolated self, results. Here Durrell embodies his theory of the heraldic universe, described in his correspondence with Miller as "based in repose . . . [where you perceive] the Oneness of Everything . . . [and] Forms Emerge . . . You cannot define these forms except by ideogram: this is non-assertive form" (COR 202, 203). In the concept of the ideogram, the graphic representation of an object or a thought, as distinguished from a representation through sound, Durrell finds the closest approximation to his poetic goal. The ideogram, according to Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), an expert in Chinese philology, is more vivid and concrete than words alone, because it refers directly to nature. Particularly appealing to Durrell is the comprehensive quality of the ideogram; containing at once noun, verb and adjective,

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"Chinese words are alive and plastic, because "thing" and "action" are not formally separated" (Fenollosa 22). Durrell believes that only the ideogram, a form incorporating vitality, integrity and completion, can convey the heraldic universe. As a "continuous self-subsistory plane of reality toward which the spiritual self of man is trying to reach out" (PL 8), the heraldic universe signifies a mystical dimension. Moreover, Durrell's claim that within this condition "for every object in the known world there exists an ideogram" (PL 8) puts a great responsibility on the artist.

As in "Themes Heraldic", Durrell uses the image of the knife to demonstrate the keenness and vitality necessary in poetry. Here, though, he goes beyond the simple idea of the knife as the symbol of the desire motivating art. With this metaphor Durrell intimates the danger poetry poses to the poet's self: he may lose subjectivity, but he may also overreach himself and fall into frustration, disappointment and madness. He must avoid the "anecdotal grossness" (CP 206) which can trivialize thought. Yet there must be an "earthly clothing" (CP 206), a bridging of thought and sensuous appreciation provided by the poem itself. All of this, "the whole", rests "upon the ideogram / As on a knifeblade, never really cutting, / Yet always sharp" (CP 207). Durrell, like Groddeck, fears that "the word may kill the thought" (Grotjahn 153). However, he acknowledges that in order to create art, to find the "ideogram", or the proper form for his thought, he must risk failure. Here Durrell alludes subtly to his vision of both art and life as often matters of luck. When successful, the poet and his poem are the models of balance Durrell seeks.

"In Patmos" teaches that tenderness, portrayed again by Melissa, instills the artistic ideal in daily life. The I-persona's realization that neither intellect nor emotion can independently "make it all coherent" (CP 207) proves genuine spiritual growth. Like Fangbrand and the lovers in "Eight Aspects of Melissa" he learns that wholeness and happiness require the accommodation of the "feminine" side of the self. With this insight he perceives how the Western ego diminishes man, distorting gentleness with its "violent repulsive force" (CP 207). In the "Britain" sections he exposes the pernicious effect of the ego. Personified as "the sleeping child / Bandaged" (CP 208), England suffers emotional immaturity and spiritual malaise. Durrell's parody of the Christian sacrifice and communion of the perfect victim recalls the fates of Uncebuñke and Hamlet, two of his early poetic creations crippled by their egos. By substituting such an imperfect victim, the poet reveals the notion of sacrifice as ridiculous and deflates the Western dream of perfection. The ego, by cultivating reason and the will, "cloud[s] the knife" (CP 208) of creativity. Durrell strikes a personal note when he states that "[o]ne could think no more of anecdotes" (CP 208) in this environment. To counter the physical weakness and imaginative apathy of this noxious ambience, the poet inserts a vivid Mediterranean scene. Through his memory of Rhodes he evokes "the yesterday that made us / Appropriates of a place" (CP 208). Here he implies his need to go beyond a connection with landscape based on time to achieve an integration with place that yields spiritual richness.

In the Paris anecdote the mature persona gains an understanding of human complexity. Now able to penetrate the surface of things he sees that the outward representation of humanism and romance in Paris masks

a nature similar to that of imperial Rome. A lack of passion and a legalistic imposition of the will, the "hated jurist's tongue" (CP, 209), prohibit spiritual completion. In this section Durrell recollects the brutality of World War Two and sees in it further evidence of the egoism, greed and lust for power underlying Western society. The influence of Spengler appears here when the I-persona threatens that "the Romans / Are going to get the chance they ask for" (CP 209). If Spengler's belief that Western society is moving inexorably toward self-destruction is correct, Durrell feels that one of its primary manifestations will be a deterioration in personal relationships. Accordingly, he depicts a stale marriage marked by "animal concupiscence" (CP 209). In this setting, the gentle and creative aspects of the self, symbolized by Melissa, acquire healing and prophetic powers. She becomes "nurse, augur, special self" (CP 209) and offers hope of renewal in a sterile landscape. In using Melissa to symbolize the power of love to revitalize the self Durrell is inspired by Groddeck's theory of the interconnection of love and symbol. Groddeck writes: "We can only love what is within ourselves, what we recognize as symbolic of ourselves, something we believe in, something allowed us by our human nature" (1951, 235). Such a deep comprehension of the natures of love and the self allows a release from the ego. The I-persona, now in old age, admits, like Conon, that his love has been egocentric. When he claims that he "loved her (his wife or lover) because [he] did not know [himself]. / . . . [and] knew her yet in the shadow cast by [himself]" (CP 209), he gains a vital insight into his own character.

Durrell now seems to change focus and portrays the physical effects of "the terrible beat of Time" (CP 210). His question, "Can we afford

to consider ourselves more fortunate?" (CP 210), underscores the certainty of old age and death. Durrell does not take a metaphysical stand here but rather seems to advocate realization and acceptance of the simple fact of mortality. In so doing he promotes honest evaluation of the self, in whatever state, as the way to achieve peace and happiness. Next, the poet broadens his scope and speculates on the ontological issues of potentiality and the nature of being. He describes how some of man's ideas never achieve form and stay an "unripened faculty" (CP 214). Despite his willingness to give them life, he must sometimes "let them die" (CP 211). This highlights Durrell's belief in the essential mystery of creation. Similarly, his picture of the earth "punctuat[ed] by seeds, some to be / Trees, some men walking as trees" (CP 211), gives additional force to his theme of life as a random, somewhat ridiculous event governed by luck. Durrell's Taoist sympathies come into play here but, more significantly, the influences of the Greek philosopher Anaxagoras and Groddeck shape this passage. The poet probably draws on Anaxagoras' theory of "seeds" of creation to explicate the phenomenal world. Anaxagoras held that each part of matter contains elements of everything else and that nous, a universal mind or spirit, causes things to assume certain forms, grow and change. Although scientifically flawed, this idea appeals to Durrell because of its attempt at an explanation of the underlying principle of creation, its vision of nature as an organic whole and its assumption of a mystical basis for life. Also, Durrell refers again to Groddeck's view of life as a continual, rhythmic process of creation. As a result of this, the I-persona intuitively feels the foolishness of man's belief that he controls time and place. Moreover, in debunking the "greater" fiction of human

superiority to time and place, the poet renders death "powerless". Released from guilt and freed from the ego in the form of his "native city" (CP 212), the I-persona liberates himself from memory, pain and personal failings of character.

As a result of this, the final anecdote is set in Rio, the New World, signifying that the I-persona is about to reach wholeness through a new conception of landscape. Bidding "goodbye" to the pain of rationalism, he opens himself to a mystical vision of pure time or eternal process. Cooper's description of timelessness sheds light on Durrell's meaning: "That which is outside time is free from limitations and inner contradictions; hence the one-ness of all mystical experience" (1981, 23). Durrell outlines this condition in classical Taoist fashion, using paradox to convey the infinite potentiality of Tao. "[Moving] in its own / Blind illumination" (CP 212), it includes everything. Furthermore, in being typified by "a yellow philosopher / Motionless over a swanpan" (CP 212), it participates in the wisdom of the Taoist sages and suggests that attempts to discover the self through rational means such as the swanpan or Chinese abacus are best ignored. In contrast to the timeless dimension of endless energy, the I-persona calls Western culture a "Graeco-Roman asylum" (CP 212), where the "accent [is] pain and not completeness" (CP 212). Here Durrell reiterates his belief that the limitations of rationalism lead eventually to madness and pain.

Durrell would probably agree with Cooper's statement that "[t]o attain enlightenment it is necessary to surpass the rational mind The opposite of the rational is not necessarily the irrational but that which goes beyond logic and objective reasoning and includes the whole

of man's potentialities and being" (1981, 65). Durrell subscribes to such an all-embracing vision, symbolized by "the Round". To reach this unified condition he urges practice of the Taoist virtues of passivity and acceptance, exemplified in "sitting and waiting . . . [and] patience" (CP 213). Ultimately, he wishes to "make an end of" (CP 213) desire, to experience, like Fangbrand, the state of desirelessness essential to Tao. Herein, a lack of conscious striving marks the beginning of illumination much as receptivity and a mysterious move beyond logic yield the integrated vision of art. Therefore, the I-persona's final assertions can be seen to indicate the parallels between the Taoist outlook and Durrell's personal vision of creativity, heraldic reality. He says:

As for me I must do as I was born
And so must you . . .
We desire fulfillment in the measure of our gift. (CP 213)

Here he echoes the cardinal Taoist belief that "everything that exists" has Tao, a 'way' to fulfil and each is in its own 'way' unique and constantly changing, growing, developing" (Cooper 1972 15). His examination of the self in a number of different settings reveals the folly of imposing the self on landscape and leads him to "withdraw" his ego. Thus liberated, he becomes a stronger and better poet, sure that balance and completeness make up the substance of his vision.

This new perspective engenders the poet's most eloquent statement of his prevailing interest. Central to an understanding of the role of landscape in Durrell's poetics, "Deus Loci" apostrophizes the spirit of place. In praising this spirit, Durrell celebrates the transforming and creative faculties of landscape. A growing precision of language

suggests that as man realizes his intimate connection to place he defines himself more fully. Generally, the critics seem to agree that "Deus Loci" represents Durrell's finest work and occupies a pivotal place in his poetics. Jennings finds in the poem "sheer poetic expertise and an accurate, original use of knowledge" (87) but provides little insight into its meaning. Her claim that Durrell is attempting to show that "religions are not based simply on men's minds but also on their feelings" (86) appears superficial and does not justify her enthusiastic praise of this work. Weigel comes a little closer to critical comment when he states that for Durrell truth involves "the various relationships among logic, psychology, spirit and geography . . . [and that] Durrell's concept of place (in "Deus Loci") defines poetic truth and often controls metaphors and metaphysics" (36). Both interpretations, however, ignore the key question of the substance of the poet's vision and the content of his metaphysics.

In "Deus Loci" Durrell sets forth a comprehensive view of his religious beliefs. Despite his refusal to align himself with any formal religion, he maintains, in a 1949-letter to Miller, that they are both "religious writers" (COR 258). He uses "religious" in a broad sense, to indicate a deep dedication to the understanding and development of the human spirit. Inspired by the Taoist idea of a "creative power . . . in Nature, not in some outside force standing separate from the thing it creates" (Cooper 1981 13), Durrell too espouses a "cosmological rather than a theological viewpoint" (13). He sees in the life principle itself a sacred quality and he venerates all of its manifestations as holy. Moreover, the poem, organized around three interweaving sets of tensions, mirrors in its structure the Taoist theory of balance and

harmony in nature on which it is based. First, on the physical level, "this royal dust" (CP 215) and "spring-belonging rain" (CP 215), the passive and active counterparts in nature, produce the "sudden coming" (CP 215) of the god. When alive to the spiritual dimension in landscape man learns that "life lives itself without recourse to reason (CP 215). For Durrell, life is self-referential, mysterious in origin and esoteric in its working. In A Key to Modern British Poetry, he says: "[A]ll relations . . . in this world partake of the mystery of the unknown" (K 81). Additionally, Durrell portrays the spirit of place as an amalgam of the present and the past. Part of the rain falling "now", it also exists in a landscape "before the expurgation of gods" (CP 216). This dual sense of time gives Durrell's spirituality a richness and profundity. Simultaneously enjoying immediacy and linked to history, it is constantly fresh, yet "continuously revived" (CP 214). The third tension, between desire and fulfillment, raises the import of the poem to the metaphysical level. The poet's passionate longing for integration with the spirit of place results finally in the attainment of his desire. This brings him the peace and well-being at the heart of his spiritual quest.

Curiously, this passionate poem begins with a theoretical statement. By examining man's relationship to landscape, Durrell sets out to prove that "religions founder, [but] you / remain" (CP 214). Initially the strength of the "deus loci" lies in its ability to fuse with man and take on human emotions, becoming, for example, a "landscape of the precocious southern heart" (CP 214). Continually nourished by human passion, place embodies a range of characteristics. Reconciling opposites, at once "common" and "special", "tragic" and a part of "laughter", its vigour stems from its multiple and timeless

nature. Unlike the severe deities of traditional religions, the god of place "cackles", intimating a playful element in nature and spirituality. This relates to the Taoist emphasis on laughter, happiness and love as elements of spirituality. Moreover, the poet feels that the "motiveless patronage" (CP 215) of the "deus loci" contrasts with the urge to control the individual seen in traditional religions. Outside of morality and personality, place affects human life in a mysterious, yet potent way. Fishermen and farmers, in intimate contact with their environment, recognize in "sea or land" (CP 215) an emotional component corresponding to human nature; and their sense of self increases. Fish and grapes, products of their communion with place, acquire a richer, almost mystical significance.

This framework lends support to Durrell's radical claim that man's body "was given him . . . to renovate your terra cotta shrines" (CP 215). Reversing the typical hierarchy of religion, Durrell maintains that man exists to serve place and this resonates with his contention in The Alexandria Quartet that "man is only an extension of the spirit of place" (AQ 143). As such, his body becomes a sacred instrument, not, as in "the religions of the dust" (CP 215), an encumbrance. Durrell conceives the function of the poet as "mak[ing] a fable of the common lot" (CP 215). Through his special sensitivity to place the poet can raise ordinary, rather dull events of life to the magical dimension of art. Here Durrell is influenced by Rank's idea of the artist as "a new kind of person, a seer" (K 89). In the modern landscape Durrell feels that the poet takes on the role of priest. He extends his implied comparison of traditional religion and the "deus loci" in his treatment of the heavily value-laden symbol of wine. Rather than restricting the use of wine to sacramental

rituals, as in Judaism and Christianity, Durrell sees in it a symbol of man's intense union with place. Accordingly, he depicts wine as appropriate to humble contexts and underscores its capacity as an "increment / to pleasure or to sadness" (CP 216). Durrell believes that "the symbol is linked to a deep subconscious source" (K 106). Yet his choice of wine as the living symbol of man's nurture of place shows a conscious intent to compare logically the "deus loci" with Christianity. Paralleling the process whereby bread and wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ, Durrell demonstrates how wine changes, miraculously, from a symbol of man's communion with place to a symbol of man's essential self. Neither blasphemy nor parody underlies Durrell's secularization of the Christian doctrine of transubstantiation. Rather, the "[i]mage of our own dust in wine" (CP 216) evinces Durrell's humanist concern to portray man as the finest expression of landscape.

In an emotional address to the spirit the poet explains precisely how it shapes the self. Aware of intellectual thought, it extends "throughout the domains of logic" (CP 217). Transcending rationalism and its diminished view of man, indicated by "the philosopher's critical impatience . . . to be done with life" (CP 217), it builds value into life by encouraging a receptivity to all. Leading man to value physical reality, it promotes participation in a larger emotional complex, including "all the heart's profit or the loss" (CP 217). In this loving vision, place adopts the feminine, supportive roles of "nurse and wife" (CP 217) to man's essential self. The final statement, a very personal one, fuses all the aspects of the spirit of place. The three tensions continue in delicate balance: "Italy [smiles] under rain" (CP 217) while the poet notices "the sour dust of this table" (CP 217). The

action takes place "today", but also in a future finally realized, "long since divined, delayed and waited for" (CP 217). Meeting the spirit "face to face" (CP 217) fulfills the poet's desire by joining his interior and exterior landscapes. Essentially mystic, this union "refresh[es]" the self by highlighting its community with all of life. Herein the self reaches Tao, a point of peace and wholeness.

In post-World War Two Yugoslavia the warm Italian landscape and Durrell's humanist vision vanish. Here he observed "Philistinism, puritanism and cruelty" (SP 101). Horrified at the "terrible deadness" (COR 264) in communism, and, comprehending it as symptomatic of a greater malaise, Durrell in "Letters in Darkness" purports to examine the artist's function in the modern intellectual environment. Employing an epistolary format, he makes a self-conscious and heavy-handed inquiry into the source of the "darkness". The poem does not meet its objective, partly because of the carping, petulant tone and Durrell's indulgence in an uncharacteristic despair. Its major flaw, however, lies in its failure to present a new perspective on Durrell's primary theme, the need for balance and harmony within the self and how this can be achieved by bringing oneself into alignment with landscape. Here Durrell offers the same vision as in "Deus Loci" or "Cities, Plains and People" but without the grace and charm. The very different expression of similar material could be seen as evidence of the devastating impact of place on the poet's psyche. Durrell admits his antipathy to communism, his dislike of the cold climate of Yugoslavia and his aversion to the insularity of diplomatic life. Although weak, the poem merits attention as an example of the effect of an unsympathetic landscape on creativity as well as for its occasional eloquence.

First Durrell claims: "It is we who observe who suffer" (CP 226). He explains the artist's pain as a consequence of more acute perception. Sad and somewhat bitter, he sees that the pagan vitality of the Dionysian rites and their accompanying creative and spiritual fertility have been lost through encrustations of the ego and reason. Modern man, he considers, rejects the Platonic vision of eros where physical love leads to union with the divine and, in so doing limits his potential. Durrell captures this state in the striking image of "[a] star entombed in flesh" (CP 227). Politics undergoes a parallel decline. Repeating the word "connive" Durrell emphasizes the duplicity of communism. He feels that this system elicits man's baser instincts and turns society into a hive. Durrell conveys his distaste for communism most vigorously in his description of the system "deliver[ing life] to the half alive" (CP 227). Continuing his criticism of modern social institutions, the poet likens marriage to a dying cock pheasant. Its beauty "overripe", it manifests a grotesque combination of fixity and malignant growth. This Durrell traces to over-intellectualization, a "sick detachment in the mind" (CP 227). Displaced eventually into religiosity, a "colder coitus in the mind of God" (CP 227), marriage loses passion and tenderness. However, he argues, as he has done previously and more effectively in "Eight Aspects of Melissa" and "Cities, Plains and People", that the modern lover, like the poet, can be re-animated through playful, whole-hearted sexuality, represented by the spirit of Pan.

To accomplish this ideal Durrell implies that the artist must learn what brings man to the level of "an unknown, misused animal" (CP 228). He discerns a force antithetical to love and growth in the modern

landscape. In a world of "false connection[s]" (CP 229); mechanism increasingly defeats emotion and spirit. Elucidating this as a "[c]ompulsion of the city and the times" (CP 229) does not deny individual responsibility for actions. Rather, it reinforces the fundamental link between the prevailing spirit of place and the human condition. Because the poem concerns primarily Durrell's unpleasant experience in Yugoslavia, his treatment of this theme lacks passion and seems more an exercise in humorless complaining. Placing man "[i]n clinic beds" (CP 229), Durrell accentuates the malaise in the modern landscape. However, he views man's "reach[ing] to where / All cultures intersect" (CP 229) as a move toward spiritual and emotional health. This unexpected act undermines the Marxist concept of art as a response to a need. Illogical, it signals the element in creativity that goes beyond reason. Furthermore, it portrays art as a process of discovery and an act of healing. Next Durrell presents images of deprivation and imprisonment to enforce the tragic denial of human potential under communism. He views this system as "ill-conceived, misshapen" (BS 73); and accordingly he characterizes man's emotional state therein as a grotesque, akin to spiders in bottles. In this ambience occurs a perversion of man's innate drive for self-realization through union with others. "In different lives contending for each other" (CP 230), alone, trapped by culture, man feels the need for attachment; but no closeness develops. The artist, articulating man's universal dilemma, assumes a primary importance. Exposing "[t]he knife of feeling in the art of love" (CP 230), he reveals the need to recover emotional intensity.

In the last letter Durrell permits himself an autobiographical touch, evident in his reference to "the writer's / Middle years" (CP

230), and in so doing damages the poem. He pictures himself as the mature artist who "condenses, prunes and tries to order / [his] experiences" (CP 23) by "throw[ing] off his sperm . . . in the bodies / Of younger learners" (CP 231). Unless he is attempting surrealism or black comedy, which seems unlikely in light of the straightforward, unrelieved negativity of the rest of the poem, such posturing is at the best pompous and at the worst offensive. Durrell certainly does not evoke the concept of the artist as a rebel against the quotidian world who miraculously gains "acceptance and understanding of an order and harmony which is beyond man's conception and approachable only through faith" (HM 52). A poet who finds motivation in "the promise of his country's laurels" (CP 231) does not correspond to such a visionary rebel. Durrell may be satirizing the lot of artists in communist countries but this is unclear and incongruous with the main thrust of the poem. If in his allusion to dispossession and "the second life" (CP 231), he aims at revitalizing the Christian symbols of sacrifice and resurrection, hoping to show that a landscape synthesizing physical, spiritual and cultural elements produces a meaningful vision, here too he misses the mark. His lack of focus and clarity creates only confusion and a vague sense of having been offered something valuable and then having it withdrawn.

When Durrell returns to the Mediterranean to live in Cyprus he recovers his optimistic, fundamentally comic outlook. While he writes the novel Justine, he continues to explore in depth the poetic process. Increasingly, he communicates his ideas about creativity in terms of the connection between place and the self. More and more his convictions about poetry seem to reflect the Taoist virtues of simplicity,

balance and harmony. To assert, however, a direct relation between Durrell's poetics and his interest in Taoism falsifies an affinity looser, yet more profound. These allied concerns probably originated independently with the poet and developed an intimate link naturally. Illustrative of this interdependence, "Poem", a pivotal statement on poetry, builds on and further illuminates Durrell's concept of landscape. In a spare, epigrammatic style, indicative of the clear and beautiful truth it offers, the poem articulates three prerequisites to imaginative creation. First, with the destruction of chronology, the poet amplifies vision. Cooper claims that such a breakthrough is essential in achieving Tao: "Truth lies outside of time . . . above the ordinary level of consciousness. That which is outside time is free from limitations and inner contradictions" (1981, 23). Significantly, Durrell expresses this as a new control over landscape, claiming "[a]ll the universe you own" (CP 236). In harmony with the rhythm of nature, the poet possesses the very cosmos.

The poet's curious mix of qualities establishes him as a natural leader. "Masterless" because he is not bound by any doctrine, he retains a wild quality, a spontaneity essential to creation. Similar to the Taoist sage, he leads by example, his inner vitality shown by his actions. When he cuts "the rational knot" (CP 236), he frees man from a narrow, strictly logical view. Because this act allows man to pass from existence as a linear "rule-of-thumb" (CP 236) to a life of beauty and infinite renewal, Durrell calls the poet a "lover". Having purified himself like the Taoist master, he sheds the superfluous and appears "barefoot". In this state he "wanders" in a sacred place, Elysium, the abode of heroes. Durrell's use of a mythological setting

highlights his vision of poetry as a radically new consciousness.

Through allusion to this particular landscape, he conveys the mystic dimension of poetry and his own Taoist sympathies. Through his choice of the word "wanders" to describe the function of the poet, Durrell confirms his vision of poetry as a pleasurable, limitless exploration of potential.

In "Style" Durrell again employs comparisons with nature to illustrate his impression of the creative process. He invokes a style of heart or mind, not an attribute unique to poetry. Open and suggestive, his language resembles the ever-changing nature of Tao itself. This relates also to Durrell's vision of poetry as a reflection of "the new values of the [modern] age" (K 37). Herein, a provisional view means that "nothing has permanent value . . . everything depends upon its context in a given system . . . [and so there can be no] final judgement upon reality" (K 37). For example, he describes his subject as "[s]omething like the sea" (CP 243). Portraying it as an "[u]nlaboured momentum of water" (CP 243), he likens it to Tao, fluid, adaptable, a state embodied in natural motion. Moreover, his claim that the poet renders "always the sound of the sea" (KT 164) at once clarifies and enlarges Durrell's intent in "Style". Entranced by words, he places more value on their sound, "the vibrations they set up in the middle ear" (KT 164), than on their exact meaning. This underscores his belief that poetry, as a product of a faculty beyond logic, can best be appreciated through a mysterious, non-rational part of the self. Indirectly, he urges man to develop this capacity, this particular "style" of feeling and understanding. The gentle, flowing cadence of the poem suggests that the Taoist journey toward awareness is a "cyclic

and rhythmic process of being and becoming" (Cooper 1981 64). As a manifestation of Tao, this style is "going somewhere, / Building and subsiding" (CP 243). These few simple words elicit many rich connotations and so display the nature of Tao. Included are the concepts of Tao as a way and the interaction of yin and yang. This approach can appear "busy" because, as Cooper explains, "Tao is all-inclusive, hence change must also be in it" (1981, 60). Seemingly "loveless" or passionless, actually it admits and harmonizes all emotions.

Durrell adds depth to his portrait of landscape by balancing the "feminine" water symbolism of stanza one with the wind imagery of the second stanza. The wind, figurative of "[c]osmic breath or energy" (Cooper 1981 43), a male principle, "slits / Forests" (CP 243). Durrell's statement that "for [him] poetry is a way of breathing" (BS 92) reveals the wind as the key symbol of the link between landscape, the self and poetry. Through a fresh combination of its elements, the poet gives new meaning to the interplay of nature. Coupled with the Taoist notion of trees as feminine, this image effectively joins yin and yang. Also informing this passage is the idea of the playful, spontaneous action of Tao. Landscape, "inspired", expands to include all and celebrates the joy of creation with "variations" to itself. In the third stanza an impersonal I-persona enters the poem, hunting the perfect line. Weigel notes that Durrell here uses a very sophisticated technique wherein the "search for the metaphor becomes the metaphor" (36). The self of the poet and the poem take on the same style--rhythmic, accepting, active and passionate. In this way, Durrell portrays his theme of the interrelation of the poet and the poem. Symbolic of the central place of the individual in Tao, this also illustrates that Tao

does not advocate a retreat from the world or an abandonment of human initiative. An essential part of the process, the individual poet focuses perspective and sharpens technique. Polishing his style to a "dry bony blade" (CP 244), he searches for precision. The powerful impact of this style, like Tao, transcends the immediate experience. Only later does one "notice the thread / Of blood from its unfelt stroke" (CP 244). This paradoxical description underlies the mysterious method of both poetry and Tao. By nature subtle and quiet, both produce surprisingly vivid and potent effects. Finally, Durrell's spare, allusive style reflects the balance of silence and speech in Tao. Providing spaces for contemplation, it "draw[s] one into participation and leaves room for the imagination" (Cooper 1981 73).

Although a poem such as "Style" clearly demonstrates excellence, Durrell's poetry during the decade after World War Two is uneven. At this time the poet lived at extremes, either serenely happy or angry and depressed. His poetry mirrors these tensions, showing insight, control and sensitivity in such pieces as "In the Garden: Villa Cleobolus", "Anniversary" and "Style", and descending to complaint in "Letters in Darkness". Despite his inner conflict, Durrell's inquiry into the nature of art and the relationship between the poet and his creation remains a constant. His search leads him to a metaphysical view of poetry as an activity which engenders the harmony and completion man inherently desires. In this sense, his poetry does not represent an intellectual or aesthetic end in itself. Durrell's most important development during this period concerns his realization of the religious nature of his work. He discovers that his poetry attempts to evoke a mystical state wherein the self fuses with the energy and splendor of

all creation. Man, liberated by the sense of belonging that this spirituality brings, takes on the character of the love which animates all.

Chapter Five

Love . . . A Merciful Self-Repair

One gladiator of the simple sense
Carving out poetry for his tomb. (CP 340)

Since 1957 Durrell has enjoyed literary recognition, financial security and in some measure, personal happiness. Chiefly, this has been due to the critical and commercial success of The Alexandria Quartet. Able for the first time to devote himself entirely to writing, from 1957 to 1961 he was occupied exclusively with completing the set of novels. In fact, he remarked to Richard Aldington in 1961 that he had "just written a poem, the first for about six years" (LL 180). In his relationship and eventual marriage to a French Alexandrian, Claude, he found emotional satisfaction and intellectual companionship. From the time of their meeting in Cyprus in 1956 until her death in 1967, she provided Durrell with a sense of well-being and stability. They settled in Sommières in southern France, where Durrell remains to this day, for he finds there "a very sympathetic setting [because] the local people have many of the qualities [he] found so congenial in [Greece and] the Greeks" (SP 131). These include a "tenderness for good living" (SP 157), expressed in the enjoyment of wine and fine food, "a restless metaphysical curiosity" (SP 157) and "passionate individualism" (SP 157), observed in kindness, humour, intelligent conversation and a great love for artists and the Mediterranean itself. Within these pleasant circumstances, however, Durrell experienced perhaps his greatest personal tragedy.

The death of Claude in 1967 brought a lasting sense of loss and sorrow. Moreover, the deaths of a number of close friends, including Richard Aldington in 1962, George Seferis in 1971 and Henry Miller in 1980, caused Durrell deep grief and once again sent him into a depression. For some time he admits to feeling "vague and scattered" (SP 155).

These occurrences may be partially responsible for the frequent mention of death and even suicide in Durrell's later poetry. He admits to being constantly in despair, quite "desperate", and claims that "suicide seems [to him] to be the only solution" (BS 98). Since he has never, to public knowledge, attempted suicide, it is difficult to judge whether this statement represents a typical attitude or can be attributed to a transitory mood. The most accurate explanation seems to be that for Durrell the despair accruing to an awareness of the certainty and finality of death acts as an impetus to creation. He declares: "Action is the only way out, but it's also the most difficult. . . . either I kill myself or I create something" (BS 98). His private pain and fear, therefore, often provide the material for poetry. He draws a connection between being "in a state of permanent disarray" (BS 100) and being a poet and maintains that he "loves to feel . . . [the] state of nervous tension" (BS 100) which presides over his writing. Like many modern writers he endeavours to create order out of chaos, to transmute his personal emotions into the public experience of art.

Accordingly, death, love and the nature of poetry figure not only as the primary concerns of Durrell's poetry of the 1960's and 1970's, but as interweaving themes. On one level this marks a return to his early preoccupation with the interrelation of fragmentation, death and

the creative process. Additionally, in maintaining a steady focus on the nature of creativity and the growth of the self, Durrell's poetry reveals a continuity of vision. His enduring interest in poetics and the developments and refinements in his ideas testifies to the cumulative and progressive nature of his work. His poetry takes on a mature and serious tone, yet retains the ironic compassion and child-like sense of wonder at the beauty of the world that distinguished his earliest efforts. Although he continues to deal with deeply metaphysical subjects, he evolves a sparer, more delicate style, largely jettisoning the superfluities of his long narrative pieces. He cultivates a compressed and impressionistic style in the belief that this reflects more accurately modern ideas about time and psychological process. Direct and instantaneous, Durrell's poetry takes the form of statement rather than argument. He incorporates, for example, a number of historical and mythological allusions and much interior content; yet he does not always present these sequentially. As such, Durrell's later poetry emerges as more modernist in character, displaying the qualities of simplicity, distillation of emotion and psychological, rather than logical, organization. Additionally, at this stage in his development, the influences of Taoism and Groddeck appear to recede. Infrequently, an overt reference appears; however, for the most part Durrell has embraced these ideas so completely that they are now subsumed in his thought.

This section explains that Durrell, in middle and old age, feels a need to re-evaluate his life in order to understand what he is as a man and as an artist. First, the chapter considers how in his poetry, which he calls the genre "closest to his heart" (BS 89), he assesses the impact of his childhood, his various experiences of love and his beliefs about

death on his sense of self and his vision. Within this context, he questions the nature of time. By examining certain memories and recalling the critical events of his life through a meditation on certain historical figures, he realizes the powerful effect of the past on the present. He learns that memory holds one of the keys to the definition and meaning he seeks. Next, the chapter discusses how this metaphysical urge arises out of Durrell's belief that "human beings are expressions of their landscape" (SP 157). In order to comprehend both himself and the self of modern man, he seeks insight into the dynamics of the reciprocal relationship between man and place. Finally, this section treats the influence of Durrell's strong sense of despair on his later poetry. His poignant descriptions of depression and sadness and his attempt to determine their cause represent an heroic effort to overcome pain through creative action.

Never a confessional poet and rarely personal in the sense of using the events of his life as subjects for his art, Durrell claims that he has "tender feelings about his private affairs . . . and [does not] want to exhibit [his] sore spots to a wondering world" (COR 371). When he does admit a personal note, as in "Joss", he uses it primarily as a background for his real concern, the effect of a remembered landscape on the growth of the self. For Durrell, the smell of joss evokes memories of his idyllic "Indian childhood" (CP 315). He gives an accurate account of psychological process in explaining how, through association of images, he then muses on the course of his life. He emphasizes the significance of his time in Greece during the 1930's, saying that there he was "born again" (CP 315). This was one of the happiest times of his life, for it was here that he discovered his poetic

voice. Remarkably, he still possesses the openness and excitement of his childhood vision, for he states that "the benign power, the providing power / Is here too" (CP 315). However, now the "[d]emon of sadness" (CP 315), a symbol of the losses, disappointments and pain of his life, is also a part of him. This in turn leads him to explicate poetry as a search for the sublime which often ends badly. Here Durrell shows how the poet functions between several sets of tensions or extremes: sublimity and the ordinary, the simplicity of youth and the complexity and sensitivity gained through age, and, finally, joy and despair. Within these parameters Durrell searches for "[a] single word to transcend all others" (CP 315). He elaborates on his method and purpose: "The search must go on, poem by poem, until one [uncovers] great truths" (SM 58). His love of language and his imagination keep the magic and promise of revelation alive in his poetry.

In a rather bizarre poem called "Pistol Weather" Durrell appears to be addressing a former lover on the subject of their relationship but on deeper levels he meditates on death and probes the connection between language and a view of the world. He perceives that the relation between these singular topics lies in himself. Because Durrell provides so few factual details about his personal life, it is difficult to say whether he delineates here a specific experience or individual, a composite of several individuals or whether this situation is a poetic creation. He may be referring to Ghislaine de Boysson, his fourth wife, and their troubled marriage and painful divorce. His witty reply to this issue in "Press Interview" can probably clarify this point. He asserts: "I do not cannabalise my fellow-man / In writing of him. I just fict" (CP 288). When writing he "redistributes" the events of life,

transforming actuality into art. The love affair in "Pistol Weather", perhaps representative of Durrell's own relationship, leaves the protagonist unhappy and somewhat bitter. Adopting an analytical tone, he dissects his lover, coolly observing her "beguiling" qualities, such as "[d]elicacy, constancy and depth" (CP 308). In mentioning their "examination" of "every artificial prison . . . with the necessary sincerity" (CP 308), he first suspects that their love has failed because each, in the interest of protecting the self, has maintained too great a distance from the other. Their calculated responses to each other limit their love, making it superficial, passionless and confining. Then, the poet recognizes that this detachment derives from his lover's concept of death, reflected in the euphemistic nature of her language. Because she believes that death means "'A stepping forever / Into a whiteness without remission'" (CP 308), she removes herself from the reality of suffering and even metaphysical inquiry. In contrast, the poet desires passion, spontaneity and fusion with another despite the anguish this can imply and pleads: "Surely to love is to coincide a little?" (CP 308). Finally he realizes that even charity cannot change a person's fundamental nature. The grotesque image of his lover with her "severed head, / Lying there, eyes open, in [her] lap" (CP 308) reveals her as a fragmented individual who does not value her emotions, who cannot fuse her feelings and her intellect and who therefore cannot love another. Although willing to try to "revive [them] both" (CP 308), Durrell accepts that this liaison cannot be transformed into a passionate union.

On the other hand "Vega" presents Durrell's account of a precious, happy and significant relationship. Based on an actual occurrence which

the poet relates in detail in A Smile in the Mind's Eye, the poem distills the essence of Durrell's encounter with a beautiful, sensitive and intelligent Swiss whom he refers to as "Vega". He calls her this because her eyes, "intense bright blue" (SM 40), remind him of "Vega, pole star of the ancients . . . always [his] favourite fixed star" (SM 40), his "protecting star" (SM 47). His time with Vega at Lake Orta near Stresa in Italy he describes as a "fused up continuum where the details have all melted into one overwhelming impression of divine attachment and friendship" (SM 47). In paralleling his loneliness, their meeting and the fulfillment it brings with the physical process of quenching thirst, he conveys the elementary and pivotal nature of their love. He sees a Taoist character in Vega, for she is paradoxically "sincere" and "sly" (CP 322). This echoes his depiction of her in A Smile in the Mind's Eye as possessing "the equable look of the Tao which contains the salt of humour and complicity and irony in its depths" (SM 47). She engenders in the poet an appreciation of "peerless calm" (CP 322), suggestive of a Taoist state of passivity and acceptance. With Vega he finds the light-heartedness, energy and balance comprising happiness.

For Durrell, love, death and the creative process form an emotional and intellectual unity of such imaginative potency that he cannot and does not deal with each separately. Often apparent, this is never more powerfully enforced than in "In Deep Grass", one of his most eloquent love poems. At first, the poem seems to argue the fragility of human memory as opposed to the endurance and vastness of the external world. The poet considers "[t]he magnitude of the night sky" (CP 339) as an entity outside of time. Its physical reality constitutes its entire

meaning. Because he has a mind, man, on the other hand, seems to confront the issues of value and order. Durrell indicates that the poet, isolated, or simply apart from others, "lying alone" (CP 339), takes on a character resembling that of impersonal landscape. Indifferent as to whether man uses his mind to "[howl] at the moon" (CP 339) or "[express] sorrow" (CP 339), he holds a strong opinion concerning his own function. He defines himself as "[o]ne gladiator of the simple sense / Carving out poetry for his tomb" (CP 340). Re-introducing the image of the sword, Durrell again portrays poetry as an active enterprise, intense and vital, yet linked to death. In the sense that he creates in order to reaffirm life while acknowledging death, death serves as his inspiration. Beyond his veneration for landscape and his creative fulfillment, Durrell cherishes the personal love relationship. So powerful that it challenges his fundamental self, making him feel "all loose at the roots" (CP 340), love transforms him totally. G. S. Fraser recognizes this sentiment in Durrell, the sense that love or feeling "is more important than art" (1970, 23). The poet highlights this theme through the image of the snake. The "reptile of ancient stars" (CP 339) at the beginning of the poem sloughs off its impurities and reaches its "final skin" (CP 340), symbolizing that through love the self sheds its old and stale substance and acquires new form. In depicting love as a creative act involving the death of a part of the self, Durrell interweaves his themes and strengthens the integrity of his vision.

In terms of subject matter "Certain Landfalls" bears a strong resemblance to "In Deep Grass"; thematically, however, it communicates a very different message. Both poems concern an aging artist ruminating

on death, love and the impact of art on the growth of the self. Unlike the protagonist of "In Deep Grass", who lives in the present, dismisses memory and reason and approaches love and death intuitively, this figure appears fixed in the past, burdened by sad memories. The tense of each poem establishes this while the narrative style, an intimate first person in "In Deep Grass" and a more distanced third person in "Certain Landfalls", underscores the antithetical points of view. At the beginning of the poem he strikes a macabre note, relating how "[t]hat last summer quite definitely the dead / Began to outnumber the living in his village" (CP 336). Despondent because the wit and intelligence of the dead have "decamped", the protagonist finds his "[h]opes [have] capsized" (CP 336). The decay of his love relationship deepens his depression. Significantly, Durrell expresses the lover's antipathy toward the protagonist in terms of her dislike of "his house . . . his style of life . . . the place" (CP 337). This depression culminates in the contradictory acts of creativity and suicide, revealing that the distorted vision produced through an inimical landscape can have tragic consequences. The frightening images of cold wind, dark storms and the "[e]nding of a visionary delight" (CP 337) signify the artist's choice of death over life in what he perceives as a hostile environment. Through suicide he believes "[h]is art [will] marry the image it deserved" (CP 337) and he will gain both emotional and creative fulfillment. Here Durrell reinforces one of his central themes, the dichotomy inherent in emotion, the human ability to sustain contradictory feelings simultaneously. As he puts it, "Without despair we should have no conception of joy" (BS 137). Ironically, his final creative act is an act of destruction. As he commits suicide he envisions himself as God, self-creating, returning

to "the soft clay" (CP 337). Finally, he becomes an image of himself, engendering "[a] presage of the faultless child in him" (CP 337). Clearly, "Certain Landfalls" represents the dark side of Durrell's vision, yet nevertheless an authentic aspect of man and an indication of his more malignant potential.

When Durrell deals with figures whom he thinks historically important he has no interest in imparting information or glorifying particular individuals. He chooses to explore certain people because they illustrate what he believes to be a universal truth: despite the reality and certainty of pain, suffering and sadness life remains worthwhile and precious. Affirmation of this kind is not easy or lightly made, especially in view of the subjects he selects. In the poem "Cavafy", for example, Durrell celebrates the courage and honesty of the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933), who portrayed what was considered to be in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the decadent experience of homosexual love. Durrell admires Cavafy's truthful and unsentimental account of his life and praises his poignant depiction of eroticism. Ironically, Cavafy, whose point of view was "the inversion of the heroic" (Warner 1) achieved, through his rendering of the integrity, dignity and beauty at the heart of life, a kind of heroism. This is, however, a modern vision, for it represents "the outlook of a mind that is disillusioned, but never cynical" (7). Cavafy, Durrell understands, was aware of the complexities, ambiguities, and ugliness of the modern world, yet was still able to accept and cherish life. Durrell shares this view and recognizes that Cavafy's greatness lies in his ability "always to preserve the adventive / Minute, never to destroy the truth" (CP 253). Moreover, he joins Cavafy in realizing

the vital connection between eroticism and creativity; in knowing that

Eros [was] the tutor of our callowness [who]
 Deployed like ants across his ageing flesh
 The crises of great art, the riders
 Of love. (CP 252)

Ultimately, Durrell values Cavafy as a good man, not as moral or religious, but as a poet completely devoted to an accurate and compassionate rendering of life, one so committed to his vision that "he died still trying" (CP 253) to communicate what he saw.

Often Durrell approaches his own poetic concern in terms of a certain artist or historical figure. In this sense his focus on Leonardo Da Vinci is not surprising; however, his estimation of the importance of Da Vinci's contribution to history differs radically from the conventional view. Usually, Da Vinci's beautiful, graceful and accurate depiction of the human body receives notice and comment. His genius, Durrell perceives, transcends the masterworks of art and scientific discoveries for which he is famous. In Da Vinci's writings and art Durrell observes a highly intelligent, sensitive mind continually receptive to the wonder and power of the natural world. Durrell claims that "[r]eading him is to refresh all nature" (CP 265). Furthermore, Da Vinci transmits his excitement and enthusiasm in that "he relives for us / The simple things our inattention staled" (CP 265). The purity, scope and freshness of his vision results in an ability to see the miraculous in the ordinary. This resonates with Durrell's primary goal in poetry, his wish to bring new life and meaning to poetic language and forms. Although Durrell does not imply a comparison with his own work, his poetry resembles Da Vinci's art in

that it proceeds from intense observation of physical landscapes through reason to metaphysical speculation and finally to pure imagination or, in Durrell's terms, heraldic reality.

Eventually, Da Vinci's "ruling passion . . . [his] curiosity" (Clark 135) led him into metaphysical contemplation. Whether engaged in the "series of drawings of the world overwhelmed by water" (135) to which Durrell refers in the line, "the reflex stroke which buries ancient cities" (CP 265), or in more placid subjects such as "[t]he plate of olives, the comb of stone honey" (CP 265), Da Vinci immerses himself completely in his art. What Durrell finds extraordinary and impressive is that Da Vinci's relentless questioning of the inner nature of his subject, his urge to penetrate its essence and apprehend its connection to the rest of the world, induces almost mystical insights such as "the sense of time's fragility" (CP 265). Next, he pictures the artist in a state of heightened awareness discovering that each moment of time contains all time, and is therefore "gravid with . . . futurity" (CP 265). Attuned to Da Vinci's point of view, Durrell comprehends that no dichotomy exists in his finding time both "fragile" and "dense". As an abstract concept its fragility renders it benign, almost irrelevant; however, when conceived of as a reality, it becomes serious and its consequence almost terrifies Da Vinci. Perhaps Durrell imposes his own emotional bias at this point when he describes Da Vinci's reaction to this knowledge as despair, a sense that "[l]ife was pitiless after all" (CP 265). Alternatively, he may be suggesting the ambivalence the artist might have felt in intuitively making a discovery that would not be scientifically proven until four hundred years later by Einstein. Overwhelmed by the immensity of this knowledge, or perhaps even then aware of its limitations,

Da Vinci adopts a new perspective, child-like and reverential. He sees that "[t]he earth is budged from its position by the / Merest weight of a little bird alighting on it" (CP 265). In this touching description of the interdependence of all creation, Da Vinci, the great scientist and rational thinker, reveals that he appreciated also the tender and simple aspect of life. To this end he revered the imagination. Throughout his poetry, Durrell illustrates his affinity with this outlook.

In "Moonlight" Durrell again builds on the thought of another writer, Pliny the Elder, a Roman naturalist who lived from 23 to 79 A.D. Pliny's writings help to clarify Durrell's vision of the interrelation of landscape, human nature and philosophy. Durrell claims that he "cannot read Pliny without terror" (CP 283) because Pliny's interpretation of the connection between man and nature, violent and perverse, leads to anarchy. In his nightmare vision, Pliny depicts an unexplained cataclysm in natural process; the sap in trees and the "menstrual pattern" (CP 283) go out of control and "perpetual bleeding" (CP 283) ensues. This frightening milieu produces the sense that "[f]reewill" is simply another carnal proverb / Of worthless minds" (CP 283). Under Pliny's system, free will, ostensibly the power of self-determination, offers man infinite possibilities and limitless choices and so implies the same kind of lack of control in man as he observed in nature. Durrell's rebuttal of Pliny takes the form of utter calm. Through his steady, deliberate portrayal of "[a] man standing" (CP 283) and waiting without specific reason or purpose, he affirms his belief in the need for quiet passivity to balance the frenetic energy and confused landscape of Pliny. His lack of action does not indicate laziness or apathy, but is in itself a kind of action similar to the Taoist "actionless action"

or wu-wei. By repeating a form of the word "wait" five times Durrell suggests that the cultivation of such Taoist virtues as openness, acceptance and patience represents the most effective way to understand the relation of man and nature. In reply to Pliny's alarming and hideous ideas Durrell proposes a balanced vision and in so doing intimates his fundamental optimism.

Durrell's friendship with the poet and critic George Seferis during his time in Greece influenced profoundly his views on poetry, time and the human condition. He recognizes Seferis as one of "the special few" (CP 321), beckoned by time "[w]ith one bird singing somewhere in the leaves" (CP 321). In this charming image Durrell manifests his Romantic sympathies by characterizing poetry as an outcome of the heightened sensitivity of particular individuals to the beauty of the world. Also with Seferis he learned that in poetry the writer must "[sign] off" (CP 321), or, in Eliot's terms, "extinguish his personality and allow his "words [to] float off like tiny seeds" (CP 321), carrying his thought and emotion to others. When they grow into "[t]he stinging image riper than his deeds" (CP 321), the poet has produced vital, perhaps immortal art. As early as "A Soliloquy of Hamlet" and again in the final "Rhodes" section of "The Anecdotes" Durrell had used the image of seeds or pods to convey his concept of creativity as a process of growth. In terms of imagery, he may be influenced by Anaxagoras' theory of "seeds" of matter animated by nous to explain the process of growth and the unity of nature. Intellectually fresh and expansive, Seferis' poetry, Durrell feels, demonstrates a continuity with the philosophy of ancient Greece. Moreover, because it includes many metaphors from ancient Greek history, Durrell implies that Seferis' poetry

revitalizes the past. His inspiration, the "seeds" of his art, may be old; however, Durrell declares that Seferis has "ignited" "[a] new Greek fire" (CP 321). In addition to his praise for Seferis' intensity and innovation, Durrell admires his modesty, his ability to create art and then leave it "in the lost property office of the loving mind" (CP 321). Seferis, he believes, lacks the ego to impose himself on his work. Rather, in composing poetry universally accessible, he gives his work lovingly to "those who listen" (CP 321). Thereby, in Durrell's estimation, he achieves greatness.

When visiting St. Remy, the town in Provence where Vincent Van Gogh voluntarily committed himself to a mental institution, Durrell contemplates the genius and tragedy of Van Gogh. Seeing St. Remy in summer, in the brilliant sunlight which excited Van Gogh's imagination and became for a time his symbol, Durrell recalls how the artist perceived and was able to portray all of his subjects as luminous, full of radiance and energy. In landscapes and people alike, he discerned "the candlepower of stored light" (CP 337). Durrell then remembers Van Gogh's "silent night" (CP 337), his rejection of the sun as his major symbol in the last year of his life, his inner turmoil and his fascination with the malicious side of nature, represented by night, the moon and the stars. He seems to agree with the conventional view that Van Gogh's mysterious and melancholy subjects and his use of sombre, muted shades as opposed to bright primary colours, signifies his mental and spiritual anguish. Although he has never undergone a mental breakdown or exhibited violent or erratic episodes similar to Van Gogh's, Durrell empathizes strongly with the artist's terror and depression. Thinking of Van Gogh's pain evokes memory of his own losses and he too feels the night "[f]ragrant with

the death of so many friends, [and] poets" (CP 337). He confides to Alan Thomas: "This last three years so many friends, etc., have died that I feel ringed about with graves" (SP 155). Linking his own distress to creative energy, he explains: "The major darkness comes and art beckons / With its quiet seething of the writer's mind" (CP 337).

In interpreting Van Gogh's tragedy as his failure to "realise / That love, even in inferior versions, is a kind / Of merciful self-repair" (CP 338), Durrell underscores his own primary thesis. That is, love nourishes, sustains and can even restore the human spirit. Ironically, Van Gogh, gifted with artistic and perhaps mystical vision, was "blind" to the simple human virtues such as kindness, tenderness and love. Here Durrell may be referring to the painter's several unsuccessful love affairs, the last of which ended in 1883 and which the art historian A. M. Hammacher believes "remain[ed] to the last his great lack, for essentially he [sought] order and a centre" (21). At this point, Durrell sheds new light on Van Gogh in suggesting that the artist's use of light itself indicates his depression, not his move to the dark side of nature and the palette. The source of this depression, Durrell feels, is Van Gogh's obsession with death and his belief that surrounding himself with light could prevent it. As Durrell sees it, Van Gogh's "shining canvasses . . . seem to assume that death is unnecessary" (CP 338). In relation to this theory, he views Van Gogh's suicide as a courageous, life-affirming act designed to reunite him with the light he so loved and which was being eclipsed by his madness. He claims that Van Gogh "directly saw the splendour of the / Dying light redeemed" (CP 338). Durrell implies that Van Gogh, in the grip of mental illness, hoped that by destroying his own despair, he could transcend death,

establish himself in perpetual light and so redeem himself. In Van Gogh's paintings Durrell observes "the jack o'lantern to console and punish" (CP 338). Playing upon Van Gogh's notions about death, he presents the artist finally as an image suffused with ghostly light. Despite this, Durrell maintains that the beauty of these paintings "consoles" with its vibrant and passionate rendering of nature. As an individual, however, Vincent Van Gogh remains a tragic puzzle, and in a sense "punishes" ordinary perception.

Like Van Gogh in that he derives his inspiration primarily from landscape, Durrell differs radically from him in that he largely emphasizes the miraculous aspects of nature as opposed to the nightmare vision. The most distinctive feature of Durrell's poetry, his delineation of the integrity of landscape, human emotion and art, grows out of his fascination with the external world. In "Salamis", for example, he traces the process whereby a "[d]ark van of winter-pledging stars" (CP 272) evokes an "uneasy" feeling in scholars or poets. Akin to the nervous tension Durrell feels before writing, this disturbed state leads these individuals to examine the genesis and meaning of the art they study or produce. Their pondering whether

. . . the work of art [is] really a work of nature
To mobilise the sense of wonder,
Revis[ing] all time's nomenclature (CP 272),

represents the key to Durrell's poetic quest. While aiming to reawaken man's appreciation of nature, he hopes also to give him a new perspective on time, a view of the timeless dimension of art. Durrell depicts the obstacles to this goal through a presentation of nature unsettled and agitated. In his account of the "capes unwinding / In their old smoke

and cursing spray . . . [and] the autumnal water's writhing" (CP 272, 273), he parallels the conditions preceding a new form emerging in nature with the mental disturbance of the artist before creating. Furthermore, in stating that "[t]o remain and realise were the hardest task" (CP 273), Durrell stresses that from landscape he has learnt to develop the courage to undergo the pain creativity can demand. As well as the joy accompanying full artistic consciousness, he understands the responsibility this entails.

In "One Grey Greek Stone" Durrell amplifies his theme of the relationship between place and the self. The Greek landscape with its "enduring faculty of self-expression" (SP 157) helps the poet clarify his thought. Through a subtle use of eye imagery Durrell demonstrates how vision, both physical and poetic, is a reciprocal process wherein subject and object fuse in a fundamentally creative activity. Here he draws on and extends Groddeck's ideas of the eye as "a world-embracing symbol" and "sight [as] a function not of the eye but of human beings" (1951, 204). Initially, he sees "[c]apes hereabouts and promontories" (CP 274). Then he realizes that the island itself watches him with its "cyclopean eyeball" (CP 274). As he notices how "shaggy presences of rock abounding / Charm the sick disputing will" (CP 274), he focuses on the healing power of landscape. Penetrating the superficial, he comprehends the intense vitality and awareness of nature, expressed in the image of the island as "all eyes" (CP 274). This echoes his description of Greece in the travel book, Prospero's Cell, as "a living eye . . . a landscape so aware of itself, conforming so marvellously to the dimensions of human existence" (PC 131). The island, as it "ponders, notes, and codifies" (CP 274), offers the poet the somewhat esoteric

message: "[w]e discover only what we set out to find" (CP 274). Here Durrell gives form to Henry Miller's explanation of the origin of poetic truth: "The exploration of the unknown yields only the known. . . . We discover only what we set out to find . . . Truth, on the other hand, comes instantaneously, without search. . . . It comes to you as a gift" (HM 47). As a result of this another eye, the "I" of the poet, enters and admits that poetic vision arrives and departs mysteriously, in the manner of intuition or revelation. He claims:

I am at a loss to explain how writing
Turns this way this year, turns and tends--
But the line breaks off as voices do, and ends. (CP 275)

Ultimately, Durrell sees that landscape, in reflecting man to himself, permits him a glimpse of the mystery of human nature. In the line, "[I]mage coiled in image, eye in eye" (CP 275), he underscores his belief in the fundamental integration of the human and natural worlds. This fusion, although it increases man's sensibilities by giving him a deeper insight into his nature, does not provide a definitive formula for creativity. Leaving the question of the exact working of the imagination open, Durrell concludes with a demonstration of the creative mind at work. In declaring that to sleep under the Greek stones "would be / The deepest luxury of the deliberate soul" (CP 275), he shows how the poetic imagination links landscape and desire.

Many poems of Durrell's later period explore various concerns within his primary theme of the interpenetration of landscape, poetry and the self. In "The Reckoning", for example, he captures exquisitely the critical connection between nature and human consciousness in such lines as "Timeless as water into language flowing" (CP 303). He realizes,

however, that beautiful description alone does not increase man's awareness. Human beings seek the meaning behind the existence of similar patterns in themselves and nature. Durrell suggests that man can find an answer to this question by imitating nature and pursuing a state of "unknowing". He feels that if man can break free from "half-knowing", or the logical point of view, and "the gagged conscience" (CP 303) of morality, he will liberate his powerful faculties of intuition and imagination. This recalls the Taoist position on the inferiority of rational knowledge and the need to move beyond it in order to attain awareness and spiritual satisfaction. When man adopts this viewpoint, modelled on the receptivity and harmonious interrelation of nature, he learns that

all is possible
That the feeble human finite must belong
Within the starred circumference of wonder. (CP 303)

Significantly, Durrell uses the same word to describe this mystical or spiritual enlightenment as he does in "Salamis" to depict artistic vision. Such experiences fill the individual with "wonder", rekindling hope and revitalizing belief in human potential, corresponding to Durrell's definition of the poem as "an act of affirmation" (WI 21). This sense of wonder approximates the idyllic vision of childhood in that it generates in the mature individual a recovered innocence and confirms the comic vision of life as ultimately good.

In "Swimmers" Durrell continues his investigation of the fundamental link between landscape and the self. This time, he pushes his theme to its ultimate extension by setting the internal action of the poem in a dream-like, almost surreal state at the limit of consciousness. In so

doing he encounters the collapse of ordinary perception and patterns of thought and makes a startling discovery about the nature of creativity. Structurally, the poem takes the form of flashbacks in the first two stanzas and ends with a visionary proclamation in the present. First, Durrell sketches a scene where an unspecified number of swimmers dive into a pool at night to retrieve the pearls from a broken necklace. Through imaginative association, the protagonist perceives a parallel between this and his experience in "sweet and headlong Greece" (CP 317) where he tried to write but could not. Syntax, the organizing principle of language, "failed" and "[e]ach noun became a nascent verb / And all verbs dormant adjectives" (CP 317). Like the string of broken pearls, all words and structures of language, once stable, defined and certain, had lost their identity and customary meaning. This upheaval in language, reminiscent of the Symbolist poet Rimbaud's concept of "semantic disturbance" (K 39), opens a new imaginative dimension. Freed from conventional rules and meanings and more highly integrated in the sense that individual words partake of the qualities of each other, as in nouns displaying the characteristics of verbs, language acquires a marvellous and enthralling aspect. Although on one level these words have died and are meaningless, they serve as the "breath" of poetry, its life force. The principal image, as it changes from pearls to words to a metaphysical conceit, corpses of words embodied in pearls, signifies that poetic vision, influenced by various environments, constantly changes, grows and re-defines itself.

In choosing pearls as his metaphor for poetry, Durrell plays upon the familiar aphorism "pearls of wisdom" and thereby reinforces his theory of poetry as valuable, rare and a product of interaction with a

particular place, the sea, symbolic of the unconscious and the imagination. As in "Themes Heraldic", Durrell again draws on the doctrine of transubstantiation to convey the mystical nature of the connection between the self and poetry. In the lines, "Newly mated man and wine / In each other's death combine" (CP 317), he alludes to the process in poetry whereby the poet sheds his ego and experiences communion with the essence or "wine" of poetry. The outcome of this fusion, a brilliant apprehension of universality, stands as one of Durrell's simplest yet most forceful images of creativity: "Somebody meets everything / While poems in their cages sing" (CP 317). Fittingly, he concludes by re-establishing order; the wildness of poetry is now enclosed in syntax. This moment of mystical illumination suggests the Taoist "realization of cosmic harmony, the expansion of the self until it embraces and merges with the whole and at the same time contains the whole" (Cooper 1981 75).

As a mature yet still evolving poet, Durrell's study of the self and the creative process continues. In his effort to delineate creativity and to express its significance, he offers a number of different ideas about poetry. His enigmatic and paradoxical statement, "[p]oetry, like life itself, is far too serious not to be taken lightly" (BS 150), seems an appropriate introduction to his gentle and light-hearted approach apparent in such poems as "Keepsake". The title means something small, yet precious, given as a memento; and this reveals Durrell's method and purpose. He describes the mystic position in concentrated, exquisite form in order that it will be remembered. Based on the theory of non-attachment, it applies equally to poetry, love and understanding. His use of short, rhythmic lines, plain language, and rhyme underscores the simple and child-like qualities of this vision. First, following the

Taoist method of teaching through paradox, he advises: "To increase your hold / Relax your grip" (CP 278). "Passionate indifference" (CP 278), an attitude combining great desire and placid disinterest, represents the most effective approach to integration. Analogous to the "exciting" concept of "non-assertive form" (COR 203) Durrell calls heraldic reality, this attitude also requires one to accommodate the object of concern within the self, not merely to express it.

The structure of the poem provides a clue to its meaning: the first stanza has four lines, the second six and the third eight, intimating that this approach involves eternal growth. In the final stanza Durrell restates the need to relinquish the impulse to control in order to intensify any relationship. To achieve the comic vision where "[a]ll that glitters may be gold" (CP 278), Durrell implies man should imitate the balance, harmony and motivelessness of Tao. Outside of both action and non-action, this position "confers the ability to maintain detachment in the midst of activity and the readiness for necessary action in the state of detachment. It also grants the ability to give without depletion or diminution of power" (Cooper 1981 9). In Durrell's view, such an outlook becomes symbolically "golden", suggestive of its rare and beautiful nature. He sees, in creativity and in love, these miraculous qualities.

Besides its value as an exquisite poem, "Keepsake" occupies a primary place in Durrell's work because it recapitulates his key poetic theory, the vision of heraldic reality. Heraldic reality is Durrell's term for a state of total awareness wherein man fuses his intellectual, emotional and spiritual capacities and perceives his unity with everything. Durrell cannot explain exactly how one achieves heraldic consciousness,

for it "operates differently with each one of us" (AQ 772, 773). He adds: "If it is to happen to you it will happen of its own accord" (AQ 773), thereby underlining its mysterious and spontaneous nature. In these respects it closely resembles Tao, Groddeck's It and the unifying nous of Greek philosophy. Durrell indicates that man attains heraldic vision by surpassing the ego, reason, time and morality, aspects of existence which, in his opinion, limit human potential. Beyond the agitated strivings of these activities, manifestations of materiality and fragmented consciousness, the heraldic universe exists in repose, an unconscious unity of energy and potentiality. Durrell explicates: "Whoever makes [the] enigmatic leap into the heraldic reality of the poetic life discovers that truth has its own built-in morality" (AQ 772). Here he asserts two cardinal features of heraldic reality: its link to creativity and its equation with truth, the kind of striking, indisputable truth that has universal recognition and application.

Durrell maintains that artistic creation can lead man to the heraldic universe. He stresses that art is not an end in itself, but an indicator of or catalyst to something greater. In defining the fundamental object of art as the "[invocation of] the ultimate healing silence" (AQ 763), he assumes a mystic position. He expands on this outlook, claiming that "the symbolism contained in the form and pattern [of art] is only a frame of reference through which, as in a mirror, one may glimpse the idea of a universe at rest, a universe in love with itself" (AQ 763). The goal of the poet, Durrell believes, is to convey love and unity. To the extent that the poet develops the ideogrammatic capacity of words and embodies, physically and metaphysically, the texture of heraldic reality, he succeeds. In such poems as "Keepsake",

where simplicity and quiet evoke an awareness of man's spirituality and his inclusion within an ever-unfolding mystical whole, Durrell accomplishes this goal.

Chapter Six

A Personal Mythology

. . . a last specialised picture
 Flickering on the retina perhaps
 The suave magnificence of a late
 Moon, trying not to insist too much.
 Emotions are just pampered mirrors,
 Thriftless provinces, penurious settlers.
 How to involve all nature in every breath? (CP 314)

In The Alexandria Quartet Durrell declares: "To become a poet is to take the whole field of human knowledge and human desire for one's province" (AQ 880). Consequently, he designs his poetry to "reflect a metaphysical reality about ourselves and the world" (K 90). Although it appears simple and often lyrical, his poetry is mentally demanding; its profundity has, in the opinion of some, rendered it elitist. From Plato to Tao, from Wordsworth to Einstein, from Da Vinci to Groddeck, he garners ideas and inspiration. Durrell's poetry, as a result, acquires a rich, multi-layered effect, a sense of all-inclusiveness and a distillation of knowledge. Intellectually exhilarating, Durrell's erudition can be somewhat daunting to readers, occasionally erecting barriers to understanding rather than engendering enlightenment. Unlike Yeats, Pound or Eliot, who also construct complex individual visions founded on esoteric knowledge, Durrell sometimes permits too many sources to fertilize his imagination and can be difficult to penetrate. Yet his aim is not to synthesize or even to present ideas, nor is he concerned with "the dialectical truth of ideas, but simply with their beauty and appositeness to his own temperamental make-up" (M 47).

Acknowledging the amorality of this position, he nevertheless characterizes it as an essentially religious endeavour, in that by "surrender[ing] to the flux of individual life [the artist can portray] the creative rebirth of the individual and the rise of the human spirit to full consciousness" (HM 47).

As appealing as this feckless selectivity may be to the artist, it too contributes to the indifferent and even antagonistic reception Durrell's work has met at times. When a poet raises ideas in a serious manner and then undermines and explodes them as ridiculous, a reader can feel confused or even cheated. In "Portfolio", for example, Durrell parallels the modern preoccupations with love, death, choice and action with his interpretation of a seventeenth-century artist's outlook on freedom as a form of imprisonment. The paradoxical conclusion he draws teases with its dual sense of humor and gravity. Some critics feel that he goes beyond the modernist penchant for ambiguity when he states that

. . . poetry . . . can be a deliverance
And true in many sorts of different sense,
Explicit or else like that awkward stare,
The perfect form of public reticence. (CP 270)

Aware of the risk he takes with such an approach, Durrell defends it, for he remains convinced that by "tak[ing] an idea apart you'll discover the ambivalence in it. By taking first one point of view and then the other you may occasionally light on the truth" (BS 108). For some, such contradiction results in uncertainty as to Durrell's true position. Conversely, Durrell feels that his unorthodox methods are the most cogent means to delineate the self.

Another factor which enters into the problems Durrell has encountered with acceptability and the scant critical attention devoted to his poetry concerns his expatriate status. His early hostility toward everything English and his persistent criticism of the puritanical and smug bent he perceived in the English psyche continue to alienate many British critics and readers. In fact, Durrell's claim to be a British writer rankles with some of his fellow countrymen. They find such an assertion audacious in one who has not lived in England since the early 1930's. Yet Durrell has not gained particular recognition or notable appreciation in North America or the rest of the English-speaking world. The reason for this may be that he offers a vision so fundamentally distinct from that of Anglicized cultures that it is difficult for them to sympathize with and embrace him. By choice and circumstance he has developed a Mediterranean sensibility. He explains that he has been "heavily stamped by Greece, ancient and modern [and that] before [one] can understand [him], [one] must first appreciate Greece" (BS 125). In such poems as "One Grey Greek Stone", "Seferis", "To Argos", "At Epidaurus" and "The Parthenon" Durrell pursues his goal of being "worthy of the light that shines from Greek metaphysics" (BS 125). The cultural influences most prominent in Western literature, the Judeo-Christian tradition and scientific rationalism, have in Durrell been supplanted by the simplicity and clarity of classical Greek idealism.

Durrell's strengths stem from the same sources as the problems in his poetry. His alignment with philosophy and such unusual influences as Tao yield an extraordinary vision at once comic and poignant. Delighted with life, glorying in its multiplicity, energy and infinite potential, Durrell recognizes also the sadness inherent in the human

condition. His integrity, wit and depth recall the fusion of metaphysics and aesthetic theory in the poetry of Wallace Stevens. An ironic tenderness, he has found, captures the modern experience most faithfully. He describes a poet as someone who is "often unhappy but . . . catching every minute as it [flies] and turning it upside down to expose the happy side" (AQ 79). Accurate yet compassionate, he treats human foibles, whether they be the pretensions of Uncebukenke or the delusions of Van Gogh, with dignity and kindness. He sees a human being as an amalgam of the carefree, innocent child at the beginning of "Cities, Plains and People" and the mad, world-weary old man of "Certain Landfalls". In both he discerns the most precious faculty of human nature, that which defines life itself, the property of growth.

Durrell's poetry celebrates the motive force of growth, an integrative, harmonizing power he would perhaps call love. Mighty and benevolent, this impersonal charity accepts all and includes all in a movement of constantly unfolding marvel. In Durrell's mystical vision the self radiates the joy of participation in such an ever-expanding wholeness. Hamlet's "dance upon the void" (CP 79), Fangbrand's "grave in the rock . . . Like a smile" (CP 96), and the old poet's subsumption into "the magnitude of the night sky" (CP 339) express the calm bliss of the fundamentally religious experience of heraldic reality. The heraldic consciousness involves a quintessential peace coupled with the most penetrating awareness of a reality made more precious for its inception in imagination. Durrell's contention that poetry "points towards a Something which itself subsists without distinction" (K 90) supports the interpretation of his work as a search for a mystical centre. In this dimension the poet surpasses time, "the measure of our death-

consciousness" (K 4). "The deathless ideogram for love" (CP 225), Durrell's primary emblem of growth, therefore, emerges as the crux of his comic vision. Comprehending art as a celebration of "growth, efflorescence, being" (HM 46), he evolves a "personal mythology" (46), a vision of one man attempting to articulate his place in the contemporary environment. As Durrell enforces his theme of the work of art as an endless demonstration of the creativity of life, his poetry moves towards apotheosis.

Language, the poet's sole means of bringing forth this state, assumes a heightened significance. As the fabric of Durrell's imaginative landscape it must take the "intuitive images [besetting him] the whole time" (BS 18) and evoke a set of associations to create "a complex of affective sounds [which carry] a mystical-metaphysical ring" (COR 329). Within this coalescence of insight, emotion, and technical skill Durrell understands that the primary element of poetry remains a mystery. He underlines the pivotal role luck plays in conveying vision when he states; "In the last analysis great poetry reflects an unknown in the interpretation and understanding of which all knowledge is refunded into ignorance" (K 90). Personally, Durrell feels that he has succeeded rarely and claims that he has "produced [only] five or six good poems" (BS 125). In light of his ambitious goal to revitalize language he achieves more than he acknowledges. By increasing awareness of the power of words to delineate the self as a blend of rationality and spirituality Durrell communicates the scope of the modern consciousness. By presenting a comic vision of man as ultimately good and life as an integration of joy and pain, he provides beauty and hope in a landscape often eclipsed by horror and negativity. Finally, Durrell's poetry

shows that the creative ability achieved through harmony with the spirit of place engenders in the modern consciousness a new state. Liberated by the realization that "there is / No sickness in the heart of time" (CP 284), the human spirit enters into the life process and feels

The fruit breathes on the tree and gestures,
The bark fresh, the leafage of hands dewy
Drives the beautiful wand of your flesh
Upwards into another spring, sap rising. (CP 284)

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