PROSPERO'S CELL
LAWRENCE DURRELL
AND THE
QUEST FOR ARTISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to consider the movement toward and achievement of artistic consciousness on the part of Lawrence Durrell. The emphasis is on the early work, particularly *Prospero's Cell*, *Prospero's Isle*, *Reflections On A Marine Venus*, Durrell's published correspondence with Henry Miller, and "Cities, Plains and People". The 1937-1946 period was chosen because it was the period which Durrell spent in Greece in a voluntary exile from England. A discussion of the poems and articles from this period and of the later *Alexandria Quartet*, which traces the growth toward artistic consciousness in a more objective way, was not possible within the limits of the thesis.

Chapter I is a concise commentary on "Cities, Plains and People", in which the controlling symbol, Prospero, is seen to be a 'persona' for Durrell. During the course of the chapter, 'artistic consciousness' is defined as 'sensitivity to the happenings of the external world coupled with intense introspection and self-realization which allow the artist to take from his inner being the power embodied in his elusive 'furies' in order to mold the events of his environment into what is called 'art,' the means of communication with his reader.' The method used is one of brief observations on the meaning of specific lines in the poem, a copy of which has been included as an appendix.

Chapter II discusses the importance of Prospero for Durrell as seen in "Prospero's Isle", an article published in 1939. The first part of the chapter, "'This Rough Magic'", is concerned with Prospero's achievement of artistic consciousness in *The Tempest*, and part two, "The Paradise of Innocence", discusses the meaning of that achievement for Durrell.
Chapter III, "The Quality of Silence", concentrates on Prospero's Cell and Reflections On A Marine Venus. Part one, "The Heraldic Universe", is a discussion of the influence of the Greek landscape on Durrell, corroborated by references to Henry Miller's The Colossus of Maroussi. "'To Move Towards Creation'", sums up the growth toward artistic consciousness and ends with Durrell's leaving the islands to return to Europe and the larger context of the world.

In general, the thesis shows the importance of artistic consciousness for Durrell, discussing his concern with the dualism which he saw typified in and initiated by Descartes, and showing the solution which he found in isolation and introspection in the Greek islands between 1937 and 1946.
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CHAPTER I

COMMENTARY ON "CITIES, PLAINS AND PEOPLE"
This thesis is concerned with the growth toward artistic consciousness as seen in the works and letters of Lawrence Durrell during the period 1937-1946. That growth is chronicled in *Prospero's Cell*, *Reflections On A Marine Venus*, Durrell's letters to Henry Miller, and "Cities, Plains and People", the title poem of a volume of verse published in 1946. Chapter One comments on that poem.

'Once in idleness was my beginning.' This first line foreshadows the introspection and reflection which, as the poem progresses, becomes necessary for the development of artistic consciousness.

Night was to the mortal boy  
Innocent of surface like a new mind  
Upon whose edges once he walked  
In idleness, in perfect idleness.  

As a child, Durrell's mind was a 'new mind.' Like the night, it was 'innocent of surface,' and he walked upon its edges because he had no need to understand its workings.

Saw the Himalayas like lambs there  
Stir their huge joints and lay  
Against his innocent thigh a stony thigh.  

The child and nature have an affinity, especially in line 10, in which the mountains are personified as having 'a stony thigh.' Like the Himalayas, the child is 'innocent.'

On draughty corridors to Lhasa  
Was my first school  
In faces lifted from saddles to the snows.

The child is, at this point, starting on the road of the artist. He is the passive observer of the people in caravans stopping 'to drink Tibet,' to become intoxicated by the mystery and religious awe carried by the winds blowing from the mountains.
In this world, between the rigidity of the British colonial system and the spirituality of Tibet, 'little known of better then or worse' (27) indicates the lack of any internal chaos on the part of the boy. There is, instead, a unity of spirit which Durrell loses when he returns to England and which he spends a great deal of time attempting to regain. Indeed, this unity is the same as artistic consciousness, for it allows the artist to stop worrying about the condition of his inner being and concentrate on the external world from which he takes his material.

To all who turn and start descending  
The long sad river of their growth:  
The tidebound, tepid, causeless  
Continuum of terrors in the spirit,  
I give you here unending  
In idleness an innocent beginning  

Until your pain become a literature.  

In these lines Durrell dedicates his poem to those who, like himself, have left the innocent world of the child and come to grips with the 'causeless . . . terrors in the spirit.' From the place of idleness the 'soft klaxons [are] crying / Down to the plains and settled cities' (24-25) in order to point out to the individual who is not psychologically unified the needlessness of his personal internal fears.

Those who went forward  
Into this honeycomb of silence often  
Gained the whole world: but often lost each other.

Like the characters in Forster's Passage To India who go into the 'honeycomb of silence' which is the Marabar Cave, 'those who went forward' in the poem have come to a realization of their true natures. The necessary retreat into introspection which yields artistic consciousness for the writer may alienate those around him, and it was in the Greek islands that Durrell achieved unity and at the same time lost two wives.
At this point in his life, however, Durrell did not go to Tibet but returned with his parents to England:

But he for whom steel and running water
Were roads, went westward only
To the prudish cliffs and the sad green home
Of Pudding Island o'er the Victorian foam.

This section of the poem is consistent with Durrell's attitude to England in The Black Book, in which he sees the situation in England as stultifying and calls it 'the English death.' Line 51 is an adequate example: the cliffs are 'prudish' and the home, while 'green,' is 'sad.' Line 52, 'Of Pudding Island o'er the Victorian foam,' needs no comment.

Here all as poets were pariahs.
Some sharpened little follies into hooks
To pick upon the language and survive.

Durrell tempered this attitude to England's effect on her writers in an interview in The Paris Review:

'my heroes of my generation, the Lawrences, the Norman Douglasses, the Aldingtons, the Eliots, the Graveses, their ambition was always to be a European. It didn't qualify their Englishness in any way, but it was recognized that a touch of European fire was necessary, as it were, to ignite the sort of dull sodden mass that one became living in an unrestricted suburban way.'

It is against the 'dull sodden mass' that Durrell is striking out when he describes

the business witches in their bowlers,
The blackened Samsons of the green estate,
The earls from their cockney-boxes calling[

And [he] knew before it was too late, London
Could only be a promise-giving kingdom.

London, and therefore England, can only give promises to her young men. It cannot and will not fulfill them. But Durrell found England to be 'a window / Into the great sick-room, Europe' (67-68):

'I think that, as I say, in England, living as if we are not a part of Europe, we are living against the grain of what is nourishing to our artists, do you see? There seems to be an ingrown psychological thing about it, I don't know why it is.'

Like Eliot and Graves, his living in Europe and serving part of his artistic apprenticeship there has not qualified Durrell's 'Englishness' in any way. However much he dislikes the English and their 'English death,' there remains a sense of being English and writing for England:

'But, mind you, that doesn't qualify one's origins or one's attitudes to things. I mean if I'm writing I'm writing for England -- and so long as I write English it will be for England that I have to write.'

In lines 72 to 76, Durrell expresses admiration for the Venerable Bede, but manages to restrict himself to Bede and attack the 'so many less' who were not like him:

Here he saw Bede who softly
Blew out desire and went to bed,
So much the greater than so many less
Who made their unconquered guilt in atrophy
A passport to the dead. (75)

Some of her writers and her position as a window on Europe are the good things about England, but 'for this person it was never a landfall[;] not a world as yet. Not a world.'

Near the end of Part II, the reader is asked to 'Reflect how Prospero was born to a green cell' (88). In The Tempest Prospero was not, in fact,
'born to a green cell.' He reached it at a later stage in life, and it was here that he achieved the unity of self which allowed him to return to the world outside the island knowing that he would be a part of it and not isolated from it in his magic. For Durrell, Prospero is a symbol of the unity for which he is seeking. Lines 88 to 92 present a dichotomous situation: on the one hand there is Prospero, 'born to a green cell,' and on the other there are those who sing 'We shall never return, never be young again.' To become physically young again is impossible, but to regain the unity one had as a child is not. Here is the meaning of 'Prospero was born to a green cell:' the unity of self which Prospero knew in his childhood, and which he had lost, has been regained. He is no longer like the English, 'the potential passion hidden, Wordsworth / In the dessicated bodies of postmistresses' (99-100).

So here at last we did outgrow ourselves.
As the green stalk is taken from the earth,
With a great juicy sob, I turned him from a Man
To Mandrake, in Whose awful hand I am.

The child has outgrown his childhood and has matured to the point that he has been 'taken from the earth,' but in the process of growth he has lost his self-realization, and must begin to search for it. Lines 105 to 106 point out that Durrell had 'turned him from a Man / To Mandrake.' He has made the child a magician, and that magician is Prospero, who controlled the world around him by means of an acquired magic and not the innate power of the unified individual. The role of the magician is one step nearer to the achievement of artistic consciousness, but at this point in the poem that consciousness has not been reached.

Part III is an interpolated comment pointing toward the remainder of the poem as a whole. The child has not yet achieved artistic consciousness,
and lines 107 to 110 foreshadow what is to come:

Prospero upon his island
Cast in a romantic form,
When his love was fully grown
He laid his magic down.

The innate internal powers embodied in love and emotion are far greater than those which are acquired, and these lines predict a time in the development of the artist when his acquired magic is no longer necessary. Lines 111 to 118 point out that the search for 'truth' is to be finalized without the aid of magic, for

Truth within the tribal wells,
Innocent inviting creature
Does not rise to human spells
But by paradox

Teaches all who seek for her
That no saint or seer unlocks
The wells of truth unless he first
Conquer for the truth his thirst.

The 'spells' with which Prospero causes the storm in the play are useless in the search for 'truth,' and will be useless in the quest for unification of the self. These lines point up for Durrell a basic truth about the unity of self for which he is searching: like the happiness he had lost, it is to be found in the innocence of the child which, as Part I of the poem shows, is so basic as to parallel the primordial. The paradox lies in the idea that truth can be found only by those who do not seek her, and this fact recalls the child who had no need to search for self-unity because he had never been told that he was not unified.

Durrell's reference to the 'Cartesian imperatives' of absolute doubt in line 70 anticipates lines 125 to 131:

he waited
For black-hearted Descartes to seek him out
With all his sterile apparatus.
Now man for him became a thinking lobe,
Through endless permutation sought repose.
By frigid latinisms he mated now
To the hard form of prose the cogent verb.

The reference to 'black-hearted Descartes' is to the Cartesian theory of
dualism which postulates that the mind of man is far superior to his body.
For this reason, 'man for Durrell became a thinking lobe.' 'Sterile' in
line 127 has a double connotation, indicating the clinical conditions both
of the laboratory of the scientist and of the writer who is more concerned
with the dissection of language than with creation, and the ultimate value,
seen in retrospect, of such practices for the writer who contents himself
with them and goes no further in his search. When we consider that 'man
for him became a thinking lobe' we must also realize that Durrell is
commenting upon himself. He is attempting at this point to solve his
dilemma by means of 'endless permutation.'

To many luck may give for merit
More profitable teachers. To the heart
A critic and a nymph:
And an unflinching doctor to the spirit.

The implication here is that Durrell's 'teachers,' the dissectors of
language, were not profitable. Because his heart did not at this time
have 'a critic and a nymph,' he was forced to struggle towards the unity
of self which 'an unflinching doctor to the spirit' would have given him
by cutting out the acceptance of Cartesian dualism.

Lines 137 to 139 compare the body to a world, and there is a
foreshadowing of the movement through and away from the technical hocus-
pocus of the magician toward a freer means of expression founded on the
internal forces of the individual. The members of the body gradually
become 'doors' into the self, a means of gaining entrance to self-
realization. The parallel with the child who first of all investigates the tiny world which is his body and comes to know himself before exploring the greater world which is external to him comes to mind here, for there is a shift from the intellectual knowledge to the physical when Durrell tells

how sex became

A lesser sort of speech, and members doors.

Part V of the poem comments upon the result of the 'endless permutation' attempted by the author:

Faces may settle sadly
Each into its private death
By business travel or fortune,
Like the fat congealing on a plate
Or the fogged negative of labour
Whose dumb fastidious rectitude
Brings death in living as a sort of mate.
Here however man might botch his way
To God via Valery, Gide or Rabelais.

In The Paris Review, Durrell has this to say about the development of style:

'I don't think anyone can, you know, develop a style consciously. I read with amazement, for example, of old Maugham writing out a page of Swift every day when he was trying to learn the job, in order to give himself a stylistic purchase as it were. It struck me as something I could never do. No.

I think the writing itself grows you up, and you grow the writing up, and finally you get an amalgam of everything you have pinched with a new kind of personality which is your own.'

Even in his comment to the interviewers, Durrell is 'pinching,' for these lines are an expanded paraphrase of what T. S. Eliot said in The Sacred Wood in 1920:

Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something

\[4\] The Paris Review, pp. 52-53
different. A good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest.5

The importance of these comments for Durrell is that 'faces may settle sadly / Each into its private death' if what is 'pinched,' whether style or content, is not 'made into something different.' The effect on the artist will be 'like the fat congealing on a plate.' The 'dumb fastidious rectitude [of] labour' will result in a 'fogged negative:' the artist, for all his attempts to create out of his inner being, will find himself cut off at every turn from the self-realization which should be a part of his efforts.

The use of 'sadly' in line 145, and that of 'death' in line 146, calls to mind 'the sad green home' which Durrell found in England and the English 'who made their unconquered guilt in atrophy / A passport to the dead' (75-76). The statement that 'man might botch his way / To God' (152-153) through the copying of the stylistic apparatus of Gide, Valery or Rabelais is a comment on the methods of approaching artistic consciousness, and the three writers to whom he refers are definitely candidates for Eliot's 'authors remote in time, or alien in language.'

The reference to the artist's moving toward God is of interest, for Durrell, in learning his art through the copying of the techniques of others, is like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. Both must move through a 'death in living' and, by means of repetition, transcend the half-life. The Mariner will reach God, and Durrell will achieve artistic consciousness. Ultimately God and artistic consciousness are synonymous in one respect, for the writer, in his capacity for organizing what he takes from his environment and

recreating it 'in his own image,' is playing the role of a deity.

Earlier in the poem Durrell indicates that the 'truth' for which he seeks lies 'in the tribal wells,' in the primitive innocence of the child. Part VI of the poem continues this idea:

And in the personal heart, weary
Of the piercing innocents in parks (170)
Who sail the rapt subconscious there like swans,
Disturbs and brightens with [November's] tears, thinking:

'Perhaps after all it is we who are blind,
While the unconscious eaters of the apple
Are whole as ingots of a process (175)
Punched in matter by the promiscuous Mind.'

'In the personal heart' Durrell is weary because he is envious of the children who have what he does not: unity. The children are 'piercing' in that their ability to 'sail the rapt subconscious' in all the unconcerned grace of swans disturbs him. But there is also an element of hope in these lines, for there is a realization that the adult is blind and that innocent children who have not yet become 'eaters of the apple' are 'whole as ingots.'

The opening lines of Part VII are similar to Eliot's 'By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . . .' This whole section is similar to the "Thames daughters" portion of The Waste Land and, just as in Eliot's poem, the presence of water points toward unity of self:

By the waters of Buda
Uncomb and unlock them,
Abandon and nevermore cherish
Queer lips, queer hearts, hands.
There to futurity leave
The luckier lover who's waiting
As, like a spring coiled up,
In the bones of Adam, lay Eve. (195)

The attainment of unity is indicated in 'the luckier lover' who, presumably, will leave 'the water of Buda' in place of the weary 'personal heart' who came there. He will leave minus the Cartesian dualism which held him back,
like Prospero who, 'when his love was fully grown[,] laid his magic down.'

On the strictly autobiographical level, there is a movement toward the Greek islands in Part VIII of the poem:

So Time, the lovely and mysterious
With promises and blessings moves
Through her swift degrees,
So gladly does he bear
Towards the sad perfect wife,
The rocky island and the cypress-trees.
Taken in the pattern of all solitaries,
An only child, of introspection got,
Her only playmates, lovers, in herself.

Durrell and his wife become not only an integral part of each other but also of the Greek landscape which bears 'in ruins / The faces of the innocents in wells' (212-213). At this time, as Prospero's Cell testifies, Durrell is completely immersed in every small detail of life in Greece, 'all far beyond the cupidity of verses / Or the lechery of images to tell' (222-223). The final step in the movement toward artistic consciousness occurred in this period in the islands, for 'here worlds were confirmed in him.'

Differences that matched like cloth
Between the darkness and the inner light,
Moved on the undivided breath of blue.

The important line is 224, for here there is a light vs dark dichotomy in which the outer darkness, as opposed to 'the inner light,' stands for the world of chaos and confusion which is constantly terrifying those who have not achieved self-integration. The answer to these terrors, for the unified individual, lies in lines 228 to 230:

Formed moving, trees asserted here
Nothing but simple comparisons to
The artist's endearing eye.

For the unintegrated individual, these trees are a manifestation of the 'causeless continuum of terrors in the spirit,' but for Durrell they are
nothing more than 'simple comparisons.' Like Shakespeare's Gonzalo, who saw a green land where Sebastian and Antonio saw only the terrors of a desert island, Durrell is able, through his own powers as typified in the 'endearing eye,' to make of his environment what he will.

LOOK' she might say 'Press here
With your fingers at the temples.
Are they not the blunt uncut horns
Of the small naked Ionian fauns?'

Considering that lines 240 to 242 refer to one of Durrell's daughters old enough to walk with him along the shore, this stanza, too, may well refer to a new-born child. The comparison of the child to the 'small naked Ionian fauns' carries the concept of the primitiveness of the child one step further. A second consideration here is Nietzsche's theory that true art is a result of the effect on the exhausted Dionysiac of the ordering, symbol-making Apollonian forces. Fauns are traditionally found in the worshipping train of Dionysus, and so the concern of the child with 'the five lean dogs of sense' associates it with the Dionysiac rather than the Apollonian.

Concerned with the sensual, Durrell is caught up in the

Red Polish mouth,
Lips that as for the flute unform,
Gone round on nouns or vowels,
To utter the accepting, calm
'Yes', or make terrible verbs
Like 'I adore, adore'.

Durrell has become the 'persuader,' a milder form of 'seducer,' so long hunted
By your wild pack of selves,
Past peace of mind or even sleep,
So longed for and so sought [.

It is not completely clear whether it is the 'persuader' or 'peace of mind' which has been sought. Ultimately, it makes no difference, and I am inclined to accept 'peace of mind' as the more suitable alternate, as it fits the
general thought content of the poem. The references to the 'wild pack of selves' in line 254 and the 'mutinous crew of furies' in line 271, however, indicate that while Durrell has achieved self-unification, he is not yet in control of the various facets of his inner being.

Within a time of reading
Here is all my growth
Through the bodies of other selves,
In books, by promise or perversity
My mutinous crew of furies — their pleading
Threw up at last the naked sprite
Whose flesh and noise I am,
Who is my jailor and my inward night.

These lines, and especially 272 to 274, contain the basis for Groddeck's theory of the It: 'I hold the view that man is animated by the Unknown, that there is within him an "Es," an "It," some wondrous force which directs both what he himself does, and what happens to him. The affirmation "I live" is only conditionally correct, it expresses only a small and superficial part of the fundamental principle, "Man is lived by the It." The mutinous 'crew of furies' is the manifestation of the It and the only means by which Durrell can attempt to understand the force which is controlling him. The 'naked sprite' is similar to the 'fauns' and the innocent child.

By the will of the It, his 'furies' have driven Durrell to attempt to communicate what he really is by means of his books. The problem in this attempt is the vast gap between the writer and his reader:

My darkness reaches out and fumbles at a typewriter with its tongs. Your darkness reaches out with your tongs and grasps a book. There are twenty modes of change, filter and translation between us.7

The last section of Part X is concerned with the plight of Fedor and Anna, 'the last two vain explorers of our guilt.' The reference to 'taws' in line 279 is a veiled allusion to the writings of the Marquis de Sade, whom Pursewarden, one of the characters of the Alexandria Quartet, sees as 'the final flower of [the] reason' which began with Descartes. The 'taws' refer to the flagellation practiced by many religious fanatics, and lines 292 to 294 are a further comment on the European situation, for Durrell sees Fedor and Anna, 'these hideous mommets' as 'westering angels' who have become the emissaries of a God like Blake's Nobaddy.

So knowledge has an end,  
And virtue at the last an end,  
In the dark field of sensibility  
The unchanging and unbending;  
As in aquariums gloomy  
On the negative's dark screen  
Grow the shapes of other selves,  
So groaned for by the heart,  
So seldom grasped if seen.  

With the turning from the Apollonian to the Dionysiac earlier in the poem, 'sensibility' comes to mean understanding based on the senses, and lines 295 to 298 describe the overpowering of purely intellectual knowledge and the false virtue of the English ('Wordsworth in / The dessicated bodies of postmistresses') by sensibility. Unlike Fedor and Anna, who tortured the body in order to achieve spiritual solace, Durrell has managed to overcome his earlier concentration on the mind in order to fully experience the world of the senses.

'The negative's dark screen,' on which Durrell sees 'the shapes of other selves,' calls to mind the earlier use of the 'fogged negative' (149) as exemplifying the result of the concentration on the clinical aspects of

8 Lawrence Durrell, Balthazar (London) Faber (1958), p. 247
writing to the complete denial of the emotional sources of inspiration. Here, however, the 'negative' is not 'fogged' but rather shows, if even for a fleeting moment, the various 'furies' which Durrell is attempting to take under control in order to translate them into words. Although these 'other selves' are 'seldom grasped,' when they are taken under control they provide the power for creation.

These lines point up the dichotomy in every artist. On the one hand there is the passive observer, through and around whom everything flows, who records the events of the external world and shapes them to his liking. On the other hand there is the artist who wages continual war with the invisible forces of his own mind. Paradoxically, the artist does not want to endure the pain caused by his 'furies,' but he must come to grips with them before he can create; they are, therefore, 'the shapes of other selves, / So groaned for by the heart.' This is the definition of artistic consciousness: sensitivity to the happenings of the external world coupled with intense introspection and self-realization which allow the artist to take from his inner being the power embodied in his elusive 'furies' in order to mold the events of his environment into what is called 'art,' the means of communication with his reader.

Art has limits and life limits
Within the nerves that support them.

Durrell draws a parallel here between life and art, and he is able to do so because both are founded on and bounded by the life of the body and artistic consciousness is only able to function as long as the body which supports it functions. The response to the world around him through his senses rather than his intellectual capacity is the point toward which Durrell has been moving in the poem, for the response which is not conditioned by and
based almost wholly on the sensual is extremely limited.

So better with the happy
Discover than the wise
Who teach the sad valour
Of endurance through the seasons. (315)

The meaning of these lines is straightforward. The opposition between the 'happy' and the 'wise' lies in the difference between those who are sensually oriented and those who base their existence on the purely intellectual. Durrell sees a valour in 'endurance,' but no value.

Through the ambuscades of sex,
The follies of the will, the tears,
Turning, a personal world I go
To where the yellow emperor once
Sat out the summer and the snow,
And searching in himself struck oil,
Published the first great Tao. (330)

The writer must first see himself as 'a personal world' before he can begin to present a cohesive picture of his world to the reader, for the external world is at last embodied in the writer and what he writes is therefore about himself rather than about his environment. 'The yellow emperor' refers to Lao Tzu, author of the Tao Te Ching, one of the oldest Chinese philosophical classics. This work propounds a predominantly passivist doctrine, based upon a pre-recognition of the self which will enable the individual to be a part of his environment. The Durrell-Miller letters indicate a profound interest in the Tao Te Ching: both writers feel that Lao Tzu holds pertinent answers for them. This section of the poem describes the conditions under which the book is traditionally supposed to have been written. Lao Tzu approached the Keeper of the Pass and asked admittance. In return for the favour, the Keeper, recognizing the wise man, asked him to write a book. The result was the Tao Te Ching.9

Which all confession can only gloze
And in the Consciousness can only spoil
Apparent opposition of the two
Where unlocked numbers show their fabric. (335)

The true Tao, the 'way' which is beyond all else and yet a part of all, is unnameable and, except as it is perceived and understood by the Unconscious, unknowable. Part of the doctrine put forward by Lao Tzu concerns 'apparent opposition,' the idea that nothing except the Tao is absolute and that where one thing exists in the world, so must its opposite. Durrell must become conscious of the fusion and interdependence of seemingly opposite things. Without that understanding he cannot be the creator, for he cannot control what he does not understand.

Lines 337 to 340 outline the general doctrine of the Tao, in which Lao Tzu defines

the Many and the None
As base reflections of the One. (340)

The 'Many' are the 'myriad creatures' who will be set at rest because man follows the 'way,' and the 'None' refers to Lao Tzu's somewhat confusing idea that something can be made from nothing:

The myriad creatures in the world are born from Something, and Something from Nothing. 11

The important point here is that everything is a 'base reflection of the One' which is the tao. This presents a seeming paradox: on the one hand there is the tao which is beyond all comprehension in terms of magnitude and influence, and on the other there is the tao which is embodied in every enlightened individual. However, the latter is merely the former as manifested in the actions of believers, and so they are the same.

10 Tao Te Ching, Book One, XXVI, 59-59a, p. 83
11 Tao Te Ching, Book Two, XL, 89, p. 101
Durrell begins the next stanza of Part XII with an application of Lao Tzu's theory of opposites to the concept of the 'double,' referring to specific literary cases:

What bifid Hamlet in the maze
Wept to find; the doppelganger
Goethe saw one morning go
Over the hill ahead; the man
So gnawed by promises who shared
The magnificent responses of Rimbaud.

Goethe and Rimbaud fit the pattern of the artist who is both the passive observer and the internally torn man. Hamlet does not seem to fit until it is remembered that, after having passed through a period of feigned madness, he reaches self-realization and is able to partially control his environment to his own ends.

All that we have sought in us,
The artist by his greater cowardice
In sudden brush-strokes gave us clues —
Hamlet and Faust as front-page news.

These lines give a greater universality to what Durrell has said previously about the artist, for here the artist is seen objectively as one who records the trials of mankind in 'sudden brush-strokes.' The 'cowardice' of the artist is an ironical comment on Society's belief that the artist does nothing. But Society's view is wrong. The artist is trying to do something: to present 'Hamlet and Faust as front-page news' and bring to the attention of his audience their need to resolve the dualism which is a result of the Cartesian doctrine.

The yellow emperor first confirmed
By one Unknown the human calculus,
Where feeling and idea,
Must fall within this space,
This personal landscape built
Within the Chinese circle's calm embrace.
Through the power of the tao, the artist is able to reconcile 'feeling and idea' in order to create. They fall in harmony in the 'personal landscape' which is the artist, and it is their reconciliation which allows him to create and communicate, having discovered the 'calm embrace' of 'the Chinese circle' which is psychological unity. The

Dark Spirit, sum of all
That has remained unloved,
Gone crying through the world:
The source of all manufacture and repair

is the force which drives the artist to communicate, the dark thing at his core which is not understood by things external to it, not even the artist, but which desires to be loved. Akin to Durrell's 'furies', it is invoked here that it might 'Quicken the giving-spring / In ferns and birds and ordinary people' that they, like the artist, might attempt to communicate with others,

That all deeds done may share,
By this our temporal sun,
The part of living that is loving,
Your dancing, a beautiful behaviour.

This is also a prayer that all men might find the 'way,' the force which knows and is unknowable, sees and is unseeable,

Darkness, who contain
The source of all this corporal music,
On the great table of the Breath
Our opposites in pity bear,
Our measure of perfection or of pain,
Both trespassers in you, that then
Our Here and Now become your Everywhere.

It is through 'the source of all this corporal music' that man will control his own situation. The music with which Prospero calms the storm in The Tempest is the music of Ariel, the sprite who is the product of his magic. The 'music' which allows the artist to structure and control his situation, however, is not the product of externally acquired powers but a 'corporal music' that comes from within.
Part XIII describes the peaceful life of Lao Tzu, pointing out the difference between appearance and reality:

His palace fell to ruins
But his heart was in repair.

Like that of Lao Tzu, the world of the artist is contained in him, and he is peopled by the Tao Te Ching's 'myriad creatures,' his 'wild pack of other selves.' As these are recognized and brought under control, the personal world becomes quiescent and the artist can merely contemplate. Should the 'furies' be freed, however, he is literally driven to communicate his pain through writing. These are the alternating periods of introspection and intense creativity which every writer experiences and which Durrell mentions in the island books and his letters to Miller.

Ego, my dear, and id
Lie so profoundly hid
In space-time void, though feeling,
While contemporary, slow,
We conventional lovers cheek to cheek
Inhaling and exhaling go. (400 - 405)

Durrell sees the ego playing a female role in the agonies of creativity. It is dominated and seduced by the id and forced to play the part which the id demands of it, but by Lao Tzu's definition the ego remains superior:

In the union of the world,
The female always gets the better part of the male
by stillness.
Being still, she takes the lower position.¹²

This process is the psychological equivalent of the sexual intercourse described in lines 403 to 405, but it is lightning-like as opposed to the 'contemporary, slow' pace of the physical act. The essential difference is that the psychological forces are 'profoundly hid / In space-time void.' The 'sexual ambuscade' to which Durrell submits in line 326 is the rape of the ego by the id, resulting in an agony which increases 'until [that] pain

¹² Tao Te Ching, Book Two, LXI, 141 - 141a
become a literature' (40).

Dear Spirit, should I reach,
By touch or speech corrupt,
The inner suffering word,
By weakness or idea,
Though you might suffer
Feel and know,
Pretend you do not hear.

The four possible ways to reach the conflict in the mind are touch, speech, weakness and idea, but all of these are inadequate. What the artist really wishes to say, what he formulates in his mind, is not what finally reaches the paper. There is an indecisiveness as to whether the artist will ever reach 'the inner suffering word,' or whether he must continue to make attempts to approximate what he feels. In all this, because the 'Spirit' is a part of the artist, and because it forces him to write in order that it might express itself, it must 'suffer / Feel and know' what is happening.

Part XV concludes Durrell's tracing of the development of artistic consciousness and reaffirms the basic forces of life from which the artist takes his strength. Addressing the reader, Durrell attempts to reach the community from which he is isolated:

See looking down motionless
How clear Athens or Bremen seem
A mass of rotten vegetables
Firm on the diagram of earth can lie;
And here you may reflect how genus epileptoid
Knows his stuff; and where rivers
Have thrown their switches and enlarged
Our mercy and our knowledge of each other;
Wonder who walks beside them now and why,
And what they talk about.

Durrell, like the Chinese in Yeats's "Lapis Lazuli", has reached again the 'little half-way house' of his childhood, and he can look down upon 'all the tragic scene' and comment upon it. The desecration of the earth has been accomplished by the 'genus epileptoid,' those who do not have control of
themselves and have only succeeded in directing the chaos and not controlling it. The unchanging force of nature is embodied in the rivers, for, unlike the disturbed and disturbing creatures of line 431, the rivers have 'enlarged / Our mercy and our knowledge of each other.' The rivers, like Mark Twain's Mississippi, are finally artists in that they change the face of the earth to their own liking. It makes no difference 'who walks beside them now and why,' for they too will have to undergo what Durrell has undergone in order to find the consciousness which not only yields creativity in the artistic sense but also in the sense that living itself is an art.

The last stanza of Part XV deals with the same sense of negation which Eliot found in the world and which he described in *The Waste Land*, but it also proposes a solution to the problem:

There is nothing to hope for, my Brother.  
We have tried hoping for a future in the past.  
Nothing came out of that past  
But the reflected distortion and some  
Enduring, and understanding, and some brave.  
Into their cool embrace the awkward and the sinful  
Must be put for they alone  
Know who and what to save.  

In the past, the hope for the future was based upon 'the wise / Who teach the sad valour / Of endurance through the seasons' (313-315): those who understood with their intellects but did not truly know with the passion of the artist. 'Their cool embrace,' their clinical dissection of the world and of life, must be set afire by the artists who are 'awkward and sinful' in the eyes of Society, for only those who have found in the basic forces of life 'our mercy and our knowledge of each other' 'know who and what to save.'

For Prospero remains the evergreen  
Cell by the margin of the sea and land,  
Who many cities, plains, and people saw
Yet by his open door
In sunlight fell asleep
One summer with the Apple in his hand.

In Part XVI, Durrell, as Prospero, has attained the unity of self for
which he has been searching and is tempted, not by the vicarious intellectual
pursuits, but 'to slumber and to sleep.' Durrell has returned to the 'green
cell' which he had forfeited with his pursuit of intellectual knowledge, the
earthly paradise in which he began as a child. He still retains the
capacity for truth, but he will find it in the sensuality of the sunlight
rather than in intellectual searching. Like the Prospero who returns to
Milan and Naples at the end of The Tempest, he has re-entered the world
from which he had isolated himself. Durrell's choice of Prospero as a
'persona' is fitting, for as Chapter Two will show, Prospero's development
of artistic consciousness in The Tempest is very similar to Durrell's
development as seen in "Cities, Plains and People", the island books, and
the letters.
CHAPTER II

"PROSPERO'S ISLE"
'THIS ROUGH MAGIC'

The importance of Prospero for Durrell is clearly stated in a semi-scholarly conjectural article published in the *Tien H'sia Monthly* in 1939. After attempting to prove that Corcyra (Corfu) is the scene of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Durrell discusses Prospero's reference in the "Epilogue" to his earlier abjuration of his magical powers:

> And then: the renunciation of Prospero! Concealed behind this fantasy surely there is a clear statement of the artistic problem — the problem which finds expression in Faust, in the Abbey Theleme of Rabelais (which is only another Prospero's isle): the problem, I make so bold to say, which the great artist shares with the saint. Here is the pure statement of the case — for all who have ears to hear. Prospero's last words are a beatitude. 13

Earlier in his article Durrell draws a parallel between Prospero and St. Spiridion, the patron saint of Corfu, and in the above quotation he is discussing 'the problem . . . the great artist shares with the saint.' For Durrell, Prospero is 'the great artist' who has attained the necessary artistic consciousness. Having presented Prospero's renunciation, Durrell goes on to its importance:

> The magician's renunciation of his power is one of the most profound things in Shakespeare: he puts himself at the mercy of the elements which he has learned so painfully how to control. Perhaps Prospero in these lines shows that he had discovered the paradox in things; he had discovered that he who comes down to earth finds himself nearest to heaven.

> It is a lesson which all magicians must learn sooner or later: whether they be saints or poets. 14

13 Lawrence Durrell, "Prospero's Isle", in *Tien H'sia Monthly* (Shanghai), September, 1939, p. 138

14 "Prospero's Isle", p. 139
The 'lesson which all magicians must learn' comes out clearly in the Durrell-Miller correspondence between the summers of 1936 and 1938. In these letters, the references to Hamlet are important. Durrell sees in Hamlet, unlike Prospero, the failure to synthesize the inner and outer selves. According to these early letters, there is a quality of loneliness in Hamlet which Durrell also finds in himself. The problem for Durrell is England:

But as the play goes on, the inner Hamlet, no longer Prince, grows and begins to strip his fellow characters of their masks. The great shock is to find himself alone in life, with no contact, not even with that sweet but silly little wretch Ophelia.15

There is a parallel here with Hamlet, for Durrell saw a similar problem with the society which demanded that Hamlet be Prince rather than himself:

Then, realising that he should really turn away from these fakes to his real self, he feels the pressure of society suddenly on him. He is forced to be the Prince, however much his private Hamlet suffers. It is a marvellous picture of psychic and social disorganisation in an individual . . . 16

My birth and upbringing? I was born in India. Went to school there — under the Himalayas. The most wonderful memories, a brief dream of Tibet until I was eleven. Then that mean, shabby little island up there wrung my guts out of me and tried to destroy anything singular and unique in me.17

Durrell considers Hamlet to be a step toward the integration which Prospero achieves with the outer world at the end of The Tempest which is a result of the unification of his bifid nature, a process which Durrell feels is necessary for the artist.

In January of 1937, Durrell felt he 'was born to be Hamlet's little

16 Durrell, Letters, p. 26
17 Durrell, Letters, p. 60
god-child. In "Cities, Plains and People" (1946), however, Durrell is no longer Hamlet but Prospero, a definite indication that he felt he had attained a unity of self. Durrell makes his reason for being no longer able to associate himself with Hamlet quite clear:

Shakespeare and Lawrence and Co. have been crippled from the start by being unable to realise themselves. Consequently the final drama, the Hamlet, when they wrote it, was entangled in their own diseases, held down by them.

So it is Prospero, and not Hamlet, whom Durrell sees as Shakespeare's final expression of the unified individual and the consciously controlling artist.

In The Tempest, Shakespeare presents Prospero as the magician who, through his art, attempts to control the environment in which he has been stranded. Prospero is in exile from Milan, is cut off from society, just as his island is not, as Donne says, 'a part of the main.' His 'full poor cell' is a physical parallel of the situation in Milan before he was deposed, a situation which was the result of his dedication to the arts, a dedication which resulted in his isolation from his people and Antonio's usurpation:

And Prospero, the prime duke, being so reputed
In dignity, and for the liberal arts
Without a parallel, those being all my study —
The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies.

When Durrell speaks of 'black-hearted Descartes' in "Cities, Plains and

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18 Durrell, Letters, p. 59
19 Durrell, Letters, p. 52
People", he is referring to the theory of dualism. Prospero, in his negation of all that is physical in favour of what is intellectual, in his neglect of his people in favour of the liberal arts, is like a Cartesian, for Descartes proved, at least to his own satisfaction, that the mind is far superior to the body:

> I ask them to make an object of study of their own mind and all the attributes attaching to it, of which they find they cannot doubt, notwithstanding it be supposed that whatever they have at any time derived from their senses is false; and I beg them not to desist from attending to it, until they have acquired the habit of perceiving it distinctly and of believing that it can be more readily known than any corporal thing.\(^{21}\)

The crux of *The Tempest* is in Prospero's attitude to Caliban, the manifestation of the gross physical, and the final reconciliation of Prospero with his former enemies, who had usurped him because of their gross desires.

Many Shakespearean critics, among them Derek Traversi, have concluded that Prospero brought his enemies to his island to effect the reconciliation which takes place at the end of the play.\(^{22}\) But there is nothing in the play that would indicate that this is so; indeed, all of Prospero's comments, as the following quotation will show, tend to indicate that he wants to punish them: 'Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour / Lie at my mercy all mine enemies' (IV, 1, 263–264). This statement is not that of a man intent on welcoming his former enemies as brothers. Rather, the words are of one dedicated to vengeance, and for this reason the reader is not prepared for his speech to Ariel at the beginning of the next act:


\(^{22}\) Derek Traversi, *Shakespeare: The Last Phase* (Stanford) Stanford University Press (1953), p. 194
Though with their high wrongs I am struck
  to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. Go release them, Ariel.
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
And they shall be themselves (V, i, 25-32).

In an overall view of the play, these lines denote the change in Prospero which is indicative of his self-realization, the point which Durrell felt all artists must reach before they can truly create. Unlike Hamlet, whose attempts at a full understanding of himself and his own capacities were aborted, Prospero can, rather than will his enemies, take the step which will reconcile him with them. He has achieved the balance between emotional and intellectual which is necessary for the integration of the individual and society.

That this balance exists is made obvious by a comparison of the preceding quotation with lines which come before it in the play:

Ari. Your charm so strongly works 'em
   That if you now beheld them, your affections
   Would become tender.

Pro. Dost thou think so, spirit?

Ari. Mine would, sir, if I were human.

Pro. And mine shall.
   Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
   Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
   One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
   Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
   (V, i, 17-24)

The way in which Ariel brings about the change in Prospero is a subtle one, and the words used by both characters in these lines: 'affections', 'touch', 'feeling', 'relish', 'passion': are those associated with the emotional and not the intellectual side of man. Prospero's reference to his 'fury' in the following lines is an admission on his part that a
capacity other than intellectual does exist for him, and this realization, coupled with the controlling action of his 'nobler reason 'gainst [his] fury,' indicates the control he now has over himself, for any subsequent action on his part will be a product of this balance between intellectual and physical rather than of his 'art'. He has become 'human', the level which, according to the Elizabethan concept of an hierarchical universe, is below angelic and above animal.

At the beginning of Act V, Prospero has reached self-realization and unity, and his treatment of Alonso and company in the closing scenes of that act is jovial. The masque which the King of Naples witnesses before Ariel appears as Fate in Act III, Scene iii is set against the reality which he sees in Act V when Prospero reveals Ferdinand and Miranda. The dream device which was a precursor to the pronouncement of eternal perdition on Alonso was a product of the intellectually-oriented hatred of Prospero, but when Alonso sees Ferdinand and Miranda together, although he first mistakes them for an apparition, he fully recovers from the dream-world in which he had been placed. Earlier in the play, Prospero had told Ferdinand that 'We are such stuff / As dreams are made on . . .' (IV, i, 156-157). If his words have significance in the play, they refer to the dream-reality interpolation which leads his enemies to penitence and final reconciliation. The importance of these lines lies in human life as a basis for dreams. Here is the artistic situation: the creation of a dream-world based on reality; the organization of reality in the mind of the artist in order to produce a response in the audience which is cathartic in Durrell's sense, whether the work is comedy or tragedy. Durrell's comments on the art of the Twentieth Century point to this need for catharsis, and his view of its purpose in the drama hints at his need for catharsis in his own life:
The only justification for the art of stasis which is XXth century art is in the precipitation of crisis. The crisis in the drama precipitates the crisis in the audience — and thus the cathartic principle of change of stance — the reborn self.²³

Within The Tempest, the artist is Prospero, and it is by means of the dream state and the masque that he reveals the truths of their situations to the others on the island. The job of the artist, to present 'Hamlet and Faust as front-page news,' as Durrell says in 'Cities, Plains and People', is to involve his audience in a crisis which will change their lives, will bring about 'the reborn self,' and this is what he achieves.

In a letter written in the winter of 1936, Durrell replies to Miller's request for information about Hamlet:

Why every one is puzzled by poor Hamlet is because they always try to see a relation between the external battle . . . and the inner one. A failure, because the inner and outer reality move along separate planes, and only seldom meet. There's your dialectal interplay, but through the reality always the magic is seen.²⁴

There are two 'battles' happening in Hamlet, the external one between the Prince and Claudius, and the internal one in which Hamlet is trying to understand himself. The external battle is the 'reality' of the play, but the 'magic' to which Durrell refers in his letter is the dream. The problem of the artist who is attempting to control the external world, his raw material, is the fusion of that world with the dream in order to produce a catharsis in his audience. Durrell considers 'Shakespeare, Lawrence and Co.' to have failed in their attempts to place before their audiences the necessity for the integration of the dual nature of man.

²³ Durrell, Letters, p. 224
²⁴ Durrell, Letters, p. 26
It is the fusion of the dream and the external world which produces artistic expression of any sort. There are two realities, 'the inner and outer reality.' The inner reality, the dream, is each individual's response to a thing or an event, for the early Durrell a response which he attempts to transcribe in order to present it to an audience. In reply to a letter from Miller about surrealism, Durrell states emphatically that 'I believe firmly in the ideal of cementing reality with the dream, but I do not believe the rest of this stuff,'25 'the rest of this stuff' being the purposes of surrealism as a theory of art according to surrealism. Durrell believes the artist must communicate the truth as he sees it by means of 'something magical which we recognize in dream and which makes the face of the sleeper relax and expand with a bloom such as we rarely see in waking life.'26 The dream, before it can be communicated, must provoke a catharsis in the artist, for it is this response that the artist is attempting to impart.

That every individual responds in his own way to any given object or occurrence is pointed up in Miller's description of his and Durrell's trip to the astronomical observatory near Athens. When he saw the Pleiades through the telescope, Durrell exclaimed, 'Rosicrucian!' This idiosyncratic response is not the exception but the rule, says Miller:

For Durrell and for myself reality lay wholly beyond the reach of [the astronomers'] puny instruments which in themselves were nothing more than clumsy reflections of their circumscribed imagination locked forever in the hypothetical prison of logic.27

And finally, even when to my own eye and the eye of the astronomer [the Pleiades] possesses the same dimensions, the same brilliance, it definitely does

25 Durrell, Letters, p. 19
27 Colossus, p. 103
not look the same to us both — Durrell's very
exclamation is sufficient to prove that.^

The 'hypothetical prison of logic' from which Durrell was trying to escape
in the early parts of "Cities, Plains and People" is the Cartesian
proposition that the mind and the body are distinct, and that the former
is far superior to the latter. In order to achieve integrated consciousness
the individual must fuse the spiritual and the physical, the Apollonian and
the Dionysiac, the dream and the reality. The latter process has been
treated at some length in regards Shakespeare's (and Prospero's) technique
in The Tempest and the process of artistic creation. It remains to discuss
the two former in respect to their roles in the play and in the dialectic
of the growth toward artistic consciousness.

In his article on The Tempest as quoted earlier in this chapter,
Durrell said that perhaps Prospero had discovered 'that he who comes down
to earth finds himself nearest to heaven.' In this discovery Prospero
is like Goethe's Faust. The perfection in the liberal arts of which he
boasts to Miranda is very much like Faust's, and Faust achieves a
recognition of his situation in Part II which is similar to Prospero's
renunciation of his powers at the end of The Tempest:

A fool! who thither turns his blinking eyes
And dreams he'll find his like above the skies.
Let him stand fast and look around on earth;
Not mute is this world to a man of worth.
Why need he range through all eternity?
Here he can seize all that he knows to be.
Thus let him wander down his earthly day;
When spirits spook, let him pursue his way;
Let him find pain and bliss as on he stride,
He! every moment still unsatisfied.29

28  Colossus, p. 104

29  Goethe, Faust, trans. G. M. Priest, Part II, Act V, 11443 -
referred to as Faust.
The preceding quotation is a renunciation of Faust's powers, for he is the 'fool' for having made a pact with Mephistopheles which will cost him his soul. Here there is a second similarity between Prospero and Faust, for both men have conjured up agents of supernatural powers in order to increase their control of the world, and both have made pacts with these spirits in return for their aid, Faust to give up his soul and Prospero to release Ariel. The perfection to which both men aspire, however, is nullified for them by their supernatural servants. Ariel indicates to Prospero that the magician lacks an emotional capacity, that deficiency keeping him from being 'human' like Alonso and Gonzalo. Mephistopheles, on the other hand, becomes for Faust the manifestation of the grosser aspect of the necromancer's nature:

Together with this rapture
That brings me near and nearer to the gods,
Thou gav' st the comrade whom I now no more
Can do without, though, cold and insolent,
He lowers me in my own sight, transforms
With but a word, a breath, thy gifts to nothing.
Within my breast he fans with busy zeal
A savage fire for that fair, lovely form.
Thus from desire I reel on to enjoyment
And in enjoyment languish for desire. 30

The state which Faust describes here, the giving over of himself to purely physical pleasures, opposes the necessary balance which allows the individual to be human as much as Prospero's pursuit of purely intellectual matters. From this point of view, Ariel is the representative of intellectuality in The Tempest and Caliban is the epitome of the grossly physical.

As Traversi reminds us, the title of the play has both actual and symbolic significance, 31 and the same is true of the characters. The plot

30 Faust, Part I, ll. 3240-3250
31 Traversi, p. 194
and the interplay of personalities shed light upon the movement of Prospero toward self-realization. There are two types of magic mentioned in the play: the intellectual powers of Prospero and the natural magic of Sycorax, the mother of Caliban. At one time Ariel's mistress, Sycorax could not completely control him, 'for [Ariel] wast a spirit too delicate / To act her earthy and abhorred commands' (I, ii, 272-3). Consequently, Ariel suffered the imprisonment from which Prospero freed him. Ariel's treatment at the hands of Sycorax is the subjugation of the intellectual to the physical, the reverse of the Cartesian ideal, while the situation which exists during the action of the play, the subjugation of Caliban to Prospero, is the norm.

At the end of Act IV Prospero has not approached the desired balance between the intellectual and the physical. He considers Caliban 'A devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick' (IV, i, 188-9), but this quality is Caliban's saving grace. Unlike Stephano and Trinculo, Antonio and Sebastian, he is pure nature and therefore not subject to any judgment of good and evil based on traditional Elizabethan concepts. He is not 'human', and therefore cannot be expected to possess the balance between the intellectual and the physical from which any variation is a condition of evil. Prospero must realize finally that Caliban is as much a part of him as Ariel is, for as Henry Miller points out,

> the great physicians have always spoken of Nature as being the great healer. That is only partially true. Nature alone can do nothing. Nature can cure only when man recognizes his place in the world, which is not in Nature, as with the animal, but in the human kingdom, the link between the natural and the divine.  

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32 Colossus, p. 77
THE PARADISE OF INNOCENCE

The letters which pass between Durrell and Henry Miller in the period just preceding and during the time chronicled in *Prospero's Cell* are filled with Durrell outlining his attempts to find himself and Miller's lucid and guiding replies. Throughout this period Durrell and Miller are thinking along very much the same lines. The tone and thought of Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi*, the retrospective log of a trip made during 1939 to visit Durrell and tour the Mediterranean, are similar to those of *Prospero's Cell*, and the bulk of their communication is concerned with the artist and the growth toward artistic consciousness which was outlined in the previous chapter. There is no mention of Prospero as the consummate artist in either the letters or the *Colossus*. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the protagonist and controlling force of *The Tempest* became the symbol of achievement for Durrell in "Cities, Plains and People", his reminiscent view of his own development.

In 1937, Durrell writes to Miller about his need for his literary 'double', Charles Norden. Trying to persuade Durrell to drop the pseudonym under which he had written *Panic Spring*, Miller replies:

A man can fall down, can underdo himself, can go haywire. But he ought not to deliberately incarnate a lesser self, a ghost, a substitute. The whole thing is a question of responsibility and willingness to accept one's fate, one's punishment, as well as one's reward. I think that is only too painfully clear, if you ask yourself. You want Charles Norden to be the scapegoat. But in the end it will be L. D. who will be obliged to kill Charles Norden. That's the "double" theme . . . *Aaron's Rod* is a good book, on this score — Lawrence suffered from it too. And he knew it. It was a little different, but fundamentally the same
The parallel between Durrell and Prospero lies in their sharing of 'the same problem [of] not accepting oneself in toto.' In the early letters Durrell's tone is one of praise and awe, and he repeatedly tells Miller that he considers him a true artist. Much later in the correspondence, in 1945, Durrell calls Miller 'Prospero', a reflection of his early attitude to the author of Tropic of Cancer, whom he saw as possessing the true worldview of the artist:

For you there is this powerful total world unrolling itself; you are so deep in it that there is not time for anything else. With me it is different. The little world, the heraldic universe, is a cyclic, periodic thing in me — like a bout of drinking. I am not a permanent inhabitant — only on Wednesdays by invitation. I enter and leave — and presto, the ordinary individual is born, the Jekyll.34

What Durrell does not realize at this point in his development is that 'the heraldic universe' is the dream-world which he must recreate as an artist. Nietzsche points out in The Birth of Tragedy that the artist 'is, first and foremost, a Dionysiac artist, become wholly indentified with the original Oneness, its pain and contradiction, and producing a replica of that Oneness, as music, if music may legitimately be seen as a repetition of the world; however, this music becomes visible to him again, as in a dream similitude, through the Apollonian dream influence.'35 That Durrell finally realized the need for balance between spiritual and instinctual is obvious in a letter to Miller written in 1958:

33 Miller, Letters, p. 108
34 Durrell, Letters, pp. 105-106
Here's a quote from de Rougement to ponder and perhaps pin up somewhere: "When under the pretence of destroying whatever is artificial — idealising rhetoric, the mystical ethics of 'perfection' — people seek to swamp themselves in the primitive flood of instinct, in whatever is primeval, formless and foul, they may imagine they are recapturing real life but actually they are being swept away by a torrent of waste-matter . . . ." 

The need for integration expressed in The Tempest is seen in the relationship of Prospero to Ariel and Caliban, both on the symbolic and narrative levels. The one character in the play who is unified is Gonzalo. Of all the courtiers who have been cast upon the island by the storm, only he is considered by Prospero to be a friend. The services which he rendered to Prospero and Miranda when they were set adrift showed a cognizance of both the intellectual and physical needs of the castaways.

Henry Miller says of humanity and human relationships that the great fundamental lack, which is apparent everywhere in our civilized world, is the total absence of anything approaching a communal existence. We have become spiritual nomads; whatever pertains to the soul is derelict, tossed about by the winds like flotsam and jetsam.

In Act II, Scene i, 143-168, Gonzalo outlines what he would do with the island if he 'were the King on't.' The society he would establish is in its description definitely a communal one, with the emphasis on the innocence of its people. Indeed, he says, 'I would with such perfection govern, sir, / To excel the Golden Age.' Gonzalo might well have been answering the need Miller sees, and while his proposed society is utopian, it is the emphasis on innocence that is the important point in the plan.

36 Durrell, Letters, p. 345
37 Colossus, p. 122
What Durrell is attempting to recapture is the innocence of a childhood spent in the Himalayas which he outlines in "Cities, Plains and People". It is impossible to return to the earthly paradise, but an approximation of that situation can be attained with the integration of the personality. Indeed,

the wonderful thing . . . is the sloughing off of the built-in man (the man of society, tradition, education, background, etc.) and the emergence of the new man relying upon his intuition, knowing that whatever it is he is practising is "magic".38

In Act V of The Tempest Prospero's renunciation of his powers is 'the sloughing off of the built-in man' which is attained with the fusion of his previously bipartite nature. But the renunciation of one magic must lead, according to the above quotation, to another, a purer force based upon the natural power of the individual and not that of his books. That this happens with Prospero is seen in the opening lines of the "Epilogue":

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,  
And what strength I have's mine own, 
Which is most faint.

The magic of which man's integrated nature is the well-spring is by far the more powerful and important. Durrell earlier complained that he could reach this inner self 'Only on Wednesdays, by invitation.' The answer to his problem lies in a letter from Miller:

So many times, when I am sorely baffled, I will say to myself — "Write it, put it down! What difference whether it makes sense or not." And then it's as if some panel inside one slid open, the musicians are there, the note is sounded, the walls give way, the images beckon — and you find yourself saying it without knowing it. Fatal to pause and reflect. On! On! Until the strength gives out. Then, in quiet, after a prayer of thanks, you read — and you see

38 Miller, Letters, p. 380
the traces of another's hand, God's maybe,  
or maybe your own, your concealed, your  
suppressed self. All one.39

The music which Miller mentions here, like the music Nietzsche's Dionysiac  
hears, is an ordered harmony, the sound of the lyre of Apollo which recreates  
the texture of reality in images which the artist will communicate to his  
audience. This music, with its intricacies of melody, is impossible to  
transcribe; it can only be approximated:

How often have I told you that the books I wrote  
in my head were the best, that nothing manifested  
in print ever approaches them? What we put down  
on paper is but a pale imitation, a faint and faded  
remembrance of these sessions with the silent spirit.40

The 'heavenly music' which Prospero summons Ariel to play in Act V, Scene i,  
is external to the magician. At this point Prospero has just reached self-  
realization; it is important to note the parallel in Miller's remarks  
concerning the music of creation in which he says that the resulting art  
form is a product, not only of the mind of the artist, but of 'another's  
hand, God's maybe, or maybe your own, your concealed, your suppressed self.  
All one.' There are, therefore, two musics, the 'heavenly music' which is  
an aspect of the Apollonian forces, and another music which is an innate  
part of the artist.

'Music is the noiseless sound made by a swimmer in the ocean of his own  
consciousness.'41 The sea which surrounds Prospero's island can be seen  
symbolically as the 'ocean of consciousness', and the voyage to that island  
as the search for self. The tempest, then, is a disturbance in the mind

39 Miller, Letters pp. 380-381
40 Miller, Letters, p. 381
41 Miller, Letters, p. 132
which hinders the swimmer, for Ariel's description of his actions during the
storm draws the following rhetorical question from Prospero:

Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil
Would not infect his reason? (I, ii, 206-8)

In Hamlet, the Prince feels 'a fever of the mad,' and the constant questioning
to which he submits himself is a result of the tempest within him. In 1938
Durrell is experiencing a similar situation:

What I have to say seems such a barren waste of
self-questioning and argument . . . . I have
cast it into a strange and novel form, that of
a Euclidean proposition: first a letter from
God to me explaining and enunciating the theorem;
then a letter from me to God explaining who I am
and what I have tried to do. I have lost revolution
and anarchy now and am swimming through hundreds of
compass points towards myself. It is difficult and
horrifying.42

The form in which Durrell has cast his self-questioning is founded upon
logic, an impossible basis for any attempt to find oneself. In his case
the 'sterile apparatus' of Descartes only led him to the concept of dualism,
into a bifurcation of his personality rather than toward the necessary
integration. In 1936 he tells Miller, 'I am discovering what I am. Only
it's a bit painful because I started in another direction.'43 It is not
through logic that the fusion of the bifid aspects of the personality will
come. The Meditations of Descartes, a result of this cold logic, have
yielded the Logical Positivism which Durrell feels is keeping Western Man
from integration. A quotation from the "obiter dicta" of Pursewarden, one
of two novelists in The Alexandria Quartet, illustrates this attitude:

"Why do I always choose an epigraph from de Sade?
Because he demonstrates pure rationalism — the

42 Durrell, Letters, p. 130
43 Durrell, Letters, p. 39
ages of sweet reason we have lived through in
Europe since Descartes. He is the final flower of
reason, and the typic of European behaviour. I
hope to live to see him translated into Chinese.
His books would bring the house down and would
read as pure humour. But his spirit has already
brought the house down around our ears." 44

The two important points in the above quotation are the resulting chaos
in a civilization based upon a dualistic philosophy, and the humour which
the writings of de Sade would arouse in China, a country one of whose most
famous philosophical treatises, the Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu, treats the
human being not as a duality of mind and body but as a unity. Durrell's
attitude to both is obvious in a letter to Miller dated November 10, 1940:

I see no end to the [war]. It will go on for years
because we are no nearer to the individual solution—
and the outer struggle is only a reflection of it.
Nothing remains really except one's personal honour
and one's love for the killers. We shall see.
Love to anyone over there who might be in
need of disinterested love. Ah Lao-tse, we need
you here! 45

Although the tone in this letter indicates an involvement in the war, it
also betrays a feeling that Durrell is somehow above the fighting. In one
sense he is like the Prospero who, at the end of The Tempest, can pardon
those who betrayed him (Alonso and Antonio) and those who had planned to
kill him (Caliban). The apostrophe to Lao-tse 46 at the end of the letter
is not to the man but to the philosophy which preaches unity of self and
involvement in the affairs of the world. Self-unity is a prerequisite to
and self-consciousness the source of material for the artists' communication
with his fellow man. The philosophy of the Tao, from this point of view, is

44 Balthazar, p. 247
45 Durrell, Letters, p. 168
46 Also variously Lao Tzu, Lao Tsu, and Lao-tsu.
creative, unlike Cartesian dualism, for it is through the attainment of the Way\textsuperscript{47} that one can influence the world for good. In the following quotation Miller outlines the goal of the artist and its consequent results:

> To live creatively, I have discovered, means to live more and more unselfishly, to live more and more into the world, identifying oneself with it and thus influencing it at the core, so to speak. Art, like religion, it now seems to me, is only a preparation, an initiation into the way of life. The goal is liberation, freedom, which means assuming greater responsibility. To continue writing beyond the point of self-realization seems futile and arresting. The mastery of any form of expression should lead inevitably to the final expression — mastery of life. In this realm, one is absolutely alone, face to face with the very elements of creation.\textsuperscript{48}

This would seem to contradict all that has been said heretofore, but this is not the case. Miller is outlining in the latter half of the quotation what he sees as the ideal. The purpose of art is to communicate to the world at large the strivings of the artist to achieve self-realization. But this unity, like the Tao, can never be verbalized; it can only be experienced. Paradoxically, then, all art is a search for self-realization, a log of that search for something which in itself can never be communicated.

The problem of the artist is therefore insoluble. He cannot communicate directly the road to self-realization, but can only approximate it with symbols. The final difficulty, from this point of view, is the means of communication itself:

> language is my problem. I set out on a voyage to find myself — and find language.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{47} Also the One, the Path.

\textsuperscript{48} Colossus, p. 206

\textsuperscript{49} Durrell, Letters, p. 94
By 1937 Durrell had published two novels, *Pied Piper of Lovers* and *Panic Spring*, and had finished *The Black Book*, which Miller read in manuscript form. The latter was the first time Durrell had heard his own voice in his writing, but he felt that something was lacking:

> In *The Black Book* there was nothing for me to be, really. I'm still nobody. But I think I will be. Then I can show myself without the cocoon, the *arty kimono.*

The 'arty kimono' bears a striking resemblance to the magician's robe which Prospero wears throughout most of *The Tempest* but which he discards in Act V, Scene i, in favour of the conventional clothing of society. With the removal of his robe and the breaking of his staff, he discards the external signs of his power. In the same way, Durrell intends to discard the outer vestiges of his craft and return to the world from which he had isolated himself on Corfu.

The search for the integration of his personality which Durrell chronicles in "Cities, Plains and People" is at the same time his development as an artist. The two go hand-in-hand. In the poem Durrell rebels against the dualistic tendencies resultant in a study of Descartes. Miller points out to him the real connection, the dialectal interplay between life and art, with a quotation from his book on Lawrence which he feels applies to Durrell and Durrell's work:

> "The poem is the dream made flesh, in a two-fold sense: as a work of art, and as life itself, which is a work of art. When man becomes fully conscious of his powers, his role, his destiny, he is an artist and ceases to struggle with reality. He lives out his dream of Paradise. He transmutes his real experience of life into spiritual equations. He scorns the ordinary alphabet which yields at most only a grammar of thought, and adopts the symbol, the metaphor, the ideograph. He *writes Chinese.* He

50 Durrell, *Letters*, p. 94
creates an impossible world out of an incomprehensible
language, a lie that enchants and enslaves men."  

Durrell's development is toward a full consciousness of his ability and a
more complete knowledge of himself. The work of art is an expression of the
growth of the individual not only as an artist but as a member of the society
with which he is attempting to communicate, and for Durrell art and life can
never be dissociated:

the root of the struggle which on paper looks like
the struggle to write is really the struggle to
live. All artistic dislocations and failings go
right back to the author. Hence my disgust when
re-reading [The Black Book] from the copy you sent
me. Jesus, I can do better than this! Let me kill
the "artist" in me and the man will appear — if
there is a man. 

There was a man beneath the 'artist' and the 'arty kimono' for both Durrell
and Prospero. By the end of The Tempest Prospero has renounced the 'rough
magic' in favour of his own power, and by 1946, the date of publication of
Cities, Plains and People, Durrell has returned to the world of men from
Prospero's Cell, the confined world of introspection which allowed him to
achieve unity of self. On the symbolic level, the island is his true self,
lying in 'the sea of consciousness' through which he must make his way in
order to attain self-consciousness. Until such time as he reaches that
metaphorical island, he must frequently endure the 'tempest' caused by his
'furies' and must attempt to communicate his ordeal by writing. The island
becomes his dream-world, embodying that which is nameable and unnameable,
universal and personal, knowable and unknowable, the Paradise of Innocence,
the search for which is common to all mankind.

51 Durrell, Letters, pp. 46-7
52 Durrell, Letters, p. 99
CHAPTER III

THE QUALITY OF SILENCE
'THE HERALDIC UNIVERSE'

The first chapter of Reflections on a Marine Venus is called "Of Paradise Terrestre". Along with Prospero's Cell, Reflections outlines the search for a lost paradise which Durrell half-consciously undertook in the 1930's and which he continued after World War II. There is an hiatus in the chronicling during the whole of the period of the war, and when it is taken up again it is with some misgivings as to what he will find in Rhodes:

Tomorrow I should see for myself whether the old Greek ambience had survived the war, whether it was still a reality based in the landscape and the people — or whether we had simply invented it for ourselves in the old days . . . .

In Rhodes Durrell found a concretization of what he had begun to discover in Prospero's Cell, and what he stated explicitly about Corfu in his article on The Tempest:

I am aware of the symbolic properties of the isle; I am aware that The Tempest is really a lucid parable which touches the island of the heart's desire . . . .

Durrell hints at the problem of the recognition of the difference between the internal and external realities in Reflections when he wonders if what he found in Greece before the war had been real or fancied. In the island books he is looking for a solution to this problem of the fusion of the realities, and while he does solve it to some extent, there is a realization at the end of Prospero's Cell that he can never record his discovery in any precise way. This discovery is foreshadowed by Ivan Zarian, one of the main characters in the book, during a discussion with Count D.:

54 "Prospero's Isle", p. 137
'I am thinking,' says Zarian, 'how nothing is ever solved finally. In every age, from every angle, we are facing the same set of natural phenomena, moonlight, death, religion, laughter, fear. We make idolatrous attempts to enclose them in a conceptual frame. And all the time they change under our very noses.'

The only solution for the problem is that there is no solution, and the Count's reply to Zarian, oriented as it is toward *The Tempest*, is the key to what Durrell was seeking and what he finally found in the Prospero of the end of the play:

'To admit that is to admit happiness — or peace of mind, if you like. You, doctor [Theodore Stephanides], are scandalized when I suggest that *The Tempest* might be as good a guide to Corcyra as the official one. It is because the state of being which is recorded in the character of Prospero is something which the spiritually rich or the sufficiently unhappy can draw for themselves out of this clement landscape.'

Durrell's references to Descartes in "Cities, Plains and People" and *Balthazar* point out that any attempt to conceptualize this 'set of natural phenomena' is impossible, for the result is only insoluble difficulties from which the individual must extricate himself. As Count D. points out,

'we knock up against the invisible wall which bounds the prison of our knowledge. It is only when a man has been round that wall on his hands and knees, when he is certain that there is no way out, that he is driven upon himself for a solution.'

Early in *Prospero's Cell*, Durrell makes a definite statement concerning his leaving England for Greece:

You will think it strange to have come all the way from England to this fine Grecian promontory where our only company can be rock, air, sky —
and all the elementals. In letters home N[ancy] says we have been cultivating the tragic sense.58

The two most obvious instances of 'the tragic sense' are Hamlet and Faust. They are examples of the aborted attempt to achieve the unification of the self which is necessary for the peace of mind of which the Count speaks. As characters they have not fully cultivated the 'tragic sense', have not attained self-realization. They are the failures which Durrell sets against the achievement of Prospero. What Prospero found at the end of The Tempest is the unity of self which Durrell was seeking, and it is obvious from the many references Durrell makes to his loneliness in the Letters that he considered himself one of 'the sufficiently unhappy' to whom the Count refers.

In the first pages of Reflections he discusses 'islomania, ... a rare but by no means unknown affliction of the spirit,'59 and it is in the conscious classification of himself as an 'islomane' that his realization of the attraction the Greek islands hold for him first appears. The islands are the manifestation of the "Paradise Terrestre", for 'there are people,' he says,

who find islands somehow irresistible. The mere knowledge that they are on an island, a little world surrounded by the sea, fills them with an indescribable intoxication. These born 'islomanes' ... are the direct descendants of the Atlanteans, and it is towards the lost Atlantis that their subconscious yearns throughout their island life ... .

Atlantis is just another name for the lost earthly paradise of Adam and Eve,

58  Prospero's Cell, p. 13
59  Reflections, p. 15
60  Reflections, p. 15
and at the end of "Cities, Plains and People" Durrell gives us Prospero,

Who many cities, plains, and people saw
Yet by his open door
In sunlight fell asleep
One summer with the Apple in his hand.

There is a definite series of parallels being drawn here. In the above quotation Prospero is another Adam, but this time an Adam who has retained his innocence by not eating the Apple from the Tree of Knowledge. "Prospero's Isle" is another Eden. It is important for Durrell that the locale of The Tempest should be the Greek islands, for like the Patmos he describes in Reflections they are all 'a symbol of something for which we all keep a place in our hearts.' It is important, too, that Hoyle refused [islomania's] application to any but Aegean islands, for these are the islands to which Durrell and the rest of the 'islomanes' in the island books long to return; they are all to be classified under the general heading "Atlantis" or "Paradise Terrestre". The impossibility of conceptualizing what is emotion or desire is also associated with 'islomania', for 'Sand [one of the characters in Reflections] could not bring himself to look a theory so irrational in the eye.' The whole point of the search for unity is that it cannot be conducted in the rational manner of a Descartes but must be experienced by each individual. The crux of the artistic problem is that every individual sees external reality in a different way, and that the artist's internal reality, the way in which he patterns the events of his environment, is therefore really a fusion of external reality and his dream of Paradise. In Prospero's Cell Durrell says that 'there is no explanation' for what he has done or for 'the

61 Reflections, p. 76
62 Reflections, p. 15
63 Reflections, p. 15
tragic sense* which he is trying to achieve. Miller makes a most concrete statement about the attraction Greece holds for him, and the same is true of Durrell:

Greece is what everybody knows, even in absentia, even as a child or as an idiot or as a not-yet-born. It is what you expect the earth to look like given a fair chance. It is the subliminal threshold of innocence.

The above quotation implies that all of mankind has a desire to return to a paradisal existence, and that this desire is not acquired but inborn. In this way the experience of the Greek landscape is purgative, for it awakens "those ageless hordes of ancestral men who stand with eyes closed, like trees after the passing of a flood, in the ever-moving stream of the blood."

Durrell wishes to reach the innocence of a lost paradise, and in a letter to Miller he describes his early childhood in India and the need he feels for a return to it:

My life is like a chopped worm. Until eleven marvellous memories. White white the Himalayas from the dormitory windows. The gentle black Jesuits praying to Our Lady and outside on the frontier roads the Chinese walking stiffly and Tibetans playing cards on the ground, the blue fissures in the hills — God, what a dream — the passes into Lhasa blue with ice and thawing softly towards the holy forbidden city. I think Tibet is for me what China is for you. I lived on the edge of it with a kind of nursery-rhyme happiness. I wanted to go one summer into the passes. They promised to take me. But I left without going — alamort — it is a kind of unreasoning disease when I

64 Prospero's Cell, p. 13
65 Colossus, p. 153
66 Colossus, p. 153
think of it. I am illogical again like a child.67

The dream-like quality of Durrell's childhood is of the utmost importance in the above quotation, for the dream colours the inner reality of the artist which he attempts to communicate to his audience. In order to comment upon them, the artist sets the events of the external world against the inner dream, and that comment is based on a set of values which are the characteristics of the dream-world for which he yearns. Good and evil, for example, are seen in relation to the perfection of the dream, but any attempt to abstract that paradise in words is futile. In the end, it is not Tibet for which Durrell yearns but the child-like innocence that made Tibet a paradise for him. Tibet must, therefore, take its place with Atlantis, Corfu, China, and all other designations for the innocent world of the child.

The importance of the child-like state and the child-like vision cannot be overstated, for Durrell sees this innocence as being indicative of the unification of the self and the fusion of dream and reality for which he is seeking. The innocence of childhood is constantly apposed to the state of knowledge in which the adult lives. The latter is best exemplified by Europe, while the former is seen as manifested in Greece. Towards the end of Reflections Durrell muses on "the dying child, no less a symbol — but of what? Our world perhaps. For it is always the child in man which is forced to live through these repeated tragedies of the European conscience. The child is the forfeit we pay for the whole sum of our worldly errors. Only through him shall we ever salvage these lost cultures of passion and belief."68

67 Durrell, Letters, pp. 60-61
68 Reflections, p. 183
The 'repeated tragedies of the European conscience' are a result of the Cartesian theory of dualism which forbade men to consider the mind and the body as a unity but rather instructed them to regard the body, because it could not be logically proved to exist, as a non-existent inferior of the mind. We must remember that Sand called the 'islomania' theory 'irrational', for the importance of the search for self-unity lies in irrationality.

However one interprets the Book of Genesis, whether as fact or allegory, Adam and Eve lost their innocence when they ate of the Tree of Knowledge. Metaphorically speaking, the Cartesian doctrine was for the majority of Europeans a Tree of Knowledge in that adherence to its theories led abruptly away from irrational knowledge to the more scientific logic and reason which Descartes advocated. Its Twentieth Century consequence is Logical Positivism, and hence Pursewarden can define Europe as 'a Logical Positivist trying to prove to himself by logical deduction that he exists.' This is the error of which Durrell speaks: the negation of all that is irrational — dreams, desires, emotions — in favour of that which is logical and can be proved by means of the scientific method. This can result, not in the integration of the self for which Durrell is seeking, but only in the madness which afflicts Hamlet when he recognizes his bifid nature but cannot unify it. Man's knowledge about the bipartite self results in his fall from the innocence of childhood. It is not an actual physical child who is sacrificed to the god of dualism but the child-like qualities in every individual, although Durrell might argue that many children are killed in the wars which are a product of the dualist theory.

69 Balthazar, p. 247
There is a vast difference between the individual who says 'I believe' and one who can say nothing until he can say 'I know.' It is Durrell's belief that mankind, and especially Western man, must return to the former condition before he can achieve the self-realization which the Chinese, of whom Lao Tzu is the example most often found in Durrell, have achieved through reflection and introspection.

Both *Prospero's Cell* and *Reflections* are 'residence books' rather than travel works, for Durrell feels they 'are always about living in places, not just rushing through them.' Both books attempt 'to isolate the germ in the people which is expressed by their landscape.' The tone of these books, is for the most part, one of child-like innocence. The importance which he ascribes to the landscape of the particular island on which he is resident is to be seen in his response to the sights and sounds of his home. The following quotation from *Bitter Lemons* will serve to illustrate the awe in which Durrell holds the Greek islands:

> In the fragile membranes of light which separate like yolks upon the cold meniscus of the sea when the first rays of the sun come through, the bay looked haunted by the desolate and meaningless centuries which had passed over it since first the foam-born miracle occurred. With the same obsessive rhythms it beat and beat again on that soft eroded point with its charred-looking sand: it had gone on from the beginning, never losing momentum, never hurrying, reaching out and subsiding with a sigh.

Durrell's islands are as timeless as the sea which surrounds them, and this timelessness is pointed up in the way in which he sees past and present.

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present, history and myth, overlapping. In each of the three books there is a definite section devoted to the history of the island, but there is also a constant reference to the association of particular places with both history and myth. The above quotation contains a reference to 'the foam-born miracle,' the birth of Aphrodite from the sea which traditionally took place on Cyprus, and at the same time it is illustrative of the pure response to the landscape found in the island trilogy. The following illustrates the common occurrence in Durrell of the landscape being seen qua landscape and yet at the same time having a great many associative qualities; the landscape, indeed, seems to become almost symbolic:

To Larnaca through an extraordinary landscape reminding one of Plato's God 'geometrizing': low hills, almost perfect cones with levelled tops suggesting the Euclidean objects found in art studios. Wind erosion? But the panel of geometrical mounds seems hand-made. And the valleys tapestried with fat-tailed sheep, plots of verdure, and here and there a camel-train and palm-tree. A strange mixture of flavours, the Bible, Anatolia, and Greece.  

This is the mind of the artist at work in a way which was not possible in Prospero's Cell, for in that book historical association with the landscape is a result of previous speculation which Durrell had read. The above quotation, however, is immediate in its response to the landscape around Larnaca and is a result of Durrell's own associative mind. In these two quotations there are the child-like response of the artist who is describing a dream-world, and the response of the structuring, associating artist who is concerned with metaphor and symbol. That Durrell has married the two in Bitter Lemons, the last of the island trilogy, indicates the self-realisation which he has reached.

72 Bitter Lemons, p. 106
Cyprus might well have been any Greek island, for each holds for Durrell the paradisal image for which he is searching. The Cypriot village of Bellapaix provided another association for Durrell which is of value to the discussion at hand, for it points up the need to return to a childhood innocence which has been previously discussed:

"crowning every courtyard like a messenger from my Indian childhood spread the luxuriant green fan of banana-leaves, rattling like parchment in the wind."

"Greece is a little like China or India. It is a world of illusion," a dream-like world in which the individual finds the closest approximation possible of the "paradise terrestre" which he envisions. This is the basic key to Durrell's reasons for writing *Prospero's Cell* and *Reflections on a Marine Venus*. Through his description of life on these islands, Durrell was able to present the 'island of the heart's desire' for which he yearned as an islomane.

The correspondence in which Durrell is trying to persuade Miller to come to Greece contains a constant refusal on Miller's part which is bolstered by statements indicating that Miller's lack of desire to visit Greece is founded on a feeling of dislike for that country. When he finally does write *The Colossus of Maroussi* his opinion has changed, and much of what he records as his response to the country and its people is directly in the line of Durrell's own feelings. While there is no proof of Durrell's having influenced Miller's feeling for Greece, comparison of the following quotation with Durrell's island books should serve as ample evidence for the statement that the individual responses of the two writers correspond

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73 *Bitter Lemons*, p. 56
74 *Colossus*, p. 49
to a startling degree:

The landscape does not recede, it installs itself in the open places of the heart; it crowds in, accumulates, disposes. You are no longer riding through something -- call it Nature, if you will -- but participating in a rout, a rout of the forces of greed, malevolence, envy, selfishness, spite, intolerance, pride, arrogance, cunning, duplicity, and so on.\(^7^5\)

The rout in which Miller feels he is taking part when he enters the Greek landscape is one which focusses on all the errors he and Durrell found in Europe, errors which are the result of the idea that the dual aspects of man's nature are irreconcilable. For Miller and Durrell, however, 'Greece presented itself ... as the very centre of the universe, the ideal meeting place of man with man in the presence of God.'\(^7^6\) With this in mind, Miller adds another name to the list of earthly paradises -- Epidaurus:

Epidaurus is merely a place symbol: the real place is in the heart, in every man's heart, if he will but stop and search it. Every discovery is mysterious in that it reveals what is so unexpectedly immediate, so close, so long and intimately known. The wise man had no need to journey forth; it is the fool who seeks the pot of gold at the rainbow's end. But the two are always fated to meet and unite. They meet at the heart of the world which is the beginning and the end of the path. They meet in realization and unite in transcendence of their roles.\(^7^7\)

This is supporting evidence for the quotation from Colossus in which Miller talks about Greece as 'what everybody knows, even in absentia,' but at the same time it furthers the concept of self-realization which has become the main point of this paper. For Durrell, Greece is 'the very centre of the universe,' and in The Tempest the union of the wise man and the fool takes

\(^7^5\) Colossus, p. 76
\(^7^6\) Colossus, p. 210
\(^7^7\) Colossus, p. 80; italics mine
place on the symbolic level with Prospero's realization of his physical side which is embodied in Caliban. While Shakespeare's characters do not correspond exactly to Miller's wise man and fool, they nonetheless achieve a transcendence of their roles, for Prospero renounces his 'rough magic' and Caliban rejects the purely physical:

and I'll be wise hereafter,
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I to take this drunkard for a god
And worship this dull fool! (V, i, 294-297)

The Greece that is 'the beginning and the end of the path' is not the world of Democritus for Durrell but the state of childhood innocence which is forfeit when the world of knowledge is entered and which the adult must regain if he is to achieve a realization of self which will permit the unification of his bifid aspects and the transcendence of his role in the world. On Rhodes, the figure of the Marine Venus exemplifies for Durrell this return to the sensual, exploratory, responsive world of the child, for she

has surrendered her original maturity for a rediscovered youth.78

Count D. outlines for each of his guests the way in which they will respond to Corfu, and it is interesting that this description closely approximates the portrait which Durrell painted, not only in Prospero's Cell but in Reflections and Bitter Lemons:

'And I?' I say. 'What sort of picture will I present of Prospero's Island?'

'It is difficult to say,' says the Count.
'A portrait inexact in detail, containing bright splinters of landscape, written out roughly, as if to get rid of something which

78 Reflections, p. 38
was troubling the optic nerves.'  

All three books, in those parts which concern only the islands as Durrell saw them and not the history, are the records of response rather than the intellectual structuring of events. The landscape is all-important, and Zarian provides the basic statement on that significance:

[Corfu is] a landscape for resolutions and partings ... A landscape which precipitates the inward crisis of lives as yet not fully worked out.  

From this point of view, Corfu was an ideal choice on Durrell's part, as were all the Greek islands, for in the 1930's his life was most certainly 'as yet not fully worked out.'

'The inward crisis of lives' is the unresolved dualism of the European world, and in 1937 Miller recognized Durrell's dualistic qualities:

I am impressed by your "double" nature. The man you reveal in The Black Book is not the same man who writes me from Corfu. Perhaps Corfu is nearer your climatic source. Anyway, had you stayed in England you would have been done for.

Miller is quite correct, for the tone of The Black Book is far different from that of the letters written at the same time. The statement that 'Corfu is nearer [Durrell's] climatic source' draws the same India (Tibet) - Corfu parallel outlined above, and it is interesting too that the final sentence of the above quotation corroborates what Durrell had already told Miller about his reasons for leaving England. Miller's comments on The Black Book are amazingly close to what has already been said about the dualistic qualities which Durrell recognized in himself as early as 1937,

79 Prospero's Cell, p. 107
80 Prospero's Cell, p. 74
81 Miller, Letters, p. 98; italics mine
but they point to a unity of self which Miller saw in his protege but which Durrell was not to realize until some time later:

you have performed the astounding feat of following the schizophrenic trend to its logical, consummate solution, that instead of the retrogressive neurotic swing back to the womb -- the womb being the unattainable, the Paradise of the Ideal, the Godhood business -- you have expanded the womb-feeling until it includes the whole universe.82

This unity with the One, which Durrell and Miller both admired in the writings of the Lao Tzu, is the result of introspection. The title of Durrell's second island book, Reflections on a Marine Venus, sums up the trend which he was following during his time on Corfu and Rhodes, the reflections through which he hoped to attain self-consciousness. The importance of the Marine Venus for Durrell is the renewed youth which he saw in her; her influence on his life in Rhodes is of maximum importance.

Miller's comment on the statue of Antinous in the museum at Thebes, "this most wonderful idealization in stone of the eternal duality of man, so bold and simple, so thoroughly Greek in the best sense,"83 is of pointed interest to the concept of duality. In a recent article on "The Other T. S. Eliot", Durrell records the following exchange with him:

'Though your writing betrays great intelligence,' I once said, 'there is a mystery in it for me. How can an intelligent man be a Christian, much less a Catholic?' He gazed smilingly at me for a moment. I went on, 'After all, if you examine Christianity from the historical point of view, you come out somewhere among the Eleusinian mysteries, no?'84

No matter how jokingly Durrell made this remark, it remains that he has hit

82 Miller, Letters, p. 79
83 Colossus, p. 196
upon the essence of the dichotomous aspect of Greek religion, an aspect that has carried over into the Greek character. We must accept that he sees Christianity as stemming from the Eleusinian mysteries, the Orphic rites originally brought from the Middle East. There are elements in the Eleusinian mysteries, then, which are similar to those of the Christian and Middle Eastern religions, and Miller's remarks on the statue are important as a further comment on the innate duality of the Greek world as embodied in its pantheon of gods:

Nothing could better convey the transition from light to darkness, from the pagan to the Christian conception of life, than this enigmatic figure of the last Greek god on earth who flung himself into the Nile. By emphasizing the soulful qualities of man Christianity succeeded only in disembodying man; as angel the sexes fuse into the sublime spiritual being which man essentially is. The Greeks, on the other hand, gave body to everything, thereby incarnating the spirit and eternalizing it. In Greece one is ever filled with the sense of eternity which is expressed in the here and now; the moment one returns to the Western world, whether in Europe or America, this feeling of body, of eternity, of incarnated spirit, is shattered.85

What Miller and Durrell found in Greece was 'this feeling of body, of incarnated spirit' which is not to be found in Europe. Christianity is an Apollonian religion, in that it depends on the mind of the worshippers. The Eleusinian mysteries, on the other hand, are both Dionysiac and Apollonian in Nietzsche's sense of the terms. The god worshipped at Eleusis was both physically manifested in the Bakkos, or chief-priest, and worshipped as a spirit. It is not extraordinary that Miller should find in the statue of Antinous the fusion of physical and spiritual which the Greeks portrayed in the meeting of Dionysus and Apollo on the Great Frieze of the Parthenon, for the whole of the Greek pantheon exhibited quite human qualities while

85 Colossus, p. 196
they remained the guiding forces of the world. Speaking of a Maillol statue which he has in his garden, Count D. says of the sculptor,

He was outside the trap of the opposites.
It was a mindless act of coition with the stone that made him describe the nymph.  

The reconciliation of the bipartite aspects of his nature, a fusion which is manifest in Greek landscape, art, and life, placed the artist without 'the trap of the opposites' which is the belief that the mind and body can never be reconciled. The solution lies in something akin to 'that wonderful Moslem quality which is called kayf —

the contemplation which comes of silence and ease. It is not meditation or reverie, which presupposes a conscious mind relaxing; it is something deeper, a fathomless repose of the will which does not even pose to itself the question: 'Am I happy or unhappy?'

The importance of the Marine Venus, especially as she has an effect on Durrell's musings, is her timelessness and her fusion of the 'opposites.' Like the statue of Antinous, she becomes 'a symbol ... of the dual nature of man — the proposition which lay at the heart of the ancient religions from which she had been derived.' Persephone, associated with cyclamens, anemones, and other flowers, personifies this duality, for she spent the winter in Hades and the summer on Earth. Both the Orphic and the Dionysiac cults were based upon a similar life-and-death dichotomy, and in describing a field of flowers on Cyprus Durrell associates them not only with the spring landscape but with the old Greek concept of the chthonic forces:

And as we walked across the carpet of [cyclamens and anemones] their slender stalks snapped and

86 *Prospero's Cell*, p. 108; italics mine

87 *Bitter Lemons*, p. 73

88 *Bitter Lemons*, p. 171
pulled around our boots as if they wished to pull us down into the Underworld from which they had sprung, nourished by the tears and wounds of the immortals. 89

In Reflections Durrell sees the Marine Venus sitting in the Rhodes museum contemplating her life, and here he finds a timelessness in which the opposites are reconciled, just as glass is worn smooth by the action of the sea:

Everywhere the dualism of the human personality has created side by side profanity and piety, truth and falsehood, hate and love. Time is always aspiring to a dance-measure which will entangle the two in a dance, a dialogue, a duet: dissolve their opposition. The radiance of that worn stone figure carries the message to us so clearly . . . . 90

In both Reflections and Prospero's Cell there are passages describing and commenting upon the dances performed by the islanders during their feast days. Theodore Stephanides makes the following remark on the Corcyrean dances, and Durrell used it in Reflections to comment upon the writing of poetry:

'All the circular ones I call star dances.
I read somewhere that dancing originated in a desire to imitate the movement of celestial bodies.' 91

This is the same attempt to become one with the universe that Miller saw Durrell achieving in The Black Book. Miller's concept of the womb as 'being the unattainable, the Paradise of the Ideal' is obviously Freudian, and while it is not really necessary here to see the star dances as symbolic, they nevertheless fit the description Jung gives of the 'mandala,' a

89 Bitter Lemons, p. 222
90 Reflections, p. 179
91 Prospero's Cell, p. 115
symbol of psychological unity. From Jung's point of view, the dances would be a product of the desire for unification in that they physically embody that which is desired by the individual, and as we have seen, creativity is the attempt of the artist both to plot his journey toward the self and at the same time find it. Durrell's connection of poetry with the primitive dances sheds light on this theory, for he says that

writing poetry educates one into the nature of the game — which is humanity's profoundest activity. In their star-dances the savages try to unite their lives with those of the heavenly bodies — to mix their quotidian rhythms into those great currents which keep the wheels of the universe turning. Poetry attempts to provide much the same sort of link between the muddled inner man with his temporal occupations and the uniform flow of the universe outside. Of course everyone is conscious of these impulses; but poets are the only ones who do not drive them off.

The quality of silence which Durrell found on Corfu, the solitude which he discovered to be a prerequisite for introspection, he found again in the Villa Cleobolus on Rhodes. Because both are the products of the cathartic effect of the silence, Durrell has tied his introspection to the writing of poetry:

It is much the same feeling as comes over one when a poem forms in the mind, its outlines misty, inchoate: until the white paper on which you have scribbled a dozen words and crossed them out, blazes in your face like a searchlight and paralyses you by the multiplicity of possibilities it presents, by the silence it opposes to your inner tension.

The paralysis which Durrell mentions here is similar to the state in which

93 Reflections, p. 48
94 Reflections, p. 54
Maillol committed that 'mindless act of coition with the stone that made him describe [the nymph]'. It is also the state in which the dancers revolve in the primitive dances, a 'look quickened by the notation of the music — itself (who knows?) a transcription in the terms of cat-gut and wind of profounder melodies which the musician has quarried from his native disenchantments and the earth.' The music expresses for the dancers and the audience the desire for unity with the universe which the dances symbolize, and its intoxicating effect is similar to that experienced by islomanes when they find themselves on an island.

Part of what Durrell is attempting to create in *The Alexandria Quartet* is 'an heraldic universe.' He has provided pseudo-scientific explanations of his use of the term, but Henry Miller has given the best definition, complete with example:

> I am gazing blankly at the field of Irish green. It is a Lawrence Durrell field, heraldic in every sense of the word. Looking blankly into that field I suddenly realize what Durrell was trying to tell me in those long rambling poems he called letters. I used to think, when these heraldic messages arrived at the Villa Seurat on a cold summer's day in Paris, that he had taken a sniff of coke before oiling his pen. Once a big fulsome sheaf which looked like prose fell out of the envelope — it was called "Zero" and it was dedicated to me by this same Lawrence Durrell who said he lived in Corfu. I had heard of chicken tracks and liver mantic and I once came near grasping the idea of absolute Zero, . . . but not until I sat gazing into the field of Irish green . . . did I ever get the idea of Zero in the heraldic sense. There never was a field so fieldishly green as this. When you spot anything true and clear you are at Zero. Zero is Greek for pure

95 *Prospero's Cell*, p. 108
96 *Reflections*, p. 171
vision. It means what Lawrence Durrell says when he writes Ionian.97

'Coke' or cocaine brings on a trance or dream-like state similar to that of the star-dancers, on the one hand, and the state of the artist during creation, on the other. In both cases a unity with the universe is experienced which results in the 'mindless act of coition' with the materials of creativity.

There are three meanings for 'heraldic,' all of which are important to the concept of creativity as a whole. The state of "Zero" in which the artist realizes the essence of what he is seeing is the first of the three. Also to be considered in Durrell's use of the term is the second meaning, a set of symbols. As Nietzsche saw,98 symbols are the result of the work of the Apollonian forces on the mind of the artist during the trance-like sleep induced by intoxication. It is by means of those symbols that the artist communicates with his readers, and this communication may well take the form of a prophecy, which is the third meaning of 'heraldic.' Art is prophetic in that it is the artist's means of pointing out the wrongs of the world.

It is important that '"Zero" means what Lawrence Durrell says when he writes Ionian,' for this is the quality which he saw in Greece, a country in which the property of the light reveals to the viewer the essence of what he is seeing, at the same time revealing to him 'the multiplicity of possibilities it presents' like the paper on which the poet fixes his stare. Miller's response to the Greek landscape, like Durrell's, is heraldic, for 'in Greece' every individual thing that exists, whether

97 Colossus, pp. 95-96
98 Birth of Tragedy, p. 38
made by God or man, whether fortuitous or planned, stands out like a nut in
an aureole of light, of time and space. 99 In that condition, too, the
landscape and the objects within it are both real and symbolic, and this
explains why Durrell can see an oak tree and associate it with Zeus, can
see a dead sea turtle on the beach and think of Orpheus' lyre. But these
are not the best examples of heraldic essence and symbol; the books
themselves answer the need. The 'aureole' in which the Greek landscape
exists has the same effect on an object as the sea has on an island; it
surrounds and points up that object for the viewer, setting it off and
showing, like the paintings of Ghika which Miller saw, 'the quintessential
Greece which the artist [abstracts] from the muck and confusion of time, of
place, of history.' 100

'TO MOVE TOWARDS CREATION'

Just as Miller felt that the individual must throw off the bonds of
society and education in order to attain self-realization, 101 so Count D.
sets before his audience a similar proposal:

'There is a morphology of forms in which our
conceptual apparatus works, and there is a
censor — which is our conditioned attitude.
He is the person whom I would reject, because
he prevents me from choosing and arranging
knowledge according to my sensibility.' 102

The conditioned attitude of England that was being slowly imposed upon him
drove Durrell to Greece, for as an artist he could not exist if his
'sensibility' was smothered by 'the English death.' The rejection of the

99 Colossus, p. 146
100 Colossus, p. 52
101 Colossus, p. 380
102 Prospero's Cell, p. 106
'censor,' too, was necessary, for this would allow him to totally assimilate the events of his surroundings and arrange them as he chose. The individual arrangement of knowledge, as pointed out in the response of Miller and Durrell to the Pleiades, is clarified by Count D.:

'And here we are,' says the Count . . . , 'each of us collecting and arranging our common knowledge according to the form dictated to him by his temperament. In all cases it will not be the whole picture, though it will be the whole picture for you.'

The artist struggles to achieve the presentation of 'the whole picture' as he sees it, and a part of that struggle is for a technique that is his own and no other's. Durrell's early efforts to achieve such a style were consummated in The Black Book.

In the attempt to formulate a unique style, the material being presented can quite easily be clouded. This is what happened in Pied Piper of Lovers (1935) and Panic Spring (1937), and it is with admiration only slightly concealed that Durrell sees Count D. as

the possessor of a literary mind completely uncontaminated by the struggle to achieve a technique; he lacks the artifice of presentation, the corrupting demon of form.

Durrell's concern for the artifice of presentation confounded his search for himself in Greece, for he could not devote himself entirely to introspection but had to write in order to eat. His self-realization was therefore postponed, but it was again in the character of the Count that he saw clearly, for the first time, the goal he was striving to reach:

'It was a kind of detachment — an idea not born within the conceptual apparatus but lodged in the nervous system itself. I had

103 Prosperi's Cell, p. 107
104 Prosperi's Cell, p. 78
become different as a person. Anyone else would have gone away and written a book about it; but I did not want to bring this personal discovery within the range of the conceptual apparatus, and thereby spoil it by consciousness. 105

The detachment which Durrell was trying to attain in order to be above the boundaries of society and of his own intellect was given physical expression in his attempted isolation of himself from England in the Greek islands. The final goal was reintegration into the European society which he had left, or rather into the society of the world which, because it is beyond the strictures of any one nation or culture, would allow him to move freely as an artist in the collection of the material he required as the basis for communication.

All three island books attempt to give the reader the real island flavour which is, for the islomane, one of isolation from society:

our existence here is [sic] in this delectable landscape, remote from the responsibilities of an active life in Europe, have [sic] given us this sense of detachment from the real world. 106

'Detachment from the real world' implies a dream-like existence, precisely what Durrell found in Greece. The position of the artist is paradoxical in that he must be aloof from the petty squabbles of society while at the same time remaining a part of it in order to criticize it accurately and recognizably. Even if, like Durrell, he feels he can only enter his dream-world 'on Wednesdays — by invitation,' that world is of the utmost importance for him, for it is here that he organizes what he has taken from his environment.

105 Prospero's Cell, p. 77
106 Prospero's Cell, p. 22
Durrell’s attitude to the opposites of isolation and integration was clarified in a letter to Miller in 1936:

Let’s look at the [artistic] manifestoes. Begins a political discussion. The artist’s place is in society. A definite lean leftward. Well, what’s wrong with that? Nothing, providing politics are not going to be confused with art. I’m tired of political people. They have confused the inner struggle with the outer one. They want to bread poultsce a primary chancre. Politics is an art that deals in averages. Art is a man that deals in people. If the people are wrong, there is no system fool-proof enough to stop them cutting each other’s throats. And the artist finds that the people are wrong. The driving force behind him is his self-isolation, the dislocation of the societal instinct.107

The chancre to which Durrell refers must be operated on to effect a cure, and this is what Durrell sees as necessary in the Europe which he has left: the operation upon the soul of man which will cure him of the dualistic doctrine of Descartes. It is the function of the artist to point out the basic ills which afflict mankind, and to suggest a possible cure, and it is only through his self-imposed isolation that he can view the happenings in the world without being held back by his censor. In 1937, Durrell had not realized that his isolation should lead not to loneliness but to integration. He felt isolated, not only from England but from the world, although his removal from English society provoked a tension between wanting to quit ‘the English death’ and at the same time retain his connection with the England of Shakespeare and Donne:

I’m one of the world’s expatriates anyhow. It’s lonely being cut off from one’s race. So much of England I loved and hated so much. The language clings. I try and wipe it off my tongue but it clings.108

107 Durrell, Letters, p. 18; italics mine
Panic Spring was written under the pseudonym Charles Norden in an attempt to avoid the adverse criticism showered on Pied Piper of Lovers. Miller made several attempts to dissuade Durrell from carrying on under that name, and his reasons for wanting to retain it indicate his sense of isolation and his need for a community:

My double Amicus Nordensis. He is a double I need — not for money or any of the fake reasons I'm always giving — but simply for a contact with the human world. Durrell's original intention to write travel articles using his pen-name is significant, for these are the works which point to his development most directly, and his use of a 'double' would tend more to prolong his isolation than to end it. He intended to complete his renunciation of England with the synthesis of Norden, who would take his place as a writer and allow him to be free in his criticism. Miller immediately took him to task, pointing out the truth about his use of the 'double' and the inevitable results if he continued:

And why couldn't you write all the other books you wish as L. D.? Why can't L. D. be the author of travel books, etc.? What's to hinder it? It's wrong to think you are cutting yourself off. On the contrary, you are muscling in. The other way is the way to cut yourself off. Better to acknowledge your weaknesses. You can't put perfection in one scale and imperfection in the other that way. We are imperfect through and through — thank heaven.

Durrell speaks of Norden as 'a contact with the human world,' and there is a poorly-disguised fear here of being 'found out,' for he tells Miller that 'Norden will keep me in touch with the commonplace world which will never understand my struggle.' Durrell knew that what he wrote was a

109 Durrell, Letters, p. 104; italics mine
110 Miller, Letters, pp. 108-109
111 Durrell, Letters, p. 104
product of the tension between the inner and outer realities, and that until such time as he could master both in such a way as to formulate something unique from their differing aspects his writing would reflect that struggle. Miller had told him repeatedly to stop worrying about style and form and simply write. Durrell replied, 'I CAN'T WRITE REAL BOOKS ALL THE TIME. Once every three years or more I shall try to compose for full orchestra. The rest of the time I shall do essays, travel-books, perhaps one more novel under Charles Norden.' The Black Book he considered to be 'a real book,' and the rest merely 'literary gardening.' The use of a pseudonym would allow him to practice his writing without feeling that he should always 'compose for full orchestra.' Miller's point is clear, however, and it is far more than an admonition to the petulant child Durrell sometimes seemed to be in their early relationship. It is a primary statement of the responsibility of the artist both to his material and his audience. Durrell never again published under a pseudonym, and the sense of responsibility he developed is an indication of the progress he was making toward a realization of self which would allow him to accept his failures as a writer and thereby escape 'the trap of the opposites.'

The 'old Greek ambience' which Durrell hoped to rediscover on Rhodes was broken in upon from time to time by the remnants of the war which he saw there. The constant vacillation between the outer reality and the inner is pointed out in a section of Reflections in which he is on a hill overlooking Phileremo:

The gaunt burnt-out skeleton of the airdrome beneath with its charred aircraft was a

112 Durrell, Letters, pp. 104-105
113 Durrell, Letters, p. 105
reminder that one was, after all, in the world; for the air of Philermio is so rare that one might be forgiven for imagining oneself in some more successful dimension where the hero had finally mastered himself, and where the act had somehow become connected once more with the concept of love.\footnote{114}

The sense of the inner world in which Durrell was living in the islands is virtually Olympian, with its rarefied air and the concept of the hero, perhaps Hamlet or Faust, who had in the end achieved unity and integration. It is important, too, that this world is one of the imagination, for the recognition of the fact that such a world does not exist in reality points to the concretization of Durrell's view of his role as an artist that is to be found in the fusion of the worlds of reality and imagination in \textit{Bitter Lemons}.

Through the many friends who visited him on the islands Durrell retained a connection with the world he had left, although some of them misunderstood his reasons for isolation:

\begin{quote}
'Here too I have been visited by friends who dropped in like swallows from the sky -- Paddy Patrick Leigh Fermor and Ian Alexander Fielding; the Corn Goddess; John Craxton; Patrick Reilly -- all bringing with them the flavour of the outside world . . . . And Boris who thought I should get a job with Unesco and said that 'This cult for islands was becoming deplorable.'\footnote{115}
\end{quote}

The feeling for Greece and for the islands that Durrell shared with many others was definitely not a 'cult,' but rather a common desire for isolation and introspection away from the European world. At the end of \textit{Reflections}, Durrell has found the needed quality of isolation which is

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{114} \textit{Reflections}, p. 84
  \item \footnote{115} \textit{Reflections}, pp. 180-181
\end{itemize}
apart from the islands in that it is mental rather than physical, and his thoughts on that quality point out his ability to detach himself from the external world without being physically removed from it:

As I sit here between Manoli and his wife I find myself sinking into that feeling of detachment, almost of peace, which visits me when I am alone in a great crowd of people all urgently occupied with their own affairs. Or else when I am an onlooker, at some drama which is going on before my eyes but in which I am powerless to take part. At such times one's individuality seems to focus itself with greater emphasis; one overlooks the affairs of men from a new height, participating in life with a richer though a vicarious understanding of it; and yet at the same time remaining fully withdrawn from it. 116

In this he is like the old priest at the bus wreck in *Bitter Lemons*, 'simply an onlooker, studying the tragedy and comedy of the life around him.' 117 The position of the artist which Durrell was so anxious to achieve in *Prospero's Cell* and the early letters to Miller is this mental state which allows him to participate in the world around him and at the same time remain aloof from it.

The importance of Greece for Durrell lies in the sense of integration and isolation he developed in the islands. In Greece, the lost Western Atlantis is fused with the Eastern Eden. Prospero is another Adam, but his Eden is in the Greek islands, the same islands to which Durrell, as an islolomane, was drawn. The Eastern and Western temperaments are changed in the islands by the overwhelming power of the vertical, masculine, adventurous consciousness of the archipelago, with its mental anarchy and indiscipline touched everywhere with the taste for agnosticism and spare living; Greece born into the

116 *Reflections*, pp. 182-183

117 *Bitter Lemons*, p. 23
sexual intoxication of the light, which seems to shine upwards from inside the very earth, to illuminate these bare acres of squill and asphodel. 118

This is the same light which Miller saw surrounding everything in Greece, the light which pointed up the essence of every object it touched by transporting the viewer to a state of "Zero" in which things were seen heraldically. The intoxication which the light provokes is also the intoxication of the islamane when he finds himself on an island, for the island is finally a symbol of the individual consciousness the essence of which Durrell was seeking when he moved to Greece.

In the islands, the light illuminates for the observer not only the physical but the mental, and it was through that radiance that Durrell discovered his true nature and was able to unify the opposites within him. In Reflections there is another expression of this state, for it is through the influence of the Marine Venus that he feels he saw the true Greece and his own inner being. What he has to say concerns only the influence of the Venus, for just as the path to the ultimate in self-knowledge cannot be stated, 'the presiding genius of a place or an epoch may be named, but she may not be properly described.' 119 Nevertheless, Durrell's comments signify the final goal which he attained in the islands, for they point out indirectly that what was put down on paper was 'not the struggle to write, but the struggle to live.' 120

somehow we have learned to share that timeless, exact musical contemplation — the secret of her self-sufficiency -- which has helped her to outlive the savage noise of wars and change, to maintain unbroken the fine thread of her

118 Reflections, p. 183
119 Reflections, p. 37
120 Durrell, Letters, p. 99
thoughts through the centuries past. Yes, and through her we have learned to see Greece with the inner eyes — not as a collection of battered vestiges left over from cultures long abandoned — but as something ever-present and ever-renewed: the symbol married to the object prime — so that a cypress tree, a mask, an orange, a plough were extended beyond themselves into an eternality they enjoyed only with the furniture of all good poetry.  

The reflections of the Venus are an 'exact musical contemplation,' and Durrell has pointed out the efforts of time to provide a music in which the opposites will be fused, the same music to which the primitive dances are set. Here, in the sharing of the Venus's contemplation, Durrell finally found himself.

The inability of the artist to record the islands of Greece with any precision is also to be found in the above quotation, for instead of going through a process in the mind which rendered them symbols, the objects in the Greek landscape became symbols by themselves. For this reason, Durrell can see Greece as the most exact approximation of the mental state which he wished to achieve, the dream-world paradise which found its expression in Atlantis and Eden. In the end, Durrell was not affected by 'that conspicuous ill-luck which . . . always afflicts islomanes when they have discovered the island of their heart's desire,'  

for he had acquired the ability of entering that paradise through meditation, through achieving a state of absolute "Zero". Miller's letter of March, 1937, was premature in its judgment of the state Durrell had reached with The Black Book, but it will serve here as a comment on what Durrell finally became aware of in Reflections on a Marine Venus:

121 Reflections, p. 179
122 Reflections, p. 36
You are now out in the wide world, the world of your own creation in which you will be very much alone. A terrorizing prospect if it were not for the fact that you know what it is all about, that you reveal a supreme awareness, a superconsciousness.123

The point that Durrell had reached may be summed up in either of two identical expressions, 'supreme awareness' and 'artistic consciousness.' From this point on, Durrell was maturing only as a writer, and perhaps it is most fitting here to quote from Henry Miller, the man who by turns led and prodded Durrell toward the goal he sought. Miller's sense of what he himself achieved in the Greek islands is identical to Durrell's:

To move towards creation does one need a compass? Having touched [Hydra] I lost all sense of earthly direction. What happened to me from this point on is in the nature of progression, not direction. There was no longer any goal beyond — I became one with the Path.124

123 Miller, Letters, p. 78
124 Colossus, p. 56


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APPENDIX

"CITIES, PLAINS AND PEOPLE"
Onoe in idleness was my beginning,

Night was to the mortal boy
Innocent of surface like a new mind
Upon whose edges once he walked
In idleness, in perfect idleness.

Oh world of little mirrors in the light.
The sun's rough wick for everybody's day:
Saw the Himalayas like lambs there
Stir their huge joints and lay
Against his innocent thigh a stony thigh.

Combs of wind drew through this grass
To bushes and pure lakes
On this tasteless wind
Went leopards, feathers fell or flew:
Yet all went north with the prayer-wheel,
By the road, the quotation of nightingales.

Quick of sympathy with springs
Where the stone gushed water
Women made their water like thieves.

Caravans paused here to drink Tibet.
On draughty corridors to Lhasa
Was my first school
In faces lifted from saddles to the snows:
Words caught by the soft klaxons crying
Down to the plains and settled cities.

So once in idleness was my beginning.
Little known of better then or worse
But in the lens of this great patience
Sex was small,
Death was small,
Were qualities held in a deathless essence,
Yet subjects of the wheel, burned clear
And immortal to my seventh year.

To all who turn and start descending
The long sad river of their growth:
The tidebound, tepid, causeless
Continuum of terrors in the spirit,
I give you here unending
In idleness an innocent beginning

Until your pain become a literature.
II

Nine marches to Lhasa.

Those who went forward
Into this honeycomb of silence often
Gained the whole world; but often lost each other.
In the complexion of this country tears
Found no harbour in the breast of rock.
Death marched beside the living as a friend
With no sad punctuation by the clock.

But he for whom steel and running water
Were roads, went westward only
To the prudish cliffs and the sad green home
Of Pudding Island o'er the Victorian foam.

Here all as poets were pariahs.
Some sharpened little follies into hooks
To pick upon the language and survive.
Some in search could only found
Pulpits of smoke like Blake's Jerusalem.

For this person it was never landfall,
With so many representative young men
And all the old being obvious in feeling,
But like good grafty men

He saw the business witches in their bowlers,
The blackened Samsons of the green estate,
The earls from their cockney-boxes calling,
And knew before it was too late, London
Could only be a promise-giving kingdom.

Yet here was a window
Into the great sick-room, Europe,
With its dull set-books,
The Cartesian imperatives, Dante and Homer,
To impress the lame and awkward newcomer.

Here he saw Bede who softly
Blew out desire and went to bed,
So much greater than so many less
Who made their unconquered guilt in atrophy
A passport to the dead.

Here St. Augustine took the holy cue
Of bells in an English valley; and mad Jerome
Made of his longing half a home from home.

Scythes here faithfully mark
In their supple practice paths
For the lucky and unambitious owners.
But not a world as yet. Not a world.
Death like autumn falls
On the lakes its sudden forms, on walls
Where everything is made more marginal
By the ruling planes of the snow;
Reflect how Prospero was born to a green cell
While those who noted the weather-vane
In Beatrice's shadow sang
With the dying Emily: 'We shall never
Return, never be young again'.

The defeat of purpose in days and lichens.
Some here unexpectedly put on the citizen,
Go walking to a church
By landscape rubbed in rain to grey
As wool on glass,
Thinking of spring which never comes to stay.

(The potential passion hidden, Wordsworth
In the desiccated bodies of postmistresses. (100)
The scarlet splash of campion, Keats.
Ignorant suffering that closes like a lock.)

So here at last we did outgrow ourselves.
As the green stalk is taken from the earth,
With a great juicy sob, I turned him from a Man
To Mandrake, in whose awful hand I am.

III

Prospero upon his island
Cast in a romantic form,
When his love was fully grown
He laid his magic down.

Truth within the tribal wells,
Innocent inviting creature
Does not rise to human spells
But by Paradox

Teaches all who seek for her
That no saint or seer unlocks
The wells of truth unless he first
Conquer for the truth his thirst.

IV

So one fine year to where the roads
Dividing Europe meet in Paris.

The gnome was here and the small
Unacted temptations. Tessa was here whose dark
Quickened hair had brushed back rivers,
Trembling with stars by Buda
In whose inconstant arms he waited
For black-hearted Descartes to seek him out
With all her sterile apparatus.
Now man for him became a thinking lobe,
Through endless permutations sought repose.
By frigid Latinisms he mated now
To the hard frame of prose the cogent verb.

To many luck may give for merit
More profitable teachers. To the heart
A critic and a nymph;
And an unflinching doctor to the spirit.

All these he confined in metaphors,
She sleeping in his awkward mind
Taught of the pace of women or birds
Through the leafy body of man
Enduring like the mammoth, like speech
From the dry clicking of the greater apes
To these hot moments in a reference of stars
Beauty and death, how sex became
A lesser sort of speech, and the members doors.

V

Faces may settle sadly
Each into its private death
By business travel or fortune,
Like the fat congealing on a plate
Or the fogged negative of labour
Whose dumb fastidious rectitude
Brings death in living as a sort of mate.
Here however man might botch his way
To God via Valery, Gide or Rabelais.
All rules obtain upon the pilot's plan
So long as man, not manners, maketh man.
Some like the great Victorians of the past
Through old Moll Flanders sailed before the mast,
While savage Chatterleys of the new romance
Get carried off in Sex, the ambulance.
All rules obtain upon the pilot's chart
If governed by the scripture of the heart.

VI

Now November visiting with rain
Surprises and humbles with its taste of elsewhere,
Licks in the draughty galleries there,
Like a country member quickened by a province,
Turning over books and leaves in haste,  
Takes at last her slow stains of waste  
Down the stone stairs into the rivers.  

And in the personal heart, weary  
Of the piercing innocents in parks  
Who sail the rapt subconscious there like swans,  
Disturbs and brightens with her tears, thinking:  

'Perhaps after all it is we who are blind,  
While the unconscious eaters of the apple  
Are whole as ingots of a process  
Punched in matter by the promiscuous Mind.'

VII

By the waters of Buda  
We surrendered arms, hearts, hands,  
Lips for counting of kisses,  
Fingers for money or touch,  
Eyes for the hourglass sands.  

Uncut and unloosened  
Swift hair by the waters of Buda  
In the shabby balcony rooms  
Where the pulses waken and wonder  
The churches bluff one as heart-beats  
On the river their dull boom booms.  

By the waters of Buda  
Uncomb and unlock then,  
Abandon and nevermore cherish  
Queer lips, queer heart, hands.  
There to futurity leave  
The luckier lover who's waiting,  
As, like a spring coiled up,  
In the bones of Adam, lay Eve.  

VIII

So Time, the lovely and mysterious  
With promises and blessings moves  
Through her swift degrees,  
So gladly does he bear  
Towards the sad perfect wife,  
The rocky island and the cypress-trees.  

Taken in the pattern of all solitaries,  
An only child, of introspection got,  
Her only playmates, lovers, in herself.  
Nets were too coarse to hold her
Where the nymph broke through
And only the encircling arms of pleasure held.

Here for the five lean dogs of sense
Greece moved in calm memorial
Through her own unruffled blue,
Bearing in rivers upside down
The myrtle and the olive, in ruins
The faces of the innocents in wells.

Salt and garlic, water and dry bread,
Greek bread from the comb they knew
Like an element in sculpture:
By these red aerial cherries,
Or flawed grapes painted green
But pouted into breasts: as well
By those great quarries of the blood—
The beating crimson hearts of the grenades:
All far beyond the cupidity of verses
Or the lechery of images to tell.

Here worlds were confirmed in him.

Differences that matched like cloth
Between the darkness and the inner light,
Moved on the undivided breath of blue.
Formed moving, trees asserted here
Nothing but simple comparisons to
The artist's endearing eye.

Sleep. Napkins folded after grace.

Veins of stealing water
By the unplumbed ruins, never finding peace.
A watershed, a valley of tombs,
Never finding peace.

'Look' she might say 'Press here
With your fingers at the temples,
Are they not the blunt uncut horns
Of the small naked Ionian fauns?'

Much later, moving in a dark,
Snow-lit landscape softly
In her small frock walked his daughter
And a simile came into his mind
Of lovers, like swimmers lost at sea
Exhausted in each other's arms,
Urgent for land, but treading water.

IX

Red Polish mouth,
Lips that as for the flute unform,
Gone round on nouns or vowels,
To utter the accepting, calm
'Yes', or make terrible verbs
Like 'I adore, adore'.

Persuader, so long hunted
By your wild pack of selves,
Past peace of mind or even sleep,
So longed for and so sought,
May the divider always keep
Like unshed tears in lashes
Love, the undeclared thought.

X

Now earth turns her cold shoulders to us,
Autumn with her wild packs
Comes down to the robbing of the flowers.
On this unstained sky, printless
Snow moves crisp as dreamers' fingers,
And the rate of passion or tenderness
In this island house is absolute.

Within a time of reading He
Here is all my growth
Through the bodies of other selves,
In books, by promise or perversity
My mutinous crew of furies—their pleading
Threw up at last the naked sprite
Whose flesh and noise I am,
Who is my jailor and my inward night.

In Europe, bound by Europe,
I saw them moving, the possessed
Fedor and Anna, the last
Two vain explorers of our guilt,
Turn by turn holding the taws,
Made addicts of each other lacking love,
Friendless embittered and alone.

The lesser pities held them back
Like mice in secrecies,
Yet through introspection and disease,
Held on to the unclenching bone,
The sad worn ring of Anna,
Loyal to filth and weakness,
Hammered out on this slender bond,
Fedor's raw cartoons and episodes.
By marriage with this ring,
Companioned each their darkness.
In cracked voices we can hear
These hideous mommets now
Like westering angels over Europe sing.
XI

So knowledge has an end,  
And virtue at the last an end,  
In the dark field of sensibility  
The unchanging and unbending;  
As in aquariums gloomy  
On the negative's dark screen  
Grow the shapes of other selves,  
So groaned for by the heart,  
So seldom grasped if seen.  

Love bears you. Time stirs you.  
Music at midnight makes a ground,  
Or words on silence so perplex  
In hidden meanings there like bogies  
Waiting the expected sound.  
Art has limits and life limits  
Within the nerves that support them.  

So better with the happy  
Discover than with the wise  
Who teach the sad valour  
Of endurance through the seasons,  
In change the unchanging  
Death by compromise.

XII

Now darkness comes to Europe  
Dedicated by a soft unearthly jazz.  
The greater hearts contract their joys  
By silence to the very gem,  
While the impertinent reformers,  
Barbarians with secretaries move,  
Whom old Cavafy pictured,  
Whom no war can remove.  

Through the ambuscades of sex,  
The follies of the will, the tears,  
Turning, a personal world I go  
To where the yellow emperor once  
Sat out the summer and the snow,  
And searching in himself struck oil,  
Published the first great Tao  
Which all confession can only gloze  
And in the Consciousness can only spoil  
Apparent opposition of the two  
Where unlocked numbers show their fabric,  

He laid his finger to the map,  
And where the signs confuse,  
Defined the Many and the None  
As base reflections of the One.
What bifid Hamlet in the maze
Wept to find; the doppelganger
Goethe saw one morning go
Over the hill ahead; the man
So gnawed by promises who shared
The magnificent responses of Rimbaud.
All that we have sought in us,
The artist by his greater cowardice
In sudden brush-strokes gave us clues—
Hamlet and Faust as front-page news.
The yellow emperor first confirmed
By one Unknown the human calculus,
Where feeling and idea,
Must fall within this space,
This personal landscape built
Within the Chinese circle's calm embrace.

Dark Spirit, sum of all
That has remained unloved,
Gone crying through the world:
Source of all manufacture and repair,
Quicken the giving-spring
In ferns and birds and ordinary people
That all deeds done may share,
By this our temporal sun,
The part of living that is loving,
Your dancing, a beautiful behaviours.

Darkness, who contain
The source of all this corporal music,
On the great table of the Breath
Our opposites in pity bear,
Our measure of perfection or of pain,
Both trespassers in you, that then
Our Here and Now become your Everywhere.

XIII

The old yellow Emperor
With defective sight and matted hair
His palace fell to ruins
But his heart was in repair.

Veins like imperfect plumbing
On his flesh described a leaf.
His palms were mapped with cunning
Like geodesies of grief.

His soul became a vapour
And his limbs became a stake
But his ancient heart still visits us
In Lawrence or in Blake.
XIV

All cities plains and people
Reach upwards to the affirming sun,
All that's vertical and shining,
Lives well lived,
Deeds perfectly done,
Reach upwards to the royal pure
Affirming sun.

Accident or error conquered
By the gods of luck or grace,
Form and face,
Tribe or caste or habit,
All are aspects of the one
Affirming race.

Ego, my dear, and id
Lie so profoundly hid
In space-time void, though feeling,
While contemporary, slow,
We conventional lovers cheek to cheek
Inhaling and exhaling go.

The rose that Nostradamus
In his divining saw
Break open as the world;
The city that Augustine
Founded in moral law,
By our anguish were compelled
To urge, to beckon and implore.

Dear Spirit, should I reach,
By touch or speech corrupt,
The inner suffering word,
By weakness or idea,
Though you might suffer
Feel and know,
Pretend you do not hear.

XV

Bombers bursting like pods go down
And the seed of Man stars
This landscape, ancient but no longer known.
Only the critic perseveres
Within his ant-like formalism
By deduction and destruction steers;
Only the trite reformer holds his own.

See looking down motionless
How clear Athens or Bremen seem
A mass of rotten vegetables
Firm on the diagram of earth can lie;
And here you may reflect how genus epileptoid
Knows his stuff; and where rivers
Have thrown their switches and enlarged
Our mercy or our knowledge of each other;
Wonder who walks beside them now and why,
And what they talk about.

There is nothing to hope for, my Brother.
We have tried hoping for a future in the past.
Nothing came out of that past
But the reflected distortion and some
Enduring, and understanding, and some brave.
Into their cool embrace the awkward and the sinful
Must be put for they alone
Know who and what to save.

XVI

Small temptations now—to slumber and to sleep,
Where the lime-green, odourless
And pathless island waters
Crossing and uncrossing, partnerless
By hills alone and quite incurious
Their pastures of reflection keep.

For Prospero remains the evergreen
Cell by the margin of the sea and land,
Who many cities, plains, and people saw
Yet by his open door
In sunlight fell asleep
One summer with the Apple in his hand.