

GLEA OF THE QUARTET:  
LAWRENCE DURRELL'S PORTRAYAL OF A MODERN WOMAN

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CLEA OF THE QUARTET

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The character Clea Mentis has been selected from the Alexandria Quartet (Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive and Clea) by Lawrence Durrell in order to examine the novelist's portrayal of a modern woman, in that this particular character seems to exemplify a new and intriguing kind of person in the world of fiction, and in a representation of the actual world in which her creator lives.

The first chapter of the thesis is devoted to an analysis of Clea as she is portrayed in the Quartet. Her physical appearance and psychological traits as they are revealed in the text suggest a well-rounded characterization of a vital, compassionate and attractive woman, a "real" person. Clea is examined in relation to the other characters in the novel, with a view to showing that she performs specific and helpful functions on behalf of the author. A third section deals with Clea's special usefulness in connection with some of the major symbols found in the Quartet, indicating that she is deeply involved in them.

The second chapter is a study of the career of Lawrence Durrell, and his development as a novelist. Included are sections dealing with the influence on Durrell of such people as Henry Miller, Einstein, Freud, Georg Walther Groddeck, and his literary predecessors in England and France. One section concentrates on the French Symbolists, and

suggests a sympathetic relationship between Durrell and some of the members of the Symbolist movement.

By virtue of the emancipation of women which has been one of the developments of the past hundred years, the novelist in the middle of the twentieth century has the opportunity denied his predecessors of portraying women as "equal but different" individuals. To provide some understanding of the new rôle of women in the world, the third chapter of this thesis examines the process of emancipation. Because Durrell writes of people in an Islamic setting, one section deals with the position of women in Egypt. The contrast, it is suggested, seems to make Durrell's portrayal of Clea even more vivid.

To see the portrait of Clea in an historical perspective, the fourth chapter briefly reviews the portrayal of six outstanding heroines of novels from the beginning of the nineteenth century with Jane Austen to the generation of D.H. Lawrence in the twentieth century. Stendhal is included in view of Durrell's appreciation for this author. It is suggested that Clea Mentis is a legitimate successor to these brilliant portraits, each of whom is true to her own time.

In the light of the foregoing, and supported by some consideration of the author as a craftsman who is gifted with an intuitively androgynous mind, this study contends that one of Lawrence Durrell's major achievements is the portrayal of a truly modern woman in the person of Clea Mentis.

April 1st, 1963

Mary Elizabeth Bayer

## Reflections on the City of Exiles

City of love and death, of four dimensions  
Man-woman city touched with the blue prints to ward away  
Evil, where ancient phthisic hands are dealing Cabal cards  
Of hieroglyphic messages. The sea with its seven dead men--  
City of symbols. Even this will sustain life,  
All things being equal.

First a shimmer of distortion from the heat, then mirrored  
Gauche gargoyles in the glass, seen darkly  
Haunting the heart with the recall of illusion,  
Memory of creatures clad for carnival, even you  
Iconoclast of west and east, middle-seeker:

Your reflection occupies the swift space  
Between the time of groping and the epiphany  
Between the fluid and the crystal,  
Between the black death and worknotes for the next fantasy,  
Between that and the fact of the urban dying now  
With its medical marvels of matter joined with mind,  
Between antiquity and the creation of new hands  
Reaching for revival, for the art of life  
And integration of the opposites.

Mary Elizabeth Bayer

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## INTRODUCTION

In his four-volume "investigation of modern love," the Alexandria Quartet, which consists of separate but interwoven sections called Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive and Clea, Lawrence Durrell has earned critical attention and public accolade. The method, approach, style and ideas in the Quartet have been reviewed and discussed at considerable length; the author's achievement has been enthusiastically applauded in both Europe and North America.

One aspect of the Quartet which, as far as is known, has not been explored is Durrell's remarkably sophisticated portrayal of women. Lawrence Durrell has taken full advantage of the knowledge, experience and attitudes of the second half of the twentieth century in his presentation of modern woman as she really is, in her relatively new rôle as a free and independent individual.

This study is an examination of Durrell's portrayal of a modern woman in the person of Clea Mentis, one of the principal characters in the Quartet. The other female characters, Justine, Melissa, Semira, Leila and Liza are discussed in reference to Clea, but the emphasis is on Clea in particular in that it is contended that she serves the author in an extremely significant way, as an alter ego and as an expression of his androgynous quality of mind.

The term Quartet is used throughout the study to indicate the complete four-volume work, although the texts used are the separate volumes published in the paper-back editions by Faber and Faber of London.

The study is divided into four main areas. First, Clea Mentis herself is introduced from the Quartet. The analysis of Clea reveals her as well-rounded character with a life and reality of her own, and a definite function in helping the author reveal the depths of the other characters. She is part of, rather than ~~being~~ subordinated to, the fundamental theme of the Quartet, sharing in Lawrence Durrell's concern with ambivalence in the modern world.

The second chapter investigates the life of Lawrence Durrell, examining those factors and influences which have enabled him to write as he does. Durrell's debt to earlier and contemporary authors, (which he has so valiantly endeavoured to repay), his appreciation of the revolutionary contributions of Einstein and Freud, and his own theories are discussed. The examination shows that Lawrence Durrell is acutely aware of the world in which he lives.

As a means of assessing Lawrence Durrell's portrayal of a woman in an historical perspective, one part of this study is a survey of a number of novelists who have drawn portraits of women at various times over the past century and a half. A general review in the third chapter of the emergence of the modern woman in both the East and the West is followed by an examination in the fourth chapter of six heroines in relation to their authors: Elizabeth Bennett and Jane Austen, Jane Eyre and Charlotte Brontë, the Sanseverina and Stendhal, Becky Sharp and Thackeray, Clara Middleton and George Meredith, Lady Chatterley and D. H. Lawrence. These magnificent portraits, it is concluded, were true to their own times and the awareness and skill of their creators,

as is that of Clea Mentis by Lawrence Durrell.

It should be pointed out that in making the above arbitrary selection, and in sketching the outlines of their portraits, it was recognized that any one of these remarkable women would provide ample scope for a full-scale critical analysis. Where the treatment of them is summary, and where much is suggested and left unsaid, the reader's indulgence is earnestly requested.

A recapitulation and synthesis of the findings of the study is presented as the final chapter, with the emphasis first on Durrell as a craftsman and then a summary of his theory of reconciliation and integration.

The primary sources used in the first chapter are, as indicated, the four volumes of the Quartet. In the second section, an attempt has been made to examine some of those works which Durrell himself has read and written. Two major works from which much valuable material was derived are The Key to Modern Poetry by Lawrence Durrell, and the recently published Private Correspondence between Durrell and Henry Miller. The fourth chapter has been dependant on critical works about the various authors, and primarily upon the specific novels in which the women appear, namely Pride and Prejudice, Jane Eyre, The Charterhouse of Parma, Vanity Fair, The Egoist, and Lady Chatterley's Lover. Where possible, the authors' own opinions about women, from letters and journals, have been sought.

In a deliberate attempt to recreate the portraits of Clea and the other women, as well as in the study of Durrell as an artist, a

considerable number of direct quotations are included in this study. To facilitate easy reference to the texts, abbreviations of the above works have been incorporated into the body of the Thesis. Throughout, J- refers to Justine, B- to Balthazar, M- to Mountolive, C- to Clea, K- The Key to Modern Poetry, D-M- to the Durrell-Miller Correspondence, and in the separate sections on the older novels the initials PP, JE, CH, VF, E, and LC are used. All other indebtedness to substantiating material is recognized in the normal manner.

The objective of this study is to examine Lawrence Durrell's portrayal of a woman and to assess his contribution to the novel in this particular area. In the course of pursuing this objective, some material is included which may be somewhat outside the stated limits of the study. Again each of these tangential topics, such as the emancipation of women or the influence of Freud on the novel might constitute subject matter for an entire thesis. They are included, however, because of the light they cast on Lawrence Durrell, and because they provide greater understanding of his capacity to portray a woman in the modern novel and in the modern world.

## CHAPTER I

### A PORTRAIT OF CLEA MENTIS

I, the watcher, smoking at a table,  
And I, my selves, observed by human choice,

A disinherited portion of the whole;  
With you the sibling of my self-desire.

Lawrence Durrell

An analysis of the personality and characteristics of Clea Mentis as she is portrayed in the Alexandria Quartet by Lawrence Durrell reveals her as an attractive and intriguing woman, in tune with the second half of the twentieth century. In this chapter, using the texts of the four volumes of the Quartet as the sole resource, a portrait of Clea Mentis is developed. In addition to her appearance and personality traits, her relationships with other characters are examined, and her usefulness to the author is studied.

#### I. CLEA OF THE QUARTET

Clea Mentis is of indeterminate age. Her physical appearance is enthusiastically described about half way through Justine; Darley apologizes for his delay in introducing her, suggesting that "there does not seem to be an easy correspondence between her habits and her true disposition."(J-128) He presents her as a woman of considerable charm and beauty;

Everything about her person is honey-gold and warm in tone; the fair, crisply trimmed hair which she wears rather long at the back, knotting it simply at the nape of her neck. This focuses the candid face of a minor muse with its smiling grey-

green eyes. The calmly disposed hands have a deftness and shapeliness which one only notices when one sees them at work, holding a paint-brush perhaps or setting the broken leg of a sparrow in splints made from match-ends.(J-128)

It is worth noting that in this introductory paragraph Durrell invests Clea's sensitive hands with an almost separate life of their own. Her eyes turn out to be blue everywhere else in the Quartet, except for one slip into grey.(J-132) Darley re-emphasizes "the warm gold of her hair and a skin honeyed almost to the tone of burnt sugar by sea-bathing in the warm spring sunshine. Her candid eyes were blue as cornflowers and set in her head like precision-made objects of beauty--the life-work of a jeweller."(B-48) In describing Narouz, Darley refers to his splendid eyes, "of a blueness and innocence that made them almost like Clea's."(B-68)

We learn from Darley that Clea has thick eyelashes, which when he recalls her have a way of "fragmenting every glance of the magnificent eyes."(C-66) When Balthazar speaks to her in a fatherly concern about her relationship with Justine, Clea's mouth is described as "sad", "grave" and later "sullen", (B-48) but this seems to be temporary as her sense of humour predominates in later references to her "nightingale's laugh", (C-77) and Darley's pleasure in her new sense of enjoyment in life, "that magical smile of tenderness."(J-115)

In the idyllic setting of Narouz' island, we have an impression of Clea being slim and athletic; Darley observes in passing that she "had always been a fine swimmer."(C-228) She sails the boat competently; Darley notes admiringly that her "brown wrist lay upon the

tiller with a deceptive negligence."(C-244)

Clea is a painter, who paints portraits--on commission--and who works at Balthazar's clinic as a medical artist. Perhaps because he so appreciates her accurate and vivid clinical drawings, Balthazar hates her abstracts.(C-94)

She lives modestly in an attic studio when we first meet her. It is simply furnished,

with little beyond an iron bed and a few ragged beach chairs which in the summer are transferred bodily to her little bathing cabin at Sidi Bishr. Her only luxury is a glittering tiled bathroom in the corner of which she has installed a minute stove to cope with whatever cooking she feels inclined to do for herself; and a bookcase whose crowded shelves indicate that she denies it nothing.(J-129)

She has a cat as a pet; she smokes in bed.(B-228)

From the worknotes in Justine(J-249) copied verbatim in Balthazar, we learn a little about Clea's father. He is elderly and scholarly, "white-haired, erect, with a sort of haunted pity in his eyes for the young unmarried goddess he has fathered. Once a year, however, on New Year's Eve, they dance at the Cecil, stately, urbanely. He waltzes like a clock-work man."(B-227) The old gentleman refers to his anxiety about Clea's unmarried state, accuses himself of meddling, says he has scraped up a dowry for her over the years, would like an Englishman to marry her, and observes:"It has been a bitter pleasure bringing her up without a mother."(B-227) Clea on her part shows gentle consideration of her father in wanting to get him home from the dance by midnight. When her father kisses her "gifted hand," Darley comments "A daughter is closer than a wife."(B-234)

The picture of Clea is drawn sharply in the course of the Quartet. We see her as an actual person, talented, articulate, beautiful.

What has happened to Clea in the years "preceeding" the time of the first three volumes of the Quartet? For the most part, she tells us herself, revealing the past in the present. We know she was motherless from an early age. She knows and loves Alexandria, has her summer cabin at Sidi Bishr, has travelled in Europe (where she met Mountolive, M-143) and lived in Tashkent, Syria, when she wrote her letter to Darley after Justine, which is further indication of her cosmopolitan life.

"Prior" to the sequence of the Quartet, judging by the implied retrospection in her account of it, Clea tried to find the solution to her inability to paint to her own satisfaction by asking Pursewarden to depucceler her.(C-109) From this it may be assumed that she was a virgin at that point. After that, for a few short months, she lived in Syria and during that time fell in love with Amaril, conceived his child, arranged and went through with an abortion, and went back to the mountains to paint and nurse her loss.(C-112)

The affair with Justine "preceeded" the first volume of the Quartet, but Durrell gives us the impression that the timing was very close. Balthazar is the vehicle for the recollection; he tells Clea what her father said of the situation: "'I cannot bear to watch it, and I do not know what to do. It is like watching a small child skipping near a powerful piece of machinery.' Tears came into Clea's eyes and slowly vanished again as she sipped her drink. 'It is over,' she said."

(B-49) The hurt was still poignant, enough that the tears were ready. In the same conversation, Clea in "a small compressed voice" said of the affair: "It ended when the painting ended,"(B-48) and begged Balthazar not to speak of it again.

In Balthazar, Darley suggests that "Justine, in pursuing these deeper sexual pleasures was unaware that they would mark Clea for years; enfeeble her in her power of giving undivided love--what she was most designed to give by temperament. Her youth, you see."(B-56) The incident had started while Clea, who had been impressed by Justine's face when she first met her, and had contracted to paint her portrait, was caught up in a "terrible sympathy"(B-51) for Justine and her lost child. Clea continued to love Justine; her nature seems to include an enormous loyalty; she speaks of her "with a wonder and tenderness such as people might use in talking of a beloved yet infuriating queen."  
(J-228)

Nevertheless she reveals a forthright quality of honesty in her assessment of "the touching and tormenting person she had once been for us all."(J-242) Early in Justine, Clea describes the heroine as "a shallow twentieth-century reproduction of the great Hetairae of the past--truly Alexandrian. . . . She simply and magnificently is; we have to put up with her, like original sin."(J-77) When she sees Justine briefly in Palestine her description of this "tubby little peasant with the hard paws"(J-242) would indicate both compassion and, in a sense, less disillusion than the disappearance of illusion.

The picture of Clea as painted by Durrell emerges more and more

clearly in an examination of her relationships with the major characters in the four novels as they are described in the text. Josh Scobie and Clea are described in Justine as being "perfectly matched, and perfectly happy in their relationship, like a father and daughter." (J-132) Earlier, "the gentle, lovable, unknowable Clea is Scobie's greatest friend, and spends much of her time with the old pirate; she deserts her cobweb studio to make him tea and to enjoy those interminable monologues. . . ." (J-127) When Scobie died, Balthazar did not want to tell her the whole story, he says, "for fear it would upset her, as she too cared for him very much." (B-173) He adds "Clea took in the old man's parrot; it was she who paid the expenses of his funeral." (B-175) She can imitate his voice and recounts to Darley some of the hilarious monologues for which Scobie is notorious. She loves the idea of his Sainthood, and shares in the celebrations of his feast day.

Darley interpolates a reluctance to suggest that between Scobie and Clea "their inversion constituted a hidden bond," (J-131) but in "daring not" to say it he allows it to be a suggestion.

Clea's generosity of spirit seems to be indicated in her relationship with Melissa. Balthazar suggests that Clea's sympathy for Melissa was in the nature of expiation of guilt--"Clea shares guilt of the wound we were all causing Melissa--though she felt it, so to speak, on behalf of Justine." (B-134) Darley sharing this guilt, and being the cause of the pain, says that Clea became Melissa's "friend, champion and counsellor . . . remained her closest confidant until she died. The selfless and innocent Clea, another fool!" (B-134) In

Justine we learn that "when Melissa was dying it was for Clea that she asked; and it was Clea who spent whole nights at her bedside telling stories and tending her."(J-131) Melissa, the gentle and generous, begged Clea to replace her in Darley's life--"You have been my friend, Clea, and I want you to love him after I am gone--Cannot a friend make love on another's behalf?"(B-135)

For Amaril's sake, Clea demonstrates toward Semira the same qualities of kindness she shows to Scobie and Melissa and Pombal. In the saga of Semira's nose, Clea asks to be allowed to be a bit boastful--"I have been part duenna, part nurse, part artist, all for the good Amaril's sake."(C-90) She and Amaril design a new nose after exhaustive research, and while Amaril is away Clea visits Semira, having promised to do so to "keep her interested and amused if I can." (M-155) At the same time, she tries to "spend hours with her sort of preparing her for the world. Also brushing up her reading and writing. In short, trying to educate her a bit."(C-90) When the operation is a success she is shaken with emotion, and says in a most human reaction, "O quick, let's have a drink, for I've a huge lump in my throat and if I cry my makeup will run."(C-93) She is extremely proud of the new nose,(C-93) and one of her last news items at the end of Clea repeats her pride, extending it to the child shortly to be born to Amaril and Semira.(C-280)

Amaril, for reasons noted above, bears a special significance for Clea, and her comments about him, together with her manner when she talks about him indicate the enduring quality of her love. His "very

name on Clea's lips sounded with a common affection for this diffident and graceful man,"(M-149) according to Mountolive. She admits "loving him as much as I do,"(M-153) speaks warmly of him on many occasions, says she "wanted very much to have a child by him,"(C-111) and sums up his effect on her when she tells Darley, "If I am generous now in my love-making it is perhaps because I am paying back the debt, refunding an old love in a new."(C-112) She works with Amaril at the clinic, and he is the surgeon who brings her back to health after the "accident" that climaxes Clea. Amaril is a former love, a present friend; there is an interesting continuity in their mature relationship.

As a further example of the kind-heartedness and sympathetic qualities which characterized Clea, we should note that even Pombal turned to her in his grief and despair after Fosca's death, wanting her and only her to accompany him on the pathetic little funeral expedition. (C-214) He was childlike in his trust and confidence in her, and she motherly in her sympathy--"he began to howl like a little boy who has cut his knee. I put my arms around him, I was so glad you weren't there--your Anglo-Saxon soul would have curled up at the edges."(C-218)

Clea's relationship to Pursewarden, was one of intellectual intimacy. She suggests that she is "the only person to have loved old Pursewarden for himself while he was alive. I loved him for himself, I say, strictly because he had no self."(C-108) Darley recalls her comment about him; "He is unlovely somewhere. Part of the secret is his physical ungainliness. Being wizened his talent has a germ of shyness in it. Shyness has laws; you can only give yourself, tragically, to

those who least understand."(C-115) But after his death, "I see now that what we found enigmatic about the man was due to a fault in ourselves. An artist does not live a personal life as we do, he hides it, forcing us to go to his books if we wish to touch the true source of his feelings. Underneath all his preoccupations--there is a man tortured beyond endurance by the lack of tenderness in the world."

(J-244) Perhaps in observing this in Pursewarden, Clea reveals something of her own wish for tenderness.

Pursewarden refers to himself in a letter to Clea as "your omniscient friend," and shares his thoughts with her, "Like you, I have two problems which interconnect, my art and my life--in my art I am free to be what I most desire to seem--someone who might bring resolution and harmony into the dying lives around me."(B-239)

In the same letter he calls her "a true reader between the lines - where all real writing is done!"(B-237) The cheerful understanding between Clea and Pursewarden is perhaps synthesized in her admission that she had asked Liza "for something to remember him by. Absurd. As if one could forget the brute! He's everywhere."(C-107) Again, she says to Darley as he starts to read the notes to 'Brother Ass', "You must exonerate the brute with a good-natured laugh, for after all he was one of us, one of the tribe."(C-119) This brotherly affection is expressed in her understanding of Pursewarden's sister(C-113ff.), which reveals something very close to shared jealousy.

Nessim is described on various occasions as "Clea's greatest friend,"(B-51,58) but there is less to be said of their direct

relationship than can be examined in the context of Narouz and his brother. There seems to be a sibling feeling in the ironical conversation of Nessim and Clea about Justine.(M-194ff.) This is, at least on the surface, a brother-sister confidence that would develop after years of platonic friendship. Nessim's innately jealous nature is revealed, so is Clea's affectionate regard for the subject of still another portrait. She teases him, probes his motives, pulls down his rumpled coat, kisses him, all with the special camaraderie of long-term knowing.

If Nessim is one of "Clea's dearest friends," we can only presume that it was the 'city-man' whom she knew. Twice he had taken her down to ride on the estate,(B-94) but she had never spoken to Narouz, the hare-lipped brother, who nursed an unspoken passion for her, "the isolation of a personal dream, transitory as childhood, and not less heartbreaking."(B-167) His icy horror when for a moment he thought Nessim was going to marry Clea,(B-91) and Nessim's complete ignorance of his infatuation are pathetic. Clea remains innocent of any knowledge of his passion until it is suddenly thrust upon her the night of de Brunel's murder, when Narouz comes to tell her that he loves her, "because he has killed Justine."(B-230ff.) Adjectives and nouns she uses to describe him give some indication of her revulsion--"the ugly face with its cruel great hare-lip . . . the queer light in his eyes . . . a ghastly incoherence . . . ape-like silhouette . . . harsh cry . . . brutal tear-stained face . . . like some great brown toad . . . like some story-book troglodyte . . . grotesque passion . . . seized my hands and

kissed them repeatedly with great wet hairy kisses. . . ."(B-230ff.)

Clea says that she was "both horrified and disgusted, and yet I couldn't help feeling sorry."(B-230) She says she "felt insulted by the intrusiveness of a love which I had never asked him to owe me."

(B-231) She feels that it is unfair, and says she "felt all the apologetic horror that comes over me when I am admired or desired and cannot reciprocate the feeling."(B-232)

Narouz loves his image of Clea, his fantasy. Even that slight tinge of reality which might have accompanied his first glimpses of her has been dissolved in the bizarre transference to the mysterious "grease-folded body of a Moslem woman" at the feast of Sitna Miriam.

(B-166) Her voice is the voice of Clea to him; she is the beloved and the mother who in giving him release, virtually "delivers him from her image."(B-167)

After his religious exultation, Narouz has no further need for Clea, "If he thought at all of his love for (her), it was for a love left now like some shining coin, forgotten in a beggar's pocket."

(M-302) Only when he is dying does he cry out for her again; "I want to see Clea."(M-308) She re-iterates her disgust to Nessim on the telephone "How disgusting that people should love without consent!--My flesh quails on my bones."(M-309) She says he was nothing to her, never was and never would be; nevertheless she tries to come. She is prevented by a washout on the road caused by a broken dyke, and he dies, calling "Clea--so nude a word, her name, as simple as 'God' or 'Mother'--yet it sounded as if upon the lips of some dying conqueror."(M-312)

Clea, the witty and the sharp-tongued ("her judgments were seldom if ever charitable,")(J-77) never laughed at Narouz. Justine after his death discovered some undelivered love letters and laughed, (C-60) but Clea felt the pull to his island and was the victim of his gun; for her it was serious and full of meaning that this strange and powerful personality had taken part even after his death in her fulfillment as an artist. She does not say this outright, but Durrell leaves this distinct impression by inference and association. Narouz' symbolic relationship with Clea we will explore in the next section.

Darley is perhaps the most important of the characters whose juxtaposition with Clea must be examined. In the volume Justine Darley gets half-way through his narrative before he introduces her, beyond a few vague references. When he does so, he plunges almost immediately into conjecture about her unmarried state.(J-128) Within three paragraphs, he reminds himself that she urged him not to "think or speak of me as someone who is denying herself something in life."(J-129) Within a hundred pages, Darley describes his turning to Clea for solace after Justine's departure, Clea's immediate awareness, she "at a glance took in my condition,"(J-229) her quick sympathy and pain, her tears, "she looked like a young stag with a broken ankle,"(J-228) and her warm acceptance of his need for help and peace of mind. Darley says earlier that it was his conversations lasting far into the night that had first brought him "close to Clea, taught me that I could rely upon the strength which she had quarried out of self-knowledge and reflection," (J-130) She observes that "in some ways she is closer to him than

Justine or Melissa," disclaiming malice in what she says, being very forthright.(J-130)

At the close of the first volume, Clea's letter to Darley suggests her sense of nearness to him. She says she thinks of him often, has considered asking him if she could come to him and help care for Melissa's child, but that she respects his right to solitude.

(J-244-5)

As an artist, Clea is curious about Darley's art of writing. She chides him for his role as spectator--"Come, why do you never play a part in these things? Why do you prefer to sit apart and study us all?"(B-233) Darley has no answer; neither does he reply directly to her letter in which <sup>she</sup> suggests that Balthazar's notes "may not be good for his book or books, which must, I suppose, put us all in a very special position regarding reality. I mean as 'characters' rather than human beings."(B-236) She notes in the same letter that the "very range of her sympathies"(B-236) precluded her from intervening with other truths. She says her affection for him lay in his art--"I was jealous of you as a writer--and as a writer I wanted to keep you to myself and did so keep you."(B-236)

Notwithstanding her reticence about Justine and Melissa, Clea pours out her confidence to Darley, telling him of the "love affair she did not have" with the young artist in Syria.(B-240) She tells him, as outlined above, about Justine, about Pursewarden, about Amaril, explores the depths of her own need, behaviour and feelings. She understands his moods(B-78); she appreciates his feelings toward Alexandria

itself. She has a program ready for him at the beginning of the fourth volume, after waiting, with remarkable sensitivity, until he has re-evaluated his attitude toward Justine.(C-89)

Darley finds her changed when he comes back the 'last' time-- "She was more beautiful than I could remember her to have been, slimmer, and with a subtle range of new gestures and expressions suggesting a new and troubling maturity."(C-77) He rejoices in their new-found intimacy and a new door opens on his experience, opens of its own accord. He sees Clea "smiling and irresponsible as a flower, after a huge arid detour in a desert of my own imaginings."(C-95) He sees in her face "neither guile nor premeditation mirrored, but only a sort of magnificent mischief,"(C-95) and her fresh and spontaneous embraces, "as pristine as invention, and not like ill-drawn copies of past actions. They were the very improvisations of the heart itself--or so I told myself."

Darley feels sure that Clea "would share everything with him, withholding nothing"(C-99) although much later when Balthazar discusses Narouz he (Darley) is "secretly piqued that Clea had confided things to Balthazar which she had kept from me."(C-206) Clea, like any woman, chooses to conceal that which could hurt the beloved. Gradually out of their love Darley as a writer saw Melissa, Justine and Clea as the three women who "arranged themselves as if to represent the moods of the great verb, Love."(C-177) It may not be too ungrammatical to suggest that Melissa was indicative, Justine imperative and Clea subjunctive!

Darley has recognized Clea's new "authority over her own

beauty,"(C-107) her new maturity in laughter, and her qualifications as an amusing companion. He enjoys her anecdotes about Scobie, and her descriptions of things that happened to herself or the others. He obviously likes her quality of "tireless curiosity."(C-280) Durrell takes pains to tell us, through Pursewarden in his letter to Mountolive, that in Alexandria, "this capital of superstition, even Clea has her horoscope cast afresh every morning."(M-116) This recalls the work-notes in Justine, "Clea always has a horoscope cast before any decision is reached."(J-248) Having thus been warned, we are not surprised when Clea does not discuss lightly Da Capo's weird account of the black laboratory. Both Darley and Balthazar recognize "her bondage to the soothsayers of Alexandria (which) would actually give her a predisposition toward the magic arts)."(C-204) Nor are we surprised when Darley, in describing the last happy days of his affair with Clea, has them visiting the tombs of Kom El Shugafa, and when she says "Hold my hand," he tells himself:"But if she shivered it was not then with the premonitions of death."(C-229) By that autumn, Darley attributes the manner of their 'falling out' as "a visitation of an agency, a power initiated in some uncommon region beyond the scope of ordinary imagination,"(C-233) suggesting the supernatural. It is interesting to observe the physical symptoms Darley sees in Clea from November the fourteenth on. She seems to go into a trance, gets up, staggers to the bathroom and is violently sick, complains of a "sudden splitting headache."(C-234) The next morning she is pale. During the next few weeks she is "subject to long distracted silences and unusual

fatigues--Insomnia too began to play its part, and she resorted to relatively massive doses of barbituates in order to seek release from it. She was smoking very heavily indeed; Balthazar is perplexed when she snaps at him after a trivial pleasantry and leaves the room--"Who is this new nervy person I do not recognize?"(C-235) he asks. Darley repeats that she seems very nervous, and when he makes any reference to her distemper her response is always one of "ill-temper or pique." (C-236) She had a high temperature, advanced pulse rate and high blood pressure.(C-238)

If one were searching for a purely physical and psychological explanation for Clea's behaviour, the search could lead to a suspicion of menopausal symptoms. There is a distinct similarity between the description of Clea's condition as described above and the Freudian interpretation offered by one of the most outstanding psychiatrists of the Freudian school, O. Spurgeon English, M.D., who says:

. . . women who have lived unwisely between the ages of twelve and forty-two can build up a great many regrets over which to be irritable, depressed, remorseful, bitter and pessimistic when the menopause appears. In addition to these mood disturbances, symptoms often occur in the menopause such as hot flushes, cold shivers, sensations of alternating heat and cold accompanied by perspiration, dizziness, cardiac palpitation, headaches, anxiety attacks, nausea, fatigue, insomnia and loss of appetite.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of Durrell's use of symbols and his careful preparation of the reader to expect the intervention of supernatural forces,

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<sup>1</sup>O. Spurgeon English, Emotional Problems of Living, (W.W. Norton & Co., 1945), p. 391

it is unlikely that he intended any such superficial interpretation of Clea's condition and behaviour, but it is significant that he supplies, in his character portrayal, such accurate and realistic symptoms, such believable manifestations of inner disturbance. Moreover, these are symptoms which are essentially feminine; Durrell describes them with consummate accuracy.

That there was a supernatural connotation in Clea's condition is indicated after the 'accident', after Darley has taken effective action and 'destroyed to regenerate', when Clea says "at last I am free from the horror. That at least you have done for me--pushed me back into mid-stream and driven off the dragon. It's gone and will never come back."(C-256-7) She uses the mythical symbol of the dragon, the fearsome creature of medieval mystery and terror.

For whatever the dragon represented, she was listening, looking over her shoulder, gnawed by secret fears. One can conjecture that it was the malevolent spirit of Narouz calling her from the realm of death; only Darley's violent action saved her from being captured by Narouz' gun and imprisoned in death at Narouz' island.

Before examining the deeper forces at work in the portrayal of Clea, it would be in order at this point to summarize the person and personality portrayed by Durrell. We have established that she is beautiful in face and form, that she is talented as an artist. She is independent both financially and in spirit, likes to be alone at times, enjoys the companionship of her friends at other times. She is non-materialistic; lives more or less frugally. She is intelligent,

thoughtful and extremely articulate. She has an excellent sense of humour and a quality of mischievousness.

Clea's is a passionate nature; she is a giving person. Out of some unconscious need, obviously related to the loss of her mother, she seeks the mother-image in her portrait of Justine, and expresses maternal instincts in her kindness to the pathetic Melissa and the gentle Semira. She is generous and sympathetic, witness her understanding of Scobie's loneliness, Balthazar's illness, Pombal's grief. She is capable of making and retaining friendships to a remarkable degree, including the friendships of men and women she has loved, like Amaril, Justine, and Darley.

That Clea is sensitive is beyond question; she is quick to understand Darley's pain at losing Justine, she shows enormous understanding of the feelings and needs of her friends. They confide in her eagerly. She is hyper-sensitive to the possibility of there being forces and powers beyond present human understanding. This can be interpreted as mere superstition, but much more than that is revealed in her fear and awe in relation to Narouz.

As Durrell unfolds his continuum, Clea is shown as a person who is capable of change and development. (B-235 & C-77) She herself seeks to improve her skill as a painter, and seems to do so. She seeks self-knowledge. Her maturity is revealed in the complete absence of moral strictures; she has developed her own code of behaviour and is not obsessed by conscious guilt about the affair with Amaril, the abortion, the affair with Justine or the liaison with Darley. Aside

from the unresolved 'legality' of abortions, it may be noted that neither of her relationships with men broke any laws or hurt any other individual; (both these men are bachelors). How overt the affair with Justine was is not clear, but there is no indication that Nessim was affected by it. Clea's code seems to be that she reserves the right to decide for herself on the morality of her own behaviour.

She is not entirely a Pollyanna in the Quartet. Without being judgmental in respect to her amorous adventures or the decision to destroy Amaril's child, it should be noted that she was less than kind or generous to Narouz, who revolted, disgusted and terrified her. It is permissible to wonder if the broken dyke really stopped her from coming to Narouz when Nessim called her, or whether the dyke merely provided a desired excuse. One might also question her reluctance to be of any particular help to the blind Liza after Pursewarden's death. It may be that Clea resented Liza as the beloved of Pursewarden, whom Clea subconsciously desired for herself.

Clea admits to being insatiably curious; it is evident that she was a tireless gossip. Durrell may be forgiven for portraying her in this way if, as we contend, he required this characteristic of Clea in the construction and flow of the novel.

This then is the 'portrait of Clea' as drawn by Lawrence Durrell. This is a real person, a self-contained character, a person who at the conclusion of the Quartet describes herself as "serene and happy, a real human being, an artist at last." (C-281) She is no flat outline or stock figure caricatured in broad strokes; Clea of the Quartet is made

to live and breathe.

## II. PATTERNS IN THE PORTRAIT

The portrait of Clea has both an outer and an inner significance. In the preceding section the "person" has been analyzed; a real person has emerged from the Quartet. Because she enjoys the friendship and confidence of all the major characters in the novel, (with the exception of Liza when she is more of an interested bystander), it is possible to explore her relationships with these other characters, to examine her function and the use Durrell makes of her in the construction of the Quartet. In so doing, some of the depths of Clea's personality emerge, and Lawrence Durrell's skill as an artist is illustrated.

The sexual ambivalence of Justine is suggested almost immediately in the first volume of the Quartet; Darley observes "how pliantly feminine this most masculine and resourceful of women could be." (J-20) He says "She talked like a man and I talked to her like a man," (J-25) and on the next page "in many things she thought as a man, while in her actions she enjoyed some of the free vertical independence of the masculine outlook." (J-26) Clea had only known Justine by hearsay until she saw the "dark Alexandrian beauty" posing for art students of the Atelier. (B-51) According to Balthazar's Interlinear, Clea was the helpless victim of her own innocence struggling for maturity. She loved Justine at once, and passionately. The psychological reasons for this infatuation are not hard to discover. Here is a strong older woman recounting her sorrows, expressing her loneliness; Clea's

compassionate nature, coupled with her female sympathy for Justine's loss of her child, catapults her inadvertently into an abnormal attachment. She is bewildered and frightened by the polarities of feelings of attraction and repulsion. (E-54ff) Latent homosexuality, no isolated characteristic of the child reared without a mother, is revealed in Balthazar's document. But the doctor adds that the experience had two valuable effects for Clea; it proved that homosexual relationships did not answer the needs of her nature, and in its distortion of reality and confusions of sensibility the artist in Clea was enhanced. For Clea, the experience was painful but enriching. As a light on the character of Justine, Clea's love reveals something of Justine's cruelty, her inability to be aware of the suffering she causes others, and to whatever extent it is implied that she was aware of Clea's infatuation and responded to it, her own latent homosexuality. She tells Clea she is only going to marry Nessim because he can afford to help her find the child, and it is again indicated that sexual relations between Nessim and Justine at the beginning of the marriage were non-existent.

Durrell uses Clea's relationship with Justine to amplify the complexity and instability which characterize Justine. Clea is one of Justine's victims; one of the objects the vampire attacks, whether consciously or not.

As a contrast to the vividly dark and 'wicked' Justine, Durrell has made Clea blonde and open and good. He may have intended Melissa as the contrasting character at first, but in the course of the story Melissa dies, and the author further develops the Clea character. As

will be indicated in the next chapter, while he was actually writing the Quartet, he was living with his third wife Claude Vincent, who is very like Clea, and this may have influenced him to expand Clea's portrait, whether consciously or not. That Clea's rôle was not too clear early in the Quartet may be indicated in the Justine worknotes, when he labels her (spelling her surname differently) "still waters of pain"; it is Justine who is labelled "arrow in darkness," (J-247) almost as if their futures were blended in his mind at that time.

When he proceeded to write his "investigation of modern love," Durrell obviously was determined to include all its peculiarities and deviations. The study began many years before the Quartet, as The Black Book indicates with its hesitant prototypes of the Alexandrians. Clea joins the sampling-group for Durrell's survey; she is one of the aspects of modern love in her relationship with Justine, another in her relationship with Amaril, another in her generous love for the despairing Darley. She is still another in her love for Balthazar, and at the end of the Quartet Durrell seems to suggest a final aspect in self-love, which Clea also illustrates.

Clea is delighted that Nessim wants to marry Justine, she hopes that it will be "a solution to everything." (B-58) She thinks of Nessim as gentle, wise, undissimulating, and would be glad to have him bring his "dignity and gentleness to bear on Justine's unhappiness." (B-58) Whatever the accuracy of Balthazar's observations, we must assume that Nessim did indeed start to write the note; "My dearest Clea, Justine has agreed to marry me. I could never do this if I thought it would qualify

or interfere in any way with either her love for you or mine. . . ."

(B-63) He tears up the note, appalled at the thought that whatever he would write might sound mawkish. What is inferred here is that Nessim was more fond of Clea than she knew, and certainly that he was aware of her fondness for Justine. It is implied that Nessim asked Clea to speak to Justine on his behalf and that Clea did so. (M-194) While she does her chalk sketch of her friend, he dissimulates, chats, begs her for encouragement in his pursuit of Justine, and they reveal a shared understanding of the object of both their loves. Durrell uses Clea to reveal Nessim's self-awareness, and to illustrate more of the intricacies of the labyrinth of human relationships which is one of the themes of the Quartet.

To Narouz, Clea is the mother-image, the goddess he worships from afar, the embodiment of his illusion of comfort, security, the return to the womb. When he first sees her, she is the desirable woman, the second desirable woman, whom his well-endowed brother has taken from him without thinking or knowing. Clea is the symbol of his search for fulfilment; she is the queen he needs to worship in his race-memory. His need is so great, and his demand so forceful that he nearly destroys Clea in order to claim her for his own; only the intervention of an alter-ego, in the form of Darley, saves her from drowning.

Durrell needs Clea to help reveal the depths of Narouz' character. He knows, perhaps instinctively, that it must be a woman to serve his purpose. He has Narouz, the earth-man, who has devoted his

love to the classic Egyptian Mother, the old-fashioned woman, seeking another mother in Clea. The conflict is obvious; Clea is not the woman of antiquity; she is the modern, free independent spirit, and shrinks from Narouz and all he represents in horror. The impact of the conflict is amplified by the juxtaposition; Durrell has employed the dramatist's technique of pitting the ugly villain against the beautiful girl.

One of the principal characters in the Quartet is Balthazar, "the botanical goat, the man in the narrow-brimmed black hat, the man with the yellow-goat eyes, with monstrously ugly hands--the man who under his chin has one dark spur of hair growing, such as one sometimes sees upon the hoof of a sculptured Pan."(J-91) Darley remarks on his inversion, but observes that his "paederasty is somehow no qualification of his innate masculinity of mind."(J-92) Balthazar and Clea are good friends as well as being associates at the clinic--he obviously likes her realistic medical drawings, but dislikes her adventures into the 'free' world of unreality, into abstract painting, which he hates. (C-94) When she paints in the abstract, perhaps she is beyond his control, realizing herself as an artist rather than serving as his acolyte in the dark arts. There is nothing in the Quartet to suggest that Balthazar hypnotizes Clea, but there are many suggestions that there is a close bond between them, a suggestion which can be examined both in the text and in its implications. The occult-student, the cabalist, the "dear old Balthazar"(C-113) was present at the death of Scobie, (B-172) at the death of Pursewarden,(B-149) at the death of Fosca,

(C-210) at the death of Melissa, (J-236) and at the death of Narouz. (M-313) If Clea had died, he would have been present, waiting on the boat for Darley's report. None of the deaths surprised him. At each one he tried, as a doctor, to relieve the pain--or save the scandal--helping to change Scobie back into uniform, covering up for Nessim who was destroying evidence, hurrying Fosca to the hospital, giving Melissa morphine, tending Narouz with tragic tenderness, ("Rest, my darling. Easily, my loved one,")(M-312) applying the tourniquet to Clea's arm, as if to stave off inevitable death. (Balthazar was not present at Capodistria's "phony" death.)(J-210) It is Balthazar who says that Narouz was "trying to drag you (Clea) down into the grave with him," causing Darley to be hurt that she had confided things to Balthazar which she had kept from him. These deaths all affect Clea; she is saddened and changed by them, but her relationship to Balthazar does not change. She is so innocent of any evil connotation in Balthazar's rôle that it is she who has the marvellous idea of the party to bring him back to 'life' after he is rehabilitated.(C-71) Part of her appreciation of him may have been related to her interest in the occult through astrology; certain this Mephistophelean Nostradamus was a guiding spirit, from whose influence she was freed only after surviving the near-fatal accident at the end of the fourth volume. Balthazar is himself a realist, a scientist, but he is fascinated with Capodistria, almost to the point of suggesting servitude. Clea is the vehicle for reading Da Capo's letter; Clea is a victim of Da Capo's rape of Justine, Clea is like a daughter and a handmaiden to the doctor

who searches the world beyond present knowledge and science; Balthazar is the doctor (and by transference the father), who reveals reality for her but quickly clouds it with generous potions of both rational and mystical meanings mixed freely together. Some of her attraction to Balthazar must stem from Clea's interest in and perhaps fear of the hidden world of mystery, which he in turn seems able to understand and not fear. The cabal and its hieroglyphics, the wisdom of the old man fascinate her; he is compatible with her unconscious wish to search and to know.

In subsequent chapters of this study, it will be seen that Lawrence Durrell is fascinated with the wisdom of the East; that he is confident that there is much to be learned from the "occult world." To the extent that Balthazar is the personification of this world of ancient wisdom, so is Clea the modern searcher, the artist seeking understanding. Durrell has drawn his man Darley as being barely on the threshold of recognition; Clea serves him as an intimate. As an intuitive woman who accepts the reality of the existence of the unknown, the mysterious, Clea helps Durrell open the doors. The author is intrigued by the past in the present; he needs Clea to represent the occidental, the west European to help him explore the mysterious middle East and its rich memories.

For the schoolteacher-writer Darley, Clea is an alter-ego; ~~where to Nareuz she is the God Mother, to Darley she is the earth mother,~~ the person to whom he turns for solace after Justine leaves, (J-227) the correspondent who keeps him in touch with the doings of Alexandria,

their microcosmic universe, the firm strength from which he draws comfort and warmth when he needs it, the woman through whom he finds fulfilment as a writer.

Clea is Darley's friend; she is in his confidence in conversation and letters; she is in his company in the 'adventures' in which he takes part, or if she is not actually there, he reports to her as one would to a mother or a compatible wife. Among all these articulate, not to say long-winded, people Clea and Darley share the effort to explore, discover, analyse, probe for meaning, truth and personal fulfilment, self-awareness.

Darley keeps Clea in mind, quoting her at random even when she is not actually present, recalling something she "once said" such as, "If a girl does not like dancing and swimming she will never be able to make love";(C-16) "Music was invented to confirm human loneliness"; (C-65) "It is our disease . . . to want to contain everything within the frame of reference of a psychology or a philosophy";(J-77) "When you pluck a flower, the branch springs back into place. This is not true of the heart's affections,"(B-22) "There are only three things to be done with a woman. You can love her, suffer for her, or turn her into literature."(J-22)

These aphorisms sound like Pursewarden, but it is Darley who recalls them and quotes them as if they were his own opinion as well as Clea's. In other words, their thoughts are like--they agree. They agree on the enjoyment of the broad comedy and their sympathy with the tragedy of Scobie; they agree in their appreciation of the charm and

interest of their mutual friends, like Balthazar, Pursewarden, Pombal. They agree or are alike in their fascination with Alexandria itself. They always have plenty to say to one another; they communicate compatibly and comfortably.

Darley uses Clea as a confessor, a resource for forgiveness, a source of comfort, a well of affection. That he loves her is obvious; that their love is sustained throughout the Quartet and projected it(C-279) is also apparent. Clea for Darley is the earth-mother, the partner and the alter-ego.

Clea is also the vehicle of Darley's regeneration. In taking action to free her from her imprisonment, Darley becomes the artist struggling to free himself from the prison of his own futility and inadequacy; Clea is the symbol of his soul and spirit, caught by forces that threaten to destroy him. It is only if she can be seen in the close relationship suggested above that Darley's 'salvation' has validity or meaning.

Clearly one of the functions of Clea as far as Lawrence Durrell may be identified with Darley is to do all these same things for the primary author. She is also the link between Darley and his ideal artist Pursewarden; she provides Durrell with the mechanism whereby he may measure and express his searching for the essence of art and the function of the artist, both of which are of overwhelming interest to Durrell.

Many of the scenes and paragraphs in the Quartet can be examined as purely literary interpolations which enrich the novel, excite and

stimulate the reader, deepen the colours of the portraits. Clea is involved in many of these; for example she helps Durrell portray Alexandria; she is the principal vehicle for the recall of Scobie; she introduces non-essential but delightful bit-players like the Syrian painter; she is to be the antagonist if the story of Johnny Keats is continued. Because she is presented as being quite as articulate as all the others, Clea voices Durrell's ideas on a hundred subjects with which his active mind and pen are busy throughout the four volumes.

In writing his masterpiece, Durrell has synthesized many of the skills he has been developing over the years. In the next section Clea's function for him as an artist is examined; this is followed by an examination of her connection with some of the symbols he uses in the Quartet.

### III. CLEA AS A PAINTER

It is possible to learn something of Clea's role in the Quartet in relation to the other inhabitants of the City by looking at her as a portrait painter, for in her painting she functions as a visual interpreter to supplement Durrell or Darley's verbal interpretations. Also as a painter she symbolizes another form of 're-working reality', (B-236) which parallels Lawrence Durrell's work as an author.

Balthazar calls her a "most gifted and sensitive painter"(B-57) and while he does not like her abstracts, Darley sees them as a development for the better. Darley has on his Greek island the unfinished portrait of Justine, the one that was interrupted by a kiss,

the portrait that Clea had given to Darley in "another life."(B-20) It is a portrait which can trigger memory, both of Justine for her beauty in its actual content, and of Clea's love for Justine in its unfinished state.

Clea painted Scobie in his police uniform with the scarlet tar-bush on his head, and "the great flywhisk, as thick as a horse's tail, laid gracefully across his bony knees,"(J-121) preserving the memory of him as she and Darley would recall him years later. This portrait is apparently as accurate and realistic as Darley's portrait of Scobie, which is one of the best rounded and most complete in the Quartet.

For reasons which she does not care to understand (probably the sibling rivalry suggested above), Clea is reluctant to paint the portrait of Liza Pursewarden which Mountolive asks her to do.(C-118) Durrell is using this reluctance, it seems, to amplify the picture of Liza in relation to Clea, to suggest Clea's growing self-sufficiency, her new self-containment; she no longer races impulsively to bind up the sparrow's broken leg in match splints.

Clea does a sketch in chalk of Nessim, but we hear no more about it and the impression one has is that the process of drawing was a technique used by Durrell to solve any question about bringing Nessim and Clea together to talk about Justine. The death mask which Balthazar took of Pursewarden and which "the loving hands of Clea"(M-187) had printed is more symbolic, it would appear. It becomes a symbol for Mountolive as he stares at it, resenting Pursewarden's revelation of Nessim's treachery; indeed the writer's face is transformed ironically

into that of the son of the woman Mountolive loves.(M-187) The death-mask seems to represent in part the enormous influence Pursewarden continues to exert over the lives of the Alexandrians.

The same mask--and this could be Durrell's reason for using a dimensional mask rather than a portrait,--is used by Liza to recognize her brother as dead; Clea is apologetic and disturbed by the naked quality of Liza's love.(C-115) Having used the symbol, Durrell, probably with his tongue in his cheek, cheerfully relegates the death-mask to the National Portrait Gallery, to lie near that of Keats and Blake. Incidentally, what Liza was fondling was the plastic negative-- a reverse, as it were, of Pursewarden. Durrell makes use of every opportunity to suggest the illusion, the real in the unreal.

One last portrait is mentioned in the Quartet, the one Clea did of Mountolive. There does not seem to be any particular significance to this portrait; Mountolive observes that it is certainly not a "work of art",(M-249) but whether he is referring to the subject or the painting is not clear. The painting was commissioned, we gather, as a gift for Mountolive's mother, and mention of it at this juncture serves to remind the reader of the diplomat's extremely close relationship to her.

Darley's interest in Clea as a painter serves to illustrate the contention that Clea is an alter-ego for the writer. It is almost as if he envies the painter's ability to stop time and preserve it in a spatially-limited frame. Clea's painting becomes the reverse of the elusiveness of truth and meaning in the written word. Moreover, as his

maturity as a writer develops, so does her maturity as a painter, as artists they advance, as it were, hand in hand. (An ill-chosen phrase!)

Clea recognizes this visual quality in herself and wants to share it with Darley on his return to Alexandria when she says, "I wanted to sort of recompense the city for you so that you could walk back into the painting from another angle and feel quite at home - though that is hardly the word for the city of exiles, is it?"(C-89) And again, when they are enjoying their love-affair, Darley compares himself and Clea to "rapt figures in some forgotten painting, unhurriedly savouring the happiness given to those who set out to enjoy each other without reservations or self-contempts."(C-95) The illusion breaks almost immediately, but momentarily it had stillness.

In her relationships with the other characters in the Quartet, Clea serves to illustrate some of the intricate facets of their being, literally as a painter, more subtly as a personality. In the foregoing, we have tried to show that Clea is revealed more fully through the people with whom she is in contact, and that the other characters are portrayed more comprehensively as a result of their association with Clea. From the novelist's point of view she is functional in providing a "woman's-eye-view" while his male narrator sees her and all the others from the male viewpoint. She calls herself "a spectator standing equidistant between two friends or lovers--always torn by friendship to intervene, to interfere, (but) one never does."(B-236) She is the link, and the spectator.

There is a special significance to Clea as an artist, in that

through her we are able to see and examine the intricate relationship between Darley and Pursewarden; two other "artists" in the generic sense of the term. Her own analysis of the relationships can be found in her letter to Darley at the end of Balthazar, when she says that as writers, Darley and Pursewarden "joined hands in me." (B-236) Add to this her astute evaluation of Pursewarden (J-214) her lucid appreciation of his worth both alive and dead (B-211 and J-115) all of which substantiate her own enigmatic suggestion that she is somehow "her brother's keeper." (J-115)

Pursewarden may be the ideal artist Darley would like to emulate. In his death, it seems there is hope for Darley. In the Balthazar letter referred to above (B-236) Clea interprets the meaning of his death, and virtually transfers her relationship from Pursewarden to Darley, adding the intellectual intimacy that she enjoyed with the former to the physical comfort she offers the latter. It is Clea who pushes back the 'sliding panel' which enables him to see himself more clearly, and she is a necessary and useful complement to Durrell's portrait of Pursewarden, which is of course revealed more vividly after his death than before.

Some illustration of the intermingling of the three artists, Clea, Darley and Pursewarden is found in the extracts from Pursewarden's notebook. (C-125ff)

Perhaps significantly, immediately before Darley reads and copies the "Conversations with Brother Ass," Clea in a burst of what seems to be irritation cries out to Darley, "O leave me alone. Can't you see I

want to sleep?"(C-124) It is almost as if she realizes she must 'cease to exist' while the personalities of Darley and Pursewarden merge in the dissertation which follows.

Lawrence Durrell's own theories about the art of writing permeate the conversations, which admit at the beginning that Darley and Pursewarden "have everything in common."(C-125) The "monochrome snapshots of so-called reality"(C-126) that are among the wax-works of literature are deplored; the French are proposed as an "intellectual asylum," Pursewarden-Darley-Durrell wonder if Darley's books "will always be such painstaking descriptions of the soul-states of. . . the human omelette (Art occurs at the point where a form is sincerely honoured by an awakened spirit)."(C-128) Pursewarden challenges Darley to decide if art is like a little white cane to help a blind man along the road.(C-134) His essay is a brilliant tour de force in challenge and wit, but he seems to look longingly and confidently for the day

the artist suddenly grows up and accepts the full responsibility for his origins in the people, and when simultaneously the people recognize his peculiar significance and value and greet him as the unborn child in themselves, the infant Joy!  
(C-140)

Surely this is a manifesto of Lawrence Durrell's own feelings and thoughts about art. He is re-creating, in the struggling Darley, his own artistic birth.

How identified Durrell-Darley is with Clea's painting is revealed in the similarity of his comments about her work and the aptness of those same comments if they were used to describe Durrell's prose. He says she concentrates on her paintings with single-mindedness, taking

it "seriously but not too seriously."(J-129) He describes her canvases as "bold yet elegant, radiating clemency and humour. They are full of a sense of play--like children much beloved."(J-129) These are the phrases one might very well use in reference to Durrell's approach to the art of writing, and the results he achieves, as will be further amplified in the next chapter.

Of Clea's clinical drawings (and Durrell's interest in medical matters gives the observation special significance), the author notes that they have "terrifying lucidity and tenderness. In a sense they are truly works of art; the purely utilitarian object has freed the painter from any compulsion toward self expression. . . ." (J-131) In this Durrell contradicts what would seem throughout his own work to be the prevailing operative force, namely a compulsion toward self-expression. He is, of course, referring here to purely scientific drawing, and is indicating a difference as well as similarities between science and art.

Clea as a painter, as an artist, forms one element in the quartet of artists who contribute most to Durrell's presentation of himself as an artist. The self-portrait is as intricate and skilful as are his portraits of all his characters, each of whom add some detail to our appreciation of the author.

Lawrence Durrell knows about painting. His first wife was a painter, and as will be seen below, he himself has done water colours as a hobby for some years. His identification with Clea as an artist has become apparent; she becomes one aspect of his craftsmanship in the

Quartet, one part of his exercise in self-portraiture. In this section Clea's specific function as a painter has been examined; it is contended that the author is revealed in her; she is the feminine counterpart to the narrator, she observes and recaptures and crystallizes for him the scene and the people of the City of Man. One aspect of Lawrence Durrell as an artist is that he wants to paint a great sweeping picture of modern life and modern man; Clea is his graphic artist, his illustrator, the companion with the sketch-book who helps him paint in words.

It was suggested that Clea is one of four artists involved in Durrell's self-portrait. The link between Clea and Pursewarden has been referred to; in Pursewarden one sees the larger-than-life "Old Master" Durrell wants to emulate in his own way. Here Durrell is revealing his appreciation of his literary predecessors. Pursewarden's piercing comments about Darley help create an outline of the narrator, over which is super-imposed Darley's own revelations about himself, which in turn adds to the portrait of Lawrence Durrell. Thus all four artists in the Quartet, Clea, Pursewarden, Darley and Durrell himself share in the 'Portrait of the Artist' as a mature man. Clea's contribution is particularly interesting in that she is a woman.

#### IV. SOME OF THE SYMBOLS

There are so many symbols in the Quartet it is virtually impossible to determine priorities. Perhaps the mirror is a good point of departure, for Clea occupies a unique position in the novels. She does not look into mirrors. There is a total of at least eighty-

nine direct references to mirrors or a mirror in the Quartet; thirty-five in Justine, seventeen in Balthazar, twenty-six in Mountolive and eleven in Clea. Every major character except Clea looks into mirrors, addresses himself in mirrors and refers to mirrors. Clea is present once when Nessim talks half to himself in a mirror and half to her; (M-196) once in Clea she recalls repairing her damaged make-up after Pursewarden laughed at her overtures to him, and quotes the writer accusing her of "mirror worship," (C-110) and once when Darley addresses her reflection when these two are recognizing the nadir of their love-affair. (C-237)

Before evaluating this rather intriguing "negative," it is important to examine Durrell's fascination with mirrors. Perhaps the simplest interpretation lies in a comment in one of Justine's diaries:

The loved object is simply one that has shared an experience at the same moment of time, narcissistically; and the desire to be near the beloved object is at first not due to the idea of possessing it, but simply to let the two experiences compare themselves, like reflections in different mirrors." (J-50)  
(italics not in the original.)

As a prefix to Balthazar (the volume which is in itself another view of the events of Justine), Durrell quotes <sup>the</sup> Marquis de Sade:

The mirror sees the man as beautiful, the mirror loves the man; another mirror sees the man as frightful and hates him; and it is always the same being who produces the impressions. (B-Introduction)

The mirror in his poetry and the mirror in his novels is a symbol of man examining himself and, through himself, his universe. It

is virtually an image of an image, a real reflection of an unreality, the reverse of an illusion. The mirror is an instrument of self-knowledge (or self-deception); it throws back in the negative that which is presented to it in positive form. It is therefore a fitting symbol of Durrell's theories of "Space-Time" translated into fiction.

It may be argued that in the three instances cited above, Clea may be removed entirely from the "mirror-worshippers." In the first instance, with Nessim, while he looks in the mirror he is "trying to imagine how he must look to Justine";(M-196) she is in his thoughts and it is likely that he imagines himself addressing Justine rather than Clea, until he turns away from the mirror and calls Clea by name, as he does in a few seconds. In the second instance, it could be suggested that Clea, in repairing her make-up, was indulging in a necessary and purely feminine act of tidying up after having burst into tears,(C-109) and that there was no significance whatsoever in that use of the mirror. In the third instance, when Darley speaks to her reflection, it is possible that Durrell is suggesting that Clea was becoming unreal to Darley. It is Darley, not Clea, who is looking in the mirror; she was sitting on the bidet at the time, while Darley was washing his face, cleaning away the blood after she had struck him. (In passing, it is interesting to note that Darley is described as having cut his lip and looking like an ogre--is he Narouz, momentarily?) If these three suggestions were accepted, it would be fair to say that Clea never uses the instrument of illusion, never in the course of the Quartet indulges in the use of this particular symbol of self-examination or examination

of others. If this is the case, whether or not it is deliberate on Durrell's part, or even if it is not done at a conscious level, it suggests an important facet of the character of Clea.

There are two possible interpretations: first that Clea is used by the author as a "real" person who looks at her world as realistically as is possible for a human being, secondly that Clea is herself a mirror, in whom aspects of the other characters are reflected. These two possibilities are not incompatible, if we accept the portrayal of Clea as a "real" human being, and if we accept the character of Clea as a feminine counterpart or female manifestation of Lawrence Durrell. Curtis Cate would seem to throw some light on this possibility when he says; "All knowledge, in the prismatic universe of human relationships, is fragmentary at best; and just as it is from others that we sometimes learn the truth about our closest friends, so it is from others that we learn the truth about ourselves."<sup>2</sup> If Clea were conceived of as a mirror for Durrell, her function is a dual one, of helping us see the other characters more vividly, and of helping the author find himself and his own real identity.

In ancient Egypt, the mirror was a symbol for life, indeed the word for mirror can also mean "life,"<sup>3</sup> which would tend to substantiate the theory that Durrell seeks reality in the mirrors, and if Clea is a

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<sup>2</sup>Cate, Curtis, Lawrence Durrell, The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 208, December, 1961, p. 67

<sup>3</sup>The Horizon Book of Lost Worlds, (American Heritage Publishing Co., 1962), p. 84

mirror, in her we can see life itself.

Clea is closely connected with the symbol of the Hand. In describing "Alexandria, the capital of Memory,"(J-188--Durrell spells it capital rather than capitol) Durrell or Darley notes "the basic talisman of the country--imprint of a palm with outspread fingers, seeking to ward off the terrors which thronged the darkness outside the lighted town."(J-189) Again in Mountolive, he describes "the imprint of dark palms--signs which guard the superstitious against the evil eyes,"(M-291) and in Clea the "imprint of little blue hands which ran around the four walls in a haphazard pattern."(C-147) This basic talisman is used as a cover design in the Faber paper-covered editions. Interestingly enough, in recent excavations in Anatolia in Turkey, the Catal Huyuk diggings reveal a shrine-house whose walls were imprinted with right palm-prints silhouetted on a red ground. The shrines are estimated to be 8500 years old.<sup>4</sup>

It is possible that there is no particular significance in the various comments about hands in the first three volumes of the Quartet, unless the references are deliberate forewarnings of the eventual importance of the symbol. We see Clea's "capable and innocent fingers" (J-131) as she works at the clinic; we learn from Clea that Justine's hands were "dark and shapely,"(B-228) and that after she went to Palestine: "Those once finely-tended hands were calloused and rough."(J-242) We learn that Pursewarden had "soft, rather womanish hands"(M-173) when

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<sup>4</sup>Mellaart, James, Archeological Section 2122, (Illustrated London News, Vol. 242, Feb. 2nd, 1963) p.161

Melissa is reading his palm and prophesying his death. When Darley returns to Alexandria in Clea, Justine notices how cracked and calloused his hands are, and he replies that wood-cutting is doubtless the reason. (C-51)

Balthazar becomes the prognosticator of "hands" as an important symbol from our very first meeting with him. Darley writes that his hands are monstrously ugly, and adds gratuitously, "I would long since have cut them off and thrown them into the sea." (J-91) Balthazar makes no reference to this remark in his Interlinear, but admits that when he was in the depths of alcoholism, drug addiction and despair, the comment occurred to him and he tried to commit suicide by cutting them off. (C-69) A Freudian analyst would observe here that the death-wish was not real--a doctor who really wanted to destroy himself could do so most effectively--and might also conjecture that the hands were a phallic symbol; that this was an attempt at castration.

It is Amaril who saves Balthazar's 'life' and repairs his hands, and the white haired old doctor is gleeful about his "return from the dead." (C-74) We can assume that Durrell has used the hand as a symbol of life and its counterpart death, the theory of death-in-life and life-in-death.

Clea herself is very conscious of hands; as a painter we would expect her to be so. Long 'after' the portrait of Justine is 'finished', on the night of the murder, the artist is looking at her painting and observes: "Those hands want thinking about." She proceeds to think about them, and makes sketches of hands "until midnight," (E-228) and it is that

same evening, while her mind is preoccupied with hands--the hands of a lost love--that Narouz bursts in, terrifying her. She recalls his horrifying appearance, and her own disgust as he kisses her hand.

(B-233) This was the only time Narouz touched her. The psychiatrist hearing a patient describe this incident as Clea recounted it would recognize the significance of the hand as a symbol closely related to Clea's attachment to Justine, and as a subconscious sign of Narouz and his desire to possess Clea, in both cases a kind of death for her.

Durrell has given us a glimpse of Narouz in relation to cruelty and death when we had the vivid picture of the two brothers in Balthazar, (B-72) and Narouz demonstrates his skill with his new whip (a scourge for the fanatic), by killing a rooster (the sacrificial symbol). Narouz picks up the dead cock, and "casually" wipes the blood from his hands. The dark shadow of Narouz' personality is already apparent.

Balthazar is the instrument used to fire Narouz' gun on Narouz' island, hitting, imprisoning Narouz' ideal. If all behaviour has purpose, it could be assumed that Balthazar was unconsciously wanting to kill Clea--indeed he had just finished expressing apprehension about her, urging Darley to take her with him, away from the world of Alexandria. (C-247) To what extent Balthazar was unconsciously trying to fulfil Scobie's prophecy (C-207) is an open question.

In the event, the prophecy is belied. Darley finds unknown resources of strength within himself and turns out to be strong enough to save both Clea and himself. (C-251) Both Narouz' steel arrow and the knife that Darley used can be interpreted as being phallic symbols;

one was designed to kill her, the other to free her. The evil is warded off; a superstitious woman is liberated from the dark shadow, and brought back to life.

Again it is Amaril who repairs the damage, builds Clea a "steel and rubber" hand, (C-278) healing her as he healed Balthazar, replacing the lost member just as he had replaced Semira's nose. Amaril knew the importance of hands, that "one distinguishing mark by which your friend or enemy may still identify you: hands. Your lover's hands. . . ." (B-191) It was Amaril, the Healer, who gives Clea her new and miraculous hand, Amaril the first love, who had conceived life in her.

Darley shows something less than sensitivity in the ironical comment as he leaves Balthazar, "Then I turned back to the work in hand," (C-271) which turns out to be writing a letter to Clea in the course of which he remarks; "What pleasure [it is] to actually sweat over a task, actually use one's hands!" (C-274) Either he did not intend to wound, or the irony was deliberate on Durrell's part.

Clea is as excited as a child at her new hand and its extraordinary ability to paint. The symbol has changed at the end of the Quartet; the hand is a symbol of life, not death, of fulfillment. The right hand that had been "pierced and nailed to the wreck" (C-248) has been re-born, and in re-birth has assured salvation.

Further light on the subject of hands is cast by Robert Hertz, whose essay on The Pre-eminence of the Right Hand: A Study in

Religious Polarity,<sup>5</sup> originally published in French in 1909 and recently translated to English. In his introduction to the essay, Professor E.E. Evans-Pritchard summarizes one aspect of Hertz' theories, saying that

he maintains that the hands have become the symbols, perhaps in that their asymmetry made them suitable for such, of polarities in thought and values because the duality of the universe of ideas must be centred in man who is the centre of them.<sup>6</sup>

Hertz reviews the primitive allocation of distinctive features to the right hand and to the left; in the same way that society and the whole universe are governed by a law of polarity, so has man vested the hands with symbolic differences, which the anthropologist feels are outmoded. Rather than continuing with man as a unilateral being, physiologically mutilated, he says:

. . . a liberated and foresighted community will strive to develop better the energies dormant in our left side and in our right cerebral hemisphere, and to assure by an appropriate training a more harmonious development of the organism.<sup>7</sup>

There is no suggestion that Lawrence Durrell read Hertz or was influenced by ~~him~~; the interesting feature of the essay is its anthropological evidence of the significance of hands in human history, and their symbolic function in duality, which is a recurring theme in Durrell's thought. If indeed Durrell has a conscious or unconscious

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<sup>5</sup>Hertz, Robert, Death and The Right Hand, (Cohen and West, The University Press, Aberdeen, 1960)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 19

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 113

race-memory of the primitive meaning of hands, his choice of Clea's right hand is doubly fascinating. The right hand, the male symbol, the one used for greeting, for swearing oaths, for giving blessings, the "good" hand is the one removed and replaced with an effective artificial hand which is neither male nor female but something of both.

Henry Miller was quick to recognize the power of Durrell's use of this particular symbol. Writing the day after he finishes Clea, Miller tells Durrell that

Particularly devastating is that underwater scene--Clea's hand nailed to the boat, and then the dervish dance. And then--the Hand!! An ending à la da Vinci. A note of sublime and delicate horror.(D-361)

Another major symbol in the Quartet is the city of Alexandria, the city of the world, the symbol of the microcosmic universe. It is a mark of Durrell's brilliance that it has become so vividly real as a city, but we must continually recognize it as a myth, a creation of the author's mind. For Clea, who describes it as a "city of exiles," (C-89) as for Durrell, Alexandria seems to represent the place to which she is drawn as if by a magnet: the true centre of her existence in the space-time of the Quartet.

There is a slight "Chamber of Commerce" connotation in her welcome to Darley at the beginning of Clea; Durrell uses Clea to help him recreate the city of memory. But she is herself one of the major characters of the city; like all the others she has her particular contribution to make to the symbolic city.

If Durrell created Alexandria to house the people who would carry his theories into the novel, where does Clea belong? At the risk

of creating a non-existent parallel, it might be contended that the city and its inhabitants are like a mythical Heraldic Court, in a classical tradition. Clea is the only individual who does not seem to fit easily into the picture; the others may be assigned distinctive and traditional rôles.

Justine is the Queen, the a-moral and powerful majesty; Nessim her consort, the wily Prince. Narouz is the evil brother, envying the prince; he is the villain, the rabble-rouser, the prophet, perhaps even the High Priest. Leila is the powerful Queen-Mother, the schemer behind the throne. Mountolive is the foreign diplomat, the unwitting pawn of palace intrigue. Balthazar is the Magus, the occult priest; Amaril is the court physician. The court boasts its clowns, Scobie and Toby. The philosopher is Pursewarden. There is even the Harlot in the person of Melissa; there is Nimrod the chief of the royal guard, and Darley the scribe. If Clea has a rôle at all it might be that of handmaiden to the Queen, but her activities in the Quartet do not substantiate this. The fact that she has no definite rôle may be further indication of her 'new' and 'modern' situation as a complex individual rather than an archetype. Her functions as Darley's assistant as described below: in relation to the symbol of the city she helps the narrator to create and sustain the illusion of reality for Alexandria.

Durrell uses Clea in the Quartet as he uses all the other characters in that she and her actions have deeper meanings than is apparent on the surface. If the sea is the symbol of the unconscious, Clea and her love of the sea, for sailing and swimming, is presented as

one who is in communion with the mysterious and unknown.

As we have seen, Clea is often referred to as being innocent, and yet she carries with her guilt for having offended the tabus of abortion and homosexuality. Perhaps Durrell chooses her for punishment and for an expiation of her rejection of Narouz precisely because of her innocence. If so, Durrell was using her as a symbol of the human being who is the innocent victim of forces beyond human control; she is the object of the necessary sacrifice. But because it is part of Durrell's design to have her liberated and regenerated, and to have Darley share in this regeneration, Clea does not succumb to the sacrificial ceremony. She is rescued and redeemed to life.

As an artist, Clea could be symbolic in her representation in portraits of the ancient will to immortality, the desire of man to preserve his image for posterity, to crystallize a memory of himself.

For Lawrence Durrell, literature is life itself. In his writing, Clea may be a symbol of the new, modern woman. She is moreover the symbol of the feminine and intuitive aspects of Durrell's androgynous nature.

## V. SUMMARY

In this chapter we have been introduced to Clea Mentis of the Quartet. From the four volumes, a portrait of the woman has been drawn in terms of her physical appearance and of her personality. She emerges as an attractive person with an independent way of life. Certain characteristics ~~about her~~ have been illustrated through

analysis of her attitude and actions in relation to Scobie, Melissa and Semira, where it was established that she is a kindly and helpful friend. Her relationship with Amaril illustrates her capacity for loyalty and sustained devotion. Her sympathetic compassionate nature is illustrated in her contact with Pombal. Her relationships with Pursewarden show her intelligence, with Nessim her qualities of warmth and affection. All these characteristics together with her sense of humour are emphasized in her relationship with the narrator Darley. That she is subject to essentially human physical and psychological frailties has been demonstrated in the physical manifestations of her anxiety and tension, in her superstitious apprehension about Narouz.

The second section was devoted to a study of Clea's function for the author in more clearly revealing the other characters in the Quartet. Through her, the portraits of Justine, Narouz, Balthazar, Darley and Pursewarden become more vivid and more meaningful. Lawrence Durrell uses Clea to throw into relief many of the characteristics of Justine which would otherwise be much more obscure. He gives Clea a vital rôle in developing the tragic story of Narouz, in providing an acolyte for Balthazar's cabalism, in helping Darley find himself. Clea provides Durrell with a counterpoint which emphasizes the essential themes of the Quartet. She helps to provide the link between the known and the unknown.

This function of "assistant to the author" is further emphasized in the third section where Clea as a painter is examined. In a visual-verbal sense, Durrell gives Clea a skill in "re-working reality" in her

paintings. Not only does she provide a vehicle for Durrell's description of actual appearance, for his crystallization of moments of reality, but she also suggests the illusion inherent in the reality. As a sensitive and artistic spectator, Clea serves as an alter-ego for the narrator.

The fourth section analyses Clea's intimate connection with some of the symbols in the Quartet. It is suggested that Clea serves Durrell as a mirror in which the City and its people are reflected. The recurrence of the Hand, first as a symbol of death-in-life and ultimately as a symbol of life-in-death is closely involved in Clea's story, as it is in the whole development of the central thesis of the Quartet, that regeneration and fulfilment are possible for the individual.

Clea and the symbol of the City, the city of exiles, the city of Alexandria, the City of Man are interwoven throughout Durrell's novel. She is the vehicle for the re-creation of the city, the memory mechanism which is allied with and part of Durrell's theories of the continuum, the Space-Time philosophy. Here again Durrell is seeking the reconciliation of opposites, the past in the present, the future in the past.

The sea, with which Clea is so often associated, serves Durrell as a symbol of the unconscious, a symbol through which he can suggest the regeneration and integration of the individual by the resolution of the separateness of the conscious and the unconscious mind.

Many questions have been raised in the foregoing. What kind of a man is Lawrence Durrell? How has he developed as an author? What

are the factors and influences that have enabled him to write as he does in the Quartet in general and in the portrayal of a modern woman in particular? Some possible answers to these questions are explored in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MIND OF THE ARTIST

As for me I must do as I was born  
And so must you: upon the smaller part of the circle  
We desire fulfilment in the measure of our gift

Lawrence Durrell

This chapter is devoted to a study of the mind of Lawrence Durrell. Through his own works, comments by his friends and critics, and through some of the books he may have read, his development as a writer and the paramount influences on his thought and skill are examined.

#### I. THE SPACE AND TIMES OF LAWRENCE DURRELL

Lawrence Durrell was born on February 27th, 1912, at one o'clock in the morning, as he meticulously and cheerfully informs Henry Miller. (D-M-59) He was the son of an English engineer working in India. His mother was Irish. Perhaps the fact that his first associations included such diverse elements as the atmosphere of a decaying Imperialism and the influence of an Irish mother helps clarify some of his feelings about modern England, so much of which he "loved and hated so much," (D-M-60) and which are crystallized in his persistent withdrawal from its shores.

To Henry Miller, Durrell accuses England, "that mean shabby little island," of wringing the "guts" out of him, says it "tried to destroy anything singular and unique in me." (D-M-60) From India, where he stored

up the most wonderful memories, Durrell was catapulted into the child's life in England. Curtis Cate sums up the scene, basing his evaluation on several meetings with the author, and discussions of his youth:

To be sent to England to a public school in Canterbury at the age of twelve came inevitably as something of a shock to this frontiersman's son, who could not help finding the diet of John Bull manliness and boxing glove ethics a trifle insipid and childishly artificial in a land of soft autumn mists and exquisitely manicured cricket fields. The consequent frustrations and a despairing inability to cope with the intricacies of mathematics explain why a student who excelled in English and French failed his entrance exams to Cambridge University three times.<sup>1</sup>

After school, Durrell tried various things. He says he "tried and failed every known civil service exam"; (D-M-60) he played jazz (piano) in the Blue Peter Night Club, even worked unsuccessfully in real estate, ran a photographic studio, which failed, with Nancy Myers whom he later married. He wrote Panic Spring under the pseudonym of Charles Norden. Gradually he recognized that his only talent was for writing; his joy was writing poetry.

Some time after 1933, Durrell was successful in persuading his mother to 'escape' from England with her family; their destination was the Greek island of Corfu.

A charming account of the first sojourn in Corfu is recorded by Gerald Durrell in My Family and Other Animals. Gerry was ten years old at the time, Margo eighteen, Leslie nineteen and Lawrence twenty-three. Significantly, Larry's luggage consisted of two trunks-full of books

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<sup>1</sup>Cate, Curtis, op. cit., p. 64

and a brief-case for his clothes.<sup>2</sup> As the eldest son, he seems to have taken a fatherly leadership role with his brothers and sister, a responsible, comradely role with his mother, sharing in the decision-making and arrangements.

Gerald obviously respected and adored his formidable older brother, and, writing from his happy memories, casts Larry in the classic mold of 'villain', fondly portraying him as supercilious, irritable, critical, patronizing and pompous. Nevertheless, they were a close-knit family, sharing in the hilarious adventures which highlighted their life on the island. As an incipient zoologist and naturalist, Gerry inflicted upon the long-suffering but explosive clan a succession of insects, animals, birds and other creatures, with Larry as the most exasperated victim of misadventures with scorpions which nearly bit him, magpies which scattered his manuscripts, pigeons which disturbed his sleep.

In a delightful sequence Gerald describes the "few people" Larry cheerfully invited to stay with them, a set of "most extraordinary eccentrics who were so highbrow they had difficulty understanding one another."<sup>3</sup> They included an Armenian poet, three artists, one a cockney, one a nervous wreck, (because he tried one day to paint spring blossoms in Italy and when he went back the next day to finish the painting the blossoms had all blown away), one asthmatic, and <sup>a</sup> bald Countess suffering

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<sup>2</sup>Durrell, Gerald, My Family and Other Animals, (Penguin Books, London, 1962), p.18

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.118ff.

from erysipelas or worse whom Larry wanted to "study."

The Lawrence Durrell who wrote the Quartet is suggested many times in Gerald's book. His love of the sea and his enjoyment of swimming,<sup>4</sup> the strange phenomenon of phosphorescence which is so reminiscent of the passages at the climax of Clea,<sup>5</sup> the hilarious stories told by Dr. Theodore Stephanides<sup>6</sup> which Larry obviously enjoyed and which are of the same texture as the Scobie anecdotes, the same doctor's strange experiments which could predict those of da Capo,<sup>7</sup> are some examples.

Something of Larry's splendid youthful arrogance, (as well as his Kipling appreciation), is indicated in his summation of a riotous incident in the course of which he nearly burnt the house down, and directed firefighting from his bed where he was suffering from a hang-over. Accused of inactivity, he replied grandly:

It's not the action that counts, it's the brainwork behind it, the quickness of wit, the ability to keep your head when all about you are losing theirs. If it hadn't been for me you would probably all have been burnt in your beds.<sup>8</sup>

His sense of humour and robust eloquence ~~are~~ illustrated in his response to his mother's considering inviting Great-Aunt Hermione to the Corfu villa for a holiday:

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.151ff.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.154

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 125, 259, 291

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.139

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.189

Really, Mother, you are impossible!--I was looking forward to a nice quiet summer's work, with just a few select friends, and now we're going to be invaded by that evil old camel, smelling of mothballs and singing hymns in the lavatory.<sup>9</sup>

Gerald writes that he says this 'angrily' but this is consistent with the younger brother's technique of giving Larry the 'villain's' part in his pleasant summer saga. For his admirers, Lawrence Durrell emerges from My Family and Other Animals as an angry young man tenaciously attached to his amusing, individualistic, warm and vital family. It is also significant that his early associations with women, in this case his mother and his sister, made him both aware and appreciative of women who were natural, independent, free spirits, capable of love and friendship on the basis of equality.

Durrell was a voracious reader. Friends of Henry Miller, the Barclay Hudsons, may have brought a copy of the American novelist's Tropic of Cancer with them, and loaned it to Durrell, while in Corfu.

That Tropic electrified Durrell is abundantly clear. In August 1935, he began his rich and eloquent correspondence with Miller with a rhapsodic fan-letter, calling the work "a copy-book for my generation," adding that it really gets down on paper "the blood and bowels of our time," (D-M-4) and observing that he is delighted with the way in which it moves both back and forward in time.

Inspired by Miller, Durrell worked on The Black Book, and as he re-wrote for a second draft, recognized the need to "demillerize."

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.193

(D-M-39) He is aware of the echoes of Miller in it, and deals with them as best he can. Encouraged by his own new-found enthusiasm, he feels sure that "it's coming away clean and fresh from me now, after all this hesitation. Like a peeled stick." (D-M-49) Soon he feels he will deserve Miller's praise.

Some of Durrell's poetry had been published by Faber and Faber, but T.S. Eliot, whom Durrell admired tremendously, decided against the manuscript. A verbatim account of Eliot's comments is not presently available, but the impression one receives from Curtis Cate is that while Eliot was encouraging about Durrell's potential, he was conscious that The Black Book could not be published in England without some expurgating.

Through Miller, the book was published by Jack Kahane of The Obelisk Press in Paris. Reviews of the work, which the author described as an escape from "the English Death"<sup>10</sup> were mixed. Cate called it "an extraordinary tone-poem of a novel, lying midway between Henry Miller or James Joyce and Eliot himself."<sup>11</sup> A. Desmond Hawkins, reviewing it in the Criterion,<sup>12</sup> said it was "an extended metaphor in poetic prose. . . Mr. Durrell's sentences are charged with a tonic gusto which no living novelist can match." A foretaste of the Quartet is found

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<sup>10</sup>Reavey, George, "Eight Characters in Search of an Exit," Saturday Review of Literature, (March 1962), p.24

<sup>11</sup>Cate, op. cit., p.63

<sup>12</sup>Hawkins, A. Desmond, "The Black Book," Criterion, Vol. XVIII, (January 1939), p.316ff.

in Hawkin's comment that the book includes "varieties of sexual behaviour which serve to illustrate both corruption and renewal." He sums up his evaluation as follows: "a limited, erratic and sometimes wayward achievement, but it is nevertheless an achievement of a high order." Henry Miller called this review the "best so far," and said he was "amazed, considering the source."(D-M-144)

From 1935 to 1937 Durrell lived in Corfu, writing, reading, sailing, swimming. In September 1937 he went to Paris, where of course he met Miller. His home base until the war was Corfu. From 1939 to 1940, he taught at the Institute of English Studies in Athens and Kalamata. With the German advance in Greece, he went to Crete in 1941, and was evacuated to Egypt. From 1941 to 1945 he served as press officer for the British Ministry of Information's Middle East Branch, first as an assistant in Cairo, then in charge of a unit in Alexandria. Durrell describes Alexandria in his letters to Henry Miller:

First this teeming humid flatness--not a hill or a mound anywhere--choked to bursting point with bones and the crummy deposits of wiped out cultures. Then this smashed up broken down shabby Neapolitan town, with its Levantine mounds of houses peeling in the sun. A sun flat, dirty brown and waveless rubbing the port. Arabic, Coptic, Greek, Levant, French; no music, no art, no real gaiety.(D-M-187)

When he imagines and re-creates the city of the Quartet, the dramatic impact of this current impression is transformed and transfigured, but the reality of the people is still accurately retained. He says "the women are splendid--like neglected gardens. Rich, silk-and-olive complexions, slanting black eyes and soft adze-cut lips, and heavenly figures like line-drawings by a sexual Matisse."(D-M-181)

Some time in 1943 he met "a strange, smashing dark-eyed woman--with every response right, every gesture, and the interior style of a real person."(D-M-189) She was, he says, the child of Tunisian Jewish parents, and has seen the worst of Egypt. He finds books for her, cures her panic, and says he enjoyed "re-articulating her experience for her."(D-M-190) Surely this is a prototype for Justine.

From the scene of the Quartet, long before he re-creates it, Durrell observes to Miller that one would have to be a genius to "write a single line of anything that had a human smell to it here."(D-M-188) The gestation period was beginning.

Professor Herbert Howarth of the University of Manitoba, who knew Durrell personally while they were both in Cairo, has supplied information on the separation with Nancy, which by 1943 in a letter to Miller, Durrell blames on "the war."(D-M-180) Professor Howarth's recollection is that the separation began when Nancy and the daughter 'Pinky' were sent to Palestine with the evacuation when Auchinleck fell back on Cairo as Rommel threatened in July 1942. Later that year, Durrell must have received some indication that his wife did not intend to return to him, as he flew to Palestine in what Professor Howarth describes as "a savage panic to try to hold her," but came back after a few days, apparently having met with no success. When the other Press Corps wives returned to Egypt on the eve of Alamein, Nancy did not do so.

As he becomes more familiar with Alexandria, and less despairing of it, Durrell hears something about a cabalistic group studying in the Mediterranean area, and tells Miller he is going to see a small banker,

a Mr. Baltazian who is one of the pre-Christian adepts.(D-M-202) That he must have done so is apparent in the contents of the Quartet, notably the volume Balthazar.

Nostalgia for Corfu ("I am not a nomad at heart") has resulted in Durrell's writing Prospero's Cell in 1945,(D-M-40) and it is published as the author moves to his new position, that of Director of Public Relations for the Dodecanese Islands. His headquarters are on Rhodes, and he tells Miller he is "damn near" being Governor of twelve islands. (D-M-210) Eventually his divorce from Nancy is effective, and he marries his slim Alexandrian Eve, February 26th, 1947.

The Dark Labyrinth, first published as Cefalû, is a mystery story with symbolic overtones, set in Crete in the palace of Knossos. While it unwinds its tale, the book examines in depth the "eight characters in search of an exit," and is, as one reviewer says, "an important link in the chain culminating in the Quartet,"<sup>13</sup> in its probing of a cultural conflict and questions of fate.

In 1947-48, Durrell delivered a series of lectures in Argentina, where he served for a year as Director of the British Council Institute in Cordoba. From these lectures came The Key to Modern Poetry, which is discussed in a later section of this chapter.

From 1949 to 1952, Durrell was Press attaché in Belgrade. From his experience and familiarity with the diplomatic corps came two sharply amusing books, Esprit de Corps and Stiff Upper Lip in which the

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<sup>13</sup>Reavey, op. cit. p.24

British are cheerfully caricatured. From the same source came his penetrating insight into such a character as David Mountolive. While in Yugoslavia, where he learned to hate communism, (D-M-283) he wrote Sappho - A Verse Play. It is interesting that he chose a woman to write about, a woman who in the classical account is unsure of her sexual identity. There is no connection between the ancient poetess' story and Durrell's Sappho, as far as the verse play is concerned, but the reader cannot refrain from considering the implications, and from recognizing that Durrell's Sappho is a strong, thinking, vivid individual.

Then early in 1953, back to his familiar area, to Cyprus to be Director of Public Relations for the Government of Cyprus.

Durrell gives Pursewarden, in his letter to 'Brother Ass', lines which might well be applied to the young author who, probably for economic reasons, has allowed himself to be drawn into another distracting job which prevents the author from pursuing his main work. Pursewarden says of Darley, "I am only suggesting that you have not become desperate enough, determined enough. Somewhere at the heart of things you are still lazy of spirit." (D-154)

Eve has suffered a breakdown, is "frightfully ill," (D-M-295) and goes to England. The story is told in Bitter Lemons, which also reveals his lack of enthusiasm for pedestrian day-to-day employment. He knows that he is a creative writer by vocation and in dedication. In this period he also wrote Reflections on a Marine Venus, a "Companion to the landscape of Rhodes."

From Nicosia, in the fall of 1955, Durrell writes to Miller that he is half-way through a book called Justine, "which is all about Eve's Alexandria," (D-M-302) and he finishes it the following summer. It is, he says, a prose poem "to the Capital of Memory, and it carries a series of sharp cartoons of the women of Alexandria, certainly the loveliest and the most world-weary-women in the world." (D-M-303)

Durrell needed a help-mate. Without Nancy, he needed Eve; now without Eve, he needed someone else. He was distressed and apathetic after Eve's departure, missed his child, and tells Miller that

. . . by a stroke of luck a lovely young Alexandrian tumbled into my arms and gave me enough spark to settle down and demolish the book. She is French, Claude, a writer with something oddly her own. Night after night we've been. . . sitting over a scale map of Alexandria. . . tracing and re-tracing the streets with our fingers, recapturing much that I had lost. . . (D-M-304)

Surely this is Clea welcoming Darley back to Alexandria! Claude Vincent is a successful writer rather than an artist. Henry Miller says of her photograph that she looks "delicious, reminds one of someone I know but can't think whom. [Nancy perhaps?] Anyway, very feminine." (D-M-321) Durrell describes her as "an Alexandrian Becky Sharp, gay, resourceful and good-tempered," (D-M-319) and later as "gallant and spirited" as she helps him with his typing. (D-M-326) Like Clea, she seems to enjoy swimming. (D-M-339) Henry Miller concurs in the similarity between the two; in reading the fourth volume of the Quartet he says "I always transpose Claude for Clea." (D-M-264) It is significant that their relationship seems to have lasted, as if he had finally found the real woman who could share his life, and that his

comments about her as a person so aptly describe the character Clea Mentis.

From February 1957, Durrell, Claude and his two daughters, as well as two of hers by a previous marriage, have lived in Nimes, in French Provence. The extraordinary success of the Quartet, including Mountolive being selected as a Book-of-the-Month, has resulted among other things, in Durrell being exposed to a great deal of magazine, radio, and television publicity which has at least solved his financial problems. In 1957 he was awarded the Duff Cooper Prize for Bitter Lemons; in 1962 a Crosscurrents book, The World of Lawrence Durrell, saluted him, and in 1963 his correspondence with Henry Miller in published form is hailed as a "revelation of two of the most renowned writers of our age" (publisher's comment).

Some of the discrepancies in the Quartet which have delighted negative critics may be explained by the great speed with which the books were written. ~~Having decided to live by his art,~~ Curtis Cate suggests that Durrell was under pressure to realize some income:

Justine. . . took nine months to write--and that includes interruptions; Balthazar was written in six weeks, Mountolive in eight, and Clea in seven. Even allowing for an irrepressible element of Irish bravado in these admissions, the bare year and a half of actual creative effort which actually went into the making of these books can hardly be considered adequate for such a major undertaking.<sup>14</sup>

As we have seen, and as Curtis Cate admits, Durrell began to think about Justine many years before; it is unfair to measure the

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<sup>14</sup>Cate, op. cit., p.68

Quartet in relation to the time actually spent in writing it; the gestation period was long, if the actual birth was quick. Gate is generous in his praise, however, saying that Durrell has "elevated the fictitious Alexandria into a kind of urban microcosm of turbulent mankind, a sensual all-too-human City of Man, within whose teeming precincts his twentieth century figures could probe the bounds of human ignorance and lose themselves in the tortuous byways of love."<sup>15</sup>

It is outside the scope of this study to examine Durrell's poetry in detail, but mention should be made of his works which include On Seeming to Presume, The Tree of Idleness, a volume of Selected Poems and a larger volume of Collected Poems. His poetry is an admirable companion to his poetic prose; it is fresh, strong, eloquent and meaningful.

The man Durrell emerges quite vividly from the fragments of his own sketches of himself and others' comments. He is impulsive, articulate, a man of enthusiasm, capable of hard work. He needs companionship, particularly female companionship. He is dedicated to his chosen craft, although it took him some time to free himself of the economic necessity of taking other jobs. Women, particularly beautiful women, inspire him.

Of his likes and dislikes we learn that cold and damp, conformity and cant he dislikes intensely; he reveals his enjoyment of personal relationships, his love of the open air, of the sea and the sun (preferably absorbed in nakedness), of islands and olive trees. He likes his ivory-

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 69

tower island, but with contact both spiritually and intellectually with his predecessors and peers in the arts. He likes to enjoy life in the Epicurean grand manner, richly and fully.

Now that we have met the author and surveyed his career, it will be useful to examine some of those people, factors and books which have influenced him as an author, helping him to write as he writes in the Quartet.

## II. DEAR HENRY MILLER

If anyone asked him to tell about himself in 1937, Lawrence Durrell replied that he was "the first writer to be fertilized by Henry Miller."(D-M-90) In the preceding section the enthusiastic correspondence between Miller and Durrell was introduced; in this section the influence of the older author on the younger will be examined.

The recently published letters, frank, human, masculine and lusty, reveal much about both writers. Seen through them is a saga of development going full circle, from Durrell's worshipful admiration and Miller's olympian fatherly counsel, through war and success to Miller's admiring adulation of Durrell, and the latter's almost paternal concern for the older writer's state and status.

Aside from the intrinsic value of any sustained and loyal friendship--and this one has lasted twenty-eight years--perhaps the most important contribution Henry Miller made to Lawrence Durrell was in writing the Tropic of Cancer. Durrell writes:

. . . Tropic opened a pit in my brain. It freed me immediately. I had such a marvellous sense of absolution, freedom from guilt

. . . Tropic taught me one valuable thing. To write about people I knew something about . . . (D-M-61)

The Black Book was the result of this inspiration, and the Quartet, twenty years later, shows that the initial impact did not lose its force. Miller has never ceased encouraging Durrell; from the earliest advice to "start now and give it from the guts,"(D-M-37) to the last recorded letter, Miller's mind, so attuned to Durrell's, cheers, urges, pushes and stimulates. Durrell is ecstatic when Miller shouts "You are a genius!" It is perhaps true that the older author could scarcely resist such enthusiasm for a young man who is his declared "ardent disciple"(D-M-82) so long before the rest of the world recognized him (Miller), as a giant.

In the 'fatherly phase' of the correspondence, much of what is common to the two writers emerges. Their letters are remarkably similar in tone; both are bulging with ideas, both write with enormous enthusiasm; both are generous with their emotions. Both are eloquently verbose.

In interests and goals they share a great deal. They both love writing, of course. They both enjoy the relaxation of water-colour painting. Miller is fascinated with antiquities of Greece,(D-M-38 and 58) as is Durrell.(D-M-163) They are both intrigued with China, Tibet, and the mysterious East in general.(D-M-97) Their letters show a shared interest in the Symbolists, in Shakespeare, in women and their own children. They are sympathetic and generous with one another's financial straits. They both dislike any form of censorship; they both

struggle valiantly to provide vehicles like The Booster (Delta), for publishing avant-garde writing, their own in particular.

How intimately their ideas mesh is revealed throughout their published correspondence; that Miller recognizes this is indicated early in the relationship when he writes "we are all working toward the realization of the potential."(D-M-57) Miller understands Durrell's eagerness to spend all his time writing; in 1950 he says:

You need to be on your own. Is it so impossible? You'll always be working for someone, if you think it's 'necessary'. Take a good think some day. Map out your life as you'd like to live it. Then jump! You are a 'protected' individual. Life will take care of you, never fear. Because you give life.  
(D-M-281)

The two writers agree on the essential theme of the modern novel; Miller finds it in The Black Book, the theme of "Death and re-birth";(D-M-78) the same theme that finds its way into the Quartet.

As their relationship achieves a more equal footing, and as Durrell gains in self-confidence, the two men reveal their basic integrity. Durrell has developed and matured since The Black Book days, it is 1949 and he has just read Sexus. "But my dear Henry," he says, with a slight edge of stuffiness he may have contracted from his diplomatic associations:

The moral vulgarity of so much of it is artistically painful. These silly meaningless scenes which have no raison d'être, no humour, just childish explosions of obscenity--what a pity, what a terrible pity for a major artist not to have critical sense enough to husband his forces, to keep his talent aimed at the target. . . .(D-M-265)

He goes on, finding some good, much bad. Miller receives the diatribe, laughs, and assures his friend (who within a day or two is

full of regret for his outburst) that "I am writing exactly what I want to write in the way I want to do it."(D-M-267) It is refreshing that these two were not blinded by their mutual admiration. Lapses in the harmony of their relationship, and the slowing down of their voluminous correspondence during the war, did nothing to impair their relationship. Of Durrell in The Black Book days, among comments on Durrell as "a devil of a worker," and "a poet primarily," Miller says of their friendship; "We spoke as if resuming a conversation broken off centuries ago."<sup>16</sup> Durrell in his Studies in Genius contribution to Horizon on Henry Miller provides an insight into the fundamental thought of both his friend and himself:

. . . Miller (who like Lawrence, has thoroughly assimilated Freud), recognizes that sex is both a sacrament and uproariously funny (not to mention silly, holy, and tiresome all in one); and that to tidy it up into a moral scheme is simply to shackle the reader more and more firmly into his puritanism. He has mastered, in fact, the great discovery of the age--ambivalence in values--and that is what lifts most of his work above the ruck of ordinary writing."<sup>17</sup>

In the same study, Durrell refers to the Tropic of Cancer as "a sort of swan-song for city man,"<sup>18</sup> which phrase finds its echo in the Alexandria Quartet. The subject of ambivalence in values is obviously one which fascinates Durrell, as it fascinated Henry Miller. This is one

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<sup>16</sup>Miller, Henry, The Durrell of the Black Book Days, from The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. H. T. Moore, (Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), p.96-97

<sup>17</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, Studies in Genius--Henry Miller, Horizon, Volume XX, (1949), p.51

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p.59

of the keys to understanding both Lawrence Durrell and his Quartet.

One of the bonds between Miller and Durrell is their huge enjoyment of living. Nostalgically, Miller in 1957 recalls Durrell's "scribbling, scribbling, polishing your style, rewriting, writing some more, bathing, drinking, singing, laughing, but always coming back to the pad and pencil"(D-M-311) in Corfu. Again a year later he had word from another friend referring to Durrell as being "quiet, contained, and all that," and says: "If I ever hear that you have quieted down, that you no longer laugh explosively, that you are not doing a hundred things at once, that you are not miserably happy and effervescent, I shall die of a broken heart."(D-M-337) In the same letter he says he still goes to bed laughing or wakes up laughing thinking of things said or done so long ago. In his tribute to the Durrell of The Black Book days, written in 1959, Miller concludes his essay wondering if Durrell, when he sees him again, will have that same "belly laugh," and prays God that he will retain his infectious laughter to the grave.<sup>19</sup> At least in his association with Miller, Durrell gave the impression of living richly and fully. That he is this sort of man seems likely in view of the splendid comedy scenes in the Quartet; the writer with a sense of the ridiculous, the observer who could roar with laughter without self-consciousness. In a letter written to Miller in August of 1940, when a cheque from Miller had virtually "saved our lives," in the midst of all the uncertainty of war, Durrell tells a marvellous

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<sup>19</sup>Miller, (W.L.D.) op. cit., p.99

Scobiesque anecdote of their Greek friend Katsimbalis, drunk with wine and poetry, on the Acropolis, crowing a "cock a doodle doo" out over the darkness of the city until the whole night was alive with answering cock<sup>6</sup>rows. (D-M-166-7) There is an almost violent quality to Durrell's humour, certainly an enduring youthful exuberance. Henry Miller may have helped him retain it through the bad years; their shared pleasure in being alive is one of the most attractive elements in their friendship as revealed in their correspondence.

To summarize Henry Miller's influence on Lawrence Durrell as a modern novelist; he was the spark that set off the first explosive burst of Durrell's genius; he provided the inspiration for Durrell to write in the manner and of the matter of the new novelists of the twentieth century. He was guide and mentor in the early years, providing Durrell with the encouragement any struggling author needs, advising him about pruning away the excess verbiage, stimulating him to further efforts.

Because Durrell constantly believed in and promoted Miller as one of the great writers of our time, Durrell's association and friendship with him raised him early to the "big leagues"; he was virtually competing with the top players from the beginning of his career, and this in itself made demands on Durrell to which he felt bound to respond.

Henry Miller helped Durrell to write freely and honestly, to grapple courageously with the problems of portraying real people in real life.

### III. DURRELL AND THE SYMBOLISTS

The great debt that contemporary English and American poetry and the novelists' 'poetic prose' owes to the French Symbolists is well known. The new sensibility which T.S. Eliot introduced into English poetry between 1909 and 1915 was in part a legacy from the Symbolists. A major link between the French and the English awareness of the new force in language was Arthur Symons' The Symbolist Movement in Literature,<sup>20</sup> which was first published in 1899, and through which Eliot was introduced to the French writers in their original works. Durrell's admiration for Eliot must have helped him find both Symons and the Symbolists for himself.

That Durrell is a Francophile is revealed in many ways. Some evidence is found in his comment about France being "The only country in which one can forget the colour of one's skin and where one feels related to everyday life: wanted!"<sup>21</sup> In the same passage he says, significantly for a student of modern love; "The French recognize that love is a form of metaphysical inquiry. The English imagine it has something to do with plumbing." (T.S. Eliot, in an essay on Baudelaire, substituted the words 'Kruschen Salts' for 'plumbing' in the same general context.) It is significant too that Durrell has chosen

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<sup>20</sup>Symons, Arthur, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, (Constable and Company, London, 1911)

<sup>21</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, The World of Lawrence Durrell, Interview, p. 156

France as his home in recent years.

Durrell is interested in French literature. He admires Stendhal; he competes with Proust in the treatment of time; the Quartet is sprinkled with references to French writers, many of whom are referred to below. His special interest in the Symbolists makes them a logical focus for examination.

There are many similarities between the lives and works of the Symbolists and the novels, poems, ideas and methods of Lawrence Durrell. Gérard de Nerval came to Paris as a young man, enjoyed the association of poets and artists.<sup>22</sup> He was a vagabond, refusing to be confined, (except when he had to be committed to an asylum). According to Symons, de Nerval was an "unsystematic mystic,"<sup>23</sup> and "he speaks vaguely of the Kabbala."<sup>24</sup> He has visions and dreams, which could be attributed to madness but cannot be dismissed as raving in that they were a significant factor in his highly imaginative symbolic poetry. Symons quotes admiringly the sonnet Artemis; noting its "deliberate inconsequence,"<sup>25</sup> and later the "firmness of the rhythms and the jewelled significance of the words," likening them to the subsequent works of Mallarmé and Verlaine. It might be noted that one woman whom Darley-Durrell loved in the Quartet he called Melissa Artemis, and Narouz' madness includes

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<sup>22</sup>Symons, Arthur, op. cit., p. 12

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 25

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 23

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 38

visions.

Aside from his interest in the symbolist poets, and in addition to it, Durrell must have been interested, while he was in Rhodes, to recall that an ancestor of Villiers de L'Isle-Adam was, in 1464, Grand Master of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem and defended the island for an entire year against 200,000 Turks. Durrell tells us of his interest in Rhodesian history in Reflections on a Marine Venus, and probably enjoyed the remote connection. Symons' references to Villiers includes a commentary on the duality of Villiers' life, the contradictions of East and West, of being and becoming, of the occult and Roman Catholicism.<sup>26</sup> His philosophy, as defined by Symons, is not unlike the compromises with duality which Durrell develops in the Quartet. Villiers' dream Axél Symons describes as "the Symbolist drama--the drama of the soul, and at the same time it is the most pictorial of dramas; I should define its manner as a kind of spiritual romanticism."<sup>27</sup> Surely this comment could be made, almost word for word, if one were describing Durrell's Sappho.

Arthur Rimbaud, whose life was at once so tragic and so romantically exciting, was, according to Symons, a man of action.<sup>28</sup> His relationship with Verlaine, which Symons treats with delicacy and sympathy, was obviously a central passion of his life. (Durrell in the

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 39ff.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 44

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 65

Quartet provides a guide for an attitude toward the existence and reality of homosexuality, making no judgments of individual behaviour.)

Rimbaud's travels took him to Paris where he was drawn almost magnetically,<sup>29</sup> and in due course to the rest of Europe, to Egypt, to Cyprus, to Africa and finally back to France. "He had been," Symons reports, "a teacher of French in England";<sup>30</sup> he made his living as best he could; he wrote of visionary countries using "expressions of a singular and penetrating charm," according to his sister.<sup>31</sup> Of his writing Symons says:

He could render physical sensation, of the subtlest kind, without making any compromise with language, forcing language to speak straight, taming it as one would tame a dangerous animal.<sup>32</sup>

Without labouring the parallels, it may be suggested that this is a tradition into which Lawrence Durrell fits most comfortably. Both he and Miller refer often, in their letters, to Rimbaud; Durrell reads his letters in 1954 while he is in Cyprus, observing to Miller "he [Rimbaud] worked here--and built the Governor's house on Mt. Troodos. There is no mystery about the man. How hard and sane and unselfpitying his letters are."(D-M-301) His poem Je Est Un Autre, whose title is Rimbaud's crystallized memorial, reveals the intensity of his sympathy with that poet. The same poem includes reference to de Nerval. Like

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 61

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 63

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 60 (the sister is quoted by Symons)

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 72

Durrell, Rimbaud was a world-lover and a word-lover, a free spirit.

Paul Verlaine was afraid of death; Symons says that whenever he spoke of it, "it was with a shuddering revolt from the thought of ever going away into the cold, out of the sunshine which had been so warm to him."<sup>33</sup> As a friend of Verlaine's, Arthur Symons is sympathetic, noting that: "To Verlaine every corner of the world was alive with tempting and consoling and terrifying beauty,"<sup>34</sup> and regretting the poet's fears.

In what he describes as "not satire but an exercise in ironic compassion,"<sup>35</sup> Lawrence Durrell comments on death in Fourteen Carols on the Death of General Uncebunke:

He is now luggage, excess baggage,  
Not wanted on voyage, scaling a pass,  
Or swinging a cutlass in the caribbean,  
Under Barbados chewing the frantic marsh-rice,  
Seven dead men, a crooked foot, a cracked jaw,  
Ten teeth like hollow dice.<sup>36</sup>

This same poem, which was written in 1938, refers to death as "biological silence, a clinical sleep,"<sup>37</sup> and throughout his prose works Durrell gives an impression that death is a matter of regret to him, regret that the people who die miss the fun and action of living. The reference to the seven dead men in the above excerpt is an intriguing

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 76

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 78

<sup>35</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, Collected Poems, (Faber & Faber), p. 228

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 232

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 238

forecast of the last major scene in Clea.

Symons sees in Verlaine's work "that single, child-like necessity of loving and being loved,"<sup>38</sup> and he says the poetry Verlaine wrote was able "to sum up in itself the whole paradox of humanity, and especially the weak, passionate, uncertain, troubled Century to which we belong, in which so many doubts, negations, and distresses seem, now more than ever, to be struggling towards at least an ideal of spiritual consolation."<sup>39</sup> Here again the words Symons wrote in 1899 might well be applied to the prose works Lawrence Durrell is writing in the middle of the twentieth century.

Jules Laforgue's Moralités Légendaires, Arthur Symons says, contains prose which carries the experimental prose of Rimbaud to "a singular perfection. Disarticulated, abstract, mathematically lyrical, it gives expression, in its icy ecstasy, to a very subtle criticism of the universe, with a surprising irony of cosmical vision."<sup>40</sup> He speaks of Laforgue's prose as having in it "compassionate laughter at human experience."<sup>41</sup> Lawrence Durrell says in one of his letters; "ever since I was twenty I wanted to translate Laforgue's Moralities into English-- another ten years of reading French and I might work up the courage."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Symons, op. cit., p. 91

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 100

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 105

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 105

<sup>42</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, The World of Lawrence Durrell, Letters, p. 223

The fact that he has not yet done so in no way need diminish his admiration, and it may be contended that an attempt on Durrell's part to emulate Laforgue's prose style could be anticipated. He quotes Laforgue in the Quartet, (J-97) and has read him as early as 1948. (D-M-255)

A principle enunciated by Symons in discussing Stéphane Mallarmé might serve as a motto for the Symbolist movement: "to name is to destroy, to suggest is to create."<sup>43</sup> This theory is compatible with the skillful use of words to evoke responses on their own, with characters in a novel who are never wholly defined or completed, with a four part novel that suggests more and more to follow after, as Durrell has implied in the Quartet.

Baudelaire has been credited as an originator of many symbolist ideas.<sup>44</sup> His doctrine of synaesthesia, the intermixing of colour, sound and taste was "of primary significance to the symbolists," and his influence was strong on the other members of the Movement. Lawrence Durrell, in his poetry and prose, shows a richness of intermingled sensuous imagery which may be traced to this concept. Symons does not include Baudelaire in his group of Symbolists, accusing him of a "too deliberate rhetoric of the flesh."<sup>45</sup>

Karl and Magalaner sum up Symons' essay on Mallarmé:

Symons showed how these writers (the Symbolists) considered words as living things, as evocators of visions, the word as a

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 128

<sup>44</sup>Karl and Magalaner, op. cit., p.19

<sup>45</sup>Symons, op. cit., p. 5

liberating principle through which the human spirit is extracted from matter.<sup>46</sup>

They refer to the influence of the Symbolists on Conrad, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, E.M. Forster, W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, and many others. It is noted in these same passages that a writer like Joyce can carry the concept too far, or at least far enough to do what Symons deplores, namely to "bewilder the middle-classes." This may be compared with Durrell's comment on the verbal excesses of the Symbolists, some of whom, he says, "worked language so hard that it fell to pieces." (K-39) In the Quartet, Pursewarden called Symbolism "the great repair outfit of the psyche," (D-137) and Durrell turned to ~~them~~ with affection and referred to ~~them~~ with familiarity while he was 'integrating' his psyche in the years before the Quartet was written.

Lawrence Durrell has said "my skill is in words only." Mr. Derek Stanford, in a brief analysis of Durrell's poetry in which he quotes the line from Durrell, says it appears as a "poetry of symbols," and quotes Comte Goblet d'Alviella's definition of a symbol as "a representation which does not aim at being a reproduction."<sup>47</sup>

Durrell is fascinated by words; this is apparent in both his poetry and his prose. When Henry Miller expresses delight in Durrell's vocabulary, in 1937, the author responds: "Words I carry in my pocket, where they breed like white mice . . . I'm a fiendish reader for mere

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<sup>46</sup>Karl & Magalaner, op. cit., p. 24ff.

<sup>47</sup>Stanford, Derek, "Lawrence Durrell, An Early View of His Poetry," from The World of Lawrence Durrell, op. cit., p. 38, 40

syllables."(D-M-83) In the Hamburg interview now referred to as the Kneller Tape, Durrell comments:

Poetically, words are less important for their dictionary meanings than for the vibrations they set up in the middle ear--the pineal ear so to speak. Poets are simply handers on of the sound, like sea shells; and yet it is always the sound of the sea . . .<sup>48</sup>

In his poem Style, Durrell seems to equate his search for style in writing with

Something like the sea,  
Unlaboured momentum of water  
But going somewhere,  
Building and subsiding . . .<sup>49</sup>

His poems reflect the love of the sea; poems from or about Rhodes, Mykonos, Corfu, Athens, and Patmos include images related to this very important symbol, which is found again in the climax of the Quartet. This is one obvious example of Durrell's interest in words as symbols. That Durrell hopes his symbols are not confined to his poetry is indicated in his own words: "I'd like to hope that seen from the other end of the continuum my characters seem not just 'people' but symbols as well, like a pack of Tarot cards."<sup>50</sup> Again in the same interview he reiterates, "I don't want them [his characters] to be copies from life but to have (apart from their reality) a symbolic

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<sup>48</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, "The Kneller Tape," Hamburg, (W.L.D.), p. 164

<sup>49</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, "Style," from Collected Poems, (Faber & Faber, 1960), p. 18

<sup>50</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, "Two Cities Interview," (W.L.D.), p. 157, 159

life of their own."

The techniques of the Symbolists are many and varied; Lawrence Durrell performs with his usual dexterity in borrowing from them those which are best fitted to his skill and purpose. In the Quartet, the rich flow of well-chosen words has been commented on by almost every critic; his absorption in them and love of them is demonstrated on every page. For Durrell, as for Eliot, this was an important legacy of the Symbolist movement.

One of the Symbolists' techniques is to suggest rather than to say. Durrell's four-volume study of love suggests the nature of modern love; he does not develop a theory and state it as such. He suggests a reality for his characters beyond their actual presentation in the novel, a reality which includes more than the reader is told, much that he can suspect. Further, he suggests more than reality; the characters are symbols of human beings in a universal sense rather than mere inhabitants of the City of Alexandria, which is itself a symbol.

The Symbolists' experimentation with form, together with that of their legatees Proust and Joyce, can only have encouraged Durrell in his courageous attempt to present the Quartet in its four-volume 'Continuum' form, with all the hazards it presented from the point of view of communication, which is presumably one of the aspirations of the novelist.

Although he does not make direct reference to them, as far as can be discovered, Lawrence Durrell may also have been influenced by some of the things the Symbolists had to say about women. Simone de Beauvoir, in

her masterpiece The Second Sex, has excerpted a number of comments which speak for themselves. Mlle. de Beauvoir quotes Laforgue on the subject:

We should kill them since we cannot comprehend them; or better tranquilize them, instruct them, make them give up their taste for jewels, make them our genuinely equal comrades, our intimate friends, real associates here below, dress them differently, cut their hair short, say anything and everything to them--Up to now we have played with woman as if she were a doll. This has lasted altogether too long!<sup>51</sup>

And again, <sup>Mlle.</sup> de Beauvoir notes his saying:

Ah young woman, when will you be our brothers, our brothers in intimacy without ulterior thought of exploitation? When shall we clasp hands truly?<sup>52</sup>

The following is quoted by Simone de Beauvoir from Rimbaud:

There shall be poets! When woman's unmeasured bondage shall be broken, when she shall live for and through herself, man-hitherto detestable--having let her go, she too will be poet! Woman will find the unknown! Will her ideational worlds be different from ours? She will come upon strange, unfathomable, repellent, delightful things; we shall take them, we shall comprehend them.<sup>53</sup>

And in the conclusion of The Second Sex, again Laforgue:

No, woman is not our brother; through indolence and depravity we have made of her a being apart, unknown, having no weapon other than her sex, which not only means constant strife but is moreover an unfair weapon of the eternal little slave's mistrust--adoring or hating, but never our frank companion, a being set apart as if in esprit de corps and freemasonry.<sup>54</sup>

Accepting Rimbaud's homosexuality and maladjustment, and making

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<sup>51</sup>Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1957), p. 261

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 263

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 715 (from Rimbaud's letter to Pierre Demeny, May 15, 1871)

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 716

allowances for Laforgue's youth, there is still a remarkably modern and mature flavour to these outbursts, and it may be suggested that there is much even in these brief passages which finds an echo in Lawrence Durrell's work. In Chapter I when the character of Clea was analysed, a woman emerged whom the author of the Alexandria Quartet does seem to comprehend. Clea is a genuinely equal comrade, a woman who, in a sense, is a poet, searching the unknown, coming upon the unfathomable, the repellent, the delightful, a woman whose unmeasured bondage is broken, a "real" human being.

The Symbolist movement made an impression on Lawrence Durrell. He shares with ~~them~~ a belief in words as symbols, an enthusiasm and delight in the free and skilful use of doubly meaningful words, a faith in the doctrine of suggesting rather than saying, a recognition of there being more to know than apparent reality, pleasure in experimenting with form, and perhaps he also shares some of the philosophy about modern women which they expressed and suggested.

#### IV. ALBERT EINSTEIN AND LAWRENCE DURRELL

In his Key to Modern Poetry, where he is identifying some of the forces which have determined the character of modern literature, (and, it may be suggested, all the arts), Lawrence Durrell attributes considerable importance to Albert Einstein and the theory of relativity.

Karl and Magalaner sum up an important result of Einstein's work in relation to the modern novel as being that after the physicist, "Man could no longer 'see' objective reality with any clarity; for now,

because of the unsureness of his own senses, he distorts reality in the very process of observing it."<sup>55</sup> Instead of seeing things as 'fixed' and 'stable' they must now be observed in relation to other things; like the scientist, the novelist has had to stop looking for absolutes. The critics also suggest that out of his new insecurity, man has become reluctant to claim for himself the important rôle, the rôle of the all-conquering hero.

Durrell tends to be consciously excited about the implications of the 'new' concepts, which were, by the time he was writing the Key, no longer absolutely fresh and unknown. He does, however, create an interesting link between Einsteinian thought and Oriental mysticism. His comments on space, time and their application to modern literature are of interest; for example he says: "Time and the ego are the two determinants of style for the twentieth century; if one grasps the ideas about them, one has, I think, the key to much that has happened." (K-117)

He interprets the Theory of Relativity as presenting the world with a new kind of space and time. "Einstein's theory," he writes, "joined up subject and object, in very much the same way that it joined up space and time. . . what is important to us. . . is the symbolic act of joining what is separated." (K-26) He notes that in the opinion of the physicist the previous ideas about space and time were not sufficiently flexible and that Einstein "suggested a marriage of the two

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<sup>55</sup>Karl and Magalaner, op. cit., p. 33

into a four-dimensional volume which he called a continuum."(K-28) The structure of the Quartet may have been in Durrell's mind as he wrote. He refers to it as a "four volume effort" in his letters to Henry Miller, June, 1957.(D-M-314) The theory leads Durrell to an appreciation of new concepts of the universe, for example that, "time has extended itself almost beyond comprehension--time is the measure of our death-consciousness,"(K-4) that what Einstein has conceived is "The sort of time which contained all time in every moment of time."(K-29) As early as 1936 Durrell has been contemplating the meaning of time; in his "Heraldic Universe," he tells Henry Miller, he is "very carefully and without conscious thought destroying time,"(D-M-19) presumably he means the conventional hour-to-hour, day-to-day accepted pattern of progressing time.

Durrell finds amplification of Einsteinian thought in Sir James Jean's The Mysterious Universe, and relates the physicist's discoveries to modern poetry which, he says, "unconsciously reproduces something like the space-time continuum in the way that it uses words and phrases; and the way in which its forms are cyclic rather than extended."(K-26)

Henri Bergson's concept of "Duration" has also come under Durrell's scrutiny. He describes it as "the indivisible flux of consciousness--made continuous only by memory, which charges each moment with its past."(K-117) Both in the Key to Modern Poetry and in the introduction to Balthazar Durrell seems to feel that the application in literary works of Bergson's Theory has an effect of weakening or destroying form. To Henry Miller in 1936 he states flatly "I have discovered that the idea of duration is false,"(D-M-19) although he does not at

that time indicate that his concept of duration is the same as Bergson's.

The extent to which Durrell has applied these theories (as he understands them), in his novel of Alexandria is open to conjecture. It is suggested, however, that he does try to accept Einstein's challenge that time and space be married in a four dimensional volume called a continuum. In the Justine worknotes he writes:

. . . narrative momentum forward is counter-sprung by references backward in time, giving the impression of a book which is not travelling from a to b, but standing above time and slowly turning on its own axis to comprehend the whole pattern--a marriage of past and present, with the flying multiplicity of the future racing toward one. (J-248)

Again in the introduction to Balthazar he says of the first three volumes of the Quartet that "they interlap, interweave in a purely spatial relation. Time is stayed." This is the fruition of his thinking so many years before, for instance that "there is only Space," (D-M-19) and that "time as a concept does not exist, but only as an attribute of matter." (D-M-23) Pursewarden is made to define Durrell's objective; "a continuum, forsooth, embodying not a temps retrouvé but a temps délivré." (D-135) There can be little doubt as to the autobiographical connotation of Darley's comment in Clea as he examines his own development and observes that "~~the~~ writer I was becoming was learning at last to inhabit those deserted spaces which time misses." (C-14)

Durrell wants to try to contain all time in every moment of time, and his characters tend to illustrate his attempt to achieve this. The character of Clea, for example, exists in a certain space, which has dimensions, and in a series of times, or in a state of motion related

to the dimensional space. Sometimes she is physically near the narrator, other times she and he are separated by distance. There is a movement of time, particularly in Clea, the fourth volume of the Quartet, but the time there is sometimes past time, sometimes present, and has an implication of future. Simultaneously, there is an impression created by the author of a real being and of real happenings. The distance factor is minimized by a prolific correspondence, and by the numerous incidents of the narrator's recall of the memory or comments of Clea, in absentia.

If one of the characteristics of the modern novel, as a result of Einsteinian thought, is distortion of reality, and another the absence of absolutes, it would seem that Lawrence Durrell complies with these criteria. The whole of the "Interlinear" in Balthazar is a good example of the way in which reality can be distorted "in the very process of observing it."

The events and the characters in the Quartet are seen in relation to other things; the people are unsure and searching. There is distortion in the isolated incidents as reported through different observers; there is distortion in the personalities of the individual characters. And there are no absolutes in the Quartet; there is a tenuous quality in the novel as a whole, in its theme, and in its dramatis personae. In this respect in particular it is an Einsteinian novel, an unfinished continuum.

As an artist, Durrell admittedly completes the cycle for most of his characters, but never in an absolute way. At the end of the Quartet,

Justine has found a new toy in Memlik, but the reader has no justification for assuming the new relationship will last. Scobie has become a Saint, but his predecessor was thrust into oblivion, and one day another saint might take El Scob's place. Mountolive can have Liza's love now that it has been freed by Pursewarden's suicide, but one can wonder what long-term effects her childhood and youth may have. Leila is dead, leaving Nessim "freed in a curious way,"(C-266) with the insatiable Justine playing with Memlik, and Melissa's child to reassure him of his potency but at the same time to remind him of his past and increase his responsibility for the future. Pombal is back in the Foreign Office enjoying "an army of women"(C-280) which would indicate that there is no absolute in grief, (and that Stendhal may have a successor in amorous pursuits). New cycles begin. Darley and Clea, both beginning new phases in their careers as artists, are the two who emerge with a new personality-integration, may have started to "become effective." The worknotes at the end of Clea illustrate the continuum, the continuation of the struggle of the individual to adjust to and find himself in the distorted and difficult world of the nuclear age.

It is only a step for Durrell to link space-time and religion. He refers in the Key to Professor S. Alexander's book Space, Time and Deity, the thesis of which he summarizes as being "that mind was only a function of the space-time stuff in its gradual evolution toward Deity." (K-33) Durrell probably "discovered" Alexander through Wyndham Lewis, and derives from the philosopher, and from the writer's interpretation of him, support for his theory that mind and matter are evolving toward One-ness. In his early attempts to delineate the

"Heraldic Universe" he looks for art nowadays to be "real art, as before the flood. It is going to be prophecy, in the Biblical sense." (D-M-19) He says he is trying "to isolate the exact moment of creation, in which the maker seems to exist heraldically." (D-M-23) It would seem that Durrell is conscious of the God in man, the creative fire in the human mind.

Durrell is also influenced by Bertrand Russell, who in his ABC of Relativity relates the Principle of Least Action to what he describes as a "law of cosmic laziness." (K-161) All these fragments of religious reference lead to an assumption that Lawrence Durrell embraces an Eastern and mystical rather than a Western and pragmatic view of man related to creation, the creator and the universe.

Without difficulty, Durrell connects the Einsteinian Theory with the ancient wisdom of the Eastern Religions, noting in passing that there is nothing new in the intuitive recognition of truth. (He cites as an example the influence of the early Renaissance philosopher Giordano Bruno on James Joyce in Finnegan's Wake, (K-34) and in discussing his idea for the Quartet in the letter referred to above (D-M-314) he himself tacitly acknowledges Bruno.)

Durrell's enthusiasm for the mystical oriental religions may have sprung from his childhood memories of India and China. Henry Miller thinks so; in his panegyric on The Black Book he writes to Durrell:

. . . now I understand the Himalayan background. You should thank your lucky stars you were born there at the gateway to Tibet. There's a new dimension in your book which could only have come

from such a place. It's like we were out among new constellations. (D-M-73)

In the Key, Durrell expands his appreciation of mysticism, referring to the Bhagvad-Gita and The Book of the Simple Way as enjoining their readers "to free themselves of the opposites." (K-83)

This same philosophy may be seen in Durrell's Song for Zarathustra:

What Yang and Yin divided  
In one disastrous blunder  
Must one day be united and  
Let no man put asunder.<sup>56</sup>

Durrell detects the oriental religious influence on such writers as Huxley, Heard, Isherwood and Maugham, and is particularly intrigued by the Eastern Theory of 'non-attachment', the objective of nirvana. This he relates to Lao-Tzu's principle of 'non-action', which seems to reflect Russell (and Einstein) in the principle of least action, the law of cosmic laziness. Durrell finds an outstanding example of the application of Eastern thought to Western writing in W.B. Yeats. He maintains that a primary influence on Yeats was Madame Blavatsky's Theosophy, suggests that it offered him release "from the cycle of birth and re-birth; it also offered a reinterpretation of the scriptures of the West which linked them up to gnosticism and neo-platonism; and so to the teachings of the East." (K-104)

Interest in the Cabalistic group to which Durrell refers in a letter to Henry Miller from Alexandria (D-M-200ff) provides a key to

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<sup>56</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, Collected Poems, (Faber and Faber, London, 1960), p. 268

the author's search for "One-ness." Even as he writes, he is planning to use it in the Book of the Dead, as he was calling the early glimmerings of the Quartet. In the Key to Modern Poetry, he is still contending that there is much to learn from "the gnostic fragments, the Logoi, which the compilers of our sacred books rejected,"(K-152) that all the searchers, Lao-Tzu, Plato, Pythagoras, are joined in their common effort to find the secret of "the integration of man."(K-153) In the Quartet, Balthazar is the student of oriental mysticism, and Clea, as we have seen in Chapter I, serves as an alter-ego for Darley in exploring its mysteries.

Clea has many of the characteristics of the individual who accepts the mysteries of the East. In the preceding chapter her superstitious nature was referred to; in due course she has "done with fortune-tellers once and for all!"(C-279) but still has the certainty that Durrell will follow her to France in his own good time. This intriguing confidence suggests an almost oriental sense of pre-ordained destiny.

Earlier in Clea, she shows an almost telepathic quality, which is also closely related to Eastern mysticism. Darley says

. . . very often at moments when I was actually thinking of her, she would walk miraculously into the flat saying: "I felt you calling me to come" or else "It suddenly came over me to need you very much."(C-161)

If Clea is used by Durrell to personify the feminine and intuitive aspects of his own mind, her special function is illustrated in her own comment; "perhaps you will concede something to the power of prophecy, sceptic that you are!(C-115) Clea as the woman accepting mysteries balances Darley as the man who doubts them.

In addition to this alter-ego proposition, it was suggested above that Clea serves Durrell as a mirror for revealing the unreality of apparent reality. The characterization of Clea is affected by Durrell's theories about space, time and the universal search for truth, which are cross-fertilized in his mind, as he himself conducts his personal search. In Clea, he creates a character who is part of the continuum. When first Darley sees Clea in the final volume, she is sitting where Melissa had once sat, in "the exact station in place and time,"(C-76) and it gives Darley a "strange sense of unreality" (C-77) to approach her. Again when he is relaxed in his love for Clea, Darley thinks:

A whole new geography of Alexandria was born through Clea, reviving old meanings, renewing ambiances half forgotten, laying down like a rich wash of colour a new history, a new biography to replace the old one.(C-229)

For Lawrence Durrell, the new scientific knowledge of physics is related to ancient wisdom, and the Quartet reflects some elements of both. Because he is consciously modern in his treatment of the new concepts, and acutely aware of the 'modernity' of so many aspects of his century, it may be inferred that his sensitive portrayal of a modern woman in Clea is one part of this awareness. Simultaneously, he sees a connection with the past, and gives Clea characteristics which are the timeless prerogative of women.

#### V. THE FREUDIANS AND LAWRENCE DURRELL

The modern novel has been deeply influenced by Sigmund Freud's theories. His mark is on the free association method used in psycho-

analytical treatment, and used by such novelists as James Joyce. His mark, with that of Einstein, is on the de-emphasis on the absolutes of logical reality; there is more, always more than is known for sure. Freud can be heard chuckling quietly over the meaningful suggestive verbal by-play which characterizes contemporary writing, the attempt at authentic recollection of interrupted, halting expression.

Sigmund Freud was no mean phrase-maker himself; the man who wrote as tidily as "heredity is seduction by the father,"<sup>57</sup> found words to describe his intricate thoughts, who understood the symbolism of words, would not be surprised that the modern novelists have tried to use words, not only for their meaning or double meaning, but for their poetical or symbolic effect as well.

As the foundation of psychoanalysis, with which Freud's genius must always be associated, it has been said that the three vital factors are "the assumption that there are unconscious mental processes, the recognition of the theory of resistance and repression, the importance of sexuality and the Oedipus complex."<sup>58</sup> In line with this Freud would understand and sympathize with the modern novelist's use of the recurring theme, the rhythm of repetition in characters and sequences, recognizing the author's purpose in so constructing his work. He would welcome the plethora of self-analytical characters in the modern novel, relate readily to the role of the author-narrator who tries to be aloof and

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<sup>57</sup>Karl and Magalaner, op. cit., p. 29

<sup>58</sup>Freud, Sigmund, A General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis, (Garden City Pub. Company, 1943) Ernest Jones Preface, (1920)

impersonal, receiving impressions. And as a psychiatrist, Freud would examine with interest characters whose behaviour was human behaviour, "in which diversity and complexity are the twin stuff of emotional, not rational, man,"<sup>57</sup> where behaviour has meaning and either conscious or unconscious purpose. Perhaps more enthusiastically than Adler or Jung, Freud agrees with the 'burden of sex' as the operating force in most human behaviour, and welcomes it in the novel.

One of the tenets of the Freudian treatment method is the analysis of dreams. The goal in the interpretation of dreams is "the discovery of a caput Nili of neuropathology";<sup>59</sup> the 'source of the Nile' is the almost inaccessible jungle of the psyche.

There are at least four processes of distortion in dreams that have been isolated by Freud. One is the process of condensation, "a combining of a number of thoughts into economical composites, so that each element of the dream will have several meanings and be what Freud called over-determined."<sup>60</sup> A second process in dreams is that of displacement, a substitution of one identification for another. A third involves considerations of representability, "the replacement of abstractions by concrete images," and a fourth and all-embracing process might be termed 'secondary revision' or what Hyman calls "a further tendentious disguising" or concealment. These processes are complicated by the warring of the unconscious and the preconscious, the id and the

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<sup>59</sup>Hyman, Stanley E., The Tangled Bank (Athaeum Press, N.Y., 1962), p. 307

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 300 ff

ego.

If a novel could be compared to a "dream described,"<sup>61</sup> the four processes of distortion in dreams might be applied to Durrell's work. The Alexandria Quartet, for example, is a combining of many thoughts, a condensation of many lives. It has a substitution, the City of Alexandria for the City of Mankind. It has dream-like abstractions of character, illusionary, fragmentary thoughts turned into people who walk about and do and say strange things. It has symbols as its 'further tendentious disguising'. Like a dream, it can be read and recalled for amusement; it can be studied for meaning; it can be analysed for real understanding. It may also be noted that the conflict in the Quartet, (and novels are supposed to have conflict in them), is really an internal conflict within the conscious and/or unconscious minds of the characters, who struggle more with themselves than with others.

In addition to the analysis of dreams, Freud contributed to psycho-analysis the concept of the Oedipus complex, an intriguing and complicated theory not directly pertinent to the current study, except insofar as it illuminates the presentation and understanding of this modern novel and the characters in it. Freud's own comments about incest, for example, throw light on Durrell's portrayal of Pursewarden, Liza and Mountolive when Freud writes, "a boy's earliest choice of objects for his love is incestuous, and that those objects are forbidden ones--his mother and

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<sup>61</sup>Freud, Sigmund, A General Introduction to Psycho Analysis, (Permabooks, 1953), pp. 179-192

his sister."<sup>62</sup>

In discussing Henry Miller's influence on Durrell, it was noted above that Durrell developed beyond the four-letter-word stage of his earlier writing. From Freudian thought, Durrell has derived much of his understanding of human behaviour and the importance of sexual development in it; in the Quartet, while its central topic is "an investigation of modern love," Durrell does not emulate Proust, Joyce, Miller or Lawrence in their intimate and exhaustive descriptions of physical sex.

In The Key to Modern Poetry, Durrell explores Freud's theories through hypnosis to repression to recall, and says the psychologist found that "the fantasies of his individual patients were often direct copies of race-myths and folk-tales of savage peoples."(K-53) Freud's ideas, Durrell writes, "have allowed us access to a new territory inside ourselves in which each one of us who is seeking to grow, to identify himself more fully with life, will feel like Columbus discovering America."(K-54) This is how Durrell himself felt when he read Miller's Tropic of Cancer; in turn it was how Miller felt on reading The Black Book.

Freud's discoveries included the new language, the symbolic language of dreams. Durrell sees in the Freudian concept "that words in the unconscious were double in meaning, just as so many of the impulses were double symbols developing a multiple impact."(K-63) This is

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<sup>62</sup>Freud, Sigmund, Totem and Taboo, (W.W. Norton and Co., N.Y., 1950), p. 17

reminiscent not only of Durrell's poetry, and his insatiable interest in words, but of his appreciation of the difference between the apparent, the obvious, the superficial and the deeper inherent meaning of behaviour. On reading Henry Miller's Hamlet, Durrell says: "It's a perfect picture of the inner struggle, done in terms of the outer one-- as all great books are, at least to me."(D-M-26) (Incidentally, ten years later, in 1946, Durrell writes to Miller: "You and Freud emerge as the great giants of this epoch."(D-M-215)

While Lawrence Durrell acknowledges Freud as the Master, he is even more intrigued with the works of Freud's disciples. Freud, he suggests, was looking for primary causes; Jung's contribution was that he "substituted the idea of creative balance for the idea of first cause."(K-63) The term balance suggests two factors balancing one another, which may be the key to Durrell's interest.

The same kind of balance may have been in Durrell's mind when he says of another Freudian disciple and interpreter, Francis J. Mott, that he "provided for a happy marriage between reason and illumination without sacrificing the claims of either."(K-33) Durrell seems almost to enjoy displaying a certain erudition in moving from the famous names like Freud and Jung to the almost entirely unknown scientists like Mott and Georg Walther Groddeck who is discussed below.

One source of Durrell's affinity for Mott may have been his interest in medicine. Early in 1938 he writes to Henry Miller "I am seriously thinking to start a medical training in England next winter."(D-M-124) The year before he wrote; "Always wanted to be a doctor.

Young enough to be as yet. Maybe in a year or two,"(D-M-65) when he was telling Miller about a new book on the anatomy of the brain.

The book by Mott which Durrell recommends in the Key is The Universal Design of the Oedipus Complex - (he mistakenly calls it The Grand Design). Mott recapitulates his complicated theory of biosynthesis, which relates to pre-natal sexuality, the bi-sexuality of the fetus in relation to the placenta, and the post-natal affect pattern, with the observation that two kinds of mentation are essential: both intellectual-spatial and emotional. At first, he says, they may be developed separately, "whereafter they may be brought into a rhythmic interaction which shall result in a new synthesis."<sup>63</sup> The biological interpretation and extension of Freud's psychological assurance that the personality is formed from the earliest moment of life was of great interest to Durrell.

Mott claims that the dilemma of modern man, who is armed or encumbered with both atom bombs and primitive passions, arises from man destroying his own contact with his deep inner feelings. He regrets the process by which at the same time the enormous power has been released from space, the content of real emotion has been corrupted. A statement of his concern with which Durrell must have sympathized is as follows:

The apotheosis of this form of thinking is found in mathematics which deals with highly polished symbols from which every trace of

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<sup>63</sup>Mott, Francis J., The Universal Design of the Oedipus Complex, (David McKay Co., 1950), p. 165

emotion has been purged. This divorce between time-feeling and space-thinking troubles all who have the long-range view of human destiny.<sup>64</sup>

While he admired Mott's theories in his study of Freudian thought, Durrell was even more interested in Georg Walther Groddeck, who, he says carried the theories beyond the point where Mott left them, and allowed us to "peer into the mystical regions which lie beyond"(K-73) the boundaries of the ego.

In an article on Groddeck in the "Studies in Genius" series in Horizon magazine in 1948, Durrell refers to the theory of the "It," which the psychologist is supposed to have borrowed from Nietzsche. Groddeck used the term in his interpretation of Freud, who in turn employed it in his concept of the "Id." Durrell defines the "It" as an unknown quality, "for Groddeck," he writes, "the whole psyche with its inevitable dualisms seemed merely a function of something else--an unknown quality--which he chose to discuss under the name of the 'It'."<sup>65</sup> The theme of dualism recurs again and again in Durrell's writing, and apparently when he reads, it is this aspect of the contents of various books which attracts his attention.

In the same study Durrell quotes Groddeck as saying that "the sum total of an individual human being--physical, mental, and spiritual, the organism with all its forces, the microcosms, the universe which is man, I conceive of as a self unknown and unknow-

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 165

<sup>65</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, "Studies in Genius - Groddeck," Horizon Vol. XVII, (June, 1948), p. 385

able."<sup>66</sup> In The Key to Modern Poetry he re-iterates this; saying that to Groddeck "the whole was an unknown, a forever unknowable entity whose shadows and functions we are."(K-75) This recalls, of course, the "unknown" and "unknowable" Clea introduced in the Quartet.

Groddeck "thinks in terms of liberation"(K-73) Durrell says in the Key. In the Horizon study he notes that Groddeck considered the psychoanalytic equipment as one means of exploring the mysteries of the human being, the 'It-self', but that where Freud speaks of cure, Groddeck speaks of "liberation through self-knowledge."<sup>67</sup> This is the destiny of Darley and Clea in the Quartet; they help one another to self-awareness and liberation both physically and psychologically.

Groddeck as paraphrased by Durrell maintains that "man lives by the perpetual symbolization of his It, through art, music, disease, language. . . ."<sup>68</sup> The reference to disease is of interest; not only was Durrell tempted to study medicine, but the Quartet has in it Amaril, a doctor, and Balthazar, a doctor, both seeking to re-integrate, the one on a physical basis, the other on the cabalistic and mystical plane, the damage and destruction they see around them.

Most significant in relation to the character and portrayal of Clea in the Quartet is Durrell's summary of Groddeck's revelations for him:

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 385

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 388

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 398

He is the only psycho-analyst for whom the artist is not an interesting cripple but someone who has, by the surrender of his ego to the flex of the It, become the agent and translator of the extra-causal forces which rule us. That he fully appreciated the terrible ambivalent forces to which the artist is so often a prey is clear; but he also sees that the artist's dilemma is also that of everyman, and that this dilemma is being perpetually re-stated in art, just as it is being re-stated in terms of disease or language. We live (perhaps I should paraphrase the verb as Groddeck does) we are lived by a symbolic process, for which our lives provide merely a polished surface on which it may reflect itself.<sup>69</sup>

This passage provides us with what amounts to a description of Clea as an artist, Darley as an artist, Lawrence Durrell as an artist, all of them after they have explored their own inner depths, "integrated" their personalities and are ready to use their talent. Again in the Key, Durrell says that "with Groddeck we learn the mystery of participation with a world of which we are a part, and from which the pretensions of the ego have sought to amputate us."(K-78) When he comes to write the Quartet, Alexandria becomes the world. Even the use of the term 'amputate' is significant; we find Balthazar trying to cut off his hands; Clea having hers amputated by Amaril.

Disease fascinates Durrell. In the Key, he explores Groddeck's theories about illness, quoting him in his belief "that man creates his own illness for a definite purpose--every human being has the feeling of guilt and tries to get rid of it by self-punishment".(K-72) A Freudian analysis of the Quartet characters could scarcely escape the conclusion that each of them is "sick" in his own way, with the possible exception of Clea and Darley.

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 399

Of particular interest in Durrell's study of Groddeck is his selection from the psychologist's The World of Man in which he deals with the tribal associations of words. Durrell chooses his description of the word "sex", reflecting that it conveys the idea that "man and woman once formed a unity,"(K-62) that it is related to the sickle-moon, and since this term is only used when the moon is waxing, "it gives to Death the suggestion not of annihilation but of a new birth." (K-63) This selection is doubly significant; it begins: "The very word sex suggests the violent splitting asunder of humanity into male and female,"(K-62) a reference to the apartness which Groddeck, as far as Durrell is concerned, resolves with his It Theory.

Durrell cross-fertilizes Groddeck's ideas with the ancient oriental thinkers when he says: "Groddeck's ego-it polarity is a brilliant rationalization of the Eastern mystic's position--who seeks to free himself from the opposites of being, and to emerge into Reality." (K-83) He adds: "The keynote is reintegration and acceptance of the warring opposites."(K-83)

The recurrent emphasis on the relationships between opposites is an outstanding characteristic of Lawrence Durrell. He has sought and found in Einstein subject and object being joined, that which has been separated being united. In Sir James Jeans he found a theory of the past and future being joined in the present. In the Eastern mystics he has recognized the objective of One-ness; in theosophy the joining of knowledge and faith. Freud provides him with the link between the conscious and the unconscious mind, Mott the synthesis of biology and psychology;

Groddeck assures him that reality is in re-integration.

Durrell's application of Freudian thought in the Quartet is rather more its extension through Groddeck than it is pure Freud. In this section it has been suggested that the novel as a whole is oriented to Freudian thought as are most contemporary novels. More specifically, the Quartet is consciously sex-oriented, or love-oriented, which is a paramount element of Freud's theories. The Oedipus complex and all it implies deserves further amplification; that it is referred to in the text of the Quartet is illustrated in a subsequent section of this study.

Wryly, Durrell introduces Freud himself into the novel, implying that Justine and Arnauti "visited the book-lined cell of Czechnia, where the famous mandarin of psychology sat, gloating placidly over his specimens."(J-79) When Arnauti glimpsed or thought he glimpsed, the villain of Justine's early sex-life, he remarks; "So this was the man for whose name Freud had hunted with all the great might of his loving detachment."(J-81) An excellent illustration of Freudian 'case history authenticity' is included in the sequence where Nessim has dreamed or imagined that he had beaten Justine until his arm ached, and on waking "he had found his whole arm aching and swollen."(J-181) Clea's letter at the conclusion of Justine is a good example of the familiarity she has with at least the superficialities of Freudian psychological principles, reflecting Durrell's own groping for understanding of human behaviour.

Clea's portrayal by Durrell relates to Groddeck in that she is

portrayed in physical, mental and spiritual terms, but is a 'self' that can never be completely known, except to herself. Clea seeks and finds Groddeck's ideal of 'liberation through self-knowledge'.

In view of the evidence presented in the first Chapter, it would be difficult to argue that Durrell's portrayal of Clea is not psychologically sound; Freud and Groddeck have helped equip the author for this achievement.

## VI. THE LEGACY OF LANGUAGE

In his own writing, Durrell seeks to balance the literal and the symbolic meaning of words, to reconcile the opposites in life. On his initial premise that "the characteristic of our age is the acceptance of duality," (K-46) Lawrence Durrell bases his literary criticism, and selects from the poets and novelists of the last hundred years those who have recognized dualities and in some cases sought to reconcile them.

To complete our investigation of those factors and individuals whose existence influenced Lawrence Durrell, it is necessary to review his choice of writers who preceded him and whose work may have affected him, may have helped him find his own niche in the tradition.

Earlier in this chapter the influence of Henry Miller was examined. In the Preface to the Key, Durrell acknowledges his debt to P. Wyndham Lewis (perhaps a prototype for Pursewarden?) and his Time and the Western Man, and to Edmund Wilson's Axel's Castle. In a 1936 letter to Henry Miller, Durrell says of Lewis, "I like him as a permanent

enemy of the people. Don't always agree with him."(D-M-30)

Lawrence Durrell acknowledges a general debt to Frazer and The Golden Bough, which, he says, "provided a link between contemporary and primitive religious beliefs."(K-152) He recognizes the impact of Darwin's Origin of the Species in modern thought(K-16) and refers to the Trojan, Egyptian, Mycenaean and Minoan archeological discoveries which helped the present to understand the past. The contribution which Frazer made which is of particular interest to Durrell is that he "provided the psychologists with a sort of stock-pot of primitive thought, much of which they were finding still active in the unconscious of the modern city man."(K-52) There is an obvious application of this connection between past and present in Durrell's thought.

Of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce, Durrell writes: "In 1922 we stumble on The Waste Land of T.S. Eliot, which altered the face of poetry, and Ulysses by James Joyce, whose technical innovations were to alter the face of prose--in neither case, however, for the better."(K-68) He suggests that Bergsonian "Duration" as extended into literary form has a detrimental effect on Lawrence and Joyce, "and much of what is tiring in Virginia Woolf comes from the surrender of a feminine temperament to recorded sensation."(K-117) (He might have added 'and much of what is wonderful' in respect of Mrs. Woolf's writing.) Of Joyce's style Durrell writes, "the type of language which Joyce chose to express himself in when he wrote Finnegan's Wake is a kind of reductio ad absurdum of the new influences."(K-65) In the Key Durrell also refers with an air of familiarity and affection to Thomas Hardy, Gerard Manley

Hopkins, Dylan Thomas, Aldous Huxley, Edith Sitwell, Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats. He is particularly attracted to Kipling, which could be as a result both of Durrell's Anglo-Indian background and his enjoyment of lusty and virile words and rhythms. Of course his selection for a series of lectures would not necessarily include all his favourite writers, nor can it be assumed that all the writers named had a specific influence over his work, but it is interesting that he chooses innovators, like Eliot and Joyce, masters of the language like Sitwell and Dylan Thomas, mystics like Yeats and Huxley, Symbolists like Rimbaud.

To whatever extent Pursewarden is Durrell, it is intriguing to note Pursewarden's Quartet comments on various writers mentioned in The Key to Modern Poetry; (C-125ff) "D.H. Lawrence, so wrong, so right, so great, may his ghost breathe on us all. . . ." John Donne, who "stopped upon the exposed nerve, jangling the whole cranium. . . ." Blake and Whitman who "are awkward brown paper parcels full of vessels borrowed from the temple which tumble all over the place when the string breaks. . . ." Auden who "also talks. He has manumitted the colloquial" . . . Proust, whose "work is the great academy of the time-consciousness," and T.S. Eliot, who

puts a cool chloroform pad upon a spirit too tightly braced by the information it has gathered. His honesty of measure and his resolute bravery to return to the headsman's axe is a challenge to us all; but where is the smile? He induces awkward pains when we are trying to dance! He has chosen greyness rather than light . . .

While Durrell gives an impression of almost trying to be clever and epigrammatical in his Key, in letters to Miller, and in the Quartet when he refers to other poets and novelists, it is important to

recognize that he is deeply aware of the stature and skill of his predecessors and peers. His voracious reading habits have already been referred to; he is conscious of the debt he owes to the words and thoughts of other writers.

Another writer who may have had a profound influence on Lawrence Durrell is Stendhal, whom Durrell was reading in 1950 in Belgrade. To Miller, Durrell writes that he is more and more convinced that in Stendhal's two big novels he has

. . . demonstrated a rationale for fiction which is the one most germane to the writers of the next fifty years. The power of creating a 3-dimensional character in a single phrase, then letting the action develop the character without further interruption. As an autobiographer too he is delightful--struggling with a sensibility too charged with femininity and a shy pudicity--anticipating Freud by the way, in a remark which follows a phrase describing the death of his mother, "Là commence la vie morale!" (D-M-278)

The depth of meaning in the phrases used by Stendhal elicits Durrell's admiration; he himself sought to select meaningful and accurate words to describe and explain. (It is interesting that he refers to Stendhal's sensibility being charged with femininity; the androgynous mind recognizing a predecessor?).

Durrell took his own directions from the patterns he saw before him; he did not follow slavishly in the steps of the writers and factors discussed above. His concept of the continuum derived from Einstein was neither Proustian nor Joycean in nature. Proust condensed the whole life of a society; Joyce delved into the enormous contents of a single day. Durrell consciously tries a different approach, feeling that these two illustrate Bergsonian duration rather than Space-Time. Both

writers are compared by Durrell to

a slow motion camera at work. Their books do not proceed along a straight line, but in a circular manner, coiling and recoiling upon themselves, embedded in the stagnant flux and reflex of a medium which is always changing yet always the same.(K-31)

While he tries to be different, there are many similarities between Durrell, Proust and Joyce.

In an article in Books Abroad,<sup>70</sup> Herbert Howarth adds to the list of writers who probably influenced Durrell. Among them are the great diarist Rémy de Gourmont, whom Durrell referred to in The Black Book as "that delicate literary fencer"; Howarth suggests Gourmont as one of Durrell's instructors in aphorisms. Another Master is Epicurus, who, Howarth contends, provided the wisdom of the worth of living. A third is Petronius; in the Quartet we see Durrell as "a student of the human enigma in its baser and more eccentric versions." Herbert Howarth hears echoes of Edgar Allan Poe's "fantasy, rhythm and shock" co-operating in the carnival sequence in Clea. From popular literature which Howarth designates collectively as The Boy's Magazine, he suggests Durrell derived his fluency in dealing with exciting events---a kidnapping, a murder, the breaking of a colt. Stendhal gave Durrell strength for his "continuous blaze of gallantry, cynicism and wisdom," and Richard Aldington, Howarth suggests, gave him translations of Gourmont and Gérard de Nerval.

Gourmont, in describing what Epicurus meant to him, writes that the Greek philosopher "understood men's temperaments are diverse and he

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<sup>70</sup>Howarth, Herbert, Lawrence Durrell and Some Early Masters, Books Abroad, Volume 37, (November 1, Winter 1963), p. 5-11

did not advise them to seek one unique pleasure," and adds pleasure to him was "the art of being happy according to one's own nature."<sup>71</sup> Throughout Aldington's translations are thoughts and comments which must have found a comfortable home in Durrell's mind.

Gerald Durrell recalled his brother's equipment for the escape to Corfu as including two trunks of books. From his novels, his criticism, his letters and his interviews it may be possible to assemble a list of two trunkfuls of books which could constitute Lawrence Durrell's selection for an island retreat about the time he was writing the Quartet. The poets and novelists who have contributed most to Durrell's development, his own legacy of language, must include many referred to above. His correspondence with Henry Miller indicates that he has probably read everything Miller has published. James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Stendhal, Proust are in the forefront of influence. Echoes of their new sounds are heard in the Quartet. Which of the older novelists led him precisely where is not important; probably it was some elements from each of them. Eliot may have led him to the Symbolists, (who are well represented in his legacy); Lawrence deepened his interest in Freud; Joyce and Proust whetted his appetite for considering space and time. All of them, as literary practitioners, helped to teach him his own craft.

As an undisciplined and eager reader lacking a formal education, Durrell seems to have plunged enthusiastically into a series of well-

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<sup>71</sup>Aldington, Richard, (trans.) Rémy de Gourmont, Selections, (Chatto & Windus, London, 1932) p. 199

known books, and proceeded from them to seek out the rare and unusual lesser-known volumes to which he refers with the air of a precocious youngster 'showing off' his erudition. From Einstein, Jeans and Russell he hurried to the Chinese philosophers; from Freud he turns quickly to Mott and Groddeck, and he keeps 'discovering' splendid new theories which he greets with boyish delight.

Capitalizing on his eastern origins, (and encouraged in this by Miller), Durrell seems to have made a specialty of studying Oriental philosophers, the Rosicrucians, the Cabbala. References in the Key have been mentioned. A further example (1958) of his interest is referred to in the Fanchette letters in the World of Lawrence Durrell, where he says he is reading a volume called Zen Flesh, Zen Bones which was sent to him from Tokyo.<sup>72</sup>

The near and Middle East has provided books for the inherited trunkful. Plato and Epicurus he has in the classical corner. Again he selects from his reading what he wants for his own philosophy; he says for instance in the Hamburg interview, "As for my 'idealized lovers' as you call them, they reflect back the bisexual nature of the psyche again which is okay by Freud and Plato alike."<sup>73</sup> Earlier in the same interview he says of Epicurus: ". . . his Garden was not the place for lazy and self indulgent ogres of sensual pleasure but an academy given over to the education of the psyche."

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<sup>72</sup>Durrell, op. cit., p.227

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 167

Somewhere in the trunk Sir Richard Burton may be represented; his accounts of the world of Islam would have intrigued Durrell. E.M. Forster's Alexandria is there; he quotes him in the Justine notes to summarize a gnostic doctrine of creation.(J-253) Kipling is represented--an example of the wide diversity of Durrell's taste--the young 'Anglo-Indian' poet almost acts as an apologist for the old one. (K-92ff) C.P. Cavafy is there, the old poet of Alexandria; some of his rare originals, and perhaps in the "fine thoughtful translations of Mavrogordato."(J-251) And Yeats is in the trunk as well.

For Lawrence Durrell, Yeats was special in many ways. Durrell's sympathies may have been fired by T.S. Eliot<sup>74</sup> for he reflects the 1940 Eliot theory of Yeats' viability in his own comments in The Key to Modern Poetry.(K-201-3) Yeats' appeal for Durrell may have started in any one of the three characteristics they share, an affinity with symbolism in poetry, Yeats' deep interest in theosophy, or the simple fact of Irish blood.

Durrell observes that the verse of the twenties helped Yeats "to control and bind his own poetry more tightly, to give his emotion an almost sculptural solidity of form without losing poignance."(K-203) W.B. Yeats and Lawrence Durrell have much in common in their reading and interest; perhaps the older poet provided Durrell with a literary 'sanction' for his ideas as well as a framework for his poetic style. Whether the disciple will surpass the prophet has yet to be determined.

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<sup>74</sup>Eliot, T.S., Selected Prose, (Penguin Books, London, 1953) p. 197

The trunk must contain Huxley and Hopkins, Edith Sitwell and Dylan Thomas from the moderns, certainly Donne and Blake and Tennyson from the past. With Blake, Durrell shares not only a recognition of the compatibility of painting and poetry, but an appreciation of an Heraldic Universe and the immense splendour of the free imagination as well.

Shakespeare is included in Durrell's portable library; Hamlet at least is well thumbed and annotated as a result of Durrell's reading of Laforgue and Miller. Shakespeare, incidentally, seems to have been responsible for Durrell's 'reconciliation' with England; his excitement and pleasure in visiting Stratford in 1939 is described glowingly in a letter to Henry Miller.(D-M-154)

The trunk is overflowing. It will be interesting to see what additional author's copies Durrell himself adds to the collection and to the legacy.

## VII. SUMMARY

A self-portrait of the artist is at best a suggestion rather than a final crystallization, particularly when the artist is still living and may yet add further depth, colour and meaning to his image. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to explore the mind of Lawrence Durrell as it has been conditioned by his environment, developed through his associations and his reading, and revealed in his writing.

Durrell's life-story, that of an Englishman, with an Irish

mother, born in India, schooled in England, intellectually stimulated in Paris, isolated for reading and writing in Corfu, employed in Cyprus, Rhodes and Athens, evacuated to Cairo and Alexandria, assigned to Yugoslavia and eventually settled in France, is the case-history of a twentieth century international citizen. This is a man who is more comfortable in 'foreign' settings than he could be in England. The impact of this single fact on the Quartet is obvious; its characters illustrate the cosmopolitan nature of their creator. Mountolive is abundantly British, Pursewarden may have some Irish antecedents; (M-113); Justine is Jewish; Melissa Greek; Nessim Egyptian; Pombal French. Durrell recognizes the twentieth-century mingling of nationality and race.

In Durrell's own life is the germination of the love-stories in the Quartet. As he lacked a parent from his youth, so does Clea. As he seeks companionship and compassion as well as physical satisfaction from three different women, Nancy, Eve and Claude, so do his Quartet characters seek their solace in a series of men or women. His love for children is reflected in his gentle sympathy with Justine's search for her child, Clea's abortion, Darley's care of Melissa's baby. His warm affection for people with whom he is compatible, as seen in his friendship with Henry Miller, is reflected in his characterization of Darley and Pursewarden, for example. His appreciation for beautiful and lovable women is revealed in his real recognition of their effect in the actual Alexandria, and his portrayals of Justine, Melissa, Clea, Leila, Fosca, Semira, in the Quartet Alexandria.

Durrell's interest in the hermetic and the occult is revealed in the characters Balthazar and Narouz. His familiarity with the Civil Service is echoed in his superb treatment of David Mountolive. His insatiable thirst for the exotic and the mysterious is exemplified in his penetrating study of the city of Alexandria.

The inquiring and sensitive artist moved, as he says in his poem *Alexandria*,<sup>75</sup> "through many negatives to what I am," from his early novels to the Quartet. He was consciously trying to learn and to improve his skill as a writer. As an eager searcher after ideas he read widely, 'discovering' concepts which were agreeable to him, developing beyond the angry out-pouring of The Black Death to the tentative explorations of human behaviour in Celafû, and eventually to Justine. Poetry and 'travel' books in the same period helped him hone his skill with words.

The impression Durrell creates is of an artist who, having found writing his only ambition, sought an ivory tower on the island of Corfu, found economic reality dragged him into jobs in which his actual personal investment was small, found his life, like everyone's was disrupted and dislocated by the war, still needed money to live and could not really dedicate full time to writing until after Justine was a success. The long gestation period for the Quartet may have been to the novel's benefit. Durrell's searching and wandering helped him collect the rich materials for the Alexandrian tapestry. His ideas

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<sup>75</sup>Durrell, op. cit., p. 72

developed to maturity by the time he could write Justine.

Durrell seems to enjoy living, and to live richly in mind and spirit. Wine, women, music, painting, new sights and new sounds have all delighted him. His pleasure is in the exercise of his craft and in intellectual intercourse with selected friends. His Epicurean ethic seems so far in his life to have freed him from pain, from trouble and from fear.

One of Durrell's best friends is Henry Miller, who has shared in both shaping and revealing the mind of the artist. In a study of their correspondence Miller emerges as inspiration, mentor and guide for Durrell in his early career, and in his maturity it is likely that Durrell would want to continue to deserve the older artist's admiration.

The close relationship of Lawrence Durrell with the French Symbolists was examined in a section in this chapter. With Yeats and Eliot in particular, Durrell as a poet and as a writer of poetic prose shares the Symbolists' fascination with free form, the recognition of the power of symbols and all they suggest, delight in words and in experimentation with them.

Two of the most significant factors in the development of Durrell's mind are new theories of space and time, and new knowledge about human behaviour, both of which have transformed the century in which he lives. The former has led Durrell to explore his own approach to the universe and to link modern physics with ancient wisdom of the East. The latter has led him to probing the depths of his own nature

through his characterizations, and he has linked the mind and the body in these considerations. His scientific reading has, it seems, been a search for material related to the reconciliation of opposites, the integration of man within himself and with his world. Pursewarden's failure and Darley's success, Melissa's death and Clea's life, the tangled loves of all the characters as they search and find or search and fail are vivid illustrations of this central preoccupation of the artist.

The chapter concluded with a summary of Durrell's literary legacy; the poets and novelists to whom he owes such a debt in his own development, who speak most significantly to him. A catholic taste, a sometimes brilliant and sometimes commonplace critical faculty, an engaging, almost boisterous enthusiasm for his favourites are all characteristic of the author of the Quartet, who in it repays the debt, "refunding" as Clea says, "an old love in a new."(C-112)

## CHAPTER III

### NEW PEOPLE TO PAINT

All cities plains and people  
Reach upwards to the affirming sun

Lawrence Durrell

As this study is maintaining that the portrait of Clea is the portrait of a modern woman, and as the Quartet is set in the City of Alexandria, it is perhaps necessary to explore two areas in this chapter. Lawrence Durrell is the product of the Western European heritage, so a brief review of the emancipation of women in England over the past hundred and fifty years is undertaken in the first section. As Durrell describes Alexandrian women, and his portraits have to be imagined against a background of the traditional rôle of women in Egypt, the second section reviews the Eastern heritage and relates it to the character of Leila, who is one of the truly Egyptian portraits in the novel.

#### I. THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN WOMAN IN THE WEST

In spite of the fact that Sigmund Freud granted women what might be called a psychological equality with men, he was in no doubt as to their social status. Women's sex life, he said in Three Contributions, "is veiled in impenetrable darkness, partly because of cultural stunting, and partly because of the conventional reticence and insincerity

of women."<sup>1</sup> The Professor has described with characteristic insight the prevailing problem of women's rôle in the early years of his lifetime, (1856-1939). Within that same span of years, revolutionary changes took place which resulted in the emergence of "the modern woman." In this section some aspects of this revolution will be traced and related to the modern novel, because the woman in the world of Lawrence Durrell is a new kind of person. Her existence helps to make possible Durrell's portrayal of Clea Mentis.

Virginia Woolf has provided an eloquent sketch of the Victorian female and her life:

Love, birth and death were all swaddled in a variety of fine phrases. The sexes drew further and further apart. No open conversations were tolerated. Evasions and concealments were sedulously practiced on both sides. And just as the ivy and the evergreen rioted in the damp earth outside, so did the same fertility show itself within. The life of the average woman was a succession of child-births. She married at nineteen and had fifteen or eighteen children by the time she was thirty, for twins abounded.<sup>2</sup>

It was in this atmosphere that most women in the nineteenth century lived and breathed and had their being. They did not, of course all marry; some were destined for an even more miserable existence. In a census taken in 1851, there were 876,290 "surplus women," or spinsters in England, of this number 24,770 were governesses.<sup>3</sup> The remainder were presumably unemployed daughters, aunts, and a horde of servants.

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<sup>1</sup>Hyman, op. cit., p. 348

<sup>2</sup>Woolf, Virginia, Orlando, (Penguin Books Inc., 1946) (original 1928), p. 146

<sup>3</sup>Brittain, Vera, The Women of Oxford, (George G. Harrap & Co., London, 1960), p. 25

There were no professions open to women; novelists like Charlotte Brontë and her sisters were blessed with talent and some measure of security. Women were not allowed possession of property after marriage, and had no political rights; it was almost impossible for a woman to get a divorce.

In The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir traces the history of the 'emerging woman'. From the time in which Balzac could write that "the destiny of woman and her sole glory are to make beat the hearts of man . . . She is a chattel and properly speaking subsidiary to man,"<sup>4</sup> ~~the~~ de Beauvoir shows the changes wrought by women beginning to share in productive labour as a result of the Industrial Revolution, being freed from slavery to reproduction as a result of the use of new methods of birth control, and becoming aware of their claims to self-determination as a result of the growing feminist movement.<sup>5</sup>

The claim to self-determination may have had earlier defenders, but in England, Mary Wollstonecraft is generally credited with first elucidating women's demands for individual liberty. In her Vindication of the Rights of Women in 1792, both the title and some of the content of which ~~was~~ derived from Paine's Rights of Man, Mary Godwin called on women to free themselves, through education, from the chains of subjugation. It was not, however, until 1823 that James Mill set the continuity in action with his comment in an article for the Encyclopedia Britannica; Mr. Mill dismissed women from having political

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<sup>4</sup>de Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 111

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 121

rights, in view of the fact that their entire interest was involved in that of their fathers or their husbands.<sup>6</sup> His cursory treatment of her sex roused the ire of a certain Mrs. Wheeler, who enlisted the help of a social philosopher, Walter Thompson. Mrs. Wheeler, and Mr. Thompson produced in 1825 a book with the incredible but self-explanatory title of: An Appeal of one half the human race, Women, against the pretensions of the other half, Men, to retain them in political, and thence in civil and domestic slavery: In reply to a paragraph on Mr. Mill's celebrated Article on Government. It was a powerful appeal; to illustrate his forthright style one sentence may be selected. Thompson says of the typical husband of his times; "The house is his house with everything in it, and of all fixtures, the most abjectly his is his breeding machine, the wife."<sup>7</sup> Thompson urged the women of England to awake, to contemplate the luxurious happiness that awaited them if all their faculties of mind and body were developed. While the women of England did not immediately respond to his call, the feminists later realized the power of his work and used it, as they did the other works mentioned, in their protracted battle. Mrs. Wheeler's legacy to feminism included not only her share in The Appeal, but her inspiration to her great granddaughter, Lady Constance Lytton who was outstanding among the militant suffragettes and whose social position made for much Cabinet embarrassment in 1909. It was awkward to say the least for a

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<sup>6</sup>Fulford, Robert, Votes For Women, (Faber and Faber, London, 1957), p. 75

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 28

Government at war with the House of Lords to be responsible for jailing the wife of a nobleman.

After Walter Thompson's work, the most influential manifesto for women's rights was Mr. Mill's son John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women published in 1869 and destined to be the most important reference book used by the constitutional suffragists in their efforts until 1918. In what his biographer calls a neat summary of J.S. Mill's comments about women, suffragist Kate Amberley writes to a friend:

. . . I see nothing in woman's nature or mental capacities to doom her eternally to the inferior position of a squaw or for the better sort of harem princess-- I would have women in reality a help mate to man, an improving and equal companion. . . .<sup>8</sup>

She goes on to list the goals; they include opening every possible occupation, giving women equal pay for equal work, letting them keep and use their earnings as they wish, opening the "places of education and the prizes of it," and giving women the franchise.

John Stuart Mill was an enthusiastic supporter of the constitutional suffragist movement; he not only articulated the philosophy of women's rights, he pursued them in Parliament.

In passing it may be noted that one of the great suffragists, Millicent Garrett Fawcett not unexpectedly attributes Mill's dedication to the cause of female suffrage to the influence of his beloved wife.<sup>9</sup> Certainly his devotion to the Cause was an antithesis to his father's

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<sup>8</sup>Packe, Micheal St.John, The Life of John Stuart Mill, (Secker and Warburg, 1954), p. 498

<sup>9</sup>Fawcett, Millicent Garrett, Women's Suffrage, (T.C. & E.C. Jack London, 1911), p. 16-17

peremptory rejection of women's rights, and was an inspiration for the efforts of his step-daughter Helen, who was one of the founders of the Women's Suffrage Society.

The suffragist movement in England, guided by such stalwarts as the formidable Millicent Fawcett, Eleanor Rathbone, Maud Royden, Emily Davies, together with the enlightened parliamentary support of men like John Stuart Mill and Philip Snowden, was responsible for the fundamental change in attitude toward women as well as for the ultimate achievement of political equality by 1919 and 1928. The suffragettes, the militant arm led by the Pankhursts, while it precipitated change in some ways, did a disservice to women to the degree that its unfeminine violence made women appear uncommonly fierce and often ridiculous.

The inevitable change in women's rôle was prophesied by novelists early in the nineteenth century, and emancipation had its champions throughout the struggle which was not concluded until after women had finally proven their worth during World War I. George Meredith was one such champion. In a letter to Lady Ulrica Duncombe on April 19th, 1902 he writes:

By and by the world will smile on women who cut their way out of a bad early marriage, or it will correct the present rough marriage system. No young woman knows what she gives her hand to; she will never be wiser until boys and girls are brought up and educated together.<sup>10</sup>

In the same letter, Meredith observes that women have a most

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<sup>10</sup>Letters of George Meredith, Coll. & ed. by his Son, (Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1912), Vol. II, p. 530-1

confused idea of masculine sentiment, and claims to have done his best to enlighten women and humanize men.

In direct antithesis to Meredith's tolerant and encouraging approach is that of Sir Almroth Wright, a violent and verbose anti-suffragette who bewailed the possibility of female franchise as a "social disaster." He wanted every young woman to be made to realize how unsufferable a person she is when

. . . like a spoilt child, she exploits the indulgence of men; when she proclaims that it is his duty to serve her and share with her his power and possessions; when she makes an outcry when he refuses to part with what is his own; and when she insists upon thrusting her society upon men everywhere.<sup>11</sup>

The indignant Sir Almroth recommended that suffragettes and their supporters be deported forthwith, and found some support for his theories, including the wag who suggested the Isle of Man as the place of exile. His venom actually may have helped rally sympathy for the women's pleas for recognition; in any event it inspired the women to fight even harder for the Cause.

Another novelist who embraced the rights of women was Arnold Bennett. In Our Women he describes the pre-war woman as a parasite, a creature capable of loving but confined to fulfilment only in the service of her mate.<sup>12</sup>

With the War, women were suddenly thrust into the main stream

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<sup>11</sup>Wright, Sir Almroth, The Unexpurgated Case Against Women Suffrage, (Constantin & Co., London, 1913) p. 67

<sup>12</sup>Bennett, Arnold, Our Women, (George H. Doran, London, 1920), p. 40-41

of the cataclysm. Young women in particular found sudden freedom of movement; skirts became shorter as an economy measure so that even physical movement was affected. War work caused an increase of local travel, and unchaperoned travel at that. Women were needed in industry; their income became a factor in the economy. And in spite of the tragedies of the War, the freedom earned in it was exhilarating, and the women had no intention of relinquishing it with the coming of peace.

Then, in 1920, Arnold Bennett (without benefit of raucous laughter from D.H. Lawrence) was able to forecast:

Women whose days are interestingly and usefully full will have not time to be morbid. Their minds will be nourished. They will think more of their own minds, and less of their own bodies and men's bodies. And men will assuredly be thereby led to do the same. The phenomenon of love will shed its superficial grossness. Affection may be strengthened, but crude passion will diminish.<sup>13</sup>

In 1928, the same year that Lady Chatterley's Lover was written and banned, Virginia Woolf comments on the rapid expansion of literature dealing openly with a subject that was hitherto verboten: "No age can ever have been as stridently sex-conscious as our own; those innumerable books by men about women in the British museum are proof of it."<sup>14</sup> With the highest levels of education available for women--symbolized in the University of Oxford granting degrees to women July 22nd, 1919, with professions open to women as a result of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of the same year, women no longer

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 54

<sup>14</sup>Woolf, Virginia, A Room of One's Own, (Hogarth Press, London, 1946), p. 149

suffered from what Freud had called 'cultural stunting'. With their political and social emancipation, women were no longer bound to a code of conventional reticence and insincerity; they were free to develop and realize their full potential as individuals.

Artists now were able to explore the mysteries of the nature of man and woman, and man-woman relationships in a more realistic way. A novelist living and writing in the second quarter of the twentieth century could write of an emancipated woman, a woman with personal freedom and independence. The new status has brought its problems; there has been much soul-searching as to the boundaries, geography and landscape of the "real world of women" and what her true identity may be. Mlle. de Beauvoir develops an involved thesis of "The Other" as her contribution to this search; she does not want to deny or have women deny, her special rôle as an equal but different creature. Her theory is best summed up in her own words;

To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man, not to deny them to her; let her have her independent existence and she will continue nonetheless to exist for him also; mutually recognizing each other as subject, each will yet remain for the other an other.<sup>15</sup>

The recognition of a woman as "subject" rather than "object" is the key to the new woman of this century. Lawrence Durrell, in the Alexandria Quartet, in his characterizations of Clea, Justine, Melissa, provides an outstanding example of insight and understanding relative to the female sex, both in their independent existences and in the

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<sup>15</sup>de Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 731

relationships they bear to man.

Clea Mentis, as an unmarried "surplus woman" of the nineteen-fifties is portrayed by Durrell as a new kind of person. Dorothy Yost Deegan, in a survey of women, single women in particular, in the American novel reaches an intriguing conclusion which tends to supplement modern psychology, and could run parallel with some of Lawrence Durrell's thinking:

the ultimate aim is a more accepting and acceptable society in which a girl can grow into wholesome and effective maturity, either with marriage or without. Regardless of what life may bring to any individual, the best way to achieve a balanced and integrated personality is to anticipate what things may come, to plan for them as intelligently as one can, and then leave the rest to the gods.<sup>16</sup>

Admitting that both Durrell and many of his readers would probably laugh heartily at the word "wholesome" applied or suggested in relation to the characters in the Quartet, and recognizing that Durrell's concepts are less idealistic and more sophisticated than Miss Deegan's, Clea Mentis as he portrays her in the Quartet would be unlikely to disagree basically with the behaviour pattern proposed.

Durrell has been fortunate; in the sophisticated world in which he lives women can be accepted as individuals, entitled to seek self-realization, not confined to the relations she bears to man, but not denied them. They can have an independent existence. The modern novelist has as part of his equipment a vast sum of new knowledge about human behaviour, a new concept of space and time. Armed with all this,

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<sup>16</sup>Deegan, Dorothy Yost, The Stereotype of the Single Woman in American Novels, (King's Crown Press, Columbia University, 1951), p. 197

together with an appreciation of the literary tradition he has inherited, and with his own poetic genius, Lawrence Durrell can write of modern individuals in a modern world, can try to reconcile the arrogant facts of human life with the complexities of emotion. He would appreciate Bruno Bettelheim's urgent plea in looking at the world of the sixties, a challenge to the contemporary citizen or author:

No longer can we be satisfied with a life where the heart has its reasons, which reason cannot know. Our hearts must know a world of reason, and reason must be guided by an informed heart.<sup>17</sup>

The informed heart of which Bettelheim speaks is of the individual, whether it belongs to a man or to a woman.

## II. AND IN THE EAST . . .

As a student and lover of antiquity, as a man who has spent the greater part of his adult life in and near Greece and Egypt, Lawrence Durrell must be aware of the classical role of women in both these countries, as well as their position in the twentieth century. It can be conjectured that Durrell's insistence on the continuum, his virtual abolition of time can make it possible for him to look back to the golden ages of civilization and inject something of their attitude into his twentieth century characters. One can also find in the Quartet portraits of women made more vivid because they are drawn in a society where they are unusual in comparison with the 'normal' or average

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<sup>17</sup>Bettelheim, Bruno, The Informed Heart, Autonomy in a Mass Age, The Free Press of Glencoe, (Crowell-Collier Publishing Co., N.Y., 1961), Preface

woman.

Durrell's appreciation of the classical woman is indicated in his verse-play Sappho. He has Clea describe Justine as being a reproduction of the great Hetairae of the past, the charming Athenian Courtesan.(J-77) Both the Hetairae and Sappho are very sophisticated women who lived at a time when women's rôle had achieved an apogee. For instance, in the fourth century B.C., Epicurus and other philosophers admitted women to their schools. Sexual morality was extremely relaxed; homosexuality was popular, but even as the Golden Age of Greece was coming to an end; women enjoyed a degree of equality they were not to see again for centuries.

In ancient Alexandria, in about the second century B.C., "women of all classes moved freely through the streets, shopping in the stores, and mingled with men. Some of them made a name for themselves in literature and scholarship."<sup>18</sup> This old Alexandria is buried far beneath the present city, and the Egyptian woman of the twentieth century is only now beginning to emerge from the seclusion which has been her lot for hundreds of years.

Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, in discussing the origins of Egyptian nationalism, quotes an observation made by a European in the late nineteenth century. "The degradation of women in the East," he said, looked like "a canker that begins its destructive work even in child-

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<sup>18</sup>Durant, Will, The Life of Greece, (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1939), p. 593

hood, and has eaten into the whole system of Islam."<sup>19</sup> The degraded women had neither political nor economic status, were reduced to virtual slavery as wives and daughters, and if they pursued the only profession the outcast could pursue, namely prostitution, there was little or not legal protection for them.

One of their champions, who should perhaps take his place beside Walter Thompson, John Stuart Mill and the other male supporters of Western female suffrage, was Quasim Amin, (1865-1908), who wrote a book discussed by Ahmed called, in translation, The Emancipation of Women. The public outcry was violent when the book appeared; there was much apprehension that emancipating women might encourage deplorable Western standards of morality. Quasim Amin promptly wrote a reply to his detractors called The New Woman, in which he accused Moslems of living in the past and challenged them to start living in the present. Mr. Amin is typical of many early twentieth century Egyptians who attempted a re-interpretation of the teachings and revelations of Mohammed, of which Islamic social ethics and social institutions are functions.

Poets joined in the cry. Ziya Gök Alp (d. 1924) a Turkish poet, wrote:

So long as the full worth of the woman is not realized,  
the life of the nation remains incomplete.  
The upbringing of the family must correspond with justice;  
Therefore equality is necessary in three things - in  
divorce, in separation, and in inheritance.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Gibb, H.A.R., Modern Trends in Islam, (University of Chicago Press, 1945), p. 92

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 92

An Iraqi Moslem poet Jamel Sidgi Az-Zahawi put the focus on education:

Woman and man are no other than equal in worth;  
Educate the woman, for the woman is the symbol  
of culture.<sup>21</sup>

The male champions of women's rights in Islam found one of their strongest voices in the Indian lawyer Sayyid Amir Ali, who appealed directly back to the Koran and pleaded for a new understanding of its laws. He claimed that the Prophet preached and in his own life demonstrated "respect for women," that he "placed them on a footing of perfect equality with men in the exercise of all legal powers and functions."<sup>22</sup> Mohammed had been limited polygamy when he set the maximum of contemporaneous marriages to four, and had added the proviso that if the husband was not able to deal equitably with four, he should marry only one.

Amer Ali observed that the Moslem approach to divorce, both in its Koranic origins and its modern application have created rules which are "far more humane and just towards women than those of the most perfect Roman Law developed in the bosom of the (Christian) Church."<sup>23</sup>

He defends the original concepts of the seclusion of women as possessing many advantages in the social well-being of unsettled and uncultured communities, and this same protective purpose underlies the continuation of the practices of seclusion in most Moslem countries.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 93

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 96

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 98

Professor Gibb maintains that in the Islamic world today, only in Turkey and in the Westernized middle-classes in Egypt do women enjoy a relatively high degree of social equality.<sup>24</sup> The rôle of Moslem women in India and Pakistan is beyond the scope of this present study: it is possible that in a consideration of it, some new light might be cast on Professor Gibb's comment. Although the emancipation of women in Moslem countries was much slower starting than was the movement in the Western world, its progress in the last twenty years has been swift and dramatic, keeping pace with nationalism.

Simone de Beauvoir has a different interpretation of the pertinent Koran passages, which like many religious works provide convenient contradictions. She paraphrases the prophet's proclamation as saying that "men are far superior to women on account of the qualities in which God has given them pre-eminence, and also because they furnish dowry for women," and states that "the veiled and sequestered Moslem woman is still today in most social strata a kind of slave."<sup>25</sup> Again it should be re-iterated that the situation is changing rapidly. Nevertheless, a novelist writing of women in Alexandria in the late thirties and forties creates a more vivid portrayal in that the scene is set in a society where women in general are neither free nor independent.

~~Ananti~~'s Moeurs in the first volume of the Quartet gives an

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 102

<sup>25</sup>de Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 84

~~gives~~ an eloquent description of the women of Alexandria as Durrell saw them:

To be happy one would have to be a Moslem, an Egyptian woman-- absorbent, soft, lax, overblown; given to veneers; their waxy skins turn citron-yellow or melon-green in the naptha-flares. Hard bodies like boxes. Breasts apple-green and hard--a reptilian coldness of the outer flesh with its bony outposts of toes and fingers. Their feelings are buried in the pre-conscious. In love they give out nothing of themselves, having no self to give, but enclose themselves around you in an agonized reflection--an agony of unexpressed yearning that is at the opposite pole from tenderness, pleasure. For centuries now they have been shut in a stall with the oxen, masked, circumcised. Fed in darkness on jams and scented fats they have become tuns of pleasure, rolling on paper-white blue-veined legs.(J-66)

Mr. Justice J.E. Marshall, in a book called The Egyptian Enigma written in 1928, has a section devoted to describing the Egyptian character. It is blatantly frank, and admittedly was the opinion of a strong-minded Englishman who was probably glad to retire from his judicial post in Egypt and return to England, but it is an illustration of one Westerner's attitude towards the Egyptian people, and finds reflection in many subsequent commentaries over the years. Marshall found the Egyptians ignorant, vain, obstinate, truculent, tyrannical, excitable, gossip- and rumour-mongers, lovers of intrigue, superstitious and devious. He claims that as they were always dominated by others in their public lives, so they were despotic in their homes. Centuries of persecution, he said, have made the Copts wily; the Egyptians as a whole are basically conservative in their approach to life.<sup>26</sup> To whatever extent Judge Marshall's observations were accurate,

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<sup>26</sup> Marshall, J.E., The Egyptian Enigma, 1890-1928, (John Murray, London, 1928), p. 186ff

the life of a woman in a society dominated by men with these prevailing characteristics had to be difficult to say the least.

While the poets called for enlightenment, the growing spirit of nationalism resulted in the revolution of 1919. In the same year, an organization called the New Woman was founded, and out of it grew the Egyptian Feminist Union in 1923. Its founder, Madame Huda Sharawi Pasha, shortly before this historic organization was formally developed, had returned to Egypt from Europe, stepped off the train unveiled, whereupon a crowd of her feminist friends who were there to greet her, did likewise, and shocked the nation. This symbolic act was the beginning. The New Woman society's goals are typical of those of subsequent pressure groups. They are, as they were in 1919.

- a. equal opportunities for women in education,
- b. improvement of marriage customs and practices to bring them into closer accord with the true spirit of Islam, and
- c. political equality for women.<sup>27</sup>

The educational picture has improved immeasurably since the first government primary school for girls was opened in 1873. In 1955, some 5300 women were in all faculties at three Universities. The demand for education has far outstripped the facilities available, however, and in 1955 boy students were still being given priority over girl students. In the rural villages, the illiteracy figure is 80 percent, which gives an indication of the educational problems still

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<sup>27</sup>The Role of Women, (in Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Syria) Directed by Ruth F. Woodsmall, International Federation of Business & Professional Women, (1956), p. 36

to be faced, but the New Women have at least achieved their first objective.

Marriage customs, pre-marital customs, and woman's status as a wife may be changing as rapidly as all the other aspects of Egyptian life, but there are still characteristics of which 'Western Women' would undoubtedly consider to be abuses. In some primitive areas, infibulation of young girls (stitching together the lips of the vulva in order to prevent copulation) is still practised, mostly as a prevailing recognition of the moral laxity which concerned Mohammed centuries before and which led him to preach the doctrine of seclusion. A form of barbaric circumcision of the clitoris which may also be practised seems to be intended to lower the excitability of the young girls, but this is medically inaccurate in that it would, according to a Canadian doctor consulted, have the opposite effect.

In spite of Madame Sharawi's efforts, many Egyptian women are still veiled as the Prophet commanded, both before and after marriage. Arranged marriages are still prevalent, although the growth of mixed social contacts, particularly in the cities, among employed people, and in the universities, are encouraging marriages made through choice.

Only a few years ago, and there are still families where the rules still hold, an Egyptian husband was quite within his rights to beat his wife if she refused him the privileges of the marriage bed, if she refused to make herself beautiful when he wanted her to, if she went outside the house without his permission. He could refuse her the right to mix with "foreigners" of any description.

The Moslem husband can still have four wives, but while polygamy can still be found among the wealthier middle classes and in the agricultural rural areas, the official figure in 1955 limited the practice of polygamy to 2.4 per cent.<sup>28</sup>

Unilateral divorce, like the marriage laws, is under attack, and sociologists report that public opinion is growing in favour of the wife. For the last twenty years more and more women have been active in public life, and political equality for women is close to achievement. More women are working, and the developments which characterized the emergence of women in the Western World, while they are happening thirty years later, are gradually and inevitably happening in Egypt.

In due time, the new woman of Egypt may enjoy a life like that of her ancient ancestors. Ironically, when in the days of the New Kingdom, women enjoyed an equal status with men, from the Pharaoh on down the hierarchy,

they had complete legal right to inherit property and dispose of it without reference to the wishes of their husbands. Monogamy was generally practised, (although the rich supported harems), and men often traced their ancestry through the maternal rather than the paternal line. Women in the next world continued to savour many of the indulgences that had gratified them on earth.<sup>29</sup>

If indeed Mohammed preached "respect for women," it may be that he too was looking back to the golden age, when after urging modesty, generosity and chastity, he claims, "We have set down for you revel-

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 23

<sup>29</sup>The Horizon Book of Lost Worlds, op. cit., p. 85

ations that make plain, and the example of those who have passed away before you."<sup>30</sup>

The rosy picture painted by some observers of women's rôle and nature in ancient Egypt is belied by one authority who claims that the earliest literature, in the time of Ramesses the Great and his successors, draws an unflattering picture of Egyptian womanhood:

She is frivolous, flirtatious and unreliable, incapable of keeping a secret, untruthful and spiteful as well as naturally unfaithful. To the story-tellers and moralists she was the epitome of all sin and an endless source of mischief.<sup>31</sup>

This might almost be a portrait of Lawrence Durrell's Justine. The preceding chapter discussed Durrell's facility in merging Time, past and present; his women may be classical or contemporary, they may be archetypes of any age.

Clea's portrait revealed a modern woman in the occidental tradition. Justine may be the classic courtesan, the Hetaira~~æ~~. The Greek Melissa is perhaps the classic victim of circumstance, the gentle prostitute who would be familiar in any era of mankind's history. Leila is perhaps the best illustration of a modern Egyptian woman, typical in many ways of her country's twentieth century struggle. She is, of course, a-typical in that she comes of a wealthy family, (M-23) and that she is educated, although her ambition to be a doctor was denied by her

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<sup>30</sup>The Koran, Trans. Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, (A Mentor Book 1954), p. 256, (Sura 24:34)

<sup>31</sup>Montet, Pierre, Everyday Life in Egypt, (Edward Arnold Publisher, Ltd., London, 1958), p. 51

conservative family.(M-24) She is fluent in four languages, was urban-educated, but consented (however reluctantly) to the arranged marriage into the Hosnani clan. By implication in these same passages it would appear that Leila did not wear the veil in the early part of the Quartet, although of course she returns to it after suffering small-pox. In her relationship to her husband, the Quartet shows her displaying "oriental submission";(M-20) she is obedient and pliant.(M-23) Before she takes Mountolive out to see the lands, she asks her husband's permission.(M-26) How passionate she is is revealed in her love for Mountolive,(M-28) although the disparity in their ages and the delicacy of her political intrigues seems to have eventually made her glad to conduct their affair by letters. Her husband, an unusual man, saw that to keep her he should approve of her friendship with Mountolive,(M-30) indicating that he is conscious of his wife's emancipation at least to a certain extent.

Because she is a Copt rather than a Moslem, Leila can drink liquor, as she does to bolster her courage for the final meeting with Mountolive.(M-280)

Leila may very well have belonged to one of the 156 women's organizations struggling to improve the lot of women and children in Egypt; she was obviously a powerful and aggressive person, enjoying an equality which at the time was more the privilege of the agricultural women than the city-dweller. Pursewarden suspects Leila of being "the driving-force"(M-117) behind the minority dream of the Copts; she reveals her capacity for organization and planning in her handling of her love affair with Mountolive (which was probably planned to aid the

intrigue), and in her relationship with her sons.

Leila is one of the characters in Durrell's International Exhibit, his gallery of portraits of women. She is the Egyptian woman of the transition, the Bint el Nil, the daughter of the Nile. She is a beautiful, imperious woman, enigmatic, "loyal as a finely bred animal," (M-23) but one who follows her instincts. She would have been reminiscent, in Durrell's portrayal of her, of Gina Sanseverina in the Charterhouse of Parma even if she herself had not drawn the parallel, in reference to her correspondence with David Mountolive. These letters of theirs, she asks,

. . . are they the bitter-sweet of the Severina's commerce with her nephew Fabricio? I often wonder if they were lovers-- their intimacy is so hot and close? Stendhal never actually says so. (M-53)

There is an Egyptian flavour to Leila's casual acceptance of a relationship that would have been at least partially incestuous.

Leila Hosnani of the Quartet provides a parallel in the emancipation of women of the East with that of women in the West as it is personified by Clea Mentis.

### III. SUMMARY

Chapter III has reviewed the emergence of a new kind of subject that is now available for the artist to portray, as a new kind of woman makes her appearance on the human stage. In tracing the emancipation movement in Western Europe, it was apparent that there was an historical inevitability in the process, and that it was hastened by the energetic efforts of women to free themselves from the confined

narrowness of Victorian attitudes. Study of the situation in the Islamic world indicates that the same process is underway, if it has been delayed three decades.

The artist's new subject is as old as history in some of the characteristics she displays. Women will not cease being women simply because they are educated and have the vote and may live independent lives. The modern woman is a new subject in that additional facets of her personality have been released in emancipation; the artist has the information, and if he has the sensitivity and the skill he can paint a full-length portrait in full colour, with new depths and a new understanding. The novelist no longer need feel responsible for helping to emancipate the "downtrodden" Western woman; he is free now to explore her complex nature both as a woman and as an equal if different individual.

Where Clea Mentis is an example of the woman who has emerged from the western emancipation of women, this chapter has presented Leila Hosnani as an illustration of the eastern "emergence." Each of them is true to her own time, her own setting. Their portraits are an indication of the awareness and the skill of Lawrence Durrell, who has made a distinct contribution in them to the portrayal of women in fiction.

## CHAPTER IV

### OTHER PORTRAITS IN THE GALLERY

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.

Lawrence Durrell

In order to see both Clea Mentis and Lawrence Durrell in historical perspective, this fourth chapter endeavours to survey the portrayal of women by six novelists who have earned lasting fame. These include heroines drawn by Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Stendhal, Thackeray, Meredith and D.H. Lawrence. An effort is made to compare these women with Clea Mentis and to evaluate Lawrence Durrell's contribution to the gallery.

#### I. JANE AUSTEN AND ELIZABETH BENNETT

In one of her letters Jane Austen says of Elizabeth Bennett, "I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her at least I do not know."<sup>1</sup> Both the novelist and her heroine managed to be delightful in a society which the author's nephew aptly described as being "formal, abstemious and unupholstered,"<sup>2</sup> a society not yet suffer-

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<sup>1</sup>Lascelles, Mary, Jane Austen and Her Art, (Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 31

<sup>2</sup>Woolf, Virginia, op. cit., p. 100

ing from the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution, a society reeling but protecting itself from the impact of the Napoleonic wars. In the narrow and circumscribed world of Jane Austen, as Virginia Woolf described it, "it was impossible for a woman to go out alone. She never travelled; she never drove through London in an omnibus or had luncheon in a shop by herself."<sup>3</sup> Miss Austen lived, according to Simone de Beauvoir, at a time when "scientists proclaimed that woman was 'a sub-species destined only for reproduction'."<sup>4</sup>

Walter Allen sees Jane Austen as an eighteenth century moralist, in some respects, he says, she is

. . . the last and finest flower of that century at its quintessential. She had escaped entirely the infection of sensibility and sentimentality; for these qualities are material only for her satire. She is never for one moment soft in any way; indeed there is no more intransigent, ruthless novelist in the world.<sup>5</sup>

Later, Allen derives from Mansfield Park Miss Austen's statement of values, the criteria by which Miss Austen judges her characters, as being, "self-command, just consideration of others, knowledge of the heart, and a principle of right derived from education."<sup>6</sup> An examination of the character of Elizabeth Bennett reveals that ultimately she becomes possessed by these admirable characteristics, if the word 'experience' be substituted for 'education'. She must, however, be

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 102

<sup>4</sup>de Beauvoir, Simone, The Second Sex, op. cit., p. 124

<sup>5</sup>Allen, Walter, The English Novel, (Pelican Books, 1954), p. 111

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 111

seen against the dual background of both the age in which Jane Austen lived, and Jane Austen's particular genius as a moralist, as a satirist, as a commentator on the morals and manners of her time.

Elizabeth Bennett is reasonably attractive. Bingley says she is very pretty; Darcy admits coldly that "she is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me." (PP-10) She is not so devastatingly beautiful as to have every dance taken; in the same scene, when she meets Darcy, she has been obliged to sit down for two dances, owing, it seems, to the scarcity of gentlemen. In a three-mile hike to the bedside of her ailing sister, Elizabeth contravenes propriety and causes no little astonishment, having been shown into the Bingley's breakfast-parlour with "weary ankles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise," (PP-31) after she had crossed over fields, jumped over stiles, sprung over puddles in a most unlady-like manner. She is therefore attractive and healthy, and the reader is given to understand that she plays the piano and sings, being capable of a performance that is "pleasing though by no means capital." (PP-23)

Elizabeth has a sharp tongue and a quick wit; some of her best lines are those directed at Darcy. When the proud hero observes that he knows no more than half a dozen women who are really accomplished, and elaborates on what they ought to know, namely music, singing, drawing, dancing, modern languages, and at the same time they should be graceful, well-mannered and well-spoken, Elizabeth responds, "I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder at your knowing any." (PP-39) Her famous battle with Lady

Catherine de Bourgh is studded with gems of verbal brilliance, none improved by being quoted out of context.

The picture of Elizabeth is more sympathetically drawn than any of the other characters in Pride and Prejudice. When she began writing about Elizabeth, Jane Austen was a very young woman. M. Edmund Speare, in the introduction to the 1940 Pocket Book edition, says the novel was completed when Jane Austen was twenty-one years old. According to Mary Lascelles, it was published in January of 1813, after many revisions and much polishing.<sup>7</sup> While it is quite possible that Elizabeth matured as her creator did so, the heroine seems to have the characteristics of the author's ideal woman. She is intelligent, well-read, (in spite of the fact that she modestly denies this, (PP-36) and of admirable virtue; perhaps she is the kind of woman Jane Austen could idealize.

Jane Austen valued knowledge of the heart. After the truth about Darcy is revealed, Elizabeth may claim self-awareness. She chastises herself roundly for having prided herself on her discernment and abilities, disdained the generous candour of her sister, gratified her vanity in useless distrust, courted prepossession and driven reason away. "Till this moment," she exclaims, "I never knew myself." (PP-214) In spite of this nadir of morale, Elizabeth recovers her equanimity in due course.

Elizabeth's understanding of men is illustrated in her violent feelings after Darcy has been so generous and her attraction to him has

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<sup>7</sup>Lascelles, op. cit., p. 30

multiplied a thousand-fold. She is enraged at herself for her silliness; imagine there being a second chance--impossible!

A man who has once been refused! How could I ever be foolish enough to expect a renewal of his love? Is there one among the sex who would not protest against such a weakness as a second proposal to the same woman? There is no indignity so abhorrent to their feelings!" (PP-349)

There is no suggestion that Jane Austen means us to interpret this in any way other than its face value, even though the second proposal follows very shortly.

Jane Austen gives us a thumbnail sketch of her ideal of marriage when she has Elizabeth cogitating on what she and Darcy had to offer one another; her ease and liveliness might soften his mind and improve his manners; his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world would give her "benefit of even greater importance." (PP-319) While she resignedly observes that "no such happy marriage could now teach the admiring multitude what connubial felicity really was," (PP-319) and we detect a note of almost bitter humour in this observation, once again one could suspect that Jane Austen was being quite sincere in her assessment of the mutual contribution of man and woman to marriage. If this is so, it is an indication of a certain timelessness in Miss Austen's values; many marriage counsellors in the twentieth century might prescribe the approach she proposes.

Aside from the discomfort of weak ankles referred to above, Elizabeth Bennett is a young woman who does not permit herself and is not permitted by her creator to have any sensations below the high neckline of her costume, except for the occasional discreet palpitation of the

heart. Pride and Prejudice is a novel of manners and humours, a satire on the absurdities and affectations of a small segment of society at the end of the eighteenth century. Elizabeth Bennett is a satisfactory heroine who overcomes a nasty bout of prejudice while repairing the hero's constitutional problem of pride. She grows and improves with the experience, which is not cluttered with extraneous concern over the world situation, or social problems, to say nothing of religious doubts or any fundamental questioning about her way of life, or the manners and morals that dictate and control her daily routine. Within the circumscribed limits of a marvellous story about pride and prejudice, Elizabeth Bennett is vividly real; she reflects exactly what her creator wishes her to reflect. She is as real as a woman could be in Jane Austen's world.

It was a world of slow time, when a single dance was half an hour long, when a visit to friends was matter of several weeks, where a trip to the lake country would be a major undertaking. It was a world of graceful manners, of carefully phrased elegance in speaking, of polite letters, of conformity. The houses were full of servants from whom family gossip should be kept secret;(PP-298) young ladies did not go unchaperoned; proposals of marriage were formal affairs involving the father's consent and a property settlement, (wicked Lydia very nearly destroyed the Bennett menage entirely); it was a world where Mrs. Bennett could be genuinely afraid that if her husband caught Wykham he would kill him, presumably in a duel. In her famous opening sentence Jane Austen notes that it is a world in which "a single man in possession

of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."(PP-1) While she is satirizing her society, Jane Austen must keep her characters in the world that she and they knew. As Karl and Magalaner suggest, "We see that each of her characters took the general morality of the day for granted; their departure from a certain norm allowed Jane Austen her freedom of movement, but the norm was ever in view, solid and never changing."<sup>8</sup>

The essence of Jane Austen's portrayal of Elizabeth Bennett, and of Elizabeth Bennett as a woman, is that at the time Jane Austen lived and wrote, women were virtually unreal. Their lives were bound inextricably to a prescribed pattern; to deviate was to die socially. One conformed to exist, and existed to conform. The women in Jane Austen's experience were dependant financially; their function in life was to marry and serve men, and to bear children. They could not vote; they were not protected by law as to property after they were married; they were not considered worthy of formal education. There were no professions open to them except that of authorship; the women who worked were servants. Of course Jane Austen herself belies this lugubrious recital; she could laugh at the situation in which she saw her women. But she could not cloak them in a reality of existence which they did not have; her age and way of life showed her no prototype of warm, vital humanity in women from which to draw her characters any more perceptively than she did.

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<sup>8</sup>Karl and Magalaner, op. cit., p. 258

Virginia Woolf says of Jane Austen that, "her gift and her circumstances matched each other completely."<sup>9</sup> As a brilliant satirist, Jane Austen could prick the balloons in her world, and do it successfully. But she could not round out the picture of Elizabeth Bennett with depths and dimensions women were not allowed to have in her station in life. Jane Austen could laugh at the human comedy she saw around her, but she was not a feminist fighting for women's rights; while it amused her and inspired her to leave it for us in burlesque, she accepted the status quo. Elizabeth Bennett, like her contemporaries, wanted to be a social success, wanted to find a good husband of adequate means, obeyed her father, assumed that men were superior beings, conformed to the social niceties, deplored anti-social behaviour, admired respectability and accepted class distinctions. For the reader's pleasure, Elizabeth also possessed a fine sense of humour, a keen eye and tongue when dealing with the ridiculous and the comic, she had the ability to grow and change, and a healthy disdain for cant and falseness, in both herself and others. Elizabeth Bennett breathes easily in an atmosphere that would have stifled the woman of the twentieth century; she is at home in her own time.

It is fascinating if fruitless to contemplate what Jane Austen would have done with all her skills if she had been able to write about women in the twentieth century--women who are permitted to get an education, be financially independent, travel, choose their own mates,

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<sup>9</sup>Woolf, op. cit., p. 102

change their way of life, have close physical contact in dancing, swim, drive cars, vote, become Members of Parliament, consider themselves equal to men and demand equal pay for equal work, choose not to go to church, and so on and so on. Jane Austen would probably be horrified by this grotesque unfeminine creature, but she would have rejoiced at the vitality and stimulation it represented. With women recognized as real human beings, Jane Austen's genius would have known no bounds.

## II. CHARLOTTE BRONTE AND JANE EYRE

When Charlotte Brontë read Pride and Prejudice, she conceded that Miss Austen was shrewd and observant, but says that in the book she found "an accurate, stereotyped portrait of a commonplace face! . . . I would hardly like," she says, "to live with her ladies and gentlemen in their elegant but confined houses."<sup>10</sup> In her next letter to Mr. Lewes, after his apparent defence of Jane Austen as one of the greatest artists, Miss Brontë compounds her criticism in observing tartly, "Miss Austen being, as you say, without 'sentiment', without poetry, maybe is sensible, real (more real than true), but she cannot be great."<sup>11</sup> By this time (1948) Charlotte Brontë has completed the publication of Jane Eyre, one of the most remarkable and enduring of nineteenth century novels, and one which would never by any stretch of the critical imagination be taken for an eighteenth century work. How-

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<sup>10</sup>Gaskell, E.G., The Life of Charlotte Bronte, (J.M. Dent & Sons, 1908), p. 240

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 241

ever, and in spite of her dislike of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë is closely allied to her in the traditions of the novel. Their treatment of the subject, their style, their approach may differ widely, but they are not antipathetic in their basic attempt to reveal life in fiction. They both reflect an awareness of human nature; where one is coolly satirical the other is warmly romantic, but both seek truth and reality.

A letter referred to in Walter Houghton's, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870<sup>12</sup> shows us something of Charlotte Brontë's approach and attitude towards truth. She has been reading Henry Atkinson's Letters on the Nature and Development of Man, which she describes as "the first exposition of avowed atheism and materialism I have ever read; the first unequivocal declaration of disbelief in the existence of a God or a future life I have ever seen," and goes on to say; "Sincerely, for my own part, do I wish to find and know the truth, but if this be truth, well may she guard herself with mysteries, and cover herself with a veil."<sup>13</sup> Miss Brontë draws herself up with proper indignation at signs and portents of naked truth. This letter was written in 1851, but much earlier, when she was writing Jane Eyre, while we sense her indignation at the uglier aspects of human nature, we also see her eagerness to cover them with mysteries and the veil of romanticism.

The situation in which women found themselves at the beginning of

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<sup>12</sup>Houghton, Walter E., The Victorian Frame of Mind, (Yale University Press, 1957), p. 424

<sup>13</sup>Gaskell, op. cit., p. 329

\*In page numbering, #148 inadvertently omitted

the nineteenth century was if anything intensified in its strictness by the time the young Queen Victoria began not being amused. Professor Houghton describes the family as the centre of Victorian life, the home a shelter from the dreadful world outside, and a shelter for the moral and spiritual values, the home a haven for the family, a castle for Husband and Father.<sup>14</sup> Life was a solemn and serious affair, where women were enjoined to remember and presumably meet the needs of "world-weary man," as Baldwin Brown described him,<sup>15</sup> and to serve the lord and master without question or doubt. "It goes without saying," Professor Houghton observes, "that after marriage, quite as much as before, the Victorian ethic made fidelity the supreme virtue and sexual irregularity the blackest of sins . . . Adultery, especially in the case of a wife, and no matter what the extenuating circumstances, was spoken of with horror."<sup>16</sup> All the attitudes that prevailed while Jane Austen was flourishing were present and intensified as Charlotte Brontë was writing Jane Eyre. The last echoes of the eighteenth century rational moralism had died away, and the wit was in shadow.

Considering the restrictions placed upon her by her own time, we are inclined to agree with Mrs. Ward in her Introduction to the second edition of Jane Eyre; "The main secret of the charm that clings to Charlotte Brontë's books is, and always will be, the contact they give us with her own fresh, indomitable, surprising personality."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Houghton, op. cit., p. 342 ff      <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 345

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 356

<sup>17</sup>Ward, Mrs. Humphrey, Introduction to 1899 Edition, P. xx

She surprises us with an astonishing power to capture and hold the imagination of the reader in spite of the obvious and often documented flaws and weaknesses in Jane Eyre. She surprises us in the reality of the heroine she creates for us, all properly veiled in protective virtue, just managing to subdue most horrible desires.

Robert B. Heilman in an essay called Charlotte Bronte's New Gothic, refers to her "discovery of passion, rehabilitation of the extra-rational, which is the historical office of Gothic "being" no longer oriented in marvellous circumstances, but moving deeply into the lesser known realities of human life."<sup>18</sup> While one might agree that there are still a fair number of marvellous circumstances occurring in Jane Eyre, the human realities are indeed explored.

They are however, explored in direct relation to Charlotte Bronte herself rather than the character Jane Eyre as a separate entity. The novel Jane Eyre is in a sense an autobiographical fantasy, a yarn woven in and around actuality and day-dreams, an eloquent and sustained escape-mechanism from the tragic real life of a lonely young woman.

Professor C.E. Vaughan observed in 1916:

Charlotte Bronte, I suppose, was the first English novelist to bring upon the stage a figure long familiar to the French novelist, the femme incomprise, the misunderstood woman; the woman who has great thoughts in her soul, who is capable of great deeds and of deep sympathies, but who, for one reason or another, meets with little but scorn and neglect from the world and

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<sup>18</sup>From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, ed. R.C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann Jr., (University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p. 123

and those who slavishly accept the judgments of the world."<sup>19</sup> Walter Allen does not disagree in 1954 when he writes:

Mr. Rochester is a monster; the dialogues between him and Jane are absurd, but they are absurd only on his side, because he is a figment of Charlotte's imagination, a dream figure, whereas the author herself, or her projection of herself in Jane is wholly real. Rochester is not so much a man as a most powerful symbol of virility. If, as has been said, he is a schoolgirl's dream of a man, then one can only retort that the schoolgirl who dreamed him may not have been very pleasant but was certainly very remarkable.<sup>20</sup>

The misunderstood and desolate schoolgirl who was Charlotte Brontë strikes out bravely in Jane Eyre to fulfill her dreams, and does so after much trial and tribulation, and the expenditure of much passion.

Critics take great delight in parodies of the absurdities of plot in Jane Eyre, but there seems to be general agreement that the young lady herself is brilliantly real as a person. She emerges as a small creature savagely mistreated by the young bully John Reed; (JE-8); she escapes into unconsciousness when the situation becomes unbearable; (JE-15); she is weaker physically than anyone else in the novel except for the dying Mrs. Reed. In the superb descriptions of life at Lowood we see that her heterosexual development is retarded; she enjoys schoolgirl crushes for Miss Temple and for Helen Burns, the latter dying in her arms. (JE-74). Mr. Brocklehurst is an adult version of John Reed; with these two men as the highlights of her male associations prior to meeting with Mr. Rochester, the wonder of it is that she did

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<sup>19</sup>Charlotte Bronte, 1816-1916, A Centenary Memorial, ed. Butler-Wood, (T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1917), p. 192-3

<sup>20</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 190

not turn and run at the sight of him; but by then disturbed recollections of actuality were merging with fantasy.

Passion is the prevailing characteristic of both the novel and its heroine. She is passionately unhappy until she finds herself comfortable in the routine of Lowood; she is passionately upset by St. John Rivers; she is passionately responsive to the telepathic call that returns her to the arms of her beloved. It is remarkable that no matter how unbelievable Jane Eyre is, Jane Eyre as a person is consistently believable, and is possessed of depths of feeling which sustain both the sympathy and interest of "dear reader" who is occasionally appealed to directly for understanding.

The passionate young woman that Charlotte Brontë gives us, in a presentation which occasionally reaches almost poetic heights, is <sup>as</sup> true to life as Charlotte could make her, deeper and more honest than Elizabeth Bennett, but still confined by the limits of the world and the experience understood by her creator. With sordid undertones, the saga of the unhappy child progresses into the dark labyrinth of third-floor dungeons and mysterious laughter and thunderstorms and hideous revelations; but always the clear picture of Jane Eyre emerges--a picture of Charlotte Brontë herself, with all her attitudes and feelings. Our concern is with Jane Eyre as a woman. She has won our hearts as a child of ten and a student of eighteen. We understand her anxiety to find a good situation and at least achieve independence and security. And we soon learn that her privations have made her eager to please; fortunately she makes a friend of Mrs. Fairfax, who seems a pleasant person glad to

have someone to talk to.(JE-87) Her excellent French wins the ward Adela.(JE-90) A wish to be helpful is satisfied in her first meeting with Mr. Rochester; "My help had been needed and claimed; I had given it, I was pleased to have done something; trivial, transitory though the deed was, it was yet an active thing, and I was weary of an existence all passive."(JE-104)

Rochester provides her with much interest from then on, in fact he becomes her consuming interest; little Adela is passed over lightly, although the governess's duty is never overlooked. Without over-much shock, Jane hears about Mr. Rochester's adventures in France, and then "I turned to the consideration of my master's manner to myself. The confidence he had thought fit to repose in me seemed a tribute to my discretion; I regarded and accepted it as such."(JE-131) We gather that she is a good and eager listener, and values discretion.

After the house party sequences, (which are highly reminiscent of Miss Austen), and after the bedside visit to the Aunt, when Jane Eyre returns to Thornfield, she blurts out, or something in her bursts out from her in spite of herself; "Thank you Mr. Rochester for your great kindness. I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and wherever you are is my home, my only home."(JE-221) This is the outburst of a spontaneously innocent spirit.

Jane's self-consciousness and sense of inadequacy is clear when she awakens the morning after Rochester has proposed and she has accepted, when she thinks she looks no longer plain, "I had often been unwilling to look at my master, because I feared he could not be

pleased at my look; but I was sure I might lift my face to his now, and not cool his affection by its expression." (JE-231)

Jane is firm and resolute. Having refused to commit bigamy she is experiencing a dreadful ordeal; "Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshipped; and I must renounce love and idol. One drear word comprised my intolerable duty--Depart!" (JE-284)

Any number of additional examples and illustrations could be selected from the text to show Jane Eyre's character in general and her attitude toward men in particular. To use a vulgar colloquialism, Jane Eyre was a "one-man woman," and that man was Mr. Rochester (so seldom 'Edward'), the much respected Master, sir, the idol, the one she "absolutely worshipped," in whose presence she was transformed with bliss, one who, wherever he is, is home to her. Jane Eyre's nature cried out for the strength and security a man could provide for the ideal masculine fulfilment of feminine yearning.

Virginia Woolf suggests a facet of Jane Eyre's personality that draws her even more roundly, reminding us in A Room of One's Own<sup>21</sup> of Jane's visit to the top turrets, where she looks out over the dim skyline and:

...longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit, which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen; that then I desired more of practical experience than I possessed; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character, than was here within my

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<sup>21</sup>Woolf, op. cit., p. 103

reach. . . . Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from the rigid restraint too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.(JE-98)

With this passionate cry from an author we see how confined and confining Charlotte Brontë's life is, and how eagerly she aspires to realize more than she is permitted. Jane Eyre is her release, the character of Jane Eyre is formed on that of Charlotte Brontë, her portrayal of the character, however faulty and romantic, is violently sincere and deeply moving.

Of Jane Eyre, Walter Allen says "Everything in the novel is staked upon the validity of the author's sensibility; Charlotte Brontë is concerned with truth to her own feelings; the value of the feelings she never questions, it is taken for granted because they are her own."<sup>22</sup>

We have tried to suggest that Jane Eyre is real as the novel is an idealized autobiography, a dream-sequence of Charlotte Brontë herself. Where Jane Austen has written with exquisite satire, Charlotte Brontë writes with passionate anguish of a real person, and that real person is herself. Her portrait, with all its shadows and mysteries, is a self-portrait.

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<sup>22</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 189

## III. STENDHAL AND HIS LADY FRIENDS

The first woman in the life of Marie Henri Beyle, before he tries to conceal himself in the love of the many and the anonymity of a hundred pseudonyms, was, according to Robert M. Adams, the woman most men first love;

He was passionately in love with his mother, though she died when he was only six. This was a physical, possessive, exclusive, and devouring impulse, which he was to anatomize brilliantly in The Life of Henry Brulard. It influenced him profoundly, and in more ways than one can readily define, though it scarcely qualifies as an affaire du coeur in the ordinary limited sense.<sup>23</sup>

Even giving Beyle credit for most prodigious development, it is less than likely that his passionate love for his mother was very much more than the natural response of a sensitive child relived and reiterated by a prolific writer of intensely passionate feelings as he recalled the maternal strength and security his Mother represented. Beyle was a man of intense and consistent introspection, witness his voluminous notebooks; such a man would tend to idealize and idolize the first loving, warm woman he knew.

A second adoration could not quite be termed an affaire du coeur in that its object died when Beyle was ten years old (1793). This was the illustrious ~~Mme.~~ Roland, who was always included in the small group, "the happy few," and whose claim to fame in history is her splendid stoical farewell comment at the foot of the guillotine, "O Liberté, que de crimes on commet en ton nom!" Adams contends that she

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<sup>23</sup>Adams, Robert M., Stendhal, Notes on a Novelist, (The Noonday Press, New York, 1959), p. 9

represented for Beyle, "a soul's companion."<sup>24</sup> She was, he says, tender, noble, brave, generous and witty, and if she was egotistical this would not have diminished her appeal in the eyes of Baron Stendhal. When towards the end of her life, she falls in love with the Girondist deputy Buzot, Adams describes her as "Nearly forty--a fine figure of a woman, hardened a little by the fires of incessant political warfare, and touched already with the bitterness of domestic and political disillusion, but with immense, untouched resources of tenderness and imaginative energy."<sup>25</sup> This was the woman who presented to Stendhal the ideal of womanhood; it may be that from a boyhood heroine-worship he set his standards for what he sought and could never find completely, although by his own account he sought with energy and diligence.

Beyle's first real love affair was with Mélanie Guilbert, an actress who had a daughter; (it seems that most of Stendhal's young ladies were at one time married or had children, which may indicate a certain "back-to-the-womb" propensity on his part). Stendhal eventually persuaded Mélanie to become his mistress, but this particular achievement often resulted in a dampening of enthusiasm in Stendhal's amorous career; he seemed to enjoy the pursuit rather more than the capture. Mr. Adams quotes M. Bardèche in dismissing Mélanie as "the mistress one has at 22, from whom one learns how to make love and how to call articles of lingerie by their right name."<sup>26</sup>

Even at twenty-two, Stendhal was searching for knowledge of

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 199

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 201

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 10

people; it was not Mélanie's fault she could not measure up to the image of ~~Mme.~~ Roland. Robert Sage observes, "In Mélanie Guilbert he fell in love for the first time with a real woman, a woman he could see day after day, whose voice he could hear, whose actions he could witness, whose changing moods he could study. It was a test no human female could survive."<sup>27</sup>

Nor did she survive it, but he did include her among the happy few, according to Simone de Beauvoir, whose excellent essay on Stendhal is so penetrating an assessment of the writer and his women."<sup>28</sup>

A fourth major female in Beyle's life was Angela Pietragrua. He had admired her when he first met her, and did so again seeing her again ten years later. He describes her as a:

... tall and superb woman. There is always something majestic about her which comes from the manner in which her eyes, her forehead and her nose are placed. I found more wit, more majesty, and less of that grace replete with voluptuousness. In my time she was only majestic through the force of beauty, now she's also through the force of her facial traits.<sup>29</sup>

Angela Pietragrua was apparently impressed with Beyle on this re-union, and invited his attentions. In a delightful entry in his diary shortly after, while the affair is waxing, Angela cries out to him, (he says), "Leave Beyle, you must leave; leave, leave, you must leave!" I held out and appeared to be very hurt, but finally amid the

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<sup>27</sup>The Private Diaries of Stendhal, ed. & trans. by Robert Sage, (Doubleday & Co. Inc., New York, 1954), p. 90 (italics not in the original).

<sup>28</sup>~~de~~ Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 238

<sup>29</sup>Private Diaries, op. cit., p. 414

più teneri baci (the tenderest of kisses), I agreed to leave."<sup>30</sup> However she does capitulate, and Robert Adams describes her as:

not only a fascinating mistress--bold, comic, impulsive, experienced; he found also a playmate who appealed irresistibly to his own sense of the dramatic. She had a sense of danger and a sense of pleasure; she acted with unhesitating violence on whatever impulse happened to stir her sensitive soul. And thus she became the first of his mistresses who 'carried over' recognizably into his writings; it was around her irresistibly impetuous figure that Stendhal in the last years of his life crystallized the magnificent image of the Duchess Angela Pietranera who controls so much of The Charterhouse of Parma.<sup>31</sup>

Adams had more evidence available than had Honoré de Balzac in his famous Study of M. Beyle which precedes the Moncrieff translation, but Balzac queries:

Had M. Beyle some woman in his mind when he drew his Sanseverina? I fancy so. . . . Although I am quite convinced that there do exist women like the Sanseverina, though in very small numbers, and that I know some myself, I believe also that the author has perhaps enlarged the model and has completely idealized her.<sup>32</sup>

Balzac goes on to make an erroneous guess, suggesting<sup>a</sup> shrewd and witty woman as the prototype.

The intricate intrigues, the ruthless plotting and planning, the cheerful deceptiveness of the Sanseverina in the Charterhouse could well be an enlarged and imaginative portrayal of this majestic woman who dominated Beyle's life from 1811 to 1815, (which was a long liaison for him).

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 430

<sup>31</sup>Adams, op. cit., p. 12

<sup>32</sup>Balzac, Honoré de, A Study of M. Beyle, trans. C.K.S. Moncrieff, (Chatto and Windus, 1926), p. IXIV

If we could assume, and assumptions are extremely dangerous in discussing so self-aware a man as Henri Beyle, that his searching for the ideal woman was invariably disappointing in the conquest of any woman, perhaps Mathilde Visconte-Dembowska came closer than the others to his idea of perfection in the very fact that she never did 'capitulate' to his advances. She had an unhappy background, two children, and Adams summarizes,

Beyle's experience with her was almost pure unrequited misery, for she would not have him, on any terms at all. Several times he was on the point of suicide, yet there were memories . . . and these lent to him a depth and complexity which finally burst into expression in a book of analysis and confession, De L'Amour.<sup>33</sup>

Again the woman was the well-spring of a classic, miserable though Stendhal may have been.

There were more amours, but even with the tumultuous Guila Beyle felt sad recognition of the end. Adams recounts how she came to him one day in 1830 "and standing directly in front of him, said with some emphasis, 'I've seen for a long time that you are old and ugly', and kissing him passionately, she declared her willingness to be his mistress."<sup>34</sup> The affair was short lived, and Beyle, while he did not terminate the search, seems to have lost enthusiasm for searching after Guila was finished with him.

He was by then losing something of physical appeal. Balzac describes him, about 1839, as having:

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<sup>33</sup>Adams, op. cit., p. 12

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 14

... irresistible charm in his speech, although his physique--for he is extremely stout--seems at first sight to preclude refinement, elegance of manners. . . . He has a fine forehead, a keen and piercing eye, a sardonic mouth, in short, he has altogether the physiognomy of his talent. He retains in conversation that enigmatic turn, that eccentricity which leads him never to sign the illustrious name of Beyle, to call himself one day Cotonnet, another Frederic.<sup>35</sup>

Métilde was the dominant figure in Stendhal's life from 1818 to 1824. Thus for the major part of his adult life he had had countless affairs, and at least three significant liaisons with women who may have approximated his ideal. His genius as an author may only have been revealed after these experiences were, to use his own term, 'crystallized' in memory; certainly his attitude toward women, as evidenced in his diaries, his letters and his novels, is that they are infinitely real people. ~~Mlle.~~ de Beauvoir discusses what Stendhal asks of women:

It is first of all not to permit themselves to be caught in the snares of seriousness; and because of the fact that the things supposed to be of importance are out of their range, women run less risk than men of getting lost in them; they have better chances of preserving that naturalness, that naivete, that generosity which Stendhal puts above all other merit. What he likes in them is what today we call their authenticity; that is the common trait in all the women he loved or lovingly invented; all are free and true beings.<sup>36</sup>

The author of The Second Sex is a Stendhal enthusiast, and admittedly uses the author's attitude toward women as a sterling example of an admirable approach, but her analysis of ~~Mme.~~ de Rênal, the Sanseverina, Clelia, ~~Mme.~~ de Chasteller and Mathilde de la Mole provide a convincing argument for Stendhal's genius in the portrayal

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<sup>35</sup>Balzac, op. cit., p. IXXI

<sup>36</sup>de Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 240

of real women. We have attempted to show that M. Beyle conducted for the greater part of his life, a study of women, a search for an ideal. While it is obvious that M. Beyle was not successful, Baron Stendhal was able to incorporate into his novels a cast of characters drawn from life. With sensitive wit and brilliant insight, Stendhal succeeds where M. Beyle has failed in conquering the image of women.

#### IV. STENDHAL AND THE SANSEVERINA

Having met the real woman in M. Beyle's life, it is intriguing to meet at least one of them in one of his novels. Of Stendhal, Stephan Zweig writes:

In retrospect he contemplates these women with the eyes of his youth, and glorifies them, for even as an elderly man he is still in love with love; taking them gently by the hand, he leads these adorable idols forth from the most secret havens of his heart, and presents them to his heroes.<sup>37</sup>

Whether or not Angela Pietragrua was an "adorable idol" is immaterial; her fictional counterpart in the Charterhouse of Parma could scarcely be described as such. F.C. Green speaks for many critics when he says that "Stendhal's greatest creation is, undoubtedly, Gina Sanseverina, the aunt of Fabrice. The whole action of the novel has its source in Sanseverina's passion for her nephew."<sup>38</sup>

This remarkable, passionate woman is as attractive as she is complex. Count Mosca, studying her through his opera-glasses, thinks

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<sup>37</sup>Zweig, Stephan, Adepts in Self Portraiture, (Viking Press, New York, 1928), p. 174

<sup>38</sup>Green, F.C., Stendhal, (Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 292

to himself that she does not even look her age at twenty-five.

Young, brilliant, blithe as a bird. . . . Her beauty is the least of her charms. Where else could I discover a creature of such perfect sincerity, one whose actions are never governed by prudence, who gives herself up bodily to the feelings of the moment, and asks nothing better than to be whisked off by some fresh object?(CP-103)

Later, inflamed by jealousy at the prince's attentions to the duchess, he may doubt her "perfect sincerity," but still thinks, "I know Gina; she is a woman who always follows her first impulse; her behaviour is unforeseen even by herself; if she tries to trace out a plan beforehand, she grows confused. . . ."(CP-148)

He does not seem to really know her well. There are echoes of M. Beyle and his affairs as we read of the Sanseverina being somewhat bewildered that there should be any misunderstanding on the part of an honourable gentleman when, after having loved him for five years, "And never given his love a single complaint, I say to him 'Dear Count, I was happy enough to love you. Well, the flame has burnt out; I do not love you any more. But I know the very bottom of your heart, I have the deepest regard for you, and you will always be the dearest of all my friends'."(CP-296)

Stendhal tells us, in one of his pithy asides, that the duchess had two special characteristics; "What she desired once she desired always, and she never deliberated a second time concerning anything she had once decided."(CP-395)

The author shows us that the duchess had great persuasive skills; when Fabrice shows reluctance to go into the church and says he might

go to America instead, the Sanseverina assures him that he would be making a dreadful mistake: "You will have no fighting, and you will fall back on the old café life, only without elegance, without music, and without love-making."(CP-126)

She then explains what dollar-worship is, and at the end of her eloquent pleading, Fabrice concedes the issue and makes the "cruel sacrifice" to stay and not go to New York.

The duchess is an expert in court manners and intrigue. She shows her worldly wisdom in her advice to Fabrice to listen and learn and never present any objections, to mention radical philosophers now in disrepute either never or with calmest irony, not to be too brilliant, "It will be time enough to be witty when you are a bishop."  
(CP-128)

She herself is successful in her efforts to reach the inner circle of the court and please the prince and his consort. She knows that the sight of happiness "drives the prince wild," so she and the Count conceal theirs.(CP-131) Stendhal suggests that she "had not the patience and the calmness indispensable to success in intrigue,"(CP-130) but admits she was adequate at ingratiating herself when she chose to do so.

When Fabrice was involved, the duchess sometimes lost her self-possession, as she did on one occasion when she was "so transported with delight" on her nephew's arrival "that she gave no thought at all to the ideas her looks might stir in the Count's brain. Their effect was deep, and his consequent suspicion <sup>in</sup> ~~is~~ eradicable."(CP-139)

As it is the source of the whole novel, the Sanseverina's passion for her nephew is of great importance. Green maintains that she idealized Fabrice, "never seeking, as the years pass, to ask herself whether his adoration is pure, or as gossip will have it, a shameful and illicit passion."<sup>39</sup> He quotes from her letter to Mosca:

Je vous jure devant Dieu, et sur la vie de Fabrice, que jamais il ne s'est passé entre lui et moi la plus petite chose que n'eut pas souffrir l'oeil d'une tierce personne. Je ne vous dirai pas non plus que je l'aime exactement comme ferait une soeur; je l'aime d'instinct pour parler ainsi.<sup>40</sup>

Green then observes that this love of hers, which can never be spoken, "finds an outlet in febrile activity. All her plotting and counter-plotting is for the sake of Fabrice."<sup>41</sup>

When Fabrice returns from France, Stendhal observes, "if he had made love to her, she the Countess Pietranera would have fallen in love with him, and the admiration she already nursed for both his person and his acts was passionate, and I might almost say unbounded."

(CP-96) The Count Mosca is hopeful: "She has loved him like a son for the past fifteen years. There is all my hope--like a son!"(CP-148)

Stendhal admits his own inadequacy to describe the Duchess's reaction to Fabrice's imprisonment:

How can I describe the moment of despair which followed this summing up of the situation in the heart of a woman so unreasonable, so enslaved by the sensation of the moment, and though she did not acknowledge it to herself, so desperately in love with the young prisoner?(CP-291)

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<sup>39</sup>Green, op. cit., p. 292

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 292

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 293

Fabrice realizes he loves Clelia, happens to think of his Aunt, is astonished to find that he has no real recollection of her; "at that moment she seemed fifty years old to him. 'Good God', he cried enthusiastically, 'how right I was not to tell her that I loved her!'" (CP-340) He dismisses other ladies more easily, realizing that there had been a time when he "imagined that the whole of his heart was possessed by the duchess." (CP-340)

The Prince shows, for the first time in his life, some decisiveness of character when he is "surprised and dazzled by the beauty and emotion" (CP-474) with which despair has imbued the duchess when Fabrice is likely to be poisoned. In his infatuation he begs her to rule him and his dominions, to be his Prime Minister. But he has a fatal flaw; he bores her, and at least Count Mosca is perfectly charming: "there was only one man in the world whom she could have preferred to him," the duchess says to herself. (CP-504)

Simone de Beauvoir comments on this quality of Gina's: "The Sanseverina, that "active soul" dreads ennui more than death. To stagnate in ennui is 'to keep from dying', she said, 'not to live'; she is always impassioned, always in action, and gay, too."<sup>42</sup>

Imprudent, impassioned, headstrong, impulsive, emotional, unreasonable, Gina Pietrianera, Simone de Beauvoir suggests, "is herself no more than the sublime and mad escapade she has chosen to live."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>de Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 241

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 242

She is something more than this, as we have seen; she is the prototype ~~type~~ of the powerful woman, the archetype of the female, a vivid and creative woman who enriches those who love her and electrifies the society in which she moves.

With wit and wisdom, in a rushing romance, Stendhal paints a portrait of "mysterious woman," giving her credit for intelligence and intuition. Whether her love for Fabrice is illicit or shameful, Stendhal makes no judgments, but he gives her the virtue of loyalty throughout The Charterhouse of Parma. The Sanseverina is as "sublime and mad" as the escapade in which Stendhal has chosen her to live, and within its pages, she is strong and real. She seems very like Stendhal himself in her impetuous and passionate nature; like him she is a free human being, no matter how enslaved, temporarily, by her wayward heart.

If as Simone de Beauvoir claims, Stendhal values naturalness, naiveté and generosity in people, the Sanseverina has those qualities in abundance. In the strictest sense of the word, the Sanseverina was most ungenerous in refusing Fabrice the pleasure of loving Clelia.

Stendhal's portrayal is of a woman, and in her selfishness with her nephew, Gina demonstrates a truly womanly negative aspect of her character. Stendhal refuses to idealize even this great soul he has portrayed; she too is victim to one of the shortcomings love can cause. However, so natural and believable is her love for Fabrice that the Charterhouse can develop as it does; her innocence is highly complicated by her impulsiveness, and her generosity of spirit is magnificently compounded by her passionate determination to protect and

save her beloved; throughout the romance she is as real a woman and person as the story and its setting could allow her to be.

#### V. WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY AND BECKY SHARP

Jane Austen would not be likely to object to a re-statement of her famous opening sentence, and might even agree that "a single woman in possession of no fortune must be in want of a husband." As Thackeray observes in one of his early confidential asides to the reader of Vanity Fair, "if he had had the courage; if George and Miss Sedley had remained, according to the former's proposal, in the farther room, Joseph Sedley's bachelorhood would have been at an end, and this work would never have been written."(VF-36) Becky Sharp wants a husband and security, and from the moment Thackeray opens the box and sets the puppets in motion until he closes it again at the end of the novel, he is concerned with her gallant endeavor to survive in an alien and suspicious society. Her performance is superb.

To say that Becky Sharp succeeds in living by her wits is an understatement; she is a tough well-built soundly-constructed puppet who lives not only by her wits but by a ruthless "knees-and-elbows" process of self-defence and cheerful defiance. She has a delightful way of translating her thoughts into action. She expresses her disdain of both Miss Pinkerton and the kindly Miss Jemima by flinging the Johnson's 'Dixonary' back into the garden as the coach drives off; (VF-11) she willingly goes down to her knees to beg Sir Pitt's benevolence after she has refused his offer of marriage; (VF-141) she

demonstrates incredible physical energy in "living well on nothing a year";(VF-360ff) she hoards her valuables in secret drawers;(VF-481) she eliminates those who are in her way and charges courageously into lions' dens as the need arises.

Thackeray obviously likes Becky Sharp; she engages his interest rather more than does the good but insipid Amelia. He takes pleasure in translating her devious machinations, as when she secures an escape plan through poor Joseph Sedley in Brussels, and the author explains her flattery as meaning, "should an accident befall the army, and a retreat be necessary, you have a very comfortable carriage, in which I propose to take a seat."(VF-301) Becky is a ruthless, shrewd and calculating wench quite determined to achieve her goal.

One of her most engaging attributes is her indomitable good nature. She was a young lady, Thackeray says, "of too much resolution and energy of character to permit herself much useless and unseemly sorrow for the irrevocable past."(VF-146) Even when their fortunes are extremely bleak, she manages to be cheerful in telling Rawdon, "if we are ruined, you can carve and take charge of the stable, and I can be a governess to Lady Jane's children. Ruined! fiddlededee! I will get you a good place before that; or Pitt and his little boy will die, and we will be Sir Rawdon and My Lady."(VF-374) From all her reverses Becky recovers with economic speed and good sense.

She is something of a philosopher, perhaps more of a realist. One of her most endearing comments on her life and times, a very personalized generality--"I think I could be a good woman if I had five

thousand a year"(VF-423)--is as tidy a paraphrase of Virginia Woolf's ideal A Room of One's Own as could be expressed.

Becky's sense of humour is well-illustrated in her device for establishing a pleasant and homey atmosphere when she is busy charming Sir Pitt (the younger); "Whenever Mrs. Rawdon wished to be particularly humble and virtuous, this little shirt used to come out of her work-box. It had got to be too small for Rawdon long before it was finished."(VF-443) So she sits and hems the little shirt, listening to the boring Baronet with the 'tenderest kindly interest'.

That Becky is of a devious nature is indicated whenever we meet her on the panoramic stage; Thackeray makes no effort to conceal his pleasure in her subterfuges. The incident with Lord Steyne, when she extracts from him double the amount she really owes Mrs. Briggs, (VF-485) and then buys the poor woman a dress instead of paying her money, is an example. Similarly she sometimes uses the blatant truth to create an impression, as when she modestly explains to Lady Grizzel her linguistic skill, "I ought to know it; I taught it in school, and my Mother was a Frenchwoman,"(VF-509) thus winning the great lady by her humility.

But we only hear the truth from Becky Sharp, or about her, when Thackeray chooses to tell us. When we would really like to know it, the author evades us. Was she or was she not innocent of a liaison with Lord Steyne? "She said not; but who could tell what was truth which came from those lips; or if that corrupt heart was in this case pure?"(VF-539) William Makepeace Thackeray could have told us; he

declines to do so. He is attacking, in Vanity Fair, false values, hypocrisy, deceit; he is staging a performance; it is not part of his purpose, he seems to be saying in avoiding a full examination of truth, to complete a character study even of the one character who appeals to him most strongly. The only full portrait in Vanity Fair is Vanity Fair; he asks us to accept the portrait of Becky, or Amelia, or Rawdon or Dobbin or old Miss Crawley only as he presents them. He tells us, or seems to tell us, all he wants us to know about any character, adding his own editorial comments when he wishes, inviting no further exploration or deeper examination.

From direct passages in the novel, it is possible to show that Becky is tough, resilient, devious, good-natured, scheming, untruthful, ruthless, calculating, a consummate actress, a stoic, strong-willed, ambitious, witty, talented, disloyal, untrustworthy and utterly selfish. Thackeray gives us not only one but several scenes to illustrate these characteristics. He also makes it clear that she thoroughly dislikes her young son; "He bored her," (VF-446) (which is a tantamount to crime in the mores of motherhood); that she is a dreadful liar--as when she claims to have rented the jewels for the Presentation when in fact Sir Pitt himself had given her a diamond brooch. (VF-481) The author leaves us with a final impression that she has probably done away with poor old Jos in order to get the insurance money--a murder if true, and a final black mark on her character.

With all these attributes, and Thackeray's enthusiasm for his creation of Becky Sharp, it is interesting that the author did not see

fit to round out his heroine--for she far outstrips Amelia as a "female lead" in the play--with some qualities which would make her more real, more human.

The answer lies in the nature of the novel itself, a revelation of *Vanity Fair*, a panoramic view of society with all its weaknesses and hypocrisy, an ironical commentary on man and his frailties. Becky Sharp is a better constructed puppet than any of the others; she has more strings and appears almost life-like. She moves quickly, pushes and scratches, falls down and gets up again when Thackeray commands; but she has no separate and independent life of her own. She is a creature created by Thackeray for his novel's cause.

Becky Sharpe has a purpose on the stage. She strips away vanity from Joseph Sedley and George Osborne, she reveals by comparison the goodness of Amelia, she mocks the Lords and Ladies of high society. She humbles the proud, and gives the servants their revenge. She keeps the play properly entangled so that the installments of the novel could be drawn out to a respectable and profitable length. She casts a fresh and penetrating light on the world Thackeray has set out to illuminate and gently mock. All this she does with memorable skill; she is a triumph for her creator, but she is not real.

As a male in a society that inhibited women, Thackeray was privileged to observe human nature on a much wider stage than was possible for a female author such as Jane Austen. It is highly unlikely that Thackeray was not deliberate in his caution with sensuality and sexuality. While it seems patronizing to explore in a very brief

analysis a fundamental relationship between an author and what might be considered an omission in his portrayal of a character, in fairness it should be observed that Thackeray does not leave Becky 'unfinished' for want of skill or for want of wisdom, and he does indicate that she gratified Rawdon's physical needs.

In considering the author, Walter Allen refers to Professor Greig, in his Thackeray, a Reconsideration, who

convincingly lays bare the sources of Thackeray's inhibition. When dealing with women, 'he was dominated and controlled by his tutelary spirit, his Mother'; and his condition was intensified by his marriage, which, after four years, was no marriage.<sup>44</sup>

Thackeray's wife was insane after 1840. While Amelia and the other 'good' women he portrayed may, with some amusement, have been patterned after the contemporary ideal of womanhood, Becky Sharp is an example of many additional vivid and powerful personalities he might have created had his own relationships with women been more normal and satisfying. Perhaps the exploration and depiction of real love and deep feeling was too bitter an experience for Thackeray to indulge in; his enormous skill as an ironist has in it the overtones and undertones of tragedy; perhaps laughter saves him from tears. Becky Sharp has spirit and fire, courage and brains; a man of Thackeray's stature would not have left her deprived of depths of passion unless he wanted to do so, or could not bring himself to round out his portrait of her with the feelings and emotional depths of a real woman.

In Vanity Fair Thackeray succeeds gloriously in what he set

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<sup>44</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 178

out to do. For his own reasons, he did not seem to set out to depict a real woman in Becky Sharp. Had he done so, he would have changed the nature of the novel, but answered our queries; had she no truly warm and loving feelings toward anyone? Was she utterly incapable of love and affection, either giving or taking? Was there no mercy or kindness in her nature? Did she never mature beyond recognizing the same mistake when there was a danger of making it a second time? Was she really as frigid and cold-blooded as she appeared to be?

Charlotte Brontë dedicated the second edition of Jane Eyre to William Makepeace Thackeray whom she considered to be "an intellect pro-founder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognized."<sup>45</sup> She regarded him as "the first social regeneration of the day, as the very master of the working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things," and in claiming that his wit is bright and his humour attractive observes that they do not conceal from her his serious genius. This eloquent tribute to the great writer notwithstanding, his Becky, for all her charm and liveliness on the great stage, is, along with the other characters, put back in the box, a clever wooden doll, at the end of the performance. But from her stall at the Fair the passer-by hears rich and hilarious echoes of the devious machiavellian designing of which woman is capable.

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<sup>45</sup>Jane Eyre, Preface, December 21st, 1847

## VI. GEORGE MEREDITH AND CLARA MIDDLETON

"Is it intuitively or by their experience that our neighbours across the Channel surpass us in the knowledge of your sex?" (E-238) the Egoist inquires of Miss Laetitia Dale while Clara Middleton is singing a Tuscan popular canzone, and Sir Willoughby writhes with 'sickly green reflections' of jealousy. There is no way of knowing if George Meredith was thinking partly of Stendhal as he wrote this question, but he does share with Stendhal a capacity for understanding Woman, and crystallizing her in brilliant prose.

Walter Allen contends that Meredith's young women "are unique in our fiction in their blending of seriousness, ardour, passion and dedication; and Clara Middleton may stand for them all as she is Queen of them all."<sup>46</sup> He feels that she is 'real', that she moves us, "by a sense of human destiny in the balance,"<sup>47</sup> that she matters to us as we read of her. Other critics agree; Edith Batho and Bonamy Dobrée comment that Meredith "managed to make his people matter, or, to phrase it differently, he made them significant as symbols."<sup>48</sup> Clara Middleton may stand as the symbol of a woman in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the symbol of ideal womanhood to George Meredith. To see how 'real' she is, and how fulfilled as a woman and as a person is the object of our present study.

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<sup>46</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 243

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 241

<sup>48</sup>Batho and Dobrée, The Victorians and After, (Robert M. McBride & Co., New York, 1938), p. 93

Clara Middleton, the "dainty rogue in porcelain", stars as the heroine of an almost stage-like, theatrical comedy. It is a comedy, if the pun will be pardoned, of patterns, a stylized scene-by-scene interweaving of personalities; high comedy in its portrayal of Sir Willoughby, warm and perceptive in its sympathy with Clara. She may be idealized by Meredith, but she is no hollow heroine present for the sake of appearances. We meet her in a reversed way, through the eyes of the Egoist, but by eliminating his pomposity, her portrait emerges. She is "young, healthy, handsome . . . has a receptive mind . . . has wit . . . dignity."(E-41) Meredith then disposes of the mirror, and informs us that the Egoist "could have seen that she had a spirit with natural love of liberty, and required the next thing to liberty, spaciousness, if she was to own allegiance."(E-44) In the same passage he notes that she became an attentive listener, surely an excellent thing in a woman!

Clara is a realist, refusing Sir Willoughby's offer of "the transcendent nobility of faithfulness beyond death,"(E-50) and she bravely faces her previous responses to his wooing; "she remembered her rosy dreams and the image she had of him, her throbbing pride in him, her choking richness of happiness."(D-54) Intellectual independence appeals to her; when Willoughby seems to be threatening it she thinks "My mind is my own, married or not," and Meredith observes that this was the point in the dispute."(E-75)

Clara is an honourable woman, caged by her word, and searching valiantly for the courage to dare to be faithless; "the world would be

barking at her heels."(E-98) Her agonies of doubt and indecision can only arise from an essentially honourable woman; the conflict of the novel would be non-existent without her having this characteristic of honour.

She is well aware of her own traits; Meredith's insight and her own blend in the statement she makes to Sir Willoughby: (it does not matter that in his egoism he does not even hear it), "I am unworthy, I am volatile. I love my liberty. I want to be free. . . ." (E-106)

Clara is aware of and resentful about the fact that "women are in the position of inferiors. They are hardly out of the nursery when a lasso is round their necks; and if they have beauty, no wonder they turn it to a weapon and make as many captives as they can." (E-160)

Meredith's sympathy with woman's plight is revealed many times; for example when Colonel De Craye is attracted to Clara, the author observes of him and other 'sportive gentlemen', that "he is our immortal dunce at learning to distinguish her as a personal variety, of a separate growth." (E-183) Later he has Clara thinking of the defencelessness of women asking, "Can a woman have an inner life apart from him she is yoked to?" (E-201) The term 'yoked' seems significant. Again, as Clara plans her escape, Meredith observes that

young women are trained to cowardice. For them to front an evil with plain speech is to be guilty of effrontery and forfeit the waxen polish of purity, and therewith their commanding place in the market. They are trained to please man's taste, for which purpose they soon learn to live out of themselves. . . ." (E-248)

When she reluctantly returns from her attempted escape, even Willoughby realizes Clara is a person to be reckoned with, deciding, without much

conviction, that "her individuality as a woman was a thing he had to bow to. It was impossible to roll her up in the sex and bestow a kick on the travelling bundle."(E-296) On his own and through the characters in The Egoist Meredith deplores or seems to deplore the lesser rôle of women.

Laughingly, Meredith gives Willoughby the prevailing ideal of the wife when he congratulates himself on his decision to propose to Laetitia:

A tried, steadfast woman is the jewel of her sex. She points to her husband like the sunflower; her love illuminates him; she lives in him, for him; she testifies to his worth; she drags the world to his feet; she leads the chorus of his praises; she justifies him in his own esteem. Surely there is not on earth such beauty!(E-388)

In effect, the author concludes, "It would be a marriage with a mirror, with an echo; marriage with a shining mirror, a choric echo." (E-389) The concept of woman solely as a reflector of and for man is subjected to Meredith's biting wit.

In passing, it should be noted that in describing Clara, Meredith reveals high skill in observation and perception about women, as when he notes that Clara thinks "in blanks, as girls do, and some women. A shadow of the male Egotist is in the chamber of their brains, overawing them."(E-112) The splendidly funny moments when Clara simply closes her eyes(C-75,77,128) in resigned desperation are equally astute.

His sympathetic and understanding treatment of Woman through Clara marks George Meredith as a very special author in the development of the novel. Clara is a rogue in her desire to run from the herd, to

be different. She is porcelain in the delicate artistry with which Meredith portrays her, but she does not break as De Craye's wedding gift breaks; she survives because Meredith made her strong. She and Vernon receive a benediction from the "grave and sisterly" Comic Muse, who does not laugh at them as she does at the others who cause her "to compress her lips in glancing at them." (E-523) Clara is sincerely drawn, is a voice for Meredith's ideas and opinions about women and their freedom, women with a right to choice and to their own identity. He gives her a well rounded character; "her mind is in a crisis of constant discovery about herself and the world around her. And from her very nature, she is pledged to self-discovery and to action in accordance with what she discovers";<sup>49</sup> he makes her articulate, kind hearted (with Crossjay), loyal (to her father of whom she is genuinely fond), mature (in her relationship with Laetitia for instance), sensitive to beauty, as in the famous passage when the good Vernon sleeps under the double-blossom wild-cherry tree and the symbol of their mutual love is introduced. (E-114)

At the end of the novel, we are left to assume that Clara will 'live happily ever after'. As she escapes from the man she does not love to the man she does love, we can assume that she is confident that her marriage to Vernon, who is also a free spirit, will be the ideal for which she has suffered so much and hoped so earnestly. Even George Meredith, for all his awareness of the individuality of women, seems to

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<sup>49</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 242

take it for granted that marriage will fulfill the whole desires of his heroine. At least he leaves his reader with these assumptions, as he writes toward a publication date of 1879. And yet in 1862 he first published his poem-novel Modern Love,<sup>50</sup> which, ~~to the extent that it can be taken as autobiographical~~, indicates the poet's awareness that marriages can indeed be shipwrecked.

Obviously, The Egoist, having done its work with such success, and as a comedy, had to end at the logical conclusion. The woman Clara is portrayed and the picture is completed. As the times demanded, the woman finds the reality of her dreams in marriage to the best man available. The question is whether or not the fulfilment is true; Clara is complete as a woman, but we have nothing in the way of evidence to prove that she is fulfilled as a person. While her reiterated desire was to be free it was to be free within marriage, in a relationship to a man she loved. (The symbolic joining of hands by Vernon and Clara seems to indicate they would marry.) Presumably she achieves this; the reader fervently hopes so, because he cares what happens to her. But marriage alone, as George Meredith knew perfectly well, is no guarantee of happiness or fulfilment; it would have been comforting and reassuring to know that Clara had developed a clear sense of her own worthiness as an individual person. However, as Meredith himself might respond, "we cannot be abettors of the tribe of imps whose revelry is in the frailties of our poor human constitution." (E-511) Meredith saw women in a clear

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<sup>50</sup>Meredith, George, Modern Love, (Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1948)

light, and sympathized with their aspirations toward greater freedom; while he stood on a high mountain he could still only describe the world as it was while he lived. Professor F.H. Lees in his essay on the novelist concludes that Meredith, whatever his imperfections, was

a novelist of great originality, with important aims, one of insight and honesty, whose full-bloodedness and searching intimacy of feeling makes his work (differences, and important ones, notwithstanding), more akin to that of D.H. Lawrence than is that of any other English novelist.<sup>51</sup>

#### VII. D.H. LAWRENCE AND LADY CHATTERLEY

The environment in which Lady Chatterley lives is not to her liking; Tavershall as it suffers from the effects of the mines and the industrial revolution is immensely depressing to her. The England she sees around her is not the same as the old England she knew, it "was really blotted out by this terrifying and gruesome England, and that blotting out would go on till it was complete." (LC-180) She looks with loathing at the effect it was having on people; it is "producing a new race of mankind, over-conscious in the money and social and political side, on the spontaneous intuitive side dead--but dead! Half-corpses, all of them!" (LC-176)

As she is married to a half-corpses it is not surprising that the phrase occurs to her. She herself is voluptuous--"Being a soft, ruddy country-looking girl, inclined to freckles, with big blue eyes, and curling brown hair, and a soft voice and rather strong female loins,

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<sup>51</sup>From Dickens to Hardy, ed. Boris Ford, (Pelican Books, 1958), p. 336

she was considered a little old-fashioned and 'womanly.'" She was not a "little pilchard sort of fish," like a boy with a boy's flat breast and little buttocks. She was too feminine to be quite smart."(LC-18)

D.H. Lawrence's approach to women is illustrated in this early description of Lady Chatterley. As he writes in 1928, women are binding up their bosoms in tight bonds, accepting the "boyish" look as fashionable, and Lawrence's resentment of this unnatural style is obvious in his sneering reference to "little pilchard sort of fishes." While England itself is changing and becoming ugly, while Englishmen are becoming more materialistic and superficial, Lawrence seems to indicate his nostalgia for the old-fashioned "womanly" Englishwoman, and creates such a female in Lady Chatterley.

Our particular concern in examining Lady Chatterley's Lover is the portrayal of a woman by D.H. Lawrence. It is extremely difficult to develop a clear picture of Constance without reference to her relationship to her husband, with Michaelis and with Mellors, because Lawrence does not give her a separate entity, an individual personality apart from them. She is subservient to them and dominated by them throughout the book. Lawrence as a "preacher to women" seems to be glorying in male predominance, presenting Lady Chatterley as a vital aspect not of herself but of her lover. He uses her as a vehicle for the development of his theories on love and life. She is the vortex of his ideas on sex.

Simone de Beauvoir, in The Second Sex,<sup>52</sup> writes in her essay "D.H.

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<sup>52</sup>Beauvoir, op. cit., pp. 214-224

Lawrence or Phallic Pride" that Lawrence portrays women in the subordinate role, that he believes passionately in the supremacy of the male." She reviews this attitude from his works, concluding that

for the cult of the Goddess Mother, Lawrence means to substitute a phallic cult; when he wishes to illuminate the sexual nature of the cosmos, it is not woman's abdomen but man's vitality he calls to mind. He almost never shows a man agitated by a woman, but time and time again he shows a woman secretly overwhelmed by the ardent, subtle and insinuating appeal of the male. His heroines are beautiful and healthy, but not heady; whereas his heroes are disquieting fawns. It is male animals that incarnate the agitation and the powerful mystery of life. . . . <sup>53</sup>

From Fantasia of the Unconscious, Simone de Beauvoir quotes Lawrence's contention that it is for man to

carry forward the banner of life . . . Woman is really polarized downwards toward the centre of the earth, her deep positivity is in the downward flow, the moon-pull. And man is polarized upwards, towards the sun and the day's activities . . . For Woman, the deepest consciousness is in the loins and the belly.<sup>54</sup>

The unawakened Lady Chatterley and her husband 'enjoyed' an intellectual companionship; she had the satisfaction of enjoying a sense of 'virtue' in her sacrifice. Lawrence suggests that in 1917 "they were as intimate as two people who stand together on a sinking ship,"(LC-10) that as their habit of 'togetherness' grew "they were attached to one another in the aloof modern way. . . . He was a hurt thing. And as such Connie stuck to him

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 218

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 219

passionately."(LC-14) Clifford's incapacity to love in both a physical and emotional sense provides Lawrence with the plot and the springboard for his examination of love and sex. (Clifford also provides him with a character to symbolize the decaying gentry, to express the opinions on workers and the ruling classes; he does not need, nor does he bother, to inject Clifford with more than the half-life which his crippling has left him.)

As Michaelis comes into the picture, we begin to detect Lawrence's attitude toward women in the male-female relationship. The author has skillfully prepared us for Lady Chatterley to be attracted by the antithesis of her husband; we are sympathetic with her need. But when Michaelis looks at Connie with his "full searching look," and then turns away she "loses her power to see him detached from herself."(LC-26) Then he fixes his eyes on her "with almost hypnotic power . . . sending out an appeal that affected her direct in the womb."(LC-27) Within moments he looks at her again with "that awful appeal in his full glowing eyes. She was utterly incapable of resisting it. From her breast flowed the answering, immense yearning over him; she must give him anything, anything."(LC-27) Hers is an emotional capitulation, a recognition of his maleness in relation to her subservience to it.

As the affair progresses, Lawrence admits that Connie had a forboding of its hopelessness,(LC-33) and deals adequately with her conflict of feelings. But the conclusion of the affair, Michaelis's cruel vulgarity, "his incomprehensive brutality"(LC-61) in the final discussion about reaching climax and her satisfaction in love-making, is both abrupt

and inadequate. From "almost that night she loved him, and wanted to marry him," within one sentence Lawrence states, "her whole sexual feeling for him, or for any man, collapsed that night. Her life fell apart from his as completely as if he had never existed." (LC-61) Lawrence is too brilliant an author to have deliberately evaded the essential psychological process here; his abruptness seems to indicate his indifference or lack of awareness of what the woman was really feeling. Lady Chatterley's "collapsed sexual feeling for any man" was roused by Mellors within a very short time, and while Lawrence as the good-author can claim she never gave Michaelis another thought, it would be most unlike a normal woman to ~~completely~~ obliterate from her mind any memory of a man with whom she had had sustained intimate relations. Naturally, we must accept Lawrence's word for it; this is his creation, but it is possible to suggest that the diagnosis is inadequate, unless it reflects his theory of women as being relatively unimportant except as objects for male identification.

In fairness, this episode should be interpreted in relation to Lawrence's major thesis, that theory of joy-through-living which permeates all his work. Connie and Michaelis really remained isolated from one another; their love-affair came to nothing because they were not truly joined either as personalities or in their sexual relationship. It is understandable therefore that Lawrence wants to dismiss the affair abruptly; Michaelis has served his purpose.

In her relationship to the game-keeper Lady Chatterley is ironically dominated from the beginning. Lawrence reveals this in his

choice of words--"she came forward with weakening limbs," . . . "feeling weak and breathless, and a little afraid of him." He had that curious kind of protective authority she obeyed at once. It is she who sees Mellors as physically beautiful, even when she first sees him washing beside the cottage--and again she receives "the shock of vision in her womb," (LC-74) as she did with Michaelis.

Their sexual encounters are almost always precipitated by Mellors; the male is dominant. Constance is the adoring one; her panegyric appreciation of his physique is that of a worshipper--"Her hands strayed over him, still a little afraid. Afraid of that strange hostile, slightly repulsive thing that he had been to her, a man. And now she touched him, and it was the sons of god with the daughters of men. How beautiful he felt, how pure in tissue!" (LC-203) And again, "She clung to him, with a kiss of wonder that was almost awe, terror. He held her close but he said nothing. He would never say anything." (LC-203) As this particular episode ends, "She got up and kissed him between the eyes, that looked at her so dark and soft and unspeakably warm, so unbearably beautiful." (LC-207) She asks him if he cares for her and he kisses her without answering. Mellors is appreciative and tender; Lawrence gives us a vivid and memorable account of physical love that deserves the appellation of classic. They are drawn together by need and even hunger for love; we do not suggest that the attraction was in any way one-sided, but neither does Lawrence suggest that there is an equal balance in this relationship. Mellors takes Connie as a male animal accepts the comfort and satisfaction of a female animal. As a person,

he resents her, and she is aware of this. When first she sees him she recognizes that "he was recoiling away from her, even now."(LC-100) His immediate response is that "he wished above all things that she would go away, and leave him to his own privacy. He dreaded her will, her female will, and her modern female insistency."(LC-100) When she begins to make a habit of visiting the hut he was never there; "He wanted to keep his own privacy."(LC-128) After their first mating, which gave them both peace,(LC-133) when she is leaving, "almost with bitterness he watched her go. She had connected him up again, when <sup>he</sup> had wanted to be alone. She had cost him that bitter privacy of a man who at last wants only to be alone."(LC-135) Thinking about her, Mellors is glad that Constance

wasn't all tough rubber-goods and platinum, like the modern girl. . . . Somewhere she was tender, tender with a tenderness of the growing hyacinths, something that has gone out of the celluloid women of today. But he would protect her with his heart for a little while.(LC-136)

She has invaded his life, but at least she is an old-fashioned natural woman, not a Hollywood copy obsessed with prophylactics (~~and wedding rings~~), and he can feel protective towards her. Lawrence indicates here some of the disdain for the modern women of his generation, as well as his conception of the splendid isolation of the male in these passages.

In contrast to her sordid little conversation about sexual climax with Michaelis, Connie can talk contentedly with Mellors on the same subject, and accept his mild amusement.(LC-154) Now Lawrence does explore her feelings in depth, recognizing her as a woman alive in her relationship to the man; "She watched his face, and the passion for him

moved in her bowels. She resisted it as far as she could, for it was the loss of herself to herself."(LC-154) Lawrence seems to be contending that in fulfilment, the woman loses herself. As she goes home, she thinks to herself that she wants to have him "inside her as a child . . ." and in so doing free herself from slavery to her passion, prevent the man from intruding except as a "temple servant, the bearer and keeper of the bright phallos."(LC-155) For Lawrence, the woman is fulfilled only in conjunction with the man.

Perhaps the core of D.H. Lawrence's feelings about the sensual joy of living is expressed in Lady Chatterley's Lover; the earlier tenderness Mellors felt for Connie has developed into something stronger,

more terrible than the thrills of tenderness, but at the moment, more desirable. Though a little frightened she let him have his way, and the reckless, shameless sensuality shook her to her foundations, stripped her to the very last, and made a different woman of her. It was not really love. It was not voluptuousness. It was sensuality sharp and searing as fire, burning the soul to tinder.(LC-268)

In retrospect, after this, Connie recognized that she had feared but wanted "this phallic hunting out,"(LC-289) and seems to speak for Lawrence in concluding that "what one supremely wanted was this piercing, consuming, rather awful sensuality."(LC-290) She rejoices in finding a man who dared to purify and quicken the mind with sheer fiery sensuality; without any thoughts of shame or sin or final misgiving. The significance of this passage for Lady Chatterley as a character portrayed is that her creator does not see her achieving this state of Lawrentian grace without the male relationship; there is no suggestion that any

pleasing of the sense can be initiated or sustained by the woman alone or separately.

As D.H. Lawrence presents Lady Chatterley, she is essentially a female designed for the fulfilment of the male. W.W. Robson, lecturer in English Literature at the University of Oxford, suggests that in The Plumed Serpent (1926) Lawrence reveals a certain amount of self-deception, and hence insecurity, with insistence that a woman must not seek complete physical satisfaction from the act of sex, but must find contentment instead in a reverent 'submission' to male 'authority'.<sup>55</sup> Professor Robson decides that Lawrence may be generalizing improperly and at times erroneously, for his own case, and uses The Plumed Serpent as an example of this generalizing in his consideration of sex. Simone de Beauvoir seems to agree with this criticism when she observes that Lawrence forbids a woman "to have an independent sensuality; she is made to give herself, not to take."<sup>56</sup> While ~~Mlle.~~ de Beauvoir is endeavouring to prove her own thesis on the new rôle of women (see Chapter III) she nevertheless makes a convincing case to prove that Lawrence feels that women should bow down before the divinity of men; "In so far as man is a phallus and not a brain, the individual who has his share of virility keeps his advantages; woman is not evil, she is even good, but subordinated."<sup>57</sup> (Italics not in the original)

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<sup>55</sup>The Modern Age, ed. Boris Ford, (Pelican Books) p. 282

<sup>56</sup>~~de~~ Beauvoir, op. cit., p. 220

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 224

It is perfectly natural that Lawrence speaks through his heroine on the subject of England, on the condition of her generation, or the deplorable aspects of class distinction--witness her fury at Clifford's attitude towards Mellors in the incident on the hill when the chair broke down.(LC-225) Lawrence has her feeling with some desperation "the tightness, the niggardliness of the men of her generation. They were so tight, so scared of life!"(LC-77) This is transparently Lawrence's own impression; Connie is his spokesman. In the main, however, Lady Chatterley exists in the novel as an emotional vehicle for or receptacle of emotional responses. She is real enough in relation to her function in the novel, but cannot be seen as a well-rounded multi-dimensional character. Lawrence presents her with brilliant sensitivity, but as a function of his central theme rather than as a woman in her own right.

#### VIII. SUMMARY AND COMPARISONS

Each of these remarkable women has given us a picture of her own time, an insight about her creator, and a sampling of the history of women in the novel. As fascinating females, they have taken their place in the literary tradition, and aside from certain eternal characteristics of womanhood which will recur, 'we shall not look upon their like again'.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the novel has changed, and the position of women in the world has changed. For a new era, new ideas and new approaches are required. A modern novelist, if he has the skill, can portray a modern woman as true to her times as Elizabeth

Bennett but more real because women are more real. She can be as passionate as Jane Eyre without being an idealized fantasy figure, as free in spirit and as fascinating as Gina Sanseverina but in a twentieth century "romance," as finally sketched as Becky Sharp but with life beyond the action of the novel. She can be as earnest in her search for fulfilment as Clara Middleton, but searching for fulfilment as a person as well as a woman. She can be more mature than Lady Chatterley, more of an individual in her own right, less of a function of the novel.

The woman in the modern novel will probably be none of these things in the grand manner, because the nature of the modern novel and its characters has been adapted to the twentieth century. She will not be a "heroine" in the traditional or romantic sense. She may be a relatively equal partner among many people who share the limelight in the novel.

Lawrence Durrell is the creator of such a modern woman. Clea Mentis belongs in the tradition; she is a successor to the women who have been discussed in the preceding sections.

Chapter I presented a detailed portrait of Clea, revealing her as a complex individual. Her function in relation to the other characters in the Quartet was examined with a view to proving her importance to the structure and depth of the novel. Her particular usefulness as a painter has been reviewed, and one section showed how intricately she is involved in the various symbols which Durrell uses in the Quartet; the mirror, the hand, the city, the sea.

From this analysis, it was contended that Clea Mentis emerges from

the Alexandria Quartet as an utterly authentic woman of the twentieth century. She is as fully and comprehensively developed as any of her predecessors in fiction, and like them reflects her own and her creator's time.

With Elizabeth Bennett, Clea shares a sense of humour and a capacity for self-awareness. Her emotional responses are more self-conscious but as profound as those of Jane Eyre. Like Clara Middleton she values integrity. With Lady Chatterley, Clea knows physical response and release.

Clea would recognize Justine in Gina Sanseverina; her vitality, her amorality would have a familiar quality. If Clea, by the operation of some time-machine that could combine fact and fiction, could have met Stendhal's friend Clementine, Countess Curial, she would have been intrigued to realize that Beyle's pet name for Clementine was Menti; and Clea would undoubtedly have wondered if there were any connection between this and her own name.

Stendhal's heroines, Lady Chatterley, and perhaps Becky Sharp would have accepted Clea's modern way of life without shock and perhaps with envy. Elizabeth, Jane and Clara, would, of course, have been horrified. All these women share a characteristic of being slightly avant-garde, however, each in her own time, and it may be assumed that in each case their creators would have rejoiced at the sight of a free and independent human being who was also a woman.

Lawrence Durrell has created a characterization of Clea which has been enriched particularly by immense advances in scientific studies

of human behaviour. He knows more, simply because more is known, about psychology than Jane Austen or Stendhal or any of the others, with the exception of D.H. Lawrence.

Durrell is able to give Clea an 'international' flavour, a cosmopolitan character because, like Stendhal, he has travelled and experienced much, and has not been strictly confined to one small area as were the Brontës or Jane Austen, or in a sense, Thackeray. Because the world has 'shrunk' through advances in communication and transportation, to say nothing of the impact of a global war, Durrell is in tune with his reader's understanding when he locates his novel in an exotic setting; it is acceptable to modern novel-devourers to find their story set in a city like Alexandria, pivot of East and West.

In considering Jane Austen, it was suggested that the women in her novel Pride and Prejudice, and Elizabeth Bennett in particular, were faithful representations of the women of the time, who played out their parts in a prescribed area with strict limitations of education and experience. As Elizabeth Bennett is an admirable portrait of a woman in her time, so is Clea Mentis in hers.

Jane Eyre was the romantic ideal of Charlotte Brontë. Her story is the impassioned fantasy of a powerful and imaginative writer. As a woman, Jane Eyre seeks and finds her fulfilment in her beloved Mr. Rochester. True to the concepts of the middle nineteenth century, Charlotte Brontë and Jane Eyre were content. Clea Mentis too is seeking fulfilment, but with personal integration and maturity as an individual as her goal.

Thackeray in Vanity Fair undertook a panoramic study of human foibles and frailties, and created characters through whom he could laugh at the vanities of the world he knew. Becky Sharp is masterfully sketched, but her portrait is less than complete. She serves her purpose in the novel, helps the author say what he wants to say, just as Clea serves Durrell in the Alexandria Quartet. Thackeray did not need or want Becky to be any more "rounded" a character than she is, but for Durrell it was important to fill in all the colours and shadings to reveal as much as possible about a complicated individual who shares one quarter of his investigation of modern love. As Thackeray created Becky Sharp to forward his intention in Vanity Fair, so did Durrell create Clea for the Quartet.

In The Egoist George Meredith has portrayed Clara Middleton as a warm, likeable woman, believable in her own time. It was suggested that Meredith, like many of his predecessors and many of his successors, has assumed that marriage to the man she loves automatically guarantees 'happiness ever after', and so the story ends. The emancipation of women, to which Meredith was a contributor, together with new knowledge of human behaviour has revealed the fallacies in this assumption. Lawrence Durrell builds on the traditions of the novel in creating heroines who live independent lives as women, who have a separate and continuing development of their own, and are not, as it were, filed and forgotten in a structurally convenient marriage. Durrell takes care to establish the future as a real factor in his portrayal of Clea.

In spite of new knowledge of psychology, D.H. Lawrence continued,

in Lady Chatterley's Lover, to relegate women to second-class status. He is among the last of great writers of the twentieth century to hold out against the emergence of women as free and real individuals. For Lawrence, Constance Chatterley is less a 'heroine' than a function of the 'hero'; she is vital to Lawrence's thesis of joy-through-sex. Within those limits she is candid and passionate, and contributes frankness and eloquence in matters of intimate man-woman relationships to the tradition of the novel. From this pioneering, novelists like Lawrence Durrell are enabled to deal with depths of human emotion and behaviour that would have been tabu half a century ago.

That Durrell is an ardent admirer of Stendhal is further indicated in a letter from Sommieres in 1958.<sup>58</sup> He must have appreciated Stendhal's attitude toward women, both in real life and in his novels. The Gallic approach which Durrell seems to have absorbed has enriched his ability to understand and accept women as individuals, and to portray them in the novel more as they really are than as idealization or cardboard figures.

While Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë as women could be expected to understand the intricacies of female behaviour, it may be noted that Stendhal and Meredith have shown a particular sensitive appreciation of women. Thackeray and Lawrence seem to have a more limited skill in their portrayals of their heroines. (Neither of the two female novelists reviewed showed special talent in the portrayal of men). Lawrence

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<sup>58</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, Letters from Durrell, in The World of Lawrence Durrell, p. 232

Durrell has been able to contribute to the tradition of the novel portrayals of both men and women with equal skill and perception. The character of Clea provides an excellent example of Durrell's capacity for understanding and portraying a woman in the novel. He treats Clea Mentis as an individual in her own right, an important and independent person, accepting her both as a woman and a person in a modern world.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PORTRAIT IN PERSPECTIVE

I have put down women's names like some  
Philosophical proposition. At last I understand  
They were only forms for my own ideas,  
With names and mouths and different voices.

Lawrence Durrell

Now that the portrait of Clea Mentis has been studied, the mind of the artist discussed, and other portraits in the gallery briefly examined, it will be useful to pause at a convenient bench and reconsider Durrell's craftsmanship in the portrayal of a modern woman, to consider a special skill he brings to his writing, and finally to recapitulate the propositions in the study as a whole.

#### I. DURRELL AS A CRAFTSMAN

Lawrence Durrell's essay which may almost be a "letter to himself" from himself, (in the person of Pursewarden via Darley) in Clea (pp.125-154) provides a summary of the artist's own conception of his craft at the time he was writing the Quartet. Where in the poem At Corinth<sup>1</sup> Durrell wrote, "my skill is in words only," the "Brother Ass" extracts warn the writer that he is called upon "to do more than demonstrate your skill with words." Durrell has Pursewarden write that "Art occurs at the point where a form is sincerely honoured by an awakened

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<sup>1</sup>Durrell, Collected Poems, op. cit., p. 92

spirit" and his notebook elaborates this dictum.

Chastizing England as a "nation of mental grannies," Pursewarden advises the artist to leave it, as Durrell did. Then he recommends the mobilization of means, and a complete dedication to art, which for him at least is "my life and then the life of my life." He warns the artist to expect the "natural automatic rejection" from the public, but comforts with the assurance that a great writer is the "servant of compulsions" which are pre-ordained and cannot be disregarded.

The function of the artist, according to Pursewarden, is to nourish and not to stunt the intuition, to repair the psyche, to search after truth. He enjoins the artist to "allow truth to plead for itself," and not to be afraid of it, for it has "its own built-in morality." He challenges Durrell, in effect, to write literature that is a "pathfinder" rather than a "bromide," suggests that the only proper field for great art in the novel is love, and this includes all kinds of love, the "whole bloody range." In pursuing these goals, the serious dedication of the artist must be tempered with laughter.

To what extent does the portrait of Clea conform to these functions and goals? Clea is a creature of intuition, who intuitively recognizes her own and other's needs. The climax of the final volume of the Quartet is a dramatic symbolization of the repairing of her psyche; the self that was breaking down is re-united and re-integrated. Clea shares with Darley in a physical as well as an intellectual way, his search after truth.

In his portrait of Clea, Durrell lets the truth plead for itself.

He paints a frank and accurate picture, adding depths, suggestions, implications and sometimes distortions after the manner of Picasso, although in Clea's case, the distortions are more emphatic in the background of the picture than in the subject itself. This very juxtaposition renders Clea more vivid; the very real Western European woman is seen in relief against the exotic richness of the Eastern tapestry.

In his poem on Alexandria Durrell writes of the Alexandrians "learning to suffer and not condemn."<sup>2</sup> This is one of the truths of his portrayal of Clea; the portrait has its "own built-in morality." There is no condemnation of her undertaking an abortion, no suggestion that her relationship with Justine is immoral, no question of her affair with Darley being legalized by marriage. Furthermore, Clea is of practical help to the artist Darley in his search after truth; she helps him find the truth for himself in relation to his art.

In her person, Clea is a companion rather than a path-finder; she is presented as a more "normal" person than, say, Justine or Leila, but her personality, like theirs, could not be construed as a "bromide," as a bicarbonate antacid dull flat acceptable stereotype. Where she shares in the experiments Durrell attempts in space-time literature, in biological-psychological exploration of human behaviour, she is useful in his path-finding in the technical sense. Where she serves to illuminate and to reflect facets of other characters she helps Durrell in his investigation of mankind and his mind.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 73

Pursewarden's challenge to the novelist to deal with the "whole bloody range" of love is, of course, an echo of the Quartet's main theme. All the characters in the four volumes are involved with forms of love; Clea is one of the many. Chapter I discussed her affectionate nature; she is capable of simple loving-kindness, to Melissa, to Semira, Pombal, Nessim, Darley. She is capable of giving unrequited love, as she did with Amaril. She is capable of loving friendship, the sort she enjoyed with Scobie, of sisterly love she felt for Pursewarden, of a homosexual attachment as she had with Justine. She is, in fact, more lovingly involved with more people than any other character in the book, and each of her relationships enable Durrell to cast some light on a kind of love.

In his investigation of modern love, Durrell demonstrates more than his skill in words. As suggested in Chapter II, his widely-ranged interests include both medicine (an exact and objective science as well as an art) and the rich sensual resources of the imagination. His portrait of Clea Mentis is an example of his attempts to blend the cool clinical skills of the objective observer with those of the intense warm physical human participant. It is not too important to know how real Durrell's clinical aspirations are; his portraits are reminiscent of those of William Blake in their accuracy of the details of draughtsmanship while they are at the same time rich in imaginative fantasy. The Clea canvas shows a beautiful (J-128), gifted, (B-57) refreshing (C-77) person. She dresses in cool colours; (C-241) she has clear eyes; (B-48) she gives an impression of clean-ness; she loves swimming. Her radical drawings are of startling scientific accuracy; (J-131) she is intelli-

gent about medical matters, of course.(M-155) She is a realist; she can be objective about her own 'past', philosophical about the death of her friends Scobie and Pursewarden. She is cool and detached in her appraisal of Justine's new life, of Pursewarden's art, of her own future after the affair with Amaril. She is a serene person, especially at the end of the book.(C-281)

But Durrell does not leave the painting in the pale blonde light colours, the clean outlines. Urged by his own need for balance, he adds sensual richness to the portrait. Clea, far from being frigid, is passionate in her love, gives her body fully and generously to those she chooses for physical intimacy. She is a sensualist in her enjoyment of books,(J-129) her pleasure in swimming in the nude,(C-224) her capacity for making and retaining warm friendships; her "limpid sensuality"(C-107) impresses Darley. She is sympathetic and tender-hearted, as in her helping Pombal, Scobie, Balthazar. To the pastels and the ice-colours are added the deep warm tones that enrich and embrace the portrait.

Critics have suggested that Durrell is among the latter-day Decadents who wallowed in the romantic agony.<sup>3</sup> His balanced treatment of Clea is one answer to this criticism; where the Decadents concentrated on the morbid, the sorrowful, with a kind of feverish intensity, Durrell relieves this with both the clinical approach and with his sense of humour. His objectivity enables him to balance the

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<sup>3</sup>Green, Martin, "Lawrence Durrell, a Minority Report," World of Lawrence Durrell, op. cit., p. 129

scenes of violence, death, passion with stringent analysis, detached observations, or when he sees it as necessary and appropriate, hilarious anecdotes.

Clea is not the romantic "tragedy-queen" of the Decadents. The powerful mysterious Justine is much more the morbid, decadent femme fatale; Clea serves Darley as a contrast for Justine, making them both more vivid. Her creation may have been necessitated by Durrell's recognition that he should provide such a contrast, and having introduced Clea in the first volume, developed her more and more fully. She became even more necessary after Melissa's death; the frail and consumptive victim of life could not provide the required contrast with Justine.

That Lawrence Durrell did not overwork and overheat the substance which the Decadents and he have both used is <sup>seen in</sup> his grave and tender treatment of parent-child relationships. He refuses to exploit all the possibilities offered in the setting and characterization of the Quartet, perhaps preferring to suggest rather than to say, certainly not treating them with the intensity that would have delighted adherents to the 'romantic agony'.

One of the most significant items in the 'stock-pot' of ideas provided by Sigmund Freud was the Oedipus Complex, which, Karl and Magalaner suggest, has replaced belief "in religion, progress and materialism."<sup>4</sup> With the Oedipus Complex they include the hunt for the

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<sup>4</sup>Karl and Magalaner, op. cit., p. 31

father, new gods, and self-analytic heroes and heroines. Parent-child relationships in the Quartet are of particular interest, and some observations on them might illuminate Durrell's portrayal of Clea.

The volume Clea is dedicated to Durrell's father, who died when he was sixteen. One can assume that he did not see much of his father while he was at school in India or in England. He does not refer to him in his writing, although one wonders if there is any imaginative parallel between Durrell's experience and the story of David Mountolive and his father.

From Gerald Durrell's My Family and Other Animals it would appear that Lawrence assumed many 'fatherly' responsibilities for the younger members of the family, and a comradely sharing of decision-making and arrangement-planning with his mother. It was suggested above that Durrell is fond of children; he has provided a home for four. In the Miller Correspondence he mentions that parents' love for their children is a form of "self-gratification"(D-M-339) but all the same has shown that he knows how to gratify himself and them. His sympathy for the child prostitutes in Alexandria is quick and warm. (M-292)

Clea enjoys what might be to Durrell an enviable relationship with her father; the description of him in the Quartet is respectful and kindly. The importance and power of parent-child relationships is recognized by Durrell; he uses Justine's love for her lost child as at least one of her motives for marrying Nessim; Darley cares lovingly for Melissa's child but eventually returns her to Nessim, her father.

Narouz is powerfully attached to his father, and suffers from an unresolved Oedipal conflict; Leila is loyal to her sons, Mountolive is deeply fond of his mother.

Some of the action of the novel is directly motivated by these close relationships; the artist's understanding of human behaviour in this area serves him well. But it is interesting that in spite of his enormous catalogue of variations and deviations of modern love, Durrell does not include overt father-daughter or mother-son incest, (although da Capo and Justine, and Leila and Mountolive's relationships might be considered as near the mark, and with the Pursewarden-Liza situation, entitle Durrell to claim, if he wanted to, that he has included various forms of incest in the range of love).

As the portrait of Clea was becoming enlarged and enriched by mid-Balthazar, she became not only a counterpoint to Justine but a personality in her own right. Far more than Justine, for instance, she serves Durrell for laughter and enjoyment as well as for comfort and reassurance. As an artist, his artist, she serves Durrell in the Pursewarden-Darley-Clea-Durrell quartet of artists, the four faces of his self-love. As an artist, she grows and develops, her talent blooms and flowers toward fulfilment.

In his portrait of Clea, to the extent that every work of art is a portrait of its creator, Lawrence Durrell reveals himself as the kind of an artist Pursewarden demanded in the Notebook. The Quartet shows the craftsman at work. The artist served his apprenticeship in his early poems and in Panic Spring, poured on the raw colours in exuberant

abandon in The Black Book; in the Alexandrian novel he has demonstrated his best to date in mature artistry. He uses all the means and materials that are available to him; he paints what he sees with skill, and what he feels with insight and understanding. In so doing, he contributes a significant canvas to the Gallery of the Novel.

One last special skill which Durrell possesses, and which has enabled him as a man to write as he does of a woman, remains to be discussed, and is the focus of the next section.

## II. A SPECIAL SKILL

One further aspect of Lawrence Durrell as an artist is his intense interest in bi-sexuality, his recognition of a psychological fact, and a special quality he seems to possess which has enabled him to portray a woman with particular sensitivity and skill.

In a paper on "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Differences Between the Sexes," Sigmund Freud in 1925 made the following observation:

We shall, of course, willingly agree that the majority of men are also far behind the masculine ideal and that all human individuals, as a result of their bisexual disposition and cross-inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content.<sup>5</sup>

This statement summarizes the psychologists' interpretation of the androgynous nature of man, and biologists of course recognize the presence of both male and female characteristics in the human animal.

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<sup>5</sup>Hyman, op. cit., p. 401

The concept of bi-sexuality postulated by Freud is translated in literature in Virginia Woolf's theory, as inspired by Coleridge:

If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine.<sup>6</sup>

Virginia Woolf goes on to say that she does not think Coleridge meant "a mind that has any special sympathy with women; a mind that takes up their cause or devotes itself to their interpretation." She then develops her own definition of the androgynous mind as being one that is "resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and individual."<sup>7</sup>

Durrell indicates early in Justine that he is familiar with the term androgynous; in describing Alexandria he writes, "The symbolic free lovers of the free Hellenic world are replaced here by something different, something subtly androgynous, inverted upon itself." He goes on to say that its people are "the sick men, the solitaries, the prophets--I mean all who have been deeply wounded in their sex."(J-14)

In that he was a contributor to the Horizon series on "Men of Genius," it is likely that Lawrence Durrell read Robert Liddell's article on Cavafy in the series. In it, Liddell refers to Cavafy having been sexually abnormal, and having been "like Tiresias of The Waste Land, in

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<sup>6</sup>Woolf, Virginia, A Room of One's Own, (Hogarth Press, London, 1946), (1929), p. 148

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 148

whom all the men and women of the poem meet,"<sup>8</sup> (Teiresias of the Eliot poem is dealt with by Durrell in the Key, and incidentally the classical prototype is subjected to analysis by Francis J. Mott).<sup>9</sup> Durrell, of course, includes Cavafy as the old poet of the city in the Alexandria Quartet, and calls the city "Cavafy's Alexandria." (D-M-193) His greatness, for Durrell, according to his poem Cavafy, was that he loved the city and saw its truth.<sup>10</sup>

Durrell's interest in Eastern mystics may bear some relationship to his concept of women, Buddha as conceived by Buddhists is neither man nor woman, but a bi-sexual "neuter." The mystics do not contend that nirvana is a state that can be achieved by man alone; the soul is neither male nor female in the achievement of One-ness with the Universe.

The androgynous mind should not be confused with sexual maladjustment, but is rather a mind which has a deep insight and understanding of the ambivalence and bi-sexual characteristics of many human beings. The Quartet presents a cast, the majority of whom suffer from, or enjoy, a large measure of bi-sexuality. In the act of recognizing these characteristics in his characters, Durrell shows his awareness of the thin line between masculinity and femininity.

Among these principals, Justine is established as having a masculine voice, and being "most masculine," (J-20) She is a latent if not

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<sup>8</sup>Liddell, Robert, "Studies in Genius - Cavafy," Horizon, Volume XVIII, (1948), p. 196

<sup>9</sup>Mott, op. cit., p. 231ff.

<sup>10</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, Collected Poems, p. 157

an overt Lesbian at one period, as is Clea,(J-129) Balthazar is a paederast,(J-92) as are other more minor characters. Scobie is a transvestite and a homosexual,(J-124) and Melissa a prostitute. Pursewarden, never really developed beyond the incestuous love of his childhood; neither did Mountolive who first loves his mother, transfers his love to another mother-figure in the person of Leila and then 'inherits' Liza from Pursewarden. Narouz is so confused by his Oedipus complex and primitive Messianic leanings that he is utterly incapable of normal man-woman relationships. Even Amaril has sublimated his yearnings for fulfilment into the practice of gynaecology, a choice, Durrell says, dictated by "his very devotion to women," although Amaril says of himself "I alone among men can say that while all women love me no one woman ever has. Not properly. I am as innocent of love (not sexual love, of course) as a virgin. Poor Amaril!"(B-133)

Yet as the Quartet runs its course, Justine emerges as a good wife for Nessim; Clea finds her identity as a woman; Balthazar is philosophically content; Scobie dies and is virtually beatified with his secret untold; Pursewarden dies perhaps nobly, Liza finds happiness, Narouz dies having achieved an illusion of power, Amaril marries Semira. Durrell takes care not to judge, condemn or punish; if they punish themselves, his characters at least earn our sympathy. The story is by no means concluded at the end of the Quartet, as if Durrell is saying that real human beings are much too complicated to be wrapped up and delivered in a completed fictional package.

Durrell recognizes and appreciates the differences between the

sexes; he writes as a man who has studied women with great care and affection. He seems to sympathize with Nessim who was thrilled by Justine when he saw (or thought he saw) in her "the perfect submissiveness of the oriental spirit--the absolute feminine submissiveness which is one of the strongest forces in the world."(M-202) The author seems to enjoy describing his heroines' beauty, the clothes they wear, their wit and charm. But rather than describing these things as if he were a casual and superficial observer, Durrell treats them with sympathy and finesse, as one who understands women in a real rather than an academic way.

It may be noted that Darley won the love of all three of the principal women in the Quartet. If Durrell identified rather more with Pursewarden, it should be recalled that Pursewarden too enjoyed their affection; neither the author nor his fictional counterparts are afraid as men of loving women.

There is further evidence that the manner in which Lawrence Durrell has portrayed Clea shows an extraordinary sensitivity to the nature of woman. Earlier in this study some parallels were drawn between Durrell and the Symbolists, who revealed an enlightened attitude toward the female sex. While Sigmund Freud himself was not particularly concerned with women as separate individuals, the psychologists and psychiatrists who have followed him have helped create a climate of understanding in which Durrell has been able to share. Thus many of those individuals and works which have influenced Durrell as an author, together with his good fortune in living at a time when women

are becoming emancipated, have no doubt helped him portray his women as real and believable human beings. None of these influences, however, could have been effective if the poet-novelist had not had a "naturally creative, incandescent and individual" mind, a mind fully fertilized, not afraid to use the "woman part" of the brain.

Freud and the Freudians in exploring the unconscious had no hesitation in discussing incest, inversions, homosexuality, nymphomania, and all the aberrations id and the libido are heir to; they examined them with the dispassionate objectivity of the scientist. Lawrence Durrell peoples his Alexandria with characters whose sexual development has been retarded and twisted, as if he were exploring the recesses of human behaviour like a scientist with feelings. He is objective in relation to man or woman; all his characters come under the microscope, regardless of their sex or the nature of their problem. A few examples illustrate the complexities of bi-sexuality in the Quartet. Nessim is doubtful about his sexual identification, (J-150) and as decadent as Alexandria itself when he appears "aged like a woman--as if his body had already submitted to a dozen pregnancies" (J-239) after Justine's departure. Nessim has a voice that "held something of the magic of a woman's contralto" (B-68) and he and Narouz, in discussing their lands about which they both feel strongly, are likened to "two blind people in love." (B-72)

In Balthazar, the doomed Toto de Brunel is sketched briefly, (a single phrase to describe a volume of information as Stendhal was so adept in providing), "There was, I suppose nothing to be done with him

for he was a woman."(B-25)

For Mountolive, whose "Mother's voice upon the darkness soothed him with its promises of relief" from the earache that "never attacked him save when he was at home," the problem is both one of difficulty over masculine identification and an adolescent revolt that never occurred. He has never broken the umbilical cord; he still longs in an effeminate way for "childhood illnesses which his mother had always shared--they fell ill together, as if by sympathy."(M-100) Durrell explains it clinically; "The defection of his father always stood between them as their closest bond."(M-97) Naturally, when Mountolive wants to love Leila he faces a problem; "He could not distinguish between his own various emotional needs, between passion-love and the sort of romance fed on narcissism."(M-31) The Oedipus complex is obvious when Narouz represses his love for his mother, transferring it to a "lustful tenderness" when he gathers up his old father's wasted body to put him to bed.(M-39) Leila's "parody of love, . . . flirtation of minds"(M-52) is in possessing David Mountolive greedily in her mind through their correspondence; her essentially masculine regality prevents any real fulfilment of their love. Pursewarden has no love but Liza; he has never developed beyond pre-adolescent incestuous love as far as women are concerned; he can offer only affection and friendship. Clea says of him;

His intuition was very feminine and much sharper than [Justine's]--and you know that women instinctively like a man with plenty of female in him; there they suspect, is the only sort of lover who can sufficiently identify with them to . . . deliver them of being just women, catalysts, strops, oil-stoves.(C-108)

This last excerpt, with its sex-symbol words of the strop and the oil-stove that sharpen knives, the theory that women like a man with "plenty of female" in him is the essence of Lawrence Durrell's understanding of women, and an indication of his own recognition of his androgynous nature. In any event, he has injected into the Quartet a special ingredient--a unique portrayal of human beings from the vantage point of one who has "fused" the masculine and feminine elements of his brain and being. This is another duality which has been accepted and to a certain extent reconciled in Durrell's mind--the duality of man and woman.

Thus there are three main areas in which the androgynous nature of Lawrence Durrell's mind and art are significant:

First, in what might seem to be an obsession on Durrell's part with sexual aberrations and inversions, and what on closer examination is revealed as a deep and sympathetic study of a man as a psychologically complicated creature, Durrell examines modern man in microcosm. He subjects sample human beings to an intensive and honest study, placing them on the context of modern love, but refusing to conceal the ramifications of that emotion behind the sentimental glamour so prevalent in the modern novel, or the sensationalism of physical passion described in detail which has also become a characteristic of many twentieth century works. Only an author who possessed more than usual sympathy and understanding, who is fundamentally aware of forces of both masculinity and femininity operating in both himself and all other human beings can present and portray men and women as they really are.

That Durrell's portrayal is enriched with humour and compassion is a dividend which distinguishes his novel.

Secondly, the quality of Durrell's prose and poetry, both of which are present in the Alexandria Quartet, reveals certain characteristics which could be called "feminine." This is not to suggest that Durrell's writing is in any way "effeminate," but one can see in his work something of his mind and thought-processes. He relies upon intuition rather than logic in his assessment of character; his City of Alexandria is drawn with imaginative sensitivity rather than antiseptic reality; he depends for the progress of the story on emotions rather than action, making the Quartet a saga of inner psychological adventure rather than a description of successive incidents. These characteristics reveal a mind capable of unashamedly using those elements within it which are often considered to be feminine or womanly in the crude stereotypes of maleness and female-ness.

Thirdly, because he is not afraid of exploring the complicated depths of human behaviour, and not embarrassed by his own capacity to think and write with some of the characteristics often attributed to women, Lawrence Durrell is able to write about women with a complete lack of prejudice. As the male characters are studied in many dimensions, so are the female characters; Durrell does not make special categories labelled "men" and "women," or show any partiality in the favour or attention he gives to either sex. His understanding of women is at the same level as his understanding of men, a feature of his work which makes him particularly interesting both as a modern novelist and

as a novelist in the long tradition of authors who with greater or less degree of skill who have tried to explore the minds and hearts of men and women. To have achieved this balanced understanding, Durrell must have an androgynous mind, able, as Virginia Woolf suggests, to transmit "emotion without impediment!" Durrell has escaped the impediment of a defensive and aggressive masculinity which has prevented many authors from portraying women as they really are.

### III. RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUSIONS

Four aspects of the portrayal of a modern woman in the person of Clea Mentis of the Alexandria Quartet have been explored in this study. In the first chapter, the appearance, character and personality of Clea were examined, as were her relationships with other characters and her function on behalf of Lawrence Durrell. The authenticity of the portrait and Clea's special significance for the author were studied and illustrated through her own words, and comments about her, in the text of the Quartet.

A second chapter was devoted to a review of the background, reading and writing of Lawrence Durrell. Some of the dominant influences he has recognized as having affected his philosophies, ideas, and craftsmanship were discussed. Both his literary and scientific interests were suggested, and it was observed that he displays personal characteristics, points of view and attitudes which may have enabled him to write with particular skill about modern woman.

Because Lawrence Durrell has, as it were, a foot in both the

world of the West and the world of the East, and as this study is an examination of his portrayal of a modern woman, the third chapter took the form of a review of the emergence of modern woman in England, and a parallel study of the woman of Egypt.

With a view to placing Clea Mentis and Durrell's portrayal of her into historical perspective, the fourth chapter took the form of sketches of a selection of six outstanding women in fiction, with reference to their portrayal, their creators, their authenticity in their own times.

It is now necessary to provide a synthesis of these aspects of Durrell's portrayal of a modern woman. In the preceding section, an attempt was made to see Durrell as an artist, to examine some of the materials he has had at hand and some of the ways in which he has used them. In this final recapitulation, some of the highlights of the foregoing will be summarized.

A major and overwhelmingly significant feature of Lawrence Durrell's philosophy is the struggle to reconcile opposites, to resolve the ambivalences of this century, to balance dualities. These were discussed in detail in Chapter II where Durrell is seen to be almost obsessed with his search for "reconciliation." From Einstein he selects material relevant to 'The symbolic act of joining what was separated', and the 'marriage of past and present, with the flying multiplicity of the future racing towards one'. He interprets Einstein as sharing with religious teachers the hope for an awareness and understanding of the fundamental unity of Eastern and Western spiritual

concepts. In the Eastern religions he recognizes the plea for people to 'free themselves from the opposites'. He admires the psychologists' search: Jung's for 'creative balance', Mott's for 'happy marriage between reason and illumination', Groddeck's for 're-integration and acceptance of the warring opposites'. Durrell's admiration for the Symbolists with their use of words with deep and double meanings, for Henry Miller who understood 'ambivalence in values', has been mentioned. Durrell's appreciation of Miller is summed up in his Preface to The Henry Miller Reader, where he writes of his friend that "what he has tried to do is to accept and so transform the warring elements in the secret life of man, and his work is a record of the battle at every stage."<sup>11</sup> His references in the Quartet to the illusion, the real and the unreal, the attempt to resolve and harmonize life have been noted.

The personality, characteristics and function of Clea illustrate this important aspect of Durrell's philosophy and the struggle inherent in his life and works. This struggle is the key to Lawrence Durrell, and his successful attempt to deal with it in the Alexandria Quartet is the essence of his contribution to the tradition of the novel. Clea provides an example and a means of evaluating this contribution; Clea as an individual (and as a woman) has resolved the ambivalence of her own situation and become an integrated personality.

While Clea is delightfully feminine, Durrell's treatment of her in the Quartet allows her to be accepted as an individual, important

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<sup>11</sup>Durrell, Lawrence, ed., Preface, The Henry Miller Reader, A New Directions Book, (1959), p. xi

regardless of her sex. This in itself is a significant contribution to the tradition of the novel.

Clea Mentis functions in the Quartet as an example of Lawrence Durrell's interest in, and attempt to create, an answer for Einstein's plea for continuum, the novelists's application of his theory of the blending of space and time. Clea is used by Durrell in his facile employment of time not as a duration, a series of happenings from A to B and on to Z, but as a flexible factor involving simultaneously past and present and future. Clea is used to help the author slip back and forth in time, and to move easily through spatial areas. As an alter-ego, she can be where he is not. She functions as a contact with the so-called past time and the apparent present, and consistently helps Durrell in overcoming the difficulties any novelist has in attempting, as he does, to merge defined and undefined realities and fantasies of space and time.

As a painter, Clea may represent another aspect of the space-time continuum. Her portrait-painting can represent either the human will to immortality or the preservation of a moment of mortality, the future in the present, or the past in the future. Two facets of the artist's problem in ambivalence are thus illustrated; Clea tries to reconcile the present attempt on the part of the artist to capture an essence of reality, and at the same time, to share in a timelessness which is surely one objective of any artist.

Clea is closely connected with Durrell's efforts to balance the past and the present as they are felt in the unconscious, and known or

seen in the conscious mind. Somewhere between modern physics and modern psychology, and sharing in both sciences, is the indistinct 'remembrance of things past', the race memories and the symbols which prevail in this century as they have in previous centuries. The space-time merging which Durrell attempts, together with his appreciation for Freudian concepts, have resulted in an intriguing use of race symbols in the Quartet. In many instances, Clea is a direct participant in these symbolic aspects of the novel. Durrell presents her as being superstitious; she is respectful of the Unknown. She is united with the Unknown in the ancient symbol of the sea. She is a contact for Durrell with the mysteries of occult forces. She is the protagonist in the symbolic sacrifice when she loses her hand, as it were to the gods, in expiation of 'sin' or guilt. Clea is important to Durrell when in his attempt to reconcile the known and unknown he joins and integrates old racial recollections into his modern setting.

Durrell considered it desirable for an individual to be integrated as a personality, to have freed himself from 'opposites'. Clea is the significant example in the Quartet of a person who achieves a resolution of the duality of her own nature; she resolves her sexual ambivalence; she claims at the end of the fourth volume to have integrated her personality and her skill to the point of maturity as a human being. One of the most important aspects of Freud's thinking and writing was his attack on the absolutes of human behaviour; Durrell is careful not to conclude Clea's story; the reader is left with the distinct information that there is more to come. Nevertheless, for the

present, Clea has reconciled the opposites in her personality.

A most important joining of what has been separated is achieved by Lawrence Durrell, assisted by Clea in the Quartet, in the unification of male-ness and female-ness. Man and woman, who in earlier fiction have been treated as two completely different entities, are shown by Durrell as sharing many of the qualities of one another, not necessarily having clear and strict proportions of masculinity or femininity. Durrell recognizes Clea as an individual, a person, who also happens to be a charming woman. The previous section in this chapter has suggested that Durrell is fortunate in having an androgynous quality of mind which has enabled him, at a time when women are assuming a position as 'real' human beings in the world, to achieve this reconciliation of man-woman polarity.

When Clea's relationship to Durrell was assessed; some aspects of her function as an alter-ego for the author were noted. Durrell has used Clea as a woman to supplement his skill as a male narrator; she complements and enriches his story, balances the masculine and feminine qualities of his prose. As we have seen, Clea is present when the narrator is absent; she supplies letters, notebooks and verbal reports. She is used to recall memories. She is used to mirror and reflect the other characters in the novel. In addition to her straightforward rôle in the 'liberation' of the hero, Durrell uses Clea to personalize the symbols in the Quartet. She is vital to his efforts to balance reality and unreality, the stuff of fact with the stuff of imagination.

As Clea has been portrayed she seems to reflect one further

element of Durrell's search and struggle. Out of his concern for 'ambivalence in values' in the twentieth century, he seems to have isolated certain human characteristics which he considers admirable. These include being fully and vitally identified with life, having courage and clarity of thought, having compassion, having a sense of personal worth and tolerance for one's self and for others, seeking individual integration and fulfilment. All these characteristics are present in Clea Mentis, an individual, a real and modern woman who ~~is~~ true to her times, and belongs in the best tradition of women in fiction.

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