Abstract

This thesis interprets the quest for wholeness or the Self as the central theme of Lawrence Durrell’s most popular fiction *The Alexandria Quartet*. It is a Westerner’s purely Eastern view of *nirvana* or the spiritual journey of the human soul or *atma* to the Universal Soul or *paramatma*, whereby Cosmic Consciousness is envisaged. This is argued as synonymous to Durrell’s “heraldic universe”, essential to the maturing of an individual or artist. Chapter 1 makes a survey of the multiple sources of religion and science that have contributed to the essence of the *Quartet*. Chapter 2 traces the spiritual growth of Darley to artisthood and efforts to evoke the condition of mystical oneness or the heraldic reality. Chapter 3 focuses on Justine and her attempts to discover her real Self through the path of love, linking Shiva mythology and the Hindu Goddess theme to the plot. Chapter 4 illustrates Death as a passion and power in Durrell as depicted in the *Quartet*. The thesis concludes with the argument that though a majority of the characters strive to seek wholeness through different means, only Clea and Darley stand truly qualified to enter the heraldic realm to attain *nirvana*. The novel lays bare the existential anguish of a group of soul-less characters.
lost in the post-war world. Durrell conveys the message that spiritualism is the answer to all present-day evils.

Abbreviations used:

- *The Alexandria Quartet*  
  *Quartet* (within the text)
- (1962 edition)  
  *Q* (in parenthetical citations)

- *The Avignon Quintet*  
  *Quintet*

- *The Black Book*  
  *The BB*

- *Key to Modern British Poetry*  
  *Key*

- *The Revolt of Aphrodite*  
  *The Revolt*