CHAPTER - 3
THE ARTISTS' ODYSSEY:

THE BATTLE WITH MANY SELVES

Those Himalayas of the mind
Are not so easily possessed:
There is more than precipice and storm
Between you and your Everest.

——— C.D. Lewis

This is exactly the predicament of the artist and C. D. Lewis points out that it is in the inherent nature of poetic vision "to perceive those invisible truths which are like electrons the basis of reality." Like many modern writers — Proust, Joyce, Lawrence etc., Durrell also was intensely concerned with the innovative process of creativity. For all the concern for love and sexual relationships in his fiction and poetry, Durrell’s main concern has been the writer . . . the writer “coming of age.” Durrell sets out to record the odyssey of a maturing artist, revealing the inadequacy of the existing narrative techniques and suggesting a few realistic approaches.
Durrell's early compositions exhibit his inadequate proficiency. In the poem, "The Beginning" written in 1931 at the age of nineteen, Durrell expresses his embarrassment in his naivety of early lines:

Oh! To blunder onto the glory of some white
majestic headland,
And to feel the clean wisdom of the curving
sea,
And the dear mute calling of the wind
On the masked heels of twilight.

(Poems 19)

The twentieth century was concerned with the difficulties, distortions and diffidence confronted by writers in their creative process. Durrell explores this "cruel apprenticeship," with utmost skill. In one of his early poems "Dedication" this inner struggle is graphically portrayed:

Pity these lame and halting parodies
Of greater, better poems;

I make excuse for each struggle, hopeless song
For all this unintelligible throng
Of words inadequate

(25)

The inadequacy of words tugs insistently at the poet, as Ezekiel expresses in his poem, "Poet, Lover, Bird watcher:

... The best poets wait for words
The hunt is not an exercise of will
But patient love relaxing on a hill.

(12)

The "wait for words" is the pain which every writer has to undergo. As Lucifer in The Black Book comments: "I am beginning my agony in the garden and there are too many words, and too many things to put into words... It is on the face of this chaos that I brood" (249). Seamus Heaney uses the rural imagery of "Digging," while expressing his own struggles with creativity:

Between my finger and my thumb
My squat pen rests,
I'll dig with it.

(11)

A rural image used to depict the creative process emphasises the labour that writing involves. Creativity becomes "digging" and
the real task is “to beat real iron out” (30). Although the writer confronts “darkness” he has the knowledge of “the door into the dark.” This groping in the dark and the inevitable pain experienced by writers become transformed into literature. Durrell strikes a consolatory note to his comrades dressed like him, in the garb of a writer and advises them to “cut the rational knot” and “go wander in Elysium” (Poems 236).

Writing about The Alexandria Quartet, Durrell claims that “the whole business of the four books . . . shows the way an artist grows up. The books are really a sort of thesis on poetic illumination” (Young 62). Towards the end of The Quartet, Darley, the protagonist, has successfully achieved artisthood. He explains:

Yes, one day I found myself writing down with trembling fingers the four words (four letters : four faces :) with which every story-teller since the world began has staked his slender claim to the attention of his fellowmen; words which presage the simple old story of an artist coming of age. I wrote . . . “Once upon a time”
Thus The Quartet gives us "the old story of an artist coming of age" which involves "the four faces": Justine, Balthazar, Mount olive and Clea. Durrell's works have a unique quality in that almost all his characters are writers, and his attempt is to unravel the mysteries involved in the creative process. Some of the major characters in The Quartet and The Quintet Darley, Pursewarden, Clea, Blanford, Sutcliffe try to present reality from different angles. Hence Durrell's fiction can be termed metafiction and the major subject of this poetry deals with aesthetics and the creative intelligence. All of Durrell's personal poems are concerned with this question of art in relation to life and life in relation to art. By making a portrait of an artist, he is able to make the creative intelligence the very subject of his poetry. In his poem "Style," the images are all from nature, but it is about art and the artist's selection of criterion for creativity:

Something like the sea,

Unlaboured momentum of water

But going somewhere,

Building and subsiding,

The busy one, the loveless.

(243)
The sea suggests the lyrical mode in poetry. Durrell expresses his desire to write a different kind of poetry from the direct lyric to something more sharper, more striking and more provocative. He concludes thus:

Such a bite of perfect temper

As unwary fingers provoke,

Not to be felt till later,

Turning away, to notice the thread.

Of blood from its unfelt stroke.

(244)

Durrell examines the different styles and seems to select a more controlled, more epigrammatic poetry than the simple, direct lyric or the great tragedy. Unfortunately he feels:

But neither is yet

Fine enough for the line I hunt.

(244)

Similarly the "frail poet" in the poem "Candle - Light" is in search of a "flame":

Yet you who seek a flame, ponder and write

Bound by the hopeless chatter of a quill
While beauty grows and stirs about your chair,

Oh frail poet, under the candle-light.

(23)

A poem, according to Donald Davie is “less an orange than a grid / It hoists a charge; it does not ooze a juice / It has no rind, being entirely - hard” (10) Like a scientist, Durrell investigates the poetic process and presents artists from Homer to Rimbaud, Horace to Byron, Fabre to La Rochefoucauld. Durrell does not make pen-portraits of these stalwarts to his readers, instead delves deep into their consciousness. For Durrell, as for Conon “style is the cut of the mind” (131). Durrell’s Horace is depicted alone “revising metaphors for the winter sea”; and La Rochefoucauld always finding “in the end the portrait always seemed / somehow faked or somehow still in need / of gender, form and present tense” (124). La Rockefoucanld’s full estimate of himself is made by Durrell, who enters the consciousness of another writer. He says:

I was my own motive - I see you smile:

The one part of me I never used or wrote,

Every comma paused there, hungry

To confess me, to reveal the famished note.  

(124)
The persevering artist is engulfed in total despair because he realises his limitations: "So the great lack grew and grew / of the Real Darkness not one grain I lifted" (124). Donald Davie expresses similar sentiments in the poem "July 1964." Here Davie ponders on the death of friends especially the poet Theodore Roethke. The highlight of the poem is not about the great poet but of his problem of "style":

The practice of art is to convert all terms into the terms of art. By the end of the stanza death is a smell no longer it is a problem of style.

(59)

This "struggle to evolve a new style" becomes pronounced more often in Durrell's poetry. The picturisation of Byron also finds relevance to the stronger, deeper, inner struggle for a poetic medium. Durrell, the poet, tends to empathize with another great poet Byron:

O watch for this remote

But very self of Byron and of me

Blown empty on the white cliffs of the mind,
A dispossessed His lordship writing you
A message in a bottle dropped at sea

(123)

Durrell seems to show that the artistic ethos can be shared with other artists too. He displays keen interest in the struggles of the sculptor Maillol. As an artist himself, Durrell highlights the "pain" the sculptor undergoes with his medium. As Elizabeth Jennings notes that Durrell tries to "understand someone else and succeeds in doing so" (93). Examining the different themes of his poems, Durrell recalls:

All indeed whom war or time threw up
On this littoral and tides could not move
Were objects for my study and my love.

(154)

Durrell uses the image of the pen’s nib to represent the exact moment when ideas get transferred on to the page - - when ideas, experiences and images get transformed into art. In "Daily Mirror", Durrell writes:

This nib dragged out like the late train
Racing on iron bars for the north
Target: another world, not necessarily better

Of course, but different, completely different.

Similarly Ted Hughes’ poem “Thought Fox” bears testimony to the poet’s exact moment of transfer of thoughts on to the page:

I imagine this midnight moments forest,
Something else is alive
Besides this clock’s loneliness
And this blank page where my fingers move

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox
It enters the dark hole of the head
The window is starless still; the clock ticks
The page is printed.

Durrell seems to represent the consciousness of writers enmasse; the desperate writer’s consciousness becomes evident in the following lines:

Sometimes we shall all come together
And it will be time to put a stop
To this little rubbing together of minimal words,

By conscience in the very act of writing.

(206-207)

One of the barriers that confronts the writer is language and Donald Davie embodies this built-in struggle of the writer with his linguistic medium in the poem “With the Grain”:

Language (mine, when wounding,

Your backbiting) lacks

No whorl nor one-way shelving. It resists

Screams into remonstrance, planes

Reluctantly to a level. And the most

Reasonable settlement betrays

Unsmoothed resentment under the caress.

(38)

Durrell goes one step further to Davie and calls a poem “a linguistic freak” (Poems 200). The poet’s struggle is expressed very powerfully by Durrell in the poem, “Portfolio”

After all, we were not forced to write

Who bade us head the inward monitor?
And poetry, you once said can be deliverance
And true in many sorts of different sense
Explicit or else life that awkward stare
The perfect form of public reticence.

(270)

Even a poet like Durrell, who has a unique skill with words, finds it difficult to capture the beauty of a simple garden:

And you think if given once
Authority over the word,
Then how to capture, praise or measure
The full round of this simple garden
And its nonchalance at being,
How to adopt and raise its pleasure?

(174)

The poet is impressed by the unadulterated simplicity of the garden's "nonchalance at being," and is prompted to capture this beauty in a poem -- which invariably becomes the struggle for the poet. The question is how "to adopt and raise its pleasure?" The
poet suffers because any attempt to describe one's view of reality by means of language limits the experience. He stoutly reiterates:

To speak of reality at all is to limit and debase it; in understanding poetry it is always the words which get in the way. It is a great pity that we cannot inhale poems like scents - for crude as their medium is, their message, their content is something which owes to reason.

(Key 84)

Durrell was very articulate and he honestly answered queries regarding the process of writing. Once he opined in an interview: "Poetry turned out to be an invaluable mistress. Because poetry is form, and the wooing and seduction of form is the whole game . . . To write a poem is like trying to catch a lizard without its tail falling off" (Plimpton 270). In yet another interview with Kenneth Young, Durrell claimed that: "A poem is like fishing where you must get the whole fish out of the water and it mustn't be a boot when you get it" (Young 66). Seamus Heaney and Stephen Spender
also have used the fishing image. Fishing is an analogy for writing, as Heaney says in the poem "Casuality":

To get out early, haul
Steadily off the bottom,
Dispraise the catch, and smile
As you find a rhythm
Working you, slow mile by mile,
Into your proper haunt
Somewhere, well out, beyond ---

(24)

Similarly in the poem "Word" Spender claims:

The word bites like a fish
Shall I throw it back free
Arrowing to the sea
Were thoughts lash tail and fin?
Or shall I put it in
To rhyme upon a dish.

(165)
The poet’s attempt is to capture the reality as a whole and not a “broken torso of a poem.” An inner reticence is sought to engulf the poem in its wholeness. The period of trial, states Durrell, occurs during the middle years of the writer because:

Middle years, the hardest yet to bear,  
All will agree: for it is now  
He condenses, prunes and tries to order  
The experiences which gorged upon is youth.

(Poems 231)

As a result the poet waits eagerly for the new flame and lets all the “old foolish rhymes” to pass on with “unreturning feet.” He waits patiently till he achieves perfection to his hand and drinks it “as a wine.” In the last two stanzas of “The Anecdotes,” the artist is seen actually waiting for the appropriate form of the poem to build up:

Yet the thing can be done, as you say, simply  
By sitting and waiting, the mystical leap  
Is only a figure for it, it involves not daring  
But the patience, being gored, not to cry out.

(213)
Durrell explained his method of composition in an interview thus: “One had to be patient and wait and let it form up, and not catch it in an early jelly stage before it has set properly, and ruin it by a premature thing” (Plimpton 270). This long wait for the “new flame” consequently pushes the writer to undertake the inward journey, giving way to a second life. Hence Durrell laments:

So, having dispossessed himself, and being
Now for the first time prepared to die
He feels at last trained for the second life.

(231)

T. S. Eliot explains this self-discovery in his poem “Little Gidding, where he points out:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning.

(197)
The "second life" is in contrast to the first life as Durrell points out in *The Quintet*: "You know the Chinese fancy that one has two birth places... one the real physical one, and one which is a place of predilection, the place in which one is psychically born" (255). Gerald Goldberg comments that: "It would seem to be Durrell's belief that a "personality" must be grown before one can ever begin to write" (390). The writer's task is to capture "the luminous moment," or as Arnold would say "the spark from heaven," because it endures only "short range raids on this greater territory which permeates our inner selves" (Key 5). The artist realises the end of his superficial existence, as Eliot points out, "each venture / Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate" (182). As a result of experiences gained from failures, the writer travels inwardly, for as Pursewarden suggests, "to recover a lost innocence" (Quartet 475) or as Durrell emphatically stated: "the writing itself grows you up." (Plimpton 275). One of the significant contributions to the understanding of the Poetic Process is made by George Walley, who reiterates:

The process which ends in a work of art is

at once an act of discovery and self -
discovery; it is an act of self-realisation which at the same time makes the world real. A work of art is, as it were an extension of some valuable experience of the artist - - it is an extension, not simply in mental, spiritual or experimental terms, but also in physical terms. The artist's experience has somehow been embodied, incarnated, made physical while still preserving its spiritual identity.

(11)

In the poem “Blind Homer,” Durrell tries to recreate the inward struggle of the great artist: “Exchange a glance with one whose art / conspires with introspection against loneliness” (157). In the midst of people and experiences, the artist is basically an isolated person - - an isolation as Marianna Turgovnick claims: “A state of exile - - literal or metaphorical” . . . almost a “transcendental homelessness” (a phrase of George Lukacs), which she defines as a state of mind that is “secular but yearning for the sacred, ironic but yearning for the absolute, individualistic but, yearning for the
wholeness of community  -  -  fragmented but yearning for immanent totality” (188). An idea which was expressed by Lu Chi:

We poets struggle with Non-Being to force it to yield Being;

We knock upon silence for an answering music

We enclose boundless space in a square foot of paper;

We pour out deluge from the inner space of the heart. 3

The east has often seen the poet as the Bhakta, bare, single like a child playing in God’s sunshine and ecstatic in his transcendent innocence. As Puran Singh points out in his The Spirit of Oriental Poetry:

In the wild simplicity of the finite expanse of his own self, he seems in his verse almost insane. But his abundant childlike carelessness is balanced well in the wisdom of self-realisation.

(11)
Hence the artist like Durrell's Walsh in Pied Piper of Lovers, "wanted fiercely, passionately, to be alone; to lose himself in the contemplation of those things which were divorced from reality by their very inability to do him hurt" (22). There is a need to forget and search for quietism. Walsh intends to remain in control of the universe, as he says:

My sensibility is the only laboratory in which work is carried out that interests me at all. An enormous sensory apparatus to be fed and exhausted in the activities of which I am so absorbed that I will not turn to look at anything else.

(373)

Durrell, himself, experienced this solitude in Corfu, as he stated in Prospero's Cell: "Greece offers you . . . the discovery of yourself" (11). The island had its own fascinations to the writer, which inspired him to coin the term "islomania", defining it as someone "who finds islands somehow irresistible" (15). Describing his passion for the island, he wrote: "visionary intimations of solitude, of loneliness, of introspection . . . because at heart everyone
vaguely feels that the solitude they offer corresponds to his or her inner sense of aloneless."\textsuperscript{4} The essential pre-requisite for self-discovery is silence, a quietism, which Darley at the beginning of Justine warns us:

The solace of such work as I do with brain and heart lies in this -- that only there, in the silence of the painter or the writer can reality be reordered, reworked and made to show its significant side. Our common actions in reality are simply the sack cloth covering which hinder the cloth-of-gold -- the meaning of the pattern.

(17)

The solitude for the artist's inward journey came to engulf a spirituality in its mission as Sri Aurobindo points out in his \textit{Future Poetry}:

\ldots from the stress of the soul-vision behind the word; it is the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self discovery among the
magic island of form and name in these inner
and outer worlds.

(16)

Then if art is self-reflection and "one's self-discovery" (Quartet 729), the process involves the unselfing of the self and "murder of self within murder to reach the self" (Poems 71). For Durrell, as for Eliot and many other poets of the times, the necessity for "knowing oneself" seemed quite essential. The very process of writing is a quest for the self - - the perpetual questions being "who am I?" and "what is reality?" as Lucifer comments in The Black Book: "Art must no longer exist to depict man but to invoke God" (249). Lucifer tries to decipher the meaning of his own existence. He discovers the diary of Death Gregory, a writer, who was obsessed with his ego and monitored by the imperfection of a divided self: "Like twin generals divided in policy bungling a war" (34). As Pursewarden claims: "There is no other, there is only oneself facing the problem of one's self discovery" (Clea 98 - 99). But as Darley or Lucifer experiences, the war has been against "duality" because "duality is distress, like the image of pins in mirrors" (Poems 81).
In a letter to Miller, Durrell explains the internal struggles of the artist — the struggle always with the "multiplicity of selves."

Durrell validates thus:

Here is this outcast holy man in his cell on Corcyra; his retreat is really voluntary, because he is dealing with reality, his many inner selves.

(360)

Durrell's own odyssey is thus explained in his Poem "Alexandria": "As for me I now move / Through many negatives to what I am" (Poems 154). "Through many negatives" is, in fact, through the different layers of consciousness to the ultimate realisation of the self. Interestingly, the primary theme of all the novels from Pied Piper of Lovers to The Quintet is the individual's search for self-awareness. As Richard Pine points out "Durrell's journeys became pilgrimages, quests: in the western sense a quest for treasure, the Grail at the centre of the labyrinth, the quincunx; in the eastern, a "way," a spiritual progression towards Nirvana" (82). In Pied Piper of Lovers and Panic Spring, the search for quietism becomes essential and inevitable. Whereas in The Dark
Labyrinth, it is the process of moving through the psychic corridors towards self-understanding. In all these novels, the quests are essentially journeys into the self - - through the labyrinths of the psyche into the pure consciousness. This spiritual journey finds expression in Durrell’s writings. His characters are involved in journeys - - the journey into the self, a quest into the inner recesses of the psyche. Durrell explores the significance of these journeys and concludes that, “journeys, like artists, are born and not made. A thousand differing circumstances contribute to them, few of them willed or determined by the will - - whatever we may think. They flower spontaneously out of the demands of our natures - - and the best of them lead us not outwards in space, but inwards as well” (Bitter Lemons 15). In the poem, “Fangbrand,” the protagonist, like a missionary, goes about “measuring penance by the pipkin,” unaware of the “oceans peculiar spelling.” He haunts this new domain and senses only at night “a foetal heart asleep” but quivering within him. With a few strokes, Durrell sketches Fangbrand’s journey which inevitably is “an outward symbol of an inward march on reality” (The Dark Labyrinth 59). What is clear to him ultimately is the end of the journey: “an old man holding an
asphodel,” an heraldic image of silvery being, where one has learned of the eternal and its dissolution of opposites, the movement beyond “the duellers, the twins / Of argument and confusion” (93).

The poem exemplifies Durrell’s attempt to turn a key into the self, “to provide a healing link between our muddled inner selves, with our temporal preoccupations, and the uniform flow of the universe outside” (Reflections 48). The poem “The Sermon,” deals with the death of the self to realise the real Self:

Life lies on the whole, along the

    circumference pure

    Duality is distress, like image of things in

    mirror

    The first law of optics is the eye: and the

    first law

    Of life is Time, the endless tepid all

    consuming ray.

(81)

The poet experiences a “quietism,” withdrawing from time as well as place to rediscover the ultimate wholeness. This withdrawal was interpreted by the Victorian poets as a sense of isolation, which
actually reflected "the musing self" of the poet. For instance in "A Summer Night", Arnold says:

In the deserted, moon-blanchéd street
How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,
Silent and white, unopening down,
Repellent as the world . . . (282)

In actuality this experience of isolation and quietism is what Durrell explains in his poem "Echoes I":

Can you remember, oh so long ago
And when I stood, breathless and called your name,
It flung it back to me in little ripples
Of ecstatic, liquid sound.

(21)

The other flinging it back to the self enables him to rediscover that his deepest nature is ONE without the other. The creative act,
Durrell seems to say, representing the inner rhythm of the unfolding universe, functions as a powerful aid to self-realisation. Creativity resulted in the annihilation of the distinction between subject and object as Durrell says in the poem “Themes Heraldic”:

It is no victory to write you,

But to become you. Gnosis

By osmosis knowing in becoming.

(58)

This interfusion and unification of self and other was not a product of rational intellectualisation. On the other hand, it was an intuitive, immediate awareness, an ontological experience. The artist’s journey is to go beyond to retrieve the self. Durrell reiterates that all art activity was a part of that supreme activity — the constant dynamism after perfection, as Robert Wilson points out:

The poet (or any writer) explores the self, and thus the self that is trapped must be richer, fuller, whole in him than in other men if his work is to be finally significant and relevant to the general enterprise.

(58)
Durrell in an interview to Anna Lilliois opined that: "Poetic realisation is a kind of celestial amnesia which is anti-egoism, completely, completely."\(^5\) The writer failing to tap his own consciousness, recognises his folly, when the other, the real self is identified. In the poem "Sonnet Astray", he says:

And I

Bewildering wonder at my great foolishness,

To leave you forever alone that night by a

star swept sea,

With the laughter of the dark surf in your

eyes . . .

Godless, and yet so very much a God.

(Poems 19)

The artist has to rediscover himself, which would eventually lead him to self-affirmation. But the problem of multiplicity of selves is consistently gnawing at the heart of every writer. As Durrell says in "Mneiae": "I, the watcher, smoking at the table / And I, my selves, observed by human choice" (Poems 234). The annihilation of the many sense is of utmost importance to writer to enable him to reorder and reconstruct reality, leading to self-discovery. The acute
narcissism which is necessary to become a poet is described thus by Durrell:

Mirrors will your image with intensity
and bleed your spirit of its density,
for they are thirsty for the inner man
and pasture on his substance when they can.
The double image upside - down
They drink their fill - you never drown.
They echo fate which is not kind
O sweet blood - poisoning of the mind.

(Livia 185)

W. B. Yeats' statement, "we make of the quarrel with others, rhetoric; but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry," (331) justifies Durrell's stance.

According to the Vedanta, the artist and his aesthetic experience is nothing other than self knowledge. Sri Aurobindo explains the role of the artist as "to find the Divine through Beauty; the highest Art is that which by an inspired use of significant / and interpretative form unseals the doors of the spirit" (Human Cycle
Creativity itself becomes sacrosanct in the Indian tradition and the artist has been called "prajapati" or "creator."

It is by human choice that the different "selves" emerge which in actuality is "a disinherited portion of the whole." The existence of different selves is an illusion or "Maya." The plurality of the selves has to be transcended to reach from "self to Notself." Maya is one of the most important terms in Indian Philosophy. As long as we confuse the myriad forms, we are under the spell of "Maya." "Maya" does not mean that the world is an illusion but that "the shapes and structures, things and events around us" are not "realities of nature," but "concepts of our measuring and categorising minds" (Capra 88). Durrell probably had in mind the Indian concept of "maya" and the "plurality" when he created characters in his works. For instance, even the women with whom he has had relationships seem to be all ONE. He categorically states:

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.

(108)
He employs identical conversations to highlight the intertwining of characters. When Darley and Justine first make love, their conversation runs thus:

Justine: I am always so bad the first time, why is it?
Darley: Nerves perhaps. So am I.
Justine: You are a little afraid of me.

Later, when Darley and Clea make love, the words are repeated:

Clea: I am always so bad for the first time, why is it?
Darley: So am I.
Clea: Are you afraid of me.
Darley: No, nor of myself.

Further repetition links the two women in the deaths of their lovers. Informed that Cohen wants to meet her, Melissa cries out: “Oh, it is so disgusting! Please do not make me go... But if you think I should I will have to” (88). Some time later informed of Narouz’s dying wish to see her, Clea cries out: “Oh, it is so disgusting! - - please do not make me come... But if you think I should I will feel obliged to” (643). According to Paul Lorenz, there
is a syncretization of characters in Durrell’s fiction and poetry. Melissa could be Justine at one time, Constance at another and even Clea. Similarly, Conon could be Darley, Arnauti, or Pursewarden. Durrell’s novels brim with characters always changing their masks “in order to break the idea of individual identity down as far as possible.” Durrell suggests as in Quinx:

    Be ye members of another . . . If each had a part in the play perhaps they could also be the various actors which, in their sum, made up one whole single personality.

(11)

Interestingly in the margin of a book Constance borrows from Sutcliffe, she finds the scribbled words: “The same people are also others without realising it” (Sebastian 8). Another conversation in Constance bears witness to the multiple identities and forms of the same self:

    Sutcliffe: “It’s as if we were versions of another set upon differing time - tracks.
    Reality is very fatiguing.” “Exactly,” said
Aubrey. "Be ye of members of one another" -
- the good book invokes you.

(Constance 341)

The whole world seems to be an illusion and exists as "Image, Image, Image . . ." (Poems 103) and the struggle of the individual is to "Rise / Between the Non Self and the Self" (103). In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna's statement that the multitude of things and the events around us are but different manifestations of the same ultimate reality. According to the Upanishads, there is only one reality, which is the Ultimate Reality or Brahman, which is the essence of every soul or Atman. The only requisite is for the Atman to realise that he is Brahman "Aham Brahmasmi" -- "I am Brahman" - - "Tat Tvam Asi" or "That Thou Art." 8 The whole universe is in the grip of a divine Lila - - the divine play in which Brahman transforms himself into the world. Lila is a rhythmic play which goes on in endless cycles, the ONE becoming the many, and the many returning into the ONE:

The manifestation of Brahman in the human soul is called Atman and the idea that Atman and Brahman, the individual and the ultimate
reality, are one is the essence of the
Upanishads. (Capra 87)

Thus Durrell in his poem “Je Est Un Autre” literally in English translation “I is an Other,” suggests that the self transcends from
the multiplicity of selves:

He is the man who makes notes

The observer in the tall black hat,

He has watched me watching him.

(106)

The I, who is another is the sinister figure in a black hat, who
keeps a constant watch over the poet. He knows everything about
the poet, his love affairs, his struggle to become an artist. In a
sense, the figure becomes the true “self.” Thus it becomes evident
that Durrell follows the Hindu cosmology closely in depicting the
characters in his novels and poetry. The characters in his fiction are
not different identities but one unified whole. In The Quartet, Darley
catches sight of Clea after many years, sitting exactly at the very
spot where he had first met Melissa, “staring into her cup with a
very reflective air of amusement” (54), and later Clea, “gazing at a
coffee cup with a very reflective air of amusement" (711). The different individuals and events seem to merge into a single whole. For Durrell, not only characters merge into a single unified personality, even places symbolise the WHOLE. Although geographical, places take up a spirituality and serenity. In the poem "Matapan", the spirit of the place is envisioned as:

Standing alone on the hills
Saw all Greece, the human
Body of the sky suspending or world
Within a crystal turning
Guarded by the green wicks of Cypresses

(Poems 115)

As Roger Bowen justifies: "Matapan becomes a mantra: its name evokes not simply a spot on Greece's eccentric sea board, but all of Greece, all members of Greece" (471). As Durrell's characters represent all mankind, the ONE is all and the all is ONE, so also his places represent the whole universe. According to Hindu mythology, all life is a part of a great rhythmic process of creation and destruction, of death and rebirth. The dancing God Shiva and his eternal dance symbolizes the eternal life-death rhythm, which
goes on in endless cycles. About the dance of Shiva, Ananda Coomaraswamy says:

. . . Dancing, He sustains its manifold phenomena. In the fullness of time, still dancing, He destroys all forms and names by fire and gives new rest. This is poetry but none the less science.

(78)

The whole universe maintains a rhythm and is involved in endless cycles of life and death. As Ted Hughes visualizes in his poem “Hawk Roosting”: Nature carrying on the endless cycle of creation and destruction. Nature speaks through the Hawk thus:

The sun is behind me
Nothing has changed since I began
My eye has permitted no change
I am going to keep things like this.

(280)

The basis of existence in Indian mysticism is the daily rhythm of birth and death, creation and destruction. It is *dejavu*, Shiva
creates and dissolves them in the ceaseless flow of his dance. As Henrich Zimmer explains:

His gestures wild and full of grace, precipitates the cosmic illusion; his flying arms and legs and the swaying of the torso produce — indeed, they are the continuous creation — destruction of the universe, death exactly balancing birth, annihilation the end of every coming — forth.

(155)

Shiva reminds us that the manifold forms in the world are maya — not fundamental, but illusionary. Durrell has, thus, very skilfully assimilated in his works the ancient wisdom of India in order to emphasize the distorted and multiple vision of reality, which he feels is the root cause of all malady. The quest is for the self and the knowledge of Indian mysticism helps us to reach the inner caves of oneself. Durrell suggests that the artist becomes successful only when he identifies the coherence at the heart of reality as Balthazar stresses the importance of
the fons signatus of the psyche and of its ability to perceive an inherent order in the universe which underlay the apparent formlessness . . . and could enable people to penetrate behind the veil of reality and to discover harmonies in space and time which corresponded to the inner structures of their own psyches. (85)

True art can only occur at the point where "a form is sincerely honoured by an awakened spirit" (Quartet 751) and Pursewarden strongly feels that: "a great writer is the servant of compulsions which are ordained by the very structure of the psyche and cannot be disregarded" (758).

It becomes evident now that unless an artist moves from his subjective experience to the final realisation of his own self, he cannot attain a clear perception of reality. This journey to the discovery of the Self is basically that of a lover through sex. He says in The Quintet that sex "is the purifier of mind, sharpener of intuition, processor of the future" (Quinx 262). Durrell is emphatic in his poems and novels that one has to transcend time in order to
understand the meaning of self, life, death and reality. Therefore, life becomes, for the artist and lovers, a kind of battle against time, to perpetually inhabit. "a private country" or "the heraldic universe."
Notes

1 Quoted by V. K. Gokak in “Poetry and Modern Consciousness”
   Sri Aurobindo Circle 10 (1954) 133.

2 The term used by Kierkegaard quoted by Paul Murray in
   “Mysticism Under Scrutiny.” T. S. Eliot & Mysticism: The
   113.


4 The Magic of Island’s - ts in CERLD intended as a preface for
   a Reader’s Digest Selection.

5 Interview with Anna Lillois, Published in Deus Loci: The
   Lawrence Durrell Journal NS2, 1993. ed. Ian. S. Mac Niven and
   Carol Pierce (University of Baltimore, 1993) 3 - 6.

6 Paul. H. Lorenz. “Melissa: From Conon The Philosopher to
   the Banker Affad and Beyond. “Deus Loci: The Lawrence
