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Characters as functions of landscape in seven poems by Lawrence Durrell

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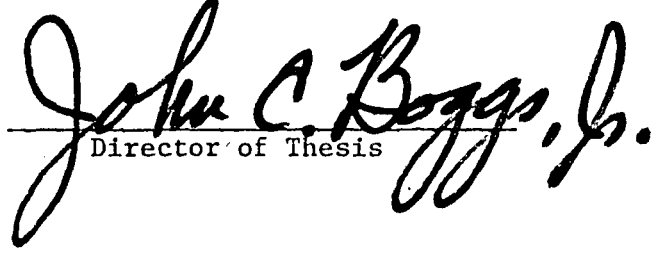
CHARACTERS AS FUNCTIONS
OF LANDSCAPE IN SEVEN POEMS
BY LAWRENCE DURRELL

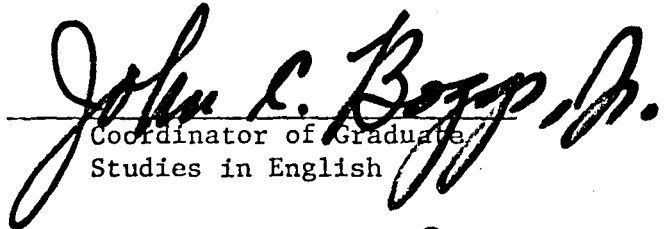
BY
RICHARD KING LEROY

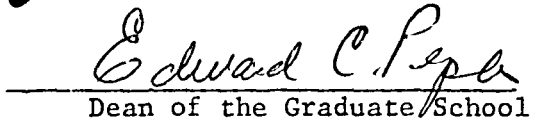
A THESIS
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Director of Thesis


Coordinator of Graduate
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Dean of the Graduate School

For Carol

With special gratitude

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Introduction

No single theory explaining the creative process has won the assent of writers and critics. Most scholars agree that the process has subconscious origins and that it concludes only when the last revisions reveal the entire finished composition.¹ However, the act of creation is dependent upon numerous aesthetic factors, and artists have given credit to various stimuli which have produced their special inspiration. René Wellek and Austin Warren offer historical rituals which have inspired artistic creation:

As the mantic poets of primitive communities are taught methods of putting themselves into states conducive to "possession" . . . so writers of the modern world learn, or think they learn, rituals for inducing the creative state . . . Some require silence and solitude; but others prefer to write in the midst of the family or the company at a cafe. There are instances . . . of authors who work through the night and sleep during the day . . . Some authors assert that they can write only at certain seasons . . . these seemingly capricious rituals have in common that, by association and habit, they facilitate systematic production.²

¹ Psychological theorists have also attempted to isolate the causes of human creation. Joseph Grasset, an authority on psychic defects, believed that a link exists between the neurosis of a writer and his creative abilities. He cites numerous writers whose works have long been identified as creations of genius, and in each case the artist had various symptoms and degrees of neurosis which Grasset determined was responsible for his special ability to create. Other distinguished doctors have studied this particular question and have come to the alternate conclusion that creative work is a normal human drive, but that it frequently is crippled by neurosis. This controversy continues today.

² René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, 1949), p. 75.

While many artists are dependent upon ritualistic methods for inspiration, others have long disputed the stimulating effects of particular places on the creative process. From the early sages to artists of the present day, assumptions affirming the relationship between the craftsman and the spirit of place have been controversial.

Lionel Trilling in an essay "The Sense of the Past" supports the suggestion that environment influences creativity and defines this reciprocal interchange as essential to the process:

The poet, it is true, is an effect of environment, but we must remember that he is no less a cause . . . We have been too easily satisfied by the merely elementary meaning of environment; we have been content with a simple quantitative implication of the word, taking a large and literally environing thing to be always the environment of a smaller thing . . . In a family the parents are no doubt the chief factors in the environment of the child; but also the child is a factor in the environment of the parents and himself conditions the actions of his parents toward him.³

In myth this symbiotic relationship between environment and character has been of considerable significance. Sir James Fraser in The Golden Bough wrote of a certain sylvan landscape in which there was a tree around which a grim figure prowled. As visiting travelers viewed this sacred grove, the sinister effects of the tree's presence pervaded the otherwise tranquil landscape:

It is sombre picture, set to melancholy music - the background of forest showing black and jagged against a lowering and stormy sky, the sighing of the wind in the branches, the rustle of the withered leaves under foot, the lapping of the cold water on the shore, and

³ Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (New York: Doubleday, 1950), p. 185.

in the foreground, pacing to and fro, now in twilight and now in gloom, a dark figure with a glitter as of steel at the shoulder whenever the pale moon, riding clear of the cloud-rack, peers down at him through the matted boughs.⁴

Also commenting on the relationship between landscape and character, Laurence Sterne in a mildly comic, perhaps rebuking comment about his countrymen, has his spokesman, Tristram Shandy, state, ". . . that this strange irregularity in our character . . ." yields the English disposition so dependent upon its climate. Hegel also recognizes the serious influence which a place can have on the psyche of an artist. In a statement of elaboration, he writes:

For awakening consciousness takes its rise surrounded by natural influences alone, and every development of it is the reflection of spirit back upon itself in opposition to the immediate, unreflected character of mere nature. Nature is therefore one element in this antithetic abstracting process; nature is the first standpoint from which man can gain freedom within himself, and this liberation must not be rendered difficult by natural obstructions. Nature, as contrasted with spirit, is a quantitative mass, whose power must not be so great as to make its single force omnipotent.⁵

Although Hegel differentiates between nature and spirit, he emphasizes the interdependence of the two elements. He further recognizes the need for a temperate zone in which man can fulfill the spirit:

In the extreme zones man cannot come to free movement; cold and heat are here too powerful to allow spirit to build up a world for itself. Aristotle said long ago, 'When pressing needs are satisfied, man turns to the general and more elevated.' But in the extreme zones such pressure may be said never to cease, never to be

⁴ Sir James Fraser, The Golden Bough, in Prose Keys to Modern Poetry, ed. Karl Shapiro (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 73.

⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History (New York: Dover, 1956), p. 80.

warded off; men are constantly impelled to direct attention to nature, to the glowing rays of the sun, and the icy frost.⁶

Direct attention to nature has influenced much of the English literary tradition. Geoffrey H. Hartman traces the evolution of the importance of landscape:

The Elizabethan Age had already pointed to this synthesis of imagination and reason. Between the time of Milton and Gray, however, a formula arose which anticipated the new poetry more completely. It suggested that the demonic, or more than rational, energy of imagination might be tempered by its settlement in Britain - its naturalization, as it were, on British soil. This conversion of the demon meant that the poetical genius would coincide with the genius loci of England; and this meant, in practice, a meditation on English landscape as alma mater - where landscape is storied England, its legends, history, and rural-reflective spirit. The poem becomes, in a sense, a seduction of the poetical genius by the genius loci; the latter invites - subtly,⁷ compels - the former to live within via media charms.

The belief that landscape does influence creative powers has led many modern artists to spend a lifetime searching for that special locale with which to establish a rapport which will meet and, indeed, stimulate their needs to create. During his sixty years, Lawrence Durrell, influenced by the English literary tradition mentioned above and a prominent writer of poetry and prose, has been a rootless wanderer. He has lived all over the world and has deep emotional feelings about the effect of landscape upon artistic creation. Durrell has emphasized the effect of the spirit of place to the point that it has become the basis for an

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Geoffrey H. Hartman, Beyond Formalism (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), p. 319.

intricate personal philosophy which proclaims harmony with landscape as the energizing force which prompts creative achievement. Hartman corroborates this intense attention to place as he writes "now the existence of a genius loci (the 'rising Genius' as he was sometimes called) is intrinsically related to vision and prophecy: to determining the destiny of an individual or a nation." ⁸ For Durrell, a "placeless man," congenial landscape and seascapes, discovered by travel, stimulate the only peaceful inner solitude and, subsequently, the ability to create. In relating his experience to his own vision of the creative process, he has written:

Taken in this way travel becomes a sort of science of institutions which is of the greatest importance to everyone - but most of all to the artist who is always looking for nourishing soils in which to put down roots and create. Everyone finds his own 'correspondences' in this way - landscapes where you suddenly feel bounding with ideas, and others where half your soul falls asleep and the thought of pen and paper brings on nausea. It is here that the travel-writer states his claim, for writers each seem to have a personal landscape of the heart which beckons them. ⁹

Hartman explains Durrell's reliance on place as characteristic of modern literary trends which began with the English Romantic writers:

What modern literary theory tends to call an epiphany involved a confrontation with a second self in the form of genius loci or Persona. There is a djinee in every well-wrought urn. Ironically enough, these concepts of Genius and Persona have practically disappeared because of the very success of the Wordsworthian Enlightenment. We no longer require a Romance or Eastern mode to express visionary encounters. Wordsworth writes Westerns only. Compared to

⁸ Ibid., p. 314.

⁹ Lawrence Durrell, Spirit of Place (New York: Dutton, 1969), p. 161.

Resolution and Independence, Coleridge's Ancient Mariner is Eastern: an open vision of demonic agency centering imaginatively and morally on the genius loci. The Mariner in his ancientness is the admonitory persona; the world he describes is demonic; his drama is that of "Compulsion," of a journey in which the self is kidnapped by various genii and made to suffer a number of spectral confrontations; the crime is basically one against the genius loci; and the punishment, a homeless voyaging, fits the crime. ¹⁰

Durrell has used his own life as a "homeless voyager" as an example to illustrate his theory on the importance of seeking out and of establishing "correspondence" with places. He has documented his own relationship with various locales and the philosophy he has developed from these experiences in his longest and most introspective poem, Cities, Plains and People, a spiritual autobiography. The poem, which can be considered one of Durrell's major poetical efforts, is divided into sixteen sections which are arranged in rough chronological order. Through Cities, Plains and People, Durrell illustrates Hartman's observation that "the new poetry projects a sacred marriage: that of the poet's genius with the genius loci. To invoke the ghost in the landscape is only preparatory to a deeper, ceremonial merging of the poet's spirit and spirit of place - hence the new structure of fusion. Poetry is to be attuned with this place and this time." ¹¹ In his autobiographical poem, Durrell exemplifies the new structure of fusion as he relates his own life in terms of the spiritual quality and the texture it has achieved through his relationship with various landscapes.

¹⁰ Hartman, p. 333.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 322.

In observing this texture, one sees the utterances of the poet who is "a young sensitive member of the 'modern' generation seeking values and coherence in a world essentially chaotic."¹² However, his youth, particularly to his seventh year, was marked by great harmony and tranquility: "Little known of better then or worse." It was not until the end of this "innocent beginning" that he found life frustrating and unyielding and attempted to discover landscapes more suitable to his psyche.

The poem begins with the poet's early remembrances of the Himalayas where "once in idleness was my beginning."

Back in 1937, Henry Miller has written of Durrell that he "was born and raised in India near the Tibetan frontier. From the window of his home he looked out on Mt. Everest: he saw the greenest jungles and the whitest snow. His consciousness is saturated with the immediacy of a land in which magic and mystery dominate. He is poised like a bird between the wildest opposites."¹³

The impression of the land as "magic and mystery" made for one of the great influences of the boy's life and has continued to promote a recurring search in his maturity for this kind of special place.

As a youth, he "Saw the Himalayas like lambs / Stir their huge joints and lay / Against his innocent thigh a stony thigh." Watching the caravans as they climbed into Tibet inspired the youth, and he placed great value in the "Words caught by the soft klaxons crying / Down to the plains and settled cities." The sounds of the words evidently stimulated

¹² Alan W. Friedman, Lawrence Durrell and the Alexandria Quartet (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1970), p. 4.

¹³ Harry T. Moore, "Introduction," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: Dutton, 1964), p. xii.

Durrell early in his life in a surrounding that was idyllic. The recollections of the pure, simple existence at the foot of the Himalayas contrast sharply with the industrialized England he was later to experience. It was an idle innocence kept "immortal to my seventh year." What had been a life of ascent and innocence became: "To all who turn and start descending / The long sad river of their growth."

Durrell is well-acquainted with the death-in-the-present qualities inherent in the passive life of descending "growth": "The tidebound, tepid, causeless / Continuum of terrors in the spirit" which plague the growth of many individuals. He found living in England to be a personal curse, and he concludes section I with the statement: "Until your pain become a literature." Since pain is a frequent stimulus for cathartic writing, Durrell alludes to his own expression of the stifling "English death" depicted in The Black Book, the regrettable period in his life after leaving India. John Unterecker has written of the contrast in these experiences:

If Durrell's early childhood contributed to his work, as I strongly suspect it did, not just imagery of innocence but a locale for the good life, the rest of Durrell's childhood seems to have offered him, in England, imagery tied to the experience of corruption and a vision not so much of evil as of hypocrisy . . . For when Durrell at the age of eleven left the College of St. Joseph in Darjeeling and set sail down the "long sad river" of adolescence, his westward path took him not toward literal but toward metaphoric death. He went westward only "to the prudish cliffs and the sad green home / Of Pudding Island o'er the Victorian foam" . . . and concluded . . . that London could at best be nothing more than "a promise-giving kingdom." ¹⁴

¹⁴ John Unterecker, Lawrence Durrell (New York: Columbia Essays on Modern Writers, Columbia Univ. Press, 1964), p. 8.

Though London was "a promise-giving kingdom," Durrell recognized its duplicity and sharply stated: "Here all as poets were pariahs," and his subsequent writings as well as this poem emphasize his sense of exile and separation from the English landscape which he describes here in terms of death: "Death like autumn falls / On the lakes its sudden forms, on walls / Where everything is made more marginal / By the ruling planes of the snow." Durrell, who has enjoyed the sun-drenched Mediterranean world in his maturity, found the English landscape and climate unpleasant and grey, a place where Spring's resuscitation never appears: "Go walking to a church / By landscape rubbed in rain to grey / As wool on glass / Thinking of Spring which never comes to stay."

The last stanza of section II calmly states "so here at last we did outgrow ourselves." This turning point in the life of the poet made him recognize the counterfeit nature of his mother country, England, and: "As the green stalk is taken from the earth, / With a great juicy sob, I turned from a Man / To Mandrake, in whose awful hand I am." The barren aspect of his English stay is indicated by the uprooting of the "green stalk," the fertility symbol, from the earth. Durrell intends the image to parallel his own reaction in being uprooted from the landscape with which he felt no correspondence.

He later told Miller, England, "that mean, shabby little island," was chiefly responsible for frustration rather than for the kind of education he needed. England "wrung my guts out of me and tried to destroy anything singular and unique in me." ¹⁵

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

In turning "from a Man / To Mandrake" Durrell became an artist-magician and with that identification saw his association with Prospero, the magician of Shakespeare's The Tempest whose exile on a beautiful island followed his life among men in Naples. Durrell, like Prospero, left his barren life among men in England and with the Durrell family moved to the fructifying landscape of Corfu, an island in the Ionian Sea, off the coast of Albania.

In section III, Durrell continues to parallel his own experience on Corfu with his references to Prospero and his daughter Miranda on their sun-bathed island. In that particular atmosphere, Prospero could feel his "love . . . fully grown" and developed. As a result, he could lay "his magic down." Durrell, in his search for truth on Corfu, found that one did not have to depend upon mystical "spells," but rather, like Prospero, one discovers reality only when the "thirst" is conquered. Durrell felt fulfilled in the Mediterranean island environment.

Yet most sensitive young men feel the need for intensive searching in their lives, and it may have been this motivation which led Durrell to be attracted to Paris, the City of Lights, with its romantic literary associations. His own literary associations in that city were of paramount importance. The effect of Henry Miller, Anais Nin, and Jack Kahane gave Durrell the feeling that: "To many luck may give for merit / More profitable teachers. To the heart / A critic and a nymph: / And an unflinching doctor to the spirit."

Through his associations in and with Paris, Durrell saw the French, unlike the English, intuitively understood that "All rules obtain upon the pilot's plan / So long as man, not manners, makyth man" and that man's rules are obtained only "If governed by the scripture of the heart."

Durrell has written in The Spirit of Place of the influence of landscape upon the French character which he so admires.

I believe that you could exterminate the French at a blow and resettle the country with Tartars, and within two generations discover, to your astonishment, that the national characteristics were back at norm - the restless, metaphysical curiosity, the tenderness for good living and the passionate individualism: even though their noses were now flat. ¹⁶

Even with the healthy experience of maturation in Paris, the rain "Surprises and humbles with its taste of elsewhere," and Durrell follows his instinct to return to that idyllic Mediterranean world of Corfu and Greece: "Towards the sad perfect wife, / The rocky island and the cypress tree." On Corfu, Durrell finds a responsive landscape and expresses this reflection by seeing the island "in the pattern of all solitaires, / An only child, of introspection got, / Her only playmates, lovers, in herself." Durrell is himself a qualified lover of islands and has lived on the Mediterranean islands of Corfu, Crete, Rhodes, and Cypress. These island experiences have become incorporated into Durrell's works (as in this poem).

However it is used . . . it retains its isolating, healing function. It becomes a place . . . for isolation from the cities in which the artist finds much of his material, a place in which the artist can compose his fragmented experience by linking it to a landscape soaked in the past, a landscape richer and older and more meaningful than the modern, chaotic one. ¹⁷

Durrell found Corfu and Greece to be that ideal landscape conducive to his mature art and love:

¹⁶ Durrell, Spirit of Place, p. 157.

¹⁷ Unterecker, p. 16.

Here worlds were confirmed in him.
 Differences that matched like cloth
 Between the darkness and the inner light
 Moved on the undivided breath of blue.

Greece and her landscape corresponds to his youthful experiences in Tibet, but because of his maturity of insight surpasses that Himalayan experience: ". . . trees asserted here / Nothing but simple comparisons to / The artist's endearing eye." The artist is in complete accord with the beauty of nature surrounding him. Even when the "earth turns her cold shoulders to us, / Autumn with her wild packs / Comes down to the robbing of the flowers," the change in season, paralleling the approach of the European barbaric chaos and war, does not affect the positive relationship he has with the Grecian landscape: "And the rate of passion or tenderness / In this island house is absolute." But even in Greece with its idyllic setting, "Art has limits and life limits / Within the nerves that support them." Durrell recognizes that under these limiting conditions, migration is important if one is to be fulfilled. He states his philosophy affirmatively:

So better with the happy
 Discover than with the wise
 Who teach the sad valor
 Of endurance through the seasons.

He doesn't feel mere endurance is enough to make life worthwhile. And he is forced to seek refuge in Alexandria when "darkness comes to Europe" with the second world war. It is apparent, however, that Egypt contrasts greatly with Greece. There is a natural sense of despair at the loss of Greece. Durrell's displacement is echoed through his images in stanza twelve of the duality and "apparent opposition of the two." He has gone "from Greece to Egypt, from peace to war, from life to death, from a

landscape warm and comforting to one harsh and loveless,"¹⁸ and he mourns the loss of "This personal landscape built / Within the Chinese circle's calm embrace." With one feeling that his dislocated life has vast uncertainties, particularly in view of the conflict and tension inherent in war, he finds it impossible to be creative. He left the innocent and consoling landscape of Greece to enter into the flawed world of Egypt. The only way Durrell sees of retaining his artistic sensibilities is to reflect upon the Greece which inspired him: "For Prospero remains the evergreen / Cell by the margin of the sea and land, / Who many cities, plains, and people saw." This recognition gives Durrell the patience to endure, and he admits positively that despite man's destructive impulses on himself and his landscape:

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

Carl Bode in his "Guide to Alexandria" sees the effect of Durrell's dislocation and his subsequent acceptance of that state: "Loss, all loss, and suffering, can teach us. Through them we can grown wise. We learn by enduring . . ." ¹⁹

Though other themes find expression in Cities, Plains and People, its complex weave emphasizes the influence which place has had on Durrell. His responses have fluctuated from the tranquil education offered by the

¹⁸ Friedman, p. 19.

¹⁹ Carl Bode, "A Guide to Alexandria," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: Dutton, 1964), p. 217.

broad vistas of the Himalayas to his unhappy relationship with the English landscape. From there, he escaped to the Mediterranean, and it has been this fulfilling locale which has become the subject of so much of Durrell's art. Unterecker has perceived: "Durrell has . . . begun, both in life and in art, to sketch . . . an image to oppose the isolated snow-covered peak: he has begun to construct the image of an isolated island, Mediterranean, sun-washed, sun-stroked." ²⁰

But that affirming landscape of Corfu and Greece had to be abandoned during the threatening dark days of World War II, and with his retreat to Alexandria, Durrell found another landscape about which he had ambiguous feelings. Though the poem suggests its negative aspects, it eventually served as the landscape for The Alexandria Quartet. It seems as though Durrell had to remove himself from Egypt long enough to observe it dispassionately. And Friedman has seen:

The poet reveals a fluctuating response characterized perhaps as much by uncertainty and ambiguity - even despair - as by affirmation . . . It is evident that, though affirmation is Durrell's natural inclination, he recognizes that it must be achieved and it cannot be meaningful if merely asserted against the pattern of failure inherent in much of reality. ²¹

It can be safely established though that Durrell's creative skills are best reinforced and developed by the island setting as expressed in the poem and by a critic: "Durrell's own 'disease' is 'islomania,' an ailment 'as yet unclassified by medical science . . . a rare but by no means unknown affliction of spirit' it causes its victims to 'find islands somehow irresistible'." ²²

²⁰ Unterecker, p. 16.

²¹ Friedman, p. 21.

²² Ibid., p. 48.

From a review of Durrell's poetry, it seems that he finds not only islands irresistible, but that he is uncontrollably drawn to many landscapes. Meaningful relationships with place, in Durrell's world scheme, presents man the opportunity to live fully and to relate the quality of his life through artistic creation. As a writer, he finds the sense of place essential to literature:

One last word about the sense of place; I think that not enough attention is paid to it as a purely literary criterion. What makes "big" books surely has as much to do with their site as their characters and incidents . . . When they are well and truly anchored in nature they usually become classics. They are tuned into the sense of place. You could not transplant them without totally damaging their ambience and mood; anymore than you could transplant Typee. This has nothing to do with the manners and habits of human beings who populate them; for they exist in nature, as a function of place. ²³

The passage above succinctly states what might be considered Durrell's theory of literature. Drawn from his own exposure to various locales and reflected in his art, his personal priority on place seems to dominate the man and his work. Since Cities, Plains and People was written in 1946, Durrell has moved from Corfu to Crete to Rhodes and, finally, for a few years in the fifties to Cyprus. Outside the Mediterranean world, he has lived in Belgrade, in Cordoba, in Argentina, in Cairo, and in Alexandria. Durrell's repeated insistence that people are "functions of place" seems to have grown from his own life experience and, subsequently, has been illustrated in his writing.

In writing a book review of Durrell's Spirit of Place, George Wickes has seen the interweaving connection between the life of the writer and

²³ Durrell, Spirit of Place, p. 163.

his special love for "place." In an interesting commentary Wickes says:

Early and late, Durrell has always shown a gift for evocation of place, a genius responsible to the genius loci. His best works - his three books on Greek Islands and his Alexandria Quartet - are hauntingly evocative of landscape and seascape, legend and local color. He belongs with Norman Douglas, D. H. Lawrence, and E. M. Forster to the tradition of Englishmen thawed by the Mediterranean sun and charmed by the flora and fauna, especially the uninhibited inhabitants. In his early twenties Durrell decided to escape "the English death" by moving to a Greek island. He has remained in the Mediterranean world ever since, living all around its borders and writing about all the places where he has lived. ²⁴

It is this tying together of seascape and landscape and the fundamental characters of its people which has captured Durrell's acute consciousness in both his non-fiction and fiction. In The Spirit of Place, a collection of letters and essays on travel, for example, he writes:

. . . a Spain, an Italy, a Greece will always give you the same type of culture - will express itself through the human beings just as it does through its wild flowers. We tend to see 'culture' as a sort of historic pattern dictated by the human will, but for me this is no longer absolutely true . . . and so long as people keep getting born Greek or French or Italian their culture-productions will bear the unmistakable signature of the place. ²⁵

In illustrating his thesis that landscape and character are inextricably bound, he refers to Greece:

Greece, for example, cannot have a single real Greek left (in the racial sense) after so many hundreds of years of war and resettlement; the present racial stocks are the fruits of countless invasions . . . But if there are no original Greeks left what is the curious

²⁴ George Wickes, "Durrell's Landscapes," rev. of Spirit of Place by Lawrence Durrell, New Republic, 21 June 1969, p. 23.

²⁵ Durrell, Spirit of Place, p. 156.

constant factor that we discern behind the word 'Greekness'? It is surely the enduring faculty of self-expression inherent in landscape.²⁶

Similarly, in his fiction, Durrell emphasizes the relationship between man and place. Specifically, expression of this idea is reflected in Justine, first volume of the Alexandria Quartet:

Darley says - and here we are justified, surely, in presuming a Darley-Durrell identity - "As a poet of the historic consciousness I suppose I am bound to see landscape as a field dominated by the human wish - tortured into farms and hamlets, ploughed into cities. A landscape scribbled with the signature of men and epochs. Now, however, I am beginning to believe that the wish is inherited from the site; that man depends for the furniture of the will upon his location in place, tenant of fruitful acres or a perverted wood."²⁷

It is also Darley who says, "We are children of our landscape. It dictates behaviour and even thought in the measure in which we are responsive to it."²⁸

Quite naturally Durrell's novels and travel books are suffused with place. Not only he, but many critics have documented his use of landscape through these literary forms. However, Durrell has also utilized poetry to express his world view and, with the exception of studies by Friedman, little attention has been paid to these works. The present study concentrates on seven of Durrell's poetic biographies. Stimulated by an interest in exploring Durrell's use of landscape in his poetry, the study confirms the author's declaration: ". . . I have a

²⁶ Ibid., p. 157.

²⁷ Hayden Carruth, "Nougat for the Old Bitch," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: Dutton, 1964), p. 126.

²⁸ Lawrence Durrell, Justine (New York: Dutton, 1957), p. 41.

private notion about the importance of landscape, and I willingly admit to seeing characters almost as functions of a landscape." ²⁹ Four hypotheses are tested in, and, therefore, frame this investigation of the special relationship of character and landscape in seven selected poems by Durrell. They are:

1. In a place of positive influence, one with which a person finds "correspondence," Durrell's characters are willful, active, at peace with themselves, and capable of art and love. Conversely, when the poet's subjects clash with places of negative influence, they become will-less, passive, and fail totally at art and love.
2. From Durrell's perspective, it is the responsibility of every person to attempt to discover a landscape which is fertile for him and, subsequently, to attain a sense of self-hood which can be expressed metaphorically as spiritual regeneration.
3. The possibilities for growth can be exhausted in a particular place. If this does happen, Durrell views flight as essential for the artist since it is possible for him to find a new landscape which will stimulate him if he is responsive and open to its influence.
4. Durrell approaches his subjects from a value-laden framework in which he judges his characters by the extent to which they are in harmony with their environments.

²⁹ Durrell, Spirit of Place, p. 156.

In developing the hypotheses and arguments in support of them, seven poetic biographies by Durrell are considered in this study. The poems are grouped together for analysis according to the value Durrell projects in his treatment of each character. Thus, if the characters are placed on a continuum according to the feelings Durrell expresses from very positive to very negative evaluations of the men and their works, it can be diagrammed as follows:

Subjects of Biographies	Fangbrand Cavafy	Rimbaud Byron	La Rochefoucauld Donne Horace
Durrell's Evaluation	Very positive judgment High positive value expressed for man and his work	Positive and negative feelings - generally positive regard for man and his work	Very negative judgment - Little or no value attached to man or his work

Fangbrand and Cavafy, though grossly dissimilar characters, both receive very positive treatment in Durrell's poetic biographies. For the purposes of this study, they are judged primarily to illustrate the first and second hypotheses. Fangbrand supports the third hypothesis. Considered in Chapter One of the present investigation, Fangbrand and Cavafy are subjects, according to Durrell, who have achieved "correspondence" with their environments. Consequently, they are creative, capable of love, and experience a unique sense of self-hood. The chapter devoted to an analysis of the poetic biographies "Fangbrand" and "Cavafy" delineates the relationship between landscape and character which seemingly results in each character's becoming complete and therefore an object of Durrell's praise.

Chapter Two deals with those subjects, Rimbaud and Byron, about whom Durrell seemingly has ambivalent feelings. Though the analysis con-

cludes that the poet is generally sympathetic to each character, it is felt that he is cognizant of their inability to achieve consistent complete harmony with the spirit of place. Rimbaud and Byron, as portrayed by Durrell, support the second and third hypotheses of this study.

The three characters who evoke negative and contemptuous portrayals from Durrell are considered in Chapter Three. Illustrative of the converse of the first hypothesis, La Rochefoucauld, Donne, and Horace confirm the poet's value-laden approach. He reacts to his perception that the characters are knowingly responsible for their lack of harmony with place and their subsequent inability to love and to create.

In considering the poetic biographies, two assumptions have been made which preface the present study. These include:

1. The word "landscape" in this study reflects what is believed to be Durrell's definition of the term as an expression which is synonymous with environment and place. Landscape, in Durrell's framework, unlike the denotative definition, does not have to be seen to be experienced. He states:

". . . this essential sense of landscape values. You do not need a sixth sense for it. It is there if you just close your eyes and breathe softly through your nose; you will have the whispered message, for all the landscapes ask the same question in the same whisper: 'I am watching you - are you watching yourself in me?'"³⁰ Thus, the action of "watching" can be accomplished by all the senses, rather than by sight

³⁰ Ibid., p. 158.

alone. In fact, one must assume that total immediate involvement of all aspects of place and person is essential to Durrell's theory of landscape.

2. In creating the poetic biographies, Durrell was aware of the personal histories of each of his subjects. As a photographer, Durrell portrays his characters at clearly defined periods in their lives. Yet, through implication and subtle cues, he pictures his subjects as they are in the perspective of what they have been. Since the history is implied, it is necessary for the reader to approach the poems with a knowledge of the character's past.

Within the limitations of the hypotheses and the assumptions which frame the present study, this investigation illustrates Durrell's literary philosophy through a consideration of his use of characters as functions of landscape. By arguing in support of the hypotheses, the study includes analysis of the reciprocal relationship between person and place; notes the behaviors that the poet generally associates with characters as they are variously in harmony with their landscapes; and finally, infers a value base from which the poet judges his subjects in an attempt to demonstrate the validity of an observation made by Friedman:

Durrell personifies his powerful, yet largely undefinable feeling for place, with its multifold associations of landscape, atmosphere, tone, religion, emotion, way of life, inspiration, and love . . . as a lyrical evocation of a concept more felt than known and conveyed (if at all) by poetic implication, not circumscribing definition. ³¹

³¹ Friedman, p. 11.

Chapter I

Although the circumstances of Fangbrand and Cavafy as personalities are completely different, they both receive very positive treatment in Durrell's poetic biographies. The poet's portrayal of each subject is so affirmative, in fact, that the two occupy the most extreme place on the positive end of the continuum used to diagram the value Durrell places on each of seven characters. He writes of the Christian missionary Fangbrand and the poet of Alexandria, Cavafy, as men who have realized "correspondences" with places of positive influence and, subsequently, have achieved unique senses of self-hood. Both characters are willful, active, at peace with themselves, and capable of art and love. That one character should personify spiritual regeneration and the other the sensuality of city life may seem contradictory. Durrell, however, justifies his ability to judge positively dissimilar men as functions of opposite landscapes in The Spirit of Place. He writes:

. . . Catholicism, for example, can be such a different religion in different places . . . it is theologically the same, working on the same premises, but in each case it is subtly modified to suit the spirit of place. People have little to do with the matter except inasmuch as they themselves are reflections of their landscape. ³²

Similarly, correspondence can be achieved in different places by different men and be expressed in vastly dissimilar ways. The constant

³² Durrell, Spirit of Place, pp. 160-161.

in the experience is the process of achieving correspondence with a place, but the person and place are changeable. The process of achieving correspondence seems according to Durrell to be a mutual acceptance and openness between person and place. If a man is unable to open himself and to receive the energizing influence of place, correspondence cannot be achieved. If a man is open to his locale, but the place is one of negative influence for him, correspondence cannot be achieved. Achievement of correspondence depends on both man and place and is defined by the energizing interaction between them. Once accomplished, correspondence with spirit of place is expressed uniquely. As Catholicism varies depending upon its location, so the manifestation of harmony with locale depends upon the unique relationship between person and place.

The biography "Fangbrand" illustrates Durrell's theory on the relationship between character and landscape as clearly as any of the poet's works. In addition to emphasizing the significance of place in the poem, Durrell intimates that it includes cues to the ultimate meaning and relationship of life and death. Viewing the work in the context of the hypotheses developed earlier in this study, the biography illustrates the situation in which a character has become will-less and passive in the place of negative influence. Moving to a new environment, he progresses from a state of alienation to one of total correspondence with his landscape.

The reader does not know the exact location of Fangbrand's former home, but the missionary's journey takes him down the Oxus River as he is "Pursued by the lilies." The Oxus, itself, has a shallow course of 1400 miles, eventually emptying into a brackish lake. In many ways,

Durrell suggests a close connection between the quality of Fangbrand's atrophied life and the sluggish nature of the river. One suspects, however, that there may be some degree of hope since the lilies, sign of the Annunciation, offer the consolation of new life.

Fangbrand arrives on the Grecian island of Mykonos as a Christian missionary "inhabited by the old voices of sorrows." He wears his "black hat and sanitary boots," appropriate dress for a proselyting clergyman, but these articles of clothing prohibit contact with the landscape. His black hat shields his head from the warming rays of the sun, and his sanitary boots allow no physical touch to exist between him and the earth. Fangbrand is a thoroughly "civilized" man. Describing the thoroughly "uncivilized" environment which Fangbrand enters, Durrell endows the island with a special, omniscient persona. As Fangbrand approached it, the island "recognized him, / Giving no welcome" to this foreign influence, "the strange man, the solitary man." The island landscape itself has a mysterious quality to it. "The Ocean's peculiar spelling," hints of some supernatural element which "Haunts here" having the refreshing possibility of rejuvenation with the "water washing the dead." Fangbrand is "the unsuspecting" who shows no understanding of his landscape; it merely surrounds him impersonally. As time passes, however, the visual experience of the island landscape affects Fangbrand. His eyes see "this rock and the seal asleep," noticing nature "with the same mineral stare," emphasizing its inorganic quality. In his own head, he attempts to reconcile "The duellers, the twins, / Of argument and confusion." This difficult task is one which he must solve "alone."

As one who searched alone, Fangbrand's "window was Orion." This reference not only suggests the missionary's eyes being a window, but

also bears mythical reference to Orion, who blinded, was told he must travel eastward and expose his eyes to the rising sun in order to regain his sight. Similarly, with squinting eyes, "smaller than commas," Fangbrand "watched without regret the ships / Passing" and continued his solitary dialogue.

The dichotomy in Fangbrand's spirit becomes very serious as he contemplates his relation to his new environment. His cognitive response, a reminder of his old landscape, implores him to "Renounce" the effects of the haunting island. Renunciation of the present world as a preparation for the afterlife is implicit in the Christian dogma the missionary must espouse. But the spirit, newly awakened by the Grecian island, pleads positively "Be." At Fangbrand's age, however, his inner voice questions whether his being a "new" man instead of being only a missionary is a realistic possibility. His reasons cries: "'Too late' 'Too late'." However, it more truly is too late for Fangbrand's past personality to withstand the changes resulting from his interaction with the island landscape. It subtly, unconsciously, begins to affect his psyche. At night, particularly with the ocean's waves upon the stones, an "awareness / Of self" overcomes Fangbrand, but it is like pre-natal growth, "a foetal heart asleep in him." Nonetheless, it represents as awakening of life.

Since Fangbrand is solitary and "exilic" upon this "colony of stones," he can learn "nothing of time," having been removed from man's dominated zones of the earth. He has "continuous memory, continual evocations." When in the "windy night asleep" his unconscious mind prevailed, "His lips brushed the forbidden apples." Although the apples may represent unlawful indulgences to Judaeo-Christian believers, this

island bears significant resemblances to Eden, nature's perfection.

Despite Fangbrand's dialectical questionings and unconscious experiences, "Everything reproached him" on the island, and the landscape continued to say, "'Turn back. Turn back. / Peace lies another way, old man.'" The landscape's plea implies the judgment that Christianity must be rejected because it is sterile and remote on this island. Christianity has become an inhibiting factor in Fangbrand's life which stultifies his range of perception and feeling. A figure alienated from his landscape, he must discover new means of selfhood: "The sick man found silence" and with that silence he awakens to the vita nuova. Fulfilled, "The pathfinder rested now." When the questioning in his own psyche ceases, he finds the comfort of stasis and "silence." From that moment on, Fangbrand is at one with nature and the island landscape. His diet is provided by nature's "snails and waterberries," and he marvels "for the first time / At the luminous island, the light."

Explaining the turmoil Fangbrand resolves, Durrell expresses the duality of purpose and self in the following figure of speech:

Truth's metaphor is the needle,
The magnetic north of purpose
Striving against the true north
Of self.

Fangbrand finally recognizes the gap and pressures between the two states of existence. He chooses, with Durrell's blessing, "the true north / Of self." The choice provides a moment of exhilaration for "An old man holding an asphodel." Fangbrand, though old, demonstrates his vigorous potential as he carries the flower with its long, erect racemes. Friedman views this process of self-discovery positively:

The depersonalized individual, fragmented and passive,
gradually attains artistic consciousness, an enlarged

range of perception, even something akin to the old fashioned sense of identity. The realization that the old way of life, the world of surface appearance, is dying or dead is the beginning of the regenerative process for the artist seeking to go beyond the impression of reality.³³

Landscape has brought a new consciousness for Fangbrand, who in going "beyond the impression of reality" can see "the planes / And concaves of the eye reflecting / A traveling mirror, the earth." The earth with its rich landscape is now the subject of Fangbrand's vision. It becomes a "traveling mirror" which reflects his true personality. Fraser sees the mirror's use by Durrell as a "breakthrough from the mirror-world of reflexive consciousness to the real world of absolute self-identity."³⁴ With this new self-identity, Fangbrand "regarded himself in water," nature's reflector, "Saying 'X marks the spot, / Self, you are still alive!'" It is a recognition of the basic harmony which he shares with his landscape, the Grecian setting symbiotically attuned to mankind. Fangbrand's exclamation of recognition is reminiscent of the question Durrell's landscape asks in The Spirit of Place: ". . . 'I'm watching you - are you watching yourself in me?'"³⁵ Fangbrand obviously watches himself in his landscape. In so doing, he achieves self-hood and spiritual regeneration which cannot be understood by his followers.

After Fangbrand's death, "disciples" come to "search the white island / For a book perhaps, a small / Paper of revelation left behind."

³³ Friedman, p. 185.

³⁴ Fraser, p. 135.

³⁵ Durrell, Spirit of Place, p. 158.

They search for some evidence of Fangbrand's life or for the means of his physical sustenance. "what kept, / Held, fed, fattened him" in an area where "nothing grows." Those who sought after scraps and testimonies of Fangbrand's life were attempting to recreate a quality they fear they never will know for themselves: the interaction of an island landscape upon a solitary figure. In fact, in looking for these tangible evidences, the followers of Fangbrand were not aware that living effectively is most truly supported and nourished by a congenial landscape. In obliterating all "crumbs of doctrine," nature holds the same test for self-discovery for all. It mocks those who are content with less, and Durrell seems to congratulate Fangbrand, who "Died with his art like a vase."

The insular process of both nature and mankind is ongoing and continuous. Life and death are merely parts of the pantheism to which Durrell subscribes. "The ultimate beauty of Fangbrand's life . . . is the pattern of potentiality it offers for all." ³⁶

. . . the luminous island
 Of the self trembles and waits,
 Waits for us all, my friends,
 Where the sea's big brush recolours
 The dying lives, and the unborn smiles.

In this poem, Derek Stanford sees the

slow spelling out of a tale of a man in relation to a landscape. All one sees is the man's figure posed against the background of the island, and the man is felt to represent mankind as the island seems to stand for nature. On this island the problem of living, the meaning of his own personal existence comes home to the man with the added force of silence. His peace finally made with nature, the once difficult

³⁶ Friedman, p. 16.

discipline of living becomes an easy spontaneous joy;
and in due time knowledge is followed by death. ³⁷

The island, so crucial in "Fangbrand," is a remarkably primitive landscape. The City of Alexandria stands in stark contrast to it. Yet, like the island, the city serves as a landscape for one of Durrell's biographies. As Fangbrand is a function of the isolated island, so Cavafy is a function of the city which surrounds him. From Durrell's standpoint, then, it seems that the kind of place in which a character is fulfilled is not of critical importance. Durrell neither describes nor guarantees an ideal landscape which will result in a character's achieving self-hood. Rather, the process of finding a positive landscape, of opening oneself to it, and of finally achieving harmony with it is of primary importance to the poet. The city with its distractions and debaucheries offers the same potential for self-actualization as the isolated, primitive, unpopulated island.

Alexandria and Constantine Cavafy, a poet born in Greece who spent much of his adult life in the city, are frequently mentioned in The Alexandria Quartet. In equating the man and his environment, Durrell often refers to Cavafy with a special reverence as the "poet of the city." Alexandria as place is absolutely essential to both Cavafy's poetry and to Durrell's appreciation of the man and his work. Writing on the importance of the city to Cavafy's poetry, translators of his work have stated:

³⁷ Derek Stanford, "Lawrence Durrell: An Early View of his Poetry," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: Dutton, 1964), p. 44.

It was in this hellenistic Alexandrian world, then, that Cavafy found the "landscape" through which he could express himself with pertinence and urbanity. Out of it he was to build his "myth" of a personal and at the same time perennial human condition, that of the tired, rapacious, over-refined man who is the generic hero of his poems. ³⁸

From the poetic biography, it becomes apparent that Durrell agrees with Cavafy's critics. Further, the poem documents Durrell's sincere affection for his subject and his respect for the environmental relationship from which Cavafy's poetic principles have developed. He reacts to his character's poetry:

I like to see so much the old man's loves
Egregious if you like and often shabby
Protruding from the ass's skin of verse,
For better or for worse,
The bones of poems cultured by a thirst -

The thirst to which Durrell refers was nurtured in Cavafy by "three principal concerns: love, art, and politics in the original Greek sense." ³⁹

As to the concern of love, to Durrell, Cavafy's sexuality generates dynamic, creative expression of the interrelationship of poet and place. However, sensuality rather than sexuality alone can be viewed as a key to understanding the importance of place in the poetic biographies as a whole. Sensuality, in this context, is viewed as the active involvement with place which results in a character's physically experiencing, and subsequently mentally experiencing, a place so intensely that it becomes a positive or negative influence on his creativity, understanding, and

³⁸ Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, Six Poets of Modern Greece (New York: Knopf, 1961), p. 7.

³⁹ W. H. Auden, "Introduction," in The Complete Poems of Cavafy, trans. Rae Dalven (New York: Harcourt, 1961), p. ix.

ability to love. The character's relationship with his environment is dynamic and unique. It represents the individualistic, never static interplay of person and place. Thus, Fangbrand's relationship with his landscape is as sensual as is Cavafy's. This sensuality, in one case related to nature; in the other, linked to sexual relationships with other human beings, ties missionary to poet, character to place. The extent to which sensual experience of place positively affects a character's ability to create, understand, and love also seems to determine the way in which Durrell judges his subjects. Thus, he is very positive about Fangbrand and Cavafy, who although dissimilar, nonetheless, have found and utilized places of positive influence to the extent of their capabilities and sensibilities.

Love, a dominant theme in Cavafy's poetry, may seem, initially, to be an incongruity when his immediate environment and the nature of his sexual life are considered. "Cavafy was a homosexual, and his erotic poems make no attempt to conceal the fact . . . The erotic world he depicts is one of casual pickups and short-lived affairs. Love, there, is rarely more than a physical passion, and when tenderer emotions do exist, they are almost one-sided."⁴⁰ However, in spite of, or perhaps because of his situation, Cavafy "refuses" to pretend that his memories of moments of sensual pleasure are unhappy or spoiled by feelings of guilt.⁴¹ Extending the view which Auden expressed, Durrell, in "Cavafy," lauds his character's guiltless affections and appreciates his openness:

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Dilapidated taverns, dark eyes washed
 Now in the wry and loving brilliance
 Of such barbaric memories
 As held them when the dye of passion ran.
 No cant about the sottishness of man!

Cecily Mackworth exaggerates Durrell's very positive appraisal of Cavafy's honest approach to passion when she assumes that:

Sex looms large in the new Romanticism, and for Mr. Durrell it has immense and mysterious importance. I think we may deduce from his work that he believes sex to be the depot of all human activity and that it is through the study of man's sexual life that one can best understand the hidden truth about him . . . For instance, he believes it is impossible to understand what Man really is without admitting the essential bisexuality of all human beings.⁴²

The "mysterious importance" to which the critic refers can be explained partially by the emphasis Durrell places on environment. If landscape in the particular case of Cavafy is examined, it cannot be assumed that a study of the poet's sexual life alone reveals the "hidden truth" about Durrell's subject. Even though Cavafy's own poetry is quite explicit, at times, about his sexual interests, Durrell regards these attitudes and physical contacts in perspective of place. He writes of Cavafy's life "in stuffy brothels on stained mattresses" in positive, healthy expressions:

. . . the riders
 Of love, their bloody lariats whistling,
 The cries locked in the quickened breath,
 The love-feast of a sort of love-in-death.

The landscape of Alexandria proved to be a very positive environment for Cavafy. Though he was Greek in origin and therefore, a "foreigner"

⁴² Cecily Mackworth, "Lawrence Durrell and the New Romanticism," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: Dutton, 1964), p. 33.

in Egypt, he related fully to his landscape in expressions of love and his art. Commenting on the "Otherworldliness" which Alexandria could have produced in Cavafy, his editors view his stoical Greek nature as perfectly accepting of himself and the Egyptian city:

. . . the sense of alienation, of possessing affections and emotion "that Hellenism sometimes finds strange" is not a cause for despair or shame: to be truly Greek is to accept the foreign influence without illusion or affectation - in fact, to honor fully the blood of Syria and Egypt that has mixed with the blood of Greece. ⁴³

Durrell, who spent a number of years in Alexandria, realized Cavafy's indebtedness to that teeming metropolis which was essential to his hopeful philosophy of life and art. "Cavafy's Hellenistic Alexandria is also, at the same time, a sensuous and a mental landscape." ⁴⁴ Reacting to the creations of that mental landscape, Durrell praises Cavafy's art for never attempting "a masterpiece of size - you must leave life for that." Instead, according to Durrell, his subject's intent in art was "always to preserve the adventive / Minute, never to destroy the truth / Admit the coarse manipulations of the lie." It was Cavafy, particularly in his mature voice of later years, who found:

relief only in his art where he can watch with something approaching a detached irony the spectacle of a life of pleasure, folly, misfortune, vice, and sybaritic elegance which he now can never again enjoy. ⁴⁵

⁴³ Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, C. P. Cavafy: Passions and Ancient Days (New York: Dial, 1971), p. xvii.

⁴⁴ Victor Brombert, "Lawrence Durrell and his French Reputation," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: Dutton, 1964), p. 181.

⁴⁵ Keeley and Sherrard, p. 7.

It is only with this detachment and reflection, according to Durrell, that one's love experiences can "be fixed in art, the immortal / Episode be recorded." Durrell, instead of viewing Cavafy's detachment and reflection as a withdrawal from life, recognizes the poet's strong-willed drives, even at age seventy, and writes of him, "like the rest of us he died still trying."

Cavafy in this poem as well as in The Alexandria Quartet provides an artistic model for Durrell's questing characters and his readers to emulate. He is an individual whom society acknowledges as sexually wounded. Yet, that very fact in combination with his strong affinity to his landscape allows him to create in spheres of art and love. Responding to the "emotional education" about which Durrell feels strongly, Unterecker states:

If tenderness - an "utterly merciless" tenderness rescued from sentimentality by the distancing power of irony - is the primary lesson in the "emotional education" the questing central characters experience, they learn their lesson most frequently from painters and from writers, also wounded and some of them healed - in their efforts to transmit a vision of the elemental processes, those processes that constitute the very design of life.⁴⁶

For Cavafy, the emotional education of tenderness he experienced in life gave him the wisdom of self-understanding. The inspiring effects of the city and of his intimacies with the residents nurtured such an affirmative understanding. "Cavafy", therefore, supports the hypothesis that in Durrell's poetry, a person who is fortunate enough to live in a place of personal positive influence is creative and capable of love.

⁴⁶ Unterecker, p. 41.

Further, Durrell's appreciation for his subject lends credence to the supposition that the poet particularly values those characters who are in harmony with their landscape - regardless of the type of environment. In approaching Cavafy, Durrell uses Alexandria and his subject's relationship with it to underscore the importance of place.

The lesson that one learns from the examples of Fangbrand's and Cavafy's experiences in relating harmoniously with a positive landscape suggests that there can be a personal place which can beckon to each man's heart. In the example of Fangbrand, flight had become essential to find a stimulating environment. This fact underlines this study's consideration that periodic migration may be necessary for the transition of a frustrated individual into a person capable of creation and of love. In the case of Cavafy, he experienced Alexandria physically and mentally, being charmed by the inhabitants of that city. Both men seem thawed by the Mediterranean sun and entered into that "condition of self-awareness and inner serenity treated metaphorically as a landscape responding and corresponding to the needs and proportions of men without dominating them." ⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Friedman, p. 41.

Chapter II

Unlike Fangbrand and Cavafy, Rimbaud and Byron, placed at the midpoint on the value continuum, are similar in significant ways. Each was a poet who died before reaching the age of forty and after wandering the world. In the perspective provided by Durrell's theory on the importance of place, each man's wanderings may be explained as his searching for places of positive influence with which to achieve harmony and correspondence. Rimbaud searched for a landscape in which he could regain his creative powers. Byron wandered to escape the chaos he invariably left behind in cities across Europe and to approach a landscape which would stimulate peaceful self-knowledge. Each man, to varying degrees, was so engrossed in himself that his search often proved futile. Durrell portrays Rimbaud as a man suffering from a painful inner conflict and, in so doing, never allows his character to find the special landscape he so desperately needs. Byron, however, is portrayed as he lies dying in Greece and as characterized by Durrell has finally achieved a measure of self-acceptance and inner tranquility.

Although Durrell's portrayal of each man concludes differently, there is enough similarity in his approach with each to group them together for consideration. In the context of the present study, it is felt that Durrell has similar, ambivalent feelings about Rimbaud and Byron. Although the poet is generally sympathetic to each of these characters, he is constantly cognizant of their failures in achieving consistent, complete harmony with the spirit of place. Viewing Rimbaud

and Byron in the perspective provided by the hypotheses, both characters illustrate Durrell's expectation that every person should attempt to discover a landscape which is fertile for him. Rimbaud, as drawn in the poetic biography, is so locked into himself that he is incapable of relating to place. He is consistently will-less, passive, and fails totally at art and love. In tracing Byron's personal history, Durrell demonstrates the effect landscape has had on the poet. Describing the Greece in which Byron finds himself at the end of his life, Durrell portrays the poet as finally achieving a measure of correspondence to his environment and as achieving some understanding of himself. In writing of each man, Durrell never seems to doubt that their wandering was essential. The key to their failures at achieving correspondence seems to be their inability to open themselves to their landscapes. Durrell, in The Spirit of Place, describes the reciprocal relationship between person and place which must be realized before correspondence can be achieved: "Yes, human beings are expressions of their landscape, but in order to touch the secret springs of a national essence you need a few moments of quiet with yourself."⁴⁸ It is difficult to describe either Rimbaud or Byron as men whose lives were characterized by moments of quiet with themselves.

Rimbaud's life, in particular, seems to have been an almost endless search for inner peace. As noted in the assumptions on which the present study is based, Durrell often makes oblique references to his characters' lives. In the case of Rimbaud, the poet seems particularly concerned

⁴⁸ Durrell, Spirit of Place, p. 157.

about what his subject had been and what, through Durrell's eyes, he has become.

What Rimbaud had been before the period of which Durrell writes provides an amazing history of precocious artistic achievement and subsequent terrifying personal decline. A striking and enigmatic personality, Rimbaud was a model student in a provincial school until the age of fifteen. At that time, his personality changed completely. In rebellion to the life he had known, he began a series of wanderings in Paris, Brussels, and London. ⁴⁹

Writing of his own youth, his period of intense creativity, Rimbaud wrote in "Alchemy of the Word" of his relationship to landscape:

Now for me! The story of one of my follies.
For a long time I boasted of possessing
every landscape and held in derision the
celebrities of modern painting and poetry.

At first it was an experiment. I wrote silences,
I wrote the night. I recorded the inexpressible.
I fixed frenzies in their flight.

. . . .

Poetic quaintness played a large part in my
alchemy of the word.

. . . .

Finally, I came to regard as sacred the disorder
of my mind. I was idle, full of sluggish fever . . .

. . . .

⁴⁹ Enid Starkie, Rimbaud (New York: New Directions, 1961), pp. 17-35.

My temper soured. In kinds of ballads I said
farewell to the world.⁵⁰

Viewing the conclusion to Rimbaud's intense association with landscape, Shapiro has said: "Rimbaud is unique in world literature - a master poet who composed all his work between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, and then abandoned literature in disgust."⁵¹

The reasons for the young poet's abandonment of literature are, of course, open for conjecture. Viewed from a psychological standpoint, it seems apparent that he suffered from schizophrenia, and people suffering from the illness "give the appearance of being extremely introverted, living within themselves, and taking no interest in what goes on around them."⁵² It is such a person Durrell portrays in "'Je Est un Autre'."

The title, in fact, according to Durrell, suggests the splitting of a mind:

It is a magical phrase, for it not only expresses this feeling of dédoublement but its very dislocation of the grammatical form prefigures much that is to come . . . If we are to take this preoccupation as significant . . . we might imagine that it signified a deep-seated split in the psyche . . .⁵³

Rimbaud was "tormented by the contrast between the dead universe and the living soul"⁵⁴ and:

⁵⁰ Arthur Rimbaud, "Alchemy of the Word," in Prose Keys to Modern Poetry, ed. Karl Shapiro (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 187.

⁵¹ Shapiro, p. 186.

⁵² Norman L. Munn, Psychology: The Fundamentals of Human Adjustment (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1961), p. 246.

⁵³ Lawrence Durrell, A Key to Modern British Poetry (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma, 1952), p. 42.

⁵⁴ Fraser, p. 137.

frightened himself with his attempt on the absolute which, he felt, lay behind 'un long, immense et raisonne dérèglement de tous les sens.' (His) work is characterized by a hysterical subjectivity which nothing, after the turn of the century, can match. ⁵⁵

The tormented young poet explored the world as well as his unconscious, and, as Symons notes:

Soon began new wanderings (after a trip to England and Belgium at the age of seventeen with Verlaine), with their invariable return to the starting-point of Charleville (his home): a few days in Paris, a year in England, four months in Stuttgart (where he was visited by Verlaine), Italy, France again, Vienna, Java, Holland, Sweden, Egypt, Cyprus, Abyssinia, and then nothing but Africa, until the final return to France. ⁵⁶

It is the wanderer, the depleted poet, whom Durrell describes in his poetic biography. Rimbaud, completely introverted, has become a passive observer of various landscapes:

He is the man who makes notes,
The observer in the tall black hat,
Face hidden in the brim:
In three European cities
He has watched me watching him.

His face hidden, his behavior elusive, Rimbaud wanders. "The tightness in the throat" to which Durrell refers belies the young poet's struggling to express himself, to create on paper the isolated world which he experienced. Even a reference to the realm of the "inexpressible" in Rimbaud's Illuminations is made by Durrell: "gave the same illumination, spied upon." Tindall calls Illuminations the type of work of which Durrell's Rimbaud was no longer capable:

⁵⁵ Durrell, Key, p. 39.

⁵⁶ Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (New York: Dutton, 1958), p. 35.

that great, strange, and very private book; he made words express vision and, using them as a means of discovery rather than of expression, compelled them to do what they cannot do. "I noted the inexpressible," he said. ⁵⁷

Despite the young poet's artistic impotence, he seems to haunt Durrell in much the same way his tortured spirit pervades the poem. Durrell watches him in three cities, seeks him at a post office, hears him laugh, and senses that he is watching as Durrell writes. Recounting the young poet's continuing influence, Durrell writes:

He watches me now, working late,
Bringing a poem to life, his eyes
Reflect the malady of De Nerval:
O useless in this old house to question
The mirrors, his impenetrable disguise.

The multiple vision of this stranger seems to affect Durrell in his creative act. Rimbaud, as a literary antecedent watches over the poet, but he also reflects "the malady of De Nerval" - another Symbolist who, under the lunar influence, worked in a wakened condition during the night and periodically went mad, eventually committing suicide. ⁵⁸

The use of mirrors is a frequent Durrellean image and is especially effective in this poem:

Mirrors play a crucial symbolic role . . . And it is a dangerous role: for although they multiply vision and drive it inward, they also shut it off from the outside. ⁵⁹

⁵⁷ William York Tindall, Forces in Modern British Literature: 1885-1956 (New York: Vintage, 1956), p. 19.

⁵⁸ Symons, pp. 10, 15.

⁵⁹ George Steiner, "Lawrence Durrell: The Baroque Novel," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: Dutton, 1964), p. 21.

With the "vision" being driven "inward," Rimbaud "in his impenetrable disguise," is "shut . . . off from the outside landscape and finds himself incapacitated in his attempt to create. "Only the creative act, only learning to communicate, offers a possibility of release from the prisons within and without him." 60

Durrell depicts Rimbaud as a character totally isolated from his landscape. To the poet, Rimbaud is the observer. He is passive. He does not create. Durrell is not harsh in his commentary. Rather, the reader senses that the poet's sympathy is with his subject. He demonstrates, through his descriptions of Rimbaud's wandering, that the young man sought some sort of favorable environment. Yet, his lack of harmony within himself seemed to prohibit Rimbaud's ever achieving harmony with place. Describing two universes - the universe outside man and the internal universe, Durrell writes of the:

impossibility of understanding - this dual principle at the root of thinking and being, that prevented the writers of the Semantic Disturbance from achieving the balance and harmony which their descendants are attempting to formulate and express in their work and presumably in their lives, since the work is a reflection of the life. 61

Instead of trying to reconcile the duality of his internal and external worlds, Rimbaud "illustrates the danger of one's over-possession by one's own genius." 62

60 Friedman, p. 6.

61 Durrell, Key, p. 47.

62 Symons, p. 36.

In portraying Rimbaud as he does, Durrell provides a commentary on the effects of inner turmoil on the creative process. Unable to resolve the conflicts within himself, Rimbaud could not become involved with anything outside himself. His isolation reinforces the assumption that, in Durrell's work, landscape and character represent dynamic interrelationships which result in the ability to create. Rimbaud's inability to relate to anything outside himself results in his artistic impotence. Just as Fangbrand and Cavafy become intensely involved with their landscapes and are spiritually affirmed, so the opposite spiritual degeneration results from Rimbaud's isolation.

It does not seem to matter then in which landscape Rimbaud located himself. His illness blocked his ability to absorb the spirit of place and to achieve correspondence with landscape since the process is a mutual one. In the perspective of Durrell's theory on the importance of place, Rimbaud illustrates the responsibility a person must assume if the mutual interchange is to be accomplished. If a person is incapable of attending to anyone or anything but himself, from Durrell's view, he seems destined to be, as Rimbaud, incapable of meaningful creation. Landscape is primary to "Je Est un Autre" because it is inconsequential to Rimbaud. In portraying the tormented young poet as he does, Durrell emphasizes the passivity which ignores the spirit of place - the element so essential to Durrell in his own life and art.

Intense involvement with landscape, as portrayed in Durrell's poetry, not only results in spiritual affirmation. Such involvement can result in self-realization which is free of illusion. "Byron," one of the longest of Durrell's dramatic monologues, illustrates this theory. The poem centers on the personal reveries of George Gordon, Lord Byron, while he is restricted to his deathbed in Missolonghi, Greece.

Perhaps no artist has ever received so much attention as to the intimate details of his life as has Lord Byron. A fact of Byron's personality was his obsession with his own staged presence, a role complete with a romantic disguise. This pattern of duality is even reflected in the fact that Byron's rise to fame in England was equalled only by his downfall and the ostracism he received. When rejected by his own countrymen, Byron wandered as an exile in Switzerland, Italy, and later to Greece. Durrell portrays Lord Byron in Greece, disillusioned with the fate of his mission to restore the birthplace of democracy to its ancient stature. Missolonghi serves as the setting for Durrell's poem. Though Durrell prepares his readers to understand the relationship existing between the landscape and the dying Byron, even the day of his death ultimately reflects the unity of the English exile and the Greek environment. "He died on April 19, 1824 and on the night of his death a great thunderstorm broke and there was a wild flaring of lighting over his body." ⁶³

Writing of Byron in Greece, Durrell begins his poetic biography with an opening stanza which reveals Byron's desolation as he considers his environment and his life. The Greek landscape seems to mirror Byron's feelings about himself as he focuses upon the trees which have been signaling him for a year:

. . . rapping
 At these empty casements for a year,
 . . .
 Repeating to us here
 Omens of the defeating wind,
 Omens of the defeating mind.

⁶³ James Stephens, Edwin Beck, and Royall Snow, eds., The English Romantic Poets (New York: American Book, 1961), p. 237.

The exchange of the natural element "wind" for the human element "mind" in the concluding lines initially links landscape to character in the poem. One recalls that the Latin word for "wind" is spiritus, evoking the connotation of breath to present an even more potent force of nature's "omens" defeating the spirit as well as the mind of Byron. The prophetic signs included in the poem's opening stanza set the mood for the rest of the work. They suggest that Byron's future, as well as that of Greece, is determined. The desolation suggested by the words "empty casements" relates to the impending defeat which pervades the poem and for which the poet and the country wait.

With a "mind at odds" in the second stanza, Byron's mental outlook is characterized by conflict. Surrounded by war and by fever, his reflection matches his landscape's turmoil. He considers where he has been and where he is going:

Before me now lies Byron and behind,
 Belonging to the Gods,
 Another Byron of the feeling
 Shown in this barbered hairless man,
 Splashed by the candle-stems
 In his expensive cloak and wig
 And boots upon the dirty ceiling.

Regarding the "Byron left behind" as belonging to the Gods suggests a parallel relationship with the country in which the dying poet finds himself. Ancient Greece, the setting for cultural advances in literature, philosophy, art, and criticism had become, by 1824, a country characterized by "incompetence, treachery, murder, and mutiny."⁶⁴ Torn by war and infested by fever, the country which had once been equated with civilization struggled for survival in revolt against Turkey. Byron, the poet

64 Ibid.

who once belonged "to the Gods" wrote from his deathbed in the country where the Gods had their origin, but where they were seemingly forgotten in the treachery of war.

The parallels between Byron and Greece hinted at in the third stanza are further substantiated in stanza four:

Hobbled by this shadow,
 My own invention of myself, I go
 In wind, rain, stars, climbing
 This ladder of compromises into Greece
 Which like the Notsself looms before
 My politics, my invention and my war.
 None of it but belongs
 To this farded character
 Whose Grecian credits are his old excuse
 By freedom holding Byron in abuse.

Byron's shadow, the Byron "of the Gods," the "barbered hairless man . . . In his expensive cloak and wig" is he who hobbles the present Byron. Although he was lame, the word "hobble" in this stanza seems to refer to more than Byron's handicap. It is as though the existence of the shadow, the Byron the poet had invented himself, forces the present Byron to proceed irregularly and haltingly. The memory of what he has been seems to overpower Byron to the point that in this reflection, he realizes that he has not known who he has become. Similarly, what Greece has been overshadows what it had become prior to and during Byron's residency. If one defines the word "Notsself" as the Byron of the past, the Byron of the Gods, then the parallel between poet and country becomes stronger. Greece, then, as well as the "past Byron" determined the poet's politics, invention, and war. The "farded character" or painted face to which the poet refers is that of Greece whose history of freedom's advocacy and tradition now binds "Byron in abuse." By initially regarding Greece by the standard of what it had been and believing that it was still potentially the same, Byron found his freedom limited, rather than enhanced. In

considering this stanza, one remembers the "Allegory of the Cave" in which shadows upon a wall have become the reality for those dwelling in that illusory place. And the answer Plato provides is the one which Greece has apparently given to Byron: Know yourself without shadowy disguises.

As he uses reflection as a guide to understanding himself, Byron regards his finding himself in his present situation as:

Strange for one who was happier
 Tuned to women, to seek and sift
 In the heart's simple mesh,
 To know so certainly
 Under the perfume and the politics
 What undertow of odours haunts the flesh:
 Could once resume them all
 In lines that gave me rest,
 And watch the fat fly Death
 Hunting the skeleton down in each,
 Like hairs in plaster growing,
 Promising under the living red the yellow--
 I helped these pretty children by their sex
 Discountenance the horrid fellow.

Byron's obsessive, haunting interest in the hidden decay in the midst of which the living thrive frames the stanza. As one who could resume in poetry the "undertow of odours" which haunts the flesh, he found peace and "rest." His work, he believed, helped those for whom he wrote "discountenance" death. As a man facing impending death in a landscape characterized by odours rather than by perfume; by the yellow of infection rather than by the living red of blood; Byron contrasts who he has been and what his landscape is:

I have been a secretary (I sing)
 A secretary to love . . .

In this bad opera landscape
 Trees, fevers, and quarrels
 Spread like sores: while the gilded
 Abstractions like our pride and honour
 On this brute age close like doors
 Which pushing does not budge.

Byron's expression of disenchantment with Greece and its "bad opera landscape" in which nature and infection rapidly increase reveals his growing awareness of his environment. No longer a victim of the illusion of what Greece had been, the poet acknowledges that the past, with its accomplishments, is finished and that it cannot be brought back into being. Since the romantic concepts of "pride and honor" which brought Byron to Greece have no effect on the general populace of this "brute age," the dying poet must find meaning elsewhere. He must be able to acknowledge his existence and that of Greece in a way which is not totally dependent on what each has been. In so doing, he must reconcile what each has become. Byron finds himself vulnerable, particularly in his present feverish condition. He curses the landscape which strips him of his outward show and humiliates his ego. Then, he begins to examine himself and his landscape for meaning. In so doing, he defines himself:

Outside them, I speak for the great average.
 My disobedience became
 A disguise for a style in a new dress.
 Item: a lock of hair.
 Item: a miniature, myself aged three,
 The innocent and the deformed
 Pinned up in ribbons for posterity.

In a deliberate reference to the immense popularity he and his poetry once enjoyed, Byron assures himself: "I speak for the great average." He remembers his role as a model for anarchy and the cult of hero-worship which has arisen around his image. Even the deformed club-foot of his early childhood has attained meaning for his followers. Although Byron's art and strength as a trend setter pale in comparison to those of the Greeks, parallels, nevertheless, can be established. As Byron reflects on his life, his thoughts remind the reader of a status the country, like the poet, once enjoyed.

Continuing his attempt to establish who he is, Byron catalogues three reactions which previously have typified his behavior in past, similar situations. He first acknowledges his "famous disposition to weep, to renounce." Stephens corroborates this tendency:

But to everything Byron did there was a touch of drama, of the conspicuous, so that when the final crash came and he went into exile he bore across Europe 'the pageant of his bleeding heart'--and all Europe watched. ⁶⁵

The second behavior to which he refers is his riding "through the wide world howling and searching for his mother." The third reference is to his own cynicism:

Picture to yourself a third: a cynic.
This weeping published rock
The biscuits and the glass of soda-water:
Under Sunium's white cliffs
Where I laboured with my knife
To cut a 'Byron' there
I was thinking softly of my daughter.
A cock to Aesculapius no less . . .

The prior search for identity only seemed to result in conflicting images which made Byron wish "to weep, / To renounce." Durrell adroitly describes Byron's tripartite identity, citing the poet's need for women and his oedipal tendencies. In expressing Byron's cynicism, Durrell's tearful poet recalls his strenuous diet of "biscuits and the glass of soda water," an expression of his weight-watching vanity. Byron's remembrance of his daughter presents yet another aspect of his personality:

"Thinking softly," perhaps of the dead Allegra.
The Biblical inscription which the English clergyman,

65
Ibid., p. 234.

who would not bury her, would not put up: 'I shall go to her, but she will not come to me.' 66

Each of these aspects of the Byronic character reveals only past disillusionment, emptiness, and his present need for compassionate understanding. Even the reference to Aesculapius is bitter. As the Greco-Roman god of medicine, he had the power of healing. The usual offering to him was a cock to return thanks or to pay the doctor's bill. Allegra's life may have been the cock paid to Aesculapius in return for her father's being able to create yet another Byronic pose "under Sunium's white cliffs."

His attitude toward Greece, the land of "unbarbered priests / And garlic-eating captains" and her quest for liberty is found in stanzas twelve and thirteen. The rocky landscape from which "unbarbered gangs of freedom dribble" provokes Byronic reactions which question the cause and value of "liberty, the Whore" and its champions. Byron sees Greece and "these legendary islands" as "A landscape hurled into the air / And fallen upon itself." The legendary landscape and the legendary Byron, when the two are united, compete with each other for dominance. Each loses its contest - Byron is left dying with his fever, Greece left in chaos by war. Like the description of the landscape, Byron has also been "hurled into the air" figuratively and has fallen upon his back exposing his true character.

The sense of oncoming death and shortening time builds in the last three stanzas in which the poet must face his past and "conscience." He desires death as "an end of service / To the flesh and its competitions

of endurance." The "trees" continue to rap their messages "at the empty casements." The final stanza reveals the resolution of the conflict which has raged in Byron:

You, the speaking and the feeling who come after:
 I sent you something once - it must be
 Somewhere in Juan - it has not reached you yet.
 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.

Directly addressing those who will come after him, asking them to "watch for this remote / But very self of Byron and of me," the dying poet acknowledges the dichotomy between who he has been and who he is. He does so with an implied sense of reconciliation, however, as he recognizes that what he has given belongs to both the past and present Byron. The strength in whom he has become, the Byron stripped of illusion and disguise, allows him to place his life in perspective. As the man stranded alone on an island sends his pleas for help to sea in a bottle, never knowing whether they will be found or by whom; so, in death, Byron realized that his poetic message was in as precarious a position and that he was as alone as the island dweller. In considering Byron's final message to his readers, one may surmise that it parallels Durrell's own statement:

If art has any message it must be this:
 to remind us that we are dying without
 having properly lived. ⁶⁷

Through the tragic gloom surrounding the dying poet at Missolonghi, Greece, Durrell utilizes the theme of an artist discovering his true

⁶⁷ Durrell, Key, p. 5.

self as a result of interaction with an environment. The landscape of Greece penetrated Byron's psyche, and one speculates about the influence it would have made on Byron's art had he lived. As one critic has observed about Byron:

Most people are agreed that Byron failed to become the great poet that he potentially was. I do not see how else we can account for this failure than by relating it to the deeper and more intimate failure to discover his own true identity. It takes courage, after all, to abandon one's neatly carved persona and surrender to the contradictory richness of life itself. ⁶⁸

Durrell can certainly identify with Byron's condition of a self-exiled Englishman. He has written:

I think that the real 'foreigner' in an Anglo-Saxon society is the artist, whether domestic or not. As an artist, one is a negré blanc. ⁶⁹

However, it was Byron's pretentious posturing and his disregarding his true nature which Durrell scorns and sees as his failure to become a great artist. Fraser sees this relationship as:

You take your basic character wherever you go with you, but a change of setting and circumstances can alter your fate. Durrell, I think, believes in fate, but in a fate loosely predetermined; a new setting can allow an apparently quite new aspect of character to flower.

Durrell, to put this another way, is concerned in his fiction not with a growing change in character, in response to changing challenges, but with a process of self-discovery, a stripping away of layer after layer of the self of outward social habit, till a hard core is revealed, which was always there, and in a sense always half known . . . ⁷⁰

⁶⁸ John Wain, "The Search for Identity," in Byron: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Paul West (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 160.

⁶⁹ "Lawrence Durrell Answers a Few Questions," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. Harry T. Moore (New York: Dutton, 1964), p. 156.

⁷⁰ Fraser, p. 23.

The mystery of self-identity was what the Greek wind whispered to Byron. Whether or not he could have achieved self-understanding in another landscape is a moot question. What seems obvious is that in however subtle manner, Byron, as drawn by Durrell, saw himself in Greece and its history. Through his life there, he recognized the noble and ignoble aspects of his own and the country's heritage and destiny. Durrell, who had a very strong belief in the potential of the Grecian landscape, has written in Prospero's Cell words which could as well have been uttered by his Byron:

Other countries may offer you discoveries in manners
or lore or landscape; Greece offers you something
harder - the discovery of yourself. ⁷¹

⁷¹ Lawrence Durrell, Prospero's Cell (London: Faber and Faber, 1945), p. 11.

Chapter III

This study has been concerned with characters about whom Durrell has generally positive feelings. Fangbrand and Cavafy, through their complete correspondence with their landscapes, seem to represent the ideal relationship between person and place. Since they corroborate Durrell's theory on the importance of place and are capable of art and love, the poet reveals immense respect for each man. Rimbaud and Byron represent what might be considered another aspect of Durrell's view of the human condition and one about which the poet is not too harsh in his judgment. Each man, though an exile, continues to wander from place to place in search of that special environment in which he will be able to equal, uniquely, Fangbrand's and Cavafy's achievements. The differences in the first set of characters and the second are not rooted in the nature of the landscapes in which they are located. Rather, the primary difference between them and the one which determined Durrell's ambivalent feelings toward Rimbaud and Byron rests on their inability to absorb and to respond to their landscapes. However, their limitations elicit sympathy rather than contempt from Durrell because these personal restrictions really cannot be controlled by either man. Each poet, in fact, suffers from a division of personality. Rimbaud's schizophrenia renders him a pathetic, impotent figure while Byron is crippled by the knowledge of who he has been. Although the conclusion to "Byron" is more consolatory than is the ending of "'Je Est un Autre'," one never knows whether Byron, had he lived, would have been capable of art and

love as a result of his relationship with Greece. Thus, Durrell uses his poetic biographies as demonstrations of respect for Fangbrand and Cavafy. Using the same literary form, he expresses sympathy with Rimbaud and Byron, who tried to achieve harmony with landscape, but who never achieved the complete correspondence of Fangbrand or Cavafy. In writing of Rimbaud and Byron, Durrell almost seems to endow each with a tragic flaw which at times means outstanding success, but one which ultimately presents barriers which neither poet can translate into the ability to create and to love consistently. Rimbaud's and Byron's failures appear to be somehow beyond their control in spite of their efforts to find places of positive influence.

The issues of control and openness are the points which distinguish those characters about whom Durrell expresses positive feelings and those who provoke contemptuous portrayals from the poet. La Rochefoucauld, Donne, and Horace each receive negative treatments from Durrell in the poetic biographies. Consequently, in the present study, they have been grouped at the most negative point on the continuum used to diagram the poet's evaluation of his subjects. Durrell views each of the three characters as having removed himself from his landscape and as having made no attempt to establish a relationship with his locale. Further, the three characters, unlike Rimbaud and Byron, do not seek new places of positive influence. In The Spirit of Place, Durrell explains the belief which, in part, justifies his negative evaluation of those people whom he perceives as blocking environments which offer potential correspondence. He writes:

Of course there are places where you feel that the inhabitants are not really attending to and interpreting their landscape; whole peoples or

nations sometimes get mixed up and start living at right angles to the land, so to speak, which gives the traveller a weird sense of alienation. I think some of the troubles which American artists talk about are not due to 'industrialization' or 'technocracy' but something rather simpler - people not attending to what the land is saying, not conforming to the hidden magnetic fields which the landscape is trying to communicate to the personality. ⁷²

The insight provided by this passage suggests a condition which Durrell closely associates with La Rochefoucauld, Donne, and Horace - that of "not attending to what the land is saying." He views this isolation from landscape as directly affecting the personality and suggests that it also limits artistic creation. Durrell seems to condemn the three writers, yet communicates that La Rochefoucauld, Donne, and Horace, like Rimbaud and Byron, felt personal chaos in their lives as a result of their walled-in existences. However, Durrell's level of tolerance and sympathy for the three writers does not equal his feelings for Rimbaud and Byron. It appears that this relative intolerance grows from the wall the poet perceives each character has created as protection and the failure of each character to seek an alternate landscape. The self-imposed wall seems to limit the character in exploring and in expressing the affective realm in his life and art. The characters realize their failures, but do nothing about them.

In writing of La Rochefoucauld, Donne, and Horace in his poetic biographies, Durrell uses the word "wall" to illustrate the enclosed environment in which each exists. He takes a scornful look at the three artists whose cerebral domination does not allow any intercourse

⁷² Durrell, Spirit of Place, p. 161.

with their landscapes. Although each writer, as portrayed by Durrell, lives in a different environment, each shares with the others the common bond of excluding, completely, relationships with certain places. Each character subsequently surrounds himself with a wall of his own creation and seems to become a prisoner in the enclosure.

One such subject of a poetic biography, Francois VI, Duc de la Rochefoucauld, was a seventeenth-century French aristocrat (1613-1680) whose moral maxims Reflections ou Sentences et Maximes Morales (1665) are marked by their lucidity and brilliance. Most critics note that the Maxims' pessimistic disillusionment reflects Rochefoucauld's character. Durrell in the dramatic monologue "La Rochefoucauld" explains what he considers to be his subject's "great Lack." The poem's epigraph "Nous arrivons tout nouveaux aux divers [^]âges de la vie" indicates renewal at each changing stage of life. While this aphorism seems to be initially true in La Rochefoucauld's early life, it becomes an ironic statement as he enters maturity and as he is portrayed by Durrell.

As a young man, La Rochefoucauld tried to find the ideal of romantic love after he had read Honore d'Urfe's pastoral novel Astree.⁷³ His great archetypal ideal was the queen, Anne of Austria, whom he enthusiastically supported. He adored her and looked to all women to see in what ways they were an imitation of this ideal. Despite his early marriage by his socially conscious family, in Durrell's portrayal he says of his knowledge of love: "Most of it I learned from serving-girls"

⁷³ Morris Bishop, The Life and Adventures of La Rochefoucauld (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1951), pp. 10-12.

who had "eyes, mindless as birds". Nonetheless, he continued to experiment by "taking / The pure for subject or the unaware" whom he knew would be flattered by a liaison with a young favorite of the Court. In attempting to discover the true nature of love, he found that "Kisses can be probes. Mine always were." As the first stanza concludes, the young La Rochefoucauld has evolved from the searcher of the romantic ideal to the cynical analyst of the motives of men and women.

Although the reasons for La Rochefoucauld's transition are not explained in the biography, Durrell uses subsequent stanzas to show his subject's following his highly cerebral tendencies and depending upon the lawyer's thoroughness of technique. La Rochefoucauld, according to Durrell, "sorted the betraying / Motive, point by point designed / The first detective story of the heart." His efforts were rewarded only by his beginning to feel that the world he experienced was as illusory as his youthful search for a romantic ideal. As a result, he concluded that reality was only obtainable through cynicism and a cold, appraising attitude toward life. Assuming such a posture, La Rochefoucauld enjoyed his role as director in the staged drama: "I primed them like an actor in a part."

From Durrell's perspective, life at court with its hypocrisy and numerous intrigues was a negative environment for the brilliant, sensitive La Rochefoucauld. The poetic biography suggests that La Rochefoucauld became increasingly more distrustful of the romantic inclinations of his heart and more dependent upon his calculating mind. The more he developed his reason, eventually to the exclusion of feeling, the more he recognized that he hungered "To confess me, to reveal the famished note." Through La Rochefoucauld, Durrell extends the metaphor. The mature character

speaks of an appetite, rarely satisfied: ". . . in reason I mastered appetite. / And taught myself at last the tragic sense." In Durrell's estimation, the tragic sense which is manifested in the Maxims is a completely unnecessary condition. Fraser explains Durrell's judgment:

Life can be very humiliatiating, it tends to put one in one's place, but only the mortally sick, the broken, or incurable egoists (like Rochefoucauld in Durrell's poem) reject it. Love, like art, like death, like power-games, is a means by which . . .⁷⁴ the Life-Force (Shaw's phrase) works itself out.

La Rochefoucauld, however, retreated from life's humiliating potential saying, "I could not get beyond the wall." The "wall" blocked the Life-Force from touching La Rochefoucauld and prohibited his reaching out beyond himself. His self-centered enclosure shelters him from contact with life-supporting love. As noted by Fraser, "The wall between Rochefoucauld and love and the sense of human need, darkness and loneliness that goes with love, means that the Maxims are mainly important for what they leave out."⁷⁵ In the poetic biography, even La Rochefoucauld observes that his art forges completeness: "Yet at the end the portrait always seemed / Somehow faked, or somehow still in need / Of gender, form and present tense." With a great sense of regret about the course of his empty life, Durrell's subject states emphatically: "No. The bait of feeling was left untasted." The muted cry of feeling in the Maxims went unheeded, and "the desires / To give, to trust, to be my subjects' equal, / All wasted, wasted." The court seems to have had such a profound effect on La Rochefoucauld's being that he was unable

⁷⁴ Fraser, p. 147.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 57.

to reach out to anyone. He acknowledges: "Though love is not the word I want/ Yet it will have to do. There is no other." Ironically, the brilliant, aphoristic author of the Maxims could not find a feeling word to describe his need and used "love" merely as a substitute for his "great Lack" of involvement with the affective domain within and around, yet, somehow, beyond him.

Never discovering himself and his need to escape from this crippling life of court, La Rochefoucauld passively accepted his role and became "the symbol of disillusioned cynicism, exhaling itself in cruel, bitter phrases revealing the worst of man." ⁷⁶ As knowledgeable about the affairs of the world as the Maxims would suggest Rochefoucauld was, his despair reflects an ignorance of self-understanding: "So the great Lack grew and grew. / Of the Real Darkness not one grain I lifted." In spite of the fact that La Rochefoucauld thinks "the whole story is here like the part / Of some great man's body, / Veins, organs, nerves," he feels that the whole of his life is "unhappily illustrating neither death nor art."

Generalizing on the significance that Durrell attaches to La Rochefoucauld's despair, Fraser comments, "This kind of emotional sterility or occlusion of the soul, Durrell . . . seems to see as particularly the illness of the failed artist." ⁷⁷ Durrell, in creating this dramatic portrait of the Seventeenth-century French aristocrat, demonstrates his hostility toward a figure who built his life on "the element

⁷⁶ Bishop, p. 272.

⁷⁷ Fraser, p. 71.

of falsity, the playing of a part, which both hides and reveals a wound, a central weakness." ⁷⁸ Cavafy, also "wounded," used weakness to advantage as he became completely involved, cognitively and affectively, in his landscape. Durrell implies, through his theory on the importance of place and its relationship to artistic creation that had La Rochefoucauld removed himself from his negative environment and allowed himself to interact with a landscape of positive influence, he would not have been a "failed artist." Unlike Rimbaud, La Rochefoucauld chose to remain in a grotesque world of hypocrisy, discontent, and cynicism. He used his "wall" to great advantage in justifying his failure and realized, too late, that he could have destroyed the barrier himself. His failure at art and love, therefore, could have been avoided, and Durrell despises the wasted potential.

Another character at whom Durrell takes a scornful look is John Donne. Also a Seventeenth-Century writer, Donne resembles La Rochefoucauld. Both artists demonstrated strong cerebral inclinations which inhibited each from interacting with his landscape. In the case of the English metaphysical poet, Durrell, in his Key, states that Donne's problem was that "he shut out all thought of the landscape outside", ⁷⁹ and retreated to immerse himself in his own emotional turmoil. He never achieved correspondence with his landscape, and Durrell, offering his explanation for Donne's failure, has written:

As a young man he wrote poems about physical love and
as an old man poems about divine love. In a sense

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

⁷⁹ Durrell, Key, p. 175.

they are the same poems. For Donne . . . one feels that the brick wall surrounding his personality was too much for him to scale; he shut out all thought of the landscape outside; this is what gives his work the feeling of exhaustion and atrophy when we compare it with the ample, generous work of a 'universal' man. Neither Donne nor Hopkins ever emerged from their intellectual seclusion into that reconciliation and relaxation that we find in the later poetry of the greatest poet. From first to last they were locked in their personalities by a wilful choice of their own. They remain, with all their perfections, miniaturists; and when one considers their work as a totality reflecting their personalities one is tempted to ascribe to them something like a spiritual tone-deafness.⁸⁰

In writing a poetic biography entitled simply "John Donne," Durrell captures the quality of spiritual tone-deafness which he perceives in the Englishman by implying an enclosure with Donne, at its center, unable to communicate with his landscape. The poem, though seemingly concise, "has the suggestion, as Durrell's simplest lyrics often have, of profound blurred metaphysical implications."⁸¹ Tortured by his agonizing choice between his loves, Donne exemplifies a distinction made earlier in this study concerning Durrellean definitions of sexuality and sensuality. Though Donne seems to have been aware of his sexual impulses at one time, the biography portrays him as having failed to reconcile his fluctuating feelings in his quest for physical as well as divine love. He suppressed his physical impulses in favor of his spiritual needs. In so doing, he limited irreparably his ability to relate to anything outside himself in his religious framework. Not only did he repress sexual desire, he never allowed himself to experience physically and

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Fraser, p. 47.

subsequently mentally his landscape. Thus, according to Durrell's criteria, Donne never fully realized his potential for creation and for love.

From the poetic biography, one assumes that Donne is not absolutely honest with his first love, sexuality, and conceals it in the safer refuge of the Church. Durrell sees the "viands," suggestive of the livelihood provided by the Church, as "dark" and perhaps like a viaduct or tunnel with an entrance, but with no exit. Donne's "tortured verse" is only an impersonation, a disguise for what he fears most in love: his deep passion. Durrell seems to be commenting that Donne "must earn his thorny crown" like that worn by Christ and receive "his poisoned kiss" as bestowed by the betraying Judas, giving him the stature of a Christian martyr. In the context of Durrell's Pantheism and in light of his denial of religious commitment to Christianity, one may conclude that he views the result of Donne's assumed "martyrdom" as negative and meaningless. His view, in fact, is reflected by the "dark blood in the cup / Which one day drank his being up." Durrell seems to ask: Donne allowed himself to be totally absorbed for what reason and to what end?

In the poem, the blood image is a key to understanding Durrell's negativism. The symbol is developed on two levels. One deals with the blessed sacrament as the "dark blood in the cup," an obvious reference to the wine representing Christ's blood, which offers salvation to Christians. At the second level, symbolizing sensuality, the blood connotes the fiery passion of the "wine-dark verse." It is the former idea of obsession with the saving quality of Christ's blood without regard for the physical passion associated with human life "which one day drank his being up." Donne chose to compromise his humanity by

sublimating his feelings of physical longing with behaviour more compatible with what he perceived to be the ideal Christian life. In his Key, Durrell comments on the self-denial which he perceives to be generally characteristic of English poets:

The truth is perhaps that the English poet tends to suffer from a deficit of sexual and emotional experience. His life is not raw enough. He is sealed up among the prohibitions and anxieties of a puritan culture and this makes it difficult for him to react to real experience.⁸²

Durrell's uneasiness about Donne seems to be directly related to his subject's completely yielding to his religious impulse and neglecting the quality of physical love which might have provided him the "real experience" of interaction with his environment. In George Steiner's view:

Durrell must explore the ambiguities and covertness of sensual lust precisely because he believes that it is only in the fiery or desperate contact of the flesh that we can gain access to the truth of life . . .⁸³

In the biography Durrell implies, and in his Key he explicitly states, the opinion that had Donne not been a victim of a mental impasse, he might have been able to achieve greater harmony with his environment. In so doing, he might have been able to lessen his inner turmoil to the point that he found the resolution he so miserably needed, "to reach detachment, clarification, serenity, a benign distancing. This state, for which perhaps there is no one adequate word, is the proper state of the artist."⁸⁴

⁸² Durrell, Key, p. 101.

⁸³ Steiner, p. 20.

⁸⁴ Fraser, p. 13.

A consideration of "the proper state of the artist" also dominates Durrell's portrayal of Horace. The poet of the Augustan Age of Rome is the subject of a ten stanza poem entitled "On First Looking Into Loeb's Horace." In this poem, Durrell makes "a commenting, critical, intrusively authorial, once removed, half imitation of the style, the mode, the life spirit . . ." of the Roman solitary.⁸⁵ The point-of-view of the poem undergoes several ingenious shifts as Durrell examines not only the life and philosophy of Horace himself, but also that of the unnamed person whose remarks are interspersed in the margins of the Loeb Horace which the poet is perusing.

Durrell censures Horace for his insensitive isolation which did not permit him to develop his potential fully. The Roman poet retreated to his Sabine Farm overlooking Rome and in that negative environment "Exhausted death in art." Durrell harshly states that his retreat was a "forgery / Of completeness, an orchard with a view of Rome." Durrell, himself, was consciously aware that action in the time of strife is necessary and that inaction may mean certain death. He narrowly escaped from Corfu during World War II and had to seek refuge in Egypt. Derek Stanford viewing this situation as paralleled in the poem writes: "How little the poet's idyllic sequestration from the world of power politics, money, and mass death prevented him from dwelling on painful truths is shown in his exposure of Horace's fake position ('this lover of vines and slave to quietness')." ⁸⁶ In contrast to Durrell, Horace attempted to avoid the painful truths and instead of choosing a more fertile

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

⁸⁶ Stanford, p. 46.

landscape for himself remained in the Sabine Hills. He had an opportunity to join the court of Octavius at Rome and become the confidential secretary and literary companion of the emperor, but he chose rather to stay in the country apart from the decadence and political intrigue of the city which he thought would interfere with his moral and social principles. ⁸⁷ Instead, he dedicated his time to arranging his life in orderly patterns while brooding on death.

In portraying the Roman poet, Durrell chooses images which suggest the withering and decay of the landscape surrounding Horace. The farm, as overseen by Horace, is noted for its rigidly thrifty aspect. The "wine-bearing grape, pruning and drainage / Laid out by laws, almost like the austere / Shell of his verses." In this particular place Horace has not been productive in his art. Durrell goes on inquiring more critically:

Surely the hard blue winterset
Must have conveyed a message to him -
The premonitions that the garden heard
Shrunk in its shirt of hair beneath the
Stars, how rude and feeble a tenant was
The self, An Empire, the body with its members dying -
An unwhistling now the vanished Roman bird?

If Horace had been responding to the landscape, he would apparently have heard the "message" about his own sterility as well as the decay of the "Empire." The garden heard the prediction, but unwilling to sacrifice his lofty principles for any political or social purposes, Horace is prevented from observing his own parts or "members dying," and the

⁸⁷ Alfred Noyes, Horace: A Portrait (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1947), pp. 36-40.

landscape now no longer even commends the joyous whistling of the bird, symbol of the legions providing the force of the "Pax Romana."

Instead of turning to his landscape, Horace, in his fastidious manner counted the apples as they fell and "waiting so patiently in the library for / Autumn and the drying of apples; / The betraying hour-glass and its deathward drift." As Durrell portrays him, Horace is obsessed with death and time. His solitary speculations are filled with natural symbols of death in the present: the onset of winter, the dropping of apples, and his close examination of the works of his deceased predecessors while seated "severe on an uncomfortable chair." This theme of death-in-the-present is one which Durrell considers in his lectures on modern criticism:

I have already described time as the measure of our death-consciousness, and suggested that if you change our ideas about time you cannot but help change our ideas of death also. It is one of the paradoxes of the new space-time that, if time is really spread out in this way, we can just as easily situate death in the present as in the future. It is this multiple state birth-life-death in one which the poet is trying to capture. ⁸⁸

There may be a suggestion in relation to the seasons that Horace found it "Easy to be patient in the summer" since that season presents no pressure to observe one's dilemma, "But winter / With its bareness pared his words to points / Like stars, leaving them pure but very few." Though he may have been passively observing the change in seasons, he was unwilling to change either his place or his attitudes.

⁸⁸ Durrell, Key, p. 36.

Instead, gaining Durrell's contempt, he gave "The pose of sufficiency" while Durrell notes him to be "a suffering limb on the great Latin tree" who was "Disguising a sense of failure in a hatred for the young." It is this "escape from self-knowledge" which Durrell cannot tolerate in Horace, and the code ("the tragic / Imperatives") of the Roman world: "Seek, suffer, endure" is one which Horace neglects. In not seeking for some other landscape more suitable to his artistic temperament and in not suffering in making that transition, Horace has to endure his own ennui and solitude.

Durrell in this poem, as in others, uses the image of the wall to suggest withdrawal and isolation, qualities he does not admire. . Fraser says:

It is a central paradox about Durrell that this Kretschmerian pyknic, short, jolly, plump, muscular, "breaking the ring" in folk dances, should, in poetical composition, convey often the sense of what he calls "the wall," the solitary dancer in a self-walled enclosure. ⁸⁹

It seems that because "Indifference and Success had crowned them all," Durrell saw Horace as a character who had been productive in the Roman landscape earlier in his life (particularly with Satires I and Satires II), but his success had prompted an indifference to the arena where he had thrived. Durrell expresses his feeling that in order to be creative and productive, one must make a questing migration to revive the integrity of the self, rather than surrender to the ease

⁸⁹ Fraser, p. 60.

of a languorous landscape. Horace did not and instead stifled his talents on his Sabine Farm. Fraser says, "The 'slow death' . . . is the proper punishment of the artist who lives in order to reflect about life, who has wholly 'expurgated' (Durrell's pet word) the roughage of life out of art." ⁹⁰

Grouping Horace with Donne and La Rochefoucauld makes it apparent that all three, from Durrell's perspective, "expurgated the roughage of life out of art." By overestimating their intellectual powers and ignoring their sensuality, each ultimately failed as an artist. In the context of Durrell's theory on the importance of place, the self-centered, walled-in pose which each writer assumed prohibited his achieving correspondence with his environment and subsequently being capable of creation and of love. In a passage from The Spirit of Place, Durrell elaborates on his theory and alludes to the effect that cognitive emphases have on artists:

These ideas, which may seem a bit far-fetched to the modern reader, would not have troubled the men and women of the ancient world, for their notion of culture was one of psychic education, the education of the sensibility; ours is built upon a notion of mentation, the cramming of the skull with facts and pragmatic data which positively stifle the growth of the soul. ⁹¹

These and other similar statements explain why Durrell is so negative in his evaluation of La Rochefoucauld, Donne, and Horace. They exemplify the mentation which stifles the soul and which Durrell ahhors.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

⁹¹ Durrell, Spirit of Place, p. 160.

Conclusion

In an essay on the English romantics, Geoffrey H. Hartman observes:

Wed the human mind to nature and you will find paradise . . . The spirit is sufficed, the need for fictions dispelled, the burden of mystery lifted. This is the Wordsworthian Enlightenment. He (Wordsworth) never abandons the idea that England can provide a homecoming for the poetical spirit: his poems remain an encounter with English spirit of place. ⁹²

Although Lawrence Durrell's encounters with the English spirit of place never provided a homecoming for his poetical spirit, he nevertheless discovered the paradise which can occur when the human mind is wed to nature. He refers to this union as the achievement of "correspondence" with the spirit of place and predicates his philosophy on the creative process with the existence of a reciprocal relationship between artist and place. From Durrell's perspective, "correspondence" with landscape seems to be the energizing force which prompts creative achievement. His prose, the novels and the travel books, are suffused with place. Not only Durrell, but many critics have documented his use of landscape in these literary forms. Little attention, however, has been paid to Durrell's use of landscape in his poetry. The present study has concentrated on Durrell's poetic autobiography and on seven of his poetic biographies and has analyzed the characters as functions of their landscapes.

⁹² Hartman, p. 329.

Cities, Plains and People, the poetic autobiography, establishes the basis for describing the other subjects of Durrell's poetry in terms of their relationships with various places. Through the autobiography, Durrell uses his own experience to illustrate his feeling about the importance of establishing correspondence with places of positive influence. He relates his own life and the ability to create in terms of the spiritual quality and stimulation he has experienced through his relationship with various landscapes. He catalogues his responses to these places from the tranquil feeling he experienced in the Himalayas to his unhappy relationship with the English landscape. The places with which he has established correspondence, primarily located in the Mediterranean, are remembered as places in which "worlds are confirmed in him" and in which he was able to function as an artist at the peak of his creative powers. He generalizes this energizing effect he has experienced as a result of his relationship with place to his characters and fills his poetry with landscape.

After analyzing "Fangbrand," "Cavafy," "'Je Est un Autre'," "Byron," "La Rochefoucauld," "Donne," and "Horace," the present investigation has resulted in four conclusions about the special relationship of character and landscape in selected poems by Lawrence Durrell. The first conclusion, the one on which the study primarily rests, is that such a relationship does indeed exist in the poetry. The poet, in fact, emphasizes his perception of the relationship between person and place to the extent that its quality forms a framework from which he judges his subjects. Durrell appears to value very highly those characters, like Fangbrand and Cavafy, whom he feels have achieved correspondence with their environments. Similarly, he expresses contempt for those

characters who shut out their landscapes and never achieve harmony with them. Consequently, in writing of La Rochefoucauld, Donne, and Horace, Durrell demonstrates that he holds each in very low esteem. It is the poet's treatment of Rimbaud and Byron which adds another element to this interpretation of Durrell's theory of place. It is possible for a man to seek a positive environment, but never to achieve it because of a personal quality or condition over which he has no control. Such was the case with Rimbaud and Byron, and in portraying them, Durrell is generally sympathetic to their agencies.

The value-laden framework from which Durrell approaches his subjects directly relates to his perception of the relationship between a character and his sense of place. From a consideration of these values, it is possible to infer at least three stages in the process of human self-actualization as it is perceived by Durrell as being related to the energizing influence of the spirit of place. The first, of course, is the state of complete correspondence and harmony with environment which results in a person's being capable of art and love. The second is the state characterized by endless search and pain. Related to this phase is the inability to control certain personality traits which prohibit achievement of harmony with place. In this situation, a person cannot achieve peace with himself and, subsequently, cannot relate to his landscape. The third stage of self-realization is really not a stage at all. In fact, the antithesis of self-actualization, it is characterized by complete isolation and non-involvement with the spirit of place and by passivity, lack of will, and failure at art and love. In Durrell's scheme, achievement of the ultimate relationship with place is to be admired and respected. Failing to achieve correspondence with

place because of a personal conflict evokes pity if one continues to search while isolating oneself from the special locale and remaining in one place merits Durrell's contempt. Commenting on this value structure from which Durrell's poetry emanates, Friedman writes:

"Durrell . . . has sought values outside the social structure, in the more externalized world he calls 'landscape' - a collective noun encompassing ambience, atmosphere, essence, a way of life, all the innumerable forces impinging on the writer in a given place, as well as all his imaginatively felt and reconstructed reactions to them."⁹³

The second conclusion to the present study corroborates Friedman's opinion by acknowledging that in Durrell's poetry it is possible for men to interact completely with their landscapes. When one of the poet's characters achieves "correspondence" with a place of positive influence, he is portrayed as willful, active, at peace with himself, and capable of art and of love. Fangbrand and Cavafy personify such achievement and, in so doing, emphasize the process of achieving harmony with landscape rather than illustrating a common quality associated with places of positive influence. In the poet's theory of place, many different locales can prove to be places of positive influence. The key to achieving correspondence does not rest in the environment, but in the man as he approaches his landscape. The primitive island and the crowded city can each be places of positive influence depending on the men who interact with them.

⁹³ Friedman, p. xiv.

As people, rather than places, are responsible for "correspondence," so men are often incapable of achieving harmony with their landscapes, regardless of the type of environment in which they live. As noted earlier, this lack of interaction with place can either be beyond a man's control or he may be responsible for it. In either case, persons who do not achieve correspondence with place or who clash with places of negative influence become will-less, passive, and fail totally at art and love. Rimbaud, Byron, La Rochefoucauld, Donne, and Horace are, for various reasons, portrayed as such men in Durrell's poetry. Their existence in the poet's work relates to the first and second conclusions, yet illustrate a third. As a consequence of his values and in line with his belief that men can achieve correspondence with their environments, Durrell portrays his subjects as being ultimately responsible for discovering landscapes which are fertile for them. Subsequently, the poet makes his subjects primarily responsible for attaining senses of self-hood which can be expressed metaphorically as spiritual regeneration.

Durrell explains his view:

The great thing is to try and travel with the eyes of the spirit wide open, and not too much factual information. To tune in, with reverence, idly - but with real inward attention. It is to be had for the feeling, that mysterious sense of rapport, of identity with the ground. You can extract the essence of a place once you know how. If you just get as still as a needle you'll be there. ⁹⁴

Thus, the poet is contemptuous of La Rochefoucauld, Donne, and Horace who dwell on factual information and negate feeling as they remain in

⁹⁴ Durrell, Spirit of Place, p. 162.

only one place and isolate themselves from that landscape. In writing of each man, the poet either omits descriptions of the landscape or portrays it as dying and barren. Since Durrell places such a priority on landscape, the omission becomes important as an illustration of the self-imposed isolation of the characters who create their own walls beyond which they cannot relate.

The final conclusion relates to the first three and may be considered an extension of them. In his poetry, Durrell presents the belief that growth can be exhausted in a particular place. If this does happen, the poet views flight as essential for the artist since it is possible for him to find a new landscape which will stimulate him if he is responsive and open to its influence. Fangbrand exemplifies this view as he travels to a new landscape and achieves self-realization.

Within the limitations of the hypotheses and the assumptions which framed the present study, this investigation has illustrated Durrell's use of characters as functions of landscape. By analyzing the reciprocal relationship between person and place and noting the behaviours the poet generally associates with characters as they are variously in harmony with their landscapes, the study infers a value base from which the poet judges his subjects. In making such an inference, the study affirms a belief that in his poetry, as well as in his prose, Durrell draws from his own experience and emphasizes the importance of place to the point that his characters are functions of landscape. Unterecker has stated that "An author is, I suppose, never one of his characters, but rather

the sum of them." ⁹⁵ More than the sum of his characters, Lawrence Durrell and his work are the sum of many landscapes and, through the interaction of person and place, are greater than any one of them.

⁹⁵ Unterecker, p. 43.

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Vita

The author of this study, Richard King LeRoy, was born in Rochester, New York, on 3 September 1943. He attended elementary and high school in Scottsville, New York. In 1965, he was graduated from the College of William and Mary with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. After college, the writer taught at Christchurch School in Virginia for two years before a semester's study in Paris. He began his Master's Degree at the University of Richmond and subsequently taught English at the Collegiate Schools in Richmond for four years. Currently, the writer is unemployed and an active patron of the arts.