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| Durrell, Lawrence (1912-1990) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Lawrence Durrell was born in Jalandhar, British India. Both his parents were born in India and never saw England before 1923 when they sent him ‘home’ for schooling. This experience shaped his writing career, and themes of expatriation and exile appear in his autobiographical first novel about this period, *Pied Piper of Lovers* (1935). Durrell was involved in English Surrealism and formed some of his key aesthetic concepts from Henry Miller’s anarchist rebuttal to Surrealism’s communism. He left England in 1935 for Greece, and this move and post-Surrealist aesthetic is reflected in his first major experimental novel *The Black Book* (1938). He did not make England his long-term home again, and after 1968 was designated a British non-patrial without the right to enter or settle in Britain without a visa. His writing career included works from 1931 to 1990, bridged late modernist and postmodern writing, and retained a baroque prose style even as realism grew more fashionable after World War II. He is most famous for his four volume series *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-1962). |
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His writing career included works from 1931 to 1990, bridged late modernist and postmodern writing, and retained a baroque prose style even as realism grew more fashionable after World War II. He is most famous for his four volume series *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-1962).  From 1935 to 1956, Durrell lived an itinerant life. He first moved to the Greek island Corfu with his first wife Nancy Myers and was later followed by his family. This period is fictionalized in his younger brother Gerald’s *My Family and Other Animals* (1956) and his own *Prospero’s Cell* (1945). He relocated to Athens and supported British anti-fascist activities. He fled to Crete during the Nazi invasion of Greece in 1941 and again to Egypt as a refugee. He separated from his first wife in 1942 when she left for Jerusalem with their daughter. During the war he resided in Cairo and Alexandria working for the British Embassy and co-editing the poetry journal *Personal Landscape* as part of the Cairo Poets. During this period he knew and financially aided the Egyptian novelist Albert Cossery whose translated work he sent for publication in America. He would later lament not publishing the Egyptian surrealist Georges Henein. In 1945, he served in the British Administration on Rhodes during the accretion of the Dodecanese to Greece, which led to his memoir *Reflections on a Marine Venus* and his observation of Nazi atrocities, including the removal of the Jewish population of Rhodes—references to the war and atrocities were excised from the book by his editor at Faber & Faber, the poet Anne Ridler. He married his second wife Eve Cohen in 1947 and was appointed Director of the British Council institute in Córdoba, Argentina. His literary lectures from this period were collected as *A Key to Modern Poetry* (1952). When Tito broke with Stalin’s Cominform in 1948, he was posted to Belgrade, Yugoslavia, for four years. The experience led to his novel *White Eagles Over Serbia* (1957) and cemented his anti-communist views. In 1952 he relocated to Nicosia, Cyprus, as a teacher and began work on *Justine* (1957), the first book of *The Alexandria Quartet*. His second marriage failed in 1955, and his second wife returned to England with their daughter. He began public relations work for the British Administration at the same time during the Enosis struggle and fled the island in 1956, abandoning his home when he became a target for assassination. His third wife, the writer Claude-Marie Vincedon was also Jewish, of the Menasce family, and from Alexandria (as was his second wife). They remained together from the period on Cyprus until her death in 1967. The Cyprus experience resulted in his third travel memoir, *Bitter Lemons* (1957), which won the Duff Cooper Prize, and was followed by *Justine* (1957), the first volume of *The Alexandria Quartet*. After nearly six months in England, he relocated to Sommières, France, with Claude and remained a resident of the region for the rest of his life. During this period he finished the three subsequent volumes of *The Alexandria Quartet*—*Balthazar* (1958), *Mountolive* (1958), *Clea* (1960), and the revised omnibus edition (1962), sections of which resemble Claude’s Zionist novel *A Chair for the Prophet* (1959)—his later novel pair *The Revolt of Aphrodite* (1968-1970), and the five volume *Avignon Quintet* (1974-1985). He was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for *Monsieur* (1974) and nominated for the Booker for *Constance* (1982). Across his career, Durrell was active as a poet, most effectively so in the short lyric, and he also published verse dramas.  Durrell’s closest literary relationship was with Henry Miller, beginning with their correspondence in 1935, their extensive network of mutual support across the 1940s, and lasting until Miller’s death in 1980. He was also close with Richard Aldington, his poetry editor at Faber & Faber T. S. Eliot, and the Greek poet George Seferis. Key Works: *The Black Book* (1938)  *The Alexandria Quartet* (1962)  *Justine* (1957)  *Balthazar* (1958)  *Mountolive* (1958)  *Clea* (1960)  *The Revolt of Aphrodite* (1974)  *Tunc* (1968)  *Nunquam* (1970)  *The Avignon Quintet* (1992)  *Monsieur* (1974)  *Livia* (1978)  *Constance* (1982)  *Sebastian* (1983)  *Quinx* (1985)  *Collected Poems: 1931-74* (1980) |
| Further reading:  Bowker, Gorgon. *Through the Dark Labyrinth: A Biography of Lawrence Durrell*.  Gifford, James. *Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes*.  Haag, Michael. *Alexandria: City of Memory*.  Kaczvinsky, Donald P. *Lawrence Durrell’s Major Novels*.  MacNiven, Ian S. *Lawrence Durrell: A Biography*.  Morrison, Ray. *A Smile in His Mind’s Eye*. |