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Variations of Selfhood
in **Lawrence Durrell's**
The Alexandria Quartet

《亚历山大四重奏》中的自我嬗变

徐 彬 著



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前言

当代英国小说家劳伦斯·达雷尔被众多评论家誉为 20 世纪最伟大的实验派作家之一。国外批评家对达雷尔的研究开始于 20 世纪 60 年代。截至目前,国外学者对达雷尔代表作《亚历山大四重奏》研究的主要关注点是该小说中的爱情主题、实验性写作技巧及其与现实之间的联系。本书既是对国外达雷尔前期研究的延续,又是在论述主题上的创新,即以前人研究为基础,展开《亚历山大四重奏》中自我嬗变主题的研究。同时,鉴于达雷尔是一位被广大国内英美文学研究者们所忽略的英国作家,本书对国内现当代英美文学研究领域也具有一定的贡献。

考虑到达雷尔的流亡作家身份以及其长期以来对自我认同的思索,可以推断“自我嬗变”应是达雷尔这部四重奏小说关注的主题。在《亚历山大四重奏》中,达雷尔对自我的艺术呈现因语境不同而在每部小说中存在差异,作家由此为读者展开了一幅描绘现当代社会自我百态的全景画卷。本书以自我嬗变的主题为联结点对《亚历山大四重奏》中的四部小说——《贾斯汀》、《巴萨泽》、《芒特奥利夫》和《克丽》在不同语境下的自我逐一加以分析。本书由引言、主体和结论三大部分组成。主体分为四章。每一章探讨一种语境下的自我嬗变。

引言部分探讨了达雷尔在当代英国文坛中的地位及其贡献。除此之外,还陈述了本书的研究目的、任务及国内外研究现状。为了给本研究奠定一个相对坚实的理论基础,引言部分阐释了本书的理论框架,其中包括相关的理论依据和术语。在引言部分,以假说的方式归纳出达雷尔小说中自我嬗变的本质、特点和意义,并随后简要介绍了主体部分各章节的内容。

第一章题为“《贾斯汀》中的现代自我”，分析《贾斯汀》在现代主义语境下的自我表现范式。现代主义语境下的自我具有分裂和重塑的双重特征。在《贾斯汀》中，主人公的自我分裂一则归因于亚历山大城对人的负面影响，二则归因于主人公对性欲的沉溺。在亚历山大城“引力场”或“爱的榨汁器”的作用下，小说人物的男性气质和女性气质被扭曲。达利从城市到偏远小岛的自我放逐帮助他实现了自我重塑，因为他在风景如画的大自然中能平静地思考并给原本凌乱的记忆赋予艺术的秩序。

第二章题为“从《贾斯汀》到《巴萨泽》的后现代自我”，聚焦于四重奏小说中前两部小说在后现代语境下的自我嬗变。后现代自我以流动性、不确定性、多元性和相对性为主要特点。除了展示现代自我的嬗变之外，《贾斯汀》还开启了达雷尔后现代自我嬗变的探索之旅。小说第一人称叙述者达利在“空时体”叙述的帮助下实现了叙述的自由。该叙述方式的内核在于“后现代多重共时性”和空间化的叙述。在后现代语境之下，小说中确定的人物描写被不确定的人物性格刻画取而代之，因此《巴萨泽》中达利与贾丝廷的自我呈现出多元化特征。与此同时，通过去中心化，即由主观叙述过渡为相对客观的叙述，达利也渐渐成为一名成熟的后现代叙述者。

第三章题为“《芒特奥利夫》中的后殖民自我”，其论述主题是该小说中后殖民语境下主人公们的自我嬗变。后殖民理论家们多用二元对立、流散、杂合、抵抗等术语来界定后殖民语境下的自我。小说中芒特奥利夫身为英国驻埃及第一任大使，经受了地理与政治上的双重流散。芒特奥利夫殖民主义者的自我已成为英国性与埃及他者性共存的统一体，使其作为帝国主义者的政治功能受到限制。以拉拉、纳西姆和贾丝廷为代表的埃及精英们的自我既是欧洲文化与埃及文化杂合的产物，又是从事反英抵抗运动的掩饰手段。不同于上述两组主人公，纳罗兹的自我不受杂合的影响。皈依萨满教的纳罗兹在抗英运动中成为带有宗教色彩的十字军领袖，而他的自我牺牲可与基督的殉难相提并论。

第四章题为“《克丽》中的自我完满”，在特定历史语境下，即第二次世界大战之际，对各色小说人物的自我实现展开探讨。以二战前夕及初期为背景的亚历山大城好似人间地狱，然而，就是在这种情形下，达雷尔还是为读者展现出人们达成自我完满的光明图景。达利、克丽与芒特奥利夫历经爱情磨难并经由荣格提出的个体化过程实现了自我的完满。思科比和普斯沃登等人虽死犹生，主要体现在东西方对思科比的神圣化和普斯沃登身后留给他人的有益影响。另外，济慈、巴萨泽和克丽等主人公也经历身心磨难而重获新生。

本书结尾回顾了每章的论点，并对达雷尔《亚历山大四重奏》中自我嬗变的艺术价值加以评述。达雷尔仿佛是一位对现当代自我进行哲学反思的编年史学家。在展现自我嬗变的同时，他还帮助读者洞察人类存在的现状。最终，达雷尔展示出他对人性的充分肯定和对人类在面对现当代社会混乱与无序时所表现出的自我修复潜力的认同。



Abstract

Contemporary novelist Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990) is considered by many critics as one of the greatest experimental writers in the 20th century. Starting from the 1960s Durrellian studies has been popular among many critics abroad and their studies on his masterpiece *The Alexandria Quartet* focused on the theme of love, the experimental writing techniques and its relevance with realities. The current study is a continuation of the previous studies abroad and is a relatively pioneering one in China because Durrell is a generally ignored British writer among Chinese scholars of contemporary British and American literatures.

Selfhood is the main concern of Durrell's tetralogy because as an expatriate writer Durrell constantly cares about the issue of self-identity. In the tetralogy Durrell's artistic representations of selfhood change from novel to novel, as a result of which the tetralogy offers the reader an overall view on the variations of selfhood and helps the reader understand the contemporary existential situations of mankind. Taking variations of selfhood as its pivot, this book chooses Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* including four novels, i. e. *Justine*, *Balthazar*, *Mountolive* and *Clea* to illustrate Durrell's concern on the variations of selfhood within different contexts. The body of the book contains four chapters and each chapter deals with one kind of context within which variations of selfhood are examined.

Starting with the discussion on Durrell's literary achievement and reputation, the introduction lays out the research purpose and task of this book. A complete critical survey of Durrell and *The Alexandria Quartet* at home and abroad is conducted in this section. Theories and definitions on selfhood are presented to construct a relatively firm theoretical framework for the book. The essence, characteristics and significance of the variations of selfhood in the tetralogy are also discussed. Finally, the introduction provides the readers with a summary of each chapter so that they can have a rough idea about the major content of the book.

Chapter one "Modern Selfhood in *Justine*" analyzes the variations of selfhood in *Justine* in the context of modernity. Modern selfhood has the characteristics of fragmentation and a strong tendency for the reconstruction of the lost unity. In *Justine* the fragmentation of selfhood is caused by the disintegrating influence of the city of Alexandria and people's incessant pursuit of sensual pleasure. Manhood and womanhood are distorted in Alexandria's "gravitational field" or "winepress of love". Darley exiles himself from the city to an isolated island and accomplishes the totality of his once fragmented selfhood by means of artistic reconstruction of memory in idyllic nature.

Chapter two "Postmodern Selfhood from *Justine* to *Balthazar*" examines the variations of postmodern selfhood in the first two novels of the tetralogy. Postmodern selfhood is characterized by its fluidity, uncertainty, multiplicity and relativity. In *Justine*, Darley's self achieves his narrative liberation by means of chronotopic narration whose quintessential features are "Postmodernism's multiple temporalities" and spatialized narrative. In *Balthazar*, due to the equation between character and personality that is known for its ontological uncertainty and protean nature, the selfhoods of Darley and

Justine are no longer as stable as they used to be in *Justine*. They proliferate in number. Darley gradually grows into a maturer narrator by decentering himself from a subjective narrative to a relatively objective one.

Chapter three “Postcolonial Selfhood in *Mountolive*” focuses on the variations of selfhood within the postcolonial context. Binary opposites, diaspora, hybridity and resistance are the terms used to define postcolonial selfhood. In *Mountolive* the first British ambassador Mountolive suffers from geographical and political diaspora. His selfhood becomes a hybridized entity of the Englishness and the Egyptian otherness, which curbs his political functions. The selfhoods of the Egyptian elites such as Leila, Nessim and Justine are characterized by a hybridity of European culture and Egyptian culture. But the hybridity is by nature a kind of camouflage for their anti-British resistance. The selfhood of Narouz is immune from the above-mentioned hybridity. By sticking to Egyptian aboriginal Shamanic religion, Narouz becomes a leader of the religious crusaders in his radical anti-British resistance. His sacrifice is compared with that of Jesus Christ.

Chapter four “Consummation of Selfhood in *Clea*” discusses various consummations of selfhood in a specific historical context, the Second World War, in the last novel of the tetralogy. Although Alexandria is a hell-like city at the beginning of or during the Second World War, Durrell still presents the reader a bright picture within which almost all the characters achieve self-fulfillment. Darley, Clea and Mountolive consummate their selfhoods by means of love and individuation. Some characters such as Scobie and Pursewarden achieve self-fulfillment by being canonized into sainthood and by exerting therapeutic powers on others after death. Some living

characters such as Keats, Balthazar and Clea achieve a rebirth by going through physical and spiritual transformations.

The conclusion of the book reviews the major argumentations in each chapter and comments on Durrell's artistic achievement as far as the variations of selfhood in *The Alexandria Quartet* are concerned. Resembling a contemporary chronicler of philosophical reflections on selfhood in literature, Durrell helps the reader to gain a panoramic view on the existential situation of mankind. In the end, as a humanist, he shows the readers his faith in human goodness and their rehabilitating potential in modern chaos.

Key words: Lawrence Durrell, Contemporary British Literature, *The Alexandria Quartet*, Variations of selfhood, Context

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Introduction

As a famous contemporary British writer Lawrence George Durrell (1912-1990) occupies an important position in twentieth-century British literature. He wrote in almost every genre available—novels, poetry, plays, short stories, travel and literary essays—and for his work, he was named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and was the recipient of such prestigious awards as the Duff Cooper Memorial Prize in 1957 for *Bitter Lemons* and James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1975 for *Monsieur, or The Prince of Darkness*. Kaczvinsky argues that “Lawrence Durrell enjoyed one of the longest and most productive artistic careers in our century [the 20th Century]—a career that recorded the devastating effects of World War II and explored the cultural shift from Modernism to Postmodernism” (9).

Harry T. Moore comments that Durrell’s *The Alexandria Quartet* has been welcomed with general critical exuberance. One of the reasons for such a response to his work is that this is an age in which so many authors can’t write, as Durrell certainly can. Among the comparatively newer men only Albert Camus, who also dealt sometimes with North Africa—but how differently!—has been greeted with such enthusiasm. The career of Camus was alas cut short prematurely; Durrell has yet the prospect of continued growth and success (“Introduction”, ix-x). More than twenty years before his name first became widely known with the publication of *Justine*, the

first novel of his *The Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell had the support of a vigorous minority which insisted that he was an important writer. Henry Miller was the first to speak out for him; Lawrence Clark Powell was an early and ardent enthusiast; T. S. Eliot gave the authority of his praise and, with his colleague Alan Pringle, added a publisher's faith. William York Tindall, in his *Forces in Modern British Literature* (both in the edition which brought the subject up to 1946 and the one which carried it through to 1956), saw Durrell as a significant writer before the publication of *The Alexandria Quartet*.

On the significance and contribution of Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*, George Steiner observes that it is held with vehemence, particularly in France, that the novel is the highest performance in the modern novel since Proust and Joyce, and that Durrell is a genius of the first rank (13). Steiner finally asserts in his article that "Anyone caring for the language and the future of the novel will have to come to grips with this singular work" (23). In "Electra Brought Him Black Roses" Gerald Sykes wrote, "With *Justine*, after establishing himself as a poet, Durrell emerged as a major novelist, acclaimed on both sides of the Atlantic and already proposed for the Nobel Prize" (47). Each of the three successive volumes, *Balthazar*, *Mountolive* and *Clea*, met with equal enthusiasm and *The Alexandria Quartet* as a whole was lauded as a tour de force of experimental art. Durrell's Alexandria is one of the major monuments of the architecture of imagination. "It ranks in manifold coherence with the Paris of Proust and the Dublin of Joyce" (Steiner 18). The twentieth century has seen a great retreat from the power of the word. The major energies of the mind seem directed toward other modes of "language", toward the notations of music and the symbol-world of mathematics. Whether in its advertisements, its comic-books, or its television, the modern

culture lives by the picture rather than the word. Durrell, with his Shakespearean and Joycean delight in the sheer abundance and sensuous variety of speech, may strike one as mannered or precious.

Critics abroad have undertaken various thematic and stylistic studies on *The Alexandria Quartet*. Modern and postmodern themes of love, art and writing techniques in the novel are widely discussed among these critics. Many recent critics are more concerned with its political and historical significance in the postcolonial context. Durrell is a generally ignored British writer among Chinese scholars, without any systematic studies on Durrell and his works in China. By adopting modern, postmodern, postcolonial and psychological theories on selfhood, this book tends to make a systematic study on why and how various selfhoods in *The Alexandria Quartet* are presented so as to draw some attention from other Chinese scholars to Durrellian studies.

Studies on Lawrence Durrell made by critics abroad have undergone 3 periods with the 1960s, 70s and 80s together as the first stage characterized by biographical studies of Durrell as an artist; the 1990s as the second stage featured by an attempt to a psychological analysis of Durrell's writings; and the 21st century up to now as the third stage in which linguistic, postcolonial and cultural approaches to the study of Durrell are thoroughly and systematically illustrated. Among those studies, biographical, psychological, narrative and postcolonial studies on *The Alexandria Quartet* are very popular.

The earliest study on Lawrence Durrell starts with *Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence* (1962) and *Spirit of Place: Letters and Essays on Travel* (1969) containing records of Lawrence Durrell's correspondences in which Durrell's philosophical ideas on art and life are presented. Unterecker's monograph *Lawrence Durrell* (1964) is about Durrell's personal history and writing

experience. G. S. Fraser's monograph *Lawrence Durrell: A Study* (1973) has a wide coverage of Durrell's works from early poems, verse dramas to later novels. In the analysis of *The Alexandria Quartet*, Fraser employs a psychological approach revealing the relationship between *The Alexandria Quartet* and the mythical elements in it. Weigel's monograph *Lawrence Durrell Revised Edition* (1989) seems to be more like an itinerary map because it mainly consists of biographical descriptions of Durrell's professional career as a writer and summaries of Durrell's major works including the early novels, poetry, dramas, later novels such as *The Alexandria Quartet*, *The Revolt of Aphrodite* and *The Avignon Quintet*. Alan Warren Friedman's monograph *Lawrence Durrell and The Alexandria Quartet* (1970) is an exception among the early critical works on Durrell because it has carried out a penetrating analysis on each of the four novels in *The Alexandria Quartet*. The narrative techniques and the themes of the novels are systematically analyzed, as a result of which though many years have passed the monograph is still a good source of reference.

Entering into the 1990s' the study of Lawrence Durrell began to show some academic insights. Richard Pine's monograph *Lawrence Durrell: The Mindscape* (1994), as the title suggests, is a study of Durrell's motivations, expectations and reflections in writing. The monograph offers a wide-range discussion on Durrell's works concerning his psychology, his reaction to contemporary literature, his characters as writers, inventors, philosophers, map-makers of the human intelligence. Donald Kaczvinsky's monograph *Lawrence Durrell's Major Novels, or The Kingdom of the Imagination* (1997) focuses on Durrell's theory about the "spirit of place" which draws its sources from psychological theories of a little-known contemporary of Freud, Georg Groddeck. Throughout the survey of Durrell's major

novels Kaczvinsky has employed psychoanalysis and concluded that Durrell's artist-heroes will always reconcile with the place of their living through a series of therapeutic means. Ian S. MacNiven's book *Lawrence Durrell: A Biography* (1998) is another good study on Durrell's life and works. Stefan Herbrechter's monograph *Lawrence Durrell, Postmodernism and the Ethics of Alterity* (1999), as Herbrechter writes, is "an attempt to bridge the gap between 'literature' and 'theory' without effacing it" (1). Herbrechter has chosen Durrell's last group of novels in *The Avignon Quintet* to examine its postmodern characteristics.

Most monographs on Durrell in the 21st century are still restricted to the biographical study and textual analysis of his writings. The oriental flavors in and linguistic approach to the examination of Durrell's works have added something new to contemporary Durrellian study, even though they are not that complete. Michael Haag's monograph *Alexandria: City of Memory* (2004) includes intertwined biographies of Lawrence Durrell, E M Forster and Constantine Cavafy in Alexandria. Linda Stump Rashidi's monograph *(Re) constructing Reality Complexity in Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria Quartet* (2005) employs a linguistic approach to the study of Durrell's famous novel *The Alexandria Quartet*. Rashidi has discussed the relationship between linguistics and literature with the help of Halliday's theories and he goes on to implement these theories into the analysis of *The Alexandria Quartet* from the perspectives of the basic components of the beginning, the middle, the ending and the alternative ending of each of the four novels that form *The Alexandria Quartet*. Michael V. Diboll's monograph *Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria Quartet in Its Egyptian Context* (2004) closely examines the historical background of and the postcolonial elements in *The Alexandria Quartet*.

Besides monographs, there are also many book-length collections of critical essays, articles in various foreign academic journals and Ph. D. dissertations on Lawrence Durrell and his masterpiece *The Alexandria Quartet*. *The World of Lawrence Durrell* (1962) edited by Harry T Moore, *Twentieth Century Literature* Volume 33 (1987), one of the special issues devoted to Durrell and *Into the Labyrinth Essays on the Art of Lawrence Durrell* (1989) edited by Frank L. Kersnowski are rather similar in their contents. They contain not only critical essays on Durrell's poetry, major novels and plays, but also some letters from Durrell as well as interviews of Durrell. *On Miracle Ground: Essays on the Fiction of Lawrence Durrell* (1990) edited by Michael H. Begnal consists of three parts. Within the first part "Metaphysics and Metafiction" most of the essays concentrate on the methods and themes in the early novels of Durrell, the author's role and the depiction of love in his later novels. The second part of the collection is a thorough study of the portraits of the artist in Durrell's novels. The essays in the third part take *The Avignon Quintet* as an example to examine the mythic elements and writing techniques of Durrell.

The essays in *Lawrence Durrell Comprehending the Whole* (1995) edited by Julius Rowan Raper, Melody L. Enscoe and Paige Matthey Bynum are classified into four categories according to the time sequence of Durrell's works: the apprentice Durrell, familiar Durrell, the hidden Durrell and the final Durrell. Among the essays, Paige Matthey Bynum's "The Artist as Shaman: Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*" examines the connection between art and religious ritual in the novel. Many Ph. D. dissertations have put their emphasis on Orientalism in Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*, such as Abdul-Qader Abdullah Khattab's dissertation "Encountering The Non-Western Other in Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*" (1999), Abdulla K.