





The Personal Landscape & New Apocalypse Networks: Philhellenic, Anarchist, & Surrealist Late Modernisms

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Beginning with Stephen Spender and ranging from Samuel Hynes through Bernard Bergonzi, the established reading of literature from the 1930s and 40s has been constructed through the critical lens of the Auden generation, running through Orwell and Graham Greene to the Angry Young Men and The Movement. Literature of the 30s grew increasingly toward communist and socialist interests, war-poetry failed to appear, anti-fascism rebelled against its Modernist forebears, and after the war creative networks ran across the Atlantic rather than to Europe, making New York and Greenwich Village the new Left Bank to the generation that emerged. Or so the story goes. Influential moves to discuss Late Modernism, in particular by Tyrus Miller and Jed Esty, have broadened this scope, but the New Modernist Studies is still in the process of engaging the other perspectives on and movements of the late 1930s and 40s.¹ Established notions of Modernism and now Late Modernism have also long excluded Anarchism as a meaningful political philosophy in relation to the activist and aesthetic practices of authors from the 1910s through the 1940s. The literary voices responsible for the received histories of this period, largely those of the Auden generation writing of itself, often disregard anarchist voices or regard them in the same vein presented by Joseph Conrad in *The Secret Agent*: bomb-throwing misfits bent on meaningless destruction and impossible ideals. In response to Fabian views shared by the likes of George Bernard Shaw, Edward Car-

¹ In particular, the excellent work begun by Damon Marcel DeCoste and the precocious work of James Keery. Otherwise, we must look back to Gillespie's 1975 work "New Apocalypse for Old: Kermode's Theory of Modernism" or dissertations from the 1970s.

penter, and H.G. Wells, Modernism and Late Modernism offered a sharp political rebuttal. Although Carpenter and Shaw had links to Pound and Eliot through *The Egoist*, and Leonard and Virginia Woolf were both Fabians, the dominant political turn of Modernism was decidedly authoritarian. In critical contrast, David Weir's *Anarchy and Culture*, David Kadlec's *Mosaic Modernism*, and Allan Antliff's *Anarchist Modernism* detail the strong though less acknowledged antiauthoritarian undercurrent in modernist works. Yet, for the core poetic figures of Modernism, politics make a sharp turn to the Right. Pound's early ties to Anarchism are distinctly individualist, quasi-Libertarian, and subsequently lead to his Fascism, as detailed by Weir and again recently by Rebecca Beasley in *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism*. Eliot's and Hulme's anti-democratic views were far from antiauthoritarian, despite early ties to *The Egoist* (Beasley 47-61). By the time the High Modernists were succeeded by the younger generation of Late Modernists, Fabian socialist values were *passé* even while Socialism regained its appeal. Although condemnation of the fascist elements of Modernism spread rapidly among the next generation, as early as 1937, George Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* derides the Fabians, and Carpenter perhaps most specifically, noting (with great color) the "prevalence of cranks wherever Socialists are gathered together. One sometimes gets the impression that the mere words 'Socialism' and 'Communism' draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist, and feminist in England" (147).

I contend something different. Although hegemonic Modernism approved of the Auden generation, and Fabian artistic networks receded as the movement gained institutional authority, the underlying anarchist threads remained a vital part of poetic activity into the 30s and 40s, and beyond. A critical tension also exists in scholarship—Miller's *Late Modernism* opens and closes with his quintessential instance of Late Modernism: Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* as described by George Orwell (7-8, 209-10). Yet, beyond naming there is no analysis or discussion. Tyrus Miller's reference to Miller, which is followed by a palpable avoidance of Miller for the rest of the volume, contends "The earliest and still one of the best diagnoses of the new literary dispensation that emerged in the 1930s may be found in George Orwell's 1935 review of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*." Orwell's seminal essay leads him to claim

Miller avoids the progressive commitments of the Edwardi-

ans and the communist enthusiasms of the Auden generation; neither, however, does he exhibit modernist-style, and faith in the power of carefully crafted, difficult art to redeem the squalid realities of this sub-proletarian existence.... Miller writes neither to praise collective idleness nor to ally himself rhetorically with the grave-diggers of a dying culture, signing on to a future utopia of labor and endeavoring to bury it. (7-8)

This is identical to Orwell's reading, but both fail to examine Miller's expressly anarchist discussion of alternatives, such as in his "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere," which he was distributing via Cyril Connelly early in 1937. In other words, Miller is surely avoiding the Fabian views of the Edwardians and Communism for the simple reason that both run contrary to his explicitly antiauthoritarian position.

These geographic and political distinctions from the established narrative of 30s and 40s writing, as well as their anarchist rather than socialist, communist, or capitalist focus, have fallen prey to the myopic image of Anarchism—they are seen as apolitical. Orwell, when reviewing the Villa Seurat's periodical *The Booster*, called it "Back to the Twenties" (in other words, back to Modernism and its difficult tipping toward Fascism) and tied its "personalist" approach to "some gesture of supreme futility, something so unutterably meaningless and stupid..., a safe and feeble way, of hitting back at Hitler, Stalin, Lord Rothmore, etc." (30). This is a shift since Orwell praised Miller in 1935, went to Spain less than ten months earlier wearing Miller's coat, and knew well of his staunchly antiauthoritarian Anarchism.² Orwell inadvertently hits on the real matter when he notes "The only definitely comic feature in

² Although this side of Miller is overlooked, it is substantial and clear, beginning with this correspondence with Emma Goldman and running through his influential 1937 "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere," in which he contends "millions are now ready to fight [in World War II] for something they have ignominiously surrendered for the greater part of their lives" (157). Miller then bluntly contradicts the Parisian Surrealists in a manner reminiscent of the Spanish Civil War: "I am against revolutions because they always involve a return to the status quo. I am against the status quo both before and after revolutions. I don't want to wear a black shirt or a red shirt. I want to wear the shirt that suits my taste" (160). In accepting Surrealism as a technique while rejecting its politics, Miller fuelled similar revisions among those who admired it but could not accommodate its orthodoxy (Gifford, "Surrealism's" 36-64).

the magazine is the advertisements.... The entire tribe of Paris-American snob-shops... seem to have been caught” (30). Three weeks later he recommended Hugh Gordon Porteus review the second issue.³ At any rate, Orwell softened and praised the same works in “Inside the Whale” in 1940, which Tyrus Miller marks as the core of his exploration of Late Modernism.

Behind these peculiarities is a broad and important series of literary movements, leading through to the Cairo Poets, on whom this paper focuses. Miller’s network of artists and authors centred on the Villa Seurat in Paris in the 1930s, and their anarchist redevelopment of Surrealism played a major role in the development, and redirection, of English Surrealism, a movement that did not die with the opening of World War II but instead translated itself to locations outside of the immediate literary sphere of London and New York. Hints and archived networks from this other legacy of Late Modernism remain, and we find the Villa Seurat’s legacy and anarchist influences appearing in Herbert Read’s anarchist writing, the New Apocalypse movement, New Romanticism, the anarchist Circle authors in Berkeley and *Big Sur* in the 1940s, some of the peculiarities of Greek Modernism after the War, and also in the philhellenic Cairo War Poets who were identified with their periodical, *Personal Landscape*. More than any of these other groups, the Cairo Poets embody the overlapping forms of Late Modernism, and though they self-identified as “exiles” and “refugees,”⁴ Cairo

³ This was also after Durrell’s letter in the same periodical advised Orwell to tend to his own flying aspidistras, a rebuke Orwell may have taken to heart (Durrell, “Booster” 78-9)—his 1936 novel *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* has striking parallels to Durrell’s 1935 *Pied Piper of Lovers*, and Durrell emphasized this by echoing Orwell’s echo in his 1937 *Panic Spring* (Gifford, “Preface” viii-ix). Porteus notably had ties to the English Surrealists and Villa Seurat, seen in his reviews of Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* (1934), Lawrence Durrell’s *The Black Book* (1938), and his publication in *Personal Landscape* under Durrell’s co-editorship in Cairo during the War when he was transferred from London.

⁴ *Personal Landscape* in its anthologized form is subtitled “An Anthology of Exile,” the various poets in its pages self-identify frequently in their criticism using the terms refugee and exile. Jonathan Bolton summarizes the group by writing “The internationalism of the forties was not caused only by the influx of foreigners and the enthusiasms of the magazine editors, however. As the war dragged on, countless Englishmen found themselves in strange places and felt compelled to explore poetically new landscapes and new societies. The most important group of exiles gathered in Alexandria and produced the quarterly *Personal Landscape* which included work by Lawrence Durrell, Bernard Spencer, Robin Fedden (the three editors), Terence Tiller, Robert Liddell, Keith

and Alexandria were often central rather than peripheral. In the Cairo Poets, I see an integration of Greek Modernism's notion of allusion and Seferis' unique revision of "Mythistorema," the Villa Seurat's revised Surrealism, and the antiauthoritarian political sensibilities that led in tandem to the New Apocalypse in London. Unlike other groups, the Cairo Poets unified these three threads, both literally and stylistically—Cairo held key figures from each of these movements and afforded them an opportunity to pool their mutual influences from the past several years into a cohesive aesthetic sensibility that grew from their High Modernist forebears with key interventions into modernist sensibilities. In other words, they prove the exception to the established sentiment noted in my first two sentences of this article.

Narrative History

The Villa Seurat group and its construction of an anarchist English Surrealism was broader than current criticism acknowledges, and this revises our sense of activities of the 30s and 40s. Hints and archived networks from this other Late Modernism remain, and Orwell's "Back to the Twenties" emphasizes its reliance on modernist predecessors rather than Auden, although the link to *The Egoist* is misleading since the Anarchism promulgated through the Villa Seurat was antiauthoritarian rather than purely individualist. To echo Kenneth Rexroth's assessment in 1949, this network comprised a major artistic interlocutor in the dominant narrative of the Auden Generation through its Anarchism and strong sense of the High Modernists as forebears. Rexroth, an outspoken anarchist, argued in his influential anthology *The New British Poets*:

In 1937 a change of taste, a reaction, set in. It was inconspicuous at first, but with the onset of universal war, most of the poetry being written in England was of a new and different kind. At the least it was a new manner, at the best it was a new vision. Most of its adherents and practitioners call themselves Romantics.... To use Assiatsky's phrase, [Auden's] voice sounded hollow across a frontier and ocean. (vii)

Douglas, Olivia Manning, Hugh Gordon Porteus and translations of work by Elie Papadimitriou, George Seferis, Cavafy, and Rilke, among others" (Bolton 41).

Rexroth associates Miller, Read, and Durrell with an anarchist tradition that led this “new vision” in 1937. He writes of Miller, “No other person of his generation has had so great an influence on the young” (xxiv). Retracing the outline of this “new vision,” Rexroth adds “[Comfort], Woodcock, and Savage are the most remarkable of the young men who came first to prominence during the War, and it is significant that they are all anarchists” (xxviii), and each was tied to Read, Miller, and Durrell through correspondence and mutual publication. What Rexroth does not note in his focus on the trinity of Dylan Thomas, Miller’s ‘group,’ and the anarchist New Apocalypse, is how closely these figures were tied to *each other* via the Villa Seurat. This group constitutes a significant movement in Late Modernism, one hinted at in major critical works but never fully articulated, one that created the direction in which English Surrealism subsequently developed under different names and guises.⁵

Although he never visited Cairo or Alexandria, Henry Miller had a long shadow that reached the poets stationed there during World War II.⁶ Apart from those who visited the Villa Seurat and became clandestine owners of Miller’s banned works, the periodicals produced through the Villa Seurat had a significant influence before and during World War II.⁷ *The Booster* and *Delta* were

⁵ I should note the closest is Erwin Weins’ discussion of Irving Layton’s literary criticism, which aligns the New Apocalypse with the subsequent anarchist movements in London as well as the Black Mountain poets (in part through Robert Duncan, whom I have already noted had direct ties to the Villa Seurat and was deeply impacted by it), though his focus is on subsequent poetic influences and Canadian poetry rather than those leading into the New Apocalypse.

⁶ While it is purely anecdotal (though corroborated by both), Durrell was first greeted on entering Egypt by a government official whose first question upon seeing his passport (as a refugee) was if he was associated with the Villa Seurat and had ties to the surrealist author Henry Miller: “I was not thinking then of security risks but of the chance to talk about a world which was far removed from Alex[andrian] docks. As the parties were made up and sent off to Cairo, Durrell and I conversed in a slit trench in a sandy transit camp through the night, while the Alexandria barrage sent up its innumerable tracers to chase the German raiders from the sky” (Braun xxvii).

⁷ Perhaps the most surprising instance comes from Madison, Wisconsin, through the periodical *Diogenese*, which was edited by Arthur Blair (no relation to Orwell) and Frank Jones. In 1940, they wrote to Durrell through the Institute of English Studies in Athens (a front for British anti-fascist propaganda) to say “Both of us are admirers of your other work that we have read in SEVEN,

short-lived and gave an anarchist perspective on modernist practices through a shifting form of English-language Surrealism that rejected Surrealism's communist beliefs. Miller's close friend, Lawrence Durrell, took over production of *Delta* and engaged assistance from David Gascoyne, one of the first English Surrealists, and Tambimuttu. Both later became dissenting voices in London publishing circles, and both promoted the Cairo Poets after Durrell, Bernard Spencer, and Robin Fedden co-founded the journal *Personal Landscape* in Egypt.

That both periodicals proclaimed in their first issues "We have no plans for reforming the world, no dogmas, no ideologies to defend" (n.pag) from 1937-9 speaks to a 'politics of the unpolitical'⁸ in Herbert Read's sense, and the work produced reflects the same, ranging from Durrell's individualist escape from the political world in *The Black Book* and *Panic Spring* (the title of which intimates the impending crisis, opening as it does with revolution),⁹ Miller's *Colossus of Maroussi* and *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* produced in wartime, and Nin's *Winter of Artifice*, which was only republished in its original 1939 form in 2008. Their close ties to and demonstrable influence over Gascoyne, Thomas, and Robert Duncan¹⁰ also stand out.

DELTA, PARTISAN REVIEW, PURPOSE, and elsewhere, and should like to be able to present some of your work for the American public in DIOGENES.... Also, I should mention that we would be delighted to consider some of your translations from modern Greek poets. I have read your work in this field in SEVEN and THE NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY, and, should it be permissible, we would particularly like to re-print the first poem by George Seferis, 'Message in a Bottle', which appeared in SEVEN some while ago" (n.pag). In addition to the expected names from the Villa Seurat circle, the short-lived *Diogenes* became a minor vehicle for the American *avant-garde*.

⁸ Patrick von Richthofen took great care to explore this political context in his encyclopedic unpublished dissertation, *The Booster/Delta Nexus* (1987), which was supported by the Baroness von Richthofen. The strong family ties to Max Weber and D.H. Lawrence are also notable.

⁹ I have recently reconstructed the anarchist sympathies implicit and explicit in Durrell's notion of the "Heraldic Universe," which was lauded by Miller and published in *Personal Landscape* (1942), *Proems* by the Fortune Press (1938, same press that first published Thomas, Gascoyne, and Barker), and *A Private Country* (1943, Faber & Faber), as well as his letters to Henry Miller. Findings were first presented at l'Université Paris X during the conference of the International Lawrence Durrell Society in July 2008 before publication in 2010 (Gifford, "Anarchist" 57-71).

¹⁰ Duncan published all of them in his short-lived periodical *Experimental Review* and continued with publication schemes through the 1940s.

Meanwhile, English Surrealism first endorsed Bréton's communism, as did Herbert Read¹¹ in his work from the 1936 London International Surrealist Exhibition, though Miller and Durrell criticized him for failing to uphold an 'unpolitical' Surrealism.¹² Critics still claim English Surrealism quietly died a short time later, but retracing the early English Surrealist writers shows that they shifted Surrealism's communist politics to Anarchism while retaining its methods, and the movement continued through the forties, maintaining contact with other international groups. As this network broadened across the Mediterranean, England, and America, it sparked friendships and modes of artistic production that lasted into the 1990s.

In 1939, Miller traveled to Greece to visit Durrell and George Seferis, the Greek poet who rendered the most influential translations of T.S. Eliot into Greek, hence instantiating Greek Modernism, which was coloured by Greek politics and the extensive Greek literary contact with Parisian Surrealists.¹³ This period of intense artistic interaction is recorded in Miller's travel narrative *The Colossus of Maroussi*, in which he adapts Greek modernist notions of place and allusion to displace modernist notions of Tradition. However, for a network, the story continues after Miller's eleventh hour departure for the safety of the USA. Seferis knew Durrell through their mutual, dear friend, the poet and translator Theodore Stephanides.¹⁴ And, Seferis was a significant figure in the Greek government, which became the Greek Government in Exile after the Nazi invasion. Durrell, Stephanides, and Seferis were forced to

¹¹ Apart from this period, Read is known for his outspoken anarchism.

¹² Miller's "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" was also an open rebuttal of Read's *Surrealism*. Miller's response to Read and forwarding of Durrell's letters express this more clearly (Gifford, "Surrealism's" 36-64; Miller "Henry Miller's Letters" 7-10, 14-22).

¹³ For further discussion of this tie to the Parisian Surrealists, see Kayalis (95-110).

¹⁴ Stephanides is now an overlooked author. His memoirs for the 1930s and 40s have just been published with his late poetry, his war-time memoirs were already published by Faber & Faber, he collaborated with nearly all of the 'biggest' figures in Greek literature on translation projects, he studied radiology under Marie Currie, he wrote the definitive study of flora and fauna of the Ionian Islands, and he mentored a swath of young authors and naturalists. He holds the distinction of having three biological species named for him, as well as a comet and a crater on the Moon. He also published several critical translations through University Presses, yet he has oddly vanished from criticism.

evacuate Greece via Crete, and Crete to Egypt, where they continued to produce political and artistic works. Although it does not feature in Miller's account, Durrell was involved in anti-fascist propaganda in Athens and Kalamata and remained so in Egypt (Stephanides 51-3, 56) while translating and boosting highly political Greek poets. For a few years, this network continued in Cairo, and its aesthetic shape is recorded in the journal *Personal Landscape*. In the midst of the military campaign, the group's "personalist" emphasis is notable,¹⁵ as is the poets' tendency toward surrealist metaphor, individualism, and avoidance of political proselytizing, the opposite of latter two being the greatest problems Hynes aligns with the Auden generation's works from the same time (206). Notably, their activism avoided the authoritarian impulse in both Socialism and Egoism-cum-Fascism—it walks an antiauthoritarian path around Fabian and Modernist influences. It integrated the Villa Seurat's revision to Surrealism, which is not surprising given their intimate ties to Miller, and this revision then became central to the English New Apocalypse and New Romantic movements. It also responded to uniquely Greek notions of tradition and landscape, often drawing on Seferis' view of Eliot and Constantine Cavafy.

Once in Egypt, several writers composed the *Personal Landscape* poets: Keith Douglas, G.S. Fraser, Bernard Spencer, Robin Fedden, Robert Liddell, Hamish Henderson, Elie Papadimitriou, and Olivia Manning, among others, including Seferis and Durrell themselves. But, this was not a random group tossed together by war—Fraser had already been highly active in English Surrealism networks and had published extensively on and in the New Apocalypse movement, which adopted the Villa Seurat's anarchist revision of Surrealism with purposeful automatism: the "organic" element of the subsequent New Romantics. Fraser also published the periodical *Orientalism* while in Egypt, which mainly included the *Personal Landscape* authors. Durrell was already published through the Villa Seurat, and recent research shows his deep influence on English Surrealists and the New Apocalypse, none of which has been noted in published criticism to date but is thoroughly acknowledged by the writers themselves in their papers.¹⁶ John

¹⁵ The recurrence of "Personalist" in the New Apocalypse, expressly tied to Anarchism, is important as well.

¹⁶ This first came to light in the Henry Miller/Herbert Read correspondence in 2007. The Villa Seurat as a whole exercised an extensive influence on English

Waller was also a supporter, though he was more closely tied to the servicemen's poetry journal in Cairo, *Salamander*, which was edited and published by Durrell's old friend, the poet John Gawsword, who had already edited surrealist materials in London. And, Waller had published through Oxford the little journal *Kingdom Come*, which included Herbert Read. He had also supported publication of *Seven*, the largely surrealist journal run by Nicholas Moore prior to the war, which mixed the Villa Seurat¹⁷ and those who would become the New Apocalypse poets with the mainstays of Hynes' Auden generation. Moore went on to become a key figure in the New Apocalypse, but notably, the key inspiration for these London-based publications was the earlier creation of *The Booster* and *Delta* in Paris through the Villa Seurat. Likewise, the Cairo Poets not only included Seferis, Stephanides, and Papadimitriou, but also the Philhellenes Robert Liddell (the first biographer of Cavafy) and Hilary Corke, who were already lecturing at King Fuad University.¹⁸ Like Durrell, Liddell produced anti-fascist propaganda in Athens prior to the Nazi invasion, though this is only recorded in his unpublished correspondence in the Seferis Archive in the Gennadius Library. Hamish Henderson is also poorly remembered for his 1950 translation of Gramsci's *Letters from Prison* (titled *Gramsci's Prison Letters*), first published in part in 1957 and at greater length in 1974 in *The New Edinburgh Review*.

Critical Contexts

This long background to the Cairo Poets and New Apocalypse

Surrealists, from Gascoyne through Dylan Thomas to Herbert Read, all of which is not only demonstrable but acknowledged by the authors in their letters, most of which have remained unpublished.

¹⁷ Durrell, Miller, Thomas, Gascoyne, Fraser, Symons, Terence Tiller, and Alex Comfort all figure prominently. Their early surrealist works are particularly significant, often receiving their first publication, as with Thomas' "Adventure to a Work in Progress" and Durrell's "Zero" and "Asylum in the Snow."

¹⁸ This later became the University of Cairo, and D.J. Enright came to the University of Alexandria, then the Farouk University, in 1947 to teach and complete his dissertation. Among their students was Dr. Mursi Saad el-Din, who eventually became the editor-in-chief of *Egypt Today* and was an important translator of modern Egyptian literature into English. He was an important spokesman and advisor to the Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat at this time and was particularly important to him during the secret negotiation of the Camp David Accords in September 1978. He took Spencer's criticism seminar before graduating in 1943.

suggests that they arrived carrying the political and aesthetic views of pre-existing late modernist antiauthoritarian movements, most of which began as anarchist revisions to Surrealism in the Villa Seurat, and in uniquely Greek adaptations of Modernism. Critics now regard the New Apocalypse and the Cairo Poets as unconnected, and the reason is simple—apart from unpublished correspondences and the trail of mutual publication in pre-war little magazines that receive no scholarly attention, there is little to connect them. However, when these difficult materials are accounted for (their mutual advertising, their mutual publication, and the transportation of Apocalyptic poets to North Africa), a different situation emerges.

The Cairo Poets and the New Apocalypse overlapped and corresponded during the war, and both derive from a revision to Surrealism via the Villa Seurat group. Moreover, this intervention in the dominant tropes of the period—the antiauthoritarian revision of Surrealism and individualist modernist aesthetics—garnered serious attention from the High Modernists themselves: Pound very favourably reviewed *Tropic of Cancer*, Eliot gave uncharacteristically effusive praise to Miller and Durrell and expressly described George Barker as the finest poet of the generation. Eliot also sustained correspondences to the Cairo Poets, even when they could not write back. Setting aside purely aesthetic sensibilities of poetic merit, this indicates where *attention* was directed in the mid 30s through 40s. In breadth of production, immediate influence on contemporaries, and subsequent influence on emerging international literary movements, this post-surrealist branch of English Surrealism was one of the strongest and most widespread movements in English letters between the Auden generation's appearance in the early 30s and the Movement in the 50s.

However, both the Cairo Poets and the New Apocalypse never significantly entered critical studies of Modernism. The Cairo Poets briefly regained their fame after Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* became a publishing sensation in the late 50s and 60s,¹⁹ but critical

¹⁹ The natural contrast here would be Esty's *A Shrinking Island* since Durrell was the most prominent of British authors who refused to shrink with the Empire in the 50s and 60s. His flight from Cyprus amidst fears of assassination shortly after the Suez Crisis marks both an end to the British Empire and as a direct result Durrell's turn to the most cosmopolitan and successful period in his career. Yet, Durrell's continued cosmopolitanism was Anthony Burgess' primary criticism, for which he argued "[*The Alexandria Quartet*] might have seemed more original if it had been set in a British middle-class environment" (97). In the same breath, he praised Olivia Manning (also of the Cairo Poets,

responses never integrated into the New Modernist Studies nor the growing notion of Late Modernism. As Joseph Boone notes, they vanished from Modernist circles, even though this network in general has continued to generate a significant body of scholarship (dozens of monographs, a couple hundred dissertations, and thousands of articles). Boone recounts some of the thrill surrounding this circle:

It is hard to recapture the intense excitement that greeted the publication of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* in the late 1950s. My parents' generation keenly awaited each successive volume with a sense of participating in the making of a masterpiece. The success of the *Quartet* could be measured not only in its popular reception and generally glowing reviews, but also, on an institutional level, in the literally hundreds of scholarly articles it spawned in the following decade: the Durrell entries in the MLA Bibliography for this period vie in number with those accorded long-time favorites like Lawrence, Joyce, and Faulkner. Simultaneously, the *Quartet* found its way onto Ivy League syllabi; while Albert J. Guerard sang Durrell's praises at Harvard, Walton Litz made the *Quartet* a highlight of his modern fiction course at Princeton. This masterpiece, it seemed clear, was going to be around for a long while. Durrell's critical stock, ironically, couldn't be lower today. (Boone 73)

Much the same could be said of Miller. I suggest this discord reflects the critical predispositions of modernist readings of this period rather than any intrinsic sense of quality or a viable notion of their impact on literary history. An anarchist or at least personalist movement, even if widespread and influential, does not mesh easily with the assumed dominance of the Auden group and its notion of social-historical narrative—and, the Auden group, after all, wrote the history.

It is equally easy to forget that Lawrence Clark Powell, when

and who housed Durrell's first wife during their divorce) based on the English focus of her Balkan trilogy, though again its foreign locale is Burgess' main dislike. Burgess' second wife, with whom he was having an affair at the time of these reviews, was the first Italian translator of the *Quartet*, which adds a curious complication to his uniformly negative reviews of the work as execrable, primarily due to its setting and resulting sadism.

building UCLA's literary collections, placed Miller and Durrell at the top of his priorities for manuscript acquisitions, and that Harvard and Princeton were matched by Yale, which holds the most complete print collection of Durrell works in the world. This is due to Donald Gallup's willingness to sell parts of Yale's Joyce collection to purchase Villa Seurat material (Gallup 110). A stronger example is Gallup's recounting of an episode in which he rapidly departed from the Gotham Book Mart amidst cries of "Stop, thief!" from Frances Steloff when he left with works marked "not for sale" that she'd intended for her own private collection: *The Booster* and *Delta* from the Villa Seurat (Gallup 110).

The same does not hold true for the networks that rose around them in distinction from the Auden generation: the New Apocalypse, the Personal Landscape Poets, the New Romantics, and the Berkeley Circle poets all languish. In America, the anarcho-surrealist tendencies of the Beats and Robert Duncan have remained visible, but their close ties to the Villa Seurat are largely ignored. Duncan carried on an affair with Anaïs Nin, published Durrell and Miller, dedicated poetry to Durrell, and sought publication repeatedly and over a period of years for the surrealist materials generated by the Villa Seurat in the 1930s. All of this is easily documented in Duncan's papers and publications history, but it does not receive significant discussion in critical studies of his works or the biographies, even with the excellent recent *Collected Works* and new biographies. Miller's direct influence on the Beats is also widely acknowledged by the likes of Kerouac, Hart, Bukowski, and Burroughs, but it does not find its way into criticism.

Similarly, Spender openly disregards other movements (13, 85),²⁰ and Bergonzi only fleetingly notes the Cairo Poets in *Wartime and Aftermath*. His main concern is that Fraser, a Scottish poet stationed in Cairo during the war, makes a simplified distinction between the poets in London and those in Cairo. After this paragraph, he drops the topic from the book without discussing Tambimuttu or the New Apocalypse. Yet, this is illustrative. The work in question is Fraser's "Recent Verse: London and Cairo" in Tambimuttu's *Poetry London*, published in 1944 (215-219), but the critical perspective reveals Bergonzi's tendency to place London as

²⁰ The Villa Seurat, the New Apocalypse, the activities of anarchist poets, and the Cairo War Poets all remain unmentioned in Spender's collection *The Thirties and After*, nor does Keith Douglas make the list, despite Spender's discussion of war poetry.

centre with the Auden group as the “London poets.” Fraser had already published on this topic in *Personal Landscape* (Cairo) and in the London anthology *The White Horseman* in which he focuses on the New Apocalypse movement rather than the Auden group (“Apocalypse” 3–31). The New Apocalypse derived from the anarchist network growing out of the Villa Seurat and English Surrealism, in large part via the periodical *Seven*, which cooperated with and entered into mutual publications with Durrell and Miller, often including work by Fraser, who then found himself in Cairo publishing through *Personal Landscape*. Likewise, the Grey Walls Press, which published nearly all of this material, maintained the same stable of Surrealist authors prior, during, and after the war and up to the 1970s.²¹ Moreover, Tambimuttu, who published the 1944 article to which Bergonzi refers, also published the Cairo Poets extensively during and after the war, including a special issue of *Poetry London* dedicated to them in 1943. Tambi also frequently dedicated himself to war anthologies such as *Return to Oasis*. He was published in the Villa Seurat’s *Delta* prior to the war and published the anthologized version of *Personal Landscape* in his Poetry London imprint, the same one Bergonzi uses.²² It is then surprising that while Bergonzi allows for a simplified version of Fraser’s argument, he overlooks the rebuttal in the same issue that directly follows it from Tambimuttu, which points directly to the kinship between the two groups. It is even more surprising that since all these articles grant centrality to Durrell’s position in the Cairo group, as well as noting his inspiration for the New Apocalypse, which expended considerable energies publishing him, none note

²¹ That *Seven*, The Grey Walls Press, the New Apocalypse anthologies, the New Romantics anthologies, Alex Comfort’s various periodicals, and most English Surrealist material from the late 1930s and 1940s were created through one small press should also be noted, especially since the two printers, Moore and Wrey Gardiner, were close to the Villa Seurat and identified with English Surrealism while also continuing to publish Durrell and Miller for decades. The exceptions are volumes published through Herbert Read at Routledge.

²² The Poetry London imprint later drew largely on the network created around the Villa Seurat. Notable authors and books include Elizabeth Smart’s *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*, Durrell’s *Cefalu*, Miller’s *The Cosmological Eye* and *Sunday After the War*, Vladimir Nabokov’s *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, Keith Douglas’ *Alamein to Zem Zem*, and Cleanth Brooks’ *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*. Notably, Durrell introduced Elizabeth Smart to his longstanding friend George Barker, who was also David Gascoyne’s flatmate. The ensuing affair is recounted in Smart’s *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* and Barker’s *The Dead Seagull*.

Durrell's article in the *same* issue, on the *same* topic. Contrary to Bergonzi's perspective, the London poets of Fraser's article (the New Apocalypse) were very much on the geographic margin of a movement based in Paris (the Villa Seurat) and then North Africa (the *Personal Landscape* poets), rather than the converse. The direct references to Durrell cement the tie, showing the London poets evolving from a previous movement, and Tambimuttu (on the same page as Fraser) notes that the two movements have poets in common, though the senior of the group were sent to North Africa.²³ Most importantly, *these* London poets were not of the Auden group, yet Bergonzi's vision lives on: London as center and London as Auden.

Hence, the conceptual, political, and aesthetic background for the New Apocalypse grew directly from the Villa Seurat network's influence on English Surrealism, and Henry Treece's greatest frustration in the New Apocalypse was failing to secure support from Dylan Thomas, who had been closely tied to and influenced by the Villa Seurat (Gifford, "*Delta*" 19-23). It is also worth noting that biographies of Thomas and his published letters overlook or misdate materials that demonstrate this influence.

These London-based poets and writers, in Fraser's not Bergonzi's sense, focused their attention, not surprisingly, on London's troubles and explicit political agitation: anarchist agitation, despite their strong military ties. This is made clear in the contributions of Alex Comfort and Herbert Read. Read's Anarchism is famous, and Comfort was a major anarchist and notable poet prior to his fame from *The Joy of Sex*, and also published several anarchist novels in the 30s and 40s. He directly solicited materials from the Cairo Poets, despite the difficulty of sending mail, and published it at every opportunity (see his papers at University College London). His later creative works declined, but he remained active in anarchist activism. Comfort's periodical *New Road: New Directions in European Art & Letters* included the same group already established by *Booster* and *Delta*, adding the poets associated with the New Apocalypse. Its first issue notably opens with Kathleen Raine referring to "The poets of the last generation—Auden, MacNeice, Empson, Michael Roberts, Day Lewis, Robert Graves" and also noting, though disliking, the new generation's "turning away from the world.... One still hears the term Anarchist used... by poets who

²³ Tambimuttu's rebuttal is uncharacteristically harsh and points to the commonalities between London and Cairo, without either being a centre.

learned the word... from the Surrealists” (Raine 15), which would be the New Apocalypse deriving from the Villa Seurat, not Breton and Éluard. Derek Stanford sees the same in a more positive light, which is not surprising given his later admiration for Comfort and Durrell: “For the young writer coming of pen-age in the ‘Thirties two schools or tendencies stood open for him: either he was free to take a leap... into the murky Surrealist whirlpool, or gather the dried sticks of statistics in the too, too solid wood of Socialist Realism,” which led him to derogate Mass Observation while praising the anarchist New Apocalypse (Stanford 8).

However, those in North Africa (sometimes *even the same poets*) expressed the same notions of anarchist revisions to surrealist metaphor in *personal* terms, as is indicated in the title: *Personal Landscape*. This lacks the explicit political turn, which was explicit in this group’s pre-war and post-war writings. During the war, it became implicit, whether out of a military sense of censure, which seems possible, or due to their unique circumstances in wartime near to a very real and very threatening front. Perhaps most surprisingly, the same networks repeat in George Woodcock’s anarchist London periodical *NOW* from 1940–1947. The parallel influence in the same terms is visible in the New Apocalypse’s arguments about a “Personalist” poetry. Henry Treece and Stefan Schimanski’s introduction to *Transformation* (1943), “Towards a Personalist Attitude” (13–17), is reminiscent of *Personal Landscape*, which they both read. This piece was followed on the same page by Herbert Read’s anarchist essay “The Politics of the Unpolitical.” Treece later made his anarchist position overt by defining “Personalist” by quoting Read’s essay in “Towards a Personalist Literature” (217).

Yet, the antiauthoritarian impulse prevents the deification of the state over the fluctuating and uncertain individual, in contrast to what is to be found in the Auden poets of the period. Among the *Personal Landscape* poets, even the immediacy of the war front vanishes before poetry of the moment, a fleeting individual’s equally fleeting experience in which the conflicts of the state appear only obliquely. Hence, even while rejecting stable notions of selfhood, these authors privilege the individual’s interpretive capabilities distinct from the author or any other authority. For instance, Fedden describes the “Ideas About Poems” sections from each issue of *Personal Landscape*, claiming

These notes on poetry do not represent a manifesto, and will often be found diametrically opposite in standpoint one to another. Per-

sonal and private, they do not even present a series of individual manifestoes. An attitude is not a permanent belief, and these notes are the expressions of attitudes, which need not be more permanent than the mood from which an individual poem is born. (“Heraldic” 72)

Henry Miller makes similar comments in his “Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere.”²⁴ The New Apocalypse, Treece in particular, attempted a manifesto but rapidly abandoned it in the face of their plurality of interests and affinities. Even Duncan’s *Experimental Review* is akin. Durrell, whose “Ideas About Poetry” opened *Personal Landscape* with an anti-manifesto, makes his rejection of the Auden Generation clear as late as 1960 when he responded to Stephen Spender’s invitation to write in the *Times Literary Supplement* on the “The Writer’s Dilemma” and the “Limits of Control”:

One supposes that the Artist as a public Opinionator only grew up with the social conscience—with Dickens, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.... [T]here come hundreds of letters asking him to take up public positions on every conceivable matter from the fate of Irish horses or homosexuals to the rights and wrongs of nuclear warfare and theosophy²⁵.... But it is very doubtful whether he has anything to say which could be more original than the other pronouncements by public figures, for apart from his art he is just an ordinary fellow like everyone else. (17)

Durrell only concludes with a question: “And can the artist offer no clue to living? Alas, no; his public does that for him” (24). In an antiauthoritarian gesture, he rejects the artist’s ‘Audenesque’ function, preferring to leave his audience with an interactionist view of the construction of meaning rather than meaning’s articulation by another person, “for apart from his art he is just an ordinary fel-

²⁴ This parallels Miller’s refutation of the “Brotherhood of man.... [which] leads the masses to identify themselves with movie stars and megalomaniacs like Hitler and Mussolini” (“An Open” 152). Both are attempting to deflate the notion of gurus or leaders who distract the masses from their lives as individuals, most particularly artists as gurus or leaders. Both Durrell and Miller were notorious for turning away fans seeking enlightenment.

²⁵ As odd as it seems, these were real letters Durrell collected in his unpublished *The Price of Glory: Gleanings From a Writer’s In Tray*, held in the Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

low,” and by extension so are all writers of manifestos. The reader is led to a personal development of meaning with the text rather than receiving meaning from the artist, priest, or leader. This is to say, the reader actively grapples with the text and makes something of it rather than passively receives it, just as the *Personal Landscape* poets rejected the call for war poetry and instead privileged introspection in a charged (yet personal) landscape, even if the speaking subject remained obscure.

The Greek poets’ previous ties to the Villa Seurat and Surrealism are already established, but Greek Modernism also has a small nexus of critical work written in English.²⁶ It points to its unique combination of allusion, tradition, place, and what Valentine Cunningham would call “surrealist metaphor.” This is where the term “Mythistorema,” comes into play. Seferis used the term in his most famous poem series, *Mythistorema*,²⁷ and it moves beyond the conventional meaning of “novel” (or “Roman”) to combine Myth and History: the repetition of Myth in allusion and the repetition of history in the same place. For a Greek from Smyrna to allude to Homer’s wandering and homeless Odysseus after the 1922 displacement of the entire Greek population of Asia Minor, the birthplace of Homer, and to make that allusion in disputed territory is clearly a more political act than alluding to Chaucer during April rains, even though the device is the same. Unlike Eliot’s Mythic Method from his “*Ulysses, Order and Myth*,” Seferis’ “novel” sense of Mythistorema creates something more than “a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” (Eliot, “*Ulysses*” 177)—it suggests a repetition of history that is only recognized via allusion, and that then grants tradition a new and *politicized* role. It is not, as per Eliot, “simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (177) but rather a recognition that this “immense panorama of futility” has occurred

²⁶ For obvious reasons, Greek material has a limited circulation among modernist scholars. Tziovas’ and Layoun’s edited books are among the most overt collections, but Vasiliki Kolokotroni (under other spellings) and David Ricks have published suggestive work, and materials have also appeared in other text from the primary authors as well as in *The Journal of Modern Greek Studies*.

²⁷ Published in 1935, this work was a major influence on Greek writing. As David Ricks comments, “[It] is perhaps the most influential single work of poetry in twentieth-century Greece, and certainly the most famously associated with Homeric myth” (135).

before, in the same place, and the poet can stand there personally living the same anarchy.²⁸ More to the point, they have more in common with the High Modernists than did the Auden generation, and their interventions into poetic technique are based on adaptations of those commonalities.

But, how does all of this lead to a viable practice for reading the Cairo Poets in the context of their late modernist concerns? Can one use this to read their politics, post-Surrealism, modernist aesthetics, notions of tradition and allusion, their philhellenism, and their location on the Mediterranean in a way that adds to their work rather than rendering it programmatic? In his essay “Cavafy and Eliot—A Comparison,” Seferis suggests a fundamental distinction between the two poets’ senses of tradition, instantiating an alternative approach to artistic production in the Mediterranean. Reading Cavafy’s poem “Those Who Fought for the Achaean League,” Seferis

appreciated that the poem was written in 1922, on the eve of the catastrophe in Asia Minor; and almost without thinking I reread these lines as:

Written in Alexandria by an Achaean,
The year that our race was destroyed. (127)

Seferis presents Cavafy with an intensely politicized sense of ethnicity and nationalism caught in a poem of exile—the affinity between past and present occurs in the same space and under related circumstance but separated by millennia.²⁹ This is a striking difference from Eliot’s tradition, and Seferis uses this wedge to pry the two apart. Notably, the 1922 Asia Minor catastrophe, perhaps better known to Modernists through Hemingway’s “The Quay at Smyrna,” is alluded to repeatedly in the pages of *Personal Landscape* by nearly every poet, especially through its Homeric opportunities for allusions to war, refugees, and the journey to a war. Elie Papadimitriou, the outspoken Marxist poet, is the most overt in this sense, and *Personal Landscape* published a number of her own translations of her epic poem of the destruction of Smyrna, *Anatolia*. In Seferis’ view, Cavafy alludes to previous poets in the long tradition,

²⁸ I have discussed Lawrence Durrell’s adaptation of Seferis’ notion in his personal struggles with Eliot’s influence in Tatiani Rapatzikou’s *Anglo-American Perceptions of Hellenism* (82-97).

²⁹ For more detail, see my “Hellenism/Modernism.”

hence granting meaning to the present from the past, but this places the poet with the same circumstances in the same place, which makes the allusion more than “traditional.” It has a contemporary politics, in this case protesting against the Greek loss of Asia Minor.

Nonetheless, Seferis’ reading of Cavafy is anachronistic, although a “strong” reading in Bloom’s sense. As a late modernist misprision, it exemplifies distinctly Greek and Philhellenic literary activities from the early 30s through World War II, and more importantly, it shows how Seferis wanted us to read a “new” kind of “Mythic method.” This view also reflects tensions among several late modernist authors active in the Hellenic world and the territories envisioned as a Greater Greece prior to their demise in 1922. Seferis’ intentions are perhaps better evidenced in his famous poem “The King of Asine,” which was first translated during his interactions with the Cairo Poets, and first published in English in *Personal Landscape*, along with three sections from Papadimitriou’s long poem *Anatolia*.³⁰ Seferis’ poem shows a dense series of overlaps between modern travelers searching for the King of Asine and their ancient forebears. They overlap not only through allusion and an Eliotic sense of Tradition (with their individual ‘talents’) but also through their location in the *same* landscape in which they are experiencing the same tragedies and repetitions of history. Just as Seferis misreads Cavafy in order to construe a direct repetition between time present and time past, which heralds the allusion to the poetic Tradition, he creates in tandem a repetition in landscape and experience. This also side-steps the didacticism and propaganda poetry that plagued Bergonzi’s London.

For instance, if I say “April is the cruelest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land,” and this cruel time tellingly “mix[es] / Memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain” (Eliot, “Waste” 23), my audience will quickly realize that a tradition has been invoked, because “Whan that aprill with his shoures soote / The droghte of march hath perced to the roote, / And bathed eve-

³⁰ Durrell translated the poem for the same issue of *Poetry London* to which I have already referred (1944), and he did so again in his *Six Poems from the Greek of Sekilianos and Seferis* (1946), and again in partnership with Bernard Spencer and Nanos Valioritis in 1948, with an Introduction by Rex Warner. Valioritis went on to become a major figure in Greek literature, and in 1954 he moved to Paris, joined Breton, and married a surrealist painter. For more information see Valioritis’ “Remembering the Poets: Translating Seferis with Durrell and Bernard Spencer” (46-56).

ry veyne in swich licour / Of which vertu engendred is the flour” (Chaucer 23). Eliot points to Chaucer just as Seferis points to Homer, yet Eliot is not standing in Canterbury experiencing Chaucer’s emotions as their political circumstances mark a present repetition of a past event: “Mythistorema.” Eliot might allude to Homer with no sense of nationalism, but for Seferis, it is also a recognition that the birthplace of Homer was no longer Greek. This is Seferis’ vision for Greek Modernism, and it was adopted by Durrell extensively.³¹ For the Cairo Poets, this is also a defining ‘trick,’ such that allusion marks a repetition in feeling, political strife (namely war), and location as the poet moves through it. This appears in many of the works in *Personal Landscape*, and it marks a significant political intervention into modernist poetics, one that these authors continued using for decades after the war.

Finally, the real judge of whether or not this is a viable approach is how well it works with the texts themselves, and for this I offer only a brief instance, though again, I contend it is viable and even essential for the majority of the works: the revision to Surrealism, Seferis’ Mythistorema notion that revises modernist allusion, and the personalist interpolation of contemporary politics and war. My example is the pair of poems published in *Personal Landscape* by Durrell and Bernard Spencer, “Delos” and “To Argos,” as well as Fedden’s “Egyptian Mythology.” Spencer’s poem shows his stylistic delight in enjambment and complex rhythm in free verse; however, the narrating subject remains elusive throughout and simply records the visions of the landscape of Delos, a landscape haunted by ghosts of history. The past tense of the opening line conjures this overlap immediately: “Wealth came by water to this farmless island” (6). The impression is of a past visible in the present and of an imperial growth without foundation—wealth was not made nor cultivated, it came by way of commerce to a place without production. Hence, it is no surprise that we find an echo to the present: “You could buy corn and oil or men and women,” which leads to “money and its worship.” In the same vein, this exercise of power in slavery is reflected in commerce and the state through “rich and poor, priests and their pennies,” which Spencer casts as a self-defeating progress “Till life here burst and was quiet.” This leads to the first four lines of his final stanza in which these materials combine—the political commentary on the rule of the economy

³¹ Again, see my “Modernism/Hellenism” for details on Durrell’s subsequent adaptations of Seferis.

and authoritarian rule by the military melds with the rule of the priesthood brings the reader to stand, invoked, in the present marveling at the past that overlaps:

In the boulevards of these dead you will think of violence,
Holiness and violence, violence of sea that is bluer
Than blue eyes are; violence of sun and its worship;
Of money and its worship. (6)

Here the warfare at sea recalls the bombardment of the harbor in Alexandria, which Spencer witnessed, as well as the blue eye of Greece, the Mathi, which should ward off the evil eye. The combination recalls the anarchist notion of “no gods no masters,” and hence Spencer’s alignment of “the boulevards of these dead” and “violence” with holiness, sea war, worship, and imperial commerce.

Fedden takes a slightly different approach that relies on a kindred overlapping of past and present in the same space, showing a sense of allusion kindred to that articulated by Seferis and that operates in Spencer above. For Fedden, the modern desert war in North Africa leaves fragmented bodies in the sands running parallel to the dismembered Osiris:

Collected in the most unexpected places,
Cast up by the foolish sea,
Drawn painfully from the earth’s brown mould,
The limbs are all brought home. (13)

Yet, for Fedden, “Isis sleeps,” which leads the body to ask “What use in these disparate limbs” (13). The reconstitutive force is absent from the poems and the titular Egyptian Mythology lacks its binding force, even though its myth overlaps with the present experience of war for Fedden, with corpses “Cast up by the foolish sea, / Drawn painfully from the earth.” Osiris begins as our speaking subject, though he only appears in the first person in the opening of the second stanza, “I have netted eyes like wings.” He is also the doubled speaking voice of the war dead cast in the same sands as the ancient god. Nonetheless, the overlap develops further, such that this is someone like Fedden with “A forehead floating on a Cornish wave, / And a mouth I remember from my youth” (13). The poet, the war dead, and the ancient god become one by inhabiting the same space and experiencing a kindred trauma of

fragmentation. Yet, the pain of the poem is not simply the broken “disparate limbs.” The poet must ask “What use” are in these limbs for a sleeping Isis who cannot stitch the fragments together into a newly living whole. In the turn to her, the speaking subject in the first person becomes Isis as well, and the unifying task of the poet and his allusion becomes clear:

What use in these disparate limbs, ...
Mere bones and promises and bones.
O how shall I gather you
From this complication of days, ...
For Time passes and the heart lacks. (13)

The final line of the poem noting time and the lacking heart is itself an internal recurrence of the variant line in the poem “But still the heart lacks and Time passes.” The poet fills the lack through the allusive poem that remembers and re-members the various corpses in Egypt, hence creating unity from the parts.

Finally, Durrell’s “To Argos” enacts the same, marking the loss of the ties to the past in poetry and place as the trauma. Durrell’s poem opens by invoking the image of the encroachment of war, setting it at a point in time when the war had begun but Greece had repelled the first invasion, a moment of foreboding knowing the coming forces:

The roads lead southward, blue
Along a circumference of snow,
Identified now by the scholars
As a home for the Cyclops... (11)

For Durrell, as with Seferis, the Cyclops is a creature marking the war, the time of the Cyclops. Yet, this heritage is gone, for both the Greeks and the English, in the tide of wars both ancient and modern that recall Spencer’s imagery:

Our idols have been betrayed
Not by the measurement of the dead ones
Who are lying under these mountains,
As under England our own fastidious
Heroes lie awake but do not judge. (11)

This break in the tradition, in the writing and the poetry as well as

the mythology of the culture, is the trauma of war in Durrell's vision here. The writing has fragmented, and this leaves the poet as well as his culture "alone," which is the first sense of the trauma at the end of the second stanza that breaks the heart the first time:

Water limps on ice, or scribbles
On doors of sand its syllables,
All alone, in an empty land, alone,
This is what breaks the heart. (11)

The break in the tradition is the heartbreak, the break in the writing that can link the past and the present, redeeming them by unification. The poet, of course, is the agent of redemption, and this is found in the poetic voice:

We say that the blood of Virgil
Grew again in the scarlet pompion,
Ever afterwards reserving the old poet
Memorials in his air, his water: (12)

Although Virgil is known for his statist position as propagandist for Rome celebrating Augustus to mythologize his origins and legitimate the new Imperial centre, he is also a poet of Remembrance who binds the ancient past and ancient literatures to the present. Virgil's Rome, though poetic invention, becomes the same as the greater city, Troy, of the Homeric tradition, and by invoking Virgil, Durrell binds his own present time of wars, waiting in Greece, to the ancient world twice over. This is the recuperative turn of the "personal." However, the problem Durrell encounters at the end of the second stanza returns with more fragmented literature that breaks the ties between past and present: "Bones have no mouths to smile with." The communion with the dead comes to its end, and this is the recurrence of the heart-breaking trauma in the poem that completes it:

The Modern girls pose on a tomb smiling;
Night watches us on the western horn;
The hyssop and the vinegar have lost their meaning,
And this is what breaks the heart. (12)

In the first instance, the fact of being "alone" is what breaks the heart, but in this recurrence, the loss of the mythological literary

tradition is the homing pain. The “modern” inhabitants of this location, or tourist visitors, have no understanding of where they are, its heritage, and its recurrence in their own lives, nor their own lives *as* a recurrence. The hyssop and vinegar offered to the crucified Christ no longer carry any meaning, apart from faith—they are no longer a part of a literary tradition that binds place and time. Their taking of comfort before their own impending destruction by the invading Nazis carries no unifying tie, and hence has lost its meaning. Modernity has forgotten, and on this spot in Argos, likely a striking tholos tomb, they can take photographs with no sense of their own pending entombment in this place marked by war. The poet’s inability to recuperate becomes the trauma itself, for the loss of poetic meaning “is what breaks the heart,” and the world of politics embodied in the war itself remains a vehement absence in all three poems that instead mourn the personal experience of the war’s breach between past, place, and tradition.

Conclusion

As is demonstrated in these brief poetic examples, the Personal Landscape poets draw together three threads in Late Modernist writing outside of the Auden generation and received histories: a reconceived Surrealism, anarchist notions of antiauthoritarian politics and poetics, and a Greek-derived function for allusion. This group had a broad influence and genealogy leading to three major interventions in Modernist methods and normative views of the late 1930s and 40s: anarchist and individualist political views that contrast against the recognized fascist and communist hegemonies; a new sense of allusion and tradition; and a revised use of automatism and surrealist techniques with a stronger sense of form and structure, which later coalesced under the title “organic.” As a whole, this offers a distinct critical narrative from the High Modernists across Late Modernism, with a stronger role for the literary histories buried in our archives and recorded in their networks of international influences.

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