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"Like dancers to a music they deserve": Setting to Music Lawrence Durrell's Poetic Nostalgia for Greece[1]

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Abstract:

This article aims to examine several musical transmediations of Lawrence Durrell's poems. Given the evocative imagery and musicality of Durrell's own poetry, it is no wonder that his works have attracted musical renditions, ranging from jazz to art songs. Durrell's friend Wallace Southam set to music different poems by Durrell, namely "Nemea," "In Arcadia," "Lesbos" and "Nothing is lost, sweet self" (based on the poem "Echo"). Thus far, Southam's musical transmediations have mainly remained overlooked. Nevertheless, they offer us with interesting new perspectives on the transmediation of contemporary poetry. As a musician, Southam transmediates the poet's musicality in his verses and plays with the rhythm, providing listeners with sometimes more melancholic renditions that convey hopelessness, and more tense musical rhythms, where the singing voice strengthens the anxiety of the poems. Interestingly, the poems chosen by Southam have a strong Greek flavour and show how Durrell captures the spirit of the places described. The obscure symbolism of Durrell's verses translates, hence, into a music full of pathos. The analysis will focus on how the composer strives to transmediate Durrell's words in musical terms, by transferring the haunting atmosphere and poignant emotions of the poet's words.

Keywords: Lawrence Durrell; poetry; transmediation; music; art song; jazz.

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1. Introduction

The interplay between art and literature has thrived since Classical Antiquity, as evinced in the Dialogues of Plato. More precisely, poetry and music have held a special place in this interrelation, as both arts were indistinguishable in ancient times, and poetry was mainly transmitted orally. As Winn explains: "The Greeks used the same word, *mousike*, to describe dance, music, poetry and elementary education."[3] This strong relationship between poetry and music would later flourish again in the late sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century, as it was the time of madrigalists and song writers such as Henry Purcell, who would state that "Musick and Poetry have ever been acknowledg'd Sister,"[4] and then from the nineteenth century onwards. Tracing back the Greek roots of this interconnection, author Lawrence Durrell pays special attention to the musicality of his poetry. In fact, Greece became for the poet a site of nostalgia for a lost past where mythology, past, and present blend through a very sensuous poetic language. More interestingly, given the evocative imagery of Durrell's poetry, it is no wonder that his works have attracted musical renditions, ranging from jazz to art songs. This article will examine several musical transmediations of Durrell's poems by amateur musician Wallace Southam, after analysing Durrell's own poetic language, so as to observe how transmediations re-present the powerful dark imagery and melancholic mood of the source texts and how these adaptations reconcile both sister arts—poetry and music—both so strongly important for a poet such as Durrell.

Within the relationship between poetry and music in the English language, we have examples in operas and musicals, but also of what is generally called art song, that is, a vocal and musical composition setting poetry to music, most especially folk songs. This article will examine several art songs based on Durrell's poetry. Linda Hutcheon sees art songs as adaptations which are amplifications of the *Lieder*

[3] James A. Winn, "Music and Poetry," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton University Press, 1993): 803-4, quoted in Arturo Mora-Rioja, *Poetry in English and Metal Music: Adaptation and Appropriation Across Media* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 8.
[4] Henry Purcell [1691], in *The Cambridge Cultural History,* vol. 1, ed. A. Ellis (Cambridge University Press, 1991); 47, quoted in Maria Frendo, "T. S. Eliot and the Music of Poetry" (PhD diss, University of Durham, 1999), 1.

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tradition.[5] The German *Lied*, whose origins date back to the Middle Ages, especially thrived during German Romanticism. These *Lieder* set German poetry to classical music, with musicians such as Beethoven or Schubert making compositions for different German pieces of poetry.

Art songs often set a single poem or text to music and are part of a recital for (one) voice and piano accompaniment. Many of them are written in strophic form, that is, all verses are sung to the same unchanged music, as in most folk and popular songs. The "modified strophic" song, on the other hand, preserves the same vocal melody but changes the musical accompaniment. Lastly, through-composed songs present no repetitions and continually introduce new musical material. These songs are simpler and easier to follow, since words might be understood more straightforwardly. Siglind Bruhn argues that "[w]henever a poetic text is set as vocal music …, the original medium is *inflected* rather than *transformed,*"[6] though some features are modified; however, instrumental music just accompanies the vocals "as a musical illustration *of* and *to* the poetic text."[7] This might be true of simple art songs or *Lieder*, which merely set poetry to music. The art song tradition, though, will continue to develop as a genre, and some of the examples examined here are quite complex and evolved compositions, where music acts as more than a mere accompaniment to the lyrics of the poem. As a composer, Southam paid extra attention to employing musical devices so as to transmediate poetical language and the main characteristic of the source texts.

This article addresses transmediations, a type of adaptation defined by Lars Elleström as the "repeated mediation of equivalent sensory configurations by *another* technical medium."[8] That is, there is a transfer of ideas and narratives *across* different media; it does not focus solely on the narrative core of the source. The re-presentations of the source texts often imply a change of purport and manner of

[5] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 44.
[6] Siglind Bruhn "A Concert of Paintings: 'Musical Ekphrasis' in the Twentieth Century," Poetics Today 22, no. 3 (2001): 568
[7] Bruhn, "A Concert of Paintings," 568.
[8] Lars Elleström, *Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics among Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 14, original emphasis.

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expression. This means that there is some sort of transformation throughout the process, since things might be added, removed, or kept, so as to bridge the gap between media and their different capacities to convey meaning. The traits from the source text are, thus, re-presented in a new medium. There are numerous transmedial characteristics which can be transferred from one medium to a different one, regarding content, style, or structure, depending on the media. In fact, music can convey aspects which language can only refer to. The cases which I will examine maintain but also transform verbal language—Durrell's poetry—into musical language, transmediating, therefore, "nonmusical media characteristics into musical pieces."[9] Hutcheon[10] argues that the transfer from one medium to another requires creativity, as it implies the use of a different medium and, hence, finding a way to express things in a different manner. Transferring poetry into music, therefore, is a creative and interpretive act which does not intend to simply copy or replicate information.

2. "Like notes of music on a page": The Importance of Music and Durrell's Private Greece

Poetry is an art which indeed combines acoustic aspects, as poetic language can convey a certain rhythm and sound which renders it with an acoustical quality. Poets have at their disposal figures of speech and techniques to create sound effects, such as rhymes, onomatopoeia or alliteration, among various others. All this is especially important if we consider that poetry, in most cases, lends itself to being read aloud and, therefore, to be heard since, as Minoru Yoshida points out, "[t]he value of a poem as a work of art can best be appreciated when it is recited, for poetry uses as its medium linguistic sounds which have also musical effects."[11] Both music and poetry, moreover, have several similarities which, at the same time, distinguish them from other arts, such as being auditory arts and having rhythm, and relying on devices such as the climax; that is, the highest point or level of intensity and emotional response.

[9] Elleström, *Media Transformation*, 34.
[10] Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 03.
[11] Minoru Yoshida. "Word-Music in English Poetry," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 11, no. 2, 1952: 151.

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Unsurprisingly, T. S. Eliot concluded that a poet "may gain much from the study of music."[12]

Eliot suggested in his well-known essay "The Music of Poetry" (1942) that a musical poem "is a poem which has a musical pattern of sound and a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it, and that these two patterns are indissoluble and one."[13] The musical pattern of sound, then, refers to the sonority, while the musical pattern of the secondary meanings alludes to the accumulated meaning of a word, that is to say, to what the word evokes in the reader's mind, and not simply the primary meaning of that word. For Eliot, these two patterns should work together, as "the music of poetry is not something which exists apart from the meaning;"[14] therefore, sound and meaning contribute to the musicality of a poem. Eliot's pivotal essay and his notions regarding the musicality of music seem to have had a great impact on Durrell's own writing, since musical imagery and metaphors, as well as the musicality of words and then importance given to rhythm pervade all his works, even his prose. In fact, in a BBC interview, Durrell claimed that poetry "leaks into my prose […] It's certainly slightly poetic prose."[15] Isabelle Keller-Privat calls attention to the musical rhythm in the introductory passage of the second chapter in Durrell's novel *Clea* (1960): "Ancient lands, in all their prehistoric intactness: lake-solitudes hardly brushed by the hurrying feet of the centuries where the uninterrupted pedigrees of pelican and ibis and heron evolve their slow destinies in complete seclusion."[16] This musicality is prominent all throughout Durrell's writing.

More precisely, Durrell's poetry exemplifies the importance of musicality in poetic language. An illustrative example is his ethereal poem "Patmos" (1948), whose melodic finishing stanza mixes the rhythm of the sea and the rain, and is teeming with assonances and alliterations:

[12] T. S. Eliot, "The Music of Poetry," in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The War Years, 1940-1946*, ed. David E. Chinitz and Ronald Schuchard, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017): 321.
[13] Eliot, "The Music of Poetry," 316.
[14] Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", 313.
[15] Lawrence Durrell quoted in Isabelle Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry: A Rift in the Fabric of the World* (Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2023), 3.
[16] Durrell, *Clea*, 47.

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When from the Grecian meadows
Responsive rose the larks,
Stiffly as if on strings,
Ebbing, drew thin as tops
While each in rising squeezed
His spire of singing drops
On that renewed landscape
Like semen from the grape.[17]

Lawrence Durrell was himself deeply involved in music and that is evident in the musical metaphors of his writings, but also in his temporary job as a jazz pianist, and in his opera libretto entitled *Sappho* (set to music by Australian composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks in 1963). Durrell even wrote a musical, called *Ulysses Come Back* (c. 1970), where both music and lyrics were written by the author. This sketch for a musical is based on Ulysses' travels back home and his last three love-affairs. It includes three acts: Circe, Nausicaa, and Penelope. Recorded in April 1970 at Lansdowne Studies, London, under the direction of Wallace Southam, all these numbers are sung by Durrell, accompanied by Belle Gonzalez for the female parts, Pat Smythe on the piano (who had already collaborated with Southam for the arrangement of the song "Lesbos"), and Jeff Clyne on the bass. The recording, thus, features Durrell singing himself the songs he had written.

Yet, before embarking on this musical adventure, Durrell had already collaborated with his friend Wallace Southam (also known as TW Southam), who set to music different poems by Durrell, namely "Nemea," "In Arcadia," "Lesbos" and "Nothing is lost, sweet self," this latter based on the poem "Echo." Up to the present time, Southam's musical transmediations have attracted little to no attention in scholarly work. However, these musical compositions provide us with interesting and new perspectives on the process of transmediating contemporary poetry. These musical settings will be the focus of our attention in this article, and they will be more thoroughly examined in section 3.

[17] Lawrence Durrell, *Collected Poems 1931-1974* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 198.

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Before tackling the analysis of these musical transmediations, there are certain aspects about Durrell's poetry which need to be considered, as they bear upon Southam's adaptations. Though unfortunately mainly disregarded particularly by the general public, Durrell's poetry is imbedded in modernism, and he evinces a very fine ear, with poems rich in sensuality and vivid imagery. In his poetry, Durrell unfolds "the world of sensorial perception, giving the reader access to the secret ripening of poetry through a composition that has been minutely organized."[18] As a poet, Durrell shows a fascination with the Mediterranean and many poems are set in a symbolist Greece, sometimes full of mysticism and lyricism. As a matter of fact, Durrell is considered a Mediterranean writer[19] and the poems chosen for musical transmediation are part of these Mediterranean poems. More precisely, it is interesting to note that, except for "Echo"—though in the dedication Durrell directly mentions Greece—, Southam's songs are all based on poems with a Greek flavour, emphasising in this way the poet's philhellenism. Apart from "Lesbos" and "Echo," the other two poems transmediated by Southam were first collected in *A Private Country* (1943), a collection where the poet explores "a private Greece that is the true spring of the poetic imagination."[20] In these poems, Durrell nostalgically pays homage to Greece, the country he had to abandon during the war, and pays tribute to the loss of an era of his life, and we can feel his uprootedness. This exile and absence would always inspire the poet.

In Durrell's poetry there is, moreover, a profound understanding of mythology and the ancient Greek canon, as seen in poems such as "Nemea" and "Lesbos," which serve as a springboard to reflect with wittiness upon the present. Exemplified in his celebrated poem "Deus Loci," Durrell expertly personifies the spirit of a place, which is also clearly observable in the poems set to music by Southam. He is a master of evoking the spirit and atmosphere of the places, which also clearly transpires in the poems set to music by Southam. The Greek poems chosen by Southam, moreover, are very musical, with carefully drafted forms, and are very connected to the ancient

[18] Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry*, 26.
[19] Isabelle Keller-Privat, "Lawrence Durrell's Mediterranean Hinterland: the Secret Flow of the Poet's Heraldic Universe," *Caliban* 58 (2017): 115.
[20] Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry*, 37.

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Greek lyric poetry, making them very adapt for musical adaptation. A strong harmony and melody define these poems, devices which are properly musical, but which also are part "of the components of the music of words."[21] They also abound in musical metaphors and sombre imagery, as shall be analysed.

3. Echoes of Unspoken Words: From Poetry to Music

In general terms, Wallace Southam's life remains virtually in the dark and not much information is available about this elusive amateur composer and music producer, except that he spent part of his life in Athens and met Durrell and his first wife Nancy Myers. Interestingly, though, there is a reference to him in Durrell's poem "Cities, Plains and People" (1943) in the marginal note in section X, where he mentions other well-known artists and friends. This is an important clue to let us see how close these two men were.

When focusing on Southam's songs, it is interesting to note that three of them are more traditional art songs, and one ("Lesbos") is a piece of jazz, more precisely, a *Jazz Lieder*. Southam playfully engages in this way with the same tradition of setting poetry to music but employing different genres. "In Arcadia," "Lesbos," and "Nothing is lost, sweet self" were released with the Bernard Stone's Turret Book label in *Contemporary Poets set to music* in the late 1960s. More precisely, in this series, *Contemporary poetry set to music No. 1* was published in May 1967 and it featured "Nothing is lost, sweet self." Predating all this, though, singer Belle Gonzalez published an EP entitled *Contemporary Poets Set in Jazz* (1966) featuring different poems set to music by Southam with arrangements—to jazz music—by Leonard Salzedo, an English multifaceted composer and conductor.

The songs based on "Lesbos" and "In Arcadia" were also performed at the concert called *Jupiter and Turret at the Wigmore Hall: New Jazz and Modern Poetry* on February 15th, 1968, in London. The programme for the concert featured music by Wallace Southam, among other composers, based on poetry by Durrell, Christina Rossetti, Lord Byron, W. H. Auden, and many other poets. The jazz arrangement of

[21] Eliot, "The Music of Poetry", 315.

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these songs makes them early examples of *Jazz Lieder*. Later, in May 1969, Southam published again through Turret Records the album *Songs of a Sunday Composer*, with settings of different poets. This album included once more songs such as "Nothing is lost, sweet self," "In Arcadia," "Lesbos," but also "Nemea," all of them by Durrell. Southam dedicated as well the song "We'll Go No More A-Roving" to Durrell and his then wife Claude-Marie Vincendon, a song with words by Lord Byron and set to jazz music.

Concentrating on Southam's musical transmediations of Durrell's poetry in chronological order, "In Arcadia" is the first song composed, probably in the late 1940s, as a companion to "Nemea," but not published until 1968 by Turret Books. This art song was later included in the album *Songs of a Sunday Composer*, where it was sung by New Zealand-born baritone Bryan Drake (1925-2001), who was mainly associated with Benjamin Britten's music, and with Diana Wright at the piano. In his source poem, Durrell offers a celebration of Greece and its extinct history, in line with the Greek lyric with its five quatrains, a couplet, and a couple of single lines. Durrell's Arcadia is a space of harmony and unity, where man and nature, time and space, unite. In order to mirror this unity, the poet does not even use linking words. This era evoked by Durrell "can only be revived through the poetic vision that sees through the past mysteries," in Keller-Privat's words.[22] The poem is awash with alliterations and consonance, which provides a certain rhythm and a very sensorial imagery, mostly related to nature: the river, the valley, the trees growing, the birds and the Keatsian nightingale, the bee and the ant, among others. The following stanza exemplifies the absence of linking words and use of repetitions and alliteration: "Rain fell, tasting of the sky. / Trees grew, composing a grammar. / The river, the river you see was brought down / By force of prayer upon this fertile floor."[23] For its part, Southam's composition is rather challenging and demanding as compared with later ones, as he provides listeners with a forceful and vigorous song performed in *fortissimo* (*ff*). The piano plays from the beginning a recurring passage in music, which is called *ritornello*, a repeating device which mirrors Durrell's alliterations and consonances. The piano and vocal line

[22] Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry*, 18.
[23] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 88.

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at times diverge, provoking a sense of dissonance. The tone of Southam's song is rather gloomy and threatening, especially with the uncanny piano lines which can be heard until the third line of the third stanza.

It is noteworthy that the composer creates a striking contrast in the melody from this third stanza, where both piano and voice sound more mellow. This interval of smoothness ends when the baritone sings the word "kiss," elongating its sound, in the following stanza. The single line stanza leads once more to the frenzied sound of the beginning, after which the rhythm of the melody becomes smoother again. As can be seen, Southam uses of intensity and tempo throughout the music to emphasise certain moments. Eliot once wrote that "there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole."[24] In line with these words, Southam marks transitions in his composition according to the rhythm of the own poem. As such, he ends the vocal line in a very smooth and harmonious manner, while the piano continues solo playing the *ritornello* passage from the beginning in an almost obsessive manner. Therefore, Southam does not transmediate the sense of unity and harmony in Durrell's poem; rather, he focuses on the conflicting sounds between voice and piano.

Another art song by Southam is "Nemea," which was written in 1950, that is, seven years after the publication of *A Private Country*, the poetry collection in which the source poem is included. It is signed as T. W. Southam and dedicated to "E. and L. D.," namely, to Lawrence Durrell and his then wife Eve "Yvette" Cohen. Written for voice with pianoforte accompaniment, the song was recorded in the album *Songs of a Sunday Composer* and sung by English tenor Wilfred Brown (1921-1971) with Margaret McNamee at the piano. I will first look into Durrell's source poem and provide a brief examination so as to fully grasp how Southam engages with the poet's musical and melancholy poetical language.

Written with a metre and rhythm truly reminiscent of a song, Durrell's poem is made up of five couplets, two tercets, and a final single verse. The musicality of the poem is evident as well in its rhyme, sometimes even internal, and sense of repetition

[24] Eliot, "The Music in Poetry", 315.

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and variation, at times through the use of anaphora and alliteration. In fact, repetition and variation are structural elements both in music and in poetry, variation being a consistently different version of a theme. In that sense, Eliot stated that the use of recurrent themes is a natural device both in music and in poetry.[25] In "Nemea," for example, the poet repeats and varies from several times "song" to "sing" ("A song un the valley of Nemea: / Sing quiet, quite quiet here."[26]), and he repeats the first stanza as the sixth stanza or even plays with the order of the letters in "quiet" and "quite," as in the example above.

But, most interestingly, Durrell employs similar images throughout the poem, as in the variation from "golden hair" in the fourth verse to "golden helm" in the seventh verse. His poem is full of sensuous imagery as well, relating to all senses: hearing ("quiet," "song"/"sing," "drum," "tone," "drone"), touch ("Combing the swarms of golden hair," "cool," "cold), sight ("golden helm," "bald bee") or several at the same time ("Under the rolling comb of grass," "The sword outrusts"). As regards imagery, the poem focuses on death, silence, and barrenness, enveloping the verses in a melancholy and dark tone, as illustrated in the last two verses which close the poem: "Tone of the frog in the empty well, Drone of the bald bee on the cold skull, / Quiet, Quiet, Quiet."[27]

In the poem, Durrell addresses the spirit of the place already mentioned before, the *deus loci*. As pointed out by James Nichols, "[t]he overwhelming significance of the place and its human experience comes to the poet only as he writes and finishes the poem."[28] This is noticeable in the change from "quite quiet" in lines two and five to "Quiet, Quiet, Quiet" in the last line. Here, a sense of understanding and quietness, of silence, seems to overcome the poet, as a full realization. The poet depicts the tragedy of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, but this is a song for "the brides of Argos," the women left behind, and not the men who went away. It is the women who dominate the scene in this poem: while Agamemnon, as well as many other men during the war

[25] Elliot, "The Music in Poetry," 321.
[26] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 87.
[27] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 88.
[28] James R. Nichols, *The Stronger Sex: The Fictional Women of Lawrence Durrell* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), 11.

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against Troy, dies (the poem, in fact, describes his grave), Clytemnestra rises to power as "the lion queen." Faced with the inevitability of history, only music and poetry can carry the story and its lessons to the future.

To mirror this daunting inexorability, Southam sets Durrell's poem in D minor, then changes to B Major then back to D minor, as minor is a mode of the tonal system "supposed to trigger sadness and melancholy in the listener,"[29] and traditionally associated with a darker sound. This is a quick movement, the fastest in Southam's transmediations, noted as *con moto* (200 bpm[30]). The piano begins playing and, after two measures, the voice starts performing. At points, the piano offers a counterpoint, simultaneously playing the same rhythm as the voice. The piece is syllabic, meaning that each syllable is matched to a single note. The composition is rather simple, with some repetitions, *ritornelli*, and similar rhythms, mirroring Durrell's sense of repetition and variation. Southam stresses the end of each verse by elongating the last word or syllable. The melody gains strength, noted as *mezzo-forte* (*mf*) or moderately loud when singing "Agamemnon" and gradually increases in intensity until reaching a *ff* when singing "jury of skeletons."

Interestingly, at that point, the composition changes to B Major when singing the verse "Cool under cumulus the lion queen,"[31] which is sung suddenly in *piano*. This line is followed by four measures of rest in the vocal line as if pausing to paint a picture in the listener's mind. Then, the singer retakes the lines "Only the drum can celebrate,"[32] sung once more in *ff*, and then gradually decreases the intensity, followed by another three measures of rest in the vocal line. Southam presents, thus, a clear distinction in this passage, as there is a change in mode and lines are surrounded by intervals of silence, providing a special emphasis. Moreover, the melody sounds more triumphant, playful, and livelier. After that, there is a repetition of the first melodic line, especially in the voice line, since the verses "A song in the valley of Nemea: / Sing quiet, quite quiet here" are repeated and music is almost identical to the beginning.

[29] Mora-Rioja*Poetry in English and Metal Music* , 12.
[30] Bpm stands for beats per minute which, in musical terminology, helps to measure tempo.
[31] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 87.
[32] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 87.

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The last lines are sung in a very smooth and *legato*, *piano*, and repetitive manner, as the voice repeats three times the word "Quiet" in the same way, twice in a row, though the second time the last syllable ("et") is elongated, and, after two measures of long rest, the voice sings it a final time. The piece is, then, awash with *ritornelli*. The song ends in a rather dim tone, after the triumphal mood of the middle stanzas, emphasising Durrell's sombre tone and ending of his poem.

A particularly striking case worthy of our attention is Southam's composition based on "Lesbos," the only song, as aforementioned, belonging to a different music genre thus far—jazz. Signed as Wallace Southam this time and dedicated to Lawrence Durrell and her then wife Claude-Marie Vincendon, who died in 1967, the jazz song "Lesbos" was recorded by Belle Gonzalez accompanied by a small jazz ensemble (alto saxophone, bass, drums, piano, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, trombone, and trumpet). Within this ensemble, the saxophone stands out in this composition. "Lesbos" was included both in the album *Contemporary Poets Set in Jazz* and in *Songs of a Sunday Composer*. The printed music available Bodleian Library in Oxford is noted as an adaptation for voice and piano arranged by Pat (or Patrick) Smythe, published in 1967 by Turret Books Publishers, and printed by Oxford University Press. Given that Durrel was himself a jazz enthusiast, this jazz *Lied* is a musical adaptation which he might have well enjoyed.

Natural imagery is once again highly relevant in the source poem by Durrell, where the poet explores sensorial experiences. Keller-Privat points to the "formal perfection of the poem" with its "regular rhythm" and "fluidity of verse."[33] Here, the use of alliteration plays an important role, as well as the word and concept game with "eye"/"I": "Defined in concave like a human eye / Or cheek pressed warm on the dark's cheek, / Like dancers to a music they deserve".[34] Just as the poem begins with an image of quietness, Southam mirrors this in the slow movement of his composition (52 bpm) and by having the piano line open the movement, only followed by the voice after four measures. For Durrell, in this poem written in four tercets in iambic pentameters, autumn is regarded as a time for melancholy, which brings recollections

[33] Keller-Privat, *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry*, 137.
[34] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 226.

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of the dead. For that reason, Southam chooses to set the poem in G minor, which is connected to sadness and darkness, as mentioned before. In fact, the mood of the song is rather lethargic, evoking the melancholy tone of the poem, which finishes with a meditation on death as a source of future inspiration, in line with Eliot's meditative and mystic *Four Quartets*.

The voice sings once again in a syllabic way, and the melody is quite simple, with some repetitions, in line with Durrell's employment of devices of repetition in his poem. For instance, the melody of the first verse of the first stanza is exactly repeated in the first verse of the second stanza and in the first verse of the last stanza of the poem. The voice line ends with a very long D note which extends the final "I" of the poem, while the piano line ends with a two final simultaneous D notes in one and two higher octaves, respectively, to the one sung by the voice. This strongly highlights Durrell's final contemplative image of the "I." Furthermore, in the vocal line, there are several *glissandi*, that is, changes from semitone to semitone, which adds to the moody atmosphere of the song and to its contemplative mood.

The voice sings very smoothly and drags the notes, only interrupting the singing for breathing when marked or during rests, following, thus, the regular rhythm and fluidity of Durrell's verses. A slight change can be noted after singing "Like dancers to a music they deserve," where the performer hits a very low G note. After that, there is a more marked rhythm thanks to the notable presence of the drums. Moreover, woodwind instruments sings stop playing until the voice sings "I slept," when the saxophone remains playing alone together with piano, drums, and bass. Woodwind instruments at times repeat the same melodic line as the voice acting as an echo. But at times they simultaneously perform the same notes as the singer as a kind of double or *Doppelgänger*, providing an emphasis to certain passages, such as "Defined in concave like a human eye," "In her slow expurgation of the sky" (these two passages are, in fact, a *ritornello*, as both repeat the same melody and rhythm), "And so am I now," and "so am I." In this way, we can see how the composer pays special attention to Durrell's wordplay and rhyme with the "I" sound.

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Following Durrell's *crescendo* before reaching the climax in the last stanza, the saxophone accompanies the voice, at points even drowning it, playing simultaneously the same melody, as if further playing with Durrell's dual concept of the "eye"/ "I." At the end, the voice sings "And so am I now," followed by a saxophone solo which nearly echoes the vocal line, until performing together "so am I." Both voice and all instruments end the song by playing together a D note in different octaves, to finally reach the conclusion of the movement in a resolute manner. Southam hereby transfers Durrell's fascination with the island of Lesbos and his evocation of harmony between man and universe through the harmonious melody between voice and most especially saxophone. In fact, this is among Southam's most melodious and sweet compositions based on Durrell's poetry, characterised by its lyricality and smoothness.

The last example to be here examined is "Nothing is lost, sweet self," another art song. This song for piano and voice was also published by Turret Books in 1967. The copy consulted during this research at the Bodleian has been there since 22 February 1968, and it was a reproduction of the original limited edition in handwritten style of 100 copies numbered and signed by the poet and the composer. This is also signed as Wallace Southam. There is a recording from 1969 with English baritone John Barrow and Diana Wright at the piano included in *Songs of a Sunday Composer*.

Durrell's source poem is a septet where the poet plays with the concept of the echo in its very structure:

> Nothing is lost, sweet self,
> Nothing is ever lost.
> The unspoken word
> Is not exhausted but can be heard.
> Music that stains
> The silence remains
> O echo is everywhere, the unbeckonable bird![35]

[35] Durrell, *Collected Poems*, 119.

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Durrel uses, thus, anaphora and rhyme to build an internal echo and consonance (evident in the prominence of the "b" sound in the last verse), which provides an internal echo within the verses. This is especially noticeable in the last verse, where the word "unbeckonable" literally echoes the word "echo." In this short lyric full of pathos and dedicated to his first wife Nancy Myers and daughter Penelope, Durrell defies emptiness by affirming that all things are preserved.

Southam retakes in his musical transmediation a somewhat faster tempo, as this is an *Andante* movement noted as 108 bpm and in Eb Major. As a very short poem, this is an equally short movement, only two pages long. Music is again syllabic and it is sung for the most part in a very *legato* style, which contributes to the smoothness and melancholy mood of the song, without leading to sentimentality. In fact, the piano and vocal lines are rather harmonious and traditional for an art song. The structural foundation of the song is repetition, so as to transmediate Durrell's literary devices to provide a sense of echo within the composition. For example, the piano starts the song alone by anticipating the first notes of the vocal line. It is also interesting to note that Southam pays extra attention to the word "unbeckonable" by making the singer carefully and markedly sing every syllable before ending with an elongation of the word "bird," thus underlining Durrell's masterful play of sound and meaning.

4. Conclusion

Overall, Lawrence Durrell's poetry—and all of his writing indeed—is deeply musical and he constructs his verses in a very minutely and architectural way employing techniques which saturate his poems with a musicality hard to escape. In the poems examined in this article, Durrell explores the concept of nostalgia, as there is a profound feeling of longing for a lost country (Greece) which serves as catalyst for meditations on the present, the cosmos, and human relations, especially towards nature. And, to do so, Durrell goes back to the Greek roots of poetry, to a time where poetry and music were indistinguishable. In the best of ancient Greek tradition, Durrel was a poet but also a musician.

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As a musician, Durrell's friend and composer Wallace Southam transmediates the poet's musicality in his verses and plays with the rhythm, providing listeners with sometimes more melancholic renditions that convey hopelessness, and more tense musical rhythms, where the singing voice, counterpointed by the piano, strengthens the anxiety of the poems. Throughout this analysis it has been noted how in these musical settings, Southam strives to transmediate Durrell's words in musical terms, by transferring the haunting atmosphere and poignant emotions of the poet's words. The obscure symbolism of Durrell's verses translates itself into a music full of pathos. For that purpose, Southam employs similar techniques in music to mirror Durrell's poetical language and devices: *ritornello*, *crescendo*, repetition and variation, tone, and mood. It is highly interesting that, for this aim, Southam decided on poems with a powerful Greek essence, where Durrell explores its land and history, in order to provide music awash with a sense of sorrow and darkness, truly capturing Durrell's nostalgic feeling for Greece—his lost country. Perhaps Southam also felt nostalgic for the country he had lived in and shared Durrell's melancholy and, thus, he was drawn to these Hellenic verses overflowing a yearning for a lost time in dual tension between the past and the present, a tension which is evident in Southam's compositions and his often-clashing melodies between voice and instruments. Both in the poems and the musical transmediations, Greece comes across as a more than a mere spatial reference, but as a living thing which is given a voice, and which acts as a springboard for their own creative and artistic imagination.

Fortunately, Southam's compositions are not the only musical transmediations of Durrell's poetry, as other composers such as Anthony Powers with his *Memorials of Sleep: Seven Songs to Poems by Lawrence Durrell* (2000), Francis Routh and his *Songs of Lawrence Durrell* (1996), or Lennox Berkeley and his *Autumn's Legacy Op .58* (1963) have felt impelled by the poet's masterful use of language and vivid imagery to adapt his words into musical language. Very thought-provoking is the fact that all these composers seem to feel attracted to the same poems time and time again. Yet the aim of this article was to shed light upon a Sunday composer (as he liked to call himself), since his friendship with Durrell and his almost complete absence in the archive make

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him a very interesting case study. He also was the first (at least on record) to venture to set to music these captivating poems by Durrell, making him very worthy of our attention and worthy to be rescued from oblivion.

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