



LAWRENCE
DURRELL

The Fruitful
Discontent
of the Word

A FURTHER COLLECTION
OF POEMS

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AUTUMN LADY: NAXOS

Under spiteful skies go sailing on and on,
All canvas soaking and all iron rusty,
Frail as a gnat, but peerless in her sadness,
My poor ship christened by an ocean blackness,
Locked into cloud or planet-sharing night.

The primacy of longing she established.
They called her Autumn Lady, with two wide
Aegean eyes beneath the given name,
Sea-stressed, complete, a living wife.

She'll sink at moorings like my life did once,
In a night of piercing squalls, go swaying down,
In an island without gulls, wells, walls,
In a time of need, all stations fading, fading.

She will lie there in the calm cathedrals
Of the blood's sleep, not speaking of love,
Or the last graphic journeys of the mind.
Let tides drum on those unawakened flanks
Whom all the soft analysis of sleep will find.

from *Sicilian Carousel*

LAWRENCE DURRELL (1912–1990), although best known for his novel sequences (such as *The Alexandria Quartet* and *The Avignon Quintet*) and his “travel” writing (such as *Prospero’s Cell*, *Reflections on a Marine Venus* and *Bitter Lemons*), thought of himself first and foremost as a poet. The comprehensive *Collected Poems 1931–1974*, published in 1980 by Faber and Faber, was compiled before some of his most distinctive later poetry became generally available. This collection seeks to supplement the *Collected Poems* with poems selected from Durrell’s later works, *Sicilian Carousel* and *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*. This edition also makes available poems from the 1969 prose and poetry collection *Spirit of Place* and the series of novels known as *The Avignon Quintet* (1974–1985). The poems from these four works have never been available separately before and this whole collection reflects not only the breadth of Durrell’s poetry but also many of the ideas which most engaged his creative life.

The editor, PETER BALDWIN, a retired solicitor, is a collector of Lawrence Durrell’s work and under his Delos Press imprint he has published a number of books by and about Durrell. For him, as for many others, a few minutes in the company of Durrell through the medium of the *Collected Poems* is an enriching experience, and he has put together this new volume to broaden that experience.