



The Lawrence Durrell Society

HERALD

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James R. Nichols
THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Sadly enough we have gone to the well (fount, spring, what have you) and the well has failed us. The Modern Language Association turned down our application for allied organization status and told us to use the special session process as we have in the past. So be it.

One might be tempted to suggest that we went to the well once too often, but this was our first time and most likely just the opposite is true. If the well is dry then, in this case, we must go back to it again and again, for knowledge (realization, enlightenment) unlike water does not flow easily at first and must be forced into useful shape. This must be only the beginning. And we must not argue that this has happened only to us or delude ourselves that it may not happen again and again. Clearly the MLA needs to be educated and we've just the organization to proffer aid.

Our request was not approved because the Lawrence Durrell Society appeared "to be rather small and limited in its activities." Evidently three conferences, our Proceedings, the Quarterly and the Herald, and members on five continents were not good enough. Some of the presently "allied" groups cannot claim as much. But that's neither here nor there. Justice has always been as equally intractable as knowledge. The good fight is our business. We've asked the MLA to be more specific.

Your Executive Board has discussed the problem and decided to update and resubmit our proposal to the MLA each year. We hope, as our numbers, conferences, and publications grow, so will the MLA's enlightenment. We will also attempt to marshal a more copious and convincing set of facts for presentation. How many libraries

receive the Quarterly? Does yours? On what panels and in what conferences has Durrell received mention? Can you send us the programs? We will also seek authorization for a special session in 1985 at Chicago. Wish Carol Peirce luck; next month she will be sending a proposal for a session on Durrell. The MLA wants us to "demonstrate the caliber of the programs" we can formulate. Susan tells me that they take attendance. Can you be in Chicago in December 1985? Or if not, recommend the Durrell session to a friend?

One way or another! Sometime! We'll get what we're after! I know that's hardly a new or inspiring declaration, but what the hell else can you do with bureaucracies?

Nancy Lewis

FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Greetings to Durrellians from the deep snows of Wisconsin (scarcely a Durrellian landscape).

My husband, daughter and I (with lots of company in and out) managed to spend the four weeks between semesters in Florida, on Sanibel Island. I wager that any island seems more Durrellian than the mainland. Sanibel is a great spot--especially for bird-watching (we don't have roseate spoonbills in our moraine). On Sanibel, I went one step further with islanding and re-read Bitter Lemons (can it really be almost twenty years since I first read it?).

My idea was that this book would, in a sense, be one of the best places to find Durrell talking politics. It is, and I am in the process of working out some ideas on why politics and art seem, for Durrell, to be a bad mix. The core of it is that when people give themselves over to political ideology, they lose their personal fluidity. When ideology takes over, people are, in Durrell's words, "frozen into immobility." Durrell certainly strikes me as a person who treasures fluidity and the creative burst in a new direction far too much to be one who sees any value in holding to a party line. He savors the quirky, the unexpected, and even the ludicrous too much to become the sort of ideologue--right or left--whose utopia is Newtonian in its efficiency and regularity. More of this anon.

Apropos of the Quintet: Bitter Lemons shows us that Durrell was interested at least as early as his years on Cyprus in the Knights Templars and their "defection from Christendom" and their interest in "assimilating Eastern rites and superstitions." Interesting to see how this interest in the Templars as the link between East and West has been percolating.

Finally, I certainly share what must be the entire membership's disappointment in the MLA decision not to grant allied organization status. But, at any rate, we all know that we're a good Society. Right? Happy Spring.

Gregory Dickson

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

Since I have received a few checks for membership renewal, it must be time for a reminder: our membership year runs from September through August, not January through December. Those of you who have sent me checks in 1985 are now members through August, 1986; the rest of you will not be hearing from me about dues until around the start of the fall term.

On the subject of dues, Cecile Oumhani has suggested that members who live outside the U. S. be allowed to pay for two years at a time to circumvent the difficulties of foreign money exchange. That sounds like a good idea to me, and if the Executive Board approves it, I will remind all our foreign members of the option come renewal time. One of the difficulties Professor Oumhani had was with the campus post office here. Some time after sending her dues, the check was returned to her with this message: "Lawrence Durrell is not enrolled at Highlands University." That deserves, as Antrobus would say, No Further Comment.

We have two new members to welcome to the Society:

Ms. Candace Fertile
Department of English
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E5
Canada

Professor Anna Lillios
Department of English
University of Iowa
308 English-Philosophy Building
Iowa City, Iowa 52242

and we welcome back a long-time member who rejoins us after spending a year in China:

Professor H. R. Stoneback
Department of English
State University of New York
College at New Paltz
New Paltz, New York 12561.

In her letter applying for membership, Candace Fertile noted the steadily increasing amount of work on Durrell: "When I flung myself with gay abandon into the Ph.D. program, I had no idea there were so many 'Durrellians' out there in the world. I guess it's heart-warming--Mr. D. should certainly be read--but it makes for a lot of criticism to keep up with."

The Society is still receiving compliments on the editing and production of our first On Miracle Ground Proceedings. The credit, of course, goes to Mike Cartwright, who established an admirable standard for future editions. We have a few copies of the book, available for \$8.00 post-paid in the U. S. The slight price increase reflects increased postage.

I think Corinne Alexandre-Garner deserves a Patience Award. When she tried to join the Society, I was in California, so she had to wait six weeks for a reply to her letter. Professor Alexandre-Garner also ordered a copy of the Proceedings of OMG I and paid for the air-mail postage to France. I sent it off immediately but it never got there. (I asked the post office to search for it. They said it might just as well be a foul-up in the French postal service, but I think we in the U. S. know better.) I sent another copy off to her last fall, but that was about four months after her request. It's a good thing Durrellians aren't the sort to let time bother them, or post offices deter them.

Lately, I have received several inquiries about Deus Loci subscriptions. Remember, a Society member automatically receives Deus Loci, and since both editors, Jay Brigham and Ian MacNiven, have an up-to-date list of members, you have nothing to worry about. We will all receive the next issue as soon as it rolls off the press. The editors apologize for the delay in Deus Loci production, and hope to get it back onto schedule soon.

Finally, I now have a telephone in my office: the number is Ext.

My home phone remains the same:

SOCIETY NOTICES

On Miracle Ground IV:

Miraculously, Lawrence Durrell has accepted Michael Begnal's invitation to attend OMG IV: The Fourth International Lawrence Durrell Conference to be held in 1986 at Pennsylvania State University! In his letter to Begnal, Durrell stated: "I'll speak if you wish, explain everything!"

In January, the Conference Committee (Begnal and Jim Nichols) and three-fourths of the Executive Board (Ian MacNiven, Nichols, and Carol Peirce) met at State College, Penn. They chose 11-12 April for the conference date (a weekend when there is no home football game at Penn State), and Cynthia and Michael Begnal offered to host a Society meeting at their home on the morning of 13 April.

In about a month you should receive the Call for Papers. But you do not have to limit yourself to topics listed therein. Begnal and Nichols will be happy to consider any ideas you have for papers, discussion groups, seminars, etc. Please forward your suggestions to Michael H. Begnal, Dept. of English, Pennsylvania State University, 117 Burrowes Building, University Park, Penn. 16802.

This should be a supercolossal conference: a Durrell conference with Durrell, and the entire Avignon Quintet to contemplate!

The British Point Of View:

This Herald contains Peter Baldwin's first column for the newsletter. The editors are happy to print his "Views From Pudding Island" and hope he makes this a regular contribution.

We would also be pleased to give our Australian, Egyptian, French, and Irish members "equal time." And why not our Canadian and American members too? What are your thoughts about Durrell? Do you--may you?--teach Durrell at your school? Has your area's Moral Majority put him on The List yet? Or is literature a Waste of Time when there are Important Things to teach? The president of SUNY/Maritime College, where Ian MacNiven teaches, recently sent a letter to the Humanities Department saying: "I strongly believe we need less Shakespeare and Lawrence Durrell and more basic English." Since MacNiven is the only one in the department who teaches Durrell, he is a bit paranoid about this. But perhaps other school presidents are subject to such aberrations?

When you have finished a good Tavel or are pleasantly fatigued from a lovely walk in the woods, and your thoughts turn literary and focus upon Durrell, jot them down and share them with the LDS.

Research And Writing And Taxes:

U. S. members of the LDS should receive with this newsletter a copy of a case in the U. S. Court of Appeals that deals with the expenses a college professor may deduct for maintaining a home office used exclusively to do most of the research and

writing expected of him/her. This information was provided by Don Bixler, one of our lawyer members, whom we thank for this tax tip. If any non-U. S. members of the Society are intrigued by the matter of taxation and would like a copy of this case, we would be glad to send one on request.

Herald No. 5:

The next regular issue of the Herald is scheduled for 15 October. The editors feel that an October--rather than a September--publication date will give Society members a chance to get resettled after their summer wanderings (physical or mental) before we request contributions.

However, you may--indeed are encouraged to--send the editors any information any time you wish. And if there is important news to share before the autumn, we will print a supplementary number.

Please keep us in mind and note down any Durrell and Durrell-related information you come upon. Remember we welcome news of your non-Durrell as well as of your Durrell activities. Send material to any of the editors:

Greg Dickson

Susan MacNiven

Wayne Markert

Peter Baldwin

CONVERSATIONS WITH ANOTHER ASS,
OR VIEWS FROM PUDDING ISLAND

Lawrence Durrell may have forsaken his native land at an early stage in his career, but he has never forsaken English as his written tongue or England as the country for the principal publication of his books. My local bookshop has a special section for Faber titles and Durrell still takes up most shelf space for any single author, although William Golding is now a very close runner-up since his Nobel Prize. Not surprisingly, the individual volumes of The Alexandria Quartet are regularly reprinted in paperback. The recent provision of completely redesigned jackets by David Gentleman makes them a most attractive set; Gentleman's imaginative evocation of the setting of the stories coupled with his singularly distinctive light brushwork complements well the romantic vein of Durrell's writing. The Black Book has also recently received the Gentleman treatment, but to much less effect. Nevertheless, this book remains in print and is readily available. Significant as this

novel was in Durrell's own growth as a writer, it surely relies too heavily on the influences of Henry Miller and surrealism; further, even for Durrell, the prose is far too lush. Its significance lies in the departure from the traditional narrative of the first two novels and a move to the coupling of narrative tension and ideas.

It is difficult to judge the impact of the Quincunx novels on Durrell's sales. So often the paperback editions are not even carried in stock and thus are not available to the impulse bookbuyer. Both Monsieur and Livia have recently been reprinted in paperback and I hope in a future report to consider the comparative sales of Durrell's books. Needless to say, the Greek island books are almost staple fare for holiday makers to those islands, although a work colleague not long back from a holiday in Corfu tells me that Larry's seaboard home (Athenaios' house, now a taverna) is still introduced by local guides as the home of the famous Gerald Durrell.

Critical response to the Quintet volumes to date has been rather mixed in the U. K., depending, I suspect, on whether or not the reviewer likes the book. If one accepts the premiss that from the point of view of the bookbuying public Durrell's work appeals to the middlebrow bourgeois reader, then one readily sees the appeal of The Alexandria Quartet, set in a romantic vein. The reader quickly identifies with the narrator Darley in his congress with such beauties as Melissa, Justine and the ineffable goddess Clea. I wonder what Durrell thinks of Robert Graves' Muse, the White Goddess? In the Quartet, our authorial sage points us in the direction of a proper "happy ending": a way towards the light, an integration of the whole personality.

From Tunc onwards, Durrell has become more concerned with the fate of our own wide world and particularly the very culture in which we live and which determines all the details of our lives, down to the colour of our socks and the type of contraceptive we use. Could it be that the average reader finds these "culture libretti" too much to rouse his interest? Our nuclear age, if nothing else, emphasises the inability of the individual to change world events. We see and can react only to the aesthetic culture we perceive around us since we at least have some chance of influencing that. Although Durrell never preaches, he is proposing religious ideas which, because such ideas are at once contradictory to our aestheticism, are fated to be of limited appeal to the usual novel reader, who, after all, is really looking for at best a good yarn. Whilst to many readers an interest in Eastern religions is still seen as trendy or esoteric, Durrell, I think, urges us toward a view of increasing interest--a synthesis of Oriental and Occidental beliefs. It is through his use of the occult that we are forced into an awareness of materialism (and its relationship to aestheticism) and thence can break its limitations and move into the metaphysical

domain where we start our search for wholeness.

For the Quincunx, time will tell. In my recent reading of the four Quintet novels to date, I have come across two passages worth quoting, one relevant to our hopes for the final novel of the series, the other . . . well, I'm not sure except that I would like to quote it:

"If we could have a summer or two of peace and quietness one might commit another novel, a votive joy, a moonshot into the future, an Indian novel" (Blanford musing in Sebastian, Faber, pp. 200-201).

"You will find only the 'five-stranded' Tibetan breath, the 'mount' or 'steed' of white light, and a titanic silence with no geography. A tall tree with the sap arrested in its veins" (Blanford speaking in Constance, Faber, pp. 353-354).

Birmingham, England
13th January 1985

PEOPLE, PLACES AND PUBLICATIONS

* In Paris in early December, LAWRENCE DURRELL, DAVID GASCOYNE, and ALFRED PERLÈS had a reunion. On 4 December at Shakespeare and Co., Durrell celebrated the recent appearance of the French translation of Constance, and Perlès the new editions of Sentiments limitrophes and Le Quatuor en Ré-Majeur (first published in 1935 and 1938 respectively). CORINNE ALEXANDRE-GARNER was present at the book-signing, and she conducted a long interview with Durrell; part of it was printed in Le Nouvel Observateur [see RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY OR CONCERNING LAWRENCE DURRELL]. After the interview, Corinne joined Anne and Alfred Perlès and Durrell for drinks at Le Coupole.

* The Times Literary Supplement of 27 July 1984 advertized that Lawrence Durrell's "extensive Archive Reference Library, paintings, notebooks, various manuscripts, memoranda" were for sale. Does any Society member know of a library with funds that would be interested in purchasing this collection of Durrelliana and keeping it intact?

* The January 1985 PMLA contained REED WAY DASENBROCK'S article, "The Petrarchan Context of Spenser's Amoretti." Another article by Reed, "Synge's Irish Renaissance Petrarchism," will appear in Modern Philology this year. In April, the Johns Hopkins University Press will publish his book, The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting.

* WILLIAM GODSHALK, JAMES NICHOLS, and SUSAN and IAN MacNIVEN dined together in Washington, D. C. in late December when they ran into each other during the Modern Language Association Convention. PETER CHRISTENSEN and EDWARD HUNGERFORD were spotted earlier at the convention, and the MacNivens were sorry not to be able to find them for this impromptu and unofficial Durrell Society dinner of Chinese food and French wine.

* Just after we went to press last autumn, a letter from FRANK KERSNOWSKI reached Greg: "I'm on leave this term and, obviously, in Ireland. My work on contemporary Irish lit progresses--though slowly. Interviews take more time than books, and my work here is based on interviews.

"I've been in correspondence with Durrell and will be meeting with him, Perlès, and LeCarrière in Paris about Oct. 1. The French edition of Constance is coming out in concert with a new critical study of Durrell and a new book by Perlès. We'll be there for 10 days. Hopefully, I will be able to extend my essays in the direction of a book.

"Regards to any LDS members who cross your path."

We hear that Durrell very much enjoyed the visit with Frank and his wife, and that there was a fascinating exchange of ideas about Irish and other literatures.

• JOHN LENZI has sent the promised report about his strange experience at Montségur:

"Last July in the South of France, one of Durrell's more sinister themes in The Avignon Quintet--the Nazis and the Gnostics--stepped boldly out of fiction and into reality.

"This event took place while I was exploring Le Château de Montségur with a group of friends. Montségur, the last bastion of the Cathars, fell after an eight-month siege in March of 1244 when 205 'parfaits'--the initiated--marched in mass suicide into a gigantic funeral pyre. Legend has it that before the suicide took place the 'treasure of the Cathars' had been removed from the dramatic fortress that forms a perfect crown on the pinnacle of Montségur--La Montagne Sacrée.

"After making the 1207-meter climb up to the ruin, my friends and I stared in disbelief as we entered the walls. There in the middle of the ruin stood a grand piano! Two men appeared and attached ropes and a net to the piano and warned everyone with sign language to take cover. Suddenly a helicopter flew over the castle and, hovering overhead, dropped a line which they attached to the piano, and flew off.

"During this operation, I noticed an older man with silver hair and steely blue eyes watching from a distance. He dismissed the two men when the piano had disappeared into the sky. I approached him and inquired if he knew what was going on. He replied by asking me if I was German. I told him I was an American. He looked at me for a moment and then said:

'Last night at midnight a cycle of Wagnerian songs was performed. It was a concert Hitler had planned, but did not live to see fulfilled.'

He then walked away.

"Later, we were exploring rooms that we entered through a break in the exterior wall. A friend scaled up onto another level where a staircase had apparently fallen away. He called to me excitedly. There among the stones was fresh cement inscribed: 1244 - 1984. The numeral '4' in both dates was written in an angular form--like stylized lightning bolts--made infamous by the Nazis."

* During the holidays CAROL and BROOKE PEIRCE visited Egypt. Here is Carol's account of their "Pilgrimage to Alexandria":

"As far as we could see, to every horizon, lay the desert; forty miles our pilot said. There was one long streak of green; that was the Nile.

"As we circled--and we circled for a full half hour--Cairo looked like the ruins of some wonderful ancient civilization, ochre and burnt orange. Brooke and I had arrived. This was the true beginning of our trip to Egypt to explore the world of Durrell's Alexandria Quartet. Of course I was excited by, and somewhat terrified of, the real Middle East.

"Once landed, I could feel the excitement increase and the terror vanish. My first impression was of the amazing diversity of people--and of clothing, ways of travelling, city scenes. We crossed Cairo to a beautiful hotel just beneath the pyramids. There we met our fascinating tour guide, Zeinab (who we later decided had the very profile of Cleopatra), and our fellow tour mates. For the next two days we saw pyramids--the big three of Giza, the even more ancient step pyramid, a gigantic lone one in the distance, numberless charming little ones. And many sphinxes of varied kinds appeared too, as well as the most famous. I had not imagined so many pyramids and sphinxes existed. Equally stunning was a first fact of Egypt Drive along a road. On one side you'll see a prospect as lush as southern Florida, with palms, flowers, water. On the other side will be solid desert with not the slightest sign of green. A clean-cut line seems to divide the two.

"Our trip was to include several days in Alexandria; we were to approach it by the desert road from Cairo and return by way of the delta. As we drove through the Sahara, we looked into a soft mist which was lying over everything. The mist, our guide said, is part of the morning in the winter desert. The Egyptians are working to reclaim parts of the desert. A green oasis, Sadat City, begun under Sadat and now expanding, showed the modern industry of the country. So too did the industrial, busy city of Alexandria.

"And yet we found another Alexandria too. Our first view across Lake Mareotis was of a gleaming white city--almost seeming a mirage after the mist of the desert. That first sight beyond the lake was totally different from that of Cairo; it was the white city of my imagination. Then I saw the stacks and the rising smoke; it was the modern industrial center I had read of. Next we plunged into the narrow, winding streets, filled with 'five races, five languages, a dozen creeds,' the great 'wine-press,' as Durrell called it. I felt I really was on miracle ground.

"Everything in Alexandria was better than I expected. Everyone I've met who's known Alexandria, even Zee our guide, has always said, 'It used to be so beautiful but isn't anymore; it used to be the way Durrell described it--not now.' Yet driving those 'dust-tormented' streets, scene after scene of his Alexandria flashed by. The old men and boys still play at backgammon in the sidewalk cafés, pigeons

spill out of opened baskets into the street, great piles of oranges are plentiful on the fruit stands. And when we stopped for lunch at one of Alexandria's best restaurants, we were ushered onto the balcony section of a charming, old, wood-paneled room. As I looked down to the tables beneath me, covered with white linen and shining silver, rich with eastern dishes, and each with a single rose in a vase, I saw Balthazar below. He was simply there, at a table with two young friends. I hardly dared to look. In a little while he rose and left, but I had one of my most memorable moments to carry away.

"Everything about the city was different from Cairo, still subtly Greek, more reminiscent of 'old' nineteenth-century Athens, but with its own incredible aura and whispers of its Ptolemaic past. Pompey's Pillar was more impressive than I expected; I could easily visualize the Temple of Serapis on its hill. The 'wind-swept' Corniche was far more beautiful; out from its shore I could almost see Cleopatra's island palace. The catacombs gave one a sense of hidden ways beneath the city, of, somewhere, the tomb of Alexander. Our hotel balcony at Montazah looked out on what E. M. Forster described as the 'circular bay with its fantastic promontories and backwaters.' Add that, as the sun set, flocks of gulls spiraled up and 'glittered like confetti as they turned their wings to the light.' Another echo of the Quartet and another memory to carry from Alexandria.

"During one day we set off to explore the area of the Soma, to lunch at the Hotel Cecil, and to spend some hours in the Greco-Roman Museum. Each has its own special association. One member of our tour group who had taught in Alexandria in the twenties was sure his old barbershop, 'at the corner of Fuad I and Nebi Daniel,' was Mnemjian's. We set out to refind it; sadly it is gone forever. But a young man stepped out on a balcony way above--and I thought maybe it was Darley, or slip back a few more years and I might have been watching Cavafy. Yet the days of the Cecil's glory seemed long gone too; the entrance was dim and the lunch far from perfect. But the 'long mirror' still gleamed in the dark hallway.

"The Greco-Roman Museum had its special rewards. Among them were two splendid busts of Cleopatra. Most special of all was a group of beautiful Arabian school girls who surrounded me, asked many questions, were thrilled that I loved Egypt and Alexandria, and each, fragrant with light perfume, kissed me on both cheeks as I left. Of such stuff--including the haunting call to prayer--are my recollections of Alexandria made. They enrich my reading of both Durrell and Cavafy.

"After leaving the 'great white city' by a road through the fertile delta, we took an overnight train to Luxor. There we boarded the Osiris, one of the Nile cruise ships. In the next five days, we sailed into ancient Egypt. The people along the banks, living as they have for centuries, ride camels alone or in caravans, turn water wheels, wash clothing on the rocks of

the river. More and more brilliant as one moves up the Nile, colors and faces shine and laugh. And within the tombs from three and four thousand years ago the same colors, the same faces glow on the rock. We drove to the Valley of the Kings on Christmas Day. Here, truly, as Howard Carter said on looking into Tutankhamum's tomb, are 'wonderful things.'

"Echoes of the Alexandrian Ptolemies abound here and even further to the north. A giant wall relief on the Temple of Hathor at Dendera depicts Cleopatra and Caesarion. The beautiful temple at Philae, reflected in the waters of the Nile, mainly built by the Ptolemies, is dedicated to the goddess Isis. It was her 'house,' and her cult continued here long after Christianity had come. This temple, in all Upper Egypt, seems to me closest to the spirit of Cleopatra and of Alexandria. And Aswan, elegant and so sophisticated in its winter season, seems a splendid place to end an Egyptian journey. By plane then, we returned to Cairo and a last long day bucking the astonishing traffic and exploring the magnificent museum.

"At home once more, I think of Durrell, of Durrell's Egypt, and especially, of Durrell's Alexandria. I can hardly wait to return. Unvisited remain the Western Harbor, the Rue Lepsius, the site of the Pharos; so much to see, so much yet to experience. I too, like Durrell, am under the spell of Egypt and of Alexandria, 'the capital of Memory.'"

* Another travelling Society member is H. R. STONEBACK, who sent the following report: "Durrell in China?"

"I recently returned from a year abroad, from a seven-month Fulbright sojourn in China where I was teaching, primarily Faulkner and Hemingway, at Peking University. Now and then, especially when the subject touched on matters of place, I would bring Durrell into the discussion. It became clear that Chinese students, teachers, literary scholars and writers are not at all familiar with Durrell's work. Several professors of literature told me that none of his work had been translated. (Such information is, however, extremely difficult to verify.) Since my work in China included consultation on a number of major translation projects, in which it was my business to name important literary works published in the West since 1949 which should now--in the present exciting literary atmosphere of post-Cultural Revolution China--be translated, I often mentioned Durrell's name and saw that it was added to the appropriate lists. A time or two, the response I received bordered vaguely on the apprehension that his work might be perilously close to that ill-defined terrain of 'spiritual pollution.' That fear seems to have receded by now; however, at the moment, I've yet to hear that any translations of Durrell are in progress in China. Yet there is a great deal of translation activity going on all around the country, and it may well be that Durrell is now in process of translation and publication. Still, the question mark--'Durrell in China?'--must be retained.

"As for Durrell elsewhere, it can be stated with certainty that Durrell is in the Soviet Union. When we left Peking, we took the ultimate train ride--seven days and seven nights across Mongolia, Siberia, Russia--into Moscow. The most striking thing, perhaps, was the sheer weight of place, that vast brooding immensity of Siberia, and the foregrounded, charged placeliness of the log cabin villages in the wilderness. Several nights, very late, I had good literary conversations with one of the Russian trainmen. In his narrow compartment, over sausage and sturgeon and vodka, he played for me his treasured tape recordings of Faulkner reading from his works, reading his Nobel Prize speech, etc. We talked about the spirit of place; he spoke of Sholokov and Faulkner and of the mysterious land unreeling beyond the train window. I, too, spoke of Faulkner, and of the American--or Southern--sense of place, and I told him about Durrell's notions regarding place, about the deus loci, and a book called Spirit of Place. He was very interested in this, though he had never heard of Durrell. He wrote down some of the titles I gave him on a cigarette wrapper; he underlined three or four times the words Deus Loci. Towards dawn, we bid each other goodnight.

"Since I was on my way to give lectures in Leningrad and Prague and elsewhere, talks in which I planned to allude to various notions about place, I had in my briefcase a xerox copy of some half-dozen key pages from Spirit of Place. I didn't need them--I had most of it by heart anyway--so I took them out of the file and folded them into my pocket, intending to give them to the trainman when next I encountered him on the long ride, the long, long train. As I navigated the swaying corridors the next day I didn't see him in his compartment. He still wasn't there at dinner-time, as we rolled through the vague hills known as the Urals, crossing from Asia into Europe. Late that night, however, I passed in the corridor and he shouted me into his compartment. We downed a ceremonial vodka or two. Then he said: 'I have been thinking all day about this matter of place and about this writer, this Mr. Deus Loci you spoke of' Before I left, I gave him the pages from Spirit of Place.

"And so, dear reader, when next you travel on the Trans-Siberian Railway, do not be surprised if you encounter a cheerfully literary Russian trainman who will tell you all about the country you pass through, all about place, and all about the famous British writer, Mr. Deus Loci."

* We have received new addresses for three Society members: George Cleyet has moved to 4915 Los Feliz Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90027 (phone: 213-669-0921); John Noel Lenzi is at 165 West 20th Street, Apt. 6-A, New York, New York 10011; and Susan Vander Closter now teaches in the Liberal Arts Dept., Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island 02903 and lives at 40 Evereh Avenue, #2, Providence, Rhode Island 02906.

Susan S. MacNiven

RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY
OR CONCERNING LAWRENCE DURRELL

* Lawrence Durrell's "Lamas in a French Forest," in the Telegraph Sunday Magazine (London), No. 421 (18 November 1984), pp. 28-34, is accompanied by marvellous photographs by Graham Harrison. There are pictures of the Buddhist center, the lamas, and Durrell with the Tibetan Lama Sherab.

* Constance, ou Les Pratiques solitaires, translated from the English by Paule Guivarch, was published by Gallimard in October 1984.

* The issues of Arts: ILEA [Inner London Education Authority] Arts Review in which "From the Elephant's Back" appears are Numbers 1 ([January 1984?], p. 5), 2 (February 1984, p. 3), and 3 (Summer 1984, p. 3).

* In a New York Times Book Review (28 October 1984, p. 21) advertisement for Shadows & Light, a novel by Francesca Stanfill, Durrell is quoted calling this author "a born writer."

* Remember that Quinx, or The Ripper's Tale, the final volume of The Avignon Quintet, will be published in London by Faber and Faber in May. It will sell for about \$8.95 and can be purchased from Bernard Stone, The Turret Book Shop, 42 Lamb's Conduit St., London WC1N 3LJ.

INTERVIEWS WITH LAWRENCE DURRELL:

* Jean-Luc Moreau and Jean-Didier Wagneur question Durrell about Constance, Le Quintette d'Avignon, and his life in Sommières in "Du Côté de Sommières" (Paris Ce Soir, 26 January 1985, p. 14). An excellent photograph of Durrell appears with this article.

* LDS member Corinne Alexandre-Garner interviews Durrell in the 4 January 1985 issue of Le Nouvel Observateur ("Lettres Arts Spectacles" section, pp. 60-61). In this fascinating interview, "Lawrence Durrell: 'Je vais devenir une nonne tibétaine . . .,'" Durrell talks about painting, women, his second wife Eve, Freud and Lacan, his character Constance, androgyny, children, Buddhism, and the termination of his novel writing. With the article is a haunting photograph of Durrell.

* Durrell discusses his life and works, Buddhism and yoga with Jean-Pierre Graf and Bernard-Claude Gauthier in "Lawrence d'arabesques" published in Construire (Spreitenbach, Switzerland), No. 2 of 9 January 1985, pp. 17 & 19. A photo of Durrell in front of his home in Sommières accompanies this interview, which is to be followed by another: "Creuser la mort poétiquement."

* Mathieu Lindon interviews Durrell and Alfred Perlès on the occasion of their reunion at Shakespeare and Co. (Paris) on 4 December 1984. This conversation about their early days in Paris, "Lawrence et Alfred vont en rétro," is in Liberation, 10 December 1984, p. 34. Corinne Alexandre-Garner attended the book signing; she is present in the photograph of Durrell and Perlès and their admirers inside the bookstore. There are two other photos: Durrell and Perlès on the Blvd. Raspail and at the Dôme.

* Jean-Maurice de Montremy and Durrell speak about The Black Book, the Quartet, and the Quintet in "Le Roman comme moulin à prière" (La Croix, 1 December 1984, p. 24).

* Maurice Rheims interviews Durrell and Robert Doisneau photographs the occasion in Femme of November 1984.

* Jean Montalbetti and Durrell discuss Durrell's life, his views of religion and death, and his "oeuvre complète, c'est-à-dire une vie artistique qui commence avec Le Carnet noir et se termine avec Le Quintet d'Avignon" in "Lawrence Durrell en dix mouvements" in the Magazine Littéraire (Paris), No. 210 (September 1984), pp. 78-85. Four striking photographs of Durrell are included with this fine interview.

• The Egoïste [mentioned in Herald No. 2] with the Michel Braudeau-Lawrence Durrell interview, "Après ça, j'aurai tout dit," is Number 8 of June 1984, pp. 50-52.

* LDS member Corinne Alexandre-Garner's book, Le Quatuor d'Alexandrie: Fragmentation et écriture, should be published this month by Peter Lang (Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York), Publications Universitaires Européennes.

* In Le Monde of 19 October 1984, pp. 24-25, is the article "Larry et Alf, les amis de Henry."

* In the first paragraph of "Haven with Occupational Hazards," an article in the Times (London) of 13 October 1984 about Turkish Cyprus ten years after the invasion of the island by Turkey, Keith Spence mentions Durrell: "You can sit beside it [Bellapais Abbey] and drink under the Tree of Idleness, as Lawrence Durrell did when he fell in love with Cyprus 30 years ago."

* "Durrell Is Top of the Readers' Pops," in the Middlesex Chronicle (Hounslow) of 23 March 1984, states "The Alexandrian [sic] Quartet has been voted the most popular book in the borough by Richmond's library users. It heads a list of 13 English language works written since the Second World War which book borrowers voted for earlier this year." This vote was in reaction to a top 13 list produced by the Book Marketing Council in 1983, which many people objected to--and which did not contain any Durrell. The Council's top 13 list and two new lists chosen by Times readers--"The Top 13" and "The Next Top 13"--appear in Liz Jobey, "And Now, A Really Good Read . . ." in The Sunday Times, 4 December 1983, p. 35. The Alexandria Quartet is 13th in "The Top 13" list tabulated by the Times.

* In Ninety-Nine Novels (Summit Books, 1984), Anthony Burgess has an essay on The Alexandria Quartet, which he includes among "the outstanding achievements of fiction in the English language since World War II." The quotation is from Anthony Burgess, "Modern Novels: The 99 Best," The New York Times Book Review, 5 February 1984, pp. 1, 36-37.

* The British Book News of December 1983 contains a short, favorable review of Sebastian by Ian Scott-Kilvert.

* Tony Smith summarizes the first four books of The Avignon Quintet in "Durrell's Quincunx" (British Medical Journal, 17 March 1984), and then compares it to Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose. He obviously derives great enjoyment from both Durrell and Eco.

* Vladimir Volkoff's book about Durrell, Lawrence le Magnifique (Julliard/L'Age d'Homme, 1984), has been reviewed by the following:

Michel Boujailles in "Durrell, le classique de l'An 2000" (Paris Ce Soir, 26 January 1985, p. 15);

P.-J. Franceschini in "Lawrence le Magnifique selon Vladimir Volkoff" (Le Monde, 19 October 1984, p. 24);

and Alain Garric in "Lawrence par Volkoff" (Magazine Littéraire, No. 210 [September 1984], p. 80).

(Our thanks to Corinne Alexandre-Garner, Peter Baldwin, Denise Boucher, Mary Mollo, Marie-Anne Pini, and Bernard Stone for sending information for this column and for the following one listing reviews of Constance.)

BIBLIOPHILES' SHELF

GREG DICKSON reports that last autumn Edward R. Hamilton, Bookseller (Falls Village, Connecticut 06031-0358) was selling Literary Lifelines: The Richard Aldington-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence, edited by Ian S. MacNiven and Harry T. Moore (The Viking Press, 1981), for \$3.98 a copy. The bookshop also had some hardbacks by Gerald Durrell. These books may still be available. Hamilton charges \$3.00 per order for handling and shipping, regardless of the number of books purchased. A catalogue will be sent on request.

Susan S. MacNiven

REVIEWS OF CONSTANCE,
OU LES PRATIQUES SOLITAIRES

* De Cessole, Bruno. "Lawrence Durrell existe, je l'a rencontré." Magazine Hebdo, 23 November 1984, pp. 68-73. While De Cessole greets the appearance of the French translation of Constance, he devotes his article to a clever biographical sketch of Durrell and to a comparison of The Alexandria Quartet, Durrell's "roman cartésien," and The Avignon Quintet, his "roman tibétain."

• Ducout, Françoise. "Les Diables d'Avignon." Elle, 12 November 1984. In her favorable reception of Constance, Ducout stresses the Oriental influences in The Avignon Quintet and Durrell's early and lasting ties to Tibet.

* Franceschini, P.-J. "Durrell et son immense quintette loufoque." Le Monde, 19 October 1984, p. 24. After reading the third Quincunx novel, Franceschini believes one can predict that The Avignon Quintet will be "Un immense roman débridé, initiatique et loufoque, débordant de sagesse, de fantaisie et d'aventures. Les mille et une nuits de l'âme moderne saisie par le mal du cosmos."

* La Combe, Marc. "Constance." Le Revue des Phénomènes, December 1984, p. 102. La Combe takes exception to Durrell's fictional presentation of the history of Avignon: "C'est avec une hargne farouche que l'auteur décrit 'son Avignon' défiguré par la guerre et les bombardements--en totale invraisemblance avec la réalité historique!" But he reviews Constance sympathetically and states that in this third volume of the Quintet "le ton est irrévocablement donné: déroutant, iconoclaste mais plein d'humour et de tendresse."

* Lemaire, Gérard-Georges. "Le Quintette de Lawrence Durrell." Paris Ce Soir, 26 January 1985, p. 15. Lemaire comments upon Durrell's writing through quotations from Vladimir Volkoff and William S. Burroughs in this announcement of the appearance of Constance.

* de Montremy, Jean-Maurice. "Lawrence Durrell et variations: Avignon, troisième mouvement." La Croix, 1 December 1984, p. 24. Over-all, Montremy has high praise for Constance and the Quintet to date; but Durrell does have a weak point, his treatment of eroticism: "Avec les développements sur l'érotisme--encore plus naïvement pubertaires que ceux de D. H. Lawrence, et d'un mauvais goût lyrique pour le moins pataud--ces discours constituent la faiblesse de ces merveilleux livres."

• Neuhoff, Eric. "Lawrence Durrell, Constance." Madame Figaro, 8 December 1984, p. 46. This is more a biographical sketch of Durrell than a review of the third book of the Quincunx. Neuhoff quotes Durrell jesting about his purpose in writing Constance: "'Je pense en français et j'écris en anglais. J'essaye de faire le premier roman pour le Marché commun.'"

* Rey, Henri-François. "Journal de Lecture" column reviewing Constance. Magazine Littéraire, No. 213 (December 1984), p. 76. Rey applauds Constance, calling it "Un 'morceau' de Proust, morceau au sens musical, plus une page inspirée d'Eugène Sue. Peut-être là réside l'étrange musique de l'oeuvre de Durrell, musique insinuante et douce, mais aussi discordante qui me fait attendre avec impatience Sebastian."



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