

## THE AVIGNON QUINTET : CLUES FOR A READING

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The weight of the silence when the bombardment ended—that was insupportable, for the shattered fragments of reality reassembled themselves and then one could estimate the result.

(Lawrence Durrell, *Constance*)

When C.P. Snow was asked why he did not mention Lawrence Durrell in his lectures on contemporary English literature, he answered as follows: "Oh yes, he's very talented, of course, but somehow we don't think of him as quite British" (qtd. in Sykes 1964: 148). It is interesting to notice that, in spite of the general acknowledgement of Durrell's work in the fields of poetry and the novel, his assignment to a concrete trend has been, at least, controversial. There are several characteristics which could help us to explain this lack of a unitary criterion among his critics.

Durrell, born in India of Anglo-Irish stock, is a writer who has spent most of his life out of Britain. His attraction to this country is only comparable to a deep dislike of its conventions, an attitude which he himself defines as a "love-hate complex" (in Young 1959: 61). Maybe for this reason,

and like many modernist authors, Durrell seems to need to escape from his country as a creative liberation. In this way, he joins a long tradition of authors who seek in the Mediterranean the vital inspiration which the bourgeois puritanism of the North refuses to give them. A clear reflection of this idea is the image of "the English Death," which recurs in his early works:

*The Black Book* was truly an agon [sic] for me, a savage battle conducted in the interests of self-discovery. . . . The very quality of this despair drove me to try and break the mummy wrappings—the cultural swaddling clothes which I symbolized here as "the English Death." (*The Black Book*, Preface)

As regards Durrell's works, his clear experimentalist bias does not clearly fit in with the post-war British fiction panorama and a "movement" (1950s) totally opposed to outstanding characteristics of his production, such as his cosmopolitanism, a certain grandiloquence both in the treatment of the subjects and in the treatment of his own style, and his rejection of a self-centered provincial Britain: "I think this is one of our cardinal errors, namely, to assume that art is a form of purely patriotic response to a given place. I think that is probably a reflection of our rather parochial attitude in refusing to admit we are part of Europe" (in Young 1959: 61).

On the other hand, it is clear that Lawrence Durrell adopts a fundamentally aesthetic approach in his works, giving to the political discourse in his novels a secondary importance<sup>1</sup>. It is not surprising, therefore, that F.R. Leavis, at the time when the socio-moral interpretation of the novel was in its prime, bracketed Durrell, together with Henry Miller and Djuna Barnes, under the label of "decadent authors" (qtd. in Green 1964: 129). All these characteristics have favoured very different, and not always logical, classifications of Durrell's work. Some of them have underlined the European influence on his novels and his relationship with the "nouveau roman", or have even grouped him with such diverse novelists as Angus Wilson in a truly extraordinary list of interesting "autonomous" novelists (Phelps 1979: 525-9). These attitudes reflect the not long ago characteristic refusal of British criticism to accept as valid any trends outside the established one: "Souhaitons que les pères sévères et tout-puissants du "reviewing establishment" veuillent bien cesser de considérer, au pays de Laurence Sterne, qu'il y a deux sortes de romans, ceux qui sont faits comme il faut et les romans expérimentaux" (Bonnesot 1983: 136).

However, this experimental approach has become more and more important. It has succeeded in making the present critics revise previous classifications, accept its existence as a divergent movement from the official one, and include such important authors as Samuel Beckett, Malcolm Lowry, William Golding and Durrell himself in this alternative trend<sup>2</sup>.

It could be thought that all these novelists differ in their attitude towards life and in their conception of what a literary work represents. However, their differences can be interpreted as individual answers to two basic and common preoccupations: the meaning of man and the aim of fiction. These classical subjects acquire new interest on the grounds of their systematic appearance and their peculiar combination in the works of each of these authors. To track their existence, two approaches are used which seem applicable to all of them and especially adequate for an illuminating interpretation of Durrell's novels: myth and metafiction. First of all, it is convenient to explain in which sense each of these well-known concepts have been used:

**1. Metafiction.** - Although there are basic differences in the work of these novelists, their common concern for "the craft of fiction" can be easily accepted: they all write works which include in themselves commentaries on their linguistic or narrative identity (Hutcheon 1985: 1). Basically, they put forward an exploration of the different possibilities of the works with regard to form and meaning. Between these coordinates, Lawrence Durrell would be placed at one end in his quest for a plural meaning and an exuberant style which has become characteristic of his production.

When it comes to justifying this style full of periphrases, digressions and revisions, Durrell describes himself as a second-rate author unable to concentrate on a single subject (Karl 1975: 47). However, it must be noticed that this technique, described by G. Steiner as "accumulated nuance" (1964: 18), fits in perfectly with his creative method: the construction of a plot by means of small changes in the subject which provide a new overall vision. In this way, the work becomes a continuous process of creation and interpretation where the realist substratum adopts new possible readings and benefits from them. This attempt to achieve manifold interpretations without relinquishing the realist tone leads us directly to the only possible field where the union of parallel meanings can take place: the symbol.

The use of symbols allows Durrell to abandon the logic of the real world and to penetrate deep into that personal universe which he calls "heraldic," where reason and causality are meaningless: "The Heraldic Universe is that territory of experience in which the symbol exists" (qtd. in Stanford 1964: 40). It is a universe of poetic associations, of "illuminations" which, altogether, shape our perception of reality. For Durrell, in fact, the archetypal poem consists of the combination of a place—real universe—and the associations which it evokes—heraldic universe (Bode 1964: 215). This combination of real and fictitious levels as a single entity leads us invariably to a mythical plane to which relatively few critics of Durrell had referred to so far: "The mythopoetic reference underlies fact. . . . Though he [Durrell] employs realistic details with

authority, he is always looking beneath them for the archetypal beauty they conceal" (Sykes 1964: 153).

2. Myth.- It is clearly this search for the "archetypal beauty," for those clues of the past which shape and explain our present reality, what has made critics such as R. Scholes (1964: 411) speak about "primitivism" and its combination with formal experimentalism as Durrell's main contribution to contemporary literature. Instead of this general term—which seems basically to point out the existence of a mythical level—the word "myth" is here explicitly stated. In any case, it can be easily applied to the rest of experimental novelists as a common trait in their works. Its literary representation must be defined by means of a concept which reveals the interplay of levels involved: the terms "symbol" or "image", as defined by M. Eliade<sup>3</sup>, could serve for that purpose. In both cases the importance of a global interpretation should be pointed out since it is only the whole set of meanings which conveys its real value.

The characteristic appearance of a mythical level in these experimental novels, their search for a plural interpretation, turns them into the inheritors of a tradition which starts with the dawn of the 20th century:

One reason that twentieth-century writers such as Lawrence and Joyce return to myths for their plots is that our lives seem more and more to lack the kind of coherent forward movement that plots require. As Eliot understood, the mythic dimension orders the futility and anarchy of contemporary history. But does not myth also introduce a level of metaphoricity that breathes new life and gives greater complexity to what may at first seem a rather pedestrian, lifeless or sterile reality? (Schwarz 1988: 1-18)

If modernist writers adopted myth to order reality and to free it from its sterile nature, it is only logical that—in an epoch where the new physics questions the existence of that single reality and the possibility of understanding it objectively—myth acquires, in the literature concerned with these ideas, unusual importance.

We might well expect, however, some greater reliance upon the integrative function of symbols by those novelists of the future who undertake to incorporate within their fiction the metaphysics implied in the new physics simply because it is the only established literary device abundantly suited to that purpose. (Nadeau 1981: 195)

The "Durrellian" method of developing his novels around a general idea which, in turn, becomes a structural principle where different subplots are linked, benefits from this integrative nature of the symbol. Leaving aside the controver-

sial "exactness" with which he captures these philosophical and scientific concepts, it can be ventured that in the same way *The Alexandria Quartet* is inspired by Einstein's space-time continuum, so *The Avignon Quintet* represents what, at first sight, would seem a "return" to the oriental, eastern thought. However, Durrell views this as a logical development, since he considers these ideas adjacent to the latest scientific discoveries and relevant to our epoch: "Science is now beginning to pose really religious questions to itself . . . It is maddening, though, to feel that Lao-tzu and Einstein are within hailing distance. What's wrong with us? Why can't we make the bridge?" (in Moore 1964: 167). *The Avignon Quintet* represents, thus, an attempt to "make the bridge", to reveal the affinities between present and past, between East and West, choosing as its central setting the city of the schism. Basically, then, the purpose is to show the original unity of what is apparently opposite or separated in time and in space.

The manifold nature of the symbol allows Durrell to play with this general idea and to create several levels of meaning:

- 1.- A metafictional level where the creative process of the work is analyzed.
- 2.- A mythical level where the creation of the "mandala" or "unitary being" is depicted.
- 3.- A narrative level where Durrell represents the fight of the characters for survival.

These three levels are closely interwoven by means of common images which can be interpreted simultaneously and have, altogether, the function of shaping the description of initiatory processes. Their purpose, the confluence in a unitary whole or union of the apparently opposite, represents the final stage of any process of initiation (Campbell 1968). It seems adequate now to focus on the materialization of these ideas in the five novels which make up *The Avignon Quintet*: *Monsieur*, *Livia*, *Constance*, *Sebastian* and *Quinx*.

There are numerous critics (Hutcheon 1984: 6; Waugh 1984: 2) who point out that metafictional works provide precise clues for their interpretation. Durrell meets this point of view and includes, also in the *Quintet*, illuminating "digressions" about the creative process. Thus, in *Livia*, the second of his novels, he puts forward his plan as regards the overall structure of the work: "I saw something like a quincunx of novels set out in a good classical order. Five Q novels written in a highly elliptical quincunxial style invented for the occasion" (11).

The shape of "quincunx," like a five on a die, not only represents the formal model sought by the writer but is constantly associated with objectives coveted by several characters (a quincunx-shaped garden reveals, for instance, the location of the temple treasure and conforms the structure of Angkor Vat,

the sacred place of pilgrimage). This spatial arrangement, which guides author and characters together, is easily comparable to a classical mandala structure—the central element inside a square—mentioned by Durrell in the work itself<sup>4</sup> and widely studied by C.G. Jung (1984: 240-51). The affinity between the quincunx and the mandala and its structure provides us too with clues for a global interpretation of the *Quintet* applicable to the three levels mentioned above: “Es, pues, la exposición plástica, visual, de la lucha suprema entre el orden, aun de lo vario, y el anhelo final de unidad y retorno a la condensación original de lo inespecial e intemporal (al ‘centro’ puro de todas las tradiciones)” (Cirlot 1982: 292-4). On the other hand, the perfect symmetry of this mandala reveals a new meaning related to its numerical interpretation: the Quinary, or group of five elements, is a well-known structure in the East as well as in the West for representing the human being as a reflection of the cosmic order<sup>5</sup>. Durrell clearly draws on this idea when in *Quinx*, the last of his five novels, he speaks about the “five-sided being” (15), the unitary product resulting from the processes described in the work.

Between these coordinates: man and his unity—composed of parts which, like the novels, have a proper name but only as a whole reach a superior order and name—a recurrent theme in the *Quintet*, the “sparagmos” or dismemberment, will be studied. The dismemberment represents a symbolic return to the chaos which precedes any ritual repetition of a cosmogony or creative process (Eliade 1986: 13). This physical and psychological “death” is a necessary requisite for the birth to a new life, the crossing into a superior level of existence. Each novel represents, thus, a member of that “five-sided being” which the work reconstructs till it arrives to the superior plane of existence, or unitary being. Its reconstruction is not merely physical but it also embraces the psychological plane through the progressive shaping of five “skandhas” or categories of knowledge which, according to the Buddhist doctrine, collaborate in defining the human personality (Govinda 1987: 70). In much the same way as the interpretation of a mandala, the lineal reading of the novel leads us to the chaos of meeting these dispersed elements whereas the final vision, its global reading, takes us back to the cosmos in which every part reaches its meaning in a superior level.

The mandalic structure represents in itself the ordering of the empty space, the passage from chaos into cosmos. The elements used by Durrell to represent this initial chaos are recurrent in his work: both *The Black Book* and *The Alexandria Quartet* start in a Winter associated with the death of nature and the end of a period in the narrator’s life<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, perhaps as a reflection of Durrell’s life, the narrators in both works have chosen to leave the

places where their novels are set (London and Alexandria) so as to let their memories revive, more objectively, the events which took place there. However, *The Avignon Quintet* entails a meaningful turn in the interpretation of these images. The beginning of *Monsieur* reflects the slow departure of Bruce, the character-narrator, from that wintry death: “... crawling out of a northern winter into a nascent spring...” (3). In this case too, his original intention was to escape together with some other characters: “To wall ourselves up, in a way: to retire from the world completely” (5). However, the death of his best friend turns this escape into a journey to the centre of the story. The memories of a common past are intertwined with the projects for the future: Avignon will be, henceforth, the gathering point, the city whose “heraldic” echoes control its inhabitants. It will be, in short, the symbolic protagonist of the *Quintet*.

The journey of this character to Avignon entails a return to his own past. His future task as narrator lies in describing and giving sense to these moments he is recovering: “I am resetting the broken bones of the past” (13). The “resetting of bones” is a recurrent image, associated in the fourth novel, *Sebastian*, with the flux of the seasons and the slow creative process: “Everything will start again when spring melts into summer. We will prune our books and re-set all the broken bones.” (201). Durrell points out in the *Quintet* (*Livia*, 11) that *Monsieur*—apparently a novel written by a character, Blanford, fictionalizing the “real” world of the story (Godshalk 1987: 537)—represents the first meeting with a series of themes which will be later developed or rearranged in the subsequent four novels. He adds that the relationship between these novels is “organic”, like different stages which conform a unity: the names of the characters vary, the age in which they live, even their frame and fictional status. However, in spite of the apparent lack of order, there are always cues, common traits which relate them as something unitary. The situations and characters described, although they are different, are always “echoes” of his earlier novels. So, this continuous “resetting of bones,” adapted to the flux of the seasons and the development of the novels, reflects the initial chaos on which three tasks are undertaken: in a mythic level, the rebuilding of this fragmented unitary being; in the narrative level, the physical and psychological reconstruction of the narrator, and, in a metafictional level, the author’s task of giving shape and meaning to what individually are no more than “five-skandha: form, aggregates, parcels, lots, congeries” (*Quinx*, 15). The attainment of these objectives involves the completion of the work and the real crossing into a superior level, where the spacial dispersion and the temporal flux lose their meaning: “The spring will seem endless once back in Avignon” (*Quinx*, 26).

Encompassed in this image of dismemberment and resetting, it is possible to find the meaning of the recurrent references to the oriental myth of Osiris—w-

hose members, scattered over the Mediterranean, were then reconstructed by Isis (*Livia*, 38)<sup>7</sup> and its subsequent projection in the West in the myth of the castration of Uranus and the birth of Aphrodite (*Livia*, 110). Both figures, symbols of cyclical death and the rebirth of nature, reflect, in the level of the story, the inner disintegration which the characters go through.

A constant image in the novel is the lack of love as a castration which prevents a real projection of feelings: "In my own case it seemed gradually to have worn me out emotionally—the word castration does not sound too exaggerated in the context. An affect dammed and frozen" (*Monsieur*, 16). This image is related to the wintry world of the beginning, waiting for renewal. The children of Avignon suffer and die in the war, some other young characters disappear or lock themselves within the silence of autism. Abortions follow one another in the first novels until they become a metaphor of sterility in the different levels: "... the sad marriage he carried about inside him like a dead foetus" (*Monsieur*, 196).

A projection of this state is the unproductiveness of the character-narrator. His notes are only fragments, potential novels searching for order within a unitary plan in which they can be developed. His creative capacity is described as an interior mass waiting for someone to give it shape: an external force which, like a revelation, guides him and makes him conscious of his reality as an artist. His amorous failure, the subsequent love affairs lacking in sincerity cause the vital and creative projects to equate in their sterility.

The myth of Osiris is also reflected in a series of mutilations which conform one of the leitmotifs in the work. These mutilations, as well as fitting the chaotic and "waste" world which the *Quintet* represents, reach their true meaning as small failures in the process of initiation of the characters towards a superior order and their physical and psychological unity. In this sense, they represent "the psychic price we must pay for tuition" (Bode 1964, 218), the overcoming of continuous trials. A world of injuries, illness, amputations and blindness arises which finds in Blanford and his shattered spine a meaningful model: "His spine was shivered, his organs splattered with thorns of shrapnel [...] Nothing could stop the flow of blood, our blood .... Rib-cage stove, thorax broken and bruised, ankles snapped like celery ..." (*Constance*, 94). The psychological "re-education" of this character goes hand in hand with his progressive physical recovery. Several operations and orthopedic devices will eventually allow him to walk without help. However, this "mechanic" process of recomposition is preceded by his real salvation: the "meeting with the Goddess," which Joseph Campbell (1968) describes as the characteristic stage of any initiatory process where the hero is rescued from death, is represented here in his sexual meeting with Theodora, his nurse. Durrell, who considers

sexual intercourse as a type of knowledge capable of "awakening the psychic forces latent in the human being" (in Moore 1964: 161) limits himself to describing a sexual act. However, he makes the reader capable of perceiving how this new Isis rejects the chaos and sterility of the world and succeeds in restoring the inner unity and sexual and creative capacity of this dismembered being: "With her I rose from the dead" (*Constance*, 99).

The mythical level and the narrative one complete their meaning in a wider metafictional level: the chaos, the initial dismemberment is represented by the first novel, *Monsieur*, where the themes which will be later developed are first introduced. The subtitle of this first novel is "*Prince of Darkness*." The devil, symbol of "regresión, de estancamiento en lo fragmentado, inferior, diverso y discontinuo" (Cirlot 1982: 170) is, then, associated with winter and the death which precedes creation. Now the narrator himself is the one in charge of fighting this tendency towards dismemberment and resetting with his work the cosmos, the unitary five-sided being *Quinx*, which will give its name to the last novel: "I sit on the nursery floor of literature surrounded by the dismembered fragments of my juggernaut of a book, wondering how best to assemble this smashed telamon" (*Quinx*, 179).

However, it is logical that a work concerned with the balance of the human being and the creation also includes death as an obstacle against both processes. The psychological chaos in which some characters and the society in which they live are steeped does not lead to the regeneration symbolized by *Quinx*. The subtitle of this fifth novel, *The Ripper's Tale*, represents the dangerous, destructive but equally important face of the process. So, the references to war, executions, assassinations and suicides find their meaning.

The physical paralysis gives way now to the population's immobility when facing these threats, the acceptance of their fate which characterizes the different victims in the work. From this point of view the resigned attitude of the Jews facing their awful fate can be related, among others, to the extermination of templars and cathars and to the Buddhist determinism. Durrell equates some followers of all this historical movements in their belief in the regenerative power of submission. Submission involves the refusal to alter natural laws which, in spite of being apparently unfair, fit a superior and essentially good plan: "Even entropy, so apparently absolute in its operation, is capable, if left to itself, of conversion into a regenerative form. The phoenix is no myth!" (*Sebastian*, 154).

Artistic creation is not outside these apparently random laws. In *The Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell depicts the novelist's conformism as regards these alterations which life imposes on his work and which reflect the indifference of the real model on its imitation: "I have been looking through my papers tonight.

Some have been converted to kitchen uses, some the child has destroyed. This form of censorship pleases me for it has the indifference of the natural world to the constructions of art—an indifference I am beginning to share" (*Justine*, 19).

In *Quinx* a projection of this image can be seen when the novelist, Blanford, throws his manuscript out the window of the train, thus clearly opting for spontaneity (11-2). However, this spontaneity is limited to small creative details since the author keeps the global scheme in his head<sup>8</sup>. To underline his submission to that superior law, Blanford decides to reincorporate in his project some of these notes which have come back to him and which he now considers valuable because they have escaped destruction (152).

This absolute determinism, the submission to a superior force, equates the novelist with those characters who accept the fate imposed on them by the "creator." In the last novel, *Quinx*, it is Blanford himself who theorizes on this attitude: "All creation is arbitrary, capricious, spontaneous. [...] Yet somewhere I am sure the Great Plan exists" (*Quinx*, 53-4). The creator must make concrete decisions as regards his material: these precise decisions shape the novel—bringing life to some subjects and characters and sacrificing others. In the same way as in *Life*, and unfair as it may seem for the victims, the only reference is the "global project," that superior law which outlines only one of the multiple possibilities offered.

Several doubts about the validity of this Great Plan bring into the work the theme of suicide. In the narrative level, suicides are recurrent and are especially meaningful in the third novel, *Constance*, although due to different motivations. One of the most important is the ritual gnostic suicide—or, rather, self-sacrifice—in which some of the main characters are involved: the ritual entails accepting one's death through another member of the sect. The victim does not know how he is going to die but he knows when, since he receives two warnings shortly before. Finally, the ritual tries to adapt itself to the natural process in that it forbids the victim to make an attempt on his own life. The theoretical basis for this "suicide" fits in with a gnostic idea according to which we live in a chaotic world which devours itself in continuous struggle. Therefore, this world cannot be the work of a righteous God but of an "evil demiurge," a "prince of darkness" who has usurped his place: "The refusal to conform to the laws of this inferior demon leads insensibly on towards death.... Yet to the pure gnostic soul the open gesture of refusal is necessary, is the only poetic act" (*Monsieur*, 140). Paradoxically, then, suicide means for these gnostics an act of individual affirmation, the rejection of the continuity of chaos. Regenerative submission has no sense when the Great Plan is ruled by Evil. Suicide is now the only possible act of rebellion against these superior laws. Their purpose is to reach, through the opposite way to submission, the same objective: "We are

setting up a chain-reaction which we believe could counter the laws of entropy—the irreversibility of process leading always to death, dispersal, disaggregation... " (*Sebastian*, 149)

This revolt is also reflected in the metafictional level. The "author" becomes for many characters a Prince of Darkness, a cruel being whose arbitrary decisions govern the world of the novel. There are, however, some characters who, instead of accepting submission, rebel against this imposed fate and, in the same way as Sutcliffe—Blanford's creation and alter ego—question their creator's power: "I am annoyed because my power is not absolute over him—he [Sutcliffe] is after all my creation; but he can sometimes break loose and show traces of free will." (*Constance*, 331). In much the same way as the members of the gnostic sect, Sutcliffe is conscious of this arbitrary manipulation but he cannot take his own life: "You [Sutcliffe] at least can't do the whole thing. You are limited to a fiction's dying" (*Sebastian*, 144).

Sutcliffe's death depends on another character—Blanford, his "creator" in the first novel—whose submission to the superior law is, as we have seen, absolute. His only means of revenge, the supreme act of revolt against his alter ego, is a symbolic suicide through the mirror: "So the Sutcliffe he invented for his novel *Monsieur* shot himself through the mirror in the early version? 'I had to,' he explained, pointing to Blanford. 'It was him or me'" (*Livia*, 3). The attempt of this character to break free introduces a new approach to the creative work. At the beginning, the novel is a world of open possibilities which give the author unlimited power on its development. However, as the novel unfolds, the themes and characters acquire their own logic and a level of autonomy which allows them to disagree with the arbitrariness of the writer: the rules of the story itself are the ones in control of its final development, "I suddenly knew that this long-heralded book had nearly formed itself" (*Quinx*, 165). Now, it is the author who, like his creations, must submit or rebel against the laws of the novel, the end of his role and his forthcoming disappearance. Blanford's submission, Sutcliffe's revolt are intertwined in the eternal dilemma of their creator, Durrell, as regards which way the *Quintet* must follow: "Between the completely arbitrary and the completely determined perhaps there is a way?" (*Livia*, Prologue).

We see a similar dilemma to the attitudes towards *Life* which the *Quintet* puts forward. As J. Campbell has pointed out: "There [East] the ideal is the quenching, not development of the ego [West]" (1962: 23). The organic relationship between these novels, whose characters and situations are reflections of previous works, represents different stages (trials or karmas) of a process of development (West) or a process of dissolution (East), different reincarnations of a common theme. The cosmos—union of opposites or nirvana—entails

the arrival in a superior level of existence. In both cases—East and West—this superior level of existence represents the final objective. Resetting or dissolution, submission or revolt represent the eternal conflict between the two different conceptions of reality which the *Quintet* tries to unify.

At a metafictional level, the superior plane of existence is nothing more than that "reality prime" to which fiction, no matter how long its journey, must give way in the end: "It was at this precise moment that reality prime rushed to the aid of fiction and the totally unpredictable began to take place!" (*Quinx*, 201). In the novel, the warning that the suicide must take place is the arrival of a letter. At the end of *Monsieur*, it seems that Blanford, the narrator, receives one of these letters. Through this image, Durrell succeeds in identifying the process of life and the creative work of the novelist. Human will stands, thus, for a "permanent death" against which the dissolution of the ego seems to be the only answer<sup>9</sup>: "For the writer at any rate everything that one might call creatively wrought, brought off, completed aesthetically, comes to you, his reader and his Muse, from the other side of a curtain. From the other side of a hypothetical suicide" (*Livia*, 52). When the novel comes out, the death of the narrator as an active participant who can alter events occurs. Therefore, the reader's task begins: he is now in charge of resetting these five parts.

## NOTES

1. "If art preaches it isn't in terms of ethics or taboos or behaviors" ("The Kneller Tape," in Moore 1964: 163).
2. Bradbury and Palmer 1980: 11.
3. "Por tanto, la Imagen en cuanto tal, en tanto que haz de significaciones, es lo que es verdad, y no una sola de sus significaciones o uno solo de sus numerosos planos de referencia" (M. Eliade 1987: 15).
4. "Like some mystical mandala-shape..." *Constance*, 24.
5. "Los cuatro miembros regidos por la cabeza como los cuatro dedos por el pulgar..." Cirlot 1982: 380.
6. "I knew all at one [sic] that we share that correspondence of death with the season..." (*The Black Book*, 21).
7. It is interesting to refer here to Sharon Spencer's study on the nature of sibling incest (1987: 436-49).
8. In a recent interview, translated into Spanish, Durrell underlines the importance of this balance between a rigid plan and spontaneity: "Hay que empezar por tener una idea muy clara de lo que se pretende hacer, y después olvidarla enseguida. Después, se va tomando lo que vaya surgiendo" (*Quimera* 52 [1986]: 27).
9. See an explanation of this idea in L.W. Markert 1987: 559-62.

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