Lawrence Durrell
at the Crossroads of Arts and Sciences
A Variant of Lawrence Durrell's *Livia* or *Buried Alive* and the Composition of *Monsieur or the Prince of Darkness*

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He suddenly realised that he was surrounded by the dead woman's books. Underlinings, annotations.
She was still here!

A primary concern of Lawrence Durrell's fiction and professional career was the construction and management of authors' textual archives, a frequent trope in his fiction from *The Black Book*, published in 1938, to *The Avignon Quintet*, completed in 1985, as well as his UNESCO and CalTech lectures. It has been suggested that Durrell constructed several of the archival holdings of his works in a manner that reflects his awareness of the nature of academic research and archival study. Indeed, much of *The Avignon Quintet*, in its plot and form, dramatizes a search through authors' correspondences, notebooks, fragments, and drafts. This obsession, coupled with the curious history of the publication of *The Avignon Quintet*, suggests that the novel can no longer be conceptualized as a closed medium; the accrual of notebooks, variants, fair copies, and sources becomes part of the novel, uncontainable between its physical covers.

We propose an alternative reading of the sequential construction of Durrell's final major novel sequence, *The Avignon Quintet*, which he

published between 1974 and 1985, although he continued to publish related fragments until 1988, two years before his death. Through Durrell's correspondence and variants of the texts, we suggest that the form for this final novel sequence only became clear as he was preparing the first volume, *Monsieur or the Prince of Darkness*, for publication. Moreover, by contrasting the published variant of the second volume, *Livia or Buried Alive*, we draw attention to many of Durrell's structural preoccupations in the novel as a whole as well as his reclamation of the first volume into the conceptual structure that only arrived after its completion. By tracing the publication history of the first two volumes of the *Quintet* in tandem with the published variant, "Gog and Magog", we demonstrate that the spiritual, Gnostic thematic content does not drive the construction of the novel; rather, this content develops from overt formal and theoretical concerns that Durrell articulated in his early variants.

Gifford and Osadetz previously discussed the conceptual source material of *Monsieur*, arguing that the core plot for the novel and the remaining four volumes in the sequence—a Gnostic suicide cult—is an amalgamation of two sources in Durrell's notebook: Serge Hutin's *Les Gnostiques* and a series of newspaper reports of famous suicides in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 1968. By realizing the overtly constructed nature of this combination of distinct sources in his notebooks (suicide and Gnosticism), Durrell's readers come to recognize the distance between author and narrator with regard to the philosophic underpinnings of the novel sequence as a whole. This religious frame is an invention, despite the seriousness with which most critics have read it. This archival exhumation thereby becomes a necessary part of the text, as if these buried drafts and pastiches were a part of the complete work, of which the bound copy is only one fragment.

3. Durrell Lawrence, "Endpapers and Inklings", p. 88-95. As Lindsay Parker has pointed out, although this late work by Durrell excises all references to names, it derives verbatim from Durrell's "Notebooks of Demonax" notebook, which was written for several years after 1985, and in which Manford and Sutcliffe remain active characters.

Yet, Durrell’s inventive combination of sources highlights the structural and formal innovations in the novel; it appears that Durrell’s consciousness of the ‘paper chase’ for variants and source materials is suspiciously related to the textual design of his fiction. As an author, Durrell was preternaturally aware of the habits of academics and of the role that notebooks, drafts, fair copies, corrected proofs, and variants play in textual studies of authors—he frequently used this to his financial advantage, with forethought. Durrell’s novels, and *The Avignon Quintet* in particular, continually remind the reader of their origins in notebooks, marginalia, and borrowed histories. Characters frequently chase out textual variants while textually blurring into each other, as if this final version of the text refused to divest itself of its origins. These origins themselves are multiple and contingent on a range of authorsubjects in different locations across time, such that the archival impulse can only be artificially removed from the construction and reception of the work itself, eliminating its conception as a stable, closed text.

Milan Kundera argues against the legitimacy of such variants and upholds the final text as a stable entity. Contrary to the irreducible multiplicity that variants suggest, he describes the archive’s ideal state as “the sweet equality that reigns in an enormous common grave.” By this, he means that the author is authoritative and controls the only conduit for a reader’s interpretive activities because “the work [*œuvre*] is what the writer will approve in his own final assessment.” The archive, in contrast, represents for Kundera the stages of development or the paratexts that the author might prefer to censor. Moreover, this applies to revisions, and Kundera gives the example of Stravinsky’s changes to his already published and performed *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*. The conductor preferred the previous version, but for Stravinsky it has ceased to exist (despite the physical remainder in the published form); for Kundera, this is correct “because what an author creates doesn’t

7. The parallels to Kundera’s own revisions and rettranslations of his novels is striking.
belong to his papa, his mama, his nation, or mankind; it belongs to no one but himself [...] The novelist is the sole master of his work?9 Despite the apparent individualism in Kundera, the master-author implies the slave-reader who cannot even choose among extant publications. In a crucial contrast, Durrell coaxes this "enormous common grave" into a livelier role than Kundera's realpolitik domination of the text as his own private possession would allow, and Durrell's revivification grants freedom to the reader from the tyranny of the author.8 Such a position also provides an anti-authoritarian spade and encourages his audience to prevent the repression and revision of history, as if the buried were placed there for the purpose of later discovery, to tell their own truths and to give their own evidence.

Durrell manifests his predilection for this particular recuperation of textual multiplicity in his correspondence with Jay Brigham, who edited Durrell's Collected Poems. In their correspondence, Durrell comments directly on the distinction between their task of collecting and that of producing a variiorum edition that privileges variants: "For the purposes of this job it would be simply a question of choosing the best of any hypothetical three or more variants. Fabers are worried about completeness, but it isn't time to think about variiorum editions yet!" 10 Shortly before Brigham's project, which began in 1977, Durrell was selecting and introducing the works of William Wordsworth for Wordsworth Selected by Lawrence Durrell, published in 1973 by Penguin, and composing the first two volumes of The Avignon Quintet. Thus, Durrell possessed a keen awareness of the tasks of the editor at this moment. Brigham commented in private conversations with James Gifford that Durrell manipulated his editors by selectively providing variants. Although this is commonplace for many authors who manage their own papers, Durrell's interests appear to have gone beyond vanity

8. Ibid., p. 98, 100.
9. A theoretical expansion of this topic would naturally develop from Roland Barthes' famous "Death of the Author" and Michel Foucault's rebuttal in "What is an Author?", but that extensive debate is not necessary for the topic at hand here.
10. Durrell Lawrence, "Letter to Brigham".
and concerned themselves primarily with the editorial and academic process, which captured his attention concurrently with his early literary efforts. Likewise, the editor’s interest in preserving variants, and the constant temptation to foreclose interpretative agency by censoring them, was necessarily salient for Durrell during this period.

Durrell’s interest in the academic study of textual variants developed early in his 20s as he made a specific point of reading the various Quartos of Hamlet while on Corfu, integrating the academic study of this problem into his own work across his long career. The spectre of this archival “afterbirth”—which privileges multiple rather than single texts or even multiple authorial intentions—haunted Durrell, driving the substance of his UNESCO lectures on Shakespeare’s variants. It also haunts his fiction with texts lost and texts found. This same problem of variants appears in Monsieur: “As this machine is to him Hamlet, cries Hamlet to Ophelia in the mysterious First Quarto”.

This alludes to Polonius’ reading aloud of Hamlet’s purloined letter to Ophelia, a scene with several changes in the 1603 and 1604-5 Quartos. Not only is Hamlet’s writing usurped here, but so too is Shakespeare’s, and it was apparently irresistible for Durrell to point to this, especially since the speaker, Polonius, also undergoes a change of identity from the Q1 to the Q2 and F1 variants. Several references to the First Quarto appear

11. For instance, the dedications in many of Durrell’s poems, as well as his own occasional annotations, were often altered across published variants. Their inclusion in The Collected Poems collapsed a range of possibilities and frequently ran contrary to Durrell’s own desires and preferences, yet he acquiesced to their inclusion as an editorial matter the author ought not to control.


13. Not only is the letter a text within the text in Shakespeare’s play (an unreliable text as well), but its contents vary across the Quartos and First Folio. Durrell interpreted these shifts as a challenge to the stability of Shakespeare’s intentions while most scholars regard these as challenges to the author’s authority over the text. As Durrell was well aware, in no version does Hamlet speak these lines to Ophelia, and Durrell’s own version is a hybrid of two versions of the line, Q1 and F1—his concerns with the 1603 Quarto, which does not actually include the comparison of Hamlet’s body/brain to a machine, are well documented. MacNiven, Lawrence Durrell, p. 140; Durrell, “The Prince and Hamlet”, p. 271-3; Durrell, “Hamlet, Prince of China”, p. 38-45; Morrison, A Smile, p. 268.
in *Monsieur*, and more than a dozen references point to Durrell's then forty-year old fascination with the *Hamlet* Quartos. Indeed, while in the midst of his first major literary undertaking, *The Black Book*, Durrell was in a parallel immersion in the variant editions of Shakespeare and the scholarly debate surrounding a corrected edition based on the Quartos and the First Folio. From this point forward, the role of notebooks in both Durrell's compositional practices and his fiction's narratives and textuality becomes increasingly important. In short, the composition of the work in the notebooks becomes a part of the work's own narrative, which makes Kundera's "burial of the dead" variants an impossibility.

*The Alexandria Quartet*, too, is as much a novel rendering a portrait of the paper-monger coming to grips with the fragments, detritus, ephemera, and conflicting voices building up around him in print as it is a portrait of the artist as a young man—ending with the same sentence that begins Joyce's *Portrait*. Moreover, Joyce's variant text, par excellence, *Ulysses*, dominated Durrell's CalTech lectures, concomitant with the publication of *Monsieur*. The naïve image of the artist at his papers was, for Durrell, displaced early in his career by an awareness that a future interpreter would ask about the artist *at which* of his papers and *when*, while scholars rummaged through each draft and variant in the waste bin. These drafts and variants are, presently, set aside and prepared carefully by the author, as part of his metafictional total text. We contend that these are not paratexts or supplemental materials, but instead have become a part of the novel itself—uncontained by its physical covers—and such a novel compels the reader to dig out its missing pieces, pointing to the insufficiency of its printed and bound corpse.

15. T.S. Eliot's "Unreal City" also becomes "only the city is real" with its reality heavily emphasized, despite its obvious incongruence with 'real' Alexandria. Durrell also ends the final British and omnibus editions of *Justine* with the same fragment that ends the first of Ezra Pound's *Quartos*.
16. Such a scene ends *Monsieur*, with Cade carefully collecting Blanford's rejected papers in order to sell the variants to a collector, a practice for which Durrell did not require the intermediary.
CONTEXTS AND VARIANTS

Curiously, an accrual of Durrell’s letters to publishers, agent, and fellow novelists, prompts a reconsideration of how he arrived at the form of *The Avignon Quintet*. Brigham—who was also the driving force behind the first major bibliography of Durrell materials, the Brigham-Thomas *Checklist*—noticed a peculiar letter from Durrell held by Columbia University, dated July 1974. The letter demonstrates that Durrell had retrospectively attempted to add a passage to the last chapter of *Monsieur*, “Dinner at Quartilas”, while he was completing the first chapter of the second volume of *The Avignon Quintet*, namely *Livia or Buried Alive*. In a letter to his American publisher, Viking Penguin, Durrell requests that a passage be added to the seventh page of the final chapter of *Monsieur* in a natural break between sections. Moreover, Durrell explains that this addition is necessary to the book as a whole, based on his work on the subsequent volume. It appears that this addition did not occur, as there is no discrepant paragraph between the proof copy and the final published volume. This addition was likely refused on the grounds that the final volume fills the signatures completely; an alteration would have required an expensive new signature.

The following month—August, 1974—Durrell wrote to his New York agent, Juliet O’Hea, that he had become aware of the form for the novel series as a whole as he continued working on the sequel to *Monsieur*, which necessitated his revision of the proofs in order to prepare the reader for the subsequent volume. Although *Livia* would not appear until 1978, he was already forwarding the first 25-page chapter of the sequel to O’Hea, asking her to find a suitable periodical for its publication. He thought this might be used as promotional material coinciding with the release of its predecessor. The first chapter of *Livia*, in a widely read journal, would supply a sense of continuity to the next volume that Durrell had wanted within the pages of *Monsieur* itself:

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17. This letter and its concordant annotations were among Brigham’s own papers, posthumously donated to the University of Victoria. The authenticity of this letter has since been validated.
[the first chapter] follows on directly from the first volume [Monsieur] and has the merit of exposing the method [...] From the formal point of view it throws quite a light on the novel, and proves it to be the first of a group of novels interconnected by this method though quite separate in themselves.18

His tone throughout this letter is uncharacteristically optimistic, boldly referring to the publication of this first chapter as a “scoop.” This slip reveals his own excitement over the materials on which he was at work in July and August, 1974.

In the same letter, Durrell requests that the material be sent to a range of potential publishers in Britain and North America. Given the temporal proximity of this letter to O’Hea and Durrell’s letter to Viking Penguin asking for the revision of the first volume based on his work in the second, the first draft of Livia takes on increasing significance. In short, when Durrell found that he could not add the paragraph, he immediately asked for parallel publication of the first chapter of Livia, neither of which occurred. Four years later, with the publication of Livia, he seemed less inclined to share his views as openly with his readers, preferring instead a greater degree of teasing obfuscation in the chapter’s final form. This first draft of that next chapter, then, is the pivot on which the structure of the novel series hinges, and it is contemporary with Durrell’s lost attempt to expand the first volume with a passage explaining this structure, something he later suppressed.

These two compelling reasons for the concurrent release of the Livia chapter and Monsieur—namely that the chapter explains Monsieur for the reader and could serve as publicity for the release—were compounded by Henry Miller’s disappointing feedback from a proof copy of Monsieur, which Durrell sent during the summer of 1974, at an indeterminate date between June and September. In a letter postmarked 23 September 1974, Durrell reminds Miller:

I am delighted by your letter and not cast down by your feelings of disappointment about the shape of the book; but you know the book is the first of five—and my stream is going to gradually expand through the lives of the ‘real’ creator and his puppets. . . . I have just finished the first 50 pages of the successor to Monsieur, called LIVIA OR BURIED ALIVE. I will send the MSS if you can bear to look at it—it exposes this strange form I have decided to try.19

This letter emphasizes the continuation, the sequel, a number of times, alternating paragraphs with the other materials discussing the publication of Tunc and Nunquam in an omnibus version titled The Revolt of Aphrodite.20 Most notably, as with O’Hea, Durrell views his first draft chapter of Livia as an explanation for the form begun in Monsieur. This accrued evidence points to the significance of this first draft of the chapter of Livia for Durrell’s conception of the novel series as a whole. While the intended passage for addition to Monsieur appears irretrievably lost, there is one variant, significantly altered publication of the first chapter of Livia, which was published in the 1977 edition of The Malahat Review at the University of Victoria, and there is good reason to suspect it is the 1974 draft.21

A personal investigation of the Robin Skelton fonds—editor of the Malahat Review—in the McPherson Library, the financial records of The Malahat Review, and the particular issue’s folder proffered little in concrete evidence as to the origin of this Livia variant. Skelton’s fonds contain only a friendly letter from Durrell in 1971, which does not mention the novel series. Likewise, the submitted manuscript for the Livia variant is not in the journal’s archive, and the record book

20. Durrell’s intended revisions to Tunc were not integrated into the omnibus edition, The Revolt of Aphrodite, so his sense of authorial intentions and textual variants was highly salient during this period. His intended revisions and corrections remain the Cyril Connolly collection at the University of Tulsa, and as with Monsieur here, he seemed intent on his American publishers and made revisions in the Viking edition of Tunc.
21. The only other significant published variant from The Avignon Quintet is Durrell, “Constance in Love”, p. 7-28.
of submissions has no record of the item's submission, acceptance, rejection, or payment, despite the fact that the rejections of nearly all the major authors in Canadian Literature are recorded between 1974-1977. Shortly after this period, however, the journal was placed under new editorial control by the University of Victoria to ensure a more diligent disbursement of its funds.

The financial difficulties of The Malahat Review in the mid-1970s, however, suggest that the 1977 Malahat Review chapter of Livia is the draft sent to Durrell's agent in August 1974, or that its composition is temporally close. The journal's problems prevented the publications of most materials received between 1974 and 1975. Moreover, according to the ledgers, the preponderance of the works published in the journal's 1977 volume were received prior to 1976. That the Livia variant followed this route is highly plausible, given that the revisions between the variant (1977) and final copy (1978) were extensive and improbably performed at a date close to the final preparations of Livia, which Durrell completed in December, 1977; Durrell's other projects of the mid-1970s limit the possible dates of composition and revision.

Finally, the biographical timeline suggests that the only viable period for the appearance of an early draft would likely be prior to September 1974 or at least prior to March 1975. Durrell recounts writing the first 25 pages to O'Hea in August 1974, in September he describes the first 50 pages to Henry Miller, and MacNiven recounts that he had written the 100 pages by March of 1975. In July 1975 he began traveling for other projects: Sicilian Carousel (1977), The Greek Islands (1978), and Lawrence Durrell's Egypt, filmed in late 1977. Durrell completed Livia in December 1977, sending the typescript to Faber & Faber. The biographical timeline matches up with the chronology of Durrell's notebook sketches for Livia, which further suggests that this Malahat Review variant is plausibly the chapter Durrell referred to in his August 1974 letter to O'Hea.
Indeed, a striking change between the variant, titled "Gog and Magog" and the final text is that the variant depicts the protagonist, Aubrey Blanford, in good health walking about the library. This indicates that the Malahat Review variant was composed long before the remainder of the novel, in which Blanford is depicted as crippled due to injuries he suffered in the war—these injuries are described in the later chapters of the novel. This suggests that Durrell imposed retroactive continuity on this draft after writing the later chapters. In the final text, Blanford hobbes on crutches while experimenting with a new back brace—phrases like "The crutches hurt him under the arms," and "He bore in his arms with a kind of meek pride the new orthopaedic waistcoat-brace" are later additions. "Gog and Magog" shows only a healthy Blanford, but by the time Durrell began drafts for the second chapter, images of wheelchairs and disability multiply. Hence, the Malahat Review variant demonstrably predates the early notebook drafts for the second chapter of Livia. Other internal evidence, such as the increasing development of Felix Chatto as a character and newspaper clippings in Durrell's notebooks for Livia held in the Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell at the University Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, all strongly suggests that the Malahat Review variant is in fact the chapter to which Durrell refers in his 4 August 1974 letter to Juliet O'Hea, or it is at least comparable in composition by a matter of weeks or perhaps a matter of six months at the most. What we do know of the sequence

22. Durrell Lawrence Avignon Quintet, p. 301.
23. Ibid., p. 302.
24. See the opening section of the Notebook #1345 held in the Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell at the University Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. This notebook also holds several fragmented drafts of the poem that closes Livia as well as notes for how to end the novel itself.
25. These include the obituaries for Dr. Georges Testut and Jacques Tallavignes, a viticulturist in the Languedoc, and dated clippings from 1980 and 1975. The combination suggests that the notebook was begun no later than February 1975, which would place any preceding variants prior to early 1975 in composition. Since "Gog and Magog" demonstrably predates the opening of this notebook by virtue of the contents, it is very likely that it aligns with the timeline Durrell gave to O'Hea, Miller, and MacNiven above for the composition of Livia.
26. Ibid.
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of composition for *Livia* makes any date of composition for "Gog and Magog" after early February 1975 highly implausible, and late 1974 seems more likely in light of his comments to Henry Miller and the extent of the differences between it and the 1975 notebook materials.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

The question, then, is one of interpretation: how do thematic variations between the two published forms of the text inform the conceptual structure of *The Avignon Quintet* as a whole? First, many of the revisions indicate Durrell's continually developing notion of narrative provisionality and uncertainty: "Accuracy" in the *Malahat Review* variant later becomes "basic accuracy" in *Livia*; the final version self-deprecatingly mocks the wisdom of "elderly novelists" through adding "Quack! Quack!"; the omniscience of the narrator in the *Malahat* variant becomes the report of the deceitful character who "told me"; and the narrator's recollections receive qualification by new phrases in apposition such as "I think", "perhaps", or "whatever that might mean". The later revisions entail a persistent, increasing degree of uncertainty that undermines the authority of the narrator in the earlier version.

Durrell not only increasingly qualifies the narrator's assertions but begins to blur the distinctions between the characters and narrators themselves. In the variant, when asked about the relation to form and content, Blanford answers: "a palimpsest of people, Robin [...] An

27. DURELL LAWRENCE, "Gog and Magog", p. 42.
28. DURELL LAWRENCE, *Avignon Quintet*, p. 341
organic relation.” This is the major theme explained in the Malahat variant of the first chapter of Livia, which retroactively makes sense of the deeply fractured narrative of Monsieur. Though Durrell excises this direct explication of the technique in “Gog and Magog” from the final revisions, he intensifies the notion of palimpsestic identity in the execution of the form—without this direct explication, the concept at work is more difficult to identify.

The enactment of the palimpsestic form in the final version has the effect of effacing the distinctions between the novel’s characters, Blanford and his creation Sutcliffe. In the Malahat variant, Aubrey Blanford narrates his own role in his recollections directly as a member of the group journeying down the Rhône. Durrell revises this later by placing the passages in quotation marks and changing the occurrences of “we,” “our,” and “I” to the third person “they.” This change to the third person continues for three pages where the narrator then draws himself into the narrative in the first person again, writing: “I was… how was I, Aubrey Blanford? Let me see.” Prior to this point, it is unclear whether Blanford or his alter ego character, Robin Sutcliffe, wrote the narrative of the Rhône journey or if it was an anonymous narrator, as the narrator also appears to be distinct from the characters for most of the section. This confusion is compounded because both are writers who base their fictions on each other’s lives. We propose that this incertitude is a significant, intentional element of the revised text, moving as it does from clarity in the early version to obfuscation in the final version. The level of authorial work involved in the transition from first person to third, only to gradually dip back into first person when the narrator fails at distancing himself, also demonstrates that this was a significant element of the textual design, worth the effort required to make the change.

35. Ibid., p. 17
37. Durrell Lawrence, Avignon Quintet, pp. 324-326.
38. Ibid., p. 326.
The earlier *Malahat Review* variant implicates the novel, *Livia*, itself in its writing in a way that parallels and explains the same metafictional function in *Monsieur*. In *Monsieur*, the final chapter, “Dinner at Quartila’s,” positions the preceding 270 pages as a working typescript inside the physical novel: “After several faltering attempts he decided to give the devil his due, so to speak, and to call it *Le Monsieur*.” In the first pages of both versions of the *Livia* chapter, the narrator wanders through his deceased friend’s library, seeing his own bound copies of her letters in direct contrast to her loose file folders filled with his. From this visual image, the narrator realizes “he was surrounded by the dead woman’s books. Underlinings, annotations. She was still here!” Despite Durrell’s readings in Barthes, the author is posthumously present, and she resides in textual fragments that parallel those that Durrell was contemporaneously manipulating in his own archives—he sold the first major lot of his papers to the Morris Library of the Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 1970. Similar to Tu’s posthumous presence in her textual archives, Durrell too remains “still here” in his concurrently constructed archives.

The distinct metatextual, archival aspect of the *Malahat Review* variant implies a struggle for the authority of authorship in the palimpsestic identities of Blanford and Sutcliffe. In both versions, Blanford and Sutcliffe argue to assert themselves as the author of what Blanford titles *Monsieur* or what Sutcliffe titles *The Prince of Darkness*—which are also the title and subtitle of the first novel of *The Avignon Quintet*. In the first chapter of *Livia* “Blanford reached out and touched the earlier manuscript of his book *Monsieur*”, yet the words “earlier” and “*Monsieur*” do not occur in the *Malahat Review* variant. Instead, the *Malahat* variant refers to “Buried Alive”, the subtitle for *Livia*, the book that is actually in the reader’s hands. In effect, by changing the book titles between the variant and final versions,

40. **Durrell** Lawrence, “Gog and Magog”, 48.
41. **Durrell** Lawrence, *Avignon Quintet*, p. 299.
42. Ibid., p. 301.
43. **Durrell** Lawrence, “Gog and Magog”, p. 12.
44. Ibid., p. 48.
Durrell makes his final text repeat the already explicit authorial instability in *Monsieur* while only *enacting* the same instability with regard to *Livia* itself. The *Malahat* variant states this instability while the final form only acts it out. Stated another way, Durrell reverses his first ploy, such that he adds this backward reference to the manuscript of the first novel (which is now the creation of a character) while he suppresses his reference to *Livia* as another of Blanford’s novels. Hence, Durrell writes the production of the novels into the novels themselves, making the archive of manuscripts and variants into a large companion volume. 45 The reader is quite literally pointed to the archive as a part of the book’s concerns.

Further revisions to the distinct metafictional interplay in “Gog and Magog”—revisions that implicate the novel itself in its own composition—demonstrate how Durrell continued to lessen the overt statements of the first draft in order to *show* rather than *tell* his concerns. In the *Malahat Review*, Blanford “could grimly follow the vicissitudes of his career through [Constance’s] letters to the first *success* of *Buried Alive*”;46 This is, of course, the subtitle to the novel *Livia*, a title and subtitle Durrell was already using with his publisher in 1974, which again implicates the character as the author—this reference is then deleted from the final version of this chapter in the novel. In the variant, Blanford’s position is reversed such that he wrote the title of the first book and only the subtitle of the second, which the reader is holding—his authority as the narrator is thus undermined. In the final version, however, “the first *success* of *Buried Alive* becomes “the first success to the time of the Q novels,”47 which is described on the next page as “a classical quincunx – a Q.” 48 This transformation of the title for *Livia* into a joking allusion to the Q

45. As a perhaps minor example of this tendency, the “Green Notebook” section of *Monsieur* is actually a nearly verbatim transcription of the contents of Durrell’s own Green Notebook for *Monsieur*, held in the Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell, University Paris X-Nanterre (#1349). Moreover, the real green notebook comprises the raw materials from which Durrell drew while constructing the novel itself, which then interpolates its own origins.
47. DURRELL Lawrence, *Avignon Quintet*, p. 350.
Gospels—an alternate, lost Gospel supposedly comprised of a verbatim collection of Jesus' discourse—suited the Gnostic theme in the books, the obsession of the archive and variants, and shows how Durrell reduced the overt gestures of the first draft. An authentic or ur-text for Livia becomes as illusory as a primary, authoritative origin for the Gospels. This shift also undermines the authorial focus implicit in classical hermeneutics. Lastly, now that he clearly articulated his form, Durrell needed to cover his tracks to keep the execution of the form exciting for the reader.

This new form, in which the characters overlap and fiction blurs with reality, is first described on 4 August 1974 in the same letter to Juliet O'Hea. Durrell tells her the 25-page typescript for the first chapter of Livia is for immediate publication in tandem with Monsieur because it "follows on directly from the first volume [Monsieur] and has the merit of exposing the method [...] From the formal point of view it throws quite a light on the novel, and proves it to be the first of a group of novels interconnected by this method though quite separate in themselves." He also contrasts this against what he regards as "the rather rigid form" he used in The Alexandria Quartet, a work typically seen as formally innovative.

Therefore, this variant is primarily important for considering Durrell's sense of form. Two moments that explicitly discuss form, which occur in the Malahat variant, are altered or omitted in the final version of the chapter, "A Certain Silence". First, the final version omits a section of three paragraphs from page 28 of "Gog and Magog"—approximately pages 323-4 of The Avignon Quintet. Among the material omitted is the remainder of Toby's satirical obituary of Blanford, which reads:

At the end of his life he was asked to define the Beauty he hunted for in his art. He defined it thus: "Beauty resides in congruence, the appropriateness of parts to wholes. The wholes not only summing up the parts but inspiring a feeling of perfect and significant order in the observer".

50. Durrell Lawrence, "Gog and Magog", p. 28.
The obituary also determines the specific genre that Blanford writes, namely “historic novels of medieval life in Avignon”—which were “regarded as daring in their scope” and explicit material—and his literary rivals, Shaw and Kipling.\(^{31}\) Also included in the omission is a short discussion between Sutcliffe and Blanford on the distortions that the cinema produced in the adaptations of his novels. The revisions entail, again, an intensification of the theme of provisionality by removing the specific references to Blanford’s career and stylistic preoccupations. In the variant, however, Blanford is blurred with Durrell as the author of the novel in hand, and the reader is led to confuse Sutcliffe as yet another potential author during the journey on the Rhône. They are all overlapping fragments in a larger whole that anticipates Blanford’s much later dream to create “a book full of spare parts of other books, of characters left over from other lives, all circulating in each other’s bloodstream. [...] Be ye members of one another.”\(^{32}\) In this way, the variant gives voice to what subsequently became a purely formal and hence “silenced” element of the text.

This discussion of Blanford’s imagined form is then significantly altered in “A Certain Silence” in Livia. The phrases “Five Q-novels written in a highly elliptical quincunxial style invented for the occasion. Though only dependent on one another as echoes might be”,\(^{33}\) “the books would be roped together like climbers on a rockface, but they would all be independent”,\(^{34}\) and “just a roman-gigogne”\(^{35}\) are additions to the revised text. As we have already noted above, in the Malahat Review variant, when asked about the relation to form and content, Blanford answers, “a palimpsest of people, Robin.”\(^{36}\) While the notion of a palimpsest is more akin to Durrell’s earlier Alexandria Quartet and its continually rewritten texts, here, in Livia and the Avignon Quintet,

\(^{31}\) Ibid.
\(^{32}\) DURRELL LAWRENCE, Avignon Quintet, p. 693.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 309.
\(^{34}\) Ibid.
\(^{35}\) Ibid.
\(^{36}\) Ibid.
\(^{36}\) DURRELL LAWRENCE, “Gog and Magog”, p. 17.
it is instead a gradation of characters overlapping with and failing to
distinguish between each other. The intermediary stage in which he
referred to his overlapping and intercalated characters as a palimpsest
exists only in the Malahat variant. This notion, then, appears to be
the crux of the form that leads to the later, more vague metaphorical
descriptions of the final version.

CONCLUSIONS

Durrell ends both versions of the Livia chapter with an allusion to
Milton, who in turn alludes to Shakespeare, and all three were concerned
with the inexhaustibility of the work of art. Furthermore, this allusion is
supplemented in the variant by the obituary of Blanford quoted above.
Both versions, however, end with Durrell's dual author-protagonists
offering to "wr[ite a book to prove that the great Blanford is simply
the fiction of one of his fictions" which contributes to the "palimpsest
of people" that describes the form. In "Gog and Magog", where the
importance of allusive relations between texts and authors is more
overt, the reward for such an accomplishment sends the reader back
to Blanford's obituary quoted above, for Durrell then ends the chapter
with Milton's 'obituary' for Shakespeare: a "star y-pointed pyramid" which derives from Milton's "On Shakespear". The matter is clearly
posthumous—the epitaph to Sir Thomas Stanley in Tong Church is
attributed to Shakespeare, and this provides Milton's source materials
in his own tribute to Shakespeare:

        Ask who lyes here but do not weep
        He is not dead he doth but sleep
        This stony register is for his bones [...] 
        Not monumental stone preserves our Fame
        Nor sky aspiring pyramids our name.59

57. Ibid., p. 49.
58. Ibid.
For Milton, this becomes

What needs my Shakespear for his honour'd Bones,
The labour of an age in piled Stones,
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a Star-ypointing Pyramid?^60

Durrell's gesture to position himself in this tradition of allusions is a longstanding habit across his oeuvre. In this instance, the palimpsest of people overlaps with allusion, belatedness, and the author finding himself and others in the "enormous common grave"^u of the archive (especially since Shakespeare's epitaph is speculative and is certainly minor in either case). Blanford finds his own letters in the files of his deceased friend, and in the last letter that ends the first chapter with an archival scrap, this grave speaks for both the book and the dead recipient while Blanford shifts from being an author to a reader: "later, when the blow falls, and I disappear from the scene, [this novel] will have to do duty, such as it is, for my star y-pointed pyramid."^62 The novel and the archive's traces of its relics speak as a palimpsestic multiplicity in which the author is the fiction of the voices that came before and from which he develops, both within the current text at hand and in the whole of the tradition that generated its horizon of possibility.

As with our quotations from Kundera, the distinction for Durrell lies in the coexistence of multiple and even contradictory states for the text, such that variants can peacefully coexist as parts of a larger whole that admits of internal contrast, just as narrative voices or frames can compete congruently: "Beauty resides in congruence, the appropriateness of parts to wholes. The wholes not only summing up the parts but inspiring a feeling of perfect and significant order in the

61. Ibid.
62. DURELL Lawrence, "Gog and Magog", p. 49.
observer." In such a view, form and content are both components of the whole, and both change across the various states of a given text, which are also, now, components—the whole endows them with their congruence and thereby with beauty, just as each whole text exists as a part in an allusive, intertextual tradition. No two parts must agree with each other; instead, like a palimpsest of people, they must only jointly contribute to the whole, within which they overlap, intercalate, and continue to develop long after the departure of the author who has surrendered his authority.

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63. Ibid.
A VARIANT OF LAWRENCE DURRELL’S LIVIA OR BURIED ALIVE...

...Monsieur or The Prince of Darkness, London, Faber & Faber, 1974.


This volume gathers some of the papers delivered at the international conference which was held in Nanterre from 1st-5th July in collaboration with the International Lawrence Durrell Society. Its aim is to explore the influence of scientific theories on Lawrence Durrell’s literary work in terms of blending and synergy, as well as to study Durrell’s political role and to explore how music and poetry pervade his writing. Written in English and addressing a specialist audience, this book is part of the Collection durrellienne and presents texts whose authors pertain to diverse geographical and cultural horizons (the USA, Canada, Turkey, Greece, Egypt, England and France), thus reflecting Lawrence Durrell’s intellectual path and giving this work an international scope.

Cet ouvrage est le fruit d’un colloque international qui s’est tenu à Nanterre du 1er au 5 juillet 2008, avec le soutien de la Société Internationale Lawrence Durrell, dont il rassemble certaines des communications. Il s’agit d’analyser l’impact de la théorie scientifique sur l’œuvre littéraire de Lawrence Durrell, qui se mesure en termes de fusion et de synergie, ainsi que d’étudier le rôle politique de Durrell et d’explorer les rapports qu’entretient son œuvre avec la musique et la poésie. Rédigé en anglais et destiné à un public de spécialistes, cet ouvrage s’insère dans la Collection durrellienne et rassemble des auteurs venant d’horizons et de sensibilités culturelles variés (États-Unis, Canada, Turquie, Grèce, Égypte, Angleterre et France) reflétant l’itinéraire de pensée de Durrell, et conférant à ce travail une dimension internationale.