



Tunc

Lawrence Durrell

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A scientist discovers that his famous invention leads to a dangerous outcome

Felix Charlock's scientific genius is unrivaled--and so is his very special invention. So special, in fact, that a shadowy and enigmatic international firm, called Merlin, recruits Felix and marries him into the family. He is betrothed to the erratic Merlin heiress, Benedicta, and given access to an inexhaustible fortune. Yet he longs to be free of the psychological and scientific toll the mysterious firm inflicts. The inscrutable Merlin is always one step ahead, and twists and turns ensue in this tale of sexual and moral intrigue that leaves Felix's future--and his sanity--on uncertain ground.

Tunc Details

Date : Published June 21st 1979 (first published 1968)

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Author : Lawrence Durrell

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From Reader Review Tunc for online ebook

Lynne King says

This a very unusual book but I'm glad that I purchased it. A review whenever...

David says

aut tunc, aut nunquam (Petronius, Satyricon). Brilliant.

Dementropy says

Very well written, and the atmosphere created a cross between a sci-fi, James Bond thriller, and an Italian surrealist film from the 1960s. Then again, that could have been my own mind bringing too much to the table. I read this about five years ago, and gave it another shot - with a more grounded mind. Extremely enjoyable from beginning to end.

Frances says

dear lawrence durrell

please stop writing books that end up being parts of series
it's stressful and also annoying

thank you

Phyl says

After some wandering around at the beginning, the story got on track and a mystery began about the protagonist's employer and wife. Then the ending fell flat and didn't connect with the beginning. Then when I picked up Durrell's other book "Nunquam", I realized this is a continuation. So maybe I'll revise my opinion of this book after I finish the next.

Andrew says

Having finished the Alexandria Quartet a year or so ago, Tunc is about what I would have expected -- lots of expatriate languor and impressionistic storytelling. With some truly memorable sequences. I should point out that this being Durrell, be prepared for a bit of a struggle -- he doesn't hand anything to you, and the whole

thing reminds me at points of some of those ennui-soaked Italian movies from, say 1955-75 (Antonioni et al), where even the "suspense" sections are somehow still quite floaty. If you let it wash over you, it's worth it. While it didn't match Durrell's high points in Balthazar, it's still rather nice.

Mark says

That reading through tears is a bitter sweet experience. That, through the published words of another, you can come undone.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in December 2003.

The titles of the two novels which together are known as The Revolt of Aphrodite are taken from a Latin quotation familiar in translation - "It was then, or never". This fact is one which either you know or which you find out when you read the second, an action which generally makes Tunc rather clearer.

For here we are not staying in the relatively accessible territory of The Alexandria Quartet, Durrell's best known collection of novels. Indeed, the first seventy pages or so of Tunc are extremely difficult to read and through their concentration on words as words rather than as constituent parts of a narrative serves as a reminder that their author first made his literary name as a poet. The novel settles down a bit after this, though it is still possible to discern the influence of James Joyce and the techniques of stream of consciousness writing.

The narrator, Felix Charlock, is an inventor, who is involved in the early days of electronic engineering - at the start of the novel, he has developed a miniature sound recorder which he is using to tape voices for analysis on a primitive computer. While Cryptonomicon fans might be interested in this in itself, it is not particularly important to the story exactly what his inventions are, though the snippets of speech he records are used as an element of the novel's text. What is important is that he attracts the interest of the mysterious Merlin corporation, and falls for the daughter of one of its senior executives.

Charlock becomes involved with Merlin without knowing much about the company, and spends most of the second half of the novel trying to understand just what he has got himself into. He is confused by things like the executive always available by phone but completely elusive physically, or the company's involvement with one of his former mistresses, now a film star, or the possible reappearance of a former employee who had been reported dead. This gives the second half of the novel something of the air of an investigation into a secret society, like John Fowles' The Magus or even The Illuminatus! Trilogy:.

Apart from Joyce, parts of this novel remind me of Iris Murdoch, or Durrell's own Alexandria Quartet. (The Avignon Quintet, which is even more similar, was written later, as was The Magus.) It is well worth making the effort to read the earlier sections, set in Athens and Istanbul; once the action moves to London, the more prosaic background is reflected in the less poetic writing. Without the sequel, there is much which doesn't get explained (the titles of both the books and the pairing for one thing, make little sense in relation to the content of this novel), so reading Tunc is likely to be quickly followed by reading Nunquaml.

Bob Rust says

In the first volume, Merlin, a burgeoning multinational corporation, co-opts the protagonist, Felix Charlock, into constructing a super-Computer, which can predict the future and which drives him to madness.

Persephone Abbott says

I was once given the criteria that a novel should at some time alter in narrative, perhaps by way of a fellow main character, or something should alter the primary narrative view. Not that I am a stickler for this idea, but as the main character was a privileged white male stewing in boredom and contempt of his fellow humans with some vague background education in the classics arena I began to crave some notion of ethics might slap him upside the head. More than once.
