

Lawrence Durrell's
Endpapers and
Inklings 1933-1988

Volume One

Lawrence Durrell's Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988

Volume One:

*Autobiographies, Fictions,
Spirit of Place*

Edited by

Richard Pine

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Lawrence Durrell's Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988, Volume One:
Autobiographies, Fictions, Spirit of Place

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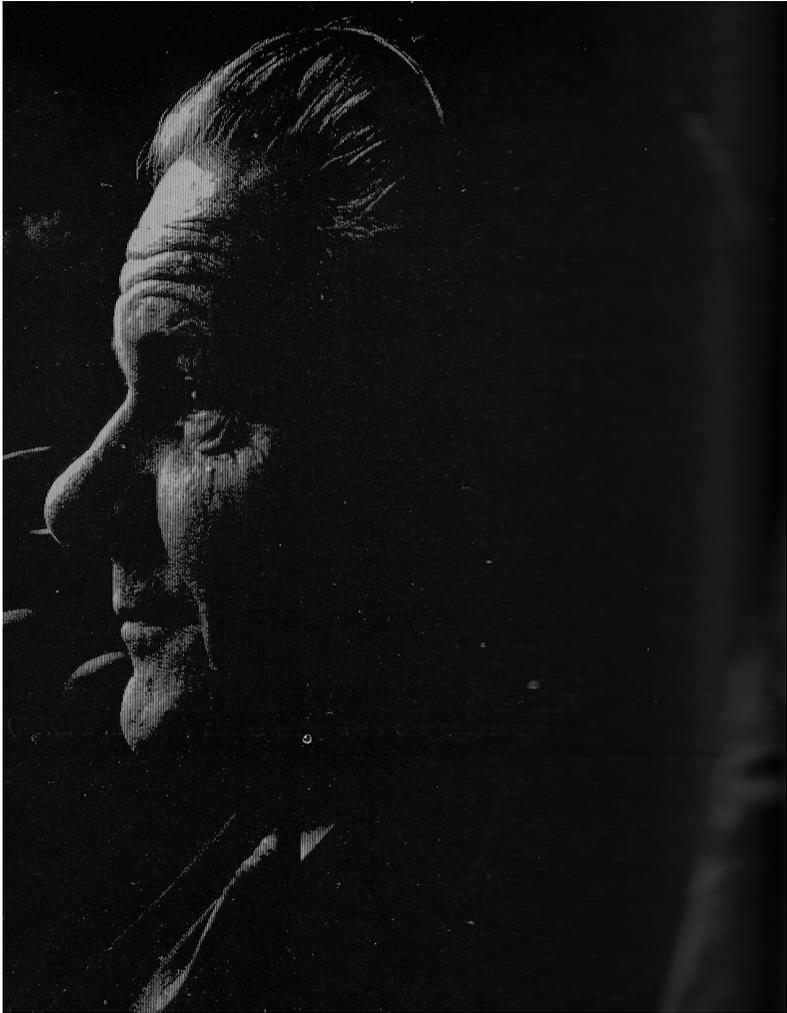
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**This book is dedicated
with great respect,
admiration and affection**

to

Françoise Kestsman



Lawrence Durrell, “a juvenile Buddha who has just stolen the cream”. An American friend, observing Durrell in Athens in 1975, noted: “Sombre eyes; sad eyes; still eyes, trying to sparkle. Trying, in fact, with sheer will, to care. Love. That is what is missing - among the many masks he wears, it is the one most transparent, most gargoylish, most foreign, most heart-rending - the one of love, for which he longs so much, and tries so hard.” (private collection)

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PREFACE

I first read Lawrence Durrell in adolescence – predictably, *The Alexandria Quartet* – and was immediately startled by his ability to write simultaneously of what he called “sexual curiosity and metaphysical speculation”. The way in which we find ourselves in the world, and the meaning which we discover of, and within, ourselves, are the great questions which commanded Durrell’s attention, and when he touches his reader, as he touched me, it is with the parallel equations of fear and excitement which propel us through adolescence into the real – or not so real – world.

I first met Lawrence Durrell in 1972 when, at my invitation, he visited Dublin to respond to a paper on his work which I delivered at Trinity College. After 1972 we met again only once, in 1988, at his home in Sommières, when he was immensely helpful, especially in elucidating the significance of his Indian childhood, the memory and enduring presence of which permeates these volumes.

Durrell liked what I wrote about him and his literary antecedents in *The Dandy and the Herald: manners, mind and morals from Brummell to Durrell* (1988) and looked forward to the planned sequel, *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape* (1994/2005) which he did not live to see.

Thus over forty years ago I began an odyssey which finds its *terminus ad quem* in these volumes of his unpublished and uncollected fictions, essays and ephemera. My research began in the Durrell collections at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and continued, after his death, at Durrell’s home in Sommières, where I inspected the remnants of his library, the “quarry books” for *The Avignon Quintet*, and notes for a final literary fling in his favourite genre – the work without consequence – to be entitled “The Asides of Demonax”; most importantly perhaps, I found notes dating from the 1930s indicating the structure and import of a work in progress entitled “The English Book of the Dead”, which represent, in effect, the blueprint for Durrell’s entire life work. Examining these notes today has enabled me to add, to my annotations to this collection, insights which might not otherwise be available to you, the reader.

The core question which I realised I had to answer in my quest for his mindscape was: what was Durrell’s intellectual landscape and context during the periods of conception? As I read deeper and deeper, I found that

this quest had two aspects: one ramification was the extraordinary width of Durrell's interests and his reading therein. This took the direction, principally, of detailed research in the Elizabethan playwrights; in the history and practice of magic as found, for example, in the work of Hermes Trismegistus and Eliphas Lévi; in philosophy – particularly Tibetan Buddhism and Henri Bergson – and in science, in this case especially the work of Einstein, Bergson, Jung, Georg Groddeck, Otto Rank and Wilhelm Stekel. On the other hand, the depth of his interests was comparatively simple, once Durrell's thought-processes became clear, since it consisted of an elaboration of a unitary field of thought. Despite – or perhaps because of – the disparate nature of the writings in this collection (fictions, dramas, essays, aphorisms), this unitary field permeates almost every piece in every genre.

As with *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape*, this collection presents the mind and spirit which was so affected by the experiences of living and of observing the world around him in whatever phenomenal form. Often it is not the literalness of Durrell's writing but its suggestiveness which is important. The work of critics who assess Durrell's relevance to reality is less important than the exploration of how he used the materials of everyday life to mean something "else" or "other". The readers who finds that "other" difficult to accommodate or to apprehend may find some assistance in the more straightforward items in this collection; to the readers who are already accustomed to that sense of "difference", the collection will deepen their appreciation.

The chief factor which was hammered into my consciousness – and my conscience – again and again as I read Durrell's notebooks, was his obsession with integration, with the restoration of wholeness, and his awareness of the impossibility of the quest. One type of wholeness which was of signal importance to him was spatial circularity – the return of the native who, of course, never was native to anywhere. In 1950 his horoscope stated with frightening accuracy: "No-one seems to satisfy your inward longings for any length of time [...] You are never really happy wherever you are, you always want to be somewhere else."¹ This restlessness and rootlessness defined Durrell the man, the lover and the writer and created a divided mind. In the poem "Le cercle refermé" he refers explicitly to this duality: "my heliocentric muse / With lunar leanings."²

¹ See R Pine, *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape*, p. 87.

² L Durrell, *Caesar's Vast Ghost*, p. 205.

The supreme principle which I have maintained in making this collection is to have followed Durrell's precept when he said "do not be afraid to touch your reader but never touch where you do not enlighten [...] The artist must keep his obstinate silences – even when he deals in words they must only emphasise the mystery of the silence [...] Definitions strangle – just like literary criticism"³ ... a salutary admonition not, I fear, generally available to, or observed by, those who labour in this vineyard.

Corfu
Greek Independence Day
2019

³ R Pine, *op.cit.*, pp.305-6.

EDITORIAL POLICY

This is a collection of Lawrence Durrell's hard-to-find *prose*. His uncollected *poetry* is an other country, most of which has been charted by Peter Baldwin, most recently in *The fruitful discontent of the word* (2018).

I decided at an early stage not to present all the items chronologically. This would have given you a sense of Durrell's intellectual and artistic development but the prevailing argument was to present the work thematically, opening with some autobiographical discussions, moving through ideas on the poetry of vision, "spirit of place", the craft and responsibility of writing, his many acts of homage to Henry Miller, and, along the way, giving you a complete novella (*The Magnetic Island*), a complete play (*Black Honey*), a complete short story masquerading as a screenplay ("The Limping Man" – his treatment for a screenplay of *Oedipus the King*) and several other fictions and screenplays, before finishing with some of his more indelicate and *méchant* squibs, and the entire notebook of "Asides of Demonax".

However, I have not been too rigorous in these thematic distinctions, preferring to allow a fluidity between the various Parts: thus Durrell's essay on the paintings of Henry Miller appears not in Part Six ("Durrell on Miller") but in Part Two ("The Artist's Eye") where it is in company with other examples of Durrell's appreciation of painting and photography as art forms, while the brief introduction to Miller's *The World of Sex* is to be found in conjunction with the essays on the Harem and Gynococracy.

After the success of *The Alexandria Quartet* Durrell complained to Miller "It's terrible to have a success; everyone wants you to repeat it by writing the same thing over again. I want to risk failure for a change by a new ploy".¹ The writer needs the freedom to fail. ("Fail better", Beckett said.) Early in his career he invented "Amicus Nordensis", the *alter ego* writing as "Charles Norden", who penned some of the work he considered of lesser quality. I have excluded from this collection only a few instances where I, in my subjective judgement, felt that Durrell had produced work that even "Amicus Nordensis" would have disowned. Durrell's workaday jobs – travel pieces (for which he was paid considerable fees) or routine

¹ 6 February 1965, in I MacNiven (ed.), *The Durrell-Miller Letters 1935-1980*, pp. 405-6.

forewords to books other than those by close friends – transcended the mundane by the same adroit use of wordplay: a grammatical nuance, an unlikely adjective or adverb, a neologism.

The pieces I have omitted are mostly very short and very slight: for example, his “Foreword” to A R and Mary Burn’s *The Living Past of Greece* (1980) which is respectful of scholarship but adds little to what we already know of Durrell’s passion for Greece and his ability to see the same passion in others (as he does, for example, in commending the photography of John Veltri – 1/115-6). Another omission is Durrell’s introduction to *100 Great Books: masterpieces of all time* edited by John Canning, where the superb statement “My antipathy to Milton has made me fearfully unjust to him because he bores me” does not justify what is otherwise a vacuous and dutiful set of words. The many versions of the screenplay for *Cleopatra* would have been tedious to read – even one of them would give little idea of Durrell’s insight into the characters. I have, however, included a “treatment” for *Cleopatra* which indicates Durrell’s approach to this kind of work. Other exclusions are pieces which are repetitive of material included here, or so close in content and style as to disqualify themselves.

Perhaps the one omission for which I may be culpable is Durrell’s controversial preface to a 1958 reprint of Anaïs Nin’s *Children of the Albatross*. Although Durrell felt that he had paid sufficient tribute to an old friend, Nin was, as Ian MacNiven says, “furious” at its implications of her “privileged upbringing”, and its lack of empathy with her writing. I have omitted it because the controversy continued and was wide-ranging (the basic elements of the row can be found in MacNiven’s biography, *Lawrence Durrell*, pp. 491-95) and to deal adequately with it in context would occupy too much space.²

The greatest loss is my inability to locate the exhibition catalogue for the paintings of Nadia Blokh (held at the Galerie Merignon in Paris in 1963). Blokh, with her husband Alexandre, was a long-term friend of Durrell, and it would have been a great pleasure to place his words about her paintings alongside those about another dear artist friend, Amy Nimr (1/125-6).

In many cases, Durrell’s introductions to books appeared in the French editions, usually translated from his English original. Where the original no longer exists, I have translated back from the French, hoping to have

² In 1984 Durrell wrote (in a copy of *Children of the Albatross* inscribed to him by Nin) “She was deeply wounded and affronted” adding, correctly in my opinion, “maybe my praise was not extravagant enough in the Hollywood sense – she was becoming used to that”.

satisfactorily achieved a Durrellian tone.

I will not insult you, the reader, by adding footnotes to explain “household names” – even today, most readers have heard of Hitler or Freud. But it *is* necessary to offer footnotes where a classical allusion or one in the many side-streets of literature might require illumination. I apologise if in any instance I have stated the obvious.

This is not an “academic” work: it contains no exhaustive Bibliography; I have preferred to indicate “further reading” where it seems appropriate. If it is at all “scholarly” the scholarship consists of the research which I, and those who have assisted along the way (and which I acknowledge below) undertook in order to present this collection. This is a book to be read and enjoyed, rather than studied. The world’s library shelves are groaning with learned and earnest dissertations on Durrell’s work – some of them virtuous and enlightening – but this is not the place or the time for such considerations.

Throughout, where the rules of grammar do not conflict with Durrellian syntax, I have quietly corrected Durrell’s punctuation (he was overfond of the colon and notoriously close-fisted with commas). Durrell’s spelling was always erratic, and except in very few cases where his misspelling is endearingly true, I have also silently corrected his “wierd” to “weird” and “collonade” to “colonnade”.

In setting signposts to locations within these volumes I have adopted the practice of *see 1/000* or *see 2/000* wherever relevant.

Wherever possible and appropriate I have used a doodle by Lawrence Durrell as a colophon to indicate the end of a particular item:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The place of honour in any Acknowledgements such as these is merited by Peter Baldwin. Peter is a *doyen* of collectors of Durrelliana and, at his Delos Press, the most sensitive publisher of Durrell's *recherche* works. His enthusiasm for this type of book led originally to a volume published as *From the Elephant's Back* – a collection which he himself conceived but decided not to publish himself. He has been the presiding genius of the present collection and I am sorry that he did not accept my initial invitation to act as co-editor. He has been instrumental in sourcing texts for this edition and in readily providing advice and opinions. I am deeply grateful to him; this collection would not exist without his example, encouragement and expertise.

Ian MacNiven is my oldest Durrellian friend: as Durrell's biographer and the editor of the *Durrell-Miller Letters* he is the pre-eminent expert on all matters Durrellian, but much more than that, he has been a constant source of encouragement, advice and wisdom. A true helpmeet.

Roderick Beaton (Emeritus Koraes Professor of Modern Greek & Byzantine History, Language and Literature, King's College London) has been a long-term friend and advocate. He provided not only guidance on matters relating to George Seferis but unstinting assistance in many other ways.

Lee Durrell graciously gave permission to include Gerald Durrell's addendum to his brother's encomium of Ludo Chardenon, and Frédéric-Jacques Temple (whose name, as editor of *Entretiens* dedicated to Lawrence Durrell, is cited often) gave permission for the inclusion of photographs for which he was responsible.

Claudine Brelet, a brilliant and internationally acclaimed scientist and anthropologist, who collaborated with Durrell on several literary projects, was more than helpful; she has been a friend for twenty-five years and has told me more about the place of the woman in Durrell's life than any research could have revealed.

My co-editor of *The Placebo*, David Roessel (Peter and Stella Yiannos Professor of Greek Language and Literature at Stockton University) has once again contributed his expertise, not least in advising on the inclusion of "Dreams, Divinations", the missing chapter from *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, for which he has provided a short introduction.

My old and dear friend Brewster Chamberlin, author of, among many other titles, the indispensable chronology of Lawrence Durrell has, with his wife Lynn-Marie Smith, been a constant source of encouragement and support, both to the Durrell School since its inception and to myself personally.

Ciara Barrick has provided vigorous, timely and erudite support which earns her an epithet far more laudatory than “research assistant”. If she were not ubiquitous we would have to clone her.

At the Morris Library Special Collections at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Aaron Lissec has been, as always, courteous and helpful in supplying material and in elucidating obscurities in the Lawrence Durrell archives.

I am also indebted to: Olivia Allan (Sotheby’s, London), Olivia Garrison (Iowa State University Library Reference Coordinator), Laura Gottesman and Karen Walfall (Library of Congress, Washington DC), Dr Arnold Harvey (London), Dr Katerina Krikos-Davis (University of Birmingham), Eng Sengsavang (Reference Archivist, UNESCO) and Adrian Tahourdin (*Times Literary Supplement*). Anthony Hirst also offered advice and assistance.

LAWRENCE DURRELL: A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

This chronology is intended as an overview of Lawrence Durrell's life and work, listing his principal publications and the places where he lived and worked. For a further, more detailed, study of his chronology, consult Brewster Chamberlin, A Chronology of the Life and Times of Lawrence Durrell (second edition, 2019). All books by Durrell were published by Faber and Faber unless otherwise stated.

- 1912** LD born in Jullundur, India
- 1918** Leslie Durrell is born (brother)
- 1920** Margaret (Margo) Durrell is born (sister)
- 1923** LD leaves India for England
- 1925** Birth of Gerald Durrell (brother)
- 1928** Death of Lawrence Samuel Durrell (father)
- 1930** LD is in London, writing songs
- 1931** The Cecil Press publishes *Quaint Fragment: Poems Written between the Ages of Sixteen and Nineteen*
- 1932** LD meets Nancy Myers, John Gawsworth and George Wilkinson
The Caduceus Press (London) publishes *Ten Poems*
- 1933** LD and Nancy visit Paris
The Caduceus Press publishes *Bromo Bombastes: a fragment from a laconic drama* [by “Gaffer Peeslake”]
- 1934** LD completes *Pied Piper of Lovers* (novel, published 1935 by Cassell)
- 1935** LD and Nancy marry and depart England for Corfu
Louisa Durrell (mother) arrives in Corfu with LD's siblings
LD discovers Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*
LD and Nancy start to live in a cottage at Kalami [the “White House”]
- 1936** LD is writing *The Black Book*
LD takes part in the “Ionian Banquets” at the Perdika taverna (in Corfu town) in the company of Gostan Zarian and Theodore Stephanides

- 1937** *Panic Spring* [LD's second novel, as "Charles Norden"] is published
August 1937-April 1938 LD and Nancy are in Paris and London, meeting Miller, Anaïs Nin, TS Eliot, Dylan Thomas
- 1938** *The Black Book* is published by the Obelisk Press, Paris
- 1939** LD is in London, Corfu, Athens; he introduces Miller to George Katsimbalis
LD and Nancy leave Corfu for Athens, where they work in the British Embassy information department
- 1940** Birth of Penelope (daughter)
LD establishes the Institute for English Studies in Kalamata (Peloponnese)
- 1941** LD, Nancy and Penelope leave Greece, travel to Egypt
LD writes "Yorick's Column" for the *Egyptian Gazette*
LD works as press officer at the British Embassy, Cairo
LD, Robin Fedden and Bernard Spencer conceive *Personal Landscape* poetry journal
- 1942** Nancy and Penelope are evacuated from Egypt to Palestine; the marriage is at an end
LD moves to Alexandria, where he meets Yvette (Eve) Cohen
- 1943** *A Private Country* (poems)
- 1945** LD is posted to Rhodes as director of public information
Prospero's Cell [LD's prose-poem about Corfu]
- 1946** *Cities, Plains and People* (poems)
- 1947** LD is divorced from Nancy and marries Eve *Cefalû* [later *The Dark Labyrinth*] is published by Editions Poetry (London)
- 1948** LD is posted to Argentina as a lecturer at the university of Córdoba
On Seeming to Presume (poems)
LD leaves Argentina before the expiration of his contract
- 1949** LD writes "Study in Genius: Henry Miller"
LD is appointed press attaché to the British Embassy, Belgrade (Yugoslavia)
- 1950** *Sappho: a play in verse* [first produced on stage in 1959]
LD and Eve holiday on Ischia with Gostan Zarian and family
- 1951** Birth of Sappho Jane (daughter)
- 1952** *A Key to Modern [British] Poetry* is published by Peter Neville (London) and University of Oklahoma Press (USA)
- 1953** LD moves to Cyprus, where he teaches at the Pancyprrian Gymnasium, Nicosia; the marriage to Eve is effectively finished
Reflections on a Marine Venus

- 1954** *Pope Joan* is published by Derek Verschoyle (London)
LD becomes Director of Information Services in Cyprus and edits *Cyprus Review*
- 1955** *Private Drafts* (poems) is privately printed
The Tree of Idleness (poems)
LD meets Claude-Marie Vincendon
- 1956** LD leaves Cyprus
Selected Poems
- 1957** *Justine* [the first part of *The Alexandria Quartet*]
LD and Claude begin living in a rented house in Sommières
White Eagles over Serbia and *Bitter Lemons*
LD is awarded the Duff Cooper Memorial Award for *Bitter Lemons*
Eve divorces LD
- 1958** *Balthazar* [the second part of *The Alexandria Quartet*]
LD and Claude rent (and later buy) the Mazet Michel, between Uzès and Sommières
Mountolive [the third part of *The Alexandria Quartet*] and *Stiff Upper Lip* ["Antrobus" stories]
- 1959** *Art and Outrage* (LD's and Alfred Perlès's correspondence about Miller) published by Putnam
- 1960** *The Black Book* is re-published by Faber and Faber
LD publishes an introduction to EM Forster's *Alexandria: a history and a guide*
Clea [the fourth part of *The Alexandria Quartet*]
LD is working on a screenplay for the film *Cleopatra* (continues into 1961)
The Dark Labyrinth
- 1961** LD and Claude-Marie Vincendon marry
LD's play *Acte* is staged in Hamburg (it is published in 1965)
- 1962** *The Alexandria Quartet* is published as a single volume
The World of Lawrence Durrell (edited by Harry T Moore) is published
LD records some of his poems for Jupiter Records (London)
LD and Miller are in Edinburgh for an International Writers' Conference
LD is in Israel to research a film scenario for *Judith*
- 1963** *A Private Correspondence: The Henry Miller-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence* (edited by George Wickes)
An Irish Faustus (play, which is staged in Hamburg the same year)
- 1964** First exhibition (in Paris) of "Oscar Eps" paintings
LD is in Israel to make a short film about *Judith* with Sophia Loren

- Death of Louisa Durrell (mother)
- 1965** LD and family are on holiday in Corfu
- 1966** *The Ikons and Other Poems* and *Sauve Qui Peut* (“Antrobus” stories)
LD and Claude buy, and move into, a mansion in Sommières
- 1967** 1 January, Claude dies
- 1968** LD is in California to visit Miller
Tunc (novel)
- 1969** *Spirit of Place: Letters and Essays on Travel* (edited by Alan Thomas)
A film of *Justine* is released, directed by George Kukor and Joseph Strick, starring Anouk Aimée, Dirk Bogarde, Michael York and Philippe Noiret
- 1970** LD sells a large portion of his personal archive to Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
Nunquam (novel)
LD records music for his musical play *Ulysses Come Back*
Second “Oscar Epfs” exhibition in Paris
- 1971** *The Red Limbo Lingo* (poems)
- 1972** *On the Suchness of the Old Boy* (poems and drawings) is published by Turret Books (London) – a collaboration between LD and Sappho
- 1973** *Vega and Other Poems*
LD is a jury member at the Cannes Film Festival
LD marries Ghislaine de Boysson
- 1974** LD lectures at California Institute of Technology
Monsieur, or The Prince of Darkness [the first part of *The Avignon Quintet*]
A third “Oscar Epfs” exhibition in Paris
- 1975** LD wins the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (UK) for *Monsieur*
LD is in Sicily and Corfu; he makes the television programme *Spirit of Place: Lawrence Durrell’s Greece*
- 1977** *Sicilian Carousel*
LD films *Spirit of Place: Lawrence Durrell’s Egypt* (screened 1978)
- 1978** LD is divorced from Ghislaine de Boysson
Livia, or Buried Alive [the second part of *The Avignon Quintet*]
The Greek Islands
- 1979** Labrys Editions publish *Lawrence Durrell: a symposium*
- 1980** *Collected Poems* (edited by James A Brigham)
Wildwood House publishes *A Smile in the Mind’s Eye*
Henry Miller dies

- 1981** LD lectures at the Cercle Pompidou (Paris) – the theme is “From the Elephant’s Back”
Literary Lifelines: the Richard Aldington-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence (edited by Ian S MacNiven and Harry T Moore)
- 1982** *Constance, or Solitary Practices* [the third part of *The Avignon Quintet*]
- 1983** Nancy Myers dies
Theodore Stephanides dies
Leslie Durrell dies
Sebastian, or Ruling Passions [the fourth part of *The Avignon Quintet*]
- 1984** LD begins his relationship with Françoise Kestman
- 1985** *Antrobus Complete*
Sappho Durrell takes her own life
Quinx, or The Ripper’s Tale [the final part of *The Avignon Quintet*]
- 1986** LD is awarded the honour of Commandeur de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres
- 1988** *The Durrell-Miller Letters 1935-1980* (edited by Ian S MacNiven)
The Mediterranean Shore: travels in Lawrence Durrell Country (artwork by Paul Hogarth, text by LD) is published by Pavilion/Michael Joseph
- 1989** Sommières names its cultural centre “L’Espace Lawrence Durrell”
- 1990** *Caesar’s Vast Ghost: aspects of Provence*
LD dies in Sommières
- 1992** *The Avignon Quintet* is published in a single volume
- 1995** Death of Gerald Durrell
- 1998** *Lawrence Durrell: A Biography* by Ian S MacNiven
BBC television screens a documentary *Lawrence Durrell: A Smile in the Mind’s Eye*
- 2000** L’Association Lawrence Durrell en Languedoc is established
- 2002** The Durrell School of Corfu commences [later the Durrell Library of Corfu]
- 2003** Ghislaine de Boysson dies
- 2004** Eve Durrell dies
- 2005** *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape* by Richard Pine is published by the Durrell School of Corfu
- 2007** Brewster Chamberlin’s *Chronology of the Life and Times of Lawrence Durrell* is published by the Durrell School of Corfu
Margo Durrell dies

- 2010** Penelope Durrell dies
- 2012** The Durrell School of Corfu publishes *Judith* (novel)
- 2018** The Durrell Library of Corfu publishes *The Placebo* [three drafts for *Tunc*]

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This collection of Lawrence Durrell's prose writings is intended to present, to both the casual reader and the aficionado, as many as possible of his transient or ephemeral writings over the long course of his career, from youthful exuberance to the reflections of old age. It cannot claim to be exhaustive: there will always be, to paraphrase Durrell's friend Dylan Thomas, a venerable pamphlet, unknown to lexicologists.

Nevertheless, "Endpapers" is intended to indicate the conclusiveness of the collection: while there may be items as yet undetected, in addition to the very few pieces that I have consciously omitted, it is very unlikely that any subsequent collection of his prose writings will be necessary. This is therefore partly a valedictory collection, in that it provides to those familiar with Durrell's work a last look at his ephemera, and also a welcoming collection for those whose knowledge of Durrell is limited to one or two titles.

Having been slightly involved (through the courtesy of Peter Baldwin) in the preliminary stages of an earlier selection, *From the Elephant's Back* (2015), I have perceived the need for a second "Elephant" which might further convey the substance and import of Lawrence Durrell's uncollected prose after the first Elephant had packed his trunk.

My principal concern has been to demonstrate, through Durrell's writings over a period of over fifty years, what he called the "long strip" of his working life, the "*vie artistique*" in the course of which his major achievement was undoubtedly *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-59) but which encompassed poetry, many more novels, dramas, screenplays, reviews and prefaces, journalism and other occasional pieces. Accomplished and applauded as a writer of "spirit of place" with his consciousness of the *deus loci*, many of his contributions in this genre to magazines such as *Holiday* or *Travel and Leisure* are now remote to all but the research scholar, as are several of the essays he published in small literary magazines (often short-lived) such as *Phoenix* (1932-40) or *Greek Horizons* (of which it seems only one issue appeared, in 1946).

I have therefore attempted to make available in a single collection the many writings by Durrell which have not already appeared in cognate collections (*Spirit of Place* [1969]) and *From the Elephant's Back* [2015]) in order to give you, the reader, a greater experience of the enormous

range of Durrell's prose writings, across fiction, drama, philosophy and criticism, and at the same time a sense of the *vie artistique* as he moved from adolescence to old age "through many negatives to what I am".¹

It is impossible to encapsulate *all* of Durrell, neither the physical bulk of his writing nor the man himself; as he wrote in his final book, *Caesar's Vast Ghost*,

Though you a whole eternity may take
You'll not unravel the entire mosaic.²

Having tried to do so in my study of his work, *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape* (and still wondering how one does, in fact, unravel a mosaic), I found, increasingly, that the individual *tessarae* and *tessellae* are greater than their sum. There was, however, a unitary direction to every piece, the elucidation of some truth by which it was possible for the artist to live and, by extension, to discover himself.

To define Durrell is a thankless and pointless task. In a draft of the "Postface" to *Nunquam* (1970), he had written "As far as possible I have always tried to make my novels inquests with an open verdict: fearing on the one hand the *roman à clef* with its closed circuits; nor on the other hand did I feel I could cope with the volumetric novel, the analysis in psychological depth of very often uninteresting people [...] The poetic game is to try and put a lid on a box with no sides."³

You cannot make the inscrutable scrutable. Any photograph of Lawrence Durrell will show the "catch-me-if-you-can", the *méchant* and the wizard, the sage and the criminal, like a juvenile Buddha who has just stolen the cream.

Durrell told his biographer, Ian MacNiven, that he wanted his work to be "pretty consistent, as well as coherent, philosophically, from *The Black Book* onwards"; and here I would urge readers to go back behind *The Black Book* to his earlier work.⁴ Unfortunately, Durrell disowned his first novel *Pied Piper of Lovers* (1935), a fictional view of his childhood in India and his subsequent exile in London, and his second, *Panic Spring* (1936), taking Walsh Clifton, his central character from *Pied Pipers*, to a Greek island of mystery.⁵ But, even including these, there is an arc stretching, like a huge musical *legato*, from his Indian childhood through

¹ L Durrell, *Collected Poems*, p. 154; subsequent references will appear in the text as "CP".

² *Caesar's Vast Ghost*, p. xiv.

³ Manuscript in Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, collection 42/20/6.

⁴ Ian MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell: a biography*, pp. 562, 671; further references are to MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell*.

⁵ Both *Pied Piper of Lovers* and *Panic Spring* were republished in 2008.

his peripatetic postings in the British public service, to his final thirty-two years' residence in the south of France. Durrell, in conversation with myself, reckoned that although *The Alexandria Quartet* was his most successful work, *Tunc* and *Nunquam* were his most important, because they expressed his view not only of the decline of western civilisation and the impoverishment of creativity and sexuality, but also the west's incapacity to understand the east. *The Avignon Quintet* was, he thought, his most ambitious, but I detected his feeling that, as he put it, he "hadn't pulled off a sufficiently large trick".

At the outset he had told Henry Miller (his lifelong friend and mentor) that he intended to write "REAL" books under his own name and lesser works as "Charles Norden" whom he dubbed his "Amicus Nordensis", and who authored his second novel, *Panic Spring* (1936). Miller disabused him of this notion ("the schizophrenic route") and urged him to write everything in his own name.⁶ The difference between the two types of writing (as Durrell saw them) was accentuated when T S Eliot initially rejected *Cefalû* (later *The Dark Labyrinth* [1946/1961]) as "too much Durrell for a Norden, and not good enough Durrell for a Durrell".⁷

The ghost of Amicus Nordensis came in the form of "pot-boilers" such as *White Eagles over Serbia* or the travelogue *Sicilian Carousel* to make ends meet financially. Even though Durrell published these under his own name, he admitted that they were "makeweights". But "the work as a whole" carried, within and throughout, the indelible signature which it was Durrell's constant drive to find elsewhere – in ideas but, supremely, in spirit of place.

Thus the sensitivity and poetic tenderness of *The Magnetic Island*, the professionalism of the screen writer for *Cleopatra* and the crudity of some of his *incorrigibilia* sit in the same company, qualitatively, with the philosopher-poet of the *Quartet* and the *Quintet*.

Although Durrell wrote in so many diverse genres, the success of *The Alexandria Quartet* has obscured his achievements as a poet. That success also set him up as the painter of exotic fruits and landscapes, the explorer of erotic liaisons and the prophet of a metaphysical world parallel to the time-space continuum. Many such facets of the *Quartet* did indeed find their way into even the slightest of book prefaces, but in its wake his admirers hoped for "more of the same" whereas, as he wrote to Miller, "It's terrible to have a success [...] I want to risk failure for a change".⁸

⁶ The exchange is discussed in R Pine, *Minor Mythologies as Popular Literature*, Appendix B.

⁷ Quoted in MacNiven, *Lawrence Durrell*, p. 300.

⁸ I MacNiven (ed.) *The Durrell-Miller Letters 1935-1980*, pp. 40 5-6; henceforth *Durrell-Miller Letters*.

There is more to this than merely a professional writer acknowledging that his work could have its high and low points; Durrell also sensed, all his life, what he described to me as “a jolly nice schizophrenia”, which he regarded both playfully – in reference to “Amicus Nordensis” and his putative Irishness – and more profoundly in relation to the *alter ego* delineated so powerfully and emotively in the poem “*Je est un Autre*” (CP 106-7). The two selves – the writer who worked on the highbrow and middlebrow levels, sometimes simultaneously, and the man who sensed always an “other” presence at his shoulder – often coalesced.

Five starting points

One might designate five starting-points in Durrell's career, each of which contributed a specific factor which he carried within him. The first was his birthplace, India, of which he wrote affectionately and longingly in the talk known as “From the Elephant's Back”, in which his colonial context identified him with other Anglo-Indians, in particular Rudyard Kipling.⁹ The second, when Durrell was sent into what he saw as a form of exile, to England (the place which his parents regarded as “home”, even though neither of them had been there) gave him one cardinal point of faith: his friendships with poets such as Dylan Thomas, Tambimuttu and John Gawsworth (and later T S Eliot) and his enduring friendship with the book-collector, bibliographer and bookseller Alan Thomas.

The third starting- (or turning-) point was Greece, in the years 1935-41, when he connected not only with the light and spirit of Greece but immersed himself in all aspects of Greek literature, ancient and modern, and became a committed philhellene, penning the lapidary statement “Greece offers you [...] the discovery of yourself”.¹⁰

The fourth point was Paris, where he and his first wife, Nancy, visited in 1937-38, meeting Miller and, among others who would have a lasting significance to his art, Anaïs Nin, David Gascoyne and Alfred Perès. This was Durrell's first experience of a cosmopolitan society, making real for him aspects of life which he had previously known only from books. [Figs. 1a, 1b]

The fifth point was the second world war and its aftermath: the fight against fascism followed, with the phenomenon of the “Iron Curtain” across Europe, by the struggle with communism; in this crucible Durrell was one of a number – one hesitates to say a “group” – of wartime poets in Egypt and, later, living a solitary existence in communist Yugoslavia.

⁹ Reprinted in *From the Elephant's Back*.

¹⁰ *Prospero's Cell*, p. 11.