Lawrence Durrell Papers, 1932-2005: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number: C1592
Repository: Princeton University Library. Special Collections.
Manuscripts Division
One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size: 1.0 linear feet
3 boxes
Language(s) of Material: French
English
Location: This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
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Françoise Kestsman Durrell, an author and translator of works by Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990), was the British author's final companion and literary executor. Born in France to Polish Jewish parents, she moved to Sommières and became the owner of a small restaurant. (Her business partner ended up absconding with the funds at a time when she was still supporting her five children.) Kestsman Durrell became acquainted with Lawrence Durrell through her friendship with his daughter, Sappho, and through her position as a restaurant proprietor. The two became very close during the last ten or so years of Durrell's life; and she played a significant role in the administration of his work.

After Durrell's death, Kestsman Durrell became affiliated with the International Lawrence Durrell Society, and in 1991, following the late author's wishes, facilitated in the creation of the Centre d'Etudes et Recherches Lawrence Durrell in Sommières in his home, La Maison de Mme Tartes. For the Centre's collection, Kestsman Durrell painstakingly collected copies of Durrell's rare early books and journal publications to replace those that he had given away, lost, or sold to Southern Illinois University. Her daughter, Nadia, Mary Byrne, and others helped Kestsman Durrell catalog the manuscripts and correspondence files still in the house at the time of Durrell's death. Due to a lack of funding, the research center closed and the house was sold in 1995. Most of its collection, including Durrell's books, papers, and manuscripts, were sold to the University of Paris X at Nanterre.

Kestsman Durrell published two works based on the writings and poems of Lawrence Durrell. Éditions Gallimard published her translation of Caesar's Vast Ghost as L'ombre infinie de César. Regards sur la Provence in 1994. In 2006, she published Too Far to Hear the Singing: Poems by Lawrence Durrell. She also authored a foreward to introduce the nine poems by Lawrence Durrell that she selected for inclusion in Anthony Astbury's The Tenth Muse, an anthology of poems by various British writers.

Lawrence George Durrell was an expatriate British novelist, poet, dramatist, and travel writer, most well-known for his cycle of novels, The Alexandria Quartet. Born in 1912 in Jullundur in northern India, near Tibet, Durrell lived in various places throughout a majority his life, most notably countries in and around the Mediterranean. A philhellene, Durrell spent years living on Cyprus and Corfu. He also held a number of jobs, including several diplomatic and government positions. In 1965, he finally settled in La Maison de Mme Tartes in Sommières, France, where he lived until his death in 1990. Durrell married four times. His final companion, Françoise Kestsman Durrell, whom he did not marry, became his literary executor. His final work, Caesar's Vast Ghost, published in 1990, was dedicated to her.

This collection primarily consists of manuscripts, specifically corrected typescripts, by British author and philhellene Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990). Many of the manuscripts, written during the final decades of Durrell's life, are unpublished. Also included is an autograph scrapbook entitled, "Diary and Rough Notes 1955," documenting his time living in Cyprus; it contains manuscript notes,
photographs of his family, stamps, and other ephemera. There is also a copy of Otto Rank’s Art and Artist with a lengthy inscription by Anaïs Nin to Lawrence Durrell on the front endpaper, dated Paris February 27, 1938, and scattered marginal annotations and underlining throughout.

Papers related to Françoise Kestsman Durrell include some correspondence, specifically letters received at the time of Lawrence Durrell’s death, and a galley proof of her publication, Too Far to Hear the Singing: Poems by Lawrence Durrell (2005).

Though most materials are in English, some are written in French.

Access and Use

Access
Open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information
Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. No further photoduplication of copies of material in the collection can be made when Princeton University Library does not own the original. Inquiries regarding publishing material from the collection should be directed to RBSC Public Services staff at rbsc@princeton.edu. The library has no information on the status of literary rights in the collection and researchers are responsible for determining any questions of copyright.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Custodial History
Françoise Kestsman Durrell appears to have lent some items in this collection to the Centre d’Etudes et Recherches Lawrence Durrell in Sommières; they are stamped accordingly.

Provenance and Acquisition
Purchase, 2017 (AM 2018-63).

Acquired with matching funds provided by the Program in Hellenic Studies, with support of the Stanley J. Seeger Hellenic Fund.

Appraisal
No materials were removed from the collection during 2018 processing beyond routine appraisal practices.

Related Materials

Related Archival Material
International Lawrence Durrell Society. Special Collections.
Works Cited

Encoding
This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2018-03-06T15:00-0500

Descriptive Rules Used
Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

- Authors, English--20th century--Sources.
- Expatriate authors--Sources.
- Novelists, English--20th century--Sources.
- Women authors, French--20th century--Sources.
- Diaries.
- Typescripts.
- Legal history
- Hellenic studies
- Literature
Manuscripts, 1940-1990

Description: Primarily includes corrected typescripts of various writings, many of them unpublished, including short stories, plays, poems, articles, book prefaces, and book reviews. Most items are accompanied by folders or enclosures that include brief notes, many of which appear to have been made by the author; these notes were used to inform the folder titles listed here. Some items are also accompanied by related correspondence.

Many of the manuscripts have ink stamps with the following: "Propriété de F. Kestsman," "Centre d'Etudes et Recherches," and "Lawrence Durrell Sommieres 15 Gard 30250 France."

"Arsenic and Old Smoky", undated
   Description: Corrected typescript of an Antrobos short story, with a duplicate, altogether 12 pages
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 1

"From an Elephant's Back", 1984
   Description: Corrected typescript lecture, 8 pages, with French translation and related correspondence
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 2

"Reichel's Book", undated
   Description: Typescript preface, signed, 2 pages
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 3

"A Poet's Journal", undated
   Description: Typescript book review, 2 pages
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 4

"The Kneller Tape", 1960
   Description: Typescript, 9 pages
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 5

"Ripeness is All", undated
   Description: Corrected typescript of a book review, 2 pages
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 6

"The Viennese [sic] Temper", 1980
   Description: Two corrected typescripts of a travel article, 40 pages
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 7

"The Will-Power Man", 1975
   Description: Typescript short story, signed, with two further copies, about 40 pages
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 8

Preface to The Black Book, undated
   Description: Typescript, 2 pages
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 9

"The Greek Light", 1984
   Description: Typescript article, 2 pages
   Box: B-001181
   Folder: 10
"Novel Notions", undated  
Description: Revised typescript, 5 pages  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 11

"Oedipus", undated  
Description: Treatment for a television play, corrected typescript and three other copies, about 106 pages  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 12

Preface to an Exhibition Catalogue on Paintings by Writers, undated  
Description: Corrected typescript and related material, 15 pages  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 13

"The Price of Glory", undated  
Description: Corrected typescript and fair copy, 15 pages  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 14

Review of La Cendre et Les Etoiles, undated  
Description: Typescript and autograph manuscript, 3 pages  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 15

"T.S. ELIOT", undated  
Description: Fair copy typescript, three copies, 32 pages, with copy of printed article  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 16

"Propaganda and Impropaganda", 1974  
Description: Corrected typescript and fair copy typescript of a lecture at Claremont, 52 pages.  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 17

"Art and Outrage", undated  
Description: Corrected typescript, two copies, 6 pages  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 18

"A Poet in the Mediterranean", undated  
Description: Corrected typescript lecture, 21 pages  
Box: B-001181  
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"The Hangman", circa 1940  
Description: Corrected typescript of a play, 40 pages  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 20

"The Mazt", 1990  
Description: Corrected typescript preface for L'Heureux, with related material, 6 pages  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 21

Review of The Selected Poems of Cavafy, 1975  
Description: Corrected typescript and related material, 12 pages  
Box: B-001181  
Folder: 22

"Magic of Islands", 1978  
Description: Two corrected typescript copies of an article for Reader's Digest along with a letter from Jacques Rauffet of Reader's Digest, 9 pages  
Box: B-001182  
Folder: 1

"The Harem", circa 1980  
Description: Corrected and fair-copy typescripts, 25 pages  
Box: B-001182  
Folder: 2
"The Boy Who Saw", undated

"Moonlight of Your Smile", 1964

"Beautiful Pickpocket"/ "Prix de Rome", 1976

"Far Memory", undated
   Description: Review of "The Cathars and Reincarnation" by Arthur Guirdham, published in Encounter


Caesar's Vast Ghost, circa 1985

Preface Claude Seingolle Marie La Louve, 1987

Preface to "Gynacocracy", 1983

About Deetie (Joseph) and Caroline for Robert Briatte, 1983

About Aristotle, 1981

"What the Butler Saw", undated
   Description: Typescript play (unconnected with Orton's play of the same name), two copies, one with corrections, 23 pages

Unpublished Texts, undated
   Description: Includes one annotated typescript: "Impulse to Wander. In Stekel [sic] Peculiarities of Behavior."

Larry's Writings (Miscellaneous Writings, Correspondence, and Clippings), 1970-1990
   Description: Consists of various manuscript and typescript fragments and notes, speeches, clippings, and some correspondence related to both Françoise Kestsman Durrell and Lawrence Durrell. Some writings include the following poems: "Looking Glass/Eyeline/Summer", "Sleepwalkers," "Toby's Song," "Omega Grey," and "Spring Song." Also included is "Provence Entire, a prospectus for a book," and the preface to "Gynacocracy." Among the letters present is one from David Gascoyne to Françoise Kestsman Durrell regarding Lawrence Durrell's death.

Interview with Michael Dibdin and Obituary, 1990 November 11
Description: Interview and obituary by Michael Dibdin, published in The Independent, along with a letter from Dibdin to Françoise Kestsman Durrell.

Passports, 1971-1995
Description: Three cancelled British passports.

Otto Rank’s Art and Artist, 1932
Description: Includes a lengthy inscription by Anaïs Nin to Lawrence Durrell on the front endpaper, dated Paris February 27, 1938, and with scattered marginal annotations and underlining throughout.

"Diary and Rough Notes 1955", 1955
Description: With an introductory note recording that he "commences this .... in August 1955 after one year in the service of the Cyprus government during which he has had many experiences of different kinds the meaning of which has been lost owing to lack of time in which to record them for future use. Hence this attempt to record the everyday events of my life as from August 8th," this scrapbook includes manuscript notes, quotations from Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, family photographs including those of his future wife Claude-Marie Vincendon, daughters Penelope and Sappho, his brother Gerald and wife Jacquie, his friend Patrick Leigh Fermor, as well as a photograph of Durrell and Sophia Loren, among others, printed ephemera relating to Cyprus (including EOKA propaganda), envelopes, stamps, cuttings, and related material. Bound in cloth covers of a copy of Ezra Pound's Cantos.

Françoise Kestsman Durrell, Too Far to Hear the Singing: Poems by Lawrence Durrell, Galley Proof, 2005