Lawrence Durrell Papers, 1932-2005: Finding Aid

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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'Études 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 of 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 Claremeont, 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
Folder: 19

"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
Box: B-001182
Folder: 3

"Moonlight of Your Smile", 1964
Box: B-001182
Folder: 4

"Beautiful Pickpocket"/ "Prix de Rome", 1976
Box: B-001182
Folder: 5

"Far Memory", undated
Box: B-001182
Folder: 6
Description: Review of "The Cathars and Reincarnation" by Arthur Guirdham, published in Encounter

Box: B-001182
Folder: 7

Caesar's Vast Ghost, circa 1985
Box: B-001182
Folder: 8

Preface Claude Seingolle Marie La Louve, 1987
Box: B-001182
Folder: 9

Preface to "Gynacocracy", 1983
Box: B-001182
Folder: 10

About Deetie (Joseph) and Caroline for Robert Briatte, 1983
Box: B-001182
Folder: 11

About Aristotle, 1981
Box: B-001182
Folder: 12

"What the Butler Saw", undated
Box: B-001182
Folder: 13
Description: Typescript play (unconnected with Orton's play of the same name), two copies, one with corrections, 23 pages

Unpublished Texts, undated
Box: B-001182
Folder: 14
Description: Includes one annotated typescript: "Impulse to Wander. In Stekel [sic] Peculiarities of Behavior."

Larry's Writings (Miscellaneous Writings, Correspondence, and Clippings), 1970-1990
Box: B-001182
Folder: 15
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
Box: B-001182
Folder: 16
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