

The International Lawrence Durrell Society

Herald

Volume 51, August 2025

David Melville Wingrove, Editor

Susan MacNiven, Founding Editor

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A Word from the Editor

Greetings and welcome to this all-new edition of *The Herald*. There's a lot to catch up on after two years, which may explain (or not) the bumper size of this issue. We're excited to bring you updates on next year's On Miracle Ground XXIII conference in Vancouver, as well as our 2024 OMG XXII conference in Athens and a new volume of essays, *Heresy and Heterotopia*, from our (virtual) Toulouse conference in 2022. All that plus regular features by known and well-loved names and special contributions by some new and fabulous guest authors.

With Best Durrellian Wishes,
David Melville Wingrove, Editor.

Port, Haven, Refuge, Passage, Fjord, Ford, Asylum...

“Steep *skylines*, low cloud, pearl ground with shadows in oyster and violet. Accidie.”



Vancouver is ready for **On Miracle Ground XXIII**! Our theme will be Port Cities, portals, transits, and all the ways that we connect in liminal places of transit and transformation. Vancouver is very much a port city, situated beside the cities of Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, districts Port Mann, Port Kells, and the multiple ports across the region. It is also a modern city floating on an ancient history, a city built on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the x^wməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish),

Stó:lō and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. A city with all the visible layers of a palimpsest of histories that Durrell Society members are attuned to recognize.

We will also try to follow, with great humility, in the hospitality of Athens by featuring the city itself as part of our conference experience. Mediterranean cultures of hospitality have defined three of the past four conferences, and our turn to the Pacific is a different land, even if Durrell's readers will quip "there's no new land, my friend, no new sea." The transforming urban spaces and perhaps even some cruises and whale watching will provide us with opportunities to move beyond the plenaries and presentations. This will also be a conference of renewed creative connections among the academic, the artistic, and the appreciation of both. And there will be islands...

In this mix, we will also explore Durrellian themes that bridge a range of literary traditions. Vancouver is a crossroads of traditions, cultures, communities, languages, literatures, and histories. It is also a city looking out across the Pacific with longstanding communities from across Asia, Southeast Asia, and beyond, and there are wonderful local literary traditions around them all.

“Five races, five languages, a dozen creeds.... But there are more than five sexes and only demotic Greek seems to distinguish among them.”

Vancouver literature and Canadian literature in general offer us many connections. Jen Sookfong Lee's [The End of East](#) tells of three generations in Vancouver's Chinatown, and I hope you will visit [The Chinese Canadian Museum](#) to learn about the history of the paper children. [Monkey Beach](#) is probably Eden Robinson's most famous novel, but her [Blood Sports](#) makes the darker side of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside as much a character as the city in *The Alexandria Quartet*, and with innovative narrative shifts that carry a kindred appeal. It's also hard not to find a late modernist cousin in Malcolm Lowry, perhaps best in his [October Ferry to Gabriola](#).

And we will have poetry... Shazia Hafiz Ramji's [Port of Being](#) and Wayde Compton's [49th Parallel Psalm](#) might be called essential to our theme, and Stephen Collis' [A History of the Theories of Rain](#) calls our attention, but [Renée Sarojini Saklikar](#), [Kim Trainor](#), [Fred Wah](#), and so many others beckon us as

readers. And, of course, the grand old figure of Vancouver literature, [George Woodcock](#), stomped about London with Durrell, and Elizabeth Smart's [By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept](#) was written here and charts her life after Durrell introduced her to George Barker. For a quick flip through the pages, consider [Dear Reader](#), again on Knowledge.

If you want some restful summer "screen time," please consider some documentaries about Vancouver and British Columbia. [Arthur Erickson: Beauty Between the Lines](#) shows how Vancouver's most famous architect reshaped the city and its design (on a personal note, I've taught, spoken at, and grown up among many of his sites—deep set in the spirit of place...). [Behind the Facade](#) likewise takes you through local built environments. [British Columbia: An Untold History](#) takes you through the range of communities here,

especially emphasizing the history of Indigenous, Chinese, Japanese, Punjabi, and Black communities of Vancouver (and as a bonus, you'll see FDU faculty interviewed). Links here are to BC's Knowledge Network, which offers *completely free* subscriptions—if you encounter a regional restriction on some content, you can likely access it in the USA through Apple TV.



We'll also walk the city. [Granville Island](#), Chinatown, and Gastown are all near our conference venue. [The Museum of Anthropology](#) (another Erickson building) is a bus ride away. The [water taxis](#) can carry visitors around False Creek and English Bay while the [SeaBus](#) crosses Vancouver Harbour to [The Shipyards](#) commons and the Quay Market. From downtown there's easy access to [Stanley Park](#), a 1,000 acre National Historic Site. The organizing committee is still exploring "off-campus" events, but whale watching, ocean ecoadventures, and "port"-oriented excursions are all on our minds.

So prepare yourselves for an event calling to port cities of the world, the in-between lived experiences of sites of transit, the cultural life of communities from around the globe as well as deeply rooted in place, a creative sharing of global literatures and the performing arts, and a city of far beyond five races, five languages, five sexes, and a dozen creeds. The organizing committee looks forward to welcoming you to our scholarly and creative panels as well as informal events for

On Miracle Ground XXIII: Writing the Port/City.

Steps go down to the port
Beyond the Pharos. O my friends,
Surely these nightly visitations
Of islands in one's sleep must soon be over?

—from "Conon in Alexandria"

**The International Lawrence Durrell Society *On Miracle Ground XXIII*
International Conference Call for Papers**

"Writing Port/Cities in the Blue Humanities"

**Venue: Fairleigh Dickinson University Vancouver Campus
16-18 July 2026 – Vancouver, Canada**

**"Landscape-tones: steep skylines, low cloud, pearl ground with shadows in oyster
and violet. Accidie." (*Justine* 216)**

The [International Lawrence Durrell Society](https://lawrencedurrell.org/wp_durrell/conferences/) invites proposals for its July 2026 conference hosted by [Fairleigh Dickinson University](https://fairleighdickinson.edu/), Vancouver. While proposals on any aspect of Durrell's writing and that of his contemporaries are welcome, the organising committee encourages consideration of the theme of the Port/City or the Blue Humanities more generally, including Vancouver literatures.

The conference venue of the coastal, seaport city of Vancouver in British Columbia—the largest port in Canada and the fourth largest in North America—suggests exploration of ports and urban (marine, aquatic) settings in Durrell's works, addressing the historical, cultural, and social significance of port cities. With Vancouver Port being in the immediate vicinity of the conference and a vital hub of trade between Canada and world economies, the conference will explore how literary cities or communities use the ocean or sea as connections or barriers. Vancouver literatures depict the Pacific Ocean as a passage exploring migration, homelessness, reconciliation, and belonging as well as identity, hybridity, and liminality—all themes across Durrell's works.

Whether focused on Vancouver or the many port cities in Durrell's literary works (Alexandria, Athens, London, Istanbul, Rhodes, &c.), the theme of port cities also gestures to recent scholarship on [Oceanic Studies](#), the [Blue Humanities](#), [Oceanic Modernisms](#), and [Atlantic Studies](#). Such approaches are welcomed and encouraged in relation to Durrell's works, his contemporaries, and Vancouver literature.

Please submit **abstracts** (300 words maximum) for 20-minute papers and short **biographical notes** stating affiliation (150 words) no later than **October 31, 2025** to email:

https://lawrencedurrell.org/wp_durrell/conferences/ **Confirmation of acceptance:**
January 15, 2026.

An edited volume of essays featuring selected papers from the conference will be published with *Fairleigh Dickinson University Press*.

For additional "workpoints," please see pages 36 and 37 of this *Herald*.

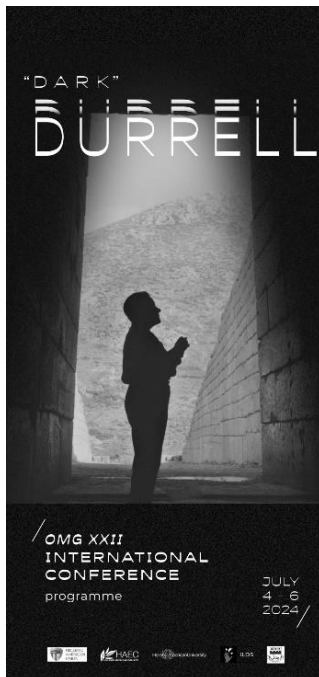
Memories of Miracle Ground

On Miracle Ground XXII – Athens, Greece

ILDS Conference Report

by Athanasios Dimakis

The "*Dark*" Durrell conference truly ignited a vibrant gathering, bringing together a diverse community of young scholars, seasoned academics, poets, artists, archivists, and Durrell aficionados – indeed, a company sufficiently singular and fascinating to fill several Durrell novels! The conference was held at *The Hellenic American Union* premises in Kolonaki, Athens, from July 4 to 6, 2024, and was co-organized by *The International Lawrence Durrell Society* and *The Hellenic American University*. This Athens event felt like a triumphant homecoming, steering Durrell scholarship back to a "Miracle Ground" so cherished by Durrell during his sojourn in the Greek capital.



This sketchy and incomplete report, then, should start in an ostentatious and maximalist manner with Pericles' love letter to Athens; an admonition that Durrell himself would, undoubtedly, have endorsed: "I would have you day by day fix your eyes upon the greatness of Athens, until you become filled with the love of her." Durrell's Athenian fictions, prose, poetry, and travel literature certainly echo this profound sentiment. Excerpts from Durrell's canon on Athens were read at the conference opening by the phenomenal duo of **Liana (Evangelia) Sakelliou** (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Professor and esteemed Greek poet) and **Danae Loukaki** (renowned Greek actress and translator).

That same evening, we had the distinct pleasure of celebrating the prolific poetic production of *The White Mice Poetry Contest*, gracefully organized and presented by **David Radavich**. David, after many years of stellar service to the society, stepped down following the presentation of the 2023 winning poems at the Athens conference opening. He received enthusiastic and well-deserved praise for his remarkable achievements.

Diving into the Dark:

The decision to focus on the "darkness" of Durrell's writings proved to be a truly felicitous one. This anthology of Durrell's enigmatic, dark imagery offered a critical vantage point for a fresh reappraisal of the author's works across all genres, opening intriguing pathways for a rich variety of approaches to his entire output. The themes explored in the presented papers ranged from Dark Imagery, Stories, and Landscapes and the depiction of Greece as an oddity, to Neo-Gothicism, Dark Modernisms, Neo-Decadence, and Gender, Colonial and Racial Politics. The conference vividly demonstrated the diverse range of projects that are currently in dialogue with Durrell's writing.

Durrellians who had previously only met in cyberspace during the Toulouse Virtual Conference of 2022 now found themselves joyfully exchanging notes and ideas during presentations, rejoicing amidst the Athenian sunset at the Hellenic American Union rooftop reception (July 4), which boasts breathtaking views of the Acropolis and the city, sharing dinners and drinks, and even traveling to the idyllic island of Hydra (July 8) for the post-conference excursion. More than 80 conference attendees and society guests attended the conference opening wine reception – an impressive turnout!



Most importantly, our "regular" conference attendees were splendidly accompanied by an eclectic group of emerging scholars joining the Athens *ILDS* conference for the very first time. I am sure we are all particularly grateful to the PhD students and early-career scholars who graced the conference with their presence, seamlessly becoming our newest society members. These original contributions truly deserve special mention (all papers listed in order of appearance at the conference):

- **Simon Leser**, New York University (NYU): "Its Own Dark Metaphor": Durrell's Aesthetic of Obscurity and Sensual Language

- **Saul Leslie**, University of Liverpool: Dark Peasant Remedies: Portrayals of Disability in Lawrence Durrell
- **Thomas Athanasios Boutis**, City University of New York (CUNY): The Impossibility of an Island: Cyprus as Hostage to History in Durrell's *Bitter Lemons*
- **Ester Díaz Morillo**, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED): "Like dancers to a music they deserve": Transmediating Durrell's Poetry into Music
- **Aitana Monzón-Blasco**, University of Zaragoza: "It is dark now. Rise / Between the Non-Self and the Self": Lawrence Durrell and The Poetics of Fire
- **Vera Konidari**, Ionian University, Corfu: Lawrence Durrell in the Footsteps of Theodore Stephanides: Intertextual Traces in Durrell's and Stephanides' Travelogues of the Greek Islands
- **Maria Pouliasi**, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens: "This Beneficent and Dangerous Sun-Darkness": Lawrence Durrell's Mysterious Corfu

Keynotes and Collaborations:

A special thanks goes to our three distinguished conference keynote speakers for their profoundly important contributions. The prominent English poet and critic **Gregory Leadbetter** (Birmingham City University) read from his collections *Balanuve* (2021), *Maskwork* (2020), and *The Fetch* (2016), masterfully disclosing themes, threads, and affinities with Durrell's "dark" poetic universe "In Conversation" with **Isabelle Keller-Privat** (Université Toulouse - Jean Jaurès). Leadbetter's insights into poetry seemed to evoke a registering of experience strikingly reminiscent of Durrell's own sensibilities. Taking the thread from Keller-Privat's *Lawrence Durrell's Poetry: A Rift in the Fabric of the World*, the first in-depth analysis of Lawrence Durrell's entire poetic opus (1940s – 1970s), the conference organizing committee aimed to encourage a keen reconsideration of Durrell's place in British poetry, and this panel immensely contributed to that crucial "reparative" reading.

In his keynote lecture titled "Lawrence Durrell and Empire," **Marinos Pourgouris** (University of Cyprus) offered a complex and compelling reading of Durrell's active role in the colonial administration, presenting original archival material and ephemera. Pourgouris argued that, despite the "dark" portrait of Durrell as a writer of Empire, his position on Cyprus, particularly after he departed the island, revealed a much more nuanced perspective full of confusion and contradictions. Centering on Durrell's shifting perspectives on the Cyprus Emergency of 1955-59, Pourgouris called for a reconsideration of Durrell's philhellenism.

In his keynote lecture titled "Between Darkness and Light: Lawrence Durrell's *Six Poems from the Greek of Sikelianos [sic] and Seferis* (1946)," **Vassilis Letsios** (Ionian University) directed attention to the underexplored collection published in 1946 on Rhodes, while the island was under control of the British Administration (1945-1947). This small collection comprises six Greek poems translated into English by Durrell. Letsios meticulously examined Durrell's poetics (and politics) of translation, comparing these poems with other examples from Sikelianos and Seferis in English translation, as well as with Durrell's own original poetry. In this small anthology of translated poems, Durrell's place in the poetic canon on Greece and his eclectic ties with the Greek poets of his time were beautifully re-traced, revealing a profound aesthetic and conceptual rapprochement. Thus, a thoroughly Durrellian trajectory was

established, with our conference keynote speakers arriving in Athens from Britain, Corfu, and Cyprus, respectively!

The hospitable premises of the Hellenic American Union provided the ideal stage to introduce exciting new research, indulge in invigorating discussions, and forge friendships and intellectual alliances over the course of three truly unforgettable days. There simply isn't enough space here to offer reflections on all the captivating papers and experiences that enthralled our attention throughout the conference. However, you can easily access the rich conference programme and all panels here:

<https://www.haec.gr/images/NEWS/2024/DD-Programme-EMAIL-compressed.pdf>.

Every single conference contribution was incredibly valuable and original – each in its own way and across different fields – sharing fresh insights and actively engaging every attendee.

Synergy with The National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation:

The Conference Organizing Committee explored the possibility of planning a special Lawrence Durrell Photographic Exhibition exclusively from the rich photographic material in the Dimitris Papadimos Archive of the **National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (MIET)**. With Durrell being one of the most prominent figures of 20th-century Anglo-Hellenism, this presented a truly unique opportunity.



While the exhibition had to be postponed for a later date (a setback in the grand scheme of things, much like a character momentarily lost in Durrell's *Dark Labyrinth*) we successfully established a creative collaboration with the ELIA-MIET Photographic Archive. We acquired permission to reproduce Durrell photographs and ephemera from the collection for our conference poster, as well as for any future publications, conference materials, or other “marketing” endeavours. We will certainly continue to explore constructive ways to maintain this wonderful synergy with the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation.

Two MIET Archivists, **Vassiliki Hatzigeorgiou** and **Mathilde Pyrli**, delivered a fascinating lecture at the conference opening: “Dimitris Papadimos and Lawrence Durrell: Converging Trajectories. Photographic Impressions of a Lasting Friendship in the Archive of Dimitris Papadimos at ELIA/MIET.” Drawing on extensive material from the Papadimos archive, much of it presented for the first time, this paper sketched a vivid

chronicle of their friendship and common projects, with poignant references to the three countries that shaped their lives and works: Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece. I cannot thank the National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (MIET) enough for the generous gift of three printed Durrell photographs to all conference attendees – a truly cherished keepsake!

In addition, the archive graciously agreed to exhibit a signed letter by Lawrence Durrell, as well as Papadimos's photographic camera and four original photo folders with Durrell photographs (Athens, Rhodes, Cyprus and *Spirit of Place*). All this invaluable Durrell material was donated to the MIET Archive by **Ioannis (Yannis) Papadimos**, son of Dimitri and Liana Papadimos, who not only attended the conference opening but also shared his fond personal memories of Durrell at the wine reception!

Dissemination and Future Horizons:

Following coordination with the illustrious **Bodossaki Foundation**, all conference keynote sessions were meticulously recorded and made available on the foundation's special scientific website, "Bodossaki Lectures on Demand," accessible at: <https://www.blod.gr/events/dark-durrell-omg-xxiii-international-conference/>. In addition to this valuable resource, a special X/Twitter conference account was created to disseminate the event widely, ensuring that Durrell's "dark" light can reach every corner of the digital realm.

The conference enthusiastically celebrated new scholarship, culminating in the announcement of the prestigious prize that recognizes and champions groundbreaking research from emerging voices in the field. Heartfelt congratulations to **Luca Barbaglia** and **Bartolo Casiraghi** for receiving the **2024 William Godshalk Prize for New Durrell Scholarship** for their paper: "Lawrence Durrell and Agalmatophilia: The Uncanny Love for Statues from Archaeology to Technology"!

On the post-conference publications front, I am delighted to share that a selection of papers from the conference will be published with ***Deus Loci: The Lawrence Durrell Journal*** (edited by **Anna Lillios**). In addition, an edited volume of essays featuring selected papers from the conference is currently being co-edited by **Isabelle Keller-Privat**, **James Gifford**, and myself (**Athanasios Dimakis**). It will be published with **Fairleigh Dickinson University Press**. Please stay tuned for this exciting development!



Our conference dinner (July 6) took place at the charming Kanella taverna in Gazi, where, in addition to delectable food and drink, the joyous gathering was graced by the convivial presence of the extended Durrellian family present in Athens.

Our post-conference excursion to the picturesque island of Hydra (July 8) was an unforgettable highlight, made even more exciting by our journey aboard a swift sea jet – a bit of

maritime thrill! Upon arrival, we immersed ourselves in the island's rich history and artistic heritage, starting with a visit to the Cathedral of Hydra, admiring its traditional architecture and serene atmosphere. We then explored the **Hydra Annex of the National Historical Museum**, housed in the historic residence of Lazaros Koundouriotis. Finally, we had the unique opportunity to visit the **Home and Atelier** of the renowned Greek painter



Panagiotis Tetsis, providing an intimate glimpse into his vibrant creative world. The entire day was incredibly enjoyable, seamlessly blending cultural enrichment with the charm of the Aegean.

I would like to extend my deepest thanks to you all for attending, sharing, and shaping three full days of dreaming, thinking, working, wondering, imagining, listening, eating, drinking, and traveling together – all the way from the vistas of Athens and glimpses of the Acropolis from our Hellenic American Union rooftop venue to the sublime waters, the whitewashed alleys, and the "sun-drenched, clear-cut, postcard Greece" of Hydra.

I hope this enthusiasm will continue to resonate until our next conference in Vancouver. **James Gifford**, my formidable Durrellian friend (and inspiration!) will be our host this time and will organize the wonderful 2026 *ILDS* conference. See you all in Canada!

Athanasios Dimakis is an Adjunct Lecturer in English Language and Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. His publications include: "‘No Longer a Hotel’: Colonial Decadence in Lawrence Durrell’s The Alexandria Quartet," Hotel Modernisms (2023). In 2020, the International Lawrence Durrell Society awarded him the William Godshalk Prize for new Durrell scholarship. He served as chairman of the organizing committee for the 2024 “Dark Durrell” Conference, and currently serves as Vice President of the ILDS.

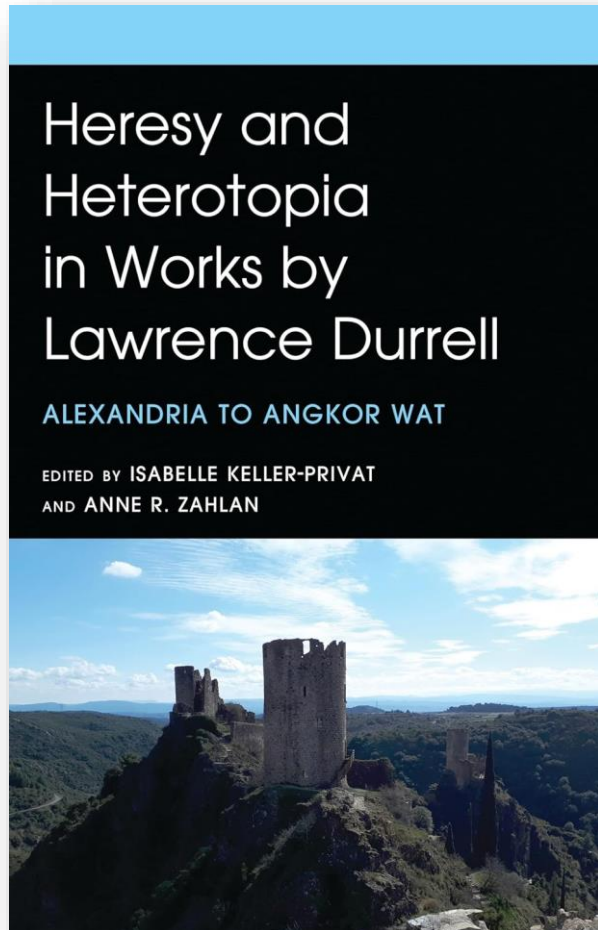


Scenes from
OMG XXII in
Athens, July
2024.



Heresy and Heterotopia in Works by Lawrence Durrell: Alexandria to Angkor Wat

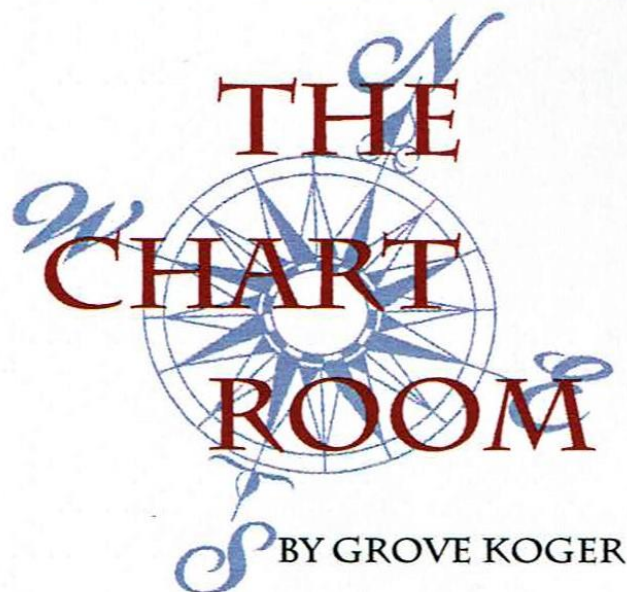
Edited by Isabelle Keller-Privat and Anne R. Zahlan



Heresy and Heterotopia in Works by Lawrence Durrell gathers new essays by international scholars examining heretical concepts and heterotopian counter-spaces. Spanning the Mediterranean to Cambodia with many stops along the way, these essays approach Durrell's thought and writing from a variety of perspectives: philosophical and intertextual, architectural and historical, mystical and digital. In so doing, they also expose the deeper echoes set off by Durrell's wide-ranging literary production, and they map out the literary, metaphysical, and aesthetic connections that account for his continued impact on social and cultural paradigms that foreshadow the disruptions of today's world.

Edited by Isabelle Keller-Privat and Anne R. Zahlan, this 2025 collection features essays by Luca Barbaglia, Bartolo Casiraghi, James M. Clawson, Athanasios Dimakis, Pamela J. Francis, Athena Hadji, Isabelle Keller-Privat, Paul Lorenz, Ali Reza Shahbazin, Fiona Tomkinson, and David Melville Wingrove.

Heresy and Heterotopia in Works by Lawrence Durrell is available through independent bookstores, online booksellers, or at <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/heresy-and-heterotopia-in-works-by-lawrence-durrell-9781683934448>



Larry: A New Biography of Lawrence Durrell, 1912-1947 by the late Michael Haag was published by Profile Books in early July. As the publisher explains, “When the Durrells expert Michael Haag died in 2020, it was feared that his definitive biography of Larry would never emerge. But happily, it turned out that he had left complete chapters covering Durrell’s life up to the time he left for South America in 1947. These chapters include the most engaging and interesting years of Larry’s life—his childhood in India and Burma, his Bohemian life in London and Paris, his madcap idea of moving his family to Corfu (immortalised in his brother Gerry’s *My Family and Other Animals*).” The description continues, “But for Durrell enthusiasts, the

key part of this new biography are the chapters set in Alexandria, which Michael had unrivalled knowledge about, having met many of the key figures, and walked every street. His account of those years bring [sic] to life the backdrop and real-life stories that Durrell interwove to create his acknowledged masterpiece, *The Alexandria Quartet*.”

Isabelle Keller-Privat’s article “Dying Still Lives in the Works of Lawrence Durrell: Questioning the Visible” was published in “Natures mourantes / Dying Still Lives,” v. 27 (2023) of *Miranda: Revue Pluridisciplinaire du monde anglophone* 27 (2023). According to the abstract, the paper “explores the various forms of dying still lives in Lawrence Durrell’s *Alexandria Quartet* and *Avignon Quintet*.”

Richard Pine has edited *Re-Reading The Alexandria Quartet of Lawrence Durrell*. The collection, number 8 in Cambridge Scholars “Durrell Studies” series, appeared in 2023.

Rania Mahmoud’s *Female Voices and Egyptian Independence: Marginalized Women in Egyptian and British Fiction* (Bloomsbury / I.B. Tauris, 2024) includes “Egypt the Grotesque: Breaking Leila’s Shackle in Lawrence Durrell’s *Mountolive*” on pp. 25-54.

Georges A. Bertrand’s “Lawrence Durrell et Henry Miller À Corfou” has been published in *L’amitié Dans La Littérature de Voyage*, 2024.

Edward Allen is the author of “The End of Timelessness? Islomania, Radio and the Awakening of Lawrence Durrell,” which appears on pp. 207-228 of *Radio in and around Greece, 1937-61: Cultural Politics and Literary Cultures*, v. 10 of the *Journal of Greek Media & Culture* (Dec. 26, 2024).

Bloomsbury Academic has published *Colonial Cyprus: A Cultural History*, edited by Maria Hadjiathanasiou, Andreas Karyos, and Emiliou A. Solomou. The work includes Hadjiathanasiou’s “Colonial Insurgency, Propaganda and the British ‘Soldier-Aesthete’: Maurice Cardiff, Lawrence Durrell, Patrick Leigh Fermor and Freya Stark in the Cyprus Revolt.” According to the publisher, the “book focuses on the cultural dimension of the island’s colonial experience and demonstrates the crucial, but understudied, significance of culture in Cyprus.”

In the *Times* for February 8, 2025, Cosmo Adair writes that “Lawrence Durrell’s *Alexandria Quartet* is Pretentious—but What Fun.” According to Adair, “*Justine*, the first of the four-part series, offers a captivating blend of sex, spies and mysticism. And so much talk about Love and Art.”

Myself and Other Animals, a posthumous work by Gerald Durrell edited by his widow, Lee Durrell, was published by Penguin in December, 2024. According to the publisher, the book is “mosaicked from unpublished autobiographies, uncollected pieces and previously published extracts from Durrell’s work and archives.” Penguin calls the work “an extraordinary journey through Durrell’s life in his own works.”

“Leslie Durrell’s Paintings Auctioned,” a January 26, 2025 blog post from *Durrelliana*, reports on an auction of two paintings by Leslie Durrell. Carol Ann Dougill, whose family knew the Durrells, including Lawrence’s younger brother Leslie, writes that “[m]y family, the Lambden’s [sic], lived near the Durrells and also rented their room out.” She adds that her grandmother “was good friends with Louisa Durrell,” and that her aunt “was particularly friends with Leslie.”

I missed them when they appeared in 2022, but that year William Ashley published two volumes of Henry Miller’s “Unique Handwritten Books for Friends”: *Jupiter in All His Phases: Handwritten Book for Lawrence Durrell* and *The Heaven beyond Heaven*, which was written for Anaïs Nin. As Miller explained in *The Waters Reglitterized* (1950), “It was my pleasure to write several little books in this manner, for my intimate friends, during the last few years of my stay in Paris.... Because they were written with the pen, and not on the typewriter, they all have a direct, intimate quality. They were done in my spare time, usually in the course of a few weeks.” The book for Durrell draws on the horoscope that Miller commissioned for him by Conrad Moricand.

Sky Blue Press has announced the publication of an updated and expanded edition of *The Anaïs Nin Character Dictionary and Index to Diary Excerpts* by Benjamin Franklin V. The first edition appeared in 2020. The work’s new appendix explores the real-life inspirations for Nin’s major characters, including Henry Miller, June Mansfield, Gonzalo More and Louise de Vilmorin.

Nick Romeo’s article “How Ancient and Modern Greek Helps Us Make Sense of Greece Today” was published in *Lit Hub* on Nov. 2, 2023. It opens with an evocative passage: “Late one night in 1951, two Englishmen were wandering downtown Athens after an evening drinking in its tavernas. Passing beneath the Acropolis, they decided to scale its rocky north side and sneak inside the Parthenon. They were caught as they left the ancient temple by the guard on duty, but they had a stroke of luck. The sentry was from Crete, and one of the Englishmen was Patrick Leigh Fermor, who had fought alongside the Cretans during the resistance to Nazi occupation in World War II.” Romeo then goes on to examine how, by the 1960s, “mass tourism threatened to replace the uniqueness of Greece with a generic nowhere aesthetic bleached of tradition.”

“Patrick Leigh Fermor’s Doomed Europe,” by Michael Duggan, appeared in *The Critic Magazine* for December 9, 2023. Another *Critic* article, “Twilight with Venus” by Des Power, appeared in the July 2023 issue. “At the age of 89,” according to Power, “Henry Miller was still writing. His output included 1,400 letters to Brenda Venus, 60 years younger, an American actress, former ballerina and *Playboy* model. Miller was besotted. For the last four years of [Miller’s] life, blind in one eye and partially paralysed in one leg,” Venus “was his paramour and muse.”

Helena Smith’s article about Constantine Cavafy, “Greek Poet Who Inspired Forster, Hockney and Jackie Onassis Emerges from the Shadows” appeared in *The Observer* on July 7, 2024.

SAVE THE DATE—DURRELLIAN BOOK LAUNCH

Saturday, 25 October 2025

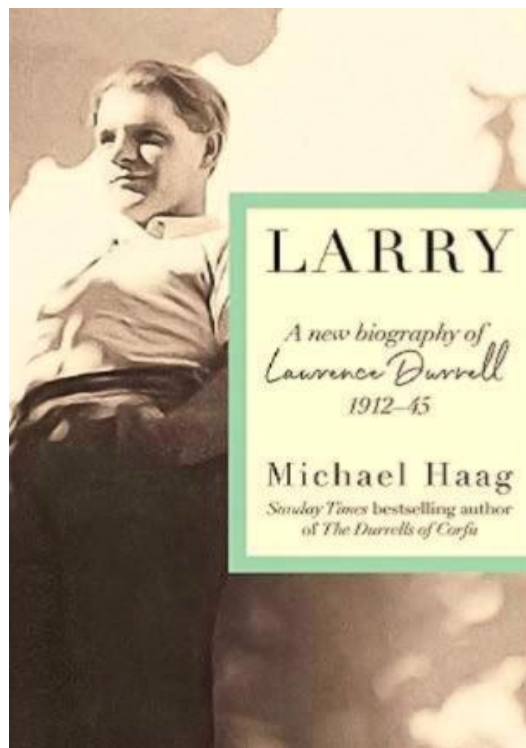
Time: 9:30--11:00 a.m. CDT (U.S.); 10:30--12:00 a.m. EDT (U.S.);

7:30--9:00 a.m. PDT California & British Columbia;

3:30--5:00 BST U.K.; 4:30--6:00 p.m. CEST France & Italy;

5:30 p.m. EEST Greece; 11:30 p.m. Japan

(Program details and the Zoom link will be sent at a later date.)



The International Lawrence Durrell Society is pleased to sponsor an online program marking the release of Michael Haag's book chronicling the first thirty-three years of Durrell's life. The program will include commentary on the research and editing that went into this and other accounts of Durrell's life and art, as well as on the craft of biography.

The book is now available online and in stores.

On and Off Campus

by David Nigel Lloyd, Executive Board Member at Large

Yes, On Miracle Ground XXIII will be held next July in Vancouver, British Columbia. The first order of business for an OMG, of course, is a CFP. Why, I mistakenly wondered, is the ILDS concerned about **California Fire Prevention** stratagems? Are we at last in need of a **Certified Financial Planner**? Of course, in our humble way, the ILDS *is* a **Coalition for Peace**? Surely, we are not invoking the **Canada Free Press**?

But, as any academic knows, a CFP is a **Call for Papers**. ILDS must therefore be an organization of academics. As Homer Simpson would often and wisely say: “Doh!”

There is, however, a valid accusation that ILDS is weighted against the Durrell reader in favor of the Durrell academic. Is it true? I’m not the only member to have faced this accusation. As a folk singer raised in a household of academics, my response is a strategy I will describe below.

Let me begin by stating how many ILDS academics have rebuffed me as an unqualified outsider. In round numbers: 0. Most of you know the truth of this. How could it be otherwise? Lawrence Durrell was not an academic. And those of us who have made a serious study of the man’s life know full well that young Larry, angry with his father for banishing him from Kipling’s Anglo India to rain-grey Pudding Island, deliberately failed to get into Oxford.ⁱ And, as if twisting the knife in the wound, Larry became a poet.ⁱⁱ Worse yet, a good one. So, why is any of this even an issue?

Because, Oh Best Beloved, if the first order of business for an OMG is a CFP, then said OMG will not only look like an academic gathering, that’s what it will be. It will have academic momentum. By way of anecdotal evidence, seven years ago, I attended OMG XXⁱⁱⁱ in Chicago. I styled myself as the Adjunct Professor of Humanities at the Yreka Campus of the College of the Siskiyous. It was kinda true^{iv} and I honestly thought I had to have some sort of academic credential to participate. Imagine my dismay when, at the reception, our current president Pamela Francis accused me of making it all up. It took me a moment to realize she didn’t care and was probably amused at the bizarre length of the title.

So, when in Athens last year, the Society conferred upon me the short title of Executive Board Member at Large, I realized my first duty would be to address this real perception of the ILDS as an organization of unreconstructed academics. I call this project: OffCampus.^v

First question: What has to change? What must we correct? First answer: Not much.



When I first broached the subject a few months ago, Athanasios Dimakis, who had organized Athens’ *Dark Durrell* OMG, lamented that he barely had time to schedule all the Papers that had been Called For (we were all politely asked to shorten our readings). Yet, the fact is, *Dark Durrell* included marvelous swag (three high-quality prints of Lawrence Durrell by Dimitri Papadimos); exquisite discounted

accommodations; as always, a reading of the winning entries of The White Mice poetry contest; and a high-speed hydrofoil trip to Hydra, the island without cars. Let us plant an OffCampus flag on such items and events.



According to the CFP for Vancouver: “We invite scholars from diverse disciplines, including literature, urban studies, history, postcolonial studies, cultural studies, to delve into Durrell’s Ports/Cities (or those of the broader range of authors in Durrell’s milieu and his contemporaries).” You may also notice an addendum stating that any Durrell related ‘paper’ will be accepted. This actually means you can make any kind of presentation you like. I offer more anecdotal evidence: my presentation at OMG XX was on the song poet Robin Williamson and his relationship to Tambimuttu. I asked then-president James Clawson what guidelines I needed to follow. “You can sing it if you like.” And so I did. Most of it, anyway.

Conclusion: We need to be clearer on the point that presentations can also be sung, danced, mimed or baked, if not half-baked. This will create OffCampus momentum, no matter how incremental.

Is it enough? Not yet.

Even so, suggested events in Vancouver next year are already flagged as OffCampus. Whale watching; concerts; water taxis to offshore islands; bus trips to nearby mountaintops; and a visit to the Vancouver Museum of Art where you will gasp awestruck at more Emily Carr paintings than I’ve ever seen in one place. Oh, Canada! We will report all about it in *The Herald*. That’s how momentum gathers.

As a non-academic, I look forward to hearing the academic papers and to discovering what intimate knowledge said academics will reveal about next year’s OffCampus destinations. To me, the ILDS has one top-priority mission. We must protest and decry the accepted wisdom that Lawrence Durrell was a faux philosopher, a literary flash in the pan as evidenced by his misbehavior with alcohol and wives. Like many of us, I have read and loved all his books, poetry and plays.

The pedal point of my own admiration for Lawrence Durrell was revealed, however, at OMG XX by James Gifford. If you have not already done so, you can read about it in his astounding book, *Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes*.^{vi} Through enviable scholarship, Gifford reveals how Durrell’s Heraldic Universe, with the aid of Henry Miller and Herbert Read, completely changed the course of anglophone literature for the 20th century; not bad for a man in his early twenties. Through sloppy scholarship, the importance of Lawrence Durrell, long before he wrote the *Quartet*, was not known until now. With both aplomb and plonk, whether On Campus or OffCampus, “We, per se We, We sing on.”^{vii}

ⁱ Alfonso Bedoya’s famous lines from *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* come to my non-academic mind: “Endnote? I don’t got to show you no stinking endnotes.”

ⁱⁱ And, as if in response, Lawrence Samuel Durrell, Larry’s father, died in 1928 when Larry was 16.

ⁱⁱⁱ Do not Google OMG XX.

^{iv} In California's designated Frontier Counties, Community Colleges can hire adjunct staff with bachelor's degrees if a suitable candidate with a master's is not available.

^v "First thought / Best thought," as Allen Ginsberg is said to have said.

^{vi} Gifford, James. "Personal Modernisms: Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes." Edmonton, Alberta. The University of Alberta Press, 2014.

^{vii} I paraphrase Durrell's "Carol on Corfu," 1937.

David Nigel Lloyd lives with his wife, the painter Gita Lloyd, in far northern California. In August 2022, The Herald published his story of encountering a Dickensian caricature named Larry rampaging through Gerald Durrell's books and how he became a devoted reader of the poet behind the caricature. The longer story – of how DNL used Lawrence Durrell's A Key to Modern British Poetry as part of his self-selected syllabus on the art of folk singing and song poetry – can be read at davidnigellloyd.com



“Too Much Vinegar!” - A Conversation with Chili Hawes

by Adrian Masters

Chili Hawes lives in a world that she has done so much to create. She lives and works now as she has done for nearly five decades in the gallery she co-founded in Bloomsbury in London. 'Gallery' is too small a word. Yes, there's a large, white room on the ground floor of this building that was once a school, but there's also a theatre space, rooms that visiting artists and performers can rent, a refectory, a courtyard with twisting, iron stairs that take you up to a club room, hung with heavy curtains and lined with rare books that hint at the stories that have taken place there.

Before I see all that though, I meet Chili Hawes in the refectory where she points to one of the large wooden tables and tells me that this is where she first met Lawrence Durrell in the early 1980s. He'd been brought there by her great friend, the poet and editor, Tambimuttu, whom she still calls 'Tambi,' and it was there, she tells me, that Durrell and others enjoyed her cooking, along with 'lots of red wine.'

There's enough to talk to Chili about without even mentioning Durrell, and the amazing story of October Gallery is told in the beautifully-produced 'Dream No Small Dream,' edited by Gerard Houghton and available from the gallery's website.

However, what's brought me to Bloomsbury is a film. *Stille Tage in Sommières* ('Quiet Days in Sommières') is a lyrical documentary about Lawrence Durrell, directed by Peter Leippe in 1987. It's based around conversations between Durrell and Chili Hawes, who is cast as herself, the director of a gallery in London, a fan of Durrell's books and intrigued by some paintings she would like to exhibit by an artist named Oscar Epfs. When she finds out that Epfs is, in fact, Durrell she sets out to meet him, hitchhiking the last part of the journey.

The rest of the film features their conversations in Durrell's home, using his notebooks, paintings and family photos as prompts, along with a long al fresco lunch. There's a game of *boules*, a bullfight, the ceremony of taking the Black Virgin to the sea at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and a lot of red wine. It's beautifully filmed and, as well as conjuring up a French way of life that was vanishing even 40 years ago, it captures Durrell in later life, mischievous and sometimes irritable, but still with lots of fascinating thoughts to share.

As Chili makes tea for us in a small kitchen off October Gallery's club room, I browse some of her precious photos and books, among them signed copies of Durrell first editions – one dedicated to 'the October Nymphs' – and Tambimuttu's groundbreaking *Poetry London*.

We settle down in front of them and talk about the film.



How did your involvement with the film come about?

I had met Lawrence, and he came here regularly because his publishers were nearby and I got to know them a little bit and he was also a very good friend of Tambi's.

And you met him first here (in the October Gallery)?

Yes, in the October Gallery because Tambi - Tambi did this often, "Chili dear! Would you kindly cook dinner tonight for Roland Penrose and Lawrence Durrell?" Of course! Of course I would. So that was the first time I met them. That must have been in '82 or '83.

Then I developed a friendship with Lawrence – and every time he came to England, he would visit a bookshop on Lamb's Conduit Street (also in

Bloomsbury) that his friend Bernard Stone had; they were very close friends. And then he would also visit his publisher, Brown, so he would stay here often or he would stay with his publisher and so we got to know each other a little bit.

Then when Aspekt Telefilm asked him would he be willing to make a film with them, he said “Yes, on condition that you ask Chili Hawes to be the counterpart of this film and be my interviewer.”

So they decided to base the film on Henry Miller's book *Quiet Days in Clichy* and this was to be *Quiet Days in Sommières*. That was the town where Lawrence was living. So they flew me there and I stayed with Lawrence in his house where his daughter used to have her room, the daughter who passed away, and we made the film there.

Then there were several scenes at the house with me interviewing him, first of all, about his paintings, Oscar Epfs' paintings. There weren't that many that he had [with him] but it was a connection. That was the connection: I had a gallery, he had paintings, and that was going to be the beginning of that interview.

So the fiction of it was that you were meeting him for the first time.

Yes, that was the fiction.

And that you'd hitchhiked there?

Yes, that I hitchhiked there. And oh, this man, who was Lawrence's friend, who picked me up in the truck.

Ludo?

Ludo! Oh, what a precious person he was. He was an herbalist and he would go out every day in the fields and collect herbs. I watched him chopping them up, as you saw him in the film, chopping them up. He was such a lovely man. My goodness. I was so fortunate to know him. So the film brought me to this place, where Lawrence had many good friends, mainly all good at drinking red wine!

So you were already friends with Lawrence Durrell, but in the film you have to pretend that you're meeting him for the first time?

Yes.

Interestingly, one of the characteristics of the film is that it often seems as if you are working each other out, particularly you: you look quite sceptical about him, as if you're trying to make sense of him. How much of that was real and how much of that was acting?

I was always trying to understand him. I never could fully know him; he was an enigma. He had so many aspects to his own being, and he stood on his head every morning for a half hour.

He really did that?

He really did.

That's how he first appears in the film.

And then he had a glass of white wine.

I love the silences in the conversations, particularly when he's made sometimes an off-colour joke or isn't taking it seriously or the opposite, has said something that's too serious, and you look at him with either a mouthful of bread, or holding a glass of wine, as if you're thinking, "What do you really mean? Are you serious about that?"

(She laughs) Of course I was quite young in comparison to him. He was, in a sense, a master of his craft, and I was still a beginner in mine. So that's why.

How did you find the filmmaking experience? Had you made one before this?

Oh, I was so excited! I'd never been in a proper film before, so this was wonderful for me to have that opportunity to use acting that I had studied since I was a young woman and to be with Lawrence and to know where he lived, his surroundings and the river that flowed by. This was all a great adventure for me, and the film crew was excellent.

And the director (Peter Leippe)?

He was excellent. He was quite on the beam. And he decided, I think it was while we were filming at Lawrence's home, he decided to go to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. That's the scene that took us to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and they were at that time carrying the Virgin, the Black Virgin out to sea, which was such a scene.

Which features in the Avignon Quintet?

Yes.

In the film, you were in the thick of all that. What was that like?

It was extraordinary for me because I had already been interested in sacred sites and also wisdom from our ancestors, so this would fit right in with what I was interested in. This was a whole mystic ritual played out in the south of France, where they took a Black Virgin to sea. And since that time, I've gone to see the town very near Aix-en-Provence, to see the actual head, the skull of the Black Virgin which is extraordinary. I recommend you go find it and see it. Who was, what was the Black Virgin? Why did they take her to the sea? I know that this is all mixed up from Indian culture coming into the south of France and into Spain, and the Moorish culture. That whole ritual is so beautiful.

In the film, how much do you think we got to see what he really believed and what he really thought? Some of the things he said are clearly jokes and he's clearly having fun, but sometimes I think you wear him down after a while and get something like the truth. How much do you think you got the truth from him?

Good question. I think you saw a lot of who he was. He was a bit upset about the film being made, I could tell. When a film company comes in - we have a lot of film companies come here to the gallery: they move everything around, they have cables going everywhere and lights, everything - I think he felt a little bit invaded in his space a little, so he was a bit cautious the whole time we were doing the interview. I'll never forget, it's in the film, it's a great line, I had made a salad and we were having the salad for lunch and the film crew was all around us and he took his first bite and said "Too much vinegar."

(I'd written that exact quotation in my notebook with an asterisk next to it. I show her that and she laughs uproariously.)

Good. Because I think it was a comment on a lot of it, you know.

What about when he says that he knows nothing about love?

On the contrary! He knows a lot about love! He had such wonderful women around him. His first wife I didn't know, but I knew Penelope, the daughter, and I met Eve. I was so glad to meet her. She came and had lunch one day. I was delighted to meet her. I didn't know her well. But whom he cherished was Claude and unfortunately, she passed away. But he said this was "the truest love of my life, the one who nourished me unreservedly and who supported me." And I think he supported her. They were so dear to each other. He was a fantastic ladies' man. Honestly.

I think he was so depressed about his daughter [Sappho] passing away. I knew his daughter. She came here in the early years of the gallery. Really, he was heartbroken about that. And for me to stay in her room was poignant, I guess.

You mentioned that he felt invaded by the film. Did you experience any discomfort?

(Laughs) No! I didn't. I was fine with it, it was fine with me. I came there specifically to help make the film and the crew were so lovely to him and to me. It wasn't like they were boisterous or anything like that, they just had to plug their things in.

You say at the end of the film that you went there to provoke Lawrence Durrell. Is that how you felt?

I think that was a line given to me. (Laughs)

How much of it is acting and scripted and how much is ad-libbed?

I was presented with a script. I was given scripts to read that you heard [as if writing a diary in voiceover], that was all from a script. But sometimes it was ad-libbed. For instance, during the lunch scene there was no script. And the dancing at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer - I danced as a young woman in Grand Junction, Colorado (where Chili grew up), I studied flamenco and I performed at



our prom, unbeknownst to my date who was shocked (laughs.) Flamenco was in my DNA and so when I went off, that was Chili going off. I just found this group dancing and performing, and I had the film crew come there. That's part of the film that was at least my unique contribution to it (laughs) because I loved it so.

So the crew was flexible enough to keep filming?

Yes, exactly and then they filmed that one scene of Lawrence alone in the street, which is terribly poignant.

It is. It looks like he wants to join in, but also wants to be separate.

I don't know what came over him at that point. He was kind of depressed, fuelled by a little bit of red wine and white wine. And they just followed him.

The film ends with you saying you'll never return. Did you return to Sommières?

I didn't go to Sommières, but he came here afterwards and then my colleagues and I were giving a conference in the south of France where we had a farm, and we invited him and he came with the lovely woman who took care of him at the end of his life, Françoise Kestman, and she came with him and we saw him then.

I think the film also captures a lost time in, well, certainly in Sommières, but France generally. If it weren't for the tracksuit bottoms worn by the men and some cars, I think it could have been set during any time period.

Any time. Any time.

Is that lost, do you think that the world that you saw there has gone?

I would hope that it isn't lost, but I'm sure it has changed drastically now. I would love to go back and see if I could still find the French playing *boules*. I know there still is the carrying of the Black Virgin into the ocean because I just had a gallery friend who emailed me that it was going on and they were doing flamenco.

You don't think he saw the finished film. What do you think he would have made of it?

I think he would have been proud of certain parts and maybe disillusioned by others, maybe by that solo scene, although I thought that was so perfect.

He was a complicated and contradictory person. And the film showed that.

Yes, that's what it should have shown. A complex, complex thinker, artist, who had many things going on in his life, but he valued friendship a great deal.

You obviously carried on your friendship with Lawrence long after the film?

I did, although, due to failure on both parts to write each other, in his last years, I didn't correspond with him so much. My life took over and I had to work so hard to make this gallery work.

Are you glad that you took part in the film?

Oh, I am so honoured and thrilled that I was even considered to be part of that film. It really helped me personally understand myself, understand Lawrence, and opened up a whole new aspect, although it wasn't necessarily popular. I'm so glad you even saw it. I didn't get offered any parts. I didn't get called to Hollywood!

Adrian Masters is a journalist and writer, living and working in Wales, UK. He's the Political Editor for ITV Cymru Wales and reports from both the Welsh and UK Parliaments. His private passion is literature, art and music and his writing on those subjects, along with his poetry has appeared in various publications.



Flâneurs in the Real and Unreal Cities of

Alexandria and New York

by Jonathan Boorstein

No one is ever surprised that I have a flâneur reference shelf. After all, I present myself as a flâneur in New York on social media and it has become a running gag among my friends and followers. Most are surprised that the shelf includes Lawrence Durrell (not just *The Alexandria Quartet*, but also a number of critical works) as well as C.P. Cavafy (no less than six translations) and E.M. Forster (the guides, of course). Yet in Durrell, Alexandria is a multicultural city of flâneurs and Cavafy is something of a poet-flâneur. He followed the city as much as the city followed him. To be fair, Forster seems to have been more sedentary, or at least less peripatetic. Nevertheless, he wrote a couple of travel books about Alexandria, which were as much influenced by Cavafy as they influenced Durrell. But it was the *Quartet* that sparked my interest in flânerie.

Before we look at the Alexandrian triplets in general and Durrell in particular, let's look at what a flâneur is as well as what sort of city caters for the flâneuric gaze. In short, what caught my attention when I first read the *Quartet* in my late teens.

Traditionally, there is no real English equivalent to the French word, flâneur. Worse, it may be easier to describe a flâneur than to define one. Edmund White explains the flâneur as an “aimless stroller who loses himself in the crowd, who has no destination and goes wherever caprice or curiosity directs his or her steps.”ⁱ The Tate Gallery in London, on its website, goes for “the urban explorer, the connoisseur of the street.”ⁱⁱ *Wikipedia*, in contrast, gets quite longwinded with “an ambivalent figure of urban affluence and modernity, representing the ability to wander detached from society, for an entertainment from the observation of the urban life.”ⁱⁱⁱ Another source on the Web, *The Art Story*, explains the flâneur as “a leisurely observer of urban life, a flâneur was someone that walked through a city, watching, but not participating in the things they saw. This allowed the viewer to analyze city life from a detached, or external viewpoint.”^{iv} In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag suggests that the flâneur is “the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes.”^v

Parenthetically, Edward K. Kaplan indirectly suggests a possible English word or equivalent for flâneur in *The Parisian Prowler* (“Le Rôdeur parisien”) his translation of Charles Baudelaire’s *Le Spleen de Paris*.^{vi} Prowler, here, is someone on the prowl, the hunt, the search, in this case, for urban, if not urbane, flâneuric moments.

It is obvious from those descriptions that the flâneur – in order to ‘flâne’ successfully – needs to explore some sort of cosmopolitan city or multicultural metropolis. White, in *The Flâneur*, spends the entire book going through Paris sub-culture by sub-culture, many of them ethnic. And “Metropolitan Diary”, the latter-day *feuilleton* section of *The New York Times*, is cluttered with short reports of minor flâneuric moments. But perhaps Durrell himself put it best at the beginning of *Justine*, when he writes on the second page: “Five races, five languages, a dozen creeds: five fleets turning through their greasy reflections behind the harbour bar.”^{vii} By the way, any international seaport, no matter how minor today, is good for flânerie, as Jan Morris displays in her 2001 travel-memoir *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Alexandria was just such a multicultural metropolis. It had not only a busy seaport, but also a cosmopolitan population. People from other continents, other countries, other cultures constituted about 20 percent of its inhabitants. Peter Jeffreys notes in *Reframing Decadence*: “That cosmopolitan Alexandria would all but vanish two decades after Cavafy’s death.”^{viii} Given the cultural diversity of New York when I was growing up, I quickly made the connection between Alexandria and my own city, which had then (as it does now) considerably more than five races and languages as well as more than a dozen creeds – plus a higher percentage of people from other cultures and other countries. I could have my own unreal city in my own backyard. I became a city walker, an urban wanderer, looking to see what there was to see, looking to develop my flâneuric gaze.

My general research went backwards – to Cavafy and Baudelaire – and forwards – to Benjamin and Debord, but it was Durrell and the *Quartet* I returned to again and again, his characters providing more than one model of the flâneur in real and unreal cities. Durrell introduces them on the first page of *Justine*, though not in so many words: “thinking of my friends – of Justine and Nessim, of Melissa and Balthazar.”^{ix} Including Darley, the unreliable narrator, that gives us five flâneurs in one sentence, although, to be fair, Melissa might be more of a *passante*.

Of course, interpreting the characters in the *Quartet* as flâneurs is nothing new. Allyson Kreuter presents Justine as a dark flâneuse haunting a sinister Alexandria in her essay “The Flâneuse and the City as Uncanny Home in Lawrence Durrell’s

The Alexandria Quartet.”^x Ali Reza Shahbazin may not use the word flâneur in “Here Once Lay the Body of the Great Alexander: From Poetic Imagination to Dwelling in Alexandria” but his “study focuses primarily on the urban experience of Durrell’s fictional L.G. Darley, and discusses also the experiences of Nessim Hosnani, Ludwig Pursewarden, and others in developing [the] argument that the *Quartet* evokes poetic imagination with narratives embodied in different places of the city.”^{xi} This focus on “urban experience(s)” combined with “narratives embodied in different places of a city” offers a solid description of exactly what flânerie is.

In the literary world, the first flâneur in Alexandria was Cavafy. As translator Evangelos Sachperoglou notes in his introduction to Cavafy’s collected works, “the settings of Cavafy’s poems are, like those of Baudelaire’s, enclosed spaces and city streets.”^{xii} The website *Greek News Agenda* comments in the introduction to January 2022’s “Poem of the Month”: “Cavafy [preferred] to stay in Alexandria, the city to which he was passionately devoted and where he could comport himself as its self-appointed flâneur.”^{xiii} Jeffreys adds in *Reframing Decadence* that “in keeping with Baudelaire’s example, Cavafy will gradually become a professional decipherer of his city and a belated flâneur.”^{xiv} Whether or not Cavafy identified himself as a flâneur is an interesting question. He certainly knew the word and the concept: he spoke French and owned the entire works of Baudelaire in the original.

Jeffreys also points out that the “paradoxical tension between the observant interiority of the poet and the urban extroversion of the flâneur will gradually shape Cavafy’s own poetic point of view, culminating in poems such as “The City,” “The Next Table,” “At the Theater,” and “On the Stairs,” compositions in which the urban gaze takes on a heightened urgency and partakes of an unmistakably splenetic beauty.”^{xv} Of course, Durrell’s footloose translation of “The City” turns up near the end of “Consequential Data” in *Justine*.

Regardless, Cavafy’s skills as a “professional decipherer” came in useful when he became something of a guide and a gossip to Forster – who was certainly *en flâneur* during his stint in Alexandria during World War I. Forster went on to write two books about the city, the first of which, *Alexandria: A History and Guide* (1922), is invoked by translator Daniel Mendelsohn in *C.P. Cavafy: The Unfinished Poems*. Mendelsohn recommends the edition with an introduction by Durrell “whose *Alexandria Quartet* is required reading for anyone interested in the city that shaped Cavafy’s poetry.”^{xvi} Or as Sachperoglou points out “[t]he memory of Cavafy still haunts Alexandria as ‘the old poet of the city’.”^{xvii} As does the memory of Durrell.

My experiences as a flâneur in New York involve considerably fewer incidents of sexual and international intrigue than the flâneurs in the *Quartet*. Because my academic field is a branch of architectural history, my flâneurie can involve an interesting building or ornamental detail, if not an amusing juxtaposition of elements that only the urban environment can provide. There are also the antics of people interacting in cafés or bookstores, walking along a street or performing on a corner. These are the types of telling details or anecdotes that give the *Quartet* its glittering and intriguing you-are-there surface. Of course, both Alexandria and New York are best experienced as palimpsests of sorts, where their pasts form, inform, and deform their presents as much as their flâneurs haunt their streets.

Oddly, one of my more Durrellian experiences as a flâneur happened not in New York, but in London. I was trying to photograph an architectural detail on the second story of the Burlington Arcade, designed by Samuel Ware in 1819, where women once offered very different goods and services from the ones displayed in the shop windows below. A heavy-set woman stopped to avoid walking in front of my mobile. I gestured for her to continue walking, but she shook her head. Instead, she stood there, looked at me, then at the architectural ornament I wanted to photograph, back to me, back to the detail.

When she judged that I was done, she said, “Thank you”.

She explained in a thick Russian accent that she walked through the Arcade every day on her way to and from lunch and had never noticed there was a second story, let alone those minor but intriguing architectural details. She added that she was not going to continue walking around not seeing what was around her. Indeed, she then continued walking along the arcade looking up, down, and around seeing whatever there was to see. Were we just ghosts upon each other’s road?

Flâneurs haunt metropolises, especially cosmopolitan, multicultural ones. The *Quartet* opened my eyes to the potential of my own urban flâneuric gaze. That is why I may well re-read Forster, but I return inevitably to Durrell.

ⁱ Edmund White, *The Flâneur* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001) 16-7.

ⁱⁱ “Flâneur”, Art Terms, *The Tate*, 8 April 2025, [tate.org.uk](https://www.tate.org.uk).

ⁱⁱⁱ “Flâneur”, *Wikipedia, The Free encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 April 2025, [wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org).

^{iv} “The Flâneur”, Modern Art Terms and Concepts, *The Art Story*, 3 March 2025, theartstory.org.

^v Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979) 55.

^{vi} Charles Baudelaire, *The Parisian Prowler – Le Spleen de Paris: Petits Poèmes en prose* (trans. Edward K Kaplan) (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2002) xxii.

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- vii Lawrence Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012) 17.
- viii Peter Jeffreys, *Reframing Decadence: C P Cavafy's Imaginary Portraits* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015) 32.
- ix Durrell, 17.
- x Allyson Kreuter, "The Flâneuse and the City as Uncanny Home in Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet*" in *Literator: Journal of Literary Criticism, Linguistics, and Literary Studies* 36, no. 1 (January 2015): 1-8.
- xi Ali Reza Shahbazin, "Here Once Lay the Body of the Great Alexander: From Poetic Imagination to Dwelling in Alexandria" in *Heresy and Heterotopia in Works by Lawrence Durrell: Alexandria to Angkor Wat* (Keller-Privat, Isabelle, and Anne R. Zahlan, eds.) (Vancouver: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2025) 11.
- xii Evangelos Sachperoglou, Introduction to *C.P. Cavafy: The Collected Poems* (Oxford: 2007) xvii.
- xiii "Poem of the Month: A Tribute to C.P. Cavafy", *Reading Greece*, 30 January 2022, greeknewsagenda.gr.
- xiv Jeffreys, 27.
- xv Ibid. 29.
- xvi Daniel Mendelsohn, Introduction to *C.P. Cavafy: The Unfinished Poems* (New York: 2009) 117.
- xvii Sachperoglou, xxxiii.



Jonathan Boorstein is a flâneur in New York and elsewhere, as well as a freelance journalist. He recently launched a website, FlamencoinNewYork.com, dedicated to flamenco performances and performers in New York City. He has visited Alexandria only through the imaginations of C. P. Cavafy, E. M. Forster, and Lawrence Durrell, among others.



‘Varnished Truth and Gloves-Off Lies’:

The Alexandrians of Tanith Lee

by Sarah Singleton

The real and fictional metropolis of Alexandria is not one literary world, but many. Its most famous inventors – Lawrence Durrell, C P Cavafy, E M Forster – have shaped our perception to such an extent it can be hard to visit the actual city without seeing it through their eyes. But there are other Alexandrias, which exist in the minds of other authors and have their own unique spiritual and sexual mythologies. Among the most dazzling and under-explored avatars of Alexandria is the one created by Tanith Lee (1947-2015) – a multi-award-winning British fantasy writer with an output of more than 90 novels and over 300 short stories.



The city that appears in the Alexandrian tales of Tanith Lee is one co-created with two intriguing and unusual collaborators, the queer Alexandrian siblings Esther Garber and her half-brother Judas Garbah. Tanith recalled how she first met the pair in the 1990s. They were “rather striking,” she wrote. Judas was “very handsome,” half Jewish and half Egyptian, black-haired and black-eyed “with the

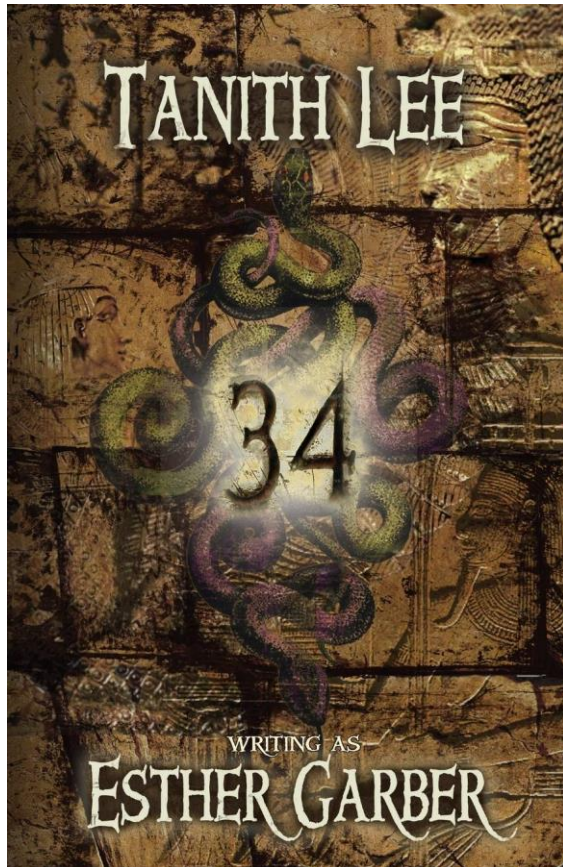
definite resultant beauty.” His French Jewish half-sister (so many halves) looked to be about fifty then, “smart and well-dressed” with a “sort of antique-coin type of arrangement of her profile.” Esther spent her childhood in Egypt in the 1920s-30s, and her young womanhood in England and France. She first met her brother ‘by the Nile’ when they were adults. Both are gay, and both are writers. A mysterious sister Anna is also mentioned.

The intriguing Esther Garber wrote the novel *34* (2004), the anthology *Fatal Women* (2004) and the short story collection *Disturbed by Her Song* (2010) which

also contains stories by her brother. These stories are told in lush, sensual prose – where scenes from 19th century Paris, contemporary London and Egypt in the 1920s are summoned up, indeed invoked, in precise, inexorable detail. The narratives are explorations of homosexual love, desire and obsession; they are unsettling, surreal and disorienting – full of anachronisms, time slips, misdirection and writerly sleight-of-hand. Myth and fairy tale slide into the fabric of these stories, as well as the tropes of fantasy (a maybe-werewolf, a possible-ghost) though these seem to be the outward manifestations, the embodiments, of fear or longing or erotic desire. Gender is subverted and fluid. And these writings are indeed partly erotica – breath-takingly so. To read them is to be swept into a world of absolute sensation, of sexual rapture, of erotic delirium; the fact that one of the stories is prefaced with a quote from a poem by the epitome of the 1890s Decadent movement, Arthur Symonds, gives something of the flavour. Esther Garber's Paris novella 'Rherlotte' – stretches the bounds of language in a manner reminiscent of D H Lawrence to describe the piercing agony of obsessive sexual longing.

It is at this point I should mention that in her introduction to the Garber siblings in *Disturbed by Her Song*, Tanith Lee adds that "obviously I have never met any of these three in the flesh. In the flesh, as far as I can tell, they do not exist." She goes on to explain that Esther Garber and Judas Garbah write *through* her. "They are not me," she asserts. "*They* – are – *themselves*" and "they are all real to me, more real, *far* more real than so-called Reality." So-called Reality? It is a bright thread running through the work, this question – our dreams and fantasies, our memories, the narratives we tell ourselves about our lives, about the lives of others, particularly those we carry deep within us, that shape who we are, how we see the world, and what we do – in what sense are those not real?

Let us turn to the short novel 34. This is purportedly an autobiographical novel by Esther Garber. The curious title is the age of Esther-the-protagonist's mother when she died, after falling down a marble staircase (perhaps). The novel is a literary symphony in four movements. Its major theme – its forward impetus – is sexual awakening and obsession. Yet it is just as deeply a novel about death. The first movement, 'Women are Creatures of the Night' launches Esther on a voyage across the dark seas from Alexandria to Paris in the aftermath of her mother's death. Still only seventeen but habituated to sexual violence by opportunistic men, alone and without resources, Esther is seduced and experiences her first orgasm with the alluring Monsieur d'Ouest, who is "black cloaked and in a tall silk hat" while "a gloved hand came out, holding a bottle of golden wine." Yet he is also "as achingly sweet as the nougat" and Esther realises also that "he was a woman." After a single night, this beautiful, ambiguous being vanishes – is (s)he a magician? – leaving mention of a mysterious chateau and "like Cinderella's glass shoe," a single pale glove. The rest of the novel recounts Esther's trance-like quest through a shifting, unreal landscape in search of her lover.



Within the quest is woven a series of recollections of “the Egyptian city.” This place is less substantial than Paris in descriptive terms. It is the territory of childhood – a series of impressions and details significant to someone very young. She recalls that the colours of the city were “pale yellow and pink, sometimes a dusty, tawny brown” and the river, “that is the Nile, of course. The Seine is the Womb, and the Nile ‘The Mother of Men’.” This layering of rivers, (Nile, Seine, Styx?) and the importance of mothers, are key motifs in the symphony. Esther recalls incidents from childhood with her sister Anna: a scorpion, a man who threatens to molest her, a mysterious attic leading to a rooftop that is “another world” where beautiful Egyptian women feed her then pray, “offering themselves to God, partaking of God.” Later she

recalls being taken with Anna by a couple who are friends of her parents to visit a recently excavated temple on the banks of the Nile. They travel by boat to the site where child-Esther sees signs and wonders – mating snakes, a cistern, a huge statue broken at the waist (*I saw a statue in an antique land...*) and while the wife sexually services her racist husband, Anna reads to Esther the story of Isis and Osiris: love, loss, a search, a mother. This Egyptian city, these memories, have moments of intense clarity, but slide into haze even in the telling. Esther recalls her mother dancing the tango, but observes too “there was no tango, then, for her to dance.” Was that someone else, someone later? Are her memories to be trusted? Can we, the reader, take these recollections at face value?

While the opening chapter is the voyage out, the short second movement - ‘Such Loveliness’ – is a return. An unexpected return – a hard landing into ‘reality’ – perhaps – to contemporary London and a flat where Esther is living with Anna and their father and writing a story. Apple trees grow in the garden. Another recurring motif, this: apples, pears, pomegranates. Anna is kind and practical, Esther is sickly and overweight, tortured by sleeplessness and migraine and menopause and pain: “a grossly fat woman, almost bald.” Who is she? Esther asks of herself, her own reflection. It seems we are in some kind of metafiction: Anna, reading the manuscript of ‘Women are Creatures of the Night’ says they were never in Egypt, that Paris came later.

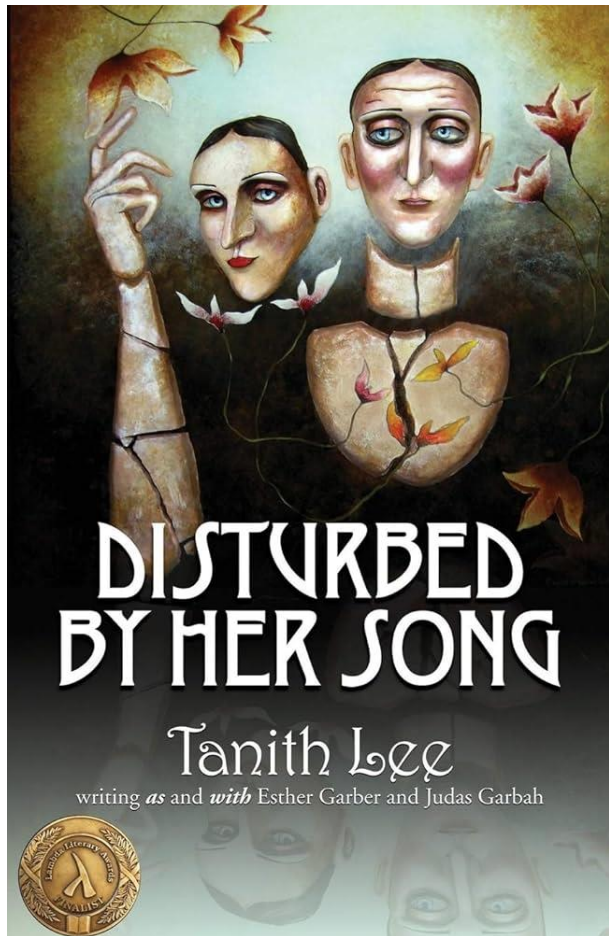
The third movement is called ‘The Dance of Death.’ It enters another circle, another journey and arrival, another trinity of old woman, child and dog (Henri, another ambiguity, part dog part pig). Words and meanings shift, overlay each other: “Où est – where is – where is Ouest: the west. The land of the Dead.” Indeed, death is the dominant theme now. Esther’s journey to the fabled chateau of her black-caped lover becomes more surreal – a patchwork of fairy tales and fabulous images. It is a psycho-geography, a desire-shaped dream-kingdom that would resonate with admirers of Angela Carter. It taps into the same emotional-sexual cartography as Carter’s 1972 novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr Hoffman*. A forest (of course) “spreading and mantled” and walled orchards where pomegranates might grow, and unhelpful villagers who will not show the way to the castle and warn Esther to stick to the road. Esther even recognises the echoes: “It was so like some fairy-tale – Red Riding Hood presumably.” She sees a boar, an “awful engine of violence” with the “odour of a minotaur,” perhaps symbolising the sexual threat she has so often faced – but in this green labyrinth she is immune. And then the house – like Satis House in *Great Expectations*, or the dream of Manderley in *Rebecca*, or the castle of ‘The Lady of the House of Love’ in the Carter story – appears in the twilight with its broken wall and overgrown garden. Echoes of the stories of Osiris, and of Orpheus, resonate through the chapter in telling details. Soon the tale of Demeter and Persephone will leaven the mix. An image of the Dance of Death is painted on the gallery wall. Esther will encounter Monsieur d’Ouest one more time in a memorable encounter with a remarkable clockwork chair. (Or is that, too, a misremembered or erotically transformed recollection, of the time a sadistic lesbian school teacher locked her into a wooden toilet, where Esther “sat on a wooden seat for hours.”?)

‘And So’ – the brief final movement. We return to London. This time no Anna (a fiction) and no apple trees in the garden (likewise) and “we have never been in Egypt” and also “Well, I have been there. Just as I have written it. Egypt, and Paris. And the house in the forest.” And to Anna – who may be a part of Esther: “If I could see it, Anna, and if I felt it, Anna, it’s as real as day and darkness. As real as the falling rain.”

I first read this novel twenty years ago, and have read it several times since. Re-reading it now, it is not the same as it was. The sadness of it – those short chapters in London – strikes me more profoundly. The theme of death was not omnipresent then, as I see it is this time, at roughly the same age as Tanith when she first met Esther Garber. It is an exploration, a meditation on death – and embedded inevitably within it, our insatiable human longings, the dreams of transcendence, the yearning and reaching – the sense that life could be so much more, that time is running out. “At the procession’s head capered Death... beckoning them all to come on...”

“Memory alters,” Esther tells us. “As when you recall some passage in a book with utter clarity, and later, reading the passage again, find it goes differently.” Memory alters, and so does perception, and so do we. What then is reality?

Towards the end of the novel, we are taken back to Alexandria and to a party at the Garbers’ childhood home. The child Esther thinks it is the Garden of Eden and searches for the Apple Tree and recalls: “It was obvious to me then that not much is real, and yet, the unreality is, if anything, more pressing, more convincing, than truth.”



Let’s turn to Judas Garbah before concluding. His short story ‘Ne Que V’on Desir’ in *Disturbed by Her Song* is a gem: a steam train charging through the snow, an intense erotic encounter with a man with grey eyes and a collar of fur, the threat of wolves outside the windows. And finally, another visit to Egypt and a story called, indeed, ‘Alexandrians.’ In this (unreal) autobiographical tale, a little boy called Judas, a “pretty little boy,” “a little doll of a boy” is neglected by his selfish mother and treated badly by his nurse. At some manner of soirée, one of the guests tells Judas that a man who loves other men “is called for Alexander, who was the son of a god, and loved men, and for his city by the sea, Alexandria. An Alexandrian.” He proceeds to ask Judas if he might grow up to be an Alexandrian – and regrets

that by the time Judas is an adult, he will be too old to be his lover. An unsettling story certainly – for the child Judas and for the reader. Judas is a more enigmatic and less fully realised presence than his half-sister – a handful of stories, a few recollections. He visits Esther only occasionally. Yet his stories explore the same themes – passion and regret, loss and age.

Tanith Lee concludes her introduction to this anthology with a reflection on her writing as and with Esther and Judas Garber/Garbah, her Alexandrians:

More even than with all the differing kinds of fiction I write, the Garbers have given me a significantly *unlike* territory. *In* this world and out of it, anachronistic (deliberately), time-twisting, utterly self-indulgent – why

not? Why write in chains? – and experimental. Varnished truth and gloves-off lies: the exquisite question that never has an answer; the answer that *is* the question.

Thank you, Madame et Monsieur.

And with a swirl of her black silk cape, she too was gone, Tanith Lee - a decade ago now, leaving many books unwritten and many stories untold. The fact that I will never read Esther Garber's unpublished (and perhaps unwritten) novel *Cleopatra at the Blue Hotel* – which Tanith insisted did indeed exist somewhere, somehow – is a matter of great regret. It is lost, like its author(s), in that unknown from which all of us spring, to which all of us must one day return.

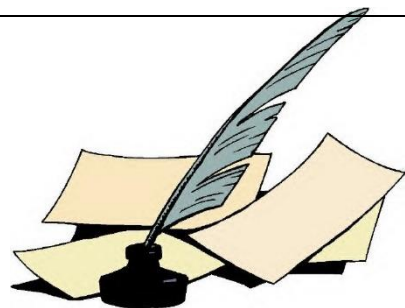
Sarah Singleton is a writer, journalist and teacher, with a Master's degree in Literature, Landscape and the Environment from Bath Spa University. She is the author of nine published novels, including 'The Crow Maiden' (Wildside Press) which was short-listed for the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts Crawford Award in 2003, and eight novels for young adults, beginning with the Booktrust Teen Award-winning 'Century' (Simon & Schuster). Her short stories can be found in a range of magazines and anthologies, such as Black Static and The Dark. She lives in Wiltshire in the UK, county of white horses and stone circles.



Editorial note: please note that David Melville Wingrove collected and edited all content of this edition. Pamela Francis worked on layout and assumes responsibility for any and all layout errors found in this edition of the *ILDS Herald*.

ILDS Mini-Minutes

Athens: 5 July 2024



As part of On Miracle Ground XXII, a general business meeting was convened at 18.00 EEST on 5 July 2024, in Athens, Greece, ILDS President James Gifford presiding. Those present included William Ashley, Christopher Bacon, Luca Barbaglia, Bartolo Casiraghi, James Clawson, James Decker, Athanasios Dimakis, Pamela J. Francis, Sheila Garland, James Gifford, Helen Goethals, Vivienne Holliday, Isabelle Keller-Privat, Gregory Leadbetter, Saul Leslie, Paul H. Lorenz, David Nigel Lloyd, David Radavich, Merrienne Timko, Fiona Tomkinson, David Melville Wingrove, and Anne R. Zahlan.

The meeting opened with remembrance of recently lost members, Jeanetta Dreuke and Wendy Gifford. Following reminders of conference events to come, Secretary-Treasurer Paul Lorenz reported on membership (211) and Society finances (sound). Vice President Pamela J. Francis announced that she had reassumed editorship of *The Herald* in addition to her management of the ILDS Facebook page. [At a date after the meeting, however, Board member David Melville Wingrove agreed to accept appointment as editor of *The Herald*.]

At this point, President Gifford turned the meeting over to Nominations Committee Chair James Clawson, who presented the report of the committee (Clawson, David Radavich, Fiona Tomkinson). Nominated for ILDS president was Pamela J. Francis; for vice president Athanasios Dimakis; for secretary-treasurer Paul Lorenz. Additionally, the Committee recommended the following to serve as at-large board members for the 2024-2026 term: Umme Alwazedi, Luca Barbaglia, James Decker, David Nigel Lloyd, and David Melville Wingrove. A motion (Zahlan/Decker) to accept the slate recommended by the Nominations Committee passed with unanimous approval. (Those elected will serve, along with active past presidents, on the 2024-2026 Executive Board.)

President Gifford then initiated discussion of the location of the next conference, On Miracle Ground XXIII, to be held in 2026. Emphasizing that

no decision had yet been made, he announced that the New Jersey campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University, a conveniently accessible location close to New York City, would be available to host the meeting. Although the tradition has been that locations would rotate between North America and other continents, there was resistance to adhering too strictly to that practice. Some non-American locations mentioned as possible sites for future conferences were Cyprus, Edinburgh, and Sicily. Meanwhile, proposals for hosting the conference were solicited and were to be sent to President Pamela J. Francis.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 18.40 Athens time.

Respectfully submitted, Anne Zahlan

Right: One of our keynote speakers, Marinos Pourgouris, from the University of Cyprus, spoke on “Lawrence Durrell and Empire.”



Left: “There’s a certain Slant of light”: Slanting Perspectives, a panel featuring David Nighel Lloyd, Merianne Timko, and Eeva-Llisa Myllymäki. Paul Lorenz, second from left, moderated the panel.

WORKPOINTS
For On Miracle Ground XXIII

Durrell's novels, travel writings, and poems offer fertile exploration of the vibrant, complex, and often liminal spaces of port-cities. From the wide spectrum of Durrell's Port/City fictions (including novels, travel narratives, poems, and essays) that foreground Mediterranean ports and polyglot cosmopolitan cities such as Alexandria, Athens, Corfu, Rhodes, Kyrenia, and Marseilles to his island, fishing harbours like the "little oil port" of Catania in the ***Sicilian Carousel*** (1976, 1977, 56), the "absence of a harbour" warrants desolation, seclusion, and "remoteness from the bustle of everyday politics..." (SC, 83). The brooding account of the metropolitan port of London and the Thames estuary in ***The Black Book*** (1938) further corroborates this understanding. With ***The Alexandria Quartet*** being one of the key examples of the modernist port city novel, the warships swaying softly resembling a "forest of masts and rigging in the Commercial Port" (***Balthazar***, 233) do more than simply suggest that the city is profoundly shaped by its maritime world. The port, instead, becomes the means of registering Alexandria's transformation, portraying its zeitgeist subsumed in the troubled version of a postwar, post-colonial, world in crisis, with its denizens on the harbour quarter feeling "like some merchant sailor cast up helpless in a foreign port at the other end of the world" (***Mountolive***, 630).

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Vancouver literatures address closely akin themes. Shazia Hafiz Ramji's poetic collection ***Port of Being*** (2018), which ambivalently entwines the private and the public, and Jen Sookfong Lee's novel ***The End of East*** (2008), depicting twentieth-century migratory waves of individuals finding refuge in the Chinatown community of Vancouver, are cases in point. Wayde Compton's [*49th Parallel Psalm*](#) might be called essential to our theme, and Stephen Collis' [*A History of the Theories of Rain*](#) calls our attention, but [Renée Sarojini Saklikar](#), [Kim Trainor](#), [Fred Wah](#), and so many others beckon us as readers.

* * *

The theme of "animal concupiscence" in Durrell's poetry, particularly concerning "treaty ports" evokes a neo-decadent erotica that conveys abandonment and lawlessness while merging the sensual with the political through the reference to treaty ports opening to foreign trade by unequal treaties imposed by Western hegemonies ("**XIII, In Paris,**" ***Collected Poems*** 1948, 209). Yet, Durrell's ***Blue Thirst*** (1975), his fascination with the liquid element and states of impermanence or liquidity, along with his accounts of island ports and Byronic, (neo-)Romantic swimming feats in "islomaniac" travel narratives like ***Reflections on a Marine Venus: A Companion to the Landscape of Rhodes*** (1953), and fond memories of "the great *bouillabaisse* cauldrons of the port of Marseilles!" (331) in ***Spirit of Place*** (1969), suggest a more ambivalent or nuanced relationship. Port/Cities are far more than exotic backdrops: they foreground the complex interplay of shifting identities, cultural connectedness, and the anxieties and opportunities of modernity in Durrell's prose. T

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This conference will open discussions around networks, insular environments, isolation and connection, cosmopolitanism, the intersection of maritime and urban space, sea representations, hospitalities, warfare, colonialism, modernity, urban life, spaces of dynamic interaction, and hybrid identities. Durrell's literature of port cities intertwine the allure of the exotic and the harsh realities of urban life, disclosing a cultural entanglement (Sarah Nuttall) that also entails violence and social exclusion. This theme broaches pathways for a variety of approaches across the author's entire body of work at this exciting juncture for Durrell studies.

* * *

Directly engaging with the rapidly emerging, interdisciplinary field of Blue Humanities, conference papers will explore how these urban confluences of land and sea function affectively, often generating a distinct mode of perception. Recent scholarship on [Oceanic Studies](#), the [Blue Humanities](#), [Oceanic Modernisms](#), and [Atlantic Studies](#) has opened new areas of study, and all are welcomed in relation to Durrell's work, his contemporaries, and Vancouver literature broadly conceived. Durrell's articulation of "Islomania" in relation to Rhodes also applies widely to both prose and poetry of the Pacific Northwest, Vancouver Island, and the literary production of the Gulf Islands.

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We invite scholars from diverse disciplines, including literature, urban studies, history, postcolonial studies, cultural studies, to delve into Durrell's Port/Cities (or those of the broader range of authors in Durrell's milieu and his contemporaries). We are particularly interested in papers that examine the port-city as a site of:

- **Modernity and Urban Transformation:** The port(-city) as a crucible of rapid change and social restructuring. Tensions between tradition and modernity in marine urban settings.
- **Cultural Exchange and Hybridity:** Port-cities as nodes of cross-cultural encounter and the formation of new, hybrid identities (fluidity and permeability of boundaries).
- **Liminal Spaces and Borderlands:** The port as a transitional zone, a place of arrival and departure, exile and return, where different worlds intersect and identities are perpetually in flux.
- **Trade, Commerce, and Economic/Imperial/Colonial Geographies:** Exchange, mercantile activity, and global networks in narratives of Durrellian Port/Cities.
- **Liquidity and Liquid Imagery, Stories, and Themes:** Waterscapes/Seascapes and the trope of Islomania in Durrell's Oeuvre (all genres).
- **Postcolonial Perspectives:** How do Durrell's port-cities reflect or challenge colonial legacies, power dynamics, and emergent national identities? How do subaltern voices or experiences manifest within Port/Cities?