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Richard Pine, Lawrence Durrell's *Endpapers and Inkings* 1933-1988. Volumes One and Two

Isabelle Keller-Privat

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REFERENCES

Richard Pine, *Lawrence Durrell's Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988*. Volumes One and Two (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), vol 1 452 p, ISBN 978-1-5275-3847-4, vol 2 430 p, 978-1-5275-3898-6

- 1 To all those who thought they were done with Lawrence Durrell after having fallen in love reading *The Alexandria Quartet*, gone hitchhiking on Cyprus with *Bitter Lemons* tucked in their rucksack, and laughed with *The Durrells in Corfu* (Christopher Hall, ITV comedy-drama, 2016-2019), Richard Pine proves that they were rash and careless: "it is [...] only a beginning" (*Prospero's Cell*, Faber, 1962, 17). The two thick volumes of *Lawrence Durrell's Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988* soon convince the reader that there is

more than first meets the eye in this protean writer who not only produced accomplished works of art in every genre (novels, island books, essays, plays and poems) but whose lesser-known and unpublished writings reveal an enquiring, alert and anxious mind that never ceased to roam the world in a desperate attempt to “find out where [he] fit in the universe” (vol 1, 411).

- 2 Richard Pine's endeavour to arouse our interest in a man who from the start “was never native to anywhere” (vol 1, xiv) and finally succeeded in making himself heard from elsewhere is thoroughly rewarded. As Corinne Alexandre-Garner has aptly been remarked, Lawrence Durrell was, from the start, “exiled even from exile” (*Deus Loci. The Lawrence Durrell Journal*, NS 2001-2002, 44-57): an Anglo-Indian child, initially deprived at age 11 of a home that was not his, he was sent Home where he never belonged. Yet, few scholarly publications have so potently foregrounded Durrell's “restlessness and rootlessness” (vol 1, xiv). The editorial policy adopted in these two volumes brings back to life not only the slow maturing of the artist's voice and gaze (encompassing Charles Norden, Lawrence Durrell, and Oscar Epfs) but also the diversity of his intellectual probing, and the spirited, wayward network of literary and artistic brotherhoods. The variety of texts chosen by Pine highlights the vast scope of Durrell's interests and experiences as well as his delightful sense of humour. Yet, the editor refuses to track down the various stages of the development of Lawrence Durrell's progress. Thus, Richard Pine breaks free from the conventional plodding along the “dotted line” (Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet. Clea*, London: Faber 1974, 758) of chronology and relies on the reader's implicit knowledge of Durrell's personal history. It is thus no wonder that Ian Mac Niven's, G. S. Fraser's and Marc Alyn's works, amongst many others, should frequently crop up, as if to remind the attentive reader that, just as in Durrell's fictions, these volumes reveal deeper strata of meaning.
- 3 Opting for a thematic perspective that highlights meetings and departures, landscapes and people, and the labile frontiers between styles, tones and genres, Pine offers us a medley of texts in what purports to be “not an ‘academic’” work (vol 1, xviii)—although one may feel strongly enticed to distrust the assertion considering the massive amount of archival exploration, thoughtful organization, and even translation in the case of the few introductions that were originally published in French. The editor emphasizes in each of his concise introductions the careful planning that has guided the composition of the sections throughout both volumes. However, he provides the reader with relatively few notes, unlike most academic authors. The notes that do find their way into the text are always illuminating and, consequently, whet the reader's appetite for more insightful details. It is true that Durrell himself started the tradition of referring the reader “to a page in the text which is mysteriously blank [...] to throw him back upon his own resources—which is where every reader ultimately belongs” (*The Alexandria Quartet. Balthazar*, London: Faber, 1974, 307) and that he repeatedly lambasted our culture built on “the cramming of the skull with facts and pragmatic data which positively stifle the growth of the soul” (*Spirit of Place*, Faber, 1969, 160). Pine thus inscribes his books in a most Durrellian paradox, flouting academic conventions while demanding a learned and extensive attention that will enable the reader to fully appreciate *Lawrence Durrell's Endpapers and Inklings* like a posthumous version of the mysterious *Obs and Inks* recording in *Caesar's Vast Ghost* “the haphazard and spasmodic nature of [a] corporate thinking” (*Caesar's Vast Ghost*, London: Faber, 1990, 14).

- 4 Indeed, one may argue that there is something “haphazard and spasmodic” in the conjunction of the various parts of each volume. Thus, volume 1 is composed of Durrell’s self-portraits, short forays into the visual arts, four early fictions, letters sent during wartime, and a final, longer section entitled “Spirit of Place” providing insight into Durrell’s diplomatic career and travels through non-fictional pieces as well as letters and various contributions. Intertwining sections devoted to a specific genre, or to a particular historical period or place, Pine proceeds in volume 2 by exploring the Durrell-Miller connection through various contributions that enlighten the reader not only on Henry Miller’s art but also, simultaneously, on Durrell’s self-reflexive metadiscourse. The following section, “Dramas and Screenplays” echoes the third section in volume 1 by giving us access to rare material that reveals the slow, careful elaboration of themes, descriptions and metaphysical enquiries that pave the way for their final accomplishment in the well-known dramatic works that have received worldwide attention and twice brought their author tantalizingly close to the Nobel Prize. The section gathering “Essays, Lectures, Reviews and Introductions” includes conversations, notes, commemorative pieces as well as Durrell’s discussions on sex, feminism and censure that account for his support of controversial figures such as D.H. Lawrence and Henry Miller and help contextualize some of the esoteric developments on sexuality in *The Quartet*, *The Revolt of Aphrodite* and *The Avignon Quintet*. The penultimate section, “Incorrigibilia”, including non-apologetic, although highly controversial pieces, leads to one of the rarest documents: the climactic, arcane, and baffling notebook that lends its title to Pine’s two volumes. *The Asides of Demonax*, subtitled *Endpapers & Inklings*, eventually leaves the reader to ponder upon man’s frail grasp on life, thought and history. It also reads as an invitation to marvel at the artist’s final leap from “the long slide deathwards [...], from the darkness of life [...] into light, into immediacy!” (vol 2, 430).
- 5 The complex composition of the two volumes that refuses to draw a line between genres, periods, places and topics also blends better known texts—some of which have already been published and republished—and unedited, archival material from the various private and public collections held by the British Library, the Durrell archives in Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Paris X – Nanterre University, and The Durrell Library of Corfu, to quote only a few. These include facsimiles of Durrell’s notebooks complete with drawings and doodles that are a true researcher’s treasure-trove. Reading *The Magnetic Island* in volume 1 or *The Asides of Demonax* in volume 2 the reader cannot help feeling thankful for such an easy access to precious archival material that will definitely lead him to reconsider Durrell’s entire opus. Likewise the unsigned contributions to *The Economist* at the time of Durrell’s stay in Cyprus shed an entirely new light upon the writer’s divided loyalties and call for a new reading of *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*. In that respect, Pine’s volumes stand out as the natural sequel to James Gifford’s edition *From the Elephant’s Back* (University of Alberta Press, 2015)¹. However, unlike Gifford’s volume that focuses exclusively on unpublished and out-of-print essays in a seminal collection that establishes Durrell as a modernist anti-authoritarian artist, Pine’s publication adopts a broader perspective that endeavours to leave no stone unturned by including Durrell’s “various hands [...] mite, obs or inks” (*Caesar’s Vast Ghost*, London: Faber, 1990, 15). In the constant shuttling between unpublished and published yet lesser-known texts, between people, times and places, Pine confirms Durrell’s status as a rebellious artist who, out of choice and by necessity, adopted a minority position, constantly fighting out from a marginal, tight corner in

order to redefine the space and alter the contours of English literature. Estranged from the Oxbridge circles of the successful and influential modernists, writing from the “imaginary homeland” which, Salman Rushdie claims, is the privileged territory of “exiles or emigrants or expatriates [...] haunted by an urge to look back” (*Imaginary Homelands*, New York: Vintage, 2010, 10) Durrell has produced a multifaceted, perplexing, and polymorphous work that resists classification. He has occupied literary spaces that are considered peripheral (travel writing, letters, short pieces of fiction) until acquiring a worldwide fame as a novelist—a title which he felt failed to acknowledge his true poetic being, his elsewhere self. His English language, tender and sardonic, romantic and obscene, is a nomadic language to be sought for in the most unlikely places. It is a language that resists and challenges the canon and that thoroughly justifies such an erudite, all-embracing, irreverent, and non-canonical approach as the one chosen by Richard Pine.

NOTES

1. For a review of James Gifford's *From the Elephant's Back* see Isabelle Keller-Privat, “James Gifford. Personal Modernisms. Anarchist Networks and the Later Avant-Gardes & Lawrence Durrell. *From the Elephant's Back*. Collected Essays and Travel Writings”, *Études britanniques contemporaines*, 51 | 2016, <http://journals.openedition.org/ebc/3502>

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Mots-clés: archive, autobiographie, fiction, essai, théâtre, récit de voyage, poésie, peinture, photographie, correspondance, critique, enfance, Seconde Guerre mondiale, Inde, Egypte, les Balkans, Grèce, France, Californie, paysages, villes

Keywords: archive, autobiography, fiction, essay, drama, travel writing, poetry, painting, photography, correspondence, criticism, childhood, World War II, India, Egypt, the Balkans, Greece, France, California, landscapes, cities

AUTHORS

ISABELLE KELLER-PRIVAT

Professeur

Université de Toulouse – Jean Jaurès

isabelle.keller-privat@univ-tlse2.fr