

**Gifford, James. “Mediterranean Modernisms & *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*: Indigeneity & Migration in World Literature.” Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. Paris, France. 15 January 2016.**

“The rain of ashes consisted of burnt pages of world literature, fragments of poems and novels” (Durrell, *CVG* 190)

“Des fragments de poems et des romans, pages calcinées de la littérature universelle, alimentaient la pluie de cendres” (*OIC* 272)

My talk today has three main sections. All three are based around a single question: instead of asking *what* Lawrence Durrell’s *Caesar’s Vast Ghost* says, I ask how does it tell its story? This is to say, rather than a simple explication of the text, I discuss its formal, structural, and conceptual work: the way that it works more than what it specifically says. The three main sections based on this question are more complicated but connect directly to this primary concern with method. They proceed in the sequence of my title: first, Mediterranean Modernism; second, the concept of indigeneity in World Literature, and third, the contrasting concept of migration in World Literature. All three lead us back to the question of form or how Durrell’s book works. From Modernism I will take the central stylistic element of fragmentation. For indigeneity, I will look to Durrell’s lifelong concern with the Deus Loci or Spirit of Place, meaning a person’s deep rootedness in place and the symbiotic relationship between location and identity. For migration, I will turn back to Durrell’s discussion in *Caesar’s Vast Ghost* of immigration and invasion as well as transplantation and translation and the stylistic migration of materials inside the book itself, where ideas or phrases appear in one chapter and then again later, transformed and reshaped into something new.

When I question how Durrell’s *Caesar’s Vast Ghost* works rather than what it specifically says, I am taking up a challenge he gives readers across his entire oeuvre. Durrell’s *Alexandria Quartet* retells its story four times from different perspectives. This formal trait emphasizes the plural nature of truth and the irresistible call for interpretation. These ideas appear in the novel as characters discuss their different perspectives, which Isabelle Keller-Privat has discussed using anamorphosis. However, the form of the novel, the structure, is more important for this idea than any single comment from a character or narrator. In a simple sense, we might say the novel “shows” us the idea rather than “tells” us about it, although it actually does both. In other words, how the novel works is as important as what it specifically says. The same troubles with form appear in Durrell’s other major

works. *The Revolt of Aphrodite* uses the number of chapters and the number of sections to contrast 22 to 7, which is the fraction for pi ( $\pi$ ) or 3.14159. The formal structure implies a circle, as does the plot. We could use an explication of specific scenes to discuss this, but the way the book works is stronger than any specific instance of what it says. Durrell's last major novel series, *The Avignon Quintet*, does similar things by changing narrators and moving between possible worlds. However, the postmodern ideas we could discuss based on narrators becoming characters or characters becoming authors are all far more explicit when we see how the novels work—it moves between notebooks and sketches or it, very literally, copies or transcribes notebooks and sketches for the novel into the novel itself as written by its characters. The division between notes and the final book becomes unstable. Durrell has the same trick with letters and notes appearing in his first novel, *Pied Piper of Lovers*, in 1935 as well as his last novel *Quinx, or The Ripper's Tale* in 1985.

This structure is everywhere across *Caesar's Vast Ghost*. Aldo's commonplace books appear in every chapter as quotations, but other notes, sketches of poems on the back of receipts, quotations, and fragments of other texts appear everywhere. When the narrator of *Caesar's Vast Ghost* reads Aldo's commonplace books, he shows us that texts always exist in relation to other texts and that no text is final—it awaits future migrations and transplantations. He also shows us that every sense of unity, wholeness, or completion exists in relation to fragments, excerpts, and lost originals. Each completion is then fragmented to create something new. We, as readers, find the narrator reading and interpreting another book that we don't actually see. The model shows how we should read: *Caesar's Vast Ghost*. It is a didactic book. Of course, Durrell shows us a reader who is rewriting and reinterpreting the fragments in Aldo's commonplace book and other texts. He says, “with Aldo I set about cobbling a potted history of [Caius Marius's] career from my Plutarch and Tacitus” (*CVG* 103) “aussie en compagnie d'Aldo, et avec Plutarque et Tacite comme sources—j'entrepris de concocter un récit mijoté de sa carrière” (*OIC* 153). Durrell expends much effort to remind the reader of these fragments and the unreliability. From whatever whole he has taken them, Durrell expects the reader to work toward a new wholeness or unity by shoring up these pieces. When Durrell refers to the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel (*CVG* 76-77; *OIC* 118), he uses a passage taken verbatim from his earlier 1978 book *The Greek Islands*, twelve years before *Caesar's Vast Ghost*. Simply put, Durrell was relying on the same notebooks to create *Caesar's Vast Ghost* as he used to create *The Greek Islands*, which is no great surprise—he used the same notebooks across the entire *Avignon Quintet* and returned to his first notebook for the series, from 1972, verbatim in the opening of the final book in 1985. When Durrell

writes in *Caesar's Vast Ghost* “‘After all,’ as Aldo pointed out, ‘...One pace to right or left and you get a change of epicentre which changes the whole field of observation’” (*CVG* 154) “‘Après tout,’ comme le faisait remarquer Aldo,... ‘Un pas à droite ou à gauche, et l’épicentre du champ d’observation s’en trouve radicalement modifié’” (*OIC* 225) he was paraphrasing his own *Alexandria Quartet*: “‘We live’ writes Pursewarden somewhere ‘lives based upon selected fictions. Our view of reality is conditioned by our position in space and time—not by our personalities..... Two paces east or west and the whole picture is changed.’” (*Alexandria* 210). This was a method. It communicates a concept through form rather than content. Recurrence teaches the reader to observe “structure” more than “statement.” What seems clear is that we, as readers, ought to be doing the same thing: cobbling together a whole from the pieces quarried out of some other previous wholeness. We should value the fragments and use them to inspire (not to limit) new responses. However, this idea has an older origin.

## **Modernism**

Durrell’s editor at his publisher, Faber & Faber, was the major modernist poet T.S. Eliot. References to Eliot appear across Durrell’s works from 1935 to 1985. He also reviewed Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* and lectured on James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and alludes to Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*. In other words, Durrell had deep roots in American and British modernism. Let us exclude a simple literary history here and instead look for how this connection works. The most widely recognized stylistic trait and formal innovation of modernism was fragmentation. The generation of authors before Durrell and who edited him all shared an interest in fragmentation. Joyce and Woolf fragmented narrative by using stream of consciousness—without an omniscient narrator, we as readers move into individual characters’s thought processes. Pound fragmented poetry into revivals of other older poetry—just as he believed money should devalue over time, and therefore promote spending and consumption, he also believed poetry should devalue over time and called younger poets to “make it new” again by recreating it. The result was fragments of the past recreated in the present. Eliot may offer us the most useful example for understanding Durrell. His long poem *The Waste Land* [*La Terre Vaine*] revives and transforms Geoffrey Chaucer’s “General Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales*:

April is the cruelest month,  
Breeding lilacs out of the dead land,

Mixing memory and desire,  
 Stirring dull roots with spring rain. (Eliot 1-4)  
 Avril est le mois le plus cruel  
 Élevant le lila de la terre morte,  
 Mélange mémoire et désir,  
 Remuer racines ternes avec la pluie de printemps.

This is recreated from

Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote  
 The droghte of March hath perced to the roote  
 And bathed every veyne in swich licour,  
 Of which vertu engendred is the flour; (Chaucer 1-4)  
 Lorsque Avril, avec sa douce pluie,  
 Perce la sécheresse de mars à la racine  
 Et baigne tous les vignes dans la liqueur  
 Qui crée la vertu dans la fleur

The point is how Durrell's *Caesar's Vast Ghost* works, not Eliot's poem, so we want to see how not what here. For Eliot, the ancient past is renewed and reborn in Spring by his allusion, his reference back to Chaucer that renews and revives the old poet. By referring back to Chaucer and reinventing him, Eliot makes him new—he's made Spring's rebirth. That's the first step. The second comes at the end of the poem: "these fragments I have shored against my ruins" (Eliot 140) "ces fragments je étayé contre mes ruines". This is one of the most famous phrases in English poetry, and it comes from Durrell's editor. It means, for us today, that the recovery of fragments is what readers do when they read literature. We do not discover a complete whole. We discover fragments that we "shore up" to create a new form of unity. As we read, we create relationships and therefore meaning. This, for Durrell's *Caesar's Vast Ghost*, is the central and most important conceit—readers, like writers, create relationships among fragments, and from that they create wholeness or "la cercle refermé." The book exemplifies this process. Durrell reads his fragmented sources, such as the fictional Aldo's commonplace book, and from these fragments he "shores up" his new work against the ruins. We, as readers, come to *Caesar's Vast Ghost* to do exactly the same thing: assembling a book from the broken fragments.

The opening sentence to *Caesar's Vast Ghost* alerts the reader to this problem: "My own version of Provence is necessarily partial and personal" (*CVG* 1) "Mon interprétation de la Provence ne peut être impartiale [est patriel et personal]" (*OIC* 17). I think Personal means

something very specific, but let's emphasize something else: “partial” (*CVG* 1) “partiel” (*OIC* 17). The same theme recurs when Durrell notes “This account is necessarily partial and particular rather than comprehensive; it is an attempt to deal with echoes and atmospheres” (*CVG* 97) “Ce récit ne peut être ni impartial ni circonstancié pas plus détaillé; juste une tentative pour interpreter les échos et les réminiscences” (*OIC* 147). The emphasis on fragments is clear, but also the repetitions and recuperations of fragments. Also, the second paragraph of the book is itself a reworked version of the fragmented first paragraph of Durrell's 1974 novel *Monsieur*, which also reappears as a fragment in the first paragraph of his 1985 novel *Quinx*. The theme is unmistakable.

The second part of Durrell's fragmentation is how he related his finished books to his notes, notebooks, and his sketches. Durrell referred to his notebooks as “quarry books,” and the term is helpful. Across Durrell's oeuvre, characters find pieces of texts from letters, notebooks, other books, and so forth. Most of these are actually recovered sketches from Durrell's “quarry books.” Notes for the novel become a character's letters, verbatim. As his career progressed, Durrell became more interested in this method: how he would move from fragments to complete novels. The nature of a “quarry” is vital. The whole stone structure of a quarry is broken apart into pieces that are removed and then reassembled into new complete works elsewhere. We break stone from a quarry and take it somewhere else to build something new. This is how Durrell's notebooks work.

At one point, we are told:

Pictograms:

Julius Caesar, Augustus, Agrippa, Marius, Olive, Hannibal, Dante, Tiberius, Marquis de Sade, Petrarch, Charles Martel, Laura, Mistral, Marius the general, Justine, Mireille... (*CVG* 70; *OIC* 109)

The style is fragmentary, and the phrase “Pictograms” calls up the importance of Pound's idea of the pictogram in his *Cantos*, an idea Durrell notes in his review, “Enigma Variations,” of Ezra Pound's works in 1957 (Durrell, *From* 235-238). Immediately following these fragments, Durrell reminds us of notebooks, whether real or imagined: “In the margins some notes by Aldo, which I suppose were due to be added in due course.... But I have been unable to find the reference anywhere—Livy, Tacitus and so on, I have combed them in order to track it down. Is it possible he made it up?” (*CVG* 70-71) “Dans la marge, quelques notes d'Aldo, dont je suppose qu'elles furent ajoutées au moment voulu.... [M]ais je n'ai jamais pu retrouver cette reference, Tite-Live, Tacite, etc., je les ai passés au peigne fin en pure perte. Serait-il possible que ce fût une creation d'Aldo?” (*OIC* 109-110). The rest of the

section of the chapter then uses long quotations from Aldo's marginal notes, which don't really exist. He closes these with a humorous comment from Aldo "Heat over mass equals light. Amen!" (*CVG* 75) "Chaleur sur masse égale lumière. Ainsi soit-il!" (*OIC* 115).

However, this is no joke. The phrase and many others are from Durrell's notebook *The Asides of Demonax*, a copy of which I deposited here at the Bibliothèque Lawrence Durrell (see Professor Alexandre-Garner).

In a 1986 interview with Durrell, Lyn Goldman asked if he was writing a new book at the age of seventy-four. Durrell responded

it might be possible to sometime, if I don't disappear in the coming year from the scene entirely, to perhaps do an autobiography of Pontius Pilate or something like that. It's a vague notion, but bits of his early training in philosophy and his encounters with the philosopher Demonax have already come unbidden. I mean, I don't do these things, they do it to me, so to speak, they arrive. (Goldman n.pag)

Two years later, Durrell published a series of fragments entitled "Endpapers and Inklings" in a special edition of *Antaeus* about private diaries. It was meant to be a collection of unpublished diaries and journals. Durrell's work is not. "Endpapers and Inklings" is transcribed directly from his *Asides of Demonax: Endpapers and Inklings* but with all references to the speaking subject, Demonax, removed. We have the ideas without the ego or subject. In this way, Durrell's fragments in "Endpapers and Inklings" appear as if they had "come unbidden" to him, arriving of their own accord without authorial reconstruction, even though he edited it carefully.

I propose we take Durrell at his word in his interview with Goldman: he was planning a biography of Pontius Pilate through Demonax. If the Demonax notebook was meant to be his last book, then the article in *Antaeus* was its published form and *Caesar's Vast Ghost* its completion as a book. The satiric and extemporizing Demonax is Durrell's methodological fascination, and he gets this from Lucian's *Demonax*. Lucian replaces chronology with random encounters. One moment Demonax is with an Olympic athlete, the next a Roman senator, and right after that Peregrinus Proteus, and then he moves on to a scientist and then a sorcerer (Lucian 18-23). Lucian moves Demonax from occasions to non-sequential circumstances to show Demonax's philosophies as created *in medias res*. Similarly, Durrell's *Asides of Demonax* begins:

The biography of Pontius Pilate who when young had studied under Demonax the Asiatic philosopher.

Demonax taught in asides—the spontaneous nature of thought was his obsession. Often his silences lasted for weeks—he taught ‘inadvertently’ in non-rationalised un-thoughts which surfaced out of correct attention.

Pilate learned to hesitate from him. His interest in virtue was a great defect—it robbed it of spontaneity. Demonax taught him to say ‘I think therefore I was!’ “Je pense donc je t’endore”! (*Demonax* 1; *CVG* 19; *OIC* 41)

Durrell says Demonax left us with a single aphorism: “Nobody really wants to be bad. So then why...?” (*Demonax* 3). This recurs verbatim in *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*. But, he then exposes his method: “why, when you want to write something else does something quite different, quite unforeseen intervene?” (*Demonax* 4). Durrell shows Demonax’s spontaneous “un-thoughts.” “Poor Demonax!” he writes: “He was pierced by the inconsequence of life, the peeled peach of our corporate reality. Doggedly he put it down as it came to him, in fits and starts” (*Demonax* 4). What follows in his notebook are these “fits and starts” and “un-thoughts” that characterise the remaining 69 pages of fragments:

Reader, be patient a moment  
The incoherence is only  
Apparent. The floating  
Fragments will all slot  
into each other and cohere. (*Demonax* 12)

The disparity between the notebook and publication makes Demonax’s philosophy new again. The spontaneous un-thoughts are stronger not tied to any character or speaking subject. It is random, so the imposition of a subject would be a false unity. When he finally arrives at a narrative that is perfectly improvised, he publishes it by cutting the narrator or subject that would force the reader to impose unity. The reader is responsible for organizing the spontaneous inklings, which means Durrell makes the reader into a writer. Meaning accretes around the sequence, and we develop causality where none existed. Therefore, the “asides” in Durrell’s *Demonax* become the new form. In this way, Durrell reinterprets the style of Lucian’s *Demonax* in a modern philosophical climate for his last experiment in writing.

References to *Demonax* are most frequent at the opening and closing of *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*. When Durrell refers to Cunégonde in the final chapter, “Conclusion: *la cercle refermé*,” we recognize his allusion to Voltaire’s *Candide*. However, the first sentence about Cunégonde identifies her as “the last pupil of the philosopher Demonax” (*CVG* 188) “la dernière élève de Démonax, le philosophe” (*OIC* 270). This should be a hint. When Durrell

goes on to say “she turned out to be a Latex doll of great beauty” (*CVG* 188) “elle s’avéra être une très belle poupée de caoutchouc” (*OIC* 271), he again alludes to his own *Alexandria Quartet* in which the character Capodistria tells of his father going insane, marrying his Latex doll, and other scenes similar to those that follow in the chapter. As the chapter becomes increasingly fragmented, Durrell shows the reader the method of his writing, but to understand it, we must add indigeneity and migration to our discussion.

## **Indigeneity**

I come from Canada, a country built out of imperialist expropriation of indigenous peoples’ sovereign territory and traditions. “Indigeneity” has very specific meanings in my home. They are also meanings important to Comparative Literature today. The emerging discipline, World Literature, enjoyed much growth in North America over the past decade, very often helped along by David Damrosch at Harvard University. Its difference from Comparative Literature is its emphasis on literatures beyond Europe and non-European languages. This reminds us of indigenous peoples. Canada is a very young country—the hotel I’m staying in while here in Paris is older than my country. I remember Professor Alexandre-Garner saying to my American colleagues on July 4th, Independence Day in America, at a conference on Durrell here in Paris in 2008, “come, we’ll go to Le Procope, the restaurant where we wrote your Constitution.” Paris is old and Canada is young. I completed my first university degree at Kwantlen Polytechnic in Canada—the school is seven years younger than me, but the Kwantlen people have lived there for 9,000 years. Canada is young but indigeneity is very, very old.

The language used in World Literature today to discuss indigeneity always returns to the land, the country, or the countryside. Those are words with more depth in French than in English unless I start to draw on “landscape,” “place,” “territory,” “domain,” and other such words that English borrows from other languages. The definition most often used is that “indigeneity” means a “grabbing into the land itself” or a “symbiotic relationship between identity and land.” This has seemed revolutionary in World Literature as a discipline in North America, distinguishing it from Comparative Literature, which often emphasizes translation and mobility rather than indigeneity.

Durrell had the idea much earlier in his 1960 essay “Landscape and Character” where the relationship between culture and land is explicit:

I willingly admit to seeing ‘characters’ almost as functions of a landscape....



the important determinant of any culture is after all—the spirit of place. Just as one particular vineyard will always give you a special wine with discernible characteristics so a Spain, an Italy, a Greece will always give you the same type of culture—will express itself through the human being... (Durrell, “Landscape” 156)

This means that when we discuss subjectivity or identity, “It is surely the enduring faculty of self-expression inhering in landscape” that matters and not national or cultural associations of the moment (“Landscape” 157). In his essay, he tells us as well, “Human beings are an expression of their landscape.” (“Landscape” 157).

Like shoring up fragments and making the old new again, it comes as no surprise to find the idea recur *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*. Durrell quotes from Livy: “If national character could be subdued and modified by what I will call the genius of place, the people of Massilia would long since have reverted to savagery” (*CVG* 65) “Si ce que je pourrais appeler le genie des lieux est capable de soumettre et de modifier le temperament national, le peuple de Massilia, au contact des nombreuses nations incultes qui l’entourent, serait depuis longtemps retourné à l’état sauvage” (*OIC* 101) and “It all, as Jérôme liked to say, came down to landscape as a determinant of character” (*CVG* 65) “Jérôme aimait à dire que tout cela venait du paysage environnant qui determine le caractère inhérent” (*OIC* 102). As he wrote thirty years earlier, Durrell regards indigeneity as the slow accumulation of land’s influence over culture and not the reverse. Early in the book he tells the reader that Provence’s “true soul... could be summed up in by the word dissent.... Because of the overlay of different cultures which are all slowly conforming to the genius of place, but at different speeds” (*CVG* 32) “son âme authentique qui pouvait se résumer par le mot dissidence.... [Parseque] la superposition de différentes cultures qui, lentement, suivant des rythmes varies, s’adaptèrent au genie des lieux” (*OIC* 59). If there is any doubt about his meaning, he restates his case later in the paragraph: “in the heart of its historic change lies a continuity and consistence which shows the pious strength of these hills and rivers to bend man and shape him into an original thought-form—the place expressing itself through his body and mind as surely as a sculptor expresses himself in the clay he works or the stone he carves” (*CVG* 33) “au coeur de cette evolution de l’histoire reposent la continuité et la logique, témoins de la force légitime de ces collines et de ces rivières qui soumettent l’homme et façonnent son mode de pensée—le terroir qui s’exprime à travers son corps et son esprit, avec autant d’assurance qu’un sculpteur dans l’argile qu’il pétrit ou la pierre qu’il cisèle” (*OIC* 60). The reversal is important. Rather than mankind changing the land’s clay and earth, the landscape acts on

humanity and culture as if we were all clay and stone to be quarried, fragmented, and remade into new forms. Fragmentation in the book is the process we undergo from the pressures of the spirit of place, the Deus Loci, or the genius loci—this is indigeneity in the book, and it changes how we understand Durrell’s work.

## **Migration**

In contrast to indigeneity, *Caesar’s Vast Ghost* shows the reader migrations. More than any indigenous group, we see invaders, but Durrell does not emphasize domination. Instead he depicts the “different cultures which are all slowly conforming to the genius of place” (*CVG* 32) “de différentes cultures qui, lentement..., s’adaptèrent au génie des lieux” (*OIC* 59). While migration and indigeneity are important social realities in our world today (and as Durrell shows, have been for dozens of centuries) we discover via migration another way the book works. That is, how it tells the narrative rather than what it says. While Durrell shows migrations into Provence, he also shows migrations of texts in his book. When Livy enters *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*, he is reshaped for a new purpose. Likewise, as Durrell quarries his previous notebooks for other books, and the materials become something new again. When Demonax appeared in Durrell’s 1986 interview at Penn State University, it presaged the publication of “Endpapers and Inklings” in 1988, a text that shows the quarry at work without its final product. When we turn to Demonax across *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*, we see Demonax transplanted, translated, or migrated to a new context and becoming something new again. This migration of pieces of the text is the final lesson, the last goodbye, Durrell gives us.

## **Conclusion: La cercle refermé**

The example that unifies these fragments and builds something new from our quarried stones is the final chapter of *Caesar’s Vast Ghost*, “Conclusion: La cercle refermé.” The translation, transplantation, allusions to previous works, and fragmentation all combine here to show a final artistic product in relation to its pieces. Durrell gives us the new building from the quarried stones. This occurs in the closing poem but gives the reader a way of engaging with the fragmented, transplanted, and translated contents of the book as a whole. In the final chapter, Durrell describes Socrates: “he wanted for one last brief moment to hear the mysterious Voice which ... he hoped would gather up and summarize all his various intuitions and findings in coherent form and order.” (Durrell, *CVG* 191) “il voulait entendre,

pendant un dernier et court instant, la Voix mystérieuse... il espérait qu'elle rassemblerait et récapitulerait, de façon cohérente et ordonnée" (*OIC* 275). The intuitions and aphorisms are from Demonax, and the passage is inside quotation marks, implicitly from Aldo's notebooks—coherence and order for the gathered inklings come from the process of writing itself. However, the fragments are Durrell's own Demonax notebook. These fragments, the most difficult in the book, then teach us how to read. Watch how they accumulate so that it is not merely what they say but how fragments, indigeneity, and migration all combine as part of writing and reading:

"The philosophic truths which abounded she [Cunégonde] called 'Mnemons', after her master, Demonax." (*CVG* 192).

"Les verities philosophiques qui abondaient, elle les appelait 'mnémons', du nom de son maître, Demonax." (*OIC* 277)

"I was hoping that, thanks to Demonax, she had hoarded a few fragments of the ancient logic which (they promised) would put humanity (meaning me!) back on the right vector" (*CVG* 193)

"j'espérais que, grâce à Demonax, elle avait mis en réserve quelques bribes de la logique des anciens qui (ils l'avaient promis) replacerait l'humanité (en fait, moi!) sur le bon axe et ouvrirait une fenêtre sur l'arc-en-ciel sacré du péché" (*OIC* 278)

"Another admonition of Demonax which Cunégonde was fond of quoting concerned conduct—the conduct which one got from yoga. 'Try and make everything seem inadvertent, fortuitous, given, spontaneous, yet secretly will.'" (*CVG* 195)

"Un autre avertissement de Demonax que Cunégonde aimait à citer concerne le comportement—celui que l'on adopte en pratiquant le yoga: 'Essaie de faire que toute réalité ait l'air hors de propos, un produit du hasard, offert, spontané, bien que désiré en secret.'" (*OIC* 281)

"Putting words down on paper in a specific order results in a merciless lampoon of reality" (*CVG* 200)

"Coucher des mots sur le papier dans un ordre précis a pour conséquence une satire impitoyable de la réalité" (*OIC* 288)

"Poems come inadvertently. 'An ant may imagine a sugar lump as a whole but can only carry it away grain by grain.'" (*CVG* 201)

"Les poems arrivent par mégarde. 'Une fourmi se représentera sans

doute un morceau de sucre comme un ensemble, mais elle ne pourra le déplacer que grain par grain.” (OIC 290)

We see here the renewed materials that have already appeared in the book as Durrell quarries them into a final shape in the fragmented final chapter, which is perhaps the most confusing part of the book. The final poem closes the circle. First we have the fragments in the body of the text and then their transformation into poetry:

“It was Friday the thirteenth and they were coming to measure me for a coffin” (CVG 201)

“C’était un vendredi treize; ils venaient prendre mes mesures en vue d’un cercueil.” (OIC 290)

“Forms like old carotids of ruins to be / Genetics of the doubts” (CVG xii)

“Telles des ruines à l’image de carotides mourantes / Qui génèrent le doute” (OIC 15)

“The carotid caressed prepared her for the stake / Genetics of a human doubt” (CVG 78)

“Une caresse sur la carotide la prepare au pilori, / Il faut ignorer la génétique du doute” (OIC 121)

“In my case I had to take into account a heliocentric Muse with lunar leanings” (CVG 204)

“En ce qui me concerne, j’avais à prendre en compte une muse héliocentrique aux penchants lunaires” (OIC 293)

And then the final poem “Le cercle refermé.” The underlined portions are recuperations from fragments in the body of the book:

.....

*What does it mean, your ancient loneliness?*

*Today they are coming to measure me for a coffin,*

*So dying you begin to sleepwalk and again regain your youth.*

*Mere time is winding down at last:*

*The consenting harvest moon presides,*

*Appears on cue to hold our hearts in fee,*

*The genetics of our doubts hold fast*

*And a carotid is haunted by old caresses*

The caresses of silence.  
When young and big with poems  
Caressed by the heliocentric muse  
With lunar leanings, I was crafty in loving,  
Or jaunty as a god of the bullfrogs  
The uncanny promptings of the human I.

Love-babies nourished by the sigh,  
With little thought of joy or pain,  
Or the spicy Kodak of the hangman's brain  
A disenfranchised last goodbye,  
Goodbye. (CVG 206)

*Blâme-t-elle votre solitude passée?*  
*Aujourd'hui ils viennent me jauger pour un cercueil,*  
*Ainsi la mort venant et la jeunesse retrouvée deviant-on somnambule.*

*Finalemeut seul le temps se dépouille:*  
*La lune des vendanges preside bienveillant,*  
*Opportune, et semble saisir nos coeurs en gage,*  
*De nos incertitudes perdue la genèse*  
*D'anciennes caresses tournmentent une carotid*  
*Les caresses du silence.*  
*Alors que jeune et riche de mes poems*  
*Enlacé par une muse solaire*  
*Aux capricieuses inclinations, je rusais avec l'amour,*  
*Ou me baladais tel le dieu des grenouilles géantes*  
*Troublante exhortation de mon ego.*

*Petites amies satisfaites d'un soupir,*  
*Ou par le Kodak croustillant né du cerveau du bourreau*  
*Sans consideration de plaisir ou de peine,*  
*Un dernier au revoir sans espoir,*  
Goodbye. (OIC 296-7)

The underlined portions are transplantations from other parts of *Caesar's Vast Ghost* or Durrell's previous books. It is both a poignant goodbye to Durrell's writing career and a final lesson in how fragments, spirit of place, and migrations shape our reading and writing.

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