

Susan Vander Closter
Professor of English
The Rhode Island School of Design

Education

Ph.D.

The Pennsylvania State University, 1981. Dissertation on the fiction of Vladimir Nabokov, *The Narrative Structures of Artistic Memory*, DAI: 42:217-218A. Doctoral Minor in Comparative Literature, with an emphasis on the history of the novel and contemporary narratives.

B.A. and M.A.

The University of New Hampshire, 1969-1973. American and British fiction, comparative literature, with a thesis on *The Novels of Thomas Hardy*.

Grants and Honors

The Rhode Island School of Design Faculty Development Grant. Travel funds to Corfu, Greece, to present a paper on Lawrence Durrell's two-volume novel, *Tunc and Nunquam*, 2000.

The Rhode Island School of Design Faculty Development Grant. Travel funds to Kerala, India, to contribute to a conference on India's influence on the work of Lawrence Durrell, 1998.

The Rhode Island School of Design Faculty Development Grant. Travel funds to Alexandria, Egypt, to present a paper on Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* at an International Lawrence Durrell conference, 1996.

Visiting Scholar, The Rhode Island School of Design European Honors Program, Rome and a southern tour through Sicily, Spring, 1994.

The Rhode Island School of Design Faculty Development Grant. Granted winter semester release time from teaching to continue research on the relationship between literature and the visual arts, Vrije Universiteit, The Netherlands, 1989.

Fulbright Scholar, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Taught classes in American Literature, Fall semester, 1988.

The Rhode Island School of Design Faculty Development Grant. Research on American film and literature, New York University, Cinema Studies Department, Summer, 1986.

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar in Comparative Literature, directed by Victor Brombert, Princeton University, 1984.

Research, Editing, and Publication

Aesop's Mirror: A Love Story by Maryalice Huggins. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Sarah Crichton books, 2009. Researching provenance (RI Historical Society), first editor of the material (created chapters and bibliography), and editorial work for Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc. before the book was sold to FS&G.

Joyce Cary and Lawrence Durrell: A Reference Guide. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985. This annotated bibliography contains an introductory essay which synthesizes and interprets the scholarship devoted to these two twentieth-century British authors who share an interest in the multivolume novel and a fascination with the *Kunstlerroman*.

"*English Fiction and Prose since 1945: Lawrence Durrell*." *Annotated Bibliography for English Studies*, Swets & Zeitlinger Publishers, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. This electronic bibliography is available on-line and on CD. The first half of the Durrell entries was published in the fall of 1998. Because of my responsibilities as department head, I turned the project over to another Durrell scholar in 1999.

"Body Parts: A Reading of *Tunc* and *Nunquam*." *Confluences XXI*, Universite Paris-X, Nanterre, France, 2002, 63-72.

"The Historical Pictures of Durrell's *Constance*." *Confluences XV*, Universite Paris-X, Nanterre, France, 1998, 215-222.

"The Medieval Art of Lawrence Durrell's *Avignon Quintet*." *Deus Loci: The Lawrence Durrell Journal*, NS2, 1993, 43-53.

"Writer as Painter in Lawrence Durrell's *Avignon Quintet*." *On Miracle Ground: Essays on the Fiction of Lawrence Durrell*. Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1990, 166-178.

"Kate O'Brien." *Dictionary of Literary Biography: British Novelists, 1930-1959*. Edited by Bernard Oldsey. Detroit, Michigan: Brucoli Clark, 1983: 389-396.

Book Reviews:

Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries.

These short, paragraph-length reviews evaluate recent studies of fiction, drama, film, and art for academic libraries. I have reviewed up to six books a year on subjects which vary from studies of specific authors, like Toni Morrison, Marguerite Yourcenar, and Dennis Potter, to thematic topics, including Italian literature and cinema, women's studies, and autobiography/memoir.

Deus Loci: The Lawrence Durrell Journal. Reviews of *Anais Nin: A Book of Mirrors*, edited by Paul Herron (Volume 5, 1997) and of *Henry Miller, the Paris Years* by Brassai and *Brassai: Images of Culture and the Surrealist Observer* by Marja Warehim (Volume 6, 1998).

Conference Papers:

“The Female Body, Landscape, and War.” School of Visual Arts Conference, October 22, 2009, New York City.

“Body Parts: A Reading of Lawrence Durrell’s *Tunc* and *Nunquam*.” Conference on Lawrence Durrell and Greece, July 2-7, 2000, Corfu, Greece.

“The Meaning of *Constance*.” Conference devoted to the influence of India on the work of Lawrence Durrell, January 2-4, 1998, Changanassery, Kerala, India.

“Historical Pictures of Durrell’s *Constance*.” Colloque pour L’Inauguration de la Bibliotheque Lawrence Durrell, 17-18 Octobre 1997, Paris.

“The Plastic Art of the *Alexandria Quartet*.” Ninth International Lawrence Durrell Conference, June, 1996, Alexandria, Egypt.

“Resisting Authority: Doris Lessing’s *Under My Skin*.” British Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies Conference, Georgia Southern University, April, 1996.

“The Medieval Art of the *Avignon Quintet*.” Sixth International Lawrence Durrell Conference, July, 1992, the Papal Palace, Avignon.

“Durrell’s Political Landscapes.” Fourth International Lawrence Durrell Conference, April 1988, Carbondale, Illinois.

“Disguise and Doubling in Patricia Highsmith’s Ripley Novels and Wim Wenders’ *American Friend*.” Popular Culture Conference, March 1988, New Orleans.

“Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil* (1985): Satire on Celluloid.” Northeast Modern Language Association Conference, April 1987, Boston.

“Symbiosis: Literature and the Visual Art Student.” The National Conference on Liberal Arts and the Education of Artists, November 1987, New York City.

“In the Realm of the Senses: Writer as Painter in Lawrence Durrell’s *Avignon Quintet*.” Third International Lawrence Durrell Conference, April 1986.

“Seduced by the Movies: Manuel Puig’s *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.” Twentieth Century Literature and the Visual Arts Conference, February 1986.

“Resetting the broken bones of the past’: Art and Love in Durrell’s *Quincunx*.” Second International Lawrence Durrell Conference, April 1984.

“A Discussion of *The Gift*, the novel in which Vladimir Nabokov artistically confronts Nikolay Chernyshevski.” Modern Language Association, New York, 1981. Abstract: *The Vladimir Nabokov Research Newsletter*, Number 8, Spring 1982: 32-35.

Lectures, Talks, Presentations:

“Norwegian Wood, “Sabbatical Presentation, Rhode Island School of Design, January 31, 2013.

“Monkey Mind.” The English Department Faculty Lecture Series, Fall, 2008.

“A Conversation with Gore Vidal,” with Scott Cook, Professor of History, Rhode Island School of Design, Library, June 1, 2007.

“The Romantic Imagination.” Dress, Art & Society: 1750-1890 Symposium, The Rhode Island School of Design, October 1996.

“American Images of Rome; or, Mediated Vision.” The European Honors Program, Palazzo Cenci, Rome, March 1994.

“Darkness at the end of the Century.” The Rhode Island School of Design Faculty Symposium, October 1990.

“The Politics of Perception.” Literature Department and the International Association of Word and Image Studies, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, January 1989.

“American History and the Contemporary Novel: Don DeLillo’s *Libra*.” Opening lecture of the English department, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, September 1988.

“*Woyzeck*, according to Buchner, Berg, and Herzog.” Literature and Film Lecture Series, Western Maryland College, April 1986.

Teaching Experience

The Rhode Island School of Design, 1984 to the present.

Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Fulbright Scholar, 1988.

Virginia Intermont College, Assistant Professor, 1981-1984.
Pennsylvania State University, 1974-1981, First-Year Composition, Writing Workshops,
Writing Center tutorials, Business Writing, Technical Writing
University of New Hampshire, First-Year Writing, Spring 1973

For the past thirty-two years at RISD, I have been able to design courses in a wide variety of areas: nineteenth and twentieth-century novels in English and in translation, contemporary literature, both American and International, and to include film narrative in my classes as well. I have also had a chance to participate in travel courses to Mexico and France. The first, in 1990, combined an introduction to Mexican fiction in translation and descriptive and analytical writing. The second, in 1997, offered students the opportunity to create illustrated travel books. Exploring the relationship between word and image, students experimented with the concept of a book, creating a variety of objects, including handmade postcards in an old mailbox, drawings and descriptive passages contained in a French provincial frame, short stories hidden in plastic eggs, found objects in bags suspended from a clothesline on Pompidou-style pipes, and a treasure box of prints and descriptive pieces. Selected pieces appeared in *RISD Views* (Summer 1997).

Administrative Experience

1999-2002: Department Head

1985-1987 and Spring Semester 1989: Department Head

Vice President, Lawrence Durrell Society, 1998-2000

NEARI union Vice President, negotiating team, 1996 contract

Works-in-Progress

A study of Elena Ferrante's four-volume Neapolitan novel: I have had a long-term interest in multivolume novels and in writers who work on this large scale. Also, *The 1001 Nights* and the role of Scheherazade in contemporary fiction (Salman Rushdie's *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-eight Nights: A Novel*)

Continuing work on the use of the female body in war narratives: Lawrence Durrell's use of Botticelli's *Histoire de Nastagio*, for example, and the links between rape and the invasion and exploitation of land in the novels of Alberto Moravia (*Two Women*) and Salman Rushdie (*Shalimar the Clown*). See paper on Arturo Perez-Reverte's *The Painter of Battles*.

Continuing research to extend and develop my course, *Signifying Landscapes*, an examination of metaphorical spaces--political (see above), apocalyptic, metaphysical, etc. Continuing exploration of contemporary American and International fiction and film. My courses introduce students to narratives which foreground historical and cultural analysis, which are emotive/psychological in content, and which experiment with language.