Literary Representations of Alexandria: Cosmopolitanism and History in Lawrence Durrell, André Aciman, and Ibrahim Abdul Meguid

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Abstract

During the first half of the twentieth century, Alexandria underwent significant historical changes, including war and decolonization. This inspired various literary reconstructions by colonial and postcolonial authors in both English and Arabic. My study examines how Alexandria was given a literary form and represented during these crucial times in the history of the city. It brings together and critically interrogates diverse perspectives: the voice of the colonizer represented by Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (1962), the voice of the Alexandrian minority represented by André Aciman's *Out of Egypt* (1994), and the voice of the Egyptians represented by Ibrahim Abdul Meguid's *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* (1996; trans. 1999). It compares and contrasts these different representations of the city, its history, and its cosmopolitan makeup. Using Said's conception of orientalism and other postcolonial critics, this study argues that the *Alexandria Quartet* and *Out of Egypt* feature orientalist representations of Alexandria, while *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* finds in realism a useful frame to counteract those representations.

The thesis is composed of four chapters. The first chapter discusses the history of Egypt from Muhammad Ali to Nasser, the timeframe of the works under discussion. This chapter highlights the historical transformations Egypt, and Alexandria in particular, have experienced, and it helps to clarify the literary representation of history in each work. The second chapter examines Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* and argues that the tetralogy is an orientalist representation of Alexandria and its inhabitants, and that the permanence of cosmopolitanism in Durrell's Alexandria is linked to British domination. Durrell's representation is an example and continuation of Western orientalist discourse that started centuries ago.

The third chapter argues that André Aciman used Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* as a guide for his representation of Alexandria in *Out of Egypt*. Aciman's focus on his Jewish

community produces an orientalist representation of the city from which the city itself and its locals outside the community are absent. Furthermore, Aciman presents a reductionist conception of cosmopolitanism in two different sites: his Jewish community and Victoria College.

The last chapter discusses voices of the Egyptians and their self-representation of Alexandria as a form of writing back to empire. The main focus of this chapter is *No One Sleeps in Alexandria,* with additional references to Naguib Mahfouz's *Miramar* (1967; trans. 1993) and Edwar Al-Kharrat's *City of Saffron* (1980; trans. 1989)*.* Using the technique of realism, Abdul Meguid presents a humanizing depiction of the city by giving voice to the locals (both Copts and Muslims) in order for them to speak of their suffering under colonial power and during the two World Wars. He actively re-centres the voices that Durrell and Aciman marginalize.

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Introduction

Alexandria has always been known as Egypt's second city. It was, until recently, the country's summer capital, and during the first half of this century an elegant seaside resort whose pleasant beaches and plentiful historical sites made a visit there an attractive prospect. I've never been convinced by Alexandria, however; throughout the early part of my life, spent in Egypt, I regarded it as boringly affected and impossibly humid, miles beneath Cairo in splendor and interest. Ever since, I have believed that one is either a Cairo person—Arab, Islamic, serious, international, intellectual—or an Alexandria amateur—Levantine, cosmopolitan, devious, and capricious.

(Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* 637)

This passage from Edward Said's essay "Cairo and Alexandria" in *Reflections* was the starting point of my exploration of Alexandria and its history. Said's essay positions Alexandria in postcolonial literature and shows more links between Alexandria and European literature and civilizations than for Cairo. In the opening paragraph, Said summarized his thoughts about Alexandria before his first visit: he saw it as an "elegant seaside resort" but "boring" and "humid." Said compares his impressions of Alexandria before visiting it to his impressions of Cairo, where he lived. He thought Alexandria was more artificial, more cosmopolitan, and Levantine, whereas Cairo was more Arab and authentic. Said was familiar with Cairo and the traces of division it has experienced since the colonial era – the colonial city modelled on its counterparts in Europe, and the Eastern or native city that is the setting of most of Naguib Mahfouz's novels – and wondered whether Alexandria was similarly divided.

Said mentions Naguib Mahfouz and Gamal Al-Ghitani as writers whose works he used as guides to Cairo, but he did not refer to any Egyptian or Arab writers in the case of Alexandria. While this absence might signify lack of Arab intervention in narrating Alexandria, Said has engaged with Western narratives of the city by authors including E. M. Forster and Lawrence Durrell, whose works he used to explore the history of Alexandria, thus indicating western interest in the city and its history. These works present Roman and Greek histories of the city for Said, as opposed to Mahfouz's history of the colonial city of Cairo. It is apparent from Said's description that the Alexandria he saw in the second half of the twentieth century is different from the Alexandria he read about in the first half. He claims that the Alexandria that was celebrated by western writers disappeared in the middle of the twentieth century, as the cosmopolitan city of the first half of the century faced economic recession, and unhappiness following the departure of the Europeans, which "filled [Said] with sadness" (*Reflections* 684).

Said's essay is one of the motifs behind this study of the political and literary position of Alexandria in the first half of the twentieth century. It also introduced me to Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (1962)*,* the works that helped to immortalize Alexandria in Western literature and were considered the most important Western works on the city and its history. The *Alexandria Quartet* is not just a literary text; it presents a Durrellian image of Alexandria that influenced many non-Egyptian readers:

> …readers of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* still like to think of a city bathed in glamorous corruption. When talking of it to a foreigner, almost every Egyptian begins by saying rather defensively that Durrell got Alexandria all wrong in the *Quartet*. This is merely a way of saying that it is not full of sexual perverts and child brothels. Yet perhaps what really irritates the Egyptians is that the *Quartet* …makes more of an impact than the modern-

day city itself. Alexandria is still viewed, by most tourists and particularly

foreign journalists, through Durrell-tinted lenses. (Cooper 254)

While eighteenth-century readers came to know the Arabs and their world from reading

translations of *Arabian Nights,* twentieth-century readers accumulated knowledge of

Alexandria received from Durrell's tetralogy. Furthermore, the pervasive reception and

influence of *Alexandria Quartet* in the West encouraged writers from other European

Alexandrian minorities to write their own stories. One such example is André Aciman, whose

Out of Egypt reflects the impact of *Alexandria Quartet*. In response to the influence of

Alexandria Quartet, Egyptian writers such as Ibrahim Abdul Meguid took a position against

Durrell's image of Alexandria by consciously writing back to *Alexandria Quartet*.

As a cosmopolitan community, Alexandria has held a special position in the hearts

and memories of its culturally diverse inhabitants, and the decline of cosmopolitanism

inspired nostalgic re-creations in literature by authors of various ethnic backgrounds. The

landscape of the city offers material evidence to palimpsests of its historical and cultural

richness. These include the memorial artifacts of Pompey's Pillar of the Roman Empire, the

Pharos lighthouse of the Ptolemaic kingdom, the Mahmmudiya Canal of Muhammad Ali's

modernization project, and Sa'ad Zaghloul's statues and Al-Alamein of the history of

resistance, to name but a few. No less important is the discursive representation of

Alexandria through literary discourse and narratives. Literary representations offer a plethora

of perspectives into history of Alexandria and construct different images of the city that

reflect their authors' specific perspectives and backgrounds. Alexandria has inspired

numerous, and often conflicting, feelings in its residents: some, such as Durrell and Aciman,

have lamented the loss of its past, whereas others, such as Mahfouz, Al-Kharrat, and Abdul

Meguid, have devoted their lives and careers to depicting the place they love.

This study examines how Alexandria was given a literary form and represented during these crucial times in its history. It brings together and critically interrogates diverse perspectives: the voice of the colonizer, represented by Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*; the voice of the Alexandrian minority represented by Aciman's *Out of Egypt*; and the voice of Egyptians, represented by Abdul Meguid's *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*. It compares and contrasts their different representations of the city and its cosmopolitan make up. Using Said's conception of orientalism, and the works of other postcolonial critics, this study argues that the *Alexandria Quartet* and *Out of Egypt* feature orientalist representations of Alexandria, while *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* finds in realism a useful frame to counteract those representations.

Cosmopolitanism

This section outlines the concept, definitions, and features of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is based on human rights and human communities. The term comes from the Greek word *kosmopolites,* which means *citizen of the universe* (Inglis 13) and dates to about the fourth century BC, having been used by intellectuals such as Diogenes the Cynic. Later, the Stoics[1] gave cosmopolitanism a political orientation and argued that humans belong to two communities: the community of their birth and the greater world community. Cosmopolitanism reached Alexandria when it became part of the Hellenistic Empire under Alexander the Great.

In the eighteenth century, the concept of cosmopolitanism received considerable attention, particularly from philosophers such as Immanuel Kant. Kant developed the philosophy of world citizenship, and his "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" (1784) and "Perpetual Peace" (1795) were influential works in the theory of cosmopolitanism. In his essay "Perpetual Peace," Kant outlined the idea of *ius*

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[1] The name refers to the Hellenistic philosophy of Stoicism.

cosmopoliticum (cosmopolitan law/right) which protects people from war by grounding international and social relations in the principle of universal hospitality. Although Kant's philosophy of moral cosmopolitanism has been seen as problematic[2], the focus here is on his notion of cosmopolitanism as a model for perpetual peace. Kant's cosmopolitanism is meant to link nations together such that any "violation of rights in one part of the world is felt everywhere" (107-08). For Kant, a cosmopolitan society leads to world peace and civilization for all people at all social levels (236). Both Kant and Hegel stress the importance of equality, justice, and individual rights for all people regardless of origin: according to Hegel, a "human being counts […] because he is a human being, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc." (197).

In *Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Gerard Delanty divides contemporary cosmopolitanism into three types: moral cosmopolitanism, political cosmopolitanism, and cultural cosmopolitanism (54). Moral cosmopolitanism, derived from the Roman and Greek interpretations of the concept, focuses on individualism, moral obligations toward the world, and universal humanity. Political cosmopolitanism is a manifestation of Kant's concept of citizenship, while cultural cosmopolitanism is centred on openness to cultural diversity and ethnic multiplicity.

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[2] For instance, Kant had a view of the inferiority of women to men. In his early life, Kant defended European colonialism because he believed in the superiority of the white race over other races. Walter Mignolo regards Kant's cosmopolitanism as "a Eurocentered and imperial" project (90), intended as a Western means of gaining control over the world. Conversely, other critics, such as Sanker Muthu, argue that Kant later abandoned his support of colonialism, but not his view on women, and his cosmopolitanism should be read as a medium of resistance to colonialism and domination (200).

The cosmopolitan space of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is defined by certain features, of which the most important is openness. In "Introduction: The Emerging Field of Cosmopolitanism Studies," Delanty notes that cosmopolitanism "implies an attitude of openness as opposed to closure" (2). He further defines cosmopolitanism as "a condition of openness to the world and entailing self and societal transformation in light of the encounter with the Other" ("Idea of Critical" 41). Closed and conservative societies cannot be cosmopolitan; the ability to integrate with and welcome the other is a trait that a cosmopolitan ambiance cultivates in its people. Openness could be encouraged if the space has a port that links it to the world, as in, for example, cities such as Alexandria, Smyrna, and Beirut. In *The Levant*,[3] Philip Mansel discusses cosmopolitanism in these three cities, which were part of the Ottoman Empire; because of the ports, these cities became "windows on the

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[3] Smyrna is a city in which Greek, Roman, and Ottoman civilizations intersect, creating an atmosphere of multiplicity and tolerance. Smyrna, a commercial port city that links Asia with Europe, was called "the pearl of the Levant" (Mansel 33). In Smyrna, Europeans were allowed to build their own houses and to constitute their own communities. They wore Turkish dress with hats to distinguish themselves from the Turks, who wore turbans (Mansel 30). In 1829, dress restrictions on non-Muslims were lifted, and there were no distinctions between Muslims, Christians and Jews (Mansel 54).

Beirut is another example of a Levantine cosmopolitan city modernized by Muhammad Ali. Beirut is different from Smyrna and Alexandria because of its Christian-majority population and French influence. However, its cosmopolitan atmosphere and openness did not protect it from sectarian violence: in the nineteenth century, Beirut enjoyed tremendous developments in infrastructure, education, and commerce, but these developments were marred by massacres resulting from sectarian tension (Mansel 98).

West, generators of revolt against it, and targets for its battleships" (1) and they were "global cities before globalization" (2), with their mixtures of different languages, religions and identities.

A cosmopolitan society is diverse, not monolithic, as different languages, religions, and traditions are practiced. The term connotes diversity and multiplicity and characterizes people or places that are influenced by a mixture of various cultural factors. James Moore defines cosmopolitanism as "a polity that incorporates, in important respects, citizens of many different nations and cultural characteristics" (*Between* 880). According to Moore, the fabric of a cosmopolitan society welcomes a multiplicity of cultures, and nationalities. Despite the community's ethnic and cultural diversity, the inhabitants are considered 'citizens' of the place.

However, openness and diversity are not enough to define a society as cosmopolitan if freedom and respect are not guaranteed. In *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in A World of Strangers*, Kwame Appiah links the concept of cosmopolitanism to respect for human diversity (xx). Freedom of practice and respect for difference are quintessential characteristics of a cosmopolitan space (Appiah xx) that foster coexistence. A person or a space would not be considered cosmopolitan unless religious, ethnic, and linguistic multiplicity are accepted and respected. Appiah supports multiculturalism and individuals' freedom to form their lives based on different cultural resources (34). Further, in his definition of cosmopolitanism, Ulf Hannerz emphasizes diversity and coexistence and "willingness to engage with the Other" as the essential criteria of cosmopolitanism (239).

While cultural multiplicity is central to the making of a cosmopolitan society, César Dominiguez's theorization of cosmopolitanism emphasizes sophistication as an important element. In "What Does the Comparative Do for Cosmopolitanism?" Dominguez argues that *sophistication* [my emphasis] is considered a quality of cosmopolitanism in many theories:

multilingualism and cultural mobility are not enough to characterize a person or society as cosmopolitan if sophistication is not present (629). In this sense, sophistication seems to refer to elitism: Dominguez uses the Gypsies or Romani as examples; despite their multiculturalism and multilingualism, they are not generally considered cosmopolitan because they are not among the elite and are therefore perceived to lack sophistication (630).

Other critics also consider mobility and the ability to travel the significant features that distinguish the cosmopolitan from the local. In "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," Ulf Hannerz places the cosmopolitan in opposition to the local: he considers those who travel and who have worldly concerns as cosmopolitan, while those who do not travel and are mainly concerned with their community are locals (237). In "Traveling Cultures," James Clifford criticizes Hannerz's argument by refuting the socioeconomic idea of movement as opposed to non-movement as criteria to define cosmopolitanism (108). In "Producing Cosmopolitanism at the Borderlands: Lonely Planeteers and 'Local' Cosmopolitans in Southwest China," Beth Notar disproves Hannerz's argument that cosmopolitan is not local by giving examples of café owners from Dali, China, who are considered cosmopolitan despite not traveling anywhere, because they have overcome isolation and backwardness by being open to foreign encounters (622). Notar uses the story of He Liyi, a middle-class Chinese café owner who never travels and lives in a small town, to demonstrate that a cosmopolitan individual is not necessarily Western, elite, metropolitan, or a traveller (626). The type of cosmopolitan Notar describes is what Bronislaw Szerzynski and John Urry termed "mundane cosmopolitanism," which means being aware of the world without leaving one's location.

Openness was a feature of port cities, attracting both cosmopolitanism and colonization. In "Between Tianxia and Postsocialism: Contemporary Chinese Cosmopolitanism," Lisa Rofel characterizes cosmopolitanism in Shanghai as colonial

cosmopolitanism because the native Chinese were regarded as inferior and the diversity in the city did not foster tolerance. During the period of Western colonization in China and the treaties resulting from the Opium War, Shanghai, a port city, became a route for European trade and Western migration, which increased Chinese encounters with the West. Many European settlers established their own district, which was isolated from the natives and had its own distinct rules. They brought their culture, traditions, food cuisines, and clothing, all of which contributed to a cosmopolitan atmosphere, as Shanghai became an example of a colonial cosmopolitan city, much like Alexandria. Notar agrees with Rofel's characterization of Shanghai as colonial cosmopolitanism; she further links its colonial cosmopolitanism to that of Alexandria because both cities experienced segregation of natives from foreigners in residential and public spaces, as well as degradation of the natives (626).

My definition of cosmopolitanism departs somewhat from a Eurocentric elite conception of cosmopolitanism and rather takes into consideration non-European societies and their right to develop a cosmopolitan space without abandoning their cultural identity. I consider the cosmopolis a city that is open to the world but has the power to keep its residents deeply connected to it until it becomes a place of identity. In a cosmopolitan society, individuals of different origins mutually respect one another. For this study, I use the adjective *cosmopolitan* as a description of a person who belongs to a specific culture, is open to other cultures, and welcomes and tolerates differences including race, religion, and class. This project deals with the social side of cosmopolitanism rather than its political concerns such as citizenship, democracy, or justice.

Representation of Egypt in the West

The popularity of the *Alexandria Quartet* is tempered, however, by its orientalist representation of Alexandria, based on sources such as Edward Lane's *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. Durrell continues the trajectory of orientalist

representations of Egypt and its cities, especially Alexandria, that began with Napoleon's invasion. Alexandria's strategic location as a port connecting the East with the West has made it a target of many empires as it "nourished imperial dreams" (Forster, *Alexandria* 106). Throughout its history, controlling the port means controlling the route, through the Red Sea, that leads to the East. According to Michel Foucault's knowledge/power dynamics, knowledge of the land, its people, history, and topography are necessary to dominate it, a founding colonialist assumption that Western scholars and writers have given much attention to in relation to Egypt and Alexandria since Napoleon's time.

Representations, in postcolonial theory, offer an important medium to disseminate knowledge of the "Other" through visual arts and literary discourse. Wendy Helsby argues that the possession of power and knowledge can produce representations that "can become the truth by which others will lead their lives" (n.p.). Representations are personal accounts that depend on the author's logical and political understanding of the situation. What the author experiences, believes in, and dreams of will be presented in the work. In efforts to gain personal fame and respect, many Western writers have represented the East as a dangerous, primitive, and undeveloped space. In *Colonial Voices: The Discourse of Empire*, Pramod Nayar points out that seventeenth-century English travellers to India would exaggerate the difficulties and dangers they experienced in order to impress readers with their courage and bravery (15). These accounts were individual, subjective narratives that mixed empirical experience with personal anecdotes and were presented as "discovery" stories for future travellers (15). Such representations could be "responsible and constructive" or "discursively and morally dubious" (Rooney and Sakr 2).

In colonial discourse, the East is an object and a field of discovery and study about which the West produces knowledge, representations, and documentations that have enabled it to consolidate imperial hegemony and power. Since the eighteenth century, Egypt had

inspired Western imperial interest and travellers' passion for discovery. Napoleon's expedition (1798-1801) marked an important event in directing Western colonial gaze to Egypt, and introducing Western colonization in the Arab world. Egypt became a subject of a long history of Western cultural discourse about the East. The role of European travellers to the Middle East in general and Egypt in particular was essential in extending European imperial power in the region. Their writings contributed to the establishment of Western imaginings of the East and set the boundaries between the East and the West, as well as what Linda Nochlin refers to as the Westerner's "controlling gaze […] which brings the Oriental world into being" (122). Nochlin argues that Westerners used art to position themselves as observers whose representations of the East would be accepted by the public as reality.

The "controlling gaze" also resonates in the photographs taken by Western visitors which were later used in exhibitions about the East. In "Orientalist Photograph," Ali Behdad discusses the features of early nineteenth-century western photographs of Egypt and the Egyptians, which were used for archaeological and documentary purposes. One such feature manifests the "controlling gaze" in which the photographer filters and designs the content of the photograph, in that the indigenous people are either erased from the scenery or present but in a distorted badly photographed way (Behdad 24).

The Western material representation of Egypt started in the Napoleonic era, and Western writers and artists have continued to use their works to construct specific images of Egypt that embody their perspective of the East as Other. Written works and paintings depicted violence, sensuality, exotic spaces, women's slavery, and history, all of which served to mark distinctions between the East and the West in the Western imagination. In the case of Egypt, these works and paintings represented elements from ancient history, such as the pyramids, in order to position the East as static and fixed in comparison to the ever-changing West.

Napoleon's mission in Egypt was referred to as an expedition rather than as an invasion, because his intentions involved both scientific investigation and military occupation. His mission was to abrogate Egyptian culture and impose French culture instead. Napoleon's cultural invasion of Egypt established what Said called "[the] 'Orient' [as a] semi-mythical construct" (*Orientalism* xii) in the eighteenth century, as it expanded Western cultural interest in the East. Napoleon was accompanied by scholars, artists, and scientists who brought books and instruments with them, establishing the Institute d'Egypte and composing *Description de l'Egypte* from the information they gathered.

Description de l'Egypte is the most fundamental encyclopaedia of Egypt produced by Western writers. It consists of twenty-two volumes of publications of Napoleon's expedition in Egypt, specifically "10 volumes of text, 885 plates (a small number hand-coloured), a three-sheet geographic map; and a 47-sheet topographic map of the country" (Godlewska 7). *Description* is divided into three themes: first, the "Antiquités," comprising an account of the ancient history of Egypt; second "État moderne," recounting the historical period from the Arab conquest to the French invasion, and third "Histoire naturelle," focusing on natural history.

The first edition of the *Description* appeared in 1809, and the final edition was published in 1829. Approximately 160 scientists and scholars, known as *savants*, who accompanied Napoleon to Egypt between 1798 and 1801, collaborated on the project, which sought to gather knowledge about all aspects of ancient and modern Egypt, such as history, geography, topography, archaeology, and demography, and present them descriptively as texts and drawings. In "Map, Text and Image: The Mentality of Enlightened Conquerors: A New Look at the *Description de l'Egypte*," Anne Godlewska discusses the importance of the *Description de l'Egypte* as a reference through which the French represented their version of Egypt visually and verbally in museums and historical accounts, a version that depended

heavily on myths (9). What Godlewska means is that, although the book was based on direct observation of the land, its compilers' mythology about the Orient controls their perceptions and influenced the vision that they presented.

In "Art of Colonialism, Colonialism of Art: *The Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1828)," David Prochaska compares the *Description*'s illustrations of the French and the Egyptians and the implications of those illustrations for the relations between both peoples. French characters are represented as observers, painters, and scientists, while Egyptian characters are seen either as servants to the French or as lazy and aimless individuals. If a French character and an Egyptian character are seen together, the French character is positioned higher than the Egyptian character to indicate superiority (Prochaska 86). Later in colonial discourse, "the colonizer establishes the colonized as being lazy" and laziness is represented as "the very nature of the colonized" (Memmi 126).

According to Mallek Alloula, the Egyptian Exhibition and the *Description de l'Egypte* were "the fertilizer of the colonial vision" (318), and inspired other museums that focused on Egypt, such as the Egyptian Hall in the British Museum, which was opened in 1899. These museums nurtured a desire among scholars and writers, such as the English writer Edward William Lane, to travel to Egypt (Thompson 565-66). Timothy Mitchell argues that most of the Europeans who travelled to the East were inspired to do so after seeing representations in paintings, museums, and exhibitions and wanting to see the original (28). For instance, Lane decided to travel to Egypt after seeing the paintings in Piccadilly's Egyptian Hall and reading *Description de l'Egypte* (Michell 28). His first trip to Egypt was between 1825 and 1828, during which he wrote his unpublished manuscript "Description of Egypt." In "Edward William Lane's 'Description of Egypt,'" Jason Thompson notes that Lane used *Description de l'Egypte* as a source for his "Description of Egypt," even though he found the French text inaccurate in certain places (567). On his second trip in 1833, he

gathered more information for his *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians,* published in 1835. During his visits, Lane immersed himself in Egyptian society in such a way that he could observe it and not be observed. He disguised himself as a local Muslim, learnt Arabic, and lived among the natives. Although Lane depended on his own personal observations and experiences in writing the book, Thompson argues in "Edward Willian Lane in Egypt" that Lane's relationship with British scientists and orientalists who were in Egypt influenced his perception of Egypt, and hence the objectivity of his representation (255).

The reception of Lane's book and its representation of the Egyptians in the West as contrary to the East highlights a core concept in this study: the distinction between *representing* and *observing*, and between *being represented* and *being observed*. In *Life of Edward William Lane*, Stanley Lane Poole describes *Modern Egyptians* as "the most perfect picture of a people's life that has ever been written" (84). Conversely, many critics in the East consider Lane's book an orientalist representation of Egypt. For example, in *Orientalism and Postcolonialism in Modern Arab Thought*, Mohammad AlQuwaizani claims that Lane's "Englishness/Europeanness determines his tone when describing the Other" (88). Although Lane positioned himself as an observer, he took a superior tone in his work that was likely to produce what Rooney and Saker called a "discursively and morally dubious" representation. Said considers the book "an encyclopaedia of exotic display and a playground for orientalist scrutiny" (*Orientalism* 161). In the West, Said argues, Lane is one of the builders of orientalism and his *Modern Egyptians* is considered a mandatory guide for writing about the Orient; it was an influence on writers such as Gustave Flaubert and Richard Burton, both of whom had read it before travelling to the East (23). Despite their detailed descriptions of the culture, language, and landscape of Egypt, the works of English writers such as Lane "inevitably privilege the centre, emphasizing the 'home' over the 'native', the 'metropolitan'

over the 'provincial' or 'colonial', and so forth" (Ashcroft et al. 5). Their Western gaze and their assumption of superiority control their perceptions, and thus their representations, of the East.

Description de l'Egypte and An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians are early productions of the cultural imperial enterprise whose representations of modern Egypt provided essential knowledge for the colonial powers and set the foundations of the orientalist trajectory of representation. In the formation of empires, cultural enterprises are as fundamental as their political counterparts. Works such as Said's Orientalism and Mitchell's Colonising Egypt explore the social and cultural effects of colonial intervention in Egypt and representations of the West on the East. Mitchell describes Western imagery of the East as "an exhibition," whereas Said considers it a "theatrical act," both of which are directed at the West.

Timothy Mitchell's *Colonising Egypt* and Edward Said's *Orientalism*

Mitchell's Colonising Egypt argues that the West conceptualized and constructed the East as the Other through exhibitions. His study begins with the arrival of the Egyptian delegation to Paris before heading to Stockholm's Eighth International Congress of Orientalists in 1889. In Paris, they visited the Egyptian exhibit curated by the French, which featured dirty and chaotic images of Cairo's architecture, streets, and merchandise, and which shocked the delegation and Egyptian visitors in general, particularly in comparison to other sections of the exhibit (1). At the Congress, Mitchell continues, the Egyptian delegates were seen as "Orientals" and were treated not as participants but as 'exhibits' to stare at with curiosity (2). Mitchell describes what happened in the Egyptian Exhibit and in the Congress as "European mischief." The Middle Eastern writers who visited the exhibition, Mitchell argues, dismissed the European representation criteria as "not natural, [but] mischievous and dependent […] on a certain [western] theology" (5).

Mitchell defines representation as "everything collected and arranged to stand for something, to represent progress and history, human industry and empire; everything set up, and the whole set-up always evoking somehow some larger truth" (6). Based on this definition, the Egyptian exhibit in Paris was a "representation" of Cairo in the European imagination that was regarded as "objective truth." Although these models of cities and civilizations impressed European visitors, the experiences of Arab visitors undermined the seeming truths that the European museums and exhibitions displayed. Mitchell questions the imperial intentions behind the exhibition as it was established during the colonial era, because "[c]olonial power require[s] the country to become readable, like a book" (33) in which the colonizer has the power to represent the object and to select what is included and what is excluded. *Description de L'Egypte* and *Modern Egyptians* and the works that followed them in the orientalist trajectory were practical applications of this model.

To colonize a land, knowledge of the history and civilization of that land is essential. As Said notes in *Orientalism,* Balfour's speeches before the occupation of Egypt expressed this sentiment, and the British were particularly effective at using literature to spread their power throughout the world. The existence of English writers in Egypt during the era of British colonization, and their enthusiasm about writing and recording the history of Egypt, provided the officials with knowledge of the land and its people; as such knowledge "gives power, more power requires more knowledge" (Said, *Orientalism* 36). As a land, Egypt was important in the eyes of British politicians, "[f]or Egypt was not just another colony: it was the vindication of Western imperialism; it was, until its annexation by England, as almost academic example of Oriental backwardness; it was to become the triumph of English knowledge and power" (*Orientalism* 35).

Said's *Orientalism* argues that Western scholars constructed images of the East through fragments of texts and anecdotes presented as plays to the West, performed by some Easterners to represent the East as a whole, yet aimed at Western audiences:

> The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. (*Orientalism* 63)

In this play, the West represents the East not as it is but "as they ought to be" (Said, *Orientalism* 70). Literature is a stage, and on this stage, knowledge and characterizations are subject to generalization.

During the colonial era, the West wrote about, represented, and spoke about Egypt, and works such as *Description de l'Egypte* and *Modern Egyptians* became guides for those who planned to visit the country. Lane set the ground for orientalist writing about Egypt, with *Modern Egyptians* that became a bible for his English successors such as E.M. Forster and Durrell. In *Avant-Garde Orientalism: The Eastern 'Other' in Twentieth-Century Travel*, David LeHardy Sweet notes that the orientalist nature of Forster's and Durrell's writings about Egypt came directly from Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, which they had used as a model for their own. Furthermore, in the *Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell considers Lane's work "the Gospel of Egypt" (424). In "Some Sources of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*," William Leigh Godshalk notes that Lane's *Modern Egyptians* influenced several of Durrell's characters, such as the superstitious Hamid (372).

Representing the Self

This section discusses Egyptian responses to the western material and literary representations of Egypt. In "Indigenous Articulations," James Clifford argues that the process of mutual exchange in postcolonial culture is no longer "a one-way process in which oppression obliterates the oppressed or the colonizer silences the colonized in absolute terms" (183). Colonized peoples challenge Western, orientalist representations with their own self-representation and resistance counter-narratives, thus using the colonizer's mediums and forms of expression against them. Since the eighteenth century, the West has taken an orientalist point of view in writing about Egypt. Such texts are characterized by a sense of superiority and a prejudice against the Egyptians and their land that leads to the creation of orientalist, and often dehumanizing, representations. Egyptian writers responding to Western stereotypes take a trajectory of self-representation to refute and undermine those images. Realistic writing was one of the techniques used to create more accurate and more humanizing images of their selves and their land, and in so doing developing "the most important literary movement in Egypt" (Brugman[4] 232) to the present day.

Egyptian literary representation of the self and of the foreign intervention in Egypt began early with the French invasion. In *Aja'ib al-Athar fī'l Tarajim wa'l-Akhbār,* Abdul Rahmān al-Jabartī characterized Napoleon's invasion of Egypt as an "ultimate catastrophe"

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[4] J Brugman's *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* (1984) presents a survey of modern literature in Egypt covering the period between the fourteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Works in the vernacular and drama were left out. The book is structured in a way that introduces Egyptian authors and their literary contributions. Each section starts with a short biographical note of the writer, followed by a discussion of the significance of his/her major works, and ends with a bibliography of his/her works.

(4). By the end of the nineteenth century, poets such as Ahmad Shawqi and Hafiz Ibrahim wrote nationalist poems that opposed the British occupation and Western influence in general. The Egyptian novel on Western lines first appeared in the 1850s, marking the beginning of the literature of resistance in Egypt as a response to British imperialism. According to Said, narrative fiction is an important tool to inspire colonized peoples to resist imperialism; he states that "grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment mobilized people in the colonial world to rise up and throw of imperial subjection" (*Culture and Imperialism* xiii). The narratives of colonized peoples identify the land and the identity of its owner and its citizens, recount its past and culture and present plans for its future (*Culture* xiii). Literature of resistance is not only a form of fighting back against imperialism, but is also "an alternative way of conceiving human history" (*Culture* 216). Through literature, colonized peoples participate in re-narrating their history and presenting new perspectives that had been neglected and overlooked by colonizers.

Critics such as Frantz Fanon and Richard Jacquemond have examined colonized literature as part of the wider context of postcolonial literature. Fanon observes three stages of colonial writing, beginning with "full assimilation" (159), in which the colonized writer is inspired by and mimics the colonizers. In the second stage, "the colonized writer has his[/her] convictions shaken and decides to cast his[/her] mind back" (159), but is not yet integrated with his/her society and people. In the third stage, the colonized writer targets his/her people and inspires them to write about "their nation, to portray their people and become the spokesperson of a new reality in action" (159).

In *Conscience of the Nation: Writers, State, and Society in Modern Egypt,* Richard Jacquemond similarly divides literary production in Egypt into the precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial moments. The precolonial moment, between 1830 and 1910, was the renaissance period, characterized by translations of European works. In the colonial moment,

or the assimilation period, interest in translation declined as the use of foreign languages increased, particularly French which dominated the literary scene. During the interwar period, Egyptian literature adopted European cultural and literary styles. The postcolonial moment is the period of global recognition of Egyptian literary production, as the publication of Arabic literature increased, with distinct features "distancing [it] from the West" (120), and it began to attain a prominent place in the international literary field (120).

In the precolonial period,[5] Muhammad Ali's initiative to modernize Egypt included plans to cultivate literary writing, translation, and printing. Students were sent to Europe, mostly to France, for education. Contact with Europeans both inside and outside Egypt proved influential on Egyptian culture, especially literature (Brugman 5). Egyptians who were educated in the West, such as Rifa'a Al-Tahtawi, wrote about their personal experiences abroad. Al-Tahtawi's *Takhlīs al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ bārīz* (1834) is a narrative of cross-cultural encounter, and Al-Tahtawi, whose works marked the emergence of a modern technique in Arabic prose, is considered "the first consciously nationalist Egyptian" (Brugman 21). The relationship between the East and the West, Roger Allen claims, is one of the fundamental themes for Egyptian authors such as Al-Tahtawi (88). Other Egyptians had the chance to visit the Egyptian Exhibitions in Paris and saw how they were misrepresented. When they returned to Egypt, they began to write about, represent, and speak for themselves. Writers such as Ali Mubarak and Muhammad Al-Muwailihi wrote realist novels based on their visits. For instance, Mubarak's *Alam al-Dīn* (1882)*,* written in maqamah,[6] describes the journey of an Englishman and an Egyptian man travelling around Egypt and Europe, providing details of traditions and phenomena in a narrative form.

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[5] Though Egypt was not colonized yet by the British during the Muhammad Ali reign, it was ruled by the Ottoman Empire. thus, it was not self-ruled nor independent.

[6] Rhymed prose.

Western literary texts, adapted, imitated, and translated by Egyptian intellectuals such as Mustafa Al-Manfaluti, Al-Tahtawi, and Abbas Al-Aqqad, played important roles in the Arab renaissance (Cachia 29-30). However, the development of prose was relatively slow due to various factors, such as a "non-Arabic speaking dynasty, the widespread illiteracy, and the exploitation of the country as a basis for military adventures" (Brugman 63-64). The number of magazines was limited, and traditional *maqamah* was preferred over narrative prose. The emergence of the Arabic printing press and the foundation of *Al-Waqāi' al-Misriyyah* (1828) as an official journal marked a rise in journalism in Egypt, with journals used as platforms for expression and Arabic literature enjoying an increase in popularity, with a broader readership and a simpler, less rhetorical writing style (Badawi 8-17).

The colonial period was marked by the influence of English literary styles and themes on Egyptian literature, due to the increase in imitation and translation of English literary texts, such as works by Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley, into Arabic (Brugman 97). The beginning of the twentieth century saw the development of prose writing, accompanied by a rejection of Western culture and the embracing of Egyptian culture. Egyptian self-representations of that period depicted East/West encounters, the British hegemony over Egypt, and Egyptian resistance and desire for independence.

Egyptian novels at the beginning of the twentieth century were mostly historical or romantic works that dealt with political and social issues such as nationalism, East/West confrontations, and imperial practices. In "The State of the Contemporary Arabic Novel," Sabry Hafez contends that "the rise of the Arabic novel was clearly associated with the emergence of patriotism and national awareness in the Arab world. … It was natural therefore that the historical novel and romantic fiction … were the two fictional types during the early period of the Arabic novel" (17). In "The Modern Arabic Short Story," he also points out that "[i]n modern Arabic literature the close interaction between literature and socio-political

issues makes it difficult to isolate one from the other" (270). As discussed below, historical novels served as representations of patriotic and nationalist themes that criticized the West, its traditions, and its imposition of Western culture on Egypt.

In 1907, under Mahmud Haqqi and Muhammad Al-Muwailihi, historical novels generally depicted actual political and social events. Haqqi and Al-Muwailihi both created examples of what Jacquemond characterizes as a "form of truthful discourse" (88), known in Arabic as *haqiqa*. Their works featured realistic portrayals of a diverse society and reformist perspectives on the social and political circumstances in Egypt. Haqqi's *Adhra' Dinshāwy* (1906)*,* which Saad Elkhadem calls "undoubtedly one of the first original Egyptian novels" (23), is based on an incident that underscored the injustice of the British occupation in general and of mixed courts in particular, and which threatened Cromer's position in Egypt. *Adhra' Dinshāwy* is based on the execution of Egyptian men who were accused of killing a British soldier during a pigeon shoot. It demonstrates the hegemony of the British authorities over the law courts during colonization, and the use of a Coptic judge for the case as a catalyst for sectarian strife (Siddiq 12). Similarly, Al-Muwailihi's *Hadīth īsa Ibn Hishām* (1907) presents examples of East/West cultural conflict and other binary oppositions in colonial Cairo. Through his protagonist, Al-Muwailihi addresses the Egyptian perception of inferiority in front of Westerners and depicts the legal system in the mixed courts as chaos due to the British intervention. The book is not anti-western, but does criticize the Egyptian "imitation of Westerners only in trivialities, false appearances and the indulgence of carnal pleasures" (El-Enany, *Arab Representation*[7] 35).

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[7] Rasheed El-Enany's *Arab Representation of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction* (2004) is a comprehensive study of Arab writers' responses to Western culture and values in Arab literature. The book discusses the Arab literary representations of the West in fiction written between the nineteenth and the twentieth century. El-Enany presents a study of

Several writers of this period were immersed in the political scene and used their works to express their political positions. After the First World War, many Egyptian writers, especially poets, gave their voices to solidarity and resistance (Brugman 198). For example, Abbas al-Aqqad, a member of the Wafd party, wrote poems praising Sa'ad Zaghloul. The interest of Egyptian writers in nationalist and anti-Western themes inspired essayist Qasim Amin and journalist Ahmad Lutfi Al-Sayyid to establish the Egyptian National University to enhance the development of national literature (Brugman 232), to oppose the collaboration between the Egyptian government and the British, and to raise awareness of Western cultures.

After the Second World War and the political disturbances throughout the Arab world, awareness of the political and social situation increased. People demanded independence from colonial occupation. That awareness was reflected in literature (Allan, "Mature Arabic Novel" 197), as literary works of that period thematized the resentment towards imperial intervention, the corruption of political regimes, and the assertion of national identity. Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* (1956-57) is a significant example of such works. El-Enany argues that the representation of the self in Arab literature in the post-colonial period is different from that of previous periods. The postcolonial period is marked by anti-imperialist ideology, national pride, and confidence in the self: "[i]ndependence boosted the self's morale and there were to follow representations in literature of the self as an equal of the other" (*Arab Representation* 87). However, the 1967 war brought a shift in representation, such that "oppression is … homemade" (El-Enany, *Arab Representation* 118) and Arabic literary texts depicted the government's suppression of the people. Sunallah Ibrahim's *Najmat Aghustus* (1974), based on the imprisonment of journalists under Nasser's

three historical contexts: the pre-colonial period, the colonial period, and the postcolonial period.

political regime, is one such example (El-Enany, *Arab Representation* 117). Following the 1952 revolution, social and political reforms and fear of detention forced intellectuals and writers to move from realist narratives to modernist narratives (Redwan 264). However, the 1990s witnessed a resurgence of realism as writers enjoyed greater freedom of expression than they had before.

Although Egyptian women played a part in their country's literary movement, their writings were largely "marginalized" (Jacquemond 184). Since the late nineteenth century women had not only been involved in journalism as writers, but as publishers of and contributors to journals that were exclusively by and for women. The first journal for women, *Al-Fatah*, was established in Alexandria in 1892 (Cooke 446). *Al-Fatah,* Hoda Elsadda argues*,* offers a platform for women to voice out and express their rights, responsibilities and interests. Political and religious issues were out of *Al-Fatah's* scope (Elsadda 10). *Al-Fatah* and other women's journals which appeared later encouraged women to "write and participate in public debates" (Elsadda 11). Miriam Cooke argues that women's writings were less popular and their voices less often heard than those of men because they did not work within a "feminine" stream or form until the 1950s, when their works began to receive greater public attention (450). Rediscovery of the works of female writers such as Aisha Taymur (1840-1902) and Labiba Hashim (1880-1947) revealed their contributions to the Arab renaissance (Jacquemond 184). Another prominent Egyptian woman writer, Qūt El-Kouloub (1899-1968), wrote in French and was widely translated; her works include *Harem* (1937), a critique of Egypt's patriarchal society (Jacquemond 118). Suhayer Qalamawi, author of *Ahādīth Jadatī* (*My Grandmother's Tales*, 1935), about middle-class Cairo in the nineteenth century, won an award from the Cairo Language Academy for her *Alf lyla we Laylah* (One Thousand and One Nights 1943). Many twentieth-century female writers addressed nationalist themes in their works; one of the best-known examples is Latifa Al-

Zayyat's *al-Bab al-Maftuh* (*The Open Door)* (1960), which depicts the participation of Egyptian women in the nationalist struggles of the 1950s through her protagonist Layla.

Literary representations of the city of Alexandria were produced later, and less in number and popularity than representations of Cairo in the twentieth century. Alexandrians generally used music and nationalist songs as mediums to protest and resist foreign intervention. For instance, Sayyed Darwish's protest music and revolutionary songs were widely played and performed in both the 1919 and 2011 revolutions. Among his best-known songs are "Ahu Da Illi Sar" ("This Is What Happened"), which is about the foreign exploitation of the land and the spirit of resistance, and "Biladi Biladi" ("My Country My Country"), which became the Egyptian anthem. In *Birds of Amber* (2000), novelist Ibrahim Abdul Meguid celebrates the importance of Darwish as a revolutionary figure who used his musical talent against the British occupation. Egyptians of all ages memorize and sing Darwish's songs for various national occasions.

Interest in writing about Alexandria seems to have begun in the late 1960s. Egyptian writers and filmmakers responded to the popularity of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet,* and the film version of *Justine*[8] in 1969, by publishing books and films that would present more accurate images of Alexandria. They used different modes of production, such as cinema and TV, to widen the scope of their audience outside Egypt. Some of these works set in Alexandria include Mahfouz's *Miramar*, based on the conflict between the political parties during the Nasser regime, and Edwar AlKharrat's *City of Saffron* and Ibrahim Abdul Meguid's *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*, both of which depict Alexandria in the colonial and interwar periods. Yusuf Chahin directed several films that represented the Alexandria he knew, such as *Alexandria…Why?* (1979), *Alexandria Again and Forever* (1989),

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[8] *Justine* is an American film directed by George Cukor and Joseph Strick, produced in 1969 based on Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet.*

and *Alexandria, New York* (2004). Although his movies lament the loss of the cosmopolitan atmosphere upon the departure of foreigners from Egypt, they also represent an Egyptian Alexandria.

Works such as these fall under the third of Fanon's stages of the literature of colonized people: they merge political and social issues, they are produced in the authors' own language to document the history of their nation, and they are written for the authors' own people. However, the voices of Alexandrian women have remained unheard at this point, as there were no popular texts about Alexandria written by women.

Although writers were engaged early on in representing the self and responding to western literary and political interreference, these self-representations did not reach Western readers because of the language barrier and translation restrictions imposed by the British colonizers, demonstrating that although colonized people may have the power to write, they do not have the power to publish. These works were not translated into European languages, leaving Egyptian voices largely unheard. In "Embargoed Literature," Said argues that Arabic literature, is "embargoed" in the West, and that Egyptian literature before the 1940s held no appeal to Western readers. Translation was selective to texts that could be harmonized with European cultures such as Taha Hussain's *al-Ayyām* (*Egyptian Childhood*, 1932) which was translated into French and English (Jacquemond 118).

The 1940s witnessed a growing Western interest in Egyptian literature, which began to be translated into English and French during the decolonization phase following the Second World War (Tomiche 2). However, the British colonial authorities, with the collaboration of the Egyptian government, imposed restrictions on the publication and translation of Egyptian literature: only those works that upheld orientalist perspectives and notions of Western superiority could be translated, such as Tawfik Al-Hakim's Y*awmīāt Na'ib fī al-Aryāf* (1937) (translated as *The Maze of Justice,* 1947), while works that depicted

the negative effects of colonialism and that called for independence were kept out of translation. These rules were part of a larger effort to present a very specific image of the East to Western readers:

> The translation of Arabic literature remains determined by the global relationship between Orient, especially the Arabic Orient, and Occident. The latter's perceptions are biased by prejudices constructed through a long and complex mutual history. The Occidental reader prefers to turn to works which confirm his prejudices and his representation of the Orient. (Jacquemond 154-155)

Who can speak for the margin? Through his conception of the "Permission to Narrate," Said argues that the postcolonial act of narration is inextricably interrelated to power and political dominance (33). The dominant culture controls who can narrate and what (hi)stories can be circulated. By controlling the economy of the publishing industry, the capitalist system of the West regulates who can publish and what can be published. From a similar perspective, Graham Huggan develops this argument further by negotiating the power politics underlying the act of translation. He discusses the industry of publication and translation of non-Western writings in the West, and argues that postcolonial writings are treated as "cultural commodities" in the western market and their value and availability depend largely on their "exotic appeal" to the West rather than their authenticity or intrinsic cultural value (13).

Denys Johnson-Davies, one of the earliest translators of works by writers such as Mahfouz and Tayib Saleh, discusses the challenges he faced in his career as an Arabic-to-English translator during the 1940s in Egypt in *Memories in Translation: A Life Between the Lines of Arabic Literature* (2006). He notes, for instance, that "[t]here [was] no publishing house in London employing anyone interested in modern Arabic literature or capable of

reading Arabic" (104). Translations of Arabic works made no profit for the publishers, compared to African works that were originally written in English. Johnson-Davies further argues that translations in general were not favoured among English readers (105), so that although the Egyptian voice was present, it was deliberately unheard. In the 1970s, the establishment of translation centres such as American University of Cairo Press (AUC) played a significant role in presenting Egyptian literature and writers to the West, including Mahfouz's *Miramar,* and Johnson-Davies' translations would help to earn Mahfouz a Nobel Prize in 1988 (77).

The awarding of the prize to Mahfouz marked the international recognition of the Egyptian novel. Since then, Hilary Kilpatrick argues, translations of Egyptian novels have increased in number, and the gap between publication and translation of a work has decreased from approximately twenty years or more to about two years (260). The middle of the twentieth century witnessed the production and translation of many Egyptian texts that went on to win international awards. The Egyptian voice was present in postcolonial discourse, as Egyptian writers worked to refute Western misconceptions and representations of Egypt and the Egyptians. A significant number of these works responded to Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet,* due to its strong influence on the Western imagination of Egypt in general and of cosmopolitan Alexandria in particular, and to its continuation of Lane's orientalist project.

Representing and *Being Represented*: Literary Mutual Exchange

Discussion of the mutual exchange in the postcolonial context, which Ashcroft and his colleagues discuss, would not be complete without a reference to Chinua Achebe's responses to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Conrad's story perpetuated an image of Africa that is akin to orientalism, prompting Achebe's efforts to present corrective, and more realistic, depictions of Africa and its history in contrast to Conrad's emphasis on darkness and chaos. Achebe's works reflect a consciousness of empire, as well as a different

approach to writing about empire than that manifested by his predecessors. Rewriting and restructuring the history and culture of colonized peoples is significant to postcolonial writers not only as a form of resistance, but also as a chance to establish a national literature:

> Many of the most interesting post-colonial writers bear their past within them- as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a new future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory taken back from the empire. (Said, *Culture* 34-35)

Here, Said clarifies the importance of the past to the colonized, as a mark of their suffering and humiliation due to colonization, and as a medium to express their voices, respond to the colonizer's representations, and to rewrite the events of the past differently. Achebe's response to *Heart of Darkness* is an early example of an author from a colonized people counteracting and writing back to the empire in answer to the colonizer's writing. Achebe states in "An African Voice" that "[t]he last four or five hundred years of European contact with Africa produced a body of literature that presented Africa in a very bad light and Africans in very lurid terms. The reason for this had to do with the need to justify the slave trade and slavery," and this representation "continued until the Africans themselves, in the middle of the twentieth [century], took into their own hands the telling of their story" (n.p.). Thus, *Things Fall Apart* rewrites African history and culture to preserve African heritage, in response to imperial constructs of the land and peoples, to "restructur[e] European 'realities'" about the colonized (Ashcroft et al. 32).

Heart of Darkness, Said argues, is as an example of texts that constructed the imperial conception in the West by orientalizing the East. He continues that *Heart of Darkness* is influenced by Western mythologies of, and previous writings about, Africa. It is an imperial

narrative, based on Conrad's visit to Congo, that provided the empire with the required knowledge for domination. The narrative sets up binary oppositions of West/East, colonizer/colonized, master/slave and superior/inferior as bases for the dominance and hegemony practiced by the Europeans in every encounter with the Africans. Said further notes that Conrad's narrative is a product of a certain time and place, an imperial age in which Africa was considered as a dark space of people incapable of self-government (*Culture and Imperialism* 25).

The relationship between the Africans and the Europeans that Conrad portrayed in *Heart of Darkness* is what Said describes as "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (*Orientalism* 5). His representation stereotyped the Africans as inferior, irrational, primitive, and incapable of self-governing, in order to define the Europeans as superior, rational, civilized, and powerful. These stereotypes were ultimately generalized to and associated with the entire East. *Heart of Darkness* represented the Africans as people with neither history nor culture, with no past and therefore no present. Denial of history is a denial of culture, a process of cultural erasure that Frantz Fanon called "cultural obliteration" (170). The voices of the Africans were unheard because Conrad "spoke for and represented" them (Said, *Orientalism* 6). "[N]egation of linguistic capability in non-Western people," David Spurr argues, is another form of denial of culture (105). The goal behind the colonial strategy of denial of the history, culture, and language of the colonized is to eradicate any of what Said termed "potential resistance."

Conrad's portrayal of Africa was popular with Western readers for over fifty years until the release of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. *Things Fall Apart* is, according to Mary Pratt, an "autoethnographic text" (7), a text written by the other, the colonized, in response to the colonizer's representation using the colonizer's language and directed toward a metropolitan readership. Creating images of Africa to challenge orientalist representations

was what inspired Achebe's work. In an interview with Simon Gikandi, Achebe stated that "we [the Africans] had no presence in my view – where we should be seen we are not seen" (5). Although Africans were present in European literature, they were silenced, which for Achebe was a presence that was equal to absence. Therefore, his goals as a writer were *to represent* the self instead of *being represented* and to eliminate the absence of the African voice.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* rejects European prejudices about Africa and its cultures and negates Conrad's orientalist portrayal of Africa. According to Achebe, Conrad's representation of Africa in *Heart of Darkness* is a dehumanization, a negation of African history, culture, and language. Achebe argued that although the image of Africa that Conrad depicted was not original, it was a common image in the western imagination that Conrad's story helped to popularize. Thus, Achebe used his writings to refute Conrad's orientalist representations, to restore to the African self what Conrad negated, and to memorialize African history and culture.

Achebe's writings represent African history and culture from the colonized perspective, in order to institute a national cultural heritage of Africa. He used the language of the colonizer because he believed "that the English language will be able to carry the weight of [the] African experience" ("English and the African Writer" 349). However, he added some terms and proverbs from his language to demonstrate the existence of genuine African languages and cultures that Conrad denied, and chose to use Chinua, rather than Albert, as his first name as a marker of his African cultural identity. Achebe's criticism of Conrad's writings and of European orientalist representations in general helped to establish a timely and crucial trend in postcolonial writing in which colonized peoples write back to the empire, negating colonizers' inaccurate and humiliating representations and re(-) presenting corrective images of their selves, their cultures, and their land.

The literary opposition between Conrad and Achebe can be clearly related to that between Durrell and Abdul Meguid, as "all colonized people have much in common…[and] all the oppressed are alike in some ways" (Memmi 5). Therefore, the suffering and resistance of colonized peoples in the Congo and Nigeria are analogous to those in Tunisia, Egypt, and other colonies in Africa. Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* presents a distorted image of Alexandria that influenced the Western imagination of Alexandria, and Egyptian writers such as Abdul Meguid have devoted their careers to refuting that image as Achebe did in reply to Conrad. In the larger context, this study positions Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* as a continuation of the orientalist trajectory of Conrad as well as Lane, a trajectory of representing the other in order to justify European imperial domination. Whereas the story of *Heart of Darkness* was based on Conrad's journey to the Congo, *Alexandria Quartet* was written after Durrell's years of exile in Alexandria. If Conrad's representation aided the imperial intervention in Congo, Durrell's representation hints that the end of British existence in Egypt means a return to chaos and political uncertainty. In the West, Lane's book was used as a guide to Egypt in the nineteenth century, and Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* became a guide to Alexandria in the twentieth century.

The works discussed in this study demonstrate the existence of different points of view about the same city, the same people, and the same time, particularly when comparing indigenous self-representations to orientalist other representations. The strategy of writing back demonstrates the writers' awareness of both their people's needs and the colonizers' perceptions. They write in order to show what self-representation looks like, to remind readers of their needs and interests, and to consciously refute orientalist misrepresentations.

Previous Studies and the New Contribution of this Thesis

Many studies of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* have discussed the structure of the work, its theme of love, and its orientalist perspective. Comparisons of Durrell's conceptions

of the city and Alexandrians to representations of Egyptian and non-Egyptian Alexandrians, however, have been overlooked. This study bridges this gap by doing a comparative study of literary representations of Alexandria from a postcolonial perspective, demonstrating the various points of view that can be drawn from the same social and historical contexts.

Alexandria is the subject of several previous studies, many of which are connected with Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*; however, most of these focus on the history of Greek and ancient Egyptian civilizations in the city. For instance, Jane Pinchin's *Alexandria Still: Forster, Durrell, and Cavafy* (1977) discusses the influence of Alexandria and the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy on the English writers E. M. Forster and Durrell. Another example is Hala Halim's *Alexandrian Cosmopolitanism: An Archive* (2013). Halim presents an important study of cosmopolitan Alexandria in which she criticizes the Eurocentric conceptions of cosmopolitanism and refutes the orientalist views about Alexandria. Her book is a comparative study of different literary representations of Alexandria consisting of four chapters about Cavafy, Forster, Durrell, and in the fourth, she brings the voice of a Syro-Lebanese of Greek origin named Bernard de Zogheb. Halim sets the European works in a dialogue with Arabic ones such as Mahfouz's *Miramar* and Al'Kharrat's *City of Saffron*. John Rodenbeck's "Alexandria in Cavafy, Durrell and Tsirkas" (2001) compares the Greek world of Alexandria on various works of the three authors under discussion. Bruce Redwine's "The Ancient Egyptian Context of *Alexandria Quartet*" (2016) explores the history and tradition of the ancient Egyptian civilization in Alexandria.

The depiction of cosmopolitanism and the colonial period in modern Alexandria has also inspired many studies of the city from a postcolonial perspective. However, most of these studies tend to compare Cairo and Alexandria, and do not particularly focus on Alexandria itself. The colonial encounter in Alexandria and Cairo in fiction by both western and Egyptian writers is the subject of various PhD dissertations, such as Kenneth

Seigneurie's "Space and the Colonial Encounter in Lawrence Durrell, Qūt el-Kouloub, and Naguib Mahfouz" (1995) and Rachid Benfares' "East-West Encounter in Lawrence Durrell's the *Alexandria Quartet* and Naguib Mahfouz's the *Cairo Trilogy*" (2016).

There are few studies of the depiction of Alexandria in Aciman's *Out of Egypt* and Abdul Meguid's *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* compared to Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. Riham Elhawary's "Cosmopolitanism in Selected Novels" explores the concept of cosmopolitanism in two different colonial sites: Calcutta in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and *In An Antique Land* (1992) and Alexandria in Abdul Meguid's *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* and *Birds of Amber* (2000). Rania Naser's article "The City as Represented in Teju Cole's *Open City* and Abdul Meguid's *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*" (2017) explores how Cole and Abdul Meguid translated their experiences of New York and Alexandria into their works.

Themes of nostalgia and exile in Aciman's memoir have received scholarly interest. For instance, Charlotte Rouchouze's "Representations of the Twentieth Century Jewish Departure out of North Africa" (2012) is an examination of Jewish novels, films, and memoirs from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt, including the remembrance of home in Aciman's *Out of Egypt.* The collection *Censorship and Exile* (2015) includes Katja Sarkowsky's article "*Out of Egypt*, *Out of Place*: Memory, Exile and Diaspora in André Aciman's and Edward Said's Memoirs," which compares both authors' narratives of the self and dislocation.

This study presents an original approach. In *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*, Timothy Brennan argues that studies of cosmopolitan literature often exclude Arabic literature in favour of literatures in European languages, and do not "[thematize] colonialism" (42). Therefore, this study contributes to the scholarship of cosmopolitan literature by incorporating both Arabic and Western literatures in order to conduct a comparative in-depth

analysis of the literary representations of cosmopolitan Alexandria. Furthermore, this study

brings in more multiplicity and diversity by drawing attention to the voices of Alexandrian

minorities. Also, this examination of Western and Egyptian representations of the history of

modern Egypt is meant to demonstrate the validity of Said's claim that "history is made by

men and women, just as it can also be unmade and re-written, always with various silences

and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated" (*Orientalism* xiv).

The selections of texts in this project retell the history of Alexandria in the first half of the

twentieth century, each text structured according to its author's background and perception of

the city.

  This study looks at three types of postcolonial representations: representations of

colonizers in *Alexandria Quartet*, representations of Alexandrian minorities in *Out of Egypt*,

and self-representations in *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*. Using Said's conception of

orientalism and other postcolonial critics, this study argues that *Alexandria Quartet* and *Out

of Egypt* feature orientalist representations of Alexandria, while *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*

uses realism in order to counteract those representations. Abdul Meguid's representation

seems to indicate that if realism is a form of humanizing, then orientalism vitiates that.

Durrell's and Aciman's orientalist representations are characterized by elitism and

westernization of the cosmopolitan city they depict, and by dehumanization and degradation

of its inhabitants. Abdul Meguid's realist narration, on the other hand, is meant to deconstruct

and counteract these images by representing a middle-class Egyptian Alexandria, by

humanizing the Alexandrians, and by voicing their hardships during the time of occupation.

  The thesis is composed of four chapters. The first discusses the history of Egypt

between the period of Muhammed Ali and Nasser, setting the scene and the timeframe for the

texts under discussion. This chapter outlines the various political, economic, and cultural

changes Egypt experienced during this time, such as Muhammad Ali's modernization, British

intervention, the two World Wars, and the Egyptianization of Alexandria during Nasser's reign. The aims of the chapter are to provide context for these texts and to reflect the importance of this period in shaping the Egyptians' national identity. Most importantly, the historical background demonstrates the strategic position of Alexandria to the world, including both the British colonizers and the colonized Egyptians.

The second chapter, "Representation of Alexandria in the *Alexandria Quartet*," discusses Durrell's representation of Alexandria before and during the Second World War in the four volumes of the *Alexandria Quartet*. The chapter argues that Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* is an orientalist representation of Alexandria, and positions the tetralogy within the trajectory of orientalism that had begun with Lane. As an orientalist, Durrell's narrator Darley serves as the voice for the Egyptians, representing them through the lens of binary oppositions that Said discusses in *Orientalism*. Further, Durrell marginalizes the modern history, and by implication the culture, of the Egyptians, what Amilcar Cabral considers "the product of […] history as the flower is the product of a plant" (55). Durrell depicts Alexandria as a Hellenistic city, rather than an Egyptian city, by highlighting its Greek history and ignoring its Egyptian heritage. Durrell's Alexandria is an example of colonial cosmopolitanism because of its segregation of natives from foreigners, a dynamic observed by Frantz Fanon. Durrell's cosmopolitan Alexandria reserves its privileges for the elite, both Europeans and Egyptians. Although the historical context of the *Alexandria Quartet* is the Second World War, Durrell represents a "fragment of reality" (Rooney & Sakr 1) of the war and the corruption of the British intervention. What is more important than the war for Durrell is the factionalism within the Eastern societies, particularly the strained relationship between Muslims and Copts and the consequent Copt conspiracy; such emphasis on division among colonized peoples is an orientalist tradition and part of the imperial enterprise.

The third chapter, "Revisiting Cosmopolitan Alexandria in André Aciman's *Out of Egypt,"* discusses the representation of Alexandria from the perspective of an Alexandrian minority, André Aciman, a Jewish writer of western origin whose ancestors immigrated to Alexandria. Aciman's *Out of Egypt* is a memoir that reflects the influence of the *Alexandria Quartet* on his perception of the city, giving the representation an orientalist stance. *Out of Egypt* demonstrates Aciman's broad knowledge of the Egyptian culture, which he uses in his orientalist and nostalgic account of the cosmopolitan past in Alexandria. His work represents what I term a "reductionist conception" of cosmopolitanism, which is manifested in his Jewish community and in Victoria College. Furthermore, he regards the expulsion of Jews from Alexandria as the point of decline of the cosmopolitan Alexandria he knew. *Out of Egypt* pictures a transitional period in which the multilingual, multireligious, and multi-ethnic city is becoming a city of one language, one religion, and one nationality. The chapter ends with a discussion of Paul Theroux's *The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean* as an example of the reach of the monolithic city that Aciman foresees.

The fourth chapter, "*No One Sleeps in Alexandria*: Writing Back to Empire," discusses Abdul Meguid's *No One Sleeps in Alexandria,* which writes back to and counteracts Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, using the mode of realism to construct its representation. The chapter theorizes realism in the West and in Egypt to position *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* in the larger context of realism, and reads it as a counter-discourse to what the *Alexandria Quartet* either misrepresented or marginalized. In contrast to the elitism that is present in both the *Alexandria Quartet* and *Out of Egypt*, middle-class Alexandria and Egyptian characters dominate the scene of Abdul Meguid's novel. The Copt/Muslim relationship is a significant theme in *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*; it refutes the *Alexandria Quartet'*s allegation of sectarian tension between Muslims and Copts in Alexandria. *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* provides a large-scale narrative of the British occupation and the social

and political burdens of that occupation on Egypt. For instance, it depicts *corvée* (forced conscription) as a humiliating system that the British occupiers used for their own benefit, a specific example of the more general dominance they practiced over the indigenous population. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of Abdul Meguid's *Birds of Amber,* which disproves Aciman's claims that the Egyptian government oppression and expulsion of Jews marked the decline of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria.

Chapter One

Alexandria: History and Cosmopolitanism

"Alexandria was a model of an open cosmopolitan city-state—a city where every language of the region could be heard" (Moore, *Between* 880).

This chapter discusses the history of Alexandria as a cosmopolitan model within the history of Egypt in general, specifically the time between Muhammad Ali and Nasser, the historical contexts of the texts discussed here. History is a major component of this study, as it "is an unending dialogue between the present and the past" (Carr 30). An understanding of the history of Egypt and Alexandria is helpful in interpreting these texts and the motives behind their composition. The past of every nation is inseparable from, and important in shaping, its present: "[p]ast and present inform each other, each implies the other and … each co-exists with the other" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 4). This chapter views the political and social circumstances of Egypt in the imperial period to reflect the importance of that period to both Egypt and the West. This period marked the beginning of British occupation, the legacy of the Second World War, the end of the monarchy, and the effects of historic presidential decisions, and all of these factors inspired writers' interest in the city.

The city of Alexandria has a special position in Egyptian history. Many significant events that shaped the history of Egypt took place in Alexandria; for the Egyptians, it is "an important site in the national, anti-colonial struggle" (Starr 39). The French and later the British invaded Egypt through Alexandria's harbour; the spark of the 1919 revolution began there; and King Farouk abdicated there before being sent into exile. Gamal Abdel Nasser chose Alexandria as the site of his historic speech declaring the Suez Canal as Egyptian (Starr 39).

Alexandria is the second largest city in Egypt, a coastal city that served as a gateway connecting Egypt with the West. Its cosmopolitan nature came from its position between the various empires of the East and West, including the Greek and Ottoman empires. In ancient times, Alexandria was the third greatest city in the world, rivalling Athens and Rome for architectural, scientific, and artistic legacies (Pollard and Reid 15-16). *In Alexandria: City of Gifts and Sorrows from Hellenistic Civilization to Multiethnic Metropolis* (2014), A. J. Polyzoides claims there are two important eras in the history of Alexandria, beginning with its foundation by Alexander the Great, after whom it was named. The eastern and western ports of Alexandria were linked through the Nile to the Red Sea and India, thus contributing to the centrality of the city to the trade route between the East and the West. At that time, Alexandria became the center of knowledge in the Hellenistic period. King Ptolemy I built the lighthouse, which counted as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and the Grand Library and Museum, which attracted scholars around the world to work in it, and whose librarians were appointed by the ruler (Polyzoides 76). In the Roman period, Alexandria became a center of trading more than of knowledge, with its many temples and monumental buildings, including Pompey's Pillar and Cleopatra's Needles, to mention only a few, giving evidence of its rich Roman history. Its importance as a center of trading with Western countries extended during Arab rule, but this importance deteriorated in the Ottoman and Mameluke eras.

Alexandria's second great period of rebirth came in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, when Muhammad Ali foresaw the potential of Alexandria and revived its port to connect the city with Europe. During Muhammad Ali's reign, Alexandria became "a machine for transforming Egypt" (Mansel 88). The modern history of Alexandria began in 1798, when Napoleon invaded Egypt through Alexandria in order to evade the expansion of the British empire to the east. At that time, Egypt was part of the

Ottoman empire. During the three years of French intervention in Egypt, the French modernized Egyptian cities for military purposes, mimicking the western style of roads, buildings, and gardens (Hopwood 3). After three years, the French troops were defeated by the British and later both armies left Egypt. Then, the Ottoman sultan appointed Muhammad Ali as a viceroy of Egypt in 1805. Later, Muhammad Ali and his dynasty undertook development and modernization projects for Egypt.

Muhammad Ali and his son Ismail wanted to make Cairo and Alexandria as advanced and modern as Paris and London, and their modernization efforts created "a fascinating chapter in Alexandria's long history" (Fahmy, "Cavafy" 263). The population of Alexandria was about 5000 at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and its diversity, more so than that of Cairo, allowed its cosmopolitan ambience to thrive. The renovations and the refoundation of the city under Muhammad Ali attracted foreigners and Egyptians who were seeking employment and ensured a prosperous future for the city. As a result, the population grew dramatically, from 8000 in 1805 to 60,000 in 1821-1840, about 5000 of whom were foreigners, to reach 270,000 in 1874, of whom 46,000 were foreigners. Abdul Azim Ramadan further notes that Muhammad Ali's policy with the foreigners boosted the amalgamation of the foreigners with the Egyptians. The inhabitants cooperated in constructing the city and reviving its ancient position as the most important city and trading route in the Mediterranean Sea.

Alexandria's good infrastructure and productive irrigation system helped to increase cotton production and export to the west. Projects such as the construction of the Mahmmudiya Canal not only attracted immigrants but also bolstered Alexandria's status as a centre of commerce in the Mediterranean (Ramadan 95). The Mahmmudiya Canal gave Alexandria "a new life. Trade expended, European merchants flocked to the city, and Alexandria was supplied with fresh water by the Mahmmudiya Canal" (Fahmy, "Cavafy"

267). The boom in the cotton industry in 1840 made Alexandria the most important cotton supplier to Europe.

To encourage them to move to Alexandria, Muhammad Ali permitted Europeans to own property and establish businesses. Different ethnic and religious groups formed their own communities while building the city with a shared sense of belonging that fostered a cosmopolitan atmosphere. In "Alexandria 1860-1960: The Cosmopolitan Identity," Robert Mabro states that the Alexandrian society was "fragmented" and composed of different groups according to their nationalities and they used to interact with each other through "commerce, finance, shipping, industry and other services" (261). Many ethnic groups, such as Greek, Italian, and British, settled permanently in Alexandria, bringing with them European design and education. By the end of the nineteenth century, Alexandria had a modern architectural style comparable to European cities such as Paris.

Alexandria's cosmopolitan atmosphere and cultural multiplicity were evident in various ways, such as European films shown with Arabic subtitles, or street and shop names in Arabic and in other languages. In "Towards A Social History of Modern Alexandria," Khaled Fahmy explained the cosmopolitan characteristics of the city as "not only manifest […] in the number of languages some elite members spoke, but also in the confusion that a newcomer often encounter when setting foot in the city with the Babel-like language of its streets" (Fahmy, "Towards" 304-305). In 1927, the population of Alexandria was about 340,000, of whom 230,000 were Egyptian. Of the 110,000 who were foreigners, 36,000 were Greek, 22,000 Italian,15,000 British, and 9000 French. There were around 20,000 Jews, both from amongst Egyptians and foreigners. In 1950, the number of Egyptians increased to half a million, the Greeks to 100,000, and the Italians to 30,000, whereas the British population had decreased to only 10,000 (Polyzoides 117-118). The total of Jews also increased to 30,000.

There were more than five languages spoken, different currencies, different schools, and various religious institutions. The diversity that characterised the city helped each community preserve its "distinctive marks of identity" (Fahmy, "Towards" 305). Alexandria became the summer resort for the king, the government, the elite, the British, and the foreigners residing in Cairo who would flee the heat of Cairo for the breeze and seashore beauty in Alexandria. Ramadan argues that since obtaining semi-independence, Alexandria expanded geographically as many new residential areas opened, and experienced cultural development with the establishment of different museums, such as Natural Museum, the Greek and Roman Museum and the Alexandria Aquarium, built in 1930. Many historical monuments, such as the Morqusiyya Church (Saint Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral) which was built in the first century, were renovated.

During Nasser's regime, a financial recovery led to a great industrial and educational expansion, which targeted the rural areas. Due to the political circumstances, there was a plan to renew Egypt and wipe out the British influence by Egyptianizing Egypt in general and Cairo and Alexandria in particular. In Alexandria, for instance, foreign street names were replaced by Arabic names. Since the First World War, Alexandria had gradually lost many of its cosmopolitan characteristics and became an Arabic city. Nowadays, the streets, historical buildings, unique mixture of architectural styles, and tramways tell the history of the city and its lost cosmopolitan atmosphere.

In an interview with Michel Fargeon, Egyptian director Youssef Chahine described Alexandria before and after the decline of cosmopolitanism:

> All religions, all cultures, all kinds of ideas lived side by side in that
> Alexandria. There were no barriers between people: Arabs, Greeks,
> Armenians, Italians, Jews, Russians and French were all friends … We spoke
> almost all these languages, not very well perhaps, but we made ourselves

understood with a few words and phrases … This melting pot of people and

cultures has vanished today, and this is something I bitterly regret. (48)

Chahine and other writers translated their feelings for the loss of the cosmopolitan

atmosphere in Alexandria through their works.

The Political scene in Egypt:

During the reign of Khedive Ismail, Egypt suffered bankruptcy, which had significant

political and economic effects. The shortage of funds and financial sources forced Khedive

Ismail to sell his share of the Suez Canal to the British government, thus bringing the Suez

Canal and the Egyptian monarchy under British control. To its rivals, Britain justified its

existence in Egypt in terms of keeping peace and order and safeguarding its interests in the

Suez Canal region; consequently, "the Canal soon became something more than itself; to

Britain a lifeline of empire, to the Egyptians a symbol of hated foreign domination"

(Hopwood 8).

The political changes that occurred during the British intervention, the Capitulations

(*imtiyazat* in Arabic) granted to foreigners, and the mixed courts (*tribunaux mixtes*)[9] were

key factors in the burgeoning rise of nationalist spirit and the emergence of various political

parties in Egypt. The British army first came to Egypt during the Urabi Revolution (1879-

1882) under the request of the Khedive to supress the revolution. Afaf Marsot, an Egyptian

scholar, argues that the advent of the British military force in the country was an invitation

from Khedive Ismail "to occupy his country in order to restore his authority" (88), and was

therefore a personal demand to save the ruler's position rather than the country. The British

army reached Egypt through Alexandria's port and bombarded the city, which caused

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[9] The Mixed Courts was a legal system founded by Ismail Pasha in 1867. These courts were

for cases between Egyptians and foreigners or between foreigners of different nationalities,

and they followed French civil codes and some Islamic principles.

considerable damage. The British managed to suppress the revolution and Urabi and his fellow nationalists were exiled to Ceylon. The bombardment marked the beginning of the British occupation of Egypt, which lasted for seventy-two years.

In 1883, Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, was appointed as the Consul-General in Egypt until 1907. His policy was to change "Britain's role in Egypt from that of an advisor to that of a mentor and guardian" (Marsot, *Egypt and Cromer* 59). He controlled Egypt's finances and governance, and he advocated a long British occupation in Egypt. As a result of his policy, and with the increase in importance of Egypt and of the Suez Canal as a strategic route that connected the British colonies together in 1914, Britain unilaterally declared Egypt as its protectorate, with the Consul-General becoming the High Commissioner. At the beginning of the First World War, Britain imposed martial law and more British troops landed in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal, the lifeline to both Britain and its rivals at that time, and to prevent any internal or external threat. The financial situation of Egypt was severe. The peasants became poorer while "hoarders and war profiteers took advantage of the war and made substantial gains despite the misery of the larger population" (Botman 26). During the British occupation, the number of foreigners increased in Egypt, and most of them occupied commercial posts, benefitting from the Capitulations that provided support and security for the foreigners. The British political and economic domination over Egypt led to exploitation of natural resources, as the British provided and offered good job opportunities and improved the markets (Porter, *Lions* 228). British officers and the Egyptian elite who had received European education occupied influential governmental posts, while lower class Egyptians were marginalized and kept busy in agriculture.

British colonization crystallized elitism in Egypt and established a more "rigidly stratified society, with a few rich and powerful families at the top and the mass of the population, impoverished and cut off from political power, below" (Botman 21). Egyptian

upper classes, who dwelled in separate cities and districts from the mass population, lived very sophisticated lifestyles, dressed in *tarboosh* and suits, and sent their children to different schools, mostly private ones. The rural areas of Egypt suffered from overpopulation, leading to a tremendous increase in unemployment and illiteracy. While the masses were busy working in agriculture on lands owned by upper classes and received little income, the economics, politics, and future of Egypt were in the hands of the upper classes, who never felt the needs or shared demands of their fellow Egyptians. While the peasants suffered from corvée,[10] forced conscription, and diseases and epidemics such as malaria and bilharziasis, the landowners and upper-class people lived luxurious European-style lives and received advanced health care. The landlords and rich people bought more land to enjoy the prosperity of cotton industry, so that over 50% of Egyptian land was owned by the rich while each peasant had no more than a single *feddan*, acre (Vatikiotis 324). The Egyptian educational systems and institutions reflected the stratification of society: education and schooling were expensive, so that poor families could not afford to send their children to school.

After its victory in the First World War, the British Empire expanded its geopolitical space by annexing new colonies such as Cameroon, South-West Africa, and Togoland. Though it extended to new areas, it could not sustain the expansion and its hegemony and strength decreased. Revolutions occurred in most of the British colonies, causing insecurity and loss of control in the region: "the world at large, outside the empire, was becoming much more familiar with anti-European, anti-colonial feeling" (Porter, *Lions* 235). Britain's many promises of self-determination and independence for the Arabs were not fulfilled. Therefore, nationalist and resistance movements became more active and powerful.

Egyptian nationalism spread throughout Egypt, rejecting the presence of the British colonization and chanting "Egypt for the Egyptians." A delegation, known as *Wafd* in Arabic,

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[10] Corvée (an unpaid or low-paid forced labour system) is discussed in Chapter Four.

led by Saad Zaghloul proposed negotiations with the British about the right to self-determination for Egypt. However, when the British refused to negotiate with Zaghloul, he returned to Egypt and gave speeches to inspire nationalism and a desire for liberation. The arrest and exile of Zaghloul to Malta sparked the 1919 revolution. According to Artemis Cooper, the Egyptians "count 1919 as their first revolution" (14) because it was the first public demonstration against the British colonial authority. Egyptians from different social communities, including students, professional workers, and women, participated, leading to bloodshed between the British soldiers and the Egyptians: "Egyptians found that their desire for national self-determination intensified and provided the basis of the protest" (Botman 28).

Mahfouz witnessed the 1919 revolution when he was seven years old; it was "the one thing which most shook the security of [his] childhood" (El-Enani, *Pursuit* 3) and that awakened nationalist feelings in him:

> From a small room on the roof [of our house] I used to see the demonstrations of the 1919 revolution. I saw women take part in the demonstrations on donkey-drawn carts…. I often saw English soldiers firing at the demonstrators…. My mother used to pull me back from the window, but I wanted to see everything. (al-Ghitani 16)

Mahfouz's experiences of the 1919 revolution inspired the *Cairo Trilogy*, which helped to immortalize the revolution in the minds of Egyptians and to inspire other Egyptian writers to create realistic fictional depictions of their country's history. The revolution inspired the Egyptian government to seek independence, and inspired the public to demand their rights. Although the 1919 revolution was not a complete turning point in Egyptian politics, it did pave the way for later revolutions, and "[a] national literature in Egypt concerned with the depiction and dramatization of native life, society and its problems developed after 1919" (Vatikiotis 469). However, in her study of the literary and cinematic narratives of the 1919

revolution *Egypt 1919: The Revolution in Literature and Film* (2020), Dina Heshmat argues that the literary representation of the revolution in Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* seems to have marginalized peasants, the working class, and women, and neglected their roles, demands and struggles. Her study, therefore, recovers the stories of the unprivileged from the margin and brings to bear the voice of the subaltern.

Britain sent Lord Milner, a British colonial officer, to investigate the causes of the uprising. His report stated that the Egyptians opposed the protectorate and that independence must be granted to them. Later, Zaghloul was freed and considered a legitimate spokesman for Egyptian aspiration. Britain, out of fear of losing Egypt and its important strategic location, had to negotiate with the Egyptians and offer them concessions as a way to sustain British presence in the region and therefore protect its interests.

As a result of the ongoing independence negotiations, various nationalist political parties emerged, each of which propagated a different ideology about the future of Egypt. One of them was the Wafd party, led by Saad Zaghloul, who won the support of marginalized communities, such as the fellaheen, who constituted the mass population of Egypt, by offering them a chance to participate in the armed struggle against the British colonial regime. Zaghloul gave them the opportunity to speak and to elect "incorporating Muslims, Copts, and other minorities into an explicitly secular nation" (Botman 29). The Wafd party urged Egyptian politicians and officers to abandon working with the British, leading many officers to resign and join the public strike. British commanders lost many of their supporters among the Egyptian officials, which put more pressure on the British empire to offer concessions to the Egyptians. Lord Milner was sent to Egypt to negotiate a treaty that would confer semi-independence on Egypt whilst British sovereignty would continue over "Egyptian foreign defence policy, Suez canal, the Sudan, and the rights of the foreign nationals and minorities residing in Egypt" (Whidden 24). However, Zaghloul insisted on

complete independence and democracy or nothing. The Wafd party was considered radical

because of its insistence on a sovereign independence. British officials, in return, tried to

rupture the party from within by inflaming disputes among its members and regarding

Zaghloul's demands as obstacles in the negotiation process.

The increasing popularity of Zaghloul as a national figure and leader of the national

Egyptian movement made it hard for the British to defeat him or limit his authority.

Therefore, the British surreptitiously supported the monarchy and other parties in order to

weaken the Wafd. They also announced that independence negotiations should be made with

'moderate' members of the Wafd and other parties in order to distance Zaghloul's political

influence. In 1921, Zaghloul was exiled to the Seychelles because he refused to obey British

martial law, which prohibited him from participating in any political activity. On 28 February

1922[11], Britain announced a unilateral treaty under which Egypt would become independent

but certain conditions were imposed: "Egypt's foreign and military affairs, and the affairs of

her foreign residents were kept in British hands, and a British garrison retained there to guard

the canal" (Porter 259). It was not complete independence, because British colonial enterprise

continued to exercise hegemony over the Suez Canal, Egypt's access to the outside world.

The period from 1922 to 1952, "the liberal era," saw four powers controlling the

political scene of Egypt: the palace, the British, the Wafd, and other minority parties.

Political parties introduced a new elected parliament and formed a new Constitution, but this

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[11] After independence in 1922, education and elimination of illiteracy became priorities for

the government, leading to a rapid expansion in the number of schools around Egypt and in

the number of students enrolled in those schools. However, most of the schools and

educational growth were concentrated in the cities and urban places, while rural areas

received basic education in the form of what was then known as "Kuttab" (Vatikiotis 455).

did not stop the internal conflict and disputes among the liberal parties. After the 1922 Declaration, Sultan Fuad, who became the Sultan of Egypt and Sudan in 1917, substituted the title of sultan for king. Egypt became a constitutional monarchy, with a new constitution promulgated and elections authorized for the parliament. Nevertheless, Britain succeeded in transferring the tension between Britain and the nationalists to the nationalists and the Palace (Marlowe 259). At that time, the liberal parties, such as the Umma party, were leading evolutionary and socialist ideologies to move Egypt towards political and social modernity. The British welcomed and supported the liberal parties because they "identified with modern, western culture and submerged the religious and ethnic characteristics of the nation, which British agents regarded as threats to the British occupation" (Whidden 25). Surprisingly, then, it was not only the British officials who dismissed the ability of Egyptian society to govern itself, but members of liberal parties and the monarchy also believed in the necessity to modernize Egypt following the European political and social system as the British did, before claiming full independence.

The struggle between the different parties within Egypt continued. British colonial policy of the time was to defeat any strong power emerging from a colonized society by creating another opposing power, from within the local society, to weaken it. In this case, Lord Allenby, British High Commissioner, formed the Liberal Constitutional Party, which was composed of the elite and landowners who had not previously been engaged in politics, as well as members of the Wafd, excluding Zaghloul. The party was meant to support the elite position and needs, and to oppose the radical Wafd party.

Zaghloul opposed the 1922 treaty and considered it "cheating" Egypt; with his return from exile, the struggle between the Wafd and the Liberal Constitutional Party intensified, as the British hoped. In 1923, the Wafd won the parliament election and Zaghloul became the prime minister; accordingly, he refused the treaty and considered it unilateral. In 1924, the

assassination of Sir Lee Stack, the British commander in Sudan, eventually led to Zaghloul's deposition by Allenby, and Britain abandoning negotiations for Egyptian independence.

In the 1930s, the political scene in Egypt focused on the composition of a new Constitution. However, this was a period of "loss of hope," marked by a great gap between the palace and the statesmen (Marsot 106). Internationally, the crisis between Britain and other European rivals increased and "Britain softened its position [with Egypt] and became amendable to compromise" (Botman 38). 1936 was a historical moment for the Egyptians when Britain declared Egypt a self-determining independent country. In that year, King Fouad died and his son Farouk ascended to the throne, reigning until 1952. The Wafd won the elections, and Mustafa Nahhas became the prime minister until 1944. Nahhas continued negotiating an independence treaty with the British high commissioner for Egypt, Miles Lampson. Some of the articles of the 1922 treaty were modified in the 1936 version, and the Capitulations were abolished in the Montreux Convention in 1937. Thus, protection of foreigners and their interests were no longer a British responsibility; the number of courts (*tribunaux mixtes*) that dealt with foreigners' issues was reduced, the British Occupation became the Anglo-Egyptian Military Alliance, and the official representative of Britain in Egypt would be called an ambassador.

In 1936, the situation in Egypt had changed, as the treaty had given Egyptians more power and pride. Before 1936, power was in the hands of the British occupiers, who enjoyed the use of the Capitulations of the 1922 treaty, which protected foreigners' rights. Foreigners occupied superior positions in all walks of life, including education, business, social status, and authority; Egyptians had to seek the help of foreigners for anything to be done in government departments, which pushed some Egyptians to declare foreign nationality to enjoy those privileges within their own country. After 1936 and with the abolition of some of the Capitulations, the situation was reversed, as the Egyptians now held power over their own

country and were no longer considered inferior. Foreigners were forced to seek Egyptian connections to accomplish their goals, which forced many permanent residents in Egypt to obtain Egyptian nationality (Marlowe 311).

In a *Mediterraneans* interview, Naguib Mahfouz describes Alexandria before and after the 1936 Treaty as a

> European city where Italian, French, Greek or English were heard far more often than Arabic. The city was beautiful and so clean that one could have eaten off the streets . . . But all that was for the foreigners. We could only observe from the outside . . . until the Treaty of 1936 which subjected foreigners to the same law as Egyptians ...When the Capitulations were abolished, foreigners in Alexandria were forced to change their attitude. They no longer owned the country; we Egyptians were no longer second-class citizens. They realized they and we would be appearing before the same magistrates so we began to feel more at ease. The characteristics of European life were still very present; but once the capitulations were abolished they became accessible to us as well. (128-29)

After the treaty and the abolition of mixed courts and Capitulations, the cosmopolitan ambiance continued in Alexandria as the Egyptians believed that it was their city and they were no longer outsiders. The 1936 Treaty gave the Egyptians the freedom to formulate their internal and external politics, and more importantly "mark[ed] the end of that epoch in Anglo-Egyptian relations which opened with the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882" (Marlowe 304). In 1937, Egyptian statesmen called for social and political reforms including a "national policy for an independent Egypt" (Vatikiotis 312). The Egyptian government permitted British forces to continue safeguarding the Suez Canal for more than twenty years, and some troops would stay in Alexandria and Cairo until the British government decided to

end it; meanwhile, Sudan would be left entirely for Britain. The 1936 Treaty elevated the spirit of nationalism and hope among the Egyptians until the eruption of the Second World War.

In the 1930s, global disasters such as the Great Depression and the Second World War changed Egypt economically, socially, and demographically. The Great Depression began in America in 1929 and soon spread worldwide. In Egypt, whose economy depended largely on cotton manufacture, cotton export to the West declined, prices and wages decreased, and many workers were released from their jobs and replaced with machines. Many peasants were forced by unemployment to migrate to Cairo and Alexandria and other cities, leaving their homes and families in search of jobs and financial stability.

Following the Depression, the Second World War overwhelmed Egypt with further social and economic disasters that "disrupted the normal cycle of agriculture" (Hopwood 19). Agricultural exports continued to decline, prices increased, and poverty and unemployment became rampant, accompanied by rises in the cost of living and declines in health and food consumption (Vatikiotis 324). Unemployment increased in the cities because British business owners in Egypt closed their shops and dismissed their employees, leading to more hatred and resentment towards foreigners in general and the British in particular. Egyptians were "blaming the British army for their misery, and accusing them of eating the country's food" (Marsot, *History* 118). Due to the scarcity of job opportunities, over 200,000 Egyptians worked with the British army (Hopwood 18).

During the war and despite the 1936 Treaty, the Anglo-Egyptian relationship deteriorated as Britain intervened once more and practiced its hegemony over the Egyptian government. The British government doubted the loyalty of the Egyptians and of King Farouk to Britain, and feared a possible collaboration between Egypt and British enemies such as Germany and Italy. Britain imposed martial law over Egypt and sent more troops to

collaborate with France in fighting the Italian and the German armies (the Axis), which were under the leadership of Rommel, from Libya. Britain supported its army with soldiers from its colonies, such as India, Australia, and Africa, to fight the Axis. Egypt was used as a war base for these troops from many lands who fought as though they were British nationals. At that time, the Egyptian government was in a difficult position, having to demonstrate support for Britain while remaining wary of a possible Axis victory. In addition, the Egyptian public resented the government because of its quick acceptance of British domination, sparking anti-British demonstrations throughout the country. Demonstrations filled the streets "shouting anti-British slogans, while the government did not reply. British officers forced King Farouk either to abdicate or appoint Nahhas, who would stabilize the political situation among the Egyptians and would support the Allies, in what became known as the 4 February Incident. When Nahhas formed his government, he immediately announced the neutral position of his government towards the ongoing war.

As the war between the Axis and the Allies continued, the Axis armies moved toward western Egyptian cities including Marsa Matruh, with the Delta as their destination. They planned to proceed further and capture Alexandria along with the Suez Canal, which, they thought, would be more devastating to the British Empire than capturing London (Vatikiotis 190). Not far from Alexandria, the Allies and the Axis faced each other in the two battles of Al-Alamein on Egyptian lands, creating insecurity and turmoil for all of Egypt. Consequently, living conditions became hard; people were frightened, and some foreigners left Egypt, before the Allies won both battles and forced the Axis to retreat.

By the end of the war and in response to the public protests, the Egyptian government resumed the negotiations of the 1936 Treaty with Britain, demanding the removal of British troops from Egyptian lands, especially the Suez Canal: "Egypt resented being treated like an independent country in name but like a British colony in practice" (Goldschmidt 90). Britain

agreed to remove its troops from Cairo and Alexandria, but insisted on keeping those who were in the Suez Canal because of the importance of the Canal Zone not only as a route to India but to the Gulf and its oil.

Between 1949 and 1952, Egypt faced many internal troubles, and the Egyptians lost trust in their government. After the failure of the evacuation negotiations, Egypt ended the 1936 Treaty unilaterally, so that "the British military presence in Egypt was illegal" (Vatikiotis 368), and this led to demonstrations and guerrilla warfare against the British. On one side, King Farouk was indulging himself in luxurious lifestyles that affected his respect and reliability in the eyes of the Egyptians; on the other side, the Wafd became the dominant party after forming the government at the British request in 1942 (Goldschmidt 94). The demonstrations against the king and the government, led mainly by students, continued to 1952.

1951 and 1952 saw agitation, demonstrations, and instability throughout the country, among the army, and between the king and the government, as "it was […] suspected that the King favoured a return to a palace-controlled government" (Vatikiotis 370). The tension between the citizen, the government, the army, and the king paved the way for the 1952 revolution. Some members of the army wanted to stop both the control of the king and the ongoing British humiliation of Egypt. Those members gathered secretly and made plans to completely end the regime and the British occupation. They were called "Free Officers," and Jamal Abdul Nasser was their chairman. Although other societies were also secretly plotting military coups against the king, they failed due to the British control of the political scene and their support of the king (Vatikioties 372-73).

On 23 July 1952, a *coup d'état* led by the Free Officers succeeded, and King Farouk was forced to abdicate and leave the country. Britain was no longer as strong an empire as it was in 1882, and was thus unable to stop the coup and restore the monarchy. Therefore, "the

Free Officers successfully took over control of the government and worked to neutralize, if not altogether destroy, *ancien regime* political leaders and groups" (Vatikiotis 380).

The Free Officers' rule marked the end of both the previous regime and Muhammad Ali's dynasty. Egypt was no longer a kingdom, and a new Republican Constitution was formed. Britain left Egypt and the Canal Zone, but insisted on keeping the Canal as an international zone that was not under Egyptian control. However, the issue of the High Dam of Aswan brought Britain back to a confrontation with Egypt. The withdrawal of some countries, such as the United States, from funding the High Dam project intensified this tension. Furthermore, Nasser thought that what was happening in the Suez Canal was an imperialist practice and that the Suez Canal Company was an imperialist company within his state for its control of the canal and its careless attitude toward the loss of life among Egyptian workers (Mansel 279). Therefore, Nasser decided to nationalize the canal. In his visit to Alexandria, Nasser publicly announced the nationalization and imposition of Egyptian control over the Suez Canal:

> We are realizing our glory and our grandeur . . . I proclaim the nationalization of the Suez Canal. The canal belongs to us. From its revenues we will construct the dam. Four years ago hour for hour, on this spot, Farouk left Egypt. I today in the name of the people take the Company. This evening our Egyptian canal will be directed by Egyptians. Egyptians! Egyptians! (Turner 180)

That decision sparked the Tripartite attack in 1956 between Egypt on one side and Britain, France, and Israel on the other, known as the Suez War. At the end of the war, the three countries withdrew their troops. In 1956, a new constitution was promulgated, and Egypt became a democratic republic. Nasser won the election and became the first Egyptian President. According to Hopwood, Nasser "was the symbol of the overall struggle against

Western domination and the takeover of the Canal was the symbolic of the gradual

reclamation by the Arabs of the heritage" (50). With the Egyptianization of the Suez Canal,

all Egyptian territories were under the sovereignty of Egyptian government.

Chapter Two

Representation of Alexandria in the *Alexandria Quartet*

> For hundreds of years Western writers, travellers, poets, and painters have
> depicted the East in a manner that accords more with their own fantasies than
> with reality. Out of their paintings and writings has emerged a series of images
> that continue to feed the popular view of the "other" in general, and of Islam
> and Middle Eastern society in particular: images of sensual harems and of
> cruel sultans, of women versed in the arts of erotic play and tantalizing desire,
> seducing men both passionate and violent.
>
> Brian V. Street (654)

This passage explains how the imagined configurations by Western writers and travellers
through images of "sensual harems" and "cruel sultans" have defined the East in terms of
binary opposition to a civilized West. Brian Street notes that the West uses art, including
paintings and literature, to construct and represent the East with qualities opposite to the
West, and to use these stereotypical images to justify the imperial enterprise. The Egyptian
city of Alexandria is not an exception in this context. As discussed in the introduction, the
material representations of Egypt and Egyptian culture as seen in exhibitions and travelogues
are examples of what Street discusses. This chapter deals with a twentieth-century text that
represents an image of Alexandria that has been as pervasive and influential on the Western
imagination as the images of Egypt constructed in exhibitions and travelogues since the
nineteenth century.

This chapter draws on Edward Said's concept of orientalism to engage with representations of the East in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. Durrell's orientalist perspective can be seen in his depictions of the city and its inhabitants, the cosmopolitan atmosphere, the festivals, and the relations between Copts and Muslims. Durrell's orientalist image of cosmopolitan Alexandria was influenced in part by the works of Constantine Cavafy and E.M. Forster. The chapter also examines Durrell's depiction of Alexandrian women and the effects of the Second World War on Alexandria.

The first part of the chapter examines the first three volumes of the *Alexandria Quartet*: *Justine* (1957), *Balthazar* (1958), and *Mountolive* (1958), which depict pre-Second World War Alexandria. The second part examines *Clea* (1960), which takes place in Alexandria during the war. The chapter introduces the concept of orientalism and orientalist discourse, briefly engages with Cavafy, Forster, and Durrell and their respective works on Alexandria, while focusing on Durrell's representation of the colonial enterprise in Egypt in *Alexandria Quartet*. The final section examines Durrell's perception and depiction of the effects of the war on Alexandria, and whether *Clea* takes a different stance on the city and its people from its three predecessors, or whether it reinforces the image presented in the rest of Durrell's series.

Theorizing Orientalism

The term Orientalism is defined in *Webster's Dictionary* as "study of Eastern culture." It is a term related to the West and the East. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* notes that "the concepts 'Europe' and 'Orient', as polar opposites, have been created by Europeans, particularly in the context of European imperialism, to provide a positive, strong image of Europe, with which eastern civilizations (especially the Muslim world) can be negatively contrasted." The material representations of the East, particularly Egypt, which started early in the nineteenth century, played a major role in creating the binary opposition of West

versus East, which further crystallized the concept of orientalism. Orientalism is related to the idea of Western superiority and indifference, leading to cultural representations of the East that shape Western thought and perception of the East and create a dichotomy between Europe and the other. French and English orientalists romanticized and exoticized Arab culture, using certain stereotypical depictions as rationale for colonial intervention.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), one of the most influential studies in the field, outlines the construction of the Orient/East by the Occident/West, and the binary oppositions between them, in literature, education, and travel writing. Said theorizes Orientalism, arguing that the Orient is an "idea" constructed by Western writers, artists and travellers. Said describes the relationship between West and East as "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (*Orientalism* 5) in which the West is the superior and the East is the subordinate/inferior. Western domination is not only physical (over the land), but also discursive, as the West controls how the East perceives and speaks about itself, and in other situations the West "[speaks] for and [represents]" the East (*Orientalism* 6). Said's argument was developed from a plethora of European writers and artists who travelled to, painted, or wrote about the East. For instance, Gustave Flaubert's description of the Egyptian dancer Kuchuk Hanem, who was silent and passive, as "typically Oriental" (*Orientalism* 6) is an example of such discursive domination. In the particular context of Egypt, Said cites the example of Arthur Balfour's 1910 House of Commons speech in which he spoke not only *about* the Egyptians, but *for* them, as another example of Orientalism (*Orientalism* 35).

Using the policies of Balfour and Cromer with regard to Egypt as the model for his arguments, Said notes that in Western discourse "[t]here are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the

disposal of one or another Western power" (*Orientalism* 36). It is a relationship in which the superior (the West) dominates the inferior (the Orient) and exploits the Orient's land and natural resources. Knowledge of Egypt's civilization, geography, and people collected during the British colonization of the land under Balfour's command helped Britain to dominate Egypt and Cromer to govern it. Said argues that Balfour and Cromer were orientalist officials who looked down on the Egyptians and considered them inferior to the European race in every aspect (*Orientalism* 39). For Balfour and Cromer, the Orient must be "*contained* and *represented*" by the West (Said, *Orientalism* 40). In other words, the West gives itself the right to control and restrain the Orient (the stranger) and to construct it as the 'other' that is opposite to the 'self' (the familiar). Said argues that knowledge about the East which Western writers and artists constructed and widely circulated about the East is "not truth but representations" (*Orientalism* 21) saturated with "lies" and "myths" (*Orientalism* 6). Because of their familiarity and resonance, these "lies" and "myths" came to form rhetorical tropes of what Said has defined as an orientalist or colonialist discourse.

In *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule*, Rana Kabbani discusses Western travel narratives of the East and the influence of travellers' education and political and social affiliation on their interpretations (1). Like Said, Kabbani argues that travellers' writings focus more on the myths of the East than on the reality, which she calls "predetermined discourse" (10). She examines the construction of the Orient by Western writers such as Antoine Galland, Edward William Lane, T.E. Lawrence and Richard Burton and concludes that they represented validation of Western myths about the East.

In literature, the West sees the Orient through notions or binary oppositions, which originated from those myths. These notions "shape the languages, perception and form of the encounter between the East and the West" (Said, *Orientalism* 58), in that the West describes the East in language that positions itself favourably and the East as its opposite. These

notions or binary oppositions become the stereotypes according to which the East is perceived and portrayed, which present the West as rational, superior, developed, humane, active, liberal, and logical, and the East as irrational, inferior, primitive, savage, passive, inflexible, and sexually immoral (*Orientalism* 49). The dichotomous stereotypes of colonizer/colonized, superior/inferior, oppressor/oppressed, civilized/uncivilized and other such binary opposites are characteristic features of orientalist discourse. In *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*, David Spurr argues that in the colonial discourse, these stereotypes are constantly represented in different shapes and forms to justify the imperial enterprise and to affirm the validity of the colonized/colonizer binary (78). Spurr's argument explains the existence of these stereotypes in twentieth-century literary texts such as the *Alexandria Quartet*.

Generalization of stereotypes and binary oppositions became an aspect of the rhetoric of empire, as Albert Memmi argues. Western misrepresentation is not limited to the individual; however, Memmi claims that

> The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity ("They are this." "They are all the same."). If a colonized servant does not come in one morning, the colonizer will not say that she is ill, or that she is cheating, or that she is tempted not to abide by an oppressive contract . . .. He will say, "You can't count on them." It is not just a grammatical expression. He refuses to consider personal, private occurrences in his maid's life; that life in a specific sense does not interest him, and his maid does not exist as an individual. (129)

Memmi's observation of how the colonizer perceives the colonized corresponds with Said's in that both point out that the colonizer will never conceive of the colonized in "a positive light" (127); and will instead ascribe negative traits to the latter. Moreover, Memmi notes that

the colonizer generally uses the plural form, such as 'they are', when talking negatively about the colonized, to attribute individual misbehaviours to the collective.

The eroticization of the East is a dominant trope in orientalist discourse, which portrays Eastern women within a frame of sexuality and patriarchal oppression in order to exoticize the East and its people. Said argues that the West associates sex and exoticism with the Orient (*Orientalism* 188); therefore, Western discourse represents the Orient, particularly women, as exotic and sexually uninhibited. In "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues that the West constructs its image of Eastern women according to common categories such as "victims of male violence," "victims of the Arab familial system," "victims of the economic development process," and "victims of the economic basis of the Islamic code" (71). In the first category, for instance, women are stereotyped as objects that are socially controlled and sexually exploited and oppressed by males in a patriarchal society.

In *The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860-1950: Images of Women*, Sarah Graham-Brown discusses the history of Eastern women's photographs taken by western photographers. In agreement with Said's *Orientalism*, Graham-Brown argues that such photographs manifest the notion of 'otherness' by representing images of inferior and romantic cultures in which women were considered as "exotic and sexual objects" (5). She claims that Western photographers and writers came to the East with pre-existing fantasies about the exotic sexual world of Eastern women, such as the harem, and through their works they turned these fantasies into stereotypes (40). In her study of these photographs, Graham-Brown's argument manifests Nochlin's norm of the "controlling gaze" when she points out that the elites in the East took their own photos and compiled albums of their urban lifestyles, their fashion, and their societies, while the middle and lower classes who could not afford photographs became the subjects of Western imagery that reinforced the Western

photographers' perspectives of the East, such as sexual segregation, patriarchy, polygamy, primitivism, exoticism, and eroticism (104-5).

The dichotomy between the East and the West is applied in the geography of the colonial city. The division of colonial cities is a feature of colonialism that maintains control and viability by creating barriers meant to segregate the urban Western residents from the local indigenous residents. This segregation was intended to protect the Europeans from contagious plagues that were spreading among the indigenous people, but it forms a rigid dichotomy within the city. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon characterizes this dichotomy as "a world divided into compartments… a world cut into two" (38) that are never compatible. The colonizers settle in the modern zone, while the natives are relegated to margins characterized by poverty, dirt, and violence. The western part of the city is well-organized and well-established, and the streets are clean and well-paved, but the native sector is overpopulated and disorganized (39).

In *I'adat Ketabt al-Madīna al-Arabīa fī al-Rīwaya al-Gharbīa* (*Rewriting the Arabic City in Western Novels*, 2017), Mu'ajab Aledwani claims that Arabic cities are generally depicted in the western imagination as an inevitable jail, a desert, or a land of exile (73). It is a primitive chaotic space not suitable for living that lacks basic needs such as health services, comfort, discipline, and regulations (151), or a static space with no sign of development or evolution.

As discussed above, western art and literature were fundamental tools used to establish the imperial discourse, which represents the West and the East according to certain criteria, and which still exists in Western writing in the postcolonial era. Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* is an example of the continuation in the twentieth century of the orientalist perspective of nineteenth-century texts such as Lane's. Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* represents Alexandria and its inhabitants within the pattern of orientalism discussed above.

Cavafy, Forster, and Durrell

The works of European writers such as Constantine Cavafy, Forster, and Durrell contributed to shaping the image of Alexandria, as a city of various civilizations, cultures, and religions, in the western imagination. Greek Alexandrian poet Cavafy (1863-1933) was born, lived most of his life, and died in Alexandria. Although most of his poems acknowledge the history of the Greeks in Egypt and their establishment of Alexandria, he neglects the history of the Egyptians in the city (Pinchin 70). One of his best-known poems, "The City," is about Alexandria, but makes no reference to its name or its history. In "The City," Cavafy describes the city of Alexandria as a place that haunts him wherever he goes and "will always pursue you." In another poem, "The God Abandons Antony," he imagines Alexandria as a goddess (Fahmy, "For Cavafy" 268). Khaled Fahmy argues that the Alexandria of which Cavafy wrote belongs either to the Hellenistic civilization or to the Alexandria of his "rich inner world," but bears little resemblance to the Alexandria in which he lived ("For Cavafy" 274). Likewise, Azza Kararah claims that "[p]hysically Cavafy lived in modern Alexandria, but mentally he did not" (320). She builds her argument on Cavafy's inability to speak Arabic despite having lived in Alexandria for a long time, and on the Alexandria of Cavafy's poetry not being the modern Alexandria.

E. M. Forster (1879-1970) was a friend of Cavafy who promoted the latter's poetry. Forster lived in Alexandria between 1915 and 1919, while he was working with the Red Cross. His best-known books about Alexandria are *Pharos and Pharillon* (1923) and *Alexandria: History and Guide* (1938), which he wrote while he was in Egypt. Jane Pinchin notes that in *Alexandria: History and Guide* and *Passage to India,* Forster was concerned about the problems of imperialism and the relation between the empire (Britain) and its colonized, an issue that did not seem to concern Durrell. However, Pinchin criticizes Forster as "a biased observer" (155-56) with a reductive perspective on the city and its history. As

with Cavafy's poetry, Forster's *Alexandria: History and Guide* emphasizes the Hellenistic and Greek history of Alexandria while marginalizing its Egyptian history. *Pharos and Pharillon* is a collection of essays and short stories about Alexandria dedicated to Mohammed el Adl, a young Egyptian man with whom Forster was in love. In *Pharos and Pharillon*, Forster describes Alexandria as "dull, [and] its dullness is really indescribable" (99), a sentiment Durrell echoes in his own work.

  Alexandria: History and Guide is composed of two parts, the first part of which concentrates on the history of ancient Alexandria and the Greek period up to the Urabi revolution. In "Forster in Alexandria: Gender and Genre in Narrating Colonial Cosmopolitanism," Hala Halim notes that Forster's history of Alexandria ended with the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 during the Urabi revolution, which for the British was an indication of the need to protect the city from the Egyptians (245). Though he was in Alexandria during the First World War, Forster did not cover the time of the war nor the colonial period in his work. The second part of Forster's book is a guide to the Alexandria of Muhammad Ali, outlining the sights and features of both ancient and modern Alexandria. *Alexandria: History and Guide* does not reflect Forster's fascination with Muhammad Ali as a ruler or his modernization project. Forster acknowledged the rapid improvement of the city after the construction of the Mahmmudiya Canal; however, he claimed that it was badly structured, and he generally criticized the modernization project as a facade to attract foreigners and a burden on the working class (110-112).

  Durrell wrote the introduction to the 1982 edition of *Alexandria: History and Guide*, and acknowledged his use of Forster's book as a guide during his stay in Alexandria. In the introduction, Durrell expressed his fascination with Forster and his depictions of the city and its people, and showcased the informative importance of Foster's book to his two visits to the city in 1941 and 1977. On his first visit, Durrell used Forster's book not only as a guide to the

city but also as an inspiration for the book he was planning to write about Alexandria, which eventually became the *Alexandria Quartet*. He claimed that Alexandria had not changed much at that time from how Forster described it. In his visit with the BBC in 1977, Durrell gave more attention to the changes the city had undergone in Nasser's time. He lamented that the Egyptianization of the city had made it a "depressing [place] beyond endurance" ("Introduction" xvi). During his visits, Durrell retraced the steps of Forster and Cavafy, revisiting Cavafy's flat which in *Alexandria Quartet* is inhabited by Balthazar.

Durrell's perception of Alexandria as revealed in *Alexandria Quartet* is clearly influenced by his readings of Cavafy and Forster. Durrell made frequent references to a selection of Cavafy's poems to enrich his work, and followed Forster's route in Alexandria. Most of the characters in the *Quartet* are familiar with Cavafy's poetry, with "The City" and "The God Abandons Antony" the most quoted. For instance, in different situations, Balthazar recites parts of Cavafy's poems, while Darley often quotes them when describing the city or emotional situations. He also reflects on the Dying Antony of Cavafy's poem when he saw Cohen dying (Katope 127).

Critics' impressions of Cavafy's, Forster's, and Durrell's works about Alexandria are controversial, with Pinchin and David Dunn as cases in point. On the one hand, in *Alexandria Still: Forster, Durrell and Cavafy*, Pinchin argues that Alexandria's past, established by Greeks and Romans and immortalized in the writings of Cavafy, Forster, and Durrell, is more fascinating than its present Arab/Egyptian incarnation, with the imagined city intentionally made more appealing to Western readers than the reality. Pinchin considers Cavafy's, Forster's, and Durrell's works the most important and influential twentieth-century depictions of Alexandria, and because they credited the cosmopolitan nature of the city to the ancient Greeks, the history of ancient Alexandria will never be forgotten. In "Imagining Alexandria: Sightseeing in a City of the Mind," on the other hand, David Dunn claims that the Alexandria

of Cavafy and Durrell is "a mythical place" and their visions of the city are "nothing innocent" (103). According to Dunn, the "orientalist attitudes" of Cavafy, Forster and Durrell contributed to their "making something erotic or exotic […] out of [Alexandria]" (105). Dunn points out that these three authors have drawn heavily on the Hellenistic or/and the imperial periods in writing Alexandria, while neglecting the modern city and its people. For Durrell, Cavafy and Forster offer rich material to support his idealized and orientalist views of the East in general and Alexandria in particular.

Alexandria and Lawrence Durrell

Poet, novelist, and travel writer Lawrence Durrell was born in India in 1917. As a child in India, he experienced British colonialism in ways that were similar to what he would encounter later in his life in Egypt. At the age of eleven, he was sent to England to receive formal education, but he disliked the English lifestyle and traditions, which he ruthlessly criticized in his later writings. Durrell composed his first poem when he was fifteen years old. During his life, he married four times: in 1935, he married his first wife, Nancy Myers, and they moved to Corfu, Greece, where he wrote many of his works, along with his mother and siblings. He won the Nobel and Booker Prizes, and some of his works include the *Black Book* (1938), *Prospero's Cell* (1945), the *Alexandria Quartet* (1962), and the *Avignon Quintet* (1992).

At the beginning of the Second World War and the German invasion of Greece, Durrell, his wife, and their daughter Penelope fled Greece for Alexandria as exiles. During this time, Nancy Myers divorced him, taking their daughter and moving to Jerusalem. Durrell's loneliness and exile influenced the melancholic view of Alexandria he expressed in his fiction and letters. He began his official career as a press attaché in the British embassies in Cairo and Alexandria, where he was able to observe the city, its people, and the British armies. He described his life and experiences in Alexandria in the letters he wrote to Henry

Miller. Donald Kaczvinsky has regarded Durrell not only as a writer of the British Empire, but also a participant in the colonial mission, due to his work as a journalist and information officer in Egypt. Michael Haag, a close friend of Durrell, states what supports Kaczvinsky's claim. Hagg writes in his *Alexandria: Capital of Memory* (2004) that Durrell's job during the Axis invasion of Egypt was to inform the British office in Cairo of Egyptian reactions to the invasion and the possibility of a British loss (197). He further claims that Durrell worked as a "propagandist" (*Alexandria* 291) whose mission was "to manipulate what appeared in the press" (*Alexandria* 291). After years of exile, Durrell was asked in an interview which country he belonged to, and he replied, "exiles tend to be more British than the British" (Moore, *The World* 156); he could not bear living in Britain, but he felt his Britishness more when he was outside Britain. In 1945, Durrell left Egypt and returned to Greece, finally returning to Alexandria in 1952. He died in Sommières in 1990.

His life in Alexandria, his job, and his reading of Forster's *Alexandria: A History and A Guide* (1922) were significant inspiration for his writings about Alexandria. Durrell wrote many novels, including *Pied Piper of Lovers* (1935), *The Black Book* (1938), and *Sicilian Carousel* (1977), and collections of poems, including *A Private Country* (1943) and *Cities, Plains and People* (1946). His book *A Spirit of Place* (1969) is a collection of essays and letters about his life. *Prospero's Cell* is a nonfiction work describing Corfu, the Greek island where he lived as an exile and wrote many of his best-known works including *Pied Piper of Lovers* and *The Black Book*.

Durrell found inspiration in his lived experience of exile. *Pied Piper of Lovers*, for example, is considered a semi-autobiographical novel based loosely on his early life. Like Durrell, the novel's hero Walsh Clifton is a son of an English man working as a railway engineer in colonial India, who is later sent to school in England and experiences feelings of exile while there. *The Black Book* was influenced by T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Henry

Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, and was first published in Paris with the help of his friend Miller. The novel tells the story of Lawrence Lucifer and other characters who live in London during the war and plan to escape to Greece. Though it was his third novel to be published, Durrell considered *The Black Book* his first novel because, as he stated, "with all its imperfections lying heavy on its head, I can't help feeling attached to it because in the writing of it I first heard the sound of my own voice" (Fraser 61). In "The Black Book: A Search for Method*"*, Sharon Lee Brown claims that *The Black Book* is autobiographical, with Lawrence Lucifer as "Durrell's alter ego" (319) due to their shared first names and details of their lives.

Durrell wrote *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* (1957) during his stay in Cyprus between 1953 and 1956. At that time, Cyprus was a British colony and there Durrell continued to practice the imperial affiliations he started in Egypt. He worked with the British authority as an investigator and used to write reports, claiming the Cypriots' preference of the British administration to the Ottoman Empire. In *Bitter Lemons*, Durrell's orientalist stance is reflected in his misrepresentation of the Turks as "cowards" (244), "dull-minded and foul-smelling" (48). Another example of his orientalist perspective can be revealed in the comparison between the Turkish policeman and the Greek one. He represents the Turkish as "sleepy, seemingly mute, helpless and depressed" (28) while the Greek is described as "elegant, gentle speaking in perfect English" (31).

Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*

Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* consists of four novels: *Justine*, *Balthazar*, *Mountolive*, and *Clea*. The first three novels are set in the years before the Second World War and are interdependent. *Justine*, *Balthazar,* and *Clea* are narrated in first person by Darley, a British teacher living in Alexandria, who describes the events of the novels as told by their title characters: Justine, a Jewish Alexandrian, and Balthazar, a Jewish doctor. The third novel, *Mountolive,* has a third-person omniscient narrator, who is implied to be Darley. Durrell's

narrative technique of giving the narrative voice of the first two novels to a British character rather than having the Egyptian and Jewish characters, after whom those novels are named, speak for themselves is itself a manifestation of his orientalist perspective as he, through Darley, "[speaks] for and represent[s]" them (Said, *Orientalism* 6).

The first three novels are considered as siblings, not as parts, because they offer "repeated views of the same moments in time, a single set of circumstances continually returned to and re-examined in the light of subsequent date" (Friedman 64). *Justine*, *Balthazar*, and *Mountolive* revolve around the story of a Coptic-Jewish conspiracy between Nessim, a wealthy Egyptian Copt, his wife Justine, and Jews in Palestine against the British. Though the conspiracy is a main element of the *Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell indicates in his preface that the main theme of his work is modern love.

Darley, Durrell's alter ego, comes to Alexandria during the Second World War when Egypt was under British colonial rule, where he falls in love with three women: Justine, the Jewish Alexandrian wife of Nessim who converted to Christianity after marriage; Melissa, a cabaret dancer; and Clea, an English woman who becomes his soulmate. Throughout the three novels, Darley works on his writing skills, finally completing his novel in *Clea. Justine* describes the love affair between Darley and the already-married Justine, whom Darley believes loves him. *Balthazar,* however, reveals that Justine, through her relationship with Darley, has been trying to find out if Darley knows about the conspiracy in which her husband and the Copts are involved. *Mountolive* depicts the arrival of the British ambassador Mountolive and his investigation of the conspiracy. This volume introduces Nessim's father Faltaus, his mother Leila, and his brother Narouz, who serve as emblematic figures of the Copt/Muslim relationship in Egypt. The volume ends with Darley planning to go to Greece. *Clea* begins with Darley being invited to return to Alexandria during the war. Over

the course of the novel, the conspiracy is revealed, and those who were involved, including Justine and Nessim, are punished, while Darley and Clea fall in love.

Alexandria Quartet: **A Modernist Work**

Durrell's politics of representation in the *Alexandria Quartet* are connected to the novels' appearance during the transition from modernism to postmodernism, leading to debate over whether the four novels are modernist or postmodernist. Critics such as Ian MacNiven and Reed Way Dasenbrock argue that the *Alexandria Quartet* features modes of modernist writing (235 /516), whereas others such as Diane Vipond categorize the *Alexandria Quartet* as postmodernist (55). A third party of critics such as Anne Zahlan see that the works themselves embody the transition from modernism to postmodernism ("Crossing" 85). Whatever the outcome of the debate, what interests me here is Durrell's use of some modernist features to design his orientalist representation of Alexandria. Durrell uses multiple narrative perspective, various forms of sexuality, and experiences of alienation, to construct his representation of the city. His references to Alexandria as "the capital city of memory" and his connection of the city to the idea of remembering also essentialize the theme of memory, another feature of modernist writing.

Many early modernist authors were "temporarily or (in some cases) permanently displaced writers and artists whose work originated in, and was nurtured by, their experiences of travel, exile, emigration, and displacement" (Gasiorek 21). Durrell similarly wrote the *Alexandria Quartet* based on his experience of exile, which he uses to express his feelings of alienation in the person of his protagonist Darley. Another feature of modernism is representing actual-world locations from the point of view of a narrator or other character. The four volumes of *Alexandria Quartet* have one narrator and each volume is narrated from the point of view of a different character. The narration focuses on interiority more than

exteriority, so that the narrator dives deep into the characters' feelings, memories and daydreams more than representing the space and incidents around them.

Durrell employs modernism aesthetically to serve his orientalist representation. Dasenbrock argues that modernist work represents "aspect[s] of human life that earlier had not been considered proper to represent" (519), such as sexuality. Marilyn Papayanis agrees with Desenbrock that "[t]he *Alexandria Quartet* fits squarely within the tradition of modernism in terms of its thematic of sexuality" (40). The novels explore different forms of sexuality, such as adultery, homosexuality, and incest, in order to add erotic and exotic appeals to their depiction of the city.

Alexandria in the *Alexandria Quartet*

Durrell's representation of Alexandria is an orientalist example of colonial cosmopolitanism, an exotic grotesque space that is nonetheless inspired by a place in which he lived and with which he became familiar. The sensory imagery present in his novels helps to create a surreal image of the city and its people.

The *Alexandria Quartet* has been controversial among critics. Gilbert Highet, for instance, seems to be caught by Durrell's orientalist depiction of the two extremes of Alexandria as "a small Paris set on the central sea; but also, by tradition and infection, […] a city of the hot, intricate corrupt Middle East" (114). Highet confirms Durrell's depiction of the conspiracy between the Copts and the Zionists, claiming that the Muslims "systematically suppress[ed] and humiliate[ed] the Copts", who then sought support from outside (116). Highet's certainty about the conspiracy is peculiar because Durrell himself declares it a product of his own imagination.[12]

On the other hand, several Arab and Western critics have debated Durrell's representations of the city. Roger Bowen and John Rodenbeck both acknowledge that Durrell

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[12] The conspiracy will be discussed later in this chapter.

continues the orientalist trajectory and his work reinforces certain orientalist stereotypes for twentieth-century readers. In "Closing the 'Toybox': Orientalism and Empire in the *Alexandria Quartet*," Bowen claims that Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* has features of an orientalist work presenting "a relationship between East and West, between the Europeans and the Other" (9). Further, Bowen regards Durrell as an orientalist and his *Alexandria Quartet* as a continuation of the "orientalist discourse" in that "[t]he re-presentation of Egypt in which Durrell engages adds a late chapter to the tradition of orientalist discourse: Beckford and Byron, Edward Lane, de Nerval and Flaubert, Doughty and Kinglake, T.E. Lawrence and Wilfred Thesiger" (10). In "Alexandria in Cavafy, Durrell and Tsirkas," Rodenbeck discusses the inaccuracy of Durrell's depictions of Alexandria compared to the actual city and its history, concluding that Durrell's image of the city is "racist [and] preposterous" (149).

Like Bowen and Rodenbeck, James Gifford argues that not only does Durrell represent an orientalist Alexandria, but he also depicts the world of religious Muslims in a manner that does not exist except in the Western mind. Moreover, in "Memlik's House and Mountolive's Uniform: Orientalism, Ornamentalism, and *Alexandria Quartet*," Donald Kaczvinsky points out that Muslim characters are almost absent from the novels, and those who are present, such as Memlik, are misrepresentations (102). He argues that Durrell's novels present a "misreading of Egypt" that can be considered as "a misguided vision of Egyptian society based on class prejudices" (94). This misreading, however, is also the result of seeing Egypt through the eyes of previous Western writers and using their works as guides.

As their umbrella title suggests, the four novels are observations of the lives of various characters in Alexandria, and their relationships to each other and to the city itself. Durrell points out at the beginning of the novel that the city is real, but the characters are fictional. However, many critics have seen Durrell's Alexandria as an imagined city

populated by characters who are similar to people Durrell knew in his own life. For example, in "Only the City is Real: Lawrence Durrell's Journey to Alexandria," Haag claims that "Durrell was … filling up the pages of his notebooks (which were later titled as *Alexandria Quartet*) with identifiable Alexandrians… Durrell's Alexandria is at once sensual and spiritual, and comprehensively seductive, but it is a false city inhabited by false selves, a world from which at least some of his characters are determined to escape" (45). Haag, a friend of Durrell who knew much about the latter's life in Alexandria, undermines Durrell's statement that "the city is real" by pointing out that the novels feature a false depiction, a sensual version of the city that deviates from the "real Alexandria."

Other Western writers have travelled to Alexandria in search of Durrell's city. In "A Note on Lawrence Durrell," Richard Aldington argues that some of his friends who visited Alexandria assured him that "the city [Durrell] has evoked is imaginary, not the reality" (8). Others, such as David Roessel in "A Passage Through Alexandria: The City in the Writing of Durrell and Forster," have examined the historical accuracy of events described in *Alexandria Quartet*, concluding that the Alexandria that Durrell represented is "less than realistic" (326). Among the examples Roessel cites of Durrell's liberties with the cultural and traditional details of Alexandria and its inhabitants are the Copts' and Zionists' alliance against the Egyptian government, and the ethnic tension between the Copts and the Muslims (328).

Egyptian critics have further problematized the influence of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* on the Western imagination, seeing it as misleading. Their findings generally correspond with some Western critical opinions of Durrell's "real Alexandria." In "The Curate's Egg: An Alexandrian Opinion of Durrell's *Quartet*," Alexandrian scholar Mahmoud Manzalaoui considers Durrell's work "mediocre" (248) and claims that the four novels neglect the Alexandrians as though they "do not exist" (259), while the real city Manzalaoui knows "is dismissed" (259). Manzalaoui supports his argument with various syntactical and

descriptive examples taken from *Alexandria Quartet* to clarify "Durrell's careless attitude towards objective reality" (255), which indicates an "essential falsity of description and weakness of grasp" (255). For instance, the Arabic words Durrell mentions in his novels are either misspelled or nonexistent in Arabic (Manzalaoui 255). In *Balthazar,* the Muslim festival that follows the month of Ramadan is not called Eid, its Arabic name, but Bairam, a Turkish word. Moreover, Durrell's errors in describing religious practices, such as his claim that "Tuesday for the Moslem is the least favoured day for human undertakings, for he believes that on Tuesday God created all the unpleasant things" (*Quartet* 602), create the impression that he does not know Egypt and the Egyptians well. Manazlaoui argues that it is not necessary for the novelist to know everything, but it is important not to give wrong information that might leave false impressions on readers (Manzalaoui 256). Furthermore, in agreement with Manzalaoui, I add that Durrell's orientalist intention is clear from his dependence on a Coptic woman, Leila, as a source for information about the Muslims and their practices while keeping the voices of the Muslims silent.

In "Elements of the Autobiographical in the *Alexandria Quartet*," Mona Morcos characterizes Durrell's 'real Alexandria' as merely a reflection of his feelings and experiences. Morcos contends that Henry Miller's biography of Durrell, and Durrell's letters to Miller, demonstrate correlations between Durrell's experiences in Alexandria and the events he describes in his novels (343). In the letters, Durrell expressed his dislike of the city and his longing for Athens, even describing Alexandria as a "melting-pot of dullness" (*Private Correspondence* 195), the same words Darley uses in *Alexandria Quartet*.

Durrell's orientalist and misleading representation of Alexandria may result in part from personal and sociopolitical circumstances, as the diaspora following both World Wars blinded many Europeans to the beauty and the historical richness of the places in which they

found themselves. In "Lawrence Durrell and Alexandria," Joan Goulianos describes Durrell's attitudes to Egypt in comparison to Greece:

> Durrell seems to have disliked Egypt partly because he came to it, against his will, from Greece. His view of Egypt often seems to include an implicit contrast with Greece. For Durrell, Greece is productivity; Egypt is sterility. Greece is marriage; Egypt, divorce and loneliness. Greece is a chosen homeland; Egypt, a place of refuge. (664)

Durrell's love and nostalgic feeling for Greece blinded him from seeing the real Alexandria, so that the Alexandria he presents in his novels is a reflection of his personal feelings toward the city. Similarly, Roessel notes that "Durrell and Forster wrote about the city [Alexandria] with one eye on somewhere else" (334): Forster's on India and Durrell's on Greece. Hence, Durrell referred favourably to Greece, the place which he was forced to leave, while dismissing Egypt, the place of his exile, and thus producing a distorted image of Alexandria and its society (Fahmy, "For Cavafy" 273).

Durrell's feelings of personal disturbance are manifested in his character Darley, who provides contradictory descriptions of Alexandria based on Durrell's conflicted vision. For instance, Darley considers Alexandria his beloved, yet also calls it "a whore" because of the unforgettable memories it has brought him and the mystery to which he is attached but cannot solve. He sees all the contradictions gathered in the city, "[t]he politics of love, the intrigues of desire, good and evil, virtue and caprice, love and murder" (*Quartet* 216), and these contradictions affect his inner self and disturb him. Allyson Kreuiter notes that the contradictions Darley feels are reflections of "a deep ambivalence" he is experiencing (70). These characteristics may be found in any city in the world, but Durrell brings together the mysterious and contrary features of Alexandria in order to present it as an example of the oriental space, a space that has the power to disturb the individual's inner peace and

tranquillity. Moreover, Durrell's perception of the city is torn between Cavafy's and Forster's images on the one side, which praised its ancient history, and the image of the city he saw personally on the other, resulting in an often contradictory presentation.

In addition, Durrell's initial feelings about Egypt affect his perception of Egypt in general and Alexandria in particular; he sees only what supports his negative impressions and what Said calls "unshakeable abstract maxims" (*Orientalism* 52) about the Orient, whose "validity" (52) the orientalist writer seeks to prove. Bowen argues that Durrell's orientalist images of the European and Arab quarters in Alexandria can be read, in Said's terms, as "'colonial' and 'alien' space" (12). According to Bowen, Durrell "proved to be as assiduous a borrower and a revivalist" (10) who seems to rediscover and re-present images of the Orient from previously-published travel books rather than creating new ones. In agreement with Bowen, I add that Durrell magnifies the negative attributes of the city and its people "to confirm the Orient in his readers' eyes; he neither tries nor wants to unsettle already firm convictions" (Said, *Orientalism* 65). He repeats and reinforces certain images to make them appear normal to the readers, presenting Alexandria as an abnormal city in which unexpected things happen, a place that may deprive a person of his/her normal mental status.

Durrell's Alexandria is an example of one of the fundamental orientalist perceptions of the East as a primitive unsecured space without rules or principles. It is a city of sexuality, murder, cruelty, and materialistic people who have been deprived of happiness. In *Alexandria Still: Forster, Durrell and Cavafy*, Pinchin states that "Durrell's Alexandria is a place where one comes to expect kidnapping, child prostitution, murder, international intrigue, poisoning, and suicide; where marriage is a business venture; where people are generous with friends; a place some suspect of having strong flavour without any real character" (163). This distorted image of Alexandria is also seen in Durrell's letters, which describe its people as expressing "personal unhappiness and loneliness" (Moore, *The World* 168), and further regard them as

lazy and envious and fond of gossip. Money controls the people's relationships and emotions in Durrell's Alexandria. He accuses them of materialism, of making "no subject of conversation except money. Even love is thought in money terms", and showing interest only in "making a woman or making money" (Moore, *The World* 169).

Further, in Durrell's Alexandria, money controls the people's lives: money forces the poor to commit crimes, and abnormal acts happen among the upper classes for the sake of money. For instance, Nessim and Justine discuss their marriage as a financial deal, which Justine considers normal in a city whose people are more realistic, and more materialistic, than passionate. Furthermore, the Alexandrians of the *Quartet* are ready to do anything, no matter how immoral, for money. It is normal to see men in the street seducing women by offering money, as "no one is offended by the mention of money in our city" (*Quartet* 34). The women's response is either "consent at once" or "simply laugh[ing]" (34). All of the above examples play into the stereotype of the Orient as mysterious, savage, primitive, irrational and lacking in values, order and security.

Durrell's Alexandria depicts danger, such as kidnap, and cruelty as features of the Alexandrian society. In *Justine,* Justine loses her child in a suspected kidnapping, despite living in an upper-class district. The kidnapping was not presented as a serious issue that would disturb the life of the parents, but in a way that suggests that such things are normal in Alexandria and that the people do not seem to care. Another example depicts the cruelty and barbarism in the Orient, particularly among the Muslims:

> A camel has collapsed from exhaustion in the street outside the house. It is too heavy to transport to the slaughter-house so a couple of men come with axes and cut it up there and then in the open street, alive. They hack through the white flesh — the poor creature looking ever more pained, more aristocratic, more puzzled as its legs are hacked off. Finally there is the head still alive, the

eyes open, looking round. Not a scream of protest, not a struggle. The animal

submits like a palm-tree. (*Quartet* 34)

The slaughter of the exhausted camel and the cutting of his flesh while still alive are

emblematic of the violence and brutality of this Islamic tradition. To make the scene more

barbaric, even the sand does not absorb the camel's blood, as a sign of the earth's rejection of

the cruelty and savagery of humans.

Darley further describes Alexandria as unsafe for non-Muslims, particularly

Christians, as exemplified in the story he tells of the murder of a European woman with a

gold tooth:

Only last week Pombal had come home with a story of the Swedish vice-

consul whose car had broken down on the Matrugh road. He had left his wife

alone in it while he walked to the nearest telephone-point in order to ring up

the consulate and ask them to send out another car. He had arrived back to

find her body sitting normally on the back seat — without a head. Police were

summoned and the whole district was combed. Some Bedouin encamped

nearby were among those interrogated. While they were busy denying any

knowledge of the accident, out of the apron of one of the women rolled the

missing head. They had been trying to extract the gold teeth which had been

such an unpleasant feature of her party-smile. (*Quartet* 153)

According to Darley, the Bedouin cut the woman's head off in cold blood, motivated by

poverty. The crime was described in a typical orientalist manner as "not sufficiently

uncommon" (153) to happen in this land plagued by poverty and illiteracy. Crimes and

robberies happen easily and frequently in Durrell's Alexandria, and, in the words of one of

the European characters, "[n]othing is easier in our city than a death or a disappearance"

(*Quartet* 236).

Sexuality – including homosexuality, adultery, and incest – plays a major role in the *Alexandria Quartet*, whose theme is "modern love" in an Eastern city. To match the sexual relationships he describes with the orientalist tradition, Durrell presents the warm climate of the city as the factor behind the rise of sexual desire and the obsession of Eastern people with sex. The Western characters in the novels also blame Alexandria and its weather for their involvement in sexual practices. Balthazar has a homosexual relationship with Scobie; Pursewarden has an incestuous relationship with his sister Liza; Darley loves Justine, a married woman, and has a sexual life with her; Malissa is a prostitute working in a cabaret who has sex with different men including Capodistria. All of these relationships were unsuccessful. Moreover, Durrell's recurring references to prostitutes and prostitution houses support the stereotype of the Orient as sensual and sexual. Even the space of Alexandria is called "the city of sensuality" (*Quartet* 299). At night, Durrell's Alexandria is populated by prostitutes walking the streets seeking prey and money (*Quartet* 54). During a daytime in the autumn, Darley remembers a drunken prostitute roaming the streets, and considers this a normal occurrence in the city (*Quartet* 54).

Linking sexuality with the climate leads us to question how Durrell represents the weather in Alexandria. Darley depicts Alexandria in the summer as a hot and dirty place, where any visitor is welcomed with mosquitoes, dusty winds, the smells of rotting fruits and flowers, and sweating black people (*Quartet* 86), all of which create an unpleasant impression for readers. Darley's image of Alexandria in the summer corresponds with Durrell's description in his letter of the heat in Alexandria as like a "Layden jar" (Moore, *The World* 168). Furthermore, Darley's account of the khamseen, the annual summer wind, which makes everything dusty and turns the sky brown before sunrise, creates the perception that the city is located in the desert rather than at the seashore (*Quartet* 179). For Durrell, the khamseen represents a supernatural power that "invad[es] everything" (*Quartet* 179), disturbs

the people, and makes them "desperate, reckless, impatient" (*Quartet* 179). Although his characterization of the seashore and the horizon in *Justine* (334) may seem poetic, the heat and the dust disturb the beauty and the romantic imagery of the scene. Conversely, both Darley and Durrell neglect Alexandria's gentle and rainy winters.

Many critics have raised questions as to the historical veracity of the *Quartet,* particularly of Durrell's imagined Alexandria. Pinchin, for example, believes that Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* deals with the history of Alexandria, "a history that provides the backdrop for actions of contemporary Alexandrians" (169), more than the works of either Cavafy, who ignored the history altogether, or Forster, whose works focus only on "periods of religious conflict" (Pinchin 169). Pinchin claims that "Durrell plays with history. In doing so he borrows from the best history and guidebook around" (170). According to Pinchin, Durrell was selective in his use of history and chose to focus on details that contribute to his construction of the city, such as Alexandria's Greek heritage and the justification of colonization as a benefit for the population and the protection of its civilization. He also personally cited Cavafy and Forster as his main sources.

In "The Ancient Egyptian Context of the *Alexandria Quartet*," Bruce Redwine contradicts Pinchin, claiming that Forster and Durrell depict Alexandria as, respectively, an ancient Roman city and as a city whose largest population subset is European; however, neither author presents it as an Egyptian city, even though the majority of its population is Egyptian. Redwine argues that "[t]he *Quartet* does not seem situated in Egypt proper, and its author would seem to pay scant attention to three thousand years of ancient Egyptian history" (71). For Redwine, Durrell's Alexandria does not carry the Egyptian identity.

I agree with Redwine that Durrell not only presented a misleading history of Alexandria, but also argued for its Greek identity. Furthermore, Durrell has seen only the past of Alexandria, the past of the Greek and Roman empires, and that nothing about

contemporary Alexandria seems to fascinate him or catch his attention. Here Darley remembers the Greek history of Alexandria nostalgically: "[t]he symbolic lovers of the free Hellenic world are replaced here by something different, something subtly androgynous, inverted upon itself. The Orient cannot rejoice in the sweet anarchy of the body – for it has outstripped the body" (*Quartet* 18). Negligence of history is a feature of colonial discourse, and marginalization of history leads to marginalization of culture and loss of identity. Aledwani, for instance, claims that negligence of history and the heritage of colonized spaces, as well as deliberate disregard for the roles of the natives, are practices meant to attribute contemporary civilization to the colonizer rather than to the colonized (Aledwani 97). Durrell marginalizes Alexandria's contemporary history and culture in favour of the remains of its ancient European history, particularly its Greek roots, demonstrating Albert Memmi's assertion that "the most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history" (135).

Amilcar Cabral discusses the importance of history as a formation and definition of culture and identity of any nation. He points out that "[w]hatever may be the ideological or idealistic characteristics of cultural expression, culture is an essential element of the history of a people. Culture is, perhaps, the product of this history just as the flower is the product of a plant" (55). Ignoring the history of a nation implies negligence of its culture or imposition of "direct or indirect liquidation of the essential elements of the culture of the dominated people" (55), because culture is a "seed of opposition" that can grow into a "liberation movement" (56). Because a nation derives its identity and national power from its history and culture, colonizers and orientalists either undermine the colonized society's history or present the society as a nation with no history.

In the *Alexandria Quartet*, the history of Alexandria after Alexander the Great is largely ignored, until the coming of the European tradesmen during the British colonial

period. The period from the Arab conquest to the end of the nineteenth century is eliminated.

Such deliberate exclusion of Alexandria's Arab influence, according to Aledwani, is an

imperialist approach that culturally and historically recasts the Arab victory as a failure (112).

It should further be noted that Durrell's misrepresentation of the Arab period in Alexandria

corresponds with Forster's overlooking the long history of the Arabs in Egypt, which he

dismisses as a history of "no importance" (Forster, *Alexandria* xx). Both Durrell's *Alexandria*

Quartet and Forster's *Alexandria: A History and Guide,* following the example of Cavafy,

disregard the history of Muhammad Ali's Egypt while highlighting and praising the Greek

history of Egypt, considering it an extension of European history. Manzalaoui points out that

Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* creates the impression of Alexandria as a Hellenistic city, rather

than the Arab Egyptian city it is in reality. We may also note that Durrell's focus on

Alexandria's Greek heritage extends to his characters as counterparts of Greco-Roman

historical figures, particularly Antony and Cleopatra, who serve as models for many, if not

all, of the characters of the *Alexandria Quartet.*

In the *Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell often represents Alexandria as part of Europe.

Some districts of Alexandria are built in the style of European cities. For instance, Durrell

describes a seaside that reminds Darley of Marseilles in 1850: "It did not take us very long to

race along the Corniche and turn down into the echoing darkness of the dock-area with its

cobbled alleys and the flickering gas light along the wharves which makes it seem so like a

corner of Marseilles circa 1850" (*Quartet* 330). Even the police stations remind Darley of

Victorian-style buildings: "[t]he police post was a red circular building like a Victorian post

office consisting of a small charge-room and two dark sweating dungeons, airless and terrible

in that summer night" (*Quartet* 330). The European facades Darley sees in the city are not

traces of the Western legacy, but are instances of Muhammad Ali's modernization of

Alexandria according to European, particularly French and British, models. This was not

unique to Alexandria as, during the time of Khedive Ismail, Cairo was similarly remodelled

in the style of Paris and London. In *The Levant Trilogy*, Olivia Manning[13] plays upon the

resemblances between Cairo and Paris, regarding Cairo as "another Paris, not quite real, put

up too quickly and left to moulder and gather dust" (Manning 14-15). Both Durrell and

Manning used these resemblances as justification and vindication of their claims of

Alexandria's European identity.

      In Durrell's cosmopolitan Alexandria, neither Egyptians nor foreigners feel truly at

home. Western characters lose their sense of home in Alexandria and regard themselves as

Others, as Alexandria's cosmopolitanism troubles their inner peace, and Alexandria's

seashores remind them of their overseas homes. For instance, Mountolive, the English

ambassador in Egypt, considers Alexandria a resort that every soul desires in the hot dusty

summer, a place where love and affection flourish. However, he does not feel at home in

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[13] Like Durrell, Olivia Manning (1908-1980) was evacuated from Greece to Egypt against

her will during the Second World War, and her experience in Cairo inspired the *Levant*

Trilogy (1960), her best-known works, which depict the suffering of the British soldiers who

participated in the Desert War in Cairo at El-Alamein during the Second World War. Though

the novels were based on her experiences there, they are, like Durrell's, misrepresentations of

Egypt and its people and expressions of Western views of the East. In *the Levant Trilogy*,

Manning criticizes the British empire for sending its soldiers to the battlefield while keeping

them "[ignorant] of the true situation" (21) of their empire. Nonetheless, she displays

contempt for Cairo and the Egyptians and takes an Orientalist approach toward them in her

works. For instance, her British characters use insulting terms such as "gyppos" and "wog"

(24) to refer to the Egyptians, and believe, despite the criticism of the empire that is also

present, that their intervention is ultimately beneficial as it "brought […] justice and

prosperity" to Egypt, and the Egyptians should therefore show "gratitude" (24).

Alexandria and dislikes its seashore. For him, Alexandria is a land of exile and unspecific

features, to which nobody belongs:

> Alexandria was still Europe—the capital of Asiatic Europe… It could never be
>
> like Cairo where his whole life had an Egyptian cast, where he spoke ample
>
> Arabic; here French, Italian and Greek dominated the scene. The ambience,
>
> the social manner, everything was different, was cast in a European mould
>
> where somehow the camels and palm-trees and cloaked natives existed only as
>
> a brilliantly coloured frieze, backcloth to a life divided in it origins. (*Quartet*
>
> 509)

Cosmopolitan ambiance of Durrell's Alexandria disturbs Mountolive and makes him

experience a different kind of otherness. Although the majority of its population is Egyptian,

Mountolive feels that Alexandria is a Westernized city with manners and traditions that are

not Eastern. Foreign languages, excluding English, and lifestyles are in the ascendancy, while

the Egyptians are marginal. That makes him feels dislocated from Alexandria because it

belongs neither to the Egyptians nor the Europeans. It is an "impossible city" (*Quartet* 379), a

multifaceted city in which various contradictory characteristics exist, such as "love and

obscenity" (*Quartet* 379), religion and secularity, East and West.

Elsewhere, Durrell depicts Alexandria as a character in itself, with a unique

connection to and influence on its inhabitants. He represents Alexandria as an exotic

character with its own life and own secrets that might pervasively affect the lives of its

inhabitants. In his sketch of the character of Alexandria, Durrell demonstrates Said's

summary of the Orient in the Western imagination as "a place of romance, exotic beings,

haunting memories, and landscapes" (*Orientalism* 1). From the beginning of *Justine,* Darley

outlines the strong relationship between the city and the characters, and the mutual effects of

this relationship. Anne Zahlan states that most of the incidents in the *Alexandria Quartet*

happen in the outdoors (35), thus helping to establish the city as a protagonist. Alexandria is personified with "predispositions, appetites, and fears" (*Quartet* 188), passing through the various stages of life until reaching maturity. For example, the city is seen as a garden with its inhabitants as her flowers; elsewhere, it is characterized as a mother with a great influence on her children. Darley argues that the mother is ill, due to the old poor districts which her children left unfixed as they gather in the European district that is full of life and pleasure. Therefore, the city, the mother, should be blamed for the mistakes of her children, even though they are the ones who "must pay the price" (*Quartet* 13). Alexandria seems to set its inhabitants up for discord, deracination, and failure, and Darley implicitly blames the city and its hot climate for the instability of the people (*Quartet* 180).

Alexandria as a character has a spirit that has merged with the other characters, from which they cannot be separated. Darley characterizes it as "unburied" (*Quartet* 114) and immortal; though it may become ill, it will rise again. Its ancient roots and history strengthen it and make it a "phenomenon" (*Quartet* 114). It has an almost supernatural quality, attracting people to live there and filling them with love and contradictions (*Quartet* 114). On the dedication page of *Justine,* Durrell refers to Alexandria as "the unforgettable city" (II), and throughout the four novels he depicts the various districts as places to which the characters become strongly connected because of their memories of those places, and establishing Alexandria as "the capital of Memory" (*Quartet* 188) for the whole world.

The countryside depicted in the *Alexandria Quartet* is different from the urban space of the city. Alexandrians, most of whom are Egyptians, seem to coexist more peacefully outside of the city than in the city, despite their different ethnic and religious backgrounds. For example, Muslims and Copts in the countryside are more traditional and more conservative than their counterparts in the city; however, they are more open and welcoming and do not appear to exhibit tension. Darley refers to Alexandria as "a town of sects and

gospels" (*Quartet* 98) in which various religious groups live in rural spaces, practice their beliefs freely, and display "more pride… and more respect for religion" (*Quartet* 73). Both minarets of mosques and domes of churches can be seen in the skyline, and the *azzan* (call to prayer) mixes with the ringing church bells, representing the coexistence of the Muslims and the Copts. Nessim, who moved to Alexandria from his small village, regards himself as a stranger among the villagers, "feeling suddenly like a European, city-bred, a visitor" (*Quartet* 267) who no longer belongs to this community. In *Balthazar*, Durrell describes the countryside of Egypt with particular attention to its flora/agricultural landscapes, the structures of the houses, the shape of the dinner table, how the people wash their hands before eating, and what and how they eat, all of this creating a contrast between "the old-fashioned way…[and] the impertinent luxury of Alexandria forms" (*Quartet* 262). Nessim compares the relaxation and tranquillity of the countryside with the hectic and exhausting hardships of city life, which he does not realize until he visits the country: "Ach! My bones ache. That is what I get for living in Alexandria" (*Quartet* 272). Durrell's description of the countryside seems to be an attempt at an unprejudiced image in order to soften his orientalism and negate what Kabbani called its "predetermined discourse." However, his description still includes negative elements such as mosquitoes, flies, and bad smells, marring the beauty of the countryside and further reinforcing his orientalist view of the Egyptian countryside.

Cosmopolitanism and the *Alexandria Quartet*

Based on the above discussion of cosmopolitanism, I posit here that Durrell's Alexandria is a representation of colonial cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan atmosphere of Alexandria that Durrell describes is a legacy of the Western world, as emblematized in his listing of the "majestic poetry of names" (*Quartet* 365) of twenty-five people who built Alexandria, all but four of whom are foreign. The tram stations have Arabic and European

names such as "Camp de César, Mazarita, Sidi Bishr, and Laurens" (*Quartet* 53). The repetition of these names throughout the volumes is meant to remind the reader that Europeans built the unburied and unforgettable city of Alexandria, and it is their home as well as the home of the Egyptians.

In the *Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell represents different types of cosmopolitan characters. He presents a limited conception of the cosmopolitan character, limiting cosmopolitanism to those characters who maintain Western thoughts, attitudes, and lifestyles; Nessim and Justine are two such instances. Nessim is a rich Egyptian who was educated in Europe and speaks English and French fluently, and his style of dress and speech resemble those of his European friends. He is an Egyptian version of Forster's Indian character, Dr. Aziz, and although, much like Dr. Aziz, he tries to befriend the colonial representatives Darley and Mountolive, he does not succeed. Justine has a westernized disposition and appearance. Nessim and Justine represent Durrell's elitist version of cosmopolitanism. Nessim's mother Laila, however, is a different sort of cosmopolitan character: she is what Bronislaw Szerzynski and John Urry call a "mundane cosmopolitan." Leila lives in the countryside and has never travelled outside Egypt, but she is fascinated with Europe and always speaks about the beauty of nature and fashion in Europe. Her cosmopolitanism comes from her reading books about Europe and her relationship with Mountolive.

The division of the city into two parts, as Fanon has noted, is a feature of Durrell's colonial version of cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan atmosphere is strongest in the European part of Alexandria, in which sophisticated upper-class foreigners and elite Egyptians reside, European languages such as English and French are more common than Arabic, and members of the Egyptian elite such as Nessim dress in Western styles. Modern districts look and smell European, while Mediterranean styles and smells can be found in the poorer and older areas. Lower- and middle-class Egyptians and foreigners are considered as

non-cosmopolitan because they lack sophistication. They are rarely seen in the European part of the city, except as servants and street vendors. They reside in the poor Arab quarter which is represented as an old and neglected space reflecting the poverty of its inhabitants, in which brothels and prostitutes can be found on nearly every corner.

Durrell's misrepresentation of the poor Arab quarters adds more to his orientalist stance. In an interview with Ramez el Halawany published in *The Egyptian Gazette*, Durrell said of his distortion of the Egyptian side of Alexandria, "I'm not interested in taking snapshots. Nor do I go in for sociological analyses… I am a romancer" (7). His description of himself as a "romancer" contradicts his claim that the Alexandria he represents is real. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a romancer as "a writer of medieval romances," while *Merriam-Webster* defines a romancer as a writer of romance, of prose narratives featuring imaginary characters and events, exaggerated accounts, or stories that lack facts. These definitions are connected to Said's claim that the West sees the East as "a place of romance" (*Orientalism* 9). Hence, by his own account, Durrell creates an exaggerated oriental portrayal of Alexandria that marginalizes an essential part: its Arab people and history.

In *Justine,* Durrell places the inhabitants of Alexandria who originate from poor countries, such as Greece, Armenia, or other Arab countries, in one part of the city that is overrun with dirt, poverty, and prostitution houses. Most of these residents are Arabs, and it is a place of "much linguistic churning. Arabic, still colored with some Ottoman Turkish, was the majority language of the city, while French was commercial *lingua franca"* (Derbyshire 26). The districts of Alexandria in which the Egyptians reside are seen as places of sorrow, vice, mess, and dirt, with old houses full of rats, and houses for child prostitutes whose faces reflect innocence despite their indecent clothes: "The slum-like streets and houses hold the horror of contamination, and of a loss of security, that seems to threaten the idea of civilization" (Kreuiter 72). There is no sign of cleanliness, virtue, or order, which brings to

mind Frantz Fanon's observation that "the native is declared [by the colonizer] insensible to ethics" (35).

This half of the city is the "poor quarter," inhabited by beggars and communities with no outside connections and dreams of paradise, who spend their nights playing backgammon in the cafés lit with "petrol-lamps." Meanwhile, affluent Europeans from countries such as Italy, France, and Britain live in wealthy neighbourhoods and spend their free time in the fancy cafés. This part of the city is organized and modernized, and its streets are beautiful and clean (*Quartet* 62-63). This distinction creates class discrimination and weakens the harmony between various ethnic groups, particularly the Egyptians who feel that Alexandria is not their own city.

Darley describes the poor districts in Alexandria as hybrids[14] consisting of many foreign communities alongside the Egyptians, a space "which is neither Greek, Syrian, nor Egyptian, but a hybrid: a joint" (*Quartet* 27). Most of the characters use words from other languages such as French, Arabic, or Greek, and music from different cultures is played at night when the city is lit up. Durrell focuses on Alexandria's hybridity to support his claim that the space in which most of the Egyptians reside has a non-Egyptian identity. However, the phenomenon of what I call cultural amalgamation that Alexandria experienced originated in its long imperial history and in Muhammad Ali's open-door policy, which made the city

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[14] Hybridity in postcolonial discourse refers to the mixture in the colonial space and its effects upon identity and culture, especially mimicry of the colonizer by the colonized, resulting in an ambivalent identity that is neither purely native nor Western. Notable theorists of hybridity include Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. However, hybridity is not the main focus of this project, because the experience of Alexandria was not so much hybridity as amalgamation between different communities even as each community strove to preserve its culture and identity.

into a melting pot of different cultures and nationalities, but none of this cancels out the reality of the Egyptian identity of Alexandria.

Durrell's orientalist perspective is most evident in his representations of Egyptian women as victims of an unequal society. In *Balthazar*, women in the countryside spend all their time doing housework while the men sing in the streets. Religions and customs force women to cover themselves in "dusty black robes" (*Quartet* 254), while the men wear light-coloured cotton clothes. These images and contrasts create and uphold the perception of Egyptian women as servants within their own homes. For instance, Darley says of Nessim's mother Leila that "[t]he temper of Egyptian life too was hostile to the freedom of women" (*Quartet* 259), suggesting that he believes that Egyptian women live in an unjust society that deprives them of their rights. However, Leila's real situation contradicts Darley's statement: Leila is beautiful at first, she later contracts a disease that leaves her face deformed. Thus, her bad temper and her decision to cover her face when going out were due to her facial deformity, which she believed had taken away her beauty, and which she would hide in public to avoid embarrassment.

The *Alexandria Quartet* also represents Egyptian women in general in the orientalist model, depicting them as irrational sexual objects in a masculine society. Durrell's letters to Miller contain similar images of Egyptian women, further supporting the idea that the *Alexandria Quartet* reflects his unpleasant experiences in and his orientalist views of Alexandria. In his letters to Miller, Durrell describes Alexandrian women physically, but not mentally, showing fascination with their beauty and the shapes of their bodies. The women of the *Alexandria Quartet* are seen "as provender, regarded as something like a plateful of mutton; a city where women cry out to be abused" (*Quartet* 298). Darley claims that Alexandrians imagine women as seductive, to the point that it seems "strange" (*Quartet* 107) and unfamiliar to hear an Alexandrian speak of a woman's positive attributes. Darley and

other characters regard Justine as beautiful but shallow-minded; she is a married woman who indulges in a secret sexual affair with Darley. The love relationship of Darley and Justine is represented as a parallel to that of Antony and Cleopatra: Justine and Cleopatra both seduced their lovers and were unfaithful to them, and Darley and Antony both lost their beloved. However, where they differ is that Antony committed suicide but Darley left for Greece. Justine, a playful and seductive object of lust searching for love but finding none, is put forth as an example of all Alexandrian women, as exemplified by the Jewish man who says "all our women are Justines, you know, in different styles" (*Quartet* 95). This statement is an example of Said's argument that generalizing from an "observable detail" (*Orientalism* 60) and constructing an "immutable law" (60) from that generalization is a common feature of orientalist discourse.

Leila, the wife of Faltous and the mother of Nessim and Narouz, is another Alexandrian woman whom Durrell represents as irrational, unfaithful, and naïve. She falls in love with the first Englishman she sees due to his resemblance to the idealized Englishman she has created in her mind after reading English books. Leila secretly falls in love with Mountolive during his residence with the family to learn Arabic, and betrays the trust of her husband and sons. She explains that she has chosen Mountolive because he is English, and in her mind, "the English are always faithful to old friends" (*Quartet* 426).

The *Alexandria Quartet* further exoticizes the Egyptian people and their society by depicting various superstitions and beliefs in the supernatural, and by presenting characters with unusual physical characteristics. Representing the colonized individual and his/her society with certain weaknesses is an aspect of the colonial discourse that Spurr calls "debasement" (77), the act of representing qualities such as "dishonesty, suspicion, superstition, [or] lack of self-discipline" as attributes of individuals in corrupted, uncivilized and tribal societies (76). Durrell's Alexandrian characters are described in terms that can also

be seen as debasement: for instance, some women wear blue beads that they believe can protect them from evil spirits. The superstitious 'one-eyed' Hamid, whose characterization was inspired by Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, is Darley's illiterate housekeeper who believes in demons and ghosts. Leila keeps a snake as a pet and considers it a symbol of luck. Darley generalizes Leila's superstitious practice to all Egyptians, stating that "Egyptians regard the snake as too lucky a visitant to a house to kill and so tempt ill-luck" (*Quartet* 258).

Debasement, however, is not limited to behavioural qualities, but can extend, as Durrell does, to giving characters physical deformities and disabilities, further enforcing the orientalist imagery of Egyptians as others. Allan Ramsay notes that "[m]any of the [Egyptian] characters in the novels are disfigured or deformed. One has a hare lip, another no nose, others are paralysed or half blind" (91). Most of these characters are either born deformed or became so: Nessim ends up with only one eye, while his brother Narauz was born with a hare lip, and Hamid is blind in one eye.

Durrell and the Colonial Enterprise in Egypt

The British colonial enterprise had wide-ranging effects on the social, economic, and political structures of Egypt, including Copt/Muslim tension, overpopulation, feudalism, and class discrimination. It also affected the personalities of the British officers, such as Mountolive, who worked in Egypt. British colonization not only imposed British culture and norms on Egyptian society, but also aimed to disturb the unity and the coexistence between Muslims and Copts. The British officers knew that they would not defeat the Egyptians until they could weaken their society from within by raising disputes among its different groups according to the old notion of *divide et impera*. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argues that colonization works to disrupt the natives and their unity in order to weaken their power of resistance. It triggers religious and sectarian violence in order to divide the nations into different communities that would fight each other rather than the colonizer: "[i]nside a single

nation, religion splits up the people into different spiritual communication, all of them kept up and stiffened by colonisation and its instruments" (129). The increasing sectarian dispute between Copts and Muslims, for instance, became an instrument by which the colonizers could dispel potential resistance on the part of the colonized peoples, as Durrell demonstrates in the *Alexandria Quartet*.

The portrayal of the Copt/Muslim relationship[15] in the *Alexandria Quartet* further demonstrates Durrell's orientalist perspective; it is depicted in imperialist terms, particularly the issue of origins. Durrell presents the Copts as the descendants of the ancient Egyptians, as Nessim's father Faltaus declares; however, they are considered foreigners. In so doing, Darley calls the Copts, such as Nessim, foreigners while reserving the terms "Arab" and "Egyptian" exclusively for Muslims. The opinions of the Muslims regarding this issue are left unheard.

The *Alexandria Quartet* contains no examples of friendship or encounters between Copts and Muslims, even in the countryside in which both groups ordinarily coexist. Although Nessim's family serve as representatives of the Copts, no Muslim family is represented. Before becoming an ambassador, Mountolive showed interest in the Copt/Muslim relationship in Alexandria and discussed the situation of the Copts with Nessim's family. Nessim's father holds the colonizers responsible for the disharmony and hostility within their society: "[t]here were never any differences between us and the Moslems in Egypt before they [the British] came. The British have taught the Moslems to hate the Copts and to discriminate against them. Yes, Mountolive, the British" (*Quartet* 420). Furthermore, Faltaus adds that "we Copts feel [Muslims] in here, in our deepest hearts. The British have made the Muslims oppress us" (*Quartet* 421). Mountolive tries to convince

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[15] The history of the Copt/Muslim relationship will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

Nessim's family that such oppression was because of appointing Muslims such as Memlik to governmental posts and marginalizing the Copts.

In a further misrepresentation of the nature of the Copt/Muslim relationship, Durrell invents a conspiracy between the Copts, led by Nessim and Justine, and the Zionists, from whom the Copts seek support and protection from the British. Durrell represents the Muslims as oppressors of the Copts, but the Copts were plotting a political conspiracy against the British. The Copt conspiracy with Zionists is fictional. Durrell himself described it as a "non-existent conspiracy" that happened only in "his imagination" (Wakin 23). Indeed, Manzalaoui states that Durrell is the only writer to have made such a connection between the Christians of the Middle East and the State of Israel (258). Even so, some Western writers, such as Highet, do believe in its existence. The fictional conspiracy reveals Durrell's insufficient knowledge of the Copts' history and demonstrates that his goal behind the making of the conspiracy is to legitimate British activity in Egypt.

In addition to the Copt/Muslim issue, the *Alexandria Quartet* addresses other problems in Alexandrian society such as feudalism, overpopulation, and class divisions. Feudalism widens the gap between the classes and causes unequal distribution of money and power. For instance, the British official Pursewarden states, "In Egypt today, for example, six per cent of the people own over three-quarters of the land, thus leaving under a *feddan* a head for the rest to live on… the population is doubling itself every second generation" (*Quartet* 473). At the time, the Monarchy, the Egyptian officials, and the upper class bought more lands to invest in the cotton industry, causing a dramatic rise in land prices and making it difficult for middle and lower classes to own more than one acre (*feddan*). Pursewarden believed that the British existence in Egypt has done nothing to solve these issues: "In Egypt, for example, very little has been done beyond keeping the peace" (*Quartet* 474). Durrell does

not hint at the British responsibility nor their use of the corvée[16] system, which led to poverty among the peasants and class discrimination, or inequality among the social classes in Egypt. Rather, he posits that the British Empire was unable to solve these problems while maintaining peace and stability.

Durrell depicts that the political situation in Egypt in the twentieth century seemingly produced a rich upper class and a poor lower class, with a vast gap between them. In one such example in the *Alexandria Quartet,* a very rich man drives his luxurious car past a very poor Egyptian peasant who rides a mule and works as a house cleaner. This scene epitomizes the economic stratification that separated the villagers from the city dwellers during the Second World War. Poverty forced the old woman to work as a cleaner in the city, which is far from her home. On the other hand, people living in the city, such as Justine, especially the foreigners, enjoyed prosperous lives (*Quartet* 28). Durrell's focus on these social and political issues is meant to highlight the corruption of the Egyptian government, and therefore, to support the Western image of the East as corrupted and unable to govern itself.

Along with political and financial changes, Egyptian society faced external and internal challenges to its identity and traditions, which are typical of colonized societies. Cabral argues that a colonized society faces the decision as to whether to assimilate and embrace the colonizer's traditions and norms, or maintain its own traditions and consequently suffer from "cultural alienation" (57) and financial and "social gap[s]" (57) between themselves and the elite.

Like Cabral, Memmi states that under colonization, "the only possible alternatives for the colonized are assimilation or petrifaction" (102); in other words, the colonized will either mimic the colonizers and become copies, or hold onto their identity and be labelled as backward. In response to the British colonial enterprise, Spurr has noted that this kind of

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[16] The corvée system (forced labour) is discussed in Chapter Four.

assimilation changes the identity of the colonized, stating that "[t]o see non-Western peoples as having themselves become the standard-bearers of Western culture is in some ways a more profound form of colonization than that which treats them merely as sources of labor or religious conversion" (36).

Egyptian society experienced a great educational and economic gap between the elites, who maintained European lifestyles, and the rest of the population. Elite Europeanized Egyptians would degrade their culture and regard traditional Egyptians disdainfully, while holding up the "European" as an example to follow. The villagers who preserved Egyptian traditions, on the other hand, were seen by the colonizers as backward, violent, and primitive people; they were isolated in their villages and forced indirectly to assimilate, and "as a result of this process of dividing or deepening the divisions in the society, it happens that a considerable part of the population … assimilates the colonizer's mentality, considers itself culturally superior to its own people and ignores or looks down upon their cultural values" (Cabral 57). The poor and middle-class Egyptians, whose sense of nationality and belonging to their land is greater than that of the upper classes, preserve their identity and their language by refusing to assimilate or imitate the colonizers, and consequently they are misrepresented as sources of chaos and backwardness and obstacles to development; as Spurr notes, "colonized peoples are systematically represented in terms of negation and absence—absence of order, of limits, of light, of spirit" (96).

In the *Alexandria Quartet*, assimilation and non-assimilation are manifested in Durrell's representation of Europeanized Egyptians in contrast to those who have held on to their identity. For instance, the rich Nessim, who chooses to adopt and mimics British lifestyles, provides English education for his children, and decorates his house with paintings by European artists is considered a good representative of the assimilated Egyptian men (*Quartet* 32). Nessim's wife Justine, who belongs to Alexandria's upper class, dresses in

European style, and meets with her European friends in luxury restaurants and sporting clubs, is a representative of assimilated Egyptian woman. In contrast to the Westernized Nessim, his brother Narouz, who lives in the countryside and dresses in *gallabiyah*, is represented as a barbaric Copt with hostile intentions. Similarly, Hamid, who has also maintained his identity as an Egyptian, is seen as backward and primitive, living in poor conditions, believing in superstitions, and incapable of changing.

In his efforts to uphold the British colonial enterprise, Durrell claims that Egyptian independence has threatened the cosmopolitan nature of Alexandria and has thrown Egypt into chaos at the hands of nationalists, who promote hatred of foreigners, and of pashas, such as Memlik, who steal the wealth and resources of the land. Consequently, some foreigners, whom Durrell calls "the brains of Egypt," left Egypt, while the rest could not leave because of the businesses and industries they had there. Durrell claims that the British "have literally thrown [the foreigners] to the lions!" (*Quartet* 477). His use of such a "zoological term" (Fanon 34) indicates that Egyptians of the time were governed by the law of the jungle, where the stronger defeat and beat the weak, and further supports Fanon's observation that "[w]hen the settler seeks to describe the native… he constantly refers to the bestiary" (34). In the absence of law, according to Durrell, foreigners in Alexandria become prey to be hunted by the Egyptians.

Durrell continues his orientalist perspective through the characterization of Memlik. Memlik is a representative of the Egyptian government who epitomizes the corrupted Egyptian officials in the government. He is a Muslim Prime Minister who looks like a religious man but accepts bribes. He demonstrates Durrell's dislike of the Muslims, who, according to Kaczvinsky, "are either noticeably absent from the work or depicted as hopelessly corrupt and backward" (102). Memlik frequently demonstrates obedience and submission to the British while exerting power over the Egyptians. In a meeting between

Mountolive and Memlik, Mountolive shows his superiority and strength, which fills the Egyptian officer with fear and a sense of inferiority (*Quartet* 595). Meanwhile, Memlik exerts authority over the Egyptian subordinates and citizens. He uses a whip to intimidate the Egyptians, considering this action the only way to deal with them: "the timorous soul of the Egyptians cries always for the whip" (*Quartet* 599). Durrell presents Memlik as a "feudal oriental tyrant of western imagination" (Bowen 16), an example of the jungle law practiced by corrupt governments and of the submission of the people to such humiliation.

In contrast to his misrepresentations of Egyptian officials, Durrell represents English officials and links their tough behaviour to Alexandria's oriental nature and politics. Pursewarden, for instance, is an English official who works in the British embassy, described as "cold and clever and self-centred. Completely amoral—like an Egyptian! He would not deeply care if we died tomorrow" (*Quartet* 562). The phrase "like an Egyptian" reflects that Pursewarden's wickedness and immorality are characteristics the English are likely to acquire from the Egyptians' nature and politics.

Another example of the influence of politics on personality is Mountolive, who came to Egypt as a normal Englishman but was later officially posted there as an ambassador, and whose mission has affected both himself and his image of Egypt. Mountolive first visited Egypt in 1918, a year before the revolution against British occupation, and returned there in 1934 as an assigned ambassador. His first visit was at a significant time to both the British and the Egyptians, because the 1919 revolution marked the beginning of independence negotiations. The second visit was at a crucial time for the British empire, two years before the 1936 Treaty, which limited British rule in Egypt and considered Egypt an independent nation with its own government and an elected prime minister.

Mountolive is an emblem of Durrell's opinions of the imperial officers who worked in Egypt during the colonial period, and the novel that bears his name is a discourse of the

encounter between colonizer and colonized. Mountolive's journey to Egypt is an example of what Spurr considers a "tradition in Western literature" (19): a Western character's sojourn in another country and exposure to its culture. In such a case, "the confrontation of cultures takes place face to face, or rather eye to eye, and it is here, at close range, that the gaze of the writer can have its most powerful effect" (Spurr 19-20). The character's observations and thoughts are based on the writer's own views and beliefs. Through Mountolive the character and *Mountolive* the novel, Durrell illustrates the experience of the Englishman who once visited the Orient with a clear intention of learning its reality and correcting the Western myths. However, his dealings with the Orient and its politics, with the chaos and corruption of politicians and immoral citizens, leads Mountolive to adopt and reinforce the mythical image of the Orient.

On his first visit, Mountolive was sent to learn Arabic. During that visit, he was able to discover Egypt, particularly Alexandria, engage with the natives and their lives, and learn their language, tradition, and history. He lived with Nessim's family in order to learn Arabic and to experience Egyptian life closely. He saw the Egyptians as normal, kind, and interesting people coexisting peacefully with the foreigners. He raised political and social issues for discussion with Nessim's family, such as the relationship between Copts and Muslims, to learn more about the Egyptian mentality and their way of reading the sociopolitical scene.

During this journey, Mountolive assesses his previous knowledge of Egypt and the Egyptians which he gained from reading Western travel books. During his stay with Nessim's Coptic family, "he had suddenly found the exotic becoming completely normal […] began to feel himself really penetrating a foreign country" (*Quartet* 406). He starts to question the reliability of the image he had previously held, and begins to construct his own. Nessim's family thinks Mountolive is different from most other foreigners of the time who

visited the Orient and lived with native families in order to "study and assess them, their language, religion and habits" (*Quartet* 409). They naively believed that they were not Mountolive's case studies.

During his personal adventure of constructing a new image of Egypt, Mountolive seems to be observing Oriental society closely. He notices some Egyptian traditions that reflect generosity and compares those traditions to their English counterparts. For example, he has attended a feast. After finishing, the Egyptians offer their guests "a touch of jasmine scent" (*Quartet* 414), while in Europe cigarettes are offered. Mountolive is especially impressed by the Egyptian custom of offering gifts to visitors, and he adopts this tradition as an ambassador. When his secretary reminds him to buy gifts, he replies, "I am becoming quite an oriental" (*Quartet* 585). Here, Durrell represents Mountolive as a humble colonizer who considers himself one of the Egyptians and respectfully follows the social practices of the colonized society. My position here is that Mountolive's familiarity with such traditions reflects his deep penetration into the society. Mountolive practices some Egyptian traditions and disguises himself as an Egyptian, with tarboosh and sunglasses, imitating the previous travellers. This practice enables him to merge into the society, to gain their trust and confidence, and thus practice political power more successfully (Bowen 14).

During his stay with Nessim's family, Mountolive falls in love with Nessim's mother Leila, which was considered socially unacceptable and disgraceful. Kaczvinsky regards the relationship between Mountolive and Leila from an orientalist perspective, as a "metaphor for imperial relations" (110). At the beginning, they were both happy and passionate, even though they kept their relationship secret.

Once Mountolive becomes an official in the British authority structure, his attitude toward the Egyptians changes. He puts on the imperial character, regards the Egyptians with a sense of superiority, and reinforces stereotypical images of the East. At that stage, he turns

his gaze to the ugly, dusty, and backward side of Egypt, ignoring his previous observations as if they had never existed. He left Leila because he could not bear seeing her deformed face and he treated her as inferior to him. Mountolive's imperial position makes him into a new character who deals differently with the same people he knew before. Even as an ambassador in independent Egypt, he behaves like a colonizer and regards the Egyptians as a colonized people. The house in which he lives is furnished with pieces belonging to different colonial cultures, such as African and Indian, reminding him of his imperial mission. His personality and his official position clash to produce a mentality of what Zahlan calls the "colonial confounded" (38).

In fact, through the character of Mountolive, Durrell represents a practical example of Balfour's and Cromer's imperial strategy in Egypt: gaining knowledge of a nation by sending a regular person to live among the natives of the target nation, learn their language, and study their land, history, and politics, demonstrating Said's notion that in the colonial process, knowledge "gives power, [and] more power requires more knowledge" (*Orientalism* 36). Mountolive's diplomatic mission focuses on the Suez Canal, and his observations update the British officials with needed information about the Suez Canal. Knowing Arabic helps Mountolive to penetrate, to access, the Egyptian society and gather the information he needs without suspicion.

Carl Bode and John Kelly have different opinions of the effects of the colonial mission on Mountolive. Bode describes Mountolive as "commonplace […] The role he plays is largely that of the traditional British diplomat, human enough under his ambassador's uniform but hardly individual" (532). Bode argues that Mountolive is an ordinary, and human, English diplomat, but his position prevents him from being independent, so that he cannot easily engage with the Egyptians or live his life normally. Mountolive, Bode claims, represents the British colonial official's struggle between the individual and the imperial

mission. On the contrary, Kelly considers Mountolive "the most dangerous" and "bloodthirsty" character in the novel (54), who has position, power, and knowledge alongside the trust of the Egyptians, and masks his deadly deeds, such as his order to kill Nessim's brother, behind his polite and tender behaviour.

I agree with Bode that Mountolive is torn between his job as a British officer and his normal self. His position turns him to an ambivalent figure capable to what Kelly considers as deadly deeds. Mountolive visualizes Egypt as a land of "deceptions and squalor" (*Quartet* 631). Mountolive sees the Egyptian landscape as deceitful and filthy and accuses it of "turn[ing] emotions and memories to dust, beggar[ing] friendship and destroy[ing] love" (*Quartet* 631). Instead of blaming his critical mission as a colonial officer for the loss of his friends and of his love of Leila, Mountolive considers the Oriental space responsible for his self-disturbance and the destruction of his relationships.

Alexandria and the Second World War in Durrell's *Clea*

The fourth novel of the *Alexandria Quartet, Clea* (1960), continues Durrell's representation of Alexandria and its inhabitants. This novel focuses on the Second World War, and particularly Durrell's perception and depiction of the effects of the war on Alexandria. The narrative manipulates these historical details to perpetuate the orientalist stance that was present in the first three novels.

Alexandria was the only city outside of Britain or Germany to be bombed in 1940-41, leading to "bombing raids, panic and mass exodus" (Mansel 252), so that the city that was once a place of refuge for Europeans fleeing the war became a site of insecurity. In *Cairo in the War: 1939-1945*, Cooper states that when the bombardment started, "[h]undreds of people were banished from Alexandria to Upper Egypt… Six thousand children were evacuated from Alexandria, in anticipation of heavy air-raids" (Cooper 47). The war accelerated the tension between the Egyptians and the British, bringing Anglo-Egyptian

relations to an all-time low (Cooper 66). The fear wrought by the war created an atmosphere of panic "provoked by the very heavy bombing raids on Alexandria…. There was a mass evacuation of between fifty and seventy thousand people from Alexandria and Port Said" (Cooper 68), and at night, the city was blacked out in hopes of making it "invisible to the enemy" (Cooper 190).

Alexandrians experienced air bombardment, fear, exodus, and death in their city during the war, a chapter in its history that has shaped its contemporary outlook. For the British, the war was also important because it reminds them of the greatness and the victory of the British empire before decolonization. Durrell's *Clea* was published in 1960, during the decolonization period, about 15 years after the war and the British withdrawal from Egypt. *Clea* celebrates the heyday of the British empire, specifically expressing nostalgia for Alexandria before the Second World War.

Clea completes the story of the *Quartet*, with its depiction of British/Egyptian encounters during the war. The story of *Clea* illustrates Durrell's belief that the cosmopolitan Alexandria was not destroyed by the war, with which it had little to do, but by the Egyptian nationalist movement, which called for British evacuation, at the end of the British colonial period. This section traces Darley's journey throughout the novel, from Greece to Alexandria until he leaves the city forever, to compare Durrell's depiction of wartime Alexandria to the image he presents in the previous volumes. It also discusses the effects of the war on the decline of cosmopolitanism and the rise of nationalism in Durrell's Alexandria. This novel sketches the character of Clea. The self-contained, distant, and independent Clea, an artist who epitomizes Philip Mansel's characterization of "the British in Alexandria [as] remain[ing] aloof from other nationalities" (251), represents the colonial English.

Before discussing Clea the character, we should first note two significant examples in *Clea* the novel of Durrell's orientalist and colonialist perspective. The first occasion is the

Egyptian religious festival of the Mawlid (transliterated as *Mulid* in the *Quartet*), the celebration of the prophet's day of birth. On that day, streets are lit up and decorated, and they smell of fruit and roasted meat. People gather to celebrate the Mawlid, including imams who dress in traditional religious clothes and sing Mawlid songs with the crowd. The Mawlid reflects the joyful spirit of the Egyptians who love to celebrate and to be happy. The atmosphere is a mixture of religious ritual with food and music, and Mawlid dolls, made of sugar and dressed as princesses, are available in all the shops. Darley attends one of the locations of the celebration of the Mawlid, sitting by the street, drinking sugar "sherbet" (*Quartet* 858), an Egyptian traditional drink made for special occasions. He did not engage with the Egyptians but kept watching the crowd happily singing and celebrating. Even the prostitutes, whom Darley can easily identify among the people, are celebrating.

Another festive occasion described in *Clea* is the Carnival, a western festival in which all the participants dance in masks. Durrell depicts this festival as a symbol of coexistence and hybridity in which people of different religions, origins, and social classes come together to celebrate. Durrell's orientalist perspective is clear in his representation of the Mawlid as contrary to the Carnival. Unlike the Carnival, a western festival in which everyone can participate and no religious or ethnic discrimination is practiced, the Mawlid is a Muslim festival in which only Egyptians celebrate while others, such as Darley and Clea, are merely observers.

The self-contained, aloof, and independent Clea represents the colonial English, who participates in neither the carnival nor the Mawlid. Her refusal to take part in city festivals stems from her dislike of mingling with the colonized peoples, in the belief that indigenous Egyptians "in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race" (Said, *Orientalism* 39), and her desire to keep her British identity pure and intact. Durrell's account of Darley's and Clea's observation of the festival without participation

demonstrates another characteristic of orientalist discourse identified by Said, that "[t]he European, whose sensibility tours the Orient, is a watcher, never involved, always detached" (*Orientalism* 15). Clea's insistence on maintaining her distance leads her to refuse and disgrace Narouz's love. She keeps to fellow English people as well as upper-class Egyptians such as Justine and Nessim.

Durrell depicts Clea and Justine as reflections of their own cultures, or "expressions of their landscape" (157), as he notes in *"*Landscape and Character." Justine represents a stereotypical Eastern woman: she is playful, deceitful, and treacherous, surrounded by lovers and indulging in many sexual relationships, but seemingly incapable of true love. Conversely, Clea, the English woman, is talented, harmless and lovable, incapable of deception, and shows no sexual interests. Clea and Darley are represented as sophisticated talented characters, Clea a painter and Darley a writer, in contrast with the sexual character of Justine. Their representations reflect the societies to which they belong: Clea, the Western character, is "the familiar" and Justine, the Oriental character, is "the strange" (Said, *Orientalism* 43).

At the beginning of *Clea,* Darley is in Greece, where he has been since the events of *Mountolive.* He receives a letter from Nessim asking him to return to Alexandria, a proposal that Darley considers an invitation to the "Underworld" (*Quartet* 657). At this moment, Darley remembers Alexandria and his contradictory feelings about it, referring to it as "a memory," "the capital of memory," and "an ancient city" (*Quartet* 657). Despite his long stay in Alexandria and his penetration into its society and its inhabitants, Darley expresses his "total failure to record the inner truth of the city" (*Quartet* 658). For Darley, Alexandria is still a city "clamouring for identity" (*Quartet* 657), more a "Hellenistic capital" (*Quartet* 658) than an example of contemporary Egypt. Durrell hints that the coexistence of different civilizations in Alexandria throughout its history have led to a lack of identity and thus an endless quest for an identity of its own.

Prior to leaving Greece, Darley receives a farewell feast from his Greek friends, simply because he is English: "[t]o be English when Greece had fallen [during the war] was to be a target for the affection and gratitude of every Greek, and the humble peasants of this hamlet felt it no less keenly than Greeks everywhere" (*Quartet* 665). The Greeks made the feast for Darley as a way to honour him and his country for fighting the Germans with the Greeks. Before his return to Alexandria, Darley describes Greece as a paradise in which he is treated with respect because he is British; on his return, he feels the threat of expulsion that foreigners in Egypt were facing. This scene again reinforces Durrell's dislike of Egypt, reflected in Darley's treatment as a British superior, which he did not receive from the Egyptians.

When he first went to Greece, Darley had not planned to return to Alexandria because the city was "fad[ing] inside [him], in [his] thoughts, like some valedictory mirage—like the sad history of some great queen whose fortunes have foundered among the ruins of armies and the sands of time!" (*Quartet* 872). For him, the time he spent in Alexandria was unrealistic and deceptive, and he believes that everything that brought it importance and glory is now gone. The political situations that Alexandria has faced for decades have changed it in Darley's imagination from a beautiful woman with many lovers, such as Justine and Leila, to an ugly and deformed one hated by those who once loved her. Now the city is at war and Darley wants to witness the destruction that might allow him to leave the city and wipe it from his memory. Darley has returned to Alexandria in hope of reaching a reconciliation between the city and the past.

While in Greece, Darley is able to see the Alexandrians differently, and experiences love and friendship. On his way back to Alexandria, Darley recalls and relives old memories as he remembers his days, experiences, and love in Alexandria. Durrell claims that in Greece he can value other people and his relationships with them, as its peaceful atmosphere evokes

the good feelings, tranquillity, and optimism that he did not experience in Alexandria (*Quartet* 659). Though he expresses his resentment of Alexandria, Darley accepts Nessim's invitation to return there because he is eager to rediscover the city's mysteries: "the city which I now know I hated held out something different for me—a new evaluation of the experience" (*Quartet* 659). Again he sees the contradictions of poverty and beauty in the city, its "insolence of colouring, its crushing poverty and shops" (*Quartet* 674). In Greece, Darley experienced financial hardship; Mnemjian, an Alexandrian who delivered Nessim's letter to Darley in Greece, feels sorry for Darley and assures him that his financial situation will improve soon, because of the generosity and hospitality of the Alexandrians, which Darley has acknowledged (*Quartet* 662).

On his return to Alexandria, Darley imagines the city as peaceful, with doves flying over the minarets on a beautiful summer day. However, as the ship approaches, it is night-time, and the harbour is full of anti-submarine nets and war shipments. Darley realizes that he "was wrong – each new approach is different. Each time we deceive ourselves that it will be the same. The Alexandria I now saw, the first vision of it from the sea, was something I could not have imagined" (*Quartet* 667). Darley insists that the imagined Alexandria is much more fascinating than the real one; the reputation of the city is elusive and illusory, merely a "valedictory mirage" (*Quartet* 872). Moreover, Darley continues to express his disdain for the weather and environment of Alexandria, by comparing the peeled paint on the houses to an "old reptile" (*Quartet* 660) with dry scaly skin. Similarly, in describing "the miasma of Egypt [that] had closed over my head" (*Quartet* 664), Darley regards the climate of Alexandria as heavy, suffocating, and unpleasant.

Despite the war, Darley notices that Alexandria's seashore is still populated by cotton merchants and bankers who have come from different parts of Europe to trade. For Darley, the European merchants and bankers are part of the effort of the British occupation to return

Alexandria to the glory of the time of Alexander the Great and revive his dream of making it a cosmopolitan city "after the centuries of dust and silence which Amr had imposed upon it" (*Quartet* 676). Durrell uses this scene to represent the British colonial period in Egypt as a golden age in which the glory and security of the cosmopolitan city were preserved. Because the British power is in Alexandria, European traders continue investing in the city's commodities. To glorify the beneficial importance of the British colonial presence, Durrell depicts the Arab period as backward and static in comparison to the dynamic and productive period of British imperialism. With this scene, Durrell manifests what Said argues about that in orientalist discourse the West as "rational, virtuous, [and] mature" (*Orientalism* 40), and the East as "irrational [and] depraved" (Said 40), the former as light and power moving any space toward modernity and the latter as darkness that disrupts what the West builds.

For Durrell, the Arab conquest of Egypt represented the retreat of Alexandria from a light for the world into "centuries of dust and silence" (*Quartet* 676), and the return of European traders to Alexandria in the nineteenth century "re-ignited and ratified" Alexander's dream (*Quartet* 676), reviving a city that had been dead and inefficient for centuries. In his explanation of Darley's description of Arab Alexandria as "dust and silence," Aledwani claims that "dust" symbolizes the Arabic desert and "silence" refers to cultural stagnation (112). Aledwani claims that colonial discourse has portrayed Arabic cities declining from their height in the imperial age, in order to make colonization more attractive to both Western and Arab readers (121).

Like Aledwani, Afaf Marsot refutes Durrell's depiction of the Arab period of Alexandria as an era of dust and silence. Marsot notes of the Arab conquest that Amr "ruled [Egypt] justly and efficiently" (*History* 3) and the Egyptians were satisfied "under Amr's wise rule" (5). During his reign, Amr established and maintained irrigation systems to support the plantation industry, the major financial resource of Alexandria, and "reopened the

ancient canal that joined the Nile to the Red Sea" (*History* 5). Both Aledwani and Marsot agree that Arab rule brought justice, stability, and coexistence between Muslims and Copts following the sectarianism of the Byzantine era. Durrell not only ignores this but constructs the history of Egypt in a way that supports his own claims. He overlooks the nations that had previously ruled Egypt, such as the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, which were succeeded by Muhammad Ali, who ushered in a period of modernization. Against such an unreliable historical background, Durrell's Alexandria becomes a city of deception.

Clea not only continues the practice throughout the *Alexandria Quartet* of presenting Western views of the East, but specifically focuses on such representations in wartime, raising the question of whether the West depicts the real situation of the East in periods of war. Spurr discusses the gaze (Western eye) of the reporter, artist, and writer, and its function as a colonial instrument of knowledge and authority, noting that the "writer's own system of value" controls and influences the interpretations and therefore the representations of what he/she sees (16). The eye of the western writer would 'select' and 'filter' the scene and rework it into an image with a significant meaning to the western audience (Spurr 21).

In *Reading the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag points out that images produced by a camera are not necessarily true pictures, because the photographer's freedom of what to include and exclude in his/her shot affects its reliability. She argues that "the photographic image [...] cannot be simply a transparency of something that happened. It is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude" (46); therefore, "it [is] possible for a photograph to misrepresent" (Sontag 46). According to Sontag, a real picture can be deceiving because a photographer can easily manipulate and impose self-censorship. The deception would be greater in written works, since the beliefs and opinions of the writer, much like those of the photographer, shape his/her view of the subject of the written account.

According to Caroline Rooney and Rita Sakr in the "Introduction" of *Ethics of Representation in Literature, Art, and Journalism*, journalists and writers of fiction would "filter" the suffering of colonized people, such that many of their works would become "fictional/cinematic, surreal" due to the difficulty of depicting material that was "too violent to historicize directly and simply" (3). Literary and nonliterary texts present "fragments of reality" (Rooney and Sakr 1); the power of representations lies in their ability to become memorials and tools for justice, moving from depictions of war and destruction to "making peace and reconciliation" (Rooney and Sakr 4).

These theories of representation are the background for the following discussion of Durrell's representations of the Second World War and its repercussions for Alexandria as contexts for *Clea*. Although *Clea* is set during the war, it neglects the history of the war itself, instead representing selected and filtered fragments of the reality of the war within which the love story of Darley and Clea is depicted in a "cinematic" manner. In addition, Durrell represents the war through the eye of the colonizer, while the voice of the colonized is silenced.

Durrell, who witnessed the war from Alexandria, tells the story from the perspective of Darley, a reporter whose gaze controls the represented scenes. Upon his arrival in Alexandria, Darley noticed the debris around the seashore. He describes the war in Greece as an "unknown dragon" which hit Alexandria with its claws (*Quartet* 665). Darley, the colonizer, experiences "the impersonality of war" (*Quartet* 669) for the first time, where "there was no room for human beings or thought of them under this vast umbrella of coloured death" (*Quartet* 669). The sound of battleships and the "buzz of a liner's siren" (*Quartet* 671) are characteristic of the new city filled with ambulances and soldiers. The bombardment of Alexandria is marked by complete darkness and the sounds of houses falling down like heavy rain (*Quartet* 669). The city is filled with checkpoints where policemen and soldiers, most of

them British, check the identification documents of the newcomers (*Quartet* 673). The British soldiers at the checkpoint treat Darley sympathetically and consider him a "refugee national" (*Quartet* 673). At that checkpoint, Darley hears English spoken in different accents; for him, "[i]t was strange and moving to hear around us all the accents of the English shires" (*Quartet* 673). Seeing and hearing soldiers from different parts of England and its colonies patrolling Alexandria may have been "strange," but Darley still felt pride and security.

On the day Darley returns, the night is disturbed by the "moaning" of alarms and by warplanes and rockets from battleships; the city is placed under "curfew" (*Quartet* 779), so that social activities such as sitting in the cafés and playing chess are forbidden, and people would stay home. For Darley, war in Alexandria "was as beautiful as it was stupefying" (*Quartet* 668), and this beauty prevents him from grasping the ugly reality of the war. This contradictory description of the city's beauty under the lights and sounds of the rockets creates what Rooney and Sakr call a "cinematic" and "surreal" picture. Even the child who accompanied Darley from Greece, who could not grasp the horror of the war, describes the scene as "beautiful" (*Quartet* 671). Durrell's use of the word "beautiful" to describe the war might indicate either his amazement at the resistance of the city and its ability to maintain its high spirits, or his attempt to demonstrate that the war was not disruptive to the British presence in Alexandria. Although there is no beautiful side to war, Durrell's descriptions seek to soften its impact.

Clea presents what Rooney and Sakr call "fragments of reality" of the war, by silencing the Egyptian part of the story. The war is witnessed and reported from Darley's point of view, bringing to mind Patrick Williams' argument that ethical writing on war "involves giving voice ... to the silenced victims, the frequently forgotten Others of triumphant wars and colonial conquests" (56-57). In *Clea*, however, the voices of the Egyptians are silenced, as Darley and Clea speak for them instead. Furthermore, Durrell

limits his descriptions of the war to the outdoors and marginalizes the responses of the Alexandrians to the situation. Alexandria appears as an active, lively, and peaceful city during the day; the war becomes seriously aggressive only for a few hours at night, when people could easily shelter themselves inside their homes. Every day at dawn, the warfare ceases and the rain falls over the city to hide the cruelty of the war (*Quartet* 728), though the city smells like "a freshly dug graveyard" (*Quartet* 728) after the rain has stopped. Every morning, life returns to normal, while the battleships in the harbour remain at the ready amidst debris and human remains "scattered" (*Quartet* 671) by the bombardments.

Durrell's descriptions of wartime Alexandria represent a space of tension, bringing together contradictory scenes of life and death, music and war, beauty and ugliness. The harbour, which should stand as a site of connectivity and economic vitality, has turned into a site of death and ruin in Durrell's wartime Alexandria. Dead bodies scattered around the battleship, in a place similar to a new graveyard, are mixed with the sounds of cars and music played loudly at the nearby cafés, reflecting the liveliness of the city (*Quartet* 671). He observes that "even the nightly bombardments of the harbour were brushed aside by day, shrugged away like nightmares, hardly remembered as more than inconvenience" (*Quartet* 702). In order to filter the horror of the war, Durrell calls the night bombardment an "inconvenience" that merely disturbs the quietness of the night; when the sun rises, everything returns to its normal state, as if nothing has happened. For Durrell, Alexandria overcomes hardships and critical circumstances with an indomitable spirit (*Quartet* 701-02).

Life in Durrell's Alexandria goes on as normal, except at the port where the war takes place; people go to work in the mornings and spend the evenings at cafés or bars, or in their homes if a bombing occurs. In *Clea*, the nightly bombardment is a background event that can be easily avoided by staying at home with friends and family; its only effect is preventing people from amusing and entertaining themselves outside at night after a tough and hectic

day (*Quartet* 779). Because the British have moved the war to the Egyptian lands in general and Alexandria in particular, Durrell claims that the city is not affected by war, except at the harbour: "[o]nly a small area of the Arab quarter came under direct fire; the upper town remained relatively untouched" (731). The Arab quarter is unimportant for Durrell because, as the previous volumes of the *Quartet* have shown, it is in need of modernization, and its destruction would provide an opportunity to rebuild. It was rarely expected to find a shop or building blown up, and "this was not part of the normal expectation of things" (*Quartet* 731).

With the war retreating to the desert, the city harbour is left full of rockets and ruined battleships. After years of darkness and bombardment, the city has survived and is returning to normal. The city and its people resume their pleasures that were kept on hold during the war, and the "normal night-life of the Levant had begun once more to flower" (*Quartet* 805). The bars and nightclubs are still crowded with the servicemen who are "on leave" (*Quartet* 805) at that time. Darley uses the word "invested" (*Quartet* 805) to characterize the effects of the war on Alexandria, emphasizing the positive connotations of financial gain and commercial venture, even though the war in reality brought bloodshed and "fighting between nations or groups within a nation using military force" (*Oxford English Dictionary*), which creates social, financial, and commercial regression. Though the war was described as a dragon, it is a dragon that has come to invest in the land.

Durrell depicts the trauma of heavy haphazard bombing in a romantic scene of what Rooney and Sakr call a picture of "making peace." This scene feeds into the construction of Alexandria as a space of tension, where contradictions coexist. In the midst of people seeking shelter, with their screams of fear echoing throughout the city, Clea and Darley share a romantic moment. Durrell 'filters' the psychological effect by using the sounds of bombing as a background for a moment of love to "mak[e] peace and reconciliation" (Rooney and Sakr 4). Inside Clea's apartment, the two are making love while they hear people outside

screaming and running from death. Clea and Darley, who are British, are not afraid, as if they are sure that they will be safe and will not be targeted. Instead of seeking shelter from the air raids, they embrace each other firmly, as though each is a shelter for the other, reinforcing Durrell's theme of love as the most secure shelter from any sort of danger.

Durrell's presentation of Alexandria's virtual reconciliation with the war as its economic situation has improved forms another surreal image. He still believes that the Alexandrians are materialistic people and that for them, money is so much more important than feelings or relationships that they used the war to improve their commerce and business. For instance, despite the numbers of people dead, wounded, or homeless, Mnemjian the barber happily tells Darley that many soldiers have come to his shop, which has increased his income. Darley states that Mnemjian "reflected only the iron material values of the Levant" (*Quartet* 663). Mnemjian thus becomes a symbol of Alexandrian materialism, and of Durrell's belief that the presence of soldiers provides benefits to the city's economy as they become regular customers at barber shops, theatres, restaurants, cafés, and nightclubs.

The effect of the war was not limited to the physical destruction of the city. The misbehaviour of the refugees and soldiers, who scour the streets day and night searching for sex and drink, disturbs the city security and annoys the residents. The barbaric behaviour of the British troops in Egypt, even as they believed in their superiority over the Egyptian citizens, brings to mind Aime Cesaire's observation that "colonialism … dehumanizes even the most civilized men" (41) and Memmi's statement that "colonization destroys the colonized [and] … rots the colonizer" (13). In *The Levant,* Mansel notes that the misbehaviour of British troops was "expected to alienate Egyptians" (252) who were anxious over the moral deterioration of their society. In *Cairo in the War*, Cooper gives examples of the insolence of the British and European soldiers: "[w]ith so many troops in the streets, many of whom were drunk and bored, … it was not unusual for an Egyptian cab to be

hijacked by drunken soldiers, who would then force the owner to drive them wherever they wanted to go. Egyptians were frequently robbed and beaten up" (116-17).

Clea, however, does not contain the Alexandrians' reactions to these threats to the moral standard of their city, as their voices are silenced and unheard. Instead, Durrell chooses to represent Alexandrian concerns about the moral standards of their society through the eyes of Darley and Clea, who describe the war-torn city as "a huge orphanage" (*Quartet* 732) because of the increasing number of brothels, with even one of the city hotels made into "a brothel for the troops" (*Quartet* 825). On viewing the hotel, Darley feels disgusted and ashamed by the "naked girls" and "half-dressed sweating soldiers" (*Quartet* 825), as well as the "doors … [that are] open on every landing, [so that] you could see everything" (*Quartet* 825). Darley's harsh descriptions of the brothels and the people who visit them, however, are still less dismissive than his views of Oriental society and practices. He does note, however, that the visitors to the brothels are mostly European soldiers, but does not identify the origins of the girls in the brothels.

Clea is a witness to the city of Alexandria both before and after the war. She states that before the war Alexandria was a conservative city in which morals were invaluable, and pleasures were sought and practiced privately in the shadows. During the war, however, everything is exposed, leading to "disorientation" (*Quartet* 732) and inability to comprehend what has happened. The misconduct of people turns the city into a "public urinal" (*Quartet* 732) whose streets are full of drunkards and prostitutes. Clea dislikes the behaviour of the soldiers, but feels sorry for them and decides to help them because they are victims of the war and it is unfair to blame them for their misconduct. Although they disturb the standards of the culture and irritate the Alexandrians with their misbehaviour, Durrell finds excuses for the soldiers and arouses empathy towards them.

The effects of the war go beyond physical and moral destruction. They take their toll on the appearances and financial status of the characters, reflecting the protean nature of the characters throughout the *Alexandria Quartet*. For Frank Kermode, "there is more change, decay, and death" (114) in *Clea* than in its predecessors; however, that change is represented from the perspective of Darley and Clea. For instance, the novels depict the decline of British hegemony, as represented by the discovery of Nessim's conspiracy despite the ability of European characters such as Mountolive and Darley to infiltrate the colonized Egyptian society. When the conspiracy has been uncovered, the British authorities, represented by the ambassador Mountolive, are unable to take action and leave the situation in the hands of the Egyptian government. Towards the end of the war, Britain has lost hegemony over Egypt, which reflects the end of its imperial power.

Durrell links the decay of Alexandria to the decay of its inhabitants; as Darley says, "if war did not mean a way of dying, it means a way of ageing" (*Quartet* 733). The Alexandrian characters have all changed dramatically, as Kermode points out: "Justine has had a stroke, Nessim has lost an eye and some fingers in an air-raid; Balthazar is toothless" (115). Specifically, Balthazar loses his job as a doctor and becomes sick, losing his teeth and appearing as a white-haired wrinkled old man. Balthazar's appearance surprises Darley, who states, "I saw with a considerable shock that his [Balthazar's] hair was quite white which made him look like an ancient version of himself. It took me a moment or two to realize that it was not dyed" (*Quartet* 702). Nessim and Justine, the main characters of the previous books in the series, are downgraded to minor roles. Nessim, known as 'the prince,' with a prestigious position and a great fortune, is reduced to working as an ambulance driver, and he has lost one eye and a finger during the war (*Quartet* 663), while Justine is placed under house arrest by Memlik as punishment for her part in the conspiracy (*Quartet* 684). Hamid represents the poor Egyptians whose static lives contrast the changes surrounding them; his

room in the apartment in which Darley used to live is still in miserable condition (*Quartet* 680), even though the house has been renovated.

In contrast to the decline of the Alexandrian characters, the British characters have become wealthier and more prestigious. For instance, Clea's painting skill has improved, while Darley holds a post in the British authority offered to him by Mountolive. His talent as a writer has improved, and he has finished writing his book. Pompal, a minor character in the three previous books, has become rich and bought a building and Nessim's Rolls Royce. Although the financial and social status of the British characters has improved significantly, unlike those of the Alexandrians, Clea states that home "is hardly the word for a city of exiles" (*Quartet* 722). Clea's statement reflects that despite what Alexandria has generously offered the British characters, they do not feel it is truly their home.

After the war, the incidents in *Clea* draw attention to the decline of British influence, and hence the expected end of Alexandria's cosmopolitanism, which forces a number of the characters to leave. Once a cosmopolitan colonial city that attracted people of various nationalities, races, and religions, Alexandria is now under nationalist control and no longer tolerates diversity. It is in the process of becoming a city of an Egyptian ambience, a place of one religion, one nationality, and one race. The rise of nationalism, for Durrell, brings with it the fall of tolerance, coexistence, and progression shared by majority and minority ethnic groups.

The first three volumes of the *Alexandria Quartet* (*Justine, Balthazar,* and *Mountolive*) represent Egyptians either as poor, powerless figures such as Hamid, or as authoritarian tyrants such as Memlik. That is to implicitly present the fundamental orientalist perspective of the inability of the Orient to govern itself, predicting that the Egyptian nationalist movement would be governed by people such as Memlik. Moreover, these three works portray Alexandria as historically a non-Egyptian city in order to disclaim the

legitimacy of nationalism as an anti-colonial movement, and instead present it as a hostile movement that works against the interests of non-Muslim minorities. Durrell's orientalist vision brings to mind Spurr's and Memmi's arguments: Spurr contends that the colonizer depicts the Western presence as representative of development and modernity (97). Therefore, the end of colonialism and the departure of the settlers, and consequently the Egyptianization and Arabization of Alexandria, as Memmi argues, mean going back to "barbarism, degradation and bestiality" (37).

Durrell expresses his dislike of the imperial practices of the British in some of his letters and in *The Black Book*. However, he acknowledges in the *Alexandria Quartet* that the British presence in Alexandria has brought diversity, coexistence, and tolerance into colonial spaces, and the end of that presence means the end of a multifaith, multilingual, and multi-ethnic city. In *Mountolive,* Durrell expresses his concern that Egyptianization would entail the expulsion of foreigners from Egypt, including the Copts, because the movement was led primarily by Muslims, whom he characterizes as hating and suppressing the Copts. In *Clea,* he shifts from the East/West opposition to the Copt/Muslim crisis when nationalism has increased. By the end of the war and the retreat of the British from Egypt, the changes wrought in the lives of Durrell's Alexandrians are represented as consequences of the nationalization of Alexandria, which has become a "futureless" (*Quartet* 875) and desolate city. Durrell's fictional Alexandria was not destroyed by the war, but by the nationalist movement that created a city of one nationality, one creed, and one language.

The end of *Clea* crystallizes Durrell's imperialist view of the state of chaos in which the colonized exist once the colonizers leave. After the war and at the end of colonization in Egypt, the city is suffering and its inhabitants are no longer attached to it. The characters felt there was no hope but to leave the land. In "Romantic Anachronism in *Alexandria Quartet*", A. K. Weatherhead claims that at the end of *Clea,* the characters' departure from Alexandria

is not their own choice because "the city deprives men of their will to act" (186). "Alexandria [has] bec[o]me a city of farewells" (Mansel 268), as the people believe there is no future in Alexandria and they intend to run away from their memories and toward a brighter, promising, and more secure future in new places in the West such as Paris. However, it is not necessarily the case that the characters are leaving against their will. Some characters are eager to leave the city and display no sense of regret, seeking instead to escape their past. Mountolive is offered a prestigious post in Paris. Clea, as mentioned earlier, does not consider Alexandria her home and sees leaving as an easy decision; she intends to leave Alexandria because it has become "stale and profitless" (*Quartet* 875). Darley also wants to go to France or Italy, whose civilizations, despite suffering during the war, can be revived and rebuilt. The departure of the foreigners accentuates Durrell's belief that cosmopolitanism has declined in Alexandria with the end of the Second World War and that the growth of nationalism has led to what Weatherhead considers a "general exodus" (186). Not only do the Europeans intend to leave, but some Alexandrians also find themselves with no choice but to leave. After their punishment is over, Nessim and Justine plan to go to Switzerland (*Quartet* 876). Upon his departure, Nessim looks different, and Darley points out that "[h]is appearance staggered me, he looked so much younger, and so elegant and self-possessed" (*Quartet* 876).

At the end of the novel, the situation of Alexandria as a whole resembles that of Leila, who characterizes herself as "dying of heartsickness like a true Alexandria" (*Quartet* 864). She has offered love and care to Alexandrians such as Nessim and Justine, and foreigners such as Mountolive, who have since left her alone and dying of a broken heart. Leila fears that her deformed face has driven others away from her, and only Balthazar truly loved her because he has seen the inner beauty of her soul, though he still left her anyway. She thus serves as a symbol of Alexandria itself, whose beauty suffered during the war and which has

also been abandoned even by those who truly loved her. Durrell blames the city's embrace of nationalism, not necessarily colonialism or war, for its regression.

Conclusion

The *Alexandria Quartet* is a twentieth-century work that presents an orientalist image of Alexandria and its inhabitants. In the larger context of orientalism, Durrell's representation presents a fundamental problem among elite British writers and their representation of the East. The orientalist discourse did not change in the twentieth century, and the pervasive influence of *Alexandria Quartet* demonstrates and reflects the prevalence of elite orientalism and the permeance of the imperial discourse. Even in the postcolonial period and the end of empire and with the appearance of the literary voices of the colonized, orientalist representations continue their predominance in the Western imagination, continuing to offer the same image even in different modes of representation. Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* is, therefore, a continuation from eighteenth-century material representations in exhibitions and of literary representations by orientalist writers such as Lane.

Durrell used modernism to construct his orientalist image by presenting themes, such as sexuality and memory, that serve to orientalize and exoticize Alexandria. The characters engage in different sexual relationships, and the warm weather contributes to the erotic atmosphere. Durrell's Alexandria is a city of memory, and memory is the only link that connects the characters to their city. Furthermore, Durrell's style is embellished with luxuriant words and metaphors—a technique used by some modernists such as Conrad—which endows his discourse with a sense of elitism.

Durrell depicts Alexandria's cosmopolitanism as a product of the West. The presence of foreigners meant the continuation of the cosmopolitan ambience, while their departure marked its end. Conversely, he also characterized Alexandria as a jail, though more for the Egyptians than the foreigners. Durrellian Alexandria is a space of tension that inspires

contradictory and ambivalent feelings within its inhabitants. Despite the great changes occurring in Egypt in general and Alexandria in particular at the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the *Alexandria Quartet* represented Egypt as a static society that was unable to change, focusing on ancient history more than the modern history of Egypt.

In the *Alexandria Quartet,* Durrell expresses an intent to depict modern love and human relationships in Alexandria, but appears to be more interested in politics and the imperial enterprise. He criticizes British imperialism for its destructive effects on the souls and personalities of the British officials on the one hand, and defends and justifies the imperialists' aggressive attitudes towards the colonized peoples on the other. Although he expresses his disdain for British politics and society, his Britishness crystallizes in his works, as he supports his country in its colonial enterprise by exoticizing Alexandria and eroticizing its inhabitants. His conflicting views of Alexandria and the British colonial enterprise are mirrored in the characters of Mountolive and Darley, who discover the Orient and observe Egypt with new eyes, yet like their author remain British imperialists, and every observation they make is ultimately orientalist in nature.

Alexandrian novelists have disagreed over Durrell's representations of their city. The popularity of the *Alexandria Quartet* and its construction of a particular image of Alexandria in the Western imagination has encouraged other Alexandrian writers of western origins, such as André Aciman, to write about their experiences in Egypt, analogously to the influence of Cavafy and Forster on Durrell himself. Conversely, Egyptian authors, such as Naguib Mahfouz, Edwar AlKharrat and Ibrahim Abdul Meguid, have written back to Durrell with corrective images of their own Alexandria. The next chapter explores the representation of Aciman and the impact of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet.*

Chapter Three

Revisiting Cosmopolitan Alexandria in André Aciman's *Out of Egypt*

This chapter investigates representations of minorities in cosmopolitan Alexandria, specifically focusing on André Aciman,[17] the Jewish Alexandrian author of the memoir *Out of Egypt* (1994) and of essays about Alexandria in *False Papers* (2000). In this chapter, I argue that Aciman's representation of Alexandria is a continuation of Durrell's orientalist characterizations. Aciman's *Out of Egypt* represents the Egyptian nationalist project as monologic and intolerant to ethnic multiplicity and multicultural space. He manipulates the representation of Jews to forward an attack against Egyptian nationalism and finds in the orientalist representation of the city framed by Durrell a useful medium to criticise the Nasserite nationalist project. Moreover, I discuss Aciman's conception of cosmopolitanism as realised in his production of two versions of cosmopolitan spaces: his Jewish community and Victoria College[18] (called Victory College in the memoir). Although the cosmopolitanism in *Out of Egypt* is not genuine, these examples do represent what I term Aciman's "reductionist conception" of cosmopolitanism based on Western norms in which cosmopolitan space is receptive of the elite, controlled by British imperial power, where everyone speaks English or French. The chapter also examines Aciman's perspective of

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[17] Aciman was born in Alexandria in 1951 of Sephardic Jewish parents. His father owned a knitting factory in Egypt, and his mother was deaf. He is a professor at New York University who has written several novels including *Call Me by Your Name* (2007), *Eight White Nights* (2010), and *Harvard Square* (2013). His memoir *Out of Egypt* received the Whiting Award.

[18] Aciman used Victory College, but in this study I use its old name, Victoria College.

Alexandria as a figure of the Jewish community, the decline of cosmopolitanism within his community, the Jewish/Egyptian encounter, and Jews' reaction to the political situation in Egypt.

This chapter begins with a historical background of Jews in Egypt and a review of Aciman's writings focusing on *Out of Egypt* and its representation of Jews, the Egyptians, and Alexandria. It then discusses different interpretations of the period of cosmopolitan decline in Alexandria, including Aciman's depiction of the decline. It includes a discussion of the cosmopolitan decline of Victoria College by comparing Aciman's experience as a student to Edward Said's, and concludes with an examination of Paul Theroux's *Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean,* which presents an image of Alexandria after the decline of cosmopolitanism.

History of Jews in Egypt

This historical overview outlines significant information and events in the history of Egyptian Jewry, and provides the historical context needed to understand the issues raised in *Out of Egypt*. Jewish history in Egypt is ancient, dating back to the time of the Pharaohs and Alexander the Great. In *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914-1952*, Gudrun Kramer discusses the history of Jews in modern Egypt. She explains why foreigners including Jews migrated to Egypt: "from the middle of the nineteenth century into the first quarter of the twentieth century, Egypt was a country of immigration: a country with rich possibilities, well-placed strategically, highly fertile, and inhabited by a hard working population, which was said to be easily roused but peaceful at heart" (8).

The Egyptian government agreement that regulates and protects the rights of foreigners (Capitulations), and the plethora of work opportunities, made Egypt the best choice for immigrants from Europe, the Levant, the Ottoman Empire, and North Africa. Among these immigrants were Jews who joined the existing Jewish community in Egypt; the

majority of them resided in Cairo and Alexandria. Their number peaked to about 80,000 in the interwar period, 24,000 of whom were located in Alexandria (Kramer 9). About 65 per cent belonged to the middle and lower-middle classes; the lower class constituted around 20 to 25 per cent, and 10 per cent consisted of the elite.

In Egypt, Jews are classified into three ethnic groups based on their origins: the Sephardi Jews, the Ashkenazi Jews, and the Karaites. Each group had different origins, customs, and political stances, which affected their solidarity and homogeneity among themselves in Egypt. The Karaites are a long-established community of Arab origin; Jews who came from the Ottoman Empire, Greece, the Balkans, and Italy were called Sephardi (Spanish origin); and the Ashkenazi were Jews who originated in Russia, Romania, and Poland. Aimée Israel-Pelletier notes that American academic discourse tends to divide Egyptian Jews into two main groups: the indigenous Jews who settled in Egypt in the sixth and seventh centuries, and the Sephardi and Ashkenazi, who arrived during Muhammad Ali's reign and now constitute about 85% of the Egyptian Jewish population. Because of their great numbers, the newcomers were regarded as "representative of the [Jewish] character" in Egypt (Israel-Pelletier 9). The Jewish community in Egypt was heterogeneous; Kramer argues that the community was not "a unified whole" because of its diversity of language, cultural attitudes, and social status (Kramer 12). In *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics. and the Formation of Modern Diaspora*, Joel Beinin agrees with Kramer that Jews of Egypt were "always already a heterogeneous community" that was formed by "a distinctive process of historical accretion" (n.p).

The earliest known immigration of Sephardi Jews to Egypt was in the fifteenth century. The nineteenth century saw an influx of rich and highly educated Sephardi, who spoke Ladino, French, and Italian, into Egypt. Their influence in business improved their social and financial status and they took the lead of the other Jewish communities, including

the indigenous Jews (Kramer 16). The Ashkenazi Jews, who spoke Yiddish, had been in Egypt since the sixteenth century. Their number increased dramatically in the twentieth century when they came to Egypt as exiles after they had been expelled from Russia and Poland. The Ashkenazi were not as financially successful as the Sephardi, and the majority were poor. Some sold tobacco and handicrafts, while others ran bars or brothels (Kramer 19). The cultural and sociopolitical differences between the Sephardi and Ashkenazi aroused tension between these two groups, although Jews in Alexandria remained on fairly good terms amongst themselves (Kramer 21). In the late nineteenth century, as French became the main language of the minorities in Egypt, most middle- and upper-class Jews spoke Italian, English, and French, but had only a basic knowledge of Arabic, except for a few words they would use to "deal with shopkeepers, waiters, domestic servants, and the man in the street" (Kramer 28). Most elite women learnt Italian and few spoke Arabic; Aciman's grandmother was one such example.

According to Kramer, the Karaite[19] movement, which combined principles of Judaism and Islam, began in Baghdad. In Egypt, a minority of Karaites was formed between the ninth and the twelfth centuries. By the beginning of the twentieth century, many Karaites were experiencing illiteracy and poverty. Most of them spoke Egyptian Arabic and lived in *Harat AlYahud* in Cairo; however, the rich Karaites moved to middle-class districts and assimilated into the cosmopolitan culture (Kramer 24). Beinin argues that the historical accounts of the Karaites connect their existence in Egypt to the time of Amr Ibn al-As, who assigned them land for residency (Basatin) and freed them from paying taxes (n.p.). The Egyptian Jews were Arabs in their traditions, customs, morals, and use of the Arabic language; however, they rarely interacted with Egyptian Muslims or Copts outside the context of business (Kramer 15).

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[19] In the *Cairo Trilogy*, Naguib Mahfouz depicted the Karaites as essentially traditional Cairenes.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Jews were culturally active and enjoyed a stable life in Egypt as part of the cosmopolitan space of multi-ethnic communities in which they co-existed with other groups and made useful contributions to society. In *On the Mediterranean and the Nile: The Jews of Egypt*, Israel-Pelletier argues that although Jews were a minority in Egypt, their contributions to "Egypt's prosperity" since antiquity were "remarkable" (5). In "Arabness, Egyptianess, Zionism, and Cosmopolitanism: The Arabic Cultural and Journalistic Activities of Egyptian Jews in the 19th and 20th Centuries", Reuven Snir listed some of the cultural contributions of Egyptian Jewry, including journals and periodicals written in Arabic and read not only by Jews, but also by Muslims and Copts. Among these periodicals were *Al-Shams* (*The Sun*), published in 1934, and *Al-Kalim* (*The Spokesman*), published between 1945 and 1957 (148, 150). The Egyptian Jews were prominent not only in commerce but also in culture, particularly in the field of Arabic music. The Karaite Jew Zaki Murad was one of the group of nationalist composers that also included Sayyed Darwish (Beinin n.p.). His daughter Layla Murad[20] (1918-95) was a renowned Egyptian singer who has been regarded as Um Kulthūm's successor.

Historically, Jews in Egypt were a major component of Egyptian society, and they regarded themselves as part and parcel of Egypt's social fabric. A plethora of Jewish Voices narrate their experience in Egypt. Yousef Darwish, translator of *Tarīkh Yahūd al-Nīl (*History of the Nile's Jew*s)*, writes in the introduction that Egyptian Jews often considered themselves Egyptian more than Jewish. Darwish, who was a witness, states that Egyptian Jews were the first to fight Zionism openly in Egypt (12). Muslims, Copts, and Jews, Darwish adds, coexisted peacefully in Egypt in the 1940s. This cosmopolitan ambiance is reflected in a

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[20] Layla was once accused of financial collaboration with the State of Israel, but this accusation was disproven. She converted to Islam and announced her identity as a Muslim Egyptian (Beinin n.p.).

popular play of the time, *Hassan, Morcus, and Cohen* (14), which represents the coexistence

and tolerance among these three ethnoreligious groups. Similarly, in *Voices from*

Cosmopolitan Alexandria, a Jewish Alexandrian called Jimmy Nawas, a grandson of one of

the wealthiest Jewish families of Alexandria, describes his experience at school. He notes that

there was no religious or racial discrimination and that religion was outside the students'

interests: "We are Jews, but I had plenty of Christian friends, and many of other confessions.

There were some Muslims, and one never asked what was your religion or which church you

went to, and the same went for nationality" (Awad & Hamouda 67). Another Jew of Spanish

origin, called Max Salama, whose family came to Egypt during the time of the Spanish

Inquisition reported that his father had assimilated into Egyptian culture, while "[his]

grandfather wore a gallabiya, like the others. [His father] spoke, read and wrote Arabic"

(Awad & Hamouda 75). The opinions of the Egyptians did not differ from Jews; for instance,

in *Voices*, Ahmed Abou Zeid, an Egyptian businessman, articulates his opinion of the

Alexandrian Jews: "The Jews played a very important and positive role in Egyptian cultural

life. They always felt they were Egyptian. And after the 1952 Revolution, when most of them

left Egypt, they were literally in tears because they were leaving. Some of them returned to

visit Alexandria, after a long absence, to see the changes that had taken place" (Awad &

Hamouda 206).

In the mid-twentieth century, with the establishment of the state of Israel in the

Palestinian territory, Jews' loyalty to Egypt was questioned. Some Egyptian nationalist

discourses represented all Jews as "exploiters" of Egypt and considered them "intruders"

(Shamir 40) who served the Zionist project. However, Beinin refutes the claim that Egyptian

Jews were disloyal exploiters of Egypt; he argues that the national slogan of the 1919

revolution, "Religion is to God and the nation is to all," inspired the Egyptian Jews to

participate in Egyptian society (n.p.). He supports this argument with three observations:

(1) Only a small minority of Jews were active Zionists, even after 1948.

(2) Most Jews who left Egypt after 1948, especially those with enough

resources to have a choice, did not go to Israel. (3) Wherever Egyptian

Jews did go, including Israel, many of them reconstructed forms of

communal life and collective practices that preserved a link between

them and Egypt. (n.p.)

In the 1950s, Jews were socially and culturally active and their preference for Europe instead of Israel indicates their non-Zionist stance and their loyalty to Egypt.

The tension against Jews in Egypt dated back to the 1930s and 1940s, years before the 1952 revolution and its nationalizing effect. The minorities' departure from Egypt dated to the 1930s, before the Nasserite project, and resulted from the series of policies issued after independence. Jews and foreign minorities lost privileges and influence in the wake of the Montreux Convention of 1937, which ended the Capitulations. The Arabic language was substituted for French in official documents, and companies were forced to hire more Egyptians at the expense of many foreign employees. There were about 80,000 Jews in Egypt; approximately 10,000 Jews had adopted Egyptian citizenship since 1929, 30,000 with foreign nationality, while another 40,000 were "stateless" (Shamir 40).

In 1945, Egyptians rioted against Jews, and some synagogues were burnt. The establishment of the State of Israel on Palestinian territory in 1948 "constituted the first crucial step toward the eventual dissolution of the Jewish communities of Egypt" (Laskier 575). It heightened tensions against Jews in Egypt, sparking public demonstrations and government restrictions on Jewish business and commercial assets. In 1949, the mixed courts were abolished, and due to the loss of the privileges they had enjoyed during the British colonial era, many Jews left Egypt (Darwish 94). The number of Ashkenazi that left Egypt exceeded those of the Sephardi and the Karaites (Beinin n.p.). Public activities among the

Jewish community were suspended, journals such as *Al-Kalim* ceased publication, and celebrations of Purim in the public gardens were cancelled (Beinin n.p.). However, the Jewish population was able to resume its normal life with the election of the Wafd party in 1950.

Between 1949 and 1956, Operation Susannah was a crucial political event in the life of the Jewish community in Egypt, which once again raised the question of loyalties. Operation Susannah, conducted in 1954, was planned and directed by Israeli military intelligence and carried out by Egyptian Jews. The operation involved planting bombs in public places owned by Egyptian, British, and American people, such as cinemas, libraries, and educational centres, where foreigners would go. Its aim was to destabilize and threaten the security of Egypt by creating a violent atmosphere, which would force Britain to spread its hegemony over Egypt. According to Beinin, the Egyptian government responded severely to those who were accused of participating in or supporting the operation, who were identified as spies rather than as Jews. The majority of Egyptian Jews, who were not involved in Operation Susannah, were treated fairly and not discriminated against. They considered themselves Egyptians, and the Egyptians and the government also considered them Egyptians. Until 1952, a large number of the Jewish elite were still in Egypt, conducting business as usual (Beinin n.p.); and when they decided to leave, they preferred to settle in Europe rather than in Israel.

In 1956, Nasser passed a law to Egyptianize all foreign-owned enterprises. Israel's ambassador in France declared that the Egyptian Jews would be treated well by the Free Officers, unlike the treatment they had received in Farouq's time. However, they were planning to leave anyway and intended to resettle in Europe (Laskier 578). Although this period witnessed a mass exodus of Jews, Greeks, and other minorities, evidence suggests that Jewish emigration had begun well before Nasser's time, with Zionist historiography

representing the end of Jewish presence in Egypt with the 1948 Arab-Israeli war (Beinin n.p.). The Jewish population in Egypt was approximately 80,000 in 1948, but by 1950, this number had decreased to about 20,000 (Laskier 577), suggesting that the exodus happened before the Free Officers' revolution. The Suez War in 1956 was a turning point for the Jewish population in Egypt, with several rules imposed against suspected Jews, such as "police detention; sequestration of businesses and property; expulsion from the country; and promulgation of a new statute under which Jews were deprived of citizenship" (Laskier 579). With these restrictions, Nasser planned to decrease the economic and social influence of foreigners in Egypt. However, in the mid 1960s, many Jews continued living in Egypt and ran their own businesses such as Aciman's father.

Egyptian Jewish authors have produced numerous and often contradictory literary representations of Egypt, generally influenced by their political affiliation. For example, Rahel Maccabi's 1968 memoir *Mitzrayim Sheli* (*My Egypt*) is one of the earliest first-hand accounts of the lives of the Jews in Egypt. She lived her early years in Alexandria before moving to Palestine, and she later joined the Israeli army (Beinin n.p.). She belonged to a middle-class family in a Jewish community in Alexandria that was isolated from the Arabic and Egyptian communities, and she did not speak Arabic. In her memoir she claimed that "the world of Egyptians is frightening" (*Mitzrayim Sheli* 90). Beinin argues that after Anwar al-Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977, many Jewish readers rejected the "colonialist Orientalism" in Maccabi's representation of Egypt (n.p.).

Other Egyptian Jewish authors include Jacqueline Kahanoff and Yitzhaq Gormezano-Goren, whose works, according to Beinin, "fit uneasily in contemporary Israel" (n.p.). Kahanoff, author of the essay collection *Mi-mizrah Shemesh* (*From the East, the Sun*), came from an upper-middle-class family and received a French education. Unlike Maccabi, Kahanoff "felt a strong positive connection to Egypt" (Beinin n.p.). In her novel *Jacob's*

Ladder (1951), Kahanoff's protagonist supports the nationalist demonstrations, but she believes that Egypt would not be a good place for Jews if the British were to leave. Kahanoff left Egypt in 1940 to move to America, and settled in Israel in 1954.

Gormezano-Goren's semi-autobiographical novel *Kayitz Aleksandroni* (1978) (*An Alexandrian Summer*) is a nostalgic account of upper-middle-class Jewish families living in Alexandria before 1951, when they left Egypt. His novel describes the last summer in Alexandria as a time full of activities such as horse-riding, fishing, and sail boating. The novel depicts the anti-Semitic resentment of the Egyptians toward Jews in the 1940s, inflamed by politics, in the context of a horse race. Shouting "death to the Jews" filled the stadium; the race became "a war of religion, a war of nations" (1660). Although the work is marked by nostalgia for happier times in Alexandria, it presents a skewed picture of the Egyptians and the Arab world in general.

Aciman and *Out of Egypt*

Aciman's *Out of Egypt*, like Gormenzano-Goren's *Alexandrian Summer*, offers a nostalgic view of family life in Alexandria prior to the expulsion, yet is also entrenched in Western orientalist and anti-Arab discourses. According to *Out of Egypt*, Aciman's ancestors were Ladino-speaking Sephardi Jews who migrated from Spain to Constantinople before settling in Egypt in 1905, later obtaining French citizenship. Despite decades of life in the East, they maintained a Western lifestyle. Aciman's account represents the rich Jewish community, who run large businesses in Alexandria with British and elite Egyptian clienteles, but completely ignores the lives of middle- and lower-class Jews. In his *False Papers*, Aciman writes that Jews were beneficial to Egypt's economy because of their skills in banking and finance (5). Aciman's family did not leave immediately after the Suez War, and were among the last Jews to leave. As a result, he witnessed the Egyptianization process in Alexandria, as "European shop names come down and [are] replaced by Egyptian ones"

and "the streets [are] being renamed" (*False* 6). Years after the expulsion, Aciman decided to return to Alexandria and re-create the lost world of his youth by retelling his history in Alexandria until his family's expulsion. This nostalgic visit inspired his memoir *Out of Egypt*, whose title reflects its essential theme of exodus and emigration.

Aciman's memoir, and his work as a whole, is characterized by melancholy and nostalgia, by the shadow of Alexandria and the experience of exile. Most of Aciman's writings, such as *Out of Egypt*, *False Papers,* and *Letters of Transit* (1999), are about exile, memories, and his experience of displacement, constantly revisiting a home that is no longer there. *False Papers* is a collection of essays on memory and experience of loss, in which Aciman tells the story of his life as an exile in different cities in which he resided after expulsion, from Alexandria to Rome to Paris to Manhattan, where he has made a home, and in each city he sees a reflection of Alexandria. For instance, in the essay "Shadow Cities," Aciman concludes that what he sees in Rome, Paris, and New York is merely the shadow of Alexandria, which he reinvents in his writing (*Letters* 34). His first essay in *False Letters,* "Alexandria: The Capital of Memory," describes his visit to Alexandria, his first impressions of the city after a long absence, and his reawakened childhood memories:

> To those who asked, I said I went back to touch and breathe the past again, to walk in shoes I hadn't worn in years. This, after all, was what everyone said when they returned from Alexandria—the walk down Memory Lane, the visit to the old house, the knocking at doors history had sealed off but might pry open again. The visit to the old temple, the visit to Uncle So-and so's house, the old school, the old haunts, the smell of the dirty wooden banister on days you almost glided downstairs on your way to a movie. And then, of course, the tears, the final reckoning, the big themes: the return of the native, the romance of the past, the redemption of time. All of it followed by predictable letdowns:

the streets always much narrower than before, buildings grown smaller with time, everything in tatters, the city dirty, in ruins. There are no Europeans left, and the Jews are all gone. Alexandria is Egyptian now. (3)

In *Letters of Transit*, Aciman collects excerpts from five authors – Eva Hoffman, Bharati Mukherjee, Edward Said, Charles Simic, and himself – who have written about their experiences of exile, loss, and displacement. An excerpt from *Out of Egypt* is included in the book and helps to place Aciman's experience among those of the other authors in the collection. The main aim of Aciman's selections is to bring together various experiences of assimilation and integration as exiles in new places, including his own. What the writers Aciman chose all have in common is the shadow of home that follows them and fuels their writing. In the preface, Aciman writes that exile literature serves as an attempt at "fashioning a new home elsewhere, of revising, transposing, or perpetuating the old one on paper" (10). Because exiles are obsessed with the idea of home, "compulsive retrospection" (*Letters* 13) is a common characteristic of their writing, as is a tendency to exaggerate in expressing what they perceive: "[w]ith their memories perpetually on overload, exiles see double, feel double, are double" (*Letters* 13).

Out of Egypt consists of six chapters: "Soldier, Salesman, Swindler, Spy," "Rue Memphis," "A Centennial Ball," "Taffi Al-Nur," "The Lotus-Eaters," and "The Last Seder." Each chapter discusses one of Aciman's family members; for instance, the first chapter is about his great-uncle Vili, whose brother – a friend of Fouad, the future king of Egypt – convinced him to move with his family from Turkey to Alexandria. The second chapter depicts Aciman's grandmothers, nicknamed Saint and Princess. The title of the chapter "Taffi Al-Nur" means "switch off the light"; and the final chapter describes the family's final Passover Seder before they left Egypt.

Although *Out of Egypt* is a memoir, the construction of its characters is reminiscent of those in a novel. Aciman represents his family members as fictional characters and narrates the history of his family in dialogues and memories. In "How Memoirists Mold the Truth," Aciman notes: "I was always a novelist. My condition (to myself) for writing *Out of Egypt* was very simple: I would write my life and my family's as factually as I could, but it would have to read like a novel and abide by all the conventions of the novel. The partition between memoir and novel never really existed" (2). No name is given to the first-person narrator, but in this study he will be referred to as Aciman. In *Out of Egypt*, Aciman presents himself as a child character whose self develops through observation and engagement with the other characters.

Out of Egypt tells the story of Aciman's family in a Jewish community in Alexandria, beginning with their arrival from Turkey to Egypt in 1905, and the meeting of Aciman's grandmothers, Saint and Princess, in Rue Memphis, before the marriage of his parents. The story continues with the childhood of Aciman during the Suez crisis and ends with the expulsion of the family after three generations living in Egypt. Aciman's father, who ran a textile business, did not leave Egypt until the government seized his assets in 1965. At the age of fourteen, Aciman was sent to Victoria College, where he believed he was the only Jew in the school, and he discusses the resentment against Jews he experienced there. In the last chapter, Aciman describes his family's last night before their expulsion from Alexandria.

Aciman provides different impressions of his family, Egypt, and the Egyptians, as presented through the daily lives of his family members. He uses these impressions and emotions to depict what he calls "the emotional truth," which he cares about more than "factual truth" ("Mystery" 46). However, Aciman's distinction between emotional and factual truths does bring into question the 'truth' in his memoir. In "The Memoir Problem," Paula Fass notes that memoirs are written to deliver "a kind of truth" through real personal

experiences; however, the integrity of memoirs vary, as some memoirs, such as Aciman's, are based on real historical events, and others are totally fabricated (121). Although I agree with Fass's statement that "the memoir illuminates subjectivity" (111), particularly since what Aciman considers true is presented from one side, the presence of actual events in a memoir does not mean that the work is fully true. In *Out of Egypt*, for instance, Aciman remembers incidents that move the audience's sympathy towards his family, to reach the conclusion, his "emotional truth," that their expulsion was unfair. Not including the voices of the Egyptians calls his truth into question; however, no matter how historically and/or socially informative it is, a memoir is still, at its heart, the memoirist's personal vision. Moreover, Aciman's use of first-person narrative reflects the subjective power. My examination of Aciman's memoir is not intended to question the credibility of his anecdotes, but does question his one-sided way of reading the history, his exclusion of Egyptian views and his presentation of his view as truth.

Aciman's *Out of Egypt* has been celebrated in the West, particularly for the quality of its writing. A review entitled "Growing Up Jewish in the Land of Nasser and Farouk,", for instance describes *Out of Egypt* as "[a] wonderful book… The sense of ceremony and magic in this memoir is as much from literature… as from the narrator's actual world" (Krupnick 340). Eva Hoffman, whose work is featured in *Letters of Transit,* links *Out of Egypt* to the sensual portrayal of the *Alexandria Quartet*; she says of *Out of Egypt* that "[t]his beautifully written book combines the sensuousness of Lawrence Durrell, [and] the magic of Garcia Marquez" (n.p.).

However, other critics have called attention to the orientalist perspective of Aciman's writing; this chapter focuses on this point and on the similarities between Aciman's orientalist discourse and Durrell's. In "Alexandria, and in Just One Volume," Michiko Kakutani contends that no one after Durrell has written as beautifully about Alexandria until

Aciman's *Out of Egypt*. She points out the similarities between Durrell's and Aciman's works, supporting the position of this study that Aciman's representation of Alexandria is a continuation of Durrell's. She notes that "Aciman … has written a remarkable memoir about Alexandria that's every bit as magical and resonant in its own way as Durrell's quartet of novels, a memoir that leaves the reader with a mesmerizing portrait of a now vanished world" (21). However, Kakutani adds that Aciman is more concerned with familial affairs whereas Durrell emphasizes sexual and romantic narratives. Though I agree with Kakutani that Aciman does not represent Alexandria as an exotic and erotic place in which women are sought for sexual interests, I disagree with her that Durrell's and Aciman's Alexandria is fascinating, "magical and resonant"; rather, both authors present orientalist images of Alexandria, although Aciman's representation focuses mainly on his Jewish community and his family's concerns. In his accounts of his encounters with the world outside the Jewish community, he imitates Durrell's trajectory in misrepresenting Alexandria and the Arabs and linking the deterioration of Alexandria's cosmopolitanism to Arab rule.

Critics such as Adam Zachary and Barry Unworth pinpoint the orientalist intentions in Aciman's *Out of Egypt*. Zachary states that an "orientalist strain weaves in and out of Aciman's discourse" as if Aciman is writing to his American readership (232) The intended non-Arab readership helps to explain the orientalist tone in *Out of Egypt*. Aciman sets binary oppositions between his family of western origin and the Arabs, including Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

In "Alexandria before the Fall," Barry Unsworth discusses the attitudes of Jews in *Out of Egypt* toward Egypt and non-European Jews:

> There are depressing aspects to this book, and they are best described in
> negatives. These people show no interest in the country, its landscape, its
> history. There is no apparent sense among them of political or any other kind

of conviction or belief. They despise the people whom they live among and

exploit. There seems to be no value among them but that of surviving and

whenever possible making profits. They are riddled with atavistic rivalries and

hatreds. One grandmother is not invited to the other's centennial ball -- a great

social occasion -- because she is married to an Arab Jew. One uncle, a Jew

from Constantinople, insults another, a Jew from Aleppo, shouting that he is a

"dirty, scoundrel Jew." There is an ugliness and shallowness in these lives,

which Mr. Aciman does not seek to disguise. (7)

Unsworth's disappointment in Aciman's work has two points, the first of which is the

memoir's neglect of the world outside of Aciman's family. Egypt's history, people, and

landscapes were absent, with only the events that related to Jews' history in Egypt, such as

the Al-Alamein battle and the tripartite attack, covered in the work. Other important historical

events that shaped the history of Egypt, such as the 1919 revolution, independence in 1922,

the public demonstrations in 1935 and the political changes that followed, are generally

ignored, and his characters show no affection or connection to the city. Unsworth's also

points out Aciman's portrayal of Jews as exploiters of the land who isolated themselves from

any political, social, or religious activities, as well as the superiority Aciman's family feels

towards other Jewish groups of Arab origin. Aciman normalizes the discrimination and

prejudice his family practiced against other Jewish groups: the Sephardic and Ashkenazi

Jews mistreat and degrade the Arabs in general, including the Arab Jews.

The following discussion of Aciman's orientalist depiction of Jews in Alexandria

draws upon the theory of orientalism presented earlier in this study, and concentrates on the

lives of Aciman's family during the Suez war and afterward. Most of the incidents in the

memoir take place in the Jewish community and in his parental grandmother's house where

the whole family usually gathers. In *Out of Egypt*, the young Aciman remembers the outbreak

of the Suez attack: he was shopping with his mother when they heard people rushing in the streets shouting 'taffi al Nur' as a precaution to avoid direct attack. Through his memory, Aciman presents the position of upper-class Jews of European origin with regard to the political events in Egypt as that of all Jews, regardless of social stature. For example, one Jew says of the British attack on Egypt during the Suez War: "The British will clean this whole mess up for us, give the Egyptians the well-deserved hiding they've been begging for ever since nationalizing the Suez Canal. And in a matter of weeks things will be back to what they always were" (*Out* 157). A European man replies "Inshallah," or "if it pleases God" (157). This passage clarifies Aciman's and his family's position on the nationalization of the Suez Canal and their deep wish for a British victory that would reinstate British hegemony over Egypt. The speaker, as did many of his fellow Jews, hopes for a severe and humiliating defeat for Egypt as revenge on "the savages" and the "nationalistic claptrap" (*Out* 164), as exemplified by shouting before any attack to shut down the lights, "taffi al Nur" (168). The use of the adjective 'savages' to describe the Egyptians is a reflection of the Western, orientalist and superior tone of Aciman's Jewish family towards the Egyptian Others.

When Aciman entered his grandmother's house after the Egyptian victory, Jews were jumping with happiness and overjoyed after the announcement of the British landing in Port Said after the Suez war (168). The Egyptian servant Abdou, conversely, sat in a dark room hiding himself behind the curtain listening to the radio, with his eyes "glinting" full of happiness, but he could not share that with the family as he kept himself behind the curtain (*Out* 168). His happiness was silent. Even when they noticed him standing behind the curtains, they did not ask him to engage with them, showing that racial discrimination existed even during happy moments.

On seeing Abdou's reaction, one of the Jews, Uncle Isaac, remarks that with that victory the Egyptians should not forget that the development of Egypt should be credited to

Jews: "you may understand their nationalistic aspirations, but remember that without us Egypt would still be a desert" (*Out* 168). Aciman's family not only degrades and looks down on the Arabs, but points out that without the West, Egypt would continue to be an uncivilized and backward nation. Here Aciman's representation corresponds with Durrell's; both seem to agree that Egypt would not have been modernized without foreign influences such as Jewish businesses and the British imperial enterprise. The statement "you may understand their nationalist aspirations" seems to reflect Aciman's family's opinions of the Egyptian position and the nationalist incentives. However, Aciman prioritizes the foreigners' belief in their part in modernizing Egypt, and marginalizes the effort and voice of the Egyptians and their right to independence.

After the Egyptian victory, Jews wonder about their destiny. *Out of Egypt* presents Jews as victims of the political situation and concerned as to what Nasser might do. Though Jews denied any connection with Israel, the new regime imposed severe restrictions on them. One character called Ugo states, for instance, that Nasser won't forgive the attack: "there will be serious reprisals against France and British nationals once all this is over. Nationalizations. Expulsions. This includes Jews" (*Out* 178). Jews responded that they were not Israelis and thus should not be punished for Israel's role in the conflict. Aciman's Uncle Isaac considers the expulsion "worse than anything he had ever imagined. It was worse than waiting for the Germans to march into Alexandria" (178).

Aciman also represents the psychological stress endured by Jewish families who chose to stay in Egypt, which they considered their home. They were forced to hide their religious identity, while their children had to learn Arabic and attend either Christian or Islamic classes. When the war ended, rumours of expulsion of French and British nationals frightened Jews, many of whom closed their businesses, transferred their money, and left Egypt before they could be formally expelled amid "summary nationalization of factories,

businesses, homes, bank accounts" (*Out* 200). Not all Jews were forcibly expelled; some left 'voluntarily' after the expulsion, while others left months later, and a few, such as Aciman's parents, preferred to stay (*Out* 208). Some Jews chose to obtain Egyptian citizenship and converted to Islam to avoid expulsion; for example, Ugo changed his name to Hag Gabalzahri, for which Aciman's aunt Elsa dismisses him as "not a survivor, a chameleon" but "an opportunist" and "madman" (Out 210). Although the Egyptian government offered Jews and other non-Egyptians the chance to obtain Egyptian nationality, Aciman's family refused this offer and criticized those who became Egyptians. This refusal may have stemmed from their sense of superiority, as they considered themselves of Western origin and regarded the adoption of a so-called 'inferior' citizenship as an insult; therefore, they preferred diaspora to settlement.

For Aciman, the Suez war marked the decline of cosmopolitanism and the end of the coexistence and tolerance that characterized the Alexandria he knew. According to him, the Egyptianization project led to Alexandria's decline, as the severe restrictions against the Jewish population led to their departure. Aciman depicts the Alexandrian Jews as victims without any reference to the state of Israel, as if to place all responsibility with the new Egyptian regime. His Alexandria no longer tolerated Jews, even those who were not Israeli and did not support Israel. The city of Alexandria that, before the Suez war, was "inseparable" from Jews "became stranger than dreamland" (*Out* 315), with Aciman's nostalgic remembrance of old Alexandria much like reminiscing about a dead person (*Out* 316). He describes the experience of a Jewish family expelled from Egypt as follows:

> After the government seized [Saint's] husband's assets in '58 and they were
>
> forced to flee the world: there she was, the *grande bourgeoise* of Rue
>
> Memphis—with her grandchildren, her pianos, her tea parties—standing at
>
> Orly airport as frightened and confused as a five-year-old child. (*Out* 86)

Though this passage describes a scene of diaspora and loss, it also depicts the western prejudice and orientalist perspective of Egypt and the Egyptians. For example, Saint is a *grande bourgeoise* lady from the upper-class district of Rue Memphis, who could not forget the expulsion and the end of the family's aristocratic life when the Egyptian government forcibly took their business from them. When they entered the French airport, they felt loss, fear, and unbelonging; in their early years in France, they desperately longed for their life in Alexandria. Aciman uses Saint as a symbol of the poor reward Jews received after having improved the Egyptian economy.

Saint, as a representative of Aciman's Jewish community, also shows that their connection to Alexandria was limited to their specific community, and that they tended to hate Egypt in general. Despite this, they reluctantly leave, and some, such as Aciman's grandfather, choose to die in the country they hate. The following conversation between two Jewish women reveals much about Aciman's perspective of the past, present, and future of Egypt:

> A generation ago he [an Egyptian doctor] would have been no better than the boy servant bringing us tea on this balcony, […] now he's brought me back to life. He speaks impeccable French. And you should see his office— sumptuous. Not bad for an Arab who is scarcely thirty years old. If he represents the new order here, well, *chapeau* to the new Egypt. (*Out* 80)

Lady Saint, who is being treated by an Egyptian surgeon, is talking about the two different generations she has witnessed in Egypt: illiterate young Egyptians working as servants in rich families, and highly educated Egyptians who have studied abroad. She has much respect for 'the new Egypt,' a product of Muhammad Ali's initiatives to modernize education by sending students to Europe. Saint expressed her respect for Egypt to an Egyptian who speaks a

European language, but it is not clear whether she would show the same respect if he were speaking Arabic.

Another Jew responds to Saint's comment on the new Egypt: "Just wait until they're in power. Then you'll see how the new Egypt will treat you" (*Out* 80). This remark demonstrates the perspective of Aciman and his family that Jews had been well-treated during the British occupation, but the Egyptians and their government did not like Jews, and once Egypt regained its power, the Jewish community would be threatened. Although she did not like Egypt in general, Lady Saint has a positive outlook about modern Egypt, whereas the other woman believes that colonization has suppressed the Egyptians' power, and without it, they would be treating Jews differently.

The example of Lady Saint shows that Jews in *Out of Egypt* seem to enjoy comfortable lives in Alexandria: men have respectable jobs and may own big businesses; children are educated in good schools; and women spend their time visiting their Jewish neighbours. Despite their good lives, they are presented as showing no affection or attachment toward the city of Alexandria or Egypt as a whole; their attachment is to the Jewish community. Lady Saint adds that "I've never loved Egypt, but life has been good here" (*Out* 80). Egypt has offered Jews a prosperous life, but they regard it as a space of hot unbearable weather that produces bad luck and dreadful natives. Any newcomer to the Orient would be infected with that bad luck. One Jewish woman comments about her family's decision to move to Egypt with its unpleasant weather: "It's hot and muggy [in Egypt], I'm always sweating" (*Out* 11). In addition, she did not find a match in Egypt because "the men are so dreadful" (*Out* 11).

From examples such as these, and others to be discussed below, I argue that Aciman's representation of Alexandria is an orientalist, subjective image, based in part on Durrell's impressions in the *Alexandria Quartet.* Because of his close contact with Egyptian culture

and traditions, Aciman seems to know Egyptian society more closely than Durrell. For instance, he uses precise and correctly-spelled Arabic words and refers to iconic Egyptian people and places such as Um Kulthūm, the great Egyptian singer, whom the Egyptians "idolized" (*Out* 260), the Muhammad Ali Theatre in Alexandria, and Opera *Aida* in Cairo (*Out* 274), and the national dish, *foul,* or "the national bean breakfast" (*Out* 262). In *Out of Egypt*, Aciman tries to create a realistic portrait of the city of Alexandria by narrating real events in the lives of his family. However, the influence of *Alexandria Quartet* on Aciman's imagination is inevitable. He uses orientalist imagery of dirt, deformity, and savagery, much as Durrell does, to establish a binary opposition between Jews and Arabs. Aciman sees Alexandria, outside his Jewish community, through the lens of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. After almost thirty years between the publication of *Alexandria Quartet* and the publication of *Out of Egypt*, Aciman seems to revive Durrell's orientalist modes of representation. Though it is a memoir of his family history, its perspective of Egypt and the Arabs affirms the prevalence of orientalist discourse.

Despite his childhood experience in Alexandria, Aciman chooses to search for Durrell's Alexandria during his return visit, upon which he wrote *Out of Egypt*. Aciman discussed the visit in one of his *False Papers*, "Alexandria: A Capital of Memory," which carries Durrell's exact description of Alexandria in *Alexandria Quartet*:

> As I step into the narrow balcony of my room at the Hotel Cecil[21] and try to
>
> take in the endless string of evening lights speckling the eastern bay, I am

---

[21] Cecil Hotel is one of the expensive hotels in Alexandria built in 1929 by an Egyptian Jewish family. It is located near Sa'ad Zaghloul square and was favoured by many prominent names such as Winston Churchill and General Montgomery, the leader of the Allies in the Second World War. After 1952 revolution, the hotel became a property of the Egyptian government.

thinking of Lawrence Durrell and of what he might have felt standing in this

very same hotel more than fifty years ago, surveying a magical, beguiling

city—the "capital of memory," as he called it, with its "five races, five

languages … and more than five sexes. (3-4)

Aciman rents a room in Hotel Cecil, the same hotel in which Durrell stayed, and he thinks of

what Durrell had thought of when he was in the same place. In that visit, Aciman finds that

Durrell's Alexandria, the multilingual and multi-ethnic city, "no longer exists; perhaps it

never did. Nor does the Alexandria [he] knew" (*False* 4). He states that "Alexandria was our

[Jews'] mirage" (*False* 110); after years of exile, Aciman felt that Alexandria was not their

land, but a place that they had only dreamed was theirs. Egyptian nationalism revealed that

their dream was just an illusion. Here again Aciman uses the word "mirage," as Durrell did,

to describe the situation. The influence of Durrell on Aciman reflects the pervasiveness of

Durrell's portrait of Alexandria in the Western imagination, and even writers such as

Aciman, who had experience in Alexandria, could not see Alexandria without Durrell's

image haunting their vision.

 Out of Egypt concentrates on Jews and their struggles with the political changes in

Egypt and the tension between the Muslim Arabs and Jews. One such example of this tension

as a recurring feature can be seen in Aciman's account of the *foul* vendor:

Ahead of us I made out the shape of the *ful* vendor's van. We waved and

shouted for him to wait for us. He waved back. When we finally reached his

van, Roxane handed him the pot. He filled it and wished us a holy Sunday. We

stared at him with a puzzled look: Why would a Moslem ever want to wish us

a holy Sunday? He must have read our surprise, for, after looking around

furtively, he pulled up his sleeve, displaying the inside of his wrist on which a

large cross was tattooed. "I'm a Copt." The current regime was not

sympathetic to Copts. (*Out* 288)

Although *Out of Egypt* does not address the situation of the Copts, Aciman does note near the

end of the novel, on seeing a Coptic *foul* vendor, that "the current regime was not

sympathetic to Copts" (288).

This scene demonstrates that the cosmopolitan ambiance has been replaced by tension

and animosity, and the three religions no longer coexist. Without any explanation or realistic

evidence, Aciman introduces the Coptic vendor to express his anticipation of a coming

suppression and maltreatment of the Copts by the new regime. Aciman hints that the Muslims

would repress not only Jews, as a response to Israel's attack on Egypt, but all other religious

minorities. In *False Papers*, he reinforces his belief that the Copts and Westernized Egyptians

would have the same destiny as Jews because he believed that sectarian tension had

intensified since Nasser's time (110):

In the end, Egyptian nationalism drove us all away. Today, religious

intolerance wants to finish the job for everyone who remains, not just Jews.

Copts—Christians who are thought to be among the most direct descendants

of the ancient Egyptians—and Westernized Egyptians are watching the clouds

darken around the country. (*False* 110)

In this, he agrees with Durrell, a further indication that he visualizes Alexandria and its

concerns through the lens of the *Alexandria Quartet.* Although he personally visited

Alexandria, he finds in Durrell's orientalist representation of the city a useful medium to

criticise the Nasserite nationalist project, particularly its insistence that all non-Muslims must

leave. Aciman's already subjective view of Alexandria becomes an orientalist, western

interpretation, though the orientalism in Aciman's work is not as dominant a trait as it is in

Durrell's.

Out of Egypt not only marginalizes the Arabs but misrepresents and degrades them, and Aciman's dislike of the Arabs has much in common with Durrell's. Aciman refers to Muhammad Ali as Albanian, which may be in keeping with his belief that non-Arabs have made the city what it was, and that the Arabs were ruining that history by expelling members of those communities that participated in building the city. Another example of his dislike of the Arabs can be seen in his description of the elite Jewish community in which no Arabs live. This community is an example of what John Comaroff calls a "colonizing cartography" (116): the rich foreigners' residential districts in Alexandria became spaces in which "everything was designed to keep [the Egyptians] out" (Comaroff 116). Inside the Jewish community, Arab locals appear as servants to the Jewish families; outside the community, *Out of Egypt* "has not a single positive portrayal of any local Egyptian" (Fahmy, "For Cavafy" 274), which makes its representation incomplete and one-sided. Despite the generalizing tone of the observation, I agree with Fahmy that "[a]ny historical work of a city that does not give pride of place to the majority of its inhabitants must be incomplete in some basic and essential way" ("For Cavafy" 272). Neglecting or marginalizing the indigenous people of a particular city does not give credibility to a historical portrait.

Aciman labels all of his Arabic characters as inferior, savage, or deformed, and often all of the above. Moreover, all the Egyptian servants in the house of the Princess's son are deformed or diseased, so that the house has become an "asylum":

Om [sic] Ramadan gives me the creeps," said the Princess. "Every time I come here it's as though I've walked into an asylum. There is always a deformed person roaming about. This isn't a bestiary, it's my son's home."

In addition to Om Ramadan, there was in our domestic asylum Hisham, the *sofraghi*—the waiter—who, as irony would have it, had only one arm and

could never hold a large platter long enough to serve eight persons without

having to rest awhile. Then there was Abdou, the cook, an alcoholic. And his

much older cousin, an albino, also named Abdou, who spoke fluent Turkish

and who came as an extra sometimes but who had a terribly ulcerated leg.

(*Out* 108)

Aciman imitates Durrell in creating deformed characters, usually Arabs, and particularly

servants.

Aciman also represents the Arabs as savages. In *Difference and Pathology:*

Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness, Sander Gilman argues that "[b]ecause there is

no real line between self and the Other, an imaginary line must be drawn; and so that the

illusion of an absolute difference between self and Other is never troubled" (18). In *Out of*

Egypt, Aciman draws that "imaginary line" by labelling all the Arabic-speaking Alexandrians

– Muslims, Copts, Alexandrians, and Bedouins – as "Arab," to differentiate between the

Jewish 'self' and the Arab 'Other.' In so doing, he represents all non-Jewish Egyptians as one

uniform other to the Jewish self.

The Arabs are seen as barbarians with no manners who pay no respect to social

norms. Aciman's family, for instance, uses the word "Arab" as a label for any

unsophisticated behaviour or uncleanliness, such as the Arabic tutor with "extraordinarily

smelly foot and … calloused hand" (*Out* 245). The tutor looks and smells dirty and his

appearance is generalized as a feature of the Arabs. In another example of representing the

Arabs as savage and amoral, when Aciman went swimming at the beach without a swimming

suit, his grandmother screamed, "Don't tell me he goes naked at the beach like an Arab" (*Out*

129). The Jewish characters in the novel speak of the Arabs and other minorities in haughty

and arrogant tones. Although Jews are seen to care about social etiquette, they ignore such

things when dealing with the Arabs, whom they humiliate and mistreat. For instance, a

Jewish woman is rude toward her servant: "without thanking Hisham [the servant], who was handing out the tapers, she grabbed one from his tray" (*Out* 138).

Many of the Egyptian traditions depicted in *Out of Egypt* are meant to represent what Aciman saw as the savage, undeveloped, and inhumane side of Egypt, as indicated by his choice of adjectives when describing those traditions. For instance, he describes the use of *halawa,* a kind of homemade wax, to remove hair from women's bodies as a "barbaric ritual" (*Out* 109). Similarly, when Aciman's father asks his mother to dismiss her Arab servant from their house, he claims that the servant smells like *helba*, which he detests and considers "an Arab smell" (*Out* 104). *Helba* is a plant with a strong smell that most Egyptians use as a drink or in cooking as part of their traditional food, and Aciman's father claims it is the only way to distinguish a traditional Egyptian from a Westernized one: "the more Westernized a family, the more odourless its home, its clothes, its cooking" (*Out* 105). This scene supports Fahmy's accusation that *Out of Egypt* is "infect[ed]" by "despicable racism" ("For Cavafy" 276).

Aciman carefully selects from the rich Egyptian heritage the traditions and rituals that reinforce his orientalist perspective. In his representation of the Arabs and of Egyptian culture, Aciman can be seen as more 'sinister' or dismissive than Durrell. Durrell depicted some festivals and religious occasions, such as the Mawlid, while Aciman focuses only on what is negative. By contrast, Jews in *Out of Egypt* are depicted as well-mannered rich people who look upon the Arabs and their behaviours with a critical eye. They degrade the Arabs and consider them smelly, ill-behaved, and impolite, and they prevent their children from communicating with Arab children.

No character from outside the Jewish community plays a major role in *Out of Egypt*, nor is there any significant encounter between Jews and non-Jewish Alexandrians. I agree with Fahmy's claim that Aciman is "unable to offer a credible account of any real encounter

between members of his celebrated, endearing family and one of the 'locals'" ("For Cavafy" 274). To this, I also note that Adam Zachary states that *Out of Egypt* "does not betoken a particularly fraternal regard for non-Jewish or non-European Egyptians, who tend to be socially and economically inferior" (231). The only encounters we do see between his family and other Egyptians, such as servants or street vendors, are those between superior and inferior, between upper class and lower class, between civilized and uncivilized. For example, Latifa, the Arab servant who works in Aciman's grandmother's house, has a son who used to steal. Aciman's Jewish grandmother lectures Latifa's son, warning him that if he does not behave well, he will be sent to jail, and then she offers him a job at her son's factory. Aciman's orientalist intentions can further be discerned from his marginalization of the Jewish District (*Harat Al-Yahoud*) in which most of the middle- and lower-class Jews reside. He does not refer to the district by name, even though it is a well-known neighbourhood populated by indigenous Jews.

Cosmopolitan Alexandria and Its Decline in *Out of Egypt*

The second half of the century saw a literary resurgence of Alexandria's cosmopolitanism by Egyptian writers and by non-Egyptian writers who belonged to Alexandrian minorities and who were born and lived for a while in Alexandria. This discussion of the concept of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria will not examine it as a political or an economic system, but as a sociocultural system that allows religious and ethnic multiplicity to coexist; specifically, it explores how Aciman depicts cosmopolitanism and its decline in Alexandria.

The decline of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria has been the subject of many literary works that express nostalgia for the cosmopolitan ambiance of the city. Each of these works presents different interpretations of the causes and effects of the decline. Since the exact moment of the decline is not fixed, each author chooses a starting point relative to the

particular social and political changes that were occurring in his/her community. This section discusses the representation of cosmopolitan decline and its consequences in Aciman's memoir of that decline in the Jewish elite community and its related institutions before their expulsion.

The formation of cosmopolitan cities is a subject of much debate, though many critics regard it as a consequence of immigration. As a port city that is close to Europe, Alexandria was attractive to immigrants who moved and settled there. In "Alexandria 1860-1960: The Cosmopolitan Identity," Robert Mabro considers cosmopolitanism in Alexandria "the product of significant immigration" (247). Egypt was a land of immigrants from Europe and from parts of the Ottoman Empire, most of whom were tradesmen and adventurers who had settled there for generations (247). Moreover, Egypt in general had been ruled by foreigners before the British intervention: for instance, Muhammad Ali and his dynasty were non-Egyptian.

With the Industrial Revolution and the economic changes in Europe, Alexandria became the fourth most important Mediterranean port city, and this growth, according to Michael Reimer, represented "Egypt's assimilation to the European world economy" (531). Alexandria's rapid and steady growth inspired many Europeans to immigrate there in order to improve their economic and financial situations; consequently, the number of Europeans in Alexandria who owned most of the city's commercial enterprises increased. As a result of these demographic and cultural shifts, "[t]he city experienced a cultural Europeanization brought about by the presence of a large and unassimilable European minority" (Reimer 539). However, immigration cannot create a cosmopolitan city alone; a political system must also embrace and enhance the cosmopolitan ambiance. This supports the notion that cosmopolitanism is a product of empire, as do features of cosmopolitanism, such as openness and diversity, that have been linked to empire.

The concept of cosmopolitanism is generally associated with port cities. In *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt: Literature, Culture, and Empire*, Starr notes that port cities celebrate linguistic, cultural, and ethnic multiplicity and East/West encounters, which tend to thrive together (13). However, the location is not enough to form a long-lasting cosmopolitanism. She argues that "it is through the experience of empire that the notion of the cosmopolitan develops" (*Remembering* 11) and diversity flourishes. In the Mediterranean region, cosmopolitanism emerged with Alexander the Great's expansion project, developed religious tolerance and diversity under the Ottoman empire, and was shaped during European military intervention (Starr, *Remembering* 13).

Roel Meijer agrees with Starr that cosmopolitanism is a product of empire. Meijer claims that cosmopolitanism is a phenomenon of imperial states because their politics provide fertile soil for cosmopolitanism. Empires, such as the Ottoman and the British, were open with unidentified territories and their citizens were allowed to move freely between the territories. Freedom of mobility raised the chance of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic amalgamation, encouraging religious and cultural coexistence. With the decline of imperial rule, independent states drew their borders and established national, linguistic, and religious identities. Accordingly, Meijer notes that cosmopolitanism became "a rare phenomenon, something of the past" (1) when borders and identities were identified.

Sami Zubaida considers the Abbasid State the oldest example of cosmopolitanism, in which Arab and Persian cultures and intellectuals mixed together. Zubaida's argument is that cosmopolitanism flourished in Egypt during the imperial period, though it was more welcomed by the elite and the Europeans than by the natives. The advent of printing machines, educational envoys to Europe, and immigration helped open the communities and create a cosmopolitan atmosphere (24). In the nineteenth century, the British dominance over

Egypt stimulated cultural intermixing between Europeans, Levantines, and Egyptians; thus, Zubaida considers this period "the golden age of Middle Eastern cosmopolitanism" (26).

However, Zubaida recognizes that the resurgence of and nostalgia for that time overlooks the accompanying inequality. In Alexandria, the elite, the Europeans, and the natives were segregated into different parts of the city, and the "[n]ative Egyptian society provided servants, functionaries and prostitutes for the cosmopolitan milieu" (26). They were inferiorized and despised" ("Middle Eastern" 37-38). Zubaida further points out that "cosmopolitan Alexandria … included a rigorous system of exclusions for native Egyptians, including isolation or exclusion on buses and trams, and certainly from clubs, some bars and cafés and many social milieux. Because of this exploitation by non-Egyptians, the Egyptian population was marked by a sense of inferiority in a city controlled largely by foreigners. Therefore, nationalists of the time took a stance against certain cosmopolitan practices.

The different empires that have ruled Egypt have contributed to its cosmopolitan character: "Cosmopolitanism in Egypt developed out of imperial rule (Ottoman and British) and was shaped by the East-West encounter; however, cosmopolitanism is neither reducible nor equivalent to colonialism" (Starr, *Remembering* 9). Starr stresses that cosmopolitanism is neither a colonial product nor a version of colonialism, and considers the imperial practice different from colonization. Amanda Anderson agrees with Starr that cosmopolitanism is an imperial enterprise. For Anderson, cosmopolitanism, or what she called "the expanded world," dates back to "Alexander the Great's program of cultural fusion and his far-reaching world conquests" (73).

James Moore agrees with Starr's and Anderson's characterizations of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and the empire. However, he points out that cosmopolitanism is an imperial product meant to "conceal European imperial ambitions and to deny native peoples national cultural ownership of their own cities through the imposition of foreign cultural

activities, social structures, and urban forms" ("Between" 881). I agree with Moore that

imperial rule worked as an umbrella under which cosmopolitan cities were constituted; the

colonial project of cosmopolitanism changed the cities' cultural and demographic structures.

The establishment of a rigid dichotomy between the modern areas built and populated by

foreigners and the westernized elite and the older areas inhabited by natives weakens

indigenous traditions and identities and even changes the demography of the land. I support

my position with Rebecca Walkowitz's claim that cosmopolitanism under colonial power is

"*detachment* from local cultures and the interests of the nation … [and] *attachments* to more

than one nation or community" (9). In other words, Walkowitz's argument corresponds with

that of Moore that the colonial practices of empires produce a cosmopolitan society that is

separate from the nation in which it is located. The society belongs geographically to a

nation, but it developed a mixture of cultural and political interests that distinguish it from the

nation's.

Some Western critics connect the decline of cosmopolitanism to the end of imperial

rule and the rise of nationalism.[22] According to these scholars, cosmopolitanism is a period of

ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity that contrasts to nationalist practices, and therefore

cosmopolitanism and nationalism cannot exist together. For instance, Robert Ilbert notes that

the rise of Egyptian nationalism marked the decline of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria. Maya

Jasanoff visited Alexandria in 2001 and noticed that the cosmopolitan environment has been

largely replaced by Islamic and Egyptian cultures. She encourages her readers to reconsider

the empire as the power to control cultural and sectarian tensions, and notes that in the history

of Alexandria, empire perhaps presents "an umbrella of common security for people from a

range of cultures to coexist, and at times even intermingle" (408), while the anticolonial

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[22] Nationalism refers in this context to the movement in Egypt for independence from

imperial and colonial presences.

nationalism of Nasser's time led to the demise of cosmopolitanism. However, I disagree with Ilbert and Jasanoff that empires protected cosmopolitanism in Egypt. Historically, Egypt became independent in the 1920s, and Cairo and Alexandria continued as cosmopolitan cities for decades afterward. Moreover, discrimination against the Egyptians had existed since the ruling dynasty of Muhammad Ali. During the British intervention, sectarian tension between the Muslims and the Copts was intensified to keep the population from uniting. The empires' investment in creating cosmopolitan cities was not purely for the sake of developing nations; it was used to support and to tolerate imperialism.

Some Egyptians disagree with Western views and believe that being cosmopolitan and accepting foreign neighbours does not contradict being nationalist and standing against foreign intervention. Since the time of Cromer, nationalism in Egypt was regarded as an anti-cosmopolitan movement that would be beneficial only for the Egyptians (Said, *Orientalism* 37), so that nationalism and cosmopolitanism were seen as opposing forces. However, in the case of Alexandria, Mansel argues that "the revival of Egyptian nationalism did not at first harm cosmopolitanism" (242) and that Egyptian nationalism had been present since the Ottoman Empire. This suggests that nationalism is not an anti-cosmopolitan movement, and it is not essential to undermine cosmopolitanism in pursuit of nationalism. Cosmopolitanism continued in Alexandria until the middle of the twentieth century.

Zubaida argues that being a cosmopolitan citizen does not imply being anti-nationalist; therefore, it is possible to be cosmopolitan in one's environment and nationalist in one's ideology ("Cosmo" 15). For Zubaida, cosmopolitanism does not only mean a "multi-cultural coexistence"; he defines cosmopolitanism as "the development of ways of living and thinking, styles of life which are deracinated from communities and cultures of origin, from conventional living, from family and home-centredness, and have developed into a culturally promiscuous life, drawing on diverse idea, traditions, and innovations" ("Cosmo"15-16).

Zubaida believes that cosmopolitanism starts in the family, which helps in forming cosmopolitan communities that grow out to encompass the diverse communal traditions and conventions of a specific place. A cosmopolitan place is formed by all of its communities with different ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds. Likewise, in "Cosmopolitanism and the Specificity of the Local in World Literature," Neil Lazarus claims that "[o]ne is not born, but *made* cosmopolitan" in that a cosmopolitan character is shaped at home, at school and in society (120).

Other Egyptian critics refute the connection between the rise of nationalism and the decline of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria. In "For Cavafy, with Love and Squalor," Khaled Fahmy highlights the link between vilification of Alexandria in western literature and the rise of nationalism. Fahmy argues that the image of Alexandria as a city full of dirt and filth was not necessarily connected to the rise of nationalism, as "narrow, overcrowded, smelly streets" (271) had always been present in Alexandria. I agree with what Fahmy notes that depicting Alexandria's overcrowded streets as a consequence of the Egyptianization project reflects a narrow understanding of the history of the city. Just as cosmopolitanism is not necessarily associated with modernity and cleanliness, nationalism does not necessarily imply a monolingual and/or 'backward' society.

Nasser's project of Egyptianizing Alexandria was an acute reaction to decades of colonialism and foreign intervention. In Nasser's time, cosmopolitanism was seen as a colonial project; therefore, such moves as Arabizing street names and removing monuments to previous rulers such as Ismail were meant to abolish perceived colonial and foreign influences (Starr, *Recuperating* 217). By the 1960s, Alexandria had changed from a "cosmopolis to regional capital" (Starr, *Recuperating* 221).

The rise and fall of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria were influenced by political changes, but scholars have had different viewpoints as to when the decline began and took

place. Moore argues that Alexandria faced the beginning of its decline in the interwar period, and that decline happened gradually: "a cosmopolitanism that celebrated cultural difference and provided institutional protection for different national cultures proved vulnerable in the political environment after the First World War" ("Between" 880). And after the Second World War, the Alexandrians resented the German and Italian communities, whose members eventually returned to their countries of origin ("Between" 896).

The economic regression in Egypt also contributed to the decline of cosmopolitanism. The rapid drop in cotton prices in the 1930s affected Alexandria's economy and resulted in many foreign cotton investors leaving the city. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, Egypt's unstable economy forced foreign families to minimize their commercial and agricultural assets, and consequently, the number of foreigners living in Egypt before the 1952 revolution dramatically decreased. However, poor people of both Egyptian and non-Egyptian origins remained in the lower-class quarters of Alexandria, which accounted for the continuation of cosmopolitanism in the city's poorer sections and its decrease in richer ones (Moore, "Between" 885).

The Suez War and its consequent nationalization reduced cosmopolitan Alexandria to what Moore called it a "memory" ("Between" 880). Mohamed Awad and Sahar Hamouda agree with Moore that the decay of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria began with the outbreak of the Second World War. However, they consider 1956 the real point at which this decline began, so that by the 1960s, "Alexandria lost its charm and the last traces of its cosmopolitanism" (Awad & Hamouda 233).

In *Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground*, Ahdaf Souief notes that cosmopolitan ambiance still existed in Egypt in the 1960s where people shared a common ground, what she termed *mezzaterra* (22). Egyptian culture at that time was a mixture of Arab, Western, Russian, Indian, and South American cultures, and identity was not yet an

issue for the Egyptians. Their identity was as a "spacious meeting point, a common ground with avenues into the rich hinterlands of many traditions" (22).

The above discussion suggests that there is no exact point at which the cosmopolitan decline in Alexandria began. Although some of Alexandria's cosmopolitan features had ceased to exist during the First World War, the essence of cosmopolitanism continued until the mid-1960s, when the city became more Egyptian with the dominance of cosmopolitan characteristics in the city and its inhabitants. Even as Nasser's anti-Israel stance prompted the Jewish community to leave, many European expatriates remained, and others arrived, which may indicate that the decline of Alexandria was mainly economic.

However, literary works such as *Out of Egypt* choose a specific time related to their authors' experience as the date of cosmopolitan decline. Aciman represents the sociopolitical conditions of Alexandria in ways that emphasise the link between the nationalization of Egypt and the expulsion of foreigners. In *Out of Egypt*, Aciman depicts the Suez war and its consequences as the start of Alexandria's cosmopolitan decline, and in so doing attacks the nationalist project. Aciman demonstrates the losses the Jewish community, and especially his own neighbourhood, suffered under the new regime. Before his family decided to leave Egypt, the young Aciman witnessed the changes Alexandria underwent, as demonstrated in his comparison of the Alexandria of 1905 with how much it had changed by 1960:

> It meant our everyday lives, an era, the first uncertain visit to Egypt in 1905 by
> a young man named Isaac, our friends, the beaches, everything I had known,
> Om Ramadan, Roxane, Abdou, guavas, the loud tap of backgammon chips
> slapped vindictively upon the bar, fried eggplants on late summer mornings,
> the voice of Radio Israel on rainy weekday evenings, and the languor of
> Alexandrian Sundays when all you did was go from movie to movie, picking
> up more and more friends along the way until a gang was formed and, from

wandering the streets, someone would always suggest hopping on the tram

and riding upstairs in second class all the way past San Stefano to Victoria and

back. Now it all seemed unreal and transitory, as if we had lived a lie and

suddenly had been found out. (*Out* 309)

Aciman describes his old life as "unreal and transitory," a dream from which he and his

fellows had awakened to confront a shocking reality, as their once-happy lives in

Alexandrian society have suddenly and irreversibly changed. His references to the San

Stefano and Victoria stations indicate that the riders are of higher classes, because the stations

are in modern parts of the city and use non-Arabic names. These references also signify that

Aciman's conception of a cosmopolitan Alexandria relates to the city's resemblance to

European places and to its detachment from its Arab heritage. Outside of the Jewish

community, Aciman mentions only what belongs to the non-Egyptians and upper classes, and

the listing of non-Arabic stations serves to hide the Arabic identity of the city.

In *Out of Egypt*, Aciman represents cosmopolitanism and its decline in his Jewish

community and in Victoria College, thus depicting a reductionist conception of

cosmopolitanism that is based on Western norms. When comparing Aciman's depiction of

cosmopolitanism in these two places to the features of cosmopolitanism as discussed earlier,

we can see that the cosmopolitanism Aciman describes is not real. Aciman's Jewish

community is a closed non-diverse space, inclusive only of the elite Jews of Western origin,

that has set borders between itself and others in Alexandria. The cosmopolitanism of Victoria

College, meanwhile, is a version of colonial cosmopolitanism: only the elite students are

accepted, one language (English) is allowed, and the British empire has authority. Once one

of these features disappears, Aciman considers that the end of cosmopolitanism.

The Jewish community Aciman describes seems to be disconnected from the city,

other communities, and Egypt itself. This suggests that, according to Aciman's criteria, a

cosmopolitan space is a space of elite sophisticated people of Western origin who have the ability to travel. Also, diversity and openness are not essential to make a space cosmopolitan. Fahmy argues that Aciman depicts two fundamental features of his cosmopolitan community, in addition to racist portrayals of Arabs: "elitism and exclusion" ("For Cavafy" 276). Aciman creates a society that includes the elite Alexandrian Jews, but nobody else. The sort of cosmopolitanism that Aciman represents, therefore, is available only to the elite. One of Moore's criticisms of cosmopolitanism is that in cosmopolitan cities, the westernized elite are more privileged than the mass population ("Between" 881). Fahmy and Moore seem to agree that Aciman presents a reductionist conception of cosmopolitanism, in which his elite Jewish community epitomizes a cosmopolitan atmosphere from which the native Egyptians are excluded, and if they are present at all, they are represented as servants and as incapable of being cosmopolitan because they lack sophistication. Aciman's Jewish community enjoyed the privileges the cosmopolitan society offers to its members to increase their business assets while keeping themselves segregated from the locals and holding firmly onto their identity.

In *Out of Egypt*, being in a cosmopolitan space does not always imply full assimilation, or even cooperation, with other communities. Whereas Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen argue that cosmopolitanism is not an option for the majority (5), Aciman depicts cosmopolitanism within his Jewish community as a matter of choice; his community includes both assimilated and non-assimilated members. Starr notes that the degree of assimilation of Jews in Egypt differs between generations within the same community, ranging between fully integrated and assimilated, such as the Egyptian Jews "whose ancestors had lived in Egypt prior to the nineteenth century [and] spoke Arabic" (Starr, *Remembering* 109), and those who "maintain their distinct ethno-linguistic identity" (Starr, *Remembering* 109). Balthazar in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* is an example of the former,

having assimilated into the larger society and speaks its language, where Aciman's grandmother is an example of the latter:

> [s]he finally yielded and began to speak in halting, heavily accented French, saying that she had lived in Egypt for exactly fifty years, that half her life had been spent in Egypt, and the other half not in Egypt, and that the part not lived in Egypt was lived abroad—and yet in all these years, she went on proudly, she had never learned more than fifty words of Arabic. (135)

Aciman's hundred-year-old grandmother is represented as a non-assimilated cosmopolitan person who travelled to different places and settled in a multi-ethnic and multilingual cosmopolitan city but encloses herself within her community and maintains her linguistic and ethnic identity. She has spent fifty years of her life in Egypt, but proudly declares that she has learnt only fifty Arabic words, demonstrating her disrespect for the Arabic language and the people who speak it. Aciman represents himself as an example of an assimilated cosmopolitan who adopted the values of Alexandrian society from his schooling at Victoria College, though his attempts to integrate with the world outside the Jewish community and to learn Arabic were met with resentment.

The other institution that Aciman uses to represent the decline of cosmopolitanism is Victoria College, which was known for its quality of education and highly trained teachers, but which admitted only students from elite and rich families. The school he attended in Alexandria can be seen as an example of Martin Carnoy's claim that British education in its colonies was meant "to colonise the colonial intellect" (23). Victoria College was a colonial space decolonized in Nasser's time by Arabizing the educational system, as a contrast to the British imperial approach to education documented in Thomas Babington Macaulay's essay "Macaulay's Minute of Education," which discusses the British "oriental plan of education" and the language chosen for education in India. The members of the British parliament

decided on English as the language of instruction out of a sense of Western superiority, claiming that it was the most suitable because the majority of the world's literary and scientific works were written in English. Macaulay claims that because the introduction of European languages to Russia has "civilized" the "barbarous" Russians (5), a similar approach would also work in India:

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, -a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (8-9)

Macaulay states that in India, since it is difficult to change the language of education at once, the process could be fulfilled gradually by educating 'a class' of people, mostly the elite. The educational system would feed that class with everything they needed to know about British culture, society, and politics, until they become intrinsically representative of the British identity: they would still be Indian nationals, but they would think, act, and look like English people. Moreover, that class would be prepared for leading roles and would later be given the responsibility of educating the mass population.

Another example of the significance of education to the reconfiguration of the colonised, is discussed in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind,* which examines the role of education and language as a primary step in colonising the population, in this case of Africa. In the English schools Ngugi attended in colonial Kenya, harmony between the school and the outer world was lost as "the language of [his] education was no longer the language of [his] culture" (11). Students who spoke their mother tongue at school were

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punished, degraded, and humiliated. Proficiency in English was a medium of evaluation and a requirement for attending university (12). All of these examples demonstrate how colonial education disconnects the individual from his/her culture. Ngugi argues that colonization is not meant to conquer a land and control its wealth, but to exert mental control over the people and how they perceive themselves and their culture, and this is accomplished through education (16).

In Egypt, the educational strategy in India and Kenya was applied in Victoria College, a school that was an icon of the British educational system in Egypt for more than 115 years (*Asharq Al-Awsat*). To sustain its imperial power, to spread the imperial culture, and to weaken the influence of the French educational system, the British authorities established Victoria College with branches in large cities such as Alexandria (1901) and Cairo (1940s). The college was named after Queen Victoria, who died three months before its establishment (Hamouda & Clement 5). It was meant to symbolize a British colony in which the "oriental plan of education" has been applied. The British authority had full control over the school, in order to guarantee the continuation of British imperial culture among new generations in Egypt.

Victoria College was a premier school in the Middle East. Sahar Hamouda and Colin Clement state that the school was "multi-ethnic and multicultural" (14), reflecting the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city. One of the headmasters of Victoria College, Mr. Lias, chose the motto "We are all one people" (Hamouda 43) to express its ideals of multiculturalism and unity. In "A School is Born," Sahar Hamouda argues that the students felt the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the school but never thought of it as a "colonial presence" (84). The students seemed to believe in the atmosphere of cosmopolitanism the school offered through its system without comprehending the colonial stance behind it.

The educational system and the organization of the school reflect the imperial strategy of its founders. The language of education and communication was English. Other languages, especially Arabic, were prohibited, so that Arab students experienced the disconnection and loss of harmony between their culture and language that Ngugi described. According to an article in the Arabic newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat,* the school had strict rules of conduct, and the students' uniforms embodied an aristocratic look. Victoria College was a boarding school that used its "house system" of student distribution to become a 'melting pot' in which all races and religions could amalgamate (*Asharq Al-Awsat*). The college's goal was to educate elite students, regardless of nationality or creed, to absorb the British imperial ideology so that they would become what Macaulay described as "English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (8). The educational system of Victoria College produced what Hamouda called "bicultur[al]" students (19). Those students who absorbed the British culture and imperial ideology were qualified to work as intermediaries between the Arabs and the West inside and outside Egypt. Many of them went on to hold leading positions in their countries.

After independence, the decolonial process in Egypt reached the school and its educational system, even though the imperial policy was still dominant. The school introduced Arabic courses for the first time in 1931. Courses on Egypt's history and geography were also made available. The most dramatic change took place in 1956 when the school was nationalized, or decolonized, and its name was changed to Victory College. Egyptian flags replaced British flags, and Queen's Victoria's portrait was replaced by Nasser's. The house names were also Egyptianized, with "Rider, Parkhouse, Reed, Alderson, Birley and Barker" changed to the more Egyptian/Islamic "Urabi, Ramsis, Saladin, Archimedes, [and] Plato" (Halim, "Victoria" 226).

A former Victoria College student, Hassan, notes that "the demise of Victoria College was not due to itself but because it [the school] represented an empire on the fall. As Britain

fell, so everything connected to it fell as well" (Clement 185). For Hassan, the school did not fall because of the changes imposed on it by the Egyptian Ministry of Education, such as teaching Arabic, religion, Islamic history, and Egyptian history and geography as compulsory courses, but because the withdrawal of the British political hegemony over Egypt affected the policy of the school. The decline of the school as a parallel to and consequence of the decline of British imperial power brings to mind W.B. Yeats's celebrated line in "The Second Coming": "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold."

Many graduates of Victoria College became politically, intellectually, or artistically influential. Some of them include Husain bin Talal, King of Jordan; al-Mahdī, the Sudanese revolutionary; Edward Said, the Palestinian-American scholar; Omar al-Sharīf, the Egyptian actor; Youssef Chahine, the Egyptian film director (*Asharq Al-Awsat*); and André Aciman, who describes his experiences there in *Out of Egypt*. al-Mahdī described the policy of the school as an enterprise to 'Anglicize' the students and to foster imperial values (*Asharq Al-Awsat*), which epitomizes Carnoy's claim that the aim of British education was to "colonize the colonial intellectual" (23). Regarding the policy of the school, Clement points out:

> it would, of course, be simplistic and unjust to suggest that the school had
> merely become a robotic tool of British foreign policy, and yet it would be
> equally naïve to deny the political significance of a large British-style public
> school that brought together the sons of Egypt's and the surrounding
> countries' elites. (145)

Even if the school were not a project of the British imperial enterprise in the Middle East, its goal of imparting British education and culture in elite students is unquestionable. The Victoria Colleges in Cairo and Alexandria belonged to the colonial power and were decolonized when Egypt became independent as part of the project of obliterating the imperial legacy.

Aciman's and Said's descriptions of their experiences as students epitomize Victoria College as an imperial space in which the British authority provided an imperial education for Egyptian and European elites to prepare them for the political scene in the future. The school was also an example of colonial cosmopolitanism, as outlined in Said's 1999 memoir *Out of Place.*

Said attended Victoria College in Cairo in 1949. His experience reflected the imperial atmosphere of the school before its decolonization. According to his account of the school in *Out of Place*, the college applied the imperial principle of 'divide and conquer' by dividing the students into houses, each of which was named after a British commissioner or official such as Kitchener and Cromer, to easily control them and "[inculcate] and [naturalize] the ideology of empire" (181). One of the college rules was that English was the official language of teaching and communication, and other languages were strictly prohibited (*Out of Place* 184). Said describes the school as "a more serious place than any I had attended, the pressure greater, the teachers harsher, the students more competitive and sharp, the atmosphere bristling with challenges, punishments, bullies and risks" (*Out of Place* 181).

Though the students of Victoria College were the elite, they were often treated in such a manner that they felt inferior. According to Said, the students at Victoria College were seen as 'colonial elite' by the administration and would be educated in the "ways of a British imperialism" (*Out of Place* 186); they were taught everything about Britain's imperial history, political system, social life, and the English language in order to become pro-imperial. The Arab students were not taught their "language, history, culture and geography," and were not allowed to speak their native language; any student caught speaking his/her mother tongue would be punished severely (*Out of Place* 186-87), as was also the case in Ngugi's school in Kenya. Said claimed that he never felt free and undirected until he was expelled from the school.

Victoria College in Alexandria, which Aciman attended in the 1960s when he was fourteen years old, was more luxurious than other schools of the time, and most of its students were rich or from royal families. Through his experience as a student, Aciman depicts the changes Victoria College underwent during the new regime as examples of the cosmopolitan decline. During his childhood, Aciman never forgot the effects of Egyptianization on the Jewish students, particularly what he considers as the religious and cultural discrimination practiced against them at Victoria College. In *Out of Egypt*, Jews who decided to stay in Egypt taught their children Arabic at school so that they could better blend into Egyptian society. During Aciman's time at Victoria College, an Arabic course was introduced, and Aciman's father reminded him that he had to take the Arabic class seriously: "since we're [Jews] not planning to leave … let us at least pretend that Arabic is important to us" (*Out* 233). His father wanted him to pretend to be assimilated as a way to avoid anti-Jewish prejudice.

Out of Egypt also depicts the hatred that was directed at the Jewish community, and anything associated with Jewish identity, following the 1956 war, even if, like Aciman, Jews were not Israeli, not necessarily Zionist. This hatred is depicted as an outcome of the nationalist project. For instance, at school, Arabic lessons included poems that vilified Jews (237) or nationalist songs and slogans, most of which opposed Jews (241). All the students, including Aciman, were forced to memorize these poems and slogans and recite them aloud. Jewish films, or even films with actors who had Jewish names, were banned from Egyptian theatres at school and outside in general (235). All of this was emblematic of the psychological violence Aciman and other Jewish students experienced at school: "Something ugly and dangerous prevailed in class whenever the *yahud* were mentioned. All I could do was stiffen helplessly and wish that some unknown force might come and take me away" (241). When a fight breaks out between an Arab student and Aciman, an Arab student calls

him "dog of the Arabs" (240). He complains to the Arab teacher, who replies with a smile: "but you are the dog of the Arabs" (240). With these incidents, Aciman attacks the nationalist project and shows that the administration joined the students in humiliating and disrespecting Jews, demonstrating that coexistence and discipline disappeared when the British imperial intervention ceased.

Further, Aciman depicts the exclusion of the Jewish religion and culture in the pedagogical system as a sign of the decline of the multicultural and multireligious atmosphere of Egypt. The religion classes at Aciman's school were either Islamic or Christian, but not Jewish, and he was forced to choose between them. He chose to attend the Islamic class in order to hear more Arabic, but "[he] was reluctant. [He] did not want to study the Koran, nor [did he] want to be the only European in a class of Moslems" (*Out* 257). Aciman's account of his struggle with religion classes introduces a racial dimension to the issue, in order to prove that freedom of practice, which Appiah considers an essential feature of cosmopolitanism, had been lost. Aciman regretted that the Egyptianization of the college brought "sad days" (*Out* 220), as Arab students from the Levant and the Gulf replaced the British and Europeans. It was once a place in which only English was spoken, and the Egyptians used Arabic mixed with words from other languages when speaking with non-Arabs (*Out* 221); however, Arabic was later made mandatory for all students including the foreigners. English was used inside the class, but outside the class "one language was favoured: Arabic" (220). Aciman's Victory College became a place of intolerance, discrimination and racism; the cosmopolitan and Western ambiance vanished, and the nationalization of the college ignored the ideals upon which the school was founded.

Said focuses on the period of colonization in Victoria College in which the British imperial power had the upper hand. He discusses the humiliation that the students underwent and the loss of harmony between the school and the world outside. The cosmopolitan

atmosphere he experienced in the school was an imperial version. Aciman, by contrast, emphasizes the period of decolonization and the decline, as he regarded it, of tolerance, discipline, and cosmopolitanism. He laments the loss of the imperial version of cosmopolitanism. In his description of the changes Victoria College underwent, Aciman demonstrates a reductionist conception of cosmopolitanism. Where the enforcement of the English language, culture, and system of education in the school was once a feature of cosmopolitanism, the return to Arabic is conceived as hindering and limiting. According to Aciman, Victoria College was no longer a cosmopolitan space when Arabic replaced English, Jewish religion and culture were out of the curricula, Arab students were the majority, and the administration was no longer under the British imperial power.

Nostalgia and *Out of Egypt*

Out of Egypt and *False Papers* express a sense of nostalgia for a cosmopolitan Alexandria that no longer exists. Aciman's essays about his return to Alexandria in *False Papers* formed the basis for his memoir *Out of Egypt*. In his essay "Alexandria: The Capital of Memory," Aciman states that he visited Alexandria years after his expulsion in order to "touch and breathe the past again" (3). He found that the city had changed: "There are no Europeans left, and the Jews are all gone. Alexandria is Egyptian now" (*False* 3).

In the final scene of *Out of Egypt,* Aciman sits facing the sea on the night of the Passover Seder[23] before he leaves Alexandria:

> And suddenly I knew, as I touched the damp, grainy surface of the seawall,
> that I would always remember this night, that in years to come I would
> remember sitting here, swept with confused longing as I listened to the water

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[23] The Passover Seder is a Jewish annual feast in which families gather to retell the story of the Exodus from ancient Egypt.

lapping the giant boulders beneath the promenade and watched the children

head toward the shore in a winding, lambent procession. I wanted to come

back tomorrow night, and the night after, and the one after that as well,

sensing that what made leaving so fiercely painful was the knowledge that

there would never be another night like this, that I would never eat soggy

cakes along the coast road in the evening, not this year or any other year, nor

feel the baffling, sudden beauty of that moment when, if only for an instant, I

had caught myself longing for a city I never knew I loved.

Exactly a year from now, I vowed, I would sit outside at night

wherever I was, somewhere in Europe, or in America, and turn my face to

Egypt, as Moslems do when they pray and face Mecca, and remember this

very night, and how I had thought these things and made this vow. (339)

This passage describes the then-fourteen-year-old Aciman's last night before expulsion, in

April 1965, as he went out for a walk to say good-bye to the city. When looking at the city,

he felt as though he were looking at a dying friend or relative. He thinks about the countries

across the sea, such as Italy or France, to which he may move after he leaves Alexandria, and

of the things he might miss in Alexandria, such as the flavour and the smell of the cake he is

eating. In his essay "In a Double Exile," Aciman notes that every year they celebrate

Passover Seder, he remembers Egypt and his family's Seder the last night before their

expulsion under the regime of Nasser, whom he called "the modern Pharaoh" (25). The

coincidence of the celebration of this ritual feast and the family's expulsion explains

Aciman's restless nostalgia and his reliving of the exodus. Such a sense of nostalgia can be

felt throughout *Out of Egypt* and *False Papers,* encompassing the feeling he had when he

first left Alexandria and the feeling that had brought him back.

The term *nostalgia* often refers to the feelings of exile, displacement, and sociopolitical and cultural changes that an individual experiences. Janelle Wilson points out that "the term 'Nostalgia' typically conjures up images of a previous time when life was 'good'" (21), and is often evoked to escape reality or to avoid facing the present. Nostalgia is a combination of two Greek words, "nostos," which means 'returning home,' and "algia," which means 'longing'; thus, it is a synonym of "homesickness" (Wilson 21). Nostalgia is one of the key features of migration narratives such as Homer's *Odyssey*,[24] which is considered the first narrative of return. In "The True Meaning of Nostalgia," Michael Chabon defines nostalgia as "the emotional experience – always momentary, always fragile – of having what you lost or never had, of seeing what you missed seeing, of meeting the people you missed knowing. [...] the feeling that overcomes you when some minor vanished beauty of the world is momentarily restored" (n.p.). Paradoxically, nostalgia not only triggers the mind to remember and relive certain moments, but can also leave the experiencer feeling helpless and weak.

In literature, nostalgia and Alexandria are so strongly intertwined that "nostalgia […] has become synonymous with the word Alexandria" (Awad & Hamouda 13). Those who lived in the lost cosmopolitan Alexandria describe it in nostalgic tones; the memory of the city is constantly with them, accompanied by feelings of longing. Aciman uses nostalgia and homesickness as themes in *Out of Egypt* and the essays of *False Papers*, as for him, exile and

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[24] The term nostalgia, which expresses a sense of longing, is linked to Homer's Odyssey when Odysseus, after years of being away from his island of Ithaca and his beloved Penelope, refuses to stay with the nymph Calypso, who promised to make him immortal, and chooses to return home (Sedikides et al. 304). Many writers, such as Cavafy and Aciman, have referred to the Odyssey when expressing nostalgic feelings.

the act of remembering are motives for writing, and writing is the tool that helps him overcome the despair of not finding home again. Therefore, Roger Porter states that exile made Aciman a writer (309). Displacement for Aciman is a "blessed accident" (Zachary 237), as he depicts the state of loss and displacement from a place in his memory. Porter considers Aciman's writing about Alexandria as a "condition of homesickness" that does not "exist within" him (304). However, Aciman does express a longing for a home that no longer exists, and even after settling in the United States, he returns to this theme because the act of remembering fills him with pleasure and satisfaction.

In *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, Eric Kandel connects memory and identity He claims that memory helps to constitute personal identity, and "[m]emory is essential not only for the continuity of individual identity, but also for the transmission of culture and for the evolution and continuity of societies over centuries" (10). In "Landscape, Memory and Contemporary Design," Panita Karamanea agrees with Kandel on the significance of memory in forming and preserving personal identity (117); she states that "[f]inding a way of keeping a memory 'alive' is an act of resistance to losing our identity" (117). Kandel's and Karamanea's discussions of memory are applicable to Aciman's writings, which focus on remembering and being nostalgic for Alexandria. Through his writings, Aciman tries to preserve his identity as an Alexandrian Jew, and through the collective memory of his family members, he inscribes and roots the history and the culture of his Jewish community in Alexandria. For that purpose, *Out of Egypt* focuses on the Jewish community, their neighbourhood, their businesses, and their cemetery, in order to sustain contact with, and historicize, the home that is no longer there.

Aciman's memories represent his experience of the loss of identity and the difficulty of reintegration into a new society. However, Aciman was not nostalgic for Alexandria in general, but for the Jewish community and his family. Aciman's use of nostalgia is

synonymous with the contemporary definition of nostalgia as "a sentimental longing for one's past" (Sedikides et al. 305). During his return, Aciman reminisces about his past in Alexandria by roaming the streets and visiting the places he used to know, such as the apartment in which his family lived thirty years earlier, but which has remained empty since they left (*False* 11). He visits the Jewish cemetery where his grandfather was buried and remembers that since Jews left, the Jewish cemetery has seen no visitors. He wrote about his visit to his grandfather's grave and expressed his feelings when standing at the grave in his essay "Alexandria: The Capital of Memory" to immortalize the existence of Jewish remnants:

> "Are you happy now?" I want to ask my grandfather, rubbing the stone some more, remembering a tradition practiced among Muslims of tapping one's finger ever so gently on a tombstone to tell the dead that their loved ones are present, that they miss them and think about them. I want to speak to him, to say something, if only in a whisper. But I am too embarrassed. Perhaps this is why people say prayers instead. But I don't know any prayers. All I know is that I cannot take him with me—but I don't want to leave him here. What is he doing here anyway? In a hundred years, no one will even know my grandfather had lived or died, here or elsewhere. It's the difference between death and extinction. (*False Papers* 19)

His memory recalls the sounds of the sea waves, the fruit and vegetable vendors, and the iceman, which were connected to his community, and calls them "small miracles of mornings" (*Out* 285) in Alexandria. Aciman does not openly state an opinion on the colonial period in Egypt in *Out of Egypt*; however, in *False Papers*, he expresses his nostalgia for the Westernized Alexandria, which he regarded as a city that acknowledged both European and colonial history: "The Alexandria I knew, that part-Victorian, half-decayed, vestigial nerve centre of the British Empire, exists in memory alone" (*False* 4). This passage suggests that

Aciman regarded Egyptianization and nationalism as movements that weakened and supplanted cosmopolitan Alexandria.

In *False Papers*, Aciman presents a definition of nostalgia, which helps to summarize his reason for returning to and writing about Alexandria: "Nostalgia is the ache to return, to come home; *nostophobia,* the fear of returning; *nostomania,* the obsession with going back; *nostography*, writing about return" (*False* 7). Aciman defines nostalgia not only as a condition and a feeling that controls a person's senses, but he also adds visiting and writing about the nostalgic space as inseparable parts of the definition. Porter argues that "Aciman is not so much nostalgic about a place as he is nostalgic about his nostalgia" (307). In other words, Aciman privileges the act of remembering over the thing being remembered, so that his definition of nostalgia includes "writing about return" (*False* 7). *False Papers* expresses his desire to visit Alexandria and to write about his journey to immortalize his Alexandria, but that desire is mixed with fear of not knowing the place of his childhood and of the inability to overcome his nostalgic feelings when he returns.

Aciman's visit was not so much an effort to revisit the city he knew as a way to supress its memory and nostalgia. He writes that his visit is "to bury the whole thing, to get it out of my system, to forget, to hate even, the way we learn to hate those who wouldn't have us" (*False* 5). In this, he echoes Darley in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet,* who also revisits Alexandria during the war to see the destruction of the city as an attempt to get rid of burdening memories of the city; and in so doing, Aciman sustains Durrell's orientalist discourse.

In the last scene before his departure in *Out of Egypt*, Aciman is thinking of Alexandria, a city "where [his] mind always turns" (21), and he remembers Cavafy's poem "The City," which also describes Alexandria:

> For you won't find a new country

Won't find a new shore,

The city will always pursue you,

And no ship will ever take you away from yourself. (*Out* 21)

Durrell translated Cavafy's poem in 1957, and this translation appears at the end of *Justine*;
Aciman imitates Durrell by including the poem at the end of his memoir. The poem
demonstrates that the shadow and memory of the city remain with its people, even those who
have left; the city and the memory are inseparable from the soul. Both Durrell and Aciman
embody the sentiment of Cavafy's poem; for instance, Aciman says of viewing the sea while
in Italy: "My love of the sea is in part a result of having lost Alexandria…. I love it precisely
because it was lost" (*False* 28-29). The city lives within the Alexandrians, such as Aciman or
Durrell's Darley, and they see its reflection whenever they go.

Alexandria after the Cosmopolitan Decline in Paul Theroux

Where Aciman's *Out of Egypt* traces the changes that happened to Durrell's
Alexandria, Paul Theroux's travel writings[25] depict Alexandria after Aciman's time and
represents an image of the complete decline of cosmopolitanism. My position here is that
Theroux's vision about Alexandria is coloured by Durrell's Alexandria. In *Pillars of
Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean* (1995), Theroux describes his journey around
the Mediterranean from Gibraltar, passing by France, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and
Morocco, in 1993 and 1994, intending to visit unexotic places and to avoid tourist
destinations. In his review of *Pillars of Hercules*, Jeff Jensen notes that Theroux aims to be
genuine in his travelogue by not visiting tourist destinations, and to be honest no matter how

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[25] Paul Theroux is a novelist and a travel writer. His best-known books are *The Great
Railway Bazaar* (1975), *The Old Patagonian Express* (1979), *Riding the Iron Rooster* (1988),
and *The Happy Isles of Oceania* (1992).

painful the truth is (n.p.). In another review, Robert J. Guttman states that Theroux is "romantic" and "optimist" in his description of the places he visits (46). However, Theroux's observations do connote cruelty and a sense of superiority. Furthermore, his account of Alexandria features language and imagery that reflect his pessimistic view of the present and future of Egypt in general.

Theroux's image of Alexandria is constructed from Western writings about the city; he specifically compares his impression of Alexandria to what Durrell described in the *Alexandria Quartet*. What he sees is no longer the cosmopolitan city of Durrell's works, and he states that "it is wrong to expect to find Durrell's Alexandria" (362) because Durrell's Alexandria is only half-imagined, and history has changed the city (362). A city of multiplicity, tolerance, and coexistence has become "a monoglot city of one race, Arabic-speaking Arabs; and one creed, Islam; and no sex. The foreigners had gone - the last had been expelled by Colonel Nasser in 1960" (Theroux 361-62). Although he had long been fascinated by Alexandria and wished to visit it, the Alexandria that he saw was in stasis, and he "was horrified by the city. Alexandria seemed filthy and flyblown" (361).

Theroux uses Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* as a guide to the cosmopolitan aspects of the city in order to come to terms with the changes that have happened since the novels were published. He also borrows Durrell's characterization of Alexandria as a deformed woman, Layla, who was once beautiful and attracted a British diplomat but lost her beauty and became ugly. Theroux similarly describes Alexandria as an ugly old woman who has lost her youth and is now struggling to survive: "Alexandria was a broken old hag that had once been (every other writer had said so) a great beauty' she was not dead, but fallen" (364).

Although some traces of Forster's and Durrell's descriptions, such as the train stations and the Cecil Hotel, remain the same, in Theroux's account hardly any modernization or signs of improvement can be seen (366). Alexandria, which once rivalled Paris and London,

is now "out of time" and sinking in poverty and negligence, and its taxi drivers are "the most rapacious by far" (368). In one scene that especially demonstrates his use of the *Alexandria Quartet* as a guide to the city, Theroux gets into a taxi to the Alexandria railway station. The driver tells him it was the first time in twelve years that a tourist was going to the station, and further notes that the station is for the locals while tourists use plane and buses for transportation. Theroux explains that he wants to "verify something [he] had read" (366), the depiction of the station in Durrell's *Justine*. When he reaches the station, it seems to be a throwback to ancient times, with people behaving in an uncivilized manner, and no order, no queues, no system to be followed:

> The three classes of tickets, the confusion at the ticket windows, the pushing and shoving and the queue-jumping men cutting ahead, the texture of the cardboard tickets, the very smudges of the printing, made it seem an experience from a former time, from a paragraph in a book written long ago. … the filthy platforms, the beggars, the sweet-vendors and newsboys, and the shafts of dusty sunlight slanting on to the rails, the clopping of horses in the courtyard; these details, part of the present, might be found on the same old page. (366)

Theroux's description of the filth and squalor in Alexandria supports Fahmy's observation that Western writers generally regard post-cosmopolitan Alexandria as dirty and backward. It also supports my position on the pervasive influence of Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* on the Western imagination of Alexandria, particularly as it is used by later authors such as Aciman and Theroux to attack the Egyptian nationalist project through their representations of post-Durrell Alexandria.

Conclusion

Aciman's nostalgic memoir depicts a cosmopolitan Alexandria in which he and his family lived among the elite, high-class Sephardi Jews who maintained Western lifestyles, while the Ashkenazi and Karaites are absent from his narrative. Aciman gave his people voices to speak for themselves, while keeping the other Jews, Copts, and Muslims voiceless. His community has set artificial borderlines between themselves and the other communities in Alexandria in order to preserve their identity. Aciman's *Out of Egypt* emphasises the contributions of Jews to the economic prosperity of Egypt while simultaneously showcasing their mistreatment and eventual expulsion from the land. The narrative, then, articulates Aciman's attack on the nationalist project of Egypt. The cosmopolitan features of Alexandria departed with them, leaving behind a city that no longer welcomes foreigners. Aciman's work continues Durrell's orientalist trajectory, but is 'more sinister' than the *Alexandria Quartet* in that Durrell's four novels provide virtually no positive images of Alexandria or the Egyptians.

Aciman and Theroux used the *Alexandria Quartet* as a guide to Alexandria in the absence or ignorance of any oral or written Egyptian guide. Aciman's representation of Alexandria is a culmination of Durrell's anticipation of its decline and his warning Alexandrian, foreign, and Coptic readers alike of its consequences. What was once a multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multireligious city now has only one language, one ethnicity, and one creed. Though these trends could be seen even in the 1930s, they came to fruition with the coming of Nasser's regime. Theroux's *The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean* further continues along the path of Durrell and Aciman, as the process of decline has indeed resulted in one creed, one language, and one nationality, in place of the multiplicity that was once an essential feature of the city.

Durrell, Aciman, and Theroux each add to the orientalist discourse of the East. Each author reinforces an image that presents Alexandria and the Orient as a whole as uncivilized, backward, inferior, and in need of control by a superior Western power to maintain stability and progress. In Egypt, writers have attempted to reject and fight unreliable Western images of the Orient, to write back to the West, and to re-present the Egyptian self.

The twenty-first century has seen a trend in narrating the history of Jews in Egypt, from the point of view of the Egyptians and of Jews in exile, a trend that reflects the continuous importance of that history. These works present images that undermine Aciman's representation of Jews as outsiders. Outside of Egypt, writing about the home from a position of exile has been an important theme, as authors present different views of their homes, and the issues they tackle vary in significance. For instance, Massoud Hayoun's 2019 book *When We Were Arabs: A Jewish Family's Forgotten History* tells the history of his family as narrated by the members of that family. Hayoun's grandparents were Arab Jews who left Egypt for America, where they spread Arabic culture among their neighbourhood, taught their children and grandchildren the Arabic language, and proudly identified themselves as Arab.

Within Egypt, the idea that Jews, before the formation of the State of Israel, are part and parcel of Egyptian society has been reinforced in various works of literature and media productions. For instance, although Aciman overlooks Harat AlYahoud and considers it insignificant, for the Egyptians Harat AlYahoud is of great importance as a symbol of coexistence and tolerance between Jews and other ethnic groups. Literary works, films, and television shows in Egypt have represented Jews in Harat AlYahoud as part of the Egyptian structure. In 2015, the Egyptian TV series "Harat AlYahoud" depicted the daily life of a middle-class Jewish family and their Muslim and Christian neighbours during the Second World War. The series portrayed Jews as citizens who enjoyed full rights and shared the

same political concerns and the same social traditions as other Egyptians. The only difference was religion, which was practiced with respect. The districts contained mosques, churches, and synagogues, all of which, during the bombardment, opened their doors as shelters for everyone regardless of religious affiliation. The series received contradictory responses, with some enjoying its themes and others believing it presented Jews as victims and the expulsion as an unfair decision. The following chapter brings the Egyptian voice to the centre to negotiate the politics and poetics of self-representation.

Chapter Four

No One Sleeps in Alexandria: Writing Back to the Empire

> Western representations of Egypt have a history too, one that doesn't always
>
> coincide with Egyptian representations of Egypt.
>
> <div align="right">(Edward Said, Reflections on Exile 153)</div>

Said's comment quoted above demonstrates a notable disparity and inconsistency between the images of Egypt in Western literature and those found in Egyptian self-representations. The previous two chapters discussed two Western representations of Alexandria and the influence of their orientalist configurations of the city in the Western imagination. In response to the English interest in representing colonial Egypt, Egyptian writers from different religious backgrounds attempted to counteract the orientalist imagination of Egypt, the effects of colonial oppression, and the imposition of British culture on their society by creating their own representations of the land and people of Egypt. These works provided medium by which Egyptian authors such as Naguib Mahfouz, Edwar Al-Kharrat, and Ibrahim Abdul Meguid could express their concerns to the world, and inspire fellow Egyptians to resist Western intervention and re-inscribe their land, their history, and their identity.

This chapter investigates Egyptian self-representation of Alexandria in the first half of the twentieth century. It focuses on Abdul Meguid's *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* as well as other works by Mahfouz and Al-Kharrat. The selection of the works is based on their relationships to the *Alexandria Quartet* as they write back to the empire to unsettle Durrell's orientalist representation of Alexandria. This chapter argues that *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* presents a representation of Alexandria in order to humanize the city and its

inhabitants, and to undermine the orientalist, dehumanizing representation in the *Alexandria Quartet*.

This chapter begins by theorizing realism as a literary technique used to represent reality. It also includes references to Mahfouz's *Miramar* and Al-Kharrat's *City of Saffron* as works that preceded *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* in rejecting the orientalist perspective of the *Alexandria Quartet*. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of several specific subjects addressed in *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*: corvée and vendetta, the Second World War and its social and political consequences, the Al-Alamein battle, and the Copt/Muslim relationship. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of Abdul Meguid's *Birds of Amber,* as a counter-narrative to Aciman's depiction of Jews in Alexandria.

Realism

Realism as a literary form in Europe does not have a clearly worked out definition. However, most realist works share certain characteristic features. This section discusses realism as a literary approach in Europe and in Egypt, in an attempt to create literary works that were reflections of everyday people and their lives and needs, in addition to social, economic, and political issues. Among the best-known British realist authors in the eighteenth century are Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and in the nineteenth century, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, and George Eliot.

Eighteenth-century English novelists, such as Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, were the first writers whose works marked a shift from universal truth to particularity and individualism. Their desire to pursue verisimilitude led them to portray their narratives as if they happened in "an actual physical environment" (Watt22). Also, their close contact with the reading public helped them to represent the needs and interests of their middle-class audience (Watt 56). Those authors created intelligent and skilled characters who faced social

challenges such as patriarchy, education, marriage, and relationships (Morris 81-82). English realism in the eighteenth century was characterized by a more humorous tone than the French realism in the nineteenth century (Furst & Skrine 33). For instance, Dicken's realistic novels, Émlie Legouis argues, "are […] lit up by laughter, […] warmed by pity. They are either distorted by lively caricature, or transformed by a curious fantasy, even by a truly poetic imagination" (324). Another aspect that marks British realism is the role of British female novelists, such as Austen, the Brontës, and Eliot, in developing the nineteenth-century realism (Morris 86).

Realism gained popularity in the nineteenth century due to historical and social changes such as the Industrial Revolution in 1830, the subsequent emergence of the middle class, and the revolution of photography (Morris 5). These changes in society led to calls for literature and art to depict the lives of ordinary people. Thus, the mission of realist novels, as Lukacs argues, is to present "the whole of society and man's condition in it" (*Aspects* 146). French realists such as Balzac and Zola represented the historical, social, and political aspects of their societies more effectively than historians, sociologists, and politicians (Snow 9).

Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), is considered the founder of European realism. His novels, plays, and short stories known collectively as *The Human Comedy* depict post-Napoleonic French society through the eyes of characters from different social classes. What distinguishes Balzac is his introduction of ordinary characters and his depiction of details of their lives, their manners, their societies, and even their clothes (Hemmings 44). Historical and social details are essential elements of Balzac's works, in order to give definition and shape to his characters and their environments, ideas, and destinies (Morris 61-62).

Another important figure in French realism is Émile Zola (1840-1902), who rejected supernatural elements in favour of a realist technique. In his novels, Zola demonstrated the influence of heredity and environment on the lives of ordinary people. Morris argues that

Zola was a pioneer not only in his representations of the working-class sphere but also in his use of literature as a voice for the voiceless, and considers that "a moral imperative to writers to speak out for those without a public voice" (Morris 73).

As a literary technique, realism opposed the aesthetic and emotional emphases that were present in classicism, romanticism, and imaginative idealism. Realism in France was often presented as an "oppositional" perspective to idealism (Morris 49). Martin Coyle describes realism as a practice or representation without idealization, a literary technique with a set of artistic strategies that are structured to provide the work with verisimilitude using straightforward, non-poetic language; therefore, realist narratives tend not to depict chivalric or heroic figures or moments. M. H. Abrams presents an explanation of realism from the reader's side, which parallels Coyle's:

> [It is] more useful to identify realism in terms of the effect on the reader: realistic fiction is written to give the effect that it represents life and the social world as it seems to the common reader, evoking the sense that its characters might in fact exist, and that such things might well happen. To achieve such effects, the novelists we identify as realists may or may not be selective in subject matter – although most of them prefer the commonplace and the everyday, represented in minute detail, over rarer aspects of life – but they must render their materials in ways that make them seem to their readers the very stuff of ordinary experience. (260-61)

In realist narrative, the reader feels that all the elements of the narrative, such as the subject matter, setting, and characters are commonly found in real life, and all the experiences and events told in the story are possible, as there is no idealization or heroism. In addition, what differentiates realism from other literary forms are its tendency to use common names, rather than allegorical or symbolic names, for characters and places, and its rejection of traditional

plots taken from "mythology, history, legend, or previous literature" (Watt 14) in favour of "characterization and the presentation of background" (Watt 17).

Although realism is based on the social, political, and everyday concerns of common people, it is not a mirror reflection or camera image of reality. Realist narrative "cannot imitate reality directly [but] uses words to give the *illusion* of reality" (Walder 18). Likewise, Pam Morris considers realism a representation or mimicry of reality, due to the influence of the writer's personality on the shaping of the work. A realist author "select[s]" what he/she wants to describe and "order[s]" his/her selection according to his/her vision and perspective (Morris 4). However, Morris argues that fidelity of representation controls the writer's role in selection and ordering. The two most important terms associated with the fidelity of representation are mimesis, "the most exact form of correspondence or fidelity between representation and actuality" (Morris 5), and verisimilitude, "the appearance of being true or real; likeness or resemblance to truth, reality or fact" (Morris 5).

In *Document of Modern Literary Realism*, George Becker agrees with Morris that the freedom of selection and ordering in realist literature is restricted by "authorial self-effacement" (31). "The facts," explains Becker, "should speak for themselves as they do in life. There should be no authorial voice raised in way of commentary or exhortation" (28). In other words, the realist must detach him/herself and his/her prejudices from the text, and the narrator should not be regarded as the author's alter ego. Moreover, the author's detachment should go hand in hand with objective representation; the author's lens should "photograph" rather than "distort" what he/she sees (Becker 7). Becker adds that realist novels are not imaginative works, as the realist work depends on documents and other sources for its depiction of the novel's social and historical contexts (31). The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition of realism supports Becker's argument of authorial detachment. Realism, according to the *OED,* is "close resemblance of what is real; fidelity of representation, the

rendering of precise details of the real thing or scene," which implies an accurate correspondence between the event and its representation, and a detailed description of the reality.

To achieve faithful representation, a realist writer relies more on detailed settings and interesting and complex characters more than on plot construction. Joseph Beach points to the importance of details to the realist, "[t]he realist is concerned to give a serious picture of life; he is the scientist in fiction, and he may be so dominated by his love of detail or by the disposition to ride his hobbies, that he may largely neglect to make his story shapely or even telling (121). This highlights the importance of the individual and his/her experiences, interests, and capacities to the realist novel, as realists distanced themselves from universal and collective truth to concentrate on the individual and the particular. Realism focuses on the environment, heredity, and social traditions that determine the character of the individual. As realist writing does not involve idealization, the characters are depicted as ordinary individuals who attain their knowledge empirically. In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt argues that realist novels are concerned with epistemology, with the attainment of knowledge through the senses and experiences of the individuals rather than from society itself.

In *Mimesis: Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Erich Auerbach examines collections of texts from Homer to the twentieth century, noting that the fundamentals of realist writing are the "serious treatment of everyday reality, [and] the rise of the more extensive and socially inferior human groups to the position of subject matter … [and] the fluid historical background" (491). According to Auerbach, realist writers do not only represent characters belonging to subordinate classes and discuss their issues with seriousness, but, more importantly, give those characters major roles and centre plots around them.

Furthermore, realist novels closely examine the individual's behavior by showing its causes and effects. Realism provides a descriptive and psychological representation of life and the influences of the family, environment, society, and traditions on the individual. This is what Lukács points to in his definition of realism, as Eugene Lunn comments, that "a literary mode in which the lives of individual characters were portrayed as part of a narrative which situated them within the entire historical dynamics of their society" (78). Realist narratives reflect the role of society and history, and the ways in which they contribute to shaping the personality and destiny of individuals. It shows the causes that forge the character and the effects of the events on the character's personality and life as "a process of interaction between a person and his or her social world" (Walder 31). Thus, these novels can be seen as historical narratives whose only difference from more traditional historiography is their emphasis on aesthetic writing over abstract facts (Hemmings 118).

Realist novels provide evaluations and observations of the time and of individuals' lives in relation to the social and historical contexts in which those novels are produced. In *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists,* Harry Levin describes realism as

> a literary mode which corresponds, more directly than most others, to a stage
> of history and state of society. Thus it raises a methodological issue, which
> can be sidestepped by the more oblique modes, as to the exact degree of
> relationship between literature and society. (ix)

Realist writers use observation and memory to provide comprehensive portraits of the individuals and their society, by engaging with the environment, past and present, and everyday lives. The employment of realism to represent the lives of ordinary people and give voice to the voiceless gives such works what Morris calls a humanizing intention. Writers such as Balzac and Dickens used realism as a literary technique to represent their societies, to

criticize social and political corruption, to highlight injustice and oppression, and to give voice to the suffering of less privileged groups in society.

Realism in Egypt

Egyptian realism began in the early twentieth century and was influenced by the French school of realism. What is distinct in Arabic, including Egyptian, realist literature is that the social and political circumstances of the community and the nation are as important as the individual. Samah Selim argues that what Arab critics mean by the word *reality* is to articulate "national reality" (110), which includes social and political struggles such as foreign hegemony and national resistance. Arabic realism is not merely a representation of truth and reality, but is "constructed through a particular and very powerful discourse about collective social and political identity" (Selim 110), in contrast to Watt's characterization of European realism as focused on the individual. In other words, the construction of the basic elements of fiction – time setting, place setting, plot, and characters – reflects the social and political realities of the particular society in which the story is being told (Selim 110).

Hence, the emergence of realism in Egypt can be linked to social, economic, and political changes, particularly the rise of nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s. In *Dirāsāt fil-Qissa al-Arabīya Al-Hadīthah: Usūloha, Ittījahātuha, Ulām'uha,* Muhammad Sallam argues that realism was the outcome of the sociopolitical upheavals of the beginning of the twentieth century. The social corruption and political instability of the World Wars and British intervention had disastrous economic and social consequences, such as poverty, illiteracy, and lack of health services. These concerns inspired novelists to take a realistic approach to depicting the problems faced by their society and the individuals in it (103-04). Selim and Hamid Sakkut further add to Sallam's argument by highlighting the concern shared by Egyptian realist novels to depict the everyday lives and personalities of working-class people

and peasants, and give voice to the voiceless, in third-person narratives (Selim, *Rural Imagination* 140; Sakkut 85).

Some Egyptian writers learned about realism while studying in France and introduced it to the Egyptian intellectual milieu through their novels. For instance, Muhammad Lufti Juma was one of the first Egyptians to write realist novels, such as *Wadi Al-Humum* (1905) and *Fi Buyut Al-Nas* (1905), which mimicked the styles of Balzac and Zola (Sallam 83). However, the early realist works of Juma and Al-Manfaluti were not well received by critics, as realism was still new and unfamiliar. The first Egyptian realist writer to gain widespread popularity was Muhammad Taymur (1892-1921), who gave up his aristocratic life and lived with the poor to understand their lives. He wrote realist short stories based on his experiences, such as *Ma Tarahu Al-Uyūn* (1922), which received wide recognition (Al-Nassaj 88-96). The title of *Ma Tarahu Al-Uyūn* is indicative of the author's intentions to render a sensory realization of the representation. Although Taymur is considered "one of [realism's] first representatives" (Brugman 245), he did not use everyday language for his short stories. Like other early realist writers in Egypt, such as Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Taymur had been educated in France and was influenced by French literary trends. Haykal's *Zaynab* (1913)*, which depicts Egyptian rural life and male/female relationships of the time, it reached its height with the works of Mahfouz in the 1940s and 1950s.

The period between the 1930s and 1960s witnessed a revolution in Egyptian literary production with the use of realism, which dominated the literary scene of the time. Mohammad Siddiq calls realism in Egypt the "midwife" of the 1940s "(re)birth" of the novel in Arabic, and considers realism "not only the supreme, but also the exclusive, mode of representation in modern Arabic fiction" (156). At that time, the social-realist novel became the most common vehicle to express anti-imperialist ideology and nationalist spirit.

Egyptian realism reached its peak with Tawfik al-Hakīm's *A'wdat al-Rūh* (1933) and Naguib Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* (1956), which reflected the sociopolitical changes Egypt had undergone at the beginning of the twentieth century. In "The Egyptian Novel in the Sixties," Sabry Hafez notes that the style of the earliest realist novels in Egypt, such as Tawfiq al-Hakīm's *A'wdat al-Rūh* and Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy*, is a mixture of western models such as Zola's naturalism and some elements of the psychological novel (70). Al-Hakim, who studied in France, introduced realism to Egypt in his *A'wdat al-Rūh*, which some critics consider the first real Egyptian novel. Sakkut, for example, characterizes it as "the first Egyptian novel which can sustain comparison with Western works" (89). Society and its impact on the individual were central in *A'wdat al-Rūh*. It is a love story that ends with its main characters' involvement in the 1919 revolution. Later, Al-Hakim wrote *Zahrat al-U'mr* (1943) and *Sijn al-U'mr* (1964), which depicted life in Egypt before and after the First World War (Brugman 284-85).

Known as the "Egyptian Balzac," Mahfouz is often considered the best Egyptian realist author, having produced eight novels that describe historical events with which he and his readers were familiar. In *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning*, Rasheed El-Enany notes that in 1945 Mahfouz's writings entered the phase of realism, and most of his realist novels, such as *Khan al-Khalili* and *The Trilogy*, discuss conflict between old and new, the past and the present, the older traditional generation and the younger generation that was fascinated with modern Western civilization (47). Mahfouz's *The Cairo Trilogy* is a realistic self-representation of colonial Egypt from the 1919 revolution until the beginning of the Second World War. It provides detailed accounts of the historical, sociopolitical, and economic changes experienced by three generations in Cairo.

During the period of Nasser and Sadat, Egypt underwent many sociopolitical changes, most notably censorship and restriction measures were imposed on the press and literary

production. Despite that, the concept of nationalism continued as a theme in much of the literature of the time. In "One Hundred Years of Egyptian Realism," Noha Redwan argues that, under the threat of detention in Nasser's time, many writers moved away from political and social issues toward representations of the individual's internal struggles, and "modernist narrative structures were most appropriate to conveying the experience" (264).

The 1960s saw a return to realism with the continuation of modernist writings. Some writers such as Edwar Al-Kharrat favoured modernist and postmodernist narrative forms. By the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century, Redwan argues, realist novels had regained popularity, thanks to the works of writers such as Ibrahim Abdul Meguid. New innovations have been introduced to the technique such as fragmentation and circular narratives and "abandon [of] linear time and conventional plots in favor of a self-reflexivity" (263). Writers may use excerpts from newspapers, journals, social media platforms, and holy books such as the Quran as ways to give more authenticity and relevance to their depiction (Redwan 268).

Alexandria in Egyptian Literature

Alexandria was the setting of various literary works that helped to narrate and shape Egyptian nationalism, to mirror political and social exchanges, and to correct inaccurate images of Egypt promoted by the British colonizers: "Egyptian literary and cultural production of Alexandria during the first half of the twentieth century contributed to the creation of a modern Egyptian national imaginary" (Starr 39). Mahfouz, Al-Kharrat, and Abdul Meguid are among the writers who contributed to that national imaginary. What these authors and their works have in common is their stance in refuting and undermining Durrell's orientalist representation of Alexandria. Their works feature the polyphonic technique, which Muhsin Al-Musawi considers as a common technique in narratives of "postcolonial consciousness" (134). Polyphony as a technique, which includes "multiple viewpoints and

epistolary form" (134), is embraced by Egyptian writers in their self-representations and reconstructions of knowable historical events to present a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. *Miramar* is one of Mahfouz's few novels to be set in Alexandria; *City of Saffron* reflects Al-Kharrat's abandonment of realism and use of modernism to represent his beloved Alexandria; while *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*, the focus of this chapter, marks Abdul Meguid's a revival of realism as a counterbalance to orientalist narratives such as Durrell's.

Mahfouz's *Miramar*

Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006) is one of the most important novelists in the Arab world, whose writings offer major contributions in the literary history of Egypt during the twentieth century. He refused to follow the western style of writing and created his own style of storytelling, inspiring many Arab writers to imitate him. He was born in 1911 in Cairo and lived his early childhood in Jamaliyya (in old Cairo), which was the setting of most of his realist novels, but then his family moved to the middle-class district of Abbasiyya,. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988.

Mahfouz's *Miramar* is a sociopolitical novel that represents a postcolonial phase in Alexandria, and focuses on the decline of cosmopolitanism and the Egyptian/foreign discussion thereof. It was published in 1967 in the same year of *Naksa* (Six-Day War), which made the novel even more relevant to the political reality of Egypt at the time. In "Post-Colonial Reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Mahfouz's *Miramar* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," Huda Galaby argues that *Miramar* depicts the formation of the national identity after independence and reflects on the corruption among the elite (460). The characters of *Miramar* represent different classes and the power politics that govern the interactions, while depicting issues of the social class system that have not yet been resolved. The events of the novel take place at the pension Miramar, owned by Mariana, an

Alexandrian Greek woman. The residents chose the pension as a space of exile from the reality of their society. However, the generational and political clashes within Miramar mirrored the larger conflicts within Egyptian society as a whole. The novel features four narrators who belong to different social and political milieux, while Zohra, the female servant, epitomizes Egypt (El-Enani, *The Pursuit* 114).

The narrative structure of *Miramar* resembles that of the *Alexandria Quartet,* as the story is narrated from four different perspectives, but the difference is that *Miramar* has four different narrators. The multiple narrators in the novel is highly significant. Mahfouz seems to manipulate the narrative technique to unsettle the uniform and authoritative narrative of orientalist writers including Durrell with a dialogic narrative in which a multiplicity of voices intervene and interact to articulate a more authentic Egyptian self-representation.

The first narrator, Amer Wagdi, is a journalist who participated in the 1919 revolution and retired after the 1952 revolution after being subdued by the new regime. He did not choose to leave Alexandria. After years of devotion at work as a journalist and supporter of the Wafd party, he found himself alone, an old man with no family and no children, and forced into exile. Amer Wagdi expresses his affection to Zaghloul and his nationalist project. The second narrator, Husni Allam, is an uneducated, bourgeois young man, who represents the notion that unqualified rich men are no longer required in government posts. The revolution has changed the local scene, as the importance of financial status has been reduced, and with the increase of public universities, education has become a more important qualification for the labour market. The third narrator, Mansour Bahi, belonged to a Marxist group but fled to Alexandria with the help of his elder brother before he could be arrested. His guilt over betraying his friends alienated him from the other people in the pension except for Wagdi and Zohra. The fourth narrator, Sarhan AlBihiri, is a representative of the current regime, coming from a middle-class family that gained power after the 1952 revolution. He is

an educated young man working in a computer company in Alexandria, and Husni Allam hates him. A fifth male character is not given space to narrate his perspective: Tulba Marzuq, a representative of the aristocracy who lost his wealth after the revolution and fled to Alexandria. In opposition to Amer Wagdi, Tulba stands against Zaghloul and his 1919 revolution which, as he claimed, led to the 1952 revolution.

There is only one female Egyptian character in the novel: Zohra, a peasant who left her village to escape a forced marriage to an old man, taking refuge in the pension where she works as a servant. Zohra was not given a space to narrate the story from her perspective, even though most of the incidents circulate around her relationship with the male tenants. She was exposed to each resident's stories and plans against the new regime, and was subject to financial temptation and sexual assaults, but Wagdi, who loves her as a father, always keeps his eyes on her for protection. Zohra seems to be a metaphor for Egypt, which is experiencing social exploitation and political corruption from various groups, represented by each of the male tenants. On this point, El-Enani says of Zohra's experiences in the novel that "Egypt emerges as strong and self-reliant; as poor but dignified, but with none of her sons sufficiently free from self-interest to do anything to her" (115). Zohra also represents the shift from the countryside to the city, from rural to urban space. She left a rural backward space in which people are closed-minded and women are subjected to various social norms and expectations, for an open urban space in which "love, education, cleanliness and hope" (*Miramar* 12) are present and attainable. Zohra is fascinated with life in the city, which has changed her priority from her desire for a job and education in order to survive in an urban space. Despite her relatively stable environment in Miramar, she lacks the freedom to move that she enjoyed in the countryside. She is not rebelling against her family and culture, but is respectable and ambitious, refusing to allow others to shape her life and future. In Arabic, the name *Zohra* means *flower*, suggesting the beauty and purity of the countryside. Even as other

characters have changed their ideologies, Zohra remains constant as she holds on to the purity of her countryside identity; she is often seen but rarely heard as she closely observes the people and urban culture.

The other main female character in *Miramar* is Mariana, the Greek Alexandrian owner of Miramar. She is an old friend of Wagdi and Tulba and a representative of the cosmopolitan legacy of Alexandria, rejecting the Egyptianization movement. According to Lindsey Moore, "Mariana is a remnant of erstwhile cosmopolitan, Mediterranean-facing Alexandria, in particular, and of the dramatically reduced presence of non-Egyptians in the country more generally since the 1950s" (51). Miramar was once a haven of prosperity and quality of life for Europeans in Alexandria, but it has become a shelter for exiled characters; Mariana herself lost her husband in the 1919 revolution, and her money and the rest of her family in the 1952 revolution (Mahfouz, *Miramar* 8). Even so, she refused to leave Alexandria during the expulsion, claiming that Alexandria is her only home. The pension is depicted as a foreign place, a remanent of the cosmopolitan ambiance, in which everything reflects a Greek atmosphere: the music, the wall decorations, and the antiques (9). The Egyptian atmosphere is represented only in Um Kulthūm's songs. Miramar represents home for her, and she wonders "who'd want to nationalize a little pension like this?" (8). At the time the novel takes place, not everything was nationalized in Alexandria, and some foreigners still owned properties and were left to conduct their businesses.

Miramar lacks any representation of local Alexandrians; its Egyptian characters are Cairenes who have come to Alexandria. These characters' descriptions of Alexandria and its scenery differ depending on the experiences that brought them to the city and their psychological conditions. *Miramar* opens with Amer Wagdi's description of Alexandria:

Alexandria. At last. Alexandria, Lady of the Dew. Bloom of White nimbus. Bosom of radiance, wet with sky water. Core of nostalgia stepped in honey and tears.

The massive old building confronts me once again. How could I fail to recognize it? I have always known it. And yet it regards me as if we had shared no past. Walls paintless from the damp, it commands and dominates the tongue of land, planted with palms and leafy acacias, that protrudes out into the Mediterranean to a point where in season you can hear shotguns tracking incessantly. (1)

Wagdi's nostalgic account of Alexandria is a pleasant description that reflects his inner peace, his familiarity with the space, and his desire to find a sense of home.

Hosny Allam, the young rich man with no qualifications, provides a different description: "the face of the sea is dark, mottled, blue from stifled wrath; there is unappeased rage in the ceaseless hammering of the waves" (53). He continues his description: "[a] great blue mass, heaving, locked in as far as the fort of Sultan Qaitbay by the Corniche wall and the giant stone jetty arm thrusting into the sea. Frustrated, caged. These waves slopping dully landward have a sullen blue- black look that continually promises fury"(53). Because the revolution has led to opportunities being given to more than just rich people, Hosny sees no future ahead; his psychological status distorts his vision of Alexandria. The condition of the sea, with its choppy waves, is a reflection of Hosny's inner outrage. Mansour Bahi's vision of Alexandria is similar to Hosny's. After losing his wealth following the revolution, Bahi says, "So I'm to stay prisoner here in Alexandria, to spend the rest of my life trying to justify myself" (87). For Bahi, Alexandria is a jail and a space of exile, representing his loss of hope of regaining the social position he had in the past.

In a later monologue, Bahi presents a more pleasant image of Alexandria as he begins to reconcile with the city and his situation. For instance, he describes the weather and the sudden changes between dust and rain:

> I liked the weather in Alexandria. It suited me. Not just the days of clear blue and golden sun; I also liked the occasional spells of storm, when the clouds thickened; making dark mountains in the sky, the face, of morning glooming into dusk. The roads of the sky would be suddenly hushed into ominous silence. A gust of wind would circulate, like a warning cry or an orator clearing his throat; a branch would start dancing, a skirt would lift— and then it would pounce wildly, thundering as far as the horizon. The sea would rage high, foam breaking on the very curbs of the streets. Thunder would bellow its ecstasies out of an unknown world; lightning would coruscate, dazzling eyesight, electrifying the heart. The rain pouring down would hug earth and sky in a wet embrace, elements mixing their warring natures to grapple and heave as if a new world were about to be born.
>
> Only after that would sweet peace fall on the city. The darkness would lift and Alexandria would show a face made serene by her ablutions— sparkling roads, spots of fresh dark green, clean breeze, warm sunshine— in a tranquil awakening (116-17)

In his descriptions of Alexandria, Mahfouz embodies the idea that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." The same space is represented differently depending on the mental and psychological condition of the beholder, and this pinpoints the problem, which is not related to the space but to how we look at it. What is worth mentioning here is that *Miramar* lacks the voice of a local Alexandrian perspective to compare to the Cairenes' views of the city.

Even the foreign Alexandrian Mariana does not speak of the city outside her pension; she merely laments the loss of the diverse community from before the revolution.

Mariana holds a discussion of the 1952 revolution and the consequent decline of cosmopolitanism with the Egyptian residents, in which she voices the foreign stance in contrast to Wagdi's expression of the Egyptian point of view. Mariana argues that following the expulsion of Europeans, Alexandria is no longer the same; the city is full of dirt and trash, and the former residents of Miramar are all gone. She nostalgically describes the situation of the pension before the 1952 revolution and the good fortune she once enjoyed: "This used to be the pension for quality. I had a cook working for me, his assistant, a waiter, a laundress, and two other servants. Now it's a charwoman, once a week" (14). She then counts the losses she suffered in the revolutions: "the first revolution killed my first husband. The second took my money and drove out my people. Why?" (8). Wagdi, presenting the wise Egyptian voice, explains that Alexandria "had to be claimed by its people" (8), to which Mariana angrily replies, "But we created it" (8). Wagdi assures Mariana that all the Egyptians are her people now, and that the revolution and its consequences can happen anywhere. He considers Alexandria an Egyptian city that has been returned to its people, including Mariana, and to further comfort her he reminds her that "Egypt's your home" and "there's no place like Alexandria" (8). Conversely, Mariana believes that Alexandria was built by foreigners and they deserve full rights to live there.

Mahfouz allows both European and Egyptian characters to voice their opinions on the revolution and the Egyptianization of Alexandria. On the one hand, Mariana represents Western superiority and opposition to the nationalist project, not unlike Durrell's characters who also believe in the Europeans' right to remain in the city they built. On the other hand, the Egyptian voice, as expressed by Mahfouz's characters, does not neglect Western efforts, but defends the Egyptians' right to re-possess their city. Despite the polemic and superior

tone of the Western voice, the Egyptian voice is rational, respectful, and, above all, welcoming.

Al-Kharrat's *City of Saffron*

One of the most influential Egyptian writers, Edwar Al-Kharrat (1926-2015) was born in Alexandria to a Coptic family. His first published work was the short story collection *Hitan 'aliya* (*High Walls*, 1958); his other works, which have been translated into various languages, include *Rama and the Dragon* (1979), *The Other Time* (1985), *City of Saffron* (1989) and *Girls of Alexandria* (1993). He was detained between 1948 and 1950 over accusations of having joined the left-wing political party. For him, Alexandria "stands for Egypt as a whole" (Ostle et al. 14), and his works are expressions of the Alexandria with which he is familiar. After being freed from detention, Al-Kharrat followed the example of Egyptian writers of the 1980s and adopted a modernist style. Egyptian modernist writers avoided realist depictions of political issues due to censorship and the threat of imprisonment, shifting their interests toward the subjective, memory, and stream of consciousness, as demonstrated in *City of Saffron*. In "Memory and Imagination in *Turābuhā Za'farān*," Magda Al-Nowaihi argues that "*Turābuhā Za'farān* is organized according to images rather than realist details of place names and dates. Even the title does not name the city of Alexandria, and instead offers an image, adopted from a popular song, of its saffron sands" (43).

Al-Kharrat has an intimate association with Alexandria as a space, as embodied in his novels about Alexandria and particularly in the character of Mikhael. In *Iskandariyyatī (My Alexandria),* for instance*,* the possessive pronoun confirms ownership of the city. Al-Kharrat describes Alexandria as

> not only a beautiful geographic location, and a place of meeting and
>
> confrontation between people who work, love, and die in the course of daily
>
> life; nor is it merely a storehouse of deep-seated ancient and modern cultures

and civilizations. It is all that, to be sure. But it is also a condition of the soul, a quest adventure to grasp an inner truth, in addition to being a metaphysical encounter with the obscurity of the abstract and death, stretching over a now placid now tumultuous surface of the sea, towards an enigmatic, limitless horizon. (*Iskandariyyatī* 5-6)

As an Alexandrian writer, Al-Kharrat creates poetic images of the city, its history, and its culture. His character Mikhael, the protagonist of his novels *City of Saffron*, *Girls of Alexandria* and *Rama and the Dragon*, is the voice of the Alexandrians in general and the Copts in particular.

City of Saffron is composed of nine texts that form one entity, moving back and forth in time and fluctuating between third-person and first-person narratives. Al-Kharrat characterizes Alexandria as a seductive and beloved city of saffron sand by the spacious ocean, full of irresistible magic and unbeatable beauty. Al-Kharrat's love for Alexandria is demonstrated in Mikhael's poetic descriptions of Alexandria's sea and sky: "[t]he colours of the sea began to shift and striate my eyes –violet and blue and shining, silvery-white, beneath clouds" (104-05) and "You are a smooth boulder in the waters' heart, where the valley sides slope down, green with lily-of-the-valley and elderflower; where the land is saffron, fertile and living; and where on high a black dove flutters, its wings spread out to infinity, beating in my heart for ever" (106). The dull, dirty, and colourless city Durrell describes is challenged by Al-Kharrat's colourful city; the melting pot of dullness in the *Alexandria Quartet* is a "blue-white marble city" (xiv) in *City of Saffron*. Durrell's Alexandria smells like a graveyard, where Al-Kharrat's city smells of "freshly-ground flour" (1) and "pressed oil with its slightly sweet, sugary overtones" (17). The lively homogeneity between human and non-human elements in AlKharrat stands in contrast to the dull and colourless space of Durrell. Further, the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Alexandria depicted in *City of Saffron* is not

presented as a colonial product brought by the British, but as an aspect of Egyptian culture throughout its history; conversely, colonialism poses a threat to cosmopolitanism and coexistence in Alexandria.

Al-Kharrat depicts the simple daily life of middle- and lower-class Alexandrians, Muslims, and Copts. His collection of characters includes illiterate old grandfathers who speak with *Saidi* accents, middle aged womanizers and hashish smokers, and young men who were educated in international schools. The women in his novels range between devoted faithful wives such as Mikhael's mother and playful prostitutes such as the Greek woman Umm Toto. Mikhael's mother is an Alexandrian character who combines Western and Eastern styles but still holds onto her Eastern identity. She would wear "Western clothes when she went out" (16) but would sometimes wear the traditional Egyptian "black *milaya*" and "a light lacy black *burqa*" (16). When she goes swimming, she wears "her dark-blue fabric bathing-dress with short puff sleeves; it covered her body completely, all the way down to her knees" (32). Mikhael's mother is a character type who is absent from Durrell's novels: a genuine Alexandrian woman who adopts Western styles but still carries her Eastern identity with pride.

Al-Kharrat represents Alexandria through images constructed in the protagonist's memory, which together produce a full picture of the city. The protagonist of *City of Saffron*, Mikhael, is a Coptic boy who tells of the daily life of his Coptic family and their neighbours in Alexandria during the 1930s and 1940s, and traces the changes to the place and its people. The story depicts the coexistence among Muslims and Copts,[26] and, through the character of Mikhael, presents the position of the Copts in the face of the British occupation of Egypt. Mikhael participated in the 1946 demonstration against the British (23) and wore a pin

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[26] The representation of Copts in *City of Saffron* is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

engraved with the word "Evacuation" while he worked with "the British Navy" (22). After graduation from university, Mikhael became involved in organising and participating in political and revolutionary movements that illustrate the desire of all Egyptians, both Copts and Muslims, for independence: "I went on demonstrations and helped organize strikes; I formed secret cells; I wrote pamphlets and analyses and manifestos" (103).

The Copts in *City of saffron* are not silenced or oppressed and are free to express themselves. For instance, Mikhael's father and his friend, both Copts, talk about Al-Nahhas Pasha and they present their different opinions of government representatives freely. The friend considers Al-Nahhas "the leader of the 'rabble'" (108) while Mikhael's father defends him as a "worthy successor of Sa'ad Zaghloul, the Leader of the Nation, and the enemy of the English Occupation" (108-9). Mikhael's father's opinion of Al-Nahhas reflects his belief that the Copts were as much of citizens as the Muslims, and they support a government that represents them.

Al-Kharrat considers the *Alexandria Quartet* a misrepresentation of Alexandria and its people. Through his writings, he tries to undermine that misrepresentation, as he outlines in an interview published in *Banipal: Magazine of Modern Arab Literature*:

> …when I read [Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*] I was very angry. He was so absolutely out of touch with the Alexandria that I knew – he was biased, he saw a different Alexandria altogether. I hesitate to use a word such as 'untrue' but its scope, in a literary sense, its images of excitement, of prettiness, have nothing to do with Alexandria. Durrell didn't live in any contact with the people of Alexandria, only with the 'foreignised' upper class, in their own way an imagined and fabricated part of society. (n.p.)

This interview touches upon points discussed earlier in this study. For Al-Kharrat, the *Alexandria Quartet* is a manipulative and false representation, not of the Alexandria with

which he is familiar but of an imagined and fabricated Alexandria whose natives are deliberately kept out of focus.

The preface of *Iskandariiyyatī* and the novel *City of Saffron* are but two examples of Al-Kharrat's critique of Durrell's orientalist representations of Alexandria. In the former, Al-Kharrat dismisses the Alexandria featured in the *Alexandria Quartet* as Durrell's personal myth that bore no resemblance to the real city. It has been written to please the West and to comprehend the East through Western eyes (*Iskandariiyyatī* 7), while the true Alexandria consists of people, monuments, and spaces that Al-Kharrat describes in *City of Saffron* and *Girls of Alexandria*. Through his works, Al-Kharrat expresses his pride of the coexistence of Copts and Muslims in Alexandria, in contrast to Durrell's depictions of oppressed Copts. His description of two prominent sacred places, the Abo al-Abbas Al-Mursi[27] mosque and El Markosia church,[28] demonstrates the freedom of religion the Alexandrians enjoy (*Iskandariiyyatī* 13-14). The material culture of Alexandria as represented by the juxtaposition of the mosque and the church articulates a history of cosmopolitan coexistence.

Abdul Meguid's *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*

Abdul Meguid was born in Alexandria in 1946 and has written several novels about Cairo and Alexandria, such as *The House of Jasmine* (1984), *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* (1996), *Birds of Amber* (2000), and *The Other Place* (2005). *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* was published in 1996 and translated into English in 1999. In an interview in *Casa Arabe*, Abdul Meguid notes that his parents told him about the events of the Second World War,

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[27] Al-Mursi is one of the main Muslim saints in Egypt; his mosque is the largest in Alexandria.

[28] El-Markosia Church is Saint Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, the headquarters of the Coptic Orthodox church.

during which time his father worked on the construction of the railway near Al-Alamein. His childhood experiences of the war inspired *No One Sleeps in Alexandria,* which received international acclaim for its depiction of Alexandria during the colonial period and was translated into several other languages including English and French. He combined his family's, especially his father's, experience with information from the Egyptian National Library and Archives to create the fictional world of *No One Sleeps in Alexandria.*

In *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*, Abdul Meguid draws on an enormous archive of historical material of the Second World War years in Alexandria. He documents facts and figures and situates his characters within this critical historical period. Although the World Wars are important elements of the novel's representation of Alexandria from an Egyptian perspective, *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* also provides detailed descriptions of the city itself and of the cultural and religious traditions of the Muslims, Copts, citizens, and villagers. It features accounts of social and political life before and during the Second World War, the effects of the war on the city and its people, and the relationship between Muslims and Copts.

No One Sleeps in Alexandria can be seen an antidote to the *Alexandria Quartet* meant to refute Durrell's orientalist representation, as illustrated by Abdul Meguid's use of quotations from the *Alexandria Quartet* as epigraphs to some of his novel's chapters. He has said that his role as an Alexandrian writer is to represent his city, its history, and its culture in literature. He and Durrell each reconstruct and rebuild the city of Alexandria based on what Samia Mehrez refers to as their own "experimental eye and […] personal encounter" with the city (*Egyptian Writers* 61).

Abdul Meguid attempts to present an unembellished depiction of life in Alexandria by using realist narrative techniques in order to humanize Alexandrian society. He focuses on and discusses issues of the everyday lives of ordinary middle- and working-class people, such as peasants and labourers, in contrast to Durrell's orientalist emphasis on Europeans and

upper-class Egyptians. The language of the text is simple, straightforward, and non-poetic, in order to reach a wider readership, in contrast to Durrell's highly poetic and elevated language. Abdul Meguid's novel gives voice to the characters' financial struggles and concerns about the radical sociopolitical upheavals that Egypt experienced in the twentieth century, particularly the Second World War, a voice that was silenced in the *Alexandria Quartet*. In *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*, Abdul Meguid provides a critique of political and social issues in Alexandria, such as the *corvée* (forced conscription) and vendetta, and their effects on the present and future lives of the characters and their families. The detailed descriptions of the war and the suffering of ordinary people, as well as of Copt/Muslim relationships, give the novel some verisimilitude.

No One Sleeps in Alexandria reflects Abdul Meguid's love for his hometown and his efforts to undermine the misrepresentation and misconception of Alexandria in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. Abdul Meguid gives prominence to the period of Muhammad Ali and his dynasty, which Durrell intentionally disregards in order to give Alexandria a Greek identity. Moreover, in *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*, tolerance between foreigners and Egyptians still exists, whereas Durrell represents the Copts as a foreign minority oppressed by the Muslims, rather than as Egyptians. The *Alexandria Quartet* depicts coexistence only in rural Alexandria, whereas *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* portrays urban Alexandria as a space of Copt/Muslim coexistence in contrast to the rural space that restricts relations between different religious groups. However, marriage between Copts and Muslims is a fundamental issue that cannot be overcome, and its consequences might risk undermining the coexistence and trust between these ethnic groups.

The title of the novel raises the question of *why* no one sleeps in Alexandria. My sense is that the city does appear to have a connection to the idea of sleep: in peaceful times, it appears to its lovers in dreams; and in hard times, it deprives them of sleep. During the war,

the people could not sleep due to fear; and after the war, they could not sleep due to joy. Legend also has it that the city of Alexandria was revealed to Alexander the Great in a dream, the dream upon which he decided to build his dream city (Plutarch 26-27).

The novel depicts the lives of Egyptian Muslims and Copts in Alexandria at the start of the Second World War. It incorporates two intertwined storylines: the first is the story of Bahi's experience of corvée during the First World War and the vendetta that forced him to leave his village for self-exile in Alexandria. The second story is that of Magd al-Din's friendship with the Copt Dimyan. The novel opens with the German invasion of Poland that marked the beginning of the war. Magd al-Din, the protagonist, lives in the village, and his brother Bahi is self-exiled in Alexandria.

Bahi was born on 27 Ramadan, and his name means "Radiant" (9). He was very handsome and "was born already circumcised. He was a child of purity destined for great blessings" (9). He was different from his brothers and the other boys in the village because of his hatred of the "peasants and working the land" (9), and his parents would not punish him or even question him if he made a mistake. He would go to places where the women of the other village gather, such as the canals and the marketplace, and enjoy their admiration of him. His village knew about his secret relationship with a married woman, which led to a rivalry between his family and hers. Many men were killed in the vendetta, which lasted for years. Bahi wanted to be killed in the vendetta, but the other family ignored him in order to "humiliate" him for his lack of "worth" (21)

Throughout the novel, Magd al-Din reminisces about Bahi's childhood and service with the British army, the 1919 revolution, and the village vendetta that cost Magd al-Din and Bahi most of their brothers. To end the vendetta, Magd al-Din, his wife Zahra, and their daughter were sent to Alexandria, where he rents a room in Khawaga Dimitri's building and becomes friends with Dimitri and his Coptic family. Magd al-Din also meets Dimyan, who

becomes his best friend and companion. Abdul Meguid depicts Magd al-Din's journey as a discovery of the history and space of Alexandria, with prominent historical events and specific geographical locations described in detail. Magd al-Din describes the effects of the British colonial era and the Second World War on Alexandria, and his and Dimyan's personal experiences working on the railway in Al-Alamein, ending with Dimyan's tragic death in an explosion and Magd al-Din's return to his village. The novel closes with a celebration of the British victory in Alexandria.

The characters of *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* are more important to the story than its plot. They are given common names for Muslims and Copts, such as Magd al-Din, Zahra, and Dimyan. Bahi might be an exception, but the story does refer to the significance of the name. Conversely, Durrell gave a Coptic character, Nauruz, a name that many Egyptian critics agree is not Egyptian in origin. In addition, as a realist writer, Abdul Meguid chooses characters that represent typical Egyptians. For instance, the three protagonists of *No One Sleeps in Alexandria,* Magd al-Din, his wife Zahra, and his brother Bahi, are villagers, a demographic group that constitutes the majority of Egypt's population. In *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880-1985*, Samah Selim points out that since the 1920s, Egyptian literature and politics have paid greater attention to rural lives and settings, giving voices to the voiceless following decades of marginalization, suppression, and exploitation:

> In the twentieth century, the Egyptian peasantry – for millennia the backbone
> of a rich and sophisticated agricultural and commercial economy – came to
> dominate the social discourse and political ideology of the modern Egyptian
> nation-state, and the *fallah* suddenly emerged as a potent emblem of national
> identity. (1)

In agreement with Selim, Samia Kholoussi notes in "Fallahin: The 'Mud Bearers' of Egypt's 'Liberal Age'" that "[t]he truest representation of the Egyptian character emanates from

peasantry" (277-78); thus, the choice of villagers as main characters makes the novel more realistic. Abdul Meguid gives the villagers the opportunity to express their social and political concerns during a crucial time in the history of Alexandria and Egypt in general, in contrast to Durrell, who marginalized this group by having Darley speak for them.

This chapter discusses two main historical periods covered in Abdul Meguid's novel: the time before the start of the Second World War, and the time of the war itself. Through the story of Bahi, Abdul Meguid discusses the issues of *corvée* (forced conscription), vendetta, and the 1919 revolution. During the war, Bahi and Magd al-Din were both exiled to Alexandria, where they experience not only the upheavals of the war itself but also the city's cosmopolitanism and encounters between Copts and Muslims.

No One Sleeps in Alexandria represents a labour system called *corvée* and the suffering of the peasants from the system. Abdul Meguid highlights this system to show the atrocious side of British colonization, which Durrell neglected to mention. *Corvée,* or *al-Sukhra* in Arabic, had existed since the time of the Pharaohs, but was used by British colonial authorities to expand their power outside Egypt. In "Who Abolished Corvée Labour in Egypt and Why?" Nalhan J. Brown defines *corvée* as forced unpaid or low-paid labour on public projects (116). In the nineteenth century, with the expansion of the irrigation system and the cotton industry, massive numbers of labourers were required for cultivation, digging canals, and watching the level of the Nile. Mohammed Ali began to employ corvée in a particularly brutal manner. At that time, lands were distributed among the ruling members and the upper class, and the peasants were forced to cultivate these lands. Abdulrahman al-Jabarti notes in "*Ajā'eb al-Athar fī al-Tarajem wa al-Akhbār*" that *corvée* was considered more humiliating than slavery. Sidney Peel similarly characterizes the *corvée* system as a form of slavery (519), and adds that the monarchy and landlords used the *corvée* system to suppress the peasants by keeping them poor and thus guaranteeing their submission (518-19).

Despite the brutality of the system, its elimination at that time apparently seemed impossible. In "Misr lil-Misriyyin" (Egypt for the Egyptians), for instance, Salim Naqqash states that "corvée labour (*al-Sukhra*) is among the misfortunes which it is impractical to eliminate completely. It has existed in Egypt for six thousand years, the people receiving it as if it were a burden placed by divine providence on their shoulders and beyond discussion" (67). However, it is possible that Naqqash considered *corvée* an Egyptian cultural tradition, since he claims that, despite its brutality and injustice, the Egyptians accepted, tolerated, and submitted to it.

In modern Egypt, the brutality of the *corvée* system was considered an incentive for the Urabi revolution and the 1919 revolution. In "The Role of Egyptian Peasants in the 1919 Revolution," Mohammed Ahmed Anis points out that Muhammad Ali reformed the distribution of land, as each peasant family whose members were able to cultivate the land by themselves was given between three and five *feddans* (acres), which was reduced to one-and-a-half *feddan* during Ismail's reign (258). Any peasant who owned land was obliged to pay tax, although Muhammad Ali established a trusteeship program in 1840 for those who were unable to pay. Under the trusteeship, the officials would pay any overdue taxes for the peasant, on the condition that the officials would assume control of the land, and the peasant would work on the land until the debt was paid. Although the decree stated that the land would gradually be returned once the taxes were paid, by 1844 most land had not been returned to its owners, but was instead possessed by Muhammad Ali, his family, the officials, and foreign landlords who lent money to pay the taxes, and the peasants were forced to work on the land anyway. During Ismail's reign, increases in taxes and decreases in cotton prices created greater burdens (Anis 259-64). Only rich peasants were able to obtain land, while the majority of the peasants who were unable to pay back taxes were kept in the hands of landlords to cultivate the lands and manage the irrigation by force.

During the colonial period, British authorities used the *corvée* system to suppress the mass population in Egypt and to fulfill the imperial enterprise outside Egypt with forced conscription, a period that is considered "a black spot in the history of British domination in Egypt" (Anis 264). However, to the world, the British authorities negated their acceptance to the system; in *Modern Egypt,* Cromer claims that the British colonial administration came to Egypt to abolish some of the brutal practices such as the *corvée*:

> Amongst the many achievements which England has accomplished in the cause of suffering humanity, not the least praiseworthy is this act, that in the teeth of strong opposition, the Anglo-Saxon race insisted that the Egyptian labourer should be paid for his work, and that he should not be flogged if he did not work. (ii)

Despite Cromer's attempted justification of the British colonial presence as a means of ending suffering and promoting justice, historical and literary evidence has shown that the *corvée* system and the use of *kurbash*[29] continued to exist at the beginning of the twentieth century. It even became a system of forced conscription that benefited the British army during the First World War.

Although Cromer denounced *corvée* and claimed to have supported a decree to abolish it, records have proved not only the falsity of Cromer's allegation but also the cooperation of the Egyptian government in forced conscription during the First World War. Instead of abolishing the system, the British officials worked to delay it. One of these records indicates that the number of peasants forced to join the British army increased from 24,700 in 1917 to 320,714 in 1918 (Anis 265). Despite that the participation of Egyptian conscripts in the war was marginalized in Western historiography (Anderson 8), further demonstrating that the British officials' claim about the abolition of *corvée* contradicted the reality.

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[29] A whip used as instrument of punishment.

In the twentieth century, many Egyptian public figures attempted to ban *corvée,* but these attempts were unsuccessful. In "The Egyptian Labor Corps: Workers, Peasants, and the State in World War I," Kyle Anderson states that some nationalist figures such as Zaghloul opposed forced conscription and forbade recruiting peasants to *corvée*. However, the Egyptian officials cooperated with the British soldiers to "kidnap" poor peasants from their villages and send them to different war zones (9). Anis adds that the participation of the Egyptian conscripts was by "compulsion," rather than voluntary as the British officials claimed (264-65). Some Egyptians sought exemptions by sending a petition to the government, by paying bribes to corrupted Egyptian officials, or by resisting aggressively (Anderson 12-15). Poverty, humiliation, illiteracy, and displacement were consequences of forced conscription, all of which helped to inspire the 1919 revolution against the British (Anis 264; Brown 137).

No One Sleeps in Alexandria provides a realistic portrayal of the *corvée* and forced conscription to represent what was marginalized in Western historiography and literature, particularly the humiliation the Egyptians experienced at the hands of the British, such as Rushdi's observation of peasants working on irrigation maintenance:

> Those intoxicating pains! But he [Rushdi] also saw the peasants humiliated and spurned, beaten by the masters of the land. He saw them sharing the animals' sleeping quarters, eating the lowliest of food and drinking, like animals, directly from irrigation canals. But they praised the Lord, in any case, He realized the Egyptians' secret power: they left the unjust ruler to the Just Ruler, who never failed them no matter how long they had to endure. How the Egyptians have survived from the ancient past to this day! What a miracle this people represent, enduring injustice more than rebelling against it. (311)

This passage is an example of the Egyptian government's unfair and inhumane treatment of the peasants who constituted the majority of the population. Because they were a huge and cheap workforce necessary to develop the economy, the government had to deal with them in a way that would guarantee their submission. Therefore, under the *corvée* system, the peasants were kept in poverty and treated like animals, even to sleeping and eating with the animals.

Abdul Meguid uses another example of forced conscription to further counteract Durrell's belief that the British Empire modernized Egypt, and instead demonstrate the British exploitation of both human and natural resources. During the First World War, the British colonial officials, aided by the Egyptian government, forced many Egyptian peasants to join the British army: "the country and governorate police forces went into the villages to pick out the best men and send them to fight in faraway lands" (Abdul Meguid 21). Bahi suffers this fate, but Magd al-Din does not because he was exempted for memorizing the entire Quran.

Bahi is forced into unpaid service in the British army after having been kidnapped, mistreated and humiliated by the guards. He was away from his family for years, and they did not know where he was, or even if he was alive:

> he [Bahi] saw in front of him a group of border guards on camelback dragging a group of peasants bound with a long rope. He had no chance to escape. One of the guards got down from his camel, grabbed his arm, and calmly bound him with the others. He did not object, question, or scream. They marched him with the others to the governorate headquarters in Tanta and from there to the army camps in Cairo. The 'Authority' had kidnapped him to serve and fight, without his acceptance, as corvee in the armies of England, which had declared Egypt a protectorate. (32)

Bahi is but one example of an Egyptian man who spends his youth fighting for the colonizers, in both World Wars and in the war against the Turks in Palestine (60). Consequently, *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* describes the British occupation of Egypt as a "pestilence" (22) that infected Egypt for decades and took the lives of its best men, who are still remembered and praised in their villages as "martyrs" (22). After the return of Bahi, Magd al-Din remembers the 1919 revolution; this, and references to the speeches of the revolutionary figure Sa'ad Zaghloul, further link the rebellion against *corvée* to the revolution that Durrell ignored in his works, despite its importance to the history of Egypt.

The story of Bahi serves as a vivid example of an important aspect of realist novels, as it "highlights the oppression and suffering of those victimized" (Morris 131). Through the character of Bahi, Abdul Meguid represents the suffering of the victims, the colonized, and others who were marginalized in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. At the end of his military service, Bahi returns to Alexandria, hoping that his family and their rivals would reconcile, but this does not come to pass. The traumas of forced conscription and vendetta disturb Bahi's inner peace, and he comes to hate the space that reminds him of his suffering. Bahi's life in the village does not correspond to Raymond Williams' argument that the country is often represented in literature as Eden, while the city is the heart of modernity and civilization in a continuous "dynamic movement" (5). Bahi's village is not Eden, but is a place marred by vendetta, the social tradition of revenge, and a space in which men are subject to forced conscription and families to endless sorrow. He dismisses his village as a "stinking village" (8) because the vendetta and the British occupation both cost him his youth and the lives of most of his brothers; therefore, he leaves for Alexandria in hope of saving his own life. The loss of young men like Bahi to war or vendetta has made the village hateful and unbearable; indeed, the effects of the vendetta on the village, including the expulsion of Magd al-Din and Bahi, form a "parallel" to the effects of the war on Alexandria. Abdul

Meguid characterizes both sets of traumatic events as "hell" (5, 11), resulting in the loss or displacement of many lives.

In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams argues that literary representations manifest the distinction between the city and village. The city is generally represented in literature as a "place of noise, worldliness and ambition" where people attain "learning, communication, and light" (Williams 1), whereas the country is a "place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation" while still retaining positive qualities such as "peace, innocence and simple virtue" (Williams 1). Magd al-Din and Zahra's experiences in the village and the city differ from those of Bahi: they discover that the city does not resemble the village from which they came, either in structure or in lifestyle. For Bahi, the village is a "place of backwardness" that lacks peace and would cost him his life, while the city promises a new life and new opportunities. Magd al-Din loves his village, and when Bahi tries to convince him to move to Alexandria, Magd al-Din answers, "our village is good, Bahi." Bahi then replies, "you're a good man, Sheikh Magd. You see the world only through the lens of the Quran" (8). Later, Magd al-Din is forced to leave, as the only way to end the vendetta: "The mayor had not believed that [Magd al-Din] would leave the village so easily, but the guards watched him ride away from the village on a donkey so small that looked like a she-ass. They fired some shots in the air to scare him" (14).

Magd al-Din and his family are forced into exile in Alexandria, as the vendetta did not end with the disappearance of Bahi. The experience of displacement, which is a "major feature of […] post-colonial literature" (Ashcroft 8), is represented through the two brothers, who demonstrate the role of place in determining the identity of the self, and the loss of place as the loss of identity (Ashcroft 8). Katrina Powell argues that forced displacement causes a "a jolt to one's sense of self—a jolt to one's identity" and it might be a "shattering of identity" (301). This forced migration deprives Magd al-Din and Bahi of their sense of self;

however, where Magd al-Din overcomes his geographical displacement and finds a new self in the city, Bahi cannot escape the curse of the vendetta even despite his mimicry of the urban style, and he ultimately succumbs to his feelings of displacement and loneliness. Conversely, Zahra, his daughter, and Dimitri's family made Magd al-Din's displacement relatively less devastating than Bahi's.

In the city, the experiences of Bahi, Magd al-Din, and Zahra provide perspectives for the reader on the cosmopolitan experience of Alexandria. Through the experiences of Bahi, Magd al-Din and other characters, Abdul Meguid demonstrates a popular version of cosmopolitanism which was alive in the 1940s, before the Second World War, and assumes that the semi-independence of Egypt did not change that cosmopolitan atmosphere. For instance, Bahi describes Alexandria to his brother Magd al-Din as "white Alexandria, where foreigners from all over the world and poor Egyptians from all over the land went" (61). The city seems to provide a promising future both for the foreigners who are looking for a place to settle and start their businesses or to flee from the war, and for the poor Egyptians who have run from poverty to look for new jobs and better lives. The Alexandrian shop owner William further demonstrates the city's cosmopolitan atmosphere in his mimicking of Egyptian manners of dress, wearing a gallabiyah and fez (42) in order to look like an Egyptian, just as many Egyptians adopted foreign-styled clothes, all of this reflecting the cultural amalgamation present in Alexandrian society, in contrast to what Durrell depicts as a cultural amalgamation that lacks the Egyptian touch.

During his exile in Alexandria, Bahi accepts the changes in his life in order to escape his past and his peasant identity. He no longer has the radiant face of his youth, and each time Magd al-Din visits him, he is amazed at the changes in his brother and the place in which he lives. Instead of wearing "village garb," Bahi now wears "clean clothes, a shirt and pants" and carries a "box of ambergris," and his home is "clean and fragrant with frankincense and

musk" (8). Zahra is surprised by Bahi's resemblance to "city folks" (30) and wonders, "Did Alexandria do this to everyone?" (30). However, Magd al-Din notices that even though his brother appears to be a gentleman on the outside, "he looked pale and exhausted and hid from Magd al-Din the many pains that he suffered in the city" (8).

Zahra and Magd al-Din's journey demonstrates the contrast between rural and urban spaces in Egypt. Although large cities such as Cairo and Alexandria have been modernized, the villages have remained undeveloped, and within the cities, both developed and undeveloped areas exist. The encounters between the villagers and the city people further represent the differences between rural and urban; for example, Zahra's traditional village dress is distinct from urban fashion:

> Zahra was wearing the same long black peasant dress that she had worn the day before, a dress with wide square neck that made it easier for her nurse her baby. On her head she had a black shawl that hung down both sides of her chest to cover whatever might be revealed by the loose-fitting bodice of her dress. Under the shawl was a tight head wrap that covered all her black hair. Camilla and Yvonne kept looking closely at Zahra, as though she were from a different planet. (35)

Similarly, Magd al-Din and other villagers still use donkeys as their essential means of transportation, while the city features different kinds of transport facilities, such as cars, trams, and trains, with which Magd al-Din and his family are unfamiliar. For instance, upon her arrival in Alexandria, "Zahra saw several dimly lit streetcars sitting in the square and cried out, 'What's that? A train?'… The driver laughed and asked if it was their first visit to Alexandria" (29).

In *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*, urban spaces seem to be more cosmopolitan than those of the countryside. The newcomers easily feel the cosmopolitan ambience of

Alexandria, which they unconsciously compare with the place from which they came. Unlike Bahi, who embraced the city style, Zahra represents the cultural shock that many villagers experienced. For example, Zahra is surprised by the difference between her traditional dress and the foreign styles worn by the Alexandrian women: "groups of beautiful young women appeared laughing. They wore colorful tight pant and tight tops, and their faces were made up and their hair done *a la garcon*. Zahra was astonished that women would cut their hair in this boyish style" (41). Zahra is similarly shocked at the sight of a woman whose style of dress reminds her of a prostitute:

> An old woman with heavy make-up and bright yellow dyed hair passed in front of the store. She was carrying a cheap red leather handbag and wearing a short skirt and a pair of sheer red stockings, through which the green veins of her legs showed. Zahra recoiled and Blessed Willian said, "One day the land will be cleansed." (43)

Her disapproval extends to movie posters depicting actors and actresses almost kissing each other, as she wonders who would dare put up such photos in public (120). Zahra blames the presence of foreigners in Alexandria for the cultural differences between the city and the village. The Alexandrian woman Sitt Maryam, Dimitri's wife, calms her down and tries to assure her that such scenes would be familiar and normal to her later (41).

Through the journey of Madg al-Din and Zahra to Alexandria, *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* represents the distinct "compartments" (Fanon 38) within the society of Alexandria that modernization and colonial development have produced. The *Alexandria Quartet* depicts the segregation of foreign and native spaces and focuses on the lives of the elites, whereas *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* concentrates on the lower and middle classes. Durrell uses demarcations between foreign and Arabic to characterize the Arab districts of Alexandria as backward and incapable of change, and the Europeanized spaces as

modernized and organized. Conversely, Abdul Meguid highlights the miserable existence of

residents of the Arabic space in order to criticize the negligence of the government and to

depict the impact of colonization. The middle-class quarters of the city are represented as

archaic spaces, with Arabic names, that lack essential services such as electricity. For

instance, Umar ibn al-Khattab Street is almost dark, with small shops lit by lanterns and

candles, while Raghib Street is in better condition, with larger shops lit by electric lamps and

lanterns, and with one coffee shop. Similarly, the following passage provides a description of

the Arabic space in Alexandria as unorganized and lacking basic needs such as electricity and

paved roads:

> There were only a very few passers-by and very few carriages. One or two
>
> taxicabs passed them. A while earlier, the driver had turned onto Umar ibn al-
>
> Khattab street. Candles in small, yellow lanterns cast a dim light in the small
>
> stores along the way. Rarely did they see a store with electric lights. At al-
>
> Hadari urinal the carriage entered Isis Street. The stores there were few and far
>
> between and most of them were closed. When the driver turned onto Raghib
>
> Street, the stores were slightly better lit and there were more pedestrians,
>
> taxicabs, and carriages. There was a streetcar ahead in the distance, and the
>
> lamps on the lampposts were painted dark blue so light barely reached the
>
> ground. The few electric lights in the stores showed many broken tiles on
>
> empty floors. (27)

The poor districts in Alexandria are neglected by the government, inevitably becoming

unclean and insecure, as though they are not part of the "white, gay, provocative city" (219).

In addition, the names of the streets do not reflect their reality: the streets in the southern part

of the city have flowery names such as "Narcissus" or "Jasmine" that belie the dirt and

poverty that exist there. This part of the city is static, while the rest is moving; it is seen as

"the refuse" and is beset by robbery and murder. Magd al-Din wonders whether, if those places were given the same attention and care that the northern parts received, they too would find "lovers, poets, lunatics and saints" (219).

The narrator of *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* refers to the establishment of the city by Alexander the Great and the formation of the cosmopolitan atmosphere that reached its heyday during Muhammad Ali's dynasty. Through the narrator's description, Abdul Meguid depicts a side of the colonial cosmopolitanism that Durrell neglects. The narrator represents the negative sides of cosmopolitanism as an ambiance that is beneficial for the Europeans and the elite Egyptians. He believes that Muhammad Ali's modernization of Alexandria has brought in rich foreigners who bought lands to build "palaces and magnificent mansions" (45). Despite the advantages of cosmopolitanism, it is still a colonial practice that has negatively affected Alexandria's poor and middle-class residents. Most of the foreigners settled in the north of Alexandria while the poor people live in the south. The narrator regards the people who came in during the time of Muhammad Ali and his sons as "foreign strangers" who "occupied" the north, with his choice of words indicating his view of modernization as a process of colonization. The immigrants to Alexandria bought land on which to build their own properties, schools, and shops. With the help of the Egyptian government, they have reconstructed and renamed their portions of the city in modern European styles, leaving the poorer residents behind and making Alexandria into a "virtual tower of Babel" (45), a place in which everyone speaks a different language. With the increasing number of foreigners in Alexandria, there was less room for them in the north, and so the "Greeks, Jews, Italians, and Cypriots" were forced to move to the south, closer to the native Egyptians.

The existence of the foreigners, either as residents or as military troops, changed the geographical and social structures of the city, and its social norms along with them. He

describes Alexandria as under the control of foreigners socially, politically, and economically, to the extent that any Egyptian coming from another part of Egypt would feel like an outsider. However, whereas many of these foreigners came to Alexandria, which was a cosmopolitan city at that time, as "adventurers" to explore the city, many Egyptians, such as Bahi and Magd al-Din, came there as "castaways."

In relation to the argument that *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* is an antithesis to the *Alexandria Quartet*, Abdul Meguid traces the history of Alexandria from its founder, Alexander the Great, to Ptolemy I and II, Antony and Cleopatra, Muhammad Ali and his sons Ibrahim, Said, and Ismail, up to the twentieth century, to demonstrate the city's Egyptian identity. He does acknowledge that Alexander brought prosperity and geopolitical importance to the city: "Did Alexander know that he was building not just a city to immortalize his name, but a whole world and a whole history? Probably: he was concerned not just with immortality, but with changing the world" (44). Since the time of Alexander and his successors, "Alexandria has raced against time, expanding and becoming crowded with strangers from everywhere. It became a real port" (45).

Dimyan, the Alexandrian Copt who acts as a guide for Magd al-Din, is a representative of Alexandria, its history, the people who built the city, and the people who have made the modernized city an important site. Dimyan knows the history and geography of Alexandria and speaks proudly of them, giving brief histories and status for each monument he encounters. Through Dimyan's descriptions, Abdul Meguid expresses his pride in the history of Alexandria, from Alexander the Great to Muhammad Ali and his dynasty, and highlights the historical periods that Durrell marginalized. For example, Dimyan says of Ismail Pasha on seeing his statue: "He was the one who built the Ismail Maternity Hospital. They say he's the one who built the city of Ismailiya, that he was the one who first moved to educate girls" (90). Similarly, an Alexandrian woman called Umm Hamidu tells Zahra that

"everything beautiful in Alexandria was built by Ismail Pasha" (178). However, in representing Ismail Pasha as a benefactor who spent generously in order to improve Egypt in general and Alexandria in particular, Abdul Meguid does seem to ignore the financial difficulties that Ismail Pasha's spending created.

Furthermore, *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* gives attention to the monumentalisation of Egyptian history by engaging with material evidence including statues and artifacts, functioning as "metonymic" (Abdel-Messih 3) reminders of the "continuous history" (4) of Alexandria. Some of these include the statue of Sa'ad Zaghloul standing high in the middle of the square (89), Pompey's Pillar, which alludes to the relations between Copts and Muslims (66), and Mari Girgis Church (St. George). The Mahmmudiya Canal is described as a "repository of secrets," and regarded as a milestone in the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha that "created Alexandria in the modern era" (196). When the Second World War ended, these monuments survived the violence of history, relatively unscathed.

The Second World War

Abdul Meguid depicts the destructive effects of the Second World War on Alexandria and its inhabitants in order to historicize the survival of the city, and to represent the experiences of his parents and many others, for those who have never encountered the reality of war. His representation focuses on the suffering and the losses of the middle and working classes, as a writing back to Durrell's Alexandria that brings the war victims, whom Durrell largely ignored, to the forefront. In the *Alexandria Quartet*, the war, the sound of the bombardment and the siren are background noises to an emotional yet surreal moment between Darley and Clea, fading in importance behind an expression of love between a British couple who met in the East. In contrast, *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* opens with the beginning of the war and closes with the celebration of the British victory, demonstrating the British government's indirect control of the political and military powers in Alexandria. The

Egyptian government has almost no power and only follows British orders, as Prime Minister Churchill moved between Alexandria and Cairo, met the officials, and set the plans for the war without consulting the Egyptian government.

The novel begins with a description of the Canal at which ships loaded with weapons and cannons arrive, indicating the imminent outbreak of war in which Alexandria will become involved. Many Egyptians were sent to work in Alexandria in preparation for the war (19). The continuous British hegemony over and exploitation of Egypt made many Egyptians secretly welcome any other power that would free them from British authority, even to the point that one character can say: "I wish Germany or Italy, or both of them together would occupy Egypt and rid us of the English" (20). The Egyptian belief that the Germans and the Italians would be more merciful colonizers than the British is a strong indication of the loss of hope and the resentment for the British that had developed in Egypt.

No One Sleeps in Alexandria foregrounds and insists that the political and social deterioration in Alexandria is due to the collaboration of the government with the British officials, who still act as colonizers. The city experienced almost daily blackouts and increases in robberies and sexual assaults (28), more indications of the officials' irresponsible behaviour. *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* criticizes the passive role of the Egyptian government during the war: "police and security forces were deployed all over Alexandria, […] because Queen Farida celebrated her birthday on 5 September at the Ras al-Tin palace, at which high-ranking statesman converged" (46). A state of emergency was declared even as the king and the government were celebrating Queen Farida's birthday and the ministers were at their summer headquarters. There were no decision makers in Cairo, the capital, and no precautions had yet been taken (45). The participation of the senior politicians in the birthday celebration demonstrates the gap between the monarchy and its government and the mass population. Though they live in the same city in a critical time, the monarchy was in paradise

while the majority of the population were left in hell. The birthday celebration is thus reminiscent of Durrell's depiction of the romantic encounter of Darley and Clea, both providing surreal images that misrepresent the reality.

The novel recounts the social changes that Alexandria faced with the eruption of the Second World War, such as the presence of British soldiers, including Indian soldiers in the British service, who would roam the city streets day and night. Historically, the British imperial power exploited not only the natural resources of its colonies, but also its people, recruiting them from colonies such as India for the British army.[30]

No One Sleeps in Alexandria uses the Indian soldiers and others in Alexandria to demonstrate how colonization dehumanizes the colonized. For instance, William, the Alexandrian resident, wonders about the loyalty of the Indian soldiers, who seem more British than the British themselves. William recognizes that the British colonized their land and forced the colonized people to fight so that they can colonize more lands: "I wanted to tell him [the Indian soldier] that Gandhi was starving himself to death so that people like him would become real human beings, not lackeys to the English" (43).

Another depiction of the social deterioration happens at night. Every night in Alexandria, carriages take the prostitutes, who are "native as well as Greek, Jewish, Armenian" (47) to the soldiers at the harbour. On cold nights, however, when streets are

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[30] During the British occupation of India, the heads of the Indian army were British officers, and the army itself was called the British Indian Army. In "Military Loyalty in the Colonial Context: A Case Study of the Indian Army during World War II," Kaushik Roy notes that that the Indian army surpassed the British army in its tactics and organization in the battlefield in North Africa, which accounted for Britain's heavy dependence on the Indian Army in Egypt. Roy further points out that in addition to their skills in warfare, Indian soldiers were loyal to the British officers.

empty, people stay at home, and electricity goes off frequently, the rates of robberies and murders increase (94). The city is full of "taverns" marked by class discrimination, with "rich ones in the corniche and poor in the alleys" (47), the latter frequented by soldiers from Australia, New Zealand, and India. There were also nightclubs featuring immodest women entertaining the soldiers, and female singers and belly dancers performing for the pashas and for the rich (162). The behaviour of the drunken soldiers every night, including "harassing girls … and sometimes even kidnapping them" (177), became a nuisance, and even a threat, to the Alexandrians. During the war, the European soldiers would spend their nights in the taverns, surrounded by women, while poor Egyptian men such as Magd al-Din and Dimyan spent their days looking for jobs.

No One Sleeps in Alexandria traces the severe economic and social problems Alexandria faced in the second year of the war: the cotton industry declined even as commodity prices increased, and Ramadan came with no celebrations or public lights, but only one banquet offering free Iftar for the poor. Prices of essential items such as flour, oil, and fuels were raised, leading to complaints that "everything is going sky high" (42). The situation seemed to be out of the control of the government, which claimed to be too busy to deal with it (77). The city became a target of bombardments, resulting in people fleeing to rural areas. Magd al-Din sends his wife and daughter back to his village to escape the threat of war. Another consequence of the war that *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* addresses is the increase in unemployment. Magd al-Din and Dimyan are in desperate need of money to support their families, and after spending much time looking for work, they are forced into working on the railroad in Al-Alamein and are separated from their families as a result.

Social and religious festivals, such as "the Prophet's birthday" (106), Ramadan, and Mawlid, as well as Easter and Christmas, would pass without public celebrations; instead, people would buy sweets and dolls and stay at home listening to the Quran (106). In contrast

to the religious festivals, royal ceremonies such as Coronation Day and royal birthdays were lavishly celebrated: the cities would be lit up for days, "literary festivals were held, music played in the streets, and free restaurants opened for the people" (305). The monarchy is presented as a separate entity within the nation that does not care about the social and political situations of the nation as a whole.

The new year began with no celebrations because people spent New Year's Eve in shelters (175). They could not believe or understand what was happening to them or to their city, and their lives felt like a "movie reel" (302). The Axis targeting the European and the Egyptian quarters in Alexandria led to "a mass exodus" (259) as it "seem[ed] like Germany had decided to destroy the city" (258). The city became an "inferno that consumes its people" (258), with many "single women and girls and homeless children" (258) left behind. Many Alexandrians were killed, wounded, and displaced (261), and those who survived suffered from panic, loss, and deep grief (258). The Egyptians would never forget the terror they lived through during the aerial bombardment, the loved ones they lost, the horrifying sounds they heard, and the time they spent homeless. The days of the Second World War were "the days of the 'great emigration,' an unforgettable event in Alexandria that people would later use as a landmark to date events in their lives" (176).

No One Sleeps in Alexandria argues that the Egyptian government did not respond seriously to the situation of the war until the Axis forces reached Al-Alamein. At that time some precautions were declared: swimming and fishing were banned at the western harbour, the resort at Marsa Matrouh was closed for the summer, officials in the army were not allowed to get married, and shelters for the public were prepared (109). Many foreign professional entertainers were deported on suspicion of being spies (110), while many families were evacuated to the countryside and gas masks were distributed (113). A statue of

Mustafa Kamil, a nationalist figure, was unveiled as a sign of patriotism and a fuel of national spirit and a symbol of hope for independence (109).

The novel's reference to Kamil is a significant marker of the Egyptians' long history of foreign resistance. Kamil, as Cooper states, "is remembered as the man who first inspired the Egyptians to fight for independence, and persuade them it was possible" (13). In "Mustafa Kamil wa-Mawaqifh al-Watanīah," Khalil AlMashhadani and Marwan AlShamari discuss some of Kamil's achievements in colonial resistance, such as the denunciation of the Dinshawy[31] incident and its consequences. Kamil's criticism of Cromer's policy in Egypt and the British responsibility for the Dinshawy incident was published in both British and Egyptian newspapers. As a result, anti-imperialist officials in the British parliament supported Kamil's stance against Cromer and the imperial enterprise in Egypt, which became one of the reasons for Cromer's resignation (69-74).

In addition to the historical figures of modern Egypt, *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* also refers to an important historical place, Al-Alamein, which became a significant setting for many other literary works. In 1942, Al-Alamein was the site of the most famous battle between the Allies, led by Bernard Montgomery, and the Axis, under the leadership of Rommel, advancing from Libya. A great number of British troops from different colonies landed in Egypt to fight the Italians and the Germans.

At the beginning of the war, the Egyptian government took a neutral position. The Al-Alamein battle was crucial for both parties because the outcome of this battle decided the ultimate victor of the war. Under the fear of Egyptian coalition with the Axis, the British government forced King Farouk, under threat of deposition, to appoint Mustafa Nahhas, who signed the 1936 Treaty, as Prime Minister. Nahhas returned and formed a government that showed support for Britain. Consequently, many Egyptian officers were humiliated by the

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[31] The story of Dinshawy is narrated earlier in Haqqi's *Adhra' Dinshāwy.*

British, and many, including General Muhammad Naguib, Nasser, and Sadat, resigned from their posts (Goldschmidt 87). Goldschmidt argues, however, that despite this, many Egyptians benefited from the war, as "[t]he presence of Allied troops and support personnel created additional demand for Egyptian-made goods and services. More than 200,000 Egyptians found jobs with the Allied forces. The entertainment industry throve" (87). Although Goldschmidt does acknowledge that the war did provide jobs and economic benefits, he does not account for the nature of those jobs or the treatment of Egyptian employees.

After ten days, Rommel and his army were defeated. However, despite its significance for both the British and the Egyptians, the fear and insecurity wrought by the Al-Alamein battle severely affected living conditions in Egypt. For the British, the battle marked the victory of the British army and hence the return of the British imperial power, which was about to collapse. For the Egyptians, Al-Alamein was a battle in which they had been forced to fight and which threw the city into chaos.

For its importance in shaping the history of the twentieth century, the Al-Alamein battle was immortalized in literature, though depictions of the battle varied according to the writer's affiliation. For instance, in *The Levant Trilogy*, Olivia Manning depicts the British soldiers as heroic fighters who sacrificed themselves to save the world from brutal leaders such as Rommel; they fought not just for themselves, but for humanity as a whole. In the *Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell marginalized Al-Alamein, and simply referred to the British victory as though it were normal and expected.

Drifting Cities (1974) and *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*, by contrast, provide very different accounts of the battle. *Drifting Cities,* by Greek writer Tsírkas Stratís,[32] depicted the

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[32] Tsírkas Stratís (1911-1980) was born in Cairo and was a friend of Cavafy. His *Drifting Cities* is a trilogy consisting of (*The Club*), set in Jerusalem; (*Ariagne*) in Cairo; and (*The*

British commanders as planners of the battle and suppliers of the weapons, with the Greek soldiers as the fighters. Further, it represented the abuse, humiliation and imprisonment the Greek soldiers received from the British commanders (569). For instance, when Germany invaded Greece, the Greeks allied with the British to help them free their land from the Germans. Consequently, Greek soldiers were involved in Al-Alamein, fighting alongside the British and other groups, with the intent of being an independent unit. However, they were deceived and were forced to fight on the front lines while the British positioned themselves as commanders.

In *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*, Abdul Meguid provides an extensive and realistic account of the dehumanization experienced by the Egyptians who worked in the tramways in Al-Alamein. His representation of Magd al-Din's and Dimyan's experience as workers in Al-Alamein can be read as a response to Goldschmidt's claim that the presence of Allied troops in Al-Alamein was profitable to Egypt and as a writing back to Durrell's marginalization of the suffering of the Egyptians. Through the experiences of Hamza, Magd al-Din and Dimyan at the battlefield, Abdul Meguid responds to Durrell's claim of the importance of British existence as a power of stabilization and security. The realistic portrayals of characters such as Hamza, Dimyan, and Magd al-Din undermine Durrell's orientalist representation of the war.

Al-Alamein under British control is a colonial space in which the Egyptians experience trauma, humiliation, and oppression both on the battlefield and by the British authority. All of which is seen in the novel through the eyes of subaltern characters such as Magd al-Din, Dimyan, and their co-worker Hamza, a naïve and good-hearted Egyptian who experienced the war closely and spent several days in the field between service and arrest.

Bat) in Alexandria. The trilogy is set during the Second World War and follows its Greek protagonist, Manos, during the Greek resistance in these three cities.

Al-Alamein's tramway was used to transport British soldiers and supply the Allied forces with commodities and weapons. Poor Egyptians such as Magd al-Din and Dimyan were unable to find any jobs other than on the railway, where they worked as manual labourers for the British army, leaving their families and children with no financial support. Magd al-Din and Dimyan work with other Egyptians, and they see trains used to transport weapons and English, Australian, Indian and African soldiers between different battlefields, or to bring in Italian soldiers as prisoners: "[t]he weapons come from Suez and from the harbor in Alexandria, and the soldiers come from all over the world" (156).

Hamza narrates his experience with the British army to Magd al-Din and Dimyan when he is found in the desert. He worked in the kitchen, serving food to the soldiers and washing dishes. He was very close to the battlefield and could see the fight:

> I was always in the rear of the English lines, but I saw hell more than once, because sometimes they pushed me up to the front with the supply team. Yes, what is hell? Isn't it fire? You know, Sheikh Magd al-Din, I think those foreigners are actually from hell. They have hearts of iron, and every day they drop a trainful of bombs on each other. Oh God? Do you think we Egyptians could ever fight like that? We are a kind people, and we cry a lot. If we got into a war and the enemy confronted us with a sad song, we would cry and get out of the way. (327)

While crying, he continues:

> War is very bad, Sheikh Magd. I've seen many soldiers get their heads blown off as they stood behind the guns. I've seen guns blown to bits in the air. I've seen soldiers suddenly go crazy and run and scream as if possessed by demons and jump up and down. Their comrades would tie them up and give them injections that put them to sleep. (327)

Hamza's experience at the hands of the British army was an example of the British treatment of the Egyptians in general. His dirty appearance and sudden laughs and cries demonstrate how much he is traumatized, and he is unable to comprehend the violence and brutality he has seen on the battlefield, which he claims the Egyptians are incapable of.

Magd al-Din's and Dimyan's experiences were more tragic than Hamza's. They notice that the workers, including Egyptians, were forced to show respect and obedience to the soldiers. One day while Magd al-Din and Dimyan are working, their fellow workers respond to a train full of English soldiers by waving and shouting, "Hello! Welcome! English is good. German is no good. Churchill is right. Hitler no right" (155). The soldiers reply by throwing cookies, chocolate, cheddar cheese, tea, and cigarettes to the workers. Magd al-Din observes the progress of the war, the supplies and weapons coming through the Suez Canal, and the invasion of thousands of soldiers through the harbour, and characterizes the war as "Judgement Day" (156).

Magd al-Din and Dimyan work together, watching the horror of the war around them and in the faces of the soldiers. They become shelters for each other, supporting each other with prayers and verses from both the Quran and the Bible. When the bombardment becomes unbearable, they leave on a train, and when Dimyan leaves the coach where Magd al-Din is, as though heading toward his fate, "[t]he light of the bombs entered the train car, which was already lit by a faint moonlight. The train swayed more violently than ever. A crash was heard, then something heavy being dragged on the ground and hitting against the crossties and the tracks" (342). Magd al-Din screams for Dimyan but receives no reply. When the train stops, Magd al-Din looks for Dimyan and discovers that the last coach has been hit:

> Nothing else was there but the fire, "Dimyan!" he [Magd Al-Din] shouted, but then he saw him rising in his golden hand a long golden lance, riding a golden horse and transfixing the heads of the fire-spewing dragons, […]. "Dimyan!"

The golden flame now diminished into a dot, which finally vanished, then the

dark prevailed. The train had gone quite a distance without Magd al-Din

noticing it. He sat down on the nearest seat, sweat pouring from his skin as if a

fire were burning in his chest. He stretched out on the seat and took off his

shoes, leaning against the wall of the train car, realizing for the first time that

he had became an orphan. (343)

Dimyan and Magd al-Din were only two examples of many like them, who left their families

and homes in search of work and respectable lives, only to encounter death. This scene serves

as a counterpoint to the romantic interlude Durrell describes in the *Alexandria Quartet,*

reminding readers that the Egyptians were facing death and destruction while British citizens

made love to the sound of air raids.

Despite the tragic political and social effects of the war, *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*

represents the resistance and resilience of the Alexandrians as they recall Sa'ad Zaghloul's

speeches during the 1919 revolution, such as "Wait for the surprise … No despair with life"

(87), and use them to support each other. The Egyptians' strong faith, especially among poor

people who have been humiliated by their superiors, becomes their "secret power" (311) that

enables them to survive and resist injustice, so that "life went on as usual" (47) even during

the war. People would still go to the cinemas, attend theatre performances, and fill the

casinos. Alexandrian society is represented in the novel as one big family consisting of

members of different nationalities who support each other. When Italy invaded Greece, for

instance, the Alexandrians felt sorry for their Greek neighbours and tried to stay united to

support the Greeks, who "continued to be optimistic" (161).

Though Abdul Meguid devotes much of his novel to describing the ferocity of the

war, he also documents the city's resistance and survival. Abdul Meguid's Alexandria is a

city that refuses to die, and is sustained by the love of its people. As the British victory

approaches, Alexandria's lights are turned on in celebration, and the streets are filled with life, happiness, and joy: "the weather conditions changed, giving the city a new, endless phosphorescent ceiling" (351), shops and coffeehouses were reopened (351, and people shouted "Dance, Alexandria, dance—Hitler has no chance" (352). After years of war, injustice, darkness, and the loss of many of its people, "the white city with a blue sea would revive the spirits of its people" (354). The rain pours heavily over the city for days, washing the fear away and cleaning the smell of blood from the city (354). With the lights on all day and all night, Alexandria becomes "a city of silver with veins of gold" (354).

The Copt/Muslim Relationship

No One Sleeps in Alexandria is both a wartime novel and a novel about the relationships between the two religious groups that make up the majority of the Egyptian population: Muslims and Copts. *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* depicts examples of friendship and coexistence between Egyptian Muslims and Copts in order to write back to Western colonial discourses, such as those in the *Alexandria Quartet,* that portray the Copts as oppressed by the Muslims, and that were intended in part to destabilize the unity of Egyptian society and inflame internal religious debates.

The word *Copt*, or '*gibt*' in Arabic, derives from the Greek word *aigyptios*, which means "the original inhabitants of the country" (Gregorius 3). The Copts are believed to be "the direct descendants of the Old Egyptians" (Gregorius 1). They constitute around 10% of the Egyptian population. Like the rest of the population, Copts should not be lumped together under one broad umbrella because social status and educational differences are part of the fabric of Egypt's class society. The nature of the Copt/Muslim relationship in Egypt is debatable, with different accounts of the condition of the Copts under Arabic rule. In "Copts in Egyptian History Textbooks: Towards an Integrated Framework for Analyzing Minority Representations," Ehaab Abdou notes that Copts and Muslims had enjoyed a history of

tolerance and fairness for much of their history since the Arab conquest, with the exception of the Fatimid ruler al-Hakim, who was "unjust toward the Egyptian people in general, but who has more specifically persecuted Christians and Jews" (13). However, J.D. Pennington asserts that in the ninth century, Muslim leaders discriminated against and oppressed the Copts; for instance, Copts had to "wear distinctive clothing" (158) to be easily identified. Similarly, in *Stranger in Their Land*, Shawky Karas points out that the Copts are the real Egyptians, who have become strangers in their own land after the Arab invasion (7).

In Modern Egypt, many critics have examined the creeds issued by Muhammad Ali with the intent of improving the Copts' social position. Pennington notes that Muslim discrimination against the Copts ended in the nineteenth century during Muhammad Ali's rule, as the Copts enjoyed "prosperity and progress" (160) and were employed in governmental sectors and allowed to enrol in the army. In *Christians Versus Muslims in Modern Egypt*, S.S. Hasan documents the opportunities that Muhammad Ali's modernization projects provided for the Copts. For instance, their proficiency in accounting qualified them for economic positions (33). Hasan argues that Muhammad Ali's politics lessened the sectarian prejudice between Muslims and Copts and relaxed "restrictions on [the Copts'] behaviour and dress" (34); even so, resentment still existed. In 1856, during Muhammad Ali's reign, the *Hamayouni Decree,* meant to diminish discrimination and provide equality between Muslims and non-Muslims, guaranteed freedom of religion, equality in employment and military services, and elimination of any implication of religious discrimination in government sectors (Ibrahim et al. 11). Furthermore, Ismail Pasha continued his grandfather's policy toward the Copts by "[giving] financial support to the Coptic schools, … appoint[ing] Coptic judges in the Courts[, and] … [granting] Copts the right to become members in the first Egyptian parliament Majlis Shura Al-Nuwwab" (El-Feki 26). Religious, official, and secular voices in Egypt insisted that the Egyptian identity was based on soil

rather than on religion. Therefore, the Copts and government officials in Egypt have avoided using the term "minority" (Sedra 219) because of its negative connotations.

Egyptian Muslims and Copts share similar cultural norms and traditions, which together comprise what is generally labelled as Egyptian culture, despite practicing different religions, as Vatikotis notes:

> Copts' social life [is] regulated by local customs and traditions that are equally acceptable to Muslims. Their manner, language and assimilated practices are hardly distinguishable from those of Muslim Egyptians. Although Copts worship in a church instead of in a mosque, they shared for a long time with all other Egyptians a basic conservatism, including the seclusion of women, circumcision, marriage and funeral ceremonial practices, customary rules and practices regulating inheritance, and so on. (207)

Religion was the only thing distinguishing Muslims from Copts; they shared an identity as Egyptians rather than identifying specifically with their religions.

The tolerance in Muhammad Ali's and Ismail Pasha's reign did not last long in the face of foreign intervention. British colonization had negative effects on the Copt/Muslim relationship by inflaming within the Copts the concept of themselves as the true Egyptian descendants and the Muslims as their oppressors. Sir Eldon Gorst, a consul general in Egypt who replaced Cromer, triggered sectarian tension during the British colonial period by reducing the number of Copts who held key positions in the government. Siddiq asserts, citing the case of *Adhrā' Dinshawāy* as an example, that colonialism set the groundwork for the Copt/Muslim crisis in Egypt: "[m]uch of the sectarian strife that has been gnawing at the Egyptian national unity in recent years harks back to these colonialist policies and practices" (12). Indeed, Egypt's first religious conflicts occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the assassination of Prime Minister Butros Ghali in 1910 by a young nationalist

one such incident that aggravated tensions between the Muslims and the Copts. Aside from inflaming such conflicts, the British presence in Egypt made little difference in the political and social lives of the Copts. Hasan asserts that "[i]n truth, the Copts got little support from the British in achieving their aims, and Coptic expectations for special treatment at the hands of their fellow Christians were disappointed" (35); furthermore, the British officials did not see the potential of the minority Copts for administrative positions.

Nevertheless, the 1919 revolution helped to unite the Copts and the Muslims against their common enemy and subdued the sectarian strife between them. The role of the Copts in 1919 was significant, as they demonstrated against the British occupation as Egyptians rather than as representatives of their religion: "the Copts have always been deeply rooted in their native country, and have at all times fiercely resisted any form of colonialism" (Gregorius 6); similarly, "Coptic participation in the 1919 Revolution has established their role in building the civil national state" (Ibrahim et al. 12). The Copts were an integral part of Egyptian society and they played invaluable roles against the British intervention both inside and outside Egypt, as they were among the demonstrators and the coordinators of the 1919 revolution. Sa'ad Zaghloul, president of the Wafd party, gave the Copts central roles in his party in order to enable them to defend their rights: "[t]he Wafd made the unity and equality of all Egyptians, Muslim and Christian, a main element in its programme" (Pennington 161). Abroad, two Coptic Wafd members who spoke both English and French led a delegation to Paris and America to protest British hegemony. Within Egypt, Copts held important positions, improved the community, earned the trust of the government and the population, and made great advances in science and literature. Consequently, it was important to highlight these roles educationally to enhance harmony and coexistence and to promote national unity between Muslims and Copts. School textbooks reprinted drawings from the

1919 revolution that showed Muslim and Coptic religious men standing beside each other facing the British colonizers (Abdou 16).

In 1952, the Copts welcomed the revolution as an enhancement of Egyptian unity. The Free Officers treated the Copts fairly and equally, but some economic and educational reforms negatively affected the Copts and indirectly inflamed some tension between them and the Muslims. Equality in employment led to a loss of privileged proficiency in certain fields, and religious education prompted separation between Muslim and Coptic students (Ibrahim et al. 15).

In literature, Western representations of Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s, such as the *Alexandria Quartet,* focused on Muslims and Copts and emphasized social and political inequality in order to incite sectarian tension. In Egypt, Siddiq notes that Copts, as characters, were largely overlooked in Egyptian fiction produced before 1970, as Egyptian writers of that time were more concerned with resisting foreign intervention and promoting national unity. He excludes the works of al-Kharrat as well as Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy,* which did feature Coptic characters. In the 1990s and onwards, the Copts were increasingly represented in Egyptian literature in order to counterbalance these Western representations. Some of these works include Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* and Al-Kharrat's *City of Saffron*, which serve as useful comparisons to *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* because of their respective depictions of the Copt/Muslim relationship in the first half of the twentieth century.

Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy* and Al-Kharrat's *City of Saffron* both examine the Copt/Muslim relationship between the 1919 revolution and the end of the Second World War. Where Abdul Meguid and Mahfouz use realist narrative forms to represent this relationship, Al-Kharrat uses a modernist narrative form to present a somewhat idealized image. Mahfouz depicts the Copt/Muslim relationship from a political perspective with intellectuals questioning the destiny of the Copts under the new political changes in Cairo,

whereas Al-Kharrat and Abdul Meguid focus on the social side of the relationship in Alexandria. Abdul Meguid's representation of the Copt/Muslim relationship is more realistic than Al-Kharrat's, but is not as harsh as Mahfouz's; it demonstrates that politics has less of an effect on religious coexistence and tolerance in Alexandria than in Cairo.

In the *Cairo Trilogy*, Mahfouz represented the Copt/Muslim relationship as it existed in Cairo in the 1940s; however, the relationship as outlined in the novels seems complicated and contrary both to the 1919 revolution and to Zaghloul's time. Mahfouz's protagonist Riyad Qaldas, who appears in the third volume *Sugar Street* and has an Arabic name, serves as a representative voice of the Copts. Qaldas, who holds a respectable job as a translator at the Ministry of Education, claims that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Copts identified as Egyptians regardless of religion and participated in anti-colonial demonstrations because they believed in the unity of their nation and in Zaghloul's slogan "Religion belongs to God and the country belongs to everyone." According to Qaldas, all the Copts were *wafdīūn* (Wafd supporters) because the Wafd is "not a religious party … but rather the party of a nationalism that makes Egypt a free homeland for all Egyptians, regardless of ethnicity or religion" (*Sugar Street* 148).

However, in the 1940s, political changes brought about changes in the Copts' situation. Qaldas expresses his worries about the Copts when the Wafd party was not the majority in parliament. Historically, in the new government under Ismail Sidqi, Copts experienced some oppression, and their Egyptian identity was threatened as they were suspected of disloyalty to the new regime; Mahfouz represented that change from the point of view of Qaldas, especially in a conversation with Kamal, a Muslim character, that raises the concern of the status of non-Muslim minorities in the new political regime. Qaldas summarizes the relationship as a "legacy of suspicion and animosity" (*Sugar Street* 178), and states that Copts considered "Christianity [their] homeland, not [their] faith" (*Sugar Street*

176), so that they would refer to themselves as Copts rather than as Egyptians. For Mahfouz, Qaldas and other Copts were more concerned about the government's policy against them than about the Muslim-majority society as a whole. The continuation of the friendship between Qaldas and Kamal was an example of coexistence between Copts and Muslims as a social norm that not even politics could change. It also serves as a refutation of Durrell's claim of Muslim oppression against the Copts. In addition, the Copt/Muslim issue is not a significant public concern in the *Sugar Street*, demonstrating that the unity and coexistence between Muslims and Copts were stronger than some political practices which did not last.

Al-Kharrat, a Coptic writer, takes a different approach to the Copt/Muslim relationship from Mahfouz. In an interview published in "The Mashriq," Al-Kharrat explains his use of the modernist style as a replacement for realism; he sees realism as a mimicry of reality, and modernism as a redefinition of reality and creation of a "poetic reality" (188-89). Al-Kharrat's idealistic representation of Alexandria and the Copt/Muslim relationship can also be regarded as a "corrective" (Starr 49) image to Durrell's distortion, though a different one from that of Mahfouz.

In *City of Saffron*, Al-Kharrat constructs a fictional world in which Copts and Muslims live in harmony. His character Mikhael is a representative of the Copts, their religion and culture, and Alexandrian society in general, as discussed earlier in the chapter. Through the memories of Mikhael, Al-Kharrat creates an idealized portrait that may be an expression of his desire for such a harmonious relationship to be true. Azza Kararah claims that Al-Kharrat depicts Alexandria as "a lifelong dream" (309), a fanciful utopia, which is expressed in Mikhael's happy memories of coexistence and tolerance. Al-Kharrat's representations of the Copts in *City of Saffron* are very much influenced by his personal experience. In an interview for *Banipal: Magazine for Modern Arab Literature* published in 1999, Al-Kharrat says of his experience as a Copt:

I was born into a Christian family, and although you might think we were a minority, it was not in the sense people might understand it today, because Egyptian Copts have never looked upon themselves as a minority, as indeed they are not. Minorities are in a certain sense outsiders, but the Copts themselves are the original inhabitants of Egypt. (n/p)

Al-Kharrat's portrayal of the Copts in his novel mirrors his comments about the government ban on the word "minority" due to its discriminatory implications, as discussed earlier. In *City of Saffron*, Mikhael and his family and the other Coptic families are not portrayed as a minority, nor are the Muslims depicted as the majority; however, both are represented as integral parts of the Alexandrian structure. Further, Mikhael's family, as a representative Coptic family, do not suffer discrimination or oppression; they enjoy civil rights similar to the Muslims and hold high posts in governmental sectors. For example, Mikhael's mother's uncle is "a very big government official, and a member of the Religious Court of Justice" (21).

City of Saffron includes Mikhael's proud descriptions of various Coptic traditions, including food preparation, clothing, festivals, and religious rituals. Mikhael remembers his childhood days when Muslims and Copts treated each other equally, especially during special religious occasions when Muslims and Copts shared their celebrations with neighbours by distributing special food, and with it love and warm wishes:

She [Mikhael's mother] sent some of [angel] pastries, on big, flat, white-china plate decorated with blue flowers, to all her neighbours and beloved women friends –Umm Mahmud and Umm Hasan and Umm Toto, and my maternal uncle Hanna and my maternal aunt Labiba. The Muslims among her neighbours and bosom-friends would return the compliment at Ashura with special Ashura dishes; and at Ramadan, they sent round jugs of *khushaf*. We

exchanged plates of *ka'k* and biscuits and *ghurrayba* and crisp milk crackers,

at the feasts of Easter and Adha and Christmas and Fitr: plates covered with

ironed tea-towels, checked or white. (87)

The joyful Ramadan celebrations and other such fond images of coexistence persist in

Mikhael's memory, and he describes them with tenderness: "I [Mikhael] used to go round

with […] other children, Copts and Muslims, to the neighbours' houses during the nights of

Ramadan. We all carried Ramadan lanterns, and we were given almonds and mixed shell nuts

at the door of every house" (120-21).

The Coptic tradition Mikhael recounts and represents does not differ significantly

from the Muslim tradition, and both are seen as important to Egyptian culture. Mikhael

knows the Muslim festivals and the names of dishes and drinks prepared for each festival,

illustrating the intertwined history and culture of Muslims and Copts, which together form

Egyptian culture as a whole, in contrast to Durrell's representation of the Copts as a minority

who are regarded as outsiders and foreigners.

Al-Kharrat also demonstrates the importance of religions and their teachings in

strengthening relationships and reinforcing unity. For instance, Mikhael remembers his

Coptic mother's religious discussions with their Muslim neighbour Sitt Wahiba, which

displayed mutual respect and understanding between the two, and ended peacefully with a

farewell kiss: "[Sitt Wahiba] would sometimes tell my mother that their Prophet had

entrusted us to them, and that our prophet Jesus was also an Apostle of God, like Moses and

Abraham" (3-4). This statement emphasizes the lack of conflict in the teachings of both

religions, as Prophet Muhammad recommended that Muslims treat the Copts of Egypt well.

Similarly, Mikhael remembers that Muslim and Copt students attended the same school and

were treated equally. He has both Muslim and Coptic friends, with whom he spends time

both in and out of school. Although Copts and Muslims have different religious practices and

traditions, in Al-Kharrat's novels they celebrate those traditions together, as friends, in sharp contrast to the adversarial relationship Durrell depicts in his novels.

Abdul Meguid provides another realist counter to Durrell's orientalist depiction of the Copt/Muslim relationship, by showing to readers that, in contrast to Durrell's claim that the Muslims oppressed the Copts, both Muslims and Copts were being oppressed by the British colonizers. Moreover, a major theme of *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* is the unity and solidarity of the Egyptian nation, despite religious differences. Where Al-Kharrat's *City of Saffron* presented important information about Islamic teachings, *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* does the same for the Coptic religion. In so doing, Abdul Meguid reinforces Al-Kharrat's position that the essence of Islam and Christianity is the same. Siddiq argues that the presence of the Coptic calendar in *No One Sleeps in Alexandria,* which is uncommon in texts by Muslim authors, further symbolizes coexistence and diversity (151), and that "Christian beliefs and practices appear different only in form, not substance or value, from their Islamic correlates" (151). *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* points out that Copts and Muslims worship the same God but in different ways, and in troubling times both Coptic prayers and verses from the Quran blend together, ending with the same word: "Amen."

The novel features three different examples of the Copt/Muslim relationships: Magd al-Din's and Khawaga Dimitri's families, Magd al-Din and Dimyan's friendship, and Camilla and Rushdi's love story. All the characters involved in these relationships are ordinary people who express their positions freely and who through their relationships humanize Alexandria and its people for readers. Magd al-Din, a devout Muslim shiekh who has memorized the Holy Quran, rents a room in a building belonging to Khawaja Dimitri, whom Bahi reassuringly calls "a good man" (33). The Coptic family of Khawaja Dimitri, including his wife Sitt Maryam and their daughters Camilla and Yvonne, welcome and befriend the Muslim family of Magd al-Din, his wife Zahra, and their daughter. Day by day, the harmony,

mutual trust, and respect grow between the members of the two families, as Magd al-Din, Khawaja Dimitri, and Dimyan spend most of their time roaming Alexandria looking for a job for Magd al-Din. Dimitri also serves as Magd al-Din's guide to Alexandria, such that Magd al-Din tells Dimitri, "you are making me fall in love with Alexandria" (73). Zahra and Sitt Maryam enjoy their time shopping or chatting and sewing at home while Zahra's daughter accompanies Camilla and Lula.

Moving from the village to the city gives Magd al-Din the chance to closely observe the Coptic religious practices and the minimal religious differences between Coptic and Muslim traditions. Marie-Therese Abdel-Messih considers Magd al-Din's experience in Alexandria a chance to "develop new relations. In his home village, relations were restricted within a community that shares the same blood, or creed. In Alexandria, he maintains even better relations with members of other creeds" (8). I agree with Abdel-Messih and add that what is unlikely in the village seems possible and acceptable in the cosmopolitan Alexandria. In the village, Copts and Muslims are neighbours, but Zahra never remembers whether they ever eat their food; in the city, she lives among the Copts and cooks with them with little difficulty. During the Christmas season, Coptic and Muslim children play happily in the streets while Muslim families visit their Coptic neighbours to share in the celebration. The festive atmosphere reflects the tolerance and coexistence between Copts and Muslims:

> The bells of the church of Mari Girgis on Rand Street rang for the Christmas Eve mass. On the following day, Copts began celebrating Christmas. Young people went out dressed in their best, and so did the adults. The air was filled with the smell of cheap perfume, worn by people on their way to church or looking out of the windows of many houses. The joyous mood spread to young Muslim men and women, and many Muslim families went out to visit their Coptic neighbours to wish them a merry Christmas. Zahra saw Camilla,

Yvonne, and their mother—three angelic roses whose faces were filled with

joy that she had never seen before. She wished them happy returns of the day,

as Magd al-Din instructed her the day before. (100)

Despite the difference in religions, the Christmas celebration resembles the Muslim

celebration of Eid. The Christmas celebration also refutes Durrell's claim that the Copts are

oppressed: if that were true, they would not be given time off from work, they would be

unable to practice their religious traditions openly, and the Muslims would not celebrate with

them.

An example of the Copts' perception of their status in Egypt can be seen in a

conversation between Magd al-Din and Dimitri, in which Magd al-Din states that "[t]here's

always strife between different communities" (103), but Dimitri assures him that the

Government suppresses such strife by working according to Zaghloul's nationalist slogan

"Religion belongs to God, and the country belongs to everyone" (103). Dimitri negates any

discrimination or oppression practiced against them from the government, and instead praises

the government's commitment to the unity of the nation, belying Durrell's claims that the

Egyptian government was oppressive toward the Copts.

The friendship between Zahra and Sitt Maryam provides a further contrast to

Durrell's orientalist representation of Egyptian women. The Muslim Zahra and the Coptic

Sitt Maryam are responsible mothers, loyal to their husbands, and respected in their societies;

they play important roles in the domestic issues of the family and enjoy freedom of

movement in public spaces. Sitt Maryam treats Zahra as her daughter, giving her cosmetics

and teaching her how to be smart for her husband: "You're still young, so why not do this for

Magd al-Din" (107). Zahra and Sitt Maryam go shopping, sightseeing around the city, and

chatting with shopkeepers, showing mutual respect to one another and to the people they

meet. The respect they receive from people on the street and from their husbands is not

reflective of Durrell's image of Eastern women as sexual objects whose freedom is restricted by social and religious traditions.

Through their friendship and their individual experiences, Magd al-Din and Dimyan discover the essence of their religions and the possibility of Copt/Muslim mutual understanding. Their friendship epitomizes the possibility of homogeneity, coexistence, and mutual respect between Copts and Muslims. According to Abdel-Messih, "Magd al-Din and his co-worker Dimyan belong to different creeds but develop a staunch friendship" (8) and their "difference creates even more opportunities for sharing" (8).

Magd al-Din's and Dimyan's work on the railway together becomes a journey of survival and self-discovery. They work during the daytime and spend their nights discussing religious and political subjects and reciting verses from the Bible and Quran, with the insertion of verses from both holy books into the narrative epitomizing the innovation in the Egyptian realist technique of the 1990s that Redwan discusses. They both recall the 1919 revolution and praise its leader Sa'ad Zaghloul for his, and the country's, belief in cultural and religious pluralism. Away from external influences, they support each other in religious practices, share their thoughts and fears, discover each other's human sides, and embrace their differences. Just as the war united Egyptian Christians and Muslims, the coincidences of Christian and Muslim holidays form opportunities for reassuring solidarity and unity. Magd al-Din and Dimyan also regard their experience of working in the desert as a chance to practice new things that would bring them together. Their experience of fasting for Christmas and for Ramadan is an example of Abdel-Messih's claim that "difference creates even more opportunities for sharing":

> "It's my turn to fast with you, Sheikh Magd," Dimyan told his friend.
>
> Magd al-Din was too surprised to reply.
>
> "Don't you believe me? I'll fast the whole month with you,"

> "Our fast is a difficult one. We have to abstain from food and drink all day
>
> long."
>
> "That's better than each of us eating alone in the desert," Dimyan replied
>
> immediately. (278)

Through the details of Magd al-Din's and Dimyan's friendship, *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*

demonstrates how Muslims and Copts are ready and willing to integrate and form a

homogeneous society. However, this dream remains unfulfilled because of the existence of

the colonizers who stir up tension and cause losses among loved ones, such as the death of

Dimyan, which symbolically marks the end of the harmonious relationship between Copt and

Muslim. At the moment the train is bombed and Dimyan's soul ascends to heaven like an

angel, Qur'anic verses "intersected" with those of New Testament to illustrate the novel's

theme that religions "bring people together rather than divide them" (Muwafi 16).

The third and most critical example of Muslim/Copt relationships in Abdul Meguid's

novel is that between the Coptic Camilla and the Muslim Rushdi, who, because they belong

to different religions, are forbidden from marrying. Camilla's and Rushdi's love allows

Abdul Meguid to touch upon the issue of Copt/Muslim marriage and express the Copts'

concerns about the consequences of a Christian woman marrying a Muslim man. He notes

that although these groups were neighbours who often celebrated religious and cultural

festivals together, they regarded intermarriage as virtually impossible. Mansel points out that

because intermarriage between Muslims and Copts was prohibited (130), Copt and Muslim

families would even cut ties to each other in order to avoid the possibility of such a marriage.

Similarly, Siddiq considers the consequences of love between Muslim and Copt as fatal as

the war itself, stating that "practically all the families in the novel are torn asunder, either by

the war or by the impossible love affair between (Muslim) Rushdi and (Christian) Camilla"

(78). Camilla's and Rushdi's relationship risks disrupting the friendship and mutual trust

between Magd al-Din and Khawaja Dimitri. Dimitri's family opposes marriage to a Muslim for fear that their daughter would convert to Islam and then cut her ties with the family:

> How could I beget my daughter, raise her, and then have some young man just come and take her and cut off all her relations with us? When a girl gets married, of course it deprives her of her family's kindness, and deprives her family of her tenderness. So can you imagine if she's married to someone from a different religion? How can anyone ask me to be deprived of my daughter forever, Shiekh Magd? (222)

As a precaution, the Christian family would cut off relations with the Muslim family, to the extent of moving elsewhere. However, Magd al-Din promises Dimitri that he will solve the situation by convincing Rushdi to forget his love and respect the limits of their religions. As a result, Camilla is sent to a nunnery and Rushdi suffers from a broken heart. Although the novel presents both the Coptic and the Muslim positions on the question of intermarriage, it ends with no decisive solution, and instead shows that respecting the limits of both religions is the only way to maintain the unity and coexistence between these different groups.

Abdul Meguid's *Birds of Amber*

Birds of Amber, which is considered a sequel to *No One Sleeps in Alexandria*, is a realist representation of Alexandria in the 1950s, particularly the foreigners' departure for fear of expulsion. It "map[s] the physical, social, and demographic shifts the city undergoes in the period between the 1956 Suez conflict and the sweeping nationalizations of industries that began in 1961" (Starr, *Remembering* 65). *Birds of Amber* takes place during the Suez War and Nasser's project to expel the fellows of the countries that attacked Egypt. The novel provides details of the beginning of the tripartite attack and the immediate reactions taken by the Egyptian government, such as taking over and nationalizing all the French and British oil companies in Egypt.

Birds of Amber's discussion of the situation of Jews in Alexandria can be seen as a response to Aciman's claim of a mass expulsion of Jews from the city. Abdul Meguid's novel depicts the coexistence of middle-class Arab/Jewish characters and presents the voices of Jews who oppose the attack and stand with Egypt. Abdul Meguid uses the polyphonic technique in *Birds of Amber* to present different views of the political, social, and even personal changes in Alexandria in the 1950s. The narrative creates a polyphonic space in which all characters, male and female, Egyptians and foreigners, can voice their views and positions towards the political changes in Egypt.

One such example of the representation of both Jewish and Egyptian perspectives is found in a conversation between a Jew called Rachel and the novel's Egyptian protagonist, Arabi. Rachel explains to Arabi that "Alexandria is our home just as it is home to Muslims and Christians. Now Israel is making people hate us. We are Egyptians, Arabi. We are from here, not from Israel" (70). Arabi reflects on this, recognizing that "[o]f course they were Egyptians, but he could not do anything. Feelings against Jews were inflamed because of this war and from time to time a Jewish spy was arrested for sending signals to the English and that increased people's animosity. He knew that not all Jews were spies and not everyone was against the Jews" (Abdul, *Birds* 70). Rachel expresses her position and that of most of her fellow Jews, who consider themselves Egyptians rather than Israeli. Arabi understands Jew's position and agrees with her, but he also looks at the situation from a political viewpoint, as the possibility of Jewish spies is high and threatening.

Birds of Amber represents the elective departure of some Jews in contrast to the collective expulsion that Aciman describes. In Abdul Meguid's account, the departure of wealthy Jews from Egypt came after the Second World War, and only those Jews who were suspected of being involved in the war against Egypt and engaging in activities such as vandalism and bombing of movie theatres (98), seemingly an indirect reference to the

Susannah operation conducted by Israeli spies in public places, were specifically expelled. However, there was a mass exodus of the Jewish population after 1956, as the Jewish population as a whole feared a general punishment: "There were rumours in the air about the government's intention to confiscate the properties of the Jews and to open detention centres for them as punishment for what Israel has done" (106).

Birds of Amber represents the rise of the nationalist spirit among the Egyptians during the tripartite attack and their refusal to submit due to the sadness and fear the war would bring. Songs were sung everywhere in the city to trigger happiness and enthusiasm, such as one sung by a young girl in the street with the whole city providing the chorus:

> *And since this life is not forever*
>
> *And the Day of Judgement is coming,*
>
> *Make it sweet and enjoy it*
>
> *And do your good deeds in it.* (64)

Among the songs remembered by people and streamed through the radio were those of Sayyed Darwish, whose expressions of love and nationalism were known by young and old alike. Darwish's songs, and other popular songs referred to in the novel, are examples of Egypt's rich cultural heritage and of the Egyptians' pride about that heritage.

Conclusion

In the works of Mahfouz, Al-Kharrat and Abdul Meguid, Alexandria celebrates multiplicity and tolerates religious and ethnic diversity. These writers' cosmopolitan versions of Alexandria are characterized by openness to others and mutual respect. Mahfouz, Al-Kharrat and Abdul Meguid each represent Egyptian culture and traditions shared between different ethnic groups, and discuss social issues and political concerns faced by the Egyptians without dismissing those of Alexandria's non-Egyptian residents. These three

authors use the polyphony as a technique to present a multiplicity of voices and perspectives, unsettling Western monolithic and authoritative narrative.

Abdul Meguid's Alexandria has an extended history dating back to its Roman and Greek origins, and a modern history enabling it to compete with European cities. The city's extensive roots help to stabilize it and protect its heritage. Abdul Meguid uses the history of Alexandria to demonstrate the importance of that history in shaping the present of Alexandria, to represent the history through the eyes of the subaltern, and to rewrite what the West has marginalized. He shows the Egyptian identity of the city in order to refute Durrell's and Aciman's claims that Alexandria is part of Europe. Although *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* celebrates the cosmopolitanism of Alexandria with its different creeds and races, all the characters in the novel speak one language: Arabic. It is likely that Abdul Meguid chose to use Arabic in order to give the cosmopolitan city a distinctly Arabic Egyptian identity.

Abdul Meguid's concentration on the lives and concerns of Alexandria's lower and middle classes is not meant to reinforce class discrimination, but rather to emphasize the gap between the royal family and the general population, in order to expose the corruption of the former and to provide a realistic account of the city's class structure. *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* is distinctive in twentieth-century Egyptian literature in featuring peasant protagonists, depicting their exploitation and marginalization, and exposing their forced participation in colonial wars. The novel does not overtly compare the lives of the Alexandrians to their elite Europeanized neighbours, nor does it present any sort of friendship between colonizer and colonized. Such decisions may indicate that, for the Egyptians, independence and freedom are more important than reconciliation.

Realism in *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* responds to orientalism in different ways and offers a distinctive perspective on Egyptian culture and society, so that, in a sense, attitudes

to colonialism inform aesthetic choices and produce different forms of culture. In other words, different political cultures produce different representations of the same thing. *No One Sleeps in Alexandria* provides a realistic picture of the dehumanization of the war and of the British occupation. Abdul Meguid's representation seems to indicate that if realism is a form of humanizing, then orientalism vitiates that. Whereas Durrell and Aciman were more concerned with the decline of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria, Abdul Meguid showed that survival was the primary concern of the Egyptians.

As orientalists, Durrell and Aciman ignored the humiliation, suffering, inferiority, loss, and displacement that the Egyptians experienced under both colonialism and war; they also presented distorted images of Alexandria and its inhabitants in order to justify the existence of the colonizer. Their Alexandria is a city of tension and sectarianism. Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* also insisted on the necessity of British colonial presence for modernization, justice, and stability. As a realist, Abdul Meguid consciously wrote back to show what self-representation looks like. He focused on what Durrell and Aciman marginalize, particularly the brutality of the imperial enterprise, in order to undermine and counteract these authors' orientalist representations of Alexandria and its people.

Abdul Meguid continued the trajectory of Mahfouz, Al-Kharrat, and other Egyptian writers in writing back to the empire. Like those of Achebe, their representations were meant to prove that the Egyptians and the East as a whole are as human as the West, to resist the imposition of fabricated "us-and-them" binary oppositions with no basis in reality, and to challenge orientalist representations of the East. They sought to overturn these false norms that were used to fashion colonial discourse and justify imperial enterprise. Their focus on the British colonial period and the World Wars demonstrated that colonization dehumanizes the colonizers as much as, if not more so than, the colonized.

Conclusion

Egyptian writers such as Abdul Meguid, Mahfouz, and Al-Kharrat consciously wrote back to authors of orientalist representations of Alexandria such as Durrell and Aciman, challenging their depictions of the city and its people. All of these works were, in turn, influenced by the history of Alexandria as a cosmopolitan community, its strategic location, its role in world trade in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the Egyptian contributions to its importance. The literary voices of the British colonizer, the Alexandrian Jewish minority, and the colonized Egyptians produce different representations of Alexandria's history and cosmopolitanism, while all contributing to the city's literary and cultural traditions.

The literary nostalgic resurgence of cosmopolitan Alexandria at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century indicates the importance of that period in shaping the history of Alexandria, the lives of its inhabitants, and the world in general. The literary representations discussed here explain the importance of that period and each author's intention in using it as the historical context of his respective work. For instance, Durrell provides an orientalist view of Alexandria as part of the Western legacy that the British colonizers sought to protect, as a port city providing access to the greater world, and as a reminder that the loss of the city would mean the loss of that legacy and of advantages in world trade. To achieve this goal, he silenced the voices of the Alexandrians, representing them as deformed or irrational and their politicians as barbaric, and appointed his English characters to speak for them. Therefore, a reader of *Alexandria Quartet* would imagine that the end of British intervention in Alexandria, or Egypt as a whole, would potentially lead to chaos.

The influence of the *Alexandria Quartet* on the Western image of Alexandria in the twentieth century and onwards paralleled the influence of *The Arabian Nights* in the eighteenth century. Therefore, a study of modern literary representations of Alexandria must begin with the *Alexandria Quartet*'s portrayals of the city and its inhabitants. Durrell depicted Alexandria as a city belonging to Europe rather than to the East, and to do so he marginalized and misrepresented its Egyptian history in order to construct its cosmopolitanism as a Western product. Since for Durrell cosmopolitanism was intertwined with Western colonialism, he regarded the withdrawal of the British from Alexandria as the end of that cosmopolitanism.

Durrell could not overlook the effects of the Second World War on Alexandria due to the British presence there. However, he minimized the destruction and its effects on the natives and the city by presenting it as the backdrop to a surrealistic image of lovemaking. In this image, the colonizers build their happiness and future plans upon the colonized's sorrow and destruction, as the sounds of siren and bombardment become sounds of celebration for the cinematic moment of love.

In *Out of Egypt*, Aciman followed Durrell's model, but focused on the Jewish community as builders of Egypt's modern history and economy. By doing that, he reminds his readers that without Jewish businesses, Egypt would not be economically prosperous in the twentieth century. Hence, he presents the departure of Jews from Alexandria as a forced expulsion that marked both the end of cosmopolitanism and a denial on the part of the Egyptian government of the Jewish community's contributions to the well-being of the city.

Aciman's parochial vision was as much a distortion of the history of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria as Durrell's, if not for the same reason. His account of the rise and decline of cosmopolitanism was meant as an attack on the Nasserite project of nationalizing Egypt. However problematic the project was, Aciman saw it as the expulsion of all Jews from Egypt

and the decline of cosmopolitanism, a view that has since been proved invalid. Since the cosmopolitanism described by Durrell and Aciman was itself an imperial product, the withdrawal of the British from Egypt spelled the end of that cosmopolitanism.

Aciman's nostalgic depiction of cosmopolitan Alexandria was meant to historicize the Jewish community and to root their identity in the city, and he did so by focusing on the history of his family. Within the Jewish community Aciman describes, the natives were seen only as ugly and deformed servants, or as street vendors selling smelly foods. Outside the community, the city and its locals were almost absent from the narrative. Aciman's representation of Jews and Arabs set boundaries between them in the orientalist tradition. The Jews were depicted as rational, civilized, and disciplined people who worked with other minority communities to make the city their home, whereas the Arabs were seen as uncivilized, undisciplined, and barbaric.

Durrell's and Aciman's orientalist views limited their perceptions of the Eastern space. Both had reductionist views of history and cosmopolitanism, and their orientalist perspectives impair their credibility as observers of the city. In their anti-Muslim and anti-Arab representations, the West was characterized as the founder of cosmopolitanism and architect of history and civilization in Alexandria, while the Muslims and the Arabs were seen as the enemies of civilization who destroyed everything the West had built. Such representations also included attacks on Islam as a religion that encourages backwardness, incentivizes sectarianism, and hinders pluralism and multiplicity. Durrell and Aciman also perpetuated the idea that the Copts were the genuine Egyptian descendants and that the Muslim Arabs were the intruders who suppressed them, occupied their land, and ruled them, so that the Copts would regard the Muslim Arabs, rather than the British, as the real colonizers.

Durrell's and Aciman's representations also involved elitism of various sorts, including language, characterization, and geography. Western languages were spoken among their higher-class characters while Arabic was the language of lower-class natives Among the elite, the native language was absent, and when present at all it was degraded and considered a language of animalistic sounds. Most of the major characters were of western origins who were concerned primarily with business and money, and were located in spaces that seemed geographically disconnected from those of the natives.

Durrell's and Aciman's representations are examples of the prevalence of the orientalist discourse that existed for centuries before them. In their works, colonization and intervention of foreign powers were seen as agents of stability and prosperity that preserved culture, religion, and ethnicity, whereas nationalism was represented as a parochial monolithic power. Durrell used Lane's orientalist book as a guide to Egypt, and Aciman used Durrell's, forming a literary chain of orientalist discourse through generations and upholding the belief in colonization as the means by which the East would flourish. Durrell's and Aciman's representations crystallized the orientalist conception of the Arab world as defined primarily by Islam, albeit a distorted version marked by suppression and by thirst for sexuality.

This thesis reveals how ideologically-laden orientalism continues to inform Western representations of Egypt. Both orientalist representations and local reconfigurations are often driven by different political ideologies. Durrell's orientalist representation helps justify colonial domination whilst local writers, including Abdul Meguid, counteract foreign hegemony and call for the liberation of the land and its people.

The Egyptians have a long and rich history of literary self-representations and resistance to Western misconceptions. Despite colonization, language barriers, and restrictions to publication and translation, Egyptian writers never stopped resisting Western

misrepresentations of their nation, their history, their nationalist figures, and their people. They started this resistance early on, using their own style of writing, but their voices remained unheard. With educational envoys to the West and engagements with Western styles of writing, Egyptian writers developed their own style based on Western literary models. The establishment of domestic translation houses allowed Egyptian literature to attain international fame, and to have their voices heard and their concerns publicized. Egyptian literary resistance to western discourses aimed to break the chain of orientalist literary representations by presenting the self in different forms, such as realist narratives, that undermine and refute long-standing Western myths. Through their art, Egyptian writers express their pride in their ancient and modern history and their Arabic identity. Furthermore, Egyptian writings portrayed the vicious side of colonization that Western writers had tried to hide, and exposed its threat to Egyptian culture and to coexistence among the different ethnic groups in Egypt.

There seems to be a conspicuous lack of studies of cosmopolitanism in relation to Arabic literature. This thesis contributes to this field by presenting a comparative and cross-cultural study of cosmopolitanism in Alexandria in Arabic and English texts. It brings the voice of Arab authors to intervene in cosmopolitan studies. The Egyptian works, studied here, showed that the cosmopolitanism celebrated and lamented in Western texts was a colonial model whose privileges were exclusive to foreigners or westernized Egyptians. In its place, they represented a popular version of cosmopolitanism for middle- and working-class Alexandrians, Egyptians, and foreigners, whose main features include coexistence, openness to the other, and mutual respect. However, the sociopolitical turbulence and sectarianism triggered by the colonial presence marred that version of cosmopolitanism.

Some Arab writers, such as Mahfouz, Al-Kharrat, and Abdul Meguid, use their works to oppose orientalist ideas about Arabs in general and Muslims in particular. They

remind readers that Arab society is not only about religion but also includes history, heritage, science, and culture, all of which help to distinguish Arab from other societies as well as convey their commonalities. These Arab representations thus demonstrate that Arabs, like societies in Europe, have concerns that are not connected with religion. Their representations tend to humanize Arab society, to give voices to everyday individuals, to raise their problems and concerns, and to show their personal lives, not as haunted by sexual desire, infidelity, or oppression, but characterized by caring, respect, and loyalty. Although there are exceptions, as in any culture, orientalist writers generalize and exoticize these exceptions and apply them to all Arabs and Muslims. Arab writers acknowledge that virtues and deficiencies exist in every society. They create narratives in which everyday virtues play a key role in narrative, -- in contrast to Western stereotypes of barbaric and uncivilized Arabs.

In the twenty-first century, the Egyptians continue to uphold the spirit of resistance against Western misconceptions of Alexandria, not only in literature but in other media as well. For instance, the Egyptian TV series *Ahu Da Illī Sar*, released in 2019, is a fictional representation of life in cosmopolitan Alexandria in the first half of the twentieth century, especially during and after the Second World War, and narrated from an Egyptian point of view. The series is named after a song by Sayyed Darwish that is symbolic of Egypt's history of resistance against foreign intervention, and the reference helps to position the series as a continuation of that history. Its depictions of the lives of Alexandrians, including both elite and ordinary people, reflects the city's diverse communities. The production of the series is not only an example of Egyptian resistance against Western misconceptions, but also a construction of modern national history of Egypt.

Contemporary accounts of the history of Arab Jews in Alexandria exemplified in the Egyptian series *Harat Al-Yahoud* and in Massoud Hayoun's *When We Were Arabs* are further reflections of the importance of this minority to the history and culture of the city. They are

also attempts to present the history from the Arab side to challenge the elitist and orientalist representations of writers such as Aciman and Gormezano-Goren in which Arab Jews were absent or deliberately silenced if they were present. In these works, Egyptians and Jews of Arab origin give voices to middle- and working-class Jews, a subject that is worthy of further study.

Egyptian literature enjoys a high position in world literature and in postcolonial studies both in the Anglo academy and the Arab world. This is mainly due to the efforts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers and critics such as the ones discussed in this study. With the Arab Spring and the political upheavals of the twenty-first century, interest in Egypt and its literary history has increased. Numerous studies were produced in Europe and in North America, Egyptian writers throughout the world reacted positively to such interest, and many literary works in Arabic and English allowed the voices of Egyptians to be heard globally.

This project can serve as an inspiration for future studies of Egypt and its revolutionary history. The study of representations of Alexandria can be extended to other Alexandrian minorities such as the Greeks, who constitute the city's largest foreign minority. Such a study may discuss different Greek representations of Alexandria or compare Greek representations to those of other minorities, such as Jews or Italians, or to Egyptian representations of the Greek minority. It may also raise questions about which history, Hellenistic or modern, is focused on in Greek representations, or whether Greek writings about Alexandria present orientalist discourses similar to those of Durrell and Aciman.

One example of a controversial Greek representation of Alexandria that is worth studying is Harry Tzalas' story collection *Farewell to Alexandria*. Tzalas lived among ordinary Alexandrians, knew their concerns, and represented a popular version of cosmopolitanism that is manifested in his multilingual and multi-ethnic city and his middle-

and working-class characters. However, he positioned himself against Egyptian nationalism, which he depicted as barbaric. This can be seen, for instance, in his account of the Urabi revolution, which he reads as an analogue to the Turkish genocide of the Armenians. Despite his aforementioned characterization of Alexandria as a cosmopolitan community, Tzalas still prioritized the interests and perspectives of Europeans at the expense of the ordinary Egyptians he represented.

Another suggestion for further study is the representation of Alexandria during the 2011 revolution. Egypt played a key part in the uprisings in the Middle East that came to be known as the Arab Spring. Many previous studies have examined literary representations of the revolution and protests in Cairo, particularly in Tahrir Square. Alexandria's crucial role in Egypt's history of resistance to foreign domination raises the question of how the literary representation of Arab Spring Alexandria looks like and whether the city has a symbolic space equivalent to Tahrir Square that has received similar literary and scholarly attention. One possible candidate for such a site is Ibrahim Pasha Square, at which demonstrations were held in 2011 as part of the Arab Spring.

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