The Alexandria Quartet: Negotiating Homogeneous Society with Heterogeneous Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* is set in Alexandria, Egypt just prior to and during World War II. The first three of the four novels present similar events from differing perspectives. Durrell's Quartet is a complex web of characters that violate social norms. The violations include behaviors such as adultery, homosexuality, pederasty, and cross-dressing. This thesis uses Georges Bataille's theory of heterogeneity, excess and expenditure to examine the violations and the reactions. Some violations provoke strong reactions, such as cross-dressing, while other violations, such as deceit, are left to be dealt with by the victim. Bataille's theory helps to demonstrate how a society can exclude or accept some behavior based on an individual basis while behavior that threatens the power balance in a society, such as a plot to destabilize the government, will be punished by the society leadership.

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Chapter I:

ALEXANDRIA'S MIX OF HETEROGENEITY

Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*, which is set in World War II Alexandria, Egypt, highlights a community of Egyptian nationals, British expatriates, and foreign embassy diplomats. The first three novels, *Justine* (1957), *Balthazar* (1958), and *Mountolive* (1958), recount the same timeline from different perspectives. The fourth novel, *Clea* (1960), is a capstone to *The Quartet* where the main narrator resolves his conflicts showcased in the first three novels. Durrell foregoes a chronological approach in favor of a layered narrative. The layered narrative reveals the struggles of multiple unique personalities as they deal with class, gender, and sexuality issues in World War II Egypt.

Durrell was a British expatriate who was born in India, according to Sir Allan Ramsey, a retired British diplomat who recently wrote "Lawrence Durrell: An Appraisal" (83). Durrell never adjusted to life in England, failing to pass his university exams (85). In 1935, he convinced his family to move to Corfu, Greece where he began his writing career. Durrell and his family lived in Alexandria, Egypt during the Second World War after fleeing the Nazi invasion. He worked for the British embassy in Alexandria as a press attaché (86). Ramsey contends that this employment as well as the location stimulated "Durrell's creative imagination" (87).

The Middle Eastern and North African political and religious situation has remained volatile since the end of the Second World War into the present with the

removal of Hosni Murbarak from power in early 2011. Notably, the Muslim government is struggling to cope with international pressure over increasing violence to women while discontent inside the country continues to swirl. While parallels can be made between *The Quartet* and the current situation, this thesis will focus on a character examination in the context of the series' setting. Specifically, this thesis will examine two characters' personalities, using Georges Bataille's theory of heterogeneity. This introductory chapter will provide a brief summary of the novels in *The Quartet* for character background and plot familiarity. Additionally, it will discuss the criticism about Durrell's characters as well as how Bataille's theory will be applied in the following chapters.

In *Justine,* the first volume, an unnamed, first-person narrator teaches English and aspires to be a writer. *Justine*'s narrative chronicles this narrator's time in Alexandria and provides tidbits about his social circle and friends. The narrator introduces Justine as a Jewish Egyptian who captivates him sexually and mentally. He describes Nessim, Justine's husband, as a wealthy Christian Egyptian who wields business and political influence: "Of Nessim's outer life—those immense and boring receptions, at first devoted to business colleagues but later to become devoted to obscure political ends—I do not wish to write" (35). The narrator's live-in lover, Melissa, dances in a club and prostitutes herself to earn extra money. Balthazar, a Jewish, homosexual doctor, mentors many of the characters and provides a calming influence within the narrative. He runs the Cabal, a group that examines Jewish polytheism. Clea, a painter, interacts with members of the narrator's circle, but her status among the Alexandrians is unclear. Scobie, a British Roman Catholic, befriends both Clea and the narrator but does not associate with the rest of the narrator's circle. Scobie is a pederast who also and cross-

dresses; however it is unclear if he combines these actions. The other significant character, for my analysis, is Pursewarden, a British embassy employee and published author. He commits suicide yet remains a central figure throughout *The Quartet*. *Justine's* narrative highlights the narrator's unquestioning loyalty to Justine despite his fear that Nessim will discover their affair.

In the second novel, *Balthazar*, the same narrator now identified as Darley, provides new information. Darley sends Balthazar his manuscript, which is the *Justine* narrative, and is surprised when Balthazar personally returns it to the remote island where Darley fled. Balthazar edits the manuscript and bluntly asserts that Justine's affair with Darley was a decoy to hide her love for Pursewarden because she feared Nessim's reaction. This assertion forces Darley to question his perceptions while attempting to reconcile Balthazar's version of events to his own. Darley also learns from Balthazar that British sailors murdered Scobie because they discovered him dressed in women's clothing. *Balthazar* concludes with Darley still struggling to assimilate his view of Justine with the new information Balthazar has provided.

The third novel, *Mountolive*, reveals Justine and Nessim's larger intrigue. Partially narrated by Mountolive, a British embassy official, the text showcases the region's politics as British influence declines. Mountolive had an affair with Nessim's mother during his first Egyptian embassy posting. Soon after Mountolive returns to Egypt as the ambassador, he discovers that Nessim and Justine are shipping arms to Palestine's Jews. Nessim hopes to destabilize Muslim power in Egypt and the Middle East. Mountolive, choosing duty over his friendship with Nessim, informs the Egyptian government.

Mountolive's narrative contains only two small sections about Justine. The first one is from Pursewarden, who sends Mountolive a letter that includes accusations of Nessim's and Justine's activity to support Palestinian Jews. Pursewarden shows no romantic interest toward Justine but suggests there is more to her personality than she shows: "Is there perhaps a thundercloud brooding there behind the dark satin-eyed wife?" (Durrell, *Mountolive* 110). Later in *Mountolive*, the narrative reveals that Nessim may have married Justine to convince Palestinian Jews to trust him. The narrative point of view, starting with Chapter X shifts from Justine, Nessim, and Mountolive. Even though the narrator's identity is unclear, the second half of *Mountolive* rounds out the story behind Justine's actions.

Darley resumes narrative control in *Clea, The Quartet's* final novel. While the first three novels provide different perspectives of similar events, *Clea* constructs a new timeline in which Darley ties up loose ends from the past and looks toward his future. Darley confronts Justine who presents him with yet another persona. Her apologetic demeanor does not rekindle Darley's feelings. Once he realizes he no longer cares for Justine, Darley no longer struggles with his memories of his time with Justine.

This thesis examines how Justine and Scobie violate social taboos. While some critics touch on aspects of individual characters' behavior, there is room in the commentary to examine Justine and Scobie. Possibly the multiple perspectives of the same events have prevented critics from delving into how *The Quartet's* characters navigate society and violate social rules. Most critics focus on Darley and his personal evolution. Justine, Balthazar, Pursewarden, and Scobie sometimes get honorable mentions. Of the four, Balthazar garners more critical attention because he mentors

Darley. Pursewarden also receives some focus from critics because of his sibling incest and eventual suicide. Spencer, for example, sees the incest motif among Durrell's works as a device to increase tension among characters "because they are torn between two states of being" (446). Dobree asserts that most of the main characters are complex; however, her 1961 essay functions more as a series overview rather than a character analysis. Bode, Pinchin, and Lund note that Durrell's female characters do not fare well because all endure tragic physical ailments or accidents (Bode, "Durrell's Way" 142).

Durrell himself contended that *The Quartet* is a "four-decker novel" with "three sides of space and one of time that constitute the soup-mix recipe of a continuum" (*Balthazar* "Note"). Early critics, such as Unterecker and Mackworth, often include a brief section about how the first three books make up the space portion because all three deal with many of the same events but from different viewpoints. *Clea* represents the "time" portion of the continuum because it purportedly places events in proper chronological perspective. Weigel contends that the narrative's revisiting of specific times, such as Pursewarden's suicide, allows the event layers to stand out (*Lawrence Durrell* 82). Because it is impossible to see all the elements in a single visit, narratives revisit them, often from a different perspective. This gives the events a rounded view. Thus, the narrative emphasizes the multiple perspectives of any event and any character. Weigel also notes that the space-time continuum spirals outward with the "workpoints" at the end of each novel (*Lawrence Durrell* 89-90). Carl Dawson doubts Durrell's understanding of Einstein's theory, but acknowledges Durrell was likely sensitive to the "powerful effect" of modern physics on art (110). None of these critics examine characters' actions.

Durrell also used the term palimpsest to explain Balthazar's "interlinear" changes to *Justine* (Durrell, *Balthazar* 183). A palimpsest refers to ancient methods of reusing parchment or other writing materials to write new text. Sometimes an entire document was written over by a new one, while at other times portions of the original text were kept and folded into the new text. Some critics focus on how *The Quartet's* layered narrative presents confusing multiple points of view, and that part of Darley's journey is to work through the confusion. Darley must decide whether or not to amend his personal narrative every time he receives new information. He sifts through the data and chooses or discards information, thus building a palimpsest as each point-of-view unfolds (Pierce, "Wrinkled" 494-95). The multiple points-of-view paint over each other. However, as in a palimpsest, sometimes the newest point-of-view only partially changes the previous one. This makes the story develop even as it circles and layers around itself (Pierce, "Wrinkled" 496). The critics who examine the palimpsest effect in *The Quartet* also do not delve into the characters' actions.

Kellman notes that the palimpsest effect of *The Quartet* makes "deciphering and reconciling competing transcripts" a challenge. John Unterecker asserts that in *The Quartet* "most roads lead, therefore—as most good roads should— in two directions" (*Lawrence Durrell* 27). However, Friedman argues that the subtle complexities in the narrative viewpoints result in Darley's eventual realization of the multiple perspectives of Justine's personality ("A 'Key'" 36-37). Darley sifts through these multiple points-of-view, which highlight different interpretations of the same subject, so he can reconcile them with his individual perspective. Of course, Darley provides the majority of narrative information, quoting other characters, making portions of *The Quartet* read like

his personal journey. Unterecker calls the series the "emotional education of a hero and his friends ("The Protean World" 178). Walter Creed contends that Darley ultimately settles for his own perspective (172). Darley mainly examines the characters' actions in relation to how they affect him. He seeks to reconcile Justine's behavior with him and so provides very little judgment of the other character's actions.

This thesis will examine how Justine and Scobie risk violating social norms with heterogeneous behavior and risk their group membership. Many of Durrell's characters transgress social, religious, and moral rules. Bataille's theories of heterology, transgression and taboo demonstrate how these two characters navigate their societies. Although people might think of their society as one entity, in reality, a geographically defined group, such as a country or a political state, is made up of sub-groups that function with their own rules that either refine or enhance the whole group's rules. These groups are homogeneous, which within Bataille's theory, means there is a "commensurability of elements" and the members are aware of the commensurability (*Vision*s 137). Social groups uphold the homogeneity by reducing their differences (139). Bataille defines the difference as heterogeneity: "The very term heterogeneous indicates that it concerns elements that are impossible to assimilate" (140). He examines the systematic effects of how societies create systems of social law by creating taboos, which are social prohibitions (141). Societies develop taboos, or rules, hoping to create homogeneity, a society of people who are similar. Heterogeneous elements, which cannot be assimilated and threaten the society, are rejected by homogeneous societies (142, 146).

Bataille theorized that humans have two "polarized" impulses: "Excretion and Appropriation" (*Visions* 94). Appropriation relates to homogeneity and excretion relates to heterogeneity (94). Bataille explains that there is "personal homogeneity" which has to do with gaining possessions (appropriating) such as food, dwellings, and clothing (95). There is also a "general homogeneity" with applies to groups such as cities with "classified series of conceptions or ideas" (95-96). Bataille also sees appropriation as a form of excretion as people decide what to appropriate and what to exclude. Exclusion, in this way, is not violent. Additionally, groups can separate, or exclude people in a non-violent way (100). Bataille explains that excretion also can be violent, such as in a revolution where one group violently expels another (100).

Society members—such as Justine and Scobie—risk being separated from their groups. They have excess, as all humans do, that they expend in ways that violate social rules. According to Bataille, everyone has "more energy than is necessary for maintaining life" and "it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically" (*Accursed Share* Vol I 21). Societies create prohibitions or taboos to organize and protect the homogeneity. However, society members are inherently drawn to the forbidden: "The taboo would forbid the transgression but the fascination compels it" (Bataille, *Death and Sensuality* 62). He contends that transgression "transcends and completes" the taboo (57). Transgression often stems from excessive behavior. Scobie and Justine expend their excess in ways that violate social norms.

Chapter 2 of this thesis uses Bataille's theory to examine how Justine's heterogeneous behavior responds to Alexandria's homogeneous restrictions while she interacts with individuals, such as Darley. Justine lies to Darley to convince him that she

cares for him. Her extended effort culminates in a significant personal, perhaps moral, transgression that causes Darley to question his perspective.

Chapter 3 discusses Justine's attempt to gain political advantages with her transgressions. At some points she seems to act purely for distraction and in other cases she acts to manipulate people. Justine's ultimate transgression, at least from one point of view, could be that she joins Nessim to threaten the Egyptian society. Nessim wants to change the balance of power from the Muslims to the Copts (Egyptian Christians) which would, ostensibly at least, affect accepted social norms.

Scobie's heterogeneity will be examined in Chapter 4. Darley's narrative describes Scobie as harmless, humorous, and inept while offering details of Scobie's pederasty and transvestism. The reason for his excess appears to be nearly opposite Justine's. He has urges that he cannot always control, but he has no wish to undermine social norms. However, Scobie's heterogeneity provokes fear and anger which results in his permanent expulsion from society—death.

Justine and Scobie violate taboos. Their violations highlight how reactions vary. Some reactions remain on a peer level. Chapter 2 examines how deceit mixed with sexual taboo violations can complicate the reactions because they are often mixed with conflicting emotions.

Chapter II:

JUSTINE TRANSGRESSES AGAINST DARLEY

In both *Justine* and *Balthazar*, Darley's narrative point of view focuses on his relationship with Justine. He questions his perspective as he receives information from other characters and consequently must decide whether or not to alter his view. He must either continue to believe Justine loved him or change his perspective to accept he was a pawn in a larger plan. Additionally, Darley must deal with the fallout from transgressions: his own as well as transgressions against him.

Durrell's main characters all have at least one behavior that could put them in conflict with social norms, even in the narrative's open Alexandrian society. *The Quartet's* narratives repeatedly examine them as new points-of-view rehash the details. Some early critics, such as Crowder, suggest that Durrell's presentation of modern love equals "pederasty, incest, self-love, adultery, rape, and sodomy" (35). Dobree labels *The Quartet's* sexual life as "amoral" (72). Lemon asserted that Durrell's modern love was "an astonishing variety of the eternal lusts and perversions" (334). "Deviant" characters knowingly violate taboos and the repercussions of the violations ripple through the entire series. However Bode contends that Durrell treats all forms of sex "from incest to nymphomania…with sympathy" (532, my ellipses). Many early critics, such as Creed and Kermode, avoid discussion of any of the uncomfortable topics like pederasty, homosexuality, or incest. As Darley examines his time in Alexandria and his relationship with Justine, he presents many of these topics nonchalantly, with very little discussion

about taboo. Justine captivates Darley and in Darley's narrative, at least in the first two novels, little else receives more than cursory observation.

Darley creates an image of Justine's personality based on information she supplies. She provides him with her diaries, which she later claims are fiction (*Mountolive* 208). Darley receives details about how others perceive Justine, which provokes his introspection. He concludes that he saw only what he wanted to see: "Truly there was no blame here; the real culprit was my love which had invented an image on which to feed" (*Clea* 55). Justine seems to act differently with different people to obtain information or create diversions. At various points in *The Quartet*, she is depicted as a victim of incestuous rape, a disillusioned Jew seeking mystical answers, a childless mother, a wife to a rich Christian businessman, a nymphomaniac, and a lesbian. *Quartet* characters who interact with Justine each focus on a different image. For example: Balthazar sees the disillusioned Jew and distraught mother (*Justine* 96). Darley sees the disillusioned Jew and the nymphomaniac (133, 84). Pursewarden sees the rape victim (*Balthazar* 144). However none of these narratives offers irrefutable information about Justine yet simultaneously elicit sympathy and antipathy.

Justine operates on both sides of transgression—as a victim and as a transgressor—making her an excellent focus for this discussion of heterology. One side is unsympathetic, but harsh judgment against her transgressions can be mitigated by sympathy for her as the victim. People tend to think about transgressions based on who can punish the offender. This varies between cultures where transgressions could be punished according to a legal code or dealt with through a system of unwritten rules. Moral transgressions that do not constitute a crime may be judged less harshly.

Conversely, something like child rape is usually considered more significant than adultery between consenting adults, at least in most Western cultures. Bataille theorizes that some taboos produce feelings of terror or fascination, producing a push and pull affect between humans (*Death and Sensuality* 62). People may forgive or ignore heterogeneous behavior if the perpetrator, like Justine, has been the victim of child rape. Justine's behavior demonstrates this characteristic. Narrative information about her reveals an accordion effect with the characters' feelings. Characters who know about Justine's transgressions draw toward her either from fascination or push away from her in disgust or fear. Darley is drawn to her as is Clea, briefly. During their affair, Clea would eagerly await Justine's entrance at the painting studio while hoping Justine would fail to appear: "These polarities of feeling bewildered and frightened her by their suddenness" (*Balthazar* 54). In his diary, Pursewarden seems to be academically curious, but has no problem pushing away from her: "Yet there was much to admire in her and I indulged my curiosity in exploring the outlines of her character with some sympathy…" (*Clea* 144, my ellipses). Only Balthazar seems to avoid either effect.

According to Bataille, humans build excess because they cannot expend all the energy they build up (*The Accursed Share Vol I* 27). Allen Stoekl notes that Bataille initially theorizes about excess from a material production standpoint; however, he also theorizes about human excess ("Excess" 253). Bataille contends that excess must be expended, even if it is in a socially unacceptable way: "it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically" (*Accursed Share Vol I* 21). Societies operate based on an expected level of commensurability. This does not mean there are no differences between the sub-groups or the individuals, only that the differences are within an

acceptable range so that they do not threaten society (Bataille, *Visions* 140). Bataille saw homogeneity and heterogeneity; even if it cannot be assimilated, coexisting but acknowledged that heterogeneity could rise to a level where it threatens the group (140). Society leaders delegate social taboo enforcement, which creates different levels of rules. Social leaders decide which taboos affect the homogeneity of the whole group and then other taboos are enforced at different levels, similar to the Western government systems which telescope authority levels down to the lowest municipalities[1]. The laws guarantee stability and an "order of things" (Bataille, *Theory of Religion* 67). Other cultural layers operate within the larger order of things. Groups form based on religion, class, ethnicity, and so on. Some taboos are enforced at these levels because society leaders have determined that those taboos do not threaten society until they reach a certain level or perhaps combine with other taboos. Bataille theorizes that this is a system of moral rules which are "universally obligatory relations between individuals and society or between individuals themselves" (67). For example, dishonesty between two individuals might be handled by the victim shunning or expelling the perpetrator from his or her smaller circle. However, if the perpetrator uses his dishonesty against the larger group, by robbing a bank for example, the violation poses a threat to a larger number of people and must be dealt with by society leaders.

Humans must expend their excess, whether it is material or emotional excess. They may expend it through activities such as playing sports, exercising, or having intercourse. According to Stoekl, Bataille asserts excessive energy is natural but expenditure can violate society's rules ("Excess" 256). Humans negotiate or challenge

[1] Alexander Murphy. "The sovereign state system as a political-territorial ideal: historical and contemporary considerations." *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*. Ed. Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. 81-120. Print.

the rules and those who challenge the rules may become violent. Social leaders can choose to punish transgressors, adjust taboos, or discard the taboo completely. However, transgression can threaten a homogeneous society: "Concern over a rule is sometimes at its most acute when that rule is being broken, for it is hard to limit a disturbance already begun" (Bataille, *Death and Sensuality* 59). Bataille theorizes the sex taboo evokes confusion because of its potential association with religious sin (100). He also asserts that humans only realize the sexual taboo exists after it has been violated (102). Most societies are built based on heterosexual monogamous relations.

The Quartet contains numerous sexual taboo violations, mostly seen through Darley's perspective. Darley feels compelled to violate the prohibition regardless of his understanding of it. Additionally, Darley sees others who transgress sexually and may feel the risk of punishment is low in Alexandrian society. Darley's narrative explains how he met Justine and how their friendship culminated in their transgression. He knows of Justine before they meet and his first observations suggest he envies her social status: "our city does not permit anonymity to any with incomes of over two hundred pounds a year" (*Justine* 20). Darley compares her to the powerful ancient Egyptian queens and "giant man-eating cats like Arsinoe." Whether he realizes it or not, Darley assesses other characters to see how he compares to them. Any such assessment can go two ways: does Darley want to be part of Justine's social group or does he question whether or not Justine can assimilate into his social group? When he comments on her wealth, he acknowledges their different status and determines they cannot assimilate into each other's social groups. However, he admires Justine when they first meet and gains a sense of her heterogeneity compared to his known social taboos: "She came into the shop

with swift and resolute suddenness and said, with an air of authority that Lesbians, or women with money, assume with the obviously indigent" (31). Darley is surprised that someone of Justine's status would personally address him.

Societies have a class structure that often relies on one's economic status. Other factors such as lineage and occupation can play a role. Often, one's social status results from unwritten rules, but those rules contribute to the homogeneity of a group. People understand when they cross group boundaries that they are initially a heterogeneous element. As Bataille says, heterogeneous elements can exist (*Visions* 140). However, people who do not have a means to adapt to the required rules will not be at ease in the new group. Darley is uncomfortable with Justine's and her husband's wealth and rank in society because he does not have any means to elevate his economic status. Justine understands Darley's discomfort with her wealth and straight-forward demeanor. She places Darley at ease. Darley likes to converse on academic and philosophical topics, so Justine converses with him on his level, in what he considers an academic plane (20). Darley sees in Justine a possible kindred spirit, but also someone with power who stops to notice him--a person heterogeneous to her higher status group. Darley equates her ability to hold these types of discussions as a masculine feature and marvels that she can still be feminine. This suggests her actions are heterogeneous in some groups but acceptable in her main group. Her acceptance of Darley is an appropriation of Darley into her society and Darley believes it happens because he has some commensurability with Justine.

Darley believes he and Justine share confusion between ideas and intentions: "It was so different from Justine who was experiencing much the same confusion as myself

between her ideas and her intentions…" (*Justine* 97, my ellipses). This commonality strengthens his bond to Justine. Prior to his relationship with her, Darley experienced a sense of isolation and depression: "I lack the will-power to do anything with my life, to better my position by hard work, to write: even to make love" (21-22). Justine builds a "mental intimacy" with Darley (134). Although Darley does not really belong among the Alexandrian wealthy, Justine's and Nessim's patronage allows him periodically to navigate that sphere. A certain amount of heterogeneity, even though it cannot be assimilated, is allowed in a society as long as it does not reach a threatening level (Bataille, *Visions* 140). Darley's confidence is built on a belief that he shares some of Justine's homogeneous behavior, not just the heterogeneous.

Darley finds ways to understand Justine better. He reads the novel *Moeurs,* which many characters believe Justine is the subject of, and notes how he can see a younger Justine in the pages (Durrell, *Justine* 64). Justine also provides Darley with her diaries to satisfy his quest for knowledge. However, he does not find everything he wants to know: "Two subjects, upon which it was fruitless to question Justine too closely: her age, her origins" (61). Darley has no reason to distrust Justine and looks past clues that tell him she is not as forthcoming with him as he believes. He recalls her sitting before mirrors at a dressmaker's and saying: "Look! Five different pictures of the same subject. Now if I wrote I would try for a multi-dimensional effect in character, a sort of prism-sightedness. Why should not people show more than one profile at a time?" (27). Justine seems to warn Darley that she projects more than one image. When one wants to fit into a particular group, that person will adapt his or her actions to fit with the group requirements. However, that persona may be one of several. People hide actions that

might be prohibited in one group because they do not want to be expelled. Also, they can belong to multiple groups with disparate requirements between them. This requires a balancing act so to match the correct actions to the right groups. Justine appears to be able to manage her personas and Darley fails to understand her warning. In at least one respect, he sees what he wants to see so that he and Justine have commonality.

Darley believes Justine allows him to see more about her than others see. He feels he attracts Justine because he provides her with intellectual stimulation which she does not get elsewhere: "Our intimacy was of a strange mental order" (*Justine* 26). He believes they shared a common perspective: "[W]e were possessed only by a desire to communicate ideas and experiences which overstepped the range of thought normal to conversation among ordinary people" (25). When Justine learns of Darley's religious studies, she introduces him to the mystical Cabal—a heterogeneous aspect of Judaism. This leads Darley to think Justine has an inner struggle with traditional Judaism. Kabbalah is a mystical examination of Judaism's concepts of divinity. The Cabal group believes deities, not a single divine being, are responsible for how things happen in the world. The group meets at night in places away from town because their Kabbalah examination of multiple deities threatens the homogeneous boundaries of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Balthazar, who leads the Cabal, discusses how other religions have a long list of prohibitions: "We of this Cabal say: *indulge but refine*" (Durrell, *Justine* 100). Darley never professes his personal views on religion but admits to an academic interest (95). With this introduction, Justine makes Darley a co-conspirator in, or at least a witness to, her transgressive approach to Judaism.

Darley thinks his sexual connection with Justine grows from the intellectual bond they share: "I know that for us love-making was only a small part of the total picture projected by a mental intimacy which proliferated and ramified around us" (*Justine* 134). Darley needs to believe that he and Justine have a relationship that transcends social rules because that would justifies their transgression against Melissa and Nessim. Justine understands that Darley struggles with their adultery. Justine uses Balthazar's words from his Cabal sermons to sooth Darley's feelings about their adultery: "Balthazar says that the natural traitors—like you and I—are really Caballi. He says we are dead and live this life as a sort of limbo" (86). She rationalizes that her role on earth is to spread harm: "It isn't easy to be me. I *so much* want to be responsible for myself" (87). Darley understands that they violated the adultery taboo upheld in the region's major religions and may take this to mean that Justine struggles too. However, Darley feels a greater burden of hurting his friends, which include Justine's husband Nessim: "I was anxious that he should not be hurt" (85).

Bataille asserts that when transgressors like Darley experience anguish it demonstrates that they understand the taboo (*Death and Sensuality* 33). Bataille contends that people usually become more concerned about a taboo when it is violated (59). People then react, sometimes violently, to such transgressions. Darley's narrative highlights his fear of Nessim's reaction. Although *The Quartet* does not follow a chronological path, the *Justine* narrative highlights Darley's increasing fear of discovery and punishment. Darley is "anxious" that Nessim "not be hurt" after they have sex for the first time (85). Darley writes about his anxiety and paranoia; he believes Nessim has people follow him (148-52). Darley fears Nessim will murder him at Nessim's annual

duck hunt: “All of a sudden, for the first time, I feel real fear as I watch the expressionless glitter of Nessim’s eyes” (209). Darley fears Nessim will punish him for violating the adultery taboo.

Bataille asserts that marriage is a condition in a “world of prohibitions” which establishes “the purity of the mother, of the sister” (*The Accursed Share Vol II & III* 58). Darley understands he and Justine violate society’s rules governing monogamous marriage with their sexual relationship. However, little is said about Justine’s adultery or how her transgressions would be viewed in the Alexandrian society. Critics such as Boone point to how “writers like Flaubert and Durrell locate their visions of a sexualized, mythic Near east in the spectacle and stimulation of Egypt’s infinite variety” (96). However, Boone examines the male sexual variety and the female is not privileged in his examination. Bataille does not theorize specifically about patriarchy, but states there is an “order of things: that begins with “law that ensures the stability” (*Theory of Religion* 67). He continues: “[L]aw and morality also have their place in the empire in that they define a universal necessity of the relation of each thing with the others (68). However, Justine may escape punishment because these unwritten rules favor the wealthy and titled. Social leaders may not punish Justine, even though she violates the order of things, because Nessim never publically repudiates her. Darley is concerned that Nessim will punish them and does not reflect concern about reaction from social leaders. He may believe that Nessim’s power to punish them will satisfy society.

Darley is caught in a complex web of transgressions. He is in a relationship with Melissa, who he knows prostitutes herself to earn extra money, which she shares with Darley. Darley also understands his relationship with Justine hurts Melissa. He knows he

risks his friendship with Nessim, yet he continues to see Justine. Darley chooses to transgress because Justine creates an intellectual fascination that he feels justifies the transgression. Darley's fascination overrides his feelings of anguish for violating the "obligatory relations between individuals and society or between individuals themselves" (70). He is happy whenever he can get a few stolen moments with Justine: "The magnitude of this happiness—we could not speak but gazed abundantly at each other with eyes full of unshed tears" (*Justine* 184).

Darley wants to believe that Justine cares for him because he is self-giving. He asserts that: "*This* [self-giving] is what Justine loved in me—not my personality" (197). At the beginning of their relationship Darley sees that Justine builds excess from her childhood victimization and her religious confusion. He quotes from *Moeurs*: "There is no pain compared to that of loving a woman who makes her body accessible to one and yet is incapable of delivering her true self—because she does not know where to find it" (136). He does not dwell on these events, perhaps because he engages in transgressive behavior with Justine. Darley is complicit but to him the cause of her transgression has become irrelevant. It is enough for Darley to know there is a cause: "[I]t was these very defects of character—these vulgarities of the psyche—which constituted for the greatest attraction of this weird kinetic personage" (134). They both expend built-up excess in transgressive activities. Darley's fascination overwhelms any sense of terror (Bataille, *Death and Sensuality* 62). At one point Darley asks Justine to invite him to her summer house "impelled by the fearful pangs her absence created in me" (Durrell, *Justine* 166). He is willing to stay in the same house as Nessim because his fear of separation is greater than his fear of Nessim.

Bataille theorizes that individual love increases "the intensity of feelings" while discussing how two people in love believe they cannot exist without each other (*The Accursed Share Vol II and III* 157, 161). Darley thinks Justine and he form a bond through their shared heterogeneous behavior (Durrell, *Justine* 48). Darley believes they both share the anguish of their transgression as well as the fear of discovery. Justine counts on Darley's intensity of feeling, even though she does not share it, to control him (*Clea* 54). She knows that Darley fears Nessim: "He is a good person, Nessim, though now he is very much afraid of you and invents all sorts of bogies with which to frighten himself" (*Mountolive* 210). She uses Darley's love and fear to control his actions: "Darley is so sentimental and so loyal to me that he constitutes no danger at all." Justine builds on Darley's fear by describing Nessim as verging on madness when he shot at seagulls while in a speeding car: "He looked mad" (*Justine* 174). Darley begins to believe that Nessim is capable of murder.

Darley fears Nessim will kill him if he learns of Darley's and Justine's adultery. Justine builds Darley's fear toward a crescendo when her husband plans his annual duck hunt to which Darley receives an invitation. Justine tells Darley that he should not "tempt providence" by going to the event and then begins to make love to him (196). After they finish, Justine presses him to make an excuse not to attend, but Darley feels he cannot refuse. Justine reluctantly agrees: "You're right. We must go" (201-202). Nessim invites friends, business associates, politicians, and foreign embassy officials to the duck hunt. People are paired up and compete to shoot the most ducks. Darley feels scared as they set out: "All of a sudden, for the first time, I feel real fear as I watch the expressionless glitter of Nessim's eyes" (209). However, Darley's fear proves

unfounded. The duck hunt results in death and physical exile, but not for Darley. He survives the duck hunt but discovers afterwards that Justine has fled. One of her relatives, Capodistria, is killed during the hunt. Darley wonders how he never realized that Capodistria raped Justine when she was a child: "How is it that I have never yet recognized in Capodistria the author of all Justine's misfortunes—the man with the black patch?" (210). A stunned Darley is left to negotiate Alexandrian society without Justine.

Capodistria's death shocks everyone. According to Bataille, people cause more terror among fellow group members when they violate the death taboo (*Death and Sensuality* 40). He asserts that societies have a murder taboo which defines permissible murder as well as what violates the taboo because non-sanctioned murder threatens a society's cohesion (42). Bataille also acknowledges that a society generally tries to "limit killing to certain specific situations (66). Justine may not have violated the murder taboo because, allegedly, Capodistria raped Justine when she was a child. However, she flees in what could be termed a self-excretion instead of facing punishment for murder. Darley's shock at Capodistria's death and Justine's disappearance is compounded by the guilt of his sexual transgression. Darley's and Justine's affair was heterogeneous, but they shared the transgression. Once she is gone, he must face the rest of his group and the potential repercussions alone. At this point in his narrative, Darley remains unaware that Justine lied when she said she loved him.

Societies have unwritten rules of "fair play" (Bataille, *Theory of Religion* 67). Justine violates this sense of fair play and her ultimate transgression against Darley may be that she used him rather than loved him. Darley reasonably expects that Justine truthfully declares her love to him. Their sexual intimacy reinforces his belief. However,

Darley must face the consequences of his excessive behavior. Expenditure can violate taboos and risk a person's expulsion from society. Behavior that cannot be assimilated is deemed heterogeneous to the homogeneous society (Bataille, *Visions* 140). Darley risked excretion from his own circle as well as from Nessim's circle. Excess must be spent, no matter how the person, society, or sub-group chooses to do this (*The Accursed Share, Vol I* 21). However, Balthazar, Clea, and Melissa, along with Darley's other acquaintances, do not exclude him from their circle because they, including Nessim and Melissa, believe that Justine used Darley (Durrell, *Balthazar* 22; *Mountolive* 177). Darley becomes an object of pity, as if he were not in control of his transgressions (*Justine* 229).

Bataille asserts that "[o]rganised [sic] transgression together with taboo make social life what it is" (*Death and Sensuality* 59). The social interplay of actions and judgment often happen without fanfare because as Bataille contends a society is a "hybrid of transgression and prohibition" that can exist peacefully even while dealing with this interplay (*Accursed Share Vol II & III* 349). Conversely, written formal laws often require significant effort to create and uphold. However, both sets of laws can evolve as the society evolves. If the members no longer feel threatened by an action, such as homosexuality, they will change the written or unwritten rules. Additionally if someone ceases their group-threatening behavior, such as adultery, the person can be reappropriated because the polygamous threat to a monogamous society diminishes. Unwritten rules are usually nebulous and one must have experience with that society's rules to understand how to deal with them.

Justine approaches Alexandria's unwritten rules with the knowledge of how people can look at extenuating circumstances. Bataille states that "*conscious*

humanity…excludes in principle *nonproductive expenditure*" (*Vision of Excess* 117). Yet, Bataille leaves the opening for humans to adapt the rules for prohibitions, both unwritten and written in what he terms "a hybrid of transgression and prohibitions" (*The Accursed Share Vol II & III* 342). Humans can consider extenuating circumstances such as extreme grief which might cause mental illness. Justine uses the loss of her child and the associated grief as a visible extenuating circumstance to avoid expulsion from society. Putting aside the question of fact or truth, Justine's multiple victimizations make her a sympathetic figure. According to Balthazar, "Justine had a child, by whom I do not know. It was kidnapped and disappeared one day. About six years old. A girl" (*Justine* 96). It is unclear if Justine suffered exclusion from society for being an unwed mother or if she was married. What sticks in Balthazar's mind, when Darley asks for details, is how Justine was frantic to find the child. Later, he wonders why Darley never mentions Justine's missing child in his manuscript (*Balthazar* 128). Justine confides to Balthazar that she is obsessed with finding the child, and that she tried to break into Nessim's safe to look for information. True or not, Justine elicits sympathy from Balthazar and others in Alexandrian society as a result.

Justine also receives sympathy because she was raped as a child. Darley learns about the rape while reading *Moeurs* (*Justine* 64, 78). He believes this rape contributes to Justine's inner confusion and search, but he does not dwell on its psychological effect. Balthazar asserts that Justine assures Pursewarden the rape is true (*Balthazar* 143-46). Justine tells Pursewarden that she confronted Capodistria many years later and found he did not remember raping her. She states that the rape "had cost me so many years of anxiety and indeed mental illness and had made me harm so many people" (146). Justine

never spoke like this to Darley, which suggests she presents different perspectives of herself to different people. She could be attempting to disarm Pursewarden with a trusting admission. If people feel transgressors share the secrets behind heterogeneous behavior, they may excuse the excessive behavior.

Darley's narrative suggests Justine's mental illness from sexual violence and the loss of her child lead her to build excess. She joined Balthazar's group to explore mystical religion and perhaps explain why God would allow rape to happen: "The tragic seed from which her thoughts and actions grew was the seed of a pessimistic Gnosticism" (*Justine* 40). She questions monotheism, which could upset Muslims who wield power in Alexandria. She also expends her excess in a more dramatic fashion by violating sexual taboos. Bataille contends that all humans have excess and pressure can build until it becomes destructive, possibly even explosive (*The Accursed Share, Vol I* 21). Justine's excess initially appears to only be self-destructive; however, she encourages the same excessive expenditure in Darley.

Bataille asserts that societies create taboo systems to control violence; transgressions result when people challenge the system (*Death and Sensuality* 58). It is part of a society's evolution when people challenge a taboo and the taboo may be changed based on the challenges. Justine ostensibly flees to avoid punishment for violating the murder taboo. However, Justine's flight also makes Darley a sympathetic figure. Darley wrestles with his feelings after he reads Balthazar's perspective. He feels violated because Justine "used" his love (*Balthazar* 131). Balthazar unseats Darley's reality: "Balthazar does not lie" (185). Darley remembers when he suggested to Justine that they stop their affair and that he should confront Nessim. She reminds him that he

does not really belong in her group, and has no authority there: "You are an Anglo-Saxon...you couldn't step outside the law like that, could you? You are not one of us" (223). Darley now realizes this conversation took place shortly after Pursewarden's suicide. He cannot understand why Justine remains with him knowing her true love—supposedly Pursewarden—has died.

Darley also struggles with the realization that his friends, including Pursewarden, knew about his affair. He wonders how they could know she did not care for him and not tell him (*Balthazar* 130). Bataille argues that anything heterogeneous has "elements" that cannot be assimilated into the society (*Visions* 140). However, that does not mean a person with a few heterogeneous elements will be automatically expelled. As I have argued, pity and sympathy can mitigate expulsion. Transgressors may also have homogeneous elements that bond them with their group members. Those bonds also help mitigate punishment. Transgressions that offend people on a personal level but do not break society's formal taboos are difficult to equate to punishable heterogeneous behavior. This is the level at which Justine's actions against Darley occur. She retains a bond with her Alexandrian society which allows it to overlook, excuse or rationalize her transgressions and excesses.

Chapter III:

JUSTINE'S POLITICAL GAMBLE

Durrell uses declining British-Egyptian political relations in the first half of the twentieth-century as a backdrop for *The Quartet*. Many have criticized the British colonial attitude toward Egypt while the British were attempting to maintain control or at least influence in the region, particularly over critical waterways such as the Suez Canal (Seigneurie 85). Peirce notes that *The Quartet* criticism shifts throughout the years and that some critics erroneously contend Durrell hated Egypt, did not understand Alexandria, and deliberately tried to undermine Egypt ("Past the Size" 55-56). Kaczvinsky, a Durrell scholar, cites Bowen several times, suggesting that Durrell may have been concerned about the effect of removing the European hierarchical structure from Egypt (105).

Sovereignty and power in the Middle East fluctuated as Britain and France began to lose their dominance in the region. According to Bataille, sovereignty goes beyond a God or King encompassing those who have some form of power: "It belongs to all men who possess and have never entirely lost the value that is attributed to gods and 'dignitaries'" (*Accursed Share Volumes II & III* 197). While Bataille does not use the terms aristocracy or upper class, he refers to people who consume the products of others: "The sovereign, if he is not imaginary, truly enjoys the products of this world – beyond his needs" (198). However, Bataille seems to present several problematic situations for sovereigns. Sovereigns depend on other people recognizing them as such (241-42).

Those with power can lose power if their transgressions lead people to refuse to recognize them anymore (251-52). Sovereigns, or leaders, must uphold a standard that can encompass both unwritten rules and formal laws. Power can be maintained as long as the homogeneity is maintained, even if it is maintained through brutal tactics. A "fall from grace" usually encompasses a transgression against unwritten rules resulting in a public outcry. If the group perceives its stability is at risk, they often switch leaders.

Justine aids a plot to destabilize Muslim power in the region. She and Nessim are not THE sovereigns within Egypt, but Nessim has a high-level of influence among the Egyptian Copts. Copts are Egyptian Christians, a denomination "distinct from the Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy[2]." As the religious minority, Copts, particularly those in the intellectual communities, struggle in Islamic Egypt. According to van der Vliet, Copt intellectuals often point to being descended from the pharaohs to show nationalism and a right to have a say in the Egyptian government. In *The Quartet*, Copts desire more power, which violates the stability of the Egyptian government. The *Mountolive* narrative reveals Nessim and Justine's plan to destabilize the Muslim political power, which puts them at risk of being excluded from Egypt. Mountolive and Pursewarden both initially refuse to believe the rumors of the plot because they have personal ties to Nessim and his family. Pursewarden breaks the news to Mountolive just as he prepares to become ambassador: "According to the paper [*A Conspiracy Among the Copts*], our Nessim was busy working up a large and complicated plot against the Egyptian Royal House" (*Mountolive* 108). Pursewarden cannot decide what Justine's part is in the alleged plot and why she started an affair with Darley right after she married

[2]Jacques van der Vliet. "The Copts: 'Modern Sons of the Pharaohs'?" *Church History and Religious Culture* 89.1-3 (2009): 279-290. *Academic Web Search Complete*. Web. 5 Apr. 2013.

Nessim (110-11). Pursewarden and Mountolive both underestimate Justine's ability to plot against the Egyptian government. They also do not understand Nessim's deep resentment over the Copt's loss of prominence.

Nessim wishes to do more than return he and his fellow Copts to political prominence. He believes that if the Jews become stronger in the region, the Muslim power base will falter permitting the Copts to return to ruling Egypt. Bataille's theory concerning excess and unproductive expenditure (*The Accursed Share Vol I* 21) can be applied to Nessim's hunger for power which causes him to build and expend excess in a way that threatens Muslim sovereignty in Egypt: "In the domain of our life excess manifests itself in so far as violence wins over reason (*Death and Sensuality* 35). Nessim has been shipping arms to Palestinian Jews. However, the Jews distrust anyone from outside their religion, so Nessim recruits Justine to solidify his position: "Yes, Justine, Palestine. If only the Jews can win their freedom, we can all be at ease. It is the only hope for us…the dispossessed *foreigners*" (200).

Nessim's lack of religious homogeneity with the Jews threatens their society. He cannot be assimilated into a Jewish state. According to Bataille, "human relations are sustained by a reduction to fixed rules based on the consciousness of the possible identity of delineable persons and situations (*Visions* 137-38). Within the Palestinian Jewish society Durrell depicts, religion is part of the fixed rules because the other religions, such as Islam, threaten their society. Justine has very little to put toward Nessim's plan—unlike Nessim who has both aristocratic prominence as well as financial means. Justine's contribution to the plan falls into the intangible assets category because, as a Jew, she supplies Nessim's acts with credibility. Nessim believes the Jews are suspicious of his

true intent because he is an Egyptian Copt (204). He wants Justine, as an Egyptian Jew and his wife, to reassure the Palestinian Jews about their "doubts and hesitations."

Justine's other capital is gender. In some ways this asset is sexual and in others it affects how she approaches situations. Darley's perspective does not include much about the political issues of the region, so Justine's political intrigue does not come to light until *Mountolive*. In some ways, women contend with more unwritten rules than men do, but in other ways women may find more leeway to push social boundaries. Justine may understand that her violation of sexual taboos provides a diversion for Alexandrians, who speculate about that rather than speculate about her political intrigues. Nessim understands her gender makes her appear to be less of a threat. He wants Justine to elicit confidences from both Darley and Pursewarden, which excites her: "Her dark intent features, so composed in the firelight, were full of a new clarity, a new power" (*Mountolive* 205). Neither "victim" understands that Justine's heterogeneous behavior involves more than sexual excess.

Justine marries Nessim and almost immediately begins an affair with Darley. It is unclear how much Darley understands about the relationship between Nessim and Justine, but he seems to believe it started as a genuine romantic relationship: "Her love was like a skin in which he lay sewn like the infant Heracles; and her efforts to achieve herself had led her always towards, and not away from him" (*Justine* 32-33). Overall, Darley seems uninterested in the larger Egyptian political scene even though he has several acquaintances who are affiliated with foreign embassies. His political naiveté works in Justine's favor as she attempts to get information from him and Pursewarden.

Because Pursewarden works in the Alexandrian British Embassy, he should be savvier about political intrigues. However, he also does not credit political motives to Justine's behavior. Pursewarden calls her "a tiresome old sexual turnstile through which presumably we must all pass" (*Balthazar* 115). Later, Pursewarden describes her to Mountolive based on her traits as a wife to Nessim and a mistress to Darley (*Mountolive* 110-14). It might be too simplistic to label Pursewarden misogynistic, but he does not give Justine much credit. He fails to see her part in the political intrigue.

Bataille's theory of heterology, excess, and expenditure applies to how Justine constructs her actions to capitalize on a tainted reputation so she can disguise illegal political activity. Bataille asserts there are two taboos in every society—one about murder and one about sex (*Death and Sensuality* 40, 45). Justine's behavior with Darley and Pursewarden is sexually heterogeneous; but she also has a larger political agenda. Justine violates many sex taboos because she uses sex and sexual attraction to gain power over men like Darley. Justine understands the social rules requiring monogamy, but must use what little capital she has in WWII Egypt – her sexuality. Justine's public display of adulterous behavior, then, furthers her political agenda. Her marriage is, at its core, a business deal connected to politics. Nessim calls their marriage a "bond of common belief" (199). When Nessim asks Justine to help him determine what Darley and Pursewarden know about the plot to destabilize the Egyptian Muslim government, she tells him, "Thank you, Nessim Hosnani. I see now what I have to do" (205). She understands Muslim dominance in the Middle East region threatens those of Jewish faith. Justine wants power: "Her true obsessions are power, politics, and possessions—

however she might deny it" (202). Her marriage with the wealthy Nessim gives her some power and allows her more latitude within society's written and unwritten rules.

Sexual transgressions combine with religious heterogeneous exploration to obscure Justine's political transgression. Justine seduces Darley, who assumes Justine shares his anxiety over violating the taboo against adultery. Justine never narrates so all accounts of her behavior funnel through Darley's perspective. Darley quotes other characters' opinions of Justine's behavior as well as their reactions to it and tries to reconcile other accounts with his own. He does not realize until many years after the affair ends that Justine used sex to help Nessim destabilize the Egyptian Muslim government: "In your bed it was he [Pursewarden] I embraced and subjugated in my mind. And yet again, in another dimension, everything I felt and did then was really for Nessim…and the plan" (*Clea* 60, my ellipses).

It is unclear who of Justine's and Darley's social group understand her political motives. When Balthazar comments on Darley's initial manuscript, *Justine*, he hints that he cannot tell Darley the whole truth because the censors might read it (*Balthazar* 147). Balthazar also suggests Justine's emotional issues justify her heterogeneous behavior with Darley and Pursewarden, as described in the previous chapter. It's unclear what Balthazar actually knows about the Palestine plot. Darley's live-in lover, Melissa, heard of the political intrigue from her former lover. She tells Pursewarden and unknowingly sets off action from the British Embassy.

Mountolive, in his official role of British ambassador, believes Justine and Nessim threaten Egyptian society and should be punished. He provides the evidence to the Egyptian government and presses for action (*Mountolive* 251). Nessim bribes the

Egyptian leader, Memlik Pasha, in order to delay any action: "He carried the exquisite little Koran wrapped in soft tissue paper; he had carefully larded the pages with bank drafts negotiable in Switzerland" (260). Nessim and Justine understand that their transgression is no longer a secret and the bribe bought them time to prepare for their exclusion.

The Egyptian government decides they must act on the Hosnanis' political transgressions but surprisingly do not impose capital punishment on either Nessim or Justine. It is possible that Nessim's brother is murdered as a warning, but the text is not clear about who directed it. At one point Nessim's fellow Copt leaders are concerned about Narouz' behavior: "Fool, you are putting us all in danger" (*Mountolive* 226). At another point, the Egyptian government tells Mountolive that Narouz is responsible for the Palestinian arms dealing, not Nessim: "He says, in effect, that we have got the wrong Hosnani" (297). However, Nessim and Justine do not escape punishment. The Egyptian government strips them of much of their financial resources and confines them to their desert property (*Clea* 18). Nessim's lineage and previous political power may have prevented their deaths, but the Muslim government acted to stop their threat to society. They remain in a liminal state while leaders consider whether they can be reappropriated into Egyptian society without risk to the government, or if they must be permanently expelled. Justine and Nessim's actions produced terror among the society leaders who moved to protect their homogeneous society.

Chapter IV:

SCOBIE'S COMEDIC BEHAVIOR OVERSHADOWS HIS HETEROGENEITY

Scobie's character provides some comic relief during *The Quartet*, but there are insidious characteristics behind the humor. Darley favors this cross-dressing pederast and peppers his narrative with descriptive memories of his time spent with Scobie. Darley's interactions with Scobie help provide breaks in his multiple perceptions of Justine. He does not judge Scobie's heterogeneous behavior. For the most part, he appears to accept it. Weigel asserts that Durrell's space-time format allows the narratives about Justine and Scobie to intermingle (*Lawrence Durrell* 108-112). Once Darley realizes that his perceptions about Justine are suspect, he extends his suspicions to other friends: "I must it seems, try to see a new Justine, a new Pursewarden, a new Clea" (*Balthazar* 28). He goes on to acknowledge that his emotions affected how he viewed his friends: "My envy of Pursewarden, my passion for Justine, my pity for Melissa. Distorting mirrors, all of them…" Yet Darley does not question how he perceives Scobie, whose heterogeneous conduct may be some of the most surprising in *The Quartet*. Scobie may not knowingly threaten society with his pederasty and transvestism; however, he threatens the heterosexual roles. Scobie's heterogeneity risks exclusion. Darley may not question his perspective of Scobie because he does not need to resolve an emotional transgression against him.

The Quartet presents Alexandria as a fairly open society with many sexual activities, such as homosexual relationships and pederasty that Western societies may find questionable. Nearly 40 years after the initial reviews of *The Quartet*, Mark Hawthorne examines the sexual relationships as well as the characters' sexual orientation. He discusses the dichotomy between the unhealthy heterosexual relationships against the helpful homosexual friends. Using Hawthorne's perspective, the homosexual characters provide a literary device for the protagonist's self-discovery rather than a vehicle for homosexual commentary. However, Durrell provides two very different examples of homosexual-coping in a heteronormative society. Scobie fears his homosexual tendencies because he is also a cross-dresser and a pederast. Balthazar appears content with his sexuality. He does not collapse because he feels at odds with society. He collapses because of unrequited love (*Clea* 68). Notably, Durrell does not kill both his "deviant" homosexuals. He shows one who can function in society and one who cannot. Joseph Boone looks at homosexual references in literature set in Northern Africa and other locations formerly called the "Near East" (89). He discusses how the area accepts certain forms of intercourse between partners that would be unacceptable in Western Europe and North America (91). Boone suggests that Darley's journey includes examining his own homosexual urges when faced with homosexual friends and their liaisons. *The Quartet's* time and geographical location allow people to deal with homosexuality and pederasty with a little more openness than if the setting had been England.

Scobie is an elderly transvestite and pederast. *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary* gives the most prevalent definition for pederasty which specifically refers to

sex between adult males and adolescent males[3]. Pederast is a problematic term to define using current sources. British documents may continue to use pederast, but within the U.S., the term pedophilia more commonly refers to all cases of adults who desire to have sex with children. Defining pedophilia and pederasty along with the various cultural differences between the United Kingdom and the U.S. is not in the scope of this paper. In order to have a standard reference, this paper will use Taber's definition.

Scobie's a former mariner, whose days at sea have peppered his language with unusual or even ridiculous words, producing much of the comic effect: "Without his teeth his face is the face of an ancient ape; about the meager beard his two cherry-red cheeks known affectionately as 'port' and 'starboard' glow warm in all weathers" (*Justine* 122). Scobie's heterogeneous behavior includes one that is unassimilable in most societies: pederasty. However, Darley's narrative uses cross-dressing to make Scobie appear "safe" by making him ludicrous. Darley obviously cares about him.

Darley's narrative describes Scobie and his lodgings in great detail. Scobie's physical description creates sympathy, not fear. Scobie is in his seventies, with a balding head and a stooped, arthritic frame. Darley devotes several lines in his manuscript describing Scobie as a waning force: "It is as if his body were being reduced, shrunk, by the passing of the winters; his cranium will soon be the size of a baby's" (*Justine* 122). Scobie also has lost body parts where nautical life and old age combine to add to the comical figure with ill-fitting dentures and crude glass eye which does not move as well as his real eye (122). The toothless and partly blind Scobie hardly represents a fearsome picture of a man who victimizes anyone. The narrative's first paragraph about Scobie includes a suggestive phrase: "Lying in bed will he fondle his telescope lovingly" (120).

[3] *Tabers's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*. 20th ed. Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, CO, 2005. Print.

As with Justine, Darley provides most of the information about Scobie. It is impossible to know if Scobie's pederasty is a frequent occurrence because Darley either does not know or that part of Scobie's life is unimportant to him.

With advanced age and ill health, Darley sees Scobie as no more than a harmless old sailor. He depicts Scobie as "the Ancient Mariner" and "the secret pirate of Tatwig Street" (*Balthazar* 29). It is unclear whether Scobie served in the British Navy, on a merchant ship, or both. He receives a miniscule pension from his service. Scobie supplements his pension by working for the Egyptian police with "the proud title of Bimbashi in the Police Force" (*Justine* 121). Darley and Clea see him as an entertaining aging figure and they enjoy his "short dim telegrams" of the past (123).

Scobie loves to tell stories, but no one knows or cares how true they are. Scobie tells and retells his life story, changing details as his memory mixes and churns old stories into new ones. He recounts how he watched his brother die somewhere in Africa, but the circumstances change with each retelling. Other characters patiently listen as Scobie tries to puzzle it out and get it straight. It is part of Scobie's charm; however, he has a darker side that Darley does not seem shocked about.

Scobie left England because he feared he would be arrested. He was a scoutmaster and makes reference to the Hackney troops where, he says, he was "invalided out" (*Justine* 124). The narrative suggests Scobie was forced out of his position, but there are no concrete details. Additionally, Scobie's dialogue, courtesy of Darley's narrative, is contradictory. At one point, he thought his position with the Hackney troop was safe because in "Hackney things didn't matter so much." Yet, Scobie describes how other scoutmasters were scrutinized and the scoutmaster before him was

arrested and sentenced to prison for twenty years. Scobie never specifically says what the scoutmaster was accused of. He also makes reference to how the clergymen were under scrutiny and that some received civil punishment for their sins. Scobie fears this type of punishment.

Scobie flees England because his vaguely described crime made him lie awake worrying (*Justine* 124). He escapes England aboard a private ship and arrives in Alexandria. He noticed Alexandria "was nice and free-and-easy." Scobie goes on to hint at his predilection: "And no complaints do you see? Looking from east to west over this fertile Delta what do I see? Mile upon mile of angelic little blacks" (124-25). He understands that his actions would shock some of his friends so he pretends to have had adult heterosexual relations. He hints to Clea about his female indulgences, but Darley believes that the "truth is much sadder" (124). Scobie confides details to Darley, but none offend Darley. He never excludes Scobie from his circle of friends.

Scobie is a Roman Catholic. The narrative connects Scobie's religion to his flaws. Darley's narrative hints that Scobie got what he needed from the church, but does not consistently attend services or speak with any priest: "it is some years since Scobie accepted the consolations of the Holy Roman Church against old age and those defects of character which had by this time become second nature" (Durrell, *Justine* 125). The narrative connects Scobie's heterogeneity to how the Church can absolve penitent sinners and so ensure their ascension to heaven without civil punishment. Religious institutions offer divine law that supersedes the human taboo system. If a sinner can secure divine forgiveness while on earth, he can avoid punishment in the civil system and the hereafter.

Scobie knows pederasty is not publically discussed because it offends some people. This upsets him because he supports the British "order of things," as Bataille terms it, and wants to uphold that order (*Theory of Religion* 67). Scobie has a highly developed sense of his society's definitions of right and wrong. He remains loyal to England, believing he should display a colonial attitude toward Egyptians when he is in the section of town where the government offices are: "He gazed at the people around him as if from stilts" (Durrell, *Balthazar* 31). However, he feels an affinity for the Egyptian culture that allows him to have his heterogeneity without constant fear of retribution. He acts differently in the Alexandrian slum where he lives: "Scobie walked here with the ease of a man who has come into his own estate, slowly, sumptuously, like an Arab (32). Scobie's heterogeneity keeps him on the edge of the British and Egyptian social boundaries.

Scobie calls his pederasty a "Tendency" which, perhaps in his mind, makes it seem less of a crime and more like a *faux pas* (*Balthazar* 31-32). Through his position with the Egyptian security forces, Scobie discovers the official British position against pederasty; however, he also understands that Egypt offers him a place to continue his actions as long as they do not come to the notice of Egyptian leaders. Yet, Scobie feels guilty for not admitting his "Tendency" and discusses his dilemma with Darley. Scobie has spent time diminishing the significance of his actions. He rationalizes that because he is "the Soul of Honour [sic]," the Egyptians do not care about his "Tendencies" (32). Scobie believes his "Tendencies" never cause any harm. According to Scobie's rationalization, if his victims never speak up, then they must not feel harmed. He understands that his society would expel him for his heterogeneous acts. Bataille

contends that violence comes from the emotions of "anger, fear or desire," which might explain how Scobie can rationalize his "Tendency" as harmless yet still be concerned about reactions (*Death and Sensuality* 58). Scobie does no harm and no one, at least as far as the narrative states, has confronted Scobie about it. However his rationalization does not match with his fear of discovery. He understands that violence could be done to him if his "Tendencies" are discovered.

It is unclear how often Scobie has engaged in his "tendency." Scobie, who was working class in England, enjoys his higher class position with, and influence over, Egyptians. Scobie took a young Egyptian couple, Abdul and his wife, under his wing and helped set them up in business (*Balthazar* 36). He tried to teach the wife what British ladies do, such as needlework, but claims she was too "stupid" to understand (36). It seems presumptuous that Scobie thinks Egyptian women do not have any handcrafting experience that would qualify them as British ladies. However, his dissatisfaction with Abdul's wife does not keep him from helping. He uses his life's savings to set Abdul up in a barber business; but worries that the business will have problems. Scobie continues on the boundaries of the two cultures. It is unclear why Scobie decides to use what little money he has for Abdul. Darley narrates how Scobie explains their relationship: "Never laid a finger on him nor even could, because I love the man" (36). Scobie's relationship with Abdul remains ambiguous throughout the narrative, and it is never clear if it ever was sexual, consentual or otherwise.

Scobie's subscribes to the social order of things and he has given his action quite a bit of thought. Bataille suggests moral rules result from "reflective thought" that defines the "obligatory relations between individuals and society or between individuals

themselves" (*Theory of Religion* 70). This is different than laws that define the "obligatory relations of thing (or of each individual-as-thing) with others and guarantees them by sanction of public force" (67). However, the line between public law and moral law (as well as the unwritten rules) can be fluid. If the majority of a homogeneous society begins to notice a heterogeneity such as pederasty, they may see it as a threat to their society. The unwritten rules, such as leniency for the rich or for the aristocracy, continue to affect any action the members can take. However, if the majority reacts to an action with terror, fear or disgust, then society members will move to enforce the taboo: "Concern over a rule is sometimes at its most acute when that rule is being broken, for it is harder to limit a disturbance already begun (*Death and Sensuality* 59). Scobie's British citizenship will not protect him if his actions publically embarrass either government. At the very least, Scobie's pederasty violates the pretense that the British Empire brought with it a moral superiority. However, if it stays contained at the individual level, the leaders can ignore Scobie's actions.

As Bataille says, heterogeneous actions either create terror or fascination (*Death and Sensuality* 62). Darley does not judge Scobie. He treats him as an inept elderly man whose memory may embellish his previous actions (*Balthazar* 34). Darley does not experience terror or he would avoid Scobie. On the contrary, Darley appears fascinated, at least with a certain aspect of Scobie's life. He recounts descriptions of Scobie's physical demeanor and mannerisms. He provides vague accounts of Scobie's pederasty. The narrative does not indicate if Darley censors Scobie's accounts to make them more palatable or if he discourages Scobie's "confessions."

Darley understands that social leaders would be forced to expel Scobie if they gain actual evidence of Scobie's pederasty. As Bataille asserts, "[c]oncern over a rule is sometimes at its most acute when that rule is being broken, for it is harder to limit a disturbance already begun" (*Death and Sensuality* 59). Scobie begins to worry when he sees indications that leaders want to excrete known pederasts: "'I've just seen a directive' said Scobie at last, in a sad withered little voice, 'about what they call a Peddyrast…At all costs, it says, we must exclude them" (*Balthazar* 32). When Scobie asks Darley's advice on whether he should confess his pederasty, Darley tells him that a confession would be foolish (32-33). Scobie's anguish is not that he is a pederast. His anguish is about lack of honesty. Scobie's sense of right and wrong seems skewed, but Darley's concern is also skewed, as he cares for Scobie with no thought for possible victims. He either does not believe Scobie's claims about his pederasty or he does not think pederasty should be considered heterogeneous: "And to be obsessed by such problems at an age when, as far as I could judge, there was little beyond verbal boasting to make him a nuisance" (34). Regardless of his opinion, Darley knows an open confession would force action while speculation or circumstantial evidence would make the authorities less likely to punish Scobie.

Scobie worries about losing his income if social sanctions occur. This worry taps into his basic survival need. It is not clear if Scobie tries to control his "tendency" or if he tries to control who knows about it: "You see the Egyptians are marvelous, old man. Kindly. They know me well" (*Balthazar* 35). The vague narrative underscores the difficulty in discussing the subject. Scobie's term, "Tendency," sounds much more innocuous, as if pederasty is equivalent to the tendency to bite one's nails: "It isn't that I

cause any harm. I suppose one shouldn't have Tendencies—any more than warts or a big nose. But what can I do?" (33). Scobie does not display remorse for his heterogeneity; which one expects from those who admit to transgressions. He refuses to believe his tendency hurts anyone.

According to Bataille, heterogeneity is permitted in a society until it builds to the point of endangering society. In fact, heterogeneity is permitted until it reaches "acute and dangerous levels (*Visions* 140)." Scobie's character apparently poses no threat to critics or the narrator. Cecily Mack calls Scobie "a truly wonderful old homosexual scoundrel" (33). Darley himself describes Scobie dancing around his room to celebrate his birthday, at one point doing "the Hootchi-Kootchi. … Here he took up a posture of quite preposterous oriental allurement and began to revolve slowly, wagging his behind and humming a suitable air" (*Clea* 86-87, my ellipses). The humor humanizes Scobie. Scobie quotes verses, sings songs, and tells stories to his friends, many involving other friends who get into trouble and have wild adventures. These portions of the narrative add to his persona of harmlessness, the one that he wishes to project.

Scobie's character, however, underscores the narrative subtext that the homogeneity of the Egyptian police society is different than the homogeneity of a British police force. Scobie tells Darley that his boss does not think pederasty is a significant offense: "Why Nimrod Pascha himself said to me the other day 'Peddyrast' is one thing—hashish quite another" (*Balthazar* 35). Scobie rationalizes that, on the Alexandrian scale, his behavior does not cause alarm. No one attempts to correct Scobie's actions or encourage him toward the overt social rules of adult, heterosexual

interaction. Scobie takes this to mean that Egyptians do not mind. He counts on the differences between the cultures to help him avoid punishment for his heterogeneity.

Scobie displays a common Western aversion to the local tradition of circumcising young girls. The female circumcision referenced in *The Quartet* is currently labeled female genital mutilation (FGM) and is illegal in most Western countries. So, Scobie upholds the Western social rule about the treatment of females, but suspends others with his "tendency" toward young males. This highlights Bataille's contention that sexual taboos exist but vary from "time and place" making it impossible to "allow it to be generally discussed" (*Death and Sensuality* 45). Scobie has no problem with the procedure for males because he was circumcised: "It's not the boy—they can do him for all I care. It's the girl, old man. I can't bear to think of that little creature being mutilated" (*Balthazar* 138-39). Scobie apparently feels protective toward young Abdul's daughter. Bataille asserts that all human groups establish and observe taboos on sex and sexuality, but the variations prohibit cross-society assimilation (*Death and Sensuality* 45). Some societies see FGM as the best way to prevent men and women alike from violating the taboo against pre-marital sexual relations. Additionally, females are not easily accessible for rape. Bataille theorizes that taboos are created to banish "violence from the course of everyday life" (*Death and Sensuality* 49). However, FGM, meant to maintain homogeneity in one society appears heterogeneous to other societies.

Scobie's disgust over female circumcision is shown with his interaction with the local barber-surgeons. Some barbers do minor medical procedures, including male and female circumcisions and bloodletting. Scobie understands disease can be prevented by better disinfecting techniques than the Egyptian barber-surgeons use, but they do not

accept his authority. Scobie must risk losing the goodwill of the locals by reporting these barbers for not disinfecting their instruments and spreading disease (*Balthazar* 139). Scobie finds that his neighbor Abdul ignores his warnings. He tells Darley that Abdul "thinks I am mad." Scobie's vigorous disapproval of poor hygiene among barbers seems at odds with his hidden heterogeneous actions and could work against him. His Alexandrian neighbors may see him more as an outsider, one who threatens their homogeneity because he opposes their practices. They may not be as willing to tolerate Scobie's pederasty or cross-dressing because he simultaneously forces unwanted prohibitions on them.

Scobie's transvestism violates cultural gender boundaries. Many cultures have fashion taboos that fit in with the "order of things," that each gender will not wear clothing meant for the opposite gender. Whether this taboo is or is not a formal law depends on the culture. Even if it is not, transgression that confuses gender boundaries threaten patriarchal societies. Bataille would term this an intangible taboo, which is as important as a formalized taboo (*Death and Sensuality* 58). If someone wears clothing that conceals the wearer's gender, that transgression can either cause what Bataille terms as "terror" or "fascination" (62). A strongly heterosexual group would be threatened by anyone disguising himself or herself to fool someone into homosexual interaction. In many societies, this is a strong fear among males. Scobie either does not realize the danger, which is unlikely, or the thrill excites him enough to take the risk.

Scobie confesses to Darley that he dresses as a woman when the "Influence" overcomes him during a full moon. He makes it sound as if he fights the tendency as much as he can: "I don't know what comes over me. And yet, you know, it's always the

old thrill…" (*Balthazar* 41). Darley mildly reacted to Scobie's pederasty admission but reacts strongly when Scobie explains his cross-dressing. He shows Darley his "costume" which includes an old women's suit, a cloche hat, and very high-heeled shoes. Darley is shocked: "For God's sake!" (41-42). Darley fears for Scobie's safety because violating the taboo can cause violence. Transvestism also seems to repel Darley, who can only think of getting away from Scobie's apartment. As he leaves, Scobie asks Darley to take the women's clothing and so remove the temptation. Darley does not understand Scobie's desire. The need to cross-dress does not go away when he no longer has the clothing. Scobie finds other women's clothing and continues to violate this intangible taboo which can be as important as formal taboos according to Bataille (*Death and Sensuality* 58).

Scobie fears public reaction with good reason. It is unclear how long he had been dressing in women's clothing. However, Scobie's septuagenarian female impersonation fails to fool the British sailors visiting Alexandria. The sailors react violently to his transvestism and Scobie dies at the hands of the British Navy seamen he loved. Scobie's heterogeneous act results in violence driven by what Bataille describes as "a cold calculation …of emotional states: anger, fear or desire" (*Death and Sensuality* 58). As Nimrod tells Balthazar: "Apparently an old man has been kicked to death by the ratings of H.M.S Milton" (*Balthazar* 171). Scobie violates the British navy's accepted order of things. As Bataille theorizes, that order of things creates stability (*Theory of Religion* 67). But stability excretes instability and violence.

Bataille contends that nature is violent, and even a rational being "succumbs to stirrings within himself which he cannot bring to heel" (*Death and Sensuality* 35).

Scobie's violent death represents a case of how one transgression provokes another. The British sailors are willing to kill someone who violates the order of gender. Scobie's actions evoke disgust, anger, and possibly fear (*Balthazar* 171). Scobie's murder demonstrates how strongly people can feel about protecting their homogeneity. For those people, perhaps Scobie's murder seems less harmful than his unacceptable heterogeneous practices.

Bataille theorizes that humanity is a "hybrid of transgression and prohibition, so that the word human always denotes a system of contradictory impulses some depending on those they that neutralize but never entirely eliminate, and others delivering a volence [sic] mixed with the certainly of peacefulness that will follow" (*The Accursed Share Vol II & III* 342). Scobie's place in Alexandrian society was only problematic when his heterogeneous behavior could not be ignored. His pederasty creates victims. Victims, as Justine demonstrates, can build excess and transgress against formal law and unwritten rules. Group members assess which transgressions must be dealt with to preserve social homogeneity. Scobie was a transvestite homosexual pederast. However, he tries to minimize his threat to society. Ostensibly, he succeeds for many years. However, he ultimately fails. Scobie, as a transvestite, was not a part of the British sailors' homogeneous group and when he crossed that boundary he caused fear or disgust. His expulsion was violent but the sailors acted to preserve their status quo homogeneity.

Chapter V:

CONCLUSION - HETEROGENEITY VERSUS POWER

Justine and Scobie represent two of the multiple heterogeneous characters in *The Alexandria Quartet*. The application of Bataille's theory to these characters reveals how their actions affect the individuals they deal with daily, those they transgress against, and the larger society. Both characters understand the taboo structure of Alexandria and know the potential punishments for transgressing those limits. However, both Justine and Scobie transgress in different, nearly conflicting ways.

Justine, like Scobie, is very familiar with her society's taboo system. Justine commits multiple heterogeneous actions, which include adultery, deceit, and the exploration of polytheism. She plans many of her transgressions to support a political goal: selling arms to Palestinian Jews, which threatens the Muslim society she lives in. On the individual level, Justine convinces Darley to transgress sexually with her. She transgresses against Darley when she acts like she cares for him. Justine creates an intellectual bond with Darley that becomes a sexual affair. She uses this trust to find out how much Darley knows about Nessim's Palestinian support. Her overall goal is to help her husband Nessim destabilize Muslim governments in the Middle East and remove Muslims from power in Egypt. To achieve that goal, Justine creates excessive personas to intrigue everyone around her. She projects herself as a victim of childhood incestuous rape, as a grieving mother, as a disillusioned Jew, as a nymphomaniac, and sometimes, as a lesbian. Only Justine knows the truth. She reminds Nessim of how she copied out

notes for her first husband when he wrote *Moeurs* (*Mountolive* 208). The unused notes were bound and she gave them to Darley. Justine makes Darley believe she has shared something very personal with him. However, her deceit makes Darley a victim. She navigates her social system well because she knows how individuals deal with violations of that system, particularly if they sympathize with the transgressor.

The other characters in *The Quartet* bring their unique perspective into the narrative when they comment on Justine. Justine fascinates characters such as Darley. She draws him into an affair so she can learn what his lover, Melissa, might know about their plan to ship arms to the Jews in Palestine. Darley does not realize Justine deceives him until their affair ends. At this point Darley confronts the transgressions against him and writes: "I must record what more I know and attempt to render it comprehensible or plausible to myself, if necessary, by an act of imagination" (*Balthazar* 28). This transgression is between Darley and Justine. Darley no longer feels guilty about hurting Justine's husband. He switches from the perpetrator to the victim: [F]or how have I never stopped to ask myself for a second why Justine should turn aside to bestow her favours [sic] on me?" (47).

According to Bataille, people who violate taboos risk expulsion (*Visions* 140). In the case of individual transgression, the group constitutes a small number of people who expect a system of fair play between participants in the group. If that system of fair play is violated, the expulsion can be violent, as it was with Capodistria's alleged murder. If the transgression produces violent emotions, the transgressor may forfeit his or her status or membership in the sub-group or, in extreme cases, his or her life, as in the case of

Scobie's murder. In Darley's case, his disappointment causes him to exclude Justine from his company, but he requires no other action.

Darley's rather bland, disheartened reaction may result from Balthazar's medical perspective of Justine as a mentally damaged person. Balthazar encourages Darley to consider Justine's transgressions as excess emotion. Justine builds excess because she is a victim and violations that affect her (rape and a kidnapped child) remain unresolved. Neither her religion not her community help her. Balthazar's scientific authority casts doubt on Darley's previous assumptions. It is never clear how much Balthazar knows about Nessim and Justine's political intrigue. However, Balthazar encourages people to indulge prohibited activities because he believes society creates more taboos that "create the desire they are intended to cure" (*Justine* 100). Bataille theorizes: "There exists no prohibition that cannot be transgressed. Often the transgression is permitted, often it is prescribed" (*Death and Sensuality* 57). Bataille also acknowledges "that prohibitions are not proposed from without" and societies create taboos "to eliminate violence" (32). Balthazar mirrors Bataille's theory that taboos must change with society. Societies negotiate what to appropriate into their homogeneity and what to excrete. This affects the taboo systems and laws. The big picture taboos, such as murder, may remain taboo, while lower level taboos, such as a prohibition against women driving vehicles, need to be reconsidered. *The Quartet* shows how individuals can negotiate responses to transgressions without resorting to violence; however, negotiations can fail.

Justine represents a danger because she challenges Egypt's leaders. Bataille argues that individuals should experience anguish when they violate a taboo (*The Accursed Share, Vol I* 38-39). Justine is dangerous because she does not feel the anguish

(*Clea* 53-54). Objectivity permits her to use Darley's anguish to control his actions. Once Darley examines his emotions, Justine loses control over him. Darley moves past his victimization, makes peace with his transgressions, rescinds his self-expulsion, and rejoins society. However, Justine does not change, as is demonstrated when she tricks the Egyptian Muslim leader, Memlik, into releasing her from house arrest (*Clea* 280).

Bataille's theory posits that heterogeneous people are only labeled when society members witness their heterogeneity and must judge if it threatens their society. Scobie hides or suppresses his heterogeneity because a reputation for eccentricity will not defend deviant sexual behavior. Scobie transgresses against individuals but never plans to subvert the government. In fact, he has a strong sense of civic duty, with a stereotypical colonial attitude toward Egypt and Egyptians. Scobie's transgressions remain on the individual level, and he fears discovery, even as a British subject in Alexandrian society. Although Scobie often plays the fool and even though his elderly status helps build sympathy for him, he still represents a character capable of causing terror in others, as is evidenced in his death.

Gender boundaries are very strong in most patriarchal societies because these relate to reproduction of a society. The fear created by someone dressed to deceive can be strong. In Scobie's case, the sailors took punishment into their own hands, whether they intended to kill him or not. He unintentionally created a situation that spawned further transgressions which included the violation of the death taboo. Perhaps the more salient point is that Egyptian authorities condoned one transgression in response to another transgression. Notably the British sailors who killed Scobie did not face any punishment.

Justine and Scobie transgress at different levels. Justine seeks to use transgression to her advantage to create political change. She threatens the balance of power because she seeks some of the power for herself, as a Jew and as a woman. She agrees with Nessim's assessment: "You know, we all know, that our days are numbered since the French and the British lost control in the Middle East. We…are being gradually engulfed by the Arab tide, the Moslem [sic] tide" (*Mountolive* 199 my ellipses). She unapologetically creates victims along the way but attempts to create a persona that will excuse her behavior long enough to attain her ultimate goal (210). Justine is also able to avoid permanent expulsion from society and is only placed under house arrest at Nessim's desert property (*Clea* 18). Scobie's heterogeneous actions are intentional but he feels anguish when he reflects on his violations: "I suppose one shouldn't have Tendencies—any more than warts or a big nose. But what can I do?" (*Balthazar* 33). He finds ways to rationalize or mute the anguish by potentially believing that his victims are consentual partners in his actions: "It isn't that I cause any harm." Scobie's visible heterogeneity causes fear or disgust among the witnesses and he is permanently expelled from society.

The Quartet offers multiple perspectives of the same events. That multiplicity suggests countless opportunities for examination. One examination often spawns other thoughts, questions, and potential areas of examination. For that reason, this conclusion will address what this thesis attempted to do, what it did not do, and what further examination would be prioritized if it were to be updated and expanded.

This thesis examined the behavior of two characters whose behavior violates social norms. Violations can risk a person's place in a group. Bataille's theory of

heterogeneity, excess, and expenditure was applied to the examination. This theory helps to identify the violations in relation to who or what has been transgressed against. Based on Bataille's theory of how heterogeneous elements can be excluded yet reappropriated, the examination tried to determine who was judging the behavior and when punishment was administered, behavior was ignored, or behavior was excused. *The Quartet's* narrative indicates a very high threshold for heterogeneity among Egyptians in Durrell's Alexandria. It implies that excretion or expulsion only happens when one removes oneself from society as Justine (who fled to Palestine) or when fear or disgust cause witnesses to violently expel someone as the British sailors did when they murdered a cross-dressed Scobie.

This thesis does not address how the social norms and any judgment of violations within *The Quartet* may be due to the colonial influence of the European colonizers, specifically England and France. It did not have space for additional examination with either a historical or post-colonial lens, nor does it account for any specific Egyptian and British cultural differences in the WWII era. Additionally, this thesis does not provide an in-depth examination of the known written laws and religious codes or unwritten prohibitions for the Alexandrian society.

If there is an opportunity to reexamine this thesis or expand the scope, the first priority would be to add a postcolonial or Orientalist examination of the social norms and potential violations. The historical context of the British influence in Egypt, particularly Alexandria, is critical for understanding the government structure and stability concerns in relation to Nessim and Justine's plot to destabilize the Muslim government. Additionally, the Quartet's other characters, such as Mountolive or Melissa, may need to

be added to the examination of homogeneous and heterogeneous behaviors. Mountolive may provide the best vehicle for examining British colonizing attitudes and influence. However, the scope of a future thesis or dissertation may still limit the amount of examination.

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