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Mapping the Self/ves in Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*

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in Comparative Literature

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Nobody guided me to myself. I am the guide,

I am the guide

To myself between the sea and the desert

From my language I was born

Mahmud Darwish (1995:113)

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this thesis to:

My loving parents: Moussa and Fatima for always loving and supporting me.

My wife: It has been said that you only fall in love once, but I do not believe in that. Every time I see you; I fall in love all over again. Safia has a heart full of love, and she pours it out on me every single day; no matter what kind of day she had or what kind of troubles she faces. Thus, this thesis is dedicated to my wonderful wife... I love you to the moon and back.

My second mother: Djidjekh Khokha for her continuous support and love

My son Mohamed Assem: dear son you have made me stronger and better. You are truly a gift from Allah.

My family: I cannot begin without expressing my gratitude to my family, especially brothers and sisters for all of the love, support, encouragement and prayers they have sent in my way along with this journey.

My friends: my friends have supported me, and I will always appreciate all what they have done for me especially: Maochou, Nouerdine, Amina, Djamila, Nadia, Yasser, Abdelhak, Sadek, Abdelfatah, Mahmoud, Walid, and Halim.

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DECLARATION

I, **BENABDERRAZEK Abdenacer**, carried out this work entitled: **Mapping the self/ves in Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa***. I do hereby solemnly declare that the work I presented in this thesis is purely my own, and has not been submitted before to any other institution or university for a degree. I declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work. This work was carried out and completed at **Department of English, Djillali Liabes University of Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria**.

Signature



Date:

24/02/2021

ACRONYMS

AIDs:	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LGBT:	Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders

ABSTRACT

Debating the impact of the contemporary sphere on the construction of the self directs a considerable attention to the possible outcome of self destruction. Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* (1994) and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* (2016) have a heavy commitment to the progressive positioning of homosexual characters considering their deviant gender roles in specific conditions. Both works gradually attract attention thanks to their engagements in the politics of sexuality which instigate to question the effects of having unusual gender roles on the fabric of self/ves. The present thesis aims at investigating the authors' underlying critique to the foundations of social relations and discusses the mapping of these characters' psychological development (self) and their socialization (selves) in the course of their life. It draws mainly upon an eclectic approach consisted mainly of Freud's psychosexual development and Butler's feminist assumption on gender and sexuality to explicate the potential implications of male homosexual appropriateness of self disconnectedness. The study shows that both Bellatin and Haddad's portrayal of male homosexuals' self destruction questions the politics of sexual identity fixation which demonstrates the problematic nature of their fragmented identity. It also demonstrates the moving pictures of male homosexual identity fragmentation the novelists provide through their rambling vision of the overlapping factors affecting the mapping of the self/ves in an increasingly difficult atmosphere to advocate in.

Key words: fragmentation, male homosexual, psychological development, self destruction, sexual identity

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General Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The social dimension of sex and its biological categorization into male or female seem to be people's first notice from which they explore the intrinsic meaning of gender roles. The process of socializing maleness and femaleness traits is said to maintain social control and conformity of gender roles in accordance to the dominant socio-cultural norms. However, forging deviant sexualities out of the existing heterosexual parameters questions the conventional perception of sexuality in a myriad of ways. Homosexuality installs itself as a "natural" variation of sexuality challenging these socio-cultural norms. Most importantly, homosexuality evokes intensive ideological debates that captivate the eyes of many authors, as it becomes not only a literary square for commercializing literary contents, but also ideologies free from rigid social constraints.

Homosexuality appears to be a prominent feature in Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* (1993) and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* (2016) who portray different cultural settings. Both works gradually attract attention thanks to their engagements in the politics of sexuality and gender norms. The authors discuss the course of the developmental socialization (selves) and the psychological fabric (self) of male homosexuals. This is in order to show the possible consequences of having "deviant" sexualities in their social development. The writers attempt, through forging literary spaces from the squalor of the plague and the so called Arab Spring turmoil (2011), to normalize what is socially seen as abnormal or deviant.

Mainstream cultures depicted in both works are being challenged by the forging of unusual sexual performances that seek to cement its existence and acceptability. These performances expose extreme sensitivity and vulnerability of homosexuals. Conventionally, social rules operate as a system of codes that maintain the social order and continuity. In this sense, the researcher tries to evoke debates on the space given to normalize or destabilize homosexual themes.

Statement of the Problem

Traditionally, the body that has to fit into narrow sexual spaces is coerced into the negotiation of compatibility to perform roles beyond the social expectation. Increasingly homosexuals seem to challenge the existing classification, which limit them to the ambit of traditional gender roles. Consequently, they are treated as damaged bodies, which have historically been associated with shame, insult and accusation. Sexual politics have shaped the body performances in a myriad of ways. In this regard, Mario Bellatin and Saleem Haddad have challenged the assigned sexual roles attributed to both men and women. Homosexuality has thus come to paint sexual performances of their characters. However, social expectations are being challenged by the visibility "deviant" sexual orientations in modern society. Increasingly today, homosexuals are performing non-standard gender roles within public spaces transgressing the conventional rules of gender performances that judge them as "abnormal".

In the view of the vastness of the aforementioned themes, the present research considers the ways Bellatin and Haddad give voice to male homosexual characters and inhabit them in their novels. The homosexuality that shapes the bulk of the characters behaviours is constructed to reflect the authors' views on the role of sexuality in the mapping of the self/ves. In this sense, the present work primarily probes the following research questions:

- a. In what way has male homosexuality mapped the perception of self/ves in Haddad's *Guapa* and Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*?
- b. What contributions have writers like Saleem Haddad and Mario Bellatin added in understanding the socio-cultural dimension of male homosexuality?
- c. What literary aesthetics could be found in the representation of the problematic areas of male homosexual characters?

Hypotheses

To support the above formulated research questions, the present research work is fuelled by the following related hypotheses:

- a. Male homosexual characters are constructed by both writers with different levels of anxiety according to the social and cultural dictum.
- b. Haddad and Bellatin's contribution is manifested in their underlying critique of the social fabric of selves and the restricted area in which male homosexuals are dis/allowed to exhibit their innermost self.

- c. Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Haddad's *Guapa* marks a subtle thematic shift in literature that embodies a considerable attention to characters of unusual sexual orientations and particularly interests in how they perceive their difference.

Objectives

This study focuses on the representation of male homosexuals in Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Haddad's *Guapa*, the present study is undertaken to fulfil the following objectives:

- a. Studying Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Haddad's *Guapa* and their articulation of male homosexual issues with a special focus on the fabric of self and the socialization of the selves.
- b. Investigating the emerging trends of homosexual themes in both works.
- c. Studying how Bellatin and Haddad offer insights in both Latin American and Arab queer literature.

Literature Review

Among those who have realized a work on the target theme of the present thesis, the researcher mentions those who consider mainly the themes of homosexuality and its variant representation in both Arab and Latin American literature. They, as well, praise the action of revolt as being the very adequate form of expressing the self and its socialisation. A number of research papers have been realized in this sense as Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* (1993) and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* (2016) have

been the object of analysis by many critical works; those include famous names as follows:

- Frederic Lagrange's *Male Homosexuality in Modern Arabic Literature* (2000) explores a range of male homosexuality representations in contemporary Arabic fiction. The author investigates the reasons behind the obscurity of male homosexuality in recent times. He deals with the representation of social relations reflected in Arab society's views on male-male relationships.

- Jolanda Guardi's *Female Homosexuality in Contemporary Arabic Literature* (2014) focuses on a set of novels that includes homosexuals as their main characters. Her work offers a monolithic image of the representation of homosexuality and Islam. She highlights the way the female homosexual characters regard the binary structure of Arab society, and traces the developments and the growth of new aesthetic forms in Arab queer literature.

- John Stewart Bankhead's *Queer(ed) Bodies, Spaces, and Forms in Selected Works by Reinaldo Arenas, Mario Bellatin, and Isaac Chocrón* (2014): examines queer performances in the works of Arenas, Bellatin, and Chocrón. He studies the ways queer bodies, space, and forms are normatively restricted, and how queer bodies seek same-sex sexual relations in heteronormative spaces. He also investigates queered performances and their roles in signifying transgressive lines of social spaces.

▪ Amy Kennedy's *Running Athwart the Human: Queer (Un)Intelligibility and Animal Connections in Justin Torres' We the Animals and Mario Bellatín's Beauty Salon* examines the notions of social unintelligibility in queer spaces in the works of Justin Torres' *We the Animals* and Mario Bellatín's *Beauty Salon*. She discusses the possibility for new connections and becomings by shedding light on the racial marginalization of homosexual performances in *We the Animals* and the ways in which the homosexual community is isolated in *Beauty Salon*.

The Methodology

The present thesis draws eclectically on a qualitative method combined with a set of approaches that are relevant to the core of the research to study the mapping of self/ves of male homosexuals in Mario Bellatín's *Beauty Salon* (1993) and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* (2016). The content analysis is built around the examination of male homosexuals' representations in the selected works, and the ways the self and selves are constructed to perform in opposition to the existing socio-cultural conventions. The queer theory is thus used to analyze male homosexuals' "deviant" gender roles as they challenge the conventional gender norms. Freud's psychosexual development and Judith Butler's feministic assumption on gender and sexuality are also used to study man-woman relationships and explore man-man relationship along with their psychosexual development.

Motivation for the Study

The present thesis is confined to the representation of male homosexual characters in the novels selected for analysis which are broadly categorised under the genre of queer literature. The study, however, does not take into account other themes within each novel. The researcher is not intended to make any generalisation about the male homosexual issues and individuals. Rather, his aim is to examine the ways used by both writers to foreground these issues by examining the mapping of male homosexual self/ves in Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*. It attempts to demonstrate how important it is to be aware of the literary representation of male homosexual characters to better understand human behaviour. The study is also linked to my personal motivation. As an EFL doctoral student, I'm concerned with human emotions and how issues of race, gender and sexuality can be both provocative and appreciated. Particularly, taboos have given voices to distinctive cultural expression and permissive behaviours.

Significance of the Research

The debate regarding male homosexuality has recently dominated the academic research. The academic community in both sociology and psychology has broadly seen gender and sexuality as an influential constituent of the self. Earlier research in the same fields has thoroughly regarded the traditional gender roles assigned for man and woman as a basis for the stabilization of social conformity. In

fact, Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Haddad's *Guapa* have been perceived as a site to engage in the debates on how male homosexual experiences are portrayed in literature. Most importantly, their representations to this category have captivated academic attention, specially for their attempts to destabilize social order through fusing defiant sexualities.

Research Outlines

The present thesis is presented in four chapters. The first chapter explores the various milestones in Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*. It provides a detailed account on the context from which Arab social and cultural structures have started witnessing radical changes. It highlights the interwoven relationship between the dystopian reality and the broken self/ves in the Arab countries and the Middle East in particular. The chapter focuses on exposing the hindrances faced by the Arab male homosexuals that cause them to be an extricable thread to the social and cultural fabric of the Arab world. The chapter also pinpoints how the Arab world is portrayed in the novel and how it is seen as a corrupt political system and a dysfunctional cultural one.

The second chapter investigates Bellatin literary realm and put his work *Beauty Salon* into scrutiny in order to decipher its themes and techniques. Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* seems to have a wealth of attention from critics and scholars as it tackles a number of modern concerns especially those which mainly deal with male homosexuality.

The third chapter is devoted to the discussion of the theoretical framework of gender in addition to a number of related theories including: feminism, agency and queer theory. It also draws upon Butler's approach on gender as social construction and gender performativity that determine new perceptions of gender and gender related concepts, such as sex and sexuality, which have become influential concepts in modern literary criticism.

In the fourth chapter, the content analysis for the novels under study is examined using an eclectic approach consisting mainly of gender related theories to decode writers' strategy to map the course of the developmental socialization (selves) and the psychological fabric (self) of male homosexuals.

As to the general conclusion, it also opens paths of research connected to the major theme of the doctoral thesis. To what extent are homosexual practices incompatible within Islamic cultures? As homosexuality is not a new trend in Arab or Mexican/ Latino American countries, moving femininities and masculinities are discussed again and again in everyday life as in literary spaces.

Chapter One:

**Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*: the Dystopian Middle
East and the Fragmented Identity**

Chapter One

Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*: Dystopian Middle East and the Fragmented Identity

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1.1 Introduction

Throughout ages and specifically after the decolonization of a number of African and Asian colonies as Uganda (1962) or India (1947), Arab countries have faced multiple political conflicts such as : the Six-Day War (1967)¹, the Oil War (1973)², the Yom Kippur War (1973)³, the Gulf war⁴, the aftermath of 9/11⁵ attacks, among several other events. These wars have destabilized the Arab world and fragmented the Arab identity allowing more crises to befall. It seems that the Arab world is currently suffering from religious conflicts, a misbalanced class system, lack of freedom of speech and democracy, sexism, and homophobia.

The current and future of the Arab world are confronted with political, social,

¹ **Six Days War:** the six days war was also known as June war, Third Arab- Israel war or Naksah. It took place in June 1967. It was a bloody conflict between Arab states of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and Isreal. The results of the war have tremendous effects on the world.

² **The Oil War (1973):** As a reaction to the June 1973 war, Arab countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Libya, and Algeria cut off oil and created a shortage and rising prices all over the world. It is worth of noting that this was not the first time that the "oil weapon" deploy.

³ **Yom Kippur War** (or the October War) is the Fourth Arab-Israeli War. It was launched on October 6th, 1973 by both Syria and Egypt on the day of Yom Kippur ; the holy Jewish day.

⁴ **The Gulf War:** in the early 1990, the late president of Iraq Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion and occupation of his small rich neighbour Kuwait. Saddam's main motive behind that invasion was his need to top up impoverished Iraqi economy that had been largely affected by the war again Iran.

⁵ **9/11:** on September 11, 2001 a group of militants known as al Qaeda organized an attack against targets in the United States. Al Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and carried out an act of suicide. Two of the planes were flown in the twin towers of the world trade centre in New York City. A third plane hit the Pentagon just from outside, whereas the last one crashed into a field in Shanksville in Pennsylvania.

cultural, and economic disputes that endanger their potential development. This situation, notwithstanding its biased view, holds a degree of truth concerning illiteracy and poverty in Middle Eastern countries. It hinders the Arabs from prospering. Thus, the present chapter, through examining Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*, aims to shed light on how Arab harsh reality is depicted.

The above-mentioned are interwoven elements in the sense that the occurrence of the first leads to the other, and vice versa. To put this chapter into perspective, it intends to highlight the interwoven relationship between the dystopian reality and the broken self/ves in the Arab countries and the Middle East in particular. It mainly stresses on the hindrances faced by the Arab people that cause them to be extricable threats to the social and cultural fabric of the Arab world. It also pinpoints how the Arab world is portrayed in the novel and how it is seen as a corrupt political system and as a dysfunctional cultural one. These focuses serve only to illustrate how the social fabric is near to collapse, signaling no optimism for a brighter reality.

1.2 Arab Literature Written in English

Arab English literature is an Arab literature written by Arab writers in English tongue. It includes the literary production made by writers from the Arab Diaspora which "often features diasporic subjects who cross these boundaries between cultures, and are often depicted as revolutionary, ground-breaking" (Srivastava 179). Arab novels written in English passes a new phase of development after having a growing body of fiction by number of Arab novelists who write in English. These writers build

a sub-genre of Arab literature, and their thematic awareness is getting attention internationally. In Arab novels, characters draw various life dimensions in both Arab world and abroad.

A great number of Arab countries as Egypt and Sudan have been colonies under the British rule for many years. These countries hold a number of people who can speak English. For this reason Arab English literature gains an important status in the Arab world. Moreover, English education affected the Arab cultural traditions. This leads to the appearance of new literary forms adapted from the west. It is generally agreed that the novel is a literary form that can be used for exploring the context of modern time. Arab fictions written in English or translated to English occupy an important place in the world literature due to its originality and its portrayal to life in the Arab world. They also use cultural codes which reflect essentially the richness of the Arabic culture. In this regard, Anati explains:

Historically, Arabic literature has long been a rich source of knowledge and entertainment that no one can ignore; *One Thousand and One Nights* is one example among others that represent the greatness of the Arabic literature. However, today's parents, teachers, librarians, and publishers are concerned about the scarcity of readily available contemporary Arabic literature for modern readers of any age, including young adults, particularly in the genre of fictional prose (171).

Arab English Literature has an air of difference compared to the Arab literary production written in Arabic. Writing in English has made Arab English literature an effective tool to export Arab culture. Arab English writers also speak of concerns over the lasting effects of colonisation. Thus, scholars believe that Arab English literature is an outcome of a multilingual interaction. According to Ashcroft et al (1995), the colonial language has provided an opportunity to approach world literature and exhibit a growing confidence in the authors' ways of reflecting realities; as they write: “to name reality is therefore to exert power over it, simply because the dominant language becomes the way in which it is known” (283).

The study of Anglo- Arab novels becomes an area of debating the impact of changing Arab social and cultural norms on people. A number of Arab novels written in English provide us with a wealth of information on both old and the modern period. The Arab English writers document how Arabs responded to the effects of colonial domination.

1.3 Themes in Anglo-Arab Literature

The scope of the Arab literature includes many themes that are relevant mainly to the changing Arab society and culture. Many of these themes overlap in one another which make them consider as subjects in many researches and degree courses. Anglo-Arab literature groups a number of concepts that have been tackled from different angles by both Arab and non-Arab scholars. These themes reflect how strong the commitment of the Arab writers' to their native culture and society. Themes like

colonisation, identity, place and displacement form the bulk of literary productions the Arab writers have been producing along with their interaction with the changing social and political factors in the Arab culture and society.

1.3.1 Colonialism

Colonialism is defined as a process of establishing and spreading power and hegemony over other territories. The problem in defining colonialism arises when compared to imperialism. The difference between colonialism and imperialism is that the two concepts are commonly mixed up. In this regard, Childs and Fowler (1997) state that a comprehensible distinction has to be drawn between imperialism and colonialism; they represent two different methods of exercising power. Childs and Williams describe imperialism as the expansion of international commerce protected by the political, legal, and military forces, while colonialism is the process of the people settlement from one country in another (227). Colonialism is a common feature in both Arab history and literature. It created a violent reaction from Arab people who are charged with the rhetoric of independence.

It is important here to notice that Anglo-Arab literature differs from Francophone literature as the later seems more postcolonial than Anglo-Arab literature. Anglo-Arab literature is studied with little attention to colonialism. Wail S. Hassan has dealt with the same idea when he states:

Symptomatic of this cooptation is the interesting fact that Arabic literature of French expression by Maghrebian and Levantine writers is routinely incorporated in Francophone studies, housed as it is on the margin of the French curriculum (and is therefore part of "postcolonialism"), rather than in Arabic or Middle Eastern Studies, where literature by their Arabophone compatriots is studied, often with little attention to colonial history (45).

In Anglo-Arab literature, colonialism is perceived as a period in Arab world history where Arabs saw radical changes in their society and culture. Anglo-Arab novels record these changes and in the time depict the sufferings of Arab people from the tyranny of colonisation and the aftermath of its effects.

1.3.2 Identity

Identity is a term that is commonly used in both Arab and Anglo-Arab literature. The word identity "reflects the notion that one can know who someone really is. In the second view, identity is seen as acquired through socialisation or the internalisation of imposed social roles (Code 277). Identity is intertwined with the feeling of belonging which is shared by social group's members. However, one's identity is constantly controversial because individuals do not share the same degree of commitment to community common characteristics, values and beliefs.

Resistance, both emotional and cultural, is inevitable in the construction of identity out of individual struggles and social contradictions. The plain truth prevails as:

Essentialized identity construction, feminine and masculine identities, are illusions, made possible through repeated cultural performances, in act, speech, body, language and dress. As a result, identities appear as natural categories of existence. The coherence of man/woman is part of the socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility, i.e. female-feminine vs. male-masculine. What exists outside this strict construction remains unintelligible, transgressive, misunderstood. It does probably mean that identity is an illusion or repeated performance of gender, race and sexuality. (Bedjaoui 28)

In Anglo-Arab literature, dealing with issues related to identity requires a special examination. The identity of an Arab is shaped and influenced by the life's changing circumstances, mainly during and after colonisation. Anglo-Arab writers get inspired from Arabs' colonial and postcolonial intercultural relations to produce a literature that reflects Arab realities in these eras. Sarnou has noted this when she said:

This trend [Anglo-Arab literature] of Arabic literature is to be considered as an influence on contemporary international literatures, in particular on the postcolonial, with its theorization of intercultural

relations by reference to the impact of colonialism and imperialism on non Western literatures (67).

To speak about identity, the influential post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha¹ targets mainly the effects of colonial identity on the colonised. Bhabha shows a strong opposition to the acclaimed post-colonial theorists and mainly Edward Said² whose works focus is on the disparities between the colonizer and the colonized. Rather, Bhabha explores the points of similarity between the two. He argues that the white is constructed as being the oppressor and the non white as the subjugated. The clash of cultures affects Arab identity which "provokes a feeling of disturbance, synonymous to a "nervous condition" and the uncanny state of ambivalence; a state of mind that he argues to be the place in where the hybrid identity comes into existence" (Childs 123).

1.3.3 Hybridity

Hybridity has become a cultural subject closely associated with Homi Bhabha. It is commonly used to describe the state of in-betweenness of two different cultures during and after colonization. The influence of colonizing culture during the colonial period had a great impact on Arab cultures. In *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key*

¹ Homi Bhabha (1949 -) is an Indian theorist and thinker whose writings are acknowledged by modern critics all over the world. Bhabha investigated the dilemma of postcolonial people whose culture is affected by the colonial discourses.

² Edward Said (1935 - 2003) is Palestinian- American literary and cultural critic focused on the portrayals of Orient. His *Orientalism* (1978) is viewed as a set of procedures shaped Orient. The discourse was systematically utilized by the Europeans during and after the colonisation of the Orient.

Concepts (2000), Ashcroft et al distinguish various types of hybridity when they write: "Hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc" (118). It has become a fundamental part in the development of Postcolonial Studies, but opens up to stringent critiques.

Hybridity refers to the experience that is shared by colonized and the colonizers. People who live between two cultures find it sometimes difficult to belong to either culture. This is what Bhabha refers to as "a Third Space". This third Space, according to Childs and Fowler (2006), what:

allows us to conceive of the identities of cultures in terms that transcend the binary dialectic between 'us/them', 'insider/outsider', 'inclusion/exclusion'. It also enables discussion of cultural difference in terms that do not exoticize it for in such exoticism Bhabha detects an Othering principle that distances difference and disavows the constitution of the Self by the Other. (112)

Hybridity is a controversial term in Anglo-Arab literature. Arab communities look at hybrid individuals as in between selves. These individuals sacrifice major part of their cultural, social and religious values to satisfy their new identity which is different from their native identity (Al Areqi 61). Many Arab writers as Malek Haddad deal with the effects of having a hybrid identity in Arab society which is doomed to be homogeneous.

1.3.4 Ambivalence

The postcolonial conditions force Arab society to adopt new mode of life. Arab people need to find ways to adapt new values that help better engagement in new cultural conditions. Modern conditions complicate the relationship between of Arab people and their native cultural components. They become rather confused whether they adopt different values or stick to their native ones. The term "Ambivalence" is pivotal in Bhabha's theory. According to Ashcroft et al. (2000), ambivalence "disrupts the clear-cut authority of colonial domination because it disturbs the simple relationship between colonizer and colonized. Ambivalence is therefore an unwelcome aspect of colonial discourse for the colonizer "(10). It explains the problem caused while adopting the different cultural values. In the Arab world; where Western (coloniser) cultural values are considered "superior" to Arab native ones, individuals become more open to westernization due to impact of both Western Media and the inherited sense of inferiority to coloniser. In Arab literature as in many cultures around the world, post-colonial writers raise the need to question individuals who:

Have stepped out of their homeland and its culture geographically, but their bodily and mental connections are lasting. Body and mind constitute the fluid, hybrid space of identification and belonging "inbetween" the cultures, languages, literatures, and histories they correlate (Milz and Staatsexamen 184).

It is in this disturbed bond between Western and the indigenous cultures that ambivalence emerged.

1.3.5 Place and Displacement

The concern with identity continues to claim space in studying place and displacement. The crisis of identity is caused by the sense of being displaced which is the result of the contact with unfamiliar place. It is in "the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft et al 8). In post-colonial theory, the word 'place' refers to the in-between-place where individuals feel that they are caught between two places. It also describes the void between place and language.

The lack of contact with the unfamiliar surroundings leads to a serious sense of alienation. The feeling of alienation shapes the way in which the colonized behaves in the meeting with the coloniser could be "compared to the feeling of displacement which characterizes the colonizer`s encounter with the wilderness of the 'uncivilized' world." (Ashcroft et al. 23-24) The imposition of the language of the coloniser enslaves displaced individuals. Their language has been rendered unprivileged in the alien land. This situation creates a gap between both cultures.

1.3.6 The *Other*

The other responds to the need of creating a space between the self and the other that doesn't fit the norms. As stated by Ashcroft et al: "The existence of others is crucial in defining what is "normal" and in locating one`s own place in the world" (154). The Empire established a systematic segregation between the colonizer and the colonized and sticks all what is uncivilized to the *other*. In this regard, the process of *othering* is defined as a system of creating identities by subjecting others. The racial, geographic, ethnic, economic or ideological differences contribute to the denial of the other. The other always adopts self negation politics that leads to the destruction of their true self.

1.4 Writers of Arab Diaspora

Diaspora has become a fancy word in many fields including literature. Writers of diasporic literatures usually put across their ambivalence which questions their identity. In this regard, Kezia Page writes:"The concept of diaspora as used in postcolonial discourse has gained a recognizable set of discourses intended to mark a distinct shift in the way issues of belonging and citizenship are understood" (2). Arab writers who spread across the world are authors of the process of writing back to the Arab centre. The sense of belonging to their native culture has greatly affected the output of their writing.

Diaspora Arab literature is born out of the expansion of the postcolonial thoughts. The common area of struggle between postcolonial writers and diasporic

writers can be found in the revitalization of the indigenous culture in the face of western hegemony. The colonial past still lingers as a historical load on the formerly colonised people. Therefore, much of the Arab diasporic writings have independent beliefs. They find it vital to reconstruct an alternative identity to experience a complete autonomy in mirroring their realities. The need to increase indigenous people's autonomy is also felt by writers of Arab diaspora. Being influenced by Western writers, writers of Arab diaspora contributed to the pole of Arab English literature. (Awajan et al 31) Their quest for the emancipation of the Arab culture gradually gained them worldwide recognition and improved their long-term outlook. For them, the main ground has been set to study the self in the modern conditions. They seek modernity and at the same time feel bound to their roots. As a result, they find themselves in a jarring position.

Arab diasporic literature raises a number of issues, including the tension between the host country and the motherland. It foregrounds the cultural struggle that is associated with migration and exile, but "more importantly perhaps, diasporic writing, in its crossing of borders, opens up the horizon of place" (Ashcroft et al. 218). Yet, a scrupulous attention has been made to the emergence of new modes of novelistic use of time and space in Arab diasporic writing. They have nostalgic connection with their motherland and add new values to the indigenous culture. To such an extent, they reconcile themselves to the rigidity of traditions and carve out their own identity as Arabs living within the ambit of tradition. Indeed, they try to maintain their ethnic,

religious and cultural identities, and sustain the desire to return to their homelands, to some extent.

Arab diaspora writers as Leila Aboulela are acting upon the experience of both women and men, but the vividness of their portrayal of gender roles covers the various shades of their writings. They portray mostly the issue of identity of Arab migrants in the host land. They view gender from a non western point of view, and work to widen the human experiences from different dimensions. Speaking about gender portrayals in diasporic literature, Ponzanesi Sandra in her book *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora* (2004) notes:

The notion of diaspora does not do away with gender inequalities. On the contrary, it makes them more acute and urgent since women must negotiate the conflicting politics of home and abroad, of tradition and emancipation, and of ethnic belonging and metropolitan fusion (xv).

Striving for sexual identity, characters of Arab diaspora writers present the dilemma of the modern life. It is in understanding the inherent preoccupation with gender and sexual issues that a renewed sense of purpose in their struggle has come to fore. A new class of Arab diaspora writers whose writing is a testimony to the modern thinking about human relations, a new type of psychology and morality, has arisen from the ashes of the traditional ways of writing about Arabs. Their writings describe fragmented and torn identities. In this vein, Bedjaoui rightly says that: This dialectic

of belonging and not belonging is depicted as somewhere in-between, a third space which challenges established hypotheses of [...] identity and becomes a crucial space for [...] subjectivity to negotiate the difference and re-build and re-evaluate (266) their self/selves in incompatible struggles, where any cultural, personal or sexual challenge is harshly condemned. They show a strong opposition to the inherent social constructs which impose rigid standards and restraints on Arabs. They make new adjustments for Arab people to create an alternative self in new surroundings.

Arab novelists as Driss Chraïbi and Amin Zaoui encounter new set of values that enable them to look nostalgically at their native culture and the one they seek to integrate into. A migrant whose situation has predominantly examined in the works of many Arab writers has to go through many upheavals and defines his identity in a new perspective. For the diaspora the lost space has been a utopia, paradise and dream while the host land gives them the status of a guest, and never feels like natural citizens. Diaspora has created an inevitable situation to which migrant can escape the status of the *other* and adapt native identity in order to join the mainstream.

1.5 Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*: Contextual Framework

Saleem Haddad is a contemporary Arab author and aid worker. He was born in Kuwait City in 1983 to an Iraqi-German mother and a Palestinian-Lebanese father. He spent his early years in Jordan. Then, he moved to Cyprus, Canada and England. He joined Doctors without Borders to work as an aid worker in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon and Egypt (<http://attitude.co.uk>). Though Saleem Haddad has joined

the literary world recently as his first novel *Guapa* was published only in 2016, his works are welcomed among readers and critics.

Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* is a clear and well-written piece of work, organized in three different chapters: Casting Donkeys, Imperial Dreams, and The Wedding. In *Guapa*, Haddad narrates the story, occurred after the events of the Arab Spring, of a young homosexual man who goes by the name of Rasa and lives in an unnamed Arab town. His impure bloodline caused him to have an insecure identity. This impurity stems from his mixed-race parents that originate from the West (America) and the Middle East respectively. Rasa is raised in the house of his grandmother because his Arab-American mother decided to disappear after having issues caused mainly with her failure in merging with the Arabic culture. As for his father, he died during his early infancy. Rasa's family issues link to the overall image of the Arab world after the Arab Spring and show the crises faced by Arabs at that time.

The novel, despite being a mere fictional work, demonstrates its power in its realistic portrayal of events. To serve this purpose, characters, in this novel, are also created in a way that depicts the historical and social scenes. This realism allows the author to reveal Arab true cultural features, but it is also important to note that he has also adopted a number of different narrative approaches. Haddad avoids a number of stylistic complexities and ambiguities that characterize many of recent novels in Arabic which often tackle stereotypes on Arab culture and society (Allen 2). Haddad's *Guapa* also backs up the author's underlying criticism of the Arab reality. Moreover, the novel's style allows reflecting on and revealing the author's personal experience

and views on the different cultural, social, and political norms of the Arab society.

Throughout multiple instances, many of the novelists have failed to avoid the political conflicts of the region with war often acts as background to intimate family dramas. (Selatnia 361) However, Saleem Haddad shifts his work to a political narrative. He constantly includes his male homosexual Arab background in *Guapa*. He also makes use of autobiographical storytelling to explore and investigate the Arab world's social behaviours and beliefs. As a postmodernist himself, Haddad thrives to make connections between one and the culture, society, political view he is tied to solve certain behavioural mysteries.

To follow postmodernist guidelines, Haddad aims, in his work, at making the reader not notice any abrupt transitions between fiction and autobiography. For instance, he makes sure that the setting of the plot is not directly given. This creates the debate over whether the events of the story took place in Amman, Cairo, or Damascus. In one of Haddad's interviews, he states that stories can only be metaphorically told if the country of the whereabouts of the events is not named. He added that he preferred not to write a piece of work that would be labeled as a study of a certain country whether anthropologically or politically. He highlights that he, instead, attempts to bring forth to all young Arabs themes they could relate to in spite of their cultural backgrounds (Shubbak).

Haddad persistently draws young Arabs' attention to certain cultural behaviours by presenting characters with a number of cultural, social, and political obstacles. Grouping these different hindrances awakens the Arab people to the reality of their

societies. Furthermore, sexual preferences as well as woman body are not yet to be fully accepted in the realm of heterosexuality, and constitute a potential threat to cultural homogeneity in modern Arab societies, as Rima Sadek argues:

Modern Arab societies have a twofold, ambiguous approach to sexuality and gender. On the one hand, there is an obsessive interest in sexuality, desire and the woman's body, often suppressed, oppressed and treated as a threat to morality, decency and the Arab cultural identity (51).

Interestingly, sexual orientations uncover more personal preferences in modern Arab societies. Haddad has thus pursued to explore his main characters' true sexual identity regardless of cultural, social, and even religious constraints. Unavoidably, the same constraints he tried to disregard come back to haunt them in the course of their journey. Their troubled minds state is a minor illustration of their conflict to acknowledge their sexual identity.

1.6 *Guapa*: Overlapping Themes

Considering it as the pioneering Arabic-English piece of work that deals with homosexuality in the Middle East, Haddad's *Guapa* is credited for its realistic characters and significant themes. It is an account that holds what these characters think and what Arab society thinks of them. This constitutes the everyday social war the Arab people have to go through. Haddad's *Guapa* further demonstrates characters' objection towards a number of societal beliefs that originate from the misinterpretation of religious guidelines. The author also highlights the divided reality

of the Arab social behaviour with cultural beliefs. He stresses that neither the general social makeup nor the cultural values of individuals can represent one's identity. They are tools to help individuals blend it with their society in order to not feel *othered*. That is why Haddad mentions the issue of finding personal identity in correspondence with the cultural and social reality.

Haddad attempts to uncover the existing social constraints to dismantle how society deals with people of different sexual orientation. He claims that society has drawn a linear path to its members when it comes to gender, and drifted away from this path would ultimately lead to social isolation. He also explains how the leading standards upon which individuals are judged are not suitable at all situations. Showing characters struggle with such social criterion allows Haddad to break down several social and cultural taboos that deal with one's sexual identity, along with his conviction that homosexuality is a natural variant of heterosexuality.

To explore the cultural, societal, and political realities of the Arab world, *Guapa* also discusses the geo-temporal dimensions. Though sexuality remains the main issue of the story's main focus, the writer tackles other cultural, social, and religious problems faced by the Arabs. As for the time when the story events occurred, it is during the day after Rasa is discovered in bed with his boyfriend Taymour by his grandmother Teta. The story, however, is not limited to that single day; the author also shifts between multiple time periods to make the readers understand Rasa's background, along with how his family treated him. To talk about the impact of social and political order on the protagonist's agency in Arab literature, Mohammed Kadal

states:

He [protagonist] lacks the agency needed for the control over his life or for the participation in political life, leaving him subject to the competing powers. In many works, the protagonist is depicted as someone who carries solutions, but because of the political and social order, he is not permitted the right to take action or express his ideology. (446)

The frustrating attempts in the Arab world to reach ultimate social status are a key element in *Guapa*. Haddad makes use of his non-linear narration style ¹ to examine the past while discussing the present. Non-linear narration helps connecting the events happening in the past that lead to the actuality of the present. (McElroy 23) It has to do with the impure image of the Arab world. Indeed, Haddad, via this technique, relates the precarious Arab history to the present unpleasant state of the Arab world. By smoothly reallocating the time of the story, he reviews the past cultural and social values of the Arab world in relation to today's values. It allows questioning those values and what was and/or is blindly accepted by the Arab society.

Events, in the Arab world during and after the 9/11 attacks, map the way the author tracks the lives of his characters. These shifts would later be the main selling features of *Guapa*. Haddad uses such a technique to make links between the protagonist's personality and the political reality around him. In this regards;

¹ Non-linear narration style is used by a number of Arab writers in an attempt to jump the linear flow of events and create other textual spaces to merge time and space.

Abderrazag and Serir state:

In the wake of September 11th, 2001 attacks, many factors contributed to shaping discourse including media and politics. As a result, issues like religion, Islam in particular, and Muslims as terrorists turned to be serious threats to those in power as well as ordinary people (101).

Haddad brings to attention a multitude of activist themes such as: police abuse, youth rights, women's rights, and immigration issues. Instead of focusing on one theme, *Guapa* links a range of cultural, social, political, and religious issues that shape the Arab world and affect individuals' identities. However, despite the multiple themes discussed in *Guapa*, sexuality remains Haddad's prime focus.

Indeed, Islam prohibits deviant sexual acts and orientations. Yet, Haddad chooses to overlook Islamic documents and treats them as a threat to homosexuality. He mainly thinks that social expectations are also an obstacle faced by homosexuals. In the Arab world, disagreement on the existence of homosexuality is heavily influenced by Islamic laws. This idea is clearly expressed in Sa'Diyya Shaikh's words as she argues:

In terms of varied notions of sexual propriety, another example relates to the presence and accommodation of homoerotic love, same-sex sexual conduct, and erotic desires in premodern Muslim societies despite the legal prohibition and punishment of such conduct. (133)

The significance of the influence of Islam is strongly overshadowed in *Guapa*. As a result, Islamic symbols such as mosques and imams, Islamic priests are not given

their impactful weight. Compared to other cultural social values, Islam is not seen as significant because having a sexual tendency other than heterosexuality goes against Islamic regulations and cause harsh consequences. Instead, the sole factor that draws the line between what is accepted or not is the cultural and social expectation. In one of these rights and wrongs lies *Guapa*'s characters' situation. As far as religion is concerned, it seems to be normal for a number of Arab English writers to be exceedingly critical of Arabs and Islam in particular to validate Western ideology in the Middle East (Al-Olaqi 1774).

Being given a voice in the story that riots against the social inequity, Rasa remains incapable of changing the expectations of his society. His voice is but a puny figure in a much larger social structure. He gives up on himself, his identity, family, and society in the midst of the cultural challenges. Apparently, living as a minority in the Arab world forces many individuals to live the margins: for they are incapable to meet the required Arab social expectations. These expectations are not written laws; they are merely agreed upon by the members of the society, and they are given such absolute power that each individual must succumb to.

1.7 Haddad's Apocalyptic View to the Middle East

The bleak Arab world is portrayed in Haddad's *Guapa* as simultaneous critique to various cultural and social reactions to sexuality, religious misinterpretation, and political system. Haddad records the problematic relationships between the East and West; he deposits the colonial effects to stress the importance of people's freedom and

rights. The reality of today's Arab world has still been affected by the colonial effects. However, Haddad neglects the effects of the past and focuses on the modern-day Middle East. This tendency groups Haddad with other post-colonial writers as Kated Yasine, Tayeb Salih and Rachid Boudjedra that devote their works to the post-independence epoch. Haddad does not completely isolate the history of the Arab world from colonialism; he discusses the current state of the Arab world while acknowledging its past.

1.7.1 Cultural Constraints

In contemporary literature and especially Arab Anglophone works, the post-independence epoch is yet to be consumed. However, Haddad attempts to bridge the gaps between the West and the East as he deals with several events, such as the support of Israel and the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Haddad argues that the harsh image of the Arab world is the result of a culmination of a number of events. These events range from cultural and social to political and religious ones. They come to altering the meaning of self-identity and the relationship between an individual and his/her society. Haddad's *Guapa* examines characters' battle against social expectations and Arab world's dire need for change both at the cultural and political levels:

is part and parcel of the successive waves of democratization and a reaction to, as well as an outcome of, the deep crisis that Arab political regimes are experiencing in their effort to reinvent authoritarian patterns that have lost their flexibility and their ability to

adapt to the profound social and generational changes happening around them (Abdelali 208).

To show Arabs' submission to the unscripted expectations without questioning, Haddad's depicts the unconditional obedience to a number of cultural rules. He highlights the illegitimate authoritativeness of these cultural rules, and extracts the Arab cultural constraints by revealing how characters feel and re/act towards them. These characters have a degree of certainty of who are/are not at any point in history, but they carry within themselves a memory of past changes and recognition that such changes are ongoing (Gana 323). Haddad delves into the personas of several different characters. Each of these characters represents a specific cultural issue. Indeed, Arab social and cultural constraints which are portrayed by Haddad hinder characters' socio-psychological dynamic development. Haddad's choice is backed with his belief that individuals are but a mirror of their society. Jameson agrees with this view by reaffirming that the character in third world literature always represents the collective (14). Arab society as a whole is affected by multiple cultural events. To demonstrate the Arab dystopian cultural reality, Haddad uses characters that are personally and politically misbalanced to show how these events re/shape individuals' lives and how they will be affected by them.

1.7.2 Traumatic Feeling of Shame

Haddad's work starts up with the feeling of disgrace and shame. The latter is prominent in the Middle East as a main component and sometimes a drive for the Arab people. In order to avoid shame, Arab people stick to a number of principles that

later become culturally and socially ascribed. Translated from "eib" in Arabic, shame haunts Rasa as he deems himself unworthy of being melted within his society, and social expectations stand against his desires. Increasingly, the traumatized people:

feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliation of community and religion. When trust is lost, traumatized people feel they belong more to the dead than to the living. (Herman 52)

Guapa's pessimistic opening lines set the overall tone of the rest of the story. Although shame is an abstract concept, for the Arab society it is considered as a principle block that determines the past and future of its individuals. To embody the feeling of shame and transfer its abstract sense to a tangible one, Haddad interweaves this feeling with Rasa's physical pain. This pain shows Rasa's defeat and incapability to have his society overlook and even welcome his difference.

Rasa's experience gives another definition of shame, its effect on individuals, and how it is seen by public. This definition does not only serve as a mere translation of the concept of "eib" to non-Arab readers, but it is also designed to call upon the Arab society to its ignored effect on individuals and on society as a whole. Rasa's experience shows that the concept of shame operates in different contexts. It also signals a double identity; the first endeavors to meet with the cultural expectations of the society, while the second is "true" identity which is deeply concealed and only

talked about in the absence of those expectations. Haddad, like other Arab writers and scholars, points out the contradictory nature of the Arab culture and speaks about his repulsion towards a number of cultural practices. In his work entitled: *Identity Contradictions in Islamic Awakening: Harmonising Intellectual Spheres of Identity*, Obiedat discusses this idea as he says:

Fortunately, in each of these stances there are cases of recent Arab scholars or intellectual activists who are attempting to creatively resolve these contradictions. Nevertheless, these scholarly contributions are less known in the West and underappreciated by awakening members themselves. Yet, they may in time add up to formulate a social movement. Presenting this analysis to an international audience provides a rarely known internal conversation over the dynamics of Arab-Islamic identity. (336)

In *Guapa*, Haddad extracts a number of the challenges faced by the Arab people as he nitpicks on the flaws in the Arab judiciary and educational systems. For him, these defects among others are what make the Arab world dreadful. He believes that his current behaviors and unsure state of mind are a result of those imperfections along with the authoritative cultural expectations. To put it shortly, the Arab world is governed by a group of specific social and cultural norms that are based on tradition, and are originally derived from religion. In order to cope with the Arab society, individuals have to submit to these laws, otherwise, they will be singled out. To practice their "true" identities away from these cultural regulations, individuals head

to a hidden basement within a coffee shop called Guapa. The coffee shop, on the other hand, is the only location where these individuals feel free to discuss social, political and religious taboos.

1.7.3 Gothic Escape

While being a coffee shop where people meet and drink their favorite beverages, Guapa is also a place where individuals go to escape Middle Eastern life constraints. Though it is an ever-lasting escape, it can only be so at specific times of the day. During the other times, individuals who seek ideological and physical freedom have to face the harsh realities. For Haddad's characters, Guapa is where they temporarily go to experience cultural and political freedom, yet the two main pillars of their double identity. Through *Rasa*, Haddad hints at the concept of double identity. He describes *Rasa's* beliefs as dark thoughts since they go against the accepted social rules. Like other post Arab Spring writers as Yasmina Khadra and Leila Aboulela , Haddad attempts to resist social conventions through his work *Guapa*. He does not only write against social conventions, but he situates his resistance to social norms through form of the novel (Abida 14). Along with fixing the reader's attention to the mysterious and claustrophobic atmosphere, Haddad uses the word dark to serve as an inner conversation between characters' conditions and the writer's beliefs over the Middle East reality. However, Haddad views it not as a culmination of history but as a place of controversies.

Despite his rejection of his culture, *Gupa's* main character is unable to face the traditions with which the Arab culture is built upon. Powerless of revealing his true

identity to the public, Rasa is limited to only spaces such as his bedroom, the bathroom, and what he referred to as the foggy mirror. He articulates his identity only in these places in order to protect himself and hide any evidence of his homosexuality. Rasa confronts the bitter fact that he cannot feel accepted with the beliefs he has. He only has to follow the cultural expectation he so wishes to free himself from. He also accentuates the fact that the possibility of living heterodox identities is determined by the gap left after encountering many challenges as Mansour and Farhana argue:

This gap is not new or even coincident. It is an accumulation of tens of factors and hundreds of years of challenge, injustice and socio-political hegemonic construction. Hence, identity is fractured because of the socio-political, economic, hegemonic and imperial deficits of the ruling elites in the Arab world. This deficit of the Arab regimes creates a state of distrust, discourage and dissatisfaction among majority of the Arab peoples (1758).

Because their society has made it challenging for them to practice their sexual desires, Haddad's homosexual characters have to internalize a double identity to satisfy both themselves and the social expectations that govern them. Homosexuality in the Arab world is considered as a hot topic referring to what Butler concludes: "The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of identities cannot exist" (24). Despite the fact that Rasa defines himself as an ordinary Arab man, his experience with homosexuality reveals his double identity. The double identity that cannot be flattened out; it becomes a singular

identity as his desire is not freely expressed. Butler describes this state of mind with the following: "because certain kinds of 'gender identities' fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain" (24).

Throughout the novel, Haddad attempts to shake the balance of the traditional binary gender belief in favour of new modes of sexuality. Arab homosexuals are paralyzed against the binary expectations of the Arab society as it is out of the traditional gender orbit. They decide to have a traditional marriage in order to fit in and satisfy the public. Their hybridity does not function in the midst of the Arab world since it is "not only a question of race, of métissage, but also of gender, class and maybe above all of imaginary significations that are constantly subjected to "différance"" (Yan Sayegh). Characters' struggle is displayed in their attempts to satisfy both ends of their identity. However, their secret identity cannot be displayed openly in the presence of the first since homosexuality is not tolerated in the Arab society.

Haddad, as many Arab writers like Driss Chraïbi, exposes a set of challenges faced by male homosexuals. These challenges reflect radical changes in male homosexual relations with their bodies and distance them from one another; it makes it harder for them to cope with their societies. Lagrange, in his essay entitled: *Homosexuality in Arabic literature*, explains:

the mere fact that there are scarce mentions of homosexuality in contemporary literature, when compared with classical poetry or adab

literature, could be interpreted in itself as an indication of huge transformations in Arab men's relations with their bodies and desires (170).

This is because the Arab society has set a group of guidelines and implicitly forces them upon the individuals. This reality makes society as a whole a two-faced institution since it is not only governed by the social expectations and what is right and wrong but what the individuals have to say about it as well. Thus, social fame and success can only be achieved by fully embracing those socio- religious expectations.

1.8 Feminism in the Middle East

Arab literature has been a space for scholars to engage in direct dialogue with new perspectives. In fact, modern education revolutionizes the Arab society and feeds the Arab peoples with individuality. The western bearing encourages Arab writers to demonstrate their vigour to take foreign values. Middle East unique sensibilities have become a fertile ground for feminist writers to look into. Arab novelists as Nawal El Saadawi and Assia Djebar have worked to unveil them despite difficulties shown by their traditional society. Their works offer an opportunity for enriching feminist studies by breaking the boundaries of Arab family experiences.

Haddad, as one of these writers, questions the authority of religious interpretation in being the decisive force behind the majority of the social and political behaviours, both are responsible for the discrimination of women in the Arab world. In his work entitled: *Twenty-First Century Arab Feminism: a movement from Islamic to the Secular*, Altwaiji finds that most Arab feminists' works attempt to decolonize

Arab women from Arab cultural heritage and religion as he argues:

These feminists look at secular feminism as a savior from gender dilemmas in the Arab world due to excessive application of religious dos and don'ts in ordinary life. They loudly articulate their revolt against Arab cultural heritage and Islamic religion as being unfair to them and thus they adopt the Western secular feminism. (3)

In recent years, Arab women express how women would be without the presence of social boundaries that disregard women's power in society through downgrading feminine roles. The contribution of Arab women in public life has witnessed radical changes few decades ago. Arab women traditional roles have undergone noticeable developments in many parts of the Arab world (Sidani 508). However, their fantasy is said to remind us of their motherly responsibility. This shows that the trendy role of women in the Arab world is that of housewives.

In *Guapa*, Haddad's portrayal of women characters' experiences picture Arab women' transition from freedom to oppression opposing what feminist works usually communicate; they show a transition from oppression to freedom instead. By reversing this ideology, Haddad attempts to criticize the motives and principles of feminism, claiming that such transformation is difficult to realize due to the fact that gender policies are not neutral, as Said-Foqahaa states:

Since the outcome of societal decisions, at all levels, reflects the existing power distribution, policy decisions cannot be neutral. Contrary to current notions of policies being "gender-blind," it is clear

that these policies, actually, discriminate against women (235).

The outcome of social conventions cannot be resisted and necessitates prolonged attentive works that support women's rights and freedom. These conventions dictate that Arab women are inferior to men. Arab countries as "many postcolonial regimes have been out rightly repressive of women's rights, using religion as the basis on which to enforce their subordination" (Loomba 189). Haddad also stresses the role of the misinterpretation of religious documents used to reinforce the patriarchal ideology. Increasingly, religious laws (mainly Islamic ones) have been used to engrave the oppression of women as a core component. But, that issue is debatable following one's interpretation of religion and gender roles in society and family.

By wearing modernized clothes that defies the traditional Arabic dressing codes, Arab women reject Arab gender conventions and seek to change these social structures. However, this freedom-seeking attitude soon changes, as they gradually begin to submit to the social, cultural and religious conventions of the Middle East. As for them, they are simply a product of their society, which minimizes their feminine role and even encourages their submission to men. Women's roles have been reduced long ago, and imposed in many societies. However, the degradation of women's status is the production of old cultural beliefs that lurk beneath and not, as some preconceived, the way some Islamic teachings are interpreted (Al-Rawi 8). Consequently, Arab women begin to accept their status until they slowly embraced it and normalized it. Their acceptance strengthens the patriarchal malpractices. They have to amend their behaviours in order to satisfy Arab social expectations, even if

they do not wholly believe in them. This means that the change they aspire to make is doomed to fail, to some extent.

Arab women have shown their vigour for resisting gender inequality and struggle to adjust it as for gender oppression is still a fundamental issue in their life. This indicates their dissatisfaction with gender roles and Arab women's inferiority in general. They are forced to abide the patriarchal ideology and accept their fate as a mere housewife. Man's habit of thought toward women is one of the underlying reasons that lead to gender inequality across the Arab region (Al-Shammari and Al Rakhis 24). Arab women attempt to make their presence felt through challenge, i.e. transgressing Middle East patriarchal culture which legitimates gender inequality. The emergence of feminism has, therefore, witnessed the violent response of the Arab society which is not yet ready to embrace such a movement. The nature of the Arab society is basically traditional; it has assumed a set of shared values and conflicts which are rooted in gender inequality. Feminist writers as Nawal El Saadawi and Leila Aboulela, in the Middle East, make serious attempts to secure women rights in the Arab society and gain them prestige and high visibility. It has influenced thinking and offered a systematic way of examining social issues and providing recommendations for change.

The concerns and issues permeating contemporary Arab women's writing such as the experience of war, political conflict, the decision to be active or passive in struggles, views towards domesticity and marriage as well as the internalisation of conflict experienced within the family and the homeland. Arab women fail to be a

reason behind a new foundation, as well as the sheer influence of the overall society on individuals. Their identity deems her self-careless. They decide not to escape their identity that is in favour of the patriarchal system by leaving the Arab world. Thus, they forfeit their lives, and inflict self-harm upon themselves both emotionally and physically. Consequently, some women become less enthusiastic to contribute their efforts to the struggle to liberate themselves from all kinds of oppressions. These oppressions apparently justify the woman-as-victim mythology (Maria Holt and Haifaa Jawad 16).

Through women characters, Haddad shows that with religious and cultural misuse, the Arab society has the power to heavily affect women's presence in all fields. It obstructs Arab women from expressing what they truly desire. This demonstrates the effect of social constructions on women who choose to blindly accept them to be the unquestionable pillars of their lives.

1.9 Politics

In his work entitled: *The Case for Democracy*, Sharansky classifies the world into two categories, free and fear societies, with nothing in between, and categorizes people into three different groups. The first is the group that fully believes in the societal order. The second is concerned with individuals who doubt this order whilst incorporating it into their lives" (41). The third is made up of the individuals who do not accept this order completely, and "who are afraid to accept the risks associated with dissent" (44). The latter is referred to as the "double thinker". They "live in constant tension from the gap between their thought and words. They always avoid

saying what is not permitted but also try to avoid saying what they do not believe" (45).

Moreover, Sharansky introduces the concept of a fear society and defines it as being ruled by the governmental spying techniques on top of being traditionally controlled by a police and/or army forces. A such strategy allows the government to overhear what individuals utter, read, and even what they think. "This is how a regime based on fear attempts to maintain a constant pool of true believers" (56). The Arab world seems to fit the description of a fear society. As for the novel under investigation, it depicts how a corrupt political system that is allegedly built upon capitalist interests, traditions, and religious documents affects the individuals struggling with fitting in with the norm. A portion of this corruptness is resolved during the Arab Spring, and a series of protests in most of the Arab world that spanned from 2010 to 2012.

To focus on the effects of the Arab culture and society on individuals, Haddad also sheds light on a few of its political issues such as: oppression, dictatorship, and the vague relationship between the Arab world and the West, especially with the United States of America. Haddad discusses the corrupt political system of the Arab world through his characters in *Guapa*. *Guapa* opens up about some of the political events that happened from 2000 to 2010. The period reveals the conflicting nature of Arab manipulative political system that the government adopts in which the sole benefactors are its sub-systems. Konstantinos Zarras, in his work entitled: *The Arab Uprisings and its implications for the Middle Eastern regional subsystem: the case of*

Iran, explains this idea as he states:

Middle East has been one of the most volatile subsystems since the end of the Second World War. As a consequence, its pattern of security interaction corresponds to a clear conflict formation. The patterns of friendship and enmity, in other words the formation and constitution of alliances can change rapidly and the levels of insecurity have been extremely high during the region's recent history. This pattern seems to be preserved and reinforced in the years to come due to the transformations provoked by the Arab Uprisings (7).

In *Guapa*, characters interact with the political system in a myriad of ways. These characters, as well as other Arabs, perceive political leaders, mainly Arab presidents as the cornerstone of the society that lives to ensure the betterness of the society not because of personal motives, but for the sake of morality. Haddad argues otherwise and tries to uncover the truth behind this belief through his criticism to the complexities of the political systems in the Middle East. These complexities resulted from the multiple experiences in Middle East countries in dealing with their neighbours and with the West, as Angrist argues:

It is important to keep in mind that there is a diversity of experience in the region: stable countries and countries torn apart by civil war, democracies and dictatorships, rich states and poor states, countries that have cooperative relationships with the West and countries that

vigorously confront the West. (30)

To illustrate, Haddad criticizes the political system through Rasa's dialogue with Laura the American journalist keeping in mind Rasa's usual secrecy in discussing politics because of fear, but he refrains from hiding his opinion to a foreigner. Haddad's narrative, even though he cannot explicitly express his opposing opinions towards the political system, indicates that the latter abuses several human rights which become a threat to undemocratic Middle Eastern regimes. They have little tolerance to any challenge to their interests and often respond violently (Duryea 1). This signifies that the Arab world is based on vague rules that benefit the government and not the individual.

Haddad argues that the Arab world is in need of renovation to escape authoritarian nature of its regimes. In addition, the aftermath of the Arab spring displays the complexity and randomness of the relationship between the Arab world and its citizens. This view dictates that Arabs forcibly possess a multitude of identities without any political orientation, unlike their Western peers. In order for them to feel a sense of belonging, they must have unconditional loyalty and support to the authoritarian regimes, making the Arab world similar to a dictatorial world. In his work entitled: *The international politics of the Middle East*, Hinnebusch explains this as he states;

While the multitude of identities from which citizens can choose seems compatible with a post-modern world, the considerable extent to which this means states cannot depend on being their citizens'

primary political loyalty, has pushed state-builders into authoritarian strategies. (57)

To strengthen the bond between the Arab political system and dictatorship, Haddad's narration of his characters' behaviour towards political leaders hints that the Arabs see their leaders as the absolute and decisive entity. He also criticizes the educational system that emphasizes that pupils must be loyal to their leaders, rather than in notions such as freedom and democracy. Identical to dictatorship, the Arab world noticeably lacks two vital elements: justice and equality. These elements contribute to the stability of society, so the absence of either would misbalance the nation's stability and even create many tensions and movements of political violence which is used by military, police, intelligence, legislative and penal systems in domestic and foreign policy (qtd in Al- Fawwaz 251) Such a system encourages the stratification of the individuals and promotes inequality amongst them. After the public has fully adopted these principles, the government can then effortlessly veil their motives behind the people's blind acceptance. This is done to guaranty the continuity of the government's authority.

To pinpoint the drawbacks of the authoritarian system, Haddad recalls its oppression-centralized motives that yield in a deficiency in freedom and democracy due to worsening the religious persecution, weakening civil society groups and rule of law, and the large-scale starvation and torture of civilians and detainees by the regime or the militants (Elhousseini 68). This is, however, ironically depicted in *Guapa*. Arab presidents, since the presidential elections are mostly rigged, control their respective

countries as a whole, watching over, manipulating every field and claiming that they are the source of stability in their countries. As a result, the countries controlled by such a system lack or rather reject democracy and development. This dictatorial system also affects the citizens' lives.

What culminates from such a system is a fragmented society and economy. During his assessment of the Arab world through a westernized lens, Haddad shows several instances in *Guapa* where some characters seem to be aware of the country's issues and even questions its foundation. These characters call for vary the infrastructure of their country and constitute a platform for Arab people to change the social and political structure of Arab societies. (Elhousseini 59) However, this change is hindered by the government allegedly sworn to maintain its integrity. Therefore, he tries to expose the system's propaganda that has impeded the Arab world from being revived from its frozen social, economic, and political development.

The story ended with Teta (Rasa grandmother) keeping her traditional values and failing to accomplish what she hoped to change. Haddad purposefully ended it by introducing a suggestion to enhance the Arab world. He proposes that in order, for the Arab reality, to be bettered, an atomistic change is in order. That means that the individuals living in the Arab world ought to question their behaviours so that a collective change occurs to re-balance entirely the Arab world. While doing so, Haddad also pinpoints the East's regression compared to the West in terms of gender roles. This view renders Haddad West-influenced since he repeatedly stresses over the Arab world's inferiority to the West and United States in particular. Increasingly

today, a number of:

Traditional and ideological arguments were used in the debate to highlight the increasing Westernization and Americanization of the Arab world and the consequent threat to local identities. The Arab world and Islam were depicted as victims of these trends (Haller 244).

This can be extracted from his characters' inner conflict with each world. They could not lead to a change due to their harsh reality, and they have no issues with belonging to the Western world.

Furthermore, *Guapa* also discusses the gap between generations. The older generation regimes refuse to adopt new values while the younger generation is capable and open to change. The clash between generations rises:

The tension between increasing (and younger) populations and low economic growth will increase the pressure on already hard-pressed regimes. Leaderships across the region [Middle East] face wholesale generational change, raising the possibility of very different patterns of governance and regime behavior (Ian et al. 191)

Haddad shows a number of outward signs of the dominant and manipulative nature of the West over the world. However, he soon comes to realize that the media's presentation of America and its principles are falsified in order to attract the younger generation towards it for economic and political motives. This approach has benefited modern American colonization by feeding the world with alibis to control parts of it. Implicitly, *Guapa* discusses Arab Muslim's hostility to western colonial impact on the

Arab world and Middle East in particular. This hostility is rooted in "their concrete foreign policy actions in the Middle East are of course a well-known alternative to the view that Arab Muslims are hostile to Westerners because of "who they are"" (A. Furia and E. Lucas 192). Before the World War II, the British Empire was a reckoned force that controlled the majority of the world's wealth through a series of colonization. This power then was passed on to the United States of America, because of financial and economic reasons. This victory can be owed to media that works to spreading western values to the world, including Arab countries, and shape thoughts and behaviours.

Guapa main character Rasa's academic pursuit that led him to America displays the political changes that have occurred in both the East and West after the 9/11 attacks. This event shakes the relationship between both parts of the sphere and marks the East as an enemy to the West at cultural, economic, and political levels after a long record of a friendly bond. But undoubtedly, "American policies aimed at fostering Arab legal and political reforms have generally taken a back seat to supporting the stability and cooperation of "friendly" regimes" (Al-Sayyid 88).

Interestingly, works of fiction written immediately after the 9/11 attacks, as Khadra's *Khalil* (2020), merely reflected the damages that the victims of 9/11 and America as a whole underwent while neglecting its effect on the Arab world. Arab writing written in English "came to the limelight with many emergent voices, expressing the anguish and the harsh experiences of Arabs and Muslims in an attempt to talk to and negotiate with the American culture" (Al Ghaberi 39). As one of them,

Guapa is Haddad's attempt to criticize the West's attitudes towards Arabs and Muslims post-9/11. Haddad seeks to shed light on the inaccuracy of Neo-Orientalist documents in their depiction of the Arab world.

Media remains a band of companies devoted to making profit through presenting their audience with information that benefits them and not enlightens their audience, even if this entails spreading fallacies of the other nations. At one point in *Guapa*, Laura, the American journalist, becomes a symbol or rather a product of Neo-Orientalist tendency. Her job as a journalist gives her the authority to decide which scope of the Arab world she wants the Americans to see. She, despite her depending on unreliable translation, picks the news that strengthens America's misconceptions on Arabs. US media have complete control over how Arabs are displayed to the American audience. Possessing such a weight that allows its holder to manipulate the public views, modern American media represents Arab as "new barbarism." The new barbarism representation is a fundamental part of Neo-Orientalist discourse that implement the idea of violence in the Middle East is a threat to the world (Altwaiji 319).

The inquiries over the Arab world by Americans prove the power of Neo-Orientalism that shifts the public's beliefs over Arabs. As a response to these questions, *Guapa* also remarks the seeming permanence of Neo-Orientalism's fallacious beliefs on the Arab world. The West creates justifications to interfere with the Arab world by publicizing Arabs as a product of Islamic fundamentalists' ideological extremisms. For instance, Iraq was invaded by orders from George H. W.

Bush with a justification that the Iraqi will be free from its oppression by the US government. This justification brings to attention that if America truly wanted to free other countries from oppression, its choice of only focusing on Iraq then becomes questionable. Instead, the main motive of Iraq's invasion is to exploit their oil. However, it also tried to force its westernized ideas on the people of Iraq even though their world does not meet with these modernized expectations (Mirzayee et al. 228).

Haddad presents America from two opposite sides. The first highlights the American Dream¹ in which characters can be familiarized with the American actualities. Through *Rasa*, Haddad shows the willingness of some Middle East individuals to adopt American values into their strict society. He proclaims them the messengers of western values as they try to prove that women ought not to be treated unequally with men. These characters encounter the unavoidable fact that Middle East society is unable to adopt any of the western values due to its bigotries which come to:

complete with an array of images and associations that most Westerners would not regard as flattering, particularly in the areas of sexual morality, family life, crime, and public safety. Like Western ideas about the Muslim Middle East, the images have at least a provisional basis in reality, but are often more representative of Hollywood than of day-to-day life (Funk and Said 6).

¹ American dream is defined as the belief that individuals, of different origins, class, races or cultures, can achieve their own brand of success in America, where there are open frontiers for anyone make his/her dream come true through hard work, and not by chance.

This does not signify that they are content with their realities. On the contrary, they are unable to feel welcome in either the West or East. Therefore, Haddad, like his postcolonial peers, is trying to promote the integration of western values in the East, implying that the West is "superior" to the East.

Haddad also introduces a second image of America. He also criticizes America's attempt to meddle in Arabic affairs and issues. In its quest to put an end to "terrorism¹", they launch a war that backfires and threatens many societies. This view allowed Haddad to manifest his other beliefs over the West and its destructive effect on the Arab world. The Arab Spring brought many families to famine, homelessness, and disease. Instead of correcting the Arab world's wrongs, they complied over it another issue of war, causing the already existing issues to worsen.

The Arab Spring was the expression of a deep seated resentment at the ageing Arab dictatorships, anger towards the brutality of the security apparatus, unemployment, rising of commodity price, and corruption that followed the privatisation of state assets in some countries and the general immunity to democratic change (Ahmad 472).

Haddad also points out America's vague approach to promoting the values they

¹ American has led an anti-terrorism war as a reaction to 9/11 terrorist attacks. This war has huge impact on international political relations, and represents a new phase in perceiving human rights, security, international law, and governance.

ostensibly foster, such as freedom and the protection of human rights. Western governments claim that they only seek to eradicate the violation of humans rights, and in doing so, they put emphasis on their values as holy and sanctified. Meanwhile, they disregard their actions that defy their advertised values when it comes to Middle Eastern countries. At one point, upon getting assaulted, Saleem Haddad's characters attempt to signify the double faceted reality of the West concerning humans rights and freedom. In fact, the only motive behind intervening in the Middle East is to harvest their earthly goods and to gain economic wealth.

Haddad's binary view over the West can be re-divided to promote a single image of America. Thus, neither can stand on their own. They become an inaccurate representation of the Western world. This fact is used by the American government to promote a near-perfect image to control. This means that *Rasa* uncovers the true identity of America that invades by spreading positive values that are not necessarily true.

1.10 Conclusion

The present chapter is an attempt to explore *Guapa*'s main themes that are the source of the current reality of the Arab world. The overall tone of the novel is gloomy and hopeless for the future. To put Haddad's intentions in perspective, he attempts to expose the societal and cultural absolute rules and their effects on individuals. This ultimately signifies the culmination of the Arab world's decision to abide by certain guidelines that forcibly shape its individuals even if this means that they cannot practice their beliefs. This is done merely to protect the visions of the

Arab world. However, *Guapa* exposes that when individuals try to not follow its rules, this vision then turns into a dreadful and constant identity battle.

Guapa sets its writer, Haddad, as an example in discussing taboo themes in the Arab world. These themes include, but not only, gender roles, sexuality, women's rights, and political corruption. He differs from his fellow postcolonial writers by shifting his attention to local, Arabic issues that have a greater impact on society and individuals.

The following chapter deals with the Peruvian – Mexican writer, Mario Bellatin and the debatable themes of identity quest and sexual orientations in another cultural setting, predominantly Western.

Second Chapter

From Agony to Destiny

Chapter Two: From Agony to Destiny

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2.1 Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to explore Mario Bellatin literary realm and put his work *Beauty Salon* into scrutiny in order to decipher its themes and techniques. Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* seems to have a wealth of attention from critics and scholars as it tackles a number of modern concerns especially those which mainly deal with men's homosexuality. Although fantastic literature is usually associated with supernatural beings and forces, a new generation of Latin-American writers uses their innovative writing techniques to manifest the fantastic. By means of experimental use of language, the Mexican-Peruvian Mario Bellatin demonstrates an emerging technique to create a unique literary realm.

With this strategy, Bellatin asserts the fact that the world is actually hazy. *Beauty Salon* tells the story of a beauty salon which transforms into a place where people on the fringes of society (terminally ill homosexual men) go to die. It can thus be read as a dystopian fiction as well. *Beauty Salon*'s transgressive effect can be ascribed to the combination of the fantastic and the dystopian. Consequently, this chapter explores the ways in which Bellatin delicately presents the fantastic to overtly show the categorization of minorities (homosexual men). Bellatin seeks to create more textual spaces for this minority group and give it a voice in his work.

2.2 The Author's World

Mario Bellatin was born in 1960 in Mexico, but brought up in Peru (his parents' homeland), where he lived until the age of twenty-three. Although he had already studied theology and obtained a diploma in communication sciences, he moved to Cuba to enroll at the Escuela internacional de Cine y Televisión. He published, however, in Peru his first book, *Mujeres de sal*, appeared in Lima in 1986, but since 1995 he has further pursued his writing career in Mexico. He continues to live and write there today (Lambrechts 93).

Bellatin has published more than forty books. Bellatin works have been translated into many languages including English. By furthering literary conventions and expectations of Latin America, Mario Bellatin aims to employ his texts to explore new narrative accounts. His work is characterized by its fragmentation and auto-representations. Although many critics consider these characteristics as important and stress their transgressive powers, Bellatin narrative strategies seek to trigger social and political transgressions which have largely been remain unexplored. Bellatin's first work creates a history for him in the Peruvian literature as José Güich Rodríguez (2011) states:

One of the first Peruvian authors who dared to cultivate exclusively the fantastic as part of a project undertaken without being afraid of the risks [...] a will to break with the conventional and predictable,

distancing itself from the usual representations to which the literary system had accustomed us (quoted in Lambrechts 3).

Bellatin's works is located in a border zone where reality becomes indistinguishable from its representation. This also applies to *Beauty Salon*; the work that created a fame for him and which was ranked nineteenth on a list of the top hundred best books written in Spanish in the last twenty-five years in 2007 (Donoso Macaya, 175).

Knowing that the terminal owner is eventually surrendering to the illness, the narrator could not worry about what might happen to his place after he passes away; since many institutions were eyeing it previously. He would not support seeing them converting his place which was once dedicated for beauty to ironically become exclusive for dying men, but somehow it seemed bearable for that transformation to happen by his will, following his instructions. Indeed, the author keeps the reader in a state of suspense far beyond the final page. In that way, it confirms that:

In stories in which the fantastic is explicitly motivated, the transgression is usually clearly indicated on the semantic level, which makes it easy to individualize a "moment" of transgression at one point in the story. The lack of motivation, in contrast, creates a fluctuation that entirely covers the world's coherence, blurring it (Campra 130 quoted in Lambrechts).

Characters' reality and that of the fish turn fuzzier and certain analogies are more readily to confusion and dominated by ambiguity.

Allegorically speaking, the narrator's nature as a homosexual portrays itself through him giving himself a feminine dimension by dressing up as a woman, which is to him sells a sense of beauty; even though that the disease targets homosexuals in particular. Bellatin wants to highlight that the narrator's ex-profession (run a beauty salon) is nothing but a reflection of his current profession as they both thrive to keep the awfulness of death away. Not forgetting the fish which could not make it alive, they have certainly sprinkled some nastiness over the story by showing the inevitability of death; Lucy Bollington notes:

To my mind, the novella is marked by a duality when it comes to the question of context. It contains symbols that resonate with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and with necropolitical and autoimmunitary patterns of violence more broadly, as I have evoked. Working on a conceptual level, the common ontology the novella constructs also creates an opening towards a relationality that implicitly overturns a politics of death rooted in the killing of some so that others might live (11).

Despite all these suggestions, running a beauty salon remains a humble job. There is not much of a plot here, and the narrator did not mention anything about his very own life, nor the beauty salon (the terminal). This work was a one of effect when

it was first published in 1999. However, it has offered more as AIDS novella in 2009. With its fascinating ideas, and concised content, *Beauty salon* is categorized as a work of fiction. Bellatin runs the story events by maintaining the anonymity of both the protagonist and other characters. In various occasions, he indicates that his characters belong to the whole world. Thus, he refuses to identify who they might be.

Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* is designed to operate with nameless characters to give a universal image to the whole novel. The cause of the death of his guests is also kept without name. The author states different reasons for the death of the terminal guests, such as tuberculosis and the plague. At the same time, he thinks that guests are different from the rest in many aspects, so it is likely that guests also differ from the others in the disease they suffer from. The neighbours, for their part, affirm that the patients are afflicted with the plague. The narrator protagonist himself, then, describes the symptoms like: pustules, swollen glands, wounds all over the body and weight loss. By doing so, the author makes it possible for his reader to normalize confusion and the ambiguity that one finds at the very beginning of the story. Philip Etyang explains this when he says:

While the reader need not believe in the possibility of the extraordinary events narrated, the characters and, above all, the narrator must believe that all the events recounted are equally real. The narrator cannot raise questions or treat the events as puzzling (6).

Beauty Salon conveys a socially and politically charged message. This does not mean that it is a story without any political orientation. Nevertheless, it attempts to answer to the question whether inclusion/exclusion game merely lays the fuel tension over the world political debates. The story tackles an important problem that human life issues are commonly conducted in a conceivable form. Actually, the *beauty salon* was conceived as a big aquarium, so that fish equally mirror the salon guests. As the salon owner looks after the beauty salon, fish are no longer suffered. When he becomes careless; letting his booming business become a place to die, the aquaria start to tarnish. In beauty Salon, Bellatin depict social and political realities in a way that makes them seem impossible to explain, unthinkable and indescribable (Roas 63; Bauman 133).

Mario Bellatin displays a number of literary means in which the dystopian and the fantastic literature collide to make use of their transgressive features. To reach the aforementioned aim, Mario Bellatin makes it clear that his works have become an area where these features are further discussed. Regardless of their incompatibilities, the fantastic, alongside with the dystopian, is visualized in *Beauty Salon* to trigger the readers' views on certain aspect of life. By emphasizing on Bellatin's views on the exile of individual who act out the conventional gender norms, the dystopian is shown through human's anticipations of what is the possible outcome of things, and fantastic is manifested in its power to uncover hidden truths and eradicate the mind-consuming ambiguity (Cardosoa 891).

In an attempt to oppose the norms of the fantastic literature and its relations with supernatural phenomena, a number of Latino-American authors such as the Mexican-Peruvian Mario Bellatin endeavor major works to illustrate the fantastic through the use of the experimental language. The author, in *Beauty Salon*, mirrors his own life with that of his aquarium fish. Although the resemblance between the narrator's life and the fish's life is still blurry, a true incomprehensible confusion between the narrator and the aquaria is established. Another aspect about the fantastic sensation is adopted not by the narrative theme, but rather by the narrative act itself (quoted in Lambrechts 4).

Another key point to discuss about Mario Bellatin is his distinctive writing style that stands out of the traditional literary conventions. Through his ways of involving the readers within his writings, Bellatin uses experimentalism¹, fragmentation², intertextuality and auto-representation³. He is one of the first Peruvian authors who:

Dared to cultivate exclusively the fantastic as part of a project undertaken without being afraid of the risks [...] a will to break with the conventional and predictable, distancing itself from the usual

¹ Experimentalism: is an emerging philosophical tendency that supports the idea that truth can only be brought and evaluated through experiments and empiricism.

² Fragmentation: refers to the disparities between a society and a number of its members. the disparities occurs in concern culture, nationality, race, language, religion, etc ...

³ Auto-representation: Auto-representation is identified as the representations of the generated initial elements of a conscious self-representation.

representations to which the literary system had accustomed us.

(quoted in Lambrechts 93)

As it was previously mentioned, Bellatin's mirroring technique of merging reality with its own representation is also used in *Beauty Salon* as he narrates the story of a cross-dressing beautician, who suspiciously articulates controversies in an asylum for almost dying people, suffering from a mysterious disease.

2.3 The Fantastic

According to Elton Honores (2011), Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* creates a collision between what is real and what is not. This makes him use of experimentalism which results in a clear confusion in the mixture. In *Beauty Salon*, the story begins when the narrator reminisces about his beauty salon which later has been turned into a shelter for ill people; more likely into a death place for them. One can have a sense of ambiguity when reading the reciting of such memories; even though they are told in a first-person point of view, we find it difficult to have a clear picture of the person and the story behind the plague. However, the only hint that we can capture is the idea that the narrator is anything but an ordinary character in the story, and he is both immersed and aware of his own reality that is different from the common people (29-32).

After changed into a funeral home, the life in the terminal is full of confusion and voids. The terminal's guests got consumed by the illness and obsessed by thinking over their destiny. The terminal owner has managed his life and quit cross-dressing. He starts reflecting on the fact that isolation is the outcomes of performing odd doings.

Beauty Salon is a literary account in which Bellatin defines moment the plague starts to assault and torch people. It is quite a hazy story with non linear flow of events. Bellatin launches the events with a sense of nostalgia from the past. Eventually, he discusses possible chances of restoring the salon back to its unique state. The past and the future disintegrate into a synchronous present.

The narrator introduces his personality as a restricted man who adopts nihilism, if not fatalism in his orbits. He remains nameless, as it is the case with every other character in his story. Although he may not have revealed the identity of the characters in a direct way, he still describes every minute detail in the victims' body, yet not the names of diseases that they had suffered from. This established a greater confusion as his passion for mysteries is dominant and consistent. The unpredictability is shown through the characters; it is also presented in the spacio-temporal spectrum of people in the story. However, there is no clear information about the salon's name, location or features. This style is actively common in fantastic literature as it triggers the readers' imagination and curiosity at the same time. In the fantastic literature:

The possibility of one true meaning is denied, and the essential uncertainty of the novel makes the parameters of the fantastic mode coalesce with one fundamental concern of modernism: the ambiguity of meaning. (Valverde 101)

The fantastic is mainly sensed within in the author's description of his fish. As he includes certain details about his fish, its behavior, name, and state of health, we can

get the impression that the author sympathizes with his fish more than he does with human beings. This explains his grief over the change that occurred on his beauty salon (which was conceived as the aquarium), turning it from a delightful aquarium into a death place for customers who are allegorized as the fish. The contrasting change of narration leads the readers to sense the opposition in meaning as they fail to generate a logical explanation for the events. The ambiguity of fantastic is created as an outcome of the impossibility to explain what happens. The Fantastic goes beyond the frontiers of language; it is indescribable, unthinkable (Roas 63).

Beauty Salon is also seen as a perplex story, for it is nearly impossible to wrap a meaningful, logical, ending without falling into contradictions. The sudden shift in events (the illness of the author, as well as the abrupt introduction of the concept of death) is a common quality of the fantastic literature. A close look into the details of the story reveals that the author himself is locked in a ferocious circle with no outlet. For this purpose, Bellatin tries to drag readers into his loop of misery by utilizing the features of the fantastic.

Bellatin attempts to challenge the norms of the fantastic while writing *Beauty Salon*. *Beauty Salon* makes a clear distinctiveness in narration as it marks the sudden shifts and uncommon analogies. The narrative foreshadows the indecisiveness of the author who is in a constant struggle with his thoughts (what is normal / possible and what is not). The fantastic genre itself has undergone a plethora of shifts in order to maintain its uniqueness amongst the other genres. For instance, it is unleashed from its

typical norms in order to protect its exceptionalism and continue to entrench ambiguity within readers between the natural and the supernatural forces. From the second half of the twentieth century to the contemporary times, fantastic literature has been tempted to adopt new themes and modalities, as well as to redefine its old patterns to keep its position as outstanding. Indeed, Latin- American literature possesses a plethora of contemporary writers who are brightest literary authors in the entire world, as Valeria Luiselli.

2.4 The Plague

Contemporary Latin writings bring back these literary motifs by evoking ethical anxieties in new conceptual literary forms. The re/writings that embrace the plague metaphor have a unique elaboration to cultural beliefs and ideological orientations including: homosexuality. They also mark shift in parallel developments in the modern literary studies done mainly on the nature of their themes. Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* is an important example of a contemporary novella which uses the plague as a motif. The use of this type of motifs in the literary works forges new functions for epidemics. The narrative perspective of Mario Bellatin fuel tensions over a number of ethical and critical questions. In *Beauty Salon*, he creates new visual representations of his allegoric characters (Lambrechts 93).

Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* begins with a vacant beauty salon which is beset by the plague in an unnamed town. The dwellers of the neglected terminal are quarantined to spend what remains from their days. The epidemic extends its control

and deepens its destructive individuals' pain. The story examines the multiple phases that mark the outbreak of an epidemic. Bellatin's narrative displays the story scenes which are painted by the effect of the plague as moving ground for characters that have an undetermined destination.

The spread of the plague reflects a lack of ethics in modern era which is the Mario bellatin's *Beauty Salon* compelling message. *Beauty Salon* creates aesthetic dimensions for plagues. By evoking multiple interpretations, Bellatin's work explores the ways a literary work is involved in the creation of the shared consciousness. (Kennedy 11) In *Beauty Salon*, plague, allows moving beyond traditional views on people's disintegration, for it calls for collective configuration in all aspects of life. The global panic caused by the epidemic has been given much attention in modern literature. In this novel, Bellatin deals with the plague in a realistic way. He documents community reaction to the overwhelming effects of the epidemic. Bellatin records the people disintegration during the epidemic with much authenticity.

2.5 The Performance and the Body

In modern time, the body is coerced into negotiation of compatibility to perform roles beyond heteronormativity. In this respect, the homosexual body seems to challenge the normative categorizations, which limits it to the ambit of traditional gender roles. In accordance, homosexual bodies are set forth by heteronormative as damaged bodies. They are cast to use prosthetics and masks to survive in heterosexist society. These bodies seek to expose same-sex relations, like the

characters found in Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* who have to fit into narrow sexual spaces.

As they have learned to perform non-standard gender roles within these normative spaces, homosexuals seek to transgress the rules of gendered performances to pave a new line for themselves and challenge the mindset which treats them as abnormal. Gender and sexuality have shaped the one's performances in a myriad of ways. In this regard, Heather (1998) has questioned the assigned roles attributed to both man and women as he argues, "We need to break the 'female moulds' and 'male moulds' that society has defined and make our own individual mould"(4). The notions of masculinity and femininity have thus painted to encompass the heteronormative performances. Gender demarcations are set at a very early age when male child is expected to wear blue coloured clothes while female child is expected to put on pink and floral ones. However, these expectations are being challenged by the visibility unusual gender roles in modern society.

In Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*, homosexuality creates a new sexual possession that defines queer's demarcations. However, his normalization of queer practices is seen as particular modes of subjectification. Understanding the norms that link the body to forms of masculinity and femininity is a way to explore pivotal role that sexuality has to play in defining the self and body:

an effort [is made] to treat sexuality as the correlation of a domain of knowledge, a type of normativity and a mode of relation to the self; it

means trying to decipher how in Western societies, a complex experience is constituted from and around certain forms of behaviour: an experience which conjoins a field of study (connaissance) (with its own concepts, theories, diverse disciplines), a collection of rules (which differentiate the permissible from the forbidden, natural from monstrous, normal from pathological, what is decent from what is not, etc.), a mode of relation between the individual and himself (which enables him [sic] to recognise himself [sic] as a sexual subject amid others.) (Foucault 333)

Increasingly, Bellatin's characters attempt to question the appropriation of masculine and feminine representations. They seek social recognition for their bodies to engage without be being hunted by the deteriorating hetronormative gender politics.

As they cannot be described as male and female-sexed bodies, queer bodies strike for involving themselves in normative sexual performances. They demand redefining sexual spaces so that they set the border lines of their actions in public life. In one of her interviews, Jacqui explains:

unless the norms of two fixed genders are shifted, then being anything but those two appropriate genders is called things like cross-dressing, transgender, which always mean transgression of a norm, a negativity, and requiring people like me to explain and justify ourselves and our positions.

In a full stagnation, Bellatin tries to put characters in an ambiguous terminal. He recognizes they have become more claustrophobic than they were before and seem to indulge homosexual relations. So unfamiliar to his surrounding, the terminal owner's queerness signifies how crumble his body appears in relation with people. In *Beauty Salon*, the body is often seen as pale, weak, and abnormal. Although he depicts these bodies performing in harshly restricted, enclosed social spheres, the author finds spaces of interaction for them to demand visibility in normative representations. His bodily politics, however, is set to put forward the conventional perception of what masculine and feminine is into a challenge. Queer body continuous nonconformity of heterosexist society's sexual norms exhausts the possibility for the queer individuals to integrate truthfully in their own society. Feeling the hollowness of their performance in a number of fields including education, homosexuals negotiate gendered performance outside their male or female sexes (Graybill and Morillas). It causes dissociation and falseness just as one is guilty of committing a crime or transgressing taboos and rigid social norms.

Despite excessive harshness, in Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*, bodies appeared to be able to struggle for their own right. To a certain extent, these bodies have claimed transgressive lines as they foreground their queerness in public. The (re)enactment of queer actions attempts, in a way or another, adjusts public performance parameters, mainly political ones (Hengel 138). Bellatin has, thus, drawn and tried to delimit the boundaries of heteronormativity (public performances)

by defying the conventional categorizations and giving more spaces for all types of sexual desire available to be acted and reacted.

Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* creates a panoramic portrayal to collision of queer actions and the social expectations. The collision nurtures ambiguities that hinder the integration and the acceptance of queer individuals in social spaces. The queer body constructs a new space by extending its performance. It makes it possible to put men on feminine chores. The theatrical nature of queer performance exposes non-standard gender choices to social examination and, thus, becomes highlighted. It becomes not easy to the different queer performance, which lurks underneath the social interaction, because they reflect a different image from that of the conventional gender roles. Any heterosexist society assumes that the incorporation of queer performance into a heteronormative society is rather impossible. Homosexual performance can be understood by recognizing some queer actions, but accepting homosexual male as a man is "quite" impossible. The absence of queer markers in the social spaces not only shows the heteronormative orientation but also hinders it from having alternative orientations (Heyes et al. 2016).

On the other hand, homosexual male attributes of caring which are typically feminine characteristics, and become a shame. When performance is judged as queer, it begins to internalize queer elements within its own nature. Queer body, thus, acquires and learns how to perform a queer act. To draw attention, homosexual male exaggerates in mimicking femininity to challenge the heterosexual norms. It is

inadequate in that exaggerated femininity expands in luring heterosexuals (Buss and Barnes). Relatively, queer individuals feel themselves as a minority. They thus behave in a liberal way, adopting non-normative and non-traditional traits. The overemphasis of feminine performance shows that male homosexual is "an other", not a female. Male homosexual's performance is a feminine act done by a non-female body. This defines male homosexual's performance as a double sexual identity which can open up spaces for them to negotiate new lines to act upon (Bártová et al.)

2.6 Personae/ Characters

Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*, characters extend the notion gender and sexual behaviour. They are, however, out of the conventional social norms; they are depicted to achieve a number of illuminating and informative purposes in the realm of gender relation. Normative society seeks to reject homosexuals' right to a self-constructed identity. It hinders the visibility of homosexual performance. This heterosexist attitude against the homosexual performance stands in a vivid opposition when it is realized that heterosexuality is not a choice in sexual relation but coercion (Argent 16).

Bellatin's characters attempt to deconstruct social conventions and appropriate the presentation of gendered practices. These characters have become tools, for scholars and readers, to look back upon their lives. By defying the social homogeneity which they often judge as stereotypical, male homosexuals seek self-

inspection in order to deconstruct social mindset that always labels them as "other" as Bowlby believes:

Individuals [social groups] develop generalized beliefs about self and others, relational scripts, and affective patterns based on repeated experiences with attachment figures. These templates of thought, emotion, and behavior—often referred to as working models of attachment—are applied to situations in which issues of safety, security, and close relationships are salient (Quoted in Mohr and Fassinger 483).

However, societies are now witnessing unfamiliar modes of performance which are out the existing categories of gender and sexuality. As a result, homosexuals have become more visible and gained support from many social institutions, mainly education and media.

This argument poses the question the author's ideological assumptions on the intentionality of being homosexual. Homosexual characters failed correction incorporates a number of crucial features in Bellatin's text. It is then worth to acknowledge that Bellatin's characters' integration is imaginary rather than real as they question the socialization of human nature. It has been used to explain Bellatin's fictional habit as it reflects his views on human relations. Bellatin's characters have been construed to perform deviant gender roles in an area which is notorious as a centre for epidemics. Implicitly, these characters undermine a sense of disconnectedness which can be seen as an underlying critique to the fabric of social

relations which make the individualist tendencies, including homosexuality, appear contradictory (Psaltis et al.).

As he regards gender relations, Bellatin's fictional narration of homosexuals' experience reveals a number of complexities in their lives. These complexities are set to reside in their failure to fit conventional gender norms. They have a genuine concern of their social distancing that has a related impact on their both personal and social life.

Today's tension over the individuals' psychological dilemma hinders their progress and makes them more isolated as Edelstein argues:

The century has seen spells of sociopolitical, institutional, and cognitive regression on a grand scale. Progressivists today suffer from acute hangover. Complexity, it now is apparent, works both ways: increasing pressure for assimilative response is but one; destructive regression, the violent simplification of complex structures, is another. In the face of regression, it is difficult to maintain confidence in an everlasting unfolding of individual cognitive competence as an assimilative response to the ever-growing cognitive complexity of social systems (6).

However, Bellatin's celebration of the domestic life of his characters reveals his tendency of creating new space for them. The terminal, the place he chooses to depict his characters inspirations, has been installed for patients who prefer to end their days

at. The gothic and mysterious surroundings match their experience of personal pain. They reflect certain aspects of the author's life as he readdressed debates on homosexuality by shedding light on the question of gender identity.

For Bellatin, *Beauty Salon* is an attempt to convey a mode of resistance to all forms of othering people based on their sexual preferences. His vivid view questions the social imposition of identity. In his account, Bellatin is interested in re-evaluating controversial issues from a literary point of view. Debating the impact of the contemporary sphere on the construction of the self, he redirects the attention to possible outcomes of self-destruction. Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* has a heavy commitment to sexual politics. It exemplifies the progressive positioning of self in texts and considers its performed action on specific conditions. In his text, he aims at discussing the aesthetics of the text regarding the self which has been constantly changing over time. McVittie and McKinlay add:

The production of self-related constructs continued apace over the years to come. Thus, if we now pick up any major text on social psychology we will find included within it a diverse range of constructs that explicitly claim some relation to the self (3).

He advocates the need of adjusting social attitudes towards those of deviant sexualities. During the epidemic, he attempts to assess the ways in which homosexuals are allowed or disallowed to contribute to the social urge to fight the outcomes of the epidemic. Their non-masculine envision deepens their social distancing. Moreover,

the politics of otherness which serves as a challenge to change public views on them. In *Beauty Salon*, Bellatin refused to rule out the possibility of increasing their presence in social interaction. But, can changes appear through writing, as to the perceptions of power, resistance, related to different genders and sexualities on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the stereotyped functions of man/woman? Furthermore, transgressive acts are usually unveiling subversion, contestation or anger. In fact, gender, constructed and therefore theoretically modifiable, assigns identity, status value and location in family structures to individuals within a given society (Bedjaoui 315)

Male homosexual characters ask for self- definition and express the desire to communicate their urge for social acceptance. Their nonconformity to social norms hinders their integration and cause a serious psychological trauma. He examines the way male homosexuals attempt to diffuse their positive self connectivity. By taking care of patients in the terminal, male homosexuals show a commitment to social responsibility. They make social connection through maintaining a constant reference to their society. This will lead to the conclusion that Bellatin's novelty techniques serve in constructing self/ves to endorse subtle social connectivity.

In *Beauty Salon*, Bellatin creates the sense of selfhood by bringing the self into the realm of literature. He has interpreted the containment of self as an essential component of human identity. Bellatin describes male homosexuality as a meeting point of personal and social controversies. Male homosexuals' disintegration is contested as their defiance remains subjected to heteronormativity. When sexual

hatred is drawn out, interpersonal avoidance and hostile attitudes associated with individuals who have sexualities which are out the heteronormative discourse form a threat to self-status within (Kiss et al. 66).

The author's choice of terminal as a habitable space for his characters conveys the idea of their rootless selves. It also highlights the lack of belonging and failed integration. Although, he seeks to soften the images the characters identify with; his characters act like an inanimate object. They feel dominated by the heteronormative tendency of the society. This demonstrates the problematic nature of their fragmented identity. The neurotic disturbance and fragile self-centeredness are common in the lives of these individuals who find themselves fatalistically into a gay lifestyle which leads to persistent personality decline both emotionally and morally (Gerard.J.M 343). A close examination to Bellatin's narrative strategy reveals that male homosexuals are portrayed as isolated beings unable to communicate their isolation. The reduplication of character' disconnection weakens their bonds with society and make it difficult for them to have a constant contact people. Their isolation in dealing with post-pandemic stress disorder is clear expressed. The lack of connection with others is found in their feeling of being strangers within their own selves; two corn halves.

2.7 Exiled within the Own Self

Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* deals with the tragedy of homosexuals that opens the way for them to a different kind of exile. The narrator who abandons his town to live in a place prepared for almost dead male homosexuals decided to leave for another

purpose, different from what he was formerly doing. Exile is not something he plans for; it comes as a refuge for his unusual sexual choices to prevail over his failure and the frustration caused by not fulfilling social expectations and norms. Male homosexuals are deeply alienated¹, as they experience: a deprivation of freedom and a separation (of the duality in the nature of the individual), or solitude (loneliness), or mutilation of the man who is no longer aware of being the centre of his universe, no longer the master of his actions and consequences, but remains a slave. The alienated man has lost the contact with himself and with the others (Bedjaoui 40). Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* is engaged in the debate of the exile of male homosexuals. It operates to install homosexual sensibility through portraying unusual characters' engagement in different mode of exile.

In *Beauty Salon*, characters become strangers in their own selves. They have to deal with unusual forms of exile. It is a gradual sense of isolation that emerged from individuals' deep involvement in a dissocialization process; they are caught by their deviant sexual desires and socio-cultural framework of norms and values. The author focuses on in the politics of sexuality as he portrays deviant gender roles that leads to a lack of visibility and viability of homosexuals and consequently destabilize their

¹ Alienation includes different types of dissociation or cuts between human beings and the objects on the objective level, and corresponding states of troubles, anxiety and strangeness on the subjective level (Fromm 120). John Lewis sums up that difference between the alienated and the free man, i.e. the importance is not to do what one wants to do, but to have the desire to do what one has done (Hammond 11).

sense of worth. Homosexuals have thus developed their self chosen exile as a survival strategy. In this regard, Lotta Samelius and Erik Wågberg note that:

Other survival strategies of LGBT people are self chosen invisibility and to live a life of double standards where a façade of male or female heteronormativity is created to cover for a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender lifestyle that is lived out in certain circumstances and with certain people, but is hidden for most of the persons surroundings (18).

The anarchy made by the plague moves the plot in *Beauty Salon* persistently between the present and the past. It, thus, unfolds around the no names' life in the terminal, and negatively influenced their perception of self. The author inserts many flashbacks through which he shows characters disconnectedness. The difficulties involved in homosexuals' sense of exile within their own selves hold some shades in Jorge Luis Borges's *Boast of Quietness* (2000); he writes:

Time is living me.

More silent than my shadow, I pass through the loftily covetous multitude.

They are indispensable, singular, worthy of tomorrow.

My name is someone and anyone.

I walk slowly, like one who comes from so far away he doesn't expect to arrive.

Bellatin explores closely homosexuals' losses under heteronormative hegemony. The novel narrates different life stories of the main character that has been exposed to heteronormative prejudice of his society. He clings to his deviant sexuality for the rest of his life as he believes that it brings him a sense of worth. *Beauty Salon* shows the nonexistence state of homosexuals which symbolizes their disintegration from the social life. They are cast to be the subalterns, and represent the tragedy of the no name downtrodden. By portraying a cross dressed man, the author immediately brings to the mind the image of female roles, i.e. taking care of almost dying patients and feeding. This male's domestic roles have deepened the misery of homosexuals in highly gendered social hierarchy (Janssens 15).

The imaginary space homosexuals give themselves does not mirror any possibility to achieve any social relationship. Their queerness hinders any relation with other beings that they had input into their lives. The terminal where the narrator prepares a place for the victims of the plague provides the chance for practically a limited space. It is shortened; it does not reveal any possibility to understand a completely envisioned sexual relationship. In this way, it offers the chance of a sexual identity combined inside the self that is carefully developed around its sexual demonstration. Being exiled in inside the self is a kind of punishment that keeps homosexuals living as outsiders in places that degrade them to satisfy their deviant sexuality (Gibson 13).

Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* discusses mainly the impact of the plague sphere on homosexuals. Homosexuals' dilemma of choice of appropriating deviant sexuality

invites forging new sexual identities. This indicates that homosexuals are the minority that takes place in a globalised heteronormative society. They are often criticized for having lost touch with reality so that they likely to be the victims of exile. The question of homosexuals' self-exile is a relevant issue in Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*. The new perception of homosexuality shifts concerns to wider range of issues that seem to invoke the fact that space is key element in shaping identities. The exilic sense which translates the anxiety of (non-) belonging has become a central subject in the story. Thus, displaced homosexuals are experiencing a traumatic experience of non-belonging within their own society. They are perpetually observed as strangers even within themselves. Bellatin records the exhausting efforts homosexuals spearheaded to escape from humiliation. Such a humiliation marks their self-respect and relegates them to the status of shadows. In this sense, the intensive ideological debates perceive homosexuality as being a cause for the dissocialization of individuals. This reflects the influence of social conventions on evoking the sense of self exile.

Social denial and exclusion force homosexuals to live secretly. The torment is inflicted on them by social attitudes. Continually, they determine to assert their deviant sexual identity through defending their way of life, so they are forced living a transitional existence. The enactment against the existing sexual forms that represent the normative structure of socio-cultural existence compels them to live as an isolated social stratum. Seemingly, the instability of their lives as well as their adhering acts to homosexuality is no longer valid in a society which is doomed to be homophobic. That

is to say, homosexuals are living within the confines of social exclusion. Burden and Hamm write in this view:

Social exclusion emphasises the denial of civil, political and social rights. In this formulation, those who are socially excluded are not accorded full membership of society and are unable to achieve 'normal' levels of social acceptance and participation (184).

At first, homosexuals were seen as mentally sick in which a correspondent psychological therapy is highly recommended. This intensified their isolation, especially after homosexual orientation is regarded as a mental disorder. Unsurprisingly, a number of clinicians use sexual conversion therapy to treat homosexuals in a myriad of ways including even the electroshock therapy (Shidlo et al. 1). The society perceived heterosexuality as natural for sexual relationship, and shows no tolerance to same-sex relationships. Increasingly, continuing forging homosexual freedom seems receiving a gradual intolerance. The plague increases public fear towards sexual freedom and consequently deepens homosexuals' isolation. It augments public homophobic, mainly because most infections are recorded among male homosexual. Bellatin portrays the way homosexual characters perceive the discrimination tendency against their sexual orientation. Their identities that are based on homosexual sexual attractions are seen as less important, and their homosexual traits make them feel as the "others". They are living as marginal identities due to the stigmatization and ignorance of their society if not lack of understanding.

2.8 Personal Adventure

In *Beauty Salon*, homosexuals witness cruel circumstances, which made them abandon their social life for personal adventure. They would rather live alone where they can exercise their unusual sexual desires than a dignified life in heteronormative confines. The author brings with homosexuals' characters memories and sorrows that sink them in a homophobic society. The problematic position that homosexuals witness can be seen in many other lives as well. The narrator is also seen as the lucky one who managed to run away from the public sphere in order to put his inspirations in a place where he can grow and prosper. But, the narrator's sense of freedom felt in the terminal is interpreted as an engagement to the unknown. This type of fatalistic engagement is driven by both personal disappointment and social disconnectedness.

Bellatin intends to show the ways homosexual characters are experiencing the feeling of discomfort after being hospitalized in the terminal. Their ambitious and dreams are hit harder by all sort of pain. In the terminal where are treated as living dead individuals and the great consequent sorrow that nobody but these characters feel. It would make a difference for homosexual characters in the story if they could realize that their future is painted with the fog of their sexual identity and fatality of the plague. As poor people live under economic oppression, homosexuals have found that their exile is nothing but a personal burden. Experiencing exceptional exile is a kind of refuge for them away from the two worlds that they found unbearable; leaving their community with normative heterosexuality or end up as unwilling category of

people with deviant sexuality. It seems to open ways for them to maintain what remains from their sense of self. In this regard, Fordoński explains:

The word "exile" was preferred as it brings to mind an element of judgement after breaking especially moral rules, severance of all ties with the old environment, one the exiles would not desert of their free will. The heroes choose to go away rather than oppose their world. They are aware of conflict but instead of fighting for their cause they choose to start a new life elsewhere (3).

In *Beauty Salon*, characters' damaged bodies are struggling to survive in heterosexist society. They learnt to perform non-standard gender roles to celebrate same-sex sexual relations as an attempt to prevent fitting into heteronormative sexual spaces formerly closed to them. In the terminal, there is not interest in the luxurious life or about wealthy people standards. The terminal guests became more interested in struggling with the disease that inflicted their bodies. The lack of belonging has strengthened their inferiority. They keep themselves away from the world of love and connectedness and fulfil their deviant desire by brutally escape in a place prepared for almost dead homosexuals. Throughout the novel, characters feel a profound ambivalence in the terminal. They develop a sense of shame for they have failed to fully integrate into the mainstream culture.

Living in seedy squalor, male homosexuals come to the terminal to end their lives hoping they have, at least, a way to retreat with their dignity intact, but the reality

is quite different. They suffer from the trauma that puts them in an abounded place. Their strange equation with the mainstream culture ultimately reflects their desire to maintain their homosexual identity. They seem tired of being victims haunted by a painful disease. Their moving images symbolize the collapse of their psychological being. The aftermath of the chaos made the plague dramatizes his delusive lives. It is obvious that they are suffering from trauma after witnessing the terrible event (plague). The weakness drives to serious psychic disorder which is clearly demonstrated by experiencing a traumatic stress reaction (Bryant-Davis and Ocampo)

In *Beauty Salon*, homosexuals adhere to a set of unusual performances. Their loneliness as well their self low esteem unable them to maintain their self-authority and dominance. Their bodies appear to be in an awful need of repair. Their nonconformity puts them as target for social intolerance as they cannot be identified with the socio- cultural mainstream and its sexual politics. Bellatin portrays homosexuals' painful experiences as he exposes the psychological torment of depression and social denial homosexuals have to go through.

2.9 Time and Space

Homosexual characters are struggling against themselves. Their fragile psyche cannot stand the hellish time during the plague. They appear to be a masochistic, and are habitually abused by heteronormative attitudes that vent out their anger on them. Bellatin puts ordinary lives of homosexual whose lives expectancy is extremely low due to the harsh conditions. After their hellish journey through which they could

hardly survive, Bellatin's characters are loaded with disappointment and nonsense. Their devotion to their deviant sexuality appears to be the only thing of they could do. Hysterically, they continue to present multiple forms of expressions usually appearing as neurotic symptoms. Their mental makeup is molded by the ideas and concepts which are not always logical or rational. Bellatin's characters have thus had a psychological urge, which cannot be easily satisfied (Morgan et al. 589).

Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* is being hotly debated because of the nature of customary themes it deals with. It presents major issues like personal achievements and losses. The novel throws more light on how the aftermath of post-plague period has a deep impact on the lives of individuals and how this impact is moved through spaces. It explores the role of existing heteronormative practices which are discriminatory against homosexuals and portrays their various crisis and traumas of dispossession. The tragedy of failed individuals in the course of their search for self worth is evident. Most importantly, it records a number of conflicts in marginalized excluded and broken homosexuals who cannot live up within society's expectations.

During the plague, there has been a kind of moral panic, which spreads around homosexuality. The plague creates confusion about sex, and brings into focus people's ambivalence on homosexuals. As a result, homosexuals have been accused for transmitting the infection, placing male homosexuals at the center of the epidemic. More attention has been given to the plague when it infects people, but it remains fixed on only homosexuals. Bellatin records how tough is the situation male

homosexual have undergone, placing them between the social forces and the fatality of the plague; the social control is emphasizing on its realm of norms and beliefs concerning gender and sexuality, while the plague worsens considerably their psychological development. In this respect, Júnior adds:

The relations between homosexuality and health sparked debate and controversy, both in the area of medical science and within social movements. During this period, homosexuality itself was considered a «disease» and individuals who engaged in homosexual practices were treated as if they were suffering from a pathology or disorder that was considered biological or genetic or associated with the individual's inadequate psychological development (159).

Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* creates an account where a distorted space is intertwined with the existence of individuals of blurry deviant sexual identity. This focus on space underlines the socio-cultural nature through which identities can be molded within specific determined standards. Mario Bellatin suggests, through a number of textual spaces, a condensation of homosexual acts that comprise their identity. His approach is broadened by considering homosexuals as contested "others" through conjuring a new vision for homosexuality within non-heteronormative spaces. However, understanding male homosexual's possession of place undermines the questioning of the normative boundaries (Vallerand 10).

In the case of Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*, homosexuals' acts constitute a space which is eventually limited to only one act, to dying. Bellatin's allegorization creates an analogous space for death that restricts homosexuals' lives. However, the space-time of allegory destabilizes the understanding of space representation. For certain persons and certain activities, space facilitates or hinders actions. Bellatin has thus centered the story on what can space provide. He recounts homosexuals' lives to draw attention on their suffering. Apparently, homosexuals' unusual sexual desires take down their relationship with their community, and eventually becomes the reason of their isolation. The confusion of the social isolation of male homosexuals has complicated the analysis of their physical and mental health. Homosexuals have lower physical health status. However, the social isolation and lower mental health lead to a psychological disruption. In other word, homosexuals are socially disconnected due their worse mental health (Cornwell and Waite 43).

Bellatin has drawn attention to the issue sexual diversity by recording the protest against social conventions. He presents a harsh picture of homosexuals that feel overpowered by the dominance of heteronormativity. The subjugated homosexuals become the victims of social attitudes, repression and trauma. It is impossible for those individuals to take up arms to fight for their rights and privileges in a society and the only means available to them is to endure questing for what they have lost and make their voices heard. Male homosexual search for qualities is related with self worth and visibility. For most of them this quest leads a self-destruction. It is the struggle for self

realization that Bellatin communicates with his characters who feel that they are under a constant threat.

2.10 Sense of Morality

Beyond narrative devices, Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* conveys certain aspects of a community that is about to lose the entire grip over the public sense of morality. It represents a dystopian society, which shows no mercy for homosexuals and many other minorities. In the story, homosexuals are portrayed trembling as being confronted with the plague and social attitudes. Violence is another factor in the tragedy of homosexuals; it threatens the course of their lives within their own society. In addition, social attitudes can also be seen as major reason for the subjugation of this category of people. Hospitals refuse to hospitalise them for fear of contamination. Yet for difference, for they demonstrate unconventional behavioural traits and sexuality, they are rejected. In turn, they seek asylum in the terminal when are infected with the mysterious disease.

Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* reports that homosexuals are victims caught between family rejection and the social conditions set by the owner of the terminal to be accepted. He accepts only men whose bodies are in an advanced state of ruin. He remains separate from his guests and shows no sympathetic response toward their suffering. The paradoxical situation in terminal which is seen as non-place symbolizes the moral crisis. On the other hand, the guests do not display any affection for him. The terminal has therefore become a place of anonymity, which creates neither

identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude that emotionally separate his patients (Augé 83).

The painful relation that is reported between homosexual and their surroundings shows the dismissal of integrity of the society. Their bodies are objective for use in the terminal. The terminal owner's disregard for their bodies is perceived as a crime for social morality. His abominable practice is worsened by the lack of morality emphasizing the belief that:

Homosexuality is abnormal and hence undesirable – not because it is immoral or sinful, or because it weakens society or hampers evolutionary development, but for a purely mechanical reason. It is a misuse of bodily parts (Levin 350).

In addition, the reaction of the people surrounding the terminal intensifies homosexual faithless to the mainstream conventions. Yet, there are growing disparities that hinder indulge homosexual acts. These disparities question the moral fabric of the society, and force homosexual to fatalistically move inward causing greater psychological ruptures.

Challenging this critical moral form, Bellatin creates a literary account to question the existing moral codes. Interestingly, *Beauty Salon* provides a comprehensible critique to the ways socio-cultural setup can lead to the destabilization of moral norms. Homosexuals, in the story, fall victims not only by the heteronormative prejudice, but with the ruin of the moral system in the society.

Consequently, the moral chain that governs the social stability has been broken by the problematic relationships between homosexuals and rigid structures of social exclusion. In this regard, Chai R. Feldblum affirms:

In the sense of a moral, normative view of "the good"-is not the proper object of governmental action. According to this view, individuals living in a pluralist society will inevitably hold divergent normative and moral beliefs, and the role of law and government is to adequately safeguard the rights necessary for each individual to pursue his or her own normative view of "the good life"-not to affirmatively advance one moral view of "the good" over others (84).

Bellatin discusses the concepts of life, value and sexual politics, and he undermines rigid social exclusion leading to destructive consequences in the homosexuals' state of being.

Beauty Salon records the story of subjugated homosexuals who disappointingly try to develop survival strategies. When their communications fail, they create self-destructive tendency to express their concerns. The writer, to whom every detail in the story mirrors his attachment to tragedy of homosexuals, conveys the moral dilemma involved in the relationship between homosexuals and their society. Obviously homosexuals who try to recuperate their sense of worth get frustrated as their approximation to the social life is not perfect. Homosexual characters in the novel have lost the ability to belong to either world and develop a complete sense of loss.

Bellatin's use of the first person narrator makes the readers get involved more with the repulsiveness of his *Beauty Salon*. Undeniably, the readers' main concern is to decode underlying moral motives in the story. Bellatin laments what he sees as the decline in moral standards shown in the ways society perceives homosexuals as unwilling category of mankind. Though given them the role of resisters, he portrays homosexuals struggling in the cycle of deterioration; his text provides a space for what Lucy Bollington refers to as destabilisation of the dynamic when she argues:

When Bellatin's text is read in dialogue with Puar, one realises that rather than solely mourning the demise of 'liberation' or documenting neoliberal or biopolitical violence, Bellatin's text opens up a new space of possibility through its destabilisation of the dynamic in which certain lives are sacrificed so that others can prevail (4).

Beauty Salon tackles the moral dilemma of the modern era. The story questions existing mainstream mindset which serves establishing an intolerant moral system. This has intensified the phenomenon of violence and dehumanization of individuals with deviant sexualities. It is generally agreed that morality guides human conduct, but, in the terminal, fish are treated humanly, more than its guests. Indeed, the tragedy of homosexual foregrounds the dark aspect of human morality Bellatin wants to turn attention to. He believes that the key element to understand human self is to put the moral aspect into examination. During the plague, homosexuals are doubly mistreated; they fall victims of the plague and the tyranny of social attitudes. The dystopia reality

of homosexual is painted by the ongoing process of othering deviant sexualities and the disease comes to worsen the scene; Lucy Bollington adds:

Critics have argued that the novella traces a movement away from the 'utopia' or 'golden age' of the 'transgressive' body in health towards the 'dystopia of homosexual death' and the dehumanising loss of identity that occurs with the advent of the disease (2).

Beauty Salon is deeply woven in irrationality and disorder. The terminal sets up an uncomfortable mood for its guests. The terminal owner shows disrespect for women that seek asylum in the terminal. He rejects hospitalizing women, for the terminal is prepared for almost died homosexuals. The beauty salon becomes a morgue that is run with rigidity accepting only homosexual bodies that are no more identifiable. In addition, the donations are only accepted if they are of poor quality. Homosexuals who think of dying away from their society get unexpected hospitalization in the terminal as they are treated as unwilling types of insects.

The underlying criticism of the removal of feelings and values seems to be one of the main themes in Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*. Bellatin questions the moral system by criticizing the moral nuance displayed within the terminal. The narrator's main concern is to shift attention to the suffering of sick homosexuals. Homosexuals are exploited in the ideological debate of sexuality and gender roles. Their representation as almost outcast category of people reflects a gap in the social morality. Their sexual

orientation can not be normalized as they are perceived as abnormal by education, politics, and religion. In this respect, Kozloski argues that people:

are currently less apt to accept homosexuality in the moral sense.

Whether or not this acceptance will follow the same positive path as social tolerance remains to be seen, but it is likely that education, politics, and religion will continue to play central roles in future trends (1382).

Homosexuals are challenging the mainstream culture seeking to cement their acceptability. They are depicted as vulnerable, psychopath and damaged. In other words, social conventions which work at maintaining the stability of the dominant social and cultural norms serve subjugating homosexuals. In this sense, Bellatin attempts to influence people perceptions toward homosexuals through turning attention to the social moral dilemma that leads to the distortion of homosexuality. In *Beauty Salon*, homosexuals are caught between exercising their sexual freedom and the dominant socio-cultural norms which would affect children socially and psychologically. Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* increasingly engages challenges sexual politics, for it shows homosexuals' urge for the acceptability and visibility. It acutely questions homosexuals' exclusiveness in the mainstream culture, and draws inspiration from the basis that sexual identity is fluid, and not fixed.

2.11 Conclusion

Mario Bellatin has drawn attention to homosexuals' tragedy during a mysterious plague. By recording the protest of the deprived and neglected category of people, he presents a harsh picture of life wherein this minority in and out the terminal feel overpowered by the dominance of the majority. The subjugated homosexuals fall victims of the tyranny of heteronormative attitudes, traumatic feeling of belonging and the plague. It is impossible for them to fight for their rights and privileges in these agonizing circumstances. The only means seems available to them is to endure questing for what they have lost and make their voices heard.

Bellatin uses language that is definite, confining and rich of appointed sad tone. This fast and definitive tone is intertwined with the disordered nature of the events portrayed in the story. Homosexuals' quest for the sense of self worth lamentably leads to self-destructive, ending up with dehumanization, isolation and death. Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* communicates homosexuals' struggle who feel under a constant threat. It takes the cause and the impact of the plague that affects the life of homosexuals who try to escape exploitation, and seek pastures to resist against the tyranny of all kinds of dominance, and the lack of humanity and sensitivity towards the "other" who is both similar to and different from the others.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Debate

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3.1 Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to discuss the theoretical framework of gender that espouses an eclectic approach in addition to a number of related theories including: feminism, agency and queer theory. After exposing feminist movement to the academic frame, feminism appears as new mode of struggles to gain a number of rights for women questioning intensively the reasons behind woman's subjugation. Feminist discourse reveals many controversies related mainly to the construction of the binary of sex/gender, especially after Butler's approach on gender as a social construction and gender performativity that determine new perceptions of gender and gender related concepts, including sex and sexuality. In the wake of this chaotic state of thoughts bursts the queer theory which takes another dimension in dealing with the fluidity of gender identity. The queer theory questions the fundamental foundations of sex, gender, and sexuality, which have become influential concepts in modern literary criticism.

Queer activists as Claudia Castrosín Verdú and Sara Higazi aim at promoting one's agency and free will to socially appropriate all queer acts, and struggle against the restriction of these within the infused socio-cultural norms, which are constructed since birth. Therefore, a brief definition of the agency theory is also provided. In this subject, male homosexual characters' agency seems to evoke contentious issues in both Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*. Characters seem to be gradually given a voice with the help of the role of homosexual activists. In this

way, it is essential to discuss the mapping of these characters' psychological development (self) and their socialization (selves) and in the course of their life.

3.2 Understanding Feminism

Feminism has been articulated differently in different parts of the world by different people, especially women depending upon their level education, background and consciousness. It seems that the term was first coined in France in the 1880s as feminism prior to forging its path through Europe and North America in 1890s and 1910 respectively. Denoting "a social movement or political ideology" (Freedman 3), this term initially stands for an amalgamation between the word "femme" and the suffix "isme". In this sense, it was coined to describe an epiphanic episode in women's struggle that marked the realization of their marginalized rights compared to men. It is an attempt to understand woman from the woman's point of view and redefine the sexual politics based on gender. Thus, feminism burst to arouse interest in understanding woman's experience from a woman's point of view. It becomes a hard and long lasting debate that still casts its shadows till nowadays, as the social status of woman remains the center of feminist writings (Hadjipavlou 112).

At the beginning, Feminism had been received with derogatory connotation and mistaken assumptions. Rather than a claim for equal rights movement, which questions the politics of power between man and woman, feminism is regarded as an anti-male movement. Hooks, however, emphasizes that Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression that is ingrained in patriarchal

societies. Patriarchal societies hold an institutionalized system for sexism, which injects sexist thoughts and habit since birth (1). In this regard, patriarchy appears to be a social mindset system that provokes hegemonic binary of man's domination and woman's subordination.

In the midst of women's dystopian reality, feminist activists and writers seek liberating woman from the oppressions of patriarchy. Feminism is an attempt to claim regard to women needs, yet impede man bias. Consequently, feminism, in the course of its history, encountered critical turning points, which stripped it off its pejorative connotations. Women struggle "may have turned to ideologies of domestic feminism in an effort to create economies of meaning for the privatized world of women's work, giving a cultural presence to what was unvalued and invisible in the public sphere (Hart et al. 223).

Feminism movement is evolving as an academic field of research. The feminist movement that first appears in the United States exposes what Friedan refers to in her book *Feminine Mystique* (1963) as "the problem that has no name". She concludes that women have psychologically been tormented by the social reality, which restricted their core existence solely and fundamentally to serve man's needs: housing and mothering, especially in a time they were eager for more in life and wanted career (11). Consequently, woman anguished an identity crisis out of their traumatic reality and domestic role. In addition, social conventions tension the situation between both sexes. Therefore, the need for a reexamination of the ways of

exercising social power over gender roles introduces another way of viewing women based on the abolition of social distinction related to any coding of gender differences.

The evolution of feminism is divided into three major phases or Three Waves. The first wave is located in the second half of the nineteenth century, which embodies the establishment of Woman's Movement or The Suffrage Movement. Women of that time did not try for equally treated as man. Rather, they sought to achieve respect for their existence. They were concerned with different issues referring to woman's issues such as: child labor laws and abolition, which emphasized the need for their voices to be heard. Thus, they called for the right to vote, and in 1920, the American woman achieved that goal, yet after, the movement witnessed a long period of stagnancy until the 1960s (Helgeson 54).

The second wave of feminism stands as a marker that washed over the American culture with the 1960s sexual revolution. The main focus of second wave feminism was directed more towards the reproduction of women's experience and sexuality. Moreover, different issues like: biology, experience, discourse, the unconscious, and social and economic conditions consumed the bulk concentration of second wave feminists who were acting upon changing women's reality. Woman's Liberation Movement showed signs of change. Evidently, contemporary women writings mainly focused on woman's subjugation. Their movement struggled for establishing

economic and political equality between man and woman, also their difference in terms of reproduction and sexuality areas (Freedman 4, 5).

It appears that the economic and political events of that time served as catalytic arenas for emerging the feminist movement. In this concern, Hooks argues that women bodies are considered personal properties. In this regard, it was their free choice to be sexual with whomever they would like, and whenever they want. Furthermore, issuing free sex encounters women to find safe ways to avoid undesirable pregnancy. Thus, they believed in the legitimacy of woman's free right and choice as well. They regarded resolutions in contraceptive pills and in access to abortion clinics (25). Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) were the pioneering oeuvres that triggered woman's consciousness in fighting for their rights. In this regard, Friedan states "to take action to bring woman into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exerting all the privileges and responsibilities thereof, in truly partnership with men"(370).

Feminism movement became more controversial and continued establishing its discourse in different part of the world. Like its predecessors, the third wave of feminism; upheld its political agendas, but now it becomes more inclusive racially and sexually. Activists from different cultures and backgrounds adjusted the concept feminism compatibly with their perspectives, as Arundhati Roy in India.

Thus, the term feminism has become feminisms, and has continued redefining itself to become a "diverse movement that emphasizes female empowerment rather than male oppression"(Freedman 6). Consequently, similar patterns of feminism from different cultures came into existence. In this sense, the third wave feminism forges a diverse feminist movement. It has become a global cultural platform to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women all over the world. In this subject, Helgeson states that the modern woman's recognition of gender is melted with race and class does not only pertain the white western middle class woman, but rather globalized woman's movement to recognize the struggle commonality shared by woman worldly. Most importantly that "traditional gender roles are grounded in culture"(57).

Third-wave feminism still concerns with probably the same problems as their previous ones. Third wave feminists are now working to creating political and legal establishments. Although, the early proponents of feminist theories were from the West and feminism is irrelevant for third world contexts, women of other races have grouped alternative feminisms. Feminism is an endeavor to understand the world from woman's perspective. It is also a socio-cultural reformation that seeks securing, empowering, and claiming equal right (with men) to woman. To fully put in a nutshell the progressive contribution of feminist theory, gender cannot be separated from its context. It comes at the core of process of deconstructing the politics of power imbalance between man and woman (Bomarito and Hunter 346; Katrak 16).

Feminism theory seeks to challenge the social biased attitudes toward women to change woman's reality. It is molded through three main progressive waves. In the midst of feminists' journey, gender finds its place as a central motif for feminist discourse. Gender becomes the basis in creating the social hierarchies. Unlike sex, sex is determined by one's biology, but rather seems to be displayed through particular social roles, which are constructed at the basis of the dominant social cultural norms to maintain social conformity. In this sense, the female is expected to demonstrate femininity trait while masculinity is expected to be displayed by male.

3.3 Rethinking Gender

The concern about gender identity is rooted in early feminist works. The term gender came into the academic use in late 20th century. Feminist writers of this period have made a strong opposition to patriarchy. Before the extension its meaning, gender has been used to describe the state of being a male or female. Scholars as Butler argue that women are biological beings, but subjugating them is socially constructed. Further, they argue that sex is manifested to be either male or female. According to them, gender describes the fact of being masculine and feminine. These theorists turn the attention to the fact that gender is constructed by some institutions like: religion, society, and education (Mboho and Ataire 27).

To understand the term gender, one needs to look at sex as fixed reality and gender as something that can be changed constantly over time and space. The idea of

the instability nature of gender has been elaborated by a number of works notably in two related approaches:

3.3.1 Social Construction Approach

As a major component of social structure as a whole, gender has become a subject of controversy nowadays. The gendered practices which are usually justified by religion, culture and law paint views of how men and women act. Today, scholars are making progressively a sharp distinction between what sex as biological and gender social contract. It would, therefore, be appropriate to look at the various theoretical approaches on the construction of gender. The social background determines the ways in which various gender roles are enacted and recreated. In this regard, gender is seen as a "social construction of sex and to the categorizations and classifications into femininity and masculinity" (Oakley 41) rather than as facts of biology. It is, therefore, important to appreciate the wider impact and implications gender has on shaping the self.

From infancy to adulthood, one develops a number of gender roles. However, interactions with the same or different gender take a gender orientation. Society constructs the relationship between men and women according to the conventional gendered norms which associate them to a number of patterns of expectations, as Lorber argues:

Gender as an institution establishes pattern of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, is built into

the major social organizations of society such as economy, ideology, the family, politics and is also an entity in and of itself (3)

As a social institution, gender distributes rights and responsibilities for both men and women. Social structures are thus built in accordance with gender roles that individuals identify with. Both of them develop patterns of interaction based on their gender. Consequently, these individuals construct a gendered order, writes Butler:

The very injunction to be a given gender takes place through discursive routes; to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker, in sum to signify a multiplicity of guarantees in response to a variety of different demands all at once (145).

In modern parlance, the term gender is defined as the social construction of masculinity and femininity, i.e. what is socially acceptable or unacceptable for feminine and masculine roles. Behaviours can therefore be categorized into masculine and feminine. These two notions vary between cultures and social groups. Through the construction of gender "one becomes aware that one is a boy or a girl and develops an understanding that one's maleness or femaleness is a permanent trait. This recognition is fateful for the development of gender roles." (Davidson et al. 10)

The social construction approach helps understanding how female and male status is constructed within the society. The approach analyses different factors that constitute social groups. Social construct approach studies gender as an integral part

of any social group's structure. Gender forges also the one's appropriation for education, work, family and authority.

The social construction approach emphasizes on the fact that men and women are actors whose roles are dictated by the society. They are engaged in different social interactions and consequently exposed to changes. Individuals rebel against all sorts of behaviours molded by gender norms. Social interactions can shape unusual expectations for men and women by institutionalizing change in their gender identity (J.W. Scott 7). The central features of social construction are grounded in time and space. The different constructions of gender are therefore made up of a variety of codes, patterns, systems, norms, values, beliefs that are specific for a given community in a given period of time. We can refer to them as cultural feminisms.

3.3.2 Gender Performativity

In *Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler advocates the theory of performativity. She claims that gender can also be seen as a set of "periodic practices based on performative theory of gender acts that disrupts the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame" (xxi). Gender and sex are elaborated as social performances. Indeed, woman and man are performing gender roles which are either reinforced or controlled in everyday life.

Butler also argues that gender is socially constructed and fluid. It is something that is performed, something we become, not something we inherently are. She also

adds: "Gender proves to be performance— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed." (33) Butler does not indicate that gender identity is a performance, but instead she explains that the performance pre-exists the doer. Butler's insight helps to understand not only how different gender roles are performed in different social situations, but how masculine and feminine practices are established, perpetuated, and changed. Therefore, it cannot be assumed a one type of femininity or masculinity.

Regarding that gender is involved in an endless process of becoming, Butler develops De Beauvoir's belief that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (De Beauvoir 281). She suggests that woman is something we do rather than something she is. In other words, the body can be male or female, but it is not necessarily to display masculine or feminine roles. To a certain extent, a person can choose his/her gender just as gender presents itself in a doing. Gender functions a collection of social and cultural codes that serve creating conventions on what a man and a woman are assigned to do.

Butler suggests that gender is a performative process which is based upon a set of sustained, regular and repetitive gendered acts, which operates outside the self and affects it. In this sense, gender is not an internal feature that one is born with, but rather a feature that is performed and acquired. She adds that" performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which accomplishes its effect through its

naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration "(xiv, xv). Thus, as aforesaid, gender is said to be a continuous, dynamic process that is socially constructed and reinforced. Most importantly, it "proves to be performative —that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed "(33). As a result, gender becomes an act that categorizes one into masculinity or femininity.

In addition, the notion of performativity suggests that gender is not fixed, but fluid, or as Butler describes " free-floating"; it is a changeable social fabrication that varies between cultures and through time. In her work, Butler claims that " Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being", which puts forth that "gender ought not to be constructed as a stable identity [...] gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts (44, 179). Therefore, it is argued that gender appears as a social manifestation, which ensues from physical sex differences by a range of repeated acts. In this vein, Freedman observes that this operates structural discrimination in individuals' daily life practices, and then constructs their attitudes to create gender hierarchy. Thus, a sort of inequality between the sexes has come to the fore; especially that every culture views man and woman through what psychologist Sandra Bem terms the lenses of gender (167, 168).

Butler states that " identity is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality" (22) where individuals turn comprehensible in as much as they confirm and suit to the expected rules and norms of "gender intelligibility"(23). Butler goes further with her performativity conceptualization. On the other hand, she attempts to draw a link between gender and sexuality deconstructing the binary of gender/sex. It seems essential here to dispel certain misconceptions about gender identity and sexual orientation. The later indicates one's sexuality which marks individuals' sexual preferences with partners of same or different sex. Heterosexuality refers to sexual attraction to the other sex whereas homosexuality is the sexual attraction to same sex. Yet, this does not abrogate the fact that sexual orientation stands as a major criterion in defining one's identity (Butler 37).

In *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Butler emphasizes that sex is biological, and that the female/ male categorization is constructed. She states that "'sex' is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time" (1) and associated to the norms and practices that differentiate bodies. Sex is not a simple bodily descriptive condition, but apparently a performative process, "whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieves this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms"(2), she explains. This assumes bodily form to sex and creates sexual differences. According to her, performativity serves to centralize heterosexual imperative as a hegemonic force. This puts forth that sexuality is constructed, also constitutes identity fixation and stabilization.

Furthermore, Butler argues that sexual practice can affect the perception of gender. According to her, gender serves, in a way, as a mechanism of organizing and securing heterosexual relations and hegemony. This seems not only oppressing woman, but also homosexuals who seem worried about the impacts of revealing their truth, beside the crisis to lose their gender identity and belonging (xi). In other words, it can be argued that the construction of gender leads to appropriate the notion of naturalizing the fact that heterosexuality is the normative setting for sexuality, since it impacts, shapes and organizes social relations and interactions. Likely, Butler attempts to stimulate the attention that the source of oppression of deviant sexualities is rooted within heterosexual hegemony.

Butler's performativity theory has revolutionized the path of gender theoretical framework. She stresses to consider that gender is not an inborn characteristic, but rather a doing which is based on continuous repeated acts. These acts define one's gender into femininity or masculinity. She goes beyond this assumption as she considers gender as a tool to maintain hetenormativity. She believes that gender perpetuates heterosexuality as the normal parameter to maintain social conformity. According to Butler's performativity theory, gender is an outcome of repeated performances that are not instable, and can articulated differently through time and space (33).

As a conclusion, gender theorists (mainly Butler) stress the need to emphasize the notion that gender is regarded as a performative social construct. They argue that

gender is not an inherited construction as it is shaped by performance which is not stable. Gender can be exposed to negotiation and change in which individuals negotiate a range of masculinity and femininity dictated by their roles in society. Apparently, Butler's epistemological matrix has revolutionized the feminist theory. It eliminates the idea that gender is fixed, but it also serves creating a point of reference for the queer theory to forge its place in the field of gender and sexuality studies. In this subject, Butler's work is regarded as a ground-breaking reference for the queer theory.

3.4 Conceptualizing Sex

Freedman investigates the binary gender/ sex that revolutionizes the feminist theory. She mainly examines whether man and woman can be dealt with as biological or social phenomena. Thus, she goes beyond studying possible similarities and differences existing in the categorization of individuals into man and woman, which was exposed the social hierarchical mindset and practice. Sex and gender are being used interchangeably and inconsistently (5). However, Helgeson differentiates between them by stating that sex is a biological category specific to female/male identity. Sex is displayed by genital, chromosomal and hormonal features. For example, since the Y chromosome is a male sex given feature, it is a fixed reality determined by natural biological characteristics. This would justify the fact that culture has no impact on the sex of individuals (135).

Gender is a social categorization for the biological female and male. In this sense, gender is a social perpetuation of being feminine or masculine in terms of

psychology, personality, behavior, appearance, interests that varies between cultures. In the United States, for instance, emotionality and dependency are considered as a psychological trait attributed to woman while competitiveness, stoicism, and leadership for man (Helgeson 30). Therefore, nurture is expected to be a female gender feature whereas sports and work were expected to be a male gender feature. In this way, gender appears as a social prescription of features and patterns for a woman and man to be appropriate or inappropriate. It is not a biological fact but a social construction; rather likely to be changed through time by society's background, culture, religion, which makes it instable. Hence, this suggests that there could not be one unified form of masculine and feminine conceptualization in the world (Helgeson 31).

Gender role represents the social influence exercised on sex. It spots the localization of female and male's social position. It presents a set of social expectancies and rules for man and woman to act accordingly. Typically, gender roles reflect what are expected from man and woman to do: man as being strong, confident, and aggressive, while woman as being sensitive, emotional, caring. In other words, it is argued that it advocates for a sort of strict social roles for a man and woman to adjust. Seemingly, gender roles organize social relations, as they establish a kind of a social control or conformity by emphasizing these gender norms and expectations in every gender interactions. Likely, the simplest representation of this role gendering comes to be in ascribing pink color to baby girl and blue color to baby boy, even before they are born. Thus, it is a process which starts since birth onwards

as the sex category appears to be children's first notice. Then, it likely goes to include a structure of norms indicating acceptances, limitations and prohibitions (Helgeson 27, 28, 30).

Feminists start to accuse social institutions for granting men privileges dominance, power. In this subject, De Beauvoir states that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman"(281). This reveals her belief that being a woman is not a biological fact, a woman is born with, but it is something made. It seems important to look to the concept of woman as an abstract man and woman's physical biological sex (male or female) cannot involve masculine or feminine social traits. In other words, sex cannot display feminine and masculine trait.

Butler developed this belief and revolutionized the discourse of feminism. She seems to swap the focus fundamentally to gender and sex to give them the primacy with her conceptualization of Gender Performativity that explains how the construction of gender works, or how gender identity is shaped with referring to its fluid nature. She asks very pertinent questions about the construction of gender:

When feminist theorists claim that gender is the cultural interpretation of sex or that gender is culturally constructed, what is the manner or mechanisms of this construction? If gender is constructed, could it be constructed differently, or does its constructedness imply some form of social determinism, foreclosing the possibility of agency and transformation? Does 'construction' suggest that certain laws generate

gender difference along universal axes of gender difference? How and when does the construction of gender take place? What sense can we make of a construction that cannot assume a human constructor prior to the construction? (7 - 8)

The social dimension of the dichotomy of male / female is said to be Butler's main focus, from which she perceives the meaning of sex through the articulation of gender in order to fit the dominant social norms and expectancies. This process is referred to as socialization. It operates on the embodiment of male and female traits, henceforth displayed through gender identity / role. It aims at maintaining social control over the conformity of gender roles. Thus, child's sex is characterized by vulnerable biological traits. It serves constructing one's gender identity and agency. Parents, school, and society are regarded to be the basic agents in the development process of child's socialization.

In this consideration, the conceptualization of sex becomes one of the most controversial concerns of feminism that fundamentally shapes the perception one's sexuality. The conceptualization of the binary of gender / sex helps probing the role of social attitudes on the construction of the categorization of gender identity which is socially produced and instable. A number of feminists as Kate Millett use it as being the fundamental pattern for social structure, which demarcates both social incompatibility and compatibility of gender roles.

3.5 Sexuality

The debate on sexuality has dominated research in recent years. For instance, the academic community of psychology has extensively explored sexuality as an influential social construct. It has thoroughly investigated both gender roles attributed to man/woman, and sexuality in stabilizing social conformity and order. Most importantly, the representations of sexual orientation have captivated academic attention. However, sexuality had covered that much to explore its effects on the representation of individuals in literature; especially that fiction appears to be a primary medium to articulate normative and deviant sexualities. Normative and deviant sexualities are targeted to reflect certain aspects on social conformity and order.

Sexuality refers to the biology of human beings in which human beings can be classified according to their sexual preferences. Sexuality has become an important factor in determining one's identity. Lorraine Code highlights the importance of the study of sexuality to understand human identity, when she says:

Sexuality is a complex and contested domain. It became central to western understandings of human identity with the birth of scientific sexology just over a hundred years ago, as doctors and policy makers began to usurp the role of the Church in the social regulation of bodily pleasures and reproductive practices. (364)

Individuals' self identification brings their sexual orientation and gender identity into debate. Sexual identity represents the image of the self when it is identified sexually. It also represents one's actual and absolute sexual state. Sexuality is limited to the assignment of amount of heterosexual and/or homosexual practices these individuals are engaged in. They came to realize that the sexual identification dictates an individualistic tendency that allows a variety of ways of sexually identifying one's self within a given social context. The term sexuality is used to refer to the state of being sexually attracted. It is a biological force that drives individuals to be erotically attracted to the same or different sex. In *A Glossary of Feminist Theory* (1996), Jackson and Scott argue that:

[sexuality] is sometimes used to refer to sexual orientation or identity.

However, sexuality also covers aspects of personal and social life which have erotic significance, not only individual erotic desires, practices and identities but also the discourse and social arrangements which construct erotic possibilities at any one time. (2)

People can be classified according to their sexual orientation into heterosexuals, homosexuals. Heterosexuality is defined as a sexual pattern of attractions to opposite sex. It is also defined as a set of beliefs that legitimize the right to dominate others because of their deviant sexual preferences. Heterosexuality sets societal standards and norms in which heteronormative individuals are sexually attracted to different sex. Therefore, it has an outstanding role in shaping one's identity, behaviors, and belongings. However, homosexuality refers to the state of being attracted to persons of

the same sex. It has taken a variety of forms over time and cultures. Hence, homosexuality does not have an affecting social existence because homosexuals are excluded from society, and deprived of any social changes. However, implementing deviant conceptions and ideologies regarding sexuality do not only seek challenging the natural heteronormative system, but also change attitudes towards homosexuals by preparing communities to normalize and accept their visibility (Seo 65-79; Schreier19-26).

Discussions over sexuality translate attitudes constructed over time. In other words, people's attitudes towards what is sexually correct or wrong are changing over time¹. In this, they mirror the positions of religious and political institutions in society. Increasingly today, feminists seem to regard sexuality as both a social construct and a biological phenomenon. Sexuality is perceived from different dimensions as Stanley Grenz explains, it:

Further, sexuality is a dimension of our existence as embodied persons. As we will see later, at it's core this embodied existence includes a fundamental incompleteness, one which is symbolised by

¹ Very recently, a French-Algerian imam, named Ludovic-Mohamed Zahed (1977-) creates an approach of queer (re)production in which he claim that now gay Muslims can openly articulate their deviant sexual identity, and suggests new feminist and queer readings of the Qur'an. His approach has violent reaction from Muslim community all over the world, as the holy Quran condemns homosexuality. In 2014, two Muslim women from Iran got married in a religious ceremony which took place in Stockholm, Sweden, and directed by Zahed. Zahed initiative sparks a number of debates on how are sexual and religious minorities competing socio-cultural traditions and configuring self/selves that shift through time and situation.

biological sex and is based in our sexuality. Through sexuality we give expression both to our existence as embodied creatures and to our basic incompleteness as embodied persons in our relationships to each other and to the world. Our sexuality, then, calls us to move toward completeness. It forms the foundation for the drive which moves male and female to come together to form a unity of persons in marriage (20).

To understand sexuality, one needs to consider different perspectives from both biology and feminist theories. Different works attempt to explain sexuality and give an explanation to logical connections between sexual expressions and gender identity. Sexuality can be seen as the factor that contributes to construction of practices, customs, and social institutions of a particular human society. It can be argued that sexuality is one of the conflicting concepts which one can encounter. It encompasses physical and psychological changes. Sexuality has, thus, a crucial role in mapping the self (individual) and selves (society).

3.6 Cultural and Social Dimensions of Queer Theory

Women seem not to be the only social class who struggled to resist oppression. Feminism is established as a theory or academic discipline in order to claim for women's rights in many fields, including political, economic, and social arenas. As previously discussed, a woman is categorized as being: variant and ranked secondly and dependent to men under the categorical binary. Noticeably, other minorities of

unusual or deviant sexual orientations and gender roles, and who do not comply with the conventional gender rules, are also the target of marginalization and oppression. Therefore, they take an analogous path with feminism to challenge and resist the binaries and norms that banish them; their struggle is lately manifested in establishing the queer theory.

Feminist theories argue that gender is a social construct designed by social structures rather than determined by biology. They separated the social from the biological (i.e the constructed and the innate). They distinctively arrange sex into male and female, gender into masculine and feminine, and sexuality into heterosexual and homosexual. But, sexuality becomes open to change as its expressions are not fixed. These changes stress the need for queer identity as observed in the words of Marinucci (2010):

Within queer theory, what is sometimes described as a rejection of binary contrasts is perhaps better described as social constructionism with respect to those contrasts. Recall that essentialism is the belief that various identity categories, such as female and male, feminine and masculine, homosexual and heterosexual, reflect innate characteristics that comprise the fundamental nature of the members of those categories, whereas social constructionism is the belief that such identity categories are historical and cultural developments (34).

The queer theory gives an explanation to the notion of normative and abnormal sexual behaviour. It foregrounds gay/lesbian authors of the sexuality that has historically been covered. By looking at their texts, one discovers particular literary themes, techniques and perspectives which show the state of being victimised in a heterosexual world. These authors portray homosexuality and heterosexuality by focusing on sexuality as a constructed concept.

In *Bodies That Matter* (1990), Butler argues that the term queer has historically been associated to shame, insult, accusation, and pathology, hence as pejorative signification. The word queer is emerging as an ongoing movement that interrogates force and opposition, of stability and variability, within performativity. In this way, the queer theory opposes the homophobic stigmatization of both shame and taboo exercised by the heterosexual hegemony to describe those who resist and rebel against social rules (233). Thus, queer individuals start to struggle to turn into their silenced social demands heard, visible, and viable through questioning the authorization, and categorization of what is normal, and what is deviant. Their struggle mirrors the effort to reverse the shameful stigmatization into self awareness of their action. Queer individuals also attempt to redefine people's articulation of their marginalized group. In this sense, the queer theory becomes an endeavor to challenge the sexual hierarchy's categorization which puts homosexuality as deviant from the naturalised heterosexuality (Jagose, 72).

As an academic field, the Queer Theory studies how notions of hetero/homosexuality have historically being defined. It studies sexuality from the point that sexuality is as normal and immoral in society. The Queer Theory is defined by D. Halperin as follows:

Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. 'Queer' then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative... [Queer] describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance. (62)

Moreover, the academic conceptualization and framing of the queer theory was first coined by Teresa De Lauretis to challenge the discourse that impose heterosexuality as being the prevailing parameter of sexuality. In this regard, the queer theory opens a number of possibilities of considerations in the field of sexuality. De Lauretis considers that the Queer Theory "conveys a double-emphasis—on the conceptual and speculative work involved in discourse' production, and on the necessary critical work of deconstructing our own discourses and their constructed silence"(qtd. in Barnett and Johnson 581).

Butler's theory of gender performativity shows a spark of interest in consolidating the perspective that destabilizes and subverts dominant

heteronormative identity fixation. Accordingly, gender is manifested as a performative process; that is based on a set of repeated acts. This restrains one's agency and grants limited autonomy to individuals because they cannot do about their gender. Yet, gender constitutes a component of what shapes and defines one's identity and determines its manifestation. It can be said that Butler's suggestion highlights the discourse of binary opposition of sexuality (heterosexuality and homosexuality). In this regard, Butler aims at naturalizing homosexuality as being another pattern for sexuality. She has, thus, declares that to make gender trouble, this requires deconstructing and subverting the constitutive categories that aim at keeping gender in its place by posturing it as the foundational illusions of identity, especially that the unity of gender is the effect of a regulatory practice that seeks to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality (42, 44).

In this sense, uncovering gender illusive reality can convey positive change at the social, political and cultural spheres. Hence, identities are constructed differently and freely, as new possibilities for human existence. Butler adds:

If identities were no longer fixed as the premises of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old (189).

In an endeavour to understand the mechanism of gender, Butler attempts to break the shell of gender, which relegated both women and homosexuals to an inferior status. Her approach of gender performativity and the fluidity of gender identity reveals the gap, which serve as a resisting strategy to dismantle gender. Through bringing out what is outside the binaries, she intends to cause this trouble suggesting:

A set of parodic practices based in performative theory of gender acts that disrupt the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame (xxxix)

Butler discusses the emergence of new butch and femme identities, drag, and lesbian and gay parenting. These problematic constructions present queer or deviant gender role attributes. However, the tendency of viewing masculinity from a male perspective develops critical men's studies. In the same area, the Queer Theory elaborates the idea of multiple masculinities. This notion enlarges One's understanding to deviant sexual identities. In this regard, Pascoe states:

Queer theory often points to disjunctures between pairings thought of as natural and inevitable. In doing so queer theorists may implicitly question some of the assumptions of the multiple masculinities model—specifically the assumption that masculinity is defined by the bodily practices of boys and men—by placing sexuality at the center of analysis. (11)

Butch is defined as being a man or having masculine gender roles. Someone identifies as a woman, and is sexually attracted by a woman (that is the lesbian part), and who dresses, acts, or speaks in ways that many people in society consider masculine (that is the butch). A butch lesbian is more comfortable with manish appearance (urbandictionary.com). On the other hand, lesbians clarifies that being a butch seeks for accessing the status granted for man, so a kind of the public privilege given to him (Butler xi). Therefore, the Queer Theory is rooted in feminist framework. In general, it is perceived as the reverse of heteronormativity that rejects sex and gender binaries and confuses essentialist identities (Barnett and Johnson 581). In this way, the queer body is said to challenge the main stream of the existing thoughts that institutionalizes heterosexuality as the identical setting for identity. Thus, it is likely for queer body to represent those who refuse to be locked within narrow cultural identifications, and reject to be controlled. Individuals of queer orientation create a kind of opposite social construction within their own societies. In this way, the Queer Theory is emerged as a reformation for socio-cultural sphere. It is a new account for the defiant stream of thought.

Queer theorists aim at destabilizing the fixed parameters that regulate heteronormative hegemony. They coin identical slogan that groups queer or deviant sexual orientations to declare their sexual identity openly. Sedgwick explains "Coming out of the Closet" as a kind of definition of gay oppression and homosexuals. Through her lenses, she depicts the closet as an organism which serves "othering" homosexuals, and forces them to conceal their sexual attraction (71). The

Queer theory stands to challenge the socially constructed classical, fixed gender binary. It suggests seeing gender as a set of spectrum of multiple identities. In this way, homosexuality cannot be seen as a deviant form of sexuality. It is seen as a normal variation, which assures the visibility of homosexual individuals.

In broader sense, both feminist and queer theories concentrate on the core interrogation and the defiance of the restrictions on individuals' agency. These restrictions constrain their ability to decide freely in the cultural and social dominant norms. The socio-cultural system's scheme imposes its weight on individuals' thoughts and behaviors; it operates as a social mechanism to maintain social conformity. Thus, it can be said that the queer theory contributes to the ongoing process to free agency from restrictions in order to gain their rights. Queer activists claim that man heterosexuality hegemony does not only oppress woman, but also those individuals of deviant sexual identities. This assumption is considered as a reference for the queer theory to emerge taking the template of feminism.

3.7 Decoding Agency

In the ground of sociology, the theory of agency is defined as a rational free choice theory. Rational choice theory helps describe the ways individuals used in making their decisions. It is the reflection of their cognitive frame of mind. Hence, it represents the autonomous capacity to act or to make free choices and expression while considering the risks, costs and benefits. Agency represents the individuals' ability to think themselves as the doer of their actions in accordance to the ways that

shape their experiences. It is important to refer to the possibility of being affected by a number of variables, which are shaping one's agency, such as society, religion and gender. These constitute the behavioral structure which symbolizes a complex network of "interconnected set of social forces, relationships, institutions, and elements of social structure that work together to shape the thought, behavior, experiences, choices, and overall life courses of people (Cole). However, in the sociology of homosexuals, agency poses a range of controversial issues in terms of locating, perceiving and decoding homosexual agency.

This presupposes that homosexuals are enclosed within their agency. Also, it is important to indicate that homosexual agency is a sensitive phase that needs a careful attention because of their vulnerability. Agency has become a fancy word in the modern articulation of deviant gender roles and sexualities as it:

Highlights the way in which individuals' movements toward accomplishing personal goals influence the configuration and direction of their life courses; and the synchronization of life, in which chronological events in personal lives combine simultaneously with events that are characteristic of the referenced group and are peculiar to the historical times (Simões 266).

Individuals are born without any gender coding. They are not able to perceive the world around them. Thus, they start acquiring gender roles through socialization since they are attributed at birth, but rather learnt gradually through time and space.

Increasingly, individuals have to extend their cognitive abilities, prudence, and judgment and consequently they develop agency. In this concern, agency and sexuality are subjects that refer to the meeting of and/or the confrontation of the body and its socio-cultural context. They invariably lead to believe in the containment of body's materiality within its social construction.

However, agency and sexuality become commonly seen as exclusive themes. The decline of sexual desire and the incapacity to produce social interaction are the main conditions for degenerating human body. In this respect, Drescher believe that:

Ideally, homosexuality should just be a passing phase that one outgrows. However, as a “developmental arrest,” adult homosexuality is equated with stunted growth. Those who hold these theories tend to regard immaturity as relatively benign, or at least not as “bad” compared to those who theorize that homosexuality is a form of psychopathology (566).

Agency helps demonstrating the ways how an individual forms conception on his/her surroundings. However, one's logic is articulated as an adaptation of both biological body and environment in terms of mental structures on the environment. This concludes that homosexuality is born out from the social and cultural configurations of the body. Therefore, agency is not understood as isolated phenomenon. It is rather the result of a combination of social and cultural conventions related mainly to gender and sexuality. In other words, social and

cultural beliefs have managed to maintain the status of the sexual agency of individuals in conformity with the dominant norms. Although sexual agency reflects many shades of the cultural and social life, individuals with deviancy are still negotiating to position themselves in the social milieu. Sexual agency has thus been closely linked to the strategic negotiation. It is the process by which people situate their sexual choices in families and a in social context at larger (Barcelos and Gubrium 6).

Parents, school, and society are perceived to be the basic socializing institutions that limit and shape any individuals agency. For today's generation, screens have also affected the way sexual manifestations are displayed. They become the principal foundation of establishing knowledge about themselves and the world. Movies, series, and TV shows are highly regarded as agents for digital generation or what Jordan and Romer label as multimedia centers (xii). The amount of impact evolving in the interaction between these individuals and multimedia contents, has affected their ways to perceive or grasping senses of gender and sexuality. Their agency seems wanting to engage themselves in reflecting their own self-interest and their sense of worth.

It is argued that sexuality has become an area where many controversies overlap. Sexual agency is a sensitive criterion in individual development of the well being. It creates the social and cultural platform where gender and sexuality can be

constructed and deconstructed, yet being identified and assimilated. In this respect, Cense explains:

The domain of sexuality would situate sexual agency not only in the longing for sexual freedom and the striving for sexual rights, but also in gaining strength or developing navigating skills while enduring unequal sexual relationships or leading a double life (249).

Thus, one's decisions are controlled by the modes of agency which exercise their weight on the body and sexual manifestation. Apparently, decoding agency seems to be a complicated mission for scholars due to the complexities of the human nature. Individuals are born as a blank page with no knowledge. They gradually construct a sense of agency through the course of their explorative experiences of life. Their socialization is said to be accomplished withing the society's dominant gender and sexuality politics.

3.8 Theorizing the Psychosexual Development

Psychoanalysis is defined as the theoretical framework and therapy established by Freud. It aims at exploring the inner world of human psyche through decoding feelings and experiences. It deals also with human mind and interprets human behaviors. Freud establishes the basis from which modern psychosexual theory emerged. The theory aims at highlighting Freud's approach to decode the conflicting nature of human behaviors. Individuals' actions and decisions are basically grounded

in early infancy, which shapes their personality formation and behavioral development.

In his work entitled: *Psychosexual Development of Children and Adolescents with Hypospadias* (2008), Schönbacher et al. argues that the psychosexual development generally deals with the unconscious part of the mind. They scrutinize the possible connection found in the body image the gender identity, sexuality and the unconscious. Thus, the sexual impulses are often driven by the unconscious mind. They add:

The term psychosexual development implies that sexual development is not only a physical process but also interacts with psychological factors. It comprises many components such as the development of gender identity, gender-role behavior, body image, and sexual behavior habits (1366).

Apparently, psychosexual development is seen as a resonating chamber for both social and personal interactions. On the other hand, social repression against deviant sexualities and unusual gender roles stand as a defense mechanism that aims at protecting the psyche from the destructive consequences of anxiety and undesired feelings. Similarly, it preserves social and cultural control; it prevents unconscious impulses from becoming conscious so that it deepens individual's self-repression. Consequently, psychosexual development becomes a testimony of individual's psychological history (Frosh 21).

By nature, individuals are instinctually driven to satisfy their bodily needs like food and sexual desires. At the early age, individuals become social agents for the socialization process. They learn to how control their instincts and fit in what is socially accepted as behaviors. In this regard, Larzabal et al. declare:

According to the theories of social learning, socialization occurs through the processes of discovery, linking and acceptance, in which the child interacts with his environment to achieve the acquisition of habits, social roles, norms, knowledge and values that society demands, and are transmitted through various social agents (quoted in Ibáñez-Cubillas 65).

Most importantly, they believe in the crucial role of the social impact on individuals' inborn urges which shapes the way they perceive the socialization process.

In the Freudian account, the human psyche is divided into three main parts. The ID, also known as the pleasure principle, is shaped since birth to represent instinctive desires like sex and aggression. It tries to find the immediate pleasure through the desired demands. However, satisfying these drives is not always possible because the incompatibility of their morality and nature to the social and cultural conventions. This element of the self is located in the unconscious. The ID holds what the one can sense, as the thoughts, aspirations, emotions, and desires, and it constitutes a great portion of the mind compared to the conscious. The conscious embodies what can be

exposed as thoughts and feelings. It represents a smaller part of the mind (Lapsley and Stey 1, 5).

In addition, the superego is defined as what defines morality principle. It is the set of social rules and tolerability, that one learns from his/her family and society. Superego is developed since childhood as individuals are identified with the common standards. The ego (also known as reality principle) has an intermediary role between the ID and superego. It balances the opposing demands of both the ID and superego by checking the unconscious desire for pleasure (ID) and superego's moral account, then determines the proper behavior. It displays the rational aspect in the mind as it represents the cognitive function. In this regard, it can be argued that the human mind is a sophisticated system which manages the conflicting nature of the three elements due to their competitiveness for incompatibility of demands (McLeod).

The mediating role is illustrated as ego's defense mechanism for denial and repression. Freud focuses on the display of children's instinctive defense mechanism in which their ego uses to defend the self from destructive realities. It functions as a tool to block the undesired thoughts. Defense mechanisms emerge through complex cognitive abilities as a response to internal and external threat. They exclude unacceptable thoughts and feelings, and refuse to recognize them in order to avoid painful and shameful realities. In this regard, Zhang has stated:

Defense mechanisms refer to individuals' relatively stable response patterns that serve to distort reality whenever their resources, skills, or

motivation are inadequate to resolve inner conflicts or master external threats to well-being (164)

In his conceptualization of human feeling, Freud argues that human beings function as machines of producing desires controlled by reason and consciousness and affected by their respective culture. Thus, the human behavior is the outcome of the impact of cultural and social factors on the self. In his approach of psychosexual, Freud outlines stages to enclose his assumption of sexual development of individuals. The sexual development appears in five stages starting from childhood (mainly after the first six years) to adolescence. He argues that one's sexuality driving force for pleasure is developed from mother lap to sexual contact. Through the bodily manifestations, individuals reflect certain traits of biological maturation (Elkatawneh).

From the very first year after birth, the sexual instinct is located on the mouth; the child uses his/her mouth to derive pleasure through sucking: this is referred to oral stage. During this stage, a child develops the ability to distinguish between his/her body and the others. The anal stage starts from the second year after birth; the sexual instinct in this stage is centered on the anus. Children can learn the proper toilet manners taught by their parents according to their cultural milieu. In the phallic stage, children aged from three to six derive pleasure from the stimulation of their genitals. It is, therefore, called genital sensitivity. Increasingly, children develop the Oedipus complex (boys) and Electra complex (girls). They are conflicted by the fantasy of being sexually attracted to the parent of opposite sex, and compete with

the one of same-sex. The gender roles are said to be shaped and internalized during this stage taking the same characteristics as the same-sex parent. The latency stage ranges between the age of seven until puberty (Nagera 41).

The genital stage starts when hormonal changes start alarming the sexual impulses to augment after the stagnant position of the latency period. At this stage, pleasure is found mainly in sexual intercourse. Young people have to deal with their sexual instincts according to the dominant social and cultural rules. The adolescents' stressful state is mainly due to the sexual insecurity the mature adolescents expose. In effort to manage to disarm the threats caused by their insecure sexual state, they eventually withdraw from families as they refuse their parental control. Hence, adolescence is regarded as turbulent period in individuals' lives and in the same time helps them to authentically identify them with particular sexual identity. In addition, Freud brings a balanced perspective to psychosexual phallic stage and gender identification process; he claims that being a rebellious rival against the parent of same-sex to attract of the parent of opposite sex's attention marks the beginning of children gender identification. In this way, gender categorization into masculine or feminine appears to be implemented in their conscience (Shaffer 40; Elkatawneh).

Ehrensaft (2018) explains that the study of children development of gender is rooted in Freud's perspective. Children's gender roles are shaped in the socializing environment creating conscious or unconscious domestic activities. He also puts that parents are the first socializing agents in their children's lives. Furthermore, children

socialization is obtained by the fantasy of monopolizing opposite sex parent attention. In this respect, Freudian approach mainly the Oedipal and Electra complexes, can also reveal the emergence of heterosexual identities at the early years of children lives. However, if children gender progression takes another dimension, children may display gender identity which does not correspond to their biological sex, cultural and social conventions (243, 244).

Children gender identity is said to open to modes of disorder. It thus needs to be fixed according to the dominant cultural norms. However, child psychiatry fundamentally changes the existing assumptions on gender and sexuality development. It helps providing appropriate methods to deal with children, and initiates the new gender confirmatory model that considers gender as a health feature. Their model will help to explore gender-nonconforming children and confirm their gender identity whatever it is in accordance with what cultural and social dictate. This is because remaining with gender confusion will lead a problem. It attempts to prepare children to confront the social impositions that are not tolerant with any gender deviation, yet defying the notion of gender inclusiveness (241, 242).

Moreover, Freud's approach traces an explanation to psychosexual development, and underscores the need to consider that children experiences reflect certain aspect of their personality and behavior when they become adults. His categorization of the human self into three conflicting categories: the ego (the reality), the superego (the morality), and the ID (the pleasure) plays an intermediary

role to create a balance between instinctive needs like sex and the society' dominant rules. Such a balance would protect the self from the troublesome realities, such as trauma, anxiety and depression. Freud also asserts that individuals, in the course of their psychosexual development, have to go through five stages: the oral stage, the anal stage, the phallic stage from which they are assigned to perform gender role identity referring to the Oedipal and Electra complexes.

3.9 Conclusion

It can be said that gender is an essential phase in the social fabric of one's self. Individuals display gender roles at different levels while growing up in different life experiences. Also, they evolve psychologically as they rationally become able to mold their instinctive desires in a given socio-cultural context. The chapter, through an intensive critical focus on gender construction and sexuality, intends to appreciate the salient features of both Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*, especially that homosexuality constitutes the core of their thematic concerns. Both writers are interested in elaborating the male homosexuals, their images and inspirations as molded by the socio-cultural mainstream. The thematic variation can also be seen in the various articulations of victimized homosexuals. The representations include probing the ways used by these writers to map the self/ves in two different dystopian realities.

The following chapter deals by with the developmental socialization (selves) and the psychological fabric (self) of male homosexuals in both selected novels of this Doctoral thesis.

Chapter Four

Dare to Live Until the Very Last

Chapter Four: Dare to Live Until the Very Last

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4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the content analysis for the novels under study is examined using an eclectic approach consisting mainly of gender related theories. It discusses the course of the developmental socialization (selves) and the psychological fabric (self) of male homosexuals. This is in order to show the possible consequences of having deviant sexualities' representations in their social development. Deviant gender roles appear to be a prominent feature in Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*. Both works gradually attract attention thanks to their engagements in the politics of sexuality and gender norms. Drawing inspiration from Judith Butler's approach in *Gender Trouble* (1990), the researcher attempts to elaborate the troubling to gender and sexuality in order to study what Henry refers to as "queer sensibility" (Henry 114).

The authors create an incomprehensible confusion as they bring into prominence the fact that the world is actually distorted. Their works are going around those male homosexuals who live on the fringes of society. The transgressive lines in both works are mainly found in the combination of the literary text and male homosexuals' dystopian reality. Certainly, transgression is depending upon religion which is counteracting the notion of the sacred. In this vein, Foucault confirms that "Profanation in a world which no longer recognizes any positive meaning in the sacred-is this not more or less what we call transgressive?" (Foucault 30). He refers to

transgression which is associated to the profane and considers different sexualities as profane, i.e. the transgressive nature of sexuality is given a transcendent meaning (Bedjaoui167). They overtly denounce the politics of sexual identity fixation through creating more textual spaces for this minority group. They seem to have a reasonable level of understanding of how male homosexuals who are expected to display unusual masculine roles feel.

4.2 Claiming Textual Spaces

Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad *Guapa* engage their readers in the ideological debate of deviant sexuality. Male homosexual representation, they hold, challenge the existing portrayal of sexual orientation in both Latin America and Arab literature written in English. The writers attempt, through forging literary spaces from the squalor of the plague and the so called Arab Spring turmoil, to normalize what is socially seen as abnormal or deviant. Mainstream cultures depicted in both works are being challenged by the forging of unusual sexual performances that seek to cement their existence and acceptability. These performances expose the extreme sensitivity and vulnerability of homosexuals. In other words, social rules operate as system codes that maintain the social order and continuity. In this sense, the authors try to evoke debate on the space given to normalize or destabilize homosexual themes.

Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* is the story of living dying human bodies on the borders of society. It gives an illusory sense to human relations in discord to the

controlling ideas of sexual attitudes. Bellatin's text is about a nameless across dressing homosexual beauty salon owner who transforms his beloved beauty salon to a refuge for almost dying victims of an ambiguous disease. It urges to consider mutual attitudes towards the human body.

Weeks later, my body strength began to decrease, although not in such a radical way. At that time I dedicated my life entirely to the Terminal, although I gave myself a day or two to go out and have a good time. Sometimes I would go to the baths. Other times I would walk around the streets dressed in clothes deceased companions had left me. It wasn't a regular activity, though. I would only do it from time to time. When I discovered the sores on my cheek, it all ended right then and there. I stuffed the dresses, the feathers and the sequins into the back- yard toilet and I made a large fire with them. It smelled really bad. It seems that many of the things were made from synthetic fabric for it raised a cloud of toxic smoke.(42)

In the terminal, the story narrator takes care of both fish and the almost dying bodies of the mysterious plague, which has attached the nameless town. "Now that the salon has become the Terminal, where people who have nowhere to die end their days" (1), writes Bellatin. The victims are being left by the city to die alone at risk of attack by the goat killer gang, as the disease ravages the city. The narrator is obsessed by portraying every single detail about his attachment to his equatorial fish. This

obsession is regarded as a standard component of the structure of allegory in the story. In a way, it absorbs most of daily events in the terminal and enables the author to communicate a likable expression of thoughts. Bellatin's intended opacity blocks any kind of understanding to characters' specific psychological realm providing readers with a profoundly mystical experience. The author writes:

But those times are gone now and I'm sure they will never return. The state of my skeletal body keeps me from going there anymore. My spirit seems to have completely abandoned me, and all this is now just something of the past (10).

Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* is designed to operate with nameless individuals giving moving images to his characters. The cause of the death of its guests is also kept without name calling to create more ambiguities and uncertainty. Bellatin runs the story events by maintaining the anonymity of story setting and states different reasons for the death of the terminal guests. By doing so, the author makes it possible for his reader to normalize the confusion and ambiguity that one finds at the very beginning of the story. This is clearly seen in the following: "A few steps more and your towel is immediately stripped away. From then on anything can happen. At that moment I always felt like I was inside one of my aquariums" (Bellatin 9).

Mario Bellatin has introduced possible explanations of the fish's death, but at the same time he makes it clear that these explanations are not definitive and the

underlying story is more complex, as he explains it : “it’s been very hard on me to see the fish disappear. Perhaps the tap water is too chlorinated or perhaps I don’t have time enough to care for them” (1). The borders between the characters’ reality and the fish turn fuzzier and certain analogies are dominated by much ambiguity and confusion. The author does not establish a cause for the fish’s death giving the impression that the event seems to be perceived as ordinary and natural. The author attempts to grasp the fact that human life is commonly conducted in a conceivable way. As its fragments show, his *Beauty Salon* is conceived as a big aquarium, so fish equally mirrors the salon guests whose stories are told in a way that makes social and political realities look impossible to explain, unthinkable and indescribable, ie. ineffable.

However, Saleem Haddad’s *Guapa* discusses the geo-temporal dimensions of Arab world dystopian realities. Even though, sexuality is being the main issue of the story’s main focus, the writer intends to tackle other cultural, social, and religious problems faced by the Arabs. As for the time when the story events occurred, it is during the day Rasa was discovered in bed with his boyfriend Taymour by his grandmother Teta. After, Rasa has developed an irrational feeling, Haddad writes:

The morning begins with shame. This is not new, but as memories of last night begin to sink in, the feeling takes on a terrifying resonance. I grimace, squirm, dig my fingers in my palms until the pain in my hands reflects how I feel. But there is no controlling what Teta saw,

and her absence from my bedside means that she doesn't intend, as she had promised, to file away last night's mess in a deep corner of her mind.(18)

The story, in *Guapa*, is not limited to that single day; the author shifts between several flashbacks to make the readers understand Rasa's background, along with how his family treat and react to his behaviours, as he adds:

In Teta I had an ally who would help me hide my shame. But meeting my mother again, the woman who had worked hard to ensure there was not a single stone of our family's shame left unturned, no shadow left unexplored — what would she uncover from my cage of secrets? She would expose all my secrets with a single glance. (Haddad 160)

Guapa's main character is unable to face the social attitudes with which the Arab society is built upon. Powerless of revealing his true sexual identity to the public, Rasa is limited to much sole only spaces as his bedroom or what he refers to as the “foggy mirror” (Haddad 132). Rasa can only articulate his identity in this place in order to protect himself and hide any evidence of his deviant sexuality. Rasa has to confront the bitter fact that he cannot feel accepted with the queerness he internalises. He is obliged to follow the social expectation he so wishes to free himself from. Rasa declares:

I had hoped America would give me the space to set free the birds in the cage in my mind, to sift through the memories of taxi drivers and POLSKASAT images that I had been diligently filing away. But I was instead confronted with something completely new: my Arabness. I wanted to scrub my skin off, my name off, my accent off, anything to deflect the suspicious looks.(Haddad 132)

Yet, considerable attention has been made to the emergence of new modes of novelistic use of time and space. Mario Bellatin and Saleem Haddad have set the course of events in the works in increasingly complex and ambiguous settings leaving readers' mind in such a confusing state. To a certain extent, they reconcile their characters to the rigidity of the traditions and carve out their deviant sexualities. Indeed, they try to challenge their cultural and social rules to sustain the desire to exercise their homosexuality. The novelists encounter a new set of circumstances that enable them to communicate their urge for integrating into their societies. Both writers from different cultural backgrounds explore identity in particular ways beyond issues of nationality and focus on the emotional individual experience of social marginality. They provide alternative ways of seeing, thinking and becoming from the perspective of the cultural edge (Bedjaoui 264). The homosexuals, whose deviant identity has isolated them from social setting through many upheavals, define themselves in narrow spaces. For the homosexual characters the lost space has become a dystopian reality which gives them the status of unwilling guests in their own homeland.

4.3 Sexual Politics

Traditionally, the body that has to fit into narrow sexual spaces is coerced into the negotiation of compatibility to perform roles beyond the social expectation. Increasingly homosexuals seem to challenge the existing classification, which limits them to the ambit of traditional gender roles. Consequently, they are treated as damaged bodies, which have historically been associated with shame, insult, accusation, or sin. Sexual politics have shaped the body performances in a myriad of ways. In their works, Bellatin and Haddad have defied the assigned sexual roles attributed to both men and women. Homosexuality has thus come to paint the sexual performances of their characters. However, social expectations are being challenged by the visibility of the deviant sexual orientations in our modern society. Increasingly today, homosexuals are performing non-standard gender roles within public spaces transgressing the conventional rules of gender performances that judge them as abnormal.

In Haddad's *Guapa*, performances with deviant sexual content have been taken into a narrow outlook. Being a male homosexual is seen as male's loss of manhood and the entire self as well. However, being a lesbian might not be even a topic for an ordinary conversation because Arab woman sexuality is dominated by man's desire. Arab homosexuals remain invisible and locked into the traditional discourse which claims that homosexuality exists, but cannot be spoken of. This would justify the fact

that homosexuals have been given a narrow space and visibility in the society;

Haddad wonders:

I wash my face and look at my reaction in the filthy mirror, at the drops of water clinging to my despicable face. Is there anything more pitiful than an Arab who attaches emotions to his homosexuality? (56).

The emergence of homosexuals in a number of modern Arab cultural and literary engagements is regarded as a symptom of the social deterioration caused by political and economic oppression of the Arab citizen. Arab homosexuals, whose deviant sexual desire is caused by either the disability of having normative heterosexuality or an attempt to drift out of the mainstream of the Arab society, bring a shame (*eib*) not only for their family but for the entire society, which is deeply intolerant of all kinds of queer practices. Haddad seems to be crazily obsessed by the word “*eib*”, as he writes:

“What?” she says.

“It’s evening prayer time,” the man says. “Have some respect and turn off the music. *Haram*.”

“*Eib* on you for interfering in a woman’s affairs,” she says, playing her *eib* like a trump card. “Mind your own business.” She rolls up the window and hands me the joint.

“*Eib eib eib*. What isn’t *eib*?” (228)

The homophobic nature of the Arab society has its roots in the reactionary attitudes against the West. These attitudes make some Islamic scholars and secular Arab leaders see gay rights, or human rights in general, as an import of the West, imposed on them by imperialist forces. (Whittaker 62) Debates over Arab homosexuality demonstrate a number of genuine concerns over Arab homosexuality. Arab public concerns over queer sexualities have been thrust to the head of the Islamic parties' agenda. They believe that homosexuality is a major sin in Islam and punishable by death under Shariah law (Muhsin 31). As a result, homosexuality is viewed as the product of Western satanic abuse that would bring curse for all mankind. Haddad questions the educational system for including the extremist religious rules, when he confesses:

The first word I came across was in religion class. On normal days the class would degenerate into a question-and-answer session that consisted of our teacher giving bored pronouncements on whether things were *haram* (plastic surgery: not *haram* if for medical reasons; going to the gym: *haram*, one should not distort the body Allah gave you; oral sex: *haram*, but it's complicated and she wasn't going to discuss it). (88)

Although Haddad has depicted these bodies performing in harshly restricted, enclosed social spheres, he finds spaces of interaction for them to demand

visibility in normative representations. His sexual politics, however, is set to put forward the conventional perception of masculine and feminine into a challenge.

I study Taymour's movements, as if examining the tricks of an award winning actor, looking for moments where he might slip, a feminine flick of the wrist, a dramatic gasp, or a camp roll of the eyes. Someone reaches over and claps him on the shoulder and Taymour turns and smiles. The turn, yes, slightly feminine, maybe? But barely noticeable.(Haddad 100)

Homosexuals' continuous nonconformity to heterosexist society's sexual norms exhausts the possibility for the homosexual individuals to integrate truthfully in their own society. Feeling the hollowness of their performance in a number of fields including education, homosexuals negotiate gendered performance outside their maleness or femaleness.

In *Beauty Salon*, Bellatin creates new sexual accounts for homosexuality that define homosexual demarcations. However, Bellatin's normalization of homosexual performances is seen as particular modes of transgression in which he gives them an accepted contextual interpretation. In this vein, as he writes: "The women didn't seem to mind being attended by male stylists dressed in women's clothes" (Bellatin 13). Understanding the social reactions that link the body to the forms of masculinity and femininity is a way to explore the fundamental role that sexuality plays in

defining the self and the body. These social reactions would differentiate the acceptable from the forbidden, normal from abnormal. He adds:

I noticed some reactions, especially among the family members of the guests who visited the beauty salon. They would try to hide their initial shock, believing I hadn't seen their reaction. My new condition allowed me to definitively retire from public life. It's true I no longer had my nighttime dresses but I also had no desire to go to the baths on Saturday afternoons. At times I gleefully imagined what the reaction of the men there would be when they saw my infected body. They probably wouldn't catch on at first, and then only when they were already too involved would they notice it. (Bellatin 50)

Arguably, gender is not an innate quality that one is born with; it is a set of regular, sustained, repetitive gendered acts which affect the self and bring it into being, in terms of socially reinforced feminine and masculine roles. Increasingly, Bellatin's characters attempt to question the appropriation of masculine and feminine representations. They seek social recognition for their deviant gender roles to engage in public life without being haunted by the deteriorating heteronormative gender politics. As they refuse being locked within the heteronormative boundaries of identification, homosexual characters strike for involving themselves in a normative life. He writes:

They needed to express their gratitude in a more tangible way. For example, by admiring the surviving fish or perhaps by saying something about my body that implied that it was still in good shape (Bellatin 23).

Homosexuals, in Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*, demand redefining sexual spaces in order to set border lines for their actions in public life. Sexual orientations affect people perception of gender roles. Seemingly, Bellatin views that gender roles serve in a way as a system of norms that oppress both homosexuals and women as well. But, homosexuals seem afraid of the impacts of revealing their truth about their sexual orientation, hence the crisis to lose their gender identity and belonging. Bellatin refers to the impossibility for homosexuals (terminal guests) to be accepted in the society. He maintains that:

They [heteronormative] probably won't want to have anything to do with the most miserable people, nor with the troublemakers, for many guests never give up their old habits even when they are seriously ill. Despite the situation and despite the rules that I impose upon them, the guests continue with their regular activities. With their bad habits that leave so much to be desired. I can't imagine the Sisters of Charity dealing with these kinds of characters. (Bellatin 56-57)

In other words, Bellatin's words demonstrate that the social construction of gender naturalizes heterosexuality as being the normative setting for sexuality, since it influences social relations.

In a full stagnation, Bellatin puts characters in an ambiguous terminal. He recognizes they have become more claustrophobic than they were before and seem to indulge homosexual relations. So unfamiliar to their surrounding, their queerness signifies how crumble their bodies appear in relation with people. In *Beauty Salon*, the body is often depicted as pale, weak, and abnormal. This is clearly shown in the following:

He died soon after. In his case, the disease wound up attacking his brain and he went into a long, delirious diatribe that was only interrupted when sleep overwhelmed him. At certain times his voice grew louder than usual and his feverish words drowned out the other guests' complaints. A little while later he was attacked by full-fledged tuberculosis, I believe, for he died after a coughing fit. By that time the boy's body was just another body I had to discard.

(Bellatin 17)

Despite extreme harshness in Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*, individual appeared to be apt to struggle for their own right. To a certain extent, they have claimed transgressive lines as they foreground their homosexuality in public. The

(re)enactment of queer performances attempts, in a way or another, seek to adjust public performance parameters. Bellatin has, thus, attempted to delimit the boundaries of heteronormativity (public performances) by defying the conventional social norms through giving more spaces for all types of sexual desire available to be acted and reacted, as he writes: I was touched to see that this young man was not oblivious to my concern. He also showed me a certain amount of affection. A few times I even came into intimate contact with his ruined body (17).

Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* creates a panoramic portrayal of collision of homosexual actions and the social expectations. The collision nurtures ambiguities that frustrate the integration and the acceptance of homosexual individuals in social spaces. The homosexual's body shapes a new space by extending its performance. The theatrical nature of homosexual performance exposes non-standard gender choices to social examination and, thus, becomes highlighted.

I still carried out my daily duties, but I couldn't wait for the days when we hit the streets dressed as women. We also began to start dressing like that when we attended our clients. [...] It became increasingly hard to succeed in my nocturnal adventures in the center of the city. I began to experience firsthand the loneliness of my friend who dressed in European clothes. I began to work less exclusive deeds within the darkness avenues and did my of neighborhood movie theaters. (Bellatin 35)

It is easy to detect the differences of a queer act that lurks beneath any social interaction; it portrays a different image of the conventional gender roles. Any heterosexist society makes the incorporation of a queer performance into a heteronormative society quite impossible. Male homosexuals are recognized by some queer actions, but accepting homosexual male as a man is quite unattainable, to some extent.

On the other hand, any homosexual male attribute of caring has become a source of shame. When performance is judged as homosexual, it begins to internalize homosexual elements within its own nature. Homosexual body, thus, learns how to perform a queer act. Homosexual male exaggeration in mimicking femininity challenges the heterosexual norms. This idea is illustrated in this: “We couldn’t travel dressed as women for we had already gotten into dangerous situations more than once. Which is why we packed up our dresses and our make-up and carried them with us (Bellatin 13-14). They behave in a liberal way, adopting non-normative and non-traditional traits. The overemphasis of feminine performance shows that a male homosexual is an *other* not a female. Male homosexual's performance is a feminine act done by a non-female body.

Both writers exhibit the issue of the controversial representation of male homosexuality. Male homosexual characters, in both works, constantly try to meet with society's expectations in order not to feel left out. However, coming to meet with social expectations puts them under the control of their heteronormative attitudes.

Skeptical from these social constraints, they turn inward toward greater individualism, yet self deconstruction.

4.4 Sense of Self Destruction

As with the case of Rasa and the terminal owner and his guests, promoting sexual agency gets to cause a significant rupture in normative gender schema. Both characters appear as vulnerable beings whose mental makeup is painted by the ideas which are not always logical. This psychological urge is ingrained and cannot be easily fixed by exercising their sexual agency. It is beyond their belonging requirements that their homosexuality is being affecting the gender developmental course at the social level and the psychological level as well. This would be traumatizing, for they are struggling to assume themselves socially and individually. Therefore, the feeling of social rejection and the psychological confusion distorting their understanding of own self, which resulted in severe sense of self destruction.

In Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*, characters extend the notion of gender and sexual behaviour. However, they are acting out of the conventional social norms, and are assigned to achieve a number of illuminating purposes for exploring homosexuals' appropriation of self disconnectedness. Bellatin celebrates his main character's claustrophobic nature, when he writes:

Little by little, the feeling of entering into the memories the songs evoked within me increased. The fire slowly died down until there

was only a slight plume of smoke coming from the charred remains. I was laying on my side. The edge of my dress had been burnt and the dress's satin sash was completely singed, as were my hair and eyelashes. In spite of all this, I lay on my side, fascinated by the wispy columns of smoke. (Bellatin 43)

Normative society refuses homosexuals' right for self-socialization by hindering the visibility of their performances. Dispossessing their sense of self-worth which has resulted from homosexuals' lack of interaction with their surroundings, poses major threat of frustrations and anxieties. Bellatin's characters attempt to resist the stereotypical social homogeneity, yet they appropriate their isolation.

Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* exposes a number of unfamiliar modes of performance which are out the existing categories of mainstream sexuality. As a result, their internalized homophobia holds by normative characters becomes more visible in their interaction with homosexuals. This appears in the following: "I made a few calls and then I started running again until I reached the police station, where I had to deal with the sarcastic remarks of the policemen (Bellatin 26).

Homosexual characters failed integration incorporates a number of crucial features in Bellatin's text. It is then worth to acknowledge that his characters' integration are imaginary rather than real as they question the socialisation of human nature. Bellatin's fictional habit reflects faithfully his views on human relations. He

explains that: “The Beauty Salon was located far from any public transportation and to get here people had to walk a great distance (Bellatin 13). Bellatin’s celebration of the domestic life of his characters reveals his individualistic tendency of creating an isolated space for them. The terminal: the place he chooses to depict his characters last inspirations has been installed for patients who prefer to end their days. The gothic and mysterious surroundings deepen their experience of dissocialization. Bellatin's characters have been construed to perform deviant gender roles in an area which is notorious as a centre for epidemics.

Gender is said to be a performative process established upon a set of sustained and repetitive gendered acts. It operates outside the self, but it affects its socialization. However, the socialization of homosexuals requires moulding their bodily performances in conformity with what is socially accepted. Therefore, Bellatin's fictional narration of homosexuals' experience unveils a number of complexities resulting from the incapability to maintain regular homosexual acts. These complexities are set to be stamped in their failure to fit conventional gender norms. Indeed, they have a genuine concern of their social distancing that has a clear impact on their both personal and social life. He writes:

I no longer have the energy to go out at night and cruise for men, either. Not even during summer when it is not at all unpleasant to get dressed and undressed in the gardens of the houses located near the pick-up spots. The whole transformation must be carried out there,

hidden from sight. It would be crazy to return at dawn on an all-night bus dressed in my nighttime work clothes (Bellatin 10).

For Bellatin, *Beauty Salon* is an attempt to communicate a mode of resistance to all kinds of *othering* based on their sexual preferences. He has displayed a vivid opposition to the social imposition of identity. In his account, Bellatin tries to re-evaluate the issue of male homosexuality from a literary point of view. Moreover, he advocates the need of altering socio-cultural attitudes on individuals of deviant sexualities. He attempts to assess the ways in which homosexuals are allowed or disallowed to contribute to a social urge to fight the outcomes of the epidemic. Their non-standard gender identity deepens their social distancing. In *Beauty Salon*, Bellatin refuses to rule out the possibility of increasing their presence in social interaction, as he writes: “ For example, in the past I wouldn’t have worried about the future of the terminal when I’m gone, I would have let the guests work it out as best they could. Now the only thing I ask is that they respect the loneliness to come” (63). He constructs an ambivalent sense of selfhood for homosexual characters. He interprets the containment of homosexual acts which have been absorbed by their social disagreements. Homosexuality is seen as a meeting point of personal and social controversies, and their defective integration is contested as they defy and transgress the defined rigid heteronormativity.

Guapa’s pessimistic opening lines set the overall tone of the rest of the story. Though shame is an abstract concept, for the Arab society, it is considered as a

principle block that determines the past and future individuals' identity. To embody the feeling of shame and transfer its abstract sense to a tangible one, Haddad interweaves the feeling with Rasa's physical pain. This pain shows Rasa's defeat and incapability to have his society overlook and even welcome his difference. Haddad describes:

The morning begins with shame. This is not new, but as memories of last night begin to sink in, the feeling takes on a terrifying resonance. I grimace, squirm, dig my fingers in my palms until the pain in my hands reflects how I feel. But there is no controlling what Teta saw, and her absence from my bedside means that she doesn't intend, as she had promised, to file away last night's mess in a deep corner of her mind. (Haddad 3)

It seems that the Arab society is governed by a number of specific socio-cultural norms that are originally derived from tradition and religion. In order to cope with the Arab society, individuals have to submit to these rules in order not to be singled out. In *Guapa*, to exercise their sexual identities away from the socio-cultural regulations, individuals have to hide within a bar called Guapa. Guapa, on the other hand, acts as a location where customers feel free to exercise odd practices. Haddad maintains that:

Guapa was livelier than usual last night. As soon as we walked in Maj rushed off to get changed, so it was just Taymour and me. I worried all the people would scare Taymour off. Although he regularly drank

with us upstairs, he hardly ever came downstairs and so was noticeably uncomfortable, shifting and glancing around the room, and I felt obliged to act cool and confident to make up for it. A couple of knife-blade-lean boys with a faint lick of eyeliner smiled at us. (106)

Along with referring to the puzzling and claustrophobic atmosphere, Haddad uses the word dark to paint characters daily conversation with his beliefs over the Middle East reality:

On the outside you couldn't tell what was happening. But in private I created a secret cage in my mind where I stored these dark thoughts. Like birds, I captured them as they flew by and put them in my cage for a time when I may need them. (86)

The black colour demonstrates characters' objection to the imposed Arab social rules. It symbolizes scattered selves in an increasingly chaotic milieu.

The author endeavors expose the imposed social constraints to examine the ways society treats individuals of different sexual orientation. Haddad claims that society molded its members to act accordance with inscribed gender rules. Hence, drifting away from these rules would eventually lead to social isolation; as Rasa declares:

I felt very close to nonexistence. With no one to speak to me of familiar things, there was nothing to stop me from sinking into a

bottomless well of loneliness. Yet to have come upon these powerful ideas was like having a group of mentors guiding me out of my despair. (Haddad 135)

Haddad explains how the Arab mindsets through which individuals' behaviors are judged are not suitable for all types of people. By revealing characters' struggle with the hegemony of Arab social rules, Haddad breaks down several socio-cultural issues that affect one's sexual identity formation. His conviction on homosexuality as being an innate option of heterosexuality comes to paint his homosexual characters behaviours.

In *Guapa*, Haddad deals with a range of cultural, social, political, and religious issues that serve shaping the Arab world and affect individuals' perception to a new mode of life. In discussing multiple themes, Haddad has set his work to focus on sexuality as a main theme. Characters, in *Guapa*, struggle to exercise their deviant sexual identity in a set of homogenous social setting.

By the end of the novel, Haddad marks a moment that breaks the fabric of the Arab society as Rasa confronts his grandmother, "I am done with shame. I am done with your rules about what is eib and what is not. I have my own rules now" (Haddad 346). Seeing that Teta represents the Arab society; Rasa's action indicates his frustration and pain along with his decision to face his society shamelessly, exposing his homosexuality.

Haddad and Bellatin expose a set of challenges faced by male homosexuals. Male homosexual defiance reflects radical changes in male homosexual relations with their bodies, and makes it harder for them to cope with inscribed social rules. In both works, male homosexual characters utterly undermine a sense of disconnectedness which can be seen as an underlying critique to the fabric of social relations. Their disconnectedness is said to be the product of an inescapable destiny as their behaviours fail to fit to the social expectations.

4.5 Inescapable Destiny

A number of literary endeavours attempt to break the shell of heterosexual homogeneity. They question the marginalization of the homosexual characters. Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Haddad's *Guapa* reflect the authors' strategy of troubling sexual identity emphasizing its fluid nature. In this way, they destabilise the existing binary system of gender and sexuality bringing out what is outside gender binaries into a serious traumatic sense of belonging. Male homosexual characters, in both works, seek self- definition through expressing the desire to communicate their urge for social acceptance. Homosexuals' nonconformity to the existing social norms deepens their isolation, and consequently causes a serious psychological trauma. The novelty techniques of both authors create an account in which they depict male homosexuals' strategy to escape social hegemony and endorse subtle social disconnectedness.

Haddad's choice of USA as a habitable space for Rasa communicates the idea of his rootlessness. He highlights Rasa's lack of belonging and failed integration in the Arab society. Though Haddad seeks to mitigate the images his characters identify with, he describes them as inanimate objects. He writes:

The solitude of America and the books it contained helped me uncover the secret to the hegemony of both the president and Teta. I explored my newfound freedom by finally thinking about my mother. I tried to uncover what had happened in those first eleven years of my life, bringing any memories I could muster to the surface to subvert Teta's rule. (Haddad 138)

Haddad demonstrates the problematic nature of Rasa's fragmented identity in his own society. Rasa's fragile psychological self-centeredness is common in the lives of those individuals who find themselves fatalistically into a homosexual lifestyle, which leads to persistent self destruction both emotionally and morally. Haddad affirms:

Being gay, that wasn't for me. My homosexuality would leave me alienated wherever I went. In America the gay world touched my life at the margins, through references and images and occasional conversations with men and women who celebrated their

homosexuality with pride. As far as I could see there was nothing to be proud about. There was only pain, humiliation, and shame. (193)

Guapa is written with words which are disapprovingly charged. It is a novel that holds multiple dimensions. In *Guapa*, characters, in the course of critical events, attempt to confront conventions set by society, religion and politics. With their deviant sexualities, they struggle to make their voice heard in the Arab society, but it helps them articulate themselves meaningfully outside the Arab world.

Haddad shows a number of unhealthy signs of the manipulative nature of the Western civilization. However, he realizes that media's presentation of the American way of life is deceivable in order to attract people through its economic and political motives. This shows the modern mode of colonization in which powerful countries like America feeds the world with alibis to control parts of it. Implicitly, Haddad discusses Arab Muslim's hostility to western cultural impact on the Arab people and Middle East in particular.

“Dreamers from all over the world go to America,” Teta had warned.

“But the dream is simply bait. America is like a fisherman’s hook that can catch you and either cut you up and eat you or, if you are not to its taste, toss you back in the water with a hook-shaped hole in your cheek.”(Haddad 123)

In Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* male homosexuals are portrayed as passive characters who fail to confront their social remoteness. Their disconnection destroys their attachment to their own society, and makes it difficult for them to maintain a constant contact people. The lack of connection with others has intensified male homosexual feeling of being strangers within their own selves, as Bellatin explains it:

When I fall ill all my efforts will have been in vain, when I think about it calmly it seems that I must have believed I was immortal and thus I didn't pre- pare for my future. Perhaps this feeling kept me from devoting time to myself, Otherwise I can't explain why I am so alone at this stage of my life. It's quite possible, though, that this is just my way of not having anyone here to cry over me at night. (62)

Beauty Salon reveals certain aspects of male homosexual daily life. The beauty salon's owner transforms his salon into a terminal for hosting people of a mysterious disease, and in the same time turns himself intensely claustrophobic. Digging into the events, the one can detect that Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* does not give enough spatial and temporal details, and stands outside the prevailing ideology in the society. Throughout the story, Bellatin depicts a critical scenario of his characters; he tries to encourage his reader to question male homosexuals' perception of dystopian realities in the terminal.

Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* tells the story of a place named the terminal owned by a transvestite: man who turned his beauty salon into a place for ill and almost dying men to spend what remains from their days. As the salon owner was infected, he promises to dedicate both himself and his beauty salon for those almost dead guests who have no shelter. One can capture:

This continuous deterioration, however, never much changes. It continues its course without ups and downs, without sudden, intense suffering. The stomach aches and pains continue, drawn-out and constant. I have had guests in the Terminal who have survived this process for a whole year. The pain remains unchanging throughout this period and the person knows there is no escape. (Bellatin 47)

Beauty salon's owner encounters many difficulties in running the terminal by himself afterward. At last, something as ugly as death cannot be escaped even in a place meant for beautifying. The same feeling of disappointment is found in *Guapa*'s main character. Rasa has an irrational fear of having no escape; the claustrophobic homosexual young man feels closed-in in his own self and neurotically preoccupied with his mental exile.

4.6 Casting New Woman's Roles

Mario Bellatin and Saleem Haddad explore the existing practices which are discriminatory, and deal with various crises and traumas of dispossession. However,

the feministic resistance is obvious in Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*, but less discussed in Marion Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*. All in all, these authors initiate a move towards queer texts that embeds within their own problematic themes as they throw a plethora of drama on male homosexuals.

Some women in the Arab world have been the victim of man's actions. They have witnessed all kinds of subjugation, although their struggle in some Arab countries, including Tunisia, Lebanon and Egypt are a little rewarding. After the Arab Spring, the Arab society has seen drastic changes that muster the traditional attitudes toward the emancipation of woman. In Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*, new roles have been given to Arab women where they might have an authoritative position over male homosexuals.

Haddad has made normative women characters integral to their plots where they have exercised an extensive authority over male homosexuals. He puts forward different perspectives of what it means to be a *shaath*¹ in the Arab world. Rasa states:

I look at my body, like a prison. I live within this prison of contradictions that fight one another like stray cats in my mind. I'm neither here nor there. Not in America and not here. Each forms a part of me, and when they all add up, all that is left is *shaath*. (Haddad 100)

¹ The word is taken the Arab language شاذ which means queer

As daring writer who is aware of the Arab sexual differences, Haddad employs male homosexual characters as molded by the post Arab Spring period new social and cultural norms.

In *Guapa*, Haddad portrays man-man relationship and explores gay man-women relationship along with changes in the socio-political conditions which might have changed one's views on either relationship. The Arab culture legitimates the social importance given to men, so Arab homosexuals have to fight off challenges from society's expectations, as Powers states it:

Each culture constructs concepts of ideal body types and a performative repertoire for both men and women, and individuals are expected to conform to these norms. Moreover, they are judged by their peers on the basis of how well they manage to enact their society's expectations. (8)

Arab social attitudes make men believe that their control over women is normal and justified and at same time declare male homosexuals' lack of bravery, challenge and power, because they are incapable of holding values like: achievement, competition and control.

Rasa is, in fact, a victim haunted by shameful memory. He seems tired of remembering Teta's reaction after catching him in bed with Taimour:

The morning begins with shame. This is not new, but as memories of last night begin to sink in, the feeling takes on a terrifying resonance. I grimace, squirm, dig fingers in my palms until the pain in my hands reflects how I feel. But there is no controlling what Teta saw, and her absence from my bedside means that she doesn't intend, as she had promised, to file away last night's mess in a deep corner of her mind.

(Haddad 3)

His grandmother's reaction evokes negative responses which make him behave unreasonably and illogically. The impact of Teta's reaction on him reflects how much respect he holds toward her. Through Teta, Haddad creates a referential point by which readers can judge Rasa's behaviours according to the Arab public discourse. Rasa's grandmother has been given authority over her grandson behaviours; this authority lies in a large part in the parental emotion that can be measured by how much he respects her.

While walking through a maze of house corridors, Rasa meets Doris, a housekeeper from Philippine. She is the character who directs attention to the issues of subaltern and enslavement of foreign maids in the Arab world. She never gets any attention from Rasa. But after last night mess, Rasa starts wondering if she knows something of what happened. Doris has destabilized him to the extent that he starts asking questions to himself.

"Good morning, sir", she chirps. Beyond the citrus smell of washing liquid I scan her face for knowledge and allegiance. She must have heard the screams last night, but did she understand enough to know what they were about? There is little I really know about Doris. She has a degree in criminology from the Philippines but has spent the past twenty-five years of her life cleaning our house. How have years of mopping floors and washing dishes shaped her views on love and morality? Where would she stand on what happened? (Haddad 8)

At work, Rasa works as a translator with Basma. Basma has always sharp conversations with him. She seems to have an invasive femininity as she addresses him with harsh words:

My mobile rings. I roll over in bed and pick it up. "Where the fuck are you? Basma barks. "You should have been here twenty minutes ago. I have got to meet a South African journalist who wants to interview some female refugees and the office is empty. I clear my throat and rub my eyes. "Basma, I'm sorry –"" Don't be sorry, be at the office." (Haddad 4)

Rasa's weakness is clearly demonstrated by his reaction when he attempts to cancel out his incapability to resist Basma's overwhelming femininity. Basma's authority over Rasa has its roots in how Arab society constructs views on homosexual

individuals. Unsurprisingly, Rasa's lack of hegemonic masculinity leads to his oppression by both hegemonic men and women.

As he portrays the losses confronted by male homosexual characters, Mario Bellatin invites his readers to realize that women are not involved in homosexual struggle. They are however depicted as marginal characters whose roles are melted in the course of the events. Excluding women from being a part of Bellatin strategy to examine the gendered relations is a sign for his focus on male homosexual characters. Bellatin affirms that:

If the Terminal does not accept women or early-stage sufferers I can't also reject those whose stomachs are under attack. It seems to me that this kind of attitude could end up completely invalidating my original idea. It would be useless to continue to maintain the beauty salon as it is now if I heeded this last restriction. (Bellatin 49)

The terminal owner's refusal of hospitalising women represents the author's intention for giving them a narrow space; women are almost unseen in the Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* because the focus is put on the fate of powerless male homosexuals. Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* records a developing tension over male homosexuality in an increasingly complex society.

4.7 Mapping the Self/ves

In both works, the tension regarding homosexuality is caused by the conflicting nature of the human self. The ambiguities played out after the outbreak of the plague and the aftermath of the Arab Spring highlight the sensitivity of homosexual identities. Mario Bellatin and Saleem Haddad attempt to make male homosexuals' tragedy visible to the extent that it communicates meaningfully their struggle for self worth. The authors have drawn attention to the mapping of the self/ves in an increasingly complex milieu. Male homosexuals feel that they are under threat of losing the entire grip over themselves. In this sense, exposing the illusive reality of homosexuality can bring changes at the social and psychological spheres. To delineate the forthright acknowledgment of male homosexual identity in Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*, one need to discuss the course of the developmental socialization (selves) and the psychological fabric (self) of male homosexuals. This is in order to show the possible consequences of having deviant sexualities' representations in their social development.

The complexities created by forging homosexual individuals are perceived to be the crucial factor in the dissocialization of the self. In fact, the core structure of social relations is the ability of the self to construct knowledge about the own self in accordance with the existing gender and sexual norms. However, troubling these norms by forging selves with deviant sexual orientation will lead to social fragmentation. Individuals are socially taught to comply with conventionality of

cultural values and beliefs since birth. Women are expected to exhibit femininity traits while masculine ones are assigned for men. In this sense, male homosexuals are not able to maintain repetitive, sustained and regular gender roles or what Butler refers to as gender performativity. This idea is clearly portrayed by Haddad when he describes:

For example, your men look like women and your women look like men. This is permitted in Western societies, even encouraged as equal rights,” I hear myself explain to Laura. “So now in your countries you have men who sleep with men who look like women. (Haddad 81)

The troubling of the gender convention has also affect the homogeneity of the social order. Male homosexuals disturb the social balance through their challenge to mainstream norms. In *Beauty Salon*, the homosexuals appropriate their social remoteness as they fall victims to both social deterioration and the plague. In this regard, Bellatin constructs social void to delineate a narrow social space (terminal) for male homosexuals where they can celebrate their deviant sexualities. To indicate their scattered selves, Bellatin writes:

The increasing number of people who come to die in the beauty salon is no form of entertainment at all. It's no longer just friends of mine who are in an advanced state of the disease, the majority of the people here are strangers who have nowhere else to die. If it were not for the Terminal their only option would be to perish in the street.(4)

To maintain their homosexual performances, characters escape mainstream gender hegemony by seeking refuge in the terminal. Their settlement in the terminal holds an underlying critique to the social fabric in many ways. Their forced exile raises the risk for being socially excluded from the public life. Bellatin turns to male homosexual exile in the terminal owner's last wish as he says:

I always think before I do anything and then analyze the possible consequences. For example, in the past I wouldn't have worried about the future of the Terminal when I'm gone, I would have let the guests work it out as best they could. Now the only thing I ask is that they respect the loneliness to come.(Bellatin 62-63)

The lack of hegemony has made many male homosexuals incapable to perform traditional gender roles. As a result, some of them are turning against themselves paving the ways to greater isolation. Their isolation which chases them to guapa has become the only space where they can let their homosexuality flooded without being judged as abnormal. Haddad explains to his homosexual character appropriation to guapa when he writes:

I wanted to explain the sad reality that, knafeh or not, we've been kicked out of the kitchen, which is why we were in Guapa drinking ourselves silly. Instead I remained silent, watching Taymour speak,

admiring his voice, his conviction, the way the dim red lighting of Guapa cut shadows into his face. (27)

Traditionally, gender conventions operate in a way that protects people from having improper experiences, which influence their social and psychological development. In *Guapa*, socialization seems to be an educative and instructive process in which experiences influence any individual personality and behaviour. Rasa is being taught to behave in accordance with Arab moral and ethics. Arab morals represent the superego in Freudian conceptualisation of the self. Rasa is obsessed by the way people are regularly been reminded of what moral and what is not:

The women gushed over Leila, hugging her and feeding her and asking when she was going to find a husband and advising her on how to dress. Leila laughed it off when she told me this, but I could tell they haunted her. They were her moral compass, her superego, and no matter how many books she read or essays she wrote, they were always there in her mind, asking her when she was going to finally settle down and find a husband and dress more womanlike. (Haddad 179)

Male homosexuals fall psychologically tormented by anxiety and depression; the social denial causes them a serious identity crisis. At this juncture, ego operates to protect their selves from the repression caused by being socially unaccepted; Rasa say:

I light the joint and inhale. So that's it, then. After today I'm on my own. But I don't even have all of myself. My public self would be somewhere else, laughing and mingling with others, participating in a façade, while my heart is left to mourn alone. (Haddad 227)

It is this struggle for self realization that Haddad communicates the suffering of male homosexual characters. For some them, this struggle is rewarding; but for many it is self-destructive, ending in feeling entirely left out as a stranger isolated within his own self.

The terminal owner's lack of conviction about his sexual identity disturbs his psychological being. The hopeless young homosexual, in his way of celebrating his deviant sexuality, becomes himself as foreigner in himself reflecting what Bhabha terms as ambivalence. Struggling bravely with the ambivalence of sexual identity and the forces of mainstream social conventions is the only thing he can do to maintain his self worth. He keeps struggling with:

These are just ideas, ideas which I might never even put into practice. It's too difficult to know what direction my illness will take. I have a hunch, though, gathered from years of experience, that my illness will most likely take a different route than the usual one. Calculating the time period is also difficult. (Bellatin 60)

In addition to the heritage of sadness and loss that he bears, Rasa is an example of man whose selfhood mechanism is disturbed by irrational fear about his deviant sexual identity. The aftermath of the Arab spring has triggered his sense of self worth which has remained his ultimate concern. Rasa becomes vigorously blended with anxiety and traumatic feeling of shame. Rasa confirms:

A flock of birds hovers over the city, oblivious to the mess us humans are making, to the heavy ball of shame and fear in the pit of my stomach. An eerie quietness cuts through the usual sound of traffic and street vendors. Is this ominous stillness new, or have I only just noticed it? (Haddad 26)

On the other hand, Mario Bellatin's main character is, in fact, a victim haunted by a painful reality. He seems tired of thinking on his beauty salon after he passed away. His hellish journey in his thoughts symbolizes the disintegration of his self. In an attempt to re-build a sense of self-worth and reduces threats of frustrations and anxieties, the terminal owner develops a claustrophobic tendency which deepens his isolation, as Bellatin explain its;

The arrival of these men bothered me, mostly because no one ever came for me. I wondered what purpose all my sacrifice administering the beauty salon served. I'm still alone, as without any emotional reward, without anyone always, to lament my disease. I believe this is the result of having cared too much for the beauty salon in its

moments of splendor, and from my dedication to my co-workers while they were with me, as well. (52-53)

Failed to reject the invasive femininity of Basma, Rasa puts himself in a direction that support his self destruction. Rasa is incapable to overcome his fragile self, and becomes the victim of the hegemony of heterosexual men and the feministic tendency of Arab women. Haddad portrays it:

One of my main goals in high school seemed to be to keep Maj from getting us both beaten up every day. His femininity offended the sensibilities of everyone, which only made him more adamant to flaunt it. (104)

Bellatin purposely puts male homosexuals' characters as objects in a heterosexist society. The performance of the terminal owner does little to change the social impression about his deviant sexual orientation. He has become a powerless man who always hopes to avoid troubles. His nonconformity encourages the social attitudes to further damage the psychological fabric of his self. He comes to the conclusion that his efforts in helping the almost dead is the only thing of worth he can do he:

The end was simple. There was no cure. All our efforts were merely vain attempts to ease our conscience. I don't know where we got the idea that helping sick people means keeping them away from the jaws of death at all costs. I made up my mind after that experience that if

there was no other option the best thing was a quick death under the most comfortable conditions I could offer the sick person. (Bellatin 38)

Most of the time, the owner of the terminal feels obliged to accept humiliation without resistance. It seems to be the only way available for him to save his life.

Arab homosexual issues, today, come to be talked about more explicitly contrasting social and cultural conventions. In *Guapa*, Haddad has negotiated a site to debunk common expectations about male homosexuals in order to destabilize the myth of heteronormativity. The growing interest to put their tense psychological drama into analysis makes it possible for their deviant sexual orientation to be imagined, constructed and studied; Haddad describes:

The sound of Teta's footsteps makes its way toward my bedroom, piercing the silence with each step. I smear my tears and snot across my face for added drama, and hold my breath so that my breathing comes out heavy and desperate. The bedroom door swings open. Teta's large figure rushes toward me like a storm. (Haddad 190)

Both writers give a new perspective of themselves as queer writers by presenting the tragedy of failed male homosexuals in the course of their search for self worth. Their pitiful images symbolize the collapse of their psychological being and their social life as well. Their sexual traits which are intensely sensitive have started to

warn them allowing traumatic feeling of non sense to come. The authors' literary accounts present a harsh picture for male homosexuals that feel completely overpowered by the dominance of heteronormative. Gradually, Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* and Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* have acclaimed a cult status in world literature, for their depiction and analysis of their main characters, beside their specific style.

4.8 Conclusion

The considerable corpus of literature created by Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* and Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* makes a literary tradition that articulates the muted voice of male homosexuals. In their attempt to broaden the range of male homosexuals' experiences, both authors have opened a new horizon and extended the frontiers to comprehensible studies on the representation of gender and sexualities in literature. Writing about the lives of male homosexuals is a daring task that resorts both writers to different strategies to act upon their own creativity. Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* and Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* are serious attempt to deconstruct socio-political views on deviant sexualities; they convey the difficulties involved in their efforts to make their voices heard. Rasa and the terminal owner try to re-build a sense of self-worth and reduce threats of frustrations and anxieties created by their surroundings. Consequently, their enactment of their true self (being male homosexual) encounters a number socio-political limits. These limits are also imposed by their problematic psychological fabric. Social attitudes toward male homosexual

have been shaped by the constitutions upon which these attitudes rest, i.e. religion, society and politics. Both authors seem to have a reasonable level of understanding of how male homosexuals who are expected to display unusual sexual roles feel.

Yet, through both novels much is explained on societal norms, the writers do not refer, to a larger extent, to religious prescriptions. Christianity and Islam condemn homosexuality which is severely punished and considered as strong sin. Being westernization or personal deviant sexual orientation and preference, both writers seem to defend homosexuals as human beings, with much respect and dignity.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Arguably, gender is regarded as a central phase in the psychological and social fabric of one's self. Individuals are expected to display different gender roles at different levels in their lives. Gradually, these individuals evolve psychologically as they rationally become able to mould their instinctive desires in accordance to the mainstream socio-cultural context. The present thesis, through an intensive focus on the construction of gender and sexuality, intends to understand the salient features of the self/ves in Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa*, for male homosexuality constitutes the bulk of their thematic concerns. The representations of male homosexuals include the probing of the ways used by the selected writers to map the self/ves in two different dystopian realities. Both writers are interested in elaborating male homosexuals who start recalling new images of their selves contrasting the conventional socio-cultural norms. The thematic variation in these works is then taken up within the various articulations of the victimized male homosexuals.

Mario Bellatin and Saleem Haddad try to explore the customary themes that are used as a source for reflecting the current reality. They set a gloomy tone of their novels in which male homosexuals are being caught by multiple forces that hinder them from exercising their deviant sexuality. They clinch against their homosexual

beliefs, regardless of the destructive consequences of exposing themselves to emotional and physical risks. Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* are seen as serious attempts to examine the effects of the social and cultural absolute rules on individuals who fail to fit into. This ultimately signifies the culmination of the socio-cultural mainstream to abide certain guidelines that forcibly construct or deconstruct rigid and fixed gender roles.

Mario Bellatin and Saleem Haddad attempt, through creating literary spaces from the nastiness of the plague and the so called Arab Spring chaos, to normalize what is socially seen as abnormal. They challenge the existing portrayal of sexual orientation in both Latin America and Arab literature written in or translated into English through recording the hellish journey of male homosexuals questing for social acceptance and visibility. They present a harsh picture of life wherein male homosexuals in and out their society feel overpowered by the dominance of heterosexuals. The subjugated male homosexuals fall victims of the tyranny of both heteronormative attitudes and the traumatic feeling of belonging. As a result, it has become difficult for them to fight for their rights and privileges in these agonizing circumstances, and the only means which seems available to them is to endure resisting social attitudes that muster their self worth.

Homosexuals' quest for the sense of self worth lamentably leads to self-destructive tendency, ending up with dehumanization, isolation and death. The authors communicate male homosexuals' struggle who feel under a constant threat of losing

the entire grip over themselves. As they appreciate their homosexuality, male homosexuals become themselves strangers within their own selves, reflecting a profound ambivalence about their sexual identity. Struggling hopelessly with this ambivalence of sexual identity and the forces of mainstream social conventions, remains the only issue they can do to maintain the spectrum bound with their societies.

The significant body of literature provided by Saleem Haddad and Mario Bellatin forges new literary lines to articulate the muted voice of male homosexuals. In their attempt to broaden the range of male homosexuals' experiences, they open a new horizon and extend the frontiers to comprehensible studies on the representation of gender and sexualities in literature. Writing about the lives of male homosexuals is a daring task that resorts both writers to different approaches to act upon. Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* and Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* attempt to deconstruct socio-political views on deviant sexualities. They convey the difficulties involved in their efforts to make their voices heard. Rasa and the terminal's owner try to re-build a sense of self-worth and reduce threats of frustrations and anxieties created by their surroundings. Consequently, their enactment of their true self (being male homosexual) encounters a range of social, cultural and political limits. These limits are also imposed by the nature of their problematic psychological fabric. Social attitudes toward male homosexuals have been shaped by the constitutions upon which these attitudes rest, i.e. religion, society and politics. Both authors seem to have a

reasonable level of understanding to the drama of male homosexuals who are expected to display unusual sexual roles.

Considerable attention has been drawn to the emergence of the new modes of novelistic use of time and space. Mario Bellatin and Saleem Haddad have set the course of events in their works in increasingly complex and ambiguous settings, leaving readers' mind in such a confusing state. In both novels, the language chosen for the overall tone is definite, confining and rich. This fast and definitive tone is intertwined with the chaotic nature of the events portrayed in the both works. The authors take the cause of the uprising during the Arab Spring and mysteries created the plague to build dramatic social setting for male homosexuals who try to escape exploitation, and seek pastures to stand against the tyranny of all kinds of dominance.

Both authors exhibit the issue of the controversial representation of male homosexuality. Male homosexual characters, in both works, constantly try to meet with society's expectations in order not to feel left out. However, coming to meet with these social expectations puts them under the control of heteronormative attitudes. Skeptical from these social constraints, they turn inward toward greater individualism, yet self deconstruction too.

Male homosexual characters utterly undermine a sense of disconnectedness which can be seen as an underlying critique to the fabric of social relations. Their disconnectedness is said to be the inescapable destiny as their behaviours fail to fit to

the social expectations. Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* and Haddad's *Guapa* reflect the authors' strategy of troubling sexual identity by emphasizing its fluid nature. In this way, they destabilise the existing binary system of gender and sexuality bringing out what is outside gender binaries into a serious traumatic sense of belonging. Male homosexual characters, in both works, seek self- definition through expressing the desire to communicate their urge for social acceptance. Homosexuals' nonconformity to the existing social norms deepens their isolation, and consequently causes a serious psychological trauma.

Homosexuals whose deviant identity has isolated them from the social life have to go through many upheavals and define themselves in narrow spaces. For the homosexual characters, the lost space has become a dystopian reality which gives them the status of unwilling guests in their homeland. Mario Bellatin and Saleem Haddad criticize human conditions which push male homosexuals into a social exclusion and social disorder in quest of an accepted authentic self, shaking between the beautiful utopian desire and the ugly dystopian reality.

The authors give a new perspective of themselves as queer writers by presenting the tragedy of failed male homosexuals in the course of their search for self worth. Their pitiful images symbolize the collapse of their psychological being and their social life as well. Their sexual traits which are intensely sensitive have started to warn them allowing traumatic feeling of non sense to come. The authors' literary accounts present a harsh picture for male homosexuals that feel completely

overpowered by the dominance of heteronormative. Gradually, Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* and Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* have depicted the misunderstanding upon male homosexuals. But, to what extent can people judge or appreciate and celebrate their freedom of thoughts and behaviours? Probably, traditions, ethics or morals and socio- religious norms stand to allow people to think and act decently, i.e. not to hurt morally and physically the "other". Therefore, the hypotheses expressed in this thesis are confirmed. Yet, much research has to be undertaken, particularly on the limits of tolerance and religion, or on the politics of being and belonging connected to different forms of sexual desires. Transgression remains a debateful space where marginalised people can voice their concern across ages and space. Heard or unheard, visible or invisible, accepted or rejected, individuals are having ethical/unethical behaviours interwoven with religious practices and dominant social pressure.

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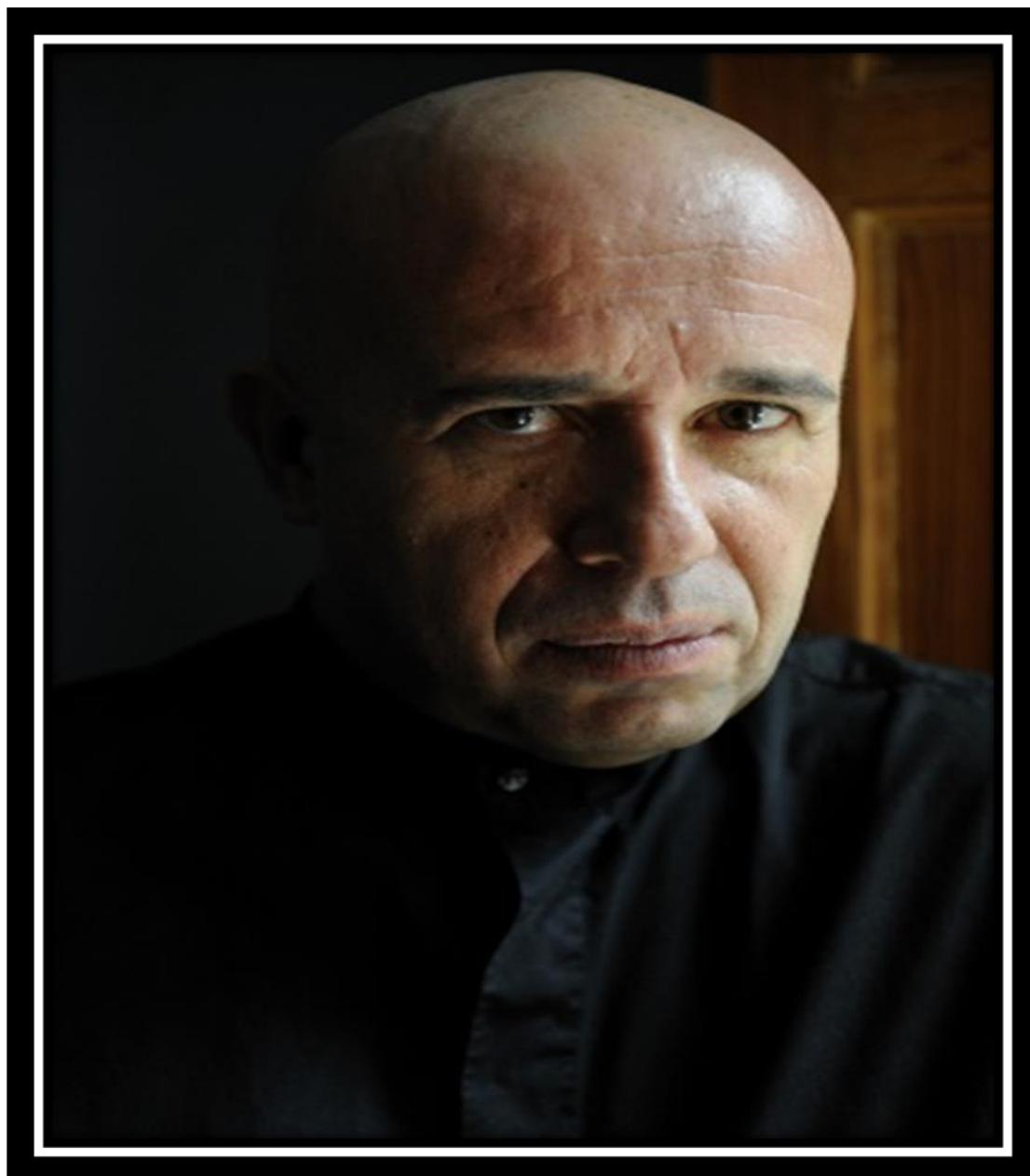
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Appendices

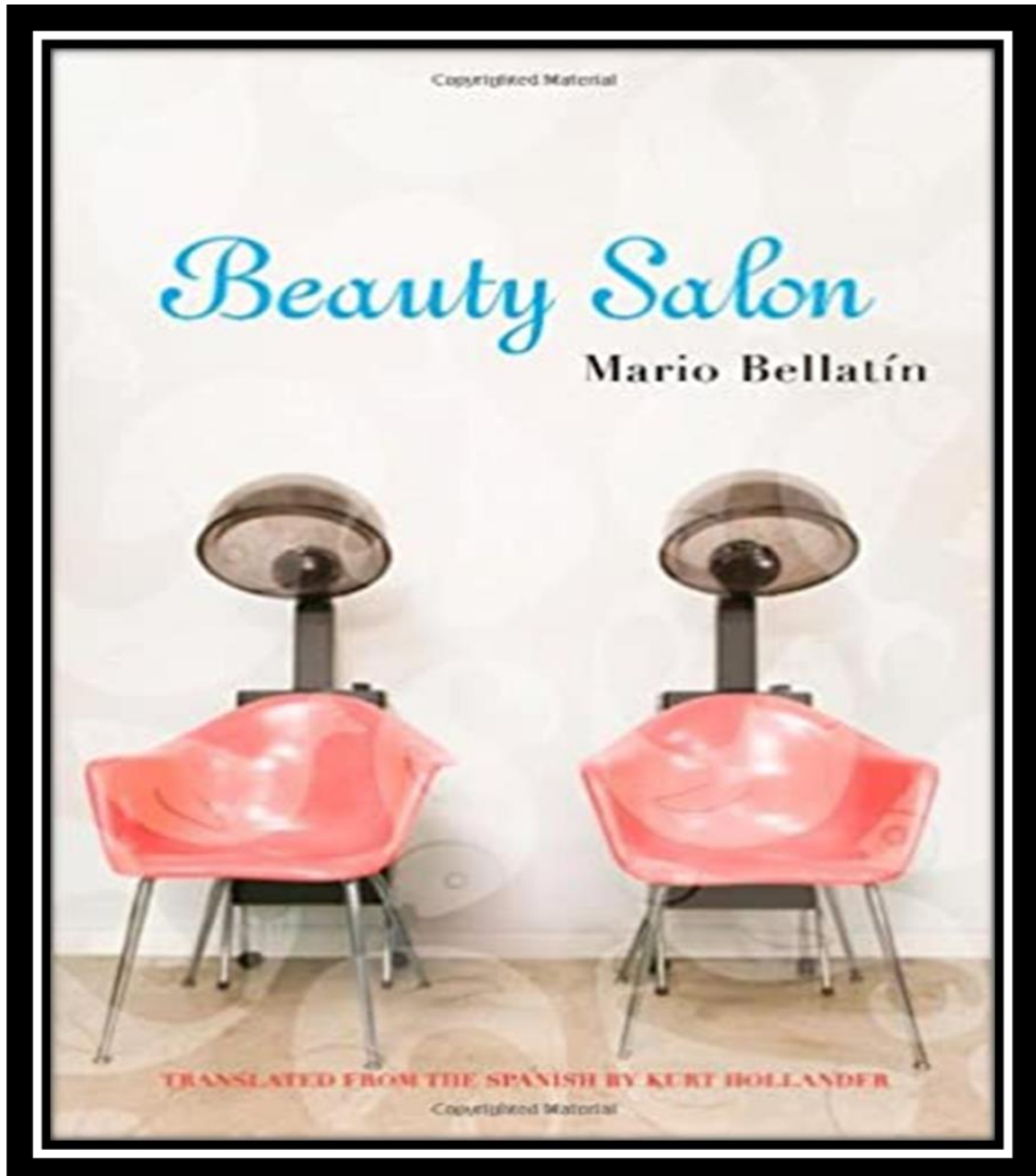
Appendix A

Mario Bellatin



Appendix B

Beauty Salon



Appendix C

Synopsis

Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* is the story of unnamed city overwhelmed by unknown disease. The narrator, is a cross-dressing homosexual man, transforms his beloved beauty salon into the Terminal, for almost dead men to end their lives. The novella gives an allegory that helps understand the mindset the terminal inhabitants. Throughout the story, the narrator is obsessed by showing the way caring for his fish.

The fish provide another allegory for those almost dead. When the work in beauty salon gets prospered, the fish look brighter and full of life in the aquariums. However, when the salon owner transform his beauty is transformed into the Terminal, he become less interested in taking care the fish. The narrator seems struggling with a health of paradoxical feelings after the death of his fish.

At times, the terminal's guests are suffering physically from the disease and mentally from the attitudes of their heteronormative society. They have received unfair treatment from their society which considers them as already unwilling category of people. The narrator refers to the terminal inhabitants as guests because they won't last long in the terminal, and are not allow to interact with the outside world. He refuses any kind of help like medicine, food or clothes. The hospitalised people go to the terminal only to die.

Though they are also suffering from the disease, women and children are not allowed to get in the terminal. Bellatin excludes women from being active characters in his *Beauty Salon* to show that women are not part of the male homosexual community. Women are also portrayed as suffers from the disease, but they could not have the same treatment as male homosexual. Women's exclusion is read as a tendency of further marginalizing women from queer literature as they constitute small area of interest in queer literature.

Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon* creates a literary account in which Bellatin tells the story of the muted homosexuals. Bellatin continues to carry a powerful message for considering the dystopian reality of the marginalized communities.

Appendix D

Biography

Mario Bellatin was born in 1960 in Mexico. He grew up in Peru (his parents' homeland), and lived till the age of twenty-three. Bellatin studied theology and obtained a diploma in communication sciences, and he moved to Cuba to enroll at the Escuela internacional de Cine y Televisión. He published, however, in Peru his first book, *Mujeres de sal*, appeared in Lima in 1986, but since 1995 he has further pursued his writing career in Mexico. He continues to live and write there today.

Career

Mario Bellatin is regarded as an important figure in Spanish fiction. His experimental and fragmented writing has created a history for him as he artfully merges reality with fiction. Bellatin has published more than forty books. His works are known all over the world. Many of his works were translated into German, English, French and Malayalam.

Awards

Bellatin has received many awards

- Premio Xavier Villaurrutia (2000)
- Guggenheim Fellowship, Latin American and Caribbean Fellow (2002)

- Premio Nacional de Literatura for El gran vidrio (The Great Glass), Instituto Municipal de Cultura, Turismo y Arte de Mazatlán (2008)
- Stonewall Book Award-Barbara Gittings Literature Award Honor for Beauty Salon, American Library Association (2010)
- Doctor Honoris Causa, 17, Institute of Critical Studies (2019)

Bellatin's Works

- Flores (Anagrama, 2004)
- The Great Glass (Anagrama, 2007)
- Chinese Checkers, trans. Cooper Renner (Ravenna Press, 2007)
- beauty parlor, trans. Ratheesh (DC Books, 2011)
- Beauty Salon, trans. Kurt Hollander (City Lights Publishers, 2009)
- Shiki Nagaoka: A Nose for Fiction, trans. David Shook (Phoneme Media , 2013)
- Jacob the Mutant, trans. Jacob Steinberg (Phoneme Media , 2015)
- The Uruguayan Book of the Dead, trans. David Shook (Phoneme Media, 2019)

Appendix E

Latin American Writers

Carlos Fuentes (1928-2012): was a Mexican novelist and essayist. Among his works are *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1962), *Aura* (1962), *Terra Nostra* (1975), *The Old Gringo* (1985) and *Christopher Unborn* (1987). In his obituary, *The New York Times* described Fuentes as "one of the most admired writers in the Spanish-speaking world" and an important influence on the Latin American Boom, the "explosion of Latin American literature in the 1960s and '70s"

Gabriel García Márquez (1927-2014): was a Colombian novelist, short-story writer, screenwriter, and journalist, known affectionately as **Gabo** throughout Latin America. Considered one of the most significant authors of the 20th century, particularly in the Spanish language, he was awarded the 1972 Neustadt International Prize for Literature and the 1982 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957): known by her pseudonym **Gabriela Mistral** was a Chilean poet-diplomat, educator and humanist. In 1952 she became the first Latin American author to receive a Nobel Prize in Literature, "for her lyric poetry which, inspired by powerful emotions, has made her name a symbol of the idealistic aspirations of the entire Latin American world".

Isabel Allende (b. 1947): is a Chilean writer. Allende, whose works sometimes contain aspects of the genre magical realism, is known for novels such as *The House of the Spirits* (*La casa de los espíritus*, 1982) and *City of the Beasts* (*La ciudad de las bestias*, 2002), which have been commercially highly successful. Allende has been called "the world's most widely read Spanish-language author." In 2004, Allende was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in 2010, she received Chile's National Literature Prize. President Barack Obama awarded her the 2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986): was an Argentine short-story writer, essayist, poet and translator, and a key figure in Spanish-language and universal literature. His best-known books, *Ficciones* (*Fictions*), *Boast of Quietness* (poem) and *El Aleph* (*The Aleph*)

Octavio Paz (1914-1998): was a Mexican poet and diplomat. For his body of work, he was awarded the 1981 Miguel de Cervantes Prize, the 1982 Neustadt International Prize for Literature, and the 1990 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973): better known by his pen name and, later, legal name **Pablo Neruda**, was a Chilean poet-diplomat and politician who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. Neruda became known as a poet when he was 13 years old, and wrote in a variety of styles, including surrealist poems, historical epics, overtly political manifestos, a

prose autobiography, and passionate love poems such as the ones in his collection *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* (1924).

Appendix F

Saleem Haddad



Appendix G

Biography

Saleem Haddad is a contemporary Arab author and aid worker. He was born in Kuwait City in 1983 to an Iraqi-German mother and a Palestinian-Lebanese father. He spent his early years in Jordan. Then, he moved to Cyprus, Canada and England. He joined Doctors without Borders to work as an aid worker in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon and Egypt. Though Saleem Haddad joined the literary world recently as his only novel *Guapa* was published only in 2016, which is well welcomed among readers and critics.

Books

1. *Guapa*: Haddad's debut novel was released in March 2016 by Other Press.

Awards

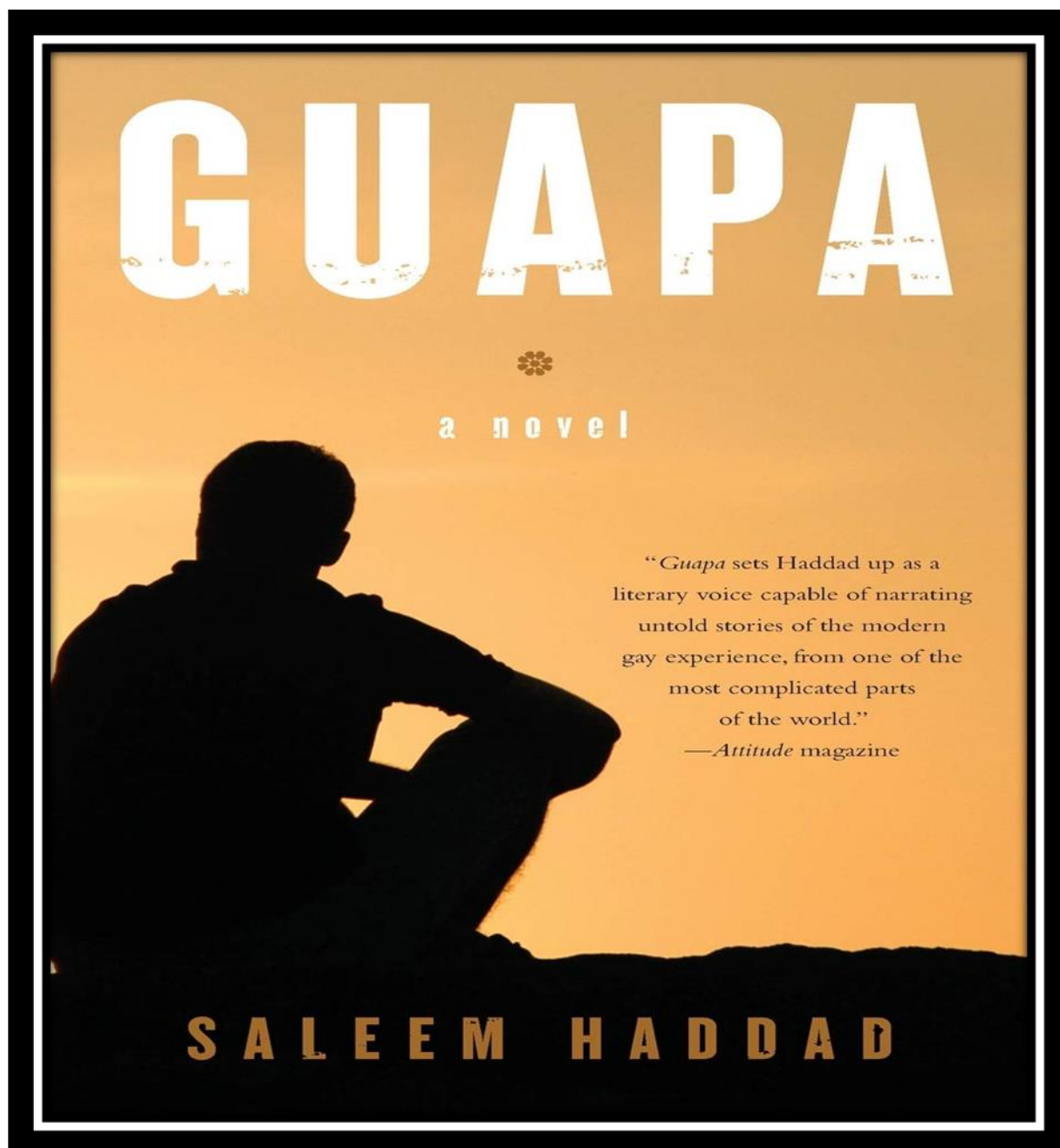
2. Polari First Book Prize 2017

Other Works

3. *Marco* (first short film): is nominated for Best British Short at the 2019 Iris Prize.

Appendix H

Guapa



Appendix I

Synopsis

Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* is the story of a Middle Eastern homosexual young man called Rasa. In *Guapa*, Haddad uses memory to tell Rasa's childhood, American education, return home and career as a translator story; he offers an account in which readers learn how Rasa is melted invisibly into relationship with his lover, Taymor. The novel's events take place the day after Rasa caught in bed with Taymor.

Characters, in *Guapa*, are varied and vibrant, and the dialogue in whole story is purposeful as Rasa navigates new life in USA. Basma and Maj offer Rasa advice on his job, love, and family issues in gay bar called Guapa. Teta is Rasa's grandmother; she is the character that represents the conservative aspect in Rasa's life. Doris is Philippine maid who is always the target of Rasa's heavy sarcasm. Taymor is Rasa's lover who fails to overcome his homophobic tendency. Rasa remembers with paradoxical feelings Cecile and Sufyan his classmates whom he was always in trouble.

Rasa's social anxiety is easily detected as well as his otherness America. Rasa wants to show his homosexual identity, but he is forced to hide it as in a society which has become violently Islamophobic. Rasa wants to foreground his homosexuality that is proud of, but he finds Taymor who is homophobic and heterosexual. Although, the relationship between Rasa and Taymor and Teta forms the bulk of novel, the author

traces the friendship between Rasa and Raj whom Rasa protects as being an easy target for his femininity.

In the end, friendship prevails as Rasa spends most of his life looking for love, aching for a man who can share with the same feeling. He never stops wondering about his mother. Rasa's story is a story of forbidden love. It is a story that crosses all the red lines in the Arab society.

Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* challenges Arab social convention; it is one of few queer novels that must not be overlooked. Haddad has created a fascinating story with life-richly elements as his novel forges its way into a canon in queer literature.

Appendix J

Arab Writers

Amin Zaoui : (1956) is an Algerian novelist. He writes in French and Arabic.

Driss Chraïbi (1926 –2007): was a Moroccan author. His novels deal with colonialism, culture clashes, generational conflict and the treatment of women and are often semi-autobiographical.

Fatimah Rifaat (known Alifa Rifaat): (1930 –1996) was an Egyptian author whose controversial short stories are renowned for their depictions of the dynamics of female sexuality, relationships, and loss. She wrote in Arabic.

Fatima-Zohra Imalayen: (1936 –2015) known by Assia Djebar was an Algerian novelist, translator and filmmaker. She wrote in French language.

Huzama Habayeb (1965-): is a Palestinian novelist, storyteller, columnist, translator, and poet who has won multiple awards such as Mahmoud Seif Eddin Al-Erani Award for Short Stories, Jerusalem Festival of Youth Innovation in Short Stories

Kahlil Gibran (1883 –1931): as a Lebanese-American writer, poet and visual artist, also considered a philosopher although he himself rejected the title. He wrote in Arabic and English

Leila Aboulela (1964 -): is a fiction writer of Sudanese origin, who lives in Great Britain and writes in English. She grew up in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, and has mainly lived in Aberdeen, Scotland, since 2012.

Malek Haddad : (1927-1978) was an Algerian poet and writer in the French language

May Ziadeh (1886 - 1941): was a Lebanese-Palestinian poet, essayist and translator, who wrote different works in Arabic and in French.

Mohammed Dib: (1920 –2003) was an Algerian author. He wrote over 30 novels, as well as numerous short stories, poems, and children's literature in the French language.

Mohammed Moulessehoul (known by the pen name **Yasmina Khadra**): (1955-) is an Algerian author who writes in French and Arabic.

Naguib Mahfouz : (1911 –2006) was an Egyptian writer who won the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature. He wrote in Arabic.

Nawal El Saadawi: (1931-) is an Egyptian feminist writer, activist, physician, and psychiatrist. She has written many books in Arab.

Rachid Boudjedra: (1941 -) is an Algerian poet, novelist, playwright and critic. Boudjedra wrote in French and Arabic.

Tayeb Salih (1929 –2009): was one of Sudan's greatest authors of the twentieth century. He wrote in Arabic and English.

Appendix K

Arab Wars

9/11: on September 11, 2001 a group of militants known as al Qaeda organized an attack against targets in the United States. Al Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and carried out an act of suicide. Two of the planes were flown in the twin towers of the world trade centre in New York City. A third plane hit the Pentagon just from outside, whereas the last one crashed into a field in Shanksville in Pennsylvania.

Six Days War: the six days war was also known as June war, Third Arab- Israel war or Naksah. It took place in June 1967. It was a bloody conflict between Arab states of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and Israel. The results of the war have tremendous effects on the world.

The Gulf War: in the early 1990, the late president of Iraq Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion and occupation of his small rich neighbour Kuwait. Saddam's main motive behind that invasion was his need to top up impoverished Iraqi economy that had been largely affected by the war against Iran.

The Oil War (1973): As a reaction to the June 1973 war, Arab countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Libya, and Algeria cut off oil and created a shortage and

rising prices all over the world. It is worth of noting that this was not the first time that the 'oil weapon' deploy.

Appendix L

Questionnaire to Mario Bellatin

The questionnaire was sent by email and answered via email in Spanish. The translation is mine.

1. How did you become involved with the queer theme in your book *Beauty Salon*?

Cómo ha sido involucrado con el tema extraño en su obra *Beauty Salon*?

De manera sutil. Sin un plan previo. Recuerdo que en esos años me obsequiaron una pecera, donde pude apreciar que se desataba una gran violencia en esa vida acuática, en apariencia apacible. Al mismo tiempo en esos años, mediados de los 90, el sida hacía estragos en la población, pues no habían sido descubiertos muchos de los antirretrovirales que existen en la actualidad, con lo que lo hacía un virus de necesidad mortal. De alguna manera, la sociedad entera era similar a la violencia contenida en esas peceras. No había voces que pudieran describir aquel estado de cosas de una manera oblicua. Los libros, las películas, las obras de arte que aludían al tema lo hacían de una manera directa. Es por eso que recurrí a un universal bíblico, La Peste, para dar cuenta de ese estado de cosas pero, al mismo tiempo, unir ese momento a la Historia en general.

In a subtle way, without any preliminary plan I remember that during these years someone has offered me an aquarium, where I was able to watch an outburst of great

violence in the aquatic life, apparently peaceful. At the same time during those years in the mid-90s AIDS was wreaking havoc among the population, but they had not discovered the antiretroviral that exist today, with what a virus made of deadly necessities. With either way, the whole society was similar to life contained in these aquariums. There were no words that could describe this issue. Books, movies, the works of art which escaped this subject did so in a simple manner. For this, I had recourse to LA PESTE to account for this issue, but at the same time to unite this moment to history in general.

2. What's the most difficult thing about writing characters from the same sex?

Qué era lo más difícil a la hora de escribir personajes del mismo sexo?

Creo que los personajes en mis libros tienen una sexualidad un tanto ambigua. A veces parecen ser explícitos en sus preferencias sexuales, en sus roles de género, pero muchas veces sus conductas demuestran lo contrario. Me parece que existe un imperativo por definirse de tal o cual manera para pertenecer a la sociedad, y advierto que en la realidad el tema es mucho más complejo.

I think characters in my books have a somewhat ambiguous sexuality. They sometimes seem explicit in their sexual preferences, in their gender role, but often their behaviour shows the opposite. It seems to me that there is an imperative to define oneself such or such a way to belong to the company but I point out that in reality the subject is much more complex.

3. Are there underrepresented ideas featured in your book?

Existen ideas subrepresentadas que figuran en su obra?

En este libro en particular creo que las posibles relaciones que pueden existir entre la Belleza y la Muerte.

In this book in particular I believe that the possible relationships that may exist between BEAUTY and DEATH.

4. What character in your novel are you least likely to get along with?

Con qué personaje de la novela sería menos probable llevarse bien?

Creo que el personaje central, el que cuenta los acontecimientos, tiene una serie de facetas sumamente marcadas que lo hacen al mismo tiempo uno y varios. Alguna de esas facetas puede ser desesperante para algún lector. Quizá la del buen samaritano o la del demiurgo que, sin piedad, decide sobre la vida y muerte de los huéspedes que mantiene a su cargo.

I think that the central character, the one who recounts the events, has a series of extremely marked facets which make him at the same time one and several any of these facets may be hopeless for any reader. without mercy, the terminal owner decides on the life or death of the guests whom he maintains in the terminal.

5. How is the gothic setting of your novel important to queer themes?

En qué el entorno gótico de su novela es importante para los temas extraños?

No sé si bautizarlo góticos a esos ambientes. Mi interés es que tengan un carácter propio. Compuesto por claroscuros, veladuras, silencios elocuentes, vacíos que cada lector debe llenar de acuerdo a su experiencia.

I don't know if I would baptize them Gothic in these environments. My interest would be for them to have a character of their own. composed of veils, eloquent silences, voids that each reader must feel in accordance with his/her experience.

6. How do characters react to and with symbolic objects like terminal, mortal disease and unnamed city?

Cómo reaccionan los personajes para acabar con los objetos simbólicos tal como terminal, enfermedad mortal y ciudad anónima?

Pues haciendo como que transcurren en un sueño. En un mundo propio. En un lugar definido únicamente por reglas propias. Me da la impresión de que la forma de soportar la realidad es creando realidades propias.

Well, pretending they're flowing in a dream, into his own world. In a place which is defined only by its own rules I feel that the way to endure reality is to create your own realities.

7. Why is the city kept unnamed?

Por qué se quedó la ciudad anónima?

Siempre. A veces la maquillo con ambientes japoneses, árabes o judíos. Un no tiempo y no espacio infinitos, el propio de la literatura, para entender de una manera mucho menos superficial la realidad concreta que nos circunda.

Always. Sometimes I make up her with Japanese, Arab, or Jewish backgrounds. In no exact time and an infinite non space create the proper of literature to understand in a much less superficial way the concrete reality that surrounds us.

Appendix M

Saleem Haddad and Tareq Baconi answering my questions in a webinar organised by Trinity College, USA

Panel discussion with and between Arab writers Saleem Haddad and Tareq Baconi

Guest speakers will discuss writing the queer Arab narrative and address issues related to activism, agency, genre, language, and visibility. Guest speakers will be in conversation with Kifah Hanna, Associate Professor at Trinity College, CT, and ACLS Burkhardt fellow in residence at MESAAS, Columbia University (2020-21).

Kifah Hanna: So the first question is, said by **Mr. Ben Abderrazak Abdelnacer**, and he is asking: in what way does Queer Arab literature raise the visibility of homosexual individuals? With either of you would like to say, if you would like something about it or shall I read another question which is: are you compelled by the intolerance expressed by religious people Christians or Muslims? Which kind of feeds into the idea of writing in itself as being a revolutionary or subversive act?

Saleem Haddad: I guess I'll just say on the end then maybe thought that you have anything to say on that first question. Around the first question: in what way does Queer Arab literature raise the visibility... I think, you know, literature is

never going to, I don't think it'll have the effect that, you know, films or music will have, just because I think the reality is people read less of books and consume less of books and they would have their forms of medias. But I think literature really allows us to get inside the skin of another person, I think that it allows an opportunity to really get inside the psyche of the characters, and that's why for me I think it's a really interesting to explore queer characters because I think it allows us to see the world through their perspective in interesting ways.

Tareq Baconi: yeah, I think I agree with that, and I think I'll take on the second question which is: are you compelled by the intolerance expressed by religious people. I mean I think for me it's not necessary, the intolerance expressed by religious people. I think it's intolerance generally that drives me, I think it's important to not please the intolerance around, or queer phobia specifically on Christians or Muslims or any religious group. I think often that intolerance is expressed in these ways even by people who are not religious in any sense of the word, and regimes certainly authoritarian regimes use religion and religious discourse as way to fuel moral panics, and in some of these questions in ways that are obviously opportunistic. I think, you know, any kind of writing for me is fuelled by the desire to push back against intolerance and to push back against forms of injustice against any community. And I think that for me isn't coupled by religion. I think that's just one vehicle in which such intolerance can be

expressed. But I think it's important to sort of think about that, yes, as a drive and a source of creative tension.

Glossary

Glossary

Diaspora: the voluntary or enforced migration of peoples from their native homelands. Diaspora literature is often concerned with questions of maintaining or altering identity, language, and culture while in another culture or country.

Dystopia: refers to a type of life's conditions that is an imagined where cruel societal control. It is characterized by disease, oppression, poverty, violence, human misery, and/or pollution.

Ego: it is a part of the human personality through which the self is expressed. It is claimed to be the part responsible for remembering, evaluating, planning, and in other ways is responsive to and acts in the surrounding physical and social world. Moreover, it is considered as a realistic part that mediates between the desire of the id and superego.

Gay: men attracted to men. In other terms, a gay is used when a man who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to men. Gay is sometimes also used as a blanket term to refer to lesbian women and bisexual people as well as gay men. However, this usage has been disputed by a large part of the LGBTI group and gay is therefore only used here when referring to men who are emotionally and/or sexually attracted to men.

Gender identity: Gender identity is also often conflated with sexual orientation, but this is inaccurate. It is worth of noting that gender identity does not cause sexual orientation. For example, a masculine woman is not necessarily a lesbian.

Gender Performativity: This notion of performativity in gender studies was first introduced in the studies of Judith Butler. For her gender is performative means that it only exist while it is being performed. Gender performativity states that the relationship between meaning (gender) and body (sex) is not mimetic, but productive and constitutive.

Gender: Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do. This term is opted for the sake of refereeing to socially constructed traits. In other terms, gender represents relationship between man and woman, or boys and girls. These relationships are socially constructed and learned via the process of socialization.

Heterosexuality: heterosexuality is a term that is defined as attraction to the opposite sex. It is also viewed as a sexual or relational identity (belonging to individuals or groups) and also as a social institution (which structures daily life).

Homosexuality: This term signifies the physical contact between two individuals of the same sex which both tend to recognize as being sexual in nature and which

results in sexual arousal. Homosexual behaviour takes place when the members of the same gender engage in sexual activity.

ID: It is a primitive, instinctual part that the human being owns when they are born. It is the crucial part of the mind that possesses sexual and embedded memories.

Identity: Identity refers to the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world. It integrates one's meaning to oneself and one's meaning to others; it provides a match between what one regards as central to oneself and how one is viewed by significant others in one's life. Identity is also a way of preserving the continuity of the self, linking the past and the present...at the same time that our identity is fundamentally interwoven with others' to gain meaning, contrasting ourselves with others heightens our sense of what is uniquely individual.

Lesbian: usually refers to women attracted to women. A woman who is sexually and romantically attracted to other women. This word is used to represent women who are homosexual.

LGBT: this acronym stands for: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people. This is the acronym that ILGA-Europe opt in order to reflect our advocacy priorities; our members may use different formulations to more accurately describe their own work, for example LGBT, LGBTQ

Masculinity: it is a concept that signifies the social outcome of being men and the traits and characteristics which describe men and give it advantages over women. Masculinity cannot be something valued unless it is performed by biological male. Male body is infused in culture with a given traits that characterize maleness, hence, human norm of male supremacy.

Psycho- sexual development: the theory of psychosexual development is also known as the libidinal development. It is one of the considerable theories in which it expounds how personality develops in human beings. This theory is regarded to be an integral part of the psychodynamic personality theory was first suggested by Freud.

Queer theory: Queer theory is an umbrella term that stands for people who are identified as ‘gays, ‘Lesbians’, bisexual, etc. In some cases, it is opted as a term for ‘LGBT’. The term is also used to represent a diverge range for critical practices like readings of the representation of same sex desire in literary work; analyses of the social and political power relations of sexuality; critique of the sex- gender system.

Sex: generally, the term sex refers to physical or physiological differences between males and females, including both primary sex characteristics (the reproductive system) and secondary characteristics such as height and muscularity.

Sexual desire: by definition, sexual desire is the feeling of wanting to engage in a sexual activity. Sexual desire represents a more complex psychological experience that is not dependent on hormonal factors.

Sexual identity: this term refers to the distinct biological types of male and female. It signifies how individuals consider themselves as males or females. It is an individual's sense of self as a sexual being, including gender identity, gender role, sexual orientation and sexual self-concept. Sexual identity may also refer to the language and labels people use to define themselves. Sexual self-concept refers to the individual's assessment of his or her sexual identity. Development of sexual identity is a critical part of adolescence.

Sexual orientation: it is to whom we are sexually and romantically attracted. Terms for sexual orientation can include heterosexual/straight, gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and queer/questioning.

Sexuality: it is viewed as a person's capacity for sexual feelings. Studying sexual attitudes and practices is a particularly interesting field of sociology because sexual behaviour is a cultural universal.

Super ego: it is regarded to be one of the three divisions of the psyche in psychoanalytic theory. It describes the internalization of parental conscience and the rules that govern the society, and functions in order to either reward or punish via a system of moral attitudes, conscience, and a sense of guilt.

The Self: it is a concept that is used to refer how individuals think about, evaluate or perceive themselves.

Utopia : is the ideally desirable life in respect of laws, politics, traditions and conditions. The word utopia form a bulk of many literary works after the publication of Thomas More book entitled *Utopia* in 1516.

Résumé

Le débat sur l'impact que peut avoir la construction du soi interroge aussi l'éventuel effet de l'autodestruction. Les deux œuvres, *Beauty Salon* de Mario Bellatin et *Guapa* de Saleem Haddad, ont une portée lourde d'engagement envers le positionnement progressif des personnages homosexuels et de leur rôle de genre déviant lors de conditions particulières. Les deux œuvres attirent l'attention de part leur engagement dans les politiques de la sexualité et de genre. Cette thèse a pour but d'examiner la constitution des relations sociales telles que critiquées par les auteurs dans ces deux œuvres. La thèse entreprend aussi de traiter de la cartographie psychologique de ces personnages et de leur socialisation. Elle se base principalement sur une approche éclectique. Elle emploie les théories de Freud sur le développement psychosexuel et les idées féministes de Butler sur le genre et la sexualité, et ceci afin d'expliquer les potentielles implications de ce que peut être la déconnexion du soi de l'homme homosexuel en vue de correspondre à une situation socialement appropriée. Notre étude montre que la description que font Bellatin et Haddad de l'autodestruction de l'homme homosexuel interroge la politique de l'obsession identitaire sexuelle; et que celle-ci, à son tour, démontre la nature problématique de la fragmentation de l'identité chez ce genre de personne.

Mots clés : *Beauty Salon*, *Guapa*, l'homme homosexuel, l'autodestruction

ملخص

لفت الكثير من النقاد وكتاب الانتباه إلى تأثير المتغيرات المعاصرة الكبير على تكوين الذات، وإلى النتائج المترتبة على الشعور بانهيائها، في هذا الصدد تعد روايتا صالون التجميل لماريو بيلاين و قوابة لسليم حداد أنموذجا للرواية التي تحاكي الاهتمام المتزايد بتضمين شخصيات مثلية بقوامها المنافي للاعتبارات الجندرية التقليدية في مواضع مختلفة، ولقد استقطبت هاتين الروايتين اهتماما متزايدا لولوجهما إلى معترك الخوض في خبايا الميول الجنسي وولفت الانتباه إلى نتائج القيام بأدوار جندرية غير التي تعود عليها على التكوين النفسي والاجتماعي للذات، حيث شكل هذا الموضوع اللبنة الأساسية لأطروحة الدكتوراه والتي عكف صاحبها على دراسة طريقة نقد الروائيين لأسس بناء العلاقات الاجتماعية و كذا مناقشة التطور النفسي والاجتماعي للذات في حياة تلك الشخصيات، ولقد أعتمد في تحليل الموضوع على نهج انتقائي مكون أساسا من مقترب التطور الجنسي النفسي لفرويد و افتراضات جاديث باتلر حول الجندر و الميول الجنسي لتفسير النتائج المحتملة لميول الشخصيات المثلية الذكورية للانعزال، بينت الدراسة أن تصوير كلا من الروائيين لشعور الشخصيات الذكورية المثلية بانهييار الذات يعد في حد ذاته نقدا لسياسة تثبيت الهوية الجنسية والتي أظهرت الطبيعة المثيرة للجدل لهوية تلك الشخصيات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذات ، صالون التجميل، قوابة ، شخصيات مثلية ذكورية ، انهيار

الذات