ANALYZING QUEER SHAME, SPACE, AND LANGUAGE IN SALEEM HADDAD'S *GUAPA* AND MUHAMMAD 'ABDUL NABI'S *FI GHURFAT AL-'ANKABUT*

Ralph Haddad
Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master's Degree in Islamic Studies - Gender and Women's Studies Concentration

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of shame, space and language in the formation of queer identity within two novels, *Guapa* by Saleem Haddad (New York: Other Press, 2016) and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* [In the Spider's Room] by Muhammad 'Abdul Nabi (Alexandria: Dar al 'Ayn, 2016). I begin with an overview of the theoretical material against which I read these two novels in order to situate them within a larger framework of debate surrounding the themes of shame, language, and space. I then analyze the role of language in the development of a queer identity of the two main characters of each work, Rasa and Hani, respectively. I discuss how language impacts how they come to know themselves, in particular how they grapple with the use of language that connotes queerness in their daily life. I also address the role of certain affects, which I categorize as negative queer affects, in the development of the protagonists' identities vis-à-vis the physical and social milieus that they exist in. More specifically I focus on the negative queer affect of shame in these two narratives and how it informs the characters and their development. I then put this discussion in conversation with larger frameworks for understanding "queer shame" in Arab contexts. Finally, I suggest how these works offer us as readers ways to begin thinking about how we can utilize the queer Arab affectual experiences within them to build new formations and understandings of what it can mean to be both Arab and queer.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine le rôle de la honte, de l'espace et du langage dans la formation de l'identité “queer” au sein de deux romans, *Guapa* de Saleem Haddad (New York: Other Press, 2016) et *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* [Dans la chambre de l'araignée] de Muhammad ' Abdul Nabi (Alexandrie: Dar al 'Ayn, 2016). Je commence par un aperçu de la matière théorique à partir de laquelle je lis ces deux romans, afin de les situer dans un cadre plus vaste de débats autour des thèmes de la honte, du langage et de l’espace. J'analyse ensuite le rôle de la langue dans le développement d'une identité “queer” des deux personnages principaux de chaque œuvre, respectivement Rasa et Hani. Je discute l’impact du langage sur la façon dont ils se connaissent, en particulier de la manière dont ils se débattent avec l’utilisation d’un langage qui évoque la vie homo dans leur vie quotidienne. Je traite également du rôle de certains affects, que je qualifie d’affectés “queer” négatifs, dans le développement de l’identité des protagonistes vis-à-vis des milieux physique et social dans lesquels ils existent. Plus spécifiquement, je me concentre sur l’effet négatif de honte dans ces deux récits et comment cela informe les personnages et leur développement. J'ai ensuite mis cette discussion en conversation avec des cadres plus larges qui nous permet a comprendre la “honte queer” dans les contextes arabes. Enfin, je suggère que ces œuvres offrent aux lecteurs des moyens de commencer à réfléchir à la manière dont nous pouvons utiliser les expériences affectives arabes “queer” en leur sein pour construire de nouvelles formations et comprendre ce que cela peut signifier d’être à la fois arabe et “queer.”

Note on Translation and Transliteration

In this thesis, I have used a simplified version of the IJMES system of Arabic transliteration, without dots and dashes. I have retained the spelling of Arabic words as they appear in English in texts by other authors, including the novel *Guapa* by Saleem Haddad. All translations from the Arabic novel, *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut*, are my own.

Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank Professor Michelle Hartman for being a patient and meticulous supervisor and mentor – both with regards to overseeing this thesis and giving me the necessary confidence and encouragement I needed in order to finish a work such as this, as well as throughout my time at McGill University. I would also like to thank Professor Dina Georgis for agreeing to examine this thesis, and for the inspiring and thought-provoking nature of her work that initially brought the first ideas of this thesis to life. I would like to thank Professor Mary Bunch for her support at the inception of this project as well. Furthermore, I would like to thank the Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies at McGill for awarding me the Shree Mulay Graduate Award in Gender and Women's Studies that allowed me to complete the course requirements for my Master's degree without having to face a financial burden. I would also like to thank the Department of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for granting me a generous Graduate Mobility Award that allowed me to further my own research within this thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank Caline Nasrallah, who generously agreed to provide this thesis with a fresh pair of eyes and new insight in the eleventh hour.

Preface

In many ways, this thesis started as a love story. But I do not mean to bring to the reader's mind the conventional meaning of the phrase because the love I felt was different – it was towards a book: Saleem Haddad's *Guapa,* which I picked up as soon as it was released in mid-2016. It quenched a thirst I never previously felt before reading it. The thirst, so to speak, had to do with the fact that *Guapa* was advertised as a book written by a queer Arab author about a queer Arab protagonist. I felt my interest pique immediately; finally, I thought, something new, fresh, and *different.* I ordered *Guapa* and started reading it with a haste I had not felt since my childhood. I felt the same sense of excitement waiting for the next Harry Potter book to be released. One can recognize this specific sense of anticipation that is reserved for literary works – waiting and wanting desperately to read how a narrative might unfold in its next iteration. I remember finishing *Guapa* in a matter of hours and feeling awestruck, and of wanting to start reading it again immediately.

We do not often sit with the feelings we get after viewing a particularly great movie, a moving art exhibit, or in this case with the afterlife that a narrative instills in the reader. I remember feeling that I needed to *do* something with the book; I felt like I could not just set it aside, waiting to gather dust on my already overcrowded bookshelf. This is how my inquiry into one of the works I study in this thesis began: with my curiosity to unpack *why* I felt the way I did towards this one specific book. What about the narrative made me feel *seen?* What about the characters, the way they conducted their lives, made them so relatable to me? The answer might seem obvious to some readers who may be familiar with my position – also queer, also Arab, feeling a sense of sexual and cultural relatability with the work itself. The answer, which I spend

the entirety of this thesis unpacking, has proven to be much more complex than I originally anticipated.

In my research into queer Arab fiction, I then learned about Muhammad 'Abdul Nabi's *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* later that same year when I attended a book talk by Saleem Haddad about *Guapa* in Beirut. Haddad brought up *'Ankabut* when he was asked what other books about queer characters were circulating contemporarily – a question that could be categorized under the same thirst that I felt when I first heard about *Guapa*. I now label this a thirst for recognition. I immediately made a note of *'Ankabut*, and what initially began as an inquiry centered around *Guapa's* narrative grew to become a comparative study of these two books. I was quickly intrigued by both authors' overarching implicit and explicit discussion of shame with regards to the queer protagonists, as well as the way the characters grapple with how to name themselves and with their identity-making project within their own milieus. I wanted my initial inquiry into the shared themes of these two different works on Arab queerness to grow into a project of questioning the different elements that are used in each book, as well as why and how they could be so similar to each other. At first I also wanted to include other works by authors from different parts of the Arab world – for example, *Salvation Army* (Semiotext(e), 2014) by Abdellah Taia, an out gay Moroccan author, and *God in Pink* (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2015) by Hasan Namir, an out Iraqi-Canadian author – because I also saw that these authors wrote their queer male protagonists[1] and the problems they struggled with in much the same way as *Guapa*

[1] Choosing my works of study grew out organically from an interest in seeing myself reflected in fiction I was reading. In this way, the novels that attracted my interest and that I eventually chose to focus on were centered on queer men. This is not to say that there are no works by and/or about queer women and non-binary people in the Arab world. For further reading, see for example Hanadi al-Samman's work on so-called lesbian subjectivities in Middle Eastern literature, as well as the anthology *Bareed Mista3jil,* a compilation of stories by queer and non-binary women.

and *'Ankabut* but were set in different Arab locales. In the end, I decided to focus on only the present two works of study in order to devote more space to their analysis.

This thesis analyzes and complicates the making and reclamation of queer Arab language – both the already existing terminologies around queerness in Arabic, and the making of that language – in connection with the concept of queer shame as it applies to the two novels, both released in 2016: *Guapa* (New York: Other Press, 2016) and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* (Alexandria: Dar al 'Ayn, 2016). Both of these books are centered around queer Arab men, and tackle many of the same issues within two different settings identified as Arab – *Guapa* takes place within an unnamed Arab city, while *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* is set in Cairo. The first chapter of this thesis presents the theoretical arguments and methodological formations that ground my intervention into these two works. In the second chapter of this thesis, I discuss the different terminologies about sexuality that exist in Arabic and English, and undertake an analysis of "queer language" as employed in the two books. The third chapter takes up the issue of queer shame, as well as its relation to the different spaces the protagonists occupy and investigate within the narratives. Queer shame is usually spoken about in negative terms: it is usually implied that we need to do away with it in order to truly liberate the queer self on the path to self-determination. I problematize this in my readings of shame and space, especially as related to language. The final chapter engages queer shame as a potentially transformative medium whereby the queer subject can question and develop a specifically queer identity, as well as how such queer subjects might reclaim/remake a specifically Arab and queer linguistic identity that takes into account local nuances. This final chapter proposes the building of an archive of queer Arab affects. I use it to show how this archive can be a site of identity

reclamation and assertion, as well as a space of thinking about queer Arab identity as a diverse field that is ever-growing and changing.

Chapter One: Introduction to Theory and Method

Methodology/Approach:

My approach to this thesis is to establish a conversation between queer theoretical practice and the study of literature – in this case literature that could be considered both Arab and queer. To do this, I have chosen two novels both set in Arab locales and each featuring a queer protagonist. In this chapter, I investigate what the existing scholarship within the field of queer theory can tell me about the works under study. I aim to develop an analysis here that is specific to the locales the two works are based in – i.e. the Arab context, and more specifically queer Arab contexts. Therefore, I also aim to develop a theory of how we can read queer Arab works, and how to analyze the affects that exist within these narrative productions. Essentially, this thesis is about letting the narratives and the theory speak to each other, and carving out a new way to approach and think about Arab cultural productions that can be understood as being as queer.

My analysis of queerness and sexuality within this thesis deviates from, and goes beyond, the normative Euro-American concept of queer liberation. In other words, I do not prioritize the importance of a coming-out narrative, for instance, with regards to the protagonists' process of coming to know themselves vis-à-vis their queerness. I also do not want to use generalizations, which have permeated discussions of queerness in Arab contexts, that all Arab queers are oppressed by the state, their culture, their families, et cetera. While these nuances do exist within the scholarly literature, they do not tell the whole story, and I hope to illuminate these different queer Arab positionalities and experiences within the analysis in this thesis. I will do this by analyzing experiences that the protagonists live through, in order to use them as a starting point

to understand their different approaches to their queernesses. More specifically, I will draw out how they tackle societal, familial, and cultural issues relating to their sexuality, and come to know themselves as "queer." In speaking about the characters' "experiences" here, I am underlining the affectual experiences the characters describe in the narratives that include: the way they think about the language/s of queerness, how they find themselves within such language/s, how they tackle issues of existing as queer within their societies, and so on. I acknowledge that this thesis does not speak to all queer Arab experiences. Indeed, the texts I analyze also point to very specific experiences, in their own contexts. However, I argue that the analysis proposed in this paper can build on the theory that came before it on queer Arab shame, and open up a discussion that can help us think through the particularities of other queer Arab affective experiences – what they share and what is different in them.

As I will discuss further below in this chapter, my methodology mainly consists of a close, contextual reading of two queer Arab novels, *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut.* Though written in two different languages – the former in English and the latter in Arabic – their use of narrative techniques is strikingly similar. For example, both novels follow queer protagonists from a first person perspective as they try to make sense of their sexuality in relation to their environment following specific traumatic events that unfold in their lives. I will compare the themes both authors employ in writing about the queerness of their characters, as well as their experiences as queer Arabs within their own settings. Specifically here, I will compare the discussions, use, and contemplation of the language of queerness in both works. In other words, I will compare how the authors use certain words related to male same-sex identity categories, and how their protagonists grapple with these terms in their daily lives, both literally and figuratively.

In the second chapter below, I employ concepts of spoken and unspoken language production within a queer Arab setting. I will borrow and build on Dina Georgis's work on language and affect as informing each other, in order to track queer Arab language-making in the realm of the abstract, not in the explicitly uttered (*The Better Story*, 117). I will do this by analysing the interplay of dialect and formal Arabic and of Arabic and English within each text, while also noting where language is inflected and informed by class. My method in Chapter Two foregrounds an understanding of queer language formation that goes beyond the narrative of coming out to the public, as I also attempt to develop a local vocabulary to talk about queerness and offer an analysis of Euro-American hegemony in the queer subjecthood of the main characters in the novel.

The third chapter argues that shame figures heavily in both stories. This works in different ways throughout the two narratives – *Guapa,* for example, introduces a more explicit discussion of shame while *'Ankabut* shows the protagonist, Hani, dealing with his feelings of shame more implicitly. Both authors use shame differently as a site of self-reflexivity and the means by which the characters negotiate their relationships with their parents, the state, and other state actors, such as the police – figures of authority. I have chosen shame as the main affect to study here because of how frequently it is written about in the two novels, and also due to the similarities of the lived experiences of the protagonists in dealing with it. I therefore concluded that shame is an important entry point in thinking about queer Arab existences. In exploring shame, I attempt to pinpoint the specific ways that it is shown to be both "queer" and "Arab" within the narratives, and also how it can manifest as such in real life. The analysis of shame will be conducted in parallel with a spatial analysis within the two texts. I highlight the different

spaces where the characters feel shame the most. For example, I trace where they are located when they begin describing feelings of shame, and I identify other spaces that signal shame for them. Furthermore, in contrast, I also identify the spaces where these characters feel like they do not feel shame-- their so-called safe spaces. These analyses point up further similarities in the two works, which I discuss through theoretical explorations as outlined further below in this chapter.

The fourth chapter brings together the discussions of shame, language, and space to suggest a new lens in thinking about and analysing queer Arab experiences. I call this an archive of queer Arab affects, as they manifest themselves in cultural productions by and about queer Arabs. I do this by proposing that thinking about these cultural productions and the affects they represent is useful when thought of in relation to a living archive. This is particularly true if the affectual responses they elicit in the reader – especially the reader who is able to pick up on the queer nuances in a specific work – are able to connect queer Arabs and validate their lived experiences. It is this feeling of validation and recognition that produces and emboldens the archive.

Theoretical Basis of the Argument: On Queer Shame, Language, and Space

In this section, I will outline the theoretical arguments that ground my thinking about the novels and their analysis within this thesis. My starting point for this is to build my thought in relation to the "queer habitus" as elaborated by Sofian Merabet. In his ethnography, *Queer Beirut*, Merabet takes the idea of the habitus proposed by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Logic of Practice* and expands it by queering it. Bourdieu's analysis of habitus centers around how each

person embodies history, as it is the "active presence of the whole past of which [the body] is the product" (56). According to Bourdieu's habitus, our histories haunt us – social rules become "inscribed in our dispositions: how we see ourselves and the extent to which we are able to envision *alternative outcomes to those histories*" [emphasis added] (Bourdieu 57, Probyn 52). Merabet builds on this by claiming that queer men in Beirut carve out their own habitus, a queer habitus, through dissident bodily performances and by appropriating public spaces as sites of meeting or cruising (518). Merabet writes that the queer habitus these individuals create is shaped by their "dissident sexualities and differences in social background" (528). In this way, we can conceive of a dominant habitus that operates as a counterculture to the queer habitus – in the case of *Guapa,* the dominant habitus is that which espouses social scripts of shame, or *'ayb,* and excludes queer bodies from the body politic.

In conversation with Merabet, I also use Martin Manalasan's concept of queer worlding in this thesis. Merabet's habitus here refers to the physical and social environment that the work moves within, as well as the habitus it tries to create, which could be called a queer world. I draw these two together to show how the two texts I am studying here, as well as the narratives that unfold within them, both form and conceive of queer worlds in varying ways. I will argue below that language and affect are starting points into the formation of these worlds. Combining the queer habitus and queer world concepts works well here because they both nuance different aspects of the two texts I am analyzing. For example, the concept of the habitus draws out more how the protagonists in the narratives think about and approach their physical environments, while the concept of a queer world takes a narrower approach and shows how these ways of

engaging with the physical environment can be reshaped and rethought of in terms of the creation of queer spaces.

Merabet's study also influences my theoretical and methodological approaches in this thesis in how I use the term and concept "queer." In *Queer Beirut,* he writes that as a category, queer holds within it a "potentially rebellious element," and uses it to broadly connote anyone who "thinks and translates outside the normative box and against the dominant paradigms" (518). I would like to extend Merabet's broad conceptualization of "queer" by invoking Dina Georgis's development of the term "queer" to propose an understanding that goes beyond a social sexual identity, but rather references sexual affect (*The Better Story* 117). Georgis argues that queerness cannot be strictly articulated, and that queer affect can be defined as "excess of language," adding that it is a descriptive rather than a prescriptive term (*The Better Story* 117). Queer, she says, is the parts of us that "resist the domestication of the sexual for social recognition, the parts of us that refuse to be colonized into affable, upright subjects" (*The Better Story* 118). By extension, queer affect includes the adjectives, the experiences, that result of this understanding of queerness within individuals.

Georgis's argument, like Merabet's, is important to rethinking what the "queer" label and concept can mean because they do not center identity-naming as a main project. This runs contrary to much other work on queerness in Arab contexts, and is for example in opposition to the well-known work of Joseph Massad. In *Desiring Arabs*, Massad argues for the rejection of Euro-American sexual identity categories, arguing that they are imposed on the non-Western world and non-Western people in an act of imperialism, because they do not exist as such in the non-Western world (197). Following Massad's analysis, "gay" men do not exist in the Arab

world because "gay" is a Western identity category that cannot be applied in the Arab context. He further argues that Arabs --and by extension community organizations--who identify as "gay" are victims of internalized imperialism (198).

Georgis's theorizing breaks from Massad to find more productive ways of engaging with racialized sexual histories. She writes that "it is the preoccupation with identities—the naming and unnaming—that shuts down other modes of reading sexual histories" (*The Better Story* 119). She offers this revision as a way to help think about sexualities that she says are "undergoing the confusing process of naming themselves in the context of gay imperialism" (*The Better Story* 118). One of my main arguments in this thesis is that the novels explored help to create an accessible, local, and shared Arabic vocabulary to address queerness. Georgis's analysis therefore helps us think about how this vocabulary is not the end goal of a hypothetical queer Arab emancipatory/ anti-imperialist project, but rather a means to the development of a specific analysis of queer Arab affect. I propose further that this can then be a part of an alternative queer habitus/queer world, to borrow Merabet's and Manalasan's terms.

José Muñoz's concept of "disidentification" is important in helping us connect Georgis's, Manalasan's, and Merabet's analyses, because it provides a practical way of thinking about the work of developing this habitus of alternative queer affect. In the introduction to *Disidentifications,* Muñoz writes that:

> Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within a such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology. Instead of buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free

> of its inescapable sphere (counteridenficiation, utopianism), this "working on and against" is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance (11).

Where Georgis argues that queerness needs to be thought of in terms of adjectives, rather than nouns that connote a specific identity or person, Muñoz's "disidentification" is an active verb, an action, a dynamic process that puts Georgis's adjectives of queerness into motion. In this way, disidentification can be the process by which we begin thinking of queerness not just in terms of identity categories, but also in terms of queer Arab affect and lived experiences that informs these categories. I am not arguing for a complete rejection of categories, but rather an expansion of our understandings of them that include how people's queerness is informed by their class position, their geographical location, and their own personal histories – whether they identify as queer or not. I am not arguing that the label queer should be taken up or given only to people whose experiences conform to a specific queer script. I am arguing rather for an expansion of the analysis of queer subjectivities to include those who engage in queer acts but do not necessarily consider themselves to be queer.

The process of identity making is a labour, in Muñoz's words, a "work" that takes places at the intersection of perspectives and ideologies (6). I argue that the act of creating, making, or even thinking through a queer language is at the centre of disidentifying from the dominant habitus and the way it conceptualizes (or doesn't conceptualize) its queer subjects. Queer language is language-specific to Arab queers, accessible in Arabic. It is crucial to be able to articulate a local existence in spoken languages that are accessible to many more people than

English or French are, as these two dominant, "prestige" languages spoken after Arabic in most Arab countries are not accessible to most people.[2]

In delving deeper in his analysis of specific disidentificatory practices, Muñoz writes that a subject, Marga, had developed a "homosexual hearing" which allowed her to pick up on the specifically lesbian social scripts of a participant on a TV show that her mother, not having this "homosexual hearing", could not have picked up on (3). In the same analysis, Muñoz offers an anecdote whereby he reflects on watching Truman Capote "make language" that coded him as a queer (4). Of course, the language and "homosexual hearing" is not just about spoken language; it is also about bodily performance and the making of language via the body, as Merabet unpacks in *Queer Beirut.* My analysis will focus on spoken language, and the attempts that are made to reconcile a queer Arab experience with non-Arab queer terminologies. Georgis asserts that queer Lebanese people are more likely to express their identity in English or French "for the lack of Arabic expressions" – wherein she argues that, contemporarily, English and French boast a larger vocabulary around gender and sexuality ("Thinking Past Pride" 238).[3] My analysis of queer language also includes the experiences of queer affect and the language that goes into producing this affect – whether it is explicitly or implicitly stated.

---

[2] For a bit of background information on the subject, Sophie Chamas's excellent essay "Colonized Tongues: A Haunting in Lebanon" provides a good entry-point into the topic of language hierarchies.

[3] The debate on the translatability or formulation of terms relating to gender and sexuality between English, French, and Arabic is not new and has been ongoing. Several studies touch upon this issue. Afsaneh Najmabadi's *Professing Selves* discusses the translation of terms relating to trans issues in Iran. Dima Ayoub's "The (un)translatability of translational literature: Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* between English and Arabic" touches upon the politics of translating texts between English and Arabic. Paul Amar's "Turning the Gendered Politics of the Security State Inside Out?" touches upon the use of shifting gendered language in Egypt. Caroline Rooney's interview with Ahdaf Soueif also probes questions of translating certain scenes that have to do with sexuality and intercourse in relation to English and Arabic-speaking readerships.

Two prominent examples of this process of making language already exist within an Arab milieu. The first example is that of the English-Arabic *Gender Dictionary* (2016) published by the non-governmental organization Lebanon Support.[4] The goal of the dictionary is to consolidate the knowledge of different gender and sexuality experts across Lebanon: "In side-by-side columns of Arabic and English, 25 entries explain the histories, main ideas, and 'localized usages' behind gender hot-topics like LGBTIQ, Orgasm, and Sex Work, just to name a few – ideas that, while necessary to understand, are often hushed in Lebanon's more conservative circles" (Al-Bawaba). The dictionary opens with the statement: "Traveling concepts and local usages in Lebanon" on its first page, thereby setting the terms for all the terms they engage. Rather than just focusing on simple definitions of terms relating to gender and sexuality, the dictionary provides an in-depth entry for each term, an entry sometimes stretching to up to three pages, detailing background information on the emergence of the word as well as its different usages. Each entry is then translated from English to Arabic. The added value of this dictionary is that it does not just engage with terms regarding gender and sexuality, but it also aims to explain concepts that could be related to gender and sexuality in some way: heteronormativity (المعيارية على أساس الغيرية الجنسية), intersectionality (التقاطعية), masculinity (الذكورة), reproductive rights (حقوق إنجابية), sex rights (حقوق الجسدية), sex roles (الأدوار الجنسية), sex work (العمل في الجنس), social justice (العدالة الاجتماعية), and violence (العنف). The dictionary is available both in print and online.

The third and most recent example is the publication of a 124-page glossary titled, "Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression: Essential Terminology for the

[4] Lebanon Support is "an independent non-governmental, non-religious, non-political, and non-profit making information and research center" based in Beirut, Lebanon.

Humanitarian Sector" (2016) by the Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration (ORAM). ORAM specializes in "the protection of exceptionally vulnerable refugees, including LGBT refugees," according to their website. This project is different from the other two because the organization is not based in the Middle East, but it includes language glossaries tailored to local contexts – in Turkish, Farsi, and Arabic – alongside English and French glossaries for terminology related to gender and sexuality. Furthermore, the glossary is specifically tailored to people who work in the humanitarian sector in order to help them with refugees of "diverse sexual orientations and gender identities" (ORAM).

The Arabic section of the glossary offers an understanding of why having "proper" terminologies to address gender and sexuality in that language is valuable. Translated from Arabic, the introduction to the Arabic sections states that Modern Standard Arabic does not boast "positive terms" in order to talk about gender and sexual orientation, adding that most of the terms that are colloquially used are borrowed from English and/or French (111). The introduction adds that, despite the presence of such words to address sexuality, most of Arab society, including mainstream media (and as Merabet illustrates in Queer Beirut, the medical establishment as well) (38) still use pejorative Arabic terms to speak about gender and sexual identities, such as the phrase *shudhudh jinsi* (شذوذ جنسي) (which would loosely translate as "sexual perversion" in English) or *louti* (لوطي) (a derogatory term, with religious overtones, which might be rendered "faggot" in English) (111). However, I contend here with the glossary's assertion that positive terms to refer to sexuality do not exist in Modern Standard Arabic. Their very compilation in a glossary proves they do, but the need to compile them in a glossary in the

first place also proves that they are not widely used in mainstream Arab dialects, and so need to be restated in some way.

The availability of glossaries such as these is valuable in creating terms relating to gender and sexuality that are not directly translated from English or French. Moreover, these three examples all include different ways of rendering the same or similar terms and ideas, and focus on different things, as they all are targeted at different audiences. For example, the *Gender Dictionary* discusses "heteronormativity", "hymen", "masculinity", "orgasm", and "power". ORAM's glossary, on the other hand, is a basic guide for terms relating gender and sexuality. For example, the entries in ORAM's dictionary are brief, limited to one or two sentences and split into two categories: proper words and derogatory words not to use. The *Gender Dictionary*'s entries are more nuanced, lasting up to three pages and applying specific examples from different contexts in order to inform their entries. The *Gender Dictionary* and ORAM's glossary seem more focused on targeting allies and professionals who would then use these insights to do better work in the queer community, or perpetuate more positive discourses around queerness in Arab society in general. The proliferation and creation of such glossaries helps in defining local queer subjectivities in Arabic, all while helping create a larger shift within the public sphere with regards to the media and medical establishments in their treatment and discussion of issues relating to gender and sexuality locally. Of course this analysis is classed, and we must therefore approach it from an intersectional point of view: Who is able to buy this book in the first place? Who is able to fully comprehend it, have time to sit down and read it, and reflect on it? Not everyone who is queer can have access to the languages and discourses, or to the communities in which these terms are being translated, discussed, and debated.

Therefore, to draw together these different theoretical threads, I argue that making local queer language is also a way through which an alternative habitus is created, one which books are a part of. One can also think of the book as a site, or as a habitus in itself (an extension of ours), as it is – if the book speaks to us, to our identities, to our past and present selves – the site onto which we project our histories, our trauma, our memories. In this way, the book becomes a moving habitus, able to be accessed when we are in motion. Individuals are able to immerse themselves in the alternate habitus they have created for themselves in the world of the book. It is a one-to-one relation: the reader develops an attachment to the book, leaves it at their side, dreams about it, thinks about it, must carry it with them at all times.

All of these insights into language can be built upon and deepened through a spatial analysis.To read the spaces within which the characters of the novel exist, I return to Martin Manalansan's theory of "queer worlding" (569). Manalansan writes that "The 'worlding' of cities involves the creation of material and semantic knowledges about space that are dependent on structural locations and power relationships. The way the city is mapped in people's lives, particularly those living in dire circumstances, are important vantages that disrupt the kind of integrative and clean portraits of global cities mentioned at the beginning of this essay" (Manalansan 569). In speaking of queer worlding, Manalansan offers the reader an alternative way of thinking about queer interaction with space and within spaces themselves. Manalansan shows us how queer worlding can be a different way of looking at queer connections and embodiments within urban locales.

In furthering Manalansan's "queer worlding", we can link it to Samuel Delany's definition of queer contact in public:

> Contact is also the intercourse—physical and conversational—that blooms in and as "casual sex" in public restrooms, sex movies, public parks, singles bars, and sex clubs, on street corners with heavy hustling traffic, and in the adjoining motels or the apartments of one or another participant, from which nonsexual friendships and/or acquaintances lasting for decades or a lifetime may spring (123).

Public places here, especially if read through a lens of queer worlding, can help nuance our discussion of the spaces of queer encounters and subjectivity in the novels. I write of queer subjectivity here, rather than queerness or the act of queer intercourse specifically, because I want to include practitioners of queer subjectivity who do not necessarily identify as queer, as well as queer acts that do not necessarily encompass intercourse. I do this because some of the characters within the two novels fall under this category of queer subjectivity. For example, both partners whom Hani and Rasa have a queer sexual encounter with for the first time might be encompassed by such a definition.

In this way, queer worlding refers to the continuous and ever-changing process by which queers come to know themselves vis-à-vis the spaces they inhabit, as well as how they embody these spaces in their lives. Queer worlding here is particularly useful in theorizing non-Euro-American spaces, in this case a distinctly Arab locale, because it runs counter to the linear, progressive narrative of how queer life "should" unfold that dominates Euro-American queer coming-of-age discourses.

To begin unpacking queer coming of age scripts, it is useful to start with the white gay pride narrative that overcodes so much queer discourse. In essence, this thesis is a project of undoing discourse as well as proposing ways of imagining new discourses, including (but not

limited to) shame, language, and space. The mapping out of a queer discourse in which shame is couched helps us think of ways of rethinking such a discourse. This narrative affects people everywhere, because of the hegemony of white Euro-American queer contexts that praise "coming out" and pride as an end result of a successful queer life. This particular white gay narrative makes "gay pride" a necessary goal, and insists on a distinct shame/pride binary – shame is inherently negative and pride is inherently positive. In unpacking this, I draw on Jack Halberstam's critique of the 2003 Gay Shame conference organized at the University of Michigan. In what follows in this section, I will explore in more depth how "shame", like language, might be reclaimed. In doing this, I will also draw upon Heather Love and Sara Ahmed's work on negative queer affects, and analyze the ways in which shame can help illuminate a counter-narrative to the dominant Western gay narrative surrounding LGBT rights and equality.

It is important to unpack the idea of "pride", and particularly its place within the dominant Western gay narrative, especially in this project of of reading shame and affect in queer Arab texts. I stress the importance of questioning pride here because pride is not necessarily a universal recourse to coming to terms with one's sexuality, speaking specifically here of Arab contexts. Sometimes, and as Muñoz states as well, silence around one's sexuality is just as potent as pride, mainly for reasons of personal safety.[5] Furthermore, many people who act out queer subjectivities and do not necessarily identify as such would not necessarily feel the need to act out a pride narrative or one of coming out, which makes this narrative fall flat in this

[5] For more information, refer to Saleem Haddad's essay "The Myth of Queer Arab Life" (*The Daily Beast,* 2016), as he probes issues of coming out versus personal security within Arab contexts.

specific scenario.[6] Halberstam insists that gay shame can at once be a negative affect many queers need to contend with–especially women, femmes, and racialized queers–as well as a "near-inexhaustible source of transformative energy" (paraphrasing Eve Sedgwick) (221). Citing Sedgwick as one of his influences for working through the pride/shame binary in relation to this conference--and queer studies in general--Halberstam posits that, by its very definition, queerness "cleaves onto" childhood shame in a way that is reclaimed and resituated by the queer adult who can transform this childhood shame and abjection into "legibility, community, and love" (221). For both Sedgwick and Halberstam, the very act of reclaiming queer childhood shame is in itself a rejection of the "gay pride agenda," which denies and ignores shame in the lives of queer subjects to begin with (221). Halberstam, himself white, makes the argument that the "gay pride agenda" is implicitly and explicitly advocated for mostly by male, white queer theorists, who do not take into account the voices and lived experiences of non-white folks who do not neatly fit into this gay pride narrative. This narrative then becomes myopic, self-reflexive, and simplistic – spawned from the very local realities of white gay subjects in the West, while positing itself as universal. (220). Halberstam's argument is aimed at the very theorists who perpetuate what he deems the gay pride narrative. It is meant to be a looking inward at the ways in which predominantly white gay theorists and queer activists universalize a specific type of rhetoric with regards to negative affects, shame being one of them. I build on Halberstam's argument here about rethinking how a gay pride narrative should be structured in a

[6] For more information, Sofian Merabet's "Disavowed Homosexualities in Beirut" discusses some of the nuances towards attempting to manifest or assert a queer identity in Beirut, a discussion that can be useful in unpacking and deconstructing a narrative that centres pride.

Euro-American context to materialize this in an Arab context, by exploring Haddad's and 'Abdul Nabi's novels.

Halberstam's and Massad's arguments, outlined above, speak to each other here. What Massad calls the "Gay International" are gay rights organizations actively trying to impose "coming out" narratives onto non-Western groups (Massad 162). Halberstam is critiquing the white gay pride academic establishment and Massad is critiquing the Western Gay International that seems to impose this gay pride narrative onto non-Western people. Halberstam's critique, however, also creates a problematic binary, whereby the concept of embracing shame becomes strictly embodied by racialized individuals, while gay pride becomes a strictly white concept. This thesis engages both arguments: on the one hand, I offer an alternative discourse to the white gay pride academic narrative – specifically concerning ideas of shame and language – and implicitly critique the imposition of this narrative through my analyses. It is important to think about the presence of negative affects, including shame, in a nuanced way that exists across a spectrum, informed by race as well as other variables.

I propose that while Massad and Halberstam both address a very real issue, my study builds a more nuanced analysis of racialized individuals' encounters with the so-called Gay International, as well as their encounters with shame. One way in which I will supplement Halberstam's and Massad's analyses is by introducing the theory of what Suad Joseph has called "intimate Arab selving" to this conversation. Joseph proposes a "relational matrix" in order to understand how subjectivities are developed within Arab societies that revolve around kinship as one primary factor of belonging (11). Joseph writes that these relational matrices should not be read as being codependent on a specific "collective," but rather as shifting and situational (11).

Relational matrices guide "selves [that are] woven through intimate relationships that are lifelong, which transform over the course of personal and social history and which shape and are shaped by shifts and changes of the self" (2). Joseph's understanding of the relational matrices that inform and embody the self in Arab societies can help nuance our understanding of how shame manifests itself in Arab societies.

In trying to understand family dynamics within Arab societies, Joseph posits that we need to rethink notions of patriarchy and seniority that are conventionally attributed to a nuclear family. Joseph claims that Arab families are gender and age marked, in that notions of seniority can also be attributed to women, who then also perpetuate patriarchy (14). In this way, both men and women take on policing roles in the family, and by extension the role of enforcers of social norms and values, which are also governed by the state. This means that they are also the enforcers of shame as a social norm. Indeed, Arab uses and manifestations of shame are directly linked to what Sianne Ngai calls "notions of virtue" in society (26). Shaming, therefore, is one of the ways specific "notions of virtue" that pertain to a particular societal milieu are maintained. Of course shaming is not specific to Arabs; Joseph is simply using an Arab family structure as a case study to approach how shame and practices of shaming can manifest themselves. Her argument is useful to this thesis because the novels present the theme of shame in a way that conforms with Joseph's findings. It is important to underline that her argument is not immutable or static. Even within one narrative, the way shame is deployed changes throughout, as well as the way it is internalized within an individual, as opposed to how someone might use shame in order to police another.

One example of how the "notions of virtue" concept comes into play is in reading the specific Egyptian context of *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* as a fictionalized account of the real-life Queen Boat Affair – a mass police raid on a popular gay nightclub on the Nile. In his analysis of this incident, Julian Awwad writes that Arab sexuality, and the attached notion of what is considered "virtuous" or not with regards to sexuality, "has historically been bound with nationalist struggles against imperial forces in the era of decolonization, especially where sexuality is involved" (320). In other words, the regulation in particular of queer bodies is the "battleground" on which the nation marks its difference from the West by perpetuating a form of "virtuous nationalism," especially during times of political and economic uncertainty (321). I argue that this "virtuous nationalism," which Awwad argues for, is also enforced by kinship groups, and mirrors state nationalism by policing bodies perceived to be queer within the kinship group as a result. This idea of "virtuous nationalism" can help us think through the way religion and society intersect and come into play within the story of the protagonists in the two novels. While it is more explicit in *'Ankabut* and less so in *Guapa,* both narratives share elements of this type of nationalism because it is tied to performativity – in other words, how people are perceived as performing their nationalism, their masculinity, et cetera, according to certain scripts.

In nuancing Awwad's concept of "virtuous nationalism" with regards to the narratives here, I will draw upon what Probyn calls "ancestral shame" (107). Both these concepts can help me better unpack queer affect within the narratives as well. Probyn writes that ancestral shame refers to the intricate social systems we are tied to as individuals – of kin, history and geography, for example – and how those particular proximities to kin, to a certain history and geography,

produce “particular emotional responses and affective identities, which are transgenerational” (107). We can come to a more narrow understanding of how queer Arab shame comes into being if we understand that this intimate selving, which Suad Joseph explains at length—that occurs within certain relational matrices which end up forming individual subjectivities—is tied into how shame is passed down intergenerationally; that is to say how ancestral shame travels and reforms itself via Joseph’s relational matrices within Arab societies today.

It is useful here to situate my own analysis of the relational matrices of queer Arab shame as existing within different “contact zones,” to invoke Mary Louise Pratt’s formulation. According to Pratt, a contact zone is a space “where subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture” (34). Probyn argues that the contact zone focuses on “material conditions” and the types of interactions that are produced within them, whether they be formal or informal interactions (113). Within Arab societies, these contact zones are the legacies of colonialism, Western consumerism and the effect of neoliberalism on local populations, class difference, as well as sectarian differences and how those produce different types of communities. Therefore, I argue that both Arab queerness(es) and Arab shame are situated within, and informed by, these contact zones, and that the intersection between Arab queerness and Arab shame is in itself a contact zone.

These contact zones are then sites of specific affective experiences that will inform this thesis’s analysis of the writing/inscription of queer Arab shame in the two novels being studied. Moreover, according to Sedgwick, “Shame floods into being as a moment, a disruptive moment, in a circuit of identity-constituting identificatory communication. Indeed, like a stigma, shame is itself a form of communication [and] makes identity” (36). Thinking about shame as a form of

communication and a marker of identity formation, and therefore recognition and relationality, will largely inform the fourth chapter of this thesis. I argue that each novel uses several contact zones to guide and build the main characters' experiences with shame, and we will see how similar or different the two narratives are as a result. In addition to this intervention on shame, I will borrow from Lee Edelman's work on queer futurity in trying to highlight the different ways that shame advances (or doesn't) notions of hoping and living for the future between the two works under study. I will also borrow from Eric Stanley's work on "near death" in conversation with Edelman in order to materialize and place Edelman's argument within a physical milieu that can be applied to the two narratives as well.

The final theoretical point that has helped me build my understanding of queer affect here begins from the point that Georgis identifies when she contends that affect starts where language stops, affect fills the gaps that language cannot begin to describe or contend with (*The Better Story*, 121). Georgis writes that,

> Arab sexualities are in transition: though hard to define, they have an affective life. If we turn our attention to affects and their vicissitudes, we may learn how queer Arabs are negotiating in unexpected ways the interconnectivity of cultures and places. In other words, they are not doomed to two choices; abide by and assimilate to hegemonic modern sensibilities or retreat to a fantasy of static tradition ("Thinking Past Pride," 237).

Rather than falling into the easy trap of discussing "Arabs" and "Arab queerness" in very general terms, an affective lens would helps us understand the micro-communities, and their particularities, that make up Arab societies—even within one country.

By understanding the particularities of these smaller communities that come together to make what can be called the "Arab world," we can also understand how queerness is different across a number of borders. This approach includes national, regional, city, and class borders, as well as other smaller communities. while showing how the particularities of that community challenge, engage, and breed particular queer subjectivities that go beyond just thinking about a monolithic group of queer Arabs. This nuance is important but also presents a huge challenge in a study and in writing a work like this, where generalizing Arab queerness seems to be a default position like an "easy out". I propose that it is a necessary step, however, and that relying on such generalized notions is an "easy out" for the more difficult work needed to identify smaller scale identities. I say this since it is often difficult to contend with the multiple cross-border differences, such as those mentioned above, and repeatedly come back to them when discussing books that have an Arab queer component. It is easy to appeal to a non-Arab Western audience by taking certain works as representative of Arab queerness as a whole, however that would not be doing justice to the lived realities of Arab queers across borders.

It is important to discuss Georgis's work on affect in relation to the value of negative queer affect in fiction, as theorized by Sara Ahmed. The value of these negative affects could be to reclaim what I've discussed to be the negative affects that queer Arabs might face, such as shame. "Reclaiming" here might be too Eurocentric of a concept in discussing the way in which these negative affects could be thought through. In order to start undertaking such a project, we need to outline the possibilities of, first of all, acknowledging what is known as "negative queer affects". Sara Ahmed contends that negative queer affects, such as shame, have been shunned from normative queer discourse: "There is no doubt that it is hard to separate images of the good

life from the historical privileging of heterosexual conduct as expressed in romantic love and coupledom, as well as in the idealization of domestic privacy" (*The Promise of Happiness* 90). In other words, Ahmed is explaining that it is difficult for queer narratives to not idealize a heteronormative view of happiness, one which values romantic love and happy endings – and which also denies or shuns the existence of these negative queer affects. Conversely, queer fiction, and by extension the two novels at hand, should locate and engage with unhappiness, as well as investigate it, rather than investing in reproducing generic images of "happy queers" (*The Promise of Happiness* 89).

Ahmed's analysis prompts us to think about the possibilities of working with queer unhappiness as opposed to shunning it. Queer recognition, she says, is predicated on becoming "acceptable" to a society which has already decided what is acceptable, and so urges assimilation (*Cultural Politics of Emotion* 106). However, what do we do with those queers which remain "unacceptable": unacceptable to their social milieu; unacceptable to normative scripts of queerness? What do we do with a queer who shuns the pride narrative and would rather critically investigate the role of shame in their lives? Narratives have a huge potential here: with regards to my own analysis, reclaiming shame starts with writing it down: "Nothing sets the conditions better for making insights into the affective undercurrents of the dilemmas of belonging and the complexities of subject formation than do stories. Stories bring narrative coherence and understanding to existence, which in psychoanalytic thought is key to how one comes to work through and bear injuries" (Georgis "Thinking Past Pride," 239).

There are multiple ways in which we can think through the ways literature reclaims shame, and also how it creates a 'safe' space to think about shame openly. It is important to think

about shame as having a "special kind of sociability" in queer culture: Michael Warner posits that a relation to others in queer circles starts with a recognition of "all that is most abject and least reputable in oneself" (36). This mutual understanding of abjection cuts through hierarchies: "Queer scenes," Warner writes, "are the true *salons des refuses,* where most heterogeneous people are brought into great intimacy by their common experience of being despised and rejected in a world of norms that they now recognize as false morality" (36). Ahmed writes that unhappiness involves certain feelings that give the narrative its direction (*The Promise of Happiness* 89). This can be read through the novels I discuss in this thesis. Instead of shunning negative queer feelings, such as shame, authors of narratives such as *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-Ankabut* engage with and investigate these negative feelings, name them, try to cope with them, and so on. The worth of these kinds of narratives is that they tend to deviate from normative narratives of being and belonging – whether they be homonormative or heteronormative (Ahmed *The Promise of Happiness*, 91). In these terms, the novels disidentify from dominant gay pride narratives that aim to erase shame, as well as from normative ways of belonging in Arab society by providing a different lens via which to view said society. In this way, the previous discussion, which started out by considering a disidentificatory queer Arab language, can be carried forward. In the last chapter of this thesis, I will work with these ideas and discuss the value of having negative queer affect written down, thought about, and consumed by different types of audiences.

At this point in the analysis, I will turn to introduce a way we can think about the way an archive of negative affects might look. In her intervention into Derrida's *Archive Fever,* Sarah Bassnett argues that "To archive is to gather together signs and to move them from a private

realm to a public one with the purpose of holding on to the source material of memory; it enables memory by becoming a repository of the impressions of our past" (242). Following Bassnett's description of archiving, I will be considering the works under study to be this "source material of memory" that can be made public through processes of readership and proliferation. In taking Bassnett's discussion further, I will also regard these works as holding impressions of certain queer Arab pasts, as well as presents and possible futures, within them. These pasts, presents, and futures are the queer Arab affects I will be grappling with. Affect is produced here through the relationship of the reader to the work, and is emboldened by the proliferation of the works and therefore the multitudes of affective relationships that occur as a result of the existence of these books in different physical spaces. In this way, affect does not lie simply within the cultural product being consumed itself, but is also external to it – it is what the consumer brings to the work, and therefore different people can have different affective attachments and responses to the same work (Bassnet 243, Chen 11).

In trying to think through what an archive of these negative queer affects might look like, we can turn first to Karen Barad's work on materiality. Karen Barad posits that discourse is not simply a speech act, it is rather what constrains and enables what "can be said" (818). This is what she deems to be a discursive practice: that which defines what *counts* as meaningful (or relevant and timely, depending on how you read her definition of meaningful here). In much the same way, these narratives, among other cultural works being produced surrounding different queernesses, can change the terms by creating a discursive practice themselves that then defines what could count as meaningful to people in the communities that are producing them.

In fact, their very existence and production is proof of their value to these communities – I argue that the act of production itself is the discursive practice in action – it defines the terms of the current game: "discursive practices produce, rather than merely describe, the "subjects" and "objects" of knowledge practices" (818). In other words, these cultural works, therefore, point us to the "subjects" and "objects" of the knowledge practices they deem to be of importance to their communities, they inform the viewer, the reader, the consumer about what is important to look at and to look for at the moment.

The archive, then, becomes a living thing, an ever-evolving site of a conglomeration of queer material experiences that unfold against an Arab backdrop, and inform a new materiality that is distinctly Arab and queer – insofar as what we come to view as redundant and quotidian experiences of living as an Arab in the Arab world became re-shaped queerly, and so take on a new meaning – they start mattering in a different way. To borrow from Brian Massumi, within the archive, affect becomes autonomous, it takes on a life of its own, and its autonomy lies in its openness. Massumi writes that "Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is" (35). It is not affect that is re-shaped, rather, affect is the agent that re-shapes. In discussing what she means by queer affect, Georgis writes that,

> Queer affect offers an opening to thinking, as that which unravels the self in relation to the self's known world. Queer affect may perform the transgression of norms, conducts, and habits but what makes it of interest is not rebellion but how it presents an emotional occasion for learning. When queer affects unsettle us, we become more in touch with how collective stories and social identities are mechanisms that settle fear, placate

> impossible desires, and provide narrative solution to the difficulty of living with difference (*The Better Story* 16).

Brian Massumi, in turn, equates affect with intensity (27), writing that,

> Intensity would seem to be associated with nonlinear processes: resonation and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future. Intensity is qualifiable as an emotional state, and that state is static—temporal and narrative noise. It is a state of suspense, potentially of disruption (26).

Putting Massumi and Georgis in conversation, queer affect then becomes the agent that re-shapes, that shakes up what is known and throws it into flux. It is also at the intersection of these two theoretical frameworks where I will begin to investigate what I mean by an archive of queer Arab affects, in Chapter Four below.

This archive of affect is our glimpse into what can be known as Arab queerness. Dina Georgis asks: "Might a different view of history, culture, and identity provide new conditions for creation and renewed political futures?" (*The Better Story* 20). Thinking about these works, and many others both written and unwritten as an archive of many forms, an archive that is constantly reshaped and also constantly re-shapes how we view the quotidian, is one place to start trying to answer this question. In this way, this first chapter and the last chapter form a cyclical loop that binds my thesis project together.

Corpus of Works

Above, I discuss briefly how I came to connect to the texts chosen for study in this thesis and what texts were excluded from study here. The comparison of these two texts works well in

this study of language, affect, and shame because of the way in which the comparison draws out how two books, published in different languages, by very different publishers, with different settings, and different target demographics are different and similar. Both books extensively discuss the themes of shame, coming out, grappling with sexuality within their cultural and religious contexts, and making sense of sexuality with all its baggage. Muhammad ʻAbdul Nabi's work was published by Dar al ʻAyn, a small press based in Alexandria, originally in Arabic, to local acclaim.[7] The book was also shortlisted for the tenth International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) on February 16th, 2017.[8]

The narrative centres around a fictionalized account of a gay man, Hani, who is arrested as part of a mass arrest. The fictional character of Hani is located, therefore, in a real historical moment and event on May 11, 2001 in Cairo, an event that later became known as the "Queen Boat Affair," mentioned above. Julian Awwad describes the Queen Boat as a "neon-lit tourist boat moored on the Nile in Cairo and a floating discotheque that was informally known to be a hang-out for allegedly gay men" (318). The narrative follows Hani, as he writes his memoir, beginning in his childhood and leading up to his arrest, as well as his life after the fact. The premise of the memoir is that he must write because he finds himself unable to speak after his imprisonment.

By contrast, Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* was published by Other Press in New York and written originally in English. It follows the day-in-the-life of Rasa, a gay Arab man who lives

---

[7] For some reviews of *Fi Ghurfat al- ʻAnkabut,* consult the following: "In the Spider's Room": A novel about the marginalized" *Al-Jazeera*, 24 April 2018, "In the spider's room": a walk in the nightmare of a gay Egyptian". Yazan al-Ashqar. *7iber*, 18 April 2017, "In the Spider's Room, a novel about the world of homosexuality". Fawez ʻAlam. *Raseef22*, 22 September 2016.

[8] This prestigious prize ensures translation into English, and most shortlisted works have been translated, as this is one of the stated goals of this prize. This work has therefore been translated by Jonathan Wright and has been published by Hoopoe, a division of the American University in Cairo Press.

with his grandmother in an unnamed Arab city and country. The narrative unfolds after Rasa's grandmother catches him in bed with another man, and the book finds Rasa trying to contend with his grandmother's discovery, as well as providing the reader with insight into his life in general amid revolts sweeping the country he lives in. Though real-life incidents in Arab locations are alluded to, the setting of the novel is a fictionalized city that bears resemblances to real cities, like Beirut, Amman, and Damascus, but cannot be identified as any one place. This thesis will, then, approach these books as methods of social inquiry (Georgis *The Better Story*, 1).

In the analysis below, I propose ways of understanding queer shame in ways that may be distinctly "Arab." My readings of the two novels *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* will nuance some of the ways in which distinctly Arab notions of "shame" are introduced and spoken about. I will also touch upon the linguistic specificities of engaging with "shame" as a concept within Arab societies, focusing specifically on the Arabic concept of *'ayb* as it is represented in 'Abdul Nabi's text and shame as it translates *'ayb* in Haddad's. In discussing shame in English, this thesis engages with how the original Arabic word and concept *'ayb* relates to the English concept.

Since the word shame invokes many different Arabic words (Al Jallad, 46), it is crucial that the Arabic concept of *'ayb* is what I will be focusing on when talking about "shame." Dina Georgis's excellent analysis of *'ayb* defines the concept as something "deemed morally wrong by society," and she gives examples of how it is commonly used in everyday conversations in the Arab world ("Thinking Past Pride" 243). In Georgis's view, *'ayb* comes to mean *kalam al-nas*, or literally "what people will say," as opposed to what is considered *haram,* or forbidden.

This is an important distinction because the word shame is not typically associated with notions of family belonging and community in a Eurocentric way, where the word is individualized. She goes on to cite the introduction to *Bareed Mista3jil* – an anthology of personal narratives by women – that states: "tradition and public views of morality are often just as powerful as religious texts" ("Thinking Past Pride" 243). Fear of social retribution and ostracization in a culture that values tight-knit kinship structures and loyalty to the immediate kinship group is an "emotional reality for most Arabs" (Georgis "Thinking Past Pride," 243). In this way, shame signals our attachment to certain people – close family, friends – and groups – the immediate religious, communal and/or class group – even if they may be hostile to queer subjectivities, as we also seek recognition from those who shun queerness (Georgis "Thinking Past Pride," 244). Awwad's "virtuous nationalism" then becomes a site of shaming of queers, among others. Of course, to follow this reactionary rhetoric of virtuous nationalism targets the most vulnerable, and most visible, of Arab queers differently and to a larger extent. Massad writes that "it is the publicness of socio-sexual identities rather than the sexual acts themselves that elicits repression" (197). Sedgwick puts it another way by writing that "shame attaches to and sharpens the sense of what one is, whereas guilt attaches to what one does" (37). As a result, shame and the publicness of socio-sexual identities inform each other.

I propose that the analysis of queer shame generally and *'ayb* as it relates to Arab queerness more specifically is radical for several reasons. There has not been an in-depth understanding of queer Arab shame to date --with the exception of Georgis-- that does not homogenize all Arab queers as being too afraid or oppressed to come out of the closet, or that paints queer, gay, or lesbian identifying Arabs as being victims/perpetrators of Western

imperialist sexuality discourse. The ancestral relational matrix of shame, queerness, and Arabness can also inform us about how religion/sect and class guide sexuality, and access to different expressions of sexuality, within Arab societies, and how these are not static categories. While the overall analysis of how class and sects inform and engage with how queerness is adopted and/or perceived by Arabs is outside of the scope of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge that there can be no analysis of Arab queerness without taking into account religious/sectarian and class differences throughout Arab societies. In keeping in mind these different nuances, this study analyzes the text's specific narratives and characters – in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of Arab queerness. Furthermore, a better understanding of Arab queerness is necessary to counter hegemonic ways non-Western queers are discussed and analysed within white gay pride narratives.

The analyses I provide of *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* can help add new dimensions to the study of Arab queers, as well as validate the experiences of queers in Arab communities. I will begin this undertaking in Chapter Two that follows with an analysis of the different ways the language of queerness are received and implemented by the queer protagonists within the narratives, and show that there is no one, clear-cut way of speaking about this language. By language of queerness here, I mean labels that denote sexual identity categories, as well as the so-called derogatory words used to denote queerness in Arabic and English. This analysis is nuanced by both English and Arabic ways of speaking about sexuality, and how the protagonists have to deal with them. In Chapter Three, I will take on an analysis of how shame and space intersect and play out within the protagonists' lives. This analysis builds on the discussion of language, since many scenes involving shame also invoke the language and words

discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Four brings together the analyses of the preceding two chapters, reading them through the formation of an archive of queer affect, which will aim to show how the discussions of shame, language, and space are interconnected in relation to formulating a deeper, more nuanced understanding of queer Arabness.

Chapter Two: Spoken and Unspoken: Making Queer Arab Language

I was always hyper-aware of my difference while growing up. I didn't know how to pinpoint it. Ever since I was a child I would be aware of being attracted to men more than women. I thought this was natural, I didn't think much of it, until I realized later on that it, in my Lebanese community at least, it was not. I became obsessed with trying to decipher what I was feeling, to name these feelings – to localize and categorize them. As a result, I grew obsessed with labels. I was very hesitant about categorizing myself as "gay" at first – the only word I knew that described how I felt, mainly taken from U.S. T.V. shows and English-language books – but I eventually gave in. When I got to university, another word popped up, "queer." I wasn't really sure what to make of this new discovery. I later began identifying as queer because I felt it encompassed certain affects that did not neatly fold into the category of "gay." In this way, the language of queerness (so to speak) can have complex consequences on the individuals who choose to identify – or disidentify – with it. Among the consequences are the inability to identify with a specific word, not knowing the meaning of specific words relating to queerness, or simply not being able to find oneself in the barrage of all the words that currently exist around sexuality in both Arabic and English.

The language of queerness can, and does, change based on local needs and desires according to what people want such language to *do.* This chapter focuses on the transformative capabilities of local queer language production in the context of the Arab world in *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut*. Drawing on textual material from these novels, I argue that both spoken and unspoken language/s play a central role in the queer Arab disidentification process, building on the theoretical material by Sofian Merabet in *Queer Beirut* and Jose Muñoz in

Disidentifications, discussed above. I argue that this disidentification process can be interpreted as creating a new habitus, which requires its own language-making process. In relation to *Guapa* specifically, I propose that it might be considered a site of an alternate habitus. Finally, I will argue that these novels might also be interpreted as sites onto which our own habitus is projected – our trauma, and history, and experiences, specifically because queer Arabs reading the book might find the content close to their reality.

Spoken Language

In *Guapa,* certain scenes demonstrate the need for a local understanding of sexuality that deviates from normative ways sexuality is spoken about either in Arabic or English. *Guapa* itself is written in English but incorporates Arabic words into the narrative, a fact that makes the book more relatable/familiar to the Arabic-speaking reader in the first place. The book does not have a glossary, which would force the non Arabic-speaking reader to resort to other means to find the definitions of certain words, or resort to reading around the word in its context.

In one early scene, the narrator recounts a story from his childhood wherein he first encounters the word "gay": it was while watching a CNN interview with George Michael in which Michael comes out as gay. The scene is also an example of what Muñoz calls "homosexual hearing". The scene comes after the narrator, at a young age, has his first sexual encounter with a slightly older male cab driver:

> [...] 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 case for a time I may need them. In that cage I stored secrets I could not so much as whisper to myself, for fear they

might escape into the world. They were free to roam in the cafe but unable to escape, lest they be discovered by my Teta [grandmother]. With no words or diagnosis, I could neither understand nor treat my symptoms. My dreadful misfortune remained nameless. Until George Michael (98).

Upon hearing George Michael use the word gay in his interview, the narrator quickly remarks, "Gay. That's the word, I thought" (98). He runs to the bathroom, shuts the door, and stands in front of the mirror. "I'm gay," he mouths to himself multiple times. He then goes on to reflect on this experience:

> There was a release in the first time I said it, the first time I had put those thoughts and feelings into words and let them escape from the secret cage. It was not yet a confirmation. But it was the beginning, the teasing out of the possibility of what my strange affliction might be.
>
> I was different from everyone else.
>
> I was doomed to be alone.
>
> I was going to spend eternity rotting in hell.
>
> But the word *gay* wasn't good enough. It was too far away, too intangible. Other than George Michael, there did not seem to be whiff of gay in the air. Did this disease not exist here? How had I become contaminated? Had all the American television I watched infected me with gay? The word, destined to be confined to foreign lands and chance headlines in English newspapers, seemed to be both a fantasy and also wholly unsuitable to my life, an otherworldly identity that jarred with who I was (100).

The narrator then describes another scene from his childhood, in which his religion teacher is reciting to them the story of the Prophet Lot. One of the students then asks the teacher if the word *louti*, used as a slur in spoken Arabic and meaning something like "sodomite", comes from the Prophet Lot. The teacher then explains that the word has connotations of male same-sex desire by reading them the story of Lot, and explaining how many men in Sodom and Gomorrah would lust after other men instead of women. The narrator, a young Rasa, tries this word on for size as well: "I went back home, turned on the faucets, and said the word in front of the bathroom mirror: "*Ana louti."* Sodomite. No, it was too religious. All it did was remind me I was going to hell" (102).

Rasa then quickly recalls another memory from his childhood, one in which his childhood bully calls him a *khawal.*[9] The word is also used as a slur in spoken Arabic, to denote effeminate men. The narrator reflects on this as well:

> Maybe I was a *khawal.* I recalled my actions leading up to Hamza calling me a *khawal.* Was it my wrists, which often hung limply under my chin when I was engrossed in what the teacher was saying? Or was it my voice, which, when I forgot to control it, would escape from my mouth in a higher pitch than was is normal for other boys in school?
>
> Perhaps *khawal* as an aspect of who I was. A sissy. A girlie-boy. But it didn't encompass everything.
>
> My obsession with finding the perfect word continued. It was funny that both English and Arabic have so many words that explored every dimension of what I was feeling, and yet not one word that could encapsulate it all (103).

[9] More about the etymology of this, and other words that denoted different acts of male same-sex acts can be found in Khaled el-Rouayheb's superb study, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab World 1500-1800*.

If we are to link these scenes back to the concept of habitus, we can think of these words having to originate from hegemonic English and Arabic ones. For example, the word "gay" today could be considered part of the dominant mainstream narrative surrounding LGBT rights, and is therefore part of the dominant U.S. habitus, for example. The words to describe queerness in Arabic, while having different meanings at various times, are now used as slurs against mostly feminine-presenting men, who are coded as gay, or as *louti* and *khawal.* These words, then, form an aspect of mainstream Arab habitus that many Arab individuals embody and reproduce.

In rejecting or questioning these words, Rasa begins disidentifying from multiple "habiti" in his identity creation project. El-Rouayheb explains that historically in Arab-Islamic society, the term *louti* was reserved for the partner perceived as occupying the active role in a male-male sexual relationship, while words like *mukhanath* and *khawal* were reserved for the partner who occupied the passive role (16). Therefore, he aims to make a distinction whereby *louti* does not necessarily translate directly to "homosexual." Rather, the designation he makes here shows it to be more performative than prescriptive. Merabet would agree here with el-Rouayheb in that his study would argue that derogatory terms would follow a performative perception of the person being referred to as a *louti* by the viewer/passerby. El-Rouayheb cautions that,

> Within one culture (and subculture), the same act may be appraised differently according to the interest of the observer, the way in which the act becomes public knowledge, whether it is carried out discreetly or flauntingly, whether the perpetrator is male or female, young or old, a friend or rival (25).

This is an important nuance to keep in mind when thinking about the use of so-called derogatory language by observers, as well as how specific words are deployed. It is also an important point

to reflect upon throughout the analyses in this thesis, as I would like to insist that my own analysis does not homogeneously apply to all Arab queers or all Arabs who partake in queer subjectivity in one way or another.

Merabet also highlights the usage of these words within the Lebanese medical establishment in his ethnographic study of Beirut. In one of the cases, a person called Georgette whom he profiles recalls his experience going in for a physical at the main Lebanese army barracks in charge of recruiting men to start their mandatory military service.[10] Georgette recalls how the doctor called him a *shadh* ("deviant", a word that is understood to mean something like "faggot" in spoken Arabic) after he failed the notorious egg test, whereby a doctor inserts an egg into a man's anus to 'prove' whether he partakes in anal sex or not (Merabet 40). The doctor uses the identifier *shadh* right after the egg breaks, thereby 'proving' his doubts about Georgette: "the doctor told Georgette that the Lebanese army did not need a bunch of *tabajna* like him and that, moreover, he was excluded from military service" (Merabet 39). *Tabajna*, which is the plural of *tubji,* is another local derogatory word used to describe male homosexuals (Merabet 251). In this case it was not only failing the egg test that prompted such a reaction and the process of "naming" Georgette on behalf of the doctor, it was also Georgette's "effeminate" behaviour that had given the doctor doubts, and had led to administering the egg test – and motivated him to 'name' Georgette as well – *luti, shadh, tobji* (Merabet 40). The reader can also notice the behavioural aspect in the above excerpt from *Guapa,* wherein a young Rasa reflects on whether his physical behaviour may have prompted him to be similarly 'named' a *khawal* by his classmates.

[10] Mandatory military service is no longer enforced in Lebanon.

In her analysis of Bourdieu's habitus, Elspeth Probyn states that emotions have the ability to "shake up the habitus, when the body outruns the cognitive capture of the habitus" (55). I argue that the emotions felt by Rasa, Georgette, and countless others at being called, or encountering and questioning, these derogatory Arabic words for homosexuality shake up their respective habitus, and creates what Muñoz deems to be the "utopian possibility" of disidentificatory performances in the making of a "queer world" (25). The "shake up" Probyn describes is Muñoz's disidentificatory process, and it sets in motion a series of events that help create this "queer world," or the alternative habitus that runs parallel to the dominant one within the queer individuals. The role of emotions will be elaborated upon in the next section of this chapter, as I analyze queer affective experiences as unspoken queer language that also help to build this utopian "queer world."

Unspoken Language

To unpack the uses of language in *Guapa* further, Dina Georgis's analysis of queer affect is also important. I argue that Rasa's hyperawareness of his own difference, of his queerness if we can call it that, disrupts his dominant worldview. He knows he isn't like the others, and is acutely aware of this. He develops an obsession with trying to name what he is in order to make sense of it. However, as the narrative progresses, the reader slowly forgets about the naming project Rasa undertakes in his childhood. This project is replaced with being immersed in Rasa's queer affect, and we see the world through his eyes. He attempts to make sense of his intersecting affects of living as both Arab and queer. Georgis writes that, "Rather than be teleological about sexuality, I suggest that we consider how a method that centers on the affect of

pain teaches us to notice and attend to the affect of sexualities that live in excess of names and national identities" (*The Better Story* 121). In other words, Georgis is asking the reader to read more into the experiences, those negative affects, that underlie many of the existences of non-Western queers in order to go beyond identifying them in relation to their sexuality and nationality. In this way, we can learn to nuance non-Western queer experiences by paying attention to what their experiences – with language or affect – can tell us about them as people.

One of the most prominent scenes which demonstrates Rasa's "affect of pain" actually precedes his encounter with sexual terminologies that was outlined above – it is his encounter with the taxi driver. The scene is also an example of what Muñoz called "homosexual hearing". An adult Rasa sits in a taxi, a scene that reminds him of a memory from his childhood "The smell of the taxi brings me back to my first time, the first time I operated purely on instinct" (28). He goes on to recall this childhood taxi experience:

> The man behind the wheel was young, though I couldn't make out his age: perhaps eighteen, maybe twenty. He was wearing a tight red T-shirt that gripped his body. He drove without speaking. A familiar pressure inside me began to build. It was a terrible choking sensation that had been growing in the months since I lost my parents (28).

Rasa's fascination with the taxi driver drove him to interrogate the man. Does he like television, Rasa asks the taxi driver, to which the driver responds, "I don't have spare time. When I'm not driving, I work on a construction site." "Is that why you have big muscles," Rasa responds. The driver then understands Rasa's intention, and invites him to sit up front next to him:

> He unzipped his jeans and pulled out his thing. It stood between us, hard, like an intruder to an intimate conversation. Instinctively, I reached out and grabbed it, and he let out a

> slight moan. [...] I was down for a few minutes when my excitement began to disappear, replaced with a strong sense of guilt that I was making a terrible mistake (29).

Rasa then recalls how he felt afterward: "The awkward feeling slowly disappeared, and the memory of what happened seemed sweeter. I stored bits of it for later" (30).

Here, we can observe Rasa's first act of queer language-making without him even knowing it. His fascination with the taxi driver prompts his many questions, leading to his question about the driver's muscles. The driver would not necessarily identify as queer, but he nevertheless "hears" this language, understands it, and responds to it. This is consistent with Dina Georgis's argument that "Queer thus becomes the site of the unthought sexual and, in this way, is the perverse" (*The Better Story* 118). Rasa understands this perversion as the "familiar pressure" he had been experiencing, as well as the "sense of guilt that he was making a terrible mistake" (29).

In another case, we can reflect on Rasa's experience after moving to the U.S. to embark on his post-secondary studies, in the chapter "Imperial Dreams". Up until then we encounter no mention of his naming project after his initial childhood experience. This chapter, however, illuminates important nuances with regards to Georgis's queer affective experiences as a site of identity and self-exploration for Arab queers. Rasa wanted to take the opportunity of being in the U.S. in order to delve deeper in these affective queer feelings he had but couldn't experience in his home country: "as soon as I could I bought myself a George Michael poster and hung it above my bed to remind me of the real reason I was here" (154). However, his experience does not go as planned, as the 9/11 attacks happen shortly after he starts his studies. Instead of being seen as queer by his peers and having these queer affective feelings validated, he starts being

perceived solely at the intersection of his race and religion: “For so long I had felt different from everyone else. Now I was lumped together with an anonymous mass. An Arab. A Muslim. I was one of ‘them’” (160). This chapter in particular speaks to the nuance that Dina Georgis posits is missing from Massad’s analysis of Arab sexuality. She writes of the need to consider the “intimacies of how people live with pain” and how “colonial and postcolonial traumas flatten subjectivities,” in this case queer Arab subjectivities (*The Better Story* 120). Massad’s theory, and similar ones, “‘defend’ the injured without considering how injury changes people” (*The Better Story* 120). In other words, Massad’s analysis aims, and eventually falls short, of trying to reclaim a unique queer Arab experience. Inversely, if we are to apply Georgis’s statement to Rasa’s experience in the U.S., the attacks of September 11, 2001 flattened his subjectivity in another way, by reducing him to a two-dimensional racial/religious category.

In the case of these scenes, and many others in the book relating to affective experiences, we can understand queerness in this case not as identity per se, but rather as a radically transformative and subversive force that shakes up the dominant habitus by creating an alternative parallel reality that is not scripted into the normative narrative of the militaristic nation-state. This parallel reality could come in many forms, whether spoken, as bodily performance, or simply as existence within a hegemonic space or a combination of those. This is true regardless of whether this space is deemed public or private as these notions are not universal and do not manifest themselves in the same way everywhere. In the case of Rasa’s U.S. experience, his queerness was eclipsed by his racial and religious identity, signifying a shift of the dominant habitus he had inhabited, which he was quick to disidentify with as well. His racial

and religious identity had then become the alternative habitus he embodied, whether he liked it or not.

Different than *Guapa* in many ways, *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* can be discussed in a way that adds significantly to the analysis of affective language making for many reasons. A comparison between the scene with the taxi driver in *Guapa* and one from *'Ankabut* helps reveal some of the nuances of coming to know oneself through different languages of queerness. We see Hani at a young age sitting in a living room surrounded by older men, including his father. However, he is not paying attention to their conversation – he is in fact peeping at the construction workers across from their house urinating in full view of where he is sitting. None of them see him, until one construction worker, Ra'fat, catches Hani's eye. Hani recalls:

> He is the only one who noticed my peeping eye, he even liked showing me his member and making like he could not see me. He took his time playing and teasing his soft white member [...] He looks at me then and sees my eyes admiring his member. I had been exposed, I was terrified that he would tell my father, but he did not (36).[11]

هو وحده من لاحظ طرف عيني المتسلل، بل وأحب فرجتي على عضوه وتظاهر بالغفلة كأنه لا يراني، وأخذ مع الوقت يتمادى ويداعب حمامته البيضاء الناعمة، فيشتد عودها كأنها ستطير، فهل تنوح مثل حمامات منور بيتنا؟ وعلى غفلة مني ينظر إليّ فيمسك بعيني تلتهمان قضيبه. أكشف أمري، وتوقعت مرتعداً أن يكشفُني لأبي. لكنه لم يفعل.

Ra'fat understands Hani's childish desire and curiosity, similarly to the taxi driver in *Guapa* who asks Rasa to come sit in the front seat.

In another scene, after Hani is arrested along with other gay men in a fictionalized account of the actual raid on gay men on the Queen Boat, the incident discussed above and

[11] All translations from *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* are my own.

analyzed by Awwad, Hani begs his affluent partner ‘Abdul ‘Aziz to set him free, as ‘Abdul ‘Aziz’s connections guarantee that he would be freed from the clutches of the police. The discussion of their encounter reads as follows:

> ‘Abdul ‘Aziz got excited and asked Hassan Fawwaz to release me along with him. Fawwaz outright refused, and began yelling that he would surely cut off both his arms if I weren’t an “actual *khawal*” (47).

تشجع عبد العزيز وطلب حسن فواز إطلاق سراحي أنا أيضاً معه فرفض تماماً وصاح بعلو صوته مؤكداً إنه سيقطع ذراعه إن لم أكن "خول رسمي".

The word *khawal* comes up many times during the narrative. It is also what the authorities call the gay men they have arrested in an attempt to feminize and dehumanize them in the book. Hani does not seem to be surprised at being called this; in fact the narrative alludes that this word is normalized in his life.

Reclamation of Language

I can provide here one concrete example of the production of such a safe space based on narrative and a discussion of language. On July 28, 2016, Saleem Haddad gave a book talk about *Guapa* in Amman, Jordan, which I attended. This particular talk was interesting for a multitude of reasons. To begin with, Haddad decided to host this discussion in coordination with *7iber.com*, because, according to my later conversation with him about the talk, *7iber* is an organization that cuts across class differences and has a wide readership within Amman including people of disparate backgrounds. Though the book is written in English, Haddad ensured that the talk was held in Arabic in order to reach a wider local audience. According to

Haddad, the Amman talk and subsequent conversation about the book felt more organic and honest, when compared to another talk he did in Beirut, which was conducted predominantly in English. Because of this linguistic difference, he claims, the Beirut talk felt more performative. In a Facebook status about his Amman talk, dated July 29, 2018, Haddad went so far as to call the talk "magical" going on to say that it was important to have conversations about "sexuality, language, gender, representation and politics with a sincerity, fluidity and depth that was exhilarating," and even more important that this conversation happened in Arabic. Haddad went on to write that:

> To discuss the novel in Arabic, to struggle to create and carve out a space for dialogue on these issues in Arabic, all of us working through the vocabulary, the terminology, discussing the context and meanings and history and implications of words and language and what that means for identities and cultures. *And speaking in Arabic created a safe space for me*, away from that harsh gaze, the misunderstandings and paranoia I feel about my words being instrumentalised. More than anything I felt, if only for a few hours, not an outsider, but an insider, debating and discussing about how we engage with the world, how do we live in it and find a space for ourselves inside of it. Being a writer involves exposing yourself and your vulnerabilities, risking failure and embarrassment. While terrifying, this also opens the possibility for creating such meaningful and deep connections, which is what I experienced in that room in Amman last night [emphasis added].

The Amman talk, given Haddad's Facebook post, was a direct manifestation of this alternative habitus, this "queerworld," that *Guapa* managed to create among many of its readers in the Arab world.

It is interesting, then, to examine the book within the context of a 'globalized' world, which, according to Cruz and Manalansan, can also be a site of creative queer agency and queer empowerment (*Queer Globalizations* 2). They go on to write that this globalized world has also given diasporic queers the opportunity to connect with other queers at "home" in order to "interrogate the limits both of nationalist discourses and of modern Euro-American lesbian and gay narratives of identity" (2) (or the "harsh gaze" Haddad mentions in his Facebook status).

In my discussion with Haddad about the Amman book reading, he underlined how quick other people in the room were to "police" and shut down other queers who wanted to interrogate the usages and redeployments of derogatory Arabic terms for homosexuality in their own lives – words like *shadh*, for example. It was particularly interesting to hear some people at the talk trying to reclaim words like these to fit their own purposes and experiences. It is doubly so in light of my analysis above of "proper" and "derogatory" spoken Arabic language with regards to homosexuality. This binary of acceptable and unacceptable does exist, and it is reproduced by society and the state in certain ways that aim to target, punish, and make visible certain queers which they deem to be outside of the dominant body politic (Merabet 40).

To what extent is it useful to talk about the reappropriation of some of these supposedly derogatory Arabic terms here? Muñoz suggests that the process of disidentification could also be a process of reclamation: "Disidentification is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that

continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship" (4). For Muñoz, disidentification with some "damaged" stereotypes surrounding sexuality could lead to the recycling of these stereotypes as "powerful and seductive sites of self-creation" (4). In Haddad's words, "you need to give people the space to try out different words and discuss how they feel about those words, and if you can even reclaim a word like *shadh*." We can think about this in much the same way that the historically derogatory term "queer" was reclaimed by AIDS activists during the epidemic[12] (Kole 3).

My analysis of the book discussion can set us up nicely in order to think about the affective afterlife a work like *Guapa* might have on its readership. Haddad's own enjoyment of the talk stemmed from the fact that there aren't many discussions like this held in his native language of Arabic, and that sense of wanting to discuss queerness in local terms seemed to be shared with others in the room as well. Through this discussion of the book in Amman, we can come to understand the need to think through the different categorical labels that connote queerness in the Arabic language. In essence, this is one way to think about affect: how do specific languages and words we use to connote different things make people feel? What is their affective weight, especially when these words are significant to a specific community of people, for example the queer communities in the Arab world?

The next chapter will focus on affect, and this analysis of language is crucial to understanding the ways in which the protagonists' affects are connected to such meaning-making. Language and affect have a cyclical relationship and put each other in conversation. Both spoken and unspoken languages in *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* can

[12] However, I recognize that many of people still distance themselves from using the word "queer" as an identifier because they have personal violent histories with it.

inform us about how the protagonists approach their sexualities, as well as their relationship with their environments.

Chapter Three: Shame, Affect and Spatiality

Guapa opens in the bedroom of the protagonist, Rasa. "The morning begins with shame," (Haddad 1), he says, after his grandmother had caught him in bed with his lover, Taymour, the night before. Immediately we sense the space of the bedroom is coloured by this encounter. What was once a safe haven for Rasa and Taymour is now gone because of his grandmother's discovery of the two of them. From the start, the experience of "shame" guides the reader throughout the book. It is the main affect that is introduced to the reader at the very opening of the book.

"The realization that I will never be able to bring him into my bedroom again is sinking in. That bedroom, it's not enough space for us, for the potential our love could be," declares Rasa to the reader later on (55). Because they can't be a couple in public – because of the "what will people say?" aspect of shame-- and because Taymour forbids it due to his high social standing, Rasa's bedroom is all they have. Rasa recalls of his encounters with Taymour:

> In public I'd watch you walk with ease through a crowded room, and then watch you do the same in my bedroom, naked. You would cross the length of my bedroom, knowing my eyes followed you, hungrily grasping as you strolled to pick something up, seemingly at random, and move it from one side of the room to the other. It was a performance, in as much as your swagger across a vast wedding hall or a crowded bar was a performance. But this performance was only for me. I was your only audience. Only I will see you this way, in here, I'd tell myself [...] My room was our sanctuary. Otherwise it was rushed, in moving cars, as we struggled to drive with one hand and fool around with the other, always on dark streets. Our last sanctuary of indulgence is gone (114-5).

The bedroom here becomes a manifestation of what Manalansan has identified as the process of queer worlding. What was once simply Rasa's bedroom later becomes the only place where Rasa and Taymour can be together, be *queer* together. Here, the difference between the outside world and the queer world is inherently performative. In writing about actual performances in *Disidentifications,* Muñoz suggests that "Disidentification is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship" (4). I argue that shame in *Guapa* is the result of the same kinds of survival strategies that Muñoz discusses here.

As this example indicates, *Guapa*'s entire plot heavily relies on shame, or *'ayb,* as a main organizing principle, almost an umbrella under which everything unfolds. Rasa tries to come to terms with shame repeatedly throughout the novel, all the while negotiating his queer subjectivity as a result. Two types of shame play out in the novel in light of Rasa's grandmother's discovery of him in this first scene. First, we have shame at being who he is, and second we have shame at what has been done. Rasa feels confused and ashamed at a very early age by his queerness, for example, when he lies to his grandmother for the first time about being with a man: "This was the first lie I had ever told Teta, as I said this a part of me split from her forever [...] I was two people now, in two separate realities, where the rules in one were suspended and different from those in the other" (31). The "rules in one" Rasa mentions here, I argue, are attributed to the moral codes of Arab society such as those explored by Georgis and Awwad, and discussed in Chapter One above. Child Rasa is ashamed at what he has done, without being able to fully articulate this shame, and therefore describes his life as splitting into

two: his queer self outside the home, and his different, ashamed self within the home, in the presence of his grandmother. Being shamed – by his grandmother, in public, et cetera – guides him to keep his relationship with Taymour secret, even though he does not want to: "Taymour's name is embargoed under a cloak of *'ayb*," says Rasa. "*'Ayb* is an old cloak that Teta [grandmother] draped across my shoulders many years ago" (35). It is revealing to read Taymour's character through a disidentificatory lens. In fact, the way Taymour's character acts vis-à-vis Rasa in the book is also indicative of a queer Arab trying to balance his intimate relationship with what his family and others expect of him. Since Taymour is from an affluent family, he is under certain kinds of pressures to conform to bourgeois social norms.

Taymour's very presence in Rasa's life, and in particular his queer presence, re-shapes completely what it means to be at home for Rasa. In the novel "at home" does not mean just the actual space of his home, but how he feels in his unnamed, fictional city as well. These "ideas of how to be and how to love" are governed by what Dina Georgis identifies as *kalam al-nas* (what people will say), and, in *Guapa,* Taymour has internalized these ideas. Even more interesting than Rasa as a character, Taymour is written as the typical masculine, successful, affluent young Arab male. Rasa recalls of Taymour:

> I was not to refer to him as my boyfriend, my *habibi,* even in private. He would come over once a week, on Thursday nights, and would leave during the muezzin's call to prayer at dawn. I was not to act too feminine, even as a joke, but if I approached him from behind and tried to take control he would tense up and quickly move away. He asked if I was willing to let him enter me, but I refused (117).

Taymour would always tell Rasa that "he had one foot in and one foot out. But I [Rasa] was his one foot out, wasn't I?" (117). It is this internalized shame, or fear of shame/being shamed, that is the main force behind conformity in the narrative. This theme arises frequently throughout *Guapa* and is intriguing with regards to the analysis. Shame is not always pronounced, it is felt internally, and it is also internalized and perpetuated by those who could be shamed. This is another example of the survival strategies marginalized people employ (Muñoz 5).

In using the term "marginalized" to discuss these characters, I mean to point to the fact that they know their queerness is a marginalized identity within their milieu. Taymour is of an affluent background and thus socially and economically privileged, but he keeps his marginalized queerness a secret. Taymour has a strong sense of what may or may not be socially acceptable and thus, in opposition to Rasa's feelings of wanting public validation of their relationship, Taymour would rather play the "game":

> At least we know the game here. We know how society works. We can play by the rules, one foot in and one foot out. It's the only way to be, because if you get sucked too deeply into society you get stuck in the throes of something that simply doesn't exist. But if you're too far away then you're lost (Haddad 260).

It can be tempting to read Taymour's character as mistreating Rasa and thereby to judge him harshly. Here I would argue that we should not make this judgement out of hand. Following Muñoz's analysis of disidentification as a survival strategy, we can understand Taymour's position vis-à-vis his milieu. In many ways, Rasa's view of their relationship is rather myopic, within the setting where they live. Rasa himself comes to realize this at the end of the novel: "If Taymour wants to live this way, to act out the role society wants of him, then who am I to tell

him otherwise? Shall I wring his neck to force him to go one way when he wants to go another? If I did, I would be no better than the regime, than Teta" (333). I argue here that Taymour's disidentification process lies in his performances both within and outside the bedroom. His survival process here can be read in parallel to the process of conformity, about which Muñoz writes, "on other occasions, queers of color and other minority subjects need to follow a conformist path if they hope to survive a hostile public sphere" (5). It is exactly this process of conformity/disidentification that attracts Rasa to Taymour at first, but this also simultaneously dooms their relationship from the start. This conformity/disidentification matrix that guides their relationship here can also be read through a lens of Manalansan's "messy" queer worlding – the game is new to both of them, and they are both trying to figure it out, carving space for their relationship in the different places they occupy. This goes hand-in-hand with Rasa fantasizing about them leaving to another place where their relationship is fully accepted, as well as Taymour realizing that this cannot be the case because of his class position in society. They both look at the futurity of their relationship, and themselves, in contradicting ways that give us two refreshing outlooks on what it might mean to be queer and Arab today.

Manalansan states that queer worlding presupposes an element of futurity: "Futurity enlivens and invigorates the process of worlding as it is not a state of being but rather one of becoming" (571). In this way, the process of queer worlding involves thinking of "better" futures. I will circle back to this discussion of queer worlding as imagining "better" futures, and better stories, in Chapter Four.

In another excerpt, after a night alone together while Rasa's grandmother was out of town, Rasa and Taymour both wake up alone in the house:

> I made us both coffee while he went to buy some fresh pastries and we spent the morning on the balcony, reading the newspaper, listening to Fairouz, and watching the world wake up. Um Nasser glanced at us suspiciously from her balcony, and I explained that Taymour had come for a morning coffee. It was a glorious day. I wanted to wake up next to him every morning, cook his favorite foods, do his laundry.
>
> "This is what our life could be," I said to Taymour.
>
> He glanced up from the paper momentarily. "In a less cruel world, perhaps" (55).

Rasa and Taymour, thus, both see the potential of their queer worlding – the potential of normalcy within domesticity – within the act of turning the house into a momentarily queer home. Futurity here is not what is bound to happen, but what could happen, or is abruptly stopped from happening due to circumstances out of the characters' control. The entire house here, beyond the locale of the bedroom, momentarily becomes a queer world the two men construct for themselves. While pondering the futility of this dream for a person in his position, Rasa thinks: "Is there anything more pitiful than an Arab who attaches emotions to his homosexuality?" (56). This line in the book is one of the most important overarching sentiments that drives how Rasa feels and how he approaches shame within his own life. He is stuck between not wanting to upset his grandmother and wanting to be with Taymour, and having this relationship validated.

The home and the bedroom are important as spaces here because this is the first locale that the reader is introduced to, and the place that shapes who the narrator is the most. Queer worlding, however, can manifest itself both on a larger and smaller social scale, as Manalansan writes; this can also happen at the "scale of the body" itself (571). I take this to mean that other

people can be emblematic of a queer world for the narrator; they can represent a form of queer worlding and queer becoming for others while not specifically expressing it themselves. I argue that this is what Taymour represents for Rasa. For example, when Rasa reflects on his love for Taymour in the following excerpt, he says:

> I love Taymour because he was from here, because everything in him reminded me of everything here, because to love him was to love this city and its history. And yet I couldn't love him because he was from here and so held ideas of how to be and how to love, which would never fit in with the love that we shared (131).

Here, Rasa "queers" the city, and its history, from the point of view of both his love for Taymour, and also Taymour's very existence. For Rasa, therefore, their relationship transforms the city into another queer world – their mere passage through it automatically queers the city. Indeed, following Sara Ahmed's work in *Queer Phenomenology*, we can view spaces as not just exterior to bodies, but as "a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body" (5). Further, Ahmed posits that the orientations we have towards others shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies (3). This proximity and distance between Rasa and Taymour shapes them both, and their worldview as well.

Teta and the Homespace

From the start of *Guapa*, we see that the domain of the house is already queer in another way as well. We come to know that Rasa lives with his grandmother, his father is deceased, and his mother left them when he was young. Rasa's relationship with his grandmother is intriguing. At a talk in Montreal on March 9th, 2017, Saleem Haddad stated that "many Arab readers would

not see the character of the grandmother as the villain, whereas Western audiences might" (Haddad "Reclaiming Queer Arab Stories"). This analytical category of the grandmother as the villain (or not) is reflected heavily in this book, where Rasa goes back and forth between sympathizing with and resenting his grandmother. This reflects what Suad Joseph writes is the power of age and gender marked seniority within Arab families (14): Rasa's grandmother is the head of the household, before and after the death of his father and his mother unexpectedly leaving them behind. He recognizes this, and as a result has to contend with balancing his close and positive relationship with his grandmother, and what he has "'done to her" by being caught in the act with Taymour at the very beginning of *Guapa* :

> On the bed Taymour and I had been lost in each other. He lay on his back and I fawned over him, stroking his hair and kissing his neck and cheeks. I wasted it. No, not wasted. Ruined. Because all I can think about is how disgusting we must have looked together. All I can picture is Teta watching her grandson, the man of the house, fawning over another man. I'm a pervert, sick, and diseased. I've strayed down the wrong path, and it's taken me here, to the point where I seduce men in Teta's house (253).

When Rasa calls himself the "man of the house," he simply means that he is the only man left in the house after his father's death. This is also a title his grandmother had given shortly after the death of his father. However, Rasa still recognizes his grandmother's seniority in this situation: it is *her* house he is bringing men into, and his internalized shame surfaces as a result of feeling like he had betrayed his grandmother's seniority over the space of their house.

The tension between Rasa and his grandmother reaches an apex towards the very end of the book which is the end of the day in the timeline of the narrative, when he decides to confront

her about what she saw the night before. Rasa tells himself that his grandmother "is an old woman. She's had a long and difficult life" and that he's given his grandmother the ultimate disappointment by killing off the family name: "I've let her down and brought her shame. I've dragged her along with me on this journey, this old woman who has been through enough in her life" (345). In maybe the most important scene in *Guapa,* Rasa finally sits down to talk to his grandmother about what happened:

> "Have you no shame to discuss this with me?"
>
> "I'm done with shame," I say. "I'm done with your rules about what is *'ayb* and what isn't. I have my own rules now."
>
> "He has his own rules now," Teta says to the lampshade. She turns back to me. "And who else is following your rules, exactly? Tell me, who? Or is it just you? What will everyone else say about your rules?"
>
> "They can say what they want."
>
> "You think they will only talk about you?" She laughed. "What about me? Or do I not matter? And your father, God bless his soul. Does he deserve to have people talk about him?" (346).

In confronting his grandmother, Rasa is also confronting the root of his shame. Sara Ahmed writes that "Shame as an emotion requires a witness: even if a subject feels shame when it is alone, it is the imagined view of the other that is taken on by a subject in relation to itself" (*Cultural Politics of Emotion* 105).

More often than not, the feeling of shame is more pronounced when the witness is someone we care about, or want recognition from (Georgis "Thinking Past Pride," 244). Rasa's

grandmother was a witness to his shame, and the scene where she catches him in bed with Taymour opens up the book to Rasa's further investigation of his shame upon being caught. The act of being caught, of bearing witness here, triggers Rasa's introspection and his feelings of shame, which becomes the catalyst for his thinking through of his home and public life through the lens of his shame, and eventually his confrontation with his grandmother.

This confrontation does not necessarily lead to a reconciliation between Rasa and his grandmother, as the reader might have expected. Importantly, however, it does lead to a reconciliation between Rasa and himself. Ahmed writes that "it is the way in which shame fills up the self – becomes what the self is about – that has been interpreted as the differences between shame and guilt at the level of lived and bodily experience" (*Cultural Politics of Emotion* 105). His confrontation with his grandmother leads Rasa to turn the house upside down in search of traces of his mother, he says, which his grandmother has made disappear from the house. It is an episode of catharsis: "I continue to search the house for any traces of my mother. I am no longer afraid of making noise of waking anyone up. Let them all wake up and know that I am alive" (350).

This declaration of existence resounds at the end of the book. After turning over the physical space of their home, the space that signifies the embodiment of shame and secrecy vis-à-vis his grandmother, there is nothing left to hide. The theme here is not pride, per se, but rather coming to terms with this shame that Rasa has had to grapple with throughout the book. On the last page of *Guapa*, Rasa declares, "I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know it won't begin with shame" (354). At the end of the narrative, rather than succumbing to his grandmother's expectations of him, Rasa is able to fully embrace his feeling of not belonging in

a "straight" world. He is able able to work both through and with his shame in order to arrive at the final cathartic scene – we could even argue that this final scene is representative of the *jouissance* Rasa feels at turning his homeworld inside out--which culminates in a feeling of being "alive" (Edelman 5). In his seminal work *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive,* Lee Edelman writes that:

> Turning the force of queerness against all subjects, however queer, can afford an access to the *jouissance* that at once defines and negates us. Or better: can expose the constancy, the inescapability, of such access to jouissance in the social order itself, even if that order can access its constant access to jouissance only in the process of abjecting that constancy of access onto the queer (5).

Here, Rasa is "turning the force of queerness" against his own home, and by extension the norms which have guided him as he was growing up. I liken Rasa's feeling "alive" to Edelman's *jouissance* here because we can read an annihilation of Rasa's self – or one of his selves – within this scene, the self that had to contend with his grandmother's expectations and the shame brought upon him by this hierarchy. In working through his shame, Rasa is able to annihilate it. He experiences this *jouissance*, confidently proclaiming that tomorrow "will not begin with shame," by literally overturning the order of the space of the home, by making the supposedly straight messy. It is only throughout this act of overturning the material homespace that he is able to come to terms with himself and his relationship with his Teta.

In becoming the senior member of her household, especially after her son's death, the character of Teta is also interesting to look at with regards to the creation of the homespace. Even within her own home, Rasa describes his grandmother as always being made up, dressed in

her best clothes, and, in short, putting on a performance. That all changes for her as well, when she enters the space of his bedroom. In one scene, a young Rasa is caught spying on his grandmother in her bedroom, out of curiosity, or wanting to catch a glimpse of the 'real' Teta. He narrates:

> There she was, sitting on the bed, the silky fabric of her *gain* stretching across her rounded stomach. I watched her study her hands thoughtfully. I was about to turn away when she looked up. She caught my gaze, and in her eyes was a flash of panic. Or maybe it was vulnerability? Whatever it was, I ran to my bedroom and shut the door. I stayed there for the rest of the afternoon. When I emerged in the early evening, we sat down for dinner and did not speak. After that Teta made sure to lock her bedroom door before removing her mask (96).

The space of Teta's bedroom here is tied to her vulnerability, so much so that she even locks it from the view of her own grandson – the only living relative she has left at the time. Rasa's grandmother still feels like she has to wear a mask, in all the spaces of her own home, outside of her own bedroom. I argue that this is also due to what Georgis explains to be *kalam-el-nas,* or the anticipation of *kalam-el-nas,* or what people will say. Teta's performance here is put on in anticipation of a would-be audience: first for Rasa, then for the domestic worker, then for the neighbours, et cetera. In this way, where Rasa's bedroom first signified the only space he could be queer with Taymour and where he could express his own queerness in turn, Teta's bedroom signifies for her the only place she can truly be herself *for* herself. To borrow from Georgis, both bedroom spaces here become emblematic of the "excess". In this case the excess is not one of language, but rather an excess of the societal performance. More specifically, the bedroom is

where the excess is shed, and then re-worn repeatedly. It is the space where the self is continuously undone and redone.

Shame and Space in *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut*

Shame is written about more implicitly in *'Ankabut* than it is in *Guapa*. I argue that this is partly because the novel is originally written in Arabic, which assumes a reading audience who is able to understand the concept of *'ayb* in the way it is alluded to and spoken about. The author of the Arabic text does not have to explicitly define what "*'ayb*" means in another language and how it may or may not overlap with the concept of "shame" in English. The audience is already meant to be cognizant of these societal norms, and thus the work is somewhat different in probing the affectual manifestations of the concept. This affectual engagement with shame as *'ayb* emerges throughout the book, changing for the main character throughout different stages of his life, and especially around the time of his imprisonment.

We know Hani is aware of the fact that his attraction to men is considered a deviation from expected social norms from an early age, as the scenes relating to his childhood and adolescence exemplify. In one scene describing his first sexual encounter with Ra'fat – the construction worker who first notices a young Hani, while spying on him urinating – at thirteen, Hani writes that,

> I have repeatedly imagined that my father had not died, and that he still worked in the atelier above us, and that he would suddenly break down the door to the storage room, and discover that I was dirtying myself with this man who resembled a beautiful demon (60).

وكثيراً ما تخيلت أن ابي لم يمت، وإنه ما زال يعمل في الاتيليه بالأعلى، وإنه سوف يكسر علينا باب المخزن فجأة، ويكتشف إنني أُوسِّخ نفسي مع هذا الشاب الذي يشبه شيطاناً جميلاً.

The Arabic term "أُوسِّخ" ('uwassikh), which I have translated here as "dirtying," is crucial because it implies that Hani actively thinks he is committing a dirty act specifically in the eyes of his late father, whom he reveres. We will never know if this is true, since Hani's feather is dead. Hani, however, actively contemplates how his father would perceive him, should he have known that Hani was engaging in intercourse with other men. Building on Georgis ("Thinking Past Pride" 244) in the section above, I have demonstrated the ways in which shame impacts individuals disproportionately when felt in relation to people individuals look up to, such as the relationship between Rasa and his grandmother. In this case, Hani worries about being shamed by his father, even though he is dead. After he has finished up with Ra'fat and left the storage room, Hani recalls that

> in the street, I kept wiping my mouth and face as if they held clear remnants of [Ra'fat's] lips on mine, remnants of his lingering kisses and teasing, threatening to expose my secret before the world. (60).

وفي الطريق أظل امسح فمي ووجهي كأن هناك بقايا شفافه، ما زالت عالقة بي من قبلاته ولعابه، قد تفضح سري أمام الجميع.

Kathryn Bond Stockton writes that "Shame is like a garment, then ("a shameful livery") – but also like a skin (an "epidermalization") that can be taken off, and put on" (9). Here, Hani does not feel shame about what he has done in itself specifically. His concern is rather if other people will realize what he has done based on these imagined remnants of this on him. They do not exist but he feels them nonetheless. He does not necessarily look any different than he did before, but he feels the sexual encounter is visible on him. He tries to physically scrub this off of himself.

This scene recalls Rasa's sexual encounter with the taxi driver. Also experienced at a young age, this encounter made him feel afraid that his grandmother would sense what he had done, and see through his first lie to her (Haddad 31).

In another scene, Hani is older and has had several sexual encounters with Ra'fat in his home. He has a monologue about the different aspects of himself: he says there is the romantic Hani who waits for his lover Ra'fat to come so they can make love, and the polite Hani who isn't like the troublemakers at school. But this scene of introspection is interrupted by a pang of guilt (68). He says:

> Often I am overcome with a feeling of guilt, a fear of God's wrath and punishment. So I throw myself into prayer, into fasting, supplication. I cry prostrated every dawn, determined to be forgiven, determined to never again approach Ra'fat or any man. (69).

وبين الحين والآخر يغلبني الإحساس بالذنب، والخوف من حساب الله وعقابه. فأنهك نفسي بالصلاة والصيام والدعاء، والبكاء ساجداً كل فجر، عزيماً على التوبة، وعلى ألا اقترب من رأفت، أو من أي رجل آخر.

Religion figures heavily in Hani's life to varying degrees throughout the narrative. In an earlier scene where he writes about the first time he was penetrated by Ra'fat, he had said he did not feel emasculated or broken by this, but instead that he had found something that had been lost (64). Here, however, we see him quickly turn to guilt, and use religion in order to think through and explain this guilt. This is not surprising. Julian Awwad writes that Egyptian values are heavily influenced by religion:

> The Egyptian Constitution also reveals the secular government's relationship to religion. The Constitution, as a reflection of the values and norms of Egyptian society, depicts a picture in which religion is a central source for prescribing these values. Article 2

> stipulates Islam as the religion of the state, and Islamic jurisprudence (shari'a law) as the principal source of legislation. The centrality of religion is furthermore evident in the manner in which it is guaranteed to inform the constituent elements of society as well as moral and national values. Article 9 establishes the family as the basis of society construed according to religion, morality, and patriotism (323).

Even if individuals themselves aren't religious, religion still informs their lives: religious values are adopted by society and the state and are promoted as such. In *Guapa,* we see how the mu'ezzin's call to prayer at dawn signals the time for Taymour to leave Rasa's bed time and again (260). In discussing religion here, I do not mean to generally stipulate that religion is the main drive in Arab societies. However, I'd like to point out the fact that it does exist in people's lives to varying degrees. Hani, for example, attends mosque regularly in *'Ankabut* and uses religious rhetoric in thinking about and trying to know himself vis-à-vis his sexuality. On the other hand, Rasa is not depicted as being remotely religious in *Guapa,* but, for example, the *adhan* at dawn is what signals the end of his and Taymour's nights together when they are at Rasa's house. This depiction in *Guapa* is not necessarily religious, but it shows how the significance of the *adhan* also changes for Rasa, reminding him of Taymour whenever he hears it.

Furthermore, the aforementioned scene where Hani tries to use religion to explain his guilt illuminates an individual's relation to shame, not as a stagnant force that is the same throughout that individual's lifetime, but one that can drastically change from one moment to another. In a scene directly following the previous one, Hani wonders if his religious neighbours know about his sexuality, highlighting the "what will people say" aspect of *'ayb* that is the way

shame informs his life: “there is no doubt that some of them have heard allusions from our neighbours in the building that I am not a man” (69).

ولعل بعضهم سمع من جيراننا في البيت تلميحات إلى أنني لست رجلاً.

Even though he did not feel this way before, this thought creeps back up on him here. Readings of this specific excerpt can be multifold. The first reading might revolve around the fact that Hani himself has internalized feelings about his own sexuality being tied to femininity – not feeling like a man because of his sexuality, or possibly his passive role while engaging in sexual intercourse**.** A second reading of this excerpt could be based in the way Hani thinks others view him – this reading would be more rooted in *kalam-el-nas,* as opposed to the first reading which would be grounded more in the internalized guilt mentioned above. This reading would also conform with Rouayheb’s analysis of the perception of the passive versus active partner in male/male sexual relationships, wherein the person who is perceived as being the passive partner (often due to certain performative traits) is understood as being emasculated, and therefore “more feminine” than the active partner. My own reading would lean more towards this second analysis, since it sits at the intersection of Rouayheb and Georgis’s analyses – *kalam-el-nas* in conversation with the perception of the active and passive male sexual partner. Even the thought of this perception on Hani’s part, even if his neighbours do not necessarily think that he is not a man, is enough to drive him into feelings of shame and guilt, as evidenced when Hani declares that he feels contempt towards himself because of his sexuality (111) originally written as “احتقاري لنفسي بسبب ميولي نحو الرجال".

In investigating the ways *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-‘Ankabut* navigate and engage with shame, we can see there is a recurring theme of insecurity, as well as one of a desire not to be

the cause of authority figures' unhappiness: in *Guapa*, Rasa's grandmother, in *'Ankabut,* Hani's deceased father and his still-present mother. Shame is informed by class, as Hani is aware of the class he occupies vis-à-vis other gay men he meets, similarly to Rasa, who speaks of the men of "al-Sharqiyeh," whom he interacts and sleeps with, as being of a lower class than him. A more engaged discussion of class is outside the scope of this thesis. However, it is intriguing the way inter-class encounters are depicted within a queer context, since the same class demarcations that exist in society seem to be reflected within the community of queers that Rasa and Hani are both a part of in their respective narratives. Furthermore, a broader common narrative between the two novels is that of the awakening of childhood sexuality. Both protagonists, Rasa and Hani, are aware of their sexuality at an early age – and aware enough to act on it. They are further aware of the fact that their sexuality is considered deviant in their societies and should be kept a secret from others.

Both Hani and Rasa contend with shame in their daily lives. For Hani this translates to emotionlessly seeking out other men to sleep with, not necessarily feeling shame at the sexual act with another man, but constantly speaking of being two different people. Hani says that: "I went to discover with excitement the night and all its creatures, and that other person who emerges inside of me every night" (81).

رحت اكتشفت في نهم حياة الليل ومخلوقاتها، وذلك الشخص الآخر الذي يولد بداخلي مع دخول كل مساء

Hani writes that he developed a small following after his many sexual encounters, wherein he "became a queen, and they started calling me Hanushka" (81).

وكنت الملكة، وصاروا ينادونني هانوشكا.

In an expression of the culmination of these feelings, Hani returns home one night to note that:

> The clown returns to his mirror at the end of the day. I return to my room, closed off and sole witness to my naked loneliness. [...] I feel like I have become mama, embodying her as she peels off the accessories of one of her characters. I am not really Hanushka, that was just an appropriate role for me, just a role, nothing more and nothing less. Perhaps I gave myself too wholly to that role, to the point that I can no longer discern who the true Hani Mahfouz really is, can no longer go back to him when I want to. I have copies of him. Yes, that's right: copies. None of them are originals, none of them are the original- none of them are me. They are all masks and behind the mask there is nothing, just a terrifying emptiness, a terrifying emptiness laced with some pleasure (82).

ثم يعود المهرج إلى مرآته في نهاية اليوم. أعود إلى غرفتي المغلقة على وحدتي العارية. [...] أشعر وكأنني صرت ماما نفسها. وهي تنزع عنها اكسسوار إحدى شخصياتها. لم أكن هنوشكا في الحقيقة، كان هذا هو الدور المناسب لي، مجرد دور، لا أكثر ولا أقل. ربما اندمجت فيه أكثر مما يجب، حتى لم أعد أعرف من هو هاني محفوظ الحقيقي، وكيف أعود إليه عندما أريد. عندي نسخ كثيرة منه. صحيحٌ: كلها طبق الأصل، لكنها ليست الأصل، ليست أنا، كلها أقنعة وخلفها لا يوجد أي شيء، فراغٌ مفزعٌ، وله لذةٌ.

These last two excerpts are also examples of how Hani views shame in his life: first, he has his daytime self, then his night self – Hanushka, the seducer, the queen with a small following of other gay men. But Hani knows there is no "real" self, only the different selves he puts on for different people. He revels in it, he says that the idea of having multiple masks under which lies nothing is seductive even – he takes an almost diabolical pleasure in navigating the many masks he assumes. I argue this is a coping mechanism for Hani, born out of necessity. It is his own way

of disidentifying with his milieu and carving out his own niche. This is consistent with a reality for most queer Arabs, whether they identify as queer or not, a fragile balance between conformity and "deviance". This once again recalls Rasa in *Guapa,* who similarly uses coping mechanisms to manage feelings of shame. In the scene where he comes back home as a child after his encounter with the taxi driver, Rasa notes that, "I was two people now, in two separate realities, where the rules in one were suspended and different from those in the other" (Haddad 31).

Between Queer Life and Death

Moving beyond the space of the home, Guapa, the eponymous bar in the book, becomes somewhere the characters do not feel like they have to continuously re-do themselves. It is a space, literally, to *be.* At Guapa, all the main characters of the story, this group of friends we come to know, gather to freely discuss their country's political situation, their own opinions about it, and debate current issues openly. They are able to do this because they approach Guapa as their "safe space". In this way, the bar Guapa becomes a material manifestation of Manalansan's "queer world," where the characters are free to disidentify with their prescribed societal roles, especially when they cannot do this even in the space of the home. Home, in this novel, is not the sanctuary from the public. Rather, the sanctuary is Guapa – this is the place that holds the potential for negotiating pain and existence. Therefore, this novel suggests that we cannot speak of a neat and clean private/public divide for these characters and how they choose to live their lives. Guapa is a public place, but for the protagonists of the novel its use is more akin to what we associate normally as being a private space.

A similar theme of having a "safe haven"-type place where queer subjectivity can manifest also appears in *'Ankabut.* This is also a bar, and also one that references the title, as it is called "the cobweb" (الكوبويب). Hani describes it as follows:

The decor was odd and depressing, like that one is used to seeing in the old castles of vampire movies. But it was the perfect place for our hushed conversations, for divulging secrets and learning from the School of Prince (110).

كان ديكوره غريباً وكئيباً يشبه القصور القديمة في أفلام مصاصي الدماء. لكنه كان مكاناً مثالياً للنميمة الهامسة وإفشاء الأسرار والتعلم في مدرسة البرنس.

Prince is an older man, depicted as queer in the narrative, who takes Hani under his wing shortly before his incarceration, and tries to help bail him out of prison. In this way, Prince becomes an older queer mentor for Hani , and therefore also a refuge for him. This is manifested in learning "from the School of Prince" at the Cobweb where Hani declares that he would vent to Prince whenever they would find themselves alone (111) (كنت أتفجر بالكلام كلما انفردت به).

After his incarceration, Hani finds himself bound to Prince. Hani describes Prince as a "shaykh" due to his large following of both men and women, queer or otherwise, as well as in the way that he would be asked for advice on almost all matters of life (111). Hani narrates:

> He would take me by the hand, me and some others, leading us deep into the dark forest of desire. We did not know which of its fruit was poisonous, which of its animals would strike. At his table at the Cobweb, I formed true friendships with others who had the same sexual orientation as I did. [...] I came to learn how to savour wine, music, and men, as I listened to Prince's life story - one he never failed to repeat when a new guest would join his eternal table (112).

كان يأخذ بيدي، أنا و آخرين، ليقودنا وسط غابة الرغبة المعتمة، التي لم نكن نعرف أي ثمارها مسمومة وأي حيواناتها ضاربة. وعلى مائدته في الكوب ويب كوَّنت صداقات حقيقة بآخرين لهم نفس الميول غير الشلة القديمة التي قطعت صلتي لها، متعالياً على تفاهتها وابتذالها، فقد صرت الآن أعرف كيف أتذوَّق النبيذ والطرب والرجال، بينما استمع لقصة حياة البرنس التي لا يتردد في اعادتها كلما إنضم ضيفٌ جديدٌ إلى مائدته الخالدة

It is clear that Hani (and others) was tied to Prince because of what he represented – his very presence allowed Hani to open up and speak his mind. Just as Taymour was Rasa's queer world, Prince becomes Hani's queer world.

(No) Futurity

In being queer worlds, and also places where queer worlding happens, Guapa and the Cobweb also become spaces where futurity takes hold. While at Guapa the characters discuss current events and ponder how there is no future in the country, they are simultaneously engaged in a process of imagining a different future through their discussion of the hopelessness of the political situation where they live. In very simple terms, it is their "what if?" discussions that form the basis of this vision of futurity, their imagining of other possibilities of being. There is an "open, indeterminate, potentiality" being discussed at Guapa (Muñoz), as Rasa puts it "we were so hopeful then, so ridiculously naive" (Haddad 15).

While politics was the order of the day at Guapa, the conversation at the Cobweb took on another dimension of futurity: the possibility of living an openly queer life in Cairo. Hani writes that at his meeting with Prince at the Cobweb, he taught Hani:

> caution and hesitation, and how to move forward, how to not throw myself at every available man, and how to sample, select, and pick favourites between men. I learned

how to separate my secret life and its fantasies and adventures from my public social life. I learned ambition and started thinking about the future for the first time (111)

علمني الحذر والتردد، وكيف أنظر لمواضع خطواتي، وألا ارتمي على كل رجل متاح، وكيف أتذوق، وانتقي، وأفاضل. تعلمت كيف افصل بين وجهي السري بنزواته ومغامراته، وبين حياتي الإجتماعية العلنية. تعلمت الطموح، وبدأت أفكر في كلمة المستقبل لأول مرة تقريباً

Here, the future for Hani is tied to being able to explore and express his sexuality openly. There is no naivete, as at Guapa, but there is a certain excitement in executing these lessons that Prince is teaching him – how to "move forward" and what his next steps are.

At Guapa, the naivete Rasa talks about, or imagining of different possibilities through the very act of thinking through the negative affects of hopelessness, manifests itself in more ways than one. Queerly, it becomes the longing of a lover towards his beloved: "I dreamed of kissing his cheek, because it struck me that to kiss your lover's cheek in public was quite ordinary, and more than anything I wanted for us to be ordinary and in love" (Haddad 16). Some queer performances are generally not tolerated within the sphere of the public here, and are completed behind closed doors – in Rasa's bedroom for example – or as we shall see later within the confines of a very public cinema. Others like the basement at Guapa, for example, is where everything comes alive afterhours: "there was the public Guapa and there was the *real* Guapa. After the main bar closes and most of the patrons leave [...] a dim red light in the basement of Guapa switches on, and after a few minutes of screeching feedback from the microphones, the show begins" (124). The basement at Guapa is another story: how the passage into a door at the far end of an ordinary bar suddenly turns into a literal queer world in a contemporary sense: a place for people who live their lives outside of social norms people to come together and party,

and of course put on a drag show. In the basement of Guapa, we see Maj go off into the bathroom in order to change into his costume. Rasa narrates:

> When Maj first started doing drag he would dress up as Madonna on some nights and other nights as Cher. One day he walked into Guapa and declared he did not want to perform as Western divas anymore, explaining that the "appropriation of queerness into the capitalist system, it's happened in the West to such a terrible extent. And we're next. What we have, we're next in line (125).

This passage sums up Maj's position within the narrative; he is there to remind the reader that there is always more that can be done. Maj is hinting at the overt need to disidentify from overarching narratives of Western queerness that put these specific characters into a box. This culminates in Maj's drag performance of the night: "War-on-terror neo-Orientalist gender-fucking" (128). Here the reader notices that while Rasa is struggling to disidentify in different ways with his lived environment – and in fact the whole book and beyond encompasses this project for him – Maj lives as a disidentified subject. Adding to this, he seems to be beyond the homonormative dynamic that underlies Rasa and Taymour's relationship as well as Taymour's performance of masculinity.

I suggest here that we could rethink their relationship, but not in an attempt to completely remake what Lisa Duggan initially defined as "the new homonormativity", which Duggan defines as being:

> The new neoliberal sexual politics [...] might be termed the new homonormativity—it is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay

> constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption (179).

It is more of an attempt at situating and thinking through such an investigation within the Arab locales where the narrative unfolds. Homonormativity is relevant to understand Rasa's versus Maj's positions in the book. Rasa craves the normalcy of a domestic relationship with Taymour where they cannot have one, while Maj does not seem to subscribe to this same ideal. Rasa's position could be described as homonormative, or as Duggan calls it "assimilationist", while Maj's position could be described as "confrontational" (180). This analysis must be questioned further, however: What does it mean to write of homonormativity in a non-European milieu? Can we think about this in a non-Eurocentric framework?

Invoking homonormativity here is not meant to highlight a negative aspect of Rasa and Taymour's relationship. Rather, I wish to propose that homonormativity in *Guapa*'s milieu *is* a form of disidentification. Striving for normalcy within this context, as narrated by Rasa in the excerpt describing him and Taymour alone on the balcony in the morning, is a disidentificatory gesture, because he realizes it cannot become a reality and is seemingly impossible in the public sphere. Of course, men can live together within this Arab milieu, and could surely live together as a discreet couple. But as Rasa alludes to in the excerpt, their relationship can never play out "on the public stage" of their larger environment. Rasa's "assimilationist" position should not therefore become invalidated in favour of Maj's politics, simply because they might seem more "radical". Homonormativity within this milieu is still a disidentification from the milieu itself. Maj's position is also a disidentificatory stance vis-à-vis his environment.

Maj is depicted as being more outwardly flamboyant and feminine than Rasa and Taymour are, and as such becomes a target for incarceration within the book. His arrest takes place at a cinema known to be frequented by men who want to engage in sex with other men. Rasa recounts that during his childhood friendship with Maj, he would always dress up as the groom while Maj would make himself up as a bride and they would stage mock-wedding ceremonies at Rasa's house: "His femininity offended the sensibilities of everyone, which only made him more adamant to flaunt it" (Haddad 121-3). Rasa continues describing his relationship with Maj, as he patiently waits in the prison waiting room to post bail for Maj's release:

> Even after college, after he had grown his nails out and painted them first in a subtle French manicure and then later a deep red, even after he began to pluck his eyebrows into a dramatic arch, even after he began performing in Guapa's underground parties, even then I stayed by his side. It is rare to meet someone who cares so little about what others think of him, and at the same time has an unwavering faith in the human race. I feel shame for many things, but my friendship with Maj is one of the few things in my life I am proud of (123).

Maj, as it turns out, is arrested as part of a raid on a so-called gay cinema within the city. This event in the book appears to be an invocation of an actual "gay cinema" raid that occured in Lebanon on May 8th, 2012.[13]

The space of the police station itself is haunting: "the police station is am imposing brick structure with no windows. As soon as I see it I feel like a fool, as if I am offering myself up for

[13] "MTV Finally Cancels Joe Maalouf's "Enta Horr"," https://www.ilga.org/crackdown-on-lebanon-gays. The arrest was prompted by an investigation carried out on a popular Lebanese TV show that mirrored a raid on a hammam in Egypt that was also televised on prime-time television.

slaughter [...] I say I am here to pick up a friend and as soon as I say this it occurs to me that this might be a trap" (Haddad 132). It is also a literal trap for both of them, as it is the reality for Arab queers who find themselves incarcerated, mainly men and trans identifying individuals. The act of re-writing this event from the point of view of a person who was caught up in the incarceration is itself important, as these raids mark important traumatic events that leave affective impressions on the communities involved.

The act of recounting these stories is itself a way of trying to deal with the traumatic consequences such events can have within the communities. Therefore, even though Rasa was not directly involved in this raid and is simply going to pick Maj up from the station, it is not surprising that he also feels a sense of dread at the very sight of the police station, as if something is also about to happen to him. Indeed, he ends up being interrogated himself because of his involvement with the popular protests that had taken place, which Maj was documenting for a human rights organization. While waiting at the police station, a picture of the president staring down at him from behind the police officer on-duty, he recounts that "an ongoing fear of mine is to be arrested and taken to a place like this. Perhaps for something I might say or think in a careless moment" (134).

Maj comes out into the waiting room looking beat up and bloody. He is handed over to Rasa's care and they both leave the police station in silence, heading to Rasa's car. Maj then recounts the story of his overnight stay at the station and the abuse he and the other detainees suffered at the hands of the policemen:

> They roughed us up. Called us names. Satan worshippers. They pulled out my file and showed me records they had on me… what I did for a living. I couldn't tell if they were

> more angry about my day job or my night job. Anyway, they pushed me around some more. They put us in a concrete room and hosed us down with freezing water. They told us we were dirty perverts and needed cleaning (143).

This is a recurrent story of police abuse of detained queers or people alleged to have engaged in queer acts, seen as illicit, as *'Ankabut* demonstrates. Furthermore, this incarceration marks both a physical and an emotional transformation for Maj. His transformation is catalysed by his passage through the physical space of the police station, away from the other physical spaces, those queer worlds where he had just been the night before: *Guapa,* and the so-called "gay cinema" he had frequented shortly after his drag performance ended. The police station here marks the antithesis to Manalansan's queer world, an intimidating structure that affectively spells out queer death for these communities who are held within it. Here, again, shame marks the transformation: "As [Maj] speaks I notice something has happened to him. Something I've never seen before. For the first time, I hear shame in his voice and can see it settling in his features" (144). At this excerpt, we can circle back to shame in the narrative, this time Rasa notices it in his own friend. Indeed, this recognition is itself important, as it beckons the "unspoken language" of queerness that manifests itself in "excess of language" (Georgis *The Better Story,* 121). Maj doesn't have to say anything; Rasa understands how Maj feels because Rasa has somehow felt in himself, albeit under different circumstances.

The same "affective remains" of incarceration (Stanley 12) can be noticed in Hani's experience of incarceration. Hani calls his experience with incarceration a "nightmare" – in Arabic *kabus* كابوس ('Abdul Nabi 44). Throughout the book he remembers the event as the "nightmare" only, and the reader immediately knows he is alluding to his imprisonment. Upon

his entrance to the police station where he was taken, along with countless other men suspected of being "gay", transliterated in Arabic as "جاي", he is encountered with police brutality. I put the word gay here in quotes because he is interpolated as such by the person who takes him in, a plainclothes officer, after he denied that he was. "What does that mean?" Hani responds to the officer who asks him this question, to which the officer responds, "come with us and we'll show you what it means" (11).

نظر كبيرهم نحوي وسألني بسرعة لإرباكي: "إنت جاي؟" فأجبته بصوتٍ مرتجف: "يعني إيه؟" فقال: "طب تعال معانا حبيبي، واحنا نقول لك يعني إيه.

This is what Julian Awwad deems to be the postcolonial predicament of gay rights in Egypt, "Same-sex practitioners become the ''homo sacers,'' to use Giorgio Agamben's term, as biopolitical subjects of the Egyptian state upon whom the state can assert jurisdiction to establish its sovereignty" (Awwad 32). In both Maj's and Hani's cases, both of which are fictionalized accounts of real life raids, Awwad's assertion rings true. The state not only incarcerates queers, but also visibilizes them in the process of incarceration. It wills them out into the public eye by force – as evidenced by the police officer asking Hani if he was "gay" and then telling him he'll "show him what it means". The state, therefore, creates its own version of queerness, or "gayness" with regards to Hani, by setting the terms for the arrests. Therefore, the implication here is that the police officer will use sexual violence in order to teach Hani what "gay" really means. The police officer's statement signals a change in significance here with regards to the word "gay" – Hani knows what is coming (the violence) specifically because he knows the police officer does not mean to say this word in any positive way. As Stanley notes of slurs being

used against queers in public: “the “dirty faggot” [...] shocks [queerness] into the embodied practice of feeling queer in a particular place, body, and time” (3).

And so as soon as Hani enters the police station, he is brutalized:

> I felt a heavy blow land on the side of my face, effectively turning it in the other direction [...] when I came to, I found myself curled up on the floor of the holding cell and heard someone convincing the officer to let go of me and stop kicking me so his shoes wouldn’t get dirty—ones he had just shined—because of a dirty person like me (84).

انتبهت على صفعة يد ثقيلة ترتطم بصفحة وجهي، فتحول اتجاهه إلى الناحية الأخرى [...] حينما أفقت على ما حولي، وأنا مكوم على أرضية الحجز، ملتفٌ حول نفسي ، أدركت انهم اقنعوه بالصفح عني، وبالتوقف عن ركلي بقدميه؛ كي لا يتسخ حذاءه -الذي لمعه للتو- بسبب واحد وسخ مثل هذا

He goes on to recount how many other prisoners had looked at him “as if he were crazy” because he had yelled back in protest for the police officer to stop, adding that many of him assumed he had:

> Lacked experience in police stations and holding cells, and so he would grow tired quickly. Many of them shared some advice with me (84).

وأدرك بعضهم انني عديم الخبرة بالأقسام والاحتجاز، لذلك سأتعب كثيراً، تبرع بعضهم بإسداء النصح

This last sentence reveals a great deal. The first part having to deal with “experience” belies a community used to experiences of incarceration, and demonstrates that many of the men arrested along with Hani on the same charges had been arrested before, possibly countless times. The “advice” they give him is invaluable, and it is inherently queered due to the nature of the arrests and the ease with which the men inform him of what he needs to do in these circumstances. I say the arrests are queered because the officers treat these men differently than other arrestees based

on the charges set against them, not because the men could actually be queer or not, or have been involved in queer acts. In reality, and as Hani also recounts in the narrative, many of the men were arrested in or around the Queen Boat itself, but many of the other men who were swept up in the raid were arrested from nearby neighbourhoods or even taken from their own homes, all accused of engaging in homosexual acts whether or not they were attending that ill-fated party on the Queen Boat (‘Abdul Nabi 30).

The spatial framework of the raid itself did not simply focus on the public aspect of the manifestation of queerness, materialized as the Queen Boat, but on queering certain places by visibilizing the men the police officers were sent to incarcerate. Therefore, all the neighbourhoods, back alleys, roads, homes, and bedrooms that the men were pulled out from become queered because they are deemed potential meeting places for queer subjectivity to manifest itself. The state becomes the agent of queering in this case, not the men who may or may not have been engaged in queer acts themselves. Performing such a widespread raid shows that the “threat is everywhere”. In Maj’s case, and the real-life case of the raid of the “gay cinema,” the state and by extension the media visibilize certain locales and the people who frequent them by *naming* them as as gay, and marking these inhabitants with certain incarceration. Where the Queen Boat and the cinema, as well as many back alleys, specific neighbourhood spots, homes, and bedrooms were queer worlds-in-creation, they now become places of symbolic queer death.

Connecting this to the usage of the signifier “gay” by the officer, which is an accusation toward Hani connected to his subsequent arrest, we can posit that the place of the arrest, the milieu of the taking in of the queer body is also shocked by the affective remains of the event

itself. The significance of the place of the arrest changes it for the queers looking at it. These places become signifiers of "near life", an in-between place which becomes the realm of queer subjectivity: "near life names the figuration and feeling of nonexistence [...] Near life is a kind of ontocorporal (non) sociality that necessarily throws into crisis the category of life by orientation and iteration" (Stanley 13). I link Stanley's "near death" with my analysis of feelings of abjection, such as shame in the second chapter above. Near death and the affects attached to feelings of abjection exist in an interplay, where one informs the other. Sites of near death become sites of abjection, and vice versa.

In exploring space in these readings I am not making an argument for the immutability of sites to be one thing or another--spaces of near-life or near-death, queer worlds or their opposites. I am trying to show, however, that spaces are ever changing and that *feeling* abjection is not simply one thing. It is a cycle informed by notions of self and belonging, as well as how the self operates within specific sites and milieus. Rasa's bedroom became a site of near death, for example, after he incorporated it with abjection upon his grandmother's discovery of him in bed with another man. For Maj, the gay cinema becomes a site of near death due to the feeling of abjection he experiences after his incarceration. For Hani, the entire city begins signifying near death as he struggles to survive and literally regain his voice after he is released from prison (where he becomes mute), as he tries to work through the feelings of abjection that *are* the afterlife of his incarceration. The bedroom ceases to be just the bedroom, the house just the house, the neighbourhood and city just geographical spaces; the bar takes on a new life and so do the places where queer subjectivity can manifest itself – the queer worlds.

Chapter Four: Towards a Model of Queer Arab Relationality

What is the afterlife of books and the narratives within them once they've been read? This is a question I have been grappling with, and in many ways failing to answer, including within my own argumentation in this project. Thus far in this thesis, I have outlined the language and affectual spaces that exist within the two novels, *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut*, and attempted to give them significance within a larger theoretical framework of relationality. The relational aspect of my work here involves a comparison of *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut*. In this study, I question why they share the themes they do, and what significance this represents. Up until now I have been involved in the process of reading, probing the narratives, and exploring the active relationship of reader to book. In this concluding chapter, I would like to dig a little deeper into what happens once the book is finished, and once the textual analysis exhausts itself. I want to circle back to the feeling I had after I finished reading both works--the feeling of being seen, of being represented, of being a part of something larger than the distance between my eyes and the book in my hands.

In *The Better Story,* Georgis asks the reader to "believe in stories" (9). Stories, according to Georgis, can be places of mourning, of making sense of the trauma we undergo and that surrounds us (*The Better Story* 11). I wish to link this concept with the queer affectual terrain, as well as the terrain of queer language, which I delved into above. Both Hani and Rasa try to make sense of their queer existences in varying ways within the narratives; indeed they are each faced with a story, their own story, as they try to fashion a better one out of their processes of self-knowing. According to Georgis, there is always a better story, if we can imagine one, that can emerge out of the trauma of our pasts. In many ways, both *Guapa* and *'Ankabut* are products

of this – they are better stories in themselves. How, then, can we use these narratives, these better stories in their own right, to imagine better stories for ourselves? We read many narratives throughout our lives, but only specific ones stick in our minds – we only truly relate to specific narratives, and often those narratives tell our story as well. The better story of these two novels, I propose, stems from their mode of queer relationality. I am sure I was not the only person who was positively impacted by these works specifically because I saw my queer affectual life reflected in the narratives in some way. And in the same vein, I am sure many queer individuals disliked the works for the *same* reason – they perhaps disliked the representation of queerness that may not have reflected their own specific experiences.

We have to imagine that both cases exist, with many ambivalent readers located somewhere along the spectrum of two options on either side. In all cases, however, I imagine it is still the element of Arab queer relationality that produces an emotional reaction to the works. Different reactions to the novels might drive the queer Arab reader to imagine a better story for themselves. After all, queer affect is that which unsettles (Georgis *The Better Story*, 16). Can unsettling here also re-shape and produce new understandings of what it means to be queer and Arab, new queer worlds? In trying to think about how the two novels studied here, as well as any Arab cultural production that has a queer element, can interpolate a queer consumer and produce an affective relationship with them, I also want to think about a different approach in drawing together what could result from this affective relationship. It is here that I propose that one way of thinking about the affective afterlife of this relationship between cultural work and consumer is through the conceiving of this as an archive. In calling it an archive, I am borrowing from Georgis's project of reading postcolonial works as a "representative archive of racialized

suffering" (*The Better Story* 19). In that vein, I have built here on Georgis's project of creating an archive of racialized experiences (*The Better Story* 19) to include broader affects at the intersection of what it means to be queer and Arab. I'd like to move beyond thinking of this at the bounds of racialized suffering, and build on Georgis by conceptualizing of this archive as encompassing world-making processes that result from such suffering, as well as different representations of racialized queerness, in this case specifically Arab queerness.

In addition to Georgis's conceptualization of what an archive is, I also draw upon Derrida, as mentioned, in Chapter One, who imagines this to be a sort of repository of *impressions* of the past (1995). In Bassnett's investigation of Derrida's approach to the archive, she adds that the work of building an archive involves the "moving" of signs from the private realm to a public one, with the purpose of holding onto the memories that exist within these signs (242). For Bassnett, an affective response is generated in the *process* of archiving source material (242). The act of archiving itself here becomes the affective performance. At the same time, affect is produced through the relationship between consumer and cultural product. The affective response, then, becomes the *process* of archiving that Bassnett suggests, and can be a way to form new connections between different consumers of a specific cultural product (Bassnett 244).

If we are to follow Derrida and Bassnett's interventions, we can therefore assert that *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* can form part of a larger network of "source material" that is imbued with specific significations, which I call queer Arab affects here. These queer Arab affects can then be recognized and located, and by their very proliferation travel from the private world of the book and individual reader to a larger public realm where larger audiences are engaging with them. The receptive relationship between reader and book here starts producing an

archive of affects that is emboldened by the presence of the book in the public realm. This relationship between reader and book is multiplied based on how many readers are engaging with the book, and specifically how many people can engage with the queer Arab affects these works hold within them. The affective archive here is necessarily built from a specific perception of the works that is based on another specific orientation – here a queer Arab orientation towards the works under study for example (Ahmed *Queer Phenomenology*, 27). Ahmed writes that "the object is an effect of towardness; it is the thing toward which I am directed and which in being posited as a thing, as being something or another for me, takes me in some directions rather than others" (*Queer Phenomenology* 27). It is also in the way that people feel different affects, feel shame differently for example even within "one culture" (Segdwick 63) that the archive is made to be diverse. Therefore, the better stories that make up such an affective archive lie in where the works take the consumers in a specific direction, rather than another. They reorient us to think our milieus in a different way, thereby building a queer habitus through acts of disidentification. Part of the building of this queer habitus, then, is affective in nature. The affective nature of it can be brought to life through reference to this archive of queer Arab affects. In her writing on the different modes and uses of shame, Sedgwick writes that

> One of the strangest features of shame, but perhaps also the one that offers the most conceptual leverage for political projects, is the way bad treatment of someone else, bad treatment by someone else, someone else's embarrassment, stigma, debility, bad smell, or strange behavior, seemingly having nothing to do with me, can so readily flood me—assuming I'm a shame-prone person—with this sensation whose very suffusiveness

seems to delineate my precise, individual outlines in the most isolating way imaginable. (37).

In taking shame to be one of the main affects I study here, and one of the main affects that also goes to build a queer habitus, we can deduce that the relational aspect of shame here (following Sedgwick) is also a marker of recognition. When it comes to *Guapa* or *'Ankabut* for example, I was able to recognize and feel the protagonist's shame without necessarily having experienced it. I argue it is because I can relate to a certain extent to the protagonist's queerness as it is tied to their experiences with shame. And in thinking and talking about shame to colleagues, or other queers, I am engaged in proliferating this affective archive and building a queer habitus – in building a better story.

Another reason that archives can be important is because they are compilations of objects, exhibits, documents, photographs, et cetera. An archive is the embodiment of the afterlife of *something.* An archive exists to chronicle evidence that certain realities, people, places, events, existed at one point. The very presence of something within an archive gives it ongoing meaning and significance in the present. It is a way of looking into the past from our present position, and evaluating what the past means to us now. An archive thus can be understood as informing the present moment as much as the past. In the same way, the two novels studied in this thesis also act as archives in their own right – archives of queer affect, of queer Arab experiences and traumas – and inform the present moment. The works are both sites of self-discovery as well as vehicles by which new understandings of the self can be formed and perpetuate the making of better stories. One example of this is the *Guapa* book discussion in

Amman, where different people gathered and tried to form new understandings and attachments to already existing notions of Arab queerness.

Another way that we can think of the archive is as the intersection of the discussions of affect and language in this thesis. It is important to remember that the affect we are discussing here exists where words begin to fail (Georgis *The Better Story*, 121), and so we can also think of the affective archive as beginning with language and moving on to encompass the various affectual experiences that exist in excess of language. I was first compelled by working with the concept of the archive in relation to these two novels because of its capability to overturn previously held notions of what something could be. Digging through an actual physical archive can be enlightening in many ways, it can bring up alternative histories that rewrite normative narratives of history as we know it, it can bring to life new historical players that helped shape these narratives that may not be known in the mainstream. An example of this is people who were forced to exist on the margins of societies. I see this affectual archive as doing a similar kind of work – presenting an alternative point of view based on affective experiences that encompass linguistic hurdles and real-life experiences, as well as fictionalized ones, that exist across different media. It is a project that aims to consolidate these affectual experiences in order to bring communities together, to bind them and to create a sense of shared experience that would combat isolation.

Therefore, the works analyzed in this thesis are not "just" stories. They are also a way into thinking through how a collective queer Arab identity made up of a multiplicity of viewpoints and positionalities can be invoked through Arab literature that represents queerness. This view of Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* and Muhammad 'Abdul Nabi's *Fi Ghurfat*

al-'Ankabut--as well as queer cultural production more broadly – helps us to develop a definition of storytelling that is material, and that can inform and produce new realities. This cycle of informing and producing new realities constitutes what I thus am calling an affective archive of queer Arab experiences.

The beginning of our affective archive here begins when the work is created – in our case when the book is written. Georgis writes that queer pride is a speech act, it is something you utter to people over and over again ("Thinking Past Pride" 240). I argue that queer shame as it plays out in the two narratives under study, for example, is the inverse of this – it cannot be articulated out loud in such few words, it needs the time and energy and space that literature affords an individual in order to investigate it: "writing shame offers a queer historiography and insight into queer identities that is both culturally/locally contextual and simultaneously an effect of contaminated histories, globalization, and Western imperialism" (Georgis "Thinking Past Pride," 246). Writing about oneself is a way to reclaim agency, and examine subjectivity. In writing about oneself, the queer Arab individual can produce a sort of relationality vis-à-vis others who can relate to their story (Georgis *The Better Story*, 13): "these texts stage the significance of human relationality and help us access the queer memory of history and in doing so assist us in telling the story differently" (Georgis *The Better Story*, 11). I further argue that the "safe spaces" that these sites of literature set up for other queer Arabs also become a mode of relationality among queer Arabs. These "safe spaces" that breed relationality therefore work to embolden the affective archive here.

The archive here goes further than being a compilation of a specific set of queer Arab affective experiences. It starts becoming a project of reclamation and of asserting one's own

history through one's experiences and the affects that these experiences produce within the queer individual. Further, the archive also becomes a result of the process of recognition that occurs when other people are able to pick up and relate to these same queer affects. The better story, here, becomes a story of reclamation. It is not necessarily a finished story, or a story that has a definite conclusion. As with *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut,* these stories and the better stories they spawn in return are stories-in-process. Georgis's project rests on the search, and ultimately rescue, of "the stories of the discarded in history, which is why we to look in queer corners" (*The Better Story* 21). I see my thesis as an extension of this work, as an embolding of Georgis's use of the archive of queer works as the starting point in working through so-called negative affects. For example, my analysis on shame would also inform such an archive because it is a process of working-through, rather than simply a process of shunning/ignoring shame in favour of pride. Negative affects such as shame, as they intersect with the queer subjectivities that are examined within the two novels, become animating vehicles of the archive. Where affect can be likened to intensity, and intensity is related to a state of disruption (Massumi 26), these negative affects and the queer Arab experiences they represent– and by extension the archive they are a part of and which they simultaneously form – also act to disrupt normative notions of what it means to be queer and Arab.

It is not simply that the books themselves make up a potential queer Arab archive, however. I propose that to build this archive we must also search for and identify the interconnected affects that exist among a number of texts to understand how they manifest themselves within texts differently based on their queer characters' circumstances. The work of building an archive therefore involves both the identification and compilation of queer Arab

literary works, but also comparing and contrasting the different queer Arab experiences that are written into and might come out of these texts. One of the things that might come out of these texts then is a "different view of history" that creates new ways of being and reforms different conceptions of identity (Georgis *The Better Story*, 20). Thus, these books themselves can be safe spaces, and they are sites of queer affective relationality that is particularly Arab – and, in the case of *Guapa*, also arguably diasporic. These spaces and works (and by extension the affective archive they represent) then set up a queer lens through which to view some of the specificities of Arab society.

In so doing, and by being a compilation of better stories-in-process, our archive could become a queer world of its own. This queer world, then, can have the impact of changing the habitus that it grows within. This sharing of affect breeds intimacy here, but not intimacy in the romantic sense of the word. Rather, this sharing of affect breeds intimacy that is born of validation and recognition – it becomes a tool of community building. This is not to propose that all relationships of recognition here are inherently positive ones. Rather, I'd also like to assert that sharing of affect that breeds disidentification and discussion here also works to embolden our affective archive. While Dina Georgis asks her reader to "listen queerly", and this thesis is by and large heeding the call to do so, this archive then can become a manifestation of listening, as well as reading and seeing, queerly. It can become a place of disruption and transformation, and at the heart of it might also become a place where queer Arab identity is negotiated on our own terms.

Conclusion

This thesis began as an attempt to make sense of my own relationship to two novels, Saleem Haddad's *Guapa* and Muhammad 'Abdul Nabi's *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut.* When I began reading these works I did not think that this would culminate in an academic study of shame, space, and language, and take the shape of an MA thesis. However, reading them together provided me with an opportunity to explore their shared themes and techniques in relation to my affective relationship with them as queer Arab novels. I found that their main characters interact with their environments in similar ways, that they grapple with the language that represents their sexuality in similar ways, and they go through similar affective experiences of getting to know themselves vis-à-vis their sexuality that was compelling and easy to relate to.

My first intervention in this thesis was to examine the language/s of queerness in the texts. I first laid the groundwork for how this language is used in real life by giving examples from civil society organizations as well as a select number of publications whose goal it is to probe language around sexuality for specific uses – mainly in the humanitarian sector. I began with this in order to situate the queer protagonists of the narratives contemporarily, in the context of other projects related to language in the Arab world. The second chapter of this thesis explores the protagonists' experiences with this language of queerness, and outlines how they come to know themselves vis-à-vis language. I compared and contrasted the exploration into queer languages in both narratives and arrived at the conclusion that though written in different languages--*Guapa* in English and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut* in Arabic--they offer similar usages of the terms related to male same gender sexuality. I also presented some of the differences in this language in the texts because they are primarily expressed in two different languages. This

specific comparison is useful as the two works address what it means to be a queer Arab in different ways, though they do have much in common. This exploration of difference is important to keep in mind when trying to develop a deep understanding of queer Arab subjectivity. This second chapter also poses an open-ended question about the ability to reclaim certain so-called derogatory Arabic words regarding male same gender sexuality in the same way that has been done in English. To my mind, this is an argument that is and will continue to be timely within our communities in the years to come.

I build upon this discussion in Chapter Three by moving on to discuss the intersecting role of shame and space. Shame figures heavily in both narratives in both explicit and implicit ways. The third chapter therefore outlines the two authors' investigations into the role of shame in forming a distinctly queer Arab understanding of sexuality. I showed how we might conceive of specific manifestations of shame that can be distinctly queer and Arab at once, by analyzing this concept within *Guapa* and *Fi Ghurfat al-'Ankabut.* I outlined how the protagonist of each novel dealt with, spoke about, and interacted with their feelings of shame. In building on the analysis in Chapter Two, I also showed how these feelings of shame build the queer protagonists' perception of themselves vis-à-vis their social and physical milieus. Furthermore, I carried out a spatial analysis alongside my analysis of shame in order to show how this affect materialized within certain spaces in the narratives, and subsequently tried to show how each character interacted within and viewed these spaces. The significance of this analysis lies is in how it builds a broader understanding of the way space is significant from a queer Arab perspective. Moreover, it shows how this perspective breaks down an explicit public/private spatial binary that does not really work in relation to how these protagonists conceive of the

spaces they dwell in. I analyze shame in this way in order to come to a more nuanced understanding of this affect beyond a negative/positive binary that permeates much of Euro-American queer pride discourse, where shame is considered something to be avoided at all costs, and something to overcome. I want to show how shame might be useful in the process of getting to know oneself and one's sexuality, and how it can be a catalyst for thinking about oneself and the world.

In the final chapter, I aim to propose a different way of understanding the affective experiences that I presented in the two preceding chapters. I offer an argument in Chapter Four that grounds these affective experiences within the bounds of what I call an archive. I use the category of archive here because it invokes the compilation of many different things together. I use the specific mode of archive here, instead of simply calling my proposed project a compilation, specifically because of the Derridean approach that an archive can make a future possible. A compilation of works is static, an archive can be dynamic, it can call upon a past, situate the works and affects being archived within a specific history of similar works and affects, and therefore simultaneously be forward thinking in trying to build on these pasts and presents in imagining different futures that speak to our communities. I advance the view that it is useful to put different affective experiences as they manifest themselves in cultural works – here the two novels – into conversation. Moreover, I highlight the experiences that readers have when picking up and engaging these books. This thesis's modest contribution of proposing an affective archive might possibly propel us to think further about new and creative ways to approach affect, and specifically queer Arab affect, as well as about how this queer Arab affect

can build and inform new ways of seeing and approaching different milieus – whether they be social, political, and/or physical.

Works Cited

‘Abdul Nabi, Muhammad. *Fi Ghurfat al-‘Ankabut.* Alexandria: Dar al-‘Ayn, 2016.

Ahmed, Sara. *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

---. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

---. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

---. “Affective Economies.” *Social Text*, vol. 22, no. 2_79, 2004, pp. 117–139.

'Alam , Fayez. “في غرفة العنكبوت، رواية عن عالم المثلية الجنسية.” *رصيف22*, Sept. 2016, <raseef22.com/culture/2016/09/22/%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%83%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%8C-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%84%D9%8A/.>

Al-Ashqar, Yazan. “«في غرفة العنكبوت»: نزهة في كابوس مثلي مصري.” *7iber* | 18 حبر, Apr. 2017, <www.7iber.com/culture/spiders-room-book-review/.>

Al-Samman, Hanadi. “Out of the Closet: Representation of Homosexuals and Lesbians in Modern Arabic Literature.” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2008, pp. 270–310.

Amar, Paul. “Turning the Gendered Politics of the Security State Inside Out?” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2011, pp. 299–328.

Audio recording of Saleem Haddad’s Amman talk, hosted by the Sijal Institute in Amman.

Courtesy of *7iber.com*. 28 July 2016.

Audio recording of Saleem Haddad's talk "Reclaiming Queer Arab Stories" Montreal, March 9, 2017.

Awwad, Julian. "The Postcolonial Predicament of Gay Rights in The Queen Boat Affair." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7.3 (2010): 318-36. Print.

Al Bawaba, "What's Arabic for 'Feminism'?" 6 Mar. 2016. <www.albawaba.com/loop/whats-arabic-feminism-813390?quicktabs_accordion=0>.

Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories. Beirut: Meem, 2009.

Bassnett, Sarah. "Archive and Affect in Contemporary Photography." *Photography and Culture*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2009, pp. 241–251.

Bell, David, and Jon Binnie. "Authenticating Queer Space: Citizenship, Urbanism and Governance." *Urban Studies*, vol. 41, no. 9, 2004, pp. 1807–1820.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1990. Print.

Chamas, Sophie. "Colonized Tongues: A Haunting in Lebanon." *Raseef22*, 17 Oct. 2016, <raseef22.com/en/blog/2016/10/12/colonized-tongues-haunting-lebanon/?utm_content=bufferbb422&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=raseef22_english_page.>

Chen, Mel Y. *Animacies : Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Cruz, Arnaldo, and Martin F. Manalansan. *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.

Delany, Samuel R. *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Duggan, Lisa. "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism." *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, by Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, pp. 175–194.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Gender Dictionary. Beirut: Lebanon Support, 2016.

Georgis, Dina. "Thinking Past Pride: Queer Arab Shame In Bareed Mista3Jil." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 45, no. 02, 2013, pp. 233–251.

---. *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East*. Albany: SUNY, 2013. Print.

---. "Hearing the Better Story: Learning and the Aesthetics of Loss and Expulsion." *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2006, pp. 165–178.

Haddad, Saleem. *Guapa*. New York: Other Press, 2016.

---. "Amman, I don't know what to say." *Facebook*. 29 July 2016. [13 December 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/haddad.saleem/posts/10154003948663579>].

---. "The Myth of the Queer Arab Life." *The Daily Beast*, 2 Apr. 2016, <www.thedailybeast.com/the-myth-of-the-queer-arab-life>.

Halberstam, Jack. "Shame and White Gay Masculinity." *Social Text*, vol. 23, no. 3-4, 2005, pp. 219–233.

"In the Spider's Room." *In the Spider's Room | International Prize for Arabic Fiction*, 2017, <www.arabicfiction.org/en/In-the-Spiders-Chamber.>

Jami' , Dawad. "في غرفة العنكبوت".. رواية عن المهمشين. Al Jazeera, 24 Apr. 2018, <blogs.aljazeera.net/blogs/2018/4/24/%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%83%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AA-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%8A%D9%86.>

Joseph, Suad. *Intimate Selving in Arab Families: Gender, Self, and Identity*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005.

Kole, Subir K. "Globalizing Queer? AIDS, Homophobia and the Politics of Sexual Identity in India." *Globalization and Health* 3.1 (2007): 8.

Love, Heather. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Manalansan, Martin. "Queer Worldings: The Messy Art of Being Global in Manila and New York." *Antipode*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2013, pp. 566–579.

Massad, Joseph Andoni. *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Print.

Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. 23-45.

Merabet, Sofian. *Queer Beirut*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014. Print.

---. "Disavowed Homosexualities in Beirut." Middle East Report, no. 230, 2004, pp. 30–33.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

---. “Feeling Utopia.” *Cruising Utopia: the Then and There of Queer Futurity*, New York: New York University Press, 2009, 1–18.

Najmabadi, Afsaneh. *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran*. Duke University Press, 2013.

Namir, Hasan. *God in Pink: a Novel*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2015.

Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Harvard University Press, 2007.

Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration (ORAM). “Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression: Essential Terminology for the Humanitarian Sector.” San Francisco: , 2016.

Pratt, Mary Louise. “Arts of the Contact Zone.” *Profession*, 1991, pp. 33–40.

Probyn, Elspeth. *Blush: Faces of Shame*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Rooney, Caroline. “Ahdaf Soueif in Conversation with Caroline Rooney, Cairo University, 12 April 2010.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2010, pp. 477–482.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. “Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James’s *The Art of the Novel*.” *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

---. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Stanley, Eric. “Near Life, Queer Death: Overkill and Ontological Capture.” *Social Text*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2011, pp. 1–19.

Stockton, Kathryn Bond. *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: Where “Black” Meets “Queer”* Durham, Duke University Press, 2007.

Taia, Abdellah. *Salvation Army*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009.

Warner, Michael. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.