Introduction translation (Sections 1a to 1c of Part 1)
« LGBT Musulman-es: des ténèbres à la Lumière »
(*Queer Muslims: Out of the Closet and into the Light*)
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Part 1 – Intersectionality: Who are Queer Muslims?

1 – The Contemporary Emergence of Muslim LGBT Associations

Sexual minorities in the Middle East and North Africa—but also in Europe—especially in states that define themselves politically as secular, are caught between, on the one hand, totalitarian politics, be they racist or "Islamo-fascist," and on the other hand, the Massadian "International Gay," perceived, wrongly or rightly, as imperialist and imposed by Western elites. One extreme imposes conformist, nationalist, and politico-religious pressure, while the other calls for identity and sexual conformity. It is this intersection between queerness and raciality that Jasbir Puar calls homonationalism (see insert below).[1]

[1] *Queer* is, firstly, a word that means "strange" or "uncommon." It has often been used as an insult towards LGBT individuals. Yet, while its first colloquial usage (as an equivalent to "faggot" or "fruit") was intended as an insult, it came to be the term that LGBT individuals in the United States used to designate the most activist, anti-establishment, and avant-gardist branch of their movement. To be queer would then be to surpass the conformism of an otherwise demobilized and subdued "gay" movement. Likewise, Eric Fassin affirms that, in intellectual and activist movements, we have gone from the question of queers to that of "the Queer," which shakes up the norm itself. In other words, we have gone from the multiplication of identities (and of supposed differences) to the calling into question of identity itself. Thus, it is no longer about merely imagining a female God, or a God of colour, nor about proclaiming that God is a Black lesbian. Rather, and more radically, it is about positioning oneself "beyond the lesbian and the male," as Stéphane Lavignotte proposes in her rereading of Elizabeth Stuart's queer theology. See Lavignotte, Stéphane. *Au-delà du lesbien et du mal, la subversion des identités dans la théologie "queer" d'Elizabeth Stuart*, Van Dieren, 2008.

Pinkwashing and Homonationalism

The portmanteau *pinkwashing*[2] combines the word "pink" with the idea of whitewashing, in a figuratively moral sense of the term. It primarily designates a technique of communication based on the promotion of homosexuality by a company, or a political entity, such as a state, in order to attempt to embellish its image and reputation as being progressive, tolerant, and open. This strategy is part of an entity's arsenal of methods of influence, of management of perceptions, and of marketing of ideas or brands. On the geopolitical level, this strategy consists in making political value-judgements on countries based on a "homophile-versus-homophobe" binary opposition, in such a manner as to justify, for example, a boycott or a military attack. This is the case, for example, in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, where, on both sides of the separation wall, LGBT associations encounter very strong political pressures, from Zionists and pan-Arabists to religious hardliners, and are made to choose one or another ideological camp.

In her book on homonationalism, Jasbir Puar argues that the consideration of homonationalism in gender studies involves taking into account "the proliferation, occupation, and suppression of queernesses in relation to patriotism, war, torture, security, death, terror, terrorism, detention, and deportation, themes usually imagined as devoid of connection to sexual politics in general and queer politics in particular."[3]

Across the world, ideologues have understood the powerful indirect effects of the treatment of sexual minorities within the public sphere.[4.]

Added to this double tension, above all in Europe and, particularly, in France, is the pressure of a religious extremism often denoted as "Islamist."

Based on years of fieldwork, analysed through anthropological, psychological, and theological perspectives, this book is primarily a careful examination of what it means to be a

[2] Pinkwashing is a term that has been used to describe governments that make use of the fact of having accorded rights to LGBT individuals (for example in Israel or in Mexico) in order to distract from, or excuse, their security-related policies, especially with regards to international opinion.

[3] Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Duke University Press, 2007, p. xii.

[4] The detailed consideration of conter-strategies opposed to pinkwashing and homonationalist recuperation, or commercial and capitalist recuperation of LGBT struggles, by certain activists or LGBT/queer leaders, will be the subject of an entire chapter of my analysis.

twenty-first-century French Muslim citizen, while being part of a gender or sexual minority[5] (see insert at the end of this section). In the past five years, a number of such citizens have increasingly referred to themselves as "homosexual (or queer) Muslims," a term that has also gained some visibility in the public sphere. In France, as in other Western countries, individuals are increasingly affirming the intersectionality of their identities, replete with diverse political and cultural influences. In such a context, what identity representations are being deployed (and in relation to what social and historical phenomena) by these French Muslims? Who is considered *de facto* as part of a visible sexual minority? What consequences could the affirmation of intersectional identity have on diverse individual self-representations, in particular in the context of current societal and civilizational debates related to the question of an assimilation that would be accessible to all people, and thus one that would be intercultural?

The present study begins from the premise that these queer Muslims are above all at the centre of what Jürgen Habermas considers an engagement for the general well-being. Habermas and others describe the post-modern democratic processes within the civil societies and communities in which these citizens have a stake, and whose transformations they witness and take part in, sometimes by being subjected to them without having the opportunity to express their claims, sometimes by struggling for the civil emancipation of the largest possible number of people. In the case at hand, this individual and collective emancipation systematically proceeds by the elaboration of a more or less complex

[5] I hesitate to employ the catch-all acronym "LGBT" for political reasons that I will develop in more detail. It is not about essentializing the great diversity of gender identities or sexual orientations among Muslims of France; quite the contrary, it is necessary to respect the self-definition that these indivduals have of themselves, these individuals who do not recognize themselves in these labels. Nevertheless, while I do not appreciate performative and rigid identity categories that trap those falling under their purview, it will at times be necessary to employ such categories in order to advance the analysis. Nevertheless, this will be done so in keeping with the principles and conclusions of the Yogyakarta conferences.

examination around corporeality: does my body, my sexuality, belong to the nation, to the community, to God?

With regards to these post-modern transformations of representations linked to corporalities, Judith Butler defines vulnerable bodies as dependant on an instable and sometimes violent environment.[6] These vulnerable bodies exist, but their worth and their existential dignity, which is to say their social and political dignity, are not recognized as such. Even in Europe, though even more so in the majority of Arab-Muslim societies, these questions are linked to the very survival of the individuals concerned; the question here is not merely a question of comfort or of political rights. Butler thus affirms that it is necessary to **"***rethink the ontology of* bodies" through a progressive politics, while questioning the "cultural modes of regulating affective and ethical dispositions through a selective and differential framing of violence."[7] According to Butler, it is the possibility and the impossibility of mourning that differentially classes lives and individuals into those who are judged to be worthy to be mourned and those who are not. Indeed, this is one reason why it is crucial to examine the the civic engagement of queer French Muslims, who find themselves at the intersection of values and perform a hybrid representation of identities: between "queerness" and "Muslimness." Furthermore, to paraphrase Serge Moscovici, founding father of social psychology in France, for those who take the time to listen to them, minorities within minorities have much to inform us about the social dynamics and the general politics of our societies.

It is precisely here that one can understand how Butler can be situated on the same epistemological line as alternative and feminist Islamic theologians such as Amina Wadud, an African-American woman imam in California, who defines her method as the paradigm of

[6] Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Verso, 2004.
[7] Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life*, pp.7-8.

Tawhid.[8] This term in Arabic means "oneness," taken by her to be the oneness of our humanity in relation to that of God. This egalitarian paradigm of re-appropriation, by dynamic redefinition and reaffirmation, of our corporalities is thus, at least in part, linked to the process of disidentification of "queers of colour"—in every sense of the term—described by José Estéban Muñoz. How does this process take place for queer French Muslims?

In accordance with Pierre Bourdieu's conception of social diversity, Jean Zaganiaris provides a useful framework towards answering this question:

> We must neither succumb to the "universalist" temptation, which wishes to homogenize everything within a monistic conception of what is good, nor to the "relativistic" temptation, which accepts everything and anything.[9] […] In a famous text, Michel Foucault had shown that "attitudes of modernity," characterized by the desire to escape from religious, moral and state tutelage, did not exist without "attitudes of counter-modernity," which struggled, through sometimes very elaborate arguments, in order to impose their vision of the world within the various social fields.[10]

In other words, equality cannot be uniformity. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the historical context, which underpins these social and political, but also ethical transformations. How are these—intellectually useful—tensions between identities deployed in a larger movement? How are they linked to Arab-Muslim nationalisms, to Western nationalisms, and to the post-colonization of religiosities, gender identities, and sexual orientations.

Active and Visible Sexual Minorities in the Public Sphere

[8] Wadud, A. *Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*, Oneworld, 2006, p. 41.
[9] Bourdieu, Pierre. *Méditations pascaliennes*, Seuil, Paris, 2003, p. 86.
[10] Zaganiaris, Jean. *Penser l'obscurantisme aujourd'hui: par-delà Ombres et Lumières,* Afrique Orient, 2009, p. 40 and p. 50.

The term “minority” is often used with political, ideological, and identitarian aims. Nevertheless, from an academic point of view, debates around the term “minority” are unavoidable. It is necessary to study the reasons for the relatively recent emergence of this concept in the public sphere.

Indeed, given the epistemological difficulties in universally defining gender identities or gender orientations, depending on the political circumstances, it is essential to return to the origins of the terminology used for the particular needs of this research. The term “sexual minority” refers just as much to women and bisexual/homosexual men as to transpeople. This terminology had been put forward in the early 2000s, in order to overcome the misunderstandings and controversies raised by the more controversial and deeply culturally-rooted terms such as “gay” or “lesbian.”

The Yogyakarta Conference (2006) in Indonesia was organized by a group of experts and politicians from around the world to discuss human rights. The conference minutes, commonly referred to as the *Yogyakarta Principles*, note that historically:

> *a transnational definition of “sexual minorities” has been problematic because the concept of normative sexuality (which could be considered an imagined “sexual majority”) varies widely from place to place, a working definition might be that “[t]hey are those despised and targeted by ‘mainstream’ society because of their sexuality, victims of systematic denials of rights because of their sexuality (and in most cases, for transgressing gender roles).”Thus, two categories have emerged; “[s]exual orientation is the capacity to relate emotionally, affectively, and sexually with a person of a different sex to oneself or of the same sex…. [while] gender identity refers to the comprehension and experience that each one of us has about his or her gender, independently of his or her biological sex.” What both of these categories have in common is that they are persecuted in almost every nation-state, and the World Values Survey shows that “evidence of homophobic attitudes and policies can be found in virtually every country.” The result of this marginalization is a particularly virulent brand of abuse that transcends local, national, and regional borders. Although it is more intense in some countries and regions than others, homophobia is an international phenomenon. Laws against homosexuality exist in over eighty countries, with nine countries punishing sodomy with death. Although the enforcement of these laws varies by country, “they create an atmosphere wherein queers and transgender people are demeaned, even where they are not subject to persecution, harassment, and*

extortion[11] [12].

Moreover, with the social and often violent transformations facing the Arab-Muslim world at present, these sexual minorities, when visible in the public space, are exposed to many forms of social and state violence. Some organizations such as the Human Rights Watch (HRW) have established a direct link between the British laws against sodomy in the nineteenth century, which still exist in some postcolonial societies of the southern hemisphere and contemporary prejudices and violence against sexual minorities in these countries:

> [The HRW] describes how these laws, in more than three dozen countries, from India to Uganda and Nigeria to Papua New Guinea, stem from a single law on homosexual conduct that British colonial leaders imposed on India in 1860.[13]

It would therefore be risky to try to impose our social models, that are Western and postmodern, onto Arab-Islamic social dynamics that, for various reasons, do not necessarily function according to the same criteria of categorization. These reasons include: 1) the impossibility of visibility in the public sphere, 2) the rejection or denial of all or parts of one's sexuality, and 3) the lack of homogeneity of observed behaviour. The words of Max Weber on the sociology of religion are essential here. Weber considered that religions contributed decisively to the rationalization of the world:

> It is important, in the first place, to recognize and explain in its genesis the peculiarity of Western rationalism [...]. The emergence of economic rationalism [...] depends on the ability and disposition of men to adopt definite forms of a life-style characterized by practical rationalism. Where such conduct of life has encountered psychic barriers, the development of a rational way of life in the economic field has also met with strong internal resistance. Among the most important elements that have shaped the conduct of life, one always finds always, in the past, magical and religious powers as well as the ethical ideas of duty, which are anchored in the belief in these powers.[14]

This is, by the way, one of the challenges facing a study of this kind, namely the challenge of

[11] Fischlin, Daniel and Martha Nandorfy. "All Human Beings Are Equal: The Commonality of Minority and Majority Rights," in *The Concise Guide to Global Human Rights*, Black Rose, 2007, pp. 78-130.

[12] *Yogyakarta Principle: Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*, International Commission of Jurists, 2007. <http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/principles_en.pdf>

[13] Gupta, Alok. *This Alien Legacy: The Origins of "Sodomy" Laws in British Colonialism*, Human Rights Watch, 2008. < https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/12/17/alien-legacy/origins-sodomy-laws-british-colonialism>

[14] "Avant-propos du Recueil d'études de sociologie des religions," in *Sociologie des religions*, Gallimard, 1996, p. 503.

objectively describing observed phenomena, without essentializing Muslims and queer Muslims.

Thus, the question ultimately is whether the discrimination of minorities in Islam is simply due to an impossibly unsurpassable colonial legacy, or due to a post-modern, on-going, and constitutive process of Islamic ethics. Here again, the discursive analysis of queer Muslims, undertaken throughout this study, will further the sociological understanding of queer Muslim identities.

1A – ARAB-MUSLIMS—BETWEEN NATIONALISMS & THE "GAY INTERNATIONAL"

For several years now, particularly after the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the 2015 Paris attacks, researchers working on gender studies in Islam are increasingly linking their work to themes traditionally associated with postcolonial studies and, more surprisingly, demographic studies. In light of this growing scholarly intersectionality, it is important to highlight a few observations about a persistent, but simplistic and idealized image of a presupposed tolerance in premodern Arab societies, particularly vis-à-vis gender diversity and sexual behaviour between consenting individuals (especially when it comes to relationships between men).

Generally speaking, many social and political reforms, as well as societal, moral, and identity-related changes, have occurred since the appearance of Islam in the seventh century of the Western common era. It must be recalled that the early Muslims respected, to some extent, in private spaces, individuals who had no desires for the opposite sex, indeed even those who expressed a transidentity, bearing in mind that this goes beyond the libertine stories found in some uncensored versions of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

Indeed, the Abbasid dynasty (750 - 1258), which some academics such as Joseph Massad call the "Golden Age" of Arab civilization, was the first to display such little interest in the performative categorization of what would later be considered sexual deviancies. So, are individual queer Muslims and their communities making claims that are deeply-rooted in the

heart of Islam? Does their collective activism represent the resurgence of this Arab-Islamic "golden age"? Or is their contemporary emergence into the public sphere a manifestation of a process of cultural "colonization" that emanates from the West, at a time of an alleged clash of civilizations? This is an issue that lies at the heart of the contemporary emergence of LGBT communities and associations, that are increasingly numerous in Arab-Muslim societies and communities.

However, as Yves Gonzalez notes, it is problematic to describe the early centuries of Islam as a "golden age":

> Rather than opposing allegedly distinct civilizational entities, against the backdrop of mechanical or organic metaphors (such as "shock" or "transplant"), it would be appropriate, on the contrary, to tackle [...] a truly historiographic taboo, one that has encumbered, for so long, the study of the interlinked relations, over the centuries, between Islam and European cultures. Thus, instead of focusing on points of divergence, it is time to focus more on the "blind spots of history" that sometimes reveal certain "inventive hybridities," in any case more so than a revealing familiarity of a certain community of culture.[15]

How do these tensions of identity—intellectually positive because ultimately productive, emancipatory, and inscribed between enlightenments and dogmatisms, but also between East and West—express themselves in communities of French-Muslim sexual minorities?

The sections that follow will focus mainly on the sociology of queer Muslims in France, before drawing parallels between this particular population and similar populations from other parts of the world. Additionally, particular attention will be paid to what has been called since the 1980's "Islamic" feminism. Finally, this book will conclude with an analysis of verbatim

[15] Gonzalez-Quijano, Yves. "Jocelyne Dakhlia, Islamicités," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 134, 2006, pp. 147-299. <http://assr.revues.org/3502>

accounts, from interviews with twenty LGBT Arab-Muslims in France and in several Francophone countries, regarding their relationships, especially in the context of the *mariage pour tous*.

1 B – CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF LGBT MUSLIMS

Muslim minorities in France and Europe, from a general point of view, are increasingly clearly seeking to reappropriate the Islamic theoretical, ethical and social corpus, in order to be able to reconcile, in this case, sexualities and identities that are deemed "Islamic" on a political level.[16] This certainly takes place in the public sphere, but also in what is regarded as particular "communities," namely LGBT and Muslim communities in France. For the most part, these individuals, more so than ever before and under unprecedented geopolitical and economic pressure, seek to rework Islamic ethics (see insert). They continue to draw inspiration from what most of them still consider Islamic "law," which they say has been established and interpreted for more than a thousand years by theologians who they think had heterocentric, hegemonic, and sometimes fascistic and homophobic, identity representations of what *the* Muslim man or *the* Muslim woman ought to be.[17] Nevertheless, these indivudals do not challenge the existence or the primacy of Islamic "law." Other more radical, "alternative" Muslims advance the idea that secularism is God's plan for humanity: there is no other law, within the Republic, than that which we decide to establish, in a pragmatic way, for ourselves.[18] In this way, Islam can only be seen as an ethical inspiration, a way of life, or a set of stories that are recounted to us by God or the figure of God, and which each of us must appropriate in his or her own way, in order to elevate ourselves spiritually: "We narrate to you

[16] Islamic is in inverted commas, because Islam as a unified, singular entity does not exist; there are as many Islams as there are Muslims.
[17] Oubrou, Tarek. *Profession imam,* Albin Michel, 2009.
[18] Bidar, Abdennour. *L'islam face à la mort de Dieu : actualité,* Bourin éditeur, 2010.

the most beautiful stories, by means of the revelation that We give to you in the Qur'an, even if you were previously among the inattentive."[19]

Religious morals or personal ethics?

Following Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, ethics or morals, from a sociological point of view, can be considered as a "common superior principle," which drives "the development of a new form of social bond."[20] With regards to the development of religious morality, the pragmatic, boltanskienne approach to ethics is apt.

The Islam of mediatized preachers does not represent all of Islamic ethics and the morals propagated by these mediatized preachers are not necessarily shared by all Muslims. One must therefore establish an objective distinction between the axioms of a pragmatic and rational ethics, the kind that has the best interest of all citizens at heart, the kind that Thevenot describes.

Several queer Muslims do indeed formulate their own representation of Islamic ethics, which is universally egalitarian, with a "grammar" consistent with the Habermasian paradigm. Yet many Muslims clearly believe that homosexuals are far from being their equals and cannot at all be Muslims. Bear in mind, however, that a framework of exclusive—and not inclusive—political analysis that posits that Muslims cannot have "alternative" sexualities, poses as much of a problem as the exclusive policy of "laïcité" in France. I will analyse how these Islamic minorities are caught between the hammer of religious dogmatism and the anvil of political puritanism.

According to Tarek Oubrou, the imam of the Mosque of Bordeaux, it is Islamic ethics itself that does not accept the practice of homosexuality. But religious authorities appear to confuse Islamic axiology and ethics in the sociological sense of the term. This is the main reason why queer Muslims are, for the most part, caught in a difficult position between a communitarian Muslim axiology that they associate with prayer, and a communitarian queer culture that they associate with the discovery of their sexuality with multiple partners.

This moral contradiction, that originates from the double discrimination to which they are subject, allows them to perform a transformation of their relation to the axioms of their personal ethics. Subsequently, some of them go on to perform a modification of their representation of their gender

[19] Quran: 12.3.

[20] Thévenot, Laurent. "L'entendement dans la cité marchande selon la Théorie des Sentiments Moraux," cahier d'économie politique 19 (1), 1991, p. 9.

and sexual identities.

One of the main goals of this book is to highlight the fact that, although LGBT Muslims are considered by their more radical coreligionists as perverse or unbalanced, they appear to be, in reality, at the forefront of the development of an alternative, progressive, and inclusive Islamic ethics (inclusive in that it includes within it any individual who considers themselves Muslim, without any value judgment or discrimination based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity).[21] This avant-garde is, usually but not always, without specific ideological motivations, other than the motivation to defend their right to exist as such. But just why has this avant-garde emerged at this precise point in history?

This reworked representation of Muslim identity, which is secular[22] and has developed democratically in a more or less non-hierachical manner, without a despotic and centralized clergy, is opposed all forms of discrimination: against women, sexual and ethnic or religious minorities (Jews, Christians, Roma and other minorities traditionally persecuted during so many crises, especially in Europe), or against persons with HIV/AIDS. It is thus necessary, to take into account the specific political stakes involved, for all Muslims in France and in Europe, in such a reformatory endeavour. This is also true with regards to the particular brand of queer activism called "Islamic," in relation to the representation that queer Muslims have of their gender and sexuality.

The big question is whether, in the near future, it can be expected that such an approach will take on a transnational nature, or whether this kind of approach will remain confined to "diasporic" Muslim communities in the West. Will this approach be bolstered by feminists,

[21] Ramadan, Tariq. "*Islam et homosexualité*," TariqRamadan.com, 2009. <http://tariqramadan.com/blog/2009/05/28/islam-et-homosexualite/>

[22] Here again is an ecclesial term that traditionally refers to those in Christendom who are actively engaged in the life of the Church – the community of believers who are nevertheless not part of the institutional hierarchy.

by the historical allies of activists for the rights of sexual minorities in the West?[23] Why and to what extent?

A strong point of attack for such a topic is the issue of how Islamic authorities in France have been adapting their discourse, which now seems to want to carve out a place for sexual minorities within French Islam. But these authorities are in general self-proclaimed, non-representative, highly politicized, and particularly conscious of the financial implications of their "fatwas": a case in point is the halal industry having reached unprecedented proportions in France and elsewhere, to the point that such a subject is seized by the far-right. Will halal meat continue to be placed on the same level as the "sins of the flesh?" In any case, the institutions of Islam in France, increasingly (dis)organized, clerical, and engaged in the defence of what they consider to be their exclusive preserve, can no longer ignore the diversity of genders and sexualities. It is at any rate a small revolution in itself.

This present research has brought me to analyse the construction of a counter-narrative that is in the process of being developed, emanating from Arab-Muslim LGBT activism. This is a counter-narrative that does not merely content itself with the embodiment of a posture that is oppositional to the dogmatisms of the most extremist among us. I have tried to determine in what way this alternative Muslim activism is similar to and different from Islamic feminism, which is also being developed, though sometimes stuck in a rut; most feminists deemed "Islamic" are silent on the issue of sexuality in general, and on gender diversity in particular. However, it is not a question of establishing some sort of "islamologizing" theory, but rather to begin with the facts and testimonies, primarily from the Islamic authorities of France, but

[23] Abdallah, Stéphanie and Ludovic-Mohamed Zahed. "Théologiennes féministes de l'islam," *Le Monde*, 18 December 2013. <http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2013/02/18/theologiennes-feministes-de-l-islam_1834339_3232.html>

also from the representatives of queer Muslim minorities, in order to chart in detail their political strategies and their respective messages.

The challenge of this question is to avoid the pitfall consisting in desiring to give lessons to Arab-Muslim societies and diasporic communities that are in the middle of social and political changes. This is especially so since such an approach would soon be considered to be the manifestation of what some simplistically dismiss as the "Gay International" lobby, despite the protestation of LGBT activist movements. [24] [25]

From this particular perspective, the key question is how ongoing societal changes, negotiated with Muslim authorities in France (such as the CFCM), will allow Islamic sexual minorities in France a way out of hegemonic, straitjacket-like heteronormative identities. Now, one should not for all that seek to blindly superimpose these remarks to what is commonly considered a "homonationalist" norm, which seeks to ideologically orient the sexual practices of "Arabs," in Europe and elsewhere, by forcing the concerned individuals to perform certain gestures such as "coming-out," among others. This normative "gay" culture is supposedly imposed by elitist, bourgeois Western sexual minorities, who seek to strengthen their identity claims by finding them elsewhere, universally; this is indeed the conclusion of Massad's analysis, which is very harsh in its criticism and sometimes verges on a trial by supposition. These sexual minorities, which are increasingly politically organized in the West are, then, accused of essentialising and westernizing Arab-Muslims, with the help of Arab and Western intellectual elites who are completely convinced of the merits of the societal changes they experience in everyday life. In this reading, one cannot help but notice a peculiar attitude that

[24] Massad, Joseph. *Desiring Arabs*, University of Chicago Press, 2008.
[25] Whitaker, Brian. "Distorting desire," al-bab.com, 2007. <http://al-bab.com/distorting-desire>

betrays an apparently unresolved tension in the identity representations of the "Arab" and the "Westerner."[26]

In any case, the main goal of approaching such a question, addressed in an anthropological and participatory manner and not from a partisan perspective, thus as objectively as possible, is to determine to what extent Muslim theologians in France, whose project it is to build an Islam *of* France, that is to say a French Islam (as opposed to an Islam merely *in* France), consider themselves to no longer be able to contribute to the development of a representation of Islam that is considered, rightly or wrongly, as openly homophobic. It is exciting to observe the direction towards which this Islam of France is still evolving. The subsidiary question to this is to determine the means by which these theologians, thinkers or preachers of France and Europe, will come to abandon a homophobia that for some is intrinsically linked to the religion.[27]

Today in Europe, there are imams, like Tareq Oubrou, who assert that it is the duty of every Muslim to fight against all forms of violence, directly or indirectly, against sexual minorities. Yet this same imam, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and still a member of the L'Union des organisations islamiques de France (UOIF), argued—before issuing a retraction—that homosexuality can be compared to bestiality, that it is contrary to the Islamic "ethics," according to the heterosexual norm imposed on him by *his* representation of the Divine and of the "natural" order of things in life. Imam Oubrou does not precise, however, on what grounds this ethics is based, as if it were self-evident. Furthermore, many Islamic authorities in the West or in the Muslim world, argue strongly that homosexuality has always been

[26] Djellad, Djallil. *Cet Arabe qui t'excite*, Balland, 2000.

[27] Godard, Didier. *Deux hommes sur un cheval: L'homosexualité masculine au Moyen Âge*, H&O, 2003. The publisher presents the book in this manner: "How can we explain that the tolerance for love between men that persists during centuries marked by Christianity disappears at the moment when the latter loses its hold on people's minds and manners."

forbidden in Islam.[28] Yet, and the paradox is all but too apparent, it is a historical fact to say that so-called "transgressive" sexual behaviours—transgressive of a social order governed in public by heterocentric norms—were tolerated for centuries in the Arab-Muslim world, as long as they were confined to the private sphere. This was a tolerance that was expressed until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, throughout Arab-Muslim societies, including in the highest spheres of Islamic power, since antiquity.[29] [30] [31] Of course, tolerance is not proactive acceptance, but this representation of the first centuries of Islam marks a clear rupture with the homophobia of postcolonial Arab-Muslim states, or even of so-called "Islamic" "states" such as Daesh, which imprison and even execute sexual minorities, as was the case in Europe until the eighteenth century.

Note for the moment that this is precisely where the paradox is but all too apparent. It seems that this tolerance or relative indifference towards homosexual practices, in particular in the private sphere, derives its justification from the same attitude of early Muslims and the Prophet Muhammad himself. Recent work in hadith studies consider that the historical reality of prohibition of sexual minorities is more complex than it appears.[32] [33] There is actually no verse in the Qur'an clearly and unambiguously condemning sexual minorities as such. All the verses relating to "sodomites" are actually referring to patriarchal practices of ritual rapes of young men, but also of young women, by the political elites of a vanished people, vanished apparently without any trace for over five thousand years.[34] Far from a clear condemnation of

[28] Dalil Boubakeur, the rector of the Mosque of Paris, argued as much at a colloquium on May 17, 2010. Al-Qaradâwî, an eminent Muslim scholar, reminded audiences during the June 5, 2006 Al-Jazeera broadcast of "*Sharia and life*," that homosexuals merited « the same punishment as all sexual perverts, the same punishment as fornication."

[29] Chebel, Malek. *Encyclopédie de l'amour en islam*, Payot, 1995.

[30] Wright, J.W. and Rowson, Everett (eds). *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, Columbia University Press, 1997.

[31] Larivière, Michel. *Homosexuels et bisexuels célèbres: Le Dictionnaire*, Deletraz, 1997.

[32] Sayings or deeds of the Prophet of Islam.

[33] Kugle, Scott. *Homosexuality in Islam*, Oneworld Publications, 2010.

[34] Aside from some ruins still being evaluated today by recent archeological research.

sexual minorities, some Qur'anic verses can in fact be interpreted as authorizing a certain degree of tolerance towards sexual minorities. Muhammad, for example, had formally forbidden attacking effeminate—or "transidentitary"—men (termed, at the time, as *mukhannathuns*[35]).

Moreover, it is probable that this tolerance was already in place before the time of the Prophet, as long as these individuals did not disturb public order. Scott Kugle cites the example of the hadith of Aisha, a wife of the Prophet, who reported that an effeminate man was accustomed to serve the wives of the Prophet, and they found nothing wrong with his visits, since he was a male with "no sexual desire towards women."[36] Note that in the version set by Aisha, the women allowed him access to their private chambers because they were convinced that he "did not have the capacities that define a male as such," which is to say that he did not desire women. The Prophet's wives did not even deem it necessary to veil themselves in front of him.

This discussion should proceed in relation to the Qur'anic verses—over 70 in total—that refer to the "abomination" of the people of Lot, in Sodom and Gomorrah. One of these verses, from the mouth of angels to the people of Lot, declares: "How dare you practice an abomination to which no other people had given themselves before you."[37] But this "abomination" does not refer to prostitution or homosexuality, but to "ritual rapes," as indicated by the chronicles of the ancient historian Herodotus who described the patriarchal sexual practices of an elite of the city who offered the virginity of young men from among the people and the dignity of foreigners as an offering to the goddess Ishtar:

[35] In Arabic, the triliteral root khountha refers to androgyny.
[36] *Sahih Muslim*, book 26, hadith 5416.
[37] Quran 7:80.

> Once in his life, the tradition is to sit down in the temple of love [dedicated to the goddess Ishatar] and to have […] sexual relations with a stranger [...] the men pass by and make their choice. The sum of money does not matter, the woman never refuses because it would be a sin, since he money has been sacralised by tradition.[38]

Of course, these are not homosexual practices as such, but rather domineering and violent sexual practices.

Kugle also highlights that the only homophobic traditions in Islam are apocryphal and appeared at times of political and identitarian crises, for example in Andalusia in the Middle Ages, which nevertheless was at the same time that renowned scholars such as Ibn Hazm declared that there existed no difference between homosexual love and other forms of love.

Regarding the evolution of these representations, that would go on to be increasingly centred on exclusive heterosexuality, one can consult, for example, Frédéric Lagrange's analysis of the travel narratives to Paris by Arab-Muslim intellectuals who compared the attraction of one sex to the other to the attraction between "iron and magnet":

> An attraction for the same sex leaves the field of the natural (kharaja an al-hala al-tabi'iyya). The first comparison was already used one thousand years prior by Ibn Hazm in his Ring of the Dove (Tawq al-hamama), but, then, in order to describe any type of amorous passion; with Tahtawi, an argument restricting the field of the natural to heterosexual attraction, with a voluntary use of "scientific" parallels, takes hold arguably for the first time in the Arabic language.[39]

[38] Dening, Sarah. *The Mythology of Sex*, Macmillan General Reference, 1996.
[39] Lagrange, Frédéric. "Les femmes de Paris, vues par trois voyageurs arabes du XIXe siècle," *Colloque "Connaissances de l'Orient," Abu Dhabi; 13-14 janvier*, 2009, p. 5. Available online: http://mapage.noos.fr/masdar/F.Lagrange-FemmesdeParis.pdf

Al-Tahtawi, Lagrange notes, is part of the avant-garde that coalesced during the second part of the nineteenth century through to the start of the twentieth century.[40] This is a literary turning point that follows homoeroticism's loss of social legitimacy, faced with a heteronormative European binary model:

> Tahtawi is careful not to excessively condemn French women, for he grasps that the mixing of public space will be an issue of modernity, and that the delegitimization of homosociality and homoerotism requires the construction of the woman as the sole object of desire, which implies her frequentation and visibility. What the young man plants through his words takes root a century later in the manners of his country.[41]

This renegotiation of the social norm in gender, especially beginning in the modern period, again, seems more consistent with the attitude of the Prophet Muhammad described, by many members of his inner circle, as proactively defending the dignity and the lives of these *mukhanathuns*—men described by Everett Rowson, as early as in 1991, as effeminate, without desire towards women, dressed colourfully, putting henna on their bodies (a distinctive marker of femininity at the time), and having sexual relations with men. Moreover, once again, the Prophet's wives, when at home and or among the children of the Prophet, did not veil themselves in front of *mukhanathuns*. [42]

In the context of prophetic traditions related to gender diversity, there is a hadith that forbids attacking effeminate men wearing henna on their hands as would women. On this topic, the

[40]See, for example, Ṭahṭāwī, Rifāʻah R, and Daniel L. Newman. *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826-1831)* [*takhlīṣ Al-Ibrīz Fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz Aw Al-Dīwān Al-Naṭīs Bi-Īwān Bārī*s], Saqi, 2004. Voir aussi al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah al-Saffar, *Al-risalah al-titwaniyyah ila diyar al-firansiyyah 1845-1846* [le voyage tétouanais dans le pays des Français], Matba'at al-haddad Yusuf Ikhwan, 1995.

[41] Lagrange, Frédéric. "Les femmes de Paris," p. 5.

[42] Rowson, Everett. "The Effeminates of Early Medina," Journal of the American Oriental Society 111 (4), 1991, pp. 671-693.

Prophet reportedly said: "I forbid the killing of those who pray."[43] Prayer among Muslims is the ultimate symbol for the equality of all. Interestingly, one early moment of aggression towards sexual minorities was expressed by Abu Huraira, one of the Prophet's companions, who garnered a bad reputation on sexuality and cheating, political vices certainly related, at least in part, to his desire to extricate himself from his status as a political subaltern. Abu Huraira, a former androgynous mukhanathan displayed homophobia, transphobia, and, likely, a deeply-internalized self-hatred that he struggled to deal with throughout his life.[44] He explicitly complained about this to the Prophet who, after careful consideration, advised him to calmly accept his destiny and the gender that God had assigned to him.

Finally, once again to illustrate the hypothesis of tolerance towards non-heterosexual sexual practices—as long as they remained marginal or subaltern, and not challenge the patriarchy of the elderly male elite—consider this anecdote from one of the Prophet's companions:

> We used to depart for battle with the Prophet. There were no women with us. We asked: O Prophet, could we treat some [male youths] as eunuchs? He forbade us from doing so.[45]

The rape of young boys was therefore probably a common practice among the Arabs before Islam. And this version of Al-Bukhari states that the Prophet allowed them, alternatively, to temporarily marry "corrupt" women in the neighbourhood, and recited to them this verse in the Quran: "O ye who believe! make not unlawful the good things which Allah hath made lawful for you, but commit no excess."[46] I would also add that in more than seventy verses referring to the "crime of the people of Lot" (commonly thought to be "sodomy"), the terms

[43] Abu-Dawud, Book 41 *General Behavior [Kitab Al-Adab]*, Number 4910.
[44] Mernissi, Fatima. *Le harem politique: le Prophète et les femmes,* Albin Michel, Paris, 1987.
[45] Sahih Bukhari, vol. 7, book 62, no. 13.
[46] Salih Al-Dina Al-Munajjid. *Al-Hayyat al-Jinsiyyah 'ind al-'arab, min al-Jahiliyyahilaailaakhir al-Qarn al-Rabi' al-hijri [La vie sexuelle des arabes, depuis la période antéislamique jusqu'à la fin du quatrième siècle de l'hégire],* Dar al-Kitab al-Jadid, 1958.

"gay" or "trans," or any other more historically appropriate equivalent, are never cited. Again, their crimes are permanently linked to the violent practice of non-consensual ritual rapes.

Nevertheless, the issue here is not whether or not homosexuality is essentially condemned by Islam (a theological question); or whether or not Islam is compatible with a secular and libertarian representation of our gender identities (a political, or even electoral question). Rather, the issue at hand is to discuss how gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transpeople, and queers, claim their "Muslimness" (an anthropological and sociological question).

1 C – A Reflective and Participative Anthropological Perspective

Whether one centres academic analysis on the question of the relation to spirituality, or of the relation to sexuality, the objective of such studies is to approach, from an anthropological and participative point of view, on the ground, the question of transformations of identity representations within our society, as linked to issues that are at the heart of the social politics in present day France and which, moreover, concern all of us on the individual level, whether we like it or not, as citizens.

Sofian Merabet's book *Queer Beirut* (2014) is written with this in mind. Merabet studies the emergence of new queer identities in connection with new urban spaces in the heart of post-war Beirut. From 1995 to 2014, Merabet made a series of ethnographic trips to Lebanon during which he interviewed numerous gay men in Beirut. Through their life stories, Merabet has put into perspective these ethnographic accounts in order to explore how Lebanese gay men begin and experience their sexual relationships, as well as how they formulate their identity. Merabet also examines the notion of "queer spaces" in Beirut and the role that this city, its structure, its colonial history, its openness to the world, and the religious

representations with which it was built, have played in the discovery and the exploration of the sexuality of his respondents (see insert).

Queer Geography

More than the social norms regulating behaviours in the public sphere, some homosexual Muslims highlight the fact that these identities—these *habitus*, in the Bourdieusian sense of the term—must be rethought and "queered." Concerning the application of this paradigm, linked to gender studies, Marie-Hélène Bourcier has given a precise illustration of this semantic transformation in process:

> Can we continue to speak of a "transvestite women" without questioning the heterocentric and masculine construction of transvestism, a vestimentarily essentialized "perversion-inversion," which is only meaningful within a binary heterosexual regime that establishes a regulated continuity between sex and gender, between biological sexes? [...] Talking about "transgender practices" would make it possible to embrace a greater number of expressions of genders and to re-evaluate the pseudo-exceptionality of "transvestism."[47]

In fact, this debate between tenants of "queered" or "gendered" paradigms stretches well beyond the social sciences, into disciplines as unexpected as geography. Rachèle Borghi, a geographer who studies the relations between space and gender identity, affirms that:

> The main objective of the geography of gender is the analysis of the relations between space and gender in their most varied forms and the roles and functions that men and women occupy in it. The reflection on these themes developed in a structured way from the second half of the 1970s. It began with feminist theories that analyzed the working world and its gender-based divisions, focusing on the binary of reproductive work, assigned to women, and of productive work, which fell under the jurisdiction of men.[48]

In this sense, "queer" should be understood, not as a noun, but as a verb, that is to say as a process of "queering." The collateral effect of this semantic and political process is the potential invisibilization of minority voices by "queer postures."[49]

Generally, queer Muslims interiorize the tendancies of a social control that harasses them, oppresses

[47] Bourcier, Marie-Hélène. "Des 'femmes travesties' aux pratiques transgenres: repenser et queeriser le travestissement," *Clio. Histoire, femmes et sociétés* 10, 1999. <http://clio.revues.org/255>

[48] Bordhi, Rachele. "De l'espace genré à l'espace 'queerisé.' Quelques réflexions sur le concept de performance et sur son usage en géographie." *Espaces et sociétés* 33, 2012, pp. 109-116. <http://eso.cnrs.fr/TELECHARGEMENTS/revue/ESO_33/Borghi2.pdf>

[49] Espineira, Karine, Maud-Yeuse Thomas, and Arnaud Alessandrin. "Introduction," *Cahiers de la transidentité: Corps trans, corps queer* 3, 2013.

them, and nevertheless seems to offer them grammatical frames of perception that are politically complex and, indeed, necessarily obscure because they are in the process of becoming "queer." It is in this intermediate and queered space, this intergender space, that these queer Muslims are able to formulate a personal identity inspite of the pressures of social and communitarian conformism.

Here are some of the conclusions that Merabet draws through his analysis:

> Still looking for more original places, where one can relax almost unreservedly in an atmosphere of excitement generated by the end of a civil war that is ultimately unresolved, many Lebanese people have seen in their Saturday outingsa form of short-term satisfaction. A satisfaction that can never be fully satisfied has led to the need to perpetually explore fresh and - allegedly - superior lands. Only those who were able to regularly visit these places considered fashionable, at any time, are considered as connected and trendy. In this respect, the fact that the Lebanese have shown vanity and indulgence in the post-war years has circulated along its legitimate course, alongside these coercive social lines, not only from one club to the other, but also from one neighborhood to the next.[50]

Through his analysis of individual behaviours within the recently liberated city of Beirut, Merabet skillfully manages to draw conclusions on the dynamic and social geography of sites, as well as on the question of identity transformations during periods of armed civilizational conflicts:

> Kaslik was at the beginning of its trajectory but, after almost a decade later, this completely rebuilt district of Beirut's city center arrived at its end. Until the mid-2000s, the only neighborhood that managed to maintain its reputation as a festive and post-war spot of nightlife was the immediate vicinity of Monot street [...]. This zone retains a spatial persistence very probably because of its immediate proximity to the khatt al-tamas (the Green Line) but also because other areas, such as the

[50] Merabet, Sofiane. *Queer Beirut*, University of Texas Press, 2014, pp. 19-20.

> Hamra (Red) district, west of Beirut, were still undergoing renovation after the war. In general, not all clubs catered to a clientele identified as queer. And those who did so also attracted heterosexual individuals, which initially made it impossible to categorize a particular club as a specifically "gay club."[51]

One notes here that gender studies and sexual identity formation are part of an on-going anthropological conversation, in a number of studies in the Middle East and in urban centers, but also that the history of gay and lesbian identities in the Middle East has only just begun to be told.

Queer Beirut is the first anthropological study of queer life in the Arab Middle East. Building on anthropology, urban studies, gender studies, queer studies, and sociocultural theory, Merabet's convincing ethnography suggests a critical theory of gender and of the formation of religious identities, which troubles traditional anthropological premises on the potential role that societies, and especially urban spaces, have in facilitating the emergence of diverse subcultures in the city. By using Beirut as a microcosm of the complexity of homosexual relationships in contemporary Lebanon, *Queer Beirut* offers a critical point of view from which to deepen understandings of women rights, and of citizenship, regarding the structuration of social inequalities in the larger context of the Middle East.

Such studies have the common objective of reestablishing the right to critique, by placing themselves in opposition to a hegemony of thought, by seeking out, in the heart of social interstices, what makes sense of all of us. As Frédéric Lebaron writes:

> It is first of all a question of breaking the apparent unanimity of the dominant discourse that constitutes the essential part of its symbolic force, of re-establishing the rights of critique by helping to lift internalized censures, and of contributing, by

[51] Merabet, Sofiane. *Queer Beirut*, pp. 19-20.

> virtue of example, to the renewal of the political intervention of intellectuals, the reconstruction of the *trouble-fête* role, which is to avoid going round in circles and, because there is no democracy without a critical counter-power, to thereby fight for democracy. It is then necessary to transmit specific weapons of resistance to combat the influence of the doxa conveyed by the media, to imagine new forms of expression and symbolic action, to contribute to a reinvention of the militant work of protest and the organization of protest and in particular the invention of a new internationalism (at least on a European scale), by trying to go beyond the mental borders imposed by national cultures.[52]

That is, at the very least, in theory because academic institutions in France, steeped in appereance in inclusitivity and in objective research, remain, as Michel Foucault, Serge Moscovi, or even Pierre Bourdieu, have stated, overly focused on the reproduction of normalized elites who not only are hardly able to come to terms with the intersectionality of identities, but also with multidisciplinary analytical approaches. In this context and especially, as citizens living in challenging times of increasing homophobic, racist, anti-Muslim acts, of protests motivated by fascistic ideologies, and of repeated terrorist attacks, these objective studies are essential in making the unavoidable decisions that face our democracies today.

Morocco and Algeria are good examples of increasingly openly homophobic societies, under the influence of recent legislative offensives against homosexuality in several Arab and Muslim countries. Conversely, South Africa placed the protection of sexual minorities in its constitution more than fifteen years ago. The country also has a strong Muslim presence on its soil, dating back to the twelfth century, through repeated contacts with merchants from Arabia, and, subsequently, in a more structured manner during the colonial period in the seventeenth century. South Africa is a country where the struggle against homophobia is not

[52] Lebaron, Frédéric and Gérard Mauger. "Raisons d'agir: un intellectuel collectif autonome," *Journal des anthropologues 77-78*, 1999, pp. 295-301. <http://jda.revues.org/3089>

self-evident, especially in townships devastated by a misery that seems quite astonishing for a relatively rich country, despite the best intentions of post-apartheid authorities in the past fifteen years.

Yet it is South Africa that seems to give several examples of these Muslims who discover themselves to be homosexual and, according to Christophe Broqua, are trying to circumvent the homophobia that they wrongly or rightly perceive in their local Muslim communities:

> In this country, the first homosexual organizations appeared in the early 1990s. In 1998, a new association was created that differed from the previous ones in that it was multiracial and committed against apartheid. This is at the same time that the homosexual cause begins to acquire a certain visibility; a first Gay Pride was held in Johannesburg in 1990. As a result of the political upheavals of the early 1990s, homosexual activists found themselves well placed to put pressure on the ANC, who soon espoused their cause. Thus, after the election of Nelson Mandela as President in 1996, South Africa became the first country in the world to include in its Constitution the prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation. This fact would have another major consequence ten years later: following a complaint filed by a couple of women against the Marriage Act, which defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman, and which was thus considered as discriminatory and unconstitutional, South Africa became the first African State to legalize same-sex marriage in November 2006.[53]

Since then, homosexual Muslim South Africans have been trying to recreate a community they describe as "inclusive," in the sense that it includes within it individuals who define themselves as Muslim without value-judgments or discrimination based on ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Such a community has existed since 2006 in Cape

[53] Broqua, Christophe. "L'émergence des minorités sexuelles dans l'espace public en Afrique," *Politique africaine* 126, 2012, pp. 5-23. <http://www.politique-africaine.com/numeros/pdf/intro/126005.pdf>

Town, and is organized around the first Muslim in the world to have been chosen by his queer community as their appointed imam.

Visibility in the public space and consequences on inclusiveness

The question of public visibility, or the lack thereof, of these identity and political issues is a fundamental fact of this present issue related to the exclusion of minorities considered to have little to no political weight. Some gay Muslims claim to have never belonged to any association. Others question the at-once individualist and collectivist identity and community model of LGBT associations, in favour of an alternative post-identity school of thought. This is in order to produce "hybrid" identities, in the sense of Homi Bhabha's cultural hybridation:

> It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond. At the century's edge, we are less exercised by annihilation—the death of the author—or epiphany—the birth of the 'subject'. Our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the 'present', for which there seems to be no proper name other than the current and controversial shiftiness of the prefix 'post': postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism... Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* - here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth.[54]

In particular, some transgender participants of this study, due to the nature of their questions, but also by the fact of being multiply marginalized, for example in the case of FTMs (Female-to-Male transgendered people), even within an LGBT-community that is itself at the margins, manage to elaborate reflections that are rich in ethical, identity, and even physical consequences, on their own corporeality, while deconstructing the ins and outs of the ethical and political impasse on any communautarian or public "fascistic" identity, imposed on the entirety of private space. I use this adjective here, carefully, in the sense that this axiology, by definition, tends to impose one narrow set of possible identities rather than another.

The civic engagement of these homosexual Muslims is explained, in a flamboyant and without doubt extreme manner, by that for which Habermassian theorists advocate in terms of the necessary individualization of public debate. Indeed, according to officials from Muslim LGBT associations in

[54] Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, 1994, p. 1.

Europe—whom I shall quote more specifically in my subsequent analysis—homophobia is mainly due to the ignorance of those who come from a different culture, a culture where one does not speak publicly about sexuality. These European Muslims have a depreciated representation of sexuality in general. This is all the more the case when homosexuality—considered deviant in relation to the order of things commonly presented as being heteronormative—is displayed in the open.

Thus, in accordance with this empirical paradigm, these queer Muslims insist, for the most part, on the detail of this holistic approach to these issues, regarding the difficulty that they experience daily within their associations, to reconcile the different components of their identity. To describe this negotiation between different cultural norms, which sometimes appear opposed to each other, and commonly regarded as oxymoronic, some cite Gay Pride as the ultimate marker of this irreducible (from a political point of view) cultural distance.

Furthermore, beyond a simple fundamental cultural difference that, in any case, remains to be demonstrated, beyond homosexual or bisexual practices, also existing in the countries of origin of "immigrants," mostly of Moroccan, Algerian or North African descent, there is a homophobia that stems from an attempt to "strengthen" their "national identity" in countries where racism and, for the Muslims among them, anti-Muslimism or hostility to Islam, might tend to depreciate the representation that they have of themselves.

This here is a commited counter-discourse, clearly constructed against homophobia, and which seeks to be part of a broader dynamic of the overhaul of Islamic social norms. This is a counter-discourse that breaks with the discourse of homophobic Muslims. This discourse seems to be clearly inspired by Muslim thinkers or philosophers like Mohammed Iqbal, from the last century in Pakistan, or his contemporary French-Muslim intellectual heir Abdenour Bidar.[55] These Muslim thinkers tell us that Islam must be fundamentally redefined. According to them, Islam can no longer refuse to engage in a "dialogue with the rest of the world".[56] Muslims owe it to themselves to include, one way or another, this concept of inalienable individual freedom to the Islamic theoretical corpus. This would be, according to some historians, such as Frédérique Lenoir, a sociologically inevitable axial evolution that awaits

[55] Iqbal, Mohammed and Diah Saba Jazzar (tr). *Le renouveau de la pensée religieuse en islam*, Al-Biruni, 2004.
[56] Bidar, Abdennour. *L'islam sans soumission: pour un existentialisme musulman*, Albin Michel, 2008.

all forms of religiosity.[57] A homecoming of sorts that is usually termed, when speaking of monotheism, "reform."[58]

So, what might the reformed representation that queer Muslim have of their relationship to Islam and to their gender identity ressemble? Does this representation differ from other Muslims who do not belong to a sexual minority? At the heart of our problem is the question of whether and how this particular representation allows queer Muslims to develop a coherent counter-discourse of their point of view? Does this ethical consistency allow them to adhere to the demands of LGBT community for the right to marry?

To understand the commitment of the latter, it is imperative to take into account the fact that the development of this public counter-discourse is based on complex psychological and sociological mechanisms. For this reason, we shall examine why, according to certain theologians, such as the Imam of Bordeaux Mosque Tareq Oubrou, this reform of identity representation will come from what he calls "*la sharia de minorité*."[59] This refers to an Islamic ethics, developed, according to him preferentially in "foreign" lands, where the Muslims of France represent a minority in a secular space. For now, Arab-Islamic societies seem, indeed, to be in the posture of a social group that feels threatened, on the defensive, and which practices discrimination. This is a social phenomenon of rejecting those who are considered different, or indeed "abnormal."[60]

[57] Lenoir, Frédéric. *Petit traité de l'histoire des religions*, Plon, 2008.
[58] Segesvary, Victor. L'Islam et la Réforme, University Press of America, 1998, p. 26.
[59] Oubrou, Tarek. *Profession imam*, Albin Michel, 2009.
[60] Foucault, Michel. *Les Anormaux*, Seuil, 1999.