

MIGRATION AND RIPPED IDENTITIES:

The Paradigm of Queer Migrant Muslims in European Countries

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Abstract

The debate over Islam's compatibility with the Western civilization resurfaced with the inflow of asylum seekers to Western countries, deeming that the values of Islam might not be compatible with liberal Western ideals. In this regard, queer Muslims with their intersectional socio-political location face a double discrimination, as they challenge the monolithic image made about them, both in regard to their gender, as well as in regard to their religious and ethnic identities. This underrepresented group experiences a triple consciousness which is torn between the different layers of their identity, namely religion, gender, and ethnicity. According to the findings queer Muslims, are navigating the existence of homosexuality not just inside their cultural, religious, and ethnic groups, but also within the Western world. Queer Muslims occupying the intersectional politico-social location challenges the monolithic image that the West has portrayed of the East. Moreover, the research explores the conceptual process of othering and its embodiment as homonationalism.

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Introduction

The rhetoric of the incompatibility of Islam and Western civilization is not only old but also has been reproduced throughout centuries of human interaction. Yet, the discussion has regained salience with the influx of asylum seekers to Western countries. Even though neither Islam nor migration is new to Europe, the contemporary discourse attributes urgency and burden vis-à-vis current events framing it as a crisis. The Islamophobic anti-immigration camp has raised economic and non-economic concerns such as security and culture which are represented in the fear of spreading Islam, the high birth rates, crime, and collapse of the social system.

Even though there are many challenges for all, the analysis will focus on queer Muslim immigrants and their multiple consciousnesses. It will be taken into consideration the immigration of the MENA Region Muslim to Europe because it represents the migration flow that is leading the political debate and that potentially can affect the political order to both countries of origins and host countries.

In particular, This thesis intends to focus on the identity drama lived by queer Muslim migrants in Europe coming from the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA) for two reasons: first, to pose the basis for a discussion aimed at reviewing the ongoing process of Othering; second, as a paradigmatic case of the struggles of recognition and the related identity crisis lived by specific categories of migrant Muslims such as queer and those who are open to the integration with the what is constructed as European values.

As the research argues that the existence of queer Muslims challenges the narrative that the West has constructed. First, it encounters the dichotomous discourse that Islam cannot accommodate homosexuality, and the existence of a Muslim queer is perceived as an impossibility. Second, the research problematizes the homonationalism approach that the West has adopted to discriminate against the 'Others'. Third, it argues that by discriminating the queer Muslims, the West contradicts its own liberal values. The research problematizes and realizes that there is no ground to consolidate queer Muslim immigrants' identity without assimilation. The root of the problem is that the three elements of political identities race, religion, and gender do overlap, the triple consciousness of the queer Muslims cannot coexist with the norms that the Western has constructed.

That is why, the research is posing the question of what concepts of discrimination can be used to describe the struggles of queer Muslims in Europe, in a postcolonial world?

The research imposes this question after recognition of the lack of representation of queer Muslims. The research argues that the homonationalist discourses and practices are aimed to isolate queer Muslims from the international queer community. As a result, the language does not exist because queer Muslims who are attempting to consolidate are excluded from conversations. Therefore, the research aims to explore the premises and reasoning surrounding the conceptual denying of a common queer sphere. Regarding the methodology of the research, as stated above there is a lack of presentation of the queer Muslims, hence, due to the limitation for accessing queer data, the thesis utilizes other academic work, to re-evaluate the construction of queer Muslims' identity. Hence, connecting the dots provide a holistic picture of the status of queer Muslims.

In the first chapter, the research briefly discusses the main influencing theories, to set a better ground for grasping the conceptual premise in the thesis. In the second chapter, the research discusses the conceptualization of the European identity. by reconstructing the process of polarization of fear in the host European countries, showing the misleading use of the concept of identity made, both by populist political parties and religious leaders. In the third chapter, the thesis discusses Islam and homosexuality in the script and the laws of the Sharia countries.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, the research observes the underlying tensions at the social and intersubjective level which are related to queer Muslims from the MENA Region. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the process of othering through the lens of homonationalism and homonormativity, as well as their effect on the identities of queer Muslims. The research focuses on the concept of 'fear' and on what we can define as the dialectic of fear, by analyzing the underlying problems related to the perception of cultural identity, to the intersubjective recognition, and to the individual identity which affects the daily life of Muslims.

1. CHAPTER 1 – Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the two main theories that have influenced this research, orientalism, and homonationalism. Said's classic work exemplifies the methodical process of othering, through the theory of orientalism. The orientalism discusses the romanization and exoticization of Arabs in the Western imagination, his theory is a key argument in the research because not only it is important from the postcolonial perspective but also in the queer Muslim immigrant case, from the view of feminizing the queer and labeling him as safe once they strap from the Islam, because of the correlation of Arabs and Muslims as uncivilized or dangerous.

Puar's seminal work displays homonationalism, which is defined as the practice of weaponizing LGBTQ rights in order to conquer other nations in the name of emancipation and equality. The research borrows Puar's theory of homonationalism as a continuation of the intellectual seeds that Said has planted.

1.1 *The Orientalism*

The orientalist discourse is the dominant cultural understanding of what European identity means as compared to all other cultures, where the Western culture is superior to the Eastern culture.ⁱ This discourse, created fundamentally for and by the West has the power to produce knowledge for the East as well as to mold the reality it is meant to describe.ⁱⁱ One of the most avid writers of this discourse is Edward Said who, during his influential work, examines the static representation of West vis a vis East and conveys the way in which the hierarchy of East and West is shaped in any intercultural dialogue.ⁱⁱⁱ

Othering practices can take different forms including spatial, temporal, hierarchical forms, etc., they can also be found in multiple forms combined. For example, temporally, due to its development and advancement, the Orient has remained what Europe has evolved from through time.^{iv} Spatially, the Orient is well divided by a line from Europe, where the latter is powerful and the former weak and defeated.^v Finally, Positioning one against the other and being omnipresent in every context is what defines the hierarchical form. Therefore, what we see, as a result, is the Orient being created by the West and therefore it becomes the only interlocutor for the Orient. In addition to this, the only one who has the authority to restructure the discourse and control its image in the West, which thus speaks for the Orient. Hence, Orientalism is the result of “a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”).”^{vi}

In addition to being dichotomous and hierarchical, this relationship is also one where the West's identity and self-identification is a result of the Orient's surrogacy.^{vii} Indeed, that is because it needs the other(s) in order to define its identity and the Orient becomes the contrast to what Europe is.^{viii} The Occident is then regarded as the creator of the other, and therefore with the power to control the knowledge production as well as the authority for its domination and control.^{ix} By this token, multiple dichotomies start surfacing such as the concepts of weak versus powerful, immature versus mature, barbarian versus civilized. Barbarism is referred to as a culture with defects in its language, people, as well as a civilization with characteristics such as liar, lethargy, and cunning.^x It was the incapability of the Orient that would not allow it to develop and evolve and, in turn, what deemed it to stay fixed in time.^{xi} The West, therefore, acts as a hero on a mission to save the Orient from its backwardness, inability to govern itself, and its constant fallout to chaos.^{xii}

The longevity of Orientalism depends on what Said refers to as “flexible positional superiority” which can be observed in any context in which the Occident is positioned as relatively higher than the Orient.^{xiii} Said indeed acknowledges that the Orientalist conceptions are not all myths and misconceptions that have been materially fed. However, he points out that the categorizations “rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient.”^{xiv}

Said recognized the importance of understanding his ideas in context as they are indeed not inherently political^{xv}, and also because by using these ideas in a directly political way, it can engender and problematizes the topics that relate to the “other”.^{xvi}

By continuously reproducing those notions it polarizes deeper both sides and hinders the possibility of fruitful encounters between the Orient and the West.^{xvii} Furthermore, the discourse between the Occident over the Orient gains prevalence over time as it is “first, and Oriental, second a human being, and last again and Oriental”.^{xviii} In turn, people of the Orient might not even qualify as human beings but a difficulty that the East has to contain and solve.^{xix} In this regard, it does not come as a surprise that the West continues to deal with the Orient in issues such as the refugee crisis which solidifies the notion of the East as a savior to the Orient.^{xx}

Taking all the above into consideration, the image of the Other in the Occident’s mind forms opinions around management, categorization, and simplification. Many scholars have found the othering as a recurring trend across different studies in time and geography. This is something that can be observed vividly now especially with the case of Queer Muslims in Europe.

1.2 *Homonationalism*

Homonationalism is a marriage of an exceptional form of national heteronormativity and an exceptional form of national homonormativity.^{xxi} To grasp Puar's intellectual sequence, we must first dissect briefly the major theories that have influenced her work.

Puar was inspired by homonormativity which is connected with the work of Lisa Duggan and heteronormativity which is linked with the work of Michael Warner. In order to understand the meaning behind the term homonationalism, we would have to briefly discuss the theories that have influenced Puar's work.

The concept of heteronormativity refers to the idea that heterosexual attraction and relationship are the naturally occurring forms of sexuality. The premise is based on an interpretation of sexuality that is fundamentally binary. Lisa Duggins employs the theory of heteronormativity, she explains the gay people can be included within the mainstream heterosexual society by labor, productivity instead of producing children, however, her stance is opposed to comparing homonormativity with heteronormativity or equating the two.^{xxii}

In other words, the queer would have to replicate the roles predetermined in the heterosexual society, they would have to assimilate they would become "normal" in the heterosexual society by performing neo-liberal capitalist practices.

Puar coined the term homonationalism, which is short for 'homonormative nationalism' in her book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. In her work, she uses the term to demonstrate the discourse of abuse of LGBTQ rights or positions to engage in xenophobic, racist, and anti-immigration ideologies.^{xxiii} The concept of homonationalism expands the accuracy of the theory of Orientalism.

In essence, the West's moral superiority is demonstrated in the adoption of feminist and LGBTQ viewpoints that is used as a justification to elevate the West above the non-West. Fundamentally, the discourse of the exceptionalism of white Western LGBTQ people is endorsing sexual othering of global South and Muslim subjects, particularly, terrorist racialized Muslim subjects, on whom Orientalist and neo-Orientalist projections are based.^{xxiv}

Puar proposes that all liberal lesbian and gay rights movements, uphold certain ideas about social progress one of which being that LGBTQ movements are upheld on the simple basis that the western nation-states of the global West have the capability of expanding to include all marginalized populations.^{xxv} However, in reality, the discourse of homonationalism allows some populaces to be granted better cultural citizenship than racialized others. In other words, LGBTQ rights discourses produce diverse narratives of progress and modernity that continue to grant certain populations the privilege of cultural and legal citizenship at the expense of those other populations. Homonationalism is articulated in the field of power, to put it simply, is the rise of the recognition of LGBTQ subjects that accompanies the limitation of welfare rights, immigrants' rights, and the expansion of state surveillance, detention, and deportation powers.

Therefore, for Puar homonationalism, neither does denote gay racism, a critique of the racial segregation and whiteness of mainstream LGBT communities nor does it indicate how conservative political imaginaries came to accept gays and lesbians' identities.

According to Puar "homonationalism is not an identity, a position, or an accusation, it is not another indicator meant to cleave a "good" progressive (transgressive/ politically left/ queer) from "bad" (sold-out / conservative/ politically bankrupt) queer"^{xxvi}. She describes it as a structural facet of modernity, as opposed to an aberration, and as a historical change

characterized by the acceptance of some homosexual bodies as deserving of protection by nation-states, as an essential rethinking of the relationship between sexuality, state, and capitalism “some homosexuals subjects are complicit with heterosexual nationalist formations rather than inherently or automatically excluded from or opposed to them.”^{xxvii}

In her work, Puar exemplifies homonationalism as the practice of weaponizing LGBTQ rights, when it is used to invade other countries, in the name of liberation and equality. She provides the example of the War on Terror, which is led by the United States in Iraq.^{xxviii} The international queer community saw an opportunity to emancipate the queer community in Iraq, however, at that time same-sex marriage was not legalized in all the states, albeit it was legalized in 2015. Not only that the United States military invaded the country, but has sexually assaulted, raped, and committed gender violence against the people of Iraq.

The narrative of the gendered power dynamics and the gendered interactions within the society, in general, is not only old but has been reproduced through time in different angles and spaces. What is astonishing is the duplication of the perspective in liberation claims that are supposed to be standing against everything that was made in Iraq. In the sense that the military has been used as a tool to impose domination, the whole premise of the military is the hierarchy of power “to be fragile is imagined by anyone of a patriarchal inclination to be essentially feminized”.^{xxix}

Furthermore, gender equality discourse has been constantly used as a benchmark of civilization by the West, Rahman argues “the policing of Muslim communities in the name of gender equality is now a globally organized phenomenon”^{xxx} however, the international community seems to ignore that dark legacy of France, Portugal and Britain the British Empire

on its colonies.^{xxx} In order to moralize their colonies and Christianize their cultures, these empires enacted anti-LGBT legislation.^{xxxii}

British colonialism has had a substantial negative impact on LGBTQ rights and freedom around the world. This particular issue was greatly affected by the British Empire's insistence on penalizing homosexual conduct in its colonies while certain cultures did not share the same outlook on such punishment.^{xxxiii}

We can conclude that Western imperialism has been abusing the gender discourse, in the name of equality and emancipation throughout the course of history. The West continues to be the dominant actor in its continuous attempts to civilize the Other, whether it is using the gay emancipation discourse, gender equality discourse, or the 'War on Terror' discourse.

2. Chapter 2 - The Dialectic of Fear and the Case of Muslim Migrants from the MENA Region

The fear of ‘the others’ is originated by identity factors that are strictly related to the issues of inter-subjective recognition, collective identity, and so on until the monolithic concept of cultural identity. Host communities are dominated by the fear to lose or fade their original identity by hosting migrants belonging to different cultures and religions; at the same time, migrants are dominated by the fear to be assimilated by the dominant culture of the hosting country and by the fear to lose their original identity, which represents for those living in foreign countries the only link available with the missing home country.

Therefore, we may argue that the fear of losing one his own identity becomes a fear of integration by both sides, host communities and migrant communities. This dialectic of fear becomes evident in the case of the MENA Region Muslim migrants in European countries, because of the role played by Islam in the countries of origins, where in some cases it regulates the whole sphere of life, both private and public, by defining the static boundaries of a given culture entirely.

Even among the young well-educated Muslim migrants from the MENA Region is possible to observe that some of the fundamental rights and liberties are not recognized, when they have not exercised gender rights or freedom of belief above all. Conversely, traditional practices like FGM, child marriages and forced marriages are well supported.

Values, moral principles, and cultural identity of Muslim migrants coming from the MENA Region are shaped by a holistic religious view of life, and precisely for this reason, they appear in radical contradiction with the secularism which characterizes moral values, life, and

the cultural identity of the European countries. This contradiction leads to a lack of integration with the social norms which rule the European societies. Despite the issue of integration is crucial and plays a vital role in the analysis of the migration phenomenon.

It is important to note, the concept of identity, which we may define - by adopting the word coined by Bauman – is a “liquid” concept^{xxxiv}. From the theoretical point of view, the idea of “identity” is “liquid” since its meaning intertwines with other key concepts, namely those of “recognition”, “ethnicity” and “culture”.

And quite apart from the pervasive concern with “identity” in work of gender, sexuality, race, religion, ethnicity, nationalism, immigration, new social movements, culture and “identity politics,” even those work has not been concerned primarily with these topics felt obliged to address the question of identity.^{xxxv}

The chapter starts with addressing what this thesis means by European Identity and its construction throughout history. Borrowing what Samuel P. Huntington^{xxxvi} called the “The Clash of Civilizations”, and the dynamic of the relationship of “the West versus the rest”. The objective of this chapter is precisely narrowed in the dialectic between fear and need of recognition which leads the Muslim migrants, and the queer Muslim migrants above all to an identity crisis in their daily life.

2.1 European Identity

The thesis refers to European Identity as a specific set of key values and principles – such as modernity, liberty, equality, and tolerance – which have been described as the basis of modern liberal democracies.^{xxxvii} These core values have been coined throughout different historical periods merging in the construct of European identity: the Ancient Greece - Athens and the classical philosophy; the Roman Empire, with the Roman law, the concept of *res publica*; the Christianity expressing the profound concept of individual as a moral person and his

inviolability^{xxxviii}; the Enlightenment, embedded by the French revolution of 1789, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, Kant and Rousseau, the secularism based on the rational thinking as the rule of law^{xxxix}; the industrialization^{xl} The trust in the development as a condition of human beings, the modern *bourgeois* society and struggles of the working class led by Marx's thought.

Although considered basic, these values are far from static, as argued by Delanty "Europe is, in fact, a historically fabricated reality of ever-changing forms and dynamics."^{xli} Indeed, Europe is only historically European in a way that it has "invented its image of a distorted modernity."^{xlii}

This image of the European identity is not only conceptualized by the Europeans and Westerns themselves but it is also kept alive and internalized by the global south, which is reflected in a sort of "Occidentalism" in the same way that Said^{xliii} used the term "Orientalism".^{xliv} Indeed, the history of Europe is the history not only of its unifying ideas but also of its divisions and frontiers, both internal and external.^{xlvi}

From the very start, the idea of the European Union was based on the process of economic interests and integration from which the assimilation of political values was assumed to emerge.^{xlvi} Another aspect of that, which acted as linkage was the sense of security in Europe through militarism^{xlvi}.

The more some concepts and categories are important, the more they are declined and utilized by scholars, media, and politicians: making continued use of these concepts in different contexts and for different purposes expands and strains their meaning. Indeed, as argued by Delanty "This Europeanism has rarely been associated with the politics of society in the sense of 'civil society' or the 'public sphere' understood as a domain distinct from that of the state"^{xlvi}.

This European community celebrates heterogeneity but within certain limits. It is selectively inclusive and tends to exclude all those that fall into the wide category of ‘migrant and minority, whether it is by limiting the mobility of non-national residents, or through other means.^{xlix} The official and codified version of European culture has nothing to say to the silent Europe of minorities.^l Indeed, the key characteristic of one group is not what its members have in common but rather what separates them from other groups.^{li}

2.2 The Polarization of Fear in the European Countries: “Us” Against “Them”

The matter of identity cannot be taken abstractly in isolation from the factors affecting its formation. As it emerges from the literature on identity exemplified in the work of Dantley, one cannot define oneself without defining the other, as Said demonstrates that the sense of Western self has emerged from the East.^{lii}

This identification of the self against the other is not problematic per se, rather, it is the value attributed to the constructed difference that is crucial for the exclusion. The intersubjective relationship of identities can be experienced in one of two ways: by highlighting distinctions between "Us" and "Them" or by acknowledging commonalities.^{liii} Thus, the outcome of the distinction between "Us" and "Them" is also highly dependent on the construction of what is “good” and “bad” of the perceived difference. The question thus becomes one of diversity or division, the latter giving rise to Other as “as a threatening stranger”.^{liv} As Delanty mentioned

Instead of identity being defined by a sense of belongingness and solidarity arising out of shared life-worlds, it becomes focused on opposition to an Other: the 'We' is defined not by reference to a framework of shared experiences, common goals and a collective horizon, but by the negation of the Other. Identification takes place through the imposition of otherness in the formation of a binary typology of 'Us' and 'Them'. The purity

and stability of the 'We' is guaranteed first in the naming, then in the demonization, and, finally, in the cleansing of otherness. This is frequently what the pursuit of community is about: the imposition of otherness in the assertion 'we are different from them'.^{lv}

Delanty describes how Castoriadis put it, the function of the 'imaginary' in the constitution of society is the “Social imaginary significations” defined are parts of every society and, most particularly, in today’s context understood as the “central imaginary.”^{lvi} The point at issue is the manner in which a society imagines itself in time and space with reference to a cultural model. This is not different from what Anderson has referred to as an “imaginary community”^{lvii} that describes one's national ideal.^{lviii}

2.3 The exploitation of fear of losing a phantom European Identity

In order to gain political support, far-right parties exploit the genuine European societies’ fear to lose – or even just fade – their collective identity if hosting immigrant Muslims from the MENA region^{lix}. The populist narrative of a supposed lack of integration, as well as the interpretation of mass immigration as a threat to European societies' cultural identity and security, is fast-growing support for far-right political groups. Examples of such tendencies can be observed in specters such as Eurabia, the Islamization and Arabization of Europe, the Islamophobia and the radical violence of the ISIS we are assisting at the election of Viktor Orban in Hungary, the increasing consent for Marin Le Pen in France, for the far-right in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and the election of Lega Nord and Movimento 5 Stelle in Italy.

On the other hand, Muslim migrants from the MENA region fear becoming assimilated into the dominant culture of their host nations as a price paid for the integration or even peaceful cohabitation. This fear is exploited by the adjacent Muslim communities and religious leaders,

which have the interest to reproduce themselves as closed communities where the membership is conceived and perceived as a grant given to those that comply with the cultural norms. Despite the different sects of Islam with its school - mainly, Sunnah, Shia, Khawrij – it stands the fact that Islam cannot be lived in *interiore homine* and this impossibility to privatize Islam along with the related social judgment on the good Muslim radically contradict the profound moral and methodological individualism that characterizes the European societies. The impossibility to contain Islam in the private life and communitarian meaning of religion represents an obstacle not only to the integration but also to the possibility for migrant Muslims to fully develop their own identity and live a harmonious life in the host countries. Dictate of religious leaders and the social judgment within the community affect the daily life of Muslims living in foreign countries, ripped from being recognized and integrated by their European ‘fellows’ or being recognized and estimated by their Muslim ‘brothers’. This contradiction undermines the self-recognition of Muslim migrants and poses the basis for their identity crisis. The above, therefore, exemplifies a situation where the European is a polarization of the fear of European societies to lose their liberal and secular – sometimes Christian – identity, which is recognized as European identity. In order to preserve this constructed identity, Europe has been engaged in conflicts. The issue of migration and fear of integration is rather seen as the continuation of the historical conflict between West and East, Christendom and Islam, in which Europe has had to consciously fight against foreign forms such as the Muslim expansion of the eighth century, the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, and later on the advancement of the Red Army in 1945 by the Russians who have traditionally been perceived as non-European.^{lx}

3. CHAPTER 3 – The Position of Islam on Homosexuality

This chapter discusses homosexuality from the Islamic point of view. First, it briefly discusses the main concepts of Sharia'a and punishments of Sodomy in Islam. Then the origin of the story of Lot and sodomy in the holy Islamic script *Quran*, passing by the terms in the Arabic language, and the focus on gay men more than women, then elaborating on transgenders.

Second, the chapter discusses the treatment of queers in the countries of origin and answers the question of why the MENA region is different than the other majority-populated Muslim countries. To answer this question, we will be demonstrating the policies and laws in the MENA region regarding Queer Muslims. Finally, the chapter discusses the revivalist approaches, regarding the script in light of modernization.

The case of Queer Muslims is paradigmatic of the tensions which stress the life and identity of Muslim migrants, and it clearly shows the underlying issue of recognition/misrecognition and the related identity crisis as a consequence.

The complex of the Occident-Orient challenges the integration of immigrants in general terms. However, the queer migrants specifically experience another layer of identity to be added. As they have layers of identity, they own triple consciousness due to the collectivity of three factors, religion, ethnicity, and gender. The religion factor is very important because the research specifically discusses the issue of queer Muslims and the nature of the orthodox Islamic teachings, which interfere in the daily life of Muslims.

The chapter elaborates on the opinion of Islam on homosexuality. The triple consciousness is problematic because on one hand two of the layer are often mistaken to be two faces for one coin, which are the Islam and Arab ethnicity. In many cases, they overlap, but it

is important to remember that not all Arabs are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabs. In fact, the majority of Muslims are from outside the Middle East and North Africa region. However, this overlapping that stresses the stereotype that all Arabs are Muslims emerges the question if Islam is a culture? On the other hand, the other layer of gender, implicitly homosexuality might seem in contradiction with the Islamic belonging especially.

Some see the possibility of coexistence between religion and homosexuality. This is what a group of queer Muslims of the Arab world has presented and argued as the following, that God has created them as homosexual, therefore if it is forbidden or refused by religion then why he created them in this way. However, Fatwa (Etymology) puts homosexuality in contradiction with religion, and when a homosexual fails to give up their instinctive homosexuality, one will inevitably have to leave religion and become an atheist or a non-religious because many countries -in which Islam is the dominant religion for the majority of the population- criminalize the act of homosexuality.

Islam as the other Abrahamic religions, inspire the forbiddances of homosexuality from the story of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. In the Arabic language, it is referred to the homosexual man as a “Louti” and “Liwat” is the meaning of sodomy, which are both derived from Lot’s name.

The Holy book of Islam, *the Quran*, tells the story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom – and sodomy in Arabic is known as “*Liwat*” based on Lot’s name. The story as it came in the *Quran* “...confirms that the punishment on the people of Sodom and Gomorrah was not for one sin but for many great sins”^{lxi} one of these sins was “violent homosexual attack on men who visited Sodom”^{lxii}. So, Lot’s statement was clear that “he would never agree to be a part of this such a practice, and warned them of a severe punishment from Allah.”^{lxiii} (He -Lot -proceeds

saying “*I am indeed, of those who disapprove with severe anger and fury your action (of sodomy).*”^{lxiv}

Moreover, it can be seen in “Quran 29:29 Verse 29:29 (Prophet Lot/Lut continued speaking) ‘Do you not approach men (to commit violent homosexual attacks on people who visit Sodom’”^{lxv}

However, the punishment of the sodomy act is not determined according to the Quran. The *Hadith* – which “the collected traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, based on his sayings and actions”^{lxvi}-states the punishment of death, taking into consideration that the sayings vary in the process. Historically, the Hadith has been passed down in the form of a written report from the oldest manuscripts of the six books, a collection of the sayings and deeds of Muhammad, which now serve as a reference for scholars. One of these six books are written by Abu Dawud who is an Islamic Hadith scholar who “traveled early to collect hadiths, and he travelled wide, so he is able to narrate hadith from the cohort of hadith narrators”^{lxvii} and in his book he states: “*The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If you find anyone doing as Lot’s people did, kill the one who does it, and the one to whom it is done (38:4447).*”^{lxviii}

Yet, In the Islamic countries that are ruled by Sharia’a law such as Iran, Sudan, Egypt, and United Arab Emirates where “...Islamic law, relies on teachings from the Quran and the Prophet Mohammed to guide all aspects of Muslim life.”^{lxix} That is where homosexuality is punishable by death. Sharia law For example, in Sudan, according to the law under article 148 in Penal Code, “ Any man who inserts his penis or its equivalent into a woman’s or a man’s anus or permits another man to insert his penis or its equivalent in his anus is said to have committed Sodomy.”^{lxx} Therefore, whoever commits Sodomy shall be punished with Flogging one hundred lashes, and it shall be liable to five years imprisonment. If the offender is convicted

for the second time, he shall be punished with flogging one hundred lashes and imprisonment for a term that does not exceed five years; if the offender is convicted for the third time he shall be punished with death or life imprisonment.^{lxxi}

Another example, in Iran homosexuality, is criminalized but sex reassignment surgery is allowed, which forces the Iranian queers to change their sex to be able to enjoy what is supposed to be their right. In some cases, even if the law does not state the death penalty for same-sex relations, there are still some horrifying hate crimes committed by the citizens/locals.

Nevertheless, Muslims in some countries – especially in the liberal countries – have reinterpreted the Islamic teachings arguing that God’s punishment on Sodom and Gomorrah was not because of performing sodomy but because they were stealing, terrorizing, and raping other men,^{lxxii} “and do you not block the road (to rob travellers) and do you not commit wickedness when you meet (each other)?”^{lxxiii} In other words, the punishment was not because of sodomy per se, but of how they forced it. Notwithstanding, the reinterpretation of homosexuality in Islam is not acknowledged by the orthodox Islam teachings “Traditional Islamic jurisprudence assumed strict gender roles. The 17th-century Muslim scholar Haskafi explicitly included ‘a male’ in his list of those whom a man could not legally marry.”^{lxxiv}

Some preachers have helped to establish the interpretation of homosexuality as a disease. They confused homosexuality and gender identity disorder. is despite the fact that a person with a sexual identity disorder, unlike a homosexual, is a person who is entirely uncomfortable with his or her sexual identity and seeks to undergo a conversion process, not just a person who is attracted to members of the same sex. Unfortunately, homosexuality is treated as if it is a choice.^{lxxv}

While religious institutions in the Arab world have united against homosexuality, some religious institutions in the West have taken a different stand. The tendency of some churches to officially recognize gay marriage encouraged Muslim advocates to recognize gay marriage. Among the most famous of these preachers is Imam Nur Warsame^{lxxvi}. Since his transfer to Australia in 2000, Noor al-Azhari has not prevented him from activating as an advocate of reconciliation between religion and homosexuality, criticizing the non-modern interpretations of the Quran that lead to the prohibition of homosexuality.^{lxxvii}

Similarly, a Professor at Oxford university Tariq Ramadan (Contemporary Islamic Studies) stated “Muslims and others have to respect each other, which includes accepting that the law permits gay marriage.”^{lxxviii}

In conclusion, the Quranic script and the Sharia law rules are imposing the Foucauldian biopower, as the Sharia law states govern the queer Muslim bodies “power no longer recognizes death. Power literally ignores death”^{lxxix} However, there is a new group that re-interpreted the Quranic text with a new modern perspective. Consequently, a new narrative has surfaced, within this new narrative there is an acceptance for gay people and a slowly growing recognition of their rights among the Muslim community in western societies. In an attempt to label certain groups of people who believe in liberal values as progressive, we are not acknowledging the differences that exist between societies, as coming out is not a one-size-fits-all process. Different cultures have different mechanisms that would break down to non-state actors in society.

3.1 *The case of Queer Muslim as a paradigm of ripped identity*

This chapter explores the process of othering through the lens of homonationalism and homonormativity and their effect on the living identities of Queer Muslims. The chapter starts by acknowledging that homophobia experiences that queer Muslims face in their countries of origin. However, that does not exclude the existence of homophobia in Europe, arguing that Europe is not the haven of sexual freedom. In addition, queer Muslims' identities are doubted and negotiated in general, and with the process of asylum-seeking. As they would have to adhere to Western standards in order to be accepted, hence, it reinforces homonationalism. Furthermore, the chapter points out the exclusion of queer Muslims from the international queer community, throughout the emancipation missionaries. In addition, it demonstrates the historical background of imperialism and its role in narrating the orientalist discourse.

Given the context of Orthodox Islam's teaching on homosexuality, we may understand why queer Muslims experience homophobia from their peers, even though homophobia is unjustifiable in itself, the link between the religious teachings and such treatment is directly identifiable. Nevertheless, queer Muslims also face Islamophobia for the construction of the religious identity and its perception by the West. So, they suffer from double discrimination, Islamophobia on one hand, and homophobia on the other hand simultaneously despite the unconsolidated notions attached to these identities separately.

Homophobia, however, is not restricted to the MENA region, but also occurs in the Western countries and is experienced as a global phenomenon at varying levels and performativities. Although it may not be as widespread as in the MENA region or the performance of homophobia differs in the Western hemisphere, it still exists. There is an assumption derived from the notion that all Western countries are liberal and open to accepting

all vulnerable minorities from other countries especially the Orient. Nevertheless, as Rahman states “LGBT rights are, however, both more recent than women’s equality and less evenly accepted across the West in general and within Europe.”^{lxxx} This generalization into the place of haven made the western countries a dream destination for the asylum seekers, hoping to be protected by the EU laws, regulations, and directives which are based on the European Convention of Human Rights under the Council of Europe. While such a legal framework in Europe offers a guarantee for an asylum seeker to live with dignity, the countries of origin present a stark distinction since dignity is directly linked to either be heterosexual or Cisgender.

Testing these assumptions, The European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) conducted a rather large survey of LGBTQ individuals in Europe. The number of participants was 140,000 from the European Union, the United Kingdom, Serbia, and North Macedonia.^{lxxxi} The survey has revealed that approximately one in five trans and intersex people has been physically or sexually assaulted, which is double the rate of reports of other LGBTQ groups. Two out of every five individuals reported being harassed, one in every five participates felt discriminated against at work, and one in every three participants feel discriminated against while going out to eat, drink, or socialize^{lxxxii}.

The Director of FRA comments on the survey findings noting that “Too many LGBTI people continue to live in the shadows, afraid of being ridiculed, discriminated, or even attacked. Even though some countries have advanced LGBTI equality, our survey findings show that overall, there has been too little real progress, leaving many LGBTI people vulnerable.” Thus, the protective haven assumptions for Europe fall greatly short of the reality, leading to the continuation of the experience of homophobia at different levels and experiences by Muslim queers with the added layer of Islamophobia.

Furthermore, solely following the borderlines in relation to the recognition of same-sex marriages as legitimate in the European Union, which still only emphasizes the legal framework not social and performative realities, it is evident that the countries in Western Europe are more accepting of non-traditional families vis-a-vis their eastern European counterparts. Due to its historical links with the Roman Catholic Church, Italy is noteworthy as an exception, since it began to recognize same-sex civil partnerships in 2016 despite these connections. Civil unions are also allowed in Switzerland for same-sex couples, while the partnerships/unions are key to underline here as there is no legal pathway to a legal marriage^{lxxxiii}. As well as being illegal, same-sex marriage is also strongly opposed in Eastern European countries.^{lxxxiv} However, Hungary, Croatia, Estonia, and Greece among other countries permit civil unions.^{lxxxv}

While the choice of western Europe might have various advantages in the matter of direct threat to life and corporal safety (still FRA data on assault limits the degree) and some level of social acceptance of their sexuality for queer Muslims, this choice often is attached to a hefty price tag, via setting new boundaries of being and existence, with new lines of discrimination that might deprive them of their voices. In this regard, Rahman, notes that the Queer Muslims are oppressed as a result of occupying “an intersectional social location between political and social cultures.”^{lxxxvi} This intersectionality here does not only come from the varying levels of homophobia but is heightened by constructed mutually exclusive nature of being Muslim to the queer identity, and the lines of containment/discrimination clashing within the individual limiting all parts of one person coexisting peacefully and performed freely.

El-Tayeb speaks to this limitation and not being able to free to use one’s voice due to overlapping identities by noting that “they [queer Muslims] are perceived as being too oppressed and alienated from their own needs to speak up as long as they still identify with

Islam. It is only when they can make the step into western modernity – a step that necessarily requires the break with, the coming out of the Muslim community – that they can claim an individualized identity as feminist or queer, usually by expressing gratitude for being saved by their ‘host society.’^{lxxxvii} El-Tayeb’s emphasis on coming out of Muslim society underlines the silencing of an essential layer of identity and consciousness for queer Muslims. In other words, their agency and ability to speak up is questioned by the western audience as long as they hold ties to their own culture and to their community which is deemed the origin of their misery, the evil to be saved from where Europe is the saviour on the opposite end of the dichotomy stripping the queer Muslims of any agency but tokenizing the queer Muslim. This in turn means, that queer Muslims face a kind of double judgment within Western countries, that is due to the different seemingly unmatching, mutually exclusive, impossible to consolidate layers of identity they carry.

Some even equate this mismatch of Islam and homosexuality with the impossibility to mix oil and water^{lxxxviii}. In this regard, the case of the Netherlands offers a fruitful ground to study in order to exemplify the triple consciousness of queer Muslims in the West.^{lxxxix} Here, three different, sometimes judgemental, perceptions of the different actors are at stake. While the Netherlands and its stance are considered to be inclined to high sexual liberty, as it was the first country to legalize same-sex marriage within Europe, the LGBTQ rights discourses are highly interconnected with anti-Muslim politics and representations and anti-Islam narratives are constructed to portray Muslims as non-modern subjects through the lens of LGBT liberation.^{xc}

While Muslims are often conceived as narrow-minded and unwelcoming when it comes to queer sexualities, at the same time, El-Tayeb argues, queer Muslims and queer of color, are

often merely conceived as “gay in process” because of their often structural inability to openly come out. The example of the “speaking out” policy in the Netherlands points to another layer of the problem queer Muslims face in western European countries, the problem of homonormativity. The “New homonormativity”, as Lisa Duggan coined it, leaves out many gender non-conformists and leaves unquestioned inequalities related to race, class, ethnicity, health, and immigration status.^{xci}

The scope of this problem becomes more evident once its mediatic representation is considered. Queers are mostly portrayed as ultra-feminine, white men coming from upper- and middle-class backgrounds, which reinforces the bias and stereotype about Queer. Not only does it narrow the range of their problems to the right of getting married, but it also excludes any other possible queer identities and their representation, such as the example of queer Muslims shows.

This constructed image of feminized Other, can be evident in the process of asylum-seeking in some Western countries, as the LGBTQ identity is doubted, negotiated as an impossible subject, represented with fantasies and desires. For example, “Germany is more likely to grant protection in cases where the asylum seeker successfully adopts German/Western standards of moral on gay/queer sexualities”^{xcii}

“Thus, queer Muslims, if such an identity can be envisioned at all, occupy a place close to that assigned to Muslimas, i.e. they are perceived as being too oppressed and alienated from their own needs to speak up as long as they still identify with Islam. It is only when they can make the step into western modernity – a step that necessarily requires the break with, the coming out of the Muslim community – that they can claim an individualized identity as feminist or queer, usually by expressing gratitude for being saved by their ‘host society.’”^{xciii}

Demonstrating the thankfulness of being saved from the other Arab savage man, “protection from their barbarian male hetero-brothers” stresses the accuracy of the Orientalism theory. Thus, the role of the white man's burden replicates itself again. We may argue that Queer Muslims are “negotiating” the existence of homosexuality within their cultural, religious, and ethnic groups, according to Jivraj, and de Jong. Moreover, they are seeking the protection of the Western from “the barbarian male hetero-brothers.” The dynamic of protection seeking and imposing as the hero and savior feed into the process of Othering.

This argument has been portrayed in the UNHCR Tracks, in particular, “Searching for a Safe Place to Be Gay”^{xciv}. The organization advocates in its campaign what seems like an advertisement, a gay young couple one is tanned skin, shorter, refugee, from Syria and the other is the white, blonde, tall American citizen. In these photos, Orientalism is blatantly displayed, portraying the white partner as the savior and the Syrian refugee as the vulnerable feminine that needs to be protected.

It is evident that queer Muslim immigrants or asylum seekers are positioned in the location of vulnerability. Also, women of color and Muslim women share the same location of vulnerability, and their identities could surely, intersect. Historically, Feminism and women's liberation have been utilized as justifications for “civilizing missions” that rely on the creation of rescue narratives, as part of political and epistemic imperial goals.^{xcv} Where again Queer and Women needed to be saved from the patriarchal roles which are affiliated with Islam or other ‘barbaric’ traditions from the perspective of the colonizer, they became the most prominent victims of human rights violations in Arab countries under these “international” human rights activism campaigns.^{xcvi}

However, the international gay community is demonstrating homonormativity by replicating the heterosexual roles to be able to blend in. Given that identities are intersectional between race, religion, ethnicity, and gender, Western queers are by definition white and are thus in a position of power.^{xcvii} This raises the question of is there a hierarchical order within the intersectional political identities of race, religion, and gender, which is the most dominant over the others? In the sense that queer Muslims from the global south in general face racism, the social construction of race is arguably the most prominent feature compared to religion or sexual orientation. On the contrary, white gay men are endorsed for being white and men, whereas masculinity takes over femininity.

The hierarchical arrangement serves the western queer, particularly the gay man, with privilege and hegemony over the Others. As a result, Western queer exceptionalism is implicitly inherited from the dominant roles that the West has played in the past and it is continuing to reproduce the same orientalist discourses. Hence, the western queer is continuing to impose as a savior and carry the white man's burden in his mission to emancipate the Other queer. Therefore, this orientalist tendency, derived from hegemonic images of the Arab and Muslim nations in the West, continues to shape all areas of the human rights community.^{xcviii}

Therefore, the western queer continues the role of domination, by controlling the knowledge production and speaking on the behalf of the Other. Massad argues most of the literature produced by mostly white male European or American gay scholars on the matter of the Muslim world and its sexuality.^{xcix} In addition, he elaborates that there are two kinds of literature, "academic literature of historical, literary, and anthropological accounts.... and journalistic accounts of the lives of so-called gays and (much less so) lesbians in the

contemporary Arab and Muslim worlds.”^c Western queer in its mission exalts this liberation project as a means to reproduce a world according to its ideology.^{ci}

The example mentioned above shares a resemblance with “White Feminism” and its ramifications. This resembles the white feminism first wave act, as white women would be demanding their rights but excluding other women of color from their rights, “In a sense, these ‘other women’ could be considered the ‘objects’ of the new women’s movement since the dominant narrative that was spun about them”^{cii}

Moreover, modern-day feminism appears to be shifted from its original agenda of accomplishing equality among genders to the gender pay gap, which is addressed to the benefit of white women from the middle class. Not that this research has anything against gay marriages, or the gender pay gap, on the contrary, it criticizes the orientations of the semi-new movements and the exclusion of the other LGBTQIA community members of different backgrounds. In other words, intersectionality is a crucial factor to achieve equality as all the types of political identity categories, gender, class, race, sexuality, and disability are all signs of how the world works, and they are significant for different levels of hierarchies of power that operate within it.

What emerges from our analysis is that contrary to the belief Queer Muslims are not only struggling to negotiate the existence of homosexuality within their cultural, religious, and ethnic groups but also, within the Western sphere. Queer Muslims' existence challenges the monolithic image that it is constructed by the West of the East, by occupying the unique intersectional social location^{ciii} “the very existence and evidencing of LGBT Muslims, understood intersectionally, undermines the equation of universal identities with monolithic and

exclusive cultures.”^{civ} It is crucial to the de-Europeanizing process of Muslims that Islam is viewed as a culture, rather than a religion.^{cv}

Conclusion

The case of queer migrant Muslim constitutes a paradigmatic model of ripped identity which can represent the living conditions of migrant Muslim women, or in those Muslims that just recognize themselves in values of modernity and equality. The model of queer migrant Muslims also shows clearly that the individual identity is not a monolithic and static entity, but a dynamic and fluid one. A Muslim queer can believe in Allah and at the same time being homosexual. Both of the identities can coexist without conflicts, as the conflicts are imposed on them through discrimination. Queer Muslims should have the right to feel themselves realized, validated, and entirely in line with their own singular identity.

The ripped identity of the queer migrant Muslims is also paradigmatic of the drama lived in the daily life by migrant Muslims suspended between the rigid bonding Muslim community and excluded or discriminated against by the European hosting society, particularly, the queer community.

The strongest drama, well represented by the case of queer migrant Muslims, is lived by individuals who do not entirely comply with the typical image and roles in Islam or who do not respect the ideal idea of the good Muslim. This because the control and the social judgment that the bonded migrant Muslim community can practice, is much more capillary than the control and the judgment of the host communities. Secondly, because the European government, generally speaking, by acting through their constitutionalism, they should guarantee to migrants to realize themselves, by reaching their personal satisfaction, having equal opportunities to access to work and to participate to the social and public life. In another world, European governments, in line with their liberal values, limit themselves in providing

the basic conditions to allow everyone, and so also Muslim migrants, to freely reach their individual satisfaction, which means, to develop their own identity. At least, this is what the European liberal governments should do if they want to respect their fundamental pillars. Nevertheless, this line is not always respected, and the case of migrant queer Muslims shows it very well regarding the procedures for asylum seekers on the basis of motivations related to sexual identity.

As we mentioned, the ongoing procedures in European countries for asylum seekers on the basis of reasons related to sexual identity require the seekers to undoubtedly prove and show their sexual identity. That can represent a form of violence to those that are not ready for the coming out and that want to continue to maintain their sexual identity as something private, or even those that fell raped in stressing and flapping on purpose their own sexual identity as a parody. At the same time, this could represent a risk for migrant Muslims which can be discriminated against or even harassed by their Muslim community.

All this considered, what the research argued moving from the case of queer migrant Muslims is that the European governments should take into consideration to review of the asylum-seeking procedures and its emancipation missions. The complexity of grasping the queer Muslim identity is possible through a deep understanding of intersectionality. In addition, a profound understanding requires careful consideration of the queer Muslims' standpoint. Moreover, the location of vulnerability that they were placed in by the West. The research demonstrated the historical Western narratives of the East and the construction of the oriental identity. The same practices are reproduced through the angle of homonationalism in the name of liberation and gender equality. According to our findings, queer Muslims are fighting to

navigate the existence of homosexuality not just inside their cultural, religious, and ethnic groupings, but also inside the Western world.

By occupying the unique intersectional social location, queer Muslims challenge the monolithic picture that the West has portrayed of the East.

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