IN THE NAME OF ISLAM

THE JUSTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL OPPRESSION BY THE EGYPTIAN STATE TOWARDS ITS HOMOSEXUAL COMMUNITY

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4149549

Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts, Political Science (M.A.)

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POL 7979

Abstract

The end of the Second World War has instigated what has become a common zeal and interest to achieve universal norms that seek to guarantee worldwide human rights recognition. Despite serious efforts, this ambitious task seems to have fallen short when it comes to gay rights recognition, especially in a non-Western sociopolitical sphere. In a general sense, this paper's primary objective is to investigate the process (both political and physical) through which sociopolitical norms could serve as a means to justify the institutionalization of homosexual oppression. From a specific standpoint, it assesses the probability in which religious norms act as a key tool of causality in the homosexual condemnation. By referring to the 2001 homosexual crackdowns conducted by the Egyptian state, in this paper I will particularly reflect on the correlation that exists between Islamic norms and the systematic justification of oppression towards the Egyptian gay community.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my professors, Manon Tremblay and Dimitrios Karmis, for their excellent mentorship and impeccable professionalism throughout the years. As my supervisors, your positive work ethic and constant guidance have truly enriched my experience over the course of my graduate studies. As my pedagogues, I will forever be indebted to both of you for sharing your deepest knowledge with me and, above all, for teaching me the importance of thinking outside the box!

Thank you.

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Dedicated to:

My mother – for your unconditional love and endless encouragement

My brother – for your relentless belief in me

My family and friends – for your infinite support

My best friend Philippe – for being my constant source of inspiration and motivation

Everyone who feels she or he does not "fit in" – mark your place in society, you are not worthless!

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INTRODUCTION

Today, when media, society or world-class leaders speak of human rights, it becomes abstruse how such a concept was only born with the end of the Second World War (SWW). It is indeed astonishing to witness how swiftly the principles of human rights have not only been diffused internationally, but how they have also become a universal target. It was after the immeasurable losses caused by the SWW that the world needed a complete change-around. The devastation had pushed the cream of the crop to work towards improving people's lives and, more importantly, to set common rights and freedoms that aimed reciprocal respect for people. Founded in 1945, the United Nations (UN) was the first international organization in its kind to implement these very ideals in its founding Charter. Within three years, the UN General Assembly had already adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Ever since, the same principles and ideals have been reappropriated and put into practice by a myriad of other charters and organizations, on both micro and macro levels, and both nationally and cross-nationally. It is undeniable that the evolution of human rights has been nothing but outstanding. On the other hand, what particularly inspired me to write this paper is the setback that exists behind the significant progression of this "quest" towards achieving universal human rights.

Today, universal human rights have become an all-encompassing umbrella that still seems to neglect some individuals in the process of human rights recognition. Founded in 1978, the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) has been doing a monumental effort to create a "world-wide network of national and local groups dedicated to achieving equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people everywhere" (Paoli Itaborahy 2012: 5). What is most intriguing about ILGA's annual report on state-sponsored homophobia is this

year's increase in the number of countries "with a legislation persecuting people on the basis of their sexual orientation, which now are 78 against the 76 of last year" (Paoli Itaborahy 2012: 3).

At a first glance, these numbers were puzzling to me. They suddenly appeared to contradict what I have been taught throughout my university years. Through the course of my studies I have learnt that the human rights framework is arguably the most efficient strategy used to recognize gay rights[1]. One cannot deny the major improvements the LGBTI communities have undergone in just the last two decades alone. With a growing global LGBTI movement, more rights are being granted and more countries are even opening up to idea of same-sex marriage.

What then can we make of this increase of homophobia in spite of a more accepting society? To a further extent, this question pushed me to even wonder how homosexuality was treated in less accepting societies. From my experience as an Egyptian immigrant who moved to Canada at the age of six, I could not help but realize how homosexuality has a completely different connotation in Arabo-Muslim countries. What caught my attention was the fact that I could attend a university class on sexual diversity in Canada, while lesbians and gays were presumed "inexistent" in Egypt. In 2007, I came across Nadya Labi's article entitled "The Kingdom in the Closet" and I was surprised to learn that there was a big, lively, yet secretive gay community in Saudi Arabia - the motherland of Islam itself (Labi 2007).

With this, I have come to understand that the most prominent change regarding gay rights recognition has been especially visible in both European and American societies (Kollman, 2007, 2009). In fact, even if this rather Western discourse is seeking to spread itself globally, studies[2] have demonstrated that gay rights are not equally developed around the world. The ILGA report

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[1] The use of "gay rights" in this paper encompasses all sexual orientations unless otherwise indicated.
[2] A study conducted by David Paternotte, Manon Tremblay and Carol Johnson reveals that even the most democratic countries in Europe and America do not acknowledge gay and lesbian rights in the same way (Paternotte *et al.* 2011).

reveals that "[r]oughly 60% of UN Members (113 of 193) has abolished (and a few never had) legislation criminalizing same-sex sexual acts between consenting adults, while roughly 40% (78 of 193) still clings to it in a misguided – as well as criminal – attempt to preserve their "cultural identities" in the face of globalization" (Paoli Itaborahy 2012: 3).

1.   Research Question and Hypothesis

It is this so called "cultural identity" that particularly got me to question whether or not it could potentially serve as a key explanation for the condemnation of gay rights in Egypt. This contemplation directed me to a specific research question: How does the Egyptian state oppress its homosexual community?

This paper argues that Islam is one of the main tools used by the Egyptian state to oppress its gay community. In a first instance, it will reflect on how heavily engrained religious norms can contribute to a specific perception towards homosexuality. In a second instance, it will argue that these religious norms shape an Egyptian identity within the sociopolitical sphere that unquestionably justifies the increasing homosexual crackdowns conducted by the Egyptian government.

2.   Significance of Research

This research study specifically attempts to reveal how the dynamic of homosexual treatment in an Arabo-Muslim framework differs significantly from that of Western society. Moreover, it will assess Egypt's recent revolution and analyze the prospective change that it may bring to the Egyptian homosexual community and its potential liberation. To further analyze this

potential change in the future, the paper will conclude with an epistemological reflection by assessing the possibility of recognition in post-revolutionary Egypt.

3.   **Procedure**

This major paper will be divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is entitled "Institutional Oppression and Homosexuality: When Religion Justifies Injustice". As a whole, this chapter contributes to the overarching theme by shaping the theoretical skeleton or ideological chain, rather, that I deem necessary to understanding why and how injustice is justified. More specifically, this chapter lays down the theoretical grounds that explore the mechanisms of oppression and their impact on homosexual individuals in the sociopolitical sphere.

The second chapter is entitled "Heteronormativity: Evolution and Practice". This particular chapter takes us on the evolutionary journey of heterosexual norms. While it provides key contributions to the understanding of heterosexual norms and their domination in the sociopolitical sphere, it especially reveals a chronological shift of this understanding. This shift allows this chapter to contribute to the overarching theme of this paper by demonstrating how heteronormativity as understood in current scholarship is not necessarily compatible within an Arabo-Muslim framework.

The third chapter is entitled "Islam and Homosexuality". This chapter seeks to concretize and put into action the afore-discussed theory by applying it to a specific context. This particular context will be first directed towards the Arabo-Muslim realm, and will then focus on the Egyptian state and its spontaneous crackdowns on homosexual conducts. As a whole, this chapter hopes to contribute to the overarching theme of this paper by elucidating on how legally

binding Islamic norms act as the main contributors to the Egyptian state-sponsored oppression towards homosexuals.

Finally, in the conclusion, a brief analytical discussion will be made in accordance with general assumptions retrieved from each explored chapter. This will be followed by a reflection on the fate of the Egyptian homosexual community in a post-revolutionary Egypt under the victorious Muslim Brotherhood, led by Muhamed Morsi.

4.   Methodology

The methodology used in this paper closely follows Hans-Georg Gadamer's account on hermeneutics in *Truth and Method* (2004). However, I should mention that Gadamer's approach is applied quite freely. Unlike scientific methods, this particular study requires what Gadamer would call a technique of understanding, or even more, an act of interpretation that must be approached with an open-mind. Gadamer posits that "(…) what another person tells me, whether in conversation, letter, book, or whatever, is generally supposed to be his own and not my opinion; and this is what I am to take note of without necessarily having to share it" (2004: 271).

Being open-minded, on the other hand, does not forcedly result in the extraction of one's own opinion. If anything, neutrality almost seems impossible in Gadamer's eyes, because we all lived and are living in different historical and cultural contexts and environments (Gadamer 2004: 390). This is predominantly relevant in the study of this research paper given the significantly opposed ideologies behind the Arabo-Muslim and Western frameworks. Consequently, these different contexts surely come with their own established traditions from which emerges a specific language of understanding that structures our consciousness in particular ways. Yet, Gadamer finds an importance and even a beauty to the idea of having our

own beliefs and preconceived notions, or what he calls "prejudices" (Gadamer 2004: 271). Focusing on the alternate interpretation that is presented to us will help achieve an overall better understanding of the issue. This better understanding necessitates on the other hand a balanced consciousness. What is important in this case is "(…) to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings" (2004: 271-272).

As a result, this process of understanding another's consciousness thus offers a chance to alter and expand the interpreter's own horizon, by giving the latter a richer and deeper dimension (Gadamer 2004: 391). This is where Gadamer's concept of "fusion of horizons" comes into play (Gadamer 2004: 390). As Dimitri Karmis explains, while Gadamer's concept of horizon encompasses an individual's specific vision regarding a particular subject, the idea of fusing horizons "…ne s'agit pas à circonscrire et à pénétrer l'horizon d'une époque passée, tout en prétendant se placer en retrait de son propre horizon" (Karmis to appear in 2013 : 8). Understood as such, the fusion of horizons bridges the gap between two distinct visions that ultimately further develop a person's own horizon with time.

It is under this Gadamerian lens that I undertake the study of this paper. My intention is not to judge or blame the Arabo-Muslim sociopolitical sphere. On the contrary, whether it be through the Western literary findings or the Egyptian case study, I am seeking to better comprehend the Arabo-Muslim worldview and within it, the reasons behind the occurrence of a justified and systematic oppression against the homosexual community.

5. **Review of Literature**
    5.1.   **Theoretical and Empirical Findings**

The theoretical findings constitute the most crucial element of this study. In fact, the paper begins by presenting the necessary theory that not only forms the ideological skeleton of the study, but that can also give the latter a sense of direction. Ultimately, the theoretical insights reveal a simultaneous interaction that exists between three different key realms that could provide a clearer understanding as to why oppression towards homosexual individuals is both at once justified and systematic.

One of these contributing realms is the sociopolitical sphere. Jürgen Habermas' concept of the public sphere in *Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (2011) probably best describes this realm due to its two-dimensional nature. On the one hand, its social dimension can be seen as the physical space in which human connections are made. Nonetheless, it is more than just a common area of social interaction. Its political dimension reminds us that people are also governed in this space. What particularly sparked my interest is how religion is presented as an ideal tool to both govern and control social masses.

In fact, many scholars seem to share the idea that the religious realm also plays a decisive role in the interactive wheel (see Figure 1.1.). Most findings indicate that religion is perhaps an ideal governing tool not just for forging a cultural identity and giving a sense of reason to people's existence. More importantly, the governing body controls individuals through religion by establishing fixed "unquestionable" social norms because they descend from "divine intervention". Though this vision emerges through Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor (in Butler *et al.* 2011a), it is especially present in most of Judith Butler's work (1990, 1997, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2011b), and in J. L. Austin and Louis Pierre Althusser (in Butler 1997), to name a few.

It is worth mentioning that other empirical findings revealed the credibility of such theoretical reasoning, especially in a non-Western context. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) report *In a Time of Torture: The Assault on Justice on Egypt's Crackdown on Homosexual Conduct* (2004) portrays very well just how much religion, religious norms, and religious laws have affected the way homosexuality is perceived in Egypt. Because Islam runs society and because it rejects and punishes homosexuality, Egyptian social norms cannot and do not account for the gay community.

This finally brings us to the third and final interactive realm. I call this the behavioural realm. Gathered information from different sources shows that the simultaneous interaction between the sociopolitical sphere and religion concurrently interrelates with both physical and mental behaviours as well (see Butler 2003, 2004, 2005). It looks like established norms will in due course condition both our bodies and beliefs that determine how individuals in the sociopolitical sphere should act and react. The HRW report shows that in Egypt, the state allows and conducts spontaneous crackdowns on homosexuals, thus promoting the idea that the heterosexual majority automatically earns the right to oppress the homosexual minority.

What the literature reveals, whether it is through theoretical reasoning or through a specific study case, is that this on-going interactive wheel of realms sheds light on the overarching theme of this paper.
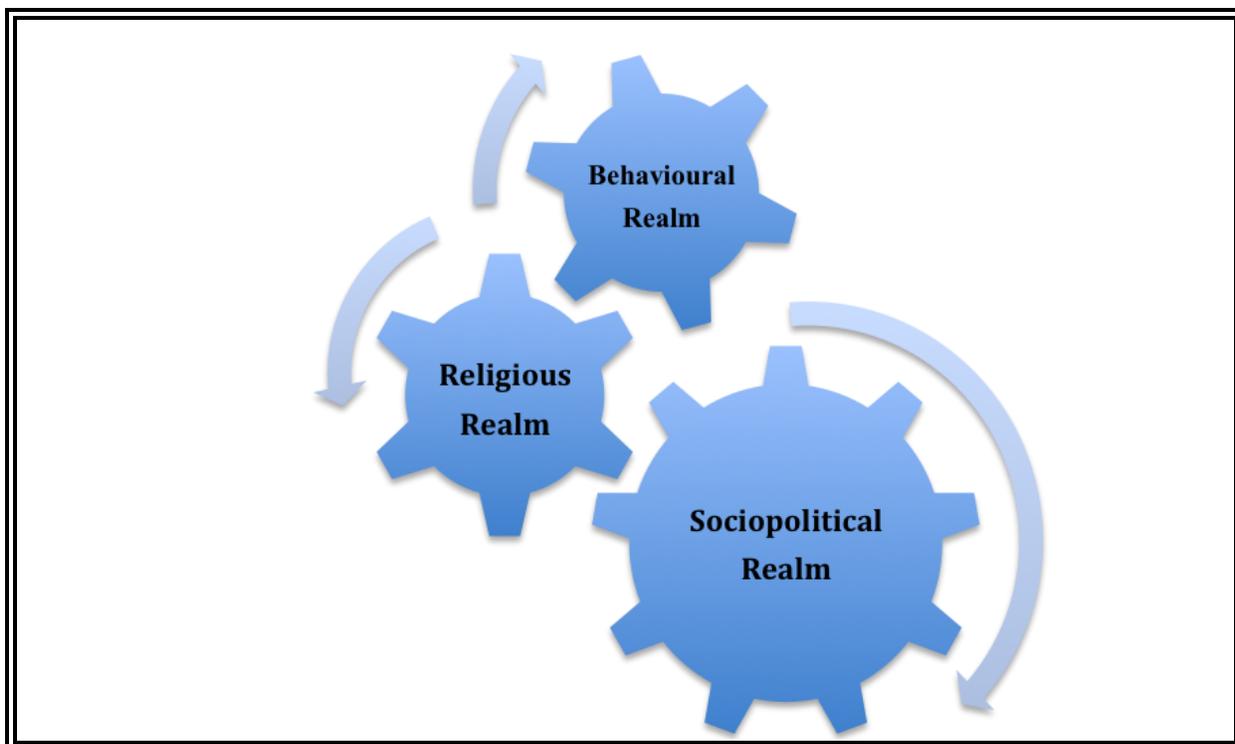
Figure 1.1.: The Interactive Wheel

5.2. Restraints of Literary Findings

One of the biggest challenges faced when writing this paper was without a doubt the literary process of selection. On the one hand, I was surprised to find endless literature on homosexuality given its on-going sensitive nature, even in today's most open-minded societies. On the other hand, although I deem my literary findings to have been quite insightful, they were nonetheless very "Westernized" and under certain circumstances incongruent with non-Western mentality.

In other words, though theoretical concepts could in themselves be applied to a non-Western context such as the Egyptian case, the solutions suggested by most scholars arguably seemed incompatible with the realities lived by homosexuals in Egypt. The question here is not about whether or not scholars are aware that religion shapes cultural conventions within the sociopolitical sphere and whether these norms impact the way we behave towards others and

ourselves. Rather, the difficulty emerges in the fact that most Western scholarship discusses LGBTI issues with an implied open-mindedness and acceptance that does not parallel non-Western ideology.

Today, Western states have, for the most part, put tremendous efforts into creating norms that, at the very least, guarantee basic and fundamental human rights to lesbians and gays. Consequently, this often makes Western scholarship seem too optimistic or perhaps even a little idealistic at times. For instance, scholar Charles Taylor discusses the potential of a secular state that does not necessarily separate public reason from religious thoughts. Instead of the typical atheist state, Taylor envisions a "neutral" state not because it is against religion, but because it wants to "respond to the internal diversity of modern societies – religious, non-religious, areligious" (Mendieta and VanAntwerpen 2011: 7).

It is for the same reason Judith Butler switched from her famous term "heterosexual matrix" to "heterosexual hegemony" because she believes in a society that can eventually accept a myriad of sexual orientations aside heterosexuality. She even strongly believes in a sociopolitical existence that has a "non-chosen character of inclusive and plural co-habitation," because though "we might choose where to live, and who to live by, (…) we cannot choose with whom to co-habit the earth." (Mendieta and VanAntwerpen 2011: 9).

Inasmuch as they are logical and promising, I wonder how such changes can ever take place in Egypt. How can we make that shift if religion influences the way we should co-habit with others? Islam explicitly condemns homosexuality. Thus, society is not only "stuck" with the heterosexual matrix, but people also grow up with the conception that Muslim heterosexuals cannot cohabit with Muslim homosexuals.

What perhaps struck me the most were the social movement theory scholars - they always seem to assume a sense of freedom of speech and respect for human dignity, regardless of the ideology being promoted through the movement. What I wonder, nonetheless, is how Egyptian homosexuals can be heard or accounted for in a gay movement, if they are not even considered human to begin with. How can an Egyptian gay movement ever become if the community who initiates it is rejected as whole by the rest of society. To say the least, with few Arabic publications that discuss such a taboo subject, I often had to turn to Western publications that did not entirely reflect the magnitude of the problem in Egypt or in other Middle Eastern countries. However, I am still uncertain that this clash of mentalities can necessarily be blamed on a problem between progressive and non-progressive mentality. I would rather call it extreme religious conservatism or religious patriarchy that "enshrines profoundly anti-homosexual sentiments and enforces legal rulings that severely curtail the welfare and human dignity of homosexuals in Muslim communities" (Kugle 2010: 21).

CHAPTER 1.

INSTITUTIONAL OPPRESSION AND HOMOSEXUALITY:

WHEN RELIGION JUSTIFIES INJUSTICE

Chapter 1 serves as the theoretical hub of this study. As a whole, this chapter contributes to the overarching theme by shaping the theoretical skeleton or ideological chain, rather, that is necessary to understand why and how injustice is justified. More specifically, it lays down the theoretical grounds that explore the mechanisms of oppression and their impact on homosexual individuals in the sociopolitical sphere. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section briefly states the logic behind my employment of the word "homosexuality" throughout this paper. I use Hannan Kholoussy's account (Kholoussy 2010) on the medicalization of Egyptian male sexuality to argue that homosexuality functions by default as a praxis of oppression. In the second section, I use Iris Marion Young's normative theory of oppression (Young 1990) to argue that despite the fluidity of the concept, oppression is institutionalized in Egypt, which allows the state to automatically justify injustices. In the third section, I use Jürgen Habermas' concept of public space to argue that the use of religion in the sociopolitical sphere can serve as a major tool to justify injustice (meaning homosexual oppression). I will argue that this is mainly possible through religious preordained influences on individual values. Finally, in the last section, I use Judith Butler's sociocultural theoretical approach to argue that religion as a tool of oppression can also impose and modify specific bodily behaviours. In all, this chapter hopes to offer a more coherent understanding on how homosexual condemnation is systematically enshrined in the Egyptian sociopolitical sphere (which will be presented in Chapter 3).

1.1. Homosexuality as a Praxis of Oppression

Before I begin, I decided to keep the first section of this chapter to discuss my choice behind the use of the word "homosexuality" as a regular referent throughout this paper. Though I mentioned in the introduction that I might at different occasions use "homosexuals" and "gays" interchangeably, I however prefer to talk of "homosexuals" as opposed to "gays" or other references. It is no surprise that this was indeed a conscious decision. Why?

There is no doubt that the debate over homosexuality still continues, and this, with great discrepancies in public opinion. However, the term "gay" is generally used in a more Western society and is therefore less fitting in my context of study. Also, it seems to me that regardless of its different stages of acceptability, the actual use of the word "homosexuality" conveys a particular sense of abnormality. More importantly, this so-called "abnormality" projects negative vibes that in due course makes homosexuality more susceptible to oppression. In fact, until now, homosexuality still carries a negative connotation, and especially in the Egyptian context.

1.1.1. The Medicalization of Male Sexuality

It appears that colonialism may have greatly impacted the logic behind the negative connotation that homosexuality still resonates in Egypt today. In 1882, the British military occupied Egypt. Immediately after, prostitution had become legalized "to protect the health of their military troops stationed in Egypt" (Kholoussy 2010: 679). The consequences had sparked alarming debates over pre-marital sex and venereal diseases. Finally, during the course of the 19th century and even early 20th century, the Egyptian state's legislation on marriage, prostitution and venereal diseases had undergone significant reforms (Kholoussy 2010: 677). These major

modifications were meant to not only monitor, but also medicalize Egyptian male sexuality, says Kholoussy:

> … Its [legislative] goal was to create 'healthy', disciplined men who would create fit and modern families that would serve as the foundation for a postcolonial nation free of socio-medical ills. In their attempts to medicalise male sexuality and regulate female prostitution, legislative reformers were delineating and gendering the normative heterosexuality of the healthy male colonial subject for the emerging nation (Kholoussy 2010: 677).

What we can learn from Kholoussy's statement on the sudden emergence of Egyptian notions of gendered sexual diseases is that only the heterosexually normative male body can be associated to Egyptian nation building. Equally, what this further tells us is that homosexuality did not have a place nor could it ever be included in what is considered to constitute *the* Egyptian identity.

These changes, on the one hand, were not exclusive to the Egyptian state alone. In contrary, it was only part of a much bigger Western movement. At that time, for most Western governments, as Foucault mentions, "the marriage relation was the most intense focus of constraints" (Foucault 1978: 37). In that sense, it was the state's duty to proscribe prostitution and to legislate marriage between a man and a woman in order to regulate sexuality (Kholoussy 2010: 681).

On the other hand, the Egyptian context was always slightly different from the European discourse. Even though Egypt was under British rule, its Islamic legal system was never changed. Legislative reforms were always founded on "medieval Islamic religious texts rather than western scientific treatises to fit their own unique socio-political and medico-legal context" (Kholoussy 2010: 678).

1.1.2. Homosexuality as a Disease

What perhaps explains why the Egyptian discourse tremendously differed from its counterparts' rhetoric is that very combination of medical-religious approach. Until today, homosexuality is never expressed publicly in Egypt, and if it is, it is only to regard it as a disease and discriminate against it. It seems like the thought that homosexuality could possibly exist simply results in fear and silence. In that sense, I agree with Kholoussy's comment when she says that deep inside, it was never a question of whether homosexuality existed or not, but it was perhaps too dangerous to even think about it:

> … because of the overwhelming unacceptability of a supposedly deviant, unnatural practice that was religiously forbidden in the normative context of early twentieth-century Egypt. While heterosexual sex beyond the confines of marriage was also deemed religiously and socially unacceptable, it was at least considered a natural legitimate male desire as opposed to homosexual desire, which was deemed unnatural (Kholoussy 2010: 689).

Today, I find it interesting how both contemporary democratic Western societies and current Western scholarship have managed to replace "homosexuality" with a different terminology. The use of "same-sex relationships" or "same-sex unions" is much more widespread today. The same can be said about "lesbian" and "gay" individuals, which seem to have substituted the "homosexual" individual.

Presently, there appears to be a generally shared consent that homosexuality pronounces a negative undertone that is extremely vulnerable to oppression. In fact, this even pushes me to argue that homosexuality functions as the praxis of oppression. While Western societies have been slowly trying to distance themselves from such a negative connotation, non-Western societies on the other hand still articulate and promote just that.

Egypt, in particular, is no exception to the rule. That said, I find my choice of using the word "homosexuality" or referring to "homosexuals" much more fitting to the Egyptian context. Speaking of same-sex relationships or unions, like most Western societies, automatically implies

a level of acceptability and open-mindedness that has never existed in a non-Western context. Yet in spite of which hemisphere we find ourselves in, it seems that "homosexuality" is in itself the language of oppression. There is no denial that both homosexuality and oppression simply go hand-in-hand!

1.2. The "Faces" of Oppression: When Injustice is Justified

Having argued that homosexuality functions as the praxis of oppression, this section is meant to elucidate the latter concept and its scope. At first, I found the concept of oppression confusing or "blurry," rather. Theoretically speaking, this was far from reassuring since oppression is both a reoccurring and foundational concept throughout this paper. For instance, Iris Marion Young explains that oppression can be understood as people who ''suffer some inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts, and feelings'' (Young 1990: 40). To say the least, it still seemed exceedingly vague to me. It was difficult for me to define it, let alone understand how such a concept can at once encompass and engage a mosaic of concepts and conditions that express various forms of oppression. Still I wondered, what is oppression in itself?

When I read Young's take on the concept more carefully, I realized that it has different magnitudes and plays at different layers, and this was perhaps the very nature, and at the same time, the danger of oppression.

Young's theory suggests that we become more accepting of a concept that is more or less fluid, where the act of oppression itself can be expressed differently, at times explicitly and/or implicitly, and at times physically and/or mentally. Though scholars Melissa Williams (1998) and Bob Mullaly (2002) have demonstrated a certain affinity in their contribution to the

conceptualization of oppression, I use their perspectives only to compliment Young's. It is specifically Young's "multifaceted" approach on oppression that I find most intriguing and appropriate for the Egyptian context.

I have already argued that homosexuality goes hand-in-hand with oppression. To continue with that thought, Young argues that oppression goes hand-in-hand with injustice. Justice for her is not exclusive to equal distribution but also the guarantee of essential institutional conditions that can allow individuals to fully exercise their rights and abilities privately or publicly (Young 1990: 39). Therefore, when these conditions are not met, injustice is triggered:

> …some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media and cultural stereotypes, and cultural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms – in short, the normal processes of everyday life (Young 1990: 41).

That being said, it would be fair to argue that in the Egyptian case, homosexuals are most likely to struggle with justice because oppression against them is institutionalized. Similarly, Mullaly notes that the institutionalization of oppression consists of the ways that "social divisions, practices, and processes, along with social institutions, laws, policies, and political systems, all work together to benefit the dominant group at the expense of subordinate groups" (Mullaly 2002: 97).

Put differently, oppression towards Egyptian homosexuals is due to a politics of difference in which the Egyptian state can never guarantee them the full exercise of their rights because their "specificity" as homosexuals gives them no place in society to begin with. Oppression is then a "structural" concept not because it finds its roots in some sort of tyrannical

power[3] but because its causes are "embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols''
(Young 1990: 41).

Then, does this mean that all subordinated groups face the same conditions of
oppression? Practically speaking, how does oppression unfold? To this, Young mentions that
oppression is only a "family word" that comprises various forms of injustices. She divides
oppression into five categories, or what she calls, the five "faces" of oppression: exploitation,
marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young 1990: 40). There is
no doubt that all five faces mentioned are very important in their own ways, yet for the purpose
of this study, marginalization and violence are more relevant to the Egyptian context.

1.2.1. Marginalization

I personally find that marginalization best describes the Egyptian context because it is a
type of injustice that mainly affects those who do not "fit" in society (in this case, the
homosexual community). This is the most dangerous form of oppression, according to Young,
since an entire category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and is thus
potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even complete uselessness (Young 1990:
53).

As I have mentioned earlier, injustice is not exclusive to equal distribution. For that
reason, Young divides marginalization into two categories. On the one hand, it deprives
individuals from the provision of equal citizenship rights – rights that depend on bureaucratic
institutions (Young 1990: 54). On the other hand, it also blocks the opportunity to exercise

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[3] Young offers an explication of the concept of oppression than transpires from the new social movements
in the United States since the 1960s. She particularly notes that she is not referring to the traditional usage
of oppression: "exercise of tyranny by a ruling group with a strong connotation of conquest and colonial
domination" (Young 1990: 41).

capacities in socially defined and recognized ways. In her own words, ''marginalization… also involves the deprivation of cultural, practical and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in a context of recognition and interaction'' (Young 1990: 55).

Applied to the context of study, Young makes a good point. Egyptian homosexuals who live in an Islamic society cannot comply with their current bureaucratic institutions, which reject them on every level (medical, educational, social services, etc.). Not able to comply with rules that are not made for them, this eventually brings them into the second category where they can never be recognized for who and what they are.

Young makes another interesting point when she posits that marginality produces a form of exclusion that translates into "uselessness, boredom, and lack of self-respect" (Young 1990: 55). This could very well resemble to Williams' concept of "underrepresentation" when she explains that marginalized groups can be identified "according to their specific representation in political bodies (Williams 1998: 15). This means that marginalized groups are those who are unremittingly underrepresented in legislative bodies (Williams 1998: 3).

While I agree with both Young and Williams, I realize at the same time the extent to which Western mentality has had on their approaches. Young defines marginalized individuals as subordinated groups by dominant groups and Williams sees marginals as members of society that are underrepresented. In that respect, it seems to me that their vision is limited in the sense that it cannot fully extend to the Egyptian context. I do not disagree with the way they conceptualized marginalization, but in the context of study, I believe that marginals cannot be presumably entitled to respect and dignity, even if they do not "fit" in mainstream society.

In Egypt, homosexuals are marginalized because they surpass Young's uselessness. Instead, they are perceived as a "disease" and officially recognized as "unnatural". It is hard to

imagine that there is any place left for their respect or dignity. That is why it is important to discuss the umbilical link between marginalization and violence in the Egyptian context.

1.2.2. Violence

Another one of Young's form of injustice, the oppression of systematic violence, is arguably one of the most common type of injustice in the Egyptian context. Often, "members of some groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their persons or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person," says Young (1990: 61).

I would even go as far as to say that violence against Egyptian homosexuals can even aim to punish and kill them. Where my view differs from Young's is once again in the impossibility to fully apply her approach to the relation between power and oppression. It seems to me that Young puts too much focus on oppression that emanates from dominant groups against subordinate groups. Yet I think that in the Egyptian context, because oppression is institutionalized, the state can also engage in this violence.

1.3. The Sociopoliticization of Religion: the Tool to Reason Justified Oppression

Thus far, I have argued in the previous sections of this chapter that while homosexuality serves as the praxis of oppression, the latter is itself the result of institutionalized injustices that are rooted in unquestionable norms. Now, I will argue how religion can serve as an effective tool towards justifying oppression.

1.3.1. Religion as the "Unforced Force"

Religion is often seen as an important predictor of attitudes about homosexuality. Yet again, what separates one attitude from another is the level of religious integration in the sociopolitical sphere. The concept of the public sphere was first introduced by German scholar Jürgen Habermas in his account entitled *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Mendieta and VanAntwerpen 2011: 2).

For Habermas, this public sphere is not just an open social space. Actually, it also serves as a realm where arguments can be "debated, accepted or rejected" (Mendieta and VanAntwerpen 2011: 3). However, only those that are accepted truly meet the consent of all citizens. What is interesting in Habermas' account is the way he views these "accepted arguments" as allowing the state to monopolize coercion. In other words, because these accepted arguments are presumed to represent all citizens, the state permits itself to impose them by default. Hence, these arguments get converted into what Habermas labels as the "coercion of rational deliberation" or a type of "unforced force" (Mendieta and VanAntwerpen 2011: 3). Accordingly, the effect of this imposed "non-imposed" force carves the way for the state to serve as an apparatus of social control over human agency. This particular conception of public deliberation in the social space was often measured incomplete and was criticized for its lack of religious consideration (Mendieta and VanAntwerpen 2011: 3).

More recently, Habermas became spoken about the debate gravitating around the role of religion in the public sphere. As Loobuyck and Rummens put it, "in spite of what he used to believe himself, Habermas now acknowledges that religion will not disappear as a relevant influence neither in the lives of individuals nor in the cultural and political arena" (Loobuyck and Rummens 2011: 237). Instead, he appears to value religion as a central element to public reason, one that not only shapes public opinion, but also cultural identity.

1.3.2. Religion as the "Political"

At this point, it is fair to question if our individual choices and decisions are to a certain extent already made for us in the sociopolitical sphere. Habermas could argue that this was even bound to happen as the origins of state-organized societies have given birth to this kind of power and control by fusing politics and religion together (Habermas 2011: 17). To a certain extent, history shows that "the political" is religious in itself (Habermas 2011: 18). Yet again, it is also safe to say that the religious is also political. When political authorities have to make decisions that are collectively binding to all citizens, especially when people have diverging views, a convincing tie connecting law and political power, along with religious beliefs and practices, ensures that the rulers' orders are being followed (Habermas 2011: 18).

In a recent dialogue between Habermas and scholar Charles Taylor, a heated debate sparked when it came to analyzing the rationality behind secular and religious reason. Habermas disagreed with Taylor's idea and incentive to categorize secular reason as being rational while religious reason is presumed irrational. He claims that "reason is working in religious traditions, as well as in any cultural enterprise, including science. So there is no difference on that broad cultural level of reasoning. At a general cognitive level, there is only one and the same human reason" (Habermas in Habermas and Taylor 2011: 61)

To this, Kristin Luker makes an important assertion (Luker [1984] 2009). In her account on pro- and anti-abortion activism, she merges Habermas and Taylor's views when she explains that the decisions regarding the *raison d'être* vary according to the established worldview. She reveals that since people are located in different parts of the world, they are exposed to different realities and have different religious and cultural traditions (Luker [1984] 2009: 158). As such,

depending on their shared sets of values, they will have an either reasonable or religious worldview. Similarly, Charlotte Ryan and William Gamson tell us that these worldviews ultimately depend on their "framing," a sort of thought organizer that filters the relevant facts from the irrelevant ones (Ryan and Gamson [2006] 2009: 167). And though it can be unconsciously done or consciously used as a strategy, the authors insist that it is:

> …a necessary part of giving coherent meaning to what is happening in the world…It provides coherence to an array of symbols, images, and arguments, linking them through an underlying organizing idea that suggests what is essential – what consequences and values are at stake (Ryan and Gamson [2006] 2009: 168).

In a way, the authors are telling us that there is more than one way of framing a problem, and more importantly, it often explicitly or implicitly reflects religious moral values deriving from a specific cultural heritage (Ryan and Gamson [2006] 2009: 169). As a matter of fact, it even seems that the legitimate power of the state has for very long managed to survive and was even guaranteed by a religious worldview (Mendieta and VanAntwerpen 2011: 3).

1.3.3. Religion as the "Existential"

Yet again, this religious framing not only gives consistency and justifies political control, but the religious beliefs underlying this frame also become an existential part of life (Habermas and Taylor 2011: 62). Deeply ingrained in all social dimensions (membership, socialization, prescribed practices, etc.), they eventually turn into the "accepted norms," the "path" one ought to take to live a good life:

> …a path to salvation means to follow, in the course of your life, an exemplary figure who draws his authority from ancient sources and testimonies. A path to salvation is different from any kind of profane ethical life project that an individual person can attribute to herself (Habermas in Habermas and Taylor 2011: 63).

In that sense, what we can learn from this is that the sociopolitical sphere is a double-edged sword. For one, it manages to craft a sense of commonality amongst individuals through what is believed to be a generally accepted set of values. For the other, it is the sociopoliticization of religion that makes these "unforcedly" forced values become an integral part of life, the unquestionable source of existence itself.[4]

1.4. The Sociopoliticization of the Body: When Divine Intervention is Performed

Judith Butler complements Habermas by adding another dimension to the sociopolitical sphere. She posits that the sociopolitical sphere goes beyond simply establishing unquestionable norms in society. If anything, these norms go as far as generating a particular bodily behaviour. Plato was the first to discern this variation between the social and the human bodies. Despite their differences, he deemed that they are both "systematically ordered assemblages whose elements (…) exist only in conjunction with one another… [and] in conjunction with each other" (Schatzki and Natter 1996: 1).

In the 19th century, this human-social body combination study became increasingly captivating to scholars like Mary Douglas, Freud, and Nietzsche, to name a few. Though their studies fall under a rubric that Foucault calls "political anatomy," Butler adjoins a fascinating concept called "performativity," a term that was initially introduced John L. Austin (Schatzki and Natter 1996: 2).

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[4] I refer to the notion of existence here from a theological perspective. It can be understood as a human life that is purely guided by spirituality. This produces a life that is lived precisely according to what religion preaches. The key here is to understand that religion becomes existence itself, because whether the individual agrees or not with what religion says, she or he will never dare to question it. On another note, I am also aware that the religion clearly does not have this type of impact everywhere. However, the expression "practice what you preach" definitely applies to the majority of non-Western societies. I will also add that this is especially relevant when the subject of homosexuality is approached in an Islamic Egyptian sociopolitical sphere.

Like Habermas, she also values the public sphere as being formed through certain religious traditions (Butler 2005: 8). However, she adds that these traditions as well establish a set of criteria and language for beings "to be" in society (Butler 2005: 7-8). This specific language is both verbal and physical and is generally commonly shared in a heterosexual context, a setting that is heavily influenced by performativity[5]. Gender is systematically performed rather than being voluntarily constructed or deconstructed as it is subjected to norms that materialize it. Butler says that "une norme peut effectivement matérialiser le corps (…) la matérialité du corps peut non seulement être investie par une norme, mais aussi en un sens être animée et profilée par elle" (Butler 2005: 15). In that sense, even the body is sociopolitically conditioned through an uttering divine voice – a voice that makes believe that only heterosexuality is permissible. French philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser sees the politics of performativity as a mere inevitability and perhaps even a necessity to the formation of the "subject-constituting power of ideology," which recourses to "the figure of a divine voice that names, and in naming brings its subjects into being" (Butler 1997: 31).

Though a part of this claim seems accurate, there also seems to be a dangerous and rather dark side to Althusser's description of divine performative. Actually, Butler would also agree since the "divine name makes what it names, but it also subordinates what it makes" (Butler 1997: 31). More frightening is the thought that this perfomative act empowers anyone who speaks the performative in the sense that "the one who speaks the performative effectively is understood to operate according to uncontested power" (Butler 1997: 49).

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[5] In *Excitable Speech* (1997), Butler's reference to language is based on a comparative analysis between J. L. Austin and Louis Pierre Althusser's comprehension of the impact of language (speech acts) and the performative. This particular sentence relates more to Austin's notion of an illocutionary utterance. Though he believes that some utterances are more powerful than others because they invoke a performative character, he does necessarily believe that "the workings of the performative always depend on the intention of the speaker," says Butler (1997: 24). Simply put, some words still remain effective even if we do not intentionally mean them.

This implies that in order to survive, performativity requires legitimacy. At the same time, it also seems to imply that performativity is no longer necessarily spoken through sovereign authority alone. If the language of performativity is equally spoken through non-state institutions and everyday citizens, then how does one determine who will be "the one" who speaks performativity? What are the criteria that give performativity its power? This question will specifically be answered in Chapter 2.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

For now, to sum up Chapter 1, the attempt here was to make it the theoretical nucleus for this paper. It mainly focused on providing the foundational theoretical frame valued necessary to explore the mechanisms of oppression and their impact on homosexual individuals in the sociopolitical sphere. At a micro-level, the theoretical findings were meant to retrieve a few conclusions. For one, we can conclude that homosexuality is often viewed negatively to the point where it has now become the praxis of institutionalized oppression. We can also conclude that this institutional oppression finds its roots in a strongly religious sociopolitical sphere that has established norms that dictate our thoughts and beliefs. At last, we can conclude that these religious norms also dictate our bodily behaviours. That way, the sociopolitical sphere seems to have become part of an inescapable vicious circle. On the one hand, the sociopoliticization of religion allows the sociopoliticization of the body, and on the other hand, the latter reconfirms the former. This is what performativity is all about!

At a macro-level, the goal of the theoretical findings presented in this chapter is to hopefully offer a more enlightened comprehension on how heterosexual norms originated, strengthened through time, and eventually lead to the systematic condemnation of homosexuality

in the Egyptian society, which will be discussed throughout Chapters 2 and 3. Yet again, after all is said and done, a few questions come to mind.

To what extent is it possible to "collectively rethink the norm," (Butler 2005: 20) as Butler mentions, if the collectivity is itself not representative of this norm? Put differently, how can all Egyptian citizens engage in such transformations when some of them are no longer considered "normal citizens" and much less even part of the sociopolitical sphere?

CHAPTER 2.

HETERONORMATIVITY: EVOLUTION AND PRACTICE

Chapter 2 takes us on the evolutionary journey of heterosexual norms. To get back to some of the questions left unanswered in the previous chapter, I find this chapter necessary. The emergence of queer theory has made some important insights on the dynamic of a heterosexually based society and its impact on the perception of homosexuality that can help us understand why it is systematically condemned in Egypt. In that sense, this chapter contributes to the overarching theme of this paper as it takes us through some of the key contributions to the understanding of heterosexual norms and their domination in the sociopolitical sphere. Divided into four sections, the chapter particularly provides a chronological shift of this understanding. In the first section, I use Monique Wittig's concept of heterosexuality as a political regime ([1981] 2001, 2007) to argue that heterosexuality has always been considered as a presumption due to a well-established sexual binary. In the second section, I use Adrienne Rich's notion of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980) to argue that heterosexuality then became an imposition. In the third section, I use Butler's heterosexual matrix (Butler 1990) in order to argue that heterosexuality has shifted to become a concept that has been completely naturalized. In the last section, I use Gundula Ludwig's notion of heteronormative hegemony (Ludwig 2011) to argue that heteronormativity has today become dominating in all aspects of life. The recent use of the term heteronormativity (Warner 1993) suggests that heterosexuality is no longer seen as the only permissible system that exists in society. Instead, while both systems exist, we come to the realization that homosexuality is allowed as long as it conforms to heterosexual norms. In that sense, more than just a socially forced structure, we will see how contemporary scholarship views heterosexuality as a hegemonic organization (Ludwig 2011).

In order to understand the dynamic between heterosexuality and homosexuality, I deem important to constantly keep in mind the following question: what instigated the reinforcement of the heterosexual structure to the point of rendering it hegemonic?

2.1. Wittig: Heterosexuality as a Political Regime

In *La Pensée Straight* ([1981] 2001, 2007), French feminist Monique Wittig explains how heterosexuality has and still manages to run society. For Wittig, even though it controls society, heterosexuality is still complex to comprehend as it is both at once real and imaginary:

> Quand je pose le terme hétérosexualité, je me trouve en face d'un objet non existant, un fétiche, une forme idéologique massive qu'on ne peut pas saisir dans sa réalité, sauf dans ses effets, et dont l'existence réside dans l'esprit des gens d'une façon qui affecte leur vie toute entière, la façon dont les gens agissent, leur manière de bouger, leur mode de penser. Donc j'ai affaire à un objet à la fois réel et imaginaire. (Wittig 2001: 82)

The idea that heterosexuality could have once been perceived as an "imaginary" concept may seem absurd today. However, this is not too surprising if we consider the fact that the word "heterosexuality" appears to have only existed in parallel with the emergence of the word "homosexuality". In fact, in *The Invention of Heterosexuality* ([1995] 1996) Jonathan M. Katz argues that the concept of heterosexuality is but a pure invention:

> An official, dominant, different-sex erotic ideal – a heterosexual ethic – is not ancient at all, but a modern invention. Our mystical belief in an eternal heterosexuality – our heterosexual hypothesis – is an idea distributed only in the last three-quarters of the twentieth century (Katz 1996: 14)

Indeed, the first use of the word "heterosexual" is known to have appeared in an American medical journal in 1892, according to Katz (1996: 19). The coming together of the heterosexual and homosexual dichotomy, distinguished by its dissimilar sexual and erotic categories, began in the 1860s (Katz 1996: 51). By the late 19th century, what Katz calls the

"historically specific idea of the heterosexual" (1996: 51) had officially been established. In his words, "the experience of a proper, middle-class, different-sex lust began to be publicly named and documented" (Katz 1996: 51).

2.1.1. The Heterosexual Contract

Regardless of this dichotomy, Wittig takes Jean Jacques Rousseau's concept of social contract to argue that before it officially existed as a counterpart to homosexuality, heterosexuality actually constituted the social norm, and therefore a social contract (Wittig 2001: 83)[6]. In that sense, Wittig sees Rousseau's social contract more like a "contrat hétérosexuel" – far from accomplishing what it had originally promised (Wittig 2001: 78). The idea of reciprocal individual freedom and protection that are guaranteed by fusing oneself to an association of people is too idealistic and a trap in which Rousseau himself may have fallen. This is because heterosexual relationships are fundamentally used to frame society and to nourish the social contract that allows such society to exist. As Wittig so eloquently puts it, "…il y a un présupposé, un déjà-là, du social d'avant le social: l'existence de deux (pourquoi deux?) groupes artificiellement distincts, les hommes et les femmes… " (Wittig 2001: 83).

2.1.2. Repercussions of a Heterosexual Binary

Wittig explains the roots of this heterosexual contract by arguing that male-female heterosexual structure serves as a parameter to all hierarchical relationships because of Aristotle's theory of pairing:

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[6] In *Du Contrat social ou Principes du droit politique,* Rousseau sums up his notion of social contract as follows: "Trouver une forme d'association qui défende et protège de toute la force commune la personne et les biens de chaque associé, et par laquelle chacun s'unissant à tous n'obéisse pourtant qu'à lui-même et reste aussi libre qu'auparavant." (Rousseau in Wittig 2001: 79).

Aristote était beaucoup plus cynique quand il déclarait dans *La Politique* que les choses doivent être (ainsi) pour constituer un État: "Le premier principe est que ceux qui sont inefficaces l'un sans l'autre doivent être réunis dans une paire. Par exemple l'union mâle femelle." Il est à remarquer que le deuxième exemple de "ceux qui doivent être réunis dans une paire" se trouve correspondre à gouvernant/gouverné. C'est peut-être depuis ce temps-là que mâle/femelle, soit la relation hétérosexuelle, a servi de paramètre à toutes les relations hiérarchiques. (Wittig 2001: 84)

I find this particular claim made by Wittig rather intriguing. In a way, it could explain how the priority given to the heterosexual binary has led to, arguably, Wittig's most provocative argument yet: heterosexuality as a political regime (Wittig 2007: 13).

The way I see it, Wittig's notion of heterosexuality as a "political regime" seems two-dimensional. In a first instance, it is a regime because it consumes, or better yet, entirely dominates life in all its aspects. In a way, it is an entirely totalitarian regime. In a second instance, it is political because sexual power relations are based on a very specific sexual categorization. While it is important to clarify that Wittig sees women and lesbians as the secondary citizens under this regime since men overpower them sexually, the same can be said of homosexuals. As Wittig explains, in the end, the sexual and political relationship is one between a slave and a master:

La pérennité des sexes et la pérennité des esclaves et des maîtres proviennent de la même croyance. Et comme il n'existe pas d'esclaves sans maîtres, il n'existe pas de femmes sans hommes. L'idéologie de la différence des sexes opère dans notre culture comme une censure, en ce qu'elle masque l'opposition qui existe sur le plan social entre les hommes et les femmes en lui donnant la nature pour cause. Masculin/féminin, mâle/femelle sont les catégories qui servent à dissimuler le fait que les différences sociales relèvent toujours d'un ordre économique, politique et idéologique (Wittig 2007: 36)

From this, we can see just how political (in terms of gender power relations) this regime is; we can deduct that an individual's social status will automatically be dictated according to sexual categories that are deemed "natural" in society. According to this understanding, men

"naturally" dominate women. This stereotype portrays women as symbolically weaker than men; she earns less, is typically expected to get married, is generally pressured to bare children and abide to her motherly and wife duties.

Along the same lines, heterosexuality also "naturally" overpowers homosexuality on all social fronts. After all, "vivre en société, c'est vivre en hétérosexualité" says Wittig (Wittig 2001: 82). In our context of study, what this seems to imply is that homosexuals cannot have meaningful lives unless they live within and according to economic, political and ideological paradigms installed by a culturally constructed heterosexuality.

Put this way, heterosexuality as a political regime is able to survive because it has become a norm by naturalizing straight culture. For Michael Warner, what this straight culture continuously "teaches" us is that one way or another all the different norms that exist in society must in the end "line up":

> If you are born with male genitalia, the logic goes, you will behave in masculine ways, desire women, desire feminine women, desire them exclusively, have sex in what are thought to be normally active and insertive ways and within officially sanctioned contexts, think of yourself as a heterosexual, identify with other heterosexuals, trust in the superiority of heterosexuality no matter how tolerant you might wish to be, and never change any part of this package from childhood to senescence. Heterosexuality is often a name for this entire package, even though attachment to the other sex is only one element. If you deviate at any point from this program, you do so at your own cost. (Warner 1999: 37-38).

Deeply anchored in the sociopolitical sphere, all in all, it is not impossible but definitely not easy to obliterate the heterosexual political regime. For Wittig, the only way to transcend it is by politically, philosophically and symbolically destroying the man/woman categorization all together (Wittig 2007: 13).

2.2. Rich: Constraints of a Violent Compulsory Heterosexuality

This resonates too well with what American feminist Adrienne Rich later called a "compulsory heterosexuality" as a powerful institution that not just presumes heterosexuality, but that would also never question the idea of a so called "preference" or "innate orientation" (Rich 1980: 633)[7]. Rich here adds a new element to Wittig's claim by introducing heterosexuality as a compulsory institutional body. This notion portrays heterosexuality as a constraint to sexual freedom, rather than just a society that "naturally" functions on the basis of a heterosexual contract.

Rich's use of the word "compulsory" especially depicts a political institution that imposes such constraints. In other words, the heterosexual political institution in this case seems to inflict a specific sociopolitical apparatus that strengthens heterosexuality and with it, the power relationships that underlie it. Once again, this provokes an on-going patriarchy where men and heterosexuality overpower women and homosexuality.

As such, one could argue that the heterosexual political institution is violent in nature as it unanimously "forces" rules and obligations towards which we have the duty to obey in exchange of individual freedoms and protection. At a first glance, I am sure the notion of complying with the rules in exchange of freedom and protection is seemingly far from violent. Yet again, the problem here lies in the fact that such individual freedoms and protection are not necessarily guaranteed to all members of society. More often than not, this regime leaves a part of society controlled by rules to which individuals never consented.[8]

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[7] The notion of "compulsory heterosexuality" was originally introduced in Rich's 1980 essay entitled "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" reprinted in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry* (1986). Rich mainly argues that heterosexuality is a violent political institution that positions women as second-class citizens in all aspects of life: culturally, economically and sociopolitically by denying their sexual freedom. The essay is aimed at criticizing feminist theory for its lack of consideration towards lesbianism as being a preference or an innate orientation.

[8] At this point, it is worth mentioning that while Wittig and Rich mainly focus their work on sexual inequalities and the place of women and lesbianism in society, both are nonetheless aware that

2.3. Butler: Heterosexuality as a Performance

2.3.1. A Practice Beyond Social Practice

What then constitutes this compulsory heterosexual regime? What effects does it have on society? In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler offers a deeper understanding of heterosexuality by introducing a type political pattern (ideal that she calls the "heterosexual matrix"; Butler 1990: 151).

In short, I see this concept as a way of understanding the mechanism that runs the heterosexual regime. However, Butler's theoretical intervention is especially unique because it seems to suggest that heterosexuality, as an imposed political institution (Rich) or a political regime that naturalizes a straight culture (Wittig), is more than just an instrumental notion or a matter of social practice as Wittig (2001: 85) once argued. As she sees it, power does not necessarily act upon male/female sexed bodies that previously existed, but instead produces and naturalizes gender categories. In Butlerian terms, heterosexuality is a "grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized" (Butler 1990: 151). I am tempted to say that this "naturalization of categories" within the heterosexual matrix can arguably be interpreted as a cultural and sociopolitical environment where bodies are automatically labelled, defined and shaped, giving little to no flexibility for our body "to be" what it wants to be.

I base my interpretation on the fact that Butler sees gender as a norm in of itself. Years after introducing the heterosexual matrix, in *Undoing Gender*, she clarifies that gender as a norm is not the same "as saying that there are normative views of femininity and masculinity" (2004: 42). This definitely brings a new light to the understanding of heterosexuality here in the sense

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homosexuality as a whole is nearly invisible in society. Wittig specifically expresses that "l'homosexualité n'apparaît que de façon fantomatique, sporadique, faiblement et parfois pas du tout" (Wittig 2001: 82).

that the norm subjects the gender to engage in a heterosexual logic. This means that only two genders (femininity and masculinity) exist and can only exist in opposition to each other. In the same route, a female can only have desires for a male just like only a man can desire a woman and vice-versa. This logic shows that "according to the norm, gender is supposed to be complementary and coherent, gender is only thinkable, perceivable and liveable in a binary form" (Ludwig 2011: 45).

2.3.2. The Problem with Normalcy

By now, it has become clear that heterosexuality even affects both body and mind as it normalizes the way we "should" act and react in society. Michael Warner calls it heteronormativity; it is a way in which the logic of heterosexual order is deeply entrenched and carried out in the social reflection, in due course becoming a standard that structures all aspects of life:

> Gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, masturbation, reproductive politics, racial and national fantasy, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body. (Warner 1993: xiii)

This actually sheds light on what Wittig meant by heterosexuality as being at the same time real and imaginary. It is real and imaginary because it is embedded in and plays on multiple levels. As we can see from Warner's claim, it is visible or "real" on some levels because it is institutionalized. However, it can also be invisible or "imaginary" on other levels because it is subconsciously practiced. Before we know it, heteronormativity automatically dictates how we should be and feel by following a socially established heterosexual guideline.

The apparent threat of this type of normalcy is that heteronormativity also draws the line between the "normal" and the "abnormal" individuals in the sociopolitical sphere. Eventually, this difference leads to the compartmentalization of the "accepted citizens" and the "prohibited citizens" (Jama 2010). Butler, as she so eloquently entitled her book *Humain, inhumain* (2005), clarifies that heteronormativity ultimately creates a divide that distinguishes the "human" from the "sub-human" in the sociopolitical sphere. As a result, heteronormativity gives higher authority to those who "fit" over those who do not "fit".

What does this "higher authority" entail? I find it very fitting to use Bob Pease's use of "unearned advantage" here (Pease 2010: 14). Actually, far from being earned, this privilege is rather an expected, assumed or perhaps a "natural" sense of entitlement (Pease 2010: 15). Pease specifically turns to Wieman's single cause theory of oppression to argue that justified oppression towards homosexuals is the single-handed cause of the heterosexual privilege (Pease 2010: 17). I find it important to mention that my intention here is not to create a divide between the good and the bad, nor to portray the heterosexual as the "evil" and the homosexual as the victim. Instead, the idea is to demonstrate that homosexuals are sociopolitically less privileged than heterosexuals. I base this on my observation of Western society where homosexuality is generally, but not typically, accepted.

The first example I want to discuss is the process of adoption. While the process of adoption is not generally an easy one, it is especially intricate for homosexuals. For one, when it comes to adoption, more often than not, homosexuals are either perceived as being affiliated with or suspected of paedophilia. Whether it is for a homosexual single parent or couple, adopting almost seems impossible for numerous reasons. Are they "fit" to love a child? Do they have enough means to provide for the child? Can they as homosexuals fill the gap or a father or a

mother? Can they provide a "friendly" or "loving" environment for the child to grow up? Will their "lifestyle" also make the child a homosexual? Ideologically speaking, the fact that these questions are even thought of during the process of adoption shows that society cannot and is not ready to accept that homosexuals are just as able as heterosexuals at providing a financially stable and loving home to an adopted child. This shows that society still believes that children should only be brought up by a woman and a man as their parents.

The second observation that caught my attention is the projection of the "American dream" in society. Whether it is via your typical big happy heterosexual family consisting of the mother, the father, the children, the dog and the white picket fence, symbolically speaking, the "American dream" is only conceivable through a heterosexual lens. Today, this symbolic representation is present in your run of the mill publicity: television commercials, magazines, shopping ads, etc.

The third and last example is the level to which marriage, as an institution, has become a strategic apparatus for heterosexual couples. Economically speaking, though this observation is especially fitting in the United States, marriage is typically an unearned advantage for heterosexual couples. Today, marrying the opposite sex automatically grants access to a myriad of protective rights, pensions and insurances that only they can enjoy as sexual counterparts. The institution of marriage cannot accept that homosexual couples can also be guaranteed "health care, equity upon divorce, tax benefits, and so forth," as Marso mentions (2010: 146). What is more troubling in addition to promising more benefits is the way marriage immediately bestows a "bourgeois respectability" (Marso 2010: 146) that would automatically place many homosexuals as second class citizens. At the same time, it goes without saying that homosexual couples might also use the same institution as an apparatus in order to access these benefits.

Consequently, this in itself creates a divide within the homosexual community by implying that there are "good" and "bad" homosexuals.

These few examples (ideological, symbolic and economic) are in my eyes a way to demonstrate that homosexuals are indeed sociopolitically less entitled to certain advantages. Julia Serano explained it well when she said that the ones who "fit" justifyingly entitle themselves to a higher status by default because their attributes are considered 'naturels' et 'normaux' et "échappent donc à une critique réciproque" (Serano 2011: 5)[9]. Consequently, the privileged are in a way almost "immune" from any wrongdoing.

Clearly, this once again comes to show us the subtility behind well-established norms (heterosexual norms, that is) to which particular individuals (homosexuals, though not all them) cannot or may not have the desire to conform. On the other hand, Diane Richardson makes an important remark regarding our own subconscious towards this normalization. She points out that neoliberalism has given birth to a society that is more prone to conform and adapt. As she explains, "[o]ne of the most common interpretations of equality in contemporary neoliberal societies such as the USA and Britain is equality of resources and recognition" (Richardson 2005: 519). The problem behind this consumerist ideology is that it requires "sameness" in order for it to achieve equality, which in the end "implies that lesbians and gay men, as well as heterosexuals, have shared interests and needs" (Richardson 2005: 520). As a result, it is no surprise that some homosexuals prefer to adhere to a typically heterosexual lifestyle in order to access this level of recognition.

2.3.3. Homonormativity

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[9] In *Le privilège cissexuel* (2011), Serano places the transgender community as being the disadvantaged individuals in society. However, by referring to the abovementioned examples, I believe that her conception of the notion of privilege can equally be applied to homosexuality altogether.

What is worrisome behind this train of thought is that we can conclude that heteronormativity is viciously uncontested and fortified due to constructed homonormative consumption practices. Duggan explains this construction as a type of "phantom mainstream of public 'conventional' gays" who seem to live and consume uniformly within and according to a heterosexual society (Duggan 2002: 179). In that case, both Richardson and Duggan would see this as a serious restraint to the homosexual public space.

Yet again, Gavin Brown believes that if there is an absence or shrinkage of the homosexual public space it is because there is a stereotypical representation of the affluent gay consumer. More often, the urban gay consumer is typically presumed to be a white professional gay man living in a normatively "masculine" loft, and who shops at commercial sites that are made "gay friendly" according to heterosexual standards (Brown 2009: 1506). However, Brown points out that we are here overlooking the fact that there are non-capitalist and "diverse economies of urban gay life" (2009: 1506) that transcend *the* capitalist economy and its typical "sites of consumptions that have been deemed to be central to the production of homonormative social relationships" (2009: 1508).

Put that way, we realize that while a gay consumer may be more inclined to consume in the hiding, either because the site is not "gay friendly" enough for heterosexual standards or because the contribution is made to a local economy, homonormative consumption is not all that normative. Rather, it seems that it is the capitalist economy that has constructed a community through normative consumption. More importantly, by acknowledging such non-capitalist consumption practices, we come to terms that homosexuals are indeed important contributors to the "overall" economy. This acknowledgment only seems to be possible if we can simultaneously challenge heteronormativity.

Butler believes that heterosexual norms can be challenged if we consider the possibility of a more fluid system that includes other sexual combinations.[10] Though Butler makes an interesting point, her argument still makes me wonder just how easy it is to lift limitations on sexual orientations. Or better yet, why is it still extremely difficult to break heteronormativity in society?

2.4. Ludwig: From Normalization to the Heteronormative Hegemony

In my view, Ludwig's employment of the notion "heteronormative hegemony" adds a new dimension to the study of heteronormativity in Queer theory (Ludwig 2011: 45). By creating a unique dialogue between Butler's view on heterosexuality as a power formation and Antonio Gamsci's notion of hegemony introduced in *Prison Notebooks* (1985), Ludwig believes this will provide us with a more precise notion of heteronormativity (Ludwig 2011: 45).

It is crucial to note that Ludwig utilises hegemony without reducing it to a notion that simply explains class orders as Gramsci did. In her own words: "I refer to hegemony as a specific power formation that operates beyond juridical power[11] and that cannot be reduced to class relations" (Ludwig 2011: 44). On the other hand, she sticks to Gramsci's overarching definition of hegemony, as a state formation that functions on the basis of "intellectual and moral leadership" (Gramsci quoted in Ludwig 2011: 50). This means that hegemony as a power

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[10]Butler originally introduced the term as the "heterosexual matrix" when it made its first appearance in *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990). Butler has since had a change of heart regarding this specific terminology, believing it actually reconfirmed and even promoted an ideal that is falsely represented (Butler 2005: 29). For that reason, she transformed it into to the "heterosexual hegemony" in *Bodies that Matter* (Butler 1993).

[11] Ludwig is influenced by Foucault's notion of modern state power which, as she points out, "cannot be reduced to juridical means, but instead operates on through governing in the sense of conducting subjects and the population" (Ludwig 2011: 52). In other words, the state does not exclusively function by implementing rules, but also by simultaneously interacting with individuals within society as seen in Foucault's lectures on governmentality (Foucault 2007, 2008).

formation represents the prevailing cultural norms of society that eventually become the dominant worldviews (term seen in Luker, Chapter 1, Section 1.3.2.).

More importantly, Ludwig also follows Gramsci's footsteps in the sense that the state is a completely distinguishable entity from civil society, where the latter is composed of private organisms – it could be "in neighbourhood communities, religious groups, [or] political associations…," for instance (Gramsci quoted in Ludwig 2011: 51). That said, not only do these organisms have different worldviews, but their daily interaction with each other is not without an influence on decisions made by the state.

Ludwig here breaks from other scholars, as she seems to suggest that heteronormativity as the heteronormative hegemony transcends the idea that homophobia is reinforced by the state as a sole political entity. Ludwig hopes that we view the source that gives power to heteronormativity with a different lens. She does so "by replacing an understanding of power as a matrix with the concept of hegemony" (Ludwig 2011: 52). As such, we come to the realization that heteronormativity is not reinforced in a "top-down fashion" since hegemonic worldviews are produced in civil society and passed onto the state who addresses individuals on the basis of such articulations (Ludwig 2011: 53). In that sense, hegemonic worldviews become the state power and not the other way around. The way I see it, while there are and always will be negotiations between the state and civil society, the former will vastly reflect the surfacing hegemonic worldview. This necessary partnership between state and civil society is needed in order for the state to survive and control the masses.

Ludwig argues that this would also explain the fact that a heteronormative hegemony is "historically and geographically-specific" because it fuels on the consent of the majority that emerges from the social struggles within civil society. Here lies a major difference between

Butler and Ludwig. Even if Butler had a change of heart regarding her heterosexual matrix (see footnote 5), which she later calls "heterosexual hegemony" in *Bodies that Matter* (1993), her concept remained still in time. The heteronormative hegemony on the other hand carries a sense of fluidity or changeableness due to hegemonic worldviews that may or may not change in time. In the end, hegemony is not just created and consolidated within the civil society, but it also entirely emerges from it (Dhawan 2011: 93).

Perhaps the most eye-opening argument in Ludwig's account is the fact that "sexed bodies and gendered subjects are effects of heteronormative hegemony" (Ludwig 2011: 53). She takes Foucault's concept of governing as form of power that relies on the way individuals constitute and conduct themselves ("techniques of the self") in order to instil a sense of common reasoning and "normality":

> Governing reveals that the gender is not imposed on the subjects through judicial mode of power but, importantly, that it is precisely a regulative force that evokes technologies of the self. In the processes of transforming into hegemonic worldviews and technologies of the self, the orientation towards "normality" is a substantial lubricant. Hegemonic worldviews are transformed into perceptions of "normality" in what Gramsci describes as "common sense" (1985: 323); they guide our ways of thinking, feeling, and doing our everyday actions (Ludwig 2011: 55)

In due time, this conditions the body through beliefs and dogmas that become "inscribed" in the body itself (Schatzki and Natter 1996: 4). Eventually, the body lives a reality that "is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of power that is exercised on those punished…" (Schatzki and Natter 1996: 7). In that sense, contrary to what we have previously seen with Butler, Wittig and Rich who portrayed normative violence of heterosexuality as being a structure or a regime that is being "imposed upon" subjects, Ludwig creates a shift with her concept of heteronormative hegemony as a form that is "agreed upon," hence legitimated by consent in civil society (Ludwig 2011: 55). Ultimately, this is because

heterosexual norms delicately permeate in all aspects of life and dictate how we should be, feel, act and react.

<center>* * *</center>

To sum up, let us bring the concept of heteronormativity back to our context of study. Looking back at Ludwig's heteronormative hegemony, many may question the need to speak of an Islamic state that generates homophobia in the Egyptian social realm if the former is already a reflection that is rooted in the later. In fact, Ludwig almost seems to insinuate that the state does what civil society wants. Does that mean that the Egyptian state is violently homophobic because the hegemonic worldviews in the Egyptian social realm violently condemn homosexuality?

Clearly, there is a fine and sensitive line to play with here. The point here is not to find out whether the Egyptian state or society condemns homosexuality first. Ultimately, this is because religion takes over the equation. As we have previously seen with Habermas, Taylor and Butler (Butler *et al.* 2001), religion has tremendous power in the public sphere because religious beliefs serve as a guideline to follow, but to also organize and control the sociopolitical sphere. In fact, the way I see it, the Egyptian state and the Egyptian civil society are surely distinguishable and yet one in the same through the force of Islamic faith. In a way, Islam here can function as the only hegemonic worldview possible in Egypt. Put that way, I find it difficult to see how Ludwig's heteronormative hegemony is fluid, transformable or even transformed through time. Like Duggan said, "hard-line religious and moral conservatives have been working to rigidify the boundaries of "traditional" marriage and to shore up its privileged status" (Duggan 2004: 1). Then, to what extent can homophobia in Egypt ever be ceased if only one overarching religious worldview (one that rejects and combats homosexuality) dominates the sociopolitical sphere?

CHAPTER 3.

ISLAM AND HOMOSEXUALITY

The main objective of this chapter is to contribute to the overarching theme of this paper by elucidating on how legally binding Islamic norms act as the main contributors to the Egyptian state-sponsored oppression towards homosexuals. The aim here is to apply what was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 to a specific context. As previously mentioned, this context is presented in an Arabo-Muslim framework, from which a particular focus will be directed towards the Egyptian state and its spontaneous crackdowns on homosexual conducts. This chapter is divided into two sections.

In the first section, an investigation will be made on the importance of the Qur'an and the meaning of being a "true' Muslim. From there, following Islam's perception towards homosexuality, I will argue that the Qur'an's stance on homosexuality struggles tremendously not just with its constantly varying interpretations, but also with lack of a well-defined legal punishment. In the second section, I will argue that even if there are no Egyptian laws that specifically condemn homosexuality, religious authorities will nonetheless rely on religious laws that are used ambiguously and that are taken out of context with the intent to penalize homosexuals. This will be followed by a specific focus on the Cairo52 event, in which the Egyptian state applied non-anti-homosexual religious laws to systematically arrest 52 homosexuals during their Nile cruise trip. Ultimately, what this chapter hopes to provide is a concrete representation of the treatment of homosexuals through religious norms and laws.

3.1. Muslim and Homosexual Do Not Rhyme

By now, it is no secret that religious beliefs are by and large the most powerful forecasters of homosexual sentiments. In addition, it should also be understood that the majority of religions classify homosexuality as unreligious and sinful. This attitude is no different for any of the world's top religions, whether it is Christianity, Judaism or Islam. As we have seen, however, the difference in this attitude ultimately relies on the sociopolitical religious context. Adamczyk and Pitt note that "even people who are not personally religious may be influenced by the religious culture in which they live. (…) While religious people may have more disapproving attitudes than non-religious individuals, religions vary tremendously in the extent to which they systematically condemn homosexuality" (2009: 339)[12]

In other words, it seems that the religious context and anti-homosexual sentiments may be paralleled. The more a religious context rejects homosexuals, the more norms reflecting anti-homosexual sentiments are likely to appear in "…public discourse, public institutions, legal codes, social norms, and family structures" (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009: 339).

On the other hand, while we can definitely apply this reasoning to different religions, research also shows that the particularly harsh penalties that are given to homosexuals living in Islamic countries is perhaps a sign that religious authorities interpret religious principles as forbidding homosexuality (Helie in Adamczyk and Pitt 2009: 339).

In my view, these anti-homosexual sentiments are particularly strong in Muslim countries because being a Muslim homosexual goes against the definition of being a Muslim in itself. What does it mean to be a "true" Muslim?

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[12] Though this research was primarily conducted in the United States (with a Judeo-Christian majority), affiliated studies confirm that this is equally valid and applicable to non-Judeo-Christian groups. In fact, Yuchtman-Yaar and Alkalay (2007) found Muslims had far more conservative social values when compared to Protestants and Catholics. Finke and Adamczyk (2008) also found that Muslims had more conservative attitudes about sexual morality than Catholics, which by reasonable deduction would augment Muslims' disapproval towards homosexuality, when compared to people of other religious faiths (see Adamczyk and Pitt 2009).

3.1.1. Definition of "Muslim"

The definition of being a Muslim is significant here because it comes to show the relevance of Habermas' concept of the "unforced force" (seen in chapter 1). Just like he claimed, it appears to me that being a Muslim is an identity – not one that is simply imposed upon or partially integral to cultural identity, but rather one that constitutes it altogether. In other words, being a Muslim shapes the sociopolitical sphere and shapes the public opinion within it.

Murad Hofmann explains that, historically speaking, a Muslim is not just an individual who articulates the Islamic confession of faith (ash-shahada), but who also believes it and respects it, accordingly:

- God, His angels, His prophets, His books and life after death;
- The Qur'an as God's authentic, eternal Word;
- Muhammad (s.) as God's last and final messenger and a beautiful example to be emulated (5: 3; 24: 54; 33:21);
- The Shari'a as divine law;
- The Five Pillars of Islam (prayer, fasting, zakat-tax, pilgrimage)
(Hofmann 2007: 81)

Being a "formal Muslim" then requires that the individual pledges to the whole religious "package," as Hofmann calls it (2007: 81). What this contrastingly means is that a Muslim who follows the list only partially is not worthy to be considered a Muslim.

To continue with this thought, it is worth mentioning that even if a Muslim is in position to judge individuals with other beliefs, the case differs if a Muslim "declares his apostasy (arrida)" (Hofmann 2007: 82). What this precisely means is that meanwhile Islam does not punish those who reject it, the exception remains in a case where there is a "hostile activity against Islam" itself (Hofmann 2007: 82). In that case, "…apostasy as high treason becomes a crime punishable in all systems of law" (Hofmann 2007: 82).

This makes me wonder to what extent is this applicable to a Muslim homosexual. Does that mean that a Muslim homosexual is by default committing "hostile activity against Islam" because the Qur'an refuses homosexuality? Does that mean that a religious Muslim who happens to also be a homosexual is not "worthy" of being a Muslim because the Qur'an said so? Could this justify the severe punishment to which Muslim homosexuals are subjected?

To take it further, why is it primordial to follow exactly word for word what the Qur'an communicates? Does it really make an individual "less religious" or "less Muslim" for following the Qur'an only partially? Arguably, the Muslim community seems to have a much more extensive fascination with the Qur'an. Where does it stem from?

3.1.2. The Qur'an: the Only "Holy" Scripture?

In Islam, there is no doubt that the Qur'an is the highest and most valuable religious authority for Muslims (Whitaker 2006: 117). Hofmann addresses some interesting facts that could explain just how vital the Qur'an is for Muslims. He explains the Qur'an as being:

> …the only truly authentic holy script, indeed as a scared source *sui generis*, being the only one in its kind. This is in part due to the fact that the Qur'an:
> - originated in the 7th century CE, i.e. in the full light of document history;
> - was immediately committed to writing;
> - had one author only, Muhammead b.'Abdallah, whose life is known in all detail;
> - exists in the very language in which it was communicated;
> - has been preserved immaculately (Hofmann 2007: 126).

Hofmann posits that when combined together, these facts make the Qur'an the only "holy" scripture, but not just because its message is unquestionable or because its foundation carries a "supernatural" authority that makes it forcedly binding (Hofmann 2007:127). What truly makes it exceptional is that, unlike with other religious scriptures, the Muslims are the only religious group that view the Qur'an "as a divine verbal revelation: Sentence for sentence, nay,

word for word send down (nazala) by Him, representing His very speech," says Hofmann (2007: 127).

Moreover, where there is revelation, God is always its source. In that sense, Muslims who do not fully believe, practice, or concede the Qur'an as a revelation, thus as God's eternal words, cannot be called Muslims.

Then, the idea that the Qur'an is perceived as the only divine scripture carries with it an unquestionable norm that is definitely reflective of the hegemonic element presented by Ludwig (seen in chapter 2). Just like Ludwig's hegemony, the Qur'an's power is significant given that it unquestionably takes over all aspects of life, and especially because its impact is invisible to the naked eye.

It might be why homosexuals cannot and in no way be considered "true" Muslims, and why they "must" punished. As a matter of fact, the Islamic condemnation of homosexuality finds its roots in the story of the prophet Lot (named Lut in the Qur'an). Similar to the Bible's story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Book of Genesis, the Qur'an's story of Lot is scattered in 14 out of 112 chapters (suras) (Whitaker 2006:186). Some verses, however, are clearer than others. For instance, in some verses, Lot wanted to protect his guests from the townsfolk and was heard saying:

> Will ye commit abomination (al-faahisha) such as no creature ever did before you? Lo!
> Ye come with lust (shahwataan) unto men instead of (min duun) women. Nay, but ye are wanton (musrifuun) folk). (7:80-81)
> What! Of all creatures do ye come unto the males, and leave the wives your Lord created for you? Nay, but ye are forward ('aaduun) folk. (26: 165-166)
> Will ye commit abomination (al-faahisha) knowingly? Must ye needs lust (shawatan) after men instead of women? Nay, but ye are fol who act senselessly (tajhaluun) (27: 53-54).
> Lo! Ye commit lewdness (al-faahisha) such as no creature did before. For come ye not in unto males…? (29: 28-29) (Whitaker 2006: 189)

Though theses famous Qur'anic verses often serve as the basis for homosexual condemnation, it still seems unclear to me how they necessarily prove or justify this condemnation explicitly. What complicates the matter is the fact that the interpretation of the Qur'an, originally written in Arabic, has led to various versions that at times either focus or deemphasize on the homosexual act. This is not to mention that Qur'an, as Whitaker mentions, does not "provide anything approaching a systematic legal code" (Whitaker 2006: 117). As a result, finding a legal solution to a problem reported in the Qur'an is also opened to other interpretations that may be based on the *hadith* (words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammed). If the hadith cannot provide an explanation, problems could be resolved either through analogies (qiyas)[13], or the ijmaa (consensus between all Muslim scholars) as a last resort (Whitaker 2006: 117).

In sum, this first section generates two important conclusions. Practically speaking, it reveals the Qur'an's stance on homosexuality and, above all, the struggle it generates sociopolitically because of its vague interpretational variations and lack of a well-defined legal punishment. Theoretically speaking, this very well depicts the sociopoliticization of religion presented in chapter 1. Firstly, one can argue that Islam is in itself Habermas' "unforced force", because in order to lead a good life one must be fully committed to becoming a "true" Muslim without ever second-guessing or questioning what it entails. In an Arabo-Muslim framework, this makes me want to argue that the Qur'an functions as "the political" given its high credibility for being considered as the only Holy Scripture. It therefore must be treated as the "supreme rule" by which people should be governed. Finally, it is through the fusion of Islam into politics that we come to understand how religion becomes an "existential" part of life, as discussed by

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[13] The term *qiyas* can be understood as a case-by-case scenario in which a decision is taken based on similar antecedent verdicts.

Habermas and Taylor. This is especially visible in the Egyptian state where politics are run by the Shari'a law. That strong union between religion and state continuously reminds Egyptians that Islam is an integral part of their daily lives (from cultural practices, all the way to politics). Most importantly, what all of this tells us is that being "true" Muslim while being a homosexual is impossible in Islam, and consequently rejected in daily life.

3.2. Homosexual Crackdowns and the Egyptian Law: the Cairo52 Event as a Sign of Oppression

Ironically, though we can say that the Qur'an acts as a guide for an eternal way of life both socially and politically, the struggle to transmit it as a legally binding document in Islamic countries has been noticeable. Even in Egypt, one of the moderate Islamic countries, the state has still found ways to inculcate this dilemma even if there are no laws that are specifically anti-homosexual (Moore 2006: 36). The only problem is that existing laws are taken out of context in order to find a way to criminalize homosexuality.

In Egypt, the common law used by the Egyptian state to suppress homosexuality is *Law10/1961 on the Combating of Prostitution*. This law was first promulgated in 1951 as *Law no. 68/1951 on Combating Prostitution*. After being reintroduced with the intent to ban prostitution altogether (first in Syria, then in Egypt), it has become Law 10/1961.

What is also interesting to note here is that sexual conduct legislation in Egypt does not originally derive from immoral cultural values as communicated in the Qur'an. If anything, at first, and despite Egyptian state's opposing view, it was actually rooted in a secular law system that was enforced by the British to legalize prostitution during their colonial rule (HRW 2004: 131). It was by 1949 when the system had ended and Egypt under the martial law had sent out a military decree to end the legal status of prostitution or evidence of brothels (HRW 2004: 131).

What I would argue, on the other hand, is that even if it originally acted as a political resistance to colonialism, abolishing prostitution became possible through moral and religious language, and this, through the pressure of both Egyptian nationalists and the Muslim Brotherhood (HRW 2004: 132). When the martial law ended the following year in 1950, sex work had been permanently banned, but a new arose. Egypt was now left with a law that combined both moral and political vocabulary as part of its legal terms.

In 1949 a special committee of the House of Representatives (the lower house of parliament at the time) had been drafting first anti-prostitution law. The committee opted for the introduction of the term *fujur* (debauchery) as a criminalized conduct. Its intent was to add the word "so the text [can] include male prostitution, since the word *di'ara* [prostitution] only referred to female prostitution" (HRW 2004: 133). The challenge behind the term *fujur* is that it is much broader than *di'ara*. Other than being vague, the term now strongly interconnects immorality with sexual behaviour, and more importantly, it no longer refers to commercial connotations. To say the least, this unclear vocabulary alluding to morality has opened the door for other legal documents to use religion to oppress homosexuals. Actually, it seems to me that these legal documents have reinforced an abstract image of what punishment "should" be like for a homosexual. Today, most Egyptian homosexuals are being attacked by the Egyptian state mainly through a law that is exclusively meant to control prostitution.

Theoretically speaking, we come to realize the extent to which the sociopoliticization of the body constitutes a fundamental part of daily Egyptian life. The 2001 Cairo52 event (also known as the Queen Boat) is an exact reminder of how performativity and heteronormativity are hugely ingrained in the Egyptian society. The simple idea that the Qur'an (the Islamic divine utterance *par excellence*) indicates that homosexuality is unnatural gave automatic permission to

the Cairo Vice Squad and officers from State Security Investigations (*Mabahbith Amn al-Dawla)* to raid the Queen Boat on Friday, May 11, 2001 (HRW 2004: 22).

While cruising down the Nile, a boat named The Queen was abruptly stopped. Suddenly, after establishing what seemed to be a "gay party," 52 men were arrested for simply being suspected of homosexual conduct. As expected, with no anti-homosexual law in sight, the men were all charged with "habitual practice of debauchery," a prohibition under article 9(c) of the Egyptian "Law on the Combating of Prostitution" (HRW 2004: 13).

What is more eye opening is the level of anti-homosexual sentiment performed by the state seen in the context of Cairo52. For instance, it did not seem enough for the state to randomly arrest 52 men for "suspecting" they were gay. The state also sensed the urgency to hold their trial at the Emergency State Security Court. As the name indicates, this court usually holds hearings for the state's biggest emergencies. As a result, from the 52 men, nearly half of them were convicted (HRW 2004: 22).

Additionally, Cairo52 also serves as an example that demonstrates how performativity and heteronormativity expanded beyond the Egyptian state. In fact, one could also argue that both the media and the public were as equally as involved in what appeared to have become an anti-homosexual campaign.

For one, the media fueled the event by using every opportunity to create a public moral panic. The Human Rights Watch remarks:

> Newspapers told the public a major case was in the offing. They trumpeted the arrest of over fifty adherents of a "devil-worshippers' organization," who practiced "perverted activities" and took "pornographic photographs." The Satanists were seized "during their practice of debauchery and while naked in the hall"; their party was "a marriage ceremony for two male youth, God protect us" (HRW 2004: 22).

Indeed, for six long months the names and pictures of the 52 men not only made major headlines and newsstands, but were also presented in a way that gave homosexuality an unprecedented, disapproving, and scandalous attention. In other words, as one of the detainees mentioned, it was suddenly "a revenge match between two big families in the country," homosexual vs. heterosexual (HRW 2004: 22).

This is heteronormativity at its best! The way media basically portrayed homosexuals as infectious devils worshippers not only intentionally creates a public scare, but also reinforces what Jane J. Mansbridge calls ideological purity.[14] This is where the habitual superiority given to a commonly shared set of Islamic morals or "purified" norms (heterosexual norms that is) creates a discourse that instantly marginalizes the homosexual subjects by viewing them as "the others" in society (Mansbridge [1986] 2010: 161).

Lastly, because both state and media felt they had the right to mock, ridicule and ultimately scandalize the event, the public had not only disapproved homosexuality, but it had also become indifferent to the systematic oppression towards the arrested. In fact, during the course of events, the arrested men were exposed to significant violence. Most men had been beaten, tortured, and for many, their lives were completely ripped apart from both psychological and physical trauma. For one, men that are arrested for homosexual conduct are obligated to run an anal examination by the Forensic Medical Authority (run by the Ministry of Justice) (HRW 2004: 2). Moreover, during their investigation of the event, the Human Rights Watch organization reported that once in prison, men were also "whipped, beaten, bound and suspended in painful positions, splashed with ice-cold water, and burned with lit cigarettes" (HRW 2004: 2). Other times, they were electroshocked and raped by other prisoners.

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[14] I am aware that Mansbridge's concept of ideological purity is presented within social movement theory, but it does not necessarily, nor should it exclusively be applied within this theory.

One of the men expressed his pain: "(t)hey punished me only because of my sexual orientation and they condemned me as a criminal for my entire life. ... In brief, they killed every beautiful hope and future I ever had," he said (HRW 2004: 1). Another expressed his confusion: "…I don't understand why they must hunt us down. ...I am a human being. Aren't I? Tell me that I am. No, I know I am. I just can't believe this happened to me" (HRW 2004: 1).

While oppression was significantly visible during Cairo52, this event was clearly not the first and last in its nature. Actually, the Egyptian state had already furtively launched an anti-homosexual campaign, at times through recorded telephone conversations or by hiring police officers in disguise as homosexual members of gay Internet chat rooms. As one could imagine the outcome, once police officers set dates and meeting places with actual gay members and they surprised them and proceeded with their arrests (HRW 2004:). In the end, it seems like the Egyptian homosexual community is constantly being "raped by the state" (Long 2005: 122). These powerful words chosen by Scott Long on his reflections on sexuality in the Middle East could sound a little too far-fetched. However, it seems that the Egyptian state had always been "raping" its homosexual community. It just took a distinguished event like Cairo52 to diffuse the state's first official "public" expression of heterosexual purity. Intricate police tactics had previously been used to make arrests, but this time the event had "loudly admonished public and police that homosexual conduct undermined religion and national security alike" (HRW 2004: 23).

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What this chapter glimpsed at are the effects of "legally binding" Islamic norms on the treatment of Muslim homosexuals, specifically within the Egyptian society. From it, we can conclude that because the Qur'an has the highest authority on Muslims, it leads the Egyptian

sociopolitical sphere by example. Consequently, as the Egyptian state formulates laws that mix morality with politics, the results are often ambiguous and open for interpretation. What is more crucial though is that the moral norms turn into an ideology that can generate moral panic, if threatened. From here, the bigger question is if this harsh representation on anti-homosexuality in Egypt can ever give space for an Egyptian gay movement to take place.

CONCLUSION

This paper argued that Islam is one of the main tools used by the Egyptian state to oppress its gay community. On the one hand, it particularly reflected on the increasing homosexual crackdown conducted by the Egyptian government as a probable cause related to religious norms that have been heavily ingrained in society and therefore shaping its cultural identity.

By establishing the theoretical grounds that are necessary to understanding why and how injustice is justified, the first chapter allowed us to explore the mechanisms of oppression and their impact on homosexual individuals in the sociopolitical sphere.

The second chapter took us through the evolution of heterosexual norms and how it has impacted society and the perception of homosexuality altogether. This evolution was mainly explored through the noteworthy contribution of four major authors: Wittig, Rich, Butler, and Ludwig. Ultimately, this chapter was necessary to help us understand why it is systematically condemned in Egypt.

The third chapter attempted to both concretize and put into the theory into action by applying it to a specific context. This particular context was based in an Arabo-Muslim realm that especially focused on the Egyptian state and its spontaneous crackdowns on homosexual conduct. This chapter allowed us to comprehend how legally binding Islamic norms act as the main contributors to the Egyptian state-sponsored oppression towards homosexuals.

If we were to combine each explored chapter together, two general assumptions can be made. First, it is not surprise that the Egyptian state-sponsored oppression towards its homosexual community is both visible and on-going for a number of factors that ultimately find their roots in the integration of religion in the sociopolitical sphere. Second, it is difficult to fully

apprehend to scope of the struggle of homosexuals in Egypt because the frame of mind that envisages this dilemma mainly derives from Western mentality. In all fairness, as an Egyptian, I have lived in Canada long enough to realize that the clash of mentalities is not just a cliché. If anything, I find it extremely complicated to apply a relatively more accepting Western theory towards homosexuality in a much more conservative Egypt, or other Middle Eastern countries for that matter. This research study reveals how the dynamic of homosexual treatment in an Arabo-Muslim framework differs significantly from that of Western society.

It is important to add that concerns over the fate of homosexuals in a post-revolutionary Egypt are growing, especially with the recent victory of the Muslim Brotherhood. Fears are understandably on the rise as many expect Islam to be reinforced under current president Muhamed Morsi. As much as I understand such a distress, I wonder if the reinforcement of Islam would actually worsen the status of homosexuals living in Egypt.

Regardless, while I find it difficult to separate Islam from the Egyptian state, like the Western society so eagerly hopes, I believe an effort must be put towards finding ways within Islam to accept homosexuality. If we look at the Qur'an, it "warns us that no life is dispensable: Whoever kills an innocent life, it is as if he had killed all of humanity. And whoever gives life to one, it is as if he had revived all of humanity (Q: 5:32)" (Kugle 2010: 21). Does that perhaps indicate that Islam could find a place for homosexuality after all? One thing for sure,

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