

The Anarchist Library  
Anti-Copyright



# The Body of the Condemned Sally: Paths to Queering anarca-Islam

Mohamed Jean Veneuse

Mohamed Jean Veneuse  
The Body of the Condemned Sally: Paths to Queering  
anarca-Islam  
2010

From *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, Volume  
2010.1

[theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)

2010



# Contents

Abstract . . . . .	5
Introduction: A Story . . . . .	5
The Difference Between Two Logics . . . . .	19
Parching, She Drank the Inky Dust of Law — Sweet Honey in Her Mouth . . . . .	27
References . . . . .	32

Doupret, Baudouin. (2001). "Sexual Morality at the Egyptian Bar: Female Circumcision, Sex Change Operations, and Motives for Suing." *Islamic Law and Society* (9)1: 42–69.

Esack, Farid. (1997). *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

Flax, Jane. (1990). *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Garber, Marjorie. (1997). *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Routledge.

Massad, Joseph. (2002). "Re-Orienting desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* (14)2: 361–85.

Rowson, Everett K. (1991). "The Effeminate of Early Medina." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (111)4: 671–93.

— (1991a). "The Categorization of Gender and Sexual Irregularity in Medieval

Arabic Vice Lists." in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (Julia Epstein & Kristina Straub., Eds.). New York and London: Routledge.

Sanders, Paula. (1991). "Gendering the Ungendered Body: Hermaphrodites in Medieval Islamic Law." in *Women in Middle Eastern History* (Keddie, N., & B. Baron, Eds.). New Heaven: Yale University Press.

Taha, Saud A., & Gady M. Magbool. (1995). "The Pattern of Intersex Disorders and Gender Assignment in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia." *Saudi Medical Journal* (16)1: 17–22.

tions from which Muslims can build new communities having given themselves to the acceptance of Transsexuals. It's not difficult to see Sayyid-Sally's case serve as a distraction from the political, socio-economic, and humane, problems of Egyptian society. Tantawi looked "at faith in terms of what divides and disperses, ignoring the wisdom of difference and objectives of having faith to begin with", trespassing Islamically God's Sole Authority as Divine Judge and provider of rights (Esack, 1997: 171). There is no evidence that Tantawi or Al-Azhar considered much Sally's faithful determinism, her respect and dignity, as she battled her way to feel what was only hers to feel, despite and following all the trials and tribulations faced at Al-Azhar University, and doubtlessly in the eyes of popular Egyptian culture. And yet, she returned to Al-Azhar and graduated a doctor.

'Natural' or 'Unnatural' there was a binary order that never tried to accept Sayyid-Sally's existence as a divinely decreed right, but rather re-worked a representation of gender to barely tolerate and ignore it and Sayyid-Sally's existence. To Tantawi, all that's left to say lies between us in two Koranic verses: "Unto us our works and unto you your works; let there be no dispute between you and us. God will bring us together and to God we shall return", therein God will decree as an Ultimate Judge the clear positions wherein we differed (Chapter 42, Chapter of 'The Counsel': Verse 15 & Chapter 2, Chapter of 'The Cow': Verse 139).

## References

AbuKhalil, As'ad. (1993). "A Note on the Study of Homosexuality in the Arab/Islamic Civilization." *The Arab Studies Journal*, Fall 1993: 32-4, 48.

Bouhdiba, Abdelwahab. (1998). *Sexuality in Islam*. London, UK: Saqi Books.

## Abstract

The 'case' I investigate is of Sayyid-Sally, an Egyptian transsexual medical student at Al-Azhar University, a pre-eminent institution for Islamic religious studies, who was expelled in 1982 because of her gendered identity. In this article I examine Al-Azhar's position, judicial edict, or Fatwa, regarding Sayyid-Sally. For even after the revelation of Sayyid-Sally's identity, her sex change operation and even after Al-Azhar admitted the existence of the category of the "Hermaphrodite" in certain Islamic legal interpretations, heteronormative gender orientations were still re-established and re-worked by Al-Azhar. I make the case that Al-Azhar's position corresponds to a binary logical order which makes distinction between Natural Hermaphrodite and Un-natural Hermaphrodite. Sayyid-Sally was tolerated at best, even when 9 years later the Administrative Court of Cairo repealed Al-Azhar's decision of expelling Sayyid-Sally. I argue that Anarchism as a political and philosophical orientation, can uniquely inform Islam, and move the debate beyond a practice or mere tolerance to help develop a doctrine of acceptance. I do this to help open-minded (non-essentialist/non-dogmatic) Muslims and anarchists better understand each other, and therefore to more effectively collaborate in the context of what Richard J.F. Day has called the 'newest' social movements.

## Introduction: A Story

In 1982 Sayyid Abd'Allah, a 19-year-old transsexual medical student, at Al-Azhar University — a pre-eminent institution of Islamic religious studies in Cairo, Egypt — 'consulted a psychologist<sup>1</sup>, Salwa Jurgis Labib, claiming to suffer from deep depres-

---

<sup>1</sup> Deleuze and Guattari critique the practice of psychoanalysis, and which I take as part of the practice of psychology (a behavioral science of

sion'. Salwa examined Sayyid concluding that 'Sayyid's sexual identity was psychologically disturbed'. Clinically, sayyid was considered 'a psychological hermaphrodite (*Mu-Khunath nafsiyan*)'. Following three years of psychological treatment and

---

the mind, emotion, with a particular focus on the neurological component) writing: "[A psychoanalyst] presents him [and/] or herself as an ideal point [a priest] of subjectification that brings the patient to abandon old, so-called neurotic points [...] in everything the patient says or does, he or she is a subject of the statement, eternally psychoanalyzed, going from one linear proceeding to another, perhaps even changing analysts, growing increasingly submissive to the normalization of a dominant [imposed] reality" (1980: 130–1). In visiting Salwa, Sayyid-Sally, had encountered clinical therapy's Oedipal "phallic power, masculine power," and "totemic rituals" found "within a traditional therapy whose predominant edifice of analysis festers in practices deaf to the voice of unreason" (Deleuze, 1990: 18). Psychology rendered unintelligible and dismissed Sayyid's acknowledgment when she stated 'I am a She' as opposed to listening (Guattari, 1989: 39). In Sayyid-Sally's encounter with psychology, Sayyid-Sally also "came under the specific laws of capitalism, or of the home market of psychoanalysis" (Guattari, 1995: 119). It is a function of the psychoanalytic 'contract' to reduce the states lived by the patient, to translate them into phantasies and into 'sexual disturbances' (Guattari, 1995: 119). Psychologists, are psychoanalysts "the saboteurs of desire" (Guattari, 1995: 129), in the sense that they "neurotize everything and through this neuroticization contribute not only to producing neurotics whose treatment never ends but also psychotics in the form of anyone resisting oedipalization [or] its 'idealism[s]'" (Deleuze, 1990: 18). The consequence of which is in Sayyid-Sally's case, psychology as a "traditional [Western] analysis took into accounts non of this experience"; that is, Sally's identification as a woman; psychology adopts for itself "the phallus as its symbol" (Guattari, 1995: 86). Contemporary dogmatic Islamic attitudes, discursively and 'on the ground' unfortunately need to clash more with, perhaps, more radical medieval perceptions of gender and sexuality in Islam. Assad AbuKhalil perceives the sharp change to be the product of colonial and post-colonial attempts to "conform sexual and moral mores to western (primarily Christian) codes of behaviour" (1993: 34). AbuKhalil writes: "what passes in present-day Saudi Arabia, for example, as sexual conservatism is due more to the Victorian puritanism than to Islamic mores. It is quite inaccurate to attribute prevailing sexual mores in present-day Arab society to Islam. Originally, Islam did not have the same harsh judgement about homosexuality as Christianity. Homophobia, as an ideology of hostility toward people who are homosexual, was produced by the Christian West" (ibid., 32).

third sex, in a Proustian sense, Transexuality as 'a natural sex'<sup>23</sup> (Deleuze, 2000: 7–9); a third sex that possess various 'incarnations' and simulacric representations through Transexuality's various intersections with colonial, imperial, cultural, ethnic and racial regimes of truth, indeed historiographies. All "which transform all the other" signifiers, formations, of not only Transexuality itself as a category but the category 'Woman' too and to which it is connected to. That said, I caution Muslims against seeking these huquq be established institutionally, 'under the purported protection of any sovereign' but God, be it Muftis', psychologists', or Al-Azhar. For it shouldn't be difficult to picture in a scenario where there is a movement towards the institutional establishment of Transsexual rights, Muslims would yet risk the stabilization, translation, inscription and normalization of gender as a drop of ink, words, appropriated by institutions like Al-Azhar; gender would still remain another binary construct, to be squared bracketed on bureaucratic state forms. There is beautiful madness in the 'un-natural', in alternative non-institutional forms of resistance.

Nothing is obscure with Tantawi's fatwa, as soon as one considers the devilish details, the governing frontiers and binary logic that guards and shuts the door on the possibility and rights of an in-between. Tantawi's view dismisses the abilities of a creating Creator that created Sally differently with neither an intention to cause confusion or out of amusement but rather so that she and only she chooses. It was never considered by Tantawi for instance, that maybe God created Sally to see who will squabble over what, who will leave what's pertinent in a ruse and for what but that which is ethical and political; founda-

---

<sup>23</sup> Far from uniting the sexes, transsexuals separating binary sexes, are the source from which we can proceed to see two divergent homosexual series, or sites: that of Sodom and that of Gomorrah. Proust writes of homosexuality "The two sexes shall die, each in a place apart from the same place" (Proust, Sodom and Gomorah, 616) having access to the same secret, *the signs* which they both possess.

a final Messenger. *Al-Haqq*, an Arabic word meaning ‘The Just’, an attribute of God, the transcendent of all beings is one to Who anyone has not only privilege of access to, but right not to access (Esack, 1997: 158). It’s given this ‘right to access or not’ that even the Prophet was warned by God not to exceed God’s sole authority over this divinely decreed ‘right to not access’. Allah says to Muhammad: “For those who take as *Awliyâ*’ [guardians, supporters, helpers, protectors, etc.] others besides Him [i.e. whom take other deities, other than Allâh as protectors, and worship them, even then] Allâh is *Hafîz* [Protector] over them [i.e. takes care of their deeds and will recompense them], and you [O Muhammad] are not a *Wakil* [guardian or a disposer of their affairs have say] over them” (The Holy Koran, Chapter 42, Chapter of ‘The Council’: Verse 6). It is this spirit of acceptance in Islam, and that exists too in anarchism as a political and philosophical orientation that can uniquely inform Islam politically and ethically, and moves the debate beyond a practice of mere tolerance to help develop a doctrine of acceptance in practice.

*Al-Haqq* radiates out from the singular, the transcendental, to a plural multiple in its form *Huquq* – ‘rights’ here on Earth – and who but God gifts beings *Huquq*? Inclusiveness is superior to exclusiveness in Islam for as the Holy Koran states: “Verily! God loves those who are equitable”(Chapter 49, The Chapter of ‘The Chambers’: Verse 9). For Transsexuality to be conceived as a divine testimony to difference, understood in this manner, and with this spirit, is what I believe necessary for Islam in the present. Following from this view any attempt at what Hakim Bey refers to as radically tolerating, or what I call accepting, begins with determining the rights of Transsexuals, to life, to *nikah* (marriage in Arabic), to inheritance, to adoption, etc. Transsexuals have *Huquq*. Transsexuality is not a problem, but is in a Deleuzian sense, a sign; “a sign which constitutes different worlds, worldly signs, empty signs, deceptive signs”, a

in carrying out ‘every effort to restore back Sayyid’s male sexual identity’ yet failing, Salwa decided to refer Sayyid to a surgeon, Izzat Asham Allah Jibra’il. This was ‘so that Sayyid could undergo the process of sex-change surgery, which eventually took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1988’. Prior to conducting surgery however, Izzat referred Sayyid to another psychologist, Hani Najib, ‘who reached a similar diagnosis to Salwa, agreeing that surgery would be the best course of action’. In preparing for surgery, Sayyid injected ‘female hormones, while experimenting with dressing like a woman, living with the other sex’. This lasted a year, after which Izzat removed Sayyid’s

‘penis, creating a new urinal orifice and an artificial vagina’<sup>2</sup> (Skovgaard-Peterson, 1997: 320).

News of the surgery broke on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1988, in *Al-Ahram*’s<sup>3</sup> interview with Sayyid. As it happens Sayyid’s surgery involved consequences of religious, state, administrative and authoritative, legal orders, ‘apart from arousing interest in the Egyptian media and the population at large’.

---

<sup>2</sup> Rusmir Music writes: “Phalloplasty can create a flesh and blood penis that may de-privilege the originality of a biological one, while testosterone treatments can similarly grow a beard on an otherwise feminine body. Although threatening the order, vaginoplasty (i.e. Castration) still creates a nothing-Zero, while phalloplasty would create a potent-One. The supposition that gender transition travels a male-to-female trajectory exposes the necessity to deny the reverse process” (2003: 46–8). Resistance to trans-men, in part through misogynistic erasure under the male terminology, Marjorie Garber believes, lies in “a sneaking belief that it should not be so easy to ‘construct’ a ‘man’ — which is to say, a male body” (1997: 102), which is to say, a penis. While “creating a vagina then does not preserve the penis, there seems to be an impulse to indulge men’s desires, as long as the liminal period is denied and transwomen live a heterosexual life. Similar gratification of men’s desires have already been discussed in attitudes toward a young man, who can provide pleasure until he himself becomes an adult man and takes pleasure. Creating a *penis*, on the other hand, even if artificial and ‘imperfect’, seriously questions what defines a ‘real man’. Sally does not have a uterus, ovaries, nor the ability to menstruate or bear children; presumably, her chromosomes are also XY, that of a normative man. Sally’s ‘sex’ was decided — again as with *khunthas*, not by the subject, but via a legal certificate — based on the *visual perception* of her genitals” (Music, 2003: 46–8). In an article published in *Saudi Medical Journal*, Taha and Magbool, similar to Al-Azhar and Tantawi, attempt to establish the pattern of intersex ‘disorders’ in Saudi Arabia. The authors write that “the single most important factor for female gender assignment [is] phallic inadequacy” (1995: 18), but unfortunately do not pause to ponder what heterosexual norms resolve whether a phallus is ‘adequate’ or not.

<sup>3</sup> Sally in an interview with *Al-Ahram*, a national newspaper, talked about her difficulty at Al-Azhar which dated back long before the operation: ‘It is strange that they still want to punish me, for that I have actually become a woman, — as if I have committed a crime at the moment I entered the operating room’ (*Al-Ahram*, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1988: 10; Skovgaard-Peterson, 1997: 320).

problems, caused by the surgeon’s mutilation of their genitals and consequent brainwashing by the society, would have far outweighed potential problems resulting from returning to a body they feel they belong to” (Music, 2003: 42). Particularly given Sally was born and raised in Egypt; ‘she never came, she never went, she never left’; she wasn’t ambivalent to Egyptian and Muslim culture. Yet she insisted. This too is the reasoning that the Grand Mufti’s fatwa became a source of confusion that both “parties [in defense and in opposition to surgery] cited it in support of their position” (Skovgaard-Peterson, 2007: 8). Al-Azhar realized that “socialized into this world of relations, which assumed that men and women must interact, that they must interact in prescribed ways, and that interaction in other ways, threatened the social order and had to be guarded against all costs” (Sanders, 1991: 75). Al-Azhar dread that its order, ‘the order of God’, would collapse publicly, should Sally be accepted rather than tolerated Islamically; what that would mean in terms of Transsexual rights — in what corner of the Mosque would Sally pray? Al-Azhar in its decision, headed by Tantawi, demonstrated little faith in Islam, or God.

You cannot compromise with belief in difference, in acceptance. It shouldn’t be subject to question; *well*, provided the presence of particular ethical and political commitments, as conditions for unconditional friendship. In Islam, righteous “deeds [...] recognized are not the monopoly of any single competitor [...] as the judge God, has to be above the narrow interest of participants [and] claims of familiarity with the judge [God] with any particular ‘team’ will not avail the participants” (Esack, 1997: 175). No authority, “no leader, no government, no assembly can restrict, abrogate or violate in any way the rights” (Arkoun, 1994: 106) to existence, to acceptance, they belong to God, not covered with shit, pissed on by demagogues. That’s precisely the point behind the Islamic concept of *Tawheed*, the first proclamation of belief; only God is God, and there is only one, with Muhammad as



our age', resisted her exorcism, instead becoming, living. It is only through "the artistic" process of self-creation, through becoming, Deleuze writes, that we "emerge from ourselves, [and] know what another sees of this universe that is not the same as ours and whose landscapes would have remained as unknown to us as those that might be on the moon" (2000: 42). Sally's becoming was her dearest possession, her 'asylum' – her surface. And the worse the 'unleashed panic,' arriving from public torture and the madness that was made to starve, with tyranny all around, the more deliriously Sally resisted; try and imagine, 'being scrutinized in a city like Cairo, forget the surveillance of people's eyes'. But it was already too late, Sally, long before, no longer a prisoner, rid herself of the worst complaint, her walls within, reconciling matters between herself and whatever God, becoming, playing to the fullest, exploring gender, performing with a certain madness, breaking her shell, swimming in its open sea. Sally, without a boss, without a factory, took permission from herself, breaking mind-body binaries in Cairo, Egypt, in '82. It was not the first incident of Transsexuality Islamically speaking, but Sally certainly stood affectively in a society that mistook her for an object of riotous publicity, a patient; a kind of superstar of madness. She did this in resistance to popular opinion, and in resistance to Al-Azhar in a country that has continued to declare itself in a 'state of emergency, and terror' (Guattari, 1995: 172) for over 27 years.

This anarchistic nomadic flight and resistance of Sally's, weighed against Al-Azhar's inability to 'tame' her, rested on Al-Azhar's ability to make 'a psychologically disturbed *mu-kuhu'natha*' submit, to conform, body and mind, within certain constructed gendered boundaries. It was not Sally's body, really, that should've demonstrated itself as the problematic for Al-Azhar but rather both her mind and heart; she knew what she was doing. That they couldn't conquer. There, in that terrain, she is free and can be whatever she desires to be. One "would presume that the patient's existing psychological

The first consequence was 'the refusal of the dean of the Faculty of Medicine of Al-Azhar in permitting Sayyid, now in the fourth year of his studies, to write his final exams in order to graduate'. The second was 'the dean's refusal of his transfer to the Faculty of Medicine for women'. To Al-Azhar, Sayyid 'became the symbol of what is morally wrong in our age', a *Khawal*; an 'effeminate man willing to play a passive, female, role in sexual intercourse with other men'; 'a well known term of abuse in Egypt denoting the lowest and most despicable kind of man-liness'; 'considered to be a door to hermaphroditism, itself perceived as capable of leading to the abominable crime homosexuality' (Skovgaard-Peterson, 1997: 326). Al-Azhar established a committee to investigate Sayyid's body, one comprised of: 'the Fatwa Council (*Lajnat Al-Fatwa*) and the Mufti of the High Council for Islamic Affairs (*Al-Majlis Al-Aola li Sh-Shu'un Al-Islamiya*)'. The committee examined Sayyid's body 'performing amongst other things an ultra-sound examination of the prostata' upon which they concluded that Sayyid 'was one hundred percent male, both outwardly and inwardly'. Sayyid 'refused to be examined again by the committee' after that. In response, the committee stated: 'here we have a Muslim youth studying at the venerable Islamic Al-Azhar university, who consults specialists of Western psychology and is told to follow his perverse inclinations towards becoming a woman and what comes out is neither male nor female, but something in between the two' (Skovgaard-Peterson, 2007: 5). The committee proceeded to state that the surgeon ought 'be condemned in compliance with Article 240 of the Islamic penal code for choosing to have inflicted permanent ['mutilation' and] injury to his patient'. Ironically it was during this time that the lead representative of the Doctors' Syndicate<sup>4</sup> (*Niqabat*

---

<sup>4</sup> 'Since 1984, the Syndicate had been dominated by an Islamic movement' (Skovgaard-Peterson, 1997: 320).

*al-Atba*) of Giza, assigned a doctor, Husam ad-Din Khatib, to investigate the case, summoning the surgeon, Izzat, the anesthetist, Ramzi Michel Jadd, and the psychologist Salwa before a medical board. All who ruled that the three doctors in question committed a professional mistake; they had failed ‘to confirm scientifically the existence of Sayyid’s pathological condition prior to conducting surgery’; ‘a charge which the doctors purportedly admitted to’. In particular, the board and Syndicate, like Al-Azhar, singled out the surgeon; that ‘Izzat had committed a serious medical error by not confirming the presence of a disease [psychological hermaphroditism] before operating’; ‘the right procedure would have been to stop the hormonal treatment, and continue with a purely psychological cure’ (Skovgaard-Peterson, 2007: 5).

It wasn’t until the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1988, that the Doctors’ Syndicate sent a letter to the Grand Mufti of the Republic of Egypt – the head Scholar of Al-Azhar University – Sayyid Tantawi, asking him to issue a *fatwa*<sup>5</sup>, a religious ruling, on the matter. Tantawi’s fatwa arrived on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1988, concluding that if the surgeon testifies that surgery was the only cure for Sayyid, the surgery is authorized. However, Tantawi continued, ‘this treatment cannot solely result from an individual psychological desire to change sex, as that would threaten the principles, values, ethics and religion of Egyptian society’. The fatwa issued by Tantawi was vague and unclear on whether

---

<sup>5</sup> From my interview with Peter Lamborn Wilson a.k.a. Hakim Bey during my research time with the Affinity Project: “A Fat’wah can be issued but whether anybody follows it is a voluntary process [...] a question of whether you had the [Ummah – The Muslim Community at Large], whether the community would accept those Fat’wahs” (Peter Lamborn Wilson Affinity Project Interview, 2006). Moreover, Wilson continues, “the way you would do it [issue a Fat’wah] would be to point out there is no hierarchy in Islam. There’s no Pope to call on his cardinals in this” and that is “why language is important, what theory, is supposed to be about” (Peter Lamborn Wilson, Affinity Project Interview, 2006). See [affinityproject.org](http://affinityproject.org) for a transcript of the interview.

logic to a man castrated in an accident and that man’s newly compromised social status in Cairo upon his ‘phallic loss’ that would deprive him of his legal status as a man. Like Paula Sanders writes, “when in doubt, [Tantawi’s] rule seemed to be to accord the inferior status to hermaphrodites. What was important was that access to the higher status of men be successfully protected. The rules assured that no hermaphrodite would attain the status accorded to men unless it could be demonstrated that he was, indeed, a man” (1991: 81). Tantawi fails to consider situations in which ‘true’ gender cannot be discerned through surgery, particularly in cases in which an individual cannot afford surgery.

In concluding the first part, Tantawi’s fatwa in particular illustrates a dogmatic re-enforcement of identity politics’ underlying and fatal principle when applied as a practice: that is, that ‘the truth’ about an ‘other’ shouldn’t be discerned from observing outward markers, what’s *zahir* or on surface, further implying that ‘the other’s’ characteristics can’t be neatly divided into two diametrically opposed poles. It is this practice of practicing reductionist identity politics, when it becomes a politics based on appearance that demonstrates a position, which I strongly oppose advocating instead for more fluid articulations of gender through the concept of becoming.

## **Parching, She Drank the Inky Dust of Law — Sweet Honey in Her Mouth**

The world is drenched in seas of beautiful ‘madness’ overlooked. Not the madness of asylums but the madness in each of us — a madness hidden — that starves and liberates — a madness of our own inner (un)doing, our own becoming (Guattari, 1995: 171). Even in the years since 1982 when Al-Azhar panicked with fantasies tied to tying Sally, like hysterics, this source of ‘madness’, this ‘evil and anarchy’ deemed ‘wrong in

performance (Call, 2003; Butler, 1990). An individual is already “a multiplicity, the actualization of a set of virtual singularities that function together, that enter into symbiosis, that attain a certain consistency” (Deleuze, 1993: xxix). A woman “as molar entity has to become-woman in order that the man also becomes — or can become woman” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980: 276). One becomes without a “beginning nor end, departure or arrival, origin nor destination [...] a line of becoming has only a middle” (ibid., 293). Becoming, in this sense, can be seen as a description of what Tantawi called ‘a *mix*’, in reference to Sally’s body not corresponding to one true sex as he expected; the only difference being, that becomings function on the conjunctive *and* (as if composing oneself as a molecular series) while binaries function on a disjunctive *or*.

Tantawi argues that: “to believe in Islam is to accept one’s sex and accept [that] it must be regulated so that it may be used in the right way” (Bouhdiba, 1985: 14). Okay, but then I’ll rhetorically ask who is this earthly authoritative figure in Islam responsible for regulating a body divinely relegated what it is; that is, who is Tantawi to privilege body over mind or mind over body when God created Sally with a mind and heart, no less or more of a degree of ‘naturalness’ than a ‘natural Transsexual’ with a ‘natural’ body (Skovgaard-Peterson, 2007: 8)? Tantawi demonstrates his regulation out of a “real concern, [and] a desire to establish as precisely and strictly as possible the limits of the sexes” only to realize, in his own admission, that “much of the inter-sexual frontiers are difficult to detail up” despite “the importance they have in the eyes of the Muslim consciousness which finds itself led more and more to set up an impenetrable wall between the sexes” (1985: 42). Tantawi strictly considers gender’s ‘natural’ state though the biological framework of ‘unaltered genitals’, and further repeats the argument in his fatwa that: a ‘true man is defined by a fully functioning penis’ as a source of phallic power. One wonders whether Al-Azhar and Tantawi Freudian analysis would apply the same

‘psychological hermaphroditism’ — a clinical term adopted by Al-Azhar from ‘Western psychology’ and used consistently to describe Sally — constituted a sufficient and admissible medical reason or not for accepting her as a transsexual; that is, in so far as what her acceptance would mean in terms of an establishment of an Islamic space of rights for her and other transsexuals. To Tantawi, Sayyid ‘had been a man, and was still a man, but now less so, because she had been bereft of her male sexual organs and been attributed with artificial (and “imperfect”) female ones. She was not a full man, definitely not a woman, and not a true hermaphrodite’ (Skovgaard-Petersen 2007: 326). As with respect to the Syndicate, it deleted Izzat ‘from its membership records and the anesthetist was fined 300 Egyptian pounds for his participation in the operation’.

Without ‘any positive evaluation of the surgery in the press’, on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1988 the matter was finally deferred to the State<sup>6</sup>, with the Attorney General and his deputy public prosecutor acquitting ‘the surgeon of the charge, Article 240, of inflicting permanent harm and mutilating’ Sally’s body through surgery. According to the final report by the Attorney General, released a year later in October 1989, Sally could be considered a woman and the ‘surgery had been performed

---

<sup>6</sup> For the most part “Arab legal systems can be viewed as: Civilian in origin, transplanted during the colonial encounter with European powers and thereafter developing their own indigenous identity like other post-colonial legal systems yet concurrently maintaining the familiar features of their continental origin” (Shalkany, 2006: 1). But on the other hand “Arab countries were governed by an Islamic legal system before the colonial encounter, and this Islamic heritage seems to continue to influence their normative structure until this day” (ibid.). It is useful to note that the case in question is not explicitly set in the realm of a type of Islamic law situated in Cairo, Egypt, even though what underlies the core of the dispute are diverging views on the moral and political Islamic basis of the place of Transsexuality and Transsexuals in Al-Azhar’s interpretation of Islam, if not, too, indicative of a systematized problem with a Republic promoting bureaucracy and gossip amongst its people as a means of occupying its citizens from what is going on in the upper echelons of state affairs.

properly according to the standard, rules and codes of these types of operations'. Sally's grievances, however, 'did not end, as Al-Azhar continued to refuse to recognize her as a woman or admit her to the Medical Faculty for women'. Since Sally's overture, Al-Azhar began the documentation, and institutionalization<sup>7</sup>, of cases of what they regard to be 'natural hermaphrodites'. To Al-Azhar, a natural hermaphrodite is one described as with 'two naturally sexual, male and female, organs and whom was to be characterized by the sexual organ from which s-he urinates most'. Where 'there are equal quantities of urination there is ambiguity,' Al-Azhar states. One ought 'wait until the hermaphrodite attains puberty and then look for the appearance of some feature of masculinity, but if none of these characteristics appears, facial hair, gets pregnant, gives milk, or if, on the contrary, they appear, but in a contradictory way, there is a fundamental ambiguity, and one is dealing with a true hermaphrodite' (1985: 41). It wasn't until November 1989 that Sally received a certificate<sup>8</sup> 'stating that she was a woman, approximately two years after the surgery'. It would be another 'one and a half years before the Administrative Court repealed Al-Azhar's decision of expelling Sally before Sally was allowed entry to any university she might wish in order to pass her final exams to become a doctor' (Skovgaard-Peterson, 2007: 3).

---

<sup>7</sup> Outside the framework of the imperial order of nation-States or Empire, institutions are ineffectual. At best, "the old institutional framework contributes to the formation and education of the administrative personnel of the imperial machine, 'the dressage' of a new elite" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 5). As for capitalism it tends to make nation-States "merely instruments to record the flows of the commodities, monies, and population that they set in motion" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 5).

<sup>8</sup> It is interesting that a 'Certificate' became what was necessary for the image of Sally, publicly that is, through Sally's determinism, to be corrected, to come true. A certificate, un-recycled sap from wood, was what was needed to permit what was already permitted, secularly and legally, of Sally herself.

was this 'ideal state of Woman' militating against its own self? In other words, that the category 'Woman' is open to opening and contesting itself through an inscribed gesture of hospitality (by virtue of the idea of 'womanhood') engraved within it, and that threatens essentialist conceptions of it. It's my argument that this gesture of hospitality or characteristic practice 'womanhood' is engraved within the category 'Woman'; that it acts, carrying on an ancient task of 'erasing and re-writing' itself, permitting the blossoming of new expressions of 'Woman'. That is, 'the spirit of womanhood' sets, yet never settles upon different paths, linking and bringing back, connecting like branches of a tree with other cartographies, signs: sublime, imaginary, symbolic, linguistic, ontological and epistemological, all potentially feminine singularities, rhizomatically interrelated through desire to 'Woman'. It's these singularities that de-stabilize the category 'Woman', the experience of *becoming woman*. It's in this light I believe Sally was *becoming man towards a woman*. Sally was becoming Sally.

Deleuze and Guattari write of an alternative logic to binaries, *becoming*. There can be "a becoming woman, a becoming child, that do not resemble 'the' woman or 'the' child as clearly molar entities (although it is possible — only possible — for the woman or child to occupy privileged positions in relations to becomings)" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980: 275). Becoming "woman is not imitating this entity or even transforming oneself [physically] into it [...] these indissociable aspects of becoming — woman must first be understood as a function of something else" (ibid.). It is "not imitating or assuming the female form, but emitting particles that enter the relation [...] or the zone of proximity, of a micro-femininity, in other words, that produce in us [everyone] a molecular woman" (ibid.). *Becoming* is the imagination then the actualization of "perpetual projects of self-overcoming and self-creation, constantly losing and finding ourselves", destabilizing our gender through

manifestations denying this true sex” (Skovgaard-Peterson, 2007: 8; emphasis added). To Tantawi, Sally’s body didn’t articulate and elevate itself sufficiently or adequately enough to the privileged position of being regarded as a ‘true case of hermaphroditism’ (Skovgaard-Peterson, 2007: 3). Tantawi himself states: “it is permissible to perform the operation in order to reveal what was hidden of male or female organs. Indeed, it is obligatory to do so on the grounds that it must be considered a treatment, when a trustworthy doctor advises it. It is, however, not permissible to do it at the mere wish to change sex from woman to man, or vice versa” (Skovgaard-Petersen, 2007: 331; emphasis added). Tantawi wants to rationalize to himself Sally’s transgendered person at its liminal stage in order to discipline it, classifying and (re)inserting it, having pretended it wasn’t there historically speaking, within a normative gender duality, in an effort at reinforcing gender hierarchies in Egypt, a predominantly Muslim country. Tantawi believes that Sally’s secret demanded an exact, swift surgical solution to its “signs and symptoms [...] everything came down to the dirty little secret” of ‘what’s wrong with Sayyid?’ (Deleuze, 1985: 143). Tantawi’s logic is a logic that re-enforces mind-body dichotomies through the practice of using binaries; a logic accompanied by practices “whose operation are not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control methods” (May, 1994: 67).

In moving beyond, given we’ve arrived at several points of departure, or consequential questions: Did Sally’s journey through hell, the tyranny and bureaucracy of Egyptian society, indicate her becoming ‘Woman’ and the entire network of essential femininities that arrive with being ‘Woman’? Isn’t Sally, and arguably any other ‘Woman’, or ‘Man’ as Sayyid (for one), always becoming — ‘Woman’? And this yearning of Sally’s to ‘be woman’ — if this ideal state did or could exist: Was it not militating against this ‘ideal state of Woman’; or

There are two more parts to this paper. In the first part I critique Tantawi’s fatwa, and its upholding of gender binaries<sup>9</sup> in a “post-colonial society where public power is a monopoly of those marked for gender as (adult) men, [as for] those not so marked were, as such, no threat, nor was their gender identity a focus of great concern [...] More problematic was the case of men who maintained a public image as men, yet in their private sexual behavior assumed a submissive [sic] role” (Rowson, 1991: 72). As a Muslim anarchist<sup>10</sup>, this critique of Tantawi’s fatwa serves to further promote an ethical and political practice that can serve Muslims and anarchists collabo-

---

<sup>9</sup> Both Al-Azhar and the psychologists involved in this case put to practice binary logic; a logic that as Marjorie Garber describes, is one where the specular requirements extend into the “ideal scenario [...] one in which a person’s social station, social role, gender and other indicators of identity in the world could be *read*, without ambiguity or uncertainty” (26). To Al-Azhar, as was demonstrated theoretically with the case of Egyptian psychology, since ’82, “every human being has only one sex, which ‘is’ its true sex, and that somehow the idea of the hermaphrodite being on the way either further into or out of his [and her] state[s] exists — that is, hermaphroditism as a process [is one] that is reduced to constantly being corporal and psychological movements, manifestations denying this true sex” (Skovgaard-Peterson, 2007: 8). Al-Azhar “real concern, went so far so as to desire to establish as precisely and strictly as possible the limits of the sexes” and which went “as far as possible into detail [while realizing] how much the inter-sexual frontiers are difficult to detail up and the importance they have in the eyes of the Muslim consciousness which finds itself led more and more to set up an impenetrable wall between the sexes” in so far for the purposes of marriage — *Nikah* (Bouhdiba, 1985: 42). Afray and Anderson spell this too quite rightly: “There is a tradition in nationalist movements of consolidating power through narratives that affirm patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, attributing sexual abnormality and immorality to a corrupt ruling elite that is about to be overthrown and/or is complicit with foreign imperialism” (Afrey & Anderson, 2005: 161). All which has led, ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ “scholarship to suffer from a state of labeling-disarray” (Shalkany, 2006: 1).

<sup>10</sup> I will not showcase how the seemingly dichotomous identities Muslim and anarchist can co-exist through an anarchic interpretation of Islam and Islamic interpretation of anarchism I call anarca-Islam. My work on anarca-Islam is available at: [theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)

rating in what Richard J.F. Day refers to as the *Newest Social Movements*<sup>11</sup> (Day, 2005: 9). Broadly speaking ‘Western’ anarchists<sup>12</sup>, and activists in the New Left, are predominantly sub-

---

<sup>11</sup> What distinguishes what Richard J.F. Day refers to as the *Newest Social Movements* from other anti-imperialist social movements, is that they are characterized by their practice of a *logic of affinity*; of being “non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid, and shared ethical commitments” (Day, 2005: 9). In other words, the newest social movements are not focused on essentialist conceptions of identity politics, a universal conception of social change — in line with Antonio Gramsci’s *logic of hegemony* — and so a mass revolution brought on by those who are oppressed to restore justice to the world that we presently live in.

<sup>12</sup> In the winter of 2008, I submitted a proposal to address the topic of ‘Transsexuality in Islam’ using specifically Sayyid-Sally’s case study at the ‘Renewing the Anarchist Tradition’ (RAT) Conference in Vermont. The organizing anarchists rejected it politely. My intent was directed at delimiting the misconception in question, and doing so with anarchists publicly. The response follows: “We really appreciated your second proposal for ‘Paths to Queering Islam(s)’, and your effort to clarify the importance and stakes of such a project for anarchists. That said, we are going to decline the presentation this year, largely because we don’t think that RAT — with all its limitations — is the most appropriate context for the conversation. Transsexuality seems like a sensitive enough topic in Muslim communities that it ought to be addressed in contexts where there is significant participation of people who identify as Muslim, or have a stake in the tradition (even if they have left it). It doesn’t seem like a conversation to be had lightly by a group of people who are overwhelmingly not part of a Muslim community and know very little about it. I realize that is absolutely not true of you — but it is true of the vast majority of RAT participants. I regret that RAT is as homogeneous as it is, and have tried in a range of ways to change that over the years I’ve been involved. But I haven’t been particularly successful, and in that sense, it is our deficiencies as organizers that have led us to arrive at this decision, and not a weakness of your proposal or of your own as a presenter. I hope you’ll understand. We hope you’ll still join us at RAT this year”. The response, I believe, is indicative of a certain sensitivity, due to the prevalence of the misconception amongst anarchists, if not too amongst the New Left, that all interpretations of Islam and all Muslims are Transphobic; hence there is an abstinence from broaching the topic. I am against this view because it camouflages differences between Muslims and anarchists, hindering friendship and ‘solidarity’ work. This dilemma with

the degree of deviance from the White-Man face, which endeavors to integrate non-conforming traits into increasingly eccentric and backward waves, sometimes tolerating them at given places under given conditions [...] sometimes erasing them from the wall, which never abides alterity” (1980: 178). The hierarchy established in Tantawi’s fatwa not only ‘operated by a determination of the degree of deviance’ with respect to ‘the un-effeminate-White Man’, as a former colonizer, or even the post-colonially produced ‘un-effeminate-Egyptian Man’ each re-occupation thereafter, but also in relation to what Tantawi believes Islam regards a ‘Natural Transsexual’. The binary logic practiced by Tantawi and Al’Azhar is of the type that points a finger and says: “Aha! It’s not a man and it’s not a woman, so it must be a transvestite” (Deleuze, and Guattari, 1980: 177). This logic isn’t inherent to Islam. No, Al-Alzhar and Tantawi’s logic was premised on the idea that *seeing* stands for *knowing*, while the inward essence of Sally was dismissed as a ‘psychological disturbance’ not only by Al-Azhar, but also by the psychologists as well. But should that be the case, then ‘show me God’. The problem with their vision was with the type of logic they were applying, that Sally’s body didn’t correspond to one true ‘sex, of which not only exist two for each human being’, but also a third sex by Tantawi’s admittance, in his own tongue, with the category ‘Natural’ (Skovgaard-Peterson, 2007: 3; emphasis added).

The ‘natural vs. un-natural’ distinction demonstrated Tantawi and Al-Azhar’s construction of a hierarchy with the category Transsexual, for the purpose of institutionalization, especially in the case of ‘Natural’, or ‘true’ Transsexuals. Their vision enables the Muslim perception that “every human being has only one sex, which is its true sex, and that somehow the idea of the hermaphrodite being on the way either further into or out of his [and her] state[s] exists — that is, hermaphroditism as a process [is one] that is reduced to constantly being corporal and psychological movements,

subjectivity, and in effect, causing a deep lack of satisfaction at the degree of her depth, Sally desired the correspondence of what was represented on surface to her depth. The application of binary logic to this knowledge of surface and depth, *zahir* and *batin*, is what enabled and permitted Tantawi to split the category of hermaphrodite into 'Natural' versus 'Un-Natural'. Considering, that is, that Sally's un-natural body did not conform to what Tantawi perceived it should be — a Natural Hermaphrodite; Tantawi's fatwa "may just as easily mark a tolerance as [to] indicate an enemy to be moved down at all costs" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980: 177). Like Rachel Adams points out, by "encountering 'freaks', we contemplate the dissolution of our own corporeal and psychic boundaries, the terror and excitement of monstrous fusion with the surrounding world. If identity formation, whether individual or collective, involves a dual gesture of incorporation and repudiation, freaks remind us of the unbearable excess that has been shed to confer entry into the realm of normalcy" (2001: 7). The 'freak rational' behind which binary logic functions is that when it does, it, the dominant machine of the moment, as is the case with Tantawi's fatwa, operates rejecting "faces that do not conform, or seem suspicious, but only at a given level of choice"; rejecting out of fear, out of the threat of our capacity, as beings, for choice (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980: 177). What Tantawi's fatwa did was produce "successive divergence-types of deviance for everything that eludes biunivocal relationships, to establish a relationships between what is accepted on first choice and what is only tolerated on second, third choice, etc." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980: 177). Sally's 'essence', or 'Who Sally felt herself to be', in this sense, can be hidden by clothing or even external genitals, but once discovered, according to Tantawi's fatwa, it's expected to conform to certain societal expectations, realigning clothing and/or genitals as needed.

Transphobia is similar to racism this way. Like Deleuze and Guattari describe, "racism operates by the determination of

sumed, unchallenged beyond the fundamentalist and Orientalist<sup>13</sup> representations of Islam and Muslims to which they are exposed; the overarching perception, amongst anarchists in par-

---

the RAT conference is not an isolated incident. For instance anarchists associated with the Anarchist Federation in London, England produced an article in their December 2001 issue reducibly levelling the multiplicity of different interpretations of Islam as monolithic, fundamentalist, reactionary, homo-trans-queerphobic and oppressive towards women; "Islam is the enemy of all Freedom loving people", the anarchists in question claimed. In another article titled "Islam and Anarchy Join Together" (2003) on Info-shop, two anarchist bloggers, 'PJP' and 'Brain-Fear' wrote: "Any form of religion is thought control — Islam is sexist and homophobic [...] If they [Muslims] are serious about anarchism, they would have dropped the sexist and homophobic aspects of the religion and accentuated more libertarian aspects of the religion." Further down, in reference to the article, on the same blog, another blogger 'Burning-man' expresses a similar, yet rather poignant sentiment regarding a side-show 'Anarcho-Islam': "Anarcho-Islam is about the stupidest thing I've ever heard of. Islam is about submission. Slave to Allah and all that crap. It has an extremely rigid set of rules and conduct and, while more enlightened than other monotheistic religions in a number of important ways, it never quite went through anything like the Reformation. It is reactionary, pro-capitalist, pro-slavery, imperialist and misogynist to the core."

<sup>13</sup> By Orientalist I mean to denote the fascistic representation or view that thrusts itself upon the Asiatic Other, the inhabitants of Ottoman/Turkish bath houses; ascribing and commoditizing a particular representation of 'the other', transforming Muslim sexual activities into something far promiscuous and "licentious than anything ever seen in Europe" (Shalkany, 2006: 7; see Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Joseph Massad's *Desiring Arabs* (2007). As Massad writes, echoing, Said: "while Orientalists were exploring the sexual practices and desires of Medieval Arabs, Western anthropologists were exploring the contemporary sexual lives and practices not only of Arabs but also of the natives of Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas. It was within the context of 'ethnography' that Arab readers began to read Orientalist accounts. Influenced by such readings, and especially by the Orientalist judgment that Arab culture had 'degraded' to an age of 'decadence' underneath the Ottomans, most Arab writers since the middle of the nineteenth century were overcome with a sense of crises concerning [...] its 'culture', its 'language', its political and economic order, its 'traditions', its views on its own 'heritage', even 'Islam' itself, in short, a malady that afflicted the whole of Arab Islamic 'civilization' [...] 'backwardness', 'decadence', 'moral decline', 'irrationality', and most of all, 'degeneration', resulting from cen-

ticular, that all Muslims and interpretations of Islam are authoritarian, dogmatic and transphobic is not difficult to prove.<sup>14</sup> This perception hinders the relationship between Muslims and anarchists politically collaborating through groups such as No

---

turies of Ottoman rule characterized by stasis at best or retardation of things Arab (and sometimes Muslim) at worst” (2007: 8).

<sup>14</sup> Foucault once wrote “at the level of the socialist State [...] we find racism at work [...] whenever a socialism insists, basically, that the transformation of economic conditions is the precondition for the transformation, for the transition from the capitalist State to the socialist State (or in other words, whenever it tries to explain the transformation in terms of economic processes, it does not need, or at least not in the immediate, racism” (1976: 245). Socialism, bio-politically, has been historically antagonistic towards religion; this is not to say without justifiable reasoning(s). Nevertheless, the Euro-centric view, rooted in the essentialist perception that “God [and God’s fettered religion solely possess] promises [...] null and void [...] only fulfilled by man’s subordination” (Goldman, 1969: 5–7) is evident not only in Emma Goldman’s antecedent statement, but also classical anarchism and the practices of nineteenth-century socialism through to the New Left today. Gandhi similarly believes in the existence of this crisis, between religion and the Left, and the necessity for socialism to re-examine this misconception regarding religion, or at least religions that orient themselves, theologically, and practically, as anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist; in other words, religions that share ethico-political affinities with socialism. Gandhi writes in support of Robert Blanchford — who explicitly claimed socialism as a religious belief — and who said: “We have the right to refuse the name of socialist to those who have not grasped the economic truth. But an economic theory alone, or any number of economic theories will make a religion [...] you must widen your definition of socialism [...] we must draw out all the ethical and spiritual implications of these efforts and desires for a juster social order [...] A new conception of life is taking shape, to which it is affection, if not folly, to refuse the name of Religion” (2006: 123).

to dominate the second, which becomes the ‘other’ of the first” (Flax, 1990: 36). To Tantawi, Sally was afflicted with “a corporeal disease which cannot be removed, except by this operation” (Skovgaard-Petersen, 330). Tantawi speaks of the surgery as if a cure that discloses ‘buried or covered’ sexual organs. Tantawi’s view is that “God did not send a disease without sending a cure for it,” making “a distinction between an outward appearance (*zahir*), which can be deceptive, and an inward essence (*batin*), which is always true” (332).

It is not difficult to see resonances between *zahir* and *batin* and what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari refer to as “the two axes, significance and subjectification” (1980: 167). Guattari and Deleuze propose that every being “possess two very different semiotic systems” (1980: 167). The first system, significance (*surface*), “does not speak a general language but one whose signifying traits are indexed to specific faciality traits [...] defin[ing] zones of frequency or probability, delimit[ing] a field that neutralizes in advance any expressions or connections unamenable to the appropriate significations” (1980: 168). The first system is a surface, the way a face is like a canvas or a map, with varying lines of geography and symmetry, wrinkles, facial features, symbols etc. The second axis is subjectification (*depth*) in which our individual subjectivity, as a singularity, is lodged in “consciousness, passion and redundancies” (1980: 168).

The second is the way our eyes are black holes; holes where our corresponding subjectivity — ‘our soul’ — takes harbor, an abyss, as illustrated in the Hegelian metaphor: ‘the eyes are the *windows* to the soul’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980: 167).

It is this friction between surface and depth, between Sayyid’s corporeal and psychic body, between *zahir* and *batin*, or what was publicly ascribed to Sayyid’s surface versus what Sayyid thought and felt at depth, that Sayyid articulated as the discomfort, the source of ‘extreme depression’, and the motive for surgery. Witnessing her surface was anchoring, nailing her



istence of transsexuals during the time of the Prophet<sup>22</sup>, like Everett Rowson writes: “there is considerable evidence for the existence of a form of publicly recognized and institutionalized effeminacy or transvestism among males in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabian society. Unlike other men, these effeminate or *mukhannathun* were permitted to associate freely with women, on the assumption that they had no sexual interest in them, and often acted as marriage brokers, or, less legitimately, as *go-betweens*” (1991: 671).

Tantawi’s view, Abdulwahab Bouhdiba describes, was that: “anything that violates the [gender binary] order of the world is a grave disorder, a source of evil and anarchy” (1985: 30). To Tantawi, the “bipolarity of the world rests on the strict separation of the two ‘orders’, the feminine and the masculine [and] that the best way of realizing the harmony intended by God is for the man to assume his masculinity and for a woman to assume her full femininity” (Bouhdiba, 1985: 30). Tantawi’s rigid and hermetic claims correspond to a practice of binary logic, a logic that involves platonic, essentialist, oppositional constructs like nature/culture, black/white, with us/against us, truth/rhetoric, speech/writing, natural/unnatural; a logic of an excluded middle. The construction of these qualities through, and as, opposite reveals a misogynist desire for control and combination. The “members of these binary pairs are not equal. Instead the first member of each is meant

---

<sup>22</sup> There is at least one ‘incident’ that is related for Muslims in the Oral Tradition (From the Book/*Sunan Abu-Dawud, Book 32, Number 4095*): “Narrated Aisha, Ummul Mu’minin: A mukhannath (eunuch) used to enter upon the wives of Prophet (peace\_be\_upon\_him). They (the people) counted him among those who were free of physical needs. One day the Prophet (peace\_be\_upon\_him) entered upon us when he was with one of his wives, and was describing the qualities of a woman, saying: When she comes forward, she comes forward with four (folds in her stomach), and when she goes backward, she goes backward with eight (folds in her stomach). The Prophet (peace\_be\_upon\_him) said: Do I not see that this (man) knows what here lies. Then they (the wives) observed veil from him.”

One Is Illegal<sup>15</sup> (NOII) and Solidarity Across Borders<sup>16</sup> (SAB) in the newest social movements (Day, 2005: 189–190). The practice is one that Leela Gandhi — following Jacques Derrida, Jean Luc Nancy, and Maurice Blanchot — refers to as a *politics of friendship*<sup>17</sup> in her text *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial*

---

<sup>15</sup> NOII is a forum for “a loose coalition of activists” resisting neo-liberal globalization in relation to its links “to the displacement of people from the South compelled to leave their homes due to persecution, poverty or oppression [and] colonial exploitation” (Day, 2005: 189–90). These people of the South leave “only to be categorized as ‘illegal aliens’ by the supposedly benevolent G8 countries where they seek refuge; they are denied the same rights as ‘regular’ citizens, and therefore face limited opportunities and further degradation” (Day, 2005: 189).

<sup>16</sup> SAB is a group where Muslim and anarchist activists are “involved in awareness-raising activities and direct action casework, and are committed to recognizing that ‘struggles for self-determination and for the free movement of people against colonial exploitation’ are led by the communities who fight on the front lines” (Day, 2005: 190).

<sup>17</sup> Gandhi’s attention in her text is directed towards the introduction of “western non-players in the drama of imperialism [...] some ‘minor’ forms of [friendships built around] anti-imperialism that emerged in Europe, specifically in Britain, at the end of the nineteenth century” (2006: 1). An example Gandhi draws upon to demonstrate a trans-national politics of friendship is where “in 1914, having resigned his post at St. Stephen’s and donated his admittedly meager possessions to the Indian National Congress, [C.F.] Andrews set sail for South Africa to lend support to a certain M.K. Gandhi in his campaign on behalf of the Indian indentured laborers. Gandhi, the records tells us, was waiting for Andrews on the dock” (2006: 14), Gandhi writes. A mourning Andrews, unrecognizable, head-shaved, and dressed in a white dhoti and kurta of coarse material like an indentured laborer might wear, approaches M.K. Gandhi, stooping, touching M.K. Gandhi’s feet (Gandhi, 2006: 14). This isn’t the only incident this happened. It wasn’t a deification of M.K. Gandhi, on Andrew’s part, his touching of M.K. Gandhi’s feet. Gandhi writes: “In 1919 Andrews touched another pair of Indian feet” (2006, 14). The symbol, the touching of feet, Gandhi describes, “is a rich symbolism [...] an iconic anticolonial frieze: the London-trained Indian barrister defying imperial polarities of class and station in an elaborate costume drama” (2006: 14). Andrews, an Anglican priest, Gandhi continues, temporally reversed a “fundamental civilizational hierarchy of Empire in a single defiant gesture of self-abnegation” (2006: 14).

*Thought, Fin-De-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (2006).

I conclude the first part, having primarily critiqued Tantawi's fatwa, Al-Azhar's position, and the psychologists in question, by pointing to an alternative logic to their dichotomous reading of gender. I do this through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *becoming*; a concept they inherited from Friedrich Nietzsche. I do this to delineate essentialist and dogmatic perceptions of gender for both anarchists and 'Western' Muslims. And I do this while refraining from discussing Sally's sexual practices and its potential intersections, and *insurrections* against, gender, preferring to situate, and discuss, as strictly as I know how and time will permit me, trans-gender politics as they are situated in a post-colonial capitalist-State under military dictatorship, Egypt. I'm not interested in conflating Sally's trans-gendered body with its purported sexual practice(s), unlike Al-Azhar's presumption, that assumes that Sayyid's body underwent surgery for the purpose of engaging in queer sexual practices. Gender and sexuality<sup>18</sup> as discourses differ. They can intersect but are not necessarily correlated.

---

<sup>18</sup> A discussion on sexuality in this particular case study in so far as it relates would not be impossible but rather difficult in the time and space allocated. Sayyid's surgery, as the case presents itself, pertained to 'a paradox in Sayyid's gender identity', but possibly, equally, though difficult if not proven, Sayyid's desire for engaging in homosexual practices. That may not be the case given there is no evidence to suggest so. Nevertheless, to speak of sexuality would, however, include a discussion of "white heter-normativity" (24). I caution against — in line with Jasbir Puar's discussion in *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007) and Joseph Massad in *Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World* (2002) who makes a similar argument to Puar in his critique of the "universalization of gay rights" — the importation of homo-nationalist discourses by LGBTQ movements in 'the West' to the 'East' (361–85). Khalid Duran too pessimistically prophesizes that "a movement for gay rights [in the East] will not be viewed as indigenous. Rather, it would be considered objectionable as yet another symptom of 'Westernization,' or what Khomeinists have come to label as 'Westoxication'" (194).

With this context at the center, in the second and last part, I conclude the paper, arguing for a more fluid reading of Sayyid-Sally's case, speaking to Salwa's affect and the establishment of a space of Islamic rights, *huquq*, for the *acceptance*<sup>19</sup> of transsexuals in Islam.

## The Difference Between Two Logics

Despite what may seem a radical legal precedent, the eventual tolerance of Sally's sex-change surgery that can be found in Tantawi's fatwa<sup>20</sup> does not represent the first case of Transsexuality in Islam. The Islamic Republic of Iran<sup>21</sup>, statistically speaking, carious out, falling behind Thailand, between 15,000–20,000 transsexual surgeries per year since their legalization by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1980. Moreover, and besides the ex-

---

<sup>19</sup> From my interview with Peter Lamborn Wilson a.k.a. Hakim Bey during my research time with the Affinity Project: "Tolerance [would signify or] is a kind of weak position [relative to 'the other'] and Acceptance [or radical tolerance] a strong position [relative to 'the other']". In other words, it's not just ecumenicalism here. It's not a reformist position. It's a pretty radical position... [...] and it [acceptance] got Hazrat Inayat Khan in a lot of trouble amongst orthodox Muslims. This movement still suffers from that today. But in India, there is this tradition of that, it still persists in India more than in other countries where the fundamentalist/reformist/modernist thing has swept away the so-called medieval creations which make up all the charm and difference. That's what they hate" (Peter Lamborn Wilson, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Tantawi's fatwa went so far as to point "significantly, the names of the psychologist, the surgeon and the anesthesiologist reveal they are Christians" when there existed no particular evidence of the doctors identifying as Christian (Skovgaard-Peterson, 1997: 328). In fact, should the surgeon's name, Izzat Asham Allah Jibra'il's be taken as an indicator of anything, it is that the presence of 'Allah' — the Arabic-Islamic word denoting God — indicates that Izzat is not a Christian.

<sup>21</sup> The following site below is a video of Ayatollah Khomeini legalizing transsexual surgeries in Iran in 1980. Retrieval Date: July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Retrieved From: ([www.videosift.com](http://www.videosift.com)).