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When he is “tied”: power, vulnerability, and embodied masculinity in Egypt

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Abstract: *This paper looks at the notion of *rabt* [tying], the inability of the groom to engage in penetrative intercourse on the wedding night, to explore the relationship between masculinity, embodiment, and sexual performance. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Egypt between 1993 and 2015, this paper explores the notion of groom *rabt*, how it is socially defined and managed. After presenting my conceptual framework for the study of sexuality and embodiment, the paper moves to discuss the meaning of the wedding night; the social clues people draw on when they identify *rabt*; how these clues relate different events to the (in)abilities of the groom; and how women, particularly mothers, work to protect and heal their male relatives from this affliction. To understand moments when individuals are unable, or “fail,” to produce desirable physical and social effects, it is important that we do not exclusively consider the individual sexed body – the body that is clearly defined, bounded, and invested with unique desires and feelings. We must also consider the broader configurations that connect different bodies, endow them with certain meanings, and produce their materiality. My discussion shows that our understanding of sexuality and reproductive health will continue to be limited if we consider only men or women as separate individuals or as autonomous couples. Exploring moments of biological-social vulnerability, such as *rabt*, and how they relate to broader projects of gendering helps us understand issues linked to reproductive health and sexual rights in a deeper sense. DOI: 10.1080/09688080.2017.1374803*

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Introduction

At the age of 22, Abdou was deeply in love with Suha, a beautiful woman from his village in Upper Egypt. He worked hard to persuade his family to agree to their engagement. Abdou's family hesitated because Suha's relatives were considered trouble makers, who engaged in frequent fights with others. After several attempts, Abdou was delighted when his family relented and agreed to the engagement. The couple's happiness did not last for long, as their engagement had to be broken when one of Abdou's uncles insisted that he overheard Suha bad-mouthing his nephew while expressing her interest in another suitor who was working abroad. Despite the fact that Abdou had his doubts about his uncle's claims and that Suha vehemently denied ever saying anything bad about her fiancé, the engagement had to be broken when the family threatened to disown Abdou if he insisted on going through with the marriage

plans. He was heartbroken and contemplated marrying Suha without his family's blessing. After a while, however, he accepted the proposal of his family and got engaged to a beautiful teacher who worked in a school in their village. His sisters knew the young woman and thought she would make a suitable wife for their brother. On their wedding night, the bride looked stunning in the new dress her groom bought her. Unfortunately, the power went off and few managed to see the beauty of the dress and the bride. This event became more significant when it turned out that Abdou could not have intercourse with his bride. The two events were connected and interpreted as an indication that he was suffering from *rabt* [tying], believed to have been inflicted on him by Suha's family. Abdou's family tried different methods and visited several local healers until they finally found a sheikh who managed to

undo the tying [*fak el-rabt*], and Abdou was able to consummate the marriage after a week.

In this paper, I look at *rabt* to explore the relationship between masculinity, embodiment, and sexual performance. *Rabt*, the inability to complete intercourse on the wedding night, is a condition deliberately caused by repeating a spell while tying a knot or locking an object or by a magical deed (*'amal* or *sihr*) commissioned by specialists believed to have supernatural powers. While el-Feki has remarked that older men (and women) might suffer from *rabt*, in more than 22 years of doing research in Egypt I only heard it discussed publicly in the context of the wedding night and in relation to the groom.¹ Unlike other sexual problems that are usually discussed discreetly and rarely mentioned in casual conversations, *rabt*, the inability of some grooms to engage in penetrative intercourse on the wedding night with the goal of breaking the hymen of the bride, who is expected to be a virgin, is discussed without hesitation or solicitation. Drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork in Cairo between 1993 and 2015 and several trips to Upper Egypt during that period, this paper explores the notion of groom *rabt*, in particular, how it is socially defined and managed. My main concern in this paper is not to discover the biological causes or social roots of *rabt*. Rather, my interest is in the social life of this condition and what it teaches us about sexuality, gender, power, and the materiality of the body. To understand moments when individuals are unable or “fail” to produce desirable physical and social effects, it is important that we do not exclusively consider the individual sexed body – the body that is clearly defined, bounded, and invested with unique desires and feelings. We must also consider the broader configurations that connect different bodies, endow them with certain meanings, and produce their materiality. Exploring moments of biological-social vulnerability, such as *rabt*, and how they relate to broader projects of gendering helps us understand issues linked to reproductive health and sexual rights in a deeper sense.

The paper first presents my conceptual framework and then moves to look at how *rabt* is socially defined and managed. The discussion pays special attention to the meaning of the wedding night; the social clues that people draw on when they identify *rabt*; how these clues relate

different events to the (in)abilities of the groom; and how women, particularly mothers, work to protect and heal their male relatives from this affliction. The last part of the paper looks at the implications of studying *rabt* to understanding gender distinctions and heterosexual coupling.

Conceptualising sexuality

This paper draws on feminist studies in general and the “new materialism” approach in particular.^{2,3} “The material turn” encompasses an interesting and diverse set of studies, which cannot be adequately reviewed in this short paper.⁴ Two points emphasised by this approach, however, are relevant to my discussion of *rabt* and are important to flag before moving to discussing sexuality and embodiment in the context of Egypt. First, new materialists aim to account for how “matter matters” and seek to go beyond seeing only culture as active and to avoid reducing nature into the passive material that is moulded and made meaningful by culture and society.⁴ Second, new materialists agree on the need for a way to conceptualise agency that captures the deep entanglements between the human and non-human, the discursive and the material, and the natural and the technological that produce our reality.^{3,5} Both these points place relationality as key to our understanding of different aspects of social life, including sexuality. In doing so, our attention is shifted from the individual body to the affective flows between bodies. Alldred and Fox, for example, argue that it is not “the individual sexual body” that should be the focus of our attention but the “sexuality-assemblage,” or “the [impersonal] affective flow within assemblages of bodies, things, ideas and social institutions, and the sexual capacities this flow produces in bodies and collectivities.”⁶ Shifting the attention to the notion of assemblage, a concept originally presented by Gilles Deleuze, makes it possible and necessary to account for how “human and non-human relations affect (and are affected by) each other to produce material effects, including sexual capacities and desires, sexual identities and the many ‘discourses’ on sexualities; these affects are qualitatively equivalent regardless of whether a relation is human or nonhuman.”⁶ While I find the emphasis on relationality appealing, the following discussion takes issue with the last part of this excerpt and questions the claim that all agentic capacities are

qualitatively equivalent. The cases that I explore in this paper show that not all flows are equally effective or affective in the same way or to the same degree and that we have to continue to be mindful of the inequalities (such as between son and father, husband and wife, and mother and child), which structure how bodies relate to, affect, and are affected by other bodies and forces.

The wedding night

Sexual intercourse in Egypt could be defined in various ways: a natural need, a sign of virility, a requirement for procreation, an act of transgression, a gesture of love and intimacy, a mark of domination, and a materialisation of social norms that define heterosexual masculinity. The meaning attached to this act varies from one time to another and from one context to another. On the wedding night, sexual performance has a particularly important meaning. This night is liminal and is key to the transition of the bride and the groom, who are betwixt and between, into a socially married couple.⁷ Both the standing of the groom and the identity of the bride are transformed in key ways after this night. The groom performatively establishes himself as a heterosexual man, who is able to penetrate and dominate, and help transition his bride from her status as *aanisa* [young unmarried woman] or *bint* [girl] into a *madam* [married woman] or *sit* [lady].⁸ The word *dukhla*, which is used in Egypt to refer to the wedding night, literally means entrance. It equates the first sexual encounter between the bride and the groom with the entrance of a new home and the beginning of their life as a socially recognised couple. Thus, the inability of the groom to complete the sexual act becomes a serious concern that is social and public and not simply individual and private. The inability to establish a physical connection with the other body and produce the expected material effects (such as the blood that socially verifies virginity) becomes an interruption in the affective flows that establish sexed and gendered bodies. This interruption mobilises family members, neighbours, and friends, who become deeply invested in explaining and addressing the condition, which might last for only a few hours but could last for an extended period of time. Therefore, to be able to understand the logic of *rabt*, we need to pay attention to the physical difficulty that has to be explained and managed, as well as the

discursive and material interventions needed to heal and protect the groom from this affliction. We need to be attentive to the broader context and social clues people draw on when identifying and treating *rabt* and the forces that shape this dynamic process.

The power of men

Samah, a 24-year-old female resident of a low-income neighbourhood in northern Cairo was madly in love with her maternal cousin and fiancé Farid. I never met Farid, who grew up in Upper Egypt and spent years working in Kuwait to secure the money needed to finalise his marriage. But we all knew how much Samah loved him and her friends and neighbours were delighted when, after four years of waiting, Samah was going to travel with her family to Upper Egypt to finalise the marriage and celebrate her wedding. Some of their close neighbours, including Um Salah and her older daughter, joined Samah's family, who rented a mini-van to drive 12 hours to get to the groom's village. Um Salah offered vivid details of the trip, their stay in the village, the makeup and dress of the bride, and much more. But her focus was on the "social drama" that unfolded during the wedding and that complicated the consummation of the marriage.⁹

To honour the request of his bride, Farid decided to build a *khoosha* [a stage where the couple would be seated and oversee the band he hired to entertain the guests]. The idea of the stage did not appeal to Farid's father, but the groom insisted and went against the wishes of the patriarch of the family. During the festivities, the brother of the bride urged one of the young women who came with them from Cairo to display her outstanding skills as a dancer. The beautiful dancing appealed greatly to those who came from Cairo but not to the villagers. The groom's brother was scandalised and insisted that the young woman stop dancing because his family will be accused of hiring a *ghaziyya* [a professional dancer] to perform at the wedding, something that is shameful and socially unacceptable in his village. All those who travelled from Cairo felt sorry for the young woman, who burst into tears when she heard that she might be viewed as *ghaziyya*, but Um Salah understood how inappropriate it was for the young woman to dance the way she did and strongly criticised the bride's brother for insisting that the young woman dance and for

not respecting local traditions. In addition to these quarrels and the unease they generated, the stage collapsed but luckily no one was injured. Other things went wrong too, so all were relieved when the evening was over and the couple retreated to their bedroom in the big building that housed the father, his two wives, and several unmarried children.

This context was important for Um Salah to convey before getting to the key part of her story. The events she narrated were premonitions that indicated what was going to come. At six in the morning, she was abruptly awakened by the bride's mother, who looked very gloomy and distressed. She told Um Salah in an urgent voice *doul rabatou el-wad* [literally they tied the boy]. The bride's mother immediately accused the father of the groom of causing his son's condition. He was known, she reasoned, to have inflicted *rabt* on others in the past and he must have *rabat* [verb, tied] Farid because he defied his wishes. Um Salah accepted the reasoning of Samah's mother because, as she said, the old man had lots of books in his house and he was known for his strong connections with foreign tourists and high ranking officials, both indicating a type of knowledge and power that could culminate in supernatural abilities. Um Salah comforted her friend and suggested they go to talk to Farid's father and see how to work things out. To their dismay, his second wife (not Farid's mother, who was sick and immobile) opened the door for them with a big towel wrapped around her head, indicating that she had just taken a bath, and she was heating water for her husband to take a bath too. This act indicated that they had sex the night before and that they were following the Islamic rules of bathing to purify themselves and get rid of impurities linked to intercourse. Um Salah thought it was a disgrace that the old man was able to sleep with his wife while causing his son, the young man, to not be able to perform sexually on his wedding night. Still, she thought they had to talk calmly with the father and to seek his help finding a way to address Farid's affliction.

The father listened to them without denying the charges but while giving subtle clues (such as the tone of his voice and body language) that confirmed their suspicions. He complained about how his son defied his wishes and emphasised that he would not forgive him unless the son apologised and kissed his hands. The women called Farid and asked him to apologise, which he did.

After much pleading, the father waved his hand and said to the son "ok, just go." To her amazement, the "boy was released immediately" [*el-wad itfak fi sa'itha*]. Soon after that, the marriage was consummated, the families saw the pieces of cloth with blood stains, and the bride's family could leave for Cairo knowing that their daughter's chastity had been publicly verified.

Both in the case of Abdou and Farid, it was believed that the affective flows of negative feelings and tensions were channelled with the help of supernatural forces to hinder the capacity of the grooms to act in socially expected ways. While in the case of the former, his family suspected Suha's family of causing his *rabt* because they were unhappy about the breaking of the engagement, Farid's condition was believed to have been caused by his own father, who felt challenged and disrespected. Both these cases show that bodies "are not objects with inherent boundaries and properties; they are material-discursive phenomena."² The body is not clearly defined and bounded but relates to other bodies and is impacted by different acts and forces. It is believed to be negatively influenced by the will of others, as well as protected and healed by specific objects and rituals. The materiality of bodies is shaped by the intentions, feelings, and sayings of other agents. At the same time, the "relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither is articulated/articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated."² *Rabt* is not only a biological state nor is it a social construction; it is simultaneously both. While the physical inability of the groom is the central part of the condition, *rabt* is equally about the ability of others to recognise, identify, and inflict or alleviate the difficulty. Yet, bodies are not only biologically and discursively entwined. Rather, their materiality has agentic capacities that shape this entanglement. *Rabt* here is not only an assemblage in which social meaning requires biological validity but also an assemblage in which biology itself actively shapes social meanings.

In many ways, the inability of the body to perform is a materialisation of the social hierarchies and power relationships that connect and differentiate men and families. As argued by Foucault, sexuality is "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population."¹⁰ The case

of *rabt* clearly illustrates this point. In all the cases I have heard discussed publicly, it was either men like Farid's father or male specialists who could be commissioned to cause or heal wedding night *rabt*. If, as argued by Kamran Ali, "an erect penis and its power to satisfy women is directly linked to the rhetoric and practice of power and control over both women and other men," then we see how urgent a case like *rabt* might be and the need to quickly address it by family members.¹¹ When the condition lasts for an extended period, the challenge could take its toll on all sides, including the bride and her family, who seek a confirmation of her virginity as quickly as possible.

Woman, the protector

While *rabt* during the wedding night is usually inflicted by men, women play an important role in protecting, explaining, and healing. Unlike Farid's mother, who was not well enough to protect or help heal her son, other mothers actively work to protect and resolve their son's wedding night problems. Um Ahmad, the mother of four boys and three girls, was fully aware of the significance of this condition. When I met her in her village in Upper Egypt in the late 1990s, she was celebrating the wedding of one of her sons, Khalid. She took special measures to protect him from *rabt*. He was particularly susceptible to *rabt* because he was engaged to another woman in their village, but the engagement was broken by Khalid at the last minute, a step that could have angered the family of the young woman.

Um Ahmad was deeply worried because Khalid's older brother, Tariq, suffered from *rabt* for over a week. Tariq, a teacher in his late twenties, had met a young nurse in Cairo, where they got engaged, but decided to have their wedding in his village, the place of their future residency. The bride arrived with her mother and siblings, who were supposed to stay through the wedding and only leave after *el-dukhla*. They waited for the news but realised next morning that Tariq was unable to consummate the marriage. They waited for a couple of days but nothing happened. Moved by her growing embarrassment, as she stated (and perhaps the possibility of an endless amount of hospitality), Um Ahmad had to act. She slaughtered a pigeon in secret and stained a piece of cloth with its blood and showed it to the bride's mother as a proof of her daughter's virginity. The bride's mother got a bit suspicious and questioned

the traces of the blood on the cloth, but Um Ahmad silenced her by loudly singing a song that emphasised that it was not the blood of pigeons or quails but the authentic blood that shows the honour of the couple. Meanwhile, she was actively seeking healers in her village and surrounding villages until the condition was resolved after a week.

Tariq's sexual standing was produced by the assemblage of relationships, forces, and acts. Um Ahmad's acts made sense out of the difficulty of her son, gave meaning to his inability, and managed the social consequences of his "failure." From using the blood of the pigeon, reciting prayers, and enacting some rituals she was familiar with to consulting several healers about ways to address the issue, the mother sought every possible way to support her son and enhance his standing as a proper man. Um Ahmad's efforts and deeds are part of a broader effort of women in the making of proper men. As I argue somewhere else, masculinity is not only what men think and do to become men, but also what women think and do to make their sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers men.¹² We see this concern triumphing over other significant social norms, such as virginity. In light of its great social importance, it was striking to see how Um Ahmad thought her son's standing in front of his in-laws and reputation in the village were more important than the virginity of the bride.

Like several other older women, Um Ahmad was resentful of the fact that young men, like her son, have to be under such pressure during the wedding night. She remembered fondly the days when the *dukhla* was *baladi* [local/traditional] and was done with the help of the midwife. All the groom had to do, Um Ahmad remembers from her own wedding night and the wedding of her two older daughters, was to wrap his finger in a white cloth and then insert it inside the bride in front of the midwife and some female relatives of the couple. When the groom was hesitant or squeamish to complete the act, the midwife took over and concluded the process in few minutes. The shift to *dukhla afrangi** [foreign], which started becoming the norm over the past two

*Some brides and their families might still insist on *dukhla baladi* to avoid any ambiguities in the future about the virginity of the bride and the moral standing of her family.¹³ Examples might include work outside the home, having frequent interaction with the fiancé, engagement lasting for a long period, and mistrust of the family of the groom.

generations in Um Ahmad's village, moved the first sexual encounter between the couple to the privacy of the bedroom and removed third parties from the scene, but the couple is still expected to produce the proof of bride's virginity as soon as possible. This shift generated new challenges and placed new pressures, particularly on the groom.

Coupling: him, her, and them

Given her previous experiences, Um Ahmad was determined to protect her younger son. Early on the wedding day, she brought an amulet she had acquired from a local sheikh and gave it to Khalid's fiancé to carry under her clothes. It contained some jumbled writing in English and Arabic letters, some short prayers, and the freshly cut fingernails and toenails of both the groom and the bride. Um Ahmad and her older daughter continued to perform other protective rituals (to avoid not only *rabt* but to protect and enhance the couple's fertility) throughout the day and until the moment the bride and groom entered their apartment.

Luckily, Khalid and his bride, Leila, did not have any problems. Within one hour, they consummated their marriage. I say *they* deliberately here because, unlike what is usually presented as an active man penetrating a passive woman, Leila described their wedding night as a joint effort. Unlike in other cases when the bride is expected to resist the groom for a while and make it hard for him to penetrate her, Leila was fully aware of the fact that her brothers needed to leave next morning to go back to their work. After the conclusion of the festivities, we sat downstairs in the groom's family's house to drink tea and chat while waiting. Within an hour, we were called up to the couple's apartment and the bride's female relatives quickly attended to the bride by offering her some lemonade while the older women, including the two mothers, eyed the white cloth with the blood. For Leila's mother, the cloth with the bloodstains affirmed the chastity of her daughter and her standing as a good mother who raised a well-behaved woman. Um Ahmad's joy, which she expressed in songs and ululations, was also celebrating her son's affirmed manhood as well as her abilities to protect him from *rabt*.

Typically and for good reasons, the attention of scholars has been directed to the social value attached to virginity and the pressure exerted on the bride during this night.^{13–15} Such focus leaves the impression that men are not subjected to social

norms and that their bodies are free from regulation and disciplining. This tendency is particularly reflected in how myths and unexamined assumptions about the sexuality of men continue to be common not only in the popular, but also in academic literature from different parts of the world.¹⁶ Despite a rich body of literature that addresses sexuality, its historical and social-cultural constructions, "the myth of men's sexual destiny," widely circulated in popular culture, continues to go unquestioned in gender studies.^{16†} Unlike media representations and discourses in Egypt, which continue to circulate the myth about the stupendous and uncontrollable male sexual appetite, Leila was surprised because she was taught and thought that only women fear the wedding night because it is a test of their virginity and was not prepared to see the anxiety and worry of her husband. Until after her marriage, Leila did not realise that men worry about their ability to have and maintain an erection. She had thought that a man automatically and at will could have an erection as frequently as he wishes. Even her husband had the impression that a man could have sex with his wife all night long and was surprised to find that was not the case after they got married and that his body had a mind of its own and needed to rest and sleep.[‡]

Highlighting the fact that men are under pressure and that their bodies are socially regulated does not mean that there are no key gender inequalities and oppressive patriarchal practices that shape the wedding night and sexual interaction more broadly. Indeed, there are important gendered dimensions to my discussion that we should consider. *Rabt* proceeds on the assumption that no groom is immune but that all are susceptible to outside forces that could prevent them

[†]Male heterosexuality continues to go largely unmarked and understudied. Until recently, only "queer theory and studies of same-sex sex can make any claim to wider-ranging, complex and nuanced treatments of sexualities."¹⁶ This statement is also true in the context of the Middle East, where there is a dearth of studies that explore sexuality in general and male heterosexuality in particular.

[‡]This emphasis on the hyper-sexuality of men tends to equate sexuality and masculinity in the popular discourse. In reality, however, manhood is a collective and contingent project that is linked to multiple practices such as providing, courage, decency, good grooming, and the ability to use violence in the proper context. For more on this issue, see elsewhere.¹²

from performing in expected ways. Their condition is not a moral failing or an individual weakness. Rather, it is caused by malicious forces that lay outside them and that are hard (but not impossible) to counter. In contrast, a woman who does not bleed during the wedding night would be judged on moral grounds. She would be viewed as having violated social norms and transgressed proper ways of behaving. Thus, and despite fully knowing that she never had any sexual relations, Leila was deeply worried about not bleeding. She had read and heard enough to know that not all virgins bleed but she also knew that people made swift negative judgments in such cases, and she did not want to see herself or her family in an ambiguous situation that might demand medical examination and verification. In fact, part of the urgency of solving *rabt* is the fact that the bride's family wants to publicly verify the chastity of the daughter as quickly as possible. The significance of virginity is clearly reflected in calling the blood resulting from the first intercourse as "her honour" [*sharafah*].¹³

Conclusion

In this paper, I have aimed to approach *rabt* without pathologising, individualising, and medicalising an issue that is usually collectively and socially explained and managed. It is important not to be too quick to equate *rabt* with "impotence" or view it as a "cover for homosexuality," or a "mechanism of blame-shifting"^{8, 17}. Neither should it be dismissed as *khurafa* [superstitious] or *daggal* [swindling] as is the tendency in

recent media discussions and some medical circles.^{**} Rather, it should be viewed as a dynamic concept that offers a sense of agency, which is not limited to the individual body but that encompasses multiple flows and connections that link different humans and non-humans, positive energy and negative feelings, the visible and the invisible, and the social and the biological. My discussion shows that our understanding of sexuality and reproductive health will continue to be limited if we consider men and women separately or as autonomous couples. Not only do we have to bring "men back to the reproductive imaginary, as reproductive partners, progenitors, fathers, nurturers, and decision makers,"²⁰ we also need to consider the broader relationships and inequalities that produce men and women and how these configurations of connections, forces, and ideas produce sexed bodies, shape meanings of health and well-being, and legitimise certain acts but not others.

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⁸Badran et al. argue that "Unconsummated marriage (honeymoon or wedding night impotence, first-night erectile dysfunction and failure of defloration) is a common medical and social problem facing medical practitioners in conservative communities. It accounts for up to 17% of visits to sexual health clinics."¹⁸

^{**}If you do a Google search using the Arabic word *rabt* of the groom during the wedding night, thousands of entries appear that discuss the religious and medical aspects of this condition in different Arab countries. For an example, see elsewhere.¹⁹

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Résumé

Cet article examine la notion du « *rabt* » (liage), c'est-à-dire l'incapacité du marié à s'engager dans les rapports sexuels pénétrants à la nuit de noces, à explorer la relation entre masculinité, mode de vie et performance sexuelle. S'appuyant sur le travail ethnographique sur le terrain au Caire entre 1993 et 2015, cet article explore la notion du liage du marié, comment elle est socialement définie et gérée. Après avoir présenté mon cadre conceptuel pour l'étude de la sexualité et du mode de vie, le document discute de la signification de la nuit des noces; des indices sociaux sur lesquels les gens s'appuient lorsqu'ils identifient le *rabt*; comment ces indices relient différents événements aux (in) capacités du marié; et comment les femmes, en particulier les mères, travaillent pour protéger et guérir leurs parents masculins de cette détresse. Pour comprendre les moments où les individus sont incapables ou «échouent» de produire des effets physiques et sociaux souhaitables, il est important que nous ne considérons pas exclusivement le corps individuel sexué - le corps qui est clairement défini, délimité et investi de désirs et sentiments uniques. Nous devons également considérer les configurations plus larges qui relient différents corps, leur confèrent certaines significations et produisent leur matérialité. Ma discussion montre que notre compréhension de la sexualité et de la santé sexuelle continuera d'être limitée si nous considérons seulement les

موجز المقال

يتناول هذا المقال مفهوم ربط ليلة الزواج، أو عدم قدرة العريس على الانخراط في الجماع المؤدي إلى فض البكارة في ليلة الزفاف، لاستكشاف العلاقة ما بين الذكورة، والتجسيد والأداء الجنسي. بالاستناد إلى العمل الميداني الإثنوغرافي في القاهرة ما بين عامي 1993 و2015، يستكشف هذا المقال مفهوم ربط العريس، وكيفية تعريفه اجتماعياً وطرحه. وبعد عرض الإطار المفاهيمي الخاص بي لدراسة الجنس والتجسيد، ينتقل المقال إلى مناقشة معنى ليلة الزفاف والمعطيات الاجتماعية التي يعتمد عليها الناس عند تحديد الربط وكيف تعزو هذه المعطيات وقوع أحداث مختلفة إلى عجز العريس؛ وكيف تعمل النساء، وبخاصة الأمهات، على حماية وإخراج أقاربهن الذكور من هذه المحنة. ويغية فهم الأوقات التي يكون فيها الأفراد غير قادرين أو "عاجزين" عن إنتاج تأثيرات جسدية واجتماعية مرغوب فيها، من المهم ألا ننظر إلى الفرد حصراً على أنه جسم بقدرته جنسية - أي الجسم المعرف بشكل واضح، والمحدد، والمقتصر على رغبات ومشاعر فريدة من نوعها. علينا أيضاً أن ننظر في التشكيلات الأوسع نطاقاً التي تربط مختلف الاجسام، ومنحها معاني معينة وإنتاج ماديتها. وتبين مناقشتي أن فهمنا للحياة الجنسية والصحة الجنسية سيظل محدوداً إن اعتبرنا الرجال أو النساء كأفراد منفصلين أو كأزواج مستقلين. ويساعدنا استكشاف لحظات الضعف البيولوجي والاجتماعي، كمثل مفهوم الربط، وكيفية ارتباطها بمشروع الجندرة على نطاق أوسع، على فهم مسائل تتعلق بالصحة الإنجابية والحقوق الجنسية بشكل أعمق.

hommes ou les femmes comme des individus distincts ou des couples autonomes. L'exploration de moments de vulnérabilité biologique-sociale, tels que la notion du *rabt* et de la façon dont ils sont liés à des projets plus larges de sexe, nous aide à comprendre les problèmes liés à la santé sexuelle et aux droits sexuels dans un sens plus profond.