Western Media as 'Technology of Affect': The Affective Making of the *Angry Arab Man*

Sabiha Allouche

ABSTRACT: This paper works through the framework of affect theory in order to show how Western media and foreign policy contribute towards the intensification of the stereotype of the 'Angry Arab Man'. It follows the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on affect in order to show how a 'refrain' or stereotype emerges. In addition to arguing that Western media acts as technology of affect, this paper shows the emotive component of the interplay between Western media, foreign policy, and their audiences. It challenges the autonomous and pre-cognitive aspects of affect, and draws on feminist and postcolonial scholars in an attempt to reinsert the 'social' into debates about affect theory.

KEYWORDS: Affect, technology, media, stereotype, Arab, emotions

---

This paper is an attempt to answer Sneja Gunew's call for 'decolonizing affect theory' (Gunew 2009, 27). It uses the rhetoric of the '*Angry Arab Man*' to argue that Western media[1] acts as a 'technology of affect', an expression first coined by Derek Hook in 2005 and later reprised by Zeus Leonardo and Michalinos Zembylas (2013). A technology of affect goes beyond psychological manipulation and involves affective components. Technology, in this paper, is an 'expert system comprised of a discrete set of […] applied knowledges and/or forms of specialist language, which is used by experts on deviant subjects […] as means of achieving a productive output of sorts, a relation of greater mastery or control' (Hook 2005, 9).

In this paper, Western media as affective technology arises as an extension of

hegemonic forms of Western ideals. Western media is understood in neo-colonial terms. Philip Altbach defines neo-colonialism as 'a planned policy of advanced nations to maintain their influence in developing countries' (Altbach 1971, 237). Moreover, Western media must be understood as a 'function that dominates public life' and recasts it 'from a locus of information and debate to a site of manipulation by corporate powers' (Kellner and Durham 2006, xix). Additionally, this neo-colonialism is situated within the current political economy of global capitalism which consists in 'multiplying and distributing differences for the sake of profit', producing as such 'ever-shifting waves of genderisation and sexualisation, racialisation and naturalisation of multiple 'others'' (Braidotti 2006, par. 4).

Previous studies have sought to expose the role of Western media in the propagation of stereotypes (Kamalipour 1995; Shaheen 2001; Aguayo 2009; Al-Malki et. al 2012). This paper exposes the role of Western media in the circulation of stereotypes by adopting affect theory as its theoretical framework. It will show how Western media and foreign policy actively contribute towards the intensification of the affect-stereotype of the '*Angry Arab Man*' and how emotions constitute a major component in the interplay between Western media and foreign policy, and their audiences. Foreign policy, in this paper, is seen as co-constitutive of Western media. This is clearly shown in the examples provided, relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Egyptian uprising in 2011. Selectivity, reiteration, and lack of critical analysis come into play in both examples. Moreover, foreign policy must be understood in the frame of Arab anti-Americanism sentiments that stretch to include US allies, whose policies regarding the Middle East are seen as particularly hostile and intrusive since they upset 'intimate politics of identity and culture' (Lynch 2006, 198), both of which have become increasingly prevalent after 9/11.

The first part of the paper situates the main argument by drawing on the work of Edward Said (1978), Sherry Ortner (1974), and Franz Fanon [1986 (1952)] to show how the affect-stereotype of the highly emotive *'Angry Arab Man'* contributes to reducing the Middle East to the inferior Other. It borrows from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) to argue that the excess of the refrain of '*Angry Arab Man*' is captured by Western media and territorialized by biased assumptions. The aim of the second part of the paper is two-fold: it first draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) to illustrate the affective component of the interplay between Western media and foreign policy, and their audiences by providing examples

related to the second Palestinian *Intifada* in 2000 and to the recent uprisings in Egypt in 2011. It then argues that an excessively theoretical examination of affect runs the risk of obliterating the 'social', coinciding with Clare Hemmings' (2005) arguments, and calls for a grounding of affect in power structures. The third part of the paper proposes an ontological reading of the *'Angry Arab Man'* as a possible attempt to 'decolonize affect theory'. It draws on the work of Black feminist bell hooks (2006) and Karl Marx's (1990 [1867]) notion of 'commodity fetishism' to show the limits of an epistemological or a constructivist reading of emotions, in addition to highlighting the links between the role of emotions and political resistance.

The 'Angry Arab Man' as the Weak Other in Western Media

In this paper, the concept of the *'Angry Arab Man'* is seen as a process of Othering that is reminiscent of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Although Said argues that the 'essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority' (in Al-'Azm 2010, 55), this line of thinking must be understood in relation to the neo-colonial context in which Western media was presented earlier.

Writing about the processes of Othering is also found among feminist theorists. A highly emotive state has long been equated with a weak and irrational, non-scientific and natural state (Lutz and White 1986). In her landmark essay, *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?,* Sherry Ortner (1974) draws on the natural/ cultural divide to show how women have been cast off from the predominantly male cultural project, in addition to being constructed as a lower sex. Ortner's work has been criticized for its presumed universality, and its limitations in accounting for specific male-nature associations such as the work of farmers, who do not necessarily see themselves as entirely separate from nature. Perhaps Ortner's work is not the first work that comes to mind when contemplating the refrain of the '*Angry Arab Man'*. However, it shows how the natural, the weak, and the inferior are posited against the cultural.

In a similar vein, Western media, through selected and repetitive imagery, constructs the Arab man as highly emotive, reducing him to a childish state – a

predominantly natural state that has yet to access the 'cultural realm'. Like all children, he is quick to express his anger when his demands are not met. He rarely takes initiatives and prefers being given directions. He is highly militarised and is incapable of making his point in a civil way. He prefers the use of force whenever Islam is criticized. He reiterates his hate for all things Western through the public burning of American and Israeli flags, in addition to mistreating women. Such behaviours were captured, diffused, and re-diffused in times of intense crisis, such as the second *Intifada* in 2000, a period of intensified violence between Palestinians and Israelis, or in the aftermath of the publication of cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammad in caricatured ways in 2005. Western media focuses on imageries of anger without paying enough importance to the historical build-up of anti-American sentiments in the region. Moreover, this approach results in the automatic conflation of "Arabness" with muslimhood, or the inclusion of Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan into an Arabic-speaking Middle East.

When Western media omits the context within which the *'Angry Arab Man'* operates, the latter is constructed as inferior, and in opposition to a superior 'Western Man' who is in control of his emotions, adopts a rational-scientific approach, and is well versed in the 'cultural', including democracy, human rights, industrial advances, and social equality.

Seen from a postcolonial lens, the rhetoric of the '*Angry Arab Man*' is saturated with Eurocentric assumptions. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Franz Fanon [1986 (1952)] argues that the colonized has been excluded from the cultural project and can only reclaim his/her agency by de-historicizing him/herself from History as we know it: a memoir of events seen from the perspective of the strong at the expense of the hope and aspirations of the weak. In Fanon's words, '[one] must constantly remind [oneself] that the real '*leap*' consists of introducing invention in life … and it is by going beyond the historical and instrumental given that [one] initiates [his/her] cycle of freedom' (Fanon [1986 (1952)], 229). When seen in the context of this paper, Fanon can be said to call for a de-territorialisation of History.

History is not a linear narrative of winners and losers. When read and applied hastily, History becomes secondary, leading to essentialist misinformation like the conflation of Arabs with Muslims, or the reduction of Arab women to permanently vulnerable beings. Essentialism and reductionism are two practices that facilitate the hegemony of Eurocentric constructions. Although the work of Fanon is mostly

concerned with racism as a system of oppression that operates both vertically and horizontally, the very deployment of racism reiterates racial stereotypes.

A stereotype is an affect because its very conception is based on the disruption of an existing atmosphere. It is reminiscent of a chorus, or a refrain, that is repeated. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), a refrain is 'rhythm and melody that have been territorialized because they have become expressive and have become expressive because they are territorializing' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 317). The refrain of the *'Angry Arab Man'* is highly affective due to its territorializing nature. It is passed on from one territory to another, often through biased cultural productions, contributing as such to the automatic stereotyping of Arabs as terrorists, irrational, lusty, or obsessed with Allah.

An affect implies affecting others in as much as it implies being affected by others. Consequently, this paper posits the *'Angry Arab man'* as affect-stereotype because it is representative of a strange, exoticised, and marked body that disrupts Western hegemonic ideals of citizenship, secularism, or scientific progress. Seeing that Western media is used in this paper as a neo-colonial tool that works in conjunction with Western foreign policy, it could be argued that Western media acts as a technology of affect because it is capable of regulating the atmosphere of a hegemonic West. This *status quo* or existing atmosphere can be maintained by heightening the dangers that questionable bodies could produce. In this sense, the socio-political and historical richness of the Middle East becomes reduced to an organic state – that of an intensely angry, almost child-like man that is excessively out of control and therefore dangerous. Sara Ahmed (2014) has remarkably conceptualized the shift in such micro-atmospherics by stating that a 'stranger might be the one to whom we are not attuned' (Ahmed 2014, par. 17). Since the stranger-Other is constantly working towards being accepted, or having his image ratified, often through minute and exhausting processes of negotiation, diplomacy, resistance, and conformity, it is of little wonder, then, that a 'stranger', including the misrepresented Arab man becomes a 'moody figure' (Ahmed 2014, par. 20), fluctuating between different degrees of anger in times of crisis.

Whereas Said (1978) is criticized for his East/West binary, and Ortner (1974) for her male-cultural/female-natural divide, Fanon [1986 (1952)], too, often reduces his work to a West/Third World opposition. However, neither West nor Third World is absolute. Although this paper presents Western media in neo-colonial terms, this

neo-colonialism, however, must not be understood in opposition to Third World conceptualizations. The fight against capitalism, including the fights against the exploitation of resources, cultural reductionism, trade and neoliberal agreements, occurs at a grassroots level through the works of activists, NGOs, transnational alliances, and counter-cultural productions in most countries around the world. In addition to this, transnational alliances between Western citizens and Third World citizens have been taking place long before the advancement of neo-colonialism. In *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*, Leila Gandhi (2006) shows how affective communities built on friendship stood in the face of the British Empire during Victorian times. The work of Gandhi reflects the imprecision of a dichotomous analysis. She shows, in her accounts of several individuals and events, how a number of British subjects sacrificed the privileges of Empire and developed affinities with the oppressed. In the process, they blurred the rigid boundaries between West and non-West, colonizer and colonized.

Still, networks of affectivities do not operate in a straightforward way. Affect can only operate insofar as the power structures that surround it permit. In other words, although affect could incite change and mobilization, it is often bound to complex systems of power, which, in their turn, alter its capacity to affect. By stressing the anger of the Arab man, Western media constructs the West as self-composed, spreading sentiments of patriotism, pride, and well-being that are ultimately captured by its audience. Through the proliferation of the figure of the *'Angry Arab Man'*, Western media contributes to global systems of exclusion that are highly affective.

Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), it could be argued that the stereotype of the *'Angry Arab Man'* is an affect that is abundant with 'excess' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 106), which is captured by Western media and foreign policy, thus limiting its potential for de/re-territorialisation. For Deleuze and Guattari, 'excess' is what allows a territory to shift. If we consider the relationship between power and affect, excess constitutes the main ingredient for both social change and control. The question that arises is how can the affect-stereotype of the *'Angry Arab Man'* be shifted? Or what obstacles impede the renewal of the image of the Arab man in Western media? The answer lies in the disassociation of affect from power and vice versa. Affect theory as method *could* answer such questions. At the same

time, it is important to identify the gaps of such method and show its limits. Those are the main concerns that are addressed in the part that follows.

A Deleuzian Reading of the Stereotype

Brian Massumi (2002) defines affect as 'a pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution of that body's capacity to act' (Massumi 2002, xvi). When we act, we are 'actualizing our being affected' (Massumi 2002, 42). Once this potential is actualized, it becomes possible to create new spaces of potentials where others could be affected. Affect, then, is constantly happening since it is as much capable of reinforcing the body's potential to act, as it is capable of reducing it.

Massumi (2002) and other affect theorists, notably Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1995), suggest that affect differs from post-structuralist analysis of the body because it includes in its examination those sensations that are not clearly located in a person but are somehow transmitted from one body to the next. For instance, when we resign ourselves to Michel Foucault's concept of bio-politics, we are resigning ourselves to pre-determined bodies that are constantly monitored and disciplined through what appears to be an inescapable labyrinth of power. This is not to say that Foucault did not discuss at length the possibilities of the body. On the contrary, in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1995 [1975]) insists on the malleability of the body to the extent it is rendered 'docile' in order to increase its productivity and decrease its resistance to political change. However, by insisting on the intertwinement of power and resistance, Foucault's concept of 'political agency' becomes too elusive at times. For Caldwell (2007), it breaks the links between the desire to act otherwise and the political and practical possibilities of making a difference (Caldwell, 2007).

In theory, an affective theoretical framework can re-link our 'desire to act otherwise' with the material possibilities of 'making a difference', and thus successfully envisaging social change. The novelty of affect theory is that it picks up on the spontaneous energies that emanate from bodies and spaces alike. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), social spaces and bodies are 'events' that are always 'becoming'. One's relationships with others, the TV programs one chooses

to watch, or the books one reads, are affective events that contribute to one's propensity to act. For Deleuze, time, or rather timing, constitutes a major component of the 'event': an event is a 'synthesis' of both the past and the future (*in* Badiou 2007, 40). In other words, an event is never now because one has yet to enact his/her being affected by the event. It is always becoming. For Deleuze, 'becoming is neither merely an attribute of, nor an intermediary between events, but a characteristic of the very production of events' (*in* Stagoll 2010, 25–27). The body, then, is in constant motion. This constant motion, or *becoming,* allows it to endlessly re-position itself in relation to power and create new systems of oppression and privilege that are not easily palpable in empirical observations. If the social is constantly becoming, the question that emerges, then, is *how does a region as vast and heterogeneous as the Middle East become reduced to the idea of an Angry Man*? Perhaps the answer lies with the highly problematic 'refrain' of the affect-stereotype of '*Angry Arab Man*'.

The refrain of the *'Angry Arab Man'* is multi-territorial seeing the links between Western media and foreign policy. Both Western media and foreign policy occupy the same territory seeing that the latter is capable of dictating its priorities by transmitting affective meanings whereby the use of force is legitimized in the name of the democratic ideals of the 'American Dream', as was and continues to be the case in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Such affective meanings are often accompanied by imageries, urban legends, and selective information about excessively Angry Arab men 'who do the world no good', and whose only obsession is to 'destroy America'. Still, it is important to note that such anti-American sentiments are only one of the 'different types of anti-Americanisms' (Katzenstein and Koehane 2006, 35) that exist, as Peter Katzenstein and Robert Koehane (2006) carefully remind us.

A stereotype occupies a territory of impressions that is maintained by a power structure that allows it to proliferate and to 'stick' to the point it operates as affect. Sticky attachments have been conceptualised by Sara Ahmed (2004) who argues that the repetition of certain words produce affect through reiteration (Ahmed 2004, 92). The repetitive depiction of the Arab man as angry and undiplomatic, and in extreme cases, as terrorist, carries 'traces of context' that prevents it from acquiring new meaning and value (Ahmed 2004, 92).

Although it is impersonal due to its abstract nature, the actualization of a ste-

reotype requires both organic and inorganic bodies (such as the media). Also, a stereotype is relational. When we contemplate a body in the Deleuzian sense, the body is constantly re-writing its ontology and renewing its discursive potential. A stereotype affects one's relationality with others and triggers negative attachments, such as racism or homophobia, which become increasingly enacted on the surface. A stereotype cannot be re-territorialized without it being de-territorialized first. The following examples draw on Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the recent uprising in Egypt to show how an affect-stereotype is de/territorialized.

Rhonda S. Zaharana (1995) examined the portrayal of Palestinians in *Time* news magazine over six decades. Basing her analysis on extracts and articles from *Time*, she found that Palestinians went from faceless victims of violence with the declaration of the Israeli state in 1948 to faces of violence during the decade of the 1980s, and to faces of peace in 1993 following the signing of the Oslo Accord in September that year. For Zaharana, these changing faces are the results of the US-Israeli special relationship, the absorption of the Palestinians under the 'Arab' label and the 'leaderlessness and voicelessness of the Palestinian refugees' (Zaharana 1995, 16). When Palestinians are absorbed under the 'Arab' label, their context is technically erased, and their anti-Zionist fight is left to the discrepancy of those who speak for Arabs 'as a whole' – often in the likes of Arab leaders who have and continue to bring forward the question of Palestine to the point of exhaustion, be it in their meetings, official statements, televised interviews and so on. This is particularly problematic seeing that Arab leaders operate as guarantors of the US' hegemony in the region. In a more recent work, Mervat Hatem notes how post-9/11 representations of Arabs as 'indiscriminate terrorists' served to classify them as antisocial, pathological, fanatical criminals whose motives and actions did not deserve historical or political analyses' (Hatem 2011, 12). The latest crackdowns on protesters in Egypt, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia only add to the stereotype of the Arab man as inherently angry, and incapable of a dialogical rationale. These examples reflect the difficulties of encountering lines of flight for ordinary Arab citizens.

Elsewhere, Greg Philo et al. (2003) analysed content from UK media following the 2000 Palestinian *Intifada*. They found that, despite the British public reacting sympathetically to the killing of Palestinians and the consequences of the conflict on their lives, the *Intifada* acquired the meaning of resistance, leaving major ques-

tions such as *Intifada* against what, or resistance to what or why unaccounted for. Consequently, what remains unexplored is the 'nature of the [Israeli] military occupation and the distorted relationships it produced between the occupiers and the subject population' (Philo et al. 2003, 141).

In a more recent example, Western media reduced the frustration of an angry Egyptian youth, and the complexity of Egypt's internal politics, to the question of whether the removal of Mohammed Morsi constituted a coup or not (Shalaan 2013; Tadros 2013; Trager 2013). Instead of focusing on the *reasons* behind the on-going uprising, despite the successful removal of Hosni Mubarak and the election a new president in the person of Mohammed Morsi, Western media focused mostly on the lack of democratic understanding of the lay Egyptian man. Khaled Shalaan remarks that such an instrumental reading of Egypt's uprising is 'pathetic' because it reflects how Western intellectuals continue to be 'wilfully entrapped' in an Orientalist worldview of the region (Shalaan 2013, par. 6).

Indeed, adopting an instrumental approach when conveying information related to the uprising of Egypt does not help in showing the localized nature of the relationship between the Egyptian nation-state and its citizens, for example, which clearly falls beyond T.H. Marshall's threefold definition of Social Citizenship: civil, political, and social rights (Somers 1994). Gender inequality, the extent of client-patron relationships, and informal networks (Singerman 1995, 2005) in Egypt are but a few examples that help illustrate unequal relationships between citizens and the nation-state. What counts as a revolution in a Western reading does not necessarily count as such in the Egyptian context, since the entire lexicon and practices of democracy of the Republic of Egypt (1952) are relatively fresh, and can thus be regarded as impermanent, or transitional. Perhaps a more engaging reading of the 'coup' would have been the conceivability of a 'radical democracy' where governments can be immediately challenged, regardless of the completion of their mandate.

Such examples illustrate how Western media, as technology of affect, shapes our understanding of particular events, affecting our emotional, mental, and bodily dimensions in the construction of events. By ignoring the wider political landscape in each of Palestine and Egypt, not only does Western media territorialize political priorities in conjunction with specific foreign policies, it also injects its audiences with feelings that contribute to the simultaneous construction of a

democratic West and a non-diplomatic *'Angry Arab Man'* who is unwilling to enter into dialogue. Zeus Leonardo and Michalinos Zembylas used the expression 'technology of affect' in their study of 'whiteness as technology of affect' (Leonardo and Zembylas 2013, 151). In addition to the explanation given earlier, technology is understood in the Foucauldian sense in that it refers to any assemblage of knowledges, practices, techniques, and discourses used by human beings on others or on themselves to achieve particular ends (Leonardo and Zembylas 2013, 151).

A theory of affect allows us to take into consideration non-palpable sensations and energies that contribute to historically and socio-politically constructed beliefs, such as stereotypes. However, one of affect theory's most problematic aspects is the overtly theoretical discussion that often accompanies it to the point where the social is lost. In Clare Hemmings' words, affect is taken up as the 'hopeful alternative to social determinism in its positioning of the individual as possessing a degree of control over their future, rather than as raw material responding rather passively to cognitive or learned phenomena' (Hemmings 2005, 552).

Indeed, the abstract nature of affect runs the risk of obliterating social meaning, at times. Since affects, bodies, and spaces are 'becoming', wouldn't it be possible to posit the possibility of a social or a 'carnal condition' that is 'out of sync with its cultural apparatus [?]', as Elizabeth Povinelli recently remarked (in Disfruscia 2010, 89). The concept of the *'Angry Arab Man'* allows us to capture affects that are clearly out of sync with the apparatus of Western media.

Moreover, it is important to take into account the territories and bodies that contribute to the everyday politics of the ordinary Arab citizen. In order to capture affect, one has to identify the technologies that contribute to its proliferation. Western media, where the *'Angry Arab Man'* is concerned, is merely one of those technologies. By identifying the technologies through which affect is transmitted, it is possible to examine the latter empirically. An empirical examination of the technologies of affect approximates us to the more palpable aspects of affect. In this sense, the transformative potential of affect leads me to question the widely accepted definition of affect as autonomous, pre-social, and pre-cognitive, as argued by Massumi (2002).

Since the social combines notions of experience, judgment, rationality, and privilege, its affective registers are organized along such lines as well. How a stereotype affects us has largely to do with the prejudice that accompanies it. António

Demásio (in Forgas 2008) a neuroscientist who has examined affect at length, asserts that affect is an essential component of cognition and behaviour, and that 'social cognitive and affective processes share overlapping neural structures' (Forgas 2008, 95). This implies that affect is not entirely autonomous, and that cognitive processes are intimately involved in the generation of affective responses.

Additionally, the gap between affect and the apparatus of Western media entails that those excluded from politics – whose desire to act differently cannot overcome the materiality of their condition, *can* and *do* bypass the obstacles of their cultural apparatus. For instance, in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*, Arjun Appadurai (2006) shows how the act of exclusion leads to the creation of communities of sentiments. Appadurai does not use affect theory in his analysis, but he draws our attention to the potential of communities, to whom he refers as 'potential communities', to move from 'shared imagination to collective action' (Appadurai 2006, 8). Imaginary sentiments could be seen as affects: 'energies that derive from encounters, not always conceivable in language, but sensed bodily' (Rodríguez 2011, par. 9). Appadurai defines his communities as groups that imagine and feel things together and have the potential of 'moving from shared imagination to collective action' (Appadurai 2006, 8). Through the example of the Salman Rushdie affair, Appadurai proves that the transformation of everyday subjectivities through media and imagination is directly concerned with politics whenever individual interests are in conflict with those of the nation state (the opposing views on Rushdie's book of each of the religious authorities in Karachi and Pakistan's pro-USA government).

The work of Appadurai highlights the centrality of one's embededness in his/her wider social circle. Class, gender, ethnicity, and political interests are all factors that contribute to processes of affectivities. If the *'Angry Arab Man'* were to be conceptualized abstractly in the Deleuzian tradition of body-as-assemblage, it becomes clear that this assemblage is both limited and limiting. Authoritarian rule, lack of transparency, and heavily punished non-normative behaviours all contribute to rather opaque parts which, when assembled, diminish one's intensity to affect or be affected. A non-abstract alternative can be found in the feminists' intersectional approach where class, gender, sociability, connectivity and further factors intersect at once. Such an approach is more palpable and maintains that affect and power are co-constitutive of each other. Another alternative to unpack-

ing one's social embededness is to follow an approach of assemblage rather than an intersectional one. Such an approach is proper to Jasbir Puar (2007) who argues that although such factors do intersect, they can be separated and disassembled. Following Puar (2007), they constitute an assemblage in which the "interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency" (Puar 2007, 212) allows for the understanding of power beyond disciplinary models. Puar's theory of assemblage leaves plenty of room to examine the role of ontology, affect, and feelings in systems of power, which is the main argument posited in the following part of the paper.

On a last note, it is interesting to examine affect theory outside its European roots, in contexts where the relationships between State and citizens are unequal, or where democracy as a process is pronouncedly fractional. This is not to say that affect and power operate independently in Western contexts, or that Western contexts are homogenous. However, affect theory was born out of Western philosophy and cannot automatically be applied to other contexts. One way to 'decolonize affect', as this paper aims, is to examine emotions from a non-constructivist lens. Although emotions, including anger, can be traced genealogically and documented following their socio-political roots, it helps seeing them as a new form of knowledge that is not easily discarded for lack of substance or psychological 'blabbing', as it is often assumed.

Emotion as Knowledge

So far, this paper has argued that Western media and foreign policy actively contribute towards the intensification of the affect-stereotype of the '*Angry Arab Man*' and that audiences' feelings constitute a major role in the interplay between Western media and foreign policy, and their audiences. At the same time, it is important to examine the '*Angry Arab Man*' from a perspective that is capable of examining the detrimental impact of such stereotyped affective transmissions on everyday Arab citizens. An ontological reading of the emotion of anger is capable, at least theoretically, to remedy the misrepresentation of the '*Angry Arab Man*'.

In addition to questioning affect as autonomous and pre-cognitive, this paper calls for an ontological examination of emotions. Emotions are not necessarily social constructs in that they are produced, albeit spontaneously, in order to con-

form to a certain cultural model (Harre 1989), nor can they be classified following the degree of cognition involved (Griffiths 1997). By focusing on the affective content of experience, it is possible to open up spaces of resistance where emotions as social judgments are capable of persuading, and use their potential to persuade analytically. Such precedents exist in the work of Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) according to whom social domination works at the level of 'constructing, delimiting and giving meaning to personal emotions' (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). In the case of bell hooks (in Crawford 2002), emotion is used as the vehicle along which power structures are challenged.

There are several points to consider when examining the roles of emotions. For instance, one could argue for a universally shared lexicon of emotions. However, what differentiates one social context or social group from another is how this lexicon came to be. In other words, although some emotions may inhabit similar affective territories in the present time, they differ from one context to another in how they came to be: to accept that the joy exhumed by the Egyptian public following the resignation of Mubarak is equal to that expressed by European leftists who were 'vouching' for the uprising is an erroneous mode of thinking. Similarly, privileged and marginalized groups in a given society do not celebrate national events evenly. In his contribution to the work *Emotions in Asian Thought*, Robert Solomon (1995) stated 'it is not enough to empathize with people from a very different culture', rather 'one has to understand the society and not merely the emotion' (Solomon 1995, 267).

This leads me to argue that the affective content of emotions should not be read equally in asymmetrically positioned social groups, despite the uniformity in their display. Such assertion finds a place among previous epistemological studies of emotions where genealogy and historicity prevail. In this context, emotions are viewed not as a reflection of some inner psychic manifestation, but as manifestations that link one individual to his/her wider socio-political discourse.

Whether emotions can be empirically observed or not, or whether emotions constitute viable knowledge is not the main issue here. The point this paper is trying to make is to turn back time and embrace emotions as a proof of existence, a sort of embodied state that for too long has been dismissed as irrational, pseudo-scientific, or lacking. Perhaps we should emphasize the potential of emotion especially in cases where the political participation of most citizens is limited.

In a recent interview with *Jadaliyya* entitled *Franz Fanon and the Arab Uprisings: an Interview with Nigel Gibson*, Gibson remarked on the links between political participation and the politics of oil in the Middle East: 'the problem with MENA [the Middle East and North Africa] is the politics of oil. It means that the spaces for truly grassroots politics, involving those masses of people excluded from high politics, are very quickly closed down' (Munif 2005, par. 16). What Gibson is highlighting is the political reality for many citizens in the Middle East who often find themselves excluded from 'high politics'.

Furthermore, among 'those excluded from high politics' (Munif 2005, par. 16), there are activists, NGOs, minorities, and marginalized members of society who are constantly strategizing in complex affective systems: foreign funding, patron-client relationships, or hierarchal systems of kinship serve to illustrate such affective systems. Still, these power relations are not pervasive. More than often, one finds room for emancipation, self-fulfilment, and opportunities to re-draw them: 'strategic essentialism'[2], 'bargaining with patriarchy'[3] (Kandiyoti 1988), 'quiet encroachment'[4] (Bayat 2002), and 'weapons of the weak'[5] (Scott 1985) are examples that illustrate how affect operates collectively, individually, and 'dividually'[6]. Such resistance is possible because of the changeability of territories, bodies, and power, be they organic, ideological, circumstantial, or material. It resonates with the concept of Nomadic theory by Rosi Braidotti (2006) where subjectivity is in flux, and normative discourses related to vulnerability and trauma, along with the established understanding of what counts as human, are entirely de-territorialized for the benefit of 'affirmative affectivities based on the transformation of negative into positive passions' (Braidotti 2006, par. 18.). It is in this sense of flux and affirmatively that emotions-as-resistance are presented in this paper, since it rekindles the links between the 'desire to act otherwise' and the political and practical possibilities of 'making a difference'.

It is possible, then, to convert emotions into spaces of resistance. Anger, in this case, becomes an embodied resistance. In her reading of bell hooks, Ilene Crawford (2002) shows how hooks 'talks back', through the activity of writing, in order to transform the emotional pain she experiences in her sexist and racist milieu into a rhetorical stance that seeks to transform the circumstances that led to her emotional pain (Crawford 2002, 685). What can be retained from Crawford's reading of hooks is the possibility of converting emotions into spaces of resistance. Whereas

anger allows hooks to create her own agency, the *'Angry Arab Man'* is often represented as reacting angrily. His reaction, though, is not empty-founded. It results from the pressure that comes with accepting Western hegemonic ideals without questioning them, to be more alike and less Other.

Where the *'Angry Arab Man'* is concerned, one can detect a commodification of public feelings, particularly in events that are emotionally charged, notably in the aftermath of 9/11. In *Das Kapital*, Karl Marx (in Williams 2005) famously defined commodity fetishism as 'a mysterious thing' in which 'the social character of men's labour appears to be stamped on the very products of that labour' (Williams 2005, 508). A commodity, then, is a social thing that exhumes social relations. Far from the price/value debate that followed Marx's definition, it could be argued that commodification, in this age and time, has come to symbolize success, a 'settled' life, and upward social mobility, seeing that abstract and impalpable economic values prevail over tangible ones.

The biased representation of the *'Angry Arab Man'* maintains the existing hegemony of Western power and their respective economies because it emphasizes the stability of Western societies in opposition to the 'problematic' Middle East. Ultimately, stability affects consumerism. The relationship between the affect-stereotype of the '*Angry Arab Man*' and Western audiences, in my opinion, illustrates the display of social characters from which all visible labour has been erased. I see it as a display of selected 'bits and pieces', so as not to disturb the politics of pleasure of its audience, since politics of pleasure affect consumerism and spending. In this sense, 'comical' gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes can all be seen as commodified for entertainment purposes and as 'not that much of a big deal'. Marx Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (in Calhoun 2012) brilliantly capture the relationship between entertainment and consumerism: 'the original affinity between business and entertainment reveals itself in the meaning of entertainment itself: as society's apologia. To be entertained means to be in agreement. At its root is powerlessness. It is indeed escape, but not, as it claims, escape from the bad reality but from the last thought of resisting that reality' (Calhoum 2012, 472).

Following Horkheimer and Adorno (in Calhoun 2012), TV news becomes a quick fix that relates events that support patriotic values of democracy and the 'good life'. In this sense, comical gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes can all be seen as commodified for entertainment purposes and as 'not that much of a big

deal'. For hooks (2006), mass cultural production in Western media is the 'contemporary location that both publicly declares and perpetuates the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the acknowledgment and enjoyment of racial difference' (hooks 2006, 366). One could also add ethnic, religious, gender, and geographical differences to this. Such commodification of Otherness is 'so successful', according to hooks, because it is offered as a new delight that brings to the surface all the 'nasty fantasies about the Other', which is more satisfying than 'normal ways of doing and feeling' (hooks 2006, 366). Through a mix of Orientalism, exoticism, and consumerism, it becomes increasingly difficult for the audience to engage critically with what it is exposed to. In this sense, and borrowing from Sara Ahmed (2000), 'stranger fetishism' renders the *'Angry Arab man'* as an 'unliveable or unassimilable strange body [that] involves contingent and over-determined regimes of difference' (Ahmed 2000, 54).

The long-term effect of the commodification of Otherness-as-pleasure creates feelings of cynicism, despair and anger, or as I pointed earlier a 'moody figure'. In the case of the *'Angry Arab Man'*, a fixed political reality can lead to a sense of hopelessness and disbelief in the idea of a brighter future. What appears to be a momentary crisis becomes ordinary and, despite an atmosphere of optimism that could be captured from mass mobilization, as was the case during the 'Arab Spring', everyday politics soon return to their *pre*-mass mobilization stance of cynicism and disbelief. It is no surprise that such a shift in atmospherics is regularly captured in processes of affectivities that operate within complex power relations, as is the case of the Middle East. It is plausible to argue then that a focus on emotions-as-experience and emotions as judgment help ground affect theory and approximate it to its social meaning.

Concluding Notes

Working on the Middle East as a context far from the European roots of affect theory, this paper has responded to Sneja Gunew's call for 'decolonizing affect theory' (Gunew 2009: 27). It demonstrated how Western media, as 'technology of affect' is complicit in the reproduction of neo-colonial stereotypical representations through the recasting of the highly emotive '*Angry Arab Man*' as the weak and

inferior Other. The relationship between power and affect is complex and one cannot operate beyond the frames set by the other. Affect theory helps us understand how the conjunction of Western media and foreign policy dictate political priorities with global consequences by hijacking audiences' feelings and transmitting affective meanings from one territory to another. However, affect theory's utopian appeal often risks losing its social meaning. This paper attempted to remedy the issue by following an ontological reading of emotions as a space of resistance. It remains, above all, an invitation to further the debate on the links between emotions, corporate power, perception, immigration, and agency. By highlighting the centrality of emotions to processes of perception and legitimisation, this paper sought to embrace emotions as knowledge that is neither objective nor subjective; rather, they constitute a valid source of knowledge whenever human relations and social matters come into question.

Endnotes

[1]   The media sources on which this paper bases itself are global news networks (CNN, Fox, and BBC), Times magazine, in addition to the Washington post.

[2]   *Strategic essentialism* is an expression coined by post-colonial scholar Gayati Chakravorty Spivak. It can be defined as the consolidation of members from different groups who, despite their internal differences, move towards a standardization of their cause for the purpose of gaining political ground.

[3]   Deniz Kandiyoti coined the expression 'bargaining with patriarchy'. It describes women's negotiation strategies within the constraints of their patriarchal context in order to maximize their benefits within their oppressive system.

[4]   In Assef Bayat's (2002) words, the notion of 'quiet encroachment' describes the 'silent, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in a quest for survival and improvement of their lives' (Bayat 2002, 19).

[5]   Scott (1985) provides a different approach for examining the links between domination and resistance by shedding light on less observable forms of non-cooperation that are deployed through the course of persistent servitude such as 'foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, [and] sabotage' (Scott 1985, 29)

[6]   In the Deleuzian tradition, bodies have become altered to the point where they have become 'dividual': a sort of a binary code were bodies are added to or subtracted from shifting sequences of knowledge (in Parr 2010, 56).

References

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1990. The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women. *American Ethnologist* 17(1)*:* 41–55.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1991. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Aguayo, Michelle. 2009. Representations of Muslim Bodies in the Kingdom: Deconstructing Discourses in Hollywood. *Global Media Journal – Canadian Edition* 2(2): 41–56.

Al-'Azm, Sadik, J. 2010. Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse. In *Readings in Globalisation: Key Concepts and Major Debates*, edited by George Ritzer and Zeynep Atalay, 54–56. Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Ahmed, Sara. 2000. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, London: Routledge.

Ahmed, Sara. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, New York: Routledge.

Ahmed, Sara. 2014. Making Strangers. Accessed August 25, 2014. http://feministkilljoys.com/2014/08/04/making-strangers/

Al-Malki, Amal, David Kaufer, Suquru Ishizaki, and Kira Dreher. 2012. *Arab Women in Arab News: Old Stereotypes and New Media*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Altbach, Philip, G. 1971. Education and Neocolonialism: A Note. *Comparative Education Review* 15(2): 237–239.

Badiou, Alain. 2007. The Event in Deleuze. Transated by Jon Roffe. *Parrhesia* 2: 37–44.

Bayat, Asef. 2002. Activism and Social Development in the Middle East. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34: 1–28.

Blackman, Lisa. 2012. *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation*, London: Sage Publication.

Braidotti, Rosi. 2006. Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity. Accessed August 19, 2014. http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/braidotti.html

Caldwell, Raymond. 2007. Agency and Change: Re-evaluating Foucault's Legacy. *Organization* 14(6)*:* 769–791.

Calhoun, Craig, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, eds. 2012. *Classical Sociological Theory*. John wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Callard, Felicity and Constantina Papoulias. 2010. Affect and Embodiment. In

Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates, edited by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz. Fordham University Press: New York.

Csordas, Thomas J. 2012. *Body/Meaning/Healing: Contemporary Anthropology of Religion*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Crawford, Ilene. 2002. Building a Theory of Affect in Cultural Studies Composition Pedagogy. *JAC* 22(3): 678–684.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

DiFruscia, Kim T. 2010. Shapes of Freedom: An Interview with Elizabeth A. Povinelli. *Altérités* 7(1): 88–98.

Fanon, Franz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Transated by Groove Press, Inc. London: Pluto Press.

Forgas, Jospeh P. 2008. Affect and Cognition. *Perspectives on Psychological Sciences* 3(2): 94–101.

Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. Transated by Alan Sheridan. Vintage Books.

Gandhi, Leila. 2006. *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Griffiths, E. Paul. 1997. *What Emotions Really Are*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Gunew, Sneja. 2009. Subaltern Empathy: Beyond European Categories in Affect Theory. *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* 35(1): 11–30.

Harre, Rom. 1989. *The Social Construction of Emotions*. Blackwell Pub.

Hatem, F. Mervat. 2010. The Political and Cultural Representations of Arabs, Arab Americans, and Arab American Feminists after September 11, 2001. In *Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging,* edited by Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Hemmings, Clare. 2005. Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn. *Cultural Studies* 19(5): 548–567.

Hook, Derek. 2005. Affecting Whiteness: Racism as Technology of Affect. *London: LSE Research Online.* Accessed September 28, 2014. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000956

hooks, bells. 2006. Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance. In *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, edited by Gigi M. Durham and Douglas M. Kellner. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Kamalipour, Yahya, R. 1995. *The US Media and the Middle East: Image and Perception*, Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Kandiyoti, Deniz. 1988. Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society* 2(3): 274–290.

Katzenstein, Peter and Robert O. Keohane. 2006. *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*. Cornell: Cornell University Press.

Kellner, M. Douglas and Gigi M. Durham. 2006. Adventures in Media and Cultural Studies: Introducing the Key Works. In *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, edited by Gigi M. Durham and Douglas M. Kellner. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Langstraat, Lisa. 2002. The Point Is There Is No Point: Miasmic Cynicism and Cultural Studies Composition. *JAC* 22(2): *293–325*.

Leonard, Zeus and Michalinos Zembylas. 2013. Whiteness as Technology of Affect: Implications for Educational Praxis. *Equity & Excellence in Education* 46(1): 150–165.

Lutz, Catherine and Geoffrey M. White. 1986. The Anthropology of Emotions. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15: 405–436.

Lynch, Mark. 2006. Anti-Amercanisms in the Arab World. In *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, edited by Peter Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane. Cornell: Cornell University Press.

Marx, Karl. 1990. Capital: Critique of Political Economy. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin Books.

Massumi, Brian. 2002. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Munif, Yasser. 2013. *Frantz Fanon and the Arab Uprisings: An Interview with Nigel Gibson*. Accessed February 1, 2014. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6927/frantz-fanon-and-the-arab-uprisings_an-interview-w

Ortner, Sherry B. 1974. Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture? In *Woman, Culture, and Society*, edited by Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Parr, Adrian. 2010. *The Deleuze Dictionary (Revised Edition)*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Philo, Greg, Alison Gilmour, Susanna Rust, Etta Gaskell, Maureen Gilmour, and Lucy West. 2003. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: TV News and Public Understanding. In *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, edited by Daya K. Thusssu and Des Freedman. London: Sage.

Puar, Jasbir. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Duke University Press.

Rodríguez, Encarnación G. 2011. *Politics of Affect: Transversal Conviviality*. Accessed February 4, 2014. http://eipcp.net/transversal/0811/gutierrezrodriguez/en

Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press.

Sedgwick, Eve. K. and Adam Frank. 1995. Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins, *Critical Inquiry* 21(2): 496–522.

Shaalan, Khaled. 2013. *Why the Western Media are Getting Egypt Wrong*. Accessed February 2, 2014. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/12624/why-the-western-media-are-getting-egypt-wrong

Shaheen, Jack G. 2001. *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People.* Massachusetts: Olive Branch.

Singerman, Diane. 1995. *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Singerman, Diane. 2006. Restoring the Family to Civil Society: Lessons from Egypt. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 2(1): 1–32.

Solomon, Robert C. 1995. The Cross-Cultural Comparison of Emotion. In *Emotions in Asian Thought: A Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy (with a discussion by Robert C. Solomon)*, edited by Joel Marks and Roger T. Ames. New York: Suny Press.

Somers, Margaret R. 1994. Rights, Relationality, and Membership: Rethinking the Making and Meaning of Citizenship. *Law & Social Inquiry* 19(1): 63–112.

Spinoza, Benedictus de. 2008. *Ethics*. Translated by Robert H. M. Elwes. Stilwell: Digireads.com Publishing.

Stagoll, Cliff. 2010. In *The Deleuze Dictionary*, edited by Adrian Parr. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Tadros, Mariz. 2013. *Egypt: Growing Anger with Western Opinion*. Accessed February 4, 2014. http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/mariz-tadros/egypt-growing-anger-with-western-opinion

Trager, Eric. 2013. *Western Media is Fixated on the Wrong Arrest in Egypt*. Accessed February 4, 2014. http://www.newrepublic.com/article/114820/gehad-el-hadded-arrest-egypt-what-media-doesnt-understand

West, Cornel. 2001. Nihilism in Black America. In *Race* Matters, edited by Cornel West. Boston: Beacon Press.

Williams, Linda. 2003. Fetishism and Hard Core: Marx, Freud, and the 'Money Shot'. In *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Amelia Jones. Oxon: Routledge.

Zaharana, Rhona, S. 1997. The Palestinian Leadership and the American Media: Changing Images, Conflicting Results. In *US Media and the Middle East: Image and Perception*, edited by Yahya R. Kamalipour. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.