Mai Al-Nakib

Disjunctive Synthesis: Deleuze and Arab Feminism

While feminists in the West have identified in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari cause for serious attention, this has not been the case among Arab feminists. This may be due to a lack of familiarity with their work or a lack of access to their works in translation, but I believe it has more to do with a perceived lack of resonance between Deleuze's thought and Arab feminist concerns.[1] The first part of this essay examines the state of Arab feminisms today, while the second explores just how viable and productive a "disjunctive synthesis" of Deleuze and Arab feminism might be at this juncture.[2] In the third and final section, I briefly outline what effects such a project can have, by analyzing the particular situation of women in the Gulf state of Kuwait.

Arab feminisms today

A conference held in October 2009 organized by the scholars of the Lebanese Association of Women Researchers (Bahithat) at the American University of Beirut marked the plurality of Arab feminism in its title: "Arab Feminisms: A Critical Perspective." The proposed goals of this conference, as described in a letter sent to invited participants, were manifold, but one key aim was to gauge "the place and role of feminism in the many and often contradictory realities of Arab societies and their interactions with other forms of feminism both within and outside the dominant Eurocentric model, as well as the strategies they have developed for change in the intellectual, social and cultural structures."[3] This objective was achieved by including participants from all over the Arab world, other parts of the global South, and both

[1] A rather elusive concept in Deleuze's philosophy, resonance can be understood as a force between series that can trigger a transformation of or movement beyond the series involved (Deleuze 1990b, 226–29, 239). As will become evident, my argument is that the resonance between Deleuze and Arab feminism can initiate a movement beyond some of the limits currently structuring the latter.

[2] The Deleuzian notion of the "disjunctive synthesis" will be discussed in detail in the second section of this essay. For now, it is sufficient to think of it as a relationship between series through which additional series of differences resonate or are produced (Deleuze 1990b, 229).

[3] Letter to author from Jean Said Makdisi, Noha Bayoumi, and Rafif Sidawi, February 18, 2009.

Arab and non-Arab participants based in the West. Furthermore, because the invitation to participate was extended not only to scholars from various disciplines but to activists, writers, and artists as well, a diversity of approaches and perspectives was represented. Although it goes beyond the scope of this article to detail the varied work presented at this landmark conference, I would like to make a few observations that relate to Arab feminism more generally.[4]

The theorization and practice of an Islamic feminism has been actively pursued by Muslim feminists in Arab and non-Arab regions for some time, and this was an identifiable tendency at the Beirut conference.[5] In the face of an increasingly extremist and sexist Islamism hostile to women's enfranchisement, Muslim feminists claim the authority to interpret the Qur'an for themselves from a more progressive and empowering perspective.[6] While this exegetical approach is sometimes coextensive with efforts to amend discriminatory legislation based on Islamic law, or shari'a (see Karmi 1996), at other times it remains a primarily abstract exercise with or without possible implications for reform at some future date (El-Nimr 1996). Muslim feminists are, in addition, rewriting the narrative of Islamic history by highlighting often ignored contributions made by Muslim women to society, politics, and culture (Ahmed 1992; Djebar 1994; Mernissi 1997). These overlooked historical precedents, they argue, construct a radically different picture than the atavistic account proclaimed by retrogressive Islamists in the interest of keeping women in their "rightful" place. It is suggested that such revised versions of Islamic history can have significant social, political, and economic implications for the lives of Muslim women today (Ahmed 1992, 235–48).

[4] To speak of "Arab feminism" in the singular is a useful rhetorical hyperbole that makes it possible to uncover certain broad tendencies. However, like the term "Arab women" or "the Arab world," it should not be taken to represent a unified phenomenon. "Arab feminism" is a convenient placeholder for the various feminisms that inhabit a wide and heterogeneous stretch of geography, cultures, religions, and traditions. The four tendencies within Arab feminism I identify in this essay are by no means the only ones that can be distinguished. However, for reasons that will become evident, I maintain that they are significant. For a brief summary of some of the major tendencies within Arab feminism, see Saliba (2000). See also Al-Hassan Golley (2004) for a discussion of the development of an indigenous Arab feminism.

[5] See Cooke (2001) for a definition of "Islamic feminism" (61), Hashim (1999) for a discussion of the viability of reconciling feminism and Islam, and Badran (2001) for a clarification of the terms "Islam," "Islamism," and "Islamic feminism."

[6] The work of Egyptian scholar Aisha Abd al-Rahman (1913–98) and Egyptian preacher (*da'iya*) Zaynab al-Ghazali (1917–2005) are early examples of such feminist exegetical approaches. For more recent examples, among others, see Mernissi (1991), Mir-Hosseini (1996), Wadud (1999, 2006), Barlas (2002), and Ali (2006).

Alongside Muslim feminist approaches, the Beirut conference also featured feminists working on issues involving the status of women's citizenship and rights within the political and economic context of both the nation-state and globalization.[7] Accounts and methods varied depending on discipline and geographical location. However, at least one commonality was identifiable. A certain frustration was expressed over the de facto split between women's rights activists, on the one hand, and feminist scholars, on the other.[8] Jean Said Makdisi, one of the organizers of the conference, argued that Arab women's rights activists often direct their efforts at solving limited problems within preexisting patriarchal structures (2009). While this may be a practical approach, inevitable given the conditions in which such activists work, it has meant that despite some improvements, the framework undergirding women's oppressions has not been substantially transformed. However, although Arab feminist academics do question the structures and systems restricting women's rights and lives, they have not been radical or vocal enough in their mostly theoretical challenges. In other words, their work has had little practical effect.

In addition to these two main thrusts—Islamic and rights based—a third identifiable tendency at the conference was a Foucauldian approach to discourse.[9] The careful emphasis by many of the presenting scholars on the genealogy of terms as well as the assumed nexus of power/knowledge cued a clearly Foucauldian bent. Somewhat anomalously, however, an attendant analysis of sexuality and gender in the Arab world was, for the most part, missing. This lack was noted by a number of participants and was registered as evidence that the body and sexuality remain taboo both socially and culturally in the contemporary Middle East. Although the topic was generally elided at the conference, it should be noted that recent studies on sexuality within an Arab or Muslim context are beginning to address issues having to do with desire, pleasure, affect, the body, sexuality, and so on.[10]

---

[7] For a seminal collection of essays addressing the relationship between the state, Islam, global forces, and women's rights, roles, and positions, see Kandiyoti (1991). See also Joseph (2000) for a more recent collection addressing similar concerns.

[8] It should be noted that this current perception of a split between an activist feminism and an academic feminism does not necessarily register or reflect the historical links between some forms of Arab feminism and Arab women's movements. For compelling examples of Arab women's activism as feminist practice, see Sabbagh (2003).

[9] See Abu-Lughod (1998) for a collection of important feminist scholarship on the Middle East influenced by Michel Foucault.

[10] For example, Saba Mahmood (2005) examines the affective capacities and embodied practices of Egyptian women in the mosque movement in order to present a perspective on

Traversing these three main trends was a fourth having to do with location. Arab or Muslim feminists located in the West, whether writing about Islam, rights, or discourse, addressed these issues from a more theoretical perspective informed by poststructuralism and gender criticism as developed in the Western academy. The scholarship of Arab feminists from non-Gulf countries, including Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq, built on the strong tradition of feminist activism in these locations and used whatever strategies and theories were deemed necessary. In contrast, feminists from the Arab Gulf region generally did not build on the historical interventions of Arab feminists in the wider Arab region, nor did their work engage the theoretical discourse of poststructuralists, feminists, or gender critics working in the West (whether Arab or not). Gulf feminists at the conference seemed content to work within conventional ideological, epistemological, political, and economic structures of organization, building toward reform rather than radical change.[11]

Deleuze and Arab feminism

I would suggest that the tendencies in Arab feminism today mirror those apparent at the Beirut conference, as summarized in broad strokes above.[12]

---

the effects of the Islamic revival on women's lives not circumscribed by secular-liberal discourses. On how Mahmood's project deviates from my own, see n. 21 below. For an interdisciplinary collection of essays addressing issues of sexuality within the context of the Middle East from a distinctly Foucauldian perspective, see Babayan and Najmabadi (2008). For "an intellectual history of the representation of the sexual desires of Arabs in and about the Arab world and how it came to be linked to civilizational worth," see Massad (2007, 49). For discussions of homosexuality in the context of the Middle East or Islam, see Murray and Roscoe (1997), El-Rouayheb (2005), Habib (2007, 2010), and Kugle (2010).

[11] While this was the case for most of the Gulf feminists presenting at the conference and can be identified as a general tendency within Gulf feminism, it is not to say that no theoretically informed feminists or, for that matter, radical women's rights activists exist in the Gulf. It is to suggest, however, that they are rare. The work of Kuwaiti feminist Haya Al-Mughni and Saudi feminists Mai Yamani and Madawi Al-Rasheed (both based in the West) are exceptional in this regard. Voices of radical feminist activists, such as Ghada Jamsheer (from Bahrain) and Ibtihal Al-Khatib (from Kuwait), are also uncommon. Interestingly, Gulf feminism is more radically manifest in art and literature than it is in scholarship or activism; examples of radical writers would include Kuwaiti Laila Al-'Uthman, Saudis Umayma al-Khamis and Seba Al-Herz, Bahraini Fawzia Rashid, and Emirati Salma Matar Sayf, among others.

[12] Needless to say, my condensed summary is not definitive, nor does it attempt to empirically tabulate the concrete successes or failures of Arab feminisms. Instead, I highlight certain tendencies in order to problematize and transvalue some of the more rigid codifications within the field. My objective is not to prescribe solutions but, rather, to experiment with alternative approaches that might provide a few unconsidered insights.

Is it necessary at this juncture to introduce Deleuze to Arab feminism? What can a disjunctive synthesis of Deleuze and Arab feminism do that cannot otherwise be done? Deleuze and Guattari list the "disjunctive synthesis" as the second of three syntheses (1983, 75).[13] Rather than conceiving disjunction as a relationship between two distinct alternatives (expressed syntactically as "either/or"), Deleuze and Guattari formulate disjunction as the production of differences (expressed syntactically as "either . . . or . . . or"; 12, 76).[14] As such, the disjunctive synthesis unfolds multiple series of differences or permutations with the potential to connect transverse territories (somatic, linguistic, conceptual, legal, political, economic, social, aesthetic, etc.). A relationship of disjunction produces alternative ways of perceiving, feeling, and thinking about the world. A relationship of disjunctions, however, cannot be understood as a unification or totalization of differences, nor can it be regarded as a process of establishing identity or equivalence between binary terms (42, 76). On the contrary, a disjunctive synthesis does "not reduce two contraries to an identity of the same" but, rather, "affirms their distance as that which relates the two as different" (77). It is precisely through this relation of difference that "synthesis itself in drifting from one term to another and following the distance between terms" occurs (77). The opportunity to drift creates the chance for new uses and confounds the habituated impulse to interpret or designate meaning. What Deleuze and Guattari call a "legitimate" or "immanent" use of the disjunctive synthesis is understood as "inclusive" and "affirmative" rather than "exclusive" and "restrictive" (76, 110). To include and to affirm the unfolding series of differences produced by the disjunctive synthesis is to open up each series to elements and terms otherwise disavowed or disallowed and, at the same time, to register the singularity of each series and each position within a given series.

---

[13] Deleuze and Guattari describe the first synthesis, or the "connective synthesis," as "the production of production" (1983, 5). It is expressed syntactically as "'and . . .' 'and then . . .'" (5). It involves a coupling between series. Such a connection is not simply a unification of two but, additionally, an interruption of one series by another, which can result in a shift and the production of a new series. The third synthesis, or the "conjunctive synthesis," is described as "the production of consumption" and of "consummation" (17–18). Syntactically, this is expressed as "so it's . . ." (17). The conjunctive synthesis involves the production of a subject, but a subject that is not instantly recognizable or familiar (not, in other words, the neurotic subject discovered again and again by psychoanalysis). For a lucid discussion of the syntheses and how they function, see Holland (1999, 25–57) and Buchanan (2008, 50–88).

[14] Deleuze and Guattari describe the disjunctive synthesis as the "production of recording," by which they mean the production of a network or surface on which differences (rather than fixed identities) are recorded and unexpected new series differentiated (1983, 12).

It is my contention that a disjunctive synthesis of Deleuze and Arab feminism can produce a series of differences otherwise absent or restricted by the exigencies of an Arabo-Islamic milieu. This is in no way to suggest that Deleuzian concepts can miraculously "save" Arab feminism or transform the state of things as they are currently experienced.[15] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has long cautioned against the Eurocentric impulse to save and its implications within colonial and global capitalist contexts (1988, 294–97). Spivak uncovers the imperialist interests structuring the British codification of Hindu Law and reveals how the colonial effort to speak on behalf of subaltern women regarding widow sacrifice in fact works to silence them. Spivak links this colonial obfuscation to more recent tendencies within poststructuralism. Specifically, she analyzes how Deleuze and Michel Foucault's elision of interest in favor of desire ends up disavowing "the role of ideology in reproducing the social relations of production" (274).[16] This disavowal of ideology conveniently masks the extent to which the interests of poststructuralist intellectuals are coextensive with Western international economic interests. Through "an unquestioned valorization of the oppressed as subject"—whether prisoners, workers, soldiers, homosexuals, hospital patients, schoolchildren, or *tiers-monde* nationals—European intellectuals who attempt to disclose the "concrete experience" of such oppressed subjects never have to acknowledge how their own subject positions and work "can help consolidate the international division of labor" (274–75). Against this, Spivak insists on accounting for the "macrological" components of subject formation (279–80).

Spivak's warning remains timely and germane to any disjunctive synthesis of Deleuze and Arab feminism. It must be acknowledged that such a disjunctive synthesis might not produce ideology critiques or sufficient macroeconomic contextualizations for the very reasons Spivak lays bare.[17]

---

[15] It is to suggest, however, that theoretical ideas do travel to new locales and can produce unexpected effects (Said 1983, 226–47). A few of Deleuze's concepts can be put to effective use in relation to some—although certainly not all—of the current knots within Arab feminist discourse.

[16] In fact, Deleuze and Guattari do not ignore interest in their conceptualization of the relationship between power and desire. Rather, they consider "the problem of power . . . not only more complicated than the question of whose interests are being served [but] also poorly formed if it is formulated only in terms of interest because there are many other varieties of power at work besides interest" (Buchanan 2008, 24).

[17] Spivak's assessment of the pitfalls of Deleuze's elision of ideology, representation, and macroeconomics is especially compelling when it comes to any discussion of the viability of Deleuze's concepts in the context of the global South. However, while she concludes "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by disclaiming the usefulness of Deleuze and Foucault when it comes to the problematic of subalternity, representation, and global capitalism, I contend that Deleuze

Nonetheless, what such an encounter can unfold are legitimate experiments connecting Deleuze and Arab feminisms through which other unexpected and useful modalities might be produced. The plane of such experimentation is wide, and any number of divergent paths could be mapped. However, in the remainder of this section I would like to focus on the implications of this disjunctive synthesis for the first three of the four tendencies in Arab feminism identified above. The final section of this essay will address some of the implications of this disjunctive synthesis to the fourth tendency—that is, the relative conservatism of Gulf feminism.

Deleuze and Guattari (1983) posit the following problem previously tackled by both seventeenth-century philosopher Benedict de Spinoza and twentieth-century psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich: "Why do men fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?" (29). How is it, in other words, that we come to desire the very things that oppress us and that diminish our capacities to act? From the perspective of Arab feminism, this is a crucial question that might make it possible to assess why the work of some Arab feminists remains circumscribed by an oftentimes despotic Islamist discourse, why the split between women's activism and feminism is so sharp, why the body remains undertheorized, and why feminists from the Gulf region are comparatively conservative in their approaches. In fact, as we shall see, the question of the body is at the heart of these other issues, and its relative absence in the discourse of the conference and of Arab feminism more generally is telling.

Feminist philosopher Moira Gatens has made a case for the relevance of a Deleuzian-Spinozist theorization of the body to feminism, feminist politics, and ethics (1996a, 95–150).[18] In particular, Deleuze's Spinozist conceptualization of affects provides a singular approach—an approach as yet untapped by Arab feminists (127–36).[19] Spinoza conceptualizes a body in

---

does offer concepts that can be of a different kind of use to feminism generally and to Arab feminism more specifically. For an alternative understanding of the implications of Deleuze and Guattari's conception of interest and desire to historiography and capitalist critique, see Holland (1988).

[18] Spinoza's ideas have been put to inventive use by Western somatic feminists, including Elizabeth Grosz (1994), Genevieve Lloyd (1994), and Moira Gatens (1996a, 1996b), to name three of the most prominent. My Deleuzian-Spinozist argument is especially indebted to Gatens's theoretical interventions. In part for the reasons outlined in this essay, I strongly believe that Arab feminist theory stands to gain from a careful and contextualized engagement with some of the innovative work being done by Spinozist and Deleuzian feminists around the world (see Gatens and Lloyd 1999; Buchanan and Colebrook 2000; Colebrook and Weinstein 2008).

[19] The affective turn in Anglophone feminist and gender studies, as well as cultural studies, parallels the turn toward Deleuze and Guattari in the Anglo-American and Australian acade-

terms of its capacity to affect and to be affected by other bodies—whether human, nonhuman, animal, social, political, economic, collective, religious, conceptual, or any other (Deleuze 1988, 123; Spinoza 1994, 153). As Gatens explains, "A person's capacity to affect and to be affected are not determined solely by the body she or he is but also by everything which makes up the context in which that body is acted upon and acts" (1996a, 131). Insofar as a body is understood in terms of its affective capacity, it cannot be understood as distinct from other bodies, which it is constantly affecting or being affected by. Relations or encounters between bodies result in particular "affections" or mixtures (Spinoza 1994, 188). Affections are what happen to a body directly as a result of any given encounter. Some affections envelop "sad affects" while others envelop "joyful affects," depending on whether they decrease or increase a body's power to act—that is, its affective capacity (160–63). Thus understood, affect is the duration, transition, or lived passage from one affective state to another (154, 188). It is the autonomous space where the potential for change inheres (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 173).

Every encounter between bodies presents an opportunity for transformation. As Deleuze, following Spinoza, puts it, "You do not know beforehand what a body or mind can do, in a given encounter, a given arrangement, a given combination" (1988, 125; Spinoza 1994, 155). This plastic sense of the body is not widely perceived. In fact, most societies are organized around a limited selection of tolerated affects. When such affective orientations become dominant, they construct what Deleuze calls an "image of thought" (1994, 131). In contrast to thought as experimentation or becoming, an image of thought is the kind of thought usually recognized as common or good sense and is often accepted as "true" (131; Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 111). Images of thought are "dogmatic, orthodox or moral" and are often prescriptive and "distorting" (Deleuze 1994, 131–32). Images of thought inevitably limit the proliferation of affects other than those deemed acceptable and, thus, constrict a body's power to act outside the parameters set by dominant institutional bodies such as the state, the mosque, the economy, or the family.[20]

————————

mies in the past two decades. Although not all discussions of affect are Deleuzian (see, e.g., Gandhi 2006), many recent studies and edited anthologies are at the very least strongly influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's work. For a representative selection, see Massumi (2002), Clough (2007), Panagia (2009), Protevi (2009), and Gregg and Seigworth (2010).

[20] Images of thought must not be confused with ideology. Ideology—understood as a system of ideas or imposed images that conceal forms of economic exploitation or social oppression—is generally perceived as a repressive illusion in need of disabuse. Once this occurs, a true, undistorted picture of reality is expected to emerge. The assumption here is that a

Islamic feminists whose work is often directed against fundamentalist Islamist theorizations and practices nonetheless adhere to the same image of thought as the extremists, namely, a version of Islam. Feminists circumscribed by Islamic discourse remain "imprisoned" (Deleuze's term) by the need to conform to recognizable affects, patterns, or *doxa* (Deleuze 1994, 134). Insofar as this is the case, it "bears witness to a disturbing complacency" that ultimately obstructs the body's capacity to multiply its affects and, thus, reduces its power to act (135). In her recent study on the question of the veil, sociologist Marnia Lazreg reveals how the usual arguments made in favor of the veil by Muslim women or Islamic feminists—including "modesty, chastity, protection from sexual harassment, and conviction"—end up reinforcing the empowerment of men over women through "the intimacy of their sexual identity as borne by their bodies" (2009, 128–29). Likewise, a turn to Islamic discourse on the part of Arab Muslim feminists carries with it the incessant danger of inadvertently fortifying at the somatic level those patriarchal structures legitimated in its name.[21] An alternative option for Muslim feminists would be to attempt

---

"true" version of the "real" exists and simply needs to be unmasked. In contrast, images do not conceal anything (Deleuze 1990a, 147; Spinoza 1994, 154, 189; Colebrook 2002, 91–94). Images of thought, if they become dogmatic, may function in ways that seem closely aligned with the notion of ideology mentioned above (Deleuze 1994, 129–35). However, a key difference is that images of thought do not indicate or function as a repressive force, nor do they mask anything. Dominant images of thought signal a collective affective desire to code or to organize life in a particular way, even if that way is functionally oppressive (134). Desire, as Deleuze understands it, lacks nothing (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 26). It is a productive force connecting bodies to increase power—in Spinoza's sense, increasing the capacity to affect and to be affected (Deleuze 1990a, 93–95; Spinoza 1994, 152–54). Decoding dominant images of thought will not reveal any truth or fixed reality. What it can do, however, is open up the potential for different collective affective orientations, alternative connective opportunities for desire, new modes of becoming for bodies, and an intensification of the production of new images (Deleuze 1994, 136–40). I suggest that the affective orientations of some Arab and Muslim feminists might be codified in ways that do not always serve their best interest. Decoding such stratifications will not unmask any definitive solution to recent deadlocks, but it may expand our capacities to feel, to think, and to act in ways not currently recognized or permitted, and this, in turn, might generate progressive change.

[21] Mahmood (2005), in her fine ethnographic study of the urban women's mosque movement in Cairo, questions the "naturalization of freedom as a social ideal" within liberalism and feminism (10). What such discourses assume is "the universality of the desire . . . to be free from relations of subordination and, for women, from structures of male domination" (10). What they elide, however, are "dimensions of human action whose ethical and political status does not map onto the logic of repression and resistance" (14). Examples of the latter forms of action would include "docility," understood as a form of agency under certain conditions, and the "desire for submission to recognized authority" (and not just the desire for freedom) in some cultural and historical contexts (15). Mahmood reads the women's piety movement as

to create new thoughts without image. This does not mean that Arab feminists must disclaim Islam completely in their approaches. In fact, within the context of the Muslim world today, this is not even on the horizon of possibility since, as Iman Hashim argues, any total rejection of Islam on feminist grounds "does not take into account the importance of Islam for women" (1999, 8). However, it does indicate that Islamic feminists ignore the hazards of remaining within religious discourse at their peril. Without unencumbered adventures in thought, Islamic feminists risk consolidating the very oppressions they otherwise so valiantly attempt to challenge (Deleuze 1994, 135).

When it comes to the split between Arab women's rights activists and feminists, a similar difficulty arises. Activists struggle on numerous fronts to overturn laws that disenfranchise women and to confront obstacles affecting women's daily lives. However, as some Arab feminists point out, these campaigns can do little to transform the overarching structures themselves, operating as they do within the codes set in advance by such structures of organization.[22] Just as Islamic feminists share the same image

---

the locus of such overlooked forms of action and desire. In sharp contrast to Lazreg's (2009) argument against the veil that, from Mahmood's perspective, would operate within the terms of a poststructuralist and liberal understanding of subjectivity and agency, Mahmood argues that when it comes to analyzing issues to do with Muslim women—including, but not limited to, veiling—what must be accounted for is "the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated" (2005, 23). On Mahmood's understanding, to conclude that all such bodily acts are signs of enforcement, ignorance, or ideological conditioning is to ignore the different meanings and functions these acts can have in context (23). Insofar as Mahmood's project attempts to account for the affective orientations and embodied subjectivities of women involved in the mosque movement, it resonates with my own Deleuzian-Spinozist project (in fact, she cites Gatens, Grosz, Colebrook, and, in passing, Deleuze in her discussion of affect; 18, 166). However, the political aims of my essay are closer to Lazreg's than to Mahmood's since, as a feminist situated in an Arab Muslim country, my concern is not in effect to challenge the orientalist views of Islam in the West but to confront the oppressive forces affecting Arab and Muslim women's everyday lives in the Arab Muslim world. To the extent that the docility of and desire for submission to authority by women in piety movements and beyond are coextensive with patriarchal norms and structures that affect (often detrimentally) all Arab and Muslim women—even those who do not regard docility and submission as viable forms of agency and subjectivity—they must be accounted for by Arab or Islamic feminists in terms other than or in addition to "agency."

[22] Mervat F. Hatem untangles the complexities of "state feminism" through the example of Egypt. The Egyptian welfare state that developed in the late 1950s and 1960s "offered explicit commitment to public equality for women. It contributed to the development of state feminism as a legal, economic, and ideological strategy to introduce changes to Egyptian society and its gender relations" (2003, 171). By the 1970s and 1980s, however, new state policies "were identified with the development of conservative social, economic, and political systems that were hostile to state activism in general, and state support of women's public

of thought with the extremists they fight against, women's rights activists share the same image of thought with the conservative state formation they attempt to reform. While activists disagree with state authority on the current distribution of rights and freedoms, they do generally agree on the current conception of rights and freedom.[23] However, Arab feminist scholars, despite producing theoretically significant research, are perceived as being disconnected from the everyday lives of the women they write about. In not adhering to the images of thought restricting women's rights activists, such feminist scholars are often left out of political and social alliances and debates.[24]

The split between these two branches of Arab feminism revolves around a specific conception of action.[25] In most cases, action is equated with activism. From a Spinozist perspective, however, action can also be understood as something other than instrumental or practical efficacy. For Spinoza, the power to act has to do with a body's capacity to affect and to be

equality, in particular" (171). This conservative turn in the agenda of state feminism is apparent in other Arab states as well and exposes the urgent need for women "to develop their own representative organizations, which can exert political influence in support of their gendered agendas" (192). Similarly, Al-Mughni addresses the pitfalls and paradoxes of state-sponsored women's organizations in Kuwait and their role in "consolidating the patriarchal foundations of Kuwaiti society" (1993, 138).

[23] Deniz Kandiyoti (2001) posits that a different set of questions must be posed regarding women's citizenship rights. It cannot automatically be assumed that "the state or civil society constitute appropriate arenas for the articulation of more gender-equitable notions of citizenship" (56). Kandiyoti argues that "analyzing the emergent institutional forms that political societies might take is absolutely crucial to a discussion of women and citizenship" (58). Keeping the understanding of women's rights, citizenship, and freedom open and under constant evaluation can help belie claims made by state power or other forms of political power (religious, tribalist, communalist, etc.) in the name of women's interests. For a discussion of Islamic human rights formulations, see Mayer (1999).

[24] While activists may find the theoretical work of feminists far removed from the political struggle for rights, ordinary women, especially those who are rural, poor, or working class, likely find the work of both groups (if they are even aware of it) removed from and perhaps irrelevant to their own daily struggles. Needless to say, class divisions between women are at the heart of women's lack of political and social solidarity in the Middle East and elsewhere. Perhaps in part because of this fracture, Islamists have managed to spread their influence among women of the lower classes, providing social support and economic assistance where both the state and women's groups have failed to (Azzam 1996, 221). On the link between class division, dependent capitalism, and the rise of Islamism, see Sharabi (1988).

[25] Implicit in this understanding of action is a qualitative distinction between theory, on the one hand, and practice, on the other. This normative opposition aligns theory with idealism and practice with materialism. However, Deleuze's conception of action is based on a Spinozist rather than a Cartesian notion of materiality. Thus understood, the differences between theory and practice are monistic differences in degree rather than hierarchical differences in kind (Deleuze 1990a, 155–86). For a discussion of this version of materiality, see Al-Nakib (2008).

affected. Affects, as mentioned above, are often constrained by images of thought. The more our affective capacity is limited by images of thought, the more "passive" or reactive our actions are because we have an "inadequate idea" of the compositional relations of our own affective experiences (Spinoza 1994, 134–36). Instead of tracing the myriad determinations that force us to feel, think, and act the way we do, we resort to standard images of thought to explain our sensibility and our actions to ourselves and others. This reactive tendency restricts acts to passions. Spinoza defines passions as affects of which we are only a partial cause and about which we have only an inadequate idea. Passions are affects that "spring from the external encounter with other modes of existence"—that is to say, other bodies—and are "explained by the nature of the affecting body and by the necessarily inadequate idea of that body, a confused image involved in our state" (Deleuze 1988, 50). Despite their inadequate causation, however, some passions ("joyful passions") can still increase our power to act, even as other passions ("sad passions") decrease it (Spinoza 1994, 160–61).

However, actions grounded in an "adequate" comprehension of life (including ourselves) as immanent or self-caused are less reactive (Spinoza 1994, 100; Gatens 1996b, 164–67). The greater our comprehension of the compositional relations of our affections—and for the monist Spinoza, understanding is always already corporeal, never abstract—the more aware we become of ourselves (and of life) as infinitely variable. When the determinations of a body's affections are adequately understood, a body begins to recognize that, in fact, it is ultimately the cause of its own affections (Deleuze 1990a, 151). The affect enveloped within this rare realization is active rather than passive because it induces creative thinking instead of relying on a string of habituated images of thought (Spinoza 1994, 154).

The difference between active and passive affects is a difference in degree rather than kind since even a passive or reactive body can be said to be acting its reaction (Deleuze 1983, 111–12). From this Deleuzian-Spinozist perspective, both women's rights activists and feminist scholars can be understood as active to a lesser and greater degree, respectively. Activists who engage molar or hegemonic structures of organization must, to a certain extent, remain reactive, even if their engagement is oppositional and progressive. Feminist scholars whose theoretical research is more attentive to the way such activism often gets reassimilated by the very structures it attempts to transform embody a less reactive affect. Their work unfolds the possibility of alternative, unmapped becomings for Arab women. A disjunctive synthesis of the work of women's rights activists and feminist theorists can, perhaps, help demonstrate how both forms of action are not only necessary for change but are, in fact, coextensive. Without an ade-

quate genealogical consideration of how women have come to feel that certain discourses and rhetorics provide their only options, Arab women's rights activists (and Islamic feminists) will continue to react to immediate conditions of oppression without addressing the wider forces that structure their reactive affects and perpetuate the oppression itself. But without the rights and freedoms activists have worked and continue to work so hard to extend to women (from access to education to entry into the political system), feminists might not have developed the capacity to perceive, feel, and think the way they do. Instead of reducing the situation to a contradictory logic of either/or, as is currently the case, women's rights activists and feminist theorists together—understood as embodying different degrees rather than kinds of action—can multiply the potential for change on more than one front at a time (either . . . or . . . or).

I would like to turn, finally, to the state of feminism in the Gulf, which can be viewed as a terrain on which the three tendencies already discussed converge. Gulf feminists tend to employ conservative approaches when compared with Arab feminists in the rest of the region and in the West.[26] This was evident at the Beirut conference and applies to Gulf feminism in general. In Kuwait, for example, despite the fact that women enjoy more liberties than in other Gulf states, many forms of discrimination—including physical and sexual abuse, lack of physical and sexual autonomy, lack of intellectual and religious freedom, among others—go unrecognized. Yet both Islamic feminists and women's rights activists remain generally apathetic toward these other forms of repression, even as they work toward expanding women's political rights. Paradoxically, in fact, the increase in women's rights over the last decade seems to have reinforced rather than dislodged Kuwaiti women's apathy regarding other forms of oppression. In the remainder of this article, I will attempt to unpack this perplexing affect of apathy prevalent among Kuwaiti women regarding conditions that perpetuate their corporeal disadvantage. What applies to the relatively liberal state of Kuwait is generalizable to other more conservative Gulf countries.

The case of Kuwait

In May 2009, during the run-up to the parliamentary election in Kuwait, an incident occurred involving candidate Aseel Al-Awadhi, a philosophy

---

[26] For a discussion of the status of Gulf women and the constraints of Islamic law, see Fakhro (1996). Munira Fakhro's own position is reformist, advocating "a formula that combines modernity and the essence of Islamic teachings" (261). Her view is representative of the more progressive Gulf feminists.

professor at Kuwait University. A recording was posted on YouTube titled, "Fadyhat Aseel Al-Awadhi" (The Aseel Al-Awadhi Scandal). It was a cut-and-paste job of a few of Al-Awadhi's lectures to an all-women class on critical thinking. A medical student made the recording, although it is not clear who posted it on YouTube. In one of the segments, Al-Awadhi is heard stating that the *hijab* (veil) is not meant for all women, that it was only intended for the prophet's wives. She mentions the relevant Qur'anic *aya* (verse) and discusses the conditions of its revelation. Al-Awadhi remarks that we are not wives of the prophet and that the situation is different today.

This YouTube video made the rounds. Al-Awadhi responded to the overblown situation in a discussion also posted on YouTube. First, she explains the context of her statements: a class on critical thinking where students learn to address all sides of any argument and to argue their positions logically. She states that she never gives her opinion on a subject but presents different sides of arguments to allow students to come to their own conclusions. Al-Awadhi explains that while she teaches criticism, not shari'a, the critical process tends to consolidate and enhance religious faith. She says that the point she made about *hijab* is a well-known interpretation of the *aya*. Al-Awadhi proclaims that the way the recording was put together made it seem like she was against *hijab*. She emphatically asserts that just because she does not wear the *hijab* herself does not mean her faith can be questioned. She adds that her mother, family members, and closest friends all wear the *hijab*. Al-Awadhi concludes that the reason she decided to respond to this attack was because there was doubt cast against her religious faith, which she will not tolerate.

That Al-Awadhi went on to win a parliamentary position in 2009 was, in some ways, an irrefutable victory for women. Along with the three other women elected to the National Assembly of Kuwait for the first time, Al-Awadhi's historic achievement can be read as a marker of Kuwait's relatively progressive stance toward women's rights. The political right to vote and to stand for parliamentary election was won in 2005. Since then, women have voted and run for parliament in four elections. In recent years, Kuwaiti women have been appointed ministers, members of the municipal council, ambassadors, and president of Kuwait University, among numerous other positions. Kuwaiti women make up 44 percent of the workforce and 70 percent of the students at Kuwait University. They are academics, teachers, scientists, doctors, nurses, lawyers, journalists, CEOs, entrepreneurs, bankers, and so on. They have the right to drive, to travel, and to wear whatever they choose. The outcome of the May 2009 parlia-

mentary election—four women elected, fewer tribal and Islamist candi-
dates, more liberal candidates—seemed to suggest that the active strug-
gle for women's freedoms was both paying off and gaining momentum.
Al-Awadhi's success in particular, despite the strategically timed and reli-
giously inflected attack against her, seemed to be a hopeful sign of change
in what has become, since the late 1980s, a highly orthodox and conserva-
tive social milieu.[27]

Nonetheless, I would argue that Al-Awadhi's response to the scandal
and her subsequent success expose another less obvious problem. On the
one hand, her articulate explanation of critical thinking and her laudable
championing of tolerance toward minority perspectives expressed a pro-
gressive position. Her election by the second largest majority of voters in her
district seemed to suggest that a chunk of the population supported her liberal
views.[28] On the other hand, Al-Awadhi's response to the attack did not simply
rely on a lucid definition of critical thought. A major component of her
defense involved using religion to validate her innocence.[29] The question I
would like to pose is, what does her recourse to religious discourse reveal
about the affective constitution of Kuwaiti women when it comes to their
freedom?

A number of the Deleuzian-Spinozist insights summarized above—
including the conception of the body in terms of its affective capacities, the
notion of active and passive affects, adequate and inadequate ideas, as well
as images of thought—can be of use here. From Spinoza's perspective, the
move from passive to active affects, which corresponds to the move from
inadequate to adequate ideas, is a step toward freedom. Unlike the common
image of freedom, which relies on a Cartesian conception of individual
subjectivity and free will, freedom for Spinoza is a matter of adequately un-
derstanding our own specific historical determinations of affects and ex-

---

[27] The outcome of the February 2012 election—no women elected, fewer liberal candi-
dates, an Islamist-tribal coalition majority—has dampened most of the optimism regarding
women's rights generated in 2009. For a brief summary and early analysis of the 2012 election
results, see Okruhlik (2012).

[28] Although Al-Awadhi ran for parliament again in 2012, she failed to win back her seat,
indicating that those who voted for her in 2009 may have been supporting something other
than her liberal views.

[29] It makes no difference whether Al-Awadhi's religious defense was sincere—and there is
no reason to doubt that it was—or politically motivated. My aim is to analyze what her re-
course to religious discourse reveals about the affective constitution of Kuwaiti women. That
her response was prompted by the anticipated reactive affects and images of thought of her
constituency suggests that she is not the cause of her own affections and actions. My argu-
ment is that in the long term such constraints will affect Kuwaiti women's lives negatively.

istence and then maximizing the sorts of encounters that increase our capacity to act and to live (i.e., to preserve being; Spinoza 1994, 212).[30] Such ways of acting and being cannot be predicted in advance, but generally the impetus will be to act in ways that are good rather than bad for us. For Spinoza, good and bad are not moralistic judgments. They have to do with whether an encounter increases or decreases a body's power or affective capacity (204). Eating a poison apple is bad not because the act of eating it is sinful or evil but because the poison will harm or kill you and, thus, decrease your affective capacity and your capacity to preserve your being (210). Helping the poor is good not on account of some transcendental promise but because it increases the power or affective capacities of the social body and, ipso facto, your own (128). Because Spinoza's project is an ethics or ethology, freedom entails action that increases the power of all bodies at all times and not simply those of a select few—for example, men, heterosexuals, able-bodied adults, Muslims, and so on—at a particular time.

Deleuze reads Spinoza's *Ethics* as an ethology (1988, 27, 125). On Deleuze's understanding, ethology is not a matter of defining animals and humans in terms of "the abstract notions of genus and species" but, rather, "by a capacity for being affected, by the affections of which they are 'capable'" (27). As stated, ethics as ethology, unlike conventional morality, does not judge behavior as right or wrong or good or evil, nor does it judge people and life on the basis of what they should be. Instead, Spinoza's ethics as ethology assesses our capacities to exist and considers what we might be capable of doing to increase our powers of living (by increasing joyful passions and actions through good encounters). Whereas morality judges life from the fixed perspective of transcendent laws or codes, ethics views life as constantly becoming something new, an ongoing experiment whose outcome cannot be predicted in advance. Realistically, a wholesale shift from moralism to ethics does not seem likely in the Arab Muslim world in our lifetime. However, an ethological perspective at least might provide Arab feminists with a constructive discourse through which to analyze how dominant, moralistic images of thought have badly affected marginalized bodies. Such an assessment might constitute a first step toward changing affective orientations if not the conditions of their production.

To return to the Al-Awadhi YouTube scandal, in the encounter between, on the one hand, the student who decides to tape Al-Awadhi's lectures and, on the other, the critical and secular ideas Al-Awadhi presents in

---

[30] For a discussion of why a shift away from Cartesian dualism is beneficial to feminism, see Grosz (1994, 6–24); see also Gatens (1996a, 49–59, 109–13). For an analysis of Spinoza's rejection of Cartesian free will and what relevance this might have to a reconceptualization of individual and collective responsibility, see Gatens and Lloyd (1999, 58–83).

class, the student is badly affected, and her capacity to act in ways that increase joyful passions or actions is diminished. The student's knee-jerk response, constricted by religious or, perhaps, familial or tribal images of thought, prevents her from encountering the lecture contents as anything other than scandalous, sinful, or evil. Or, rather more cynically, her reactive response may have been prompted by an economic image of thought registering a golden opportunity to make some money by selling the tapes to anyone interested in damaging Al-Awadhi's political chances. Both the young student and whoever posted the recording on YouTube were banking on the sad passions of a society ordered by religious images of thought; that is to say, they were banking on their society's uncritical and reactive affections.

They were, at least in part, wrong, as Al-Awadhi's success in the 2009 election attests. A large majority of voters apparently used adequate ideas to reject images of thought that might have restricted their affective responses. They transformed a potentially bad encounter into a good one—one that, for a couple of years anyway, increased the body politic's affective capacities and ontological powers by joining it with a kind of body historically excluded (i.e., female). This transition was no doubt an expression of joyful affects. However, joyful affects remain passions, according to Spinoza, and it is uncertain to what extent Al-Awadhi was voted into office as a result of truly adequate thinking and free action.

In fact, Al-Awadhi's response references the same dogmatic images of thought the student and her coconspirators took for granted. While Al-Awadhi begins her defense with a strong account of critical thinking that appears aligned with Spinoza's notion of adequate ideas and free action, it turns out that such critical thought is of value primarily to consolidate religious faith.[31] Al-Awadhi's recourse to her religious credentials ends up reinforcing the same orthodox images of thought that have kept women out of politics and discriminated against. If it was, in fact, this turn to religion that won her the vote in 2009 (and her loss in the 2012 parliamentary elec-

---

[31] On Spinoza's understanding, religious faith cannot be reconciled with adequate ideas (read: critical thinking). Faith requires an unquestioned acceptance of signs taken for wonders or miracles (Spinoza 1994, 34–40). Moral laws and dictates based on a univocal misreading of such signs have tended, historically speaking, to follow (40–41). In contrast, critical thinking provokes a thorough and ongoing analysis of signs (religious or otherwise) from a variety of perspectives, including linguistic, philological, intertextual, contextual, and historical (41–44). While Spinoza does not exactly reject religion wholesale, he does conceptualize a radically different version of it, one that is less superstitious, less oppressive, and based on actively rational thought rather than passively obedient faith. That Spinoza was excommunicated in 1656 by the Portuguese Synagogue at Amsterdam reveals something of the threat his version of religious thinking posed (and continues to pose) to any rigidly orthodox establishment.

tion suggests that it may well have been), then Al-Awadhi's success was less a sign of freedom for women than it was a marker of their sad passions.

Apathy is one such sad passion. While there has always been a strong group of women actively fighting for their rights in Kuwait, they form only a small minority of the population; most are members of government-sponsored women's organizations.[32] Such organizations have, for the most part, focused on the issue of political rights, failing to tackle the other less obvious but far more insidious forms of discrimination against women mentioned earlier. Although the issue of women's social and family rights is currently gaining prominence, it remains a minor concern at both the national level and among women generally; other forms of discrimination are even less engaged. Sociologist Haya Al-Mughni has attributed this "depressing state of inertia" to Kuwaiti women's embeddedness in the patriarchal system of *ashira* (familial and tribal groups) on which the state itself is built (1993, 142). She adds that religious revivalism has not done much to change the general apathy toward women's issues.[33] Complacency can also be attributed to the relative wealth of the Kuwaiti population, which seems to blunt critical awareness of oppression and the impetus for social and political change (142; Katulis 2005, 13).

For Al-Mughni, with whom I agree, class, family, and religious divisions prevent the kind of feminist solidarity needed to transform the social body wholesale (1993, 144). What is essential, I would suggest, is an affective—not just political, social, or economic—transformation of apathy to uncir-

[32] For an insightful study of women's organizations in Kuwait, see Al-Mughni (1993). Al-Mughni is especially attentive to issues of class, kinship, and religion in her groundbreaking analysis.

[33] In sharp contrast to Mahmood's (2005) assessment of piety within the Egyptian mosque movement as a form of agency, Al-Mughni reads the recent turn to religion as a form of either escapism or superficial power for politically, socially, or economically disenfranchised Kuwaiti women (1993, 120, 142). From Al-Mughni's perspective, this turn will not, ultimately, benefit women's political or personal lives since "what the Muslim revivalists wanted . . . was not simply to exclude women from the world of politics and organized labour. They also wanted to restore the absolute authority of men which the women's movement had threatened to disrupt" (119). Helen Mary Rizzo (2005) has examined the effect of Islamic revivalism on women's organizations and the struggle for women's democratic rights in Kuwait. Contrary to Al-Mughni's position regarding the effects of religion on women's rights in Kuwait, Rizzo's study concludes that "Islam is not inherently incompatible with democratization, gender equality and the development of civil society" (93). She states that her "findings support the growing literature that secularization at the individual level is not necessary for the modernization and democratization processes" (94). While this may be the case in the short term, I would contend that without careful critical engagement at the affective level, an automatic recourse to religion (or any dogmatic image of thought) can become as hindering as it might be initially helpful.

cumscribed action. The kind of freedom expressed by enfranchisement and the election of women to parliament remains, paradoxically, a limiting image of freedom.[34] Such an image may reinforce rather than subvert Kuwaiti women's apathetic affective orientations by falsely signaling the end of women's disenfranchisement.[35] This would be a bad interpretation, one based on an inadequate understanding of how the material conditions of women's oppression have not actually changed at all and will not until women begin to actively recognize and engage its fundamental causes, such as class, kinship, and orthodox religious practice. The transition between Al-Awadhi's defense of critical thinking and her defense of her religious belief provided an opportunity to shift affective orientation—that is, to create a new way of thinking and feeling about *hijab*, women's bodies, and much else—that was quickly rerouted back to the familiar, restrictive images of thought organizing life in Kuwait and much of the Arab and Muslim world. Rather than opening up a discussion about how critical thought is good for any society, Al-Awadhi's defense resorted to proving that critical thought did not break any moral codes and was ultimately aligned with faith.[36]

Morality relies on restricting thought, action, and being within codes of judgment gilded with the sheen of irrefutable truth, codes generally unfavorable to women, homosexuals, and other minorities. Women in the Arab world have much to lose by going along with such images of thought. As Arab feminists, it behooves us to shift our affective orientation toward an ethics or ethology rather than a codified morality that excludes versions of

[34] Gatens identifies a similar and related paradox: "The effects of women's historical exclusion from citizenship do not vanish once women are enfranchised. There is a multiplicity of embodied habits, customs and laws that continue to bear the scars of that exclusion. The removal of formal bars to women's sociopolitical representation does not amount to full participation in legal and political institutions, since those institutions have histories that continue to function in ways that deplete women's powers of action" (1996a, 141).

[35] In fact, after the 2009 election, a CNN headline announced: "Woman Elected in Kuwait Says Gender in Politics Is 'History'" (2009). The article quotes Al-Awadhi's remarks after the election regarding the perceived sense in Kuwait that attitudes toward women in politics were changing. She states, "Even before the results, people were piling up to congratulate me either from my own district or from other districts. I think that shows you the tremendous amount of support for women's role in politics. And I think today I can confidently say that [the] gender issue is history in Kuwait—I mean, regarding women's role in politics." Al-Awadhi's understandably optimistic pronouncement was widely felt and expressed throughout Kuwait in the aftermath of the 2009 election results. My sense—confirmed by the 2012 election results—is that such triumphalism is decidedly premature.

[36] While critical thought can help to consolidate faith for some, this may not be true for all. However, the orthodox image of thought determining the affective orientation of most

freedom disavowed by the dominant image of thought. Ethics does not judge bodies or actions on the basis of fixed laws or assumed truths but assesses encounters, events, people, or ideas on the basis of the extent to which they increase or decrease our capacity to live and to act productively. Ethics relies on thought, knowledge, and ongoing analysis; it presumes life to be open to constant modification.[37]

All this may seem terribly impractical when it comes to feminist political action. From a certain perspective, it is. On such a view, Al-Awadhi's religious response was the more practical one; it got her into office, and that will help make Kuwait a less oppressive place for women. However, in the long run, an ethological feminism may prove to be the more practical option—where practicality is not automatically equated with instrumental practice or activism but with the kinds of affective changes that can transform how we feel about our lives. If kept within the bounds of activism, action will lead only to a certain version of freedom—one that has dominated Arab feminism for the last sixty years and that has still not changed the material conditions that perpetuate oppression at the somatic and social levels. If, however, action is understood as a reorientation of affects on the basis of a careful understanding of the conditions that structure not only our social, political, and economic position in the world but our feelings as well, then other unconsidered forms of freedom can be affirmed. This latter orientation might make it possible for Kuwaiti women to begin to consider how their apathy over entrenched forms of ongoing discrimination is a by-product of the very freedoms they have won and, thus, to recognize that these freedoms are nowhere near enough. To ignore the possibilities of a feminist ethics is to remain enslaved by images of thought that separate us from our infinite power to multiply joyful af-

---

people in Kuwait—as the Al-Awadhi event helps illustrate—will not tolerate the unpredictable outcome of critical and adequate thought not aligned with dominant values. It is my contention that a careful account of how our affective orientations are determined (historically, discursively, politically, economically, culturally, etc.) might trigger a transvaluation of at least some currently dominant values, potentially opening up a small, safe place for untimely feminist practice. On the possibilities of the untimely, see Deleuze (1983, 107). For a challenging discussion of critique and its conventional link to the secular within European discourse, see Asad et al. (2009). In their respective essays, Talal Asad (2009) and Saba Mahmood (2009) both question the Eurocentric assumptions that undergird this connection and expose the orientalist judgments based on it (through their separate readings of the 2005 Danish cartoon incident). While both Asad's and Mahmood's impetus is toward a critique of Euro-American frameworks and responses, my own is toward a critique of Arab and Muslim ones.

[37] For a selection of recent essays exploring the ethical dimension of Deleuze's philosophy, see Jun and Smith (2011).

fects, to be less reactive and, therefore, more open to what life in this part of the world might become. Insofar as a disjunctive synthesis of Deleuze and Arab feminism produces this expanded sense of what counts as action by accounting for the body as affective capacity—an account otherwise absent from Arab feminisms—it is, I believe, about time for it.

Department of English Language and Literature
Kuwait University

References

Abu-Lughod, Lila, ed. 1998. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ahmed, Leila. 1992. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Al-Hassan Golley, Nawar. 2004. "Is Feminism Relevant to Arab Women?" *Third World Quarterly* 25(3):521–36.

Ali, Kecia. 2006. *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith and Jurisprudence*. Oxford: Oneworld.

Al-Mughni, Haya. 1993. *Women in Kuwait: The Politics of Gender*. London: Saqi.

Al-Nakib, Mai. 2008. "Negotiating Materiality in Postcolonial Studies." *Arab Journal for the Humanities* 26(101):233–46.

Asad, Talal. 2009. "Free Speech, Blasphemy, and Secular Criticism." In Asad et al. 2009, 20–63.

Asad, Talal, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood. 2009. *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Azzam, Maha. 1996. "Gender and the Politics of Religion in the Middle East." In *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani, 217–30. Reading: Ithaca.

Babayan, Kathryn, and Afsaneh Najmabadi, eds. 2008. *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire*. Cambridge, MA: Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University.

Badran, Margot. 2001. "Understanding Islam, Islamism, and Islamic Feminism." *Journal of Women's History* 13(1):47–52.

Barlas, Asma. 2002. *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Buchanan, Ian. 2008. *Deleuze and Guattari's "Anti-Oedipus": A Reader's Guide*. London: Continuum.

Buchanan, Ian, and Claire Colebrook, eds. 2000. *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Clough, Patricia Tincineto, ed. 2007. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. With Jean Halley. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

CNN. 2009. "Woman Elected in Kuwait Says Gender in Politics Is 'History.'" CNN, May 17. http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/05/17/kuwait.women.elections/.

Colebrook, Claire. 2002. *Gilles Deleuze.* London: Routledge.

Colebrook, Claire, and Jami Weinstein, eds. 2008. *Deleuze and Gender.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Cooke, Miriam. 2001. *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism through Literature.* New York: Routledge.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1983. *Nietzsche and Philosophy.* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 1988. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy.* Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights.

———. 1990a. *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza.* Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Zone.

———. 1990b. *The Logic of Sense.* Trans. Mark Lester. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 1994. *Difference and Repetition.* Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1983. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 1994. *What Is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press.

Djebar, Assia. 1994. *Far from Madina.* Trans. Dorothy S. Blair. London: Quartet.

El-Nimr, Raga'. 1996. "Women in Islamic Law." In *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani, 87–102. Reading: Ithaca.

El-Rouayheb, Khaled. 2005. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fakhro, Munira. 1996. "Gulf Women and Islamic Law." In *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani, 251–62. Reading: Ithaca.

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

Gatens, Moira. 1996a. *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power, and Corporeality.* London: Routledge.

———. 1996b. "Through a Spinozist Lens: Ethology, Difference, Power." In *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton, 162–87. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gatens, Moira, and Genevieve Lloyd. 1999. *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present.* London: Routledge.

Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. 2010. *The Affect Theory Reader.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Grosz, Elizabeth. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Habib, Samar. 2007. *Female Homosexuality in the Middle East: Histories and Representations.* New York: Routledge.

————, ed. 2010. *Islam and Homosexuality*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Hashim, Iman. 1999. "Reconciling Islam and Feminism." *Gender and Development* 7(1):7–14.

Hatem, Mervat F. 2003. "Economic and Political Liberalization in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism." In Sabbagh 2003, 171–93.

Holland, Eugene. 1988. "Schizoanalysis: The Postmodern Contextualization of Psychoanalysis." In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 405–16. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

————. 1999. *Deleuze and Guattari's "Anti-Oedipus": Introduction to Schizoanalysis*. London: Routledge.

Joseph, Suad, ed. 2000. *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Jun, Nathan, and Daniel W. Smith, eds. 2011. *Deleuze and Ethics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Kandiyoti, Deniz, ed. 1991. *Women, Islam, and the State*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

————. 2001. "The Politics of Gender and the Conundrums of Citizenship." In *Women and Power in the Middle East*, ed. Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics, 52–58. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Karmi, Ghada. 1996. "Women, Islam, and Patriarchalism." In *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani, 69–85. Reading: Ithaca.

Katulis, Brian. 2005. "Women's Rights in Focus: Kuwait." Report. Freedom House, Washington, DC.

Kugle, Scott Siraj al-Haqq. 2010. *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflections on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims*. Oxford: Oneworld.

Lazreg, Marnia. 2009. *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lloyd, Genevieve. 1994. *Part of Nature: Self-Knowledge in Spinoza's "Ethics."* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

————. 2009. "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?" In Asad et al. 2009, 64–100.

Makdisi, Jean Said. 2009. "'Women's Rights' and Feminist Thought." Paper presented at the Arab Feminisms: A Critical Perspective conference, Lebanese Association of Women Researchers, Beirut, October 4–7.

Massad, Joseph A. 2007. *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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

Mayer, Ann Elizabeth. 1999. *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Mernissi, Fatima. 1991. *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*. Trans. Mary Jo Lakeland. Cambridge, MA: Perseus.

————. 1997. *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*. Trans. Mary Jo Lakeland. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. 1996. "Stretching the Limits: A Feminist Reading of the Sha-ri'a in Post-Khomeini Iran." In *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani, 285–319. Reading: Ithaca.

Murray, Stephen O., and Will Roscoe, eds. 1997. *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature*. New York: New York University Press.

Okruhlik, Gwenn. 2012. "The Identity Politics of Kuwait's Election." *Foreign Policy*, February 8. http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/02/08/the_identity_politics_of_kuwait_s_election/.

Panagia, Davide. 2009. *The Political Life of Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Protevi, John. 2009. *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Rizzo, Helen Mary. 2005. *Islam, Democracy, and the Status of Women: The Case of Kuwait*. New York: Routledge.

Sabbagh, Suha, ed. 2003. *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint*. New York: Olive Branch.

Said, Edward W. 1983. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Saliba, Therese. 2000. "Arab Feminism at the Millennium." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 25(4):1087–92.

Sharabi, Hisham. 1988. *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Spinoza, Benedict de. 1994. *A Spinoza Reader: The "Ethics" and Other Works*. Ed. and trans. Edwin Curley. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271–313. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Wadud, Amina. 1999. *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2006. *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*. Oxford: Oneworld.