Sara Mourad

Egypt's Nude Blogger: Sexuality, Citizenship, and Arab Body Politics

Abstract:

In November 2011, Alia, a young Egyptian blogger, posted a nude picture of herself - wearing nothing but thigh-high black stockings and red patent leather shoes - on her blog “Diary of a Rebel.” The photograph triggered uproar in Egypt, received 1.5 million hits within a week of its posting, and drew condemnations from conservatives and liberals alike in the weeks leading up to the first post-Mubarak elections. How was Alia’s nudity framed by Arab mainstream public opinion? And how was it framed by Alia herself? This paper addresses these questions through an analysis of 60 articles from the Arab mainstream press and 20 posts from the Arab blogosphere. My research suggests that mainstream Arab media framed Alia’s nudity as “merely cultural” and “simply Western.” Ultimately, such a rhetorical framing of a woman’s naked body needs to be analyzed within the redefinition of dissent and political agency -its forms, channels, and actors- in the contemporary Arab public sphere.