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Rationale
The publication of the *Journal of Applied Language and Culture Studies* (JALCS) was one of the main objectives behind the establishment of the Applied Language and Culture Studies Lab based at Chouaib Doukkali University in El Jadida, Morocco. The journal grew out of the need to provide a forum for the ALCS Lab members and doctoral students as well as other Moroccan and international researchers to publish stimulating, well-written, and scientifically rigorous peer-reviewed articles on topics relevant to the broad fields of applied language and culture research. As a platform for the dissemination and discussion of research based on both new and fundamental approaches to applied language and culture studies, the journal aspires to become a beneficial influence on the academic community in Morocco and beyond.

Aims and Scope
*JALCS* is an outgrowth of the activities of Applied Language and Culture Studies Lab. The great interest shown in the activities of the ALCS Lab have pointed to a need for a scientific journal. By starting *JALCS*, we hope to disseminate cutting-edge research that explores the interrelationship between language, culture and translation. *JALCS* hopes to be an annual, peer-reviewed journal publishing high-quality, original and state-of-the-art articles that may be theoretical or empirical in orientation and that advance our understanding of the intricate relationship between language, culture and translation. In addition to research papers on any linguistic, cultural and translation topic, *JALCS* intends to publish squibs and book reviews. The working language of the journal is English, but papers and other contributions can also be published in other languages. The Journal is expected to appear both in print and online as an open access publication.

Topics of interest to *JALCS* include, but are not limited to the following:

1. **Applied Language Studies**
   - Core Linguistics (Phonetics, Phonology, Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics, Etc.)
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2. **Culture Studies**
   - Literary and Postcolonial Studies
   - Cross-Cultural Studies
   - Gender Studies
   - Cultural Translation (Ethnography)

3. **Translation Studies**
   - Specialized Translation
   - Terminology and Lexicography

*JALCS* can be accessed at https://revues.imist.ma/index.php?journal=JALCS

The views expressed in *JALCS* do not necessarily reflect those of the "Applied Language and Culture Studies Laboratory"
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Introduction

Raja Rhouni
Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco

In a globalized world dominated by a neoliberal and imperial/patriarchal logic, an increasing number of women around the world are made vulnerable to violence substantiated and perpetuated in inequities that often result from an intersection of economic, political and social discriminations. Since the late 1990s, violence against women (VAW) has emerged as the site of activism and international resolutions, forcing many states to commit to take steps towards its elimination. The United Nations proclaimed in 1993 the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women which came to strengthen other resolutions like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) voted in 1979. The instruments of international human rights have been valuable for feminist organizations around the world in their advocacy for laws and policies that address VAW. However, they have also proven to be a limited and easily accommodated

1 The editors of the present issue of JALCS would like to express their gratitude to all the people that participated in the realization of this project. Thanks are due to all the authors in this volume for their contributions, especially those who responded positively to our invitation. It was a great pleasure working with each one of you. Special thanks go to our distinguished anonymous reviewers who generously accepted to take the time and effort to review the manuscripts and share their thoughts and suggestions with our contributors. We also would like to express our thanks to Professor Mohamed Yeou, the director of the JALCS, and Professor Reddad Erguig, the deputy director, for their professionalism and valuable collaboration throughout this process. A special word of thanks goes to our colleague Professor Benzehaf for his kind co-operation in the final stages of editing this volume. We also appreciate the help of all the lab members. Last but not least, we would like to express our profound gratitude to Professor Abdelaziz Boudlal for his encouragement from the very beginning of this process and to Professor Abdelkader Sabil for his support throughout these years.
framework in an age of neoliberalism, serving to obscure both international and local economic and financial structural violence, in addition to justify large scale military aggression. Within the prevalent human rights discourse, social and economic equity is thus often downplayed in favor of individual human rights, leaving vulnerable groups of women and their communities exposed to dispossession. It is within this political and economic context and the hegemonic human rights discourse that the concept of VAW is produced and deployed.

Morocco is no exception to this global scenario. In spite of the importance of the instruments of human rights for advocating for more rights for women, the neoliberal framework of human rights and VAW seems to prevail. Morocco is one of the United Nations state parties which have committed to international resolutions on women’s human rights and the elimination of VAW. Since the beginning of the 1990s, feminist organizations have campaigned to pressure the state to ratify CEDAW and to adjust local legislations to its standards. The 2004 reforms of the Moudawana and the issuing of a new family code are seen as one of the first strides towards this goal. More recently, Law 103-13 on combating VAW in Morocco was promulgated in February 2018, more than a decade after the Moroccan government first declared its commitment to issue a law of this kind. The national survey on the prevalence of VAW conducted in 2009 by the Office of the High Commissioner for Planning had revealed that 62.8% of women aged 18-64 were victims of violence. Law 103-13 in addition to recent amendments to the Penal Code and the Constitution are seen by human rights and feminist organizations as a positive move, though they insist the reforms remain below their expectations.

However, in spite of the importance of the voiced grievances regarding Law 103-13, the prevalent discourse tends to overplay unequal legislations, and often conceives violence as primarily the result of patriarchal culture, or the physical manifestations of male dominance. Aspects of structural violence such as the economic policies of the neoliberal state and their intersections with gender are not given adequate attention and consideration. The same shortcoming is manifest in many academic works on the issue, which, in spite of their value, usually study VAW through the sole prism of male violence, women’s victimization, religious extremism and lack of
gender equality.² It is this one-dimensional cultural and legalistic paradigm that the present volume seeks to remedy. The idea of this collective volume is to approach VAW as a complex phenomenon with multiple dimensions that foreground the intersection of patriarchal power relations with economic and political relations. As Karen Rignall, in this volume, expresses it, “The task is not to refute the operations of patriarchy in the violence experienced by women (...) but to put patriarchy in dynamic relation with other systems of oppression.”

This second issue of the JALCS addresses the theme of VAW in the context of Morocco, using an interdisciplinary approach. It seeks to both ponder the discourse on VAW and explore the nature of the violence, its different manifestations and the conditions that lead to its reproduction whether in law, media, culture, or in economic and political state policies. As stated before, another aim of the volume is to contribute to the expansion of the concept of VAW from the very often narrow meaning of patriarchal, cultural and legal violence, or male perpetrated violence on women’s bodies, to a more comprehensive meaning that integrates both embodied and structural violence and their intersections.

² See the review of this literature in Silvia Gagliardi’s article (2017) “Violence against Women: the Stark Reality behind Morocco’s Human Rights Progress.” Gagliardi’s study on VAW is illuminating and its insights very much relevant to the present volume’s concerns. Gagliardi interrogates the state’s celebratory narratives regarding progress made in human rights, or its “hagiographic discourse” on women’s rights and gender equality. It also sheds light on the discrepancy between women’s rights organizations’ discourse on VAW and the lived experiences and needs of ordinary women on VAW. She argues that women’s rights’ over-emphasis on legal reforms and gender equality has left the existing power structures producing inequality in Morocco uncontested, which suggests their cooptation by the state. Legal reforms, although undeniably important, she argues, are not identified by the rural and lower class urban women of her ethnography to be the primary solution to VAW. Gagliardi concludes that “without a ‘vernacularisation’ of women’s rights and frameworks and, more importantly, a grassroots understanding for women’s explanations for, and justifications of, VAW in their own communities, any reform in this area will continue to be perceived as undemocratic, exogenous or even as merely useless” (p.17). Gagliardi, S. (2017). Violence against women: The stark reality behind Morocco’s human rights progress. The Journal of North African Studies, 23(4), 569–590. DOI:10.1080/13629387.2017.1363649
To reverse the usual order of things and subvert the prevailing analytical frame, the first articles which appear in this volume address aspects of structural violence. Karen Rignall’s essay “Is Rurality a Form of Gender-Based Violence?” interrogates the hegemonic discourse on women living in rural areas, which posits that it is rurality itself, or the fact of inhabiting the countryside, where repressive traditions and conservative religious norms prevail as is stereotypically presumed, which are the root causes of women’s subordination, marginalization and even violence perpetrated against them. This analysis obscures how this situation is the outcome of complex relations and processes. Rignall’s paper puts the marginalization of rural zones and the dispossession women (and men) suffer from in a historical and political context. It sheds light on the way women’s marginalization is the outcome of specific structural and political processes ranging from colonial policies, national polity, global labor markets and networks of capital accumulation and dispossession. Using ethnography and an interrogation of statistical indicators, the paper seeks to show how gender disparities are structural rather than simply cultural. Rignall calls for a “new feminism” or new feminist analysis which adopts an intersectional approach that examines gender-based structural violence such as that experienced by rural women through a broader lens of social justice, one that also takes rural women’s priorities and actions seriously.

The second article by Ismail Frouini and Brahim Benmoh, titled “The Incarcerated Female Subject(ivity): Resisting Gendered Trauma” addresses the issue of state violence and women’s agency in Moroccan female prison literature. Frouini and Benmoh discuss the issue of gender, trauma and resistance within the Moroccan prison apparatuses during the “Years of Lead” (1956-1999). The paper analyzes female prison writings and testimonials, such as Fatna El Bouih’s Talk of Darkness (2008), Khadija Marouazi’s The Biography of Ash (2000) and Malika Oufkir’s Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail (2001). Using a postcolonial and trauma theory, the paper seeks to present these writings as a form of resistance to “epistemic violence,” as foregrounding a feminist/political consciousness, and as a significant contribution to Moroccan postcolonial feminist theorizing.
On a related theme, Brahim El Guabli’s “Gender-Unaware History: Ordinary Women as the Forgotten of Moroccan Historiography of the Present” reflects upon the issue of history writing and gender in the aftermath of the Years of Lead, with a special focus on ordinary women’s testimonials and their treatment by contemporary academic historians. The article revisits Moroccan historiography at a particular time of “post-reconciliation” period within the space opened up by the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (ERC) in January 2004, when historians were reflecting on the meaning of history-writing post-1999. It specifically examines the historians’ discussions around the concept of “tārīkh al-zaman al-rāhin,” or “histoire du temps present” (history of the present), through a gender lens. The article also discusses some ordinary women's moving testimonies and narratives about their experiences of state violence, their agency and their journey towards empowerment. El Guabli argues that despite the existence of the women’s narratives, “predominant Moroccan historiography of al-zaman al-rāhin has failed to take women into account both as victims of state violence and history makers during the Years of Lead.” This silence on women’s suffering and contribution to the fight against authoritarianism reflects the ERC’s lack of a gender-conscious vision of the equity and reconciliation process, which does not only diminish women’s historical roles, but also “lays the ground for the repetition of violence.” The objective of this critique is to contribute to the conceptualization of a more “inclusive and gender-conscious” history, which is critical to any project that genuinely aims to prevent future violence and to bring about real social change.

On another register, Hanane Darhour and Ginger Feather’s papers explore the legal aspects of VAW. Darhour’s “The Impact of CEDAW’s Global Norms on GBV Legislation in Morocco” investigates, as the title suggests, the different ways the ratification of the CEDAW impacted Moroccan legislations. The article focuses on an examination of the 2011 Constitution and the 2018 VAW law, shedding light on their legal ambiguities and loopholes. Darhour uses a methodology which combines a content analysis of Moroccan legislations with interviews with feminists and political activists. She concludes that the internalization of CEDAWs norms, mainly gender equality, in the Moroccan legal structure “remains of evolutionary
nature” since it is largely dependent on domestic dynamics and political compromises.

Ginger Feather’s article “Legal Discrimination and Violence against Women: Analyzed through a Feminist Lens Using the Advocacy Coalition Framework” is equally critical of Morocco’s legislations which do not align with international norms. Feather analyzes the impact of discriminatory Moroccan laws on VAW. Using the analytical framework of Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) from public policy, the article examines the way feminist and religious women’s organizations compete with each other and may cooperate along “core and secondary beliefs.” This study is based on in-depth interviews and focus groups with more than 200 stakeholders across twenty Moroccan cities from 2013-2018. The study includes people ranging from women’s and human rights associations, VAW listening centers, overnight shelters, and violence victims as well as members of the judiciary. The sampling aimed at including voices from across the Moroccan political spectrum, namely, secularists, socialists, progressive Muslim feminists, and conservative Islamic associations. This inclusive perspective, Feather argues, reflects the complex Moroccan social fabric which illuminates the challenges to, as well as the potential for, cooperation and consensus-building in the process of fighting VAW in Morocco.

Mohammed Derdar’s “Sexual Harassment against Waitresses in Morocco: The Case Study of El Jadida” addresses the issue of sexual harassment against waitresses in cafés in the city of El Jadida, as the title indicates. The study utilizes a qualitative data collected from cafés based on 25 interviews, including waitresses, male café clients, and café managers. The objective of the study is to analyze the nature and proportion of sexual harassment against waitresses, to explore the socio-economic structures which contribute to its production, and to shed light on the attitudes of the victims and the perpetrators. Finally, the aim of Derdar’s study is to contribute to subverting the taken for granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations which reproduce, normalize and sustain sexual harassment in the workplace.

Valerie Orlando’s article titled “Depicting and Documenting Violence against Women in the Contemporary Counter-Narratives of Moroccan Film” opens the section devoted to the media and VAW. Orlando
argues that Moroccan films and documentaries made in the last decade represent an effective medium to challenge the State’s “hagiography” and the hegemonic state narrative of exceptionalism, which often inflated the progress made in recent years in terms of women’s sociocultural, political and economic enfranchisement. Analyzing Nadir Bouhmouch’s documentary “475” (2013) and the fiction film, “Much Loved” (2015) by Nabil Ayouch, Orlando argues that these films serve to set the record straight on VAW in Morocco.

Ouidyane Elouardaoui’s “Romanticizing Rape in the Turkish TV Series Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? and The Female Moroccan Fans” analyzes Moroccan audience’s attitude to rape in the Turkish series Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? [What is Fatmagul’s Fault?] (Kanal D, 2010), known by the title of Fatma. The series narrates the psychological and social sufferings of Fatma, a village girl who was gang raped by four men, a few days before her wedding date, and who ended up eventually marrying one of the men involved in the rape act. Elouardaoui uses a close textual analysis of the narrative to explore the different meanings the series evokes in Moroccan audience using an analysis of Facebook fan pages and YouTube videos about the series. The paper concludes that the series serves not only the normalization of rape, but also its romanticization among Moroccan female viewers.

Ayoub Loutfi’s article “Exploring the Discursive Construction of Rape in Morocco: A Critical Discourse Analysis” further explores the representation of rape in Moroccan culture in social media platforms. Loutfi analyzes three recent rape cases and the reactions they received from Moroccans on Facebook and YouTube. The paper analyzes the language used in depicting the victims or the perpetrators. The data confirm the prevalence of victim-blaming typical of traditional norms which hold women responsible for men’s actions and sexual aggression. Loutfi argues that the discursive strategies revealed by the study indicate the way the female victims are subjected to another form of assault- verbal violence- in social media.

Finally, Moha Ennaji’s paper “Reflections on the Role of New Media in the Prevention of Violence against Women” ends this volume with a more optimistic note. Ennaji argues that the new media have the potential to improve women’s lives and gender relations, and promote
social change. The paper addresses VAW in Morocco and its different manifestations whether in the private sphere or in the public realm. Ennaji begins his study by a brief overview of Morocco’s international human rights commitments. He then looks at the political, legal, economic, and social status of women in Morocco, which serves as a background for his analysis of VAW perpetrated by male intimate partners as well as by the state. Finally, the author discusses the prevalent and positive use of the internet and social media, especially among the young female generation. Ennaji maintains that using modern technology and new media to debate VAW and exchange experiences whether among the youth or the human rights organizations is indispensable in raising awareness on violence and its consequences.

To conclude, this volume is dedicated to the memory of Professor Fouzia Rhissassi, who left us too soon, and who edited (together with Abderrazak Moulay Rchid) the first collective book on violence against women (in 2003). We wish that the present volume supplement the early questions and concerns of her volume and incite future research to further examine the interlocking structures and complex power relations producing violence against women in Morocco.
Is Rurality a Form of Gender-Based Violence in Morocco?

Karen E. Rignall

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Abstract

This essay addresses the conceptual question of how we understand gendered forms of social suffering in rural Morocco. In asking whether the fact of living in a rural area is at the root of women’s experience of discrimination, I examine the dominant frames commonly used to interpret disparate health, educational, and other development indicators. Rather than assume rurality represents a repressive social context that produces these disparate outcomes because of tradition, custom, or religion, this essay contextualizes the marginalization of rural zones in Morocco. It offers a critical account of how rural areas came to occupy a structurally marginalized position in the national polity, global labor markets, and networks of capital accumulation. This position is structural in its durability and in the ways its seeming inevitability normalizes cultural explanations for gender disparities and poverty more generally. The essay uses ethnography and an interrogation of statistical indicators to suggest how a “new feminism” might explain gendered, structural violence in Morocco’s southeast.

Keywords: Gender, rurality, structural violence, Morocco

0. Introduction

One cold January evening in 2014, I was watching the evening television line-up on 2M with Lalla Fadma, in the home she shared with
Moulay Brahim in a new district of Kelaa Mgouna, a market town at the base of the Mgoun Valley in Tinghir Province. We had waited later than usual to eat dinner because Moulay Brahim had been out all day on urgent business as member of the municipal council and still had not returned. I had rented a room from the family while I worked on a research project in the Mgoun Valley to document household land ownership, livelihood strategies, and migration histories. The project was survey-based but I had been doing anthropological fieldwork in the valley since 2010 and each and every interaction offered an opportunity to think through issues I was encountering in the more ‘formal’ parts of the research. Moulay Brahim returned that evening with a weary expression. “Did you hear what happened today?” he asked, his facial expressions indicating an expectation that I should have known. “About that American who died?” I had not heard. An older American man and his adult daughter had been rock climbing with a guide in one of the smaller gorges of the valley when the man had fallen. It was a serious fall and his daughter, traumatized, demanded to know why he was not taken to medical care more quickly. Why was there not an ambulance, or better yet, an airlift, that could take him to a trauma care facility? She did not know, perhaps could not have known, that the nearest hospital was in Ouarzazate, over two hours away, while the highest level of trauma care would only have been available in Marrakech, over five hours away by road. There was no airlift. Moulay Brahim explained to me that the only ambulance in that upper reach of the valley, a converted Land Rover, was not available at the time because it was taking a woman with labor complications to give birth in the same hospital in Ouarzazate that would have received the tourist. Local residents scrambled to arrange informal transit for the accident victim but the tourist died nonetheless. I never heard what happened to the woman in labor.

Many of the women who end up in those ambulances in the rural southeast do, in fact, die or see their infants die because of labor complications and other risk factors. Maternal, infant, and child mortality rates in rural Morocco are notoriously high and one reason why the country earns a relatively low ranking in the UNDP human development index (HDI) given Morocco’s status as a middle-income country: Morocco ranks 123 on the HDI, just below Kyrgyzstan and just above Nicaragua (United Nations Development Program [UNDP],
Aware of rural women’s disproportionately low economic, health, and educational attainment, various ministries have adopted programs to reduce gender disparities. They have made progress, but I was reminded of the stubborn persistence of the problem that evening in Moulay Brahim’s home. Members of the municipal council urgently came to the aid of the American family—understandable given the tragedy that befell them far from their home—while the structural violence that the woman in the ambulance faced was broadly recognized as a reality of life. To be sure, council members regularly came to the aid of many people, especially pregnant women, requiring urgent care but there was a normality to those cases. The American expectation of timely, effective care was not applicable to the Moroccan woman, whose access to that ambulance ride to the regional capital was an improvement on just a few years before, when no one expected an ambulance to serve the remote areas of the valley. In fact, a hospital that should have handled her high-risk labor had officially opened in Kelaa Mgouna that same year. It could not, however, receive patients because it lacked the equipment and doctors to become functional. Sections of the hospital have come online in the half-decade since this incident, but the violence that woman experienced joins the everyday violence of marginalization to remain a banality of rural life.

The global inequalities that became clear that day of the tourist’s fall and the Mgouni woman’s labor complications are usually expressed in indicators separating “high”, “middle” and “low” income countries. These comparative statistics do not, however, explain the reasons for women’s social suffering nor how they experience this suffering as an everyday reality. The fact that rural women in Morocco - and elsewhere - suffer from disproportionately high levels of illiteracy and other forms of dispossession can easily lead to a naturalized explanation: that rurality itself represents a form of gender-based violence. It is the fact of living in a rural area, where infrastructure is inadequate and “tradition” devalues women, that is at the root of their poorer outcomes? In another essay, Berriane and I (2017) explore this question in the context of gendered access to collective lands, arguing that assumptions about tradition and patriarchy blame “custom” for

1 Though many Americans do not, of course, have such an expectation either, given the marked social inequalities and health disparities in the United States - but it would have been an expectation for a family with the means to travel to Morocco.
Moroccan women’s exclusion from communal land rights, ignoring the ways in which French colonial property law and dispossession helped to codify customary law as exclusionary. The analytic challenge is to historicize law, custom, and practice as situated in relations of power that are simultaneously historically-rooted and modern. Gendered forms of domination cannot, therefore, be traced to an essential cultural trait but have to be located at the intersection of relations that cut-across gender to include other forms of dispossession as well. This is particularly important in the Middle East and North Africa because, as Ennaji and Sadiqi (2011, p. 2) note, “the dominant paradigm of research on gender-based violence in MENA region is that of the victimized Muslim women and their male oppressors on the basis of culture and religion…the impact of gendered political, social, and economic power on gender-based violence is seldom addressed, and so is the role of the State in banning or punishing violence against women.” The task is not to refute the operations of patriarchy in the violence experienced by women in the region but to put patriarchy in dynamic relation with other systems of oppression.

This essay extends that analysis to resist the explanation of rurality as essential to gender-based structural violence. Such an explanation obscures critical accounts of how rural areas came to occupy structurally marginalized positions in their national polities, global labor markets, and networks of capital accumulation. These positions are structural in their durability and in the way their seeming inevitability normalizes cultural explanations for gender disparities and poverty more generally. Such explanations may acknowledge the role of the Moroccan state or historical disinvestment in the rural periphery, but they often also foreground timeless notions of tradition, patriarchy, and religion in a way that diffuses critical analysis of structural violence. Here, I follow Farmer’s (2004, p. 307) definition of structural violence, one that built on existing debates within and outside of anthropology, especially among the liberation theologians of Latin America who described the “‘sinful’ social structures characterized by poverty and steep grades of social inequality.” Farmer’s account (2011, p. 307) has since been critiqued and extended but his definition has a striking power and clarity: “violence exerted systematically—that is, indirectly—by everyone who belongs to a certain social order.” The concept moves away from pinning blame on individuals for specific
acts of violence, though those acts may still play a role, to focus on the “social machinery of oppression” (Farmer, 2011, p. 307). This social machinery works at diverse temporal and spatial scales; violence is not always a set of discrete acts with immediate and visible consequences but can unfold slowly, in ways that render that social machinery invisible and obscure the lines of causality (Nixon, 2013). The structural violence I document in southeastern Morocco grows out of historically-situated and material practices that have rendered aspects of rural life disproportionately dangerous or difficult for women. By examining women not apart from men, but as embedded in gendered relations of inequality that include men in intersectional forms of dispossession, we can better understand the causes and consequences of structural violence in Morocco’s rural areas.\(^2\) This intersectional approach to structural violence assigns responsibility not to geography or abstract concepts such as “tradition” or “Islamic patriarchy” but to a matrix of power, of which patriarchy is but one vector of inequality or domination.

This analysis also builds on Salime’s (2012) account, in another context, of the “new feminism” taking shape in contemporary Morocco. She offers a preliminary analysis of the surprising and fluid gender dynamics of the young people spearheading Morocco’s February 20\(^{th}\) movement—a “territorial shift from the traditional spaces identified feminism in Morocco” that moved from the orthodoxy of largely urban women’s organizations often allied with the state to performative feminist subjectivities espousing broader projects for equality and social justice (Salime, 2012, p. 103). Her account of new forms of political organization taking shape in the February 20\(^{th}\) Movement is relevant beyond that movement’s eventual successes or failures. Could her identification of new feminist mobilizations also extend to a new feminist analysis in Morocco? This analysis would push beyond “the usual feminist rhetoric of ‘equality’ before the law” to consider broader understandings of discrimination as embedded in practice—a phenomenological experience—and at the same time situated at the intersection of diverse social positions (Salime, 2012, p. 105). This analysis would not hold up statistics that isolate women as an object of

\(^{2}\) I limit my analysis more specifically to the rural southeast where I conducted my research in an effort not to generalize across Morocco’s heterogeneous rural spaces.
analysis and policy in comparing their status to other women around the globe. Rather, it would consider women as relational and agentive subjects who are embedded in broader networks of power and sociality and at the same time, derive their senses of self and meaning from those networks. If, in Salime’s research with young Moroccan activists, the new feminism treats the question of gender equality as “too narrow to encompass the general goal of social justice that includes men and women” (2012, p. 105), then a new feminist analysis would also consider gender-based structural violence such as that experienced by rural women through a broader lens of social justice. This, in turn, brings a critical eye to the discourse of gender and development, whereby women are empowered by more powerful institutions and actors, including urban or elite feminist associations. However, accounting for the complex social environment in which women live and express their own agency involves more than adopting participatory approaches or elevating women’s voices. A meaningful acceptance of women’s agency, especially in analyzing women’s lives in the rural southeast, acknowledges that there is more than one way to assert the project of gender-based equity in rural zones, and that such discursive openness must take women’s desires, priorities, and actions seriously.

In what follows, I counterpose a statistical understanding of the gendered dimensions of structural violence in the valley where I conducted my research to an intersectional analysis, mapping out a “new feminist” approach to structural violence in Morocco’s rural southeast.

1. Statistical Measures

Statistics matter. They are the language of power, policy, and economic representation and they do describe an important reality, if a partial one. Broadly speaking, women and girls experience infrastructure, economic opportunities, educational and health services, and other aspects of rural life differently from men, boys, and urban residents generally. The differences appear throughout statistical indices of human and economic development, from traditional income and poverty levels to new approaches to multidimensional poverty. I found this in my own survey work in the Mgoun Valley of Tinghir Province. In 2014-2015 and in partnership with a local network of civil society organizations, we conducted a survey of over 300 households across 18 communities documenting income, asset, and livelihood profiles of households over
a fifty-year period. This survey provided a quantitative portrait that complemented 12 continuous months of qualitative fieldwork in 2010 centered on participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews, and extended case studies of households in three rural communities in the Mgoun Valley. Each year since 2010, I have returned on average a month each year for follow up research, the household survey, and new research on natural resource management and other resource access issues. Our findings dovetailed with national human development indicators: in our sample, women and girls had illiteracy rates of 45% percent as compared to men and boys (18% percent). We also documented almost no wage earning on the part of women, who nonetheless participated in all aspects of agricultural production and various other forms of labor. Few, however, had their work remunerated in wage form, though as I discuss later, this statistic does not capture the complexity of women’s labor force participation. The objective of our household survey was not to examine gendered disparities, but they nonetheless emerged as an affirmation of national data.

On the whole, women in Morocco experience significantly higher illiteracy rates, in large part because of rural disparities in educational attainment: overall illiteracy is 42% for women and 22% for men, but Table 1 shows the role of rural disparities in the breadth of these gaps. While 98% of rural girls (compared to 99% of rural boys) were enrolled in primary school in 2015-2016, that number dropped to 33% for collège and 10% for secondary school (compared to 35% for rural boys and 78% for urban girls/70% for urban boys at the college level, and 9% for rural boys and 54% for urban girls/ 43% for urban boys) (Royaume du Maroc, 2017, p. 46).

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Men</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>18.8</td>
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<td>Rural</td>
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Maternal mortality in 2015-2016 was 111 deaths per 100 thousand live births in rural areas as compared to 45 deaths for urban women.
a striking disparity that reflects the relatively low levels of medical assistance at birth. The woman I heard about that day in Kelaa did end up having an assisted birth, but only 55% of rural women do, in comparison to 91% of urban women (Royaume du Maroc, 2017, p. 16). Women have lower labor force participation and when they do participate in the formal labor force, have significantly higher unemployment rates than men and urban women, though I will explore the problems with describing women’s labor using these formal statistical definitions (Royaume du Maroc, 2017, pp. 60, 72). The rise to prominence of the Soulaliyate movement has drawn attention to disparate experiences of land ownership and by extension, women’s control over productive assets and wealth. There are no reliable statistics on women’s land ownership and such a statistic would be suspect given the ways the country’s complex collective and individual tenure systems prevent women from accessing rights to land; when they do have a right to land, actualizing these rights in the face of family pressure or economic marginalization can be difficult and even dangerous.

The gender gaps I have outlined have persisted despite Morocco’s longstanding status as a middle-income country, with official recognition that rural-urban inequality is at the root of the country’s low HDI performance. The response has been a concerted and well-publicized series of government initiatives to address rural investment and infrastructural issues, from the rural electrification program begun in the 1990s that, according to official pronouncements, has achieved nearly universal coverage to systematic efforts to address barriers to girls’ school attendance. This includes constructing latrines (many rural schools have historically lacked toilet facilities) and dormitories to enable girls to attend middle school. Contemporary programs such as the Ramid insurance program attempt to make healthcare more accessible to the rural poor while Taysir provides payments to families in targeted communes as long as their children attend school. Though

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3 See Berriane and Ait Mous (2016) and Berriane (2015) especially for understanding the economic and political stakes of the Soulalyiate movement.
4 Though rural residents I interviewed in my ethnographic research described a more uneven result, as many were unable to afford electricity or found coverage to be inadequate.
these payments are for both male and female children, they are seen as having a particularly important impact on girls’ school attendance.

These policies have yielded results, with trends showing improved rural literacy and health outcomes overall and reduced gaps between men and women and urban and rural areas; these trends are visible in the comparative results of the Statistical Directorate’s report on women’s development indicators cited above (Royaume du Maroc, 2017). Government interventions have followed international best practices, the suite of programs supported by international finance institutions and development agencies. The programs tend to be conceptually simple, if not practically complex, to implement: payments to families, building bathrooms in elementary schools, extending credit to women. And they follow the now accepted orthodoxy that investing in women and girls yields the highest dividends for development overall, an orthodoxy enshrined in the World Bank’s analysis of gender equity as “smart economics” and even in corporate social responsibility programs such as Nike’s campaign “The Girl Effect” (Boyd, 2016). But it is also important to understand these statistics in the broader context of rural-urban disparities. It is not simply being a woman that deepens vulnerability but living in rural areas full stop—all genders in rural Morocco have lower outcomes in key human development indictors. Thus, infant and child mortality rates in 2010 were higher for rural boys than rural girls but both are over 10 percentage points higher than urban children (Royaume du Maroc, 2017, p. 14). Similarly, the statistic above about educational attainment shows a marked drop off in school attendance for both boys and girls at the collège and secondary school levels. What is it about living in rural areas that produces these disparate experiences between rural and urban children for both boys and girls? How might we conceive of structural violence in rural zones as being gendered for all people—experienced through the prism of gender in a way that affects everyone, if we conceive of their experiences as structural violence at all? How might we see the fact of rurality as ambivalent, not simply negatively affecting women but having positive and negative dimensions for both men and women?
3. Historicizing Inequality in Morocco’s Rural Southeast through an Intersectional Lens

The mountain plateaus and steep valleys of the High Atlas, the southern and eastern oases, and the steppe of the arid plains seem inevitably underserved by infrastructure by virtue of their geography: difficult and often remote terrain. However, a historical account of how and why modern government services are distributed in the way they are needs to be located in an analysis of colonial—and then post-colonial—political and economic imperatives. Investment programs that build schools and health centers are an essential part of the solution to rural disparities and the structural violence of poverty, but they are not addressing the root of these disparities. The issue is not so much that rural Moroccans are excluded from full participation in Morocco’s economy and polity but that they are quite explicitly integrated in unequal ways. This form of integration extends to colonial policies that were encapsulated in the French colonial framework of *le Maroc utile*, the littoral plains and axis from Fes through Rabat, Casablanca and the Haouz that became the object of French interest because it was conducive to settler expropriation and commercialized agriculture (Hoisington, 1995). Many parts of *Le Maroc inutile*—the high mountains, southern oases, and outlying steppe—only received road construction to the extent that it facilitated submission to French military rule (Ait Hamza, 1993). The problem with this dichotomy as it has been taken up in contemporary scholarship is that it can downplay how these ostensibly *inutile* areas of Morocco *did* become an object of policy and integration into the larger dynamics of a rapidly changing capitalist economy. Diana Davis, Hsain Ilahiane, and others describe how policies restricting the mobility of extensive pastoralists destroyed the livelihoods and ecological relationships that maintained mountain societies and environments (Davis, 2007; Ilahiane, 1999). By rendering these populations immobile, French policy assured a flexible, urban labor force that could serve industrializing aspirations and colonial agribusiness, though this rural exodus also caused substantial political alarm about how to manage the restive urban poor and their rural hometowns (Montagne, 1952). In this historical context, disparities in levels of state investment are not simply a by-product of the littoral’s economic dynamism or proximity to population centers. Rather, the disparities reflect the importance of infrastructure as “one of major
vectors for organization of society by the state,” a means of narrowing and directing the inclusion of rural populations in Morocco’s larger political economy along certain channels: as low-paid migrant labor, for example (Rodgers & O’Neill, 2012). The rural south has historically been marginalized, especially in terms of the infrastructure that would assure public services and education into the post-independence period. But it was not excluded: men and women alike felt the ramifying effects of an integration predicated on the dismantling or reconfiguration of their livelihoods.

The geography of rural dispossession varied tremendously from the foothills of the Saiss, which had the agricultural potential to attract foreign investment and land expropriation, to the rural southeast where I conduct my research. There, populations were seen as a labor reservoir for construction sites and commercial agricultural operations because low levels of formal education placed migrants on the lowest rung of the urban waged-labor force. All these forms of dispossession are, however, gendered by their very nature. Labor outmigration from the southeast oases began in the colonial period as chronic drought compounded the effects of Protectorate policy limiting local livelihoods. The men who left rarely took their families, shifting the gender dynamics of the remaining household in complicated ways. Households in the Mgoun valley remain largely patrilocal and patrilineal, with brothers or fathers who stay in the tamazirt (homeland) retaining primary decision-making power over farming, livelihoods, and household affairs. The existence of these gendered disparities should not obscure their changing dynamics over time or the affective costs for men who, for 2-3 generations now, have had to leave their home in order to provide for their family. In my ethnographic work on these long-term migration dynamics, I learned how men experience their manual labor in urban construction sites throughout Morocco and for the lucky few, in industrial Europe, as absence and longing. The costs for women are also complex in a migration economy that has reconfigured family life even as it enables households to remain in their rural homeland. Katherine Hoffman describes the burden of temara, the

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5 This process has been described by numerous scholars and memorialized in popular memory throughout Morocco’s rural migrant sending areas. In Rignall 2015 I place these developments in the context of shifting politics of hierarchy and agricultural production; see also Ilahiane 2001.
hard work of agriculture and social reproduction for women in the Souss who are nostalgically assigned the role of maintaining *Ishelhi* (Amazigh) identity by men who have long worked in the cities (Hoffman, 2008). Women may find their workloads increase not necessarily because men have left them to do their work—in the Mgoun valley, agricultural tasks tend to be gendered and male tasks are often covered by men who have stayed or by hired in-day labor—but because migration remittances fund land acquisition and an expansion of farming. Women therefore have larger holdings to work and more tasks throughout the agricultural calendar. At the same time, I knew the daughters of migrants who enjoyed better access to education and better nutrition; they were aware of the relative privilege afforded by their family’s livelihood security even as they experienced new burdens or responsibilities because of their migration experience.

The changes in rural gender dynamics as a result of this uneven integration into Moroccan and global labor markets have therefore had ambivalent effects. A colonial development framework that directed investment towards capital accumulation for the few has persisted into the post-independence period, suppressing historically important rural livelihoods, expropriating land, and neglecting investment in public services and infrastructure. At the same time, migration to the coal mines of France and Holland in the 1960s and to urban Morocco disrupted historical relations of domination based on race and indentured sharecropping; numerous scholars have described this racialized system and the ways in which modern citizenship and labor mobility have undermined those hierarchies.⁶ New forms of upward social mobility have opened for historically-repressed populations in the south. Migration has also enabled households to reinvest in their homes and livelihoods, at least in the Mgoun valley, where new forms of agricultural production are creating local markets for farmers and

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⁶ Historically, sharecropping constituted the dominant social relation framing agriculture and political representation in the sedentary communities in the oases: only free, landowning *Imazighen* (free men; sing. Amazigh) enjoyed the right of political representation, while sharecroppers, who were often categorized as racially black, suffered from political and economic exclusion. The scholarship on Morocco’s complex racial dynamics (Jacques-Meunié, 1958; Ennaji, 1994; Ensel, 1999; Ilahiane, 2001, 2004) has recently been enriched by Chouki el Hamel’s work on slavery, race, and Islam in Morocco (2013).
remittances help support “rural urbanization,” as new economic activities bring growth to small and medium market towns (de Haas, 2006). I argue, though, that it remains important to frame even these positive changes in larger terms of structural violence because of the persistent disparities in the human development indicators presented earlier. In and of themselves, statistics may tell us little about the reasons for continuing marginalization of the rural southeast, but residents articulate their experiences very clearly in terms of lack of government investment in the social and physical infrastructure that would enable them to develop their tamazirt in ways that are meaningful and effective for them. A bridge over the Mgoun river, for example, would enable villages outside of Kelaa Mgouna to send their girls to collège and would allow women to give birth in the health center more easily. A working maternity in a full-service hospital would be best, but even the pared down health center is out of reach of many. One woman I came to know well nearly died in labor because flash flooding prevented her from reaching the medical center even though it was only a kilometer away. The bridge had been washed out. That same bridge would also enable households to bring their produce to market more efficiently and in the process, strengthen agricultural livelihoods (Rignall, 2015). These improvements are one important step to addressing priorities rural residents themselves have put forth.

However, infrastructural investments do not alone resolve a historical legacy of marginalization. They are easily compartmentalized into cost-benefit analyses that focus on one aspect of gendered disparity while obscuring the complex relationship between infrastructure, political participation (how projects are geographically situated usually reflects local power dynamics not actual need), and the broader context for rural livelihoods and economic possibility. Thus, school latrine construction might yield an identifiable increase in girls’ school attendance for a time but might not address the broader structural barriers to girl’s continuing education because of limited livelihood opportunities for both men and women. Narrow interventions that address only one dimension of gendered disparities are still important, of course, but they do not necessarily address what about those disparities is both structural

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7 This not uniformly true as Hoffman describes different outcomes for the Souss, where men of working age are usually absent from their rural villages (2002 and 2008).
and violent. As Nixon notes (2013, p. 40), “slow violence involves more than a perceptual problem created by the gap between destructive policies and practices”—in this case, a colonial and post-independence legacy of disinvestment in the rural southeast—and their deferred, invisible consequences…[it] also provides prevaricative cover for forces who profit most from inaction.” In my research, I have seen both civil society activists and residents who do not consider themselves activists point to the links between a political system that does not include the rural poor, unequal patterns of investment, and a resulting disparity in economic opportunities and political voice.

4. Reinterpreting the Structural Violence of Rural Morocco

This account of structural violence challenges unmoored concepts of tradition, patriarchy, or religion as causes of gendered social suffering to attend to the historically-situated and political processes that determine how resources and power are distributed in Morocco. However, this account can fall into the same trap as the statistical representations critiqued earlier. In emphasizing the structural violence at the root of gendered disparities, those disparities should not be taken to represent the entirety of women’s or men’s experiences. Statistics that encapsulate gender equity in a few indicators of women’s status tend to isolate women as individual or monadic subjects who can be considered apart from their social identities. When they are represented in the statistical discourse of human development as social beings they are done so as “women and children,” instrumental vehicles for the development of children or the well-being of the family (Enloe, 2014). However, neither women nor men can be dissociated from the complex web of sociality that marks their identities, social positions, and livelihoods. Concepts that are reduced to single statistics, such as women’s landownership or wage earnings, become more difficult to grasp when understood in this broader social context. Landholdings, for example, are managed and transferred in households with multiple interests and centers of power. Modes of transferring and controlling assets such as land are not a static mechanism for repressing women but have provided different opportunities for negotiation depending on the juridical and social context, as Hoffman has shown in her analysis of Berber courts during the colonial era (Hoffman, 2010). My contemporary ethnographic work has shown that a woman in a household with large landholdings may not have her own property but
effectively control agricultural production and transmission of that property depending on her status within that household. If she is a younger wife of a younger son, she may have no voice; if she is the matriarch whose husband passed away, she may direct the affairs of her sons, as I witnessed in one influential family in the Mgoun Valley. Conversely, a household with little land may also produce disparate outcomes for what is commonly termed “gender empowerment:” the senior woman in that household may have inherited what little land she has but finds her autonomy isolating rather than empowering because she does not have access to adequate land or the labor to work it. Access to land and labor is arguably more important for women’s status or livelihood security than formal ownership because they are embedded in fundamentally social networks of production, reciprocity, and care.

Considering gendered experiences of rural life as fundamentally social, then, opens up new perspectives for interpreting the relationship between rurality and structural violence. Rather than representing an exorable component of that violence, rurality can signify possibility—a site for the production of meaning and social support. To illustrate, we can return to the statistics cited above about women’s low labor force participation and wage-earning capacity. Most development analysts would quickly recognize that these statistical formulations do not capture of the complexity of rural work or social reproduction; on farms everywhere around the world there is rarely a clear separation between formal work and family life. However, my ethnographic research in the oasis fields and homes of the Mgoun Valley indicated the extent to which women’s participation in agricultural production and other economic activities is rendered invisible by formal statistical categories (Rignall, 2016). The vast majority of women in the valley participate in agricultural production and although that participation may be invisible to the Ministry of Agriculture’s data collection, it is not socially invisible in the valley. Women do, in fact, receive wages, sometimes in cash but more usually in-kind (in the form of a portion of the harvest), when they work the fields of relatives or patrons in their villages. They may control more economic activities and cash than openly acknowledged because they often remain quiet about their earnings in an effort to sustain their own autonomy over those resources (autonomy that may not be “individual” but may involve discrete coordination with
other members of their family, male and female). Their extensive networks of social reciprocity—working on others’ fields and receiving support on their own—are not divorced from men’s gendered roles in agricultural production but usually coordinated with them. These relations mean that their households sustain webs of social support, a form of insurance that acknowledges the state itself will not provide any safety net for the area’s marginalized residents. These relations also provide a strong sense of meaning to women who understand their subjectivities as fundamentally social, linked with their identities as wives, daughters, and mothers.

If Salime’s (2012, p. 105) interlocutors in the February 20th movement saw of the notion of gender equality as “too narrow to encompass the general goal of social justice that includes men and women,” so, too, might the women I encountered in southeastern Morocco understand gender as a fundamentally relational identity linked to the broader social position of their family and community. They may not espouse notions of gender typical of the feminists who came of age in an earlier era—the more elite, state-allied feminists to whom Salime refers—but their notions may be intelligible to the social movement feminists who more openly strive to entertain diverse subject positions in constructing their inclusive sense of social justice. I had many conversations with young and older women alike committed to learning to read: for them, reading was about being able to access the holy Qur’an directly, not only to ensure better educational and health outcomes for their children. I encountered women who valued their contribution to their family’s well-being as they looked for support to open their own day care facilities in the village or take on a waged job in the market town. However, they did not articulate their aspirations primarily or exclusively in terms of individual self-fulfillment, the guiding framework for gender and development discourse, but rather in terms of their socially-embedded identities as members of families, lineages and a rural Tamazirt.

5. What Might Gender Equity Look like in Rural Morocco?

In other scholarly debates in which I participate, rurality is celebrated as an affirmation of solidarity against the iniquities of capitalist accumulation and as a platform for land and food sovereignty. Women are leaders in or otherwise actively participate in movements such as
the celebrated Via Campesina or the Chipko movement in India. Yet, rurality can often acquire a different valence in the gender and development discourse that guides international development programs, official ministry initiatives, and many feminist discussions of rural women’s status. In focusing on rural women’s “lacks” - their lower level of health, educational attainment, and economic autonomy - rurality itself can become an agent of their oppression. Women do experience gender-based violence in the rural parts of Morocco where I conduct my research, but it is important to locate that violence in broader matrices of structural violence. Patriarchy is not abstractly located in the rural—or notions of tradition and custom usually elided with rurality—but produced and reproduced through structures of state power and capital accumulation that interact with cultural forms and durable social institutions.

So, what is the analytic consequence of considering the structural violence of rural life in Morocco through a gendered, intersectional lens? On the one hand, it pushes us to an expansive view of violence that both locates responsibility in diverse structures of power and accounts for the ways in which that responsibility is effaced. On the other hand, it compels us to take seriously alternative ways of understanding rural life. It is not that human development statistics are false and that we therefore need a fine-grained ethnographic perspective to give texture to women’s lives. Rather, statistics represent one story that reveals little about the diverse stories women and men themselves tell. We need to simultaneously listen to those stories and grapple with the inevitable social contestations—over gender and other forms of inequality—embedded in those stories. Many of the aspirations espoused by women in rural Morocco would be intelligible to urban or elite feminists but those that do not need to be taken seriously as expressing their lived experience not as uniformed or a version of false consciousness. While there would undoubtedly be broad agreement that gender equity would produce parity in human development indicators like literacy or mortality, limiting our analysis to those measures would ignore the complex vectors of dispossession in rural Morocco. It would also ignore the specific joys and solidarities that men and women cultivate—sometimes together, sometimes apart—in their rural homes and in their expansive social relationships that extend from rural to urban Morocco and beyond.
References


The Incarcerated Female Subject(ivity): Resisting Gendered Trauma

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Abstract
This paper addresses the issue of gender, trauma and resistance within the Moroccan prison apparatuses during “Years of Lead” (1956-1999). Moroccan female detainees have challenged the view that they were passive. They have aligned themselves up with the resistant voices to meet the horizons and expectations of post-colonialism—as an emancipatory project. This paper is premised upon the analysis of the female testimonial writings left by some of the leading female voices during the “Years of Lead” in Morocco: Mustapha Kamal, Susan Slyomovics and Fatna El Bouih’s Talk of Darkness, (2008), Khadija Marouazi’s The Biography of Ash (2000) and Michèle Fitoussi and Malika Oufkir’s Stolen Lives: Twenty Years in a Desert Jail, (2001). Following François Lyotard (1995) and Barbara Harlow (1987), this paper conceives of these writings as a form of resistance. Writing and revealing what Cathy Caruth refers to as “insidious trauma” in her 1995 book Trauma: Explorations in Memory is essential for the recovery of the postcolonial subjects from the trauma of the arbitrary and political incarceration. The female resisting subjectivities are reconstructed in their prison writings. In so doing, female political prisoners resist what Gayatri Spivak refers to as “epistemic violence” in her 1988 text “Can the subaltern Speak?” that Moroccan society exerts on female subjectivities. By articulating their voices of trauma and resistance to
the patriarchal discourse (re)shaping and reshuffling their subjectivities, Moroccan female prisoners foreground a feminist/political consciousness. Finally, this paper suggests that these female prison writings should be parts of the Moroccan postcolonial feminist theorising.

**Keywords:** Trauma, resistance, gender, “Years of Lead” prison writings, Moroccan Cultural Studies

### 0. Introduction

The traumatic human experience of the 20th century is a mere reflection of the impact of power on the course of history, society, culture, international relations and politics. Power relations have always been shaping human relations, forms of government and domination, social class and cultural hegemony. When Morocco got its “independence” from France in 1956, there were many calls from Moroccan activists to meet the premises of “independence”. This paper departs from Robert Young’s definition of postcolonialism as constitutes a critical response to the new world system conditions. It struggles for autonomy, real independence and self-determination (2016, p. 59). During that period, many male and female activists and dissidents were arrested and imprisoned for their dissident and antagonistic subject positions. As a postcolonial condition, “Years of Lead” Morocco cannot be analysed outside the framework of such ubiquitous relations of power. The inequalities and the simultaneous oppressions exerted on the Moroccan post-colonial subjects were meant to shutter their agency and deny their subjectivities. Since power abuse generates and provokes resisting voices, post-colonial Moroccan activists and the “Years of Lead” dissidents have offered their own ways of resistance to all forms of oppressions that they have gone through. Retrospective autobiographical and other self-writing responses (like memoirs, diaries, and autobiographies) to the postcolonial trauma offer the traumatised victims a sense of agency and self-empowerment to recover from the trauma of their imprisonment.

The birth of the Moroccan “resistance literature”, to use Barbara Harlow’s terminology (1987), marked the appearance of many female dissident and activist voices. Female resistance literature aims at generating what James Scott refers to as the “Hidden Transcript” and at foregrounding and therefore redefining the structures that underlie the
Moroccan patriarchal society. The 1980s, noted Suellen Diaconoff (2009), was the period when female Moroccan prisoners’ voices were articulated. It was the period when political female prisoners started to write. They broke and fought what Paulo Freire in his 1968 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* calls the “culture of silence”. These women have challenged the view that they were passive. They have aligned themselves up with the male resistant voices to meet the horizons and expectations of post-colonialism, as it “claims the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being” (Young, 2003, p. 2).

Recent female prison testimonies on the "Years of Lead" trauma have brought the issue of gender and state sponsored violence against women into public and academic attention. Such prison testimonies write opposition and activism against gender-based violence and trauma of the political dissidents who spoke truth to power. Women have exercised their agency, however. They were not silent, as comes to be interpreted by their total absence in the academia during the “Years of Lead” Morocco (1956-1999). They offered resistance to different traumatic and unspeakable forms of oppression and violence. Moreover, they empowered other women to share and articulate their traumas as well, Rabia Bannouna’s 2003 *Tazmammart: mandhour nisai* (*Tazmamrt: A feminist perspective*) is a case in point.

1. The Incarcerated Female Subject: Resisting Gendered Trauma

   “As far as we are concerned, you’re now a man. Therefore, we treat you the way we treat men.” El Bouih, *Talk of Darkness*

The simultaneous oppressions that the Moroccan “Years of Lead” dissident women were subject to presuppose foregrounding a “free” space to articulate their insidious traumatic conditions and voice their subject positions vis-à-vis the inequality and state sponsored violence that surrounds the post-colonial world. In the post-colonial Morocco, female dissidents and prisoners have addressed such issues in their “resistance literature”. Writing allows the female dissidents and prisoners a sense of empowerment and agency to resist the gendered trauma and violence that they faced in the prison apparatuses.
To articulate the approaches that this paper adopts, it should be highlighted from the very outset that the paper has recourse to many approaches developed in the major field of cultural studies. It is a free interplay of gender theories, trauma theories and subjectivity. Though it argues and calls for a merely local and organic Moroccan feminist discourse, this paper draws also upon the findings and the scholarship of other feminists and gender as well as subjectivity theorists (like Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, respectively). Given the intersectional framework and nature of these issues (gender, trauma and subjectivity), this paper also investigates the identity politics or the subjectivity of the traumatised female prisoners within the patriarchal prison apparatus. The rationale behind theorising “subjectivity” is due to its interrelatedness with trauma. According to Kelly Oliver in his Witnessing: Beyond Recognition (2001) “trauma is part of what makes subjectivity othered” (p. 7). Female prisoners undergoing the “Years of Lead” trauma have their subjectivities refashioned, reshuffled and othered in the overwhelming prison apparatus.

As an interdisciplinary field of study and a travelling theory, trauma studies goes beyond its epistemic border. Before the emergence of the contribution of many scholars in the field, trauma studies used to be approached only from other perspectives, i.e. psychiatry, psychology, medicine, etc. Now thanks to the influential works by Cathy Caruth (Trauma: Explorations in Memory (1995) and Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History (1996)), trauma studies, as a travelling theory, has neither confines nor borders. Cathy Caruth and other scholars like Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub have devised new approaches of trauma studies in literature and critical theory. These trauma studies theorists have replaced their focus on finding the relationship between war, captivity and other incident-incited trauma and/in literature and other forms of expression. Problematic, though, is the possibility of narrating and representing such trauma (Gilmore, 2001; Judith, 1997).

Since cultural studies approaches investigate how power relations are exercised and perpetuated (Hall, 1996 & 1997), this paper examines the intersectionality and the interrelatedness of gender, trauma and power. The female prisoners of conscience of the turbulent “Years of Lead” were subject to power abuse and trauma because of their gendered subjectivities. Narrating and writing such experienced trauma is,
however, beyond the ability of the survivors. It is even beyond the language to represent it. It is unpresentable as Gilmore (2001) asserts that:

Crucial to the experience of trauma are the multiple difficulties that arise in trying to articulate it. Indeed, the relation between trauma and representation, and especially language, is at the centre of claims about trauma as a category...language fails in the face of trauma, trauma mocks language and confronts it with its insufficiency. Yet at the same time, language about trauma is theorized as an impossibility. (p. 6)

Despite the fact that trauma is difficult to articulate, survivors carry some trauma symptoms or what is referred to as post-traumatic stress disorder. They make recourse to writing and sharing their trauma testimonies. Writing, as argued before, allows them agency to articulate their subjectivities. It is noticeable that Moroccan prisoners of the “Years of Lead” have authored numerous autobiographies and other self-representational forms of writing to narrate their trauma. Such choice of autobiographies is attributed to the fact that, as argued and put forwards by Ursula Tidd in his “Exile, Language, and Trauma in Recent Autobiographical Writing by Jorge Semprun,” (2008), autobiographical prison writings and trauma writings share some characteristics. Both forms of writing give voice to an “absent other” or what Mary Mason calls “other voice”. Such voice is excluded and othered that it constitutes a kind of hidden transcript and testimony. With this variety of voices of trauma, the victim/witness or in some cases narrator subvert the singularity of the experience.

As for the female subjectivities, it should also be highlighted, following Cultural Studies approaches (see Hall, 1996, 1997 & Baker, 2003), that identity is socially, culturally, and institutionally assigned to all subjects. Political discourse contributes to the construction of identities. They are part of the analysis of the discourse. Like identity, gender is also a social construct that is assigned to the institutions and social and cultural practices. Collectively, they produce discursive practices within which gendered subjectivities and other subjectivities are constructed and produced. In his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation)” (1971), the French Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser, theorises this process through which
individuals are conceived as ‘knowing subjects’ as interpellation; he argues that “ideology hails or interpellates individuals as (its) subjects” (p. 22).

Subjectivity is shaped by the subject positions that the discourse of power compels its ‘subjects’ to take up. This process of identifying oneself as a “free” resisting and active agent is what these prison writers painstakingly foreground. As prisoners of conscience, Moroccan prisoners of the “Years of Lead” generate dissident narratives and discourses to raise the consciousness of other women to exercise agency and resistance. As the incarceration affects the way prisoners view their subjectivities being processed and (re)shaped, the conception of subjectivity is useful for the analysis of their prison writings; prisoners’ performances and behaviour inside the prison apparatus are regulated and disciplined which gives birth to new refashioned subjectivities. Even the way these prisoners are interpellated, traumatised and treated is dictated and framed by the subjectivity and subject position of the prisoner.

As far as the Moroccan prison status quo is concerned, it is worth mentioning that Althusser’s notion of interpellation is pertinent to the analysis of female subjectivities. As it articulates its approaches, this paper should also acknowledge that Althusser’s approach towards power relation is problematic. Since this paper probes some forms of resistance that female prisoners have offered to the overwhelming trauma circulating their subjectivities, Althusser develops no theories of resistance. Yet his contribution to theories of power views that the “state” is not the only one to blame for reconstruction of the oppressed subjectivities. In line with this argument put forwards by Althusser (1971), prisoners themselves help sometimes interpellate and construct themselves, as individuals, into subjects. Althusser argues that by means of ascribing and imposing a socially determined role on subjects, ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals into “concrete subjects” or in Foucault’s terminology “good boys” (1982). Consequently, subjectivity is the product of dominant ideology.

In his 1982 article on “The Subject and Power” Foucault outlines three modes of objectification through which power is exercised and “human beings are made subjects… the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the "good boys" (p. 777).” Prison as a
repressive state apparatus helps, by force or otherwise, interpellate the female prisoners into subjects to the state’s ideology. The way in which the female prisoners are perceived in this apparatus is ideologically inspired. Consequently, as subalternised, as used in Subaltern Studies (1983) -- being subordinated in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way (Guha, p. viii) -- and silenced subjects, female prisoners are traumatised by the state ideology that shapes their subjectivities. In his book Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975) Michel Foucault shows how the body of the prisoners becomes the object of regulation. It is an arena of target and power. Foucault (1975) writes “the body...is manipulated, shaped, trained, which [the body] obeys, responds, becomes skilled and increases its forces” (p. 136).Yet, the body is not always submissive and obedient; there is always the possibility of resistance. As he himself argues elsewhere ‘where there is power there is resistance’ (Foucault, 1990, p. 95).The first step towards resistance has been the ability of these prisoners to ‘speak truth to power’. Foucault theorises the by-product of manipulation of the body as “docility”. This latter is a situation that is attained by means of the ‘general formulas for domination’, that are exerted on prisoners (Foucault, 1975, p. 173).

Prison, as a repressive state apparatus, is part and parcel of the network of power. It aims at depriving subjects from their agencies and accordingly disciplining them. These female prisoners make use of writing to restore their stolen traumatised subjectivities. Such resistance to these overwhelming apparatuses aims at generating a body of knowledge to redefine the “female” identities. In the poststructuralist theory of discourse, the emphasis, however, is replaced on the discursive practices within which such “knowledge” is produced and resistance is offered. In so being, and in line with the argument put forwards by Herman (1997) about the unrepresentability of trauma, this theoretical paradigm disputes the possibility and scopes of narrating one’s trauma within these regulations. Put differently, it answers the question of how Moroccan female political prisoners identify and assign agency to themselves regardless of their subaltern subject positions in the patriarchal post-colonial Morocco. Furthermore, this paper analyses how these female prisoners or female subjects that are shaped and constituted by and within the neo-colonial patriarchal discourses manage to serve as agents of resistance.
To construct such subjectivity and maintain ‘docility’ in prison, disciplinary power makes use of many techniques. Foucault (1975) refers to these techniques as “the means of correct training” (p. 170). In this respect, in his *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault contends “The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination” (p. 170). The female prisoner is subject to all these means of regulation. “Everything in this world is subject to surveillance. The guard was watching her through the peephole” (El Bouih, 2008, p. 31). ‘Hierarchal observation’ is carried out by a constant ‘gaze’ at the individual, say, the prisoner. Drawing on feminist tradition and critique, when a “female” body is under the male ‘gaze’, voyeurism, objectification, fetishism, women as the object of male pleasure and bearer of male lack come along (Snow, 1989, p. 30). In prison, women are usually subject to this male ‘gaze’ which is almost patriarchal, ideological, and phallocentric. A female anonymous political prisoner says, “You feel the gaze of strange men always around you. You can do nothing, you cannot even be minimally at ease because there is the gaze of men on you” (Slymovics, 2005, p. 90). It is this authority of the prison guard that mitigates the agency of the female prisoner. It evokes the binary opposition: the prisoner is always guilty, criminal, and the like; whereas the prison officer/guard is always innocent, ordinary, and even infallible. The female prisoner is always panopticised and put under the surveillance of male power. Moreover, this prisoner remains always subaltern and deprived of voice.

The perception of women inside the prison apparatus as a mere subject of power brings the issue of gender politics to the fore. Gender is a social and cultural set of assumptions as well as practices that regulate the construction of male/female subjectivities and the social reactions that govern them. Given that gender is a social and cultural construct, the female prisoners identity is defined within the dominant patriarchal discourse. However, masculinity and femininity as forms of gendered identities are constructed and represented under this biological determinism. Prison, as a disciplinary and regulative space of power par excellence, is not immune from such social practices. Male and female bodies are subject to this gender bias and distinction. Given the heterogeneous ontology of the Moroccan society which is said to be
patriarchal, this subordination of one sex (woman for instance) is dictated by the social discourse.

In contemporary feminist discourse, sex/gender distinction is outmoded. Drawing on a poststructuralist theoretical and critical paradigm, contemporary feminists argue that there is no access to the biological “truth” of the body. The naturalness of the sexed body is only a mythical credo. In this respect, Judith Butler (2006) argues that:

Gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. Gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which “sexed nature” or “a natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive,” prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts. (p. 10)

These sexed bodies are per se socially constructed, following the argument of Butler. This alibi of the biological determinism contributes to the play of the subordination of women. Female subjects as such are believed to be physically and psychologically weak. Such discourse always favours men over women. It also attributes leadership to men. Moroccan female dissidents and prisoners, who have been firmly fastened by oppression and state sponsored violence, have also struggled against male chauvinism. They fought against a despotic hegemonic discourse shaping them during the “Years of Lead”.

There is an intricate relationship between violence, gender and subaltern subjectivities. This latter is the ultimate outcome of both violence and gender relations. El Bouih’s 2008 *Talk of Darkness* helps carve out a space where she—and other political detainees-- could voice the voiceless women and their traumatic experience that deeply marked her during detention. It reveals the ongoing silencing and what is referred to before as “means of correct training” of the female prisoners during the “Years of Lead”. This transitional period is marked by different historical trajectories in the Moroccan history. Trauma, silencing and violence exercised on these women have flowed from their biological sex. As argued by Judith Butler (2006), before the biological sex of the prisoners is also problematic. It provokes more power abuse and disempowerment. As female subalterns, dissident women and prisoners of conscience “tried to speak though it was forbidden” (El Bouih, 2008, p. 9). Such violence that denies women
agency and voice has accentuated the need of the Moroccan feminist and activists to write and voice the silenced trauma and atrocities of the "Years of Lead". Women who witnessed the "Years of Lead" trauma elucidate resistance to the violence and the "culture of silence" that shaped the female subjectivities.

De facto, there are many factors that determine and shape the subjectivity of whatever subject. One’s voice is no exception. It plays a pivotal role in constructing one’s subjectivity. There are even some limitations and boundaries that women, for instance, should not transcend, so far as articulating their voices is concerned; for instance, writing used to be only a male privilege (Smith & Loudiy, 2005, p. 1082). What women were left with was silence. Fatna El Bouih (2001) asks us to:

Remember that the model for all Moroccan females is the woman who lowers her eyes, never raises her voice, whose tongue "does not go out of her mouth," as in the Moroccan proverb "ilfum mesdud ma duxluh dbana" (into a closed mouth no flies can enter). Girls are raised with: "Samt hikma u-mennu tfarraq ilhikayem" (silence is wisdom and from it comes even greater wisdom). (p. 42)

In line with Judith Butler’s contribution to gender studies-- that lies in her ability to go beyond and deconstruct the gender/sex distinction, by coining the concept of “performativity”—the prediscursive construction of the female body shapes the way patriarchal Moroccan disciplinary apparatus views the “model” women, a silent and devoiced one. By critiquing Simone de Beauvoir, Butler deconstructs the socially constructed binary of sex and gender as biological and cultural, respectively. For Butler (1986), the sexed body cannot determine the individual’s identity. Any given identity is socially and culturally ascribed. At this level, the body of the individual shapes their identity. As dictated by the Moroccan society, all women should fit into the “model” female subject that “lowers her eyes” and most importantly “keeps silent”.

Gender is also related to the behaviour of the subject. That is to say the actions and the act ascribed to a person determine his or her subjectivity. The discourse shaping him or her interpellates them into refashioned and re-gendered subjectivities. Butler, as mentioned before,
deconstructs this cunning discourse. Individuals are “disciplined” to define masculinity and femininity with regard to their sexed bodies. The “regulatory practices” that prison agents exert on women like “body search” and psychological violence are meant to highlight the fact that women have transgressed and transcended the socially established borders of politics, dissidence and activism. The price they have paid for such attempt to challenge the dominant male is a gendered trauma and violence. Khadija Merouazi (2000) says that “I cried violently, as I never did before, when the whip came down my body”. Many other women like Khadija have been subject to such physical and psychological violence. Such violence shows the male chauvinism to assign dissident voice exclusively to male subjects.

As argued before, trauma is roughly unspeakable. Yet, making use of what Foucault calls the ‘power of writing’, female prisoners of conscience could communicate such situations, say gendered trauma related symptoms or what is referred to as post-traumatic stress disorder. In her 1997 seminal work on Trauma and Recovery, Judith Herman argues that:

> It is very difficult for the observer to remain clearheaded and calm, to see more than a few fragments of the picture at one time, to retain all the pieces, and to fit them together. It is even more difficult to find a language that conveys persuasively what one has seen. Those who attempt to describe the atrocities that they witnessed also risk their own credibility. To speak publicly about one’s knowledge of atrocities is to invite the stigma that attaches to victims. (p. 2)

In these prison narratives, the “Years of Lead” trauma survivors are invited to articulate their trauma experience. Following Herman’s line of thought, the “other voice” that prison writers invite to voice their trauma is also questionable; they simply happen to be victims who witnessed such atrocities of the “Years of Lead”. They risk the credibility of their own voice. Yet, a close reading of the female prison writings suggests that prison writers use some techniques to communicate the unspeakable collective memory of trauma. Repetition and slips of the tongue are among two techniques that trauma survivors
make use of to come to terms with the past and communicate their traumas (Butler, 1990, p. 273).

Merouazi’s and El Bouih’s prison writings contain many repetitions and sometimes parapraxes. For both of them, repetition in a humorous way indicates the ridiculous experience and the atrocities committed against them. This emphasises also the inconsistencies that characterise the Moroccan regime and prison apparatuses. Silencing is a means of traumatising and subalternising. Prison is an arena where even antagonistic and opposite things (must) reconcile. Silence and screams are the same. They mean the same and almost nothing for the prison agents and officers, but for El Bouih and her comrades it is an anathema and challenge. They have fought and broken silence. Moreover, El Bouih’s narrative point of view shifts from the first person to the second person. Every so often, she slips up into slips of the tongue. These metaphorical slips include “our shared life, excuse me, our shared death” (p. 14) and “you saw light, excuse me, the darkness” (p. 66). These parapraxes, in Freudian psychoanalysis, come as an outcome of hidden thought. They evoke the reader’s attention of a belated trauma of incarceration and how painful and devastating such trauma has been. This indicates also that there are some instances of pain and torture which El Bouih and Merouazi cannot go into describing. More than that, language cannot adequately convey this traumatic situation, given that trauma is unspeakable. These slips of the tongue show the effects left by this trauma; it reveals the posttraumatic stress disorder experienced by these female prisoners of conscience.

The aforementioned prison writings chronicle some of the gender dynamics and gender-based violence exercised on female detainees to perpetuate the power relations underlying the Moroccan ‘discipline and punish’ apparatuses. Not only have these female detainees challenged this hegemonic discourse, but they have also subverted the dominant gender norms; that is, they have engaged in the political sphere, which is believed to be a male realm. As one of the prison officers says addressing El Bouih:

You want to change the world, strip woman of her natural skin, erase differences… a woman belongs in the harem, and only the harem. The woman belongs in the home and her role is to
reproduce life. Anything else is an aberration, a deviation from nature. (p. 38)

Similarly, Laila in Merouazi’s *Biography of Ash* is subject to the same symbolic violence. One of the prison officers says to her “أنت خصك أعمريان” (p. 143) “What do you want, O, naked one?”. Such verbal violence can be interpreted as the patriarchal discourse that shaped the post-colonial Morocco. This is simply because they get involved in political issues. El Bouih and Merouazi highlight the deep dimension of the view that prison is meant for male activists. This psychological violence or say trauma destroys their subjectivities. At this level, it is also safe to argue that these female dissidents are making a call for women’s empowerment by generating a kind of “political consciousness” and resistance. Fatna El Bouih (2008) reports what the torturers and prison officers say to the arrested female activists and dissidents “Do you see those young women who want to enter the world of politics and take on men's work?” (p. 80). Such questions are meant to provoke female dissidents and activists. It is also meant to mitigate their agencies and reduce their subjectivities to nothing.

Apart from the psychological trauma of incarceration, female subjects have also been subject to physical violence and assault. Malika Oufkir, for instance, was subject to a worse physical violence which is related to rape. Being in a very weak position to resist and defend herself, Malika has resolved to endure the assault of a prison officer. She says:

> He pressed himself against me, and began to grope my breasts and bite my mouth. He lifted up my blouse. I could hear him panting like a rutting animal, he smelt bad, his breath was offensive, his body was crushing me, but I was incapable of fighting back. I was powerless: I couldn’t scream or defend myself in any way without frightening the others. (p. 172)

Using the oft-repeated Saidian phraseology, prisoners should ‘speak truth to power’ to reveal the blanks, the silences, and the *non-dits* of rape and sexual trauma experienced by female prisoners. It is only by writing about such trauma that prisoners could reveal and address the taboo issues that used to be “hshouma” (shame). This state sponsored violence that was exerted on these women is meant to mitigate and undermine the subjectivity of the female dissident. Yet the very first attempts of writing such trauma is contestatory and antagonistic to the
master narratives. As argued and put forwards by Nawar Al Hassan Golley in her 2007 edited book Arab Women's Lives Retold: Exploring Identity through Writing:

Risking censorship slander, or possible imprisonment, the Arab woman writer is a dissident, crossing into the traditionally male space of language. Such violence of sacred sexual/textual space impinge on a woman's honor (sharaf), which is contingent on her silence and invisibility, and challenge both cultural concepts of women and "the master narratives" that always assume the speaker is male. (p. 185)

The prison writings under analysis provide the male perception of female identities within a repressive state apparatus. The representation of gender relations in prison is at the centrality of El Bouih’s Talk of Darkness. The title of the French translation of the memoir is very telling; it is Une femme nommée Rachid (A woman named Rachid). Oxymoron as it might be, the French translation of this prison memoir suggests male subjective attributes could be attributed to female prisoners. El Bouih has her subjectivity refashioned and her name masculinised as “Rachid”. “From now on your name is Rashid,” (p. 5) says El Bouih’s torturer. Moreover, as she mentions in an interview with Fatima Merinssi, it is “Rashid N 45”. Other female political prisoners who have been subject to gender-based assault include both Widad Bouab and Latifa Jbabdi. In prison testimony "The Prison that Was a Refuge after the Isolation in Police stations" Widad Bouab has undergone the traumatic assault, “Thus they chose a man's name for each one of us. Mine was Hamid” (p. 80). Similarly, Latifa Jbabdi in her prison testimony “The Police Station, Torture, Prison, and Torturers” that concludes Fatna El Bouih's Talk of Darkness says that "to mask the presence of women in the detention center, they gave us men's names. I was called Said, Twil, or Doukkali" (p. 86).

Attributing such numbers to prisoners is meant to mitigate the political prisoners’ subjectivities and deny their agencies. The prison apparatus is not satisfied with female engagement in politics. This is simply because “وجد امرأة بالسجن هو خروج عن المألوف بالنسبة للمجتمع و العائلة” (p. 79) “the existence of women in prison is not common to society nor to family” adds Merouazi. Such hegemonic practices and gendering of space and subjectivities exerted over female detainees are attributed to
the patriarchal discursive practices that assign leadership and dissidence only to men. In these cases, there is one conclusion that could be drawn from such hegemonic practices: resistance, dissidence and activism are only attributes of men. This argument brings to the fore the claim that women are supposed to stay in the harem. Such refashioned subjectivities have not disempowered the prisoners, on the contrary, these prisoners have recovered their agency and spoken ‘truth to power’ as active agents.

Since these forms of power abuse and verbal as well as physical violence aim at perpetuating power relations that underlie the relationship between man and women, female activists and dissidents of the years of lead Morocco have offered resistance in theory and praxis. As for this latter, El Bouih and Merouazi were arrested for their membership in a Marxist Movement. El Bouih’s trauma is articulated from the very beginning of her memoir. As the title suggests, Talk of Darkness, denotes that she is blindfolded. She adds that “We became acquainted with each other in silence and darkness” (2008, p. 11). This is echoed in Khadija Merouazi’s Biography of Ash “أًاو انسجٍ طبعا متناسخة “لا لون لها غير السود” (2000, p. 68) “Prison days are certainly successive and have no colour other than blackness.” Both El Bouih and Merouazi are used to silence, blackness and darkness. This is the price they have paid for their praxis and for their courage to voice themselves and speak truth to the male power.

Malika Oufkir’s prison autobiography title Stolen Lives is also very telling. It is another way of saying stolen subjectivities. This novel is not only about Malika, the General Mohammed Oufkir daughter, as the original French title (La Prisonnière) (The Prisoner) might suggest, but it draws its significance from the inclusion of the other oppressed voices, i.e. her little siblings. In fact, Stolen Lives does address the trauma of the whole Oufkir family. Yet at its core is a deeper cry of gender-based violence. Not only have the Oufkir family experienced trauma inside prison, but their trauma goes beyond the walls of prison. No one wants to host them as they escape from prison. For the whole family, the outside world is as dark as “another prison, even if it resembled a real house” (Oufkir, 2001, p. 285)

The trauma of imprisonment is rampant. It affects the prisoner and all his/her “free” family. As a state apparatus, prison exerts a systemic
violence on the member of the prisoner’s family. Ilham, the daughter of a Moroccan female detainee, is a subaltern subject who is born unfree; being born in this dark prison, this clean-handed female subject has never known freedom or the outside world. Ilham’s mother is silenced. The mother, as El Bouih (2008) describes, is a “powerless [who] did not utter a word—prison had tied her tongue—even when she was in labor there were no powerful drugs to ease her acute pain” (p. 59). This traumatic status quo is meant to remind the dissidents of the high price of speaking truth to power. In his *Femme- Prison Parcours Croisées (Women prison, Crossed Paths)*, Nour Eddine Saoudi (2005) documents the traumatic consequences experienced by the female relatives of the detainees:

L’arrestation d’un militant politique au Maroc entraîne souvent des conséquences imaginables pour son entourage, parents et amis (...) Par leur sensibilité et leur émotivité particulières, les mères, les épouses et/ou les sœurs sont généralement les plus affectées par ce douloureux événement qui dure parfois de nombreuses années. (p. 8)

(The arrest of a political activist in Morocco often leads to unimaginable consequences for his entourage, family and friends (...) In particular sensitivity and emotionality, mothers, wives and / or sisters are usually the most affected by this painful event which sometimes lasts many years.)

Like Fatna El Bouih who offers the space for agency articulation of some subaltern female prisoners, Nour-Eddine Saoudi attributes the same agency to the silenced political prisoners to voice the trauma of their relatives. Political imprisonment evokes an ongoing trauma that the family member of another political prisoner undergoes. Oum Hafid, for instance, says that “j’ai été arête et torture parce qu’ils n’ont pu prendre mon mari recherché” (p. 57) “I have been arrested and tortured because they have not been able to arrest my wanted husband.” This woman experienced the same trauma of incarceration that her husband would experience had he been arrested. This upholds the claim that women also aligned themselves and helped resist the hegemonic power that circulates the postcolonial Moroccan dissidents.

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1 Our translation
2 Our translation
Given that prison is a patriarchal and repressive state apparatus, the subject position of women becomes weak. The very first act of articulating their trauma is a form of resistance. Writing helps articulate and voice the antagonistic subject position of women who have been silenced, subalternised and trauma-tised. Going back to *Resistance Literature*, Barbara Harlow suggests the political prisoners' testimonies "are actively engaged in a redefinition of the self and the individual in terms of a collective enterprise and struggle" (1987, p. 120). Speaking of the redefinition and reshuffling of the gendered subjectivities, Moroccan female dissidents and prisoners have generated a good number of scholarship to redefine the female subjectivities.

These prison accounts are detailed experiences of trauma and torture in the Moroccan prison apparatuses under the regime of Hassan II. Given the period and the conditions under which they were generated, Moroccan prison writings are crucial in shaping, defining and foregrounding a feminist discourse in Morocco. They are meant to redefine and reshape the patriarchal structures of the Moroccan female identities. Their active involvement in activism is an ultimate answer to the gender-based segregation and violence that they usually experience in the society. They want to voice and articulate their agencies in the political field.

The recent academic turn towards the gender issues provoked serious engagement with the postcolonial conditions of the Moroccan activists in general, and the Moroccan female activists and dissidents in particular (see, for instance, Diaconoff, 2009; Badran, 2011; Charrad, 2001). These prison narratives generated a new discourse on/of gender dynamics. Many activists and later-on-prisoners have picked up the pen and started to fight back in their own way. The female prisoners of the turbulent “Years of Lead” could not be intimidated nor controlled. They were uncensored and defiant subjectivities. They have not observed the regime’s "red lines" but they have transgressed them and joined the other counterpart by generating feminine voice.

Some of these outspoken Moroccan female political prisoners and feminine voices include Latifa Jbabdi, Maria Zouini, Khadija El Boukharı, Fatna El Bouih, Widad Al Bouab, Fatema Okacha, Rabea Ftouh, Saida Menebhi and many others who have already spoken “truth to power” and articulated their screams of consciousness. Given their
subject position as active agents who articulated their opposition and
dissidence from within and without the state apparatuses, these women
have generated and foregrounded the Moroccan feminist discourse.
These women are at pains to approve themselves by asking an
existential and Shakespearean question, a crucial one being “to be or
not to be.” Malika also highlights the need to join the women rights
movement: “had I been free, I would have followed those women. I
would have been an activist like them” (Oufkir, 2001, p. 167). Activism
and resistance to such gender-based practices has been an existential
necessity for the “Years of Lead” Moroccan women.

So far as activism is concerned, these women believe that they have
been traumatized not because of a crime they have committed but
because they have principles and generate consciousness. The following
excerpt from Khadija Merouazi’s Biography of Ash summarises the
trauma of a certain reality that lasted for years and inspiration, hope and
dream of a better reality.

(Despite our conviction that the arrest was our paid tribute for our
principled convictions, we still bet deep down in ourselves on
women who share the burden with us. We all
dream of a woman
who is pushing us out of the darkness, like light that shines in the
darkness of the prison. It doesn’t matter that the candle burns,
what matters is to illuminate the prison, to illuminate just a corner
of my cell that I dyed yellow so that the light condenses. My
night is my light, but it refuses to be a mere bridge to cross….).³

The moment the post-colonial Moroccan women activists have aligned
themselves with the other voices of resistance to speak truth to the
oppressive power, they knew that would cost them so dearly. They want
to burn like candles to illuminate and get out of a blinding-absence-of-
light place, to borrow from Tahar Ben Jalloun. This take will help pave

³ Our translation
the way for the rest of the other women get out of the darkness of oppression and tyranny by simply believing strongly in the principled convictions. This echoed also in Fatna El Bouih’s prison autobiography “they'll try to eradicate our ideas and our principles, they won't succeed if we hold out" (p. 10). It is this persistence to be dissident that exacerbates their traumas in prison since they were conceived of as passive agents who are transcending the “red lines”.

2. Conclusion

To conclude, these female prison writings bespeak the complex interplay of trauma, gender and (dis)(em)power(ment). This interrelatedness perpetuates power relations, which are even accentuated more in prison as a disciplinary and regulatory state apparatus. Trauma and violence experienced by female prisoners are justified by the claim that women should not access the political realm. Despite the epistemic, physical and symbolic violence exercised on these female prisoners because of their gendered identities, Moroccan female detainees have offered different means of resistance to have a voice of their own. They have not been passive anymore; they have been active, activist and dissident.

Writing is a means of resistance and a site of agency. It has allowed these female detainees to voice themselves and articulate the specificities of the female activism as well as imprisonment during the “Years of Lead”. To contest the dominant male narratives and reconstruct the collective traumatic memory of the subalternised, silenced and traumatized female subjectivities, Moroccan female prison writers have generated what Suellen Diaconoff refers to as the ‘house of women’ as opposed to the “house of men.” Prison trauma narratives offer the victims of the “Years of Lead” a theoretical alternative space to voice their political and discursive silences. Writing is a form of discourse and (em)power(ment). It is a space where the gendered subjectivities and identities are negotiated and redefined. It is within this framework that this paper tries to investigate how the Moroccan political prisoners’ voice engage in their political empowerment.

Apart from the main objective of these prison writings, female dissident and prison writers try to bridge the “memory gap” of the “Years of Lead” traumatic experiences which have been silenced and unvoiced. They accentuate the need to reconsider the history of post-colonial
Morocco. Such past history is fraught with many exclusions and unsaid traumatic atrocities. These female prisoners write explicitly about their torture and trauma of imprisonment in order to come to terms with the past atrocities of the regime. Such hegemonic practices and atrocities over female detainees are based and attributed to the patriarchal practices.

As advocates of women's rights in Morocco, many of the aforementioned dissidents have authored many books. By dint of bearing witness, offering testimony, explaining and showing how the postcolonial Moroccan women have proved that they are not passive any more, but they are active as comes to be interpreted by the number of accounts they generated during the turbulent period. Moroccan dissident women have subscribed their voices to the male resistant ones and have also produced some of the Moroccan “hidden transcript”.

In line with previous arguments put forwards above, when trauma survivors experience this kind of alienation and loss, their trauma is reinforced and even perpetuated by other related symptoms. That’s exactly the same repercussions and aftermaths of the colonial trauma. In so being, the colonial discourse is still deferred in the so-called post-colonial Morocco. These conditions of alienation of identity crisis are also experienced in the “Years of Lead” Morocco. What exacerbates the trauma of the Moroccan “Years of Lead” prisoners is that it was gendered.

In so being, these writings implicitly reinforce the aim of this paper to inscribe these voices of emancipation and the coming-to-feminist consciousness to a situated organic, and appropriate Moroccan feminism. Finally, to reiterate Virginia Wolf’s famous essay “A Room of One’s Own,” Moroccan female prison writers have already had voices of their own and accordingly started to write.

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Gender-Unaware History: Ordinary Women as the Forgottens of Moroccan Historiography of the Present

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Abstract

This article probes the significance of Moroccan historians’ oversight of ordinary women's experiences of state violence during the Years of Lead (1956-1999) throughout their discussions of conceptual and methodological ways to implement the histoire du temps présent or tārīkh al-zaman al-rāhin (history of the present) for the study of Morocco’s recent history between 2004 and 2007. A branch of history, the history of the present examines recent histories characterized by trauma and memory, and of which the witnesses are still alive and could confront academic historians. Taking place in the context of hay’at al-inşāf wa-l-muṣālaḥa (Equity and Reconciliation Commission, henceforth ERC), which the king of Morocco established on January 7th, 2004 to investigate and find the truth about the violence committed during the Years of Lead (1956-1999), these historiographical meetings sought to reconfigure the Moroccan historiographical school by delving into topics that historians avoided prior to King Hassan II’s passing in 1999. Despite the diversity of the topics they examined at their meetings, Moroccan historians showed no interest in gender despite the existence of a rich, gendered testimonial literature. I contrast the lack of gender awareness in Moroccan historians’ debates with the testimonial literature of Moroccan women in order to demonstrate the productivity of a more inclusive and gender-
conscious Moroccan history of the present. My goal is to show that history is pivotal to any political, educational, and civic project that aims to prevent social violence, especially that directed at women. This article demonstrates the importance of a historiography that recognizes the role of women in societal and political transformation in post-1956 Morocco.

**Keywords:** Historiography, memory, state violence, Morocco, women, ERC

**0. Introduction**

Women have always been at the forefront of political activism in Morocco during the Years of Lead (1956-1999). *Sanwāt al-raṣāṣ, sanawāt al-jamr wal-raṣāṣ* or *années de plomb*, all refer to a period of state violence against society and political opposition, which extended from the country’s independence in 1956 to the passing of Hassan II in 1999. Moroccan women of a variety of political persuasions and social classes were also the victims of rampant repression and ubiquitous state-sponsored political violence during these decades (El Guabli, 2018). Women paid dearly for their activism, especially their pressuring of the Moroccan government to release their disappeared relatives, but also gained the honorific title of *munāḍilāt* (Slyomovics, 2005, p. 154). Their forced *niḍāl* (activism) in the public sphere not only allowed these women to publicly advocate the cause of their relatives in Morocco and abroad, but it also transformed the women themselves. Moroccan women turned state violence into an opportunity to use their testimonial agency to rewrite the recent Moroccan past despite the fact that the history of this agency has yet to be written (Slyomovics, 2005, p. 153).

Recent Moroccan history and its rewriting became central to Moroccan historiography’s conversations during and after the establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission on January 7, 2004. Academic historians, who were mainly concentrated in the axis Casablanca-Rabat-Fez, participated in multiple symposia to discuss *tārīkh al-zaman al-rāhin* or *histoire du temps présent* (the history of the present) and its applicability to the study of Morocco’s post-independence past.¹ These

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all the translations from the French and Arabic into English are the author’s.
conferences sought to chart a new path for Moroccan historiography by addressing methodological questions as well as more nuanced ways to study the formerly taboo topics in post-independence Morocco (El Guabli, 2017, p. 135). I argue that predominant Moroccan historiography of al-zaman al-rāhin has failed to take women into account both as victims of state violence and history makers during the Years of Lead. I attribute this historiographical ignorance of the struggle of Moroccan women to the fact that these historiographical debates were reflective of ERC’s lack of a gender-conscious vision of the equity and reconciliation process (ICTJ, 2011). In this article, I give an overview of four major historiographical books that were published from the proceedings of these conferences before examining how Moroccan women wrote themselves into the history of the present despite the historiographical oversight of their struggles. The premise of the article is that historiographical silence on women’s suffering during the Years of Lead does not only diminish their historical roles, but also lays the ground for the repetition of violence.

1. Moroccan Historiography, the ERC, and a Gender-Unaware History

In the years following the establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission in January 2004, Moroccan historiography refashioned itself. The discipline sought to update its concerns and question its configuration in order to stay abreast of the developments taking shape within Moroccan society (Kenbib, 2015, p. 18-19). Although they attempted to avoid the study of their post-colonial history, Moroccan historians nonetheless found themselves in the midst of debates about the historiography of the period between 1956 and 1999. Regardless of the fact that many Moroccan historians subscribe to the understanding of history as the scientific study of the distant past (Boutaleb, 2014, p. 1045), Moroccan people’s sudden interest in their recent past forced historians to interact with social needs that emerged out of the desire to know what happened after Morocco’s independence. However, writing a history that is situated at the intersection of memory and politics proved problematic for Moroccan historians, especially in the absence of the archival materials and critical distance needed for the reconstruction of the past (Baida, 2006, pp. 16-17). In an effort to engage with the immediate concerns of their society, Moroccan historians borrowed the French concept of histoire du temps présent
(تاريث الزمان الرهين). As its theoreticians established, histoire du temps present is a branch of history methodologically equipped to examine and reconstruct histories in which memory is still heavily present and whose implications are relevant for ongoing traumas, acts of problem management and mourning after catastrophes, writ large (Rousso, 2016, p. 13). Specifically, the history of the present allowed Moroccan historians to study the immediate past without waiting for the death of witnesses and the availability of archives before the examinations of contemporary historical questions.

The ERC put Moroccan historians at the center of the socio-political and social dynamics that were taking place in the country between 1999 and 2006. Historians were deeply involved in the ERC process (Hegasy, 2017, p. 87). While some historians were employed as investigators, others participated in the different thematic conferences the ERC organized in 2004 and 2005. Moreover, the dean of Moroccan historians, Brahim Boutaleb, was in fact one of the sixteen ERC commissioners. Boutaleb’s appointment by the king in such a position thrust Moroccan historians into the vortex of Moroccan attempts to process its painful past, which had major implications for Moroccan historiography’s methodological and conceptual tools (Binyūb & Būdirqa, 2017, pp. 318-319). As a result of the political and social changes taking place around them, Moroccan historians found themselves examining questions that neither their academic training nor the prevalent approaches in their discipline prepared them to undertake. Questions regarding trauma, emotions, and reconstruction of pasts are prone to political instrumentalization. A combination of state intimidation and self-censorship prevented historians from engaging in the study of these questions before 1999, but the political climate in the country after the enthronement of Mohammed VI fostered Moroccan historians’ attempts to establish new conceptual and methodological tools for the study of erstwhile proscribed topics without taking a partisan stance (Baida, pp.17-18). The history of the present seemed to

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answer the needs of Moroccan academic historians and assuaged their fears about the politicization of history.

The historiographical debates about the history of the present yielded four important volumes. These volumes were all edited from proceedings of symposia, conferences, and roundtables that concerned the rewriting of specific themes in Moroccan history. Mohammed Kenbib edited and prefaced *Du protectorat à l’indépendance: Problématique du temps présent* [From the Protectorate to independence: the problematic of the present] (2006) and *Temps présent et fonctions de l’historien* [The history of the present and the functions of the historian] (2009). According to Kenbib, *Du protectorat à l’indépendance* was an attempt to explore the “(feasibility) of a history of the present in the Moroccan context today” (p. 9). Kenbib’s particular context was characterized by the proliferation of testimonial literature, oral testimonies, interviews and media interest in the Years of Lead (p. 8). *Temps présent et fonctions de l’historien* furthers the project undertaken in *Du protectorat à l’indépendance*, albeit with a greater focus on techniques for writing history of the present while upholding objectivity and remaining conscious of the challenges that memory poses to historians (p. 12). The other two significant volumes produced during this period are entitled *Histoire du Maroc: Réactualisation et synthèse* [Moroccan history: a synthesis and update] (2011) and *al-Maghrib wa-l-zaman al-rāhin* [Morocco and the history of the present] (2013). While *Histoire du Maroc* is a de facto rewriting of Moroccan history that enlisted the services of over thirty academic historians, *al-Maghrib wa-l-zaman al-rāhin* is a collection of presentations juxtaposed with transcriptions of the arguments that took place between the academic presenters and witnesses who lived some of the events in question. Modeled after the procedure of the French *Institut de l’Histoire du Temps Présent*, the encounter between witnesses and academics aimed to tease out historical knowledge through the confrontation between memory and academic research (El Moudden in El Kably, 2011, p. 206). A reader of the two volumes cannot but admire the breadth of the topics they cover as well as the novelty of the approaches Moroccan historians were experimenting with in order to develop appropriate tools that would help them to write post-1956 Moroccan history. Thanks to these works, taboos were lifted from Moroccan postcolonial history, which became, at least in theory, a
permissible focus of historical inquiry. However, these theoretical engagements produced their own historical silences.

Theoretical freedom to engage in or explore formerly censored or unexamined topics in Moroccan history did not translate into an equitable interest in all historical actors. In fact, by their focus on the nationalist movement, political and social movements, the Sahara, and the area of Spanish colonialism, Moroccan historians involved in these debates created their own forgottens, which included, among others, the Amazigh movement, political prisoners, and women, who received a short shrift in these discussions. Among all those left out, Moroccan women are the biggest forgottens of tārīkh al-zaman al-rāhin. Neither their struggle for equity and citizenship nor their suffering as a result of their political positions or those of their relatives during the Years of Lead found their way into Du protectorat à l’indépendance: Problématique du temps présent (2006), Temps présent et fonctions de l’historien (2009), Histoire du Maroc: Réactualisation et synthèse (2011) or al-Maghrib wal-zaman al-rāhin. Even when “Women’s rights and the reform of the mudawwana” were discussed in Histoire du Maroc, the authors approached these rights as a dehistoricized given, thus omitting the sacrifices of women and their struggles against patriarchy at the cost of enormous suffering during the Years of Lead (p. 684). For instance, Histoire du Maroc: Réactualisation et synthèse does not acknowledge any of the prominent Marxist-Leninist prisoners, such as Saïda Menebhi or Fatna El Bouih, to mention only the most famous ones. Although the Mudawwana (the family code) was a milestone achievement for Moroccan women, the absence of detailed references to the sacrifices of generations of Moroccan women, who were subjected to state violence, neglects women as actors of the history of the present.

This historiographical forgetting of women reflected ERC’s ignorance of gender in its work. Observers have remarked that ERC’s precursor, Instance indépendante d’arbitrage (Arbitration Commission), was not guided by any gender consciousness (ICTJ, 2011, pp. 7-8). UNIFEM-

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3 Du protectorat à l’indépendance: Problématique du temps présent included only one paper about women, and it was about the colonial period. Entitled “Les femmes marocaines au sortir du Protectorat : Entre tradition et émancipation,” this paper focused on Moroccan women’s situation under the French Protectorate in the 1930s.
CCDH’s researchers who examined the Arbitration Commission’s work concluded that “the absence of gender concerns is clear there: an all-male body, the absence of any references to violence against women, a compensation formula based on the traditional Islamic jurisprudence, which continues to discriminate against women” (cited in ICTJ, p. 7-8). When ERC was put in place by the king in 2004, only “one of the 17 [commissioners] was a woman: Latifa Jbabdi, a former victim, human rights activist, and well-known feminist” (p. 17). The absence of gender awareness in ERC’s founding documents was exacerbated by the fact that the Moroccan feminist movement was not invested in the transitional justice process (pp. 14-15). The disinterest of Moroccan feminist movements in the ERC process demonstrated their divergent priorities and revealed that the majority of the women affected by the Years of Lead belonged to vulnerable and marginal social classes (Guessous, 2009; Hegasy, p. 93). Most female victims of the Years of Lead were illiterate and lived in marginal areas of Morocco (p. 15). To make things worse, ERC’s controversial birth might have played a role in distracting it from developing a well-thought-out approach to gender in its work (p. 16). Thus, the very detailed “gender-based violations” included in ERC’s final report were rather an afterthought that emerged from ERC’s field trips rather than a core value that could be attributed to its mission and bylaws (p. 20). This said, ERC was able to make up for its general omission of gender by making forceful recommendations regarding gender in its final report.⁴ Later on, the Consultative Council on Human Rights (CDDH) enlisted an anthropologist to conduct a study on gender and political violence,⁵ women were invited to share their stories during the public hearing sessions, and gender was a central component of the development projects to be put in place as part of the

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⁵ Anthropologist Nadia Guessous (2009) was hired by CCDH and the United Nations Development Fund for Women to conduct an important study entitled Women and Political Violence during the Years of Lead in Morocco. Rabat: CCDH. Also, as the July 2011 constitutional reform, CCDH has become the National Council for Human Rights (CNDH).
implementation of the ERC’s recommendations. However, because ERC was intended to set the public agenda, its overwhelming ignorance of gender trickled down to the historiographical discourse. The absence of Moroccan women as a topic of historiographical study in the academic historians’ conceptualizations of the history of the present was only a confirmation of ERC’s failure to opt for gender inclusivity since its inception in 2004. An early, gender-aware approach within ERC could have been reflected in historiographical discussions of the history of the present.

2. Moroccan Women Produce their Own History of the Present: Women’s Voices Invade Clio’s Kingdom

Against the backdrop of their absence from Moroccan historians’ discussions of the history of the present, women used a variety of media and literary genres to write themselves into the narratives of the present. In her analysis of Moroccan women’s contribution to the writing of history and the assumptions underlying women’s voices in history, anthropologist Susan Slyomovics (2005) asserts that “[w]omen are associated with a domestic, oral history rather than a written, political history” before affirming that in places like Morocco where much of the history has yet to be written, this “assertion is only partially true” (p. 153). Moroccan women from all social strata have indeed undertaken the transcription of their memories of state violence during the Years of Lead. Furthermore, contemporaneous to the history of the present discussions, Moroccan women affected by state violence were publishing a significant number of memoirs and interviews. Many of those works could have illuminated the theory as well as the practice of the historiography of the present in Morocco. However, the published proceedings of Moroccan historians’ dialogues contain no indication

For a thorough analysis of the way gender is included in the reparation projects, see Dennerlein, B. (2012). Gendered Memory in the Middle East and North Africa: Cultural Norms, Social Practices, and Transnational Regimes. Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies, 8(1), 10-36.

that they drew on these women’s testimonial literature to support their endeavor to chart their new historiographical path. The historiographical silence on Moroccan women’s imprisonment, struggles, and suffering during the height of state violence cannot be justified by an absence of archives, documents, or literature alone. In fact, as early as 1994, al-İttiḥād al-İshtirākī daily published the stories of four women prisoners who spent time in jail in the late 1970s through the early 1980s as a consequence of their activism in the Ilā al-Amām secret organization (al-İttiḥād al-İshtirākī, November 5, 1994).

Historiographical silence gave Moroccan women space to write their own history in their present time. In fact, Moroccan women conquered all the spaces available to record their stories of state violence. Free of the disciplinary concerns that guide academic historians’ work, numerous Moroccan women survivors of state violence authored or co-authored their memoirs or made statements that were later recorded in written form, thus giving their stories a life in the public space (El Guabli, 2018). Instead of writing for historians who may or may not reconstruct their stories in the future, these women wrote (or had their testimonies written) to create a narrative reality in the public sphere. By narrative reality, I mean stories that exist in social and cultural memory and give public validity to the voices of the victims of state violence. Testimony has the power to create this narrative reality because of the truth claims embedded in its very meaning. In her discussion of the distinction between ifāda and shahāda in the ERC context in Morocco, Slyomovics (2016) has written that “[b]etween any scholarly historical reconstruction of that past and the history of its retelling in the context of current Moroccan politics, it is shahada that embodies its two meanings of ‘to testify’ as well as ‘to witness’” (p. 18). These women’s inscription of themselves in Moroccan history through testimony is clear in their writings about sisterly solidarities and social transformation that were corollaries of the violence they were subjected to at the hands of the state. Despite their exercise of their agency, not all Moroccan women victims of state violence had equal access to the testimonial platforms available in the public space. The uneven access of their voices to the public arena was determined by illiteracy and marginality, which the majority of these women suffered from.

In what follows I discuss three important themes of historiographical significance in Moroccan women’s testimonial writings about the Years
of Lead. While a wide variety of historical themes could be investigated through Moroccan women’s testimonial writings, I focus on the three that directly relate to the context in which the ERC conducted its work and Moroccan historians discussed the history of the present

2.1. Defying the wall of silence through testimony

Organized in the form of four depositions by women named Ummī Ḥlima, Tūda, Khadīja, Izza, and Ḥafīḍa, these testimonies collected by CCDH (2008) aim to do justice to “the violence carried out against women” (p. 3). In his introduction to this booklet of testimonies, Ahmed Herzenni, the former CCDH’s President has written that ERC collected these women’s stories in the “geography of forgotten Morocco” and that “the encounter with them was the beginning of a new Morocco that aims to achieve reconciliation with itself” (p. 3). In Herzenni’s introduction, these stories “reveal what these women were subjected to in terms of suffering, torture, exclusion, and mistreatment only because fate had chosen them to be daughters, sisters, mothers or spouses of political opponents of the state” (p. 3). Herzenni acknowledges that these women belonged to the marginalized Morocco and asserts that their stories would have remained unknown if it were not for the ERC teams that unearthed, recorded, and made them available in the public archives of political detention.

The five women tell the story of the long-term effects of political detention on Moroccan women. For instance, Ḥafīḍa, a woman from Nador in northern Morocco, was subjected to myriad forms of mistreatment starting from 1984, when her husband was arrested because of his political activities (p. 5). This mother of three found herself alone, raising three children with no help or support. Another woman named Izza was the wife of one of the prisoners disappeared to Tazmamart in the aftermath of the 1971 coup d’état. The participation of her husband in the coup ruined Izza’s life. Khadija, a woman from the Middle Atlas region, was a victim of opportunity when she was arrested and falsely accused by the Moroccan army of aiding the rebels during the March 3rd, 1973 events. Despite her illiteracy and lack of any political history, Khadija was detained and mistreated for months.  

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The fourth woman whose story is included in this section is named Ummī Ḥlima, and she is the mother of an unnamed former political detainee from Casablanca. Tūda is the subject of the fifth and final story. Only aged three when she was arrested in 1973, the police spared Tūda no physical abuse because they thought they could coerce her to reveal the whereabouts of her father who was involved in the aborted rebellion of March 3, 1973. As a result of constant torture, Tūda became handicapped in one of her legs forever.

These five stories have as a common denominator, the harsh mistreatment of women at the hands of security forces. Immediately after her husband’s arrest, Ḥafīḍa was “subjected to beating, interrogation, and illegal detention” (p. 8). Although Izza was spared arrest and physical violence, she and her children were not spared midnight visits by the soldiers after the coup d’état in 1971. Frightened and traumatized by the arrival of the soldiers, Izza “understood nothing” (p.11). Despite the fact that Izza had four children and was pregnant with a fifth, the soldiers still used their harsh methods to frighten them (p. 11). In Khadija’s case, state violence took both sexual and physical forms. She declares to the interviewers that:

In most nights, I would be raped by at least three to four different soldiers. My body was full of cicatrices, scratches, and wounds. I didn’t own it anymore. They had stolen it from me and it had become their property. Because I was unable to clean myself after each rape due to lack of water in the cells, I had sharp sores in my uterus. (p. 16)

For more than two weeks, Khadija endured rape at the hand of the soldiers despite her miserable condition, which led to a hysterectomy or removal of her infected uterus. Like Khadija, Tūda was arrested in a mountainous region, which might have emboldened the soldiers to mistreat her and her family. Tūda “remember[s] very well the image of the soldiers as they were beating and torturing [her] mother” (p. 29). Tūda tells her interviewers that “the soldiers assaulted me and my siblings physically, and they were tortured in front of my mother’s eyes in order to pressure her and force her to reveal my father’s whereabouts” (p. 29). Tūda then addresses her interviewers that they probably “observed that I am handicapped in one of my legs and that I don’t walk in a natural way like the rest of the girls” before revealing that the “soldiers used to hoist me on one of my legs and leave me
“hanging” to pressure the mother to divulge the location of the father, which she did not know (p. 30). As these four cases show, state-sponsored violence during the Years of Lead was meted out to women and children and ranged from physical violence to sexual assault, which left its long-term sequelae on its victims.

Social isolation was a corollary of state violence (El Guabli, 2018). Surveillance and intimidation were equally torturous for these women. Surveillance isolated women and their children and undermined their ability to retaliate. Each one of these five women discloses how the police was deployed to deprive families of a sense of belonging to a group. Ḥafīḍa declares that she was “put under constant police surveillance, which contributed to [her] marginalization by society” (p. 8). In addition to her ongoing geographic peripheralization, police surveillance further isolated her from society. In Halima’s case, both her neighbors and relatives “avoided any contact with [her] because of fear of being persecuted” (p. 6). Because of the myriad forms of abuse that Izza’s family was subjected to by the soldiers, “none of the neighbors dared to come close to [them]. They were terrorized as they were hearing the screaming and shouting, thus our torture and isolation started to increase” (p. 11). Even though they were children, Tūda and her siblings were subjected to surveillance while their mother remained in custody. Tūda told her interviewers that “the house in which she and her siblings were left after the arrest of [their] mother was under constant surveillance by soldiers who were interrogating [them] every day” (p. 30). Tūda’s child testimony here not only helps us to understand her experience of the mental and physical mistreatment meted to her, but also to have an idea about the mistreatment of her mother and her siblings whose testimonies were not included in this booklet.

Once torture and surveillance shattered the sanctity of women’s physical and mental integrity and severed their connections with society, the resumption of a normal life was impossible. The five women interviewed in this booklet give us a clear example of the far-reaching sequelae of state violence in Morocco. However, while stigma can be overcome or forgotten with time, the impact state violence had on children could never be reversed. After the arrest of their father, Ḥalīma’s children left school and became street vendors to help support the family (p. 4). The destruction of her children’s future emboldened
Ḩalīma to question the criteria used to determine reparations and point out how the system was detrimental to women and children (p. 8). Other children were more fortunate, as Izza’s children finished their education. Still, Izza and Ḩafiḍa experienced the inequitable reparation process when their respective husbands remarried and moved on with their lives after their release from jail. Ḩalīma waited for her husband for ten years whereas Izza waited twenty-two years, but both husbands used the reparation funds they received from the state to rebuild their lives with younger wives, away from their first wives and children. One such irreversible consequence of political detention is Khadija’s loss of her uterus as a result of an infection due to her serial rape by soldiers throughout the period of her detention. Comparing her suffering to the amount of compensation that might be disbursed to her by the ERC, Khadija wonders rhetorically: “no matter the amount, would it be able to repair damage done to me? Would it repair the isolation that I live in? Would it restitute the strength of my vision that waned as a result of my suffering? Would the compensation restitute my health and my uterus that was removed and thrown in the trash? Would money buy me the sentiment of motherhood?” (p. 19). Khadija’s poignant questions show that the impact of state violence on women has far reaching effects that neither reparations nor public hearings could heal. Only history can carry these questions into the future in order to prevent the repetition of this violence.

Only loss could describe the absence of these stories from the Moroccan academic historians’ debates of the history of the present. Moroccan historiography self-inflicted multiple types of loss due to its oversight of Moroccan women. First, Moroccan historiography could have delved into gendered-aspects of the history of state violence in post-1956 Morocco. Second, work on these women’s testimonies and their survival strategies as historical actors could have contributed to the emergence of a subaltern, women’s history out of the endeavor to Moroccanize the history of the present. Third, close analysis of these testimonies from a historical perspective could have honed the methodological approaches that Moroccan historians sought to define. The opportunity offered by the fact that these women were still alive while historians’ conversations were taking place was not capitalized upon, thereby omitting gendered concerns from the reform of Moroccan historiography.
2.2. *Sisterhood forged in common struggle*

A recurrent theme of Moroccan women’s testimonies about their struggle was the formation of strong sisterly bonds among women. These bonds brought together women from diverse social backgrounds to support each other in opposing the state’s political imprisonment policies. This sisterly solidarity taught the women activist strategies and techniques while also inscribing their struggle in a larger context of human rights and democratization in the country. Ummī Ḥlima’s integration into the world of families of political detainees started with her discovery that she was not alone; on the contrary, other Moroccan families suffered from the disappearance or imprisonment of their relatives (p. 22). Ummī Ḥlima vowed to “no longer [be] that obedient mother” (p. 23). Unlike the isolated women whose stories I discussed in the previous section, Ummī Ḥlima found in other families of political prisoners a family, a community; “they provided each other with support, solidarity and invaluable help” (p. 22). In her turn, Khadija Menebhi (2000), the wife of a political detainee and the sister of two political prisoners, extols her relationship with Evelyne Serfaty, Abraham Serfaty’s sister, and Jocelyne Laâbi, the spouse of Abdellatif Laâbi while their male relatives were in jail or in hiding. Jocelyne’s and Evelyne’s presence in Menebhi’s life was such that she has written that “[w]ith you, two, I had my first experience of the world and friendship” (p. 48). Alluding to the famous political disagreements between the Marxist-Leninist prisoners in Kénitra, Menebhi writes that women learnt “thanks to these years of struggle to become morally independent from their husbands,” (p. 49) thus forging solidarities that were not contingent on their male relatives’ relationships. These sisterly solidarities also provided women with space for disagreement and disagreement.

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9 Her husband is Abdelaziz Loudiy, a former Marxist-Leninist activist, who was sentenced to and served ten years in jail from 1973 to 1983 for his political activism.
10 Although Laâbi and Loudiy were arrested in 1973, Abraham Serfaty went into hiding and was only arrested in 1974. However, his sister Evelyne was already targeted by the police in order to force her to reveal his whereabouts.
11 Former Moroccan Marxist-Leninists had deep disagreements in prison about the future of their secret organization *Ilā al-Amām*. Divided into two camps, between those who wanted to revive the organization in prison and those who saw no point in such endeavor, these disagreements turned into internecine wars between former colleagues (Fakihani, 2005).
intellectual growth within the crucible of struggle against the incarcerating state.

Rabat and central prisons shaped this sisterhood despite the geographical distance that separated the different regions which the detainees hailed from. Rabat, the administrative capital of Morocco, became the center where women from all over Morocco met with each other. Ummī Ḥlima discusses her evolution within the movement of families of political prisoners:

I started traveling to Rabat regularly to meet families of other political prisoners. I started to participate in the protests and other forms of mobilization. I also started to participate in marches and demonstrations alongside all the mothers whose children were imprisoned illegally. One of these times, we stormed into the office of the American Consulate. We addressed letters to different human rights organizations and to newspapers. We executed a sit-in in front of the minister and presented petitions and demands. (p. 23)

Daouia Mouchtari (2005), the sister of Marxist-Leninist prisoner Bel Abbes Mouchtari, has also discussed the significance of this sisterhood. Focusing specifically on women’s action in the mobilization to push the Moroccan state to release their brothers and husbands, Daouia says that “the mothers, spouses and sisters of political prisoners undertook numerous actions” to pressure the state to release them (p. 126). In detailing the actions undertaken to ensure the freedom of the prisoners, Daouia uses the first-person plural “we,” which indicates the collective nature of Moroccan women’s action to put an end to political detention. These women in Daouia’s words:

...campaigned to make their just demands known to the international public opinion. We organized sit-ins in front of mosques, the parliament, the ministry of justice, the penitentiary administration and the central prison in Kénitra. We also occupied the headquarters of the UN in Rabat. (p. 126)

However, this sisterhood was also forged in physical suffering and psychological intimidation. As a result of their deep involvement in the families’ movement, some of the mothers, wives and sisters were
subjected to “intimidation, aggression, and detention” to use the words of Ummī Hlima (Up. 23).

A history of the present that does not delve into these sisterly solidarities and their significance for the making of political change possible in Morocco would be lacking in many regards. Moroccan women were the catalyzer of a unique social movement that was almost entirely formed of families from underprivileged classes of society. The historical significance of their involvement in protests and human rights activism shows that history was not always driven by famous or important figures but, in fact, rather by ordinary women who overcame many hurdles in order to make a profound statement against authoritarianism and its political detention during the Years of Lead. Furthermore, the history of the present could use these women’s testimonies to rethink how these sisterly solidarities created alternative communities that replaced the interrupted local social networks these women and their families lost as a result of state surveillance. Furthermore, the history of the present could examine the conditions that make illiterate women and downtrodden members of society historical agents that influence and drive the course of history. When we know that women, including mothers, wives, and sisters of the prisoners, represented ninety-nine percent of the movement (30 août, n.d.), a genuine historiography of the present cannot but probe the stories of these women and their historical significance.

2.3. Liberation and coerced modernity through struggle against State violence

One of the counterintuitive results of political violence against women in Morocco is the acceleration of women’s access to modernity—a violent modernity indeed. Hailing mostly from traditional families, many of these women never left their homes without the company of their husbands or male relatives. However, the imprisonment of these male relatives set their social modernity through spatial mobility and sartorial liberation. While this enforced modernity was born out of violence, it is important to think about the different ways in which violence changed women’s status in Moroccan society. Much has been written about shame and ḥshūma felt by women in their testimonies about their experiences of state violence (Slyomovics, 2005; Menin, 2014). Yet much remains to be said about the modernities that
Moroccan women were obliged to embrace because of state violence and the courage they developed to narrate histories of violence as a result of these experiences.

The shift of gender roles is one result of this forced modernity. While some women already had jobs and enjoyed a privileged status in society before the arrest and disappearance of their spouses, others had no choice but to join the labor force in order to support their families. For instance, Aïda Hachad (2004) was already a pharmacist before the arrest of her husband, Salah Hachad, but Kalima El Ouafi only started working after her husband’s arrest and disappearance to Tazmamart (El Ouafi, 2004, p. 117). However, for women from more traditional backgrounds the arrest of the male relatives left them no other options but to work and make a living (CNDH, 2008, p. 6). Noureddine Saoudi (2005) has captured the transformative nature of this coerced modernity in writing that through their mobilization “in the meantime, these women were, without being fully conscious, actors and objects of a profound social transformation, of a huge emancipation, within the family as well as in society at large” (p. 9).12 Overnight, women from villages and conservative social backgrounds found themselves being breadwinners in their families and facing the police force and state agents in a male-dominated society. Thus, state violence did not only force women to leave the house, but also brought changes to their dress code (p. 9). Finally, this modernity born out of violence made these women uphold their humanity and affirm themselves “as full citizens” (p. 9). This citizenship, which was also shaped by testimony and sustaining the memory of the disappeared and their relatives, entrenched the culture of human rights in Morocco and forged the path forward toward the reforms the country would witness in the 2000s.

12 Although scholarship and observers may use words like “emancipation” and “modernity” to describe the changes imposed upon ordinary women, these women themselves only remember violence and suffering. Even the ERC describes the impact of this violent modernity in these terms: state violence “burdened them with responsibilities and challenges that they were not prepared for or anticipated in the majority of cases, which resulted in anxiety, lack of security and trust as well as loss of the habitual landmarks in their lives” (Hay’at al-inṣāf wal-muṣālaḥa (Book1), 2006, 93).
3. If It Is Not in History, It Is Doomed to Be Repeated

One of the crucial recommendations in the ERC’s final report is a series of measures to prevent state violence from being repeated in the future. Under the title “Democratic Transition: Memory and the Writing of History,” the drafters of the final report highlight the significance of the public hearings in creating an archive and contributing to the rewriting of the Moroccan history (Book 4, 2006, p. 60). Moreover, the report details the transformations that took place in Morocco and which facilitated rewriting the country’s recent past (pp. 60-61). This section on history is followed by some important conclusions about political violence and “Recommendations to Avoid Violence,” in which history figures prominently as a bulwark against violence. The report clearly indicates that during the ERC process Morocco witnessed “a period of historical consciousness because the state admits [to] the violations committed in the past and the violence that was practiced during that period” (p. 64). Furthermore, the report also underlines the fact that “talk about the violations of the past existed in the literature of many organizations as well as in the writings of the victims and the newspapers of the opposition” (p. 64). What is interesting in these two sections of the report is the connection they establish between history and the prevention of political violence in the future. Likewise, Book 1 of the ERC’s final report stresses the public hearings’ “education and pedagogical role” in reconciling Moroccans with their state, thus framing historical knowledge about the past violations of human rights as a condition for the preclusion of human rights violations in the future (p. 109). Although this confirms the core importance of history and historiographical research to ERC’s decisions about non-repetition of state violence (Binyūb & Būrdīrqā, p. 357), it also raises the no-less-important-question related to the impact of Moroccan academic historians’ disregard of women in their endeavors to indigenize a Moroccan version of the history of the present.

Specifically, because of the centrality of history for ending the repetition of violence in the future, the absence of Moroccan women in historiographical discourses about the history of the present is problematic. In a society in which women are not treated as equal to men and in a context in which patriarchy and misogyny predominate, Moroccan historians’ ignorance of women’s contribution to the political, intellectual and social transformations that took place in
Morocco starting in the early 1990s does not do justice to women’s struggles. This ignorance of women by historians rather prevents future generations of Moroccans from appreciating the sacrifices of women that made theirs a better present. History, unlike any other discipline, is linked to the identity of a society, and it is through history that people learn about their heroes, founding myths, and the shared ethos that bond them together. By overlooking Moroccan women and excluding them from the history of the present in the discussions that took place between 2004 and 2007, Moroccan historiography forsook a rare opportunity to place women at the heart of public and academic attention. Accounting for Moroccan women’s experiences and survival of state violence would have placed their testimonies at the center of the discussions and would have been an important stride toward the unsettling of misogyny and patriarchy. By examining how women were kidnapped, deprived of their rights, denied the most rudimentary needs for hygiene during imprisonment, threatened, raped, and resisted torture, and braved all these challenges to assert their humanity and status as citizens, future generations of Moroccans would translate female co-citizens from the peripheries of Moroccan society to its center. As the wisdom goes, those who ignore their past are doomed to repeat it, and forms of daily violence against women in Morocco today are linked to the ignorance of the central role women played in the collective liberation throughout the Years of Lead.

4. Conclusion

In this article I have argued that Moroccan women have been left out of the history of the present. Despite the existence of women’s testimonies of state violence during the Years of Lead, Moroccan academic historians overlooked them during their debates about this new branch of history. I have also shown how Moroccan women used testimonies to write their own present time. Moroccan housewives, mothers, wives, and sisters wrote their stories of state violence in meticulous detail. These women’s narratives about state violence inscribed Moroccan women from all regions and social backgrounds into the cartography of the nation. While disappearance, as Fatna El Bouih (2001) has written, deleted women from the map of the nation (p. 21), testimony placed them at the core of the new cartography that they redesigned and redrew through their struggles against authoritarianism during the Years of Lead. Even as Moroccan historians were rethinking the methodologies
of their discipline in the absence of a gender-conscious approach to the present time, women were both making the present by being part of human rights movements and writing their history in the present tense by inundating the public sphere with their testimonial narratives. Moroccan historiography is today faced with the challenge of revisiting its approaches again to include gender as a crucial component of a more inclusive and gender-aware tārīkh al-zaman al-rāhin.

Finally, I have shown that Moroccan women’s testimonies of experiences of state violence offer the possibility to study various forms of sisterly solidarities, coerced modernities, and social transformations through the prism of women’s struggle as social and historical actors who led a social movement that made history. Historians of the present could also investigate how gender consciousness among women emerged from the practice of activism within the public sphere rather than from university benches. It has been over a decade since ERC submitted its report, and it is high time Moroccan historians’ debates about the history of the present were revisited to further investigate what else was forgotten or excluded from these discussions.

References


Sexual Harassment against Waitresses in Morocco: A Case Study of El Jadida

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the growing problem of sexual harassment in Morocco. It particularly focuses on the sexual harassment perpetrated on waitresses in Moroccan cafés. The findings of this study are grounded on qualitative data collected from El Jadida cafés where 25 informants were interviewed. The respondents included 10 waitresses, 10 male café clients, and 5 café managers. The major aim of the study is to explore the nature and extent of sexual harassment against waitresses, delve into the micro and macro socio-economic structures which contribute to it, and find about the attitudes of the victims as well as of their male harassers. Most importantly, the study addresses the frequently taken for granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations which reproduce, sustain, and normalize sexual harassment against women in the workplace.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, waitresses, cafés, gender-based violence, Moroccan culture

0. Introduction

Sexual harassment is a rampant form of gender-based violence which affects women across culture, class, race and geographical region. It is defined as any utterance, performance, display of words, or gestures that intend to sexually tempt or coerce women into a sexual act. Sexual
harassment includes forms of behavioral patterns such as sexual teasing, jokes, comments or unwanted pressure for sexual favour or date. Yusuf (2010) contends that sexual harassment encompasses intimidation, bullying or coercion which is unsolicited or welcome by a victim. Shefield (1987) and Stanko (1988) define sexual harassment as deliberate, repeated or unwelcome verbal comments, unwanted pressure for sexual attention imposed by the manager in organizations resulting from work related relationships.

Katharine (2002) observes that sexual harassment occurs in the workplace or in other work-related environments and it is a flagrant violation of the fundamental human rights of women. According to Boland (2005), there are at least two recognized types of workplace sexual harassment. One type is called ‘quid pro quo’, and includes a situation in which employment benefits are conditioned upon certain sexual favors. The second type is called a ‘hostile work environment,’ in which the severe or pervasive conduct causes a hostile, intimidating, or offensive work environment. Both of these types have psychological effects on women regardless of their age, social background, and disability; therefore, their morale becomes inevitably weak and their productivity shrinks. There is, indeed, a consensus among scholars and gender activists that sexual harassment at work is a “gender expression of power” (Uggen & Backstone, 2004). In all its dimensions, this form of violence against women threatens women’s mobility, curbs their participation in the public domain and limits the practice of their full citizenship.

As such, sexual harassment falls within the broader framework of gender-based violence which the UN’s Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women (CEDAW) defines as any act of “violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. In this vein, feminists and human rights activists highlight certain ways in which sexual harassment is sustained by a deeply rooted patriarchal gender system that discriminates against women and favors “a dominant normative form of masculinity” (Uggen & Blackstones, 2004).
This paper endeavors to explore sexual harassment in the work place within a Moroccan context. Particularly, the study focuses on the sexual harassment which is perpetrated on waitresses in cafés in El Jadida. The main research questions raised in this study include how do waitresses define sexual harassment? What are the forms of such harassment? Who are the harassers? How do waitresses react to such harassment? How do male clients view sexual harassment against waitresses? The paper is structured into three main sections. The first section provides a review of the literature. The second section presents a description of the methodology used in data collection. And the third section is devoted to the findings and discussion.

1. Review of the Literature

Sexual harassment remains a serious worldwide problem. 42-50% of female workers have been sexually harassed in developed countries, 40-50% in the European Union, 30-40% in Asia-Pacific, and 77% in South Africa (ITUC, 2008). A recent American report on sexual harassment in the restaurant industry found out that 90% of female restaurant workers have experienced sexual harassment on the job. The report found out that 2/3 of women in the field reported being harassed by their managers, 69% faced sexual teasing or lewd comments perpetrated by co-workers, and 78% reported harassment from customers. More than half of the harassed women said it occurred on at least a weekly basis (Marcotte, 2014).

Reporting on the nature of sexual harassment, Benninger and Lacroix (1994) state that sexual harassment:

- May assume the form of physical contacts, remarks and jokes with a sexual connotation, unwelcome invitations, exhibition of pornographic material or physical aggression. For the victim, the physical and psychological consequences are manifold: depression, insomnia, excessive smoking, eating and sleeping disorders. (p. 164)

In many countries, sexual harassment is not legally codified as a criminal offence. It may, however, be regarded as a penal offence when it assumes violations of moral codes, such as indecent exposure in public. Nevertheless, in view of the scope of this cross-geographical phenomenon, an increasing number of governments have adopted laws
explicitly condemning sexual harassment in the work place. Besides, this form of violence is increasingly addressed in some labour codes, laws on sexual discrimination and company regulations.

However, the number of women who denounce perpetrators of sexual harassment at work is very low. This may be due to the imbalanced professional power relationship between the male perpetrator and the female victim. Indeed, it is known that sexual harassment on the part of a man who is hierarchically superior to the victim is usually not reported for fear of dismissal or other reprisals. Within the Moroccan Penal Code, article 503-1 stipulates that:

Any person who uses threats, means of coercion or any other means, exploiting the powers conferred upon him by his functions for purposes of a sexual nature, shall be punished with imprisonment from one to two years and a fine of five thousand to fifty thousand dirhams.

Morocco’s commitment to fight sexual harassment in public places is also stressed by the enactment of an anti-sexual harassment law on September 12, 2018 after years of efforts to get it passed. This new law guarantees protection for women who report sexual harassment, and imposes fines and even prison sentences (ranging from one to six months) against anyone convicted of sexual harassment in the public sphere. It is the first time that Moroccan women will have legal pathways to seek justice from such behaviour. Commenting on this law, Bassima Hakkaoui, the country’s minister for women’s issues told the official Maghreb Arabe Presse news agency that the new law is “one of the most important texts strengthening the national legal arsenal in the area of equality of the sexes” (as cited in O’Grady, 2018).

However, the problem is that the victims still find it very difficult to provide solid evidence if they opt for suing their harassers. Consequently, the perpetrators are left unpunished in most cases. What adds insult to injury is that women victims are culturally hindered to stand against their harassers; this is because some people tend to put the blame on the harassed rather than on the harasser. If a woman dares to denounce her harasser, she is likely to face some reprimanding questions, such as “why did you speak back? or “what were you wearing at that time?” A survey conducted by Promundo, a gender justice non-profit organization, found that 72% of Moroccan men
surveyed would blame the victim of harassment if she was dressed “provocatively”; 78% of women shared that view, and 71% of men believe that women enjoy being sexual harassed (Selby, 2017). It has also been found that most women believe that disclosure of sexual harassment may jeopardize their honour and reputation, or it may lead them to lose their job (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, 2000).

According to a field survey on sexual harassment in Morocco, conducted by l’Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), 40 out of 63 women were sexually harassed in public sectors. The perpetrators were employers, senior executives and members of parliament. The study revealed that only 15% of the victims had the courage to denounce their tormentors, transgressing a set of barriers that construct gender (Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité, 1994). It is perhaps not surprising to support the view of Malika El-Fekkak, who has pointed out that sexual harassment is an increasing phenomenon which haunts Moroccan women in both public and private spheres (El Fakkak, 1999, p. 4). Such a view is also proved by the Moroccan Association for Women’s Rights, which argued that 56.46% of women employees experienced sexual harassment at work. This percentage concerned married women (56, 26%); single women (37.50%); divorced women (4.16%); and widowed women (2.08%) (Association Marocaine pour les Droits des Femmes, 2000, pp. 42-43). In brief, the sexual harassment plight is suffered by all women regardless of their family status, social stratum, or educational level.

Even mentally disabled women are not immune from sexual abuse; a case in point is the incident of a mentally handicapped young girl who got gang raped on a public bus in Casablanca. The barbaric act went viral on August 20th, 2017 showing four boys (aged 15 to 17 years) forcibly undressing the woman and forcing themselves on her while others cheered them on amid a burst of laughter and shouting. Though the rapists were arrested immediately after the release of the video, the heinous crime reignited a heated public debate on violence against women, occurring in public places and in front of citizens’ eyes without moving a finger. International media condemned the sexual crime and reported that it is exactly these sorts of incidents that anti-immigration hawks in Europe and the United States cite as justification for limiting the flow of young male refugees from predominately Muslim countries.
(Qazvini, 2017). However, we think that gang rape has no specific culture, race or class; it can happen anywhere in the West as well as in the East; therefore, such an orientalist discourse by western media will only fuel racism and Islamophobia.

The fact that no woman is immune from sexual harassment is empirically testified by Nidal Chebbak who conducted a qualitative study on sexual harassment in Moroccan streets in 2013. Chebbak concluded that all women are susceptible victims, including those wearing the ‘niqab’. A woman informant told Chebbak (2013) about her experience with street sexual harassment:

   At first I was harassed every time I went out; sometimes it was awful and just too much to bear. Then I wore the hijab and thought now that I’m a bit covered and more modest in the way I dressed, harassment would stop or at least diminish, but it didn’t. Then, I felt all guilty about it and was wondering maybe it’s me I’m not well covered and maybe I’m a source of fitna (sedition) and felt very bad about it. I decided to wear the full niqab, no more colors, and no more clothes that show the figure. I felt and still feel very good at peace with my decision, but I would lie if I say that harassment stopped. I still get the harassing gazes and the harassing words about my eyes (though my face was covered). But at least, I feel that it isn’t my fault.

Sexual harassment in public sectors aims to systematically hinder working women from competing with men in the workforce. As Rosemary Pringle puts it, “sexual harassment functions particularly to keep women out of non-traditional occupations and to reinforce their secondary status in the workplace” (Pringle, 1993, p. 283). As such, it betrays one of the many prejudices and stereotypes upon which patriarchal ideology is based. In other words, by using sexual harassment as a weapon, men tend to redeem for some defects and weaknesses in their ability for competition.

In effect, many victims, particularly those who are not armed adequately with a special awareness of their rights as workers find themselves forced to leave their work, especially when their tormentors are in higher positions such as a boss, a director or a manager. A case in point is K.L., who reported to Al-Bayane newspaper:
I used to work in a big textile company. I had worked there for many years, but I was obliged to leave my job because of my boss’s nonstop sexual harassment. He had been treating me like a bitch, using all coercive means to make me succumb to his beastly sexual drives …. He had caused so much pain to me with continual indecent behaviours that I’m ashamed to tell you. (Naji, 1998, p. 2)

Whether it occurs in public or private places, sexual harassment remains a serious violation of women’s rights that has its physical and psychological outcomes. Being quite aware of this, women’s NGO’s and human rights associations work cross-culturally to fight the plague. Within the Moroccan context, for instance, centers of women’s legal and psychological orientations have been opened in Rabat and Casablanca for this purpose. These centers not only receive, assist and orient women victims of sexual harassment and other forms of violence, but they also carry out field studies, convene conferences and organize workshops on violence against women and how to eliminate it. The concluding idea was that reinforcing the law alone against the perpetrators would not be an effective measure to whittle away sexual abuse. Indeed, priority should be given to citizens’ consciousness raising on the danger of those negative ‘representations’ and other stereotypically fossilized attitudes which sexualize any relationship between men and women.

One form of public sexual harassment which is growing rapidly in Morocco is the one perpetrated on waitresses. The latter are usually sexually harassed by male clients, co-workers, managers or café owners. What is worse is that waitresses often put up with this phenomenon because they feel obliged to safeguard their job. If they complain, they are more likely to get fired. Café owners often take sides with a client rather than a waitress. In her study on sexual harassment against waitresses, Laila Amzir concludes that the number of women who work in Moroccan cafés is increasing year after year. Those women are always working with a smile even if they are facing harassment attitudes during their work. According to Amzir, these women are sexually harassed because, in the public view, they have broken a social taboo in search of decent work. They have no other option better than bearing harassment because they know they will lose their job if they complain (Amzir, 2014).
Amzir’s study finds out that café owners often hire beautiful young women as an effective marketing strategy to attract male customers. For Amzir, some café owners decorate their cafés with luxurious furniture and recruit young girls to boost profit. However, Amzir confirms that these low-paid waitresses are sexually harassed on a daily basis. Male clients often give them tips and flirt with them. One of Amzir’s informants stated that waitresses “are only seen as a body for customers to look at.” Another respondent added that “most café owners are aware of the sexual harassment their waitresses face daily, but these owners remain silent as long as business is running well”.

2. Methodology
This study is based on qualitative data collected through the method of semi-structured interviewing. 25 respondents were interviewed during a period that lasted up to 1 hour 30 minutes. 10 respondents were waitresses, 10 were male customers, and 5 were café managers. We preferred to include different variables to get a holistic data that would allow us to better understand the problem of sexual harassment form different perspectives, and hence steer clear of biased data.

All the respondents were from El Jadida city and were interviewed in 10 cafés. Some waitresses were interviewed after work and others during the short breaks when they were not on service. I targeted only the cafés where there was at least one waitress. I had to sit as a customer and after getting served I explained to the waitresses my real objective behind my being in the café. Those who accepted to cooperate were asked to choose the suitable time to start the interview. Some of them told me to come another day. As for the male clients and café owners, they accepted to cooperate on the spot. I think this is because they did not see sexual harassment as a sensitive issue for them.

3. Findings and Discussion
3.1. Defining sexual harassment
All the 10 interviewed waitresses defined sexual harassment (taharrush al jinsi) as the act of imposing certain behavior upon them. This behavior included, winkling, catcalling, touching, pinching, stroking, leering, gazing and other more sexually inviting conducts, such as

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1 For more information, visit this page: https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/features
inviting the waitress to sit with the client, asking for her phone number or a date. The phrase ‘they come to flirt’ (kayjio bash iffellawo) was mentioned by almost all the waitresses in their attempt to give a brief definition to sexual harassment. One waitress said, “some men come to cafés to flirt with us.” She added that men’s flirting (tfelya) could take a verbal form (lohan lhadra), or a physical form like touching or fondling.

Abdellatif, 56 years old, a café manager said that sexual harassment against waitresses is indeed a growing phenomenon. He revealed that over the 10 years of working as a café manager, he had witnessed various forms of sexual harassment against his waitresses. The most common of all these was asking the waitress to give her phone number after receiving the tip. Sometimes, Abdellatif added, the tip reaches up to MAD 200. Boujama, another café manager told me that sexual harassment against waitresses “has become a common practice” (had shi wella ‘adi). He explained that there are at least three forms of sexual harassment against waitresses: direct harassment, indirect harassment, and go-between harassment. The first form is a face-to-face practice when the harasser speaks directly to the harassed; the second form happens when the harasser leaves his phone number along with a good tip on the table; the third form occurs when the harasser employs another person to reach the victim. In most cases, the go-between is a woman co-worker.

The male clients I interviewed gave a variety of answers to the question “how would you define sexual harassment against waitresses?” Some of the definitions entail asking the waitress (serbaya) for her phone number, asking her for a date, touching her, winking at her, asking for her name or other personal information, saying that she is beautiful or other flirting words. Brahim, a 25 year-old man and a regular café-goer, said that he had never sexually harassed a waitress in his life, but he stressed that he preferred to go to cafés where there were waitresses. When I asked about the reason for his preference, he replied that the service of the girls was better and “one can gaze at their beauty” (lwahed isqi ‘winatu). Brahim’s last sentence is in fact a stark verbal harassment that he was not quite aware of.

Ahmed, Reda and Youssef maintained that some waitresses contributed to their harassment. The three men thought that “the tight jeans the waitresses wear, the make-up they use, and the way they talk do
encourage us to flirt with them; the more inviting and flirtatious they are, the more tips they get.” To confirm the validity of what Ahmed, Reda and Youssef said to me, I asked the two waitresses Amal and Imane why they wore tight jeans and thick make-up at work; they responded that they did so because they wanted to gain more tips. The fact that waitresses, compared to their male partners, get more tips was confirmed to me by some café owners who explained that the weekly wage of a waiter is (MAD 250-500), while a waitress gets a wage of MAD 200-400 a week. The lower wage of the waitress is justified by the fact that she gets more tips than the waiter.

3.2. Most pervading forms of sexual harassment

The informant waitresses were asked about which type of sexual harassment they encountered most frequently at work. The majority responded that they faced verbal sexual harassment almost on a daily basis. Some examples of the harassment they experienced entailed the fact that some male customers (harassers) left their phone numbers on the table along with a good tip. A waitress told me that one client left his cell phone number written on a note of MAD 200. Other examples of verbal/psychological harassment included the fact that some clients forced the waitresses into talking about things out of the working context. Another prominent example was asking them for their cell phone numbers. The most prominent form was when the customer tried to flirt by smiling at the waitresses or ‘throwing words’ (luhan lhadra) about their physical appearance. Words and phrases such as how are you my beautiful? (fin a zin), can’t we have a rendez-vous? (manshufuksh), can I have your phone number? (mat ‘tinash namra?), etc.

Zineb, who left school 5 years ago and started working as a waitress, told me that verbal harassment was the most prevailing form in cafés. She added that the waitress should know how to deal with it, or she would face a problem with the café owner. “The café owner”, Zineb stressed, “will always take sides with the customer so as not to lose him.” This finding was confirmed by most waitresses and even some café managers who explained that “if an incident of this kind takes place in the café, we need to handle the problem wisely to please both the customer and the waitress.” Jelloul, who has been running a café in
Hay Essalam in El Jadida for 15 years, told me that he would always defend the waitress if a client harassed her (tbassel ‘liha).

Fatima, 22 years old, reported that most of the harassment she encountered was verbal; she explained that “those who harass must have problems with their wives, and they come to release their fury and sexual dissatisfaction in us (ifārghu fina)”. She concluded that “because the customer “pays MAD 7 for a cup of coffee, he wants to profit from every moment he spends in the café.” Fatima went on explaining that she oftentimes received harassing calls from unknown men. They asked her for a date; when she refused, they got angry and shouted at her. Some of the harassing callers would come to the café and cause trouble to her. They would for example complain to the manager about the poor quality of the service, make her redo the order, or leave without tipping.

Imane, 28 years old, recounted a painful story that happened to her when she was working in a previous café:

I was kicked out of my job as a result of resisting the sexual harassment of a male client. He was harassing me on a daily basis; he did everything to make me accept his offer; he wanted to have my cell phone number. I always refused to give it to him. When all his attempts failed, he took revenge in a cowardly manner. One day, he complained to the café owner and told him that I didn’t give him his change. He also told him I sometimes charged him more than the normal price.

Imane’s story with verbal sexual harassment leading to grave consequences like losing the job is only one example. Other examples have to do with the harassment of the manager himself. In this situation, the victim has only two choices; she has to endure the manager’s harassment or leave the job. It was found that most of the victims chose to endure rather than lose their job; as one respondent puts it, “We are obliged to tolerate what is happening to us to maintain our or job, our source of living.”

3.3. Who Are the Harassers?

According to the data gleaned from the researched waitresses, the harassers were male clients, co-workers, and managers. The café clients had the lion’s share in harassing. Most respondents underscored that their harassers belonged to different walks of life, age groups, and
marital statuses. Halima, 27 years old, commented on her harassers thus: “all male café goers would flirt with me if they had the opportunity.” She explained that men of all ages would harass her: “even the man with a walking cane” (hta rajel bel’ukkaz kaytharresh). Halima’s last sentence shows that the harassers belong to all age groups, ranging from teenagers, to adults, to old men. However, Fatima and Amal stressed that most of the harassers were adults. This category was more likely to commit sexual harassment because, according to Fatima and Amal, adults were frequent café clients. Sara, a 25 years-old- waitress said that “when a man comes to the café almost every day, he builds up a friendly rapport with me; this encourages him to start flirting with me.”

Amal recounted a sad story about the sexual harassment of her manager who started harassing her from the first day she started work in his café. He went on harassing her till she gave up. He promised that he would marry her once his financial situation was settled. The result was an illegitimate pregnancy that ruined Amal’s life because the manager not only broke his promise, but he fired her as well. Amal concluded her story thus:

My first manager ruined my life and future; I have been working as a waitress since then; no one would marry a woman with an illegitimate son; my relationship with my parents and brothers is very bad because of what happened to me. They say I brought shame and disgrace to the family. No one wanted to understand I was very young at that time. I was like an easy prey for my assaulter.

Amal’s case is indeed one example of those naive girls who drop out of school because of poverty and they start working as waitresses or maids to help their families. The results are often dramatic; these girls are most likely to suffer sexual harassment at work. The fact that working women in general and waitresses in particular are vulnerable to sexual harassment within the working environment was empirically confirmed by the International Trade Union Conference (ITUC) in 2008. The ITUC found that sexual harassment can be perpetrated by colleagues, supervisors, managers or clients, and it usually takes the form of suggestive remarks and requests for sexual favours and comprising invitations (ITUC, 2008).
3.4. Waitresses’ reaction to sexual harassment

When asked about their reactions after getting sexually harassed, the waitresses gave various answers:

- I put up with the sexual harassment incidents I face every day.
- I have no choice but tolerate it because I need the job.
- If I react against my harassers, my boss will fire me and find another girl who is willing to allure more clients.
- I once reprimanded a client for forcing me to give him my phone number, but my manager didn’t like the way I defended myself.
- In this job, we have no right to complain against the harassing clients.
- If you ‘open your mouth about it’ (if you complain), the client won’t tip you, and the boss may fire you.
- The customer is always right even when they make you feel uncomfortable.
- Our tips depend on how tight our jeans are and how flirtatious we treat male clients.
- It goes without saying that our first and foremost task is to serve and please male customers in return of a one-dirham tip.

Among the 10 waitresses I interviewed, only two said that they would not allow clients to harass them and that they would ‘fight back’ if someone dared to harass them. Imane, a veiled young waitress, told me that she was facing some incidents of sexual harassment during her first days in the job. As time went on, Imane continued, the clients began to respect her because they had no doubt about her work ethics and moral conduct. Imane concluded that “my experience has taught me that people would respect the waitress who respects herself.” For Imane, a waitress can respect herself by wearing decent clothes and speaking politely with the male clients. More importantly, she should be skillful at handling clients’ misbehaviour. The second interviewee (Fatima, 28 years old) said that she often fought back against her harassers. What helped her to react that way was that her boss was always taking sides with her.
It is clear, therefore, that most waitresses (8 out of 10) put up with sexual harassment incidents because they were afraid of getting expelled from the job. Besides, this category of waitresses knew that if they made the clients unsatisfied, the latter would not tip them. The other category - those who resisted - were supported by their managers, so they were not afraid of losing the job. This leads us to call for all café owners to seriously consider supporting and defending the harassed waitresses, and even call for the police if such mistreatment occurs.

3.5. Men’s attitudes towards waitresses’ sexual harassment

The male respondents in this study gave various answers regarding waitresses’ sexual harassment. Some said “they deserve it because of the way they dress”, some said “they get harassed because they encourage it by smiling at the clients”, others thought that “they shouldn’t talk with the clients about other things apart from their work”, and others stressed that “young beautiful girls shouldn’t work in cafés at all.” According to this category of respondents, the café is a male sphere par excellence. Other negative attitudes towards waitresses include:

- waitresses are responsible for the sexual harassment they get because of the tight sexy clothes they wear;
- waitresses encourage getting harassed for tipping reasons;
- most of them are prostitutes and they use waitressing as a ‘cover story’ (sebra) to sell their body;
- they use the café as a place where to find male clients who are willing to pay for sex;
- sexual harassment becomes a normal behaviour in cafés (wella jari bih l’amal);
- waitresses are expected to just take it, smile, and flirt back.

Nonetheless, the data revealed that some male attitudes were positive and they reflected a sense of empathy and understanding towards waitresses:

- some of these waitresses were driven by poverty;
- they didn’t find better alternatives;
- they are victims of a socio-political and educational system;
many of them dropped out of school or they never went to school;
- we should treat them as their male coworkers;
- they provide a better service;
- wearing a tight dress doesn’t mean the girl is immoral.

It is important to stress as a concluding statement that those who gave positive opinions about the work of waitresses were adult educated men (high school teacher, doctor, company director, pharmacist). On the other hand, negative attitudes came from walks of life, such as a guardian, a grocer, a mason, a taxi driver and a plumber. This leads us to say that in order to fight the plight of sexual harassment, we need first and foremost to fight illiteracy and ignorance, raise awareness of the problem, and reinforce the anti-sexual harassment law. The road is long and arduous, but it is the most effective pathway to fight sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence.

4. Conclusion

Most informants responded that fighting sexual harassment against women in general is a difficult task, but it is not an impossible thing to realize. They think that the first and foremost measure to take is to improve the waitresses’ payment. As long as the meager wage (MAD 250 to 300 a week) continues, sexual harassment will continue to be perpetrated. The respondents insisted that the tipping coins they got from some male clients were the reason why they put up with what they called ‘tkarfiss’ (mistreatment). Also, they wanted the café owners to grant them all their rights in terms of a better payment, promotion, social security, and health care facilities. This demand is reflected in the answer the respondents gave to the question on the government’s role to prevent sexual harassment against waitresses. All of them highlighted the fact that the government should punish the café owners who exploit waitresses economically before punishing the perpetrators of sexual harassment.

Other respondents suggested reinforcing the law against those café owners who employ minor girls. As Fatima states, “minor girls should be at school instead of working as waitresses and those who employ them should be punished.” Halima and Zineb shared Fatima’s opinion, but they added that the government should help poor families.
financially to help preventing child labour in general. This view is also shared by a number of café goers who explained that sexual harassment can occur in cafés as well as in houses where poor little girls drop out of school and work as maids. So, it is essentially important to stress that any project to fight sexual harassment must take into account a political economy approach.

References


Depicting and Documenting Violence against Women in the Contemporary Counter-Narratives of Moroccan Film

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Abstract

This article argues that films and documentaries made in the last decade by filmmakers working in Morocco challenge the State’s “hagiography”; its official narrative of exceptionalism written by the monarchy to stand as uncontested truth. Since the dawn of the new millennium and the ascendance of Mohamed VI to the throne, this narrative often exaggerates the improvement in recent years of women’s actual sociocultural, political and economic enfranchisement in Moroccan society. The documentary 475 (2013) by Nadir Bouhmouch challenges the positivism of the government’s affirmation that it has ameliorated the lives of all women in Morocco. Equally important, the feature-length fiction film, Much Loved (2015) by Nabil Ayouch, serves to set the record straight on Violence Against Women (VAW) in a country where patriarchal tradition still takes precedence over women’s overall societal enfranchisement.

Keywords: Violence against women, Moroccan cinema, 20 February Movement, women’s rights, human rights

0. Introduction

Since 1999, Moroccan cinema has provided a space to negotiate and debate some of the country’s most pressing sociocultural and political
topics, particularly those impacting women.\(^1\) Since 1999, when the country emerged from Les Années de plomb (the Years of Lead) and witnessed the enthronization of King Mohamed VI, popularly known as “M6”, Morocco has prided itself on being a leader of social and political reform in the Arab world. King Mohamed VI, noted as a visionary, has crafted and implemented reforms and modifications to the judicial and legislative branches of government in order to change the system and better Moroccans’ lives, specifically women’s. The more liberal climate has fostered demonstrations and activism that have brought about meaningful sociopolitical reforms. These include: a reformed Labor Code (2003); the new Mudawwana (Family Code) (2004); the establishment of the Instance et Reconciliation (IER) and its report (2005) documenting egregious human rights violations during the Years of Lead; and in 2014, the repeal of Article 475 in Morocco’s Penal Code— an article that “allowed a rapist to marry his underage victim and escape criminal prosecution” (Gagliardi, 2018, p. 572). One of the most notable reforms was in 2011 to the Moroccan Constitution.

On the one hand, M6’s more transparent political climate has offered the space for public demonstrations and increased freedom of speech unlike during his father’s reign. Yet, on the other, critics have pointed out that this freedom of expression has also been keenly monitored and curtailed by the monarchy and the Makhzen whenever it is perceived as getting out of hand (Evrard, 2014; Gagliardi, 2018; Touati, 2014). Critics claim that reforms to the Moroccan constitution in 2011 were only implemented in order to curb the potential of an Arab Spring occurring in Morocco, rather than due to any moral ideal associated with M6’s master vision for a new society. With respect to women, reforms of all types, while making some strides, have not secured or assured their well-being in society on all social levels. According to women’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs), activists members in the February 20\(^{th}\) Movement, as well as artists, filmmakers, journalists and novelists who have exposed in their works the sociopolitical and cultural victimization of women, these reforms “have not sufficed to tackle violence against minor girls [and women]”

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(Gagliardi, 2018, p. 573). Additionally, human rights activists, feminists, and cultural producers have criticized the monarchy and government for not safeguarding freedom of speech in public space, most significantly in the arts and media, as promised early on in M6’s tenure.

Recent sociopolitical activist films and documentaries made by cineastes such as Nadir Bouhmouch and Nabil Ayouch provide examples of artistic resistance that explore the more democratically transparent, yet also disappointing era of King Mohamed VI’s “reforms” to the nation’s judicial and legislative systems that often directly affect women. Scholar Amy Evrard points out that, the monarchy’s relationship to women’s rights is fraught on many levels. She underscores that because the monarchy “controls both the state and the religion [it is] inimical to the notion of women’s rights and feminism.” This status quo will not change until women “can be full participants in the political and social spheres of Morocco” (Evrard, 2014, p. 115). Subverting national narratives and championing women’s rights, these cineastes’ films and documentaries inspire intellectual debate about the egregious human rights abuses committed in the past and the present against women. Recent films have consequently contributed to keeping alive debate about, and criticism of, what scholar Sylvia Gagliardi suggests is the Moroccan state’s “hagiographic narratives about its human rights progress” (Gagliardi, 2018, p. 569). “Hagiography” alludes to biography and autograph, both terms referring to texts and, more broadly, the written word. Gagliardi explains that the “[Moroccan] state’s hagiography is a clever exercise of rhetorical self-aggrandizement” that is rooted in “national policies, strategies and laws [which] theoretically [highlight] steps in the right direction to address the issue of Violence Against Women (VAW) and its causes and consequences” (Gagliardi, 2018, p. 576). However, as many critics note, these steps have not significantly improved women’s

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2 “Like "biography" and "autograph," the word “hagiography” has to do with the written word. The combining form "-graphy" comes from Greek graphein, meaning "to write." "Hagio-" comes from a Greek word that means "saintly" or "holy." This origin is seen in "Hagiographa," the Greek designation of the Ketuvim, the third division of the Hebrew Bible. Our English word hagiography, though it can refer to biography of actual saints, is these days more often applied to biography that treats ordinary human subjects as if they were saints.” Cited in https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hagiography
safety and enfranchisement in the institutions and policies founded and implemented in the country. In actuality, Morocco’s orchestrated veneer of exceptionalism, transmitted through public policies shaped by the monarchy, have done little to influence lasting change for women in society (Evrard, 2014, pp. 114-115).

The monarchy’s Master Narrative is one rooted in a multi-ethnic and multilingual cosmopolitanism that touts Moroccan *exceptionalism* as its foundation. This view of the country as promoting a cosmopolitanism unique in the Arab world has helped celebrate Morocco’s socio-ethnic diversity, which in turn is expressed in the arts, literature, and various forms of media. Such expansive expression defines exceptionalism as based on an understanding of contemporary cosmopolitanism that, as Kwame Appiah explains, “tempers a respect for difference with a respect for actual human beings” (2007, p. 113). The cosmopolitan author-social-activist recognizes that “no local loyalty can ever justify forgetting that each human being has responsibilities to every other” (Appiah, 2007, p. xvi). Journalist and professor, Cherkaoui Roudani, echoing Appiah’s ideas on cosmopolitanism, explains that Morocco’s exceptionalism is “a rational strategy for the promotion of pluralism that distinguishes Morocco from other nations” (2011, n.p.).

Remarking on the cultural roots of its multiculturalism that have fueled its diversity through the arts, Roudani adds that the Morocco of today is “a Morocco that knew how to rehabilitate its strengths by digging into its rich authenticity without giving up its creative contemporary power which accompanies its modernity.”

In this article, I would like to expand on Silvia Gagliardi’s thesis focused on unpacking the truth about what she defines as the Moroccan government’s “hagiographic narratives about human rights progress” and the discourse of exceptionalism that is attached to them (Gagliardi, 2018, p. 569). It is evident that these narratives have overshadowed “the needs and views of non-elite Moroccan women” who still disproportionately suffer from domestic violence, socioeconomic disparity, and traditional patriarchal structures that are acute in rural

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4 Roudani, Cherkaoui, n.p.
areas (Gagliardi, 2018, p. 569). Films and documentaries made in the last decade by filmmakers working in Morocco engage with these narratives in order to challenge the country’s exceptionalism rhetoric that overshadows realities and truths about the amelioration of women’s agency and actual socioeconomic progress in Morocco. Nadir Bouhmouch’s documentary 475 (2013) questions the Moroccan government’s record on the progress of women’s rights. Feature-length film Much Loved (2015) by Nabil Ayouch serves to set the record straight on violence against women in a country where patriarchy still defines the “status and the improvement” of women’s living conditions (Touati, 2014, p. 122). In general, as critics note, the State’s inflated narratives on the progress of human rights has suppressed many women’s stories about violence and abuse. Using these cinematic works as examples, I consider how Moroccan cinema as a medium provides the possibility of counter-narratives to Morocco’s entrenched Master Narratives of exceptionalism. These dogmatic national narratives promote achieved gender equality as a centering beacon of Moroccan millennial modernity, when in fact they fall very short of helping women realize full enfranchisement in society.

1. Moroccan Film: Documenting the Resistance of the “Everyday”

Jacques Rancière notes the similarities between fiction and documentary films in The Politics of Aesthetics (2006) in which he claims that realist film, even if fictional, can achieve the same aims as the documentary if “it calculates the values of truth” and the “potential” for them to produce meaning for audiences (2006, p. 38). These truths are those couched in scenes of “the resistance of the everyday” (Abdelmouman, 2018, p. 5). Moroccan films, whether fictional or documentary, challenge audiences to realize that “resistance” is also rooted in “traditions and everyday stories that are at variance to those being promoted [officially]” and seek to highlight “practices and cultural meanings that are at variance to the rationale governing the present” (Abdelmouman, 2018, pp. 5-6). Both the fictional film and the documentary frequently explore psychological and physical violence against women in order to engage with other subjects such as sociocultural taboos about sexuality, governmental judicial/legal abuses

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of power, and the general cracks in Morocco’s human rights’ record that have revealed themselves in recent years. Countering the nation’s official narratives about the sociopolitical and cultural everyday, these cinematographic works are also useful for bringing to light the institutional and societal violence that, despite millennial judicial and legislative reforms, continues disproportionally to affect Moroccan women; not only physically and psychologically, but also economically, socially and politically. They also demonstrate the extent to which Moroccan women can subvert and transgress the socio-normative of society that habitually labels them as the “paria rebelle”. These alternative female narratives cast women as femme-fatales, prostitutes and militant-activists who question the status quo and “who, in taking ownership of [their] marginality, and being proud of [their] solidarity with [their] peers, overturn…the stigmatism and criticize…religious normativity and the unjust relationships of society” (Löning, 2017, p. 186).  

Many Moroccan films made in the last decade draw on localized and regional collective traumas. Fiction film blends into the documentary as filmmakers deal with “a combination of the shifting moral politics at home, the relentless process of neoliberal globalization, the geopolitics of neo-imperialism, [and] the rise of a civilization discourse in which ‘Islam’ is positioned in opposition to the ‘West’” (Bayat & Herrera, 2010, p. 3). Documentaries such as Nadir Bouhmouch’s 475 echo in the background of fiction film scenarios such as Nabil Ayouch’s Much Loved, demonstrating that the docurealist film is a powerful medium through which to study the everyday of women’s collective and individual traumas and their causes rooted in global and local systems of exploitation, patriarchal domination and tradition.

The everyday realities for women, as revealed in Bouhmouch’s 475 and Ayouch’s Much Loved, are also linked to our complicated era of globalization by a “truism” grounded in the idea “that we are functioning in a world fundamentally characterized by objects in motion” (Appadurai, 2000, p. 5). A “world-in-motion” is the definitive quality of how globalization operates, is fueled, and sustained. It is a world that sets in “motion…objects, persons, images and

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6 My translation.
discourses…[that] have different speeds, axes, points of origin and termination, and varied relationships to institutional structures” (Appadurai, 2000, p. 6). Yet, as we all know, this 21st century mobile world, powered by the constant transnational flow of goods and humans, is not equitable for all nations and societies: to say that globalization is about a world of things in motion somewhat understates the point. The various flows we see—of objects, persons, images, and discourses—are not coeval, convergent, isomorphic, or spatially consistent. They are in what I have elsewhere called relations of disjuncture” (Appadurai, 2000, p. 5)

Appadurai’s “relations of disjuncture” occur “between economy, culture, and politics”, causing “the complexity of the …global economy” (2000, p. 3). As we have seen in recent years, the increasing inequality in the new millennium with respect to land, money, and more broadly access to the right to enjoy a “being-in-the-world”, has encumbered local socioeconomic forces and exposed the failures of nation states to ensure the well-being of their citizens. Appadurai mentions that relations of disjuncture are most noticeable within the emerging nation-state’s economy. Even at the micro level of the city, livelihoods are frequently compromised “by floating populations, transnational politics within national borders, and mobile configurations of technology and expertise” (Appadurai, 2000, p. 5). Appadurai further postulates that the “framework” through which we should explore such disjunctures has five dimensions that he terms: “(a) ethnoscapes, (b) mediascapes, (c) technoscapes, (d) financescapes, and (e) ideoscapes” (1996, p. 33). These different “scapes” interact, converge and diverge on global and local levels (Appadurai, 2000, p. 5). The films considered in this article reveal that the overly positive discourse of transformation promoted by the Moroccan state with respect to women’s rights crumbles in the framework of relations of disjuncture. For critics, including Bouhmouch and Ayouch, “the tradition of reforms in Morocco [that] present the particularity of being sufficient… are always

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8 Emphasis added.
9 In the philosophical sense as explained in Being and Time by Martin Heidegger.

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meant to preserve the order of things rather than change it” (Ferrie & Dupret, 2012, p. 22).  


Since the early 2000s, documentary filmmaking in Morocco has become a valuable medium to instruct audiences at home and internationally as the country, like many in the MENA region, faces sociocultural and political challenges at the local and global levels. In a country whose population is primarily young, between 18 and 35, and well versed in using the latest social media platforms, millennials filmmakers are able to access global knowledge more easily than in the past. Therefore, it is not surprising to see a burgeoning number of young documentary filmmakers producing their work in the era of millennial protest. Their films offer an “alternative cultural scene” that allows a “means to give voice to the postcolonial condition of an age group that has come of age under globalization” (Bahmad, 2014, p. 380). This new generation is building on a long tradition of documentary filmmaking by renowned filmmakers, such as Hakim Belabbes, Lahcen Zinoun, Izza Génini, and Farida Benlyazid. In the new millennium, Hicham Lasri (Al Jahiliya, la blessure la plus rapprochée du soleil, 2018), Tarik El Idrissi (Rif: 58-59: Briser le silence, 2014), Nadir Bouhmouch (475, 2013), and more recent, young women on the scene—Rim Mejdi (Stone and Fire, 2007), Leila Kilani (On the Edge, 2011), Tala Hadid (House in the Fields, 2017), Soraya El Kahlaoui (Marocains sans terres, 2017) and Hind Bensari whose documentary We Could be Heroes (2018), won the Best International Documentary Award at Hot Docs Festival in Canada this year—11—are making their mark nationally and internationally. This new generation is changing the way films are made in Morocco from subject matter to production. They are also reshaping cinema production in the country by forming their own companies and streaming their films on alternative media platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo. Therefore, they are circumventing the national Centre Cinématographique du

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10 Cited in Touati 2014, p. 128.

11 Bensari also currently is conducting an indiegogo campaign to fund her own documentary, Break the Silence, on Article 475. See: www.indiegogo.com/projects/475-break-the-silence
Maroc’s (CCM) traditional structure. Through new media forms, these young documentarists are using their films to counter official narratives that continue to promote the status quo as a “fact of life inherent to patriarchal society and the habitus” (Gagliardi, p. 580).

Twenty-eight-year-old Nadir Bouhmouch is a documentary filmmaker and a human rights activist committed to working at home and abroad to heighten awareness of human rights abuses in Morocco. He is cofounder of “the Guerrilla Cinema movement and currently leads a civil disobedience campaign against the Centre Cinématographique Marocain, the government body which regulates and censors films in Morocco - in Nadir’s opinion a violation of the right to freedom of expression” (Weibel, 2014, p. 140). Bouhmouch’s works in the 2000s capture the power of youth movements, and the broader activism in rural areas of Morocco. One such example is the film, Timadine N’Rif (2017), which documents the 2016 and 2017 demonstrations for justice in the Rif region. In general, Bouhmouch’s films transmit the everyday challenges and realities of society at all levels: civil, political, and social. His recent films have emerged from the 20th of February Movement that in 2011 galvanized Morocco’s youth to stand up and demand a host of reforms, notably focusing on: police brutality, electoral fraud and corruption, censorship, and unemployment (high even among young people with advanced university degrees). Bouhmouch’s 2011 film, My Makhzen and Me, as well as his later film 475 (2013) and the most recent Timadine N’Rif (2017), are all openly available to the public on his website (nadirboumouch.com), complete with subtitles in English and Spanish. The films are raw assessments of the socio-political and economic work that remains to be done to ameliorate average Moroccans’ lives. Award winning 475, a film emerging from the millennial youth movement climate in Morocco, forefronts women’s rights as one of the necessary, principle components for positive social change in the country. The film also reflects the power of social media and alternative platforms for filmmaking that have allowed Bouhmouch and other filmmakers to circumvent government censure.

12 “The film won Reporters without Borders’ and the Deutsche Welle The Bobs (Best of the Blogs) awards for Best Social Activism and was nominated for the BBC Arabic Film and Documentary Festival” (Weibel 2014, p. 140).
As in all his documentaries, Bouhmouch begins 475 with the advisory claim: “This is a non-commercial film… it was made illegally as a form of civil disobedience to call for freedom of expression in the arts in Morocco and as a stand against state regulation of filmmaking through the Centre Cinématographique Marocain.” In my opinion, the goals of the film are threefold. First, to set the record straight, presenting all the facts of Amina’s death. Second, to outline how patriarchy continues to influence politics, judicial reform, and general views about women’s enfranchisement in society. And, third, to demonstrate that the sociocultural dimensions of rural life in Morocco are radically different than those of more urban settings, offering women few means to improve their living conditions, seek recourse for abuse, and help (either through NGOs or official government institutions) to leave their violent domestic situations. The essence of the film is encapsulated in feminist-activist and rape survivor Houda Lamqaddam’s statement that: "For female rape victims, it's still very difficult to find justice…the judicial system is heavily biased in favor of men, the attackers, and there is very little support for women who are victims of rape and sexual violence."\(^{13}\)

475 focuses on the tragic story of the 2012 case of Amina al-Filali, a 16-year-old-girl who was raped and then forced to marry her rapist in order to preserve her family’s honor, resulting in her suicide by taking rat poison. Bouhmouch’s film also reveals larger issues of socioeconomic and political disparity between urban and rural women that continue to surface in Morocco. The film explains the controversial subject of “Article 475” of Morocco’s Penal Code that disproportionately affected women living in rural areas. In 2014, the Article was finally repealed after demonstrations across the country forced parliament into action.

475 is a prime example of the importance of documentary filmmaking to documenting violence against women as it also challenges the more general, positive, pervasive and persuasive official Moroccan narratives on human rights. The film considers the fact that while “legal remedies” have been politically implemented, they are deficient in “tackling the reasons why women are subject to VAW [violence against women] and

unable to extract themselves from it” (Gagliardi, 2018, p. 585). Appadurai’s various “disjunctures” occurring in, and expanding from, the many scapes present in contemporary Morocco are part of the gender inequality equation. In the neoliberal era as Appadurai and other social critics suggest, current socioeconomic realities have driven acute wedges between those who have access to sociopolitical and financial power and those who do not.

As mentioned above, the controversial Article 475 was overturned in 2014, after demonstrations and protests by Moroccan citizens took place across the country. However, Bouhmouch’s film remains relevant for what it exposes about the persistent official whitewashed narratives concerning women’s rights and their sexuality and socioeconomic status in society. For example, the film clearly counters the governmental and international perceptions that reforms to the Moroccan Family Code (Mudawwana 2004) have ameliorated all women’s status in society. Bouhmouch and many critics point out that these reforms have fallen short when scrutinized according to class and geography (rural vs. urban).

Additionally, Bouhmouch as an international filmmaker-activist seeks to show international audiences that the Filali tragedy “was not that simple.” He affirms that “475 [was] not the [only] source of the tragedy” (Bouhmouch 475). Amina’s death was rooted in many other sociocultural and political factors such as lack of access to education, to sufficient economic means, and pervasive and persistent class inequalities (Bouhmouch 475). Bouhmouch also takes issue with the coverage of the Filali story by the western press, which is faulted for emphasizing stereotypes “with a broad brush.” The interworking of Appadurai’s globalized mediascape disjuncture is evident in the documentary. Feminist-activist Houda Lamqaddam, who narrates the story throughout the film, suggests that this was the “perfect story for western ears and eyes…” The story allowed the media to “beat once again on the drums of orientalism and its stereotypes of Muslim peoples…what the western media missed was the growing debate around women’s rights and sexual violence [in Morocco].” Filali’s story, thus, could not just be studied from the angle of Article 475, a holdover from the colonial French penal code. Rather, the law had to be considered as the legacy of colonial history and the subsequent systemic disparities between the rights of women in rural areas and those of the
upper classes, living primarily in urban settings. Women in rural areas, because of illiteracy and lack of financial resources, coupled with the paradigms of traditional patriarchy, continue to be vulnerable to unchanging traditions and practices.

Religion also contributes to the confusion surrounding women’s rights, as Bouhmouch wants his audiences to recognize. Does Islam “really support sexual violence?” is a defining question in the film. As Johanna Buisson, a professor of theology and women’s studies, interviewed by Bouhmouch, notes there is “no justification in the Quran for marrying a rapist and women have the right to refuse husbands.” What role, then, does religion play in determining how rural women see their agency (?) is a question left open-ended in the film. Filali’s father underscores that after Amina’s death, the village imam told him that “she had committed no sin and that she would go to heaven” (475).

To ferret out the nuances and complexity of the Filali story, Bouhmouch and his team – Houda Lamqaddam, Younes Belghazi, and Hamza Mahfoudi—travel to the Filali family’s village near Lahrache. Lamqaddam narrates both the English and Arabic versions of the documentary, thus attesting to Bouhmouch’s mission to reach wider audiences outside Morocco. Once there, it becomes evident that the story is more complicated than what was portrayed in the media, locally and internationally. Bouhmouch films as Houda Lamqaddam and Younes Belghazi interview all the people involved. Lamqaddam interviews women in the family – Amina’s mother, siblings and her father’s second wife. Belghazi interviews Amina’s father, Lahcen Filali, and the men implicated in the narrative: Mustapha “the rapist” and his father. These live interviews with the family are interspersed with interviews with activists, politicians (conservative and progressive), sociologists, human rights lawyers, and human rights’ activists such as Khadija Riyadi, head of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (l'Association marocaine des droits humains (AMDH)), and Fatima El Maghnaoui, head of UAF (L’Union de l’Action Féminine). What ensues is a murky story of “he said, she said”, indicating as Leila Slimani notes in her work, Sexe et mensonges: La vie sexuelle au Maroc (2017), that discussions of sexuality, particularly when it pertains to women, is habitually a fraught topic: “many men and women prefer to turn away [their] eyes” (détourner les yeux) (Slimani, 2017, p. 13).
Bouhmouch and his filming team soon discover that documenting the facts leading up to Amina’s suicide are virtually impossible to establish. Her father, a bigamist, states “he tried to protect his child” and that after her death, he “sought judicial aid and to take Mustapha (the rapist) to court.” However, we learn that authorities affirm that Lahcen Filali filed the “marriage contract” and from Filali’s second wife, Chou’a, that it was Amina’s biological mother, Zohra, who “arranged for Amina to be married after the incident.” It was Zohra who later decided to “press charges” against Mustapha, accusing him also of “kidnapping” which “has a heavier sentence than rape”, a fact ironically pointed out by Lamqaddam. Mustapha, the accused, denies wrongdoing and asserts that Amina was “his wife” and that sexual relations were consensual. Chou’a, Lahcen Filali’s second wife, also divulges to Lamqaddam that she was the victim of rape by Lahcen Filali, and that she “fears for her safety and that of her children every day.” This knowledge taints the image of the protective father seeking justice for his daughter.

It is also evident in the film that lack of knowledge about the laws protecting women and basic illiteracy contributed to the family’s turmoil, ultimately derailing the justice they sought for their daughter. Lahcen Filali affirms, “no one from Rabat [no official] came to investigate the crime.” The division between rural and urban justice is underscored as we learn that the case was closed and no further action taken by local officials. Mustapha was not detained. As the camera takes us through a tunnel near the Filalis’ village, Lamqaddam remarks: “according to her father, this is the tunnel that Mustapha used to take Amina to the forest where he would rape her. What actually happened at the end of this tunnel is only a truth that Mustapha and Amina know.” Amina’s story is buried as other stories from the village pertaining to violence against women are revealed, particularly that of Chou’a, Filali’s second wife. She too was “abducted” she claims, kept in a second house away from the first wife, and repeatedly raped by Filali. She divulges her story slowly to Lamqaddam after the interviewer reveals to Chou’a that she, too, was raped. Lamqaddam tells Chou’a that “you do not have to be a victim.” Chou’a protests, though, claiming that she cannot leave because “she has nowhere to go.” This secondary narrative reveals a key component in the sustainability of violence against women:
While most present in the domestic sphere, VAW is a pervasive and, yet often, matter-of-factly accepted human rights violation across society…women, especially from underprivileged and rural backgrounds, have resigned themselves to the status quo…their lack of access to legal remedies…and also the fear of losing their children and their means of survival in the absence of their husbands’ socioeconomic support [make them doubly victimized]. (Gagliardi, 2018, p. 585)

Although the Mudawwana reforms of 2004 clearly stipulate that women now have recourse in court and have protection under the law for parental rights in case of divorce (and by extension abuse), they often do not have the means or knowledge to pursue these rights. Particularly if they are from rural areas and ignorant of the specificities of the reforms.  

In Bouhmouch’s documentary, the larger story of continuing VAW in Morocco, despite the official government narrative that touts the contrary, in many ways supersedes Amina Filali’s tragic story. This fact is highlighted halfway through the film when Lamqaddam opens up the discussion pertaining to laws and judicial hearings on women’s rights, sexuality, and how the Filali case is an example of flagrant abuses of gendered power. She narrates as a photo of King M6, surrounded by male politicians many of whom currently serve in Parliament, is shown to viewers: “it seems like the last call is always being made by a man…for Amina, it was either her father, or one of these government officials.” It is here that the film draws a clear link between politics and antiquated, patriarchal cultural mores that still affect and influence the actions of (male) politicians. Changing scenes from the rural to the urban seat of power in Rabat to discuss legislation and Parliament’s lackluster action on women’s rights, Lamqaddam tells us that “a year after Amina’s suicide, a proposition was put forth in Parliament to abolish article 475.” It was met with resistance, certainly by men such as MP Hassan Arif, who was “acquitted of rape the same week as the proposition.” Arif’s victim, Malika Salmini, “was the one who went to jail for contempt of court against a magistrate.” The film also scrutinizes the politics of Abdelilah Benkirane, Prime Minister of Morocco from November 2011-March 2017. Benkirane, member of

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14 See Article 6 of the Preamble of the Mudawwana.
the PJD Islamic Party, is scrutinized for insisting that rape does not happen in marriage and that Amina was “married” at the time of her death. His views are supported by Bassima Hakkaoui, also member of the PJD and Minister of Families and Social Development, who disputes the claim made by an interviewer that “the Moroccan woman faces discrimination and mistreatment.” She defends her position, saying, “this is not true.” Lamqaddam counters by stating, “60% of Moroccan women are victims of gender violence.” However, as 475 specifies, the percentage is continually refuted by the “Islamists who say it is only 35%.” What is evident, as Lamqaddam points out, is that “numbers are not exact because families don’t want to talk about violence and rape.”

Despite the statistics on VAW, ministers in Parliament continue to affirm that cases of rape are rare (at one moment Benkirane states in the film that there were “only 500 during the entire year 2011-2012”) and that women have equal protection under the law. Minister of Justice (at the time of the film) Mustapha Ramid affirms, in a television interview inserted in the film, that “marriage of minors is not banned by the Sharia’a nor by French, Spanish or Belgian laws.” He continues in another scene to demand, “Why are you [women] protesting?...The case of Amina Filali did not involve rape, it involved consensual relations between two youths.” Ramid’s and Benkirane’s as well as many other politicians’ views aired in the documentary lead AMDH Head, Khadija Riyadi, to remark that “when it comes to women’s rights, we are one of the most backwards countries.” Riyadi cites a WTO report ranking Morocco 129th out of 135 countries for its record on “equality between genders.” Interviews with Khadija Riyadi and other human rights activists working in Morocco support the fact that:

Although the equality of men and women was anchored in Morocco's constitution in 2011, it hasn't arrived in people's daily lives. Women are supposed to be pure and virgins until marriage or they are cast out. It is engrained in the more traditional sectors of Moroccan society as well as other countries, including
several in the Arab World: rape is a stigma; no other man will marry a rape victim. (Griebeler)\textsuperscript{15}

For Lamqaddam, Amina Filali and many other victims, this means the struggle is not yet over. In the concluding scenes, Bouhmouch’s documentary does not shed much light on the details of Amina Filali’s rape and subsequent suicide. It is clear, though, that she was a victim of an accumulation of traditional views, patriarchal maneuvering, and lack of resources due to her family’s rural poverty. The case remains mired in confusion. Yet the larger messages the film unmask, and its portrayal of the complexity of Morocco’s gendered political polemics, are telling. Most assuredly, the film discloses, as Lamqaddam affirms in the closing scene, that “the oppression of women does not end in the confines of the household, it goes beyond and penetrates every aspect of the society, from family, to community to state. It ranges from everyday sexual harassment to discrimination against single mothers, and ultimately, to the impossibility of a Moroccan queen.”


While Bouhmouch’s documentary engages with women’s reality in rural landscapes, Nabil Ayouch’s 2015 film, *Much Loved*, offered audiences a shockingly raw and realistic scenario about four prostitutes in urban Marrakech. Although it won critical acclaim in international festivals as well as at the Cannes’ Film Festival in France, the film was immediately banned from theaters “sight unseen by the Moroccan censorship committee” for what was deemed by communications minister Mustapha El Khalfi (also a member of the PDJ) to be “a film [that] undermines the moral values and dignity of Moroccan women as well as the image of Morocco” (Alami, 2016 n.p.). Even though Moroccans could only access several clips from the film on the internet, the actresses as well as Ayouch all received death threats from numerous individuals in Morocco immediately following its release at Cannes. Shortly after its European debut, three men in a Casablanca street savagely beat leading star, Loubna Abidar. Ultimately, she flew to France for safety, where she remains. In an interview, she divulges

that she has filed for French citizenship (although since the incident she has returned periodically to Morocco) (Alami, 2016).

To date, very few academic articles have been published on *Much Loved*. Scholar Madeleine Löning offers an expansive critique of the film’s “subversive identities” and how these trump usual codified norms with respect to gender and sexuality. She notes that what is most remarkable about the film is that it not only looks at the stigmatizing “regard” (look/gaze) Moroccan society focuses on prostitutes, it also takes to task other forms of social marginalization such as “homosexuality, poverty and unwed motherhood” (Löning, 2017, p. 184). The film also criticizes the sexploitation of children, concentrating on them as the most vulnerable victims of Morocco’s thriving sex tourist trade which many have remarked has increased since the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia that shifted the numbers of Europeans seeking sex to Morocco. The film therefore builds on awareness cultivated during the first campaign ever in Morocco against child sexual abuse entitled “Touche pas à mon gosse” (Don’t touch my child), which began in 2003. Engaging with a once very taboo subject, authorities launched the campaign to combat the sexual abuse of children domestically, while also clamping down on the sex tourism trade popular with Europeans and, more broadly, western tourists.¹⁶

*Much Loved*’s nuanced look at prostitution, which also entails the marginalization, stigma, and a host of sexual taboos associated with the profession, again tarnishes the official narratives of the State, which deny its prevalence. An additional aspect of the film includes Ayouch’s larger mission to focus on what he affirms is the “rampant hypocrisy in this society—a hypocrisy verging on schizophrenia” (Béar, 2016, p. np.). This hypocrisy covers up the reality of the unfavorable living conditions of many Moroccans, particularly women. In keeping with his dedication to exposing and unpacking sensitive subjects in Moroccan society, *Much Loved* does not depart from the sociocultural and political messages of his previous films: *Ali Zaoua, prince de la rue* (2000), *Une minute de soleil en moins* (2003), *Les Chevaux de Dieux* (2012), and the recent, *Razzia* (2017). All Ayouch’s films are

docurealist as they delve into topics imbedded in the sociopolitical and economic disjunctures of contemporary Morocco. In *Much Loved*, it is the four women prostitutes, abused children, and the transvestites, living off what they make on the Marrakech streets, who are trafficked as *les biens du patrimoine* (material goods of the nation); commodities that have attractive prices for foreign buyers. *Much Loved*, thus, is not just a film about poverty and exploitation of local populations, racism, and gender inequality in Morocco, although these elements do all contribute to its overarching narrative. It is also a film about the divisions caused by micro and macroeconomics. These divisions are not only apparent between North (Europe) and South (Africa), they also reveal internal politics and inequality in the Arab world (for example, rich conservative-UAE against the more socio-culturally open, yet poorer, Maghreb). It is a film that unmask how “globalization has destabilized the spatiotemporal contours of the Moroccan subject, particularly in metropolitan centers” (Bahmad, 2014, p. 380).

In the opening scenes of the film, Noha, Soukaina, and Randa, three of the four prostitute-protagonists prepare for a huge party hosted by Saudi big rollers in an upscale neighborhood in Marrakech. The film’s denouement implicates the spectator’s voyeuristic journey from one party to the next hosted in rich villas and *les clubs de luxe*; the highflying luxury nightclubs for which Marrakech is known. The women are thus determined by a doubled “masculine gaze; that of the characters and of the viewers. Both project their fantasies on them” (Löning, 2017, p. 191). The degradation of the women, who are forced down on hands and knees to act like dogs in heat, lap dance, and hint at fellatio with the men, are shocking as we peer at performers and receivers of sexual encounters through our voyeuristic cinematic window. Noha, as the oldest, acts as the Madame for the group, taking calls from clients and negotiating prices. She is strong and resilient, and wants only the best for her sisters in kind (they all live together in one apartment). She fights constantly throughout the film to keep all the women out of harm’s way. Hlima, a young girl “from a village”, found living on the streets, pregnant, with nowhere to go, is taken in halfway through the film to become part of the “family.” Noha constantly walks a fine line between succumbing to despair and trying to lead a “normal” life as a role model to her younger coworkers. She is also the sole breadwinner for her impoverished and fatherless actual family and a
mother to her illegitimate son who she has hidden away at her mother’s house in a poor area of Marrakech. She is concerned for her little sister who wants to leave school to follow Noha’s same path and a younger brother who is constantly tempted by “drugs and dealing.” Although her mother is ashamed of her career choice, telling her that “I don’t want to see you anymore”, she has no other option but to take the prostitute’s money in order to survive.

Despite their economic and social freedom as women making their own decisions about their finances and the clients they take, Ayouch does not soften the fact that the four prostitutes have all been, previously (or are during the film), subjected to violence at the hands of men. Noha wears visible scars on her forehead from past beatings. She is raped by one of the inspectors at the police station after being picked up for having “disturbed the peace” by hurling bottles at the front gates of the abusive Saudi, Ahmed, who has beaten her co-worker, Soukaina. Noha has been obligated to pay bribes to the police so that the women will be “protected” from street violence and various events associated with their trade. Hlima, the young uneducated “country girl”, who joins the other three prostitutes in the city, was raped in her village and had to flee from it “because of the shame” when she became pregnant. Soukaina is savagely beaten by Ahmed because she discovers that he is homosexual and is only using her “for appearances.” When she protests, defending her womanhood and her profession, stating “j’ai de la dignité” (I have dignity), he strikes her, yelling, “you are a whore, worth nothing, not even a dime.” Even though he is gay, Ahmed has power due to his gender, his nationality, and his money. The film, thus, reminds audiences that these women are still prisoners in the patriarchal, macho society in which they must operate. Their corporeal reality is “reduced to buttocks and breasts” (Löning, 2017, p.192).

While sexual debauchery and explicit, “vulgar” language were the reasons given by the authorities for the ban of Much Loved, I would also like to argue that there were other equally important issues involved in bringing about the film’s censure. These have to do with local and global systems of sex, money, power and abuse of women that certainly the State would prefer not to acknowledge. Particularly

17 The dialogue is in French and Moroccan Arabic. Interestingly, the most sexually explicit scenes take place in French.
financial issues linked to the financescapes currently visible in the economics of globalization, and how global systems affect local populations, build the foundation of Ayouch’s messages.

Marrakech, like other tourist-destination cities in Morocco (Tangier and Agadir for example), is ground zero for clashes between the global and the local, or what Roland Robertson has coined the “glocal,” revealing “the extent to which what is called local is in large degree constructed on a trans-or super-local basis” (Heise, 2011, p. 159). It is an exemplary city for discussing the interior and exterior interworking’s of globalization and Appadurai’s “disjunctures” revealed in the liberalized economy of Morocco. Geographically set between deserts and mountains, where multiple languages, ethnicities, and histories have interacted for centuries, it is the perfect setting in which to study the intricate tensions between globalization and the local landscapes (financial, ethnographic, geographic, etc.) that make up the systems of people, goods and services of its environment of consumption. Viewers are privy to following the four prostitutes as they participate in, and also are, products of Appadurai’s “world-in-motion.” The glocal financescapes that they must navigate in their daily lives drive the choices the four women must make to “earn their bread.”

On a meta-economic level, Ayouch points a finger at the failure of the Moroccan government and monarchy to assure viable employment for their people, despite the amelioration of the Moroccan GDP in recent years. He demonstrates how global, capitalist foreign consumers (Europeans and Saudis) contribute to local violence associated with prostitution on Marrakech streets; a trade which is part of les petites économies (the shadow economies) operating in Morocco. Lack of political will to devise ways to shore up local economies that are legitimate and cultivate viable employment to assure the well-being of the local population is a predominate theme in the film. Not only are foreign tourists to blame for the prostitutes’ exploitation, Much Loved

19 “The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Morocco expanded 2.40 percent in the second quarter of 2018 over the previous quarter. GDP Growth Rate in Morocco averaged 4.08 percent from 1999 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 9.30 percent in the second quarter of 2006 and a record low of 0.50 percent in the fourth quarter of 1999.” https://tradingeconomics.com/morocco/gdp-growth (Last accessed 11/11/18)
reveals opinions stated by international economists who have underscored for years that entities such as the IMF and the World Bank have contributed to the fraying of local economies through mandated structural adjustments, which have forced people to work in shadow industries such as prostitution. Morocco (like many other African countries) has discovered that “participation in IMF structural adjustment programs can lead to great shadow sector activity as IMF-imposed structural conditions … cause significant near-term economic hardship and degrade states’ regulatory capacity” (Blanton, Early & Peksen, 2018, p. 309). Due to the macroeconomics that generate economic stress on Morocco, like other emerging markets, black market or “shadow economies” are virtually undocumented or regulated and are, in fact, thriving. Equally important in terms of economics, the film alludes to how these shadow economies contribute to the Moroccan economy while allowing the government to avoid doing the necessary work to ensure equitable pay and safe working conditions for its people (Evrard, 2014, p. 27).

Scholar Isandra El Amrani underscores the danger of severe socioeconomic inequality in Moroccan society, stating that Morocco’s liberalized economy allows the monarchy to assure its “newest source of popular legitimacy…[which has] become a safety valve for pent-up pressures.” A more socioeconomic and political liberalized economy, though, does not discount the fact that “beneath the surface of the new democratic era…old political formulas for maintaining power continue to prevail” (El Amrani, 2009, p. 320). The shadow economy of prostitution threatens the integrity of official narratives about fiscal responsibility cast in western molds, or “development discourses of capitalist-driven progress” (Medley & Carroll, 2011, p. 285).

One of the ironic results of glocal disjunctures, and a salient facet of the economic messages revealed in Ayouch’s film, is that Morocco’s shadow economy has afforded women moneymaking opportunities that give them more freedom and power over their own choices and ways to extrapolate themselves from oppressive sociocultural milieus. In general, Much Loved demonstrates that the “gendered processes in the neoliberal era… impact women differently depending on their location in the matrix of local power structures as well as geopolitical spaces.” Women are not just “passive victims,” but are “actively engaged in the restructuring of these gendered processes” (Desai & Rinaldo, 2016, p.
On certain levels, the money they earn gives Nora and her co-workers the power to subvert the patriarchal structures of Moroccan society that often keep uneducated and poorer women from power over their own bodies. While the women are often abused at the hands of men, they also, at times, are able to say “no”, or make choices that have better outcomes for them because they benefit from agency derived from financial means. Although living in a marginal space, all the women exercise different forms of agency that they normally would not have had if they had remained in their poorer, traditional class and rural regions from where they come. The marginal space of their trade affords them some freedom and access to alternative ways of being women in Moroccan society. For example, Randa is more easily able to explore her lesbianism and to act on her impulses to find same-sex relationships. Hlima, is able to openly declare her unwed motherhood. Soukaina, enjoying her financial means, decides when (and if) to give money to Katib, her homeless boyfriend. Noha, possessing her own home and “business”, decides when she and her co-workers will work and under what conditions. The space of the marginalized prostitutes is also where othered outcasts—the transvestite Cherine (Oussama) and street children—find their place to speak, tell their stories, and reveal their secrets. This space, however, is not without its violence. Ayouch is careful to make sure his audiences know that at no time do the marginalized live without risk or fear of psychological and/or bodily harm.

Saudi Arabia is at the heart of economic relations of disjuncture portrayed in Much Loved. Ayouch underscores that it is one of the most forceful foreign powers in Morocco. Since 2011, and the various Arab Springs across the Arab world, the Saudis have operated politically and economically to spread their interests. The filmmaker focuses on the Saudis as the essential element of socioeconomic exploitation of the Marrakesh prostitutes, showing the men’s ability to wheel and deal


politically and economically. They pay off local authorities to turn a blind eye, and local cops to help navigate the planning of their lavish sex parties. In one of the most overtly political moments in the film, when Noha and her coworkers are with the Saudi men for one of their opulent parties, the Arab world and the Saudis’ role in manipulating it are discussed. Rich and poor nations, men and women, and power and weakness are all played against one another as the discussion unfolds. The conversation turns to the plight of Palestinians. After one Saudi suggests that “Palestinians just want to beg, they want money, that’s all”, Soukaina speaks up, stating that “It’s not nice to mock Palestinians; they were chased from their homes after all. We should help them, not criticize them.” She is rebuffed by another Saudi who angrily shouts, “Why are women discussing politics with us men?” Affirming his male prowess, he states, “the Saudis are the masters of the world, we have oil.” To alleviate the tension, Noha changes the subject, quipping, “We have oil too…we Moroccan women, we are the oil, we are even more perfumed and colorful.” Ayouch’s message in this scene is not subtle. Morocco has had to pay a considerable price for Saudi economic development by giving up its citizens to sexual exploitation.

In general, although the women confront on a nightly basis the violence associated with working in the liberalized economy of prostitution, they nevertheless are able to make conscious decisions to free themselves from it. Regardless of what seems to be the prison of their trade, forcing them to kowtow to male domination and the general violence of the streets, they do sometimes “transgress strict social and religions codes as well as the barrier between private and public space” (Löning, 2017, p. 186). Certain spaces are equated with unfettered freedom. The most obvious is Saïd the chauffeur’s car, which offers the women a means to circulate openly in the streets of Marrakech. The prostitutes’ trade, which involves earning money off the grid at hours out of sync with the rhythm of the city in daylight, does allow them to move somewhat freely in public space. They are equal observers and commentators on the urban space that surrounds them, at least from Saïd’s protective car. He is the only redeeming male figure in the film, an equal, acting as protector, friend, confident and stalwart bodyguard for the women. From the car, the audience and the women observe the outside spaces of everyday Marrakech. Viewers and protagonists gaze out into the
bustling streets where street venders, shopkeepers, as well as beggars and the unemployed, make up a local “world-in-motion.” In the car, the women are both on the edges and in the midst of this world. As part of the whole of the everyday, they assert their presence despite the fact that their trade is unrecognized and taboo. Their freedom of motion allows them to “refuse the image of victim” (Löning, 2017, p. 188). The women’s economically tangible freedom also allows them to dream about other possible worlds. Noha tells the other women that freedom is “to be able to take a plane to an island very far from here … an island where we are respectable; where we will be beautiful without makeup or sexy clothes; and where we will be respected and treated like ladies by men…where we will be princesses.”

Like all who benefit financially from the shadow economy, the women are bound by codes of silence, and secrecy associated with their trade. Thus, one of Ayouch’s goals is to “give them a voice, a voice to these women who live in a society where they are practically invisible and inaudible” (Gilson, 2015, n.p.).Ironically, though, as the filmmaker wants his audiences to admit, prostitution is no secret, but rather an openly known fact making up part of Morocco’s millennial financescape: “I wanted to show these women as they are, from their point of view…certainly their lives are hard, made from hurt, solitude, but also from solidarity, friendship and legerity. This idea…[hopefully] balances certain things that are more difficult in the film.”

In the closing scene, the four women decide to take a “vacation” from their work to enjoy the beach in an upscale hotel in Agadir. Hlima has lost her baby due to a miscarriage, but defying social norms Noha tells her, “don’t be sad, it’s better not to have children.” As they drink vodka on the beach, as the sun goes down, they are unfettered by family, tradition, or masculine power over their bodies. Saïd, sitting on the sand next to them, drinks to them, stating “Aux filles de mon pays” (To the girls of my country). Mocking the Saudis, Randa tells him, “a guy with four girls around him and a cig in his mouth…one would say a true Saudi.” Yet, Saïd is not like these other exploitive men. On the beach, he shares the women’s liquor and their laughter. All are Moroccans. In

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Ayouch’s world, Moroccan men and women, no matter their backgrounds, or how they must function within the *glocal* demands of our age, can sit on a beach and be equals.

*Much Loved* does not attempt to diminish the violence of prostitution. Rather the film exposes the local and global socioeconomic and political forces and failures that have contributed to the persistence of this shadow trade in Morocco. Bouhmouch’s *475* and Ayouch’s *Much Loved* reveal the economic realities that persist in rural and urban environments, and their films provide a space for “the voices of women who have been on the periphery of sites of power” (Gagliardi, 2017, p. 585). These women are relegated to the margins by patriarchal structures that allow physical and psychological violence to continue to harm them.

### 4. Conclusion

The real and the “fictional” cinematographic works of Nadir Bouhmouch and Nabil Ayouch reveal the extent to which film is an effective medium through which to expose the challenges Morocco faces as it navigates the global socioeconomic and political networks of our millennial “world-in-motion.” For these filmmakers and many others, social and political progress at home will not be possible without the equal participation of women at every level of Moroccan society.

### References


**Romanticizing Rape in the Turkish TV Series: Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? and the Female Moroccan Fans**

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**Abstract**

Turkish TV series first appeared on Arab television in the period of 2007-2008. *Ihlamurlar Altinda* [*Under the Linden Trees*] (Kanal D, 2005) and *Gumus* [*Silver*] (Kanal D, 2005) were the first Turkish series that aired on Arab TV. They were translated from Turkish to Arabic as *Sanawat Aldaya’a* [*The Lost Years*] and *Noor*, and were shown on MBC (the Middle-East Broadcasting Channel) from 2007-2009. *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* [*What is Fatmagul’s Fault?*] (Kanal D, 2010), known in the Arab world simply by the title of *Fatma* aired on MBC in 2013, after being dubbed in Syrian Arabic. *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* traces the psychological and social sufferings of a simple village girl who was sexually assaulted by four men, a few days before her wedding’s date. Fatma’s story undergoes a drastic change when she voluntarily accepts to marry one of the rapists, Kerim, though the viewers find out later that he did not touch Fatma but did nothing to save her, too.

In this paper, I discuss through close textual analysis how the television drama *Fatmagul* does not only contribute in normalizing rape, but also exploits the commonplace melodramatic ingredients in fiction that are characterized by excess such as the loss of consciousness, eavesdropped
conversations, last-minute rescues and unpredictable love stories (Brooks, 1995) in order to romanticize the most aggressive sexual aggression against women. I point out to the alarming effects of these messages on the specific category of Moroccan female audience, who instead of condemning the rapists, develops sympathy and even identify with the emotional struggle of the male protagonist Kerim who was involved in the rape incident. I have joined a number of Facebook fan pages of Fatmagul and I have also looked at numerous constructed Youtube videos about the series so that I can have access to and analyze the comments and reactions of the Moroccan female fans.

Keywords: Turkish drama, the romanticizing of rape, female Moroccan fans.

0. Introduction

Turkish TV series first appeared on Arab television in the period of 2007-2008. Ihlamurlar Altında [Under the Linden Trees] (Kanal D, 2005) and Gumus [Silver] (Kanal D, 2005) were the first Turkish TV series that aired on Arab television and were originally shown on Kanal D, which is one of the most significant nationwide TV channels in Turkey. They were translated from Turkish to Arabic as Sanawat Aldaya’a [The Lost Years] and Noor, and were shown on MBC (the Middle-East Broadcasting Channel) from 2007-2009. Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? [What is Fatmagul’s Fault?] (Kanal D, 2010-2012), known in the Arab world simply by the title of Fatma aired on MBC in 2013, after being dubbed in Syrian Arabic. However, a large number of Arab young viewers, including the Moroccan youth, watched the series on YouTube or on other related sites where the series aired in the Turkish language but with featured Arabic subtitles.

Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? traces the psychological and social sufferings of a simple village girl who was sexually assaulted by four men, a few days before her wedding’s date. At the beginning of Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?, the depiction of rape follows a traditional line in which the female protagonist, Fatma, traumatized and devastated, has to face the social stigma of being raped, reinforced by the fact that she lives in a small and closed village in the west coast of Turkey. However, Fatma’s story undergoes a drastic change when she voluntarily accepts to marry one
of the rapists, Kerim, though the viewers find out later that he did not touch Fatma but did nothing to save her, too. The unexpected part of the story is when Fatma falls in love with Kerim, who thanks to the dramatic twits in the plot magically turns to be her savior.

This paper looks at how the issue of rape in Fatmagul is being romanticized and turned into a love story, which appears to be the only way for the rape victim, Fatma, to overcome the past sexual abuse and start a normal marital life. I discuss through close textual analysis how the television drama Fatmagul does not only contribute to normalizing rape, but also exploits the commonplace melodramatic ingredients in fiction that are characterized by excess such as the loss of consciousness, eavesdropped conversations, last-minute rescues and unpredictable love stories (Brooks, 1995) in order to romanticize the most aggressive sexual aggression against women. I point out to the alarming effects of these messages on the specific category of Moroccan female audience, who instead of condemning the rapists, develops sympathy and even identify with the emotional struggle of the male protagonist Kerim who was involved in the rape incident. I have joined a number of Facebook fan pages of Fatmagul and I have also looked at numerous constructed YouTube videos about the series so that I can have access to and analyze the comments and reactions of the Moroccan female fans.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of TV series and the way their universal themes and visual attractions have made them welcomed TV products at a global level. I then examine the rape scene in Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? which is considered to be one of the most disturbing scenes in contemporary Turkish drama to the extent that Arab TV officials felt the need to censor different parts of it before airing it on MBC. Finally, I look at the supportive reactions of the Moroccan audience to the unusual love story between the rape victim Fatma and Kerim, who is accused of sexual assault along with his other three friends. I rely mainly on social media, particularly on Facebook and YouTube, to trace the reactions of the Moroccan female fans, who constitute part of the Arab online fan community, to see the way they affectively respond to the elements related to the love story in Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?.
1. The Worldwide Success of Serialized TV Shows

Serialized TV shows or TV series are generally divided into two main genres which are telenovelas and soap operas. It is worth differentiating between these two genres for a better understanding of the distinct elements of the Turkish TV series. Telenovelas are a popular TV genre that initially emerged in Latin America particularly in Brazil and Mexico during the early 1950s. They are historicized by reference to radio shows that were sponsored by soap manufacturers in the United States during the 1930s. Telenovelas along with soap operas have been the most watched form of global TV entertainment worldwide. Telenovelas differ from the soap operas primarily in terms of form; this is in spite of their reliance on a melodramatic serialization structure. Lozano and Singhal (1993) assert that the term “telenovela” (which literally stands for television novels) is typically used to refer to TV serials produced in Latin America, but is known as soap opera in the United States. However, these two types of melodramatic serials diverge in certain important respects. American soap operas run for years or even decades, as in the case with The Bold and The Beautiful (1987-present). A roughly analogous chronological time is represented through the effect of changing circumstances and the aging of the actors themselves. By contrast, the seriality of telenovelas is finite with typically conclusive endings. Whereas American soap operas are mainly conceived as daytime serials that target female viewers, the highest rated telenovelas are shown in primetime slots that serve a wider audience even if shown during the day. Finally, the most popular Latin American actors aspire to be featured in telenovelas. This is unlike the cult of stardom in the United States, which is more often tied to Hollywood cinema.

On the other hand, the Turkish soap operas, known as diziler in Turkish, have more relevance to telenovelas than American soap operas. Turkish diziler usually have two seasons that can run over two years utmost. Most Turkish diziler would have definite endings and the featured actors are usually very popular in both the film and TV industries. Also, Turkish series are typically produced as high-budget and target different social classes and varied target viewers, not necessarily only the female audience. The most high-budget ones are
shown in prime-time slots, in which one episode that runs for average 100 minutes is aired every week. However, in case the rate of viewership does not meet the producers’ expectations, the TV series can face the risk of being cancelled or shortened to no more than twenty episodes.

The successful Turkish diziler are believed to have offered Arab viewers “a familiar context of arranged marriages, respect for elders and big families living together” (Kimmelman, 2010). Arab broadcasters supported this rhetoric of cultural proximity in order to assist in promoting TV series that originate from a predominantly Muslim country. Nonetheless, both the dialogue and visual content of Turkish diziler have been subject to the same rigorous censorship procedures as any other imported global TV series. This censorship practice is due to the differences between the general parameters of Arab and Turkish television. Unlike Arab television, the secular political ideology in Turkey allows for greater latitude in depictions of the sexualized body along with narratives that challenge cultural taboos. *Fatmagül’un Suçu Ne?* has also been subjected to rigorous censorship procedures, particularly in relation to the rape scene and the dialogues around the topic of rape.

Also, the popularity of Turkish diziler on the satellite pan-Arab TV channel MBC has provoked the ire of religious authorities in the Arab world. In Saudi Arabia, in particular, there have been claims that Turkish diziler promote “anti-Islamic” values by depicting alcohol consumption, pre-marital sex and the acceptability of abortion as a matter of course. The Saudi religious clerics assert that this could negatively affect the conservative cultural values of Arab viewers (Buccianti, 2010, p. 9). These claims have had a limited effect on the popularity of the Turkish diziler, since MBC continued to purchase them to keep pace with increased demand in the Arab media market. Different Arab TV channels headed by MBC have purchased 50 Turkish diziler between 2008 and 2013 due to their continuing success among Arab viewers (Carney, 2013). However, as demonstrated in the next section, *Fatmagül’un Suçu Ne?* has undergone censorship in relation to a number of scenes and dialogues, particularly the rape scene.
in order to make the content of the TV series appropriate for the cultural parameters of Arab television.

2. Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? and the Romanticizing of Rape

*Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? [What is Fatmagul’s Fault?] (prod. Ay Yapım, Kanal D, 2010)* depicts the life of Fatmagul (Beren Saat) who is happily engaged to Mustafa (Fırat Celik). The engaged couple live in a small and beautiful village in the west coast of Turkey, close to the coastal city Izmir. The couple’s living standard is very mediocre. Fatma had to drop out from school at an early age so that she could assist her simple-minded brother in running daily errands. Her fiancé, on the other hand, is a humble fisherman. Fatma has only one hope of getting married to Mustafa whom she loves unconditionally, and which will enable her to have a separate life from her annoying and constantly nagging sister-in-law. In one morning, Fatma wakes up very early so that she can bid goodbye to her fiancé, before he embarks on his fishing trip. This morning would be a turning-point in Fatma’s life. As she hastily runs to catch up with Mustafa, four young men, who were under drugs, get hold of Fatma, sexually assault her as they take turns in raping her. The rape scene can be considered as one of the most troubling scenes in contemporary Turkish drama. The rape scene lasts for four minutes in which Fatma’s screams are interrupted by the crazy laughter of the four rapists.

Thanks to the daring persona of the Turkish actress, Beren Saat, playing the role of Fatma, the rape scene is shot in detail in which Fatma’s face that expresses mixed emotions of pain, shock and fear is the main focus. Some parts of the rape scene were censored on MBC because they cross the cultural borders of Arab television. The shots in which Erdogan tears up Fatmagul’s dress and touches her breasts after having poured wine on her captured body were edited. Also, the part in which Erdogan, who is depicted as the most cold-blooded and the most aggressive of the four, unzips his trousers has been omitted. In the Arabic version what mainly remains is Fatmagul’s loud screams, scared and agonizing facial expressions accompanied with her stifled tears as the rapists take turns in violently raping her while hysterically laughing.
After being treated in the local hospital and kept for a few days to recover, Fatma’s anger and anguish increases as she notices that her family members and friends treat her with pity, but their eyes carry multiple questions regarding the details of the incident. The traumatized Fatma will eventually have to face the growing doubts from her fiancé, the continuous blame of her sister-in-law and the reserved pity of the people in the village. Fatma’s case deteriorates as she realizes her weak stand in the face of the wealthy and influential families of the three rapists Erdogan (Kaan Tasaner), Selim (Engin Öztürk), and Vural (Bugra Gülsoy). This distressing chapter in Fatma’s life supposedly comes to an end when she agrees to marry one of the rapists Kerim (Engin Akyürek), a simple blacksmith, who accepts to marry her to save her life, as she attempts to commit suicide several times, but also to protect his rich friends, who have been exploiting his great sense of guilt to push him to marry Fatma. Troubled and nostalgic for Mustafa, who abandoned her after having accused her of having an affair with Kerim, Fatma could not stand living with Kerim (he never tries to touch her) and pleas for divorce. However, Kerim starts to have feelings for Fatma, and proves this to her when he files a rape case against him and his friends.

In the second season of Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?, Kerim would be portrayed as a hero because he is the only person who opens charges against those who were the cause of Fatma’s long and painful sufferings. Nevertheless, Kerim has the courage to file the case only after he has discovered that he is innocent and did not participate in the rape. Kerim could not remember the details of the rape incident because he was under drugs, but later he would gradually remember and he would also indirectly know from the rapists that he did not touch Fatma, who had passed out by then. Thus, Kerim would be released though he attended the incident and did nothing to help Fatma. After continuous attempts to circumvent accusations through different means, the three rapists would be sent to a long prison sentence, and Fatma eventually falls in love with Kerim and she bears his child at the end.

The series Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? represents an uncommon and even a disturbing love story. The rape victim, Fatma falls in love with Kerim, who attended the sexual aggression against her from three of his friends.
without trying to help or interfere. In addition, Kerim could have also assaulted Fatma if she had not already passed out. The role of Kerim is played by the aspiring Turkish actor, Engin Akyürek, who is famous for his innocent facial expressions and low-pitched voice, qualities that facilitated his portrayal of the passive and confusing character of Kerim. In fact, there are many details in the story that are inserted in order to “cleanse” Kerim from the taunting accusations of sexual assault. First, Kerim is represented as a passive and helpless man who agrees to marry Fatma in order to appease his feeling of guilt and save her life though he could never face her or even look at her in the eyes. Kerim also decides to try all means to help Fatma overcome pain and the social stigma attached to her from her close family members, such as her sister-in-law. In the episodes that follow Fatma’s marriage to Kerim, Fatma would always treat Kerim with anger and contempt but he constantly remains patient and kind.

Apparently, Kerim never tries to touch Fatma or even have close conversations with her though he would make gestures to bring back the smile to her cold and cheerless face. More importantly, when Kerim finds out that he is innocent of the rape, he faces Fatma with this fact and pleas for forgiveness and a chance for a stable and normal life. The consequent events of the story would be presented from Kerim’s point of view so that the audience can develop sympathy for him and forget his involvement in the rape scene. Gradually, the audience would also expect Fatma to forgive Kerim and accept his love. Thankfully, Fatma remains rigid and angry and does not give in to Kerim’s advances. Only after Kerim reports the crime to the police and is consequently arrested along with the three rapists, does Fatma start to have feelings for him. From a feminist perspective, Fatma’s reaction is empowering as she is able to make her voice heard and struggles in order to open charges against the offenders though this happens only in the middle of the first season as a result of the family pressure that Fatma had to endure to remain silent.

Thus, there are many dramatic details in the plot that renders Kerim as a savior and justifies Fatma’s growing attachment to him. When he is released, Kerim helps Fatma have her own food business and rent a new beautiful house for them though he still finds it extremely difficult to
physically get close to her. This detail is added to highlight the continuous devastating effects of sexual assaults. Generally, all these dramatic details are being inserted in the story to help Kerim’s character change from being the man who passively attended the rape of an innocent girl to the hero who struggles to bring justice to Fatma’s case and who is ready for all types of sacrifice in order to bring back peace and stability to Fatma’s life.

However, the fact that the TV series offers a possibility for people taunted with sexual assault to start a normal life with the sexually aggressed victims raises serious questions regarding the issue of rape. Following the code of 434 of Turkish Criminal Laws that thankfully lost its validity in 2004; the rapists could escape accusations if they married the ones that they had sexually abused (Yener, 2013). Similarly, in Morocco, until recent times, article 475 in the penal code allowed rapists to marry their victims in order to avoid punishment. However, the newly adopted law no. 103-13 guarantees more protection for rape victims (Human Right Watch, 2018). In Fatmagul, the fact that Fatma voluntarily agrees to marry Kerim in order to evade the social stigma of being “a rape victim” sends out a dangerous message regarding women’s rights and the laws that oftentimes fail to protect them from the most intense types of aggression. More to the point, in her close study of how rape is depicted in the old film version of Fatmagul as well as the contemporary television drama, the Turkish researcher, Yasmin Yener, criticizes the way Turkish newspaper responded to the depiction of rape in Fatmagul. Yener asserts that the widely-read Turkish newspapers such as Zaman, Hurriyet and Radikal, have had serious issues with the way rape is depicted in Fatmagul. For her, instead of supporting the strong feminist cause of the series, these newspapers attacked the boldness and the length of the rape scene, claiming that such visual content is considered disturbing for the Turkish audience. I would agree with Yener that the depiction of rape in the series is being “unaesthetized” that is represented in a shocking and repulsive way. This detail serves to reinforce the feminist spine of the series, which is also supported by the daring person of the actress playing the role of Fatma, Beren Saat, as previously mentioned. In addition, the big controversy over the rape scene in Fatmagul has contributed to its popularity both inside and outside Turkey.
3. The Moroccan Female Audience and the Depiction of Rape

It should be noted that the Moroccan audience has mainly watched *Fatmagul* on MBC in which the rape scene has been censored and shortened and thus, its strength and repulsiveness have been mitigated. As discussed earlier, the censoring of imported TV series on Arab television has a long tradition in which scenes and details that cross already-established boundaries are constantly edited. This censorship might partly justify the supportive stand of the Moroccan female viewers towards the romance that starts to develop between Fatma and Kerim, who is involved in sexual abuse. However, as in my case, a large number of fans, particularly the ones active on social media platforms, resorted to the internet to watch the uncensored versions of the series and to express their feelings towards the different dramatic elements in *Fatmagul*.

The appeal of soap operas to female viewers in particular has enhanced their global success. Louise Spence (2005) explains that soap operas can be considered as an outlet for women viewers, given that they allow for a private space and time, thus, granting them a certain type of autonomy. Spence also argues that the process of watching soap operas by women involves a set of reactions that include joy, fancy and even contradictory feelings that can be gained privately or collectively. She describes soap opera female fans as “coparticipants in pity, sorrow, compassion, pain, condemnation, joy, or happiness” (Spence, 2005, p.71). Her main contention is that soap operas offer female viewers in general and housewives in particular the possibility of experiencing pleasure among all their daily commitments. As Spence (2005) puts it, “these daily dramas transform household desires (the despair of their context) into the possibility of embracing pleasure or perhaps even a reminder of our capacity for pleasure” (Spence, 2005, p.167). This applies to the way the majority of Moroccan female viewers feel regarding the Turkish diziler. The Moroccan female audiences derive different types of pleasure in their watching experience of the Turkish diziler in relation to the visual attractions of the physical attraction of the characters, the clothing fashion, the settings, and the stories.

To closely examine the reactions and feelings of the female Moroccan fans in regards to *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* to better understand the
series’ quality of affect, I have joined several fan pages in social media, particularly on Facebook. The majority of the contributors to the Facebook fan pages are girls and young women who not only post the pictures and videos of their favorite Turkish characters but also diligently seek out all uncensored intimate scenes between female and male characters on Internet sites with uncensored versions of these shows. More significantly, Moroccan female fans have been emotionally moved by the caring behavior of Turkish male characters towards their partners, which can be traced through their comments and discussions. Thanks to social media platforms that enable the masking of the identity of the user, female fans are able to voice their opinions about how they perceive the ideal moral, physical and sexual traits of men, taking Turkish male characters as models. Drawing on the arguments of Brown (1994) and Baym (2000) who have extensively studied online female fandom regarding soap operas, these Moroccan female fans have been empowered through their new capacity to convene online in order to freely gossip over the different aspects of their favorite diziler, particularly the taboo topics of sexuality and sexual relations, thus defying the dominant social hierarchies that belittle their feminine discourse and watching experience.

The strong impact of Turkish diziler on female Moroccan viewers, who are typically the largest audience, is more pronounced in the virtual world of social media. As in my case, an important number of Moroccan viewers watched Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? on YouTube with featured Arabic subtitles and in its original form without any type of dialogue or scene censorship. My choice to use the Internet in order to watch my favorite Turkish TV series was personally and academically driven. As mentioned earlier, the original Turkish episode lasts for average two hours while the dubbed one lasts for only average forty minutes with important interruptions caused by censorship. Accordingly, I preferred to watch the original ones though oftentimes the Arabic subtitles are not provided. To solve this linguistic problem, I started taking Turkish language classes in order to be able to understand more the freshly released online episodes and then I became able to compare between the original and the censored versions. In parallel, I joined most of the Facebook fan pages talking about Fatmagul and the main characters. I was surprised to find out about the nonchalant way
the Arab female fans felt towards the rape incident and astonished to see the degree to which they are emotionally engaged with the male protagonist Kerim.

Moroccan female fans, who are part of the online Arab female community, used the social media forum Engin Mad Fans¹ to express their great admiration for the personal and physical traits of Kerim (Engin Akyürek). This can be seen as a key effect of Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? on this particular category of female viewers, most of whom are aged between 17-30.² Female fans from Morocco and other Arab countries have one common objective on this Facebook page, which is expressing their strong admiration for the physical qualities of Kerim such as his long dark hair, big black eyes and his smile, in addition to his caring and romantic behaviors towards Fatma. The fans’ fascination with the personal characteristics of Kerim (Engin Akyürek) made them criticize the cold way Fatma has been treating Kerim.

The Moroccan female fans seem to confuse the personal and physical traits of the actor, Engin Akyürek, with the role he plays in Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?, who is the timid and passive Kerim that develops to be more assertive, particularly after his innocence is proven. The young actor Engin Akyürek is famous for being shy and reserved; starting from his very first featuring and winning of the first part in an acting contest in Turkey called Turkiye’nin Yıldızları (Turkey’s Star) in 2004. His innocent facial features, low voice tonality and his scarce participation in TV talk shows have confirmed these characteristics. Hence, the reputation of the actor, Engin Akyürek, has contributed to the sympathy the Moroccan female fans developed towards the character Kerim. They seem not to consider the part in the series where Kerim passively attends the sexual aggression against Fatma, and probably did not sexually assault her because she had already lost consciousness.

² My findings are based on my first hand experience with the Facebook page as I am myself a fan. I have also been in personal contact with the administrator of the page who is Egyptian and who has provided me with information regarding the goal of the group as well as the age range of the girl fans.
Instead, the Moroccan female viewers as part of the online Arab women fans focus on the plot twists that have made Kerim the only savior for Fatma more than on the fact that Kerim remained passive, watching his three friends taking turns in raping Fatma. This is highlighted in the short scenes of Fatma and Kerim that have been uploaded on YouTube. The majority of these scenes depict Kerim as the ideal man, embracing the characteristics of kindness, generosity and having the status of a gentleman. Among the titles of the videos on YouTube that idealizes Kerim are “Kerim offers his last sacrifice to Fatma-e‌pisode 61,”3 “Kerim reconciles with Fatma and kisses her hand-episode 83,”4 “Kerim re-ensures Fatma and tries to calm her down-episode 19”5 “Kerim keeps his promise to Fatma.”6 These titles indicate the amount of sympathy that Arab and Moroccan female fans feel towards the character of Kerim and their total support for the growing love between Kerim and Fatma. The majority of the comments on these videos are from Egyptian fans as the comments are written in Egyptian Arabic. Nonetheless, the Moroccan female fans also devoted their time to express their engagement by writing comments in Moroccan Arabic or in French such as “serie super”, “fantastic”7 “at least Fatma did not die and there is a happy ending,” and “I watch it every morning at 7am.”8

In the same vein, the comments from both the Moroccan and Arab female fans on the videos mainly focus on the character Kerim. Some of the comments are “this actor is genius, his role is very nice”, “who can imitate the way Kerim walks?” “Kerim is an uncommon personality that would never reoccur in Turkish drama” “Kerim is so sweet” “I love Kerim’s hair, who is like me?” the Moroccan and Arab female viewers

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maintained the same emotional stand towards Kerim even on the video that shows devastated Kerim describing the rape incident to the police. Instead of accusing Kerim, female fans comment with expressions such as “these are terrible moments for Kerim that are installed in his mind” “Kerim was only joking when he caught Fatma while his friends are the ones that raped her” “oh poor Kerim” “poor Kerim, he feels very remorseful.” On this video, there is only one comment that blames Kerim, it says “if I were Fatma, I would never forgive Kerim because he was the one who pointed to her and who caught her first;” however, another fan jumps in and defends Kerim saying “he was very drunk and unconscious.” Thus, again the majority of the comments show sympathy towards Kerim more than the rape victim, Fatma. For these female fans, the fact that Kerim was unconscious, and now feels pain and remorse and he is the only one that decides to report the rape crime are sufficient factors to forgive him and even sympathize with him. In her study of the depiction of violence in a number of contemporary television series, Aysun Akincı Yüksel points out that Turkish drama typically adds the elements of the loss of consciousness or the heavy consumption of drugs and alcohol by the male protagonists that would serve as excuses for their sexually violent acts. This detail is inserted so that the heroes are not depicted as evil characters and hence “forgiving becomes commonplace” (Yüksel, 2013). I would confirm that the loss of consciousness is one of the long-standing elements used in drama to offer it the amount of excess that serves to emotionally engage the audience. In the case of Fatmagul, the audience is encouraged to sympathize with Kerim while they also carry hopeful expectations regarding Fatma’s feelings towards Kerim.

What is peculiar about the videos found on YouTube is the way the fans appropriate sections of Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? The female fans appropriate Arab pop songs in the resulting remixed videos. They typically use the most recent successful regional songs that are suitable with the dramatic parts of Fatma. Songs are not always in Arabic as fans also make use of Turkish music, and the videos typically consist of the most emotionally charged moments as well as the passionate scenes that have been censored on Arab TV. Among these videos are the ones

that use the very romantic songs of the regionally popular singer Wael Jassar. These types of videos again illustrate the extent to which the female fans feel attached to the love story that develops between Fatma and Kerim and see no harm in the fact that the rape victim Fatma is falling in love with Kerim, who has been involved in the most traumatizing incident in her life.

It should be noted that YouTube has experienced a remarkable rise in viewership from soap opera fans in many Arab countries and Morocco is no exception. The Internet has facilitated the congregation of soap opera fans who in the past had difficulty in coming together to share this interest due to actual distances and scheduling conflicts. In fact, the different ways the Arab and Moroccan online fans construct and remix the YouTube videos from the different sections of *Fatma* facilitated the engagement of these fans with specific scenes, as indicated in the titles of the videos themselves. In this context, Emma F. Webb affirms that online fans usually assume more “textual” ownership over their favorite soaps than the offline ones do because they spend considerable time on the Internet discussing and evaluating the storylines, the characters, and the realism of the acting. The same applies to the Moroccan female fans of Fatma who have become increasingly attached to the character of Kerim and show less interest in the psychological sufferings of Fatma or the horrific nature of rape as a crime.

The other categories of Moroccan female fans who usually don’t use the Internet to watch the Turkish diziler, have had access to them on MBC. There has been a recent shift to dubbing the Turkish diziler into regional dialects instead of standard Arabic (*Fusha*). This has contributed to the current success of imported Turkish soap operas that started to be dubbed into colloquial Syrian Arabic. The primary reason for the shift to vernacular dialects is to make imported Turkish diziler more accessible to a wider demographic of Arab viewers. Though standard Arabic is the shared official language in Arab countries, it remains an unspoken language in daily life and limited to the educated elite.

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Thus, given the high rates of illiteracy in the Arab world, in Morocco, for instance, it is almost 40 percent (Skalli, 2007); the move to regional dialects was directed towards increasing the popularity of these imported TV series. Despite the fact that the Syrian dialect is not as commonly understood as the Egyptian, but the loyal Moroccan audiences of the Turkish diziler have grown more accustomed to it and the language barrier gradually withers. The profusion of the Turkish TV series with Arabic subtitles on the Internet and their accessibility on Arab TV made them easily available to Arab viewers, particularly to the female fans. This consequently guarantees the prevalence of a number of alarming messages, as in the case with *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* The dramatic plot twists in this series have incited the viewers, the female viewers in particular, to focus and support the possibility of a love story between the rape victim, Fatma, and the guilty Kerim, thus belittling the gravity of sexual assaults against women and opening possibilities for love or marital relationships between the rape victims and the rape criminals.

4. Conclusion
The strong interest of the Arab viewers for the Turkish TV series is reflected in their continuous airing on different Arab TV channels. *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* has been one of the most successful series both inside Turkey and internationally. This is the result of its controversial visual content. In *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?*, rape is being normalized as it turned into a love story between the rape victim Fatma and Kerim, who passively attended the horrible sexual aggression against her. As pointed out, a number of dramatic elements were added to make Kerim appear as the only savior for Fatma. For instance, it is only thanks to Kerim that Fatma is able to open charges against the three rapists whose lives would eventually be ruined. Kerim’s motive to stand by Fatma was first due to his great sense of guilt before he started to have feelings for her and slowly but successfully wins her affection as well.

Hence, the way this TV drama makes rape turn into a possibility for romance confirms the alarming effects of such series on the Arab audience in general and the Moroccan female audience in particular. Female viewers in Morocco and other Arab countries showed almost no criticism towards the past problematic behaviors of Kerim during the
violent scene of rape. Instead, they rapidly forgave Kerim, sympathized with him and supported his love for Fatma. As demonstrated in this paper, this type of reaction raises questions about the extent to which TV drama can lead to popular sympathy for those involved in rape, thus underestimating the most aggressive sexual aggressions against women. More to the point, my discussion of the reactions and the comments of the Moroccan female fans in social media platforms confirms the growing importance of social media to TV series fans. Moroccan fans are increasingly feeling more comfortable and encouraged to voice their opinions and express their feelings on social media about the different visual and content details of their favorite Turkish series

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Exploring the Discursive Construction of Rape in Morocco: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This paper is a Critical Discourse Analysis of the representation of rape within the Moroccan culture. In particular, it attempts to show the constitutive role of language when it comes to people’s (verbal) reaction to rape incidents in social networking sites, namely Facebook and YouTube. This is achieved by analyzing the language used as a reaction to the recent attempted sexual assault incidents taking place in different areas in Morocco, with the aim being to depict the linguistic and discursive features via which gender-discriminatory ideologies are circulated and reinforced in these e-platforms. The discursive strategies analyzed show how women who are victims of rape are subjected to another subtler form of violence- verbal violence- in social media. The data gathered herein have affirmed our gendered performances, unravelling some culturally powerful definitions of social reality/practices, where women are still held responsible for men’s sexual aggression. The implications of this study have far-reaching consequences, most important of which is that they will deepen our understanding of the structuring effects of language.

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Keywords: Rape, critical discourse analysis, social media, social practices, ideologies, discrimination

0. Introduction

That language is the vehicle through which ideologies, particularly oppressive ones, are circulated and reinforced in a given society is not uncommon (Fairclough, 1989, p. 2010). This is largely due to the constitutive role language plays in shaping and constraining people’s perception and conception about a given issue. Oftentimes, this results in empowering a group to the detriment of disempowering another. The repercussions of such a dialectical relationship between discourse and power are for the most part pernicious. Undeniably, this affects how individuals interpret and negotiate gender relations and roles2. Of interest to the present study is the assumption that social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, to mention but these, are loaded with naturally-occurring data, wherein speakers are given the space and tools to voice their opinions and concerns out loud with no censorship whatsoever3. In so doing, they are able to construct and perform their identity (Bolander, 2017).

In the same vein, the present paper attempts to investigate how rape incidents are perceived in social networking sites, with the major claim being that the language produced therein as a reaction to rape incidents serves as a vehicle for circulating gender discrimination, showing how women who are victims of rape are subjected to another subtler form of violence—verbal violence. This revictimization of rape victims by society suggests what Matoesian (1995, p. 676) refers to as ‘rape of the second kind’. Our framework of analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA henceforth) (Fairclough, 1989, 1999; Van Dijk, 1993), a framework that claims that discourse plays a key role in constructing social reality. CDA allows us to show how ideologies which are circulated via discourse empower a party at the expense of disempowering and oppressing another one. As a result, discourse/language can be said to serve as a vehicle for creating,

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3 On Facebook, for example, a comment is deleted only if it is reported by several users to contain inappropriate language or content; otherwise, it is the responsibility of the page admin to do so.
maintaining and perpetuating social injustice. As Mullet (2018, p. 117) puts it, “CDA deals primarily with discourses of power abuse, injustice, and inequality and attempts to uncover implicit or concealed power relations.”

The main impetus for choosing CDA as our framework of analysis stems from the assumption that the language used as a reaction to rape incident is replete with discursive techniques used by Internet users that contribute to the production and reproduction of gender inequalities. Social networking sites provide the space and the resources in which such inequalities are reinforced and maintained.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The two sections that immediately follow are concerned with looking at how rape is defined in the Islamic religion and the Moroccan law. The goal of these sections (sections 2 and 3) is to pinpoint any mismatch between these two and the deployed discursive practices with regard to rape. While section 4 presents the methodology adopted along with a brief description of the rape incidents analyzed, section 5 attempts to provide an analysis of the language used as a reaction to recent attempted sexual assault incidents taking place in different areas in Morocco, with the aim being to depict the linguistic and discursive features via which gender-discriminatory ideologies are circulated and reinforced in these e-platforms. Section 6 concludes.

1. Legal Definition of Rape

In the Moroccan Penal Code, rape is defined in Article 486, which states that “Rape is an act by which a man has a sexual relationship with a woman without her consent. It is sanctioned by imprisonment from 5 to 10 years. If the victim is a minor whose age is less than 15, the sanction is imprisonment from 10 to 20 years” (cited in Lamrani, 2012). Interestingly, the Moroccan Penal Code differentiates between two outcomes of rape. While Article 486 is concerned with the general incidents of rape, in which one has sexual intercourse with a female against her will, Article 488 is concerned with the outcome of rape. If, for example, the act of rape results in loss of virginity the punishment is almost doubled: “If the crime (of rape) results in the victim’s loss of

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4 For more details on CDA, the interested reader is referred to Van Dijk (1993), Mullet (2018), and the references cited therein.
virginity, the sanctions are as follows: Imprisonment from 10 to 20 years for [committing] the first part of [Article] 486, and imprisonment from 20 to 30 years for [committing] the second part of [Article] 486” (cited in Lamrani, 2012). Another related Article, i.e. Article 475, in the Penal Code that was revoked later on stipulates that rapists can escape persecution if they agree to marry their victims. This article was revoked in 2013 following the tragic suicide of Amina, the rape victim who married her perpetrator, and the ensuing public outcry against it. Before we proceed to the analysis, a discussion of how rape is defined in Islamic law and Moroccan culture is deemed convenient at this stage, the focus of the section that follows.

2. Rape in Islamic Law and Moroccan Culture

In the Islamic law, it is not clear whether rape falls within the category of zina\(^5\) or constitutes an isolated crime (Noor, 2010). Usually regarded as zina bii l-ʔikraah, rape is defined as an illegal, forced sexual intercourse or assault. The fact that it is illegal and happens outside marriage creates confusion; this is incarnated most clearly in practices in which the female victim is asked to provide four male eyewitnesses to prove her case\(^6\); otherwise, it is considered as a false accusation or qaḍf. Such a punishment clearly indicates the confusion that some scholars and laymen alike have regarding coming up with a clear-cut distinction between rape and zina\(^7\).

As a country where the majority of its population identify themselves as Muslims, any sexual relations outside marriage is criminalized and stigmatized. Therefore, a female is responsible for preserving her virginity at all costs. Of interest to the present paper is the assumption that in Morocco there is a strong cultural association between a girl’s virginity and her family’s honor (Lamrani, 2012). Such an association is far from being without glaring, pernicious repercussions. For example,

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\(^5\) The IPA transcription is used in this paper. Emphatic consonants are represented using a corresponding capital letter. Gemination and vowel length are transcribed by doubling the sound in question.

\(^6\) Exploring this issue in detail is worthwhile on its own right. In this paper, I steer away from doing so, as issues like these might take us too far afield. The interested reader is referred to Noor (2010) and the references cited therein.

\(^7\) In the Moroccan Penal Code, for example, article 490, zina is defined as any sexual intercourse happening outside marriage. It is sanctioned by imprisonment from month to a year.
Lamrani (2012) analyzed rape discourse in legal courts in Morocco. She concludes that such an association affects all the society’s sphere, even legal institutions. This blurs, as it were, the act of rape as an independent crime with pernicious effects on the victim who is usually revictimized in the process, treating them as culprits, guilty of crimes of honor (see Lamrani (2012) for details).

In this paper, we argue that another space affected by such an association is social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube. On the basis of analyzing comments produced by users as reaction to recent rape incidents, we show how language produced as a reaction to rape incidents serves as a vehicle for circulating gender discrimination. The data gathered herein affirms the society’s gendered performances, unravelling some culturally powerful definitions of social reality/practices, where women are still held responsible for men’s sexual aggression.

3. Methodology

The data for this study were drawn from Facebook and YouTube comments. Three rape incidents are analyzed. The first case of attempted rape is commonly referred to as the ‘bus rape’. As its term indicates, this incident took place in August, 2017, on a public bus in Casablanca. It involved a group of teenagers, aged between 15 and 17, who tried to forcefully take the girl’s clothes off. The boys were assaulting her and groping her while performing sexual acts on her (Hayden, 2017). The second rape incident, which is a gang rape, took place in June, 2018 in a small village called Oulad Ayad in central Morocco. Khadija, the 17-year-old victim, claimed that 15 men had kidnapped her and held her captive for 2 months (Trew, 2018). While held captive, the alleged kidnappers raped and tortured her. The torturing took the form of forcefully tattooing Khadija. The tattoos covered almost all parts of her body. The last rape incident is also an attempted rape that took place in Rehamna province in the Moroccan region of Marrakech-Safi. The circulating video of the incident showed a man wrestling with what appeared to be a student, as she was wearing her school uniform. The girl was seen struggling with a man on the ground who was trying hard to strip her off her jeans, something which he succeeded in eventually. Khaoula, the rape victim, could be heard screaming while a friend of his was filming the incident.
The comments were taken from several Facebook pages and YouTube channels that are characterized by having a good number of followers. Of the pages consulted, we particularly mention Chouf TV, Hama9a +18, Soltana, and Anonymous Masaktinch. For privacy reasons, the users’ full name is not displayed. For clarity of data representation, the comments have been divided into two sub-sections. The first subsection analyzes data in which the victim is depicted as the villain while the perpetrator as the victim, an instance of role reversal. The last subsection shows comments that are characterized by topic shift, that is, ignoring rape as an independent crime.

4. Analysis and Discussions

In analyzing the discursive strategies used in the afore-mentioned social networking sites, this study shows that users deploy two major discursive strategies. We refer to them here as role reversal and topic shifting strategies. The former is when the victim becomes the villain and the perpetrator becomes the victim. The latter strategy is a technique in which users attempt to ignore the incident of rape and shift their attention to other peripheral and unrelated issues.

4.1. Role reversal

In these comments, the female victim is depicted as the main agent responsible for the act of rape while the male perpetrator is portrayed as the victim.

Comment#1: Raḥbənt l-ṣabd ǧamkara w katqarqəb w katskər w katbdə DRəb yəddiha w ṣhrəq RaSha b l-garru yəsni hadi mqaTTəa lwrəq w təlt snin w hiyya mkaSya mn DaRhum. had lhaDRa b l-san ʒ-ʒiran.

_The girl of the slave_ is a thug. She takes drugs and drinks alcohol. She makes cuts to her forearm. She burns parts of her body with a cigarette which means she is crazy. It has been three years that she has been away from her (parents’) home. This is confirmed by her neighbors.

Comment#2: n-nas mən nəyyətəhüm məty9in biʔannahum ətaSbuha. hadra xawya. bayna katkdəb kathDəR b buruda.

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8 This phrase has become popular among young people. It is used as another way to avoid saying the otherwise offensive and swearing phrase “the son/daughter of a prostitute”.

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Are people seriously believing that she was raped? This is bullshit. It is obvious that she is lying. She talks in a calm voice.

Comment#3: Rafia bvat t****wa ?af bvat ydiru liha
She wants to have sex. What more did she want they could do to her?

What patriarchal society? There needs to be an association that defends males. Whoever comes blames men as though females were angels.

Comment#5: waa ṣibaD L-Laḥi ḫayn jī ṣtiSab w d-dərriyya ṣaya baxa t-Sif l-hayat baxa t-Sif LahaDat l-hRam.
Oh people! Is this rape?! The girl wants to live her life and sin (to have sex)

Comment#6: fin huwwa l-ṣtiSab hiyya makatrawwət ma walo.
Where is rape? She does not scream or anything like that.

Comment#7: baʃ ſrəfnaḥa waf kant Tayḥa mʕah wla diṣa kayʕrəfha
How do we know that she is not his girlfriend or that she already knows him.

Comment#8: baxin t-Sift-u d-drari l-habs w s-səyda xir ħamqa
Do you want to send the boys to prison and the lady (the victim) is not even psychologically stable.

Comment#9: ?af ddaha tmʃį mʕahum ?aSlan
Why did she go with them in the first place?

As is clearly shown in these comments⁹, the perpetrator is not held responsible for his crime; instead, they are using language as a mitigating technique to look for a way to hold the victim responsible. For example, comment#1 implies that a girl who drinks alcohol or takes drugs should never complain about rape or any sexual assault for that

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⁹ For expository reasons, the comments selected for analysis are those which are believed to be most relevant to the purpose of the paper. The same analyses apply to the other comments, however.
The same analysis applies to comment#8. Therefore, rape is a deserved and inevitable consequence, not something men perform. This renders the role of the perpetrator in the crime virtually invisible. This could also mean that women ask for rape (Meyer, 2010). Comment#3 and comment#4 are similar to comment#1 in that they show that the trigger for men’s sexual aggression is the victim sexual desire, as comment#3 amply demonstrates. Comment#6 associates rape with screaming, the absence of which means implied consent. Similarly, comment#7 seems to confuse rape with dating. In this sense, sexual assault is perceived as the male partner’s right for sexual satisfaction.

This victim blaming discursive technique deployed here is not restricted to Internet users. It has been reported in Ehrilch (2001) and Lamrani (2012) that judges too are blaming the victims for their lack of resistance, which could be interpreted by the perpetrator as giving consent. Comment#6 and comment#2 provide a sustained argument to the description of female victims as being culprits by not resisting enough.

4.2. Topic shifting

The data presented in this sub-section presents instances in which users shift the main topic, i.e. rape, to discuss other peripheral or unrelated topics. This could be said to be used as a discursive technique to blur the issue of rape as an independent crime.

Comment#10: kun kanu l-bnat kaytsətr-u gaʃ maywqaʃ had jî kaml

If girls were to put on respectful clothes, these would not have happened to begin with.

Comment#11: kayban lli mən fiad l-vidoɔ bli makayn la xtiSab la walo. ymknən kan ḳaSD huwa yʃərrīha wSafi kathaddi. ʔana baqi nʃqal məllı kunna Sxar kunna kanʃbu l-kaRTa w lli xɔr kanhoɔku ʃlih b ʔahkam xribə bhal yhayəd l jî wахd ssəɾwal f ʃʃəɾiʃ. 1-ʃʃləm kəbbər l-mawDuʃ. had jî yadi ʔattər ʃla huDUl l-məʃrib f kaʔs l-ʃalm.

It seems to me that there is no rape. Maybe the intention that he (the perpetrator) was trying to strip her off her clothes as a challenge. As far back as I could remember, we used to play cards and whoever loses we ask him to do strange things like pulling a stranger’s pants down in

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10 See Bernhardsson and Bogren (2012) for similar findings.
the street. Media has magnified the issue. This will affect the country’s chances to organizing the World Cup.

Comment#12: had ʃi kaml dayrah d-dula baʃ təlhina ʃla l fasad. bəςdu mən d-drari msakn.

This is all (referring to the rape incidents) is made by the state to divert our attention from corruption. Leave the poor guys alone.

Comment#13: had zman wəlla kayxləʃ. kulʃi mabqaʃ kayhəm ɬa bnat la wlad ər L-Lah yəhaDəR s-salama w Safi.

This time is frightening. Nobody respects nobody. This includes both males and females. May God protect us!

Comment#14: ʔana sməʃt bəli diʒa kant katʃrəʃhum. ʃafuhum n-nas qbol had ʃʃi.

I heard that she already knew the guys. People had seen them together before.

In these instances, the users are not focusing on the crime of rape, but instead they are shifting their attention to other peripheral or unrelated topics. For example, comments#10 assumes that if girls were to wear descent, respectful clothes, rape would not take place. This gives the impression that rape is legitimate as long as a girl is not wearing this type of clothes. Surprisingly, comment#11 is denying the incident of rape all together. For him/her, this could be anything but rape. Referring to the attempted rape incident of the man who was wrestling with a student on the ground (see section 4), s/he provides an example of a childhood game that shows that what appears to be an attempted rape is actually a game; thus, the people seen on the video were actually playing. The user further suggests that the timing of discussing this incident might affect the country’s chances in the World Cup.

If anything to be inferred from the two discursive strategies that we have seen is that females are still held responsible for the act of rape. While the reasons why this is the case may vary (see for example Lamrani (2012) and Derdar (2016, 2017)), it is evident that it still exists, as is reflected conspicuously in our language. Through analyzing a number of Moroccan proverbs, for example, Derdar (2016, p. 459) shows that women are depicted negatively. For him, women are
portrayed as deficient, superstitious, treacherous, perfidiously cunning, and very obsessed with sexual matters (Derdar, 2016, p.459).

5. Conclusion

The present paper has attempted to explore the discursive strategies that Moroccans deploy as a reaction to rape incidents in social networking sites. Using the precepts of CDA, comments from Facebook and YouTube have been taken and analyzed. It has been shown that users deploy two major discursive strategies. The first strategy is role reversal, whereby the victim becomes the villain and the perpetrator becomes the victim. The second strategy is topic shift, according to which users attempt to ignore the incident of rape and shift their attention to other peripheral and unrelated issues. Both of these techniques, it is argued, are meant to downplay the incident of rape and render the agentive role of the perpetrator almost invisible.

This paper has contributed to the already existing body of research that attempts to show how language is one of the main vehicles through which ideologies, in this case blaming rape victims, are circulated and reinforced. This extends beyond legal institutions to day-to-day language use.

References


Reflexions on the Role of New Media in the Prevention of Violence against Women

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Abstract

After a brief overview of Morocco’s international obligations, I look at the political, legal, economic, and social status of women in Morocco before examining violence against them in the private space and violence perpetrated by the State from both a de jure and de facto perspective. I argue that the new media can improve women’s lives and gender relations, promote social change at the individual, institutional, country, and broader social levels. The internet is an effective tool to attract young people to think about social change. Today, according to research, more girls use the internet than their mothers, and they use it differently from boys: they do not zap from one website to another, they spend more time on one website, and they return emails more than boys. Today, preventing violence against women and increasing women’s access to justice is a primary concern of the Moroccan civil society. Using modern technologies to debate violence against women and to exchange experiences is necessary to sensitive men and women to the dangerous consequences of violence and to adopt efficient strategies and methods to prevent it.

Keywords: Gender, women, violence, rights, state, civil society, new media, Internet
0. Introduction: Legal Provisions

Violence against women is widespread in society, and it is often perpetrated by the husband, brother, father, or another male relative. This is referred to as domestic violence. Violence is a weapon used by men for subordinating women. As long as the present system of domination remains, and legal and social inequality continues, both men and the State will feel legitimated to pursue violence against women.

In this article, I highlight gender-based violence in Morocco and the legal provisions, both penal and civil, of the Moroccan State, which discriminate against women or which, without being discriminatory as such, become so through their application. Unequal power relations between men and women have led to the domination of and discrimination against women, which in turn leads to violence against women.

In 2008, Morocco withdrew all its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in a speech made by King Mohammed VI, with the aim to enhance the legal position of women on the basis of the principle of equality opportunity and the application of international instruments and declarations ratified by Morocco. This decision may be regarded as an important indication that Morocco is committed to gender equality and to combating violence against women.

Morocco has also ratified other international accords relating to human rights which protect women from violence, inter alia: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. The Constitution of Morocco, which was amended in 2011, recognizes the primacy of international law to which Morocco adheres over domestic legislation.

Considerable endeavours have been made by the State to improve the situation of women in Morocco in recent years. Significant measures to
reduce gender inequity within the legal system produced reforms in the country's criminal code, labour code, and family law in 2004. The latter, also known as the Mudawana, is based on the Malikite School of Islamic law and on internationally recognised human rights; it governs the status of women under civil law. The new family law now fosters the principle of gender equality and substantiates joint responsibility of both spouses for the family (Ennaji & Sadiqi 2012). Women's political representation has also improved. The government includes 8 women Ministers and “Secrétaires d’Etat”. The adoption of a gender approach in all ministries is a testimony to the commitment of the government to combat discrimination against women, and to improve their representation in politics. As a result of the quota system, 60 women MPs have been elected from the national lists, while another 20 secured their seats after competing in local and youth lists, and 3428 women were elected in the municipalities (Ennaji, 2016).1

Under the new labor code, women can start their own business and sign trade agreements without the consent of their husbands. The code stipulates that there shall be no discrimination against women in employment and wages, and considers sexual harassment a serious crime for the first time. Significant demographic changes have also led to the improvement of women's health, such as a decrease in fertility rates and a rise in the age of women contracting their first marriage (average 26 years).

The Dahir (royal decree) of 1958 concerning nationality and the Penal Code of Morocco have been recently revised. The new penal code allows a wife to directly sue her husband without the authorization of the court, unlike in the previous provisions. According to the new Nationality Code passed in 2007, a Moroccan mother can pass on Moroccan nationality to her children with a non-Moroccan father automatically, unlike in the 1958 law which required residence in Morocco and a formal application for granting Moroccan nationality to the child. This new code puts an end to the suffering of thousands of Moroccan women married to non-Moroccans.

The recent legislative reforms will, in the long run, have a very positive effect on gender relations. Nevertheless, these changes will only

1 See this link for more information: https://punchng.com/80-women-elected-moroccos-parliament/
become truly significant if they lead to a change in the mentalities of all Moroccans, and if they benefit the daily lives of Moroccan women of all ages. This remains a major challenge, for Morocco is a Muslim society where modernity and tradition compete – not to mention a country in transition toward democratization, integration into the global economy, and urbanization.²

Despite these positive changes, women still face violence in private and public spheres alike, as well as societal discrimination in many walks of life. Gender discrimination persists, and inequalities between Morocco’s urban and rural populations in terms of access to education, employment, and health care are flagrant. Additionally, the national legislation of Morocco continues to contain numerous provisions concerning equality between men and women, which are contradictory to CEDAW, as well as other sources of international law to which Morocco has obligations.

The preamble to the new Constitution of Morocco makes a reference to human rights as universally recognized; the Constitution explicitly mentions equality between women and men. Article 19 of the Constitution guarantees that women and men enjoy equal political rights. A woman can vote and be elected. In all other areas, equality between men and women can be deduced by reading the laws in conjunction with Article 6 of the Constitution which provides that all Moroccans are equal before the law. Thus, legal discrimination against women continues to persist in many provisions of the new Family Code, which deals with topics generally regarded as belonging to the private sphere such as marriage, divorce, alimony, child custody and inheritance; this legal discrimination acts as a powerful mechanism of control over women’s political, social, civic, and cultural activities (see Ennaji, 2010; Sadiqi, 2009).

Despite some important reforms, several laws still discriminate against women, especially regarding polygamy, which has been heavily restricted, but not banned. To be polygamous, the husband must get the approval of the judge, as well as that of his first and future wives. The first wife can go to the judge to ask for a divorce if she feels wronged by her husband’s remarriage. Although the practice of polygamy is

declining – there were 700 polygamous families in 2008 in the whole country (Ennaji forthcoming) – polygamy continues to be a threat to women, as it undermines a woman’s dignity, perpetuates notions of male dominance, and above all, creates domestic environments where women become vulnerable to abuse because they are in the difficult position of agreeing to their husbands’ marriage or asking for divorce. Likewise, inheritance still obeys shari’a law, which means that women inherit only half of what men can inherit (see Ennaji, 2018).

1. Violence against Women

The new Penal Code has responded to most of the demands of the Moroccan women’s NGOs. Article 418 stipulates that murder, injury, and beating are no longer excusable even in cases of adultery. Rape and sexual harassment are also considered serious offences. Article 475 of the Criminal Code stated that “… When a nubile minor is kidnapped or seduced and marries her kidnapper, he can only be sued by persons qualified to demand that the marriage be annulled, and can only be condemned after the marriage has been annulled. If the marriage is not annulled, the kidnapper cannot be sued for kidnapping”. It has been reported that a rapist who marries his victim will not be prosecuted for the crime. Following the suicide of Amina al-Filali, 16, who was forced to marry a man who had raped her, this article was abrogated in 2014 and a rapist is now simply sent to jail.

Since the promulgation of the new family law, violence against women has been largely in the news and on top of the Moroccan social and political agendas, mainly due to the work of women’s NGOs (Sadiqi, 2009). Headed by a woman, the Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity, has adopted a new strategy to combat violence against women, guaranteeing gender equality. In 2007, a unit for women victims of violence was created in a few hospitals and police stations across the country.

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3 The Minister, Nouzha Skalli, who was speaking at a G8 conference on violence against women on 10 Sept 2009, stressed "the empowerment and emancipation of women” as a way of combating gender-based discrimination and all forms of violence against women (Maghreb Arab Press).

Nevertheless, domestic and sexual violence continue to be considered a private matter. It thereby does not represent a human rights violation or a crime that needs serious investigation and analysis. Violence against women continues to be surrounded by silence. As a consequence, violence against women is underestimated (Ennaji, 2011).

Domestic violence is a form of behaviour which is in accord with patriarchal systems. Family and domestic violence includes higher female mortality, wife battering, rape, and early marriage. These practices are commonly integrated into values and beliefs. Some women accept domestic violence in violation of their basic human rights due to ignorance, social prejudices, incorrect interpretations of religious texts, and low self-esteem (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2006).

According to a survey carried out in 2000 by the “Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc”, (ADFM), domestic violence against women is still considered a private social phenomenon. Many respondents (45.3%) believe that it is justifiable for a husband to beat up his wife in case she commits adultery or disobeys her husband. Thus, violence against women is widespread in the country. A 2009 government survey asked women between the ages of 18 to 65 whether they had experienced various forms of violence, including physical and psychological. Approximately 63% answered yes.⁵

The lack of cooperation of law enforcement officials, poverty, illiteracy, and the absence of facilities to protect and shelter these women lead the latter to avoid reporting violence. All these factors foster domestic violence which seldom gets reported due to fear or shame.⁶ According to the Ministry of Social Development, Family and Solidarity, there were over 28,000 cases of violence against women between 2012 and 2016. One main problem with the prosecution of domestic violence under the general assault provisions of the Penal Code is the issue of proving evidence. Besides a medical certificate, the testimony of a

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witness to the assault is required to prove and punish physical assault. This condition also prevents women from reporting cases of domestic violence, as domestic violence often does not involve the presence of eyewitnesses.

Law enforcement officials continue to have the old mindset that regards domestic violence against women as a private issue. In most cases, women are blamed for these violations. Under these circumstances, most women report domestic violence to NGOs while most of the physical violence committed by strangers is reported to the police and hospitals.⁷

On the other hand, according to article 496 of the Penal Code, anyone who hides a married woman from her husband is subject to imprisonment from 2 to 5 years. In this context, whoever assists a woman who has suffered domestic violence and left her home without her husband’s permission may fall under this law. This law obviously prevents NGOs from opening shelters for battered women who have fled their conjugal domiciles without the consent of their spouses. In August 2013, the Moroccan parliament repealed articles 494-496 through pressures from feminist organizations.

In conformity with the new legal reforms, the police force is pressured to fulfil its duty in an adequate way, and other government units have been trained to curb violence. Even the courts have begun to take the problem more seriously. The State has taken on the responsibility of public prosecutor and will register complaints against the perpetrator in cases of violence.

Section 4 of the 2003 labour law specifies the recruitment and employment conditions regarding domestic workers. Despite these changes, the status of domestics is still not well defined, because the labour code applies only to salaried men and women.

According to ADFM, one of four wage earning women in urban areas is employed as a maid who often is under the age of twelve. These young girls work under appalling conditions, are deprived of their basic rights and are over-exploited, as they work between 10 and 14 hours a day (cf. Ennaji, 2013; Schneider, 1999). The government has recently

⁷ Survey by ADMF/UNIFEM, Potentiel de changement de la position des femmes dans le cadre des relations familiales, 1999.
taken measures to reduce the exploitation of maids, and a new law has been enacted to guarantee their social security. It took effect on October 2, 2018.\(^8\)

According to the 2001 survey conducted by the Moroccan League for the Protection of Children and UNICEF, 45% of domestic workers under the age of 18 were between the ages of 10 and 12, and 26% were under the age of 10. In 2002, the legal age for work was raised from 12 to 15. Underprivileged parents oblige their daughters to work as maids so that they can benefit from their earned wages. These young girls are sent by their families from rural areas to work as maids in urban homes.\(^9\) Over 80% of the child maids are illiterate and over 75% are from rural areas.\(^10\)

These domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. They are usually lonely, with hardly any opportunity to see their relatives or meet new people and consequently no one to turn to for assistance. These young girls are often beaten up by their employers. Many cases reached courts and media. In 2009, a judge and his wife battered their maid, Zineb, aged 12. The wife was sentenced to three years in jail, and her husband suspended from his job (see the Moroccan Arabic daily *Al Massae* of 30 Oct. 2009).

A recent government survey carried within the city of Casablanca has showcased that eight out of ten cases of violence against maids who come to the centres are perpetrated by their employers.\(^11\) Although there are no estimates as to how many children are employed in domestic service due to the hidden nature of the work, United Nations agencies and most NGOs underline the prevalent abuse of young girls working as household maids, which is one of the major issues confronting Moroccan children.\(^12\)

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\(^8\) See this source: https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/01/morocco-new-law-advances-domestic-workers-rights


\(^11\) “Statistical survey of girl domestics under 18 years of age in the administrative district of Casablanca” (Ministry of Economic Forecasting and the Plan, Regional Delegation of Greater Casablanca, with the support of UNICEF and UNFPA).

\(^12\) Ibid
Since 2002, the “Secrétariat d'Etat Chargé de la Protection Sociale, de la Famille et de l'Enfance” worked with government departments and Moroccan women's NGOs to fight against violence in general, and violence against domestic workers in particular. While reforms to criminal legislation have allowed some protections for women against violence, violent practices against women in the public and private spheres continue to occur, including sexual harassment, and violence against domestic workers.

An anti-sexual harassment law was enacted on September 12, 2018 after five years of efforts to get it passed. The law offers a variety of protections for women who report harassment or violence in Morocco, bans forced marriage, and imposes fines and even short prison sentences against anyone convicted of sexual harassment in the public sphere. It is the first time that Moroccan women will have legal mechanisms to seek justice from such misconduct. Bassima Hakkaoui, the country’s current minister for women’s issues, told the official Maghreb Arabe Presse (MAP) news agency that it is “one of the most important texts strengthening the national legal arsenal in the area of equality of the sexes.”

Moroccan women’s NGOs worry that the problem will be implementation and how to eradicate the root causes of violence against women. They endeavour to break the silence surrounding violence and other mistreatments undergone by women using radio and television campaigns. Several Moroccan and international NGOs advocate for the prevention of violence against women and for the protection of women victims. Centres like Solidarité Féminine, Initiatives, Bayti, Annajda, Chourouk, Annakhil, and many others provide support services, shelter, legal aid, and information (Ennaji, 2010).

2. Using New Media to Combat Violence against Women

The new media can improve women’s lives and gender relations, promote social change at the individual, institutional, country, and broader social levels. The internet is an effective tool to attract young people to think about social change. Today, according to research, more

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girls use the internet than their mothers, and they use it differently from boys: they do not zap from one website to another, they spend more time on one website, and they return emails more than boys (Fairlie, 2015).

Mass media, particularly television and radio, play an essential role in fighting violence against women. Television has influenced millions of people and raised their awareness about women’s rights. Television interviews have been held with numerous activists and with many women who have suffered from violence. Mass media have been effective in mobilizing women to fight for their rights. They have been instrumental in breaking the silence about violence and in sensitizing the public to the dangers of violence against women. For instance, the ADFM’s recent national campaign against gender-based violence has been heavily televised. The programmes called *Moukhtafoun* and *lkhit lebyad*, broadcasted on the TV channel 2M, are well known television talk shows aimed, among other things, to sensitize the public about the hazards of violence against women and children.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are typically convenient, fast and simple to use; they reduce the time and distance between people, and bring about change in social relations. They are constantly used by NGOs to disseminate information and to offer other forms of support to survivors of violence against women as well as to people and organizations working to combat it.

Mobile phones are a key instrument in awareness-raising and prevention of violence, as most men and women own them. They are providing organisations and advocates with new ways to reach their communities. Many women NGOs use text messaging, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp and other new media to create awareness about violence against women in Morocco. They undertake advocacy activities geared towards addressing gender concerns within the ICT policies and programmes. The main objective is to develop strategies to find integrated solutions to end violence against women and girls, paying particular attention to ICT policies and interventions.

ICTs can improve women’s lives and gender relations, promote social change at the individual, institutional, country, and broader social levels (Goodman & Epstein, 2007).
In 2008, The UN Development Fund for Women launched an Internet campaign in an effort to end violence against women and to urge decision-makers to place ending violence against women high on the global agenda.

ICT is a weapon in the fight against gender-based violence. ICTs such as the Internet, multimedia, and wireless technologies are transforming economic and social interactions, as well as cultures (see Kathambi Kinoti, 2008)\textsuperscript{14}.

Digital technologies have an impact on the portrayal of gender roles and relations. The Internet has allowed for a diversity of input from across the social spectrum. Nevertheless, women's presence on the Internet is less visible than men's. ICTs can and do facilitate both the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and the positive transformation of gender roles.

Women are asked to take control of ICTs and consciously use them to change power relations between men and women, and to combat violence against women. ICTs can help raise awareness about the way new media are connected to violence and provide simple strategies on how incidences of violence against women can be minimized online. They can also generate a discourse around the connections between new media and gender-based violence in online and offline spaces, as well as build a community that will continue to strategize around eliminating violence against women through and in ICT spaces.

As in other arenas, women need to assert their participation and their right to be present in dignity on the ICT space. Morocco’s Internet users increased by 17.9\% in 2016 to reach 17 million people, accounting for a penetration rate of 50.4\%, according to the country’s national telecom regulator ANRT (Agence National de Réglementation des Télécommunications). The number of people surfing the Internet via smartphones reached 15.8 million compared to 1.23 million people favoring ADSL Internet, the Rabat-based agency pointed out in a report. Since its launch in June 2015 and until December 31, 2016, the

\textsuperscript{14} http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/ICTs-and-Violence-against-Women2/ (language)/eng-GB
4-G mobile reached close to 2.8 million customers. In 2017, the number of Internet users increased by 33%.\(^\text{15}\)

In Morocco, women’s NGOs make only a partial use of computers and the Internet. Some do not master technologies, because they are insufficiently trained or aware of the benefits of new ICTs. Technology is still male-dominated, expensive, and inaccessible to most Moroccans; yet ICT knowledge and skills are required. However, women express a strong desire to learn and use new media. Hence, training them on ICTs is crucial to gain practical skills, to improve communication capacities, to share experiences and information, and to network with other women locally, regionally, and internationally. According to Pourmehdi (2015), 75% of schooled girls and women use the Internet mainly for sending and receiving emails, and 88% for research and finding information.

Women's rights advocates are already occupying spaces for the articulation of women's issues and the advancement of their rights. There are numerous women’s websites and blogs expanding the information, education, and awareness-raising space via the Internet. Hundreds of women have told their stories of domestic and public violence. In other words, the use of ICTs and new media is crucial for the potential transformation of power relations, towards a vision and reality of gender equality.

Nevertheless, there exist many obstacles to the use of ICTs in Morocco. It is not just the exorbitant price of computers, Internet, telephone lines and technical services that are a barrier to adopting ICTs; frequently such services do not even exist. Women’s lack of skills and knowledge in ICTs is also an obstacle.

Language plays a significant role in the barriers to using new media. For example, there are few ICT training materials available in Arabic and none in Berber, and women’s NGOs had never heard of many different types of software that could facilitate their work. Those who have access to new media are in real need of any resources concerning gender and ICT in Arabic. They also want to learn about all aspects of ICTs: how to facilitate online discussions; how to promote their

websites; and how new media - websites, blogs, games, smart phones - have been used to address the violence issue among youth.

At any rate, ICTs and new media provide practical information about combating violence against women. It is no longer easy for a case to slip through the cracks and be ignored. With this kind of access of information, each case of abuse is made into an individual case that can easily be given attention and shared through social media.

3. The Situation on the Ground

As mentioned above, women are the most frequent victims of violence in Morocco, including widespread domestic violence. However, women rarely approach the Moroccan police for assistance, especially in the rural areas, because the police are often perceived as an institution that violates human rights and is biased against women, rather than an institution that upholds the law and protects human rights.

In light of the new reforms enacted since the implementation of the new family code, the Moroccan family courts and women’s NGOs are engaged in activities to try and encourage women to report more to police, but such measures may involve significant time to permeate to local levels. Whilst the Moroccan government has shown some zeal in appointing hundreds of new female police officers, it will take time to train them and integrate them (see Ennaji, 2011).

Today, preventing violence against women and increasing women’s access to justice is a primary concern of the state and civil society. Progress has been achieved in education and employment given the increasing presence of women in education and the work place. Nevertheless, more efforts are badly needed to eradicate illiteracy among women in particular in the rural areas. Concerning employment, although women appear to be economically active compared to other countries in the region, women frequently occupy low-level jobs (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2010). Additionally, women are still under-represented in government, which means that new measures must be taken to make up for this deficit in order to promote women in decision making positions, since politics is an area of utmost importance for women’s empowerment.

The road to ending violence against women is long and arduous. The key to lasting crime prevention is education and programmes set up to
offer women a way out. To combat the problem, many government and non-government organisations have added domestic violence to their agendas.

Thus, important initiatives have been taken over the past four years. While this progress can only be commended, there are, however, many gaps that continue to persist. Greater attention must be paid to the barriers that currently prevent women and girls in Morocco from lodging complaints in relation to domestic violence. These factors include: traditional social beliefs concerning the inferiority of women; the social unacceptability of denouncing the husband; the (lack of) specific legislation on violence against women; the lack of sensitivity on the part of law enforcement officials; poverty; inadequate structures to shelter and help women; the difficulty for women to obtain a judicial divorce on the grounds of harm, and the obstacles to proving and punishing physical assault in the domestic sphere, which perpetuates the message that domestic violence is to a certain degree acceptable.

The State has yet to develop a comprehensive policy and legislative response to the problem of domestic violence. This legislation should be drafted in such a way that it covers both physical and psychological violence and that it provides for protective mechanisms including restraining orders. There is also the necessity of training law enforcement officials and members of the judiciary in relation to the investigation, prosecution and punishment of cases of family-based violence.

The State must make provision for sufficient financial resources for policies, actions and measures to adequately address violence against women in view of its eradication. Although Morocco has officially validated CEDAW, it should take further steps in protecting women’s human rights by ensuring the implementation of the family and penal codes. The persistence and tolerance of all forms of male violence against women is a fundamental obstacle to the achievement of full equality between women and men in all areas of life. With this in mind, the equal participation of women in decision-making remains a fundamental prerequisite for positive change and the abolition of violence.

At the level of education and training, it is essential to develop equality curricula at levels of formal education in which respect for human
rights and zero-tolerance violence against women are an integral part of these programmes directed towards young people. The need to increase public awareness is paramount both at the local and the national levels.

It is equally crucial to enhance the empowerment of women and foster their attaining decision-making positions. Promoting economic opportunities for women through bank facilities and skills training will give them the tools and economic independence they need to avoid or escape violence.

4. Conclusion

In light of the new reforms enacted since the implementation of the new family code, the Moroccan authorities are engaged in activities sensitizing women to report more to the police, but such measures may involve significant time to permeate to local levels. Whilst Moroccan Ministry of Interior has shown a reforming zeal in announcing its intention to appoint thousands of new female officers, it will take time to train them and integrate them.

Today, preventing violence against women and increasing women’s access to justice is a primary concern of the Moroccan civil society. The Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity supports gender responsive measures to prevent violence against women. Other ministries have introduced gender mainstreaming and gender-oriented budgets, whereby the gender approach is to be applied to any project or sector including the financial domain. The nationality codes have contributed to the promotion of women’s rights and to their protection from discrimination and violence.

However, women are still far from fully enjoying human rights on an equal footing with men, as they continue to suffer from discriminatory laws and practices, due to many factors, including the predominance of patriarchy and the persistence of a conservative mindset. Using all sorts of modern technology (radio, television, internet, smart phones, SMS messages, forums, etc.) and new media to debate violence against women and to exchange experiences is necessary to sensitive men and women to the dangerous consequences of violence and to the strategies and methods to prevent it. Thus, it is worthwhile supporting community-based training and information campaigns to change harmful norms and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women.
and reinforce its social acceptability. NGOs, particularly those with experience addressing violence against women, are to be represented on national councils and government bodies to highlight the link between violence against women and poverty, and to ensure law enforcement.

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