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Sociodemographic imagery of women in sexual and erotic markets in Moroccan filmography

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Abstract

Introduction. This article analyzes and offers a first database about the representation of the sexual and erotic markets of the Moroccan filmography, focusing on female figures: their sociodemographic characterization, the roles they play, and the liminal nature of the represented transactional sex practices. **Methodology.** The sample is based on the analysis of 51 characters of 30 films produced between 1958 and 2017. These films were selected, according to thematic lines, out of the total amount of 367 films contained in the catalog of the *Centre de la Cinématographie Marocaine*. **Results.** The most common profile are women who practice paid prostitution, between 15 and 25 years old, mostly single and without family responsibilities, in urban contexts. **Discussion and Conclusions.** The presence of characters belonging to the sexual and erotic markets is a constant in Moroccan cinema. Poverty is not always considered as a trigger; prostitution is also linked to the notions of sexual liberalization and access to spaces of freedom.

Keywords

Prostitution; cinema; Morocco; representation; sexual market; erotic market.

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1. Introduction

In Morocco, prostitution has turned into a topic of social and cinematography controversy since the premiere of the film ‘Much Loved’ in 2015, by the filmmaker Nabyl Ayouch, in the section *Une Quinzaine des réalisateurs* of the Cannes Festival. The film, which tells the story of four Marrakesh prostitutes, was censored by the Government since “it represented a serious affront to moral values and Moroccan women, besides a flagrant attempt against Morocco’s image,” according to the Justice and Development Party (Perejil, 2015). A censure that took place even before the director, Nabyl Ayouch, requested exploitation rights in Morocco (Morocco World News, May 29th, 2015). The Moroccan cinema has never shown before, in such a realistic and straightforward manner, the professional practice of the sexual work and its context. After the promotion sequences spread on Internet, Loubna Abidar, the leading role actress, even had to take refuge in France after a group of men attacked her with a knife in a street of Casablanca (Dwyer, 2016).

In Morocco, discourses about prostitution and sexual and erotic markets, including activities such as the traditional dance or ‘belly dance’ are framed in a broader debate that connects with collective imageries regarding sexuality, the private sphere compared to the public space, morals and religion. These issues condense all kinds of ideological positionings that measure the moral pulse of societies and the way women conceive sexual liberation. While in Europe and in other Latin American countries abolitionist movements and those advocating sexual work fight over the hegemonic space of the public sphere (Juliano, 2004; Osborne, 2004; López and Mestre, 2006; Briz, Garizabal and Juliano, 2007; Holgado, 2008; Rubio, 2008; Heim, 2011; Gimeno, 2012; Saiz-Echezarreta, 2016), in Morocco, the existence of prostitution is a recognized issue, but it is not part of public sphere debates (Cheikh, 2009). Like the lawyer Khadija Riyadi suggests, although the country is aware about the existence of a wide and extended sex industry, Moroccans do not like to stare at their own mirror (in Sahad, 2016).

Even though activities linked to sexual markets or the sex industry are a booming sector in Morocco (Salem, 2015) also due to sexual tourism coming from Europe and other Gulf countries (Dwyer, 2016), its visibility in the public sphere is marked by taboo, moral sanction and prohibitionist laws. Affective economies, registered from the linguistic plane, demonstrate strong social ties through terms such as *hshouma*, which means dishonor or shame, associated not only to the practicing woman, but to the whole family by extension (Abu- Lughod, 1986: 119). Likewise, the term *fitna* is used both to refer to a beautiful woman as well as to describe a situation based on disorder and chaos. In this sense, *fitna* suggests the notion of “*femme fatale*” who makes men to lose control (Mernissi, 1975: 31). Thus, for the actress Loubna Abinar, who played the leading role in ‘Much Loved’: “In Morocco, belly dance and prostitution go hand in hand. If a woman reconciles with her own body, she is accused of selling it.” (in Stucin, 2016).

In Morocco's case, it is necessary to consider that from a legal perspective, sexual intercourse outside marriage is punished with penalties ranging from a month up to one year in prison, as set forth in the article 490 of the Criminal Code. Along with sexuality inside marriage, there is also a sexuality the society considers '*déviante*' (diverted) because it is practiced outside marriage, which represents the moral and legal framework (Cheikh, 2009: 173). This kind of legal restrictions generated the summit of what the sociologist Alioua Mehdi (in Hayoun, 2015) qualifies as "clandestine sexuality", in which consumption and porn production and prostitution are part of.

Cinema, as an artistic form that can present models of a specific society and its structure of thought (Howard, 1986: 25), may be helpful in understanding social phenomena and grant meaning to reality, modelling our representation system and proposing cultural schemes for identification or rejection. Furthermore, it is helpful in constituting the structure of feelings, which is essential on issues rooted in social controversy. As Raymond Williams says, the structure of feelings cinema can catalyze, among other products and cultural experiences, is constituted by:

"The meanings and values the way they are experienced and felt actively; and the relationships between them and systematic or formal beliefs are, in practice, an ongoing social experience, which is not often recognized as truly social, but instead as private, idiosyncratic and even isolating (changes in language, customs, clothing, building and other similar forms of social life), but that in the analysis (although it rarely happens otherwise) has its emerging, connecting and dominant features and, certainly, its specific hierarchies". (1977, 155).

Additionally, according to professor Elena (2007: 2008), the study of the Moroccan cinema entails a historical, sociological, political and artistic interest. In our specific case, sexual and erotic markets' case, it is also helpful to better fit a situation of displacement of the phenomenon from the territory of taboo to the territory of public space. 'Much Loved' illustrates how a film can become a tool to awaken collective imageries, producing controversy and finally acting as a revulsive for public debate and/ or social transformation. The film's premiere in France and its subsequent controversy encouraged the Moroccan Government to publish, a week later, the first official data of the country about sexual workers. Although the Ministry of Health only offered partial results focused in the cities of Rabat, Tangier, Fez and Agadir (with a total of 19,333 women in the four cities) and, besides, data was collected in the year 2011 (without explaining why said data was not published before), entailing a complete revulsive, because it represented an official recognition of the existence of the sex industry (Hayoun, 2015).

According to this survey, there is a calculation of about 50,000 prostitutes in Morocco. The study revealed that from the 19,000 interviewed women, most were illiterate, divorced or widows (between 62 and 73%), and who had sexual intercourse for the first time when they were between 15 and 19 years old. Most live alone (between 60 and 70%) but support someone financially (in 50-80% of cases), often children (up to 56%) or their family of origin (Piscitelli, 2015). The violent reactions against 'Much Loved' by the most conservative layers of society help to comprehend how sociocultural and religious contexts condition production dynamics and film narratives. This study assumes that the analysis of imageries must include not only the description of an empirical set of representations, but

also the logic generating them, considering different dimensions or scales: plastic, figurative, cognitive, axiological, political, affective or ethical (Saiz-Echezarreta 2016: 116).

Gender identity and cinema studies are incorporating an interdisciplinary and international *corpus* (Orlando, 1999; Carter, 2000, 2008; Martin, 2004; Farqzaid, 2010; Caillé, 2012, 2016; Chahir, 2014; Hamil, 2009; Saadia and Oumlil, 2016; Torres, 2012; Bliss, 2014). Studies about intersectional representation of gender and the migrant condition in cinema have been common and from them, there have derived some studies specialized about the presence of prostitution in cinematography. However, it is not a matter grounded in the framework of gender studies, for instance in Spain, only Juana Gallego (2012) performed a systematic investigation of the issue and in the international scope there are some monographic studies such as Russell Campbell's (2006), Ritzenhoff and MacVoy's (2015) and the recently edited study of Hipkins and Taylor-Jones (2017).

In this context, specific academic studies about prostitution, as well as its representation in Morocco, are also scant, despite the noteworthy presence of the prostitute's figure in the national Moroccan filmography as a whole. Almost all studies have a socio-anthropological perspective, being those of cinematography nature almost non-existent (Weinstein, 2016). In her book *Excluidas y marginales: ellas "salen", nosotras "salimos". De la situación de la mujer marroquí y su sexualidad a la prostitución en las calles de Casablanca* (2007), Sara Carmona focuses in the testimony and life stories of sexual workers, striving to uncover taboos and emphasizing on the situation of marginalization of women in the core of a patriarchal society under an economic and social process of change. Dialmy, from Mohammed V University in Rabat, has linked sexuality and identity by associating youth, Islam and AIDS (2000) and Handman has related prostitution to the search for female emancipation (2004). In this line of anthropological studies, also Venema and Bakker (2004) coincide with the Middle Atlas' case study, the zone of greater permissiveness towards prostitution.

When talking about sexual and erotic markets we adopted the approach of the Mexican anthropologist Marta Lamas, member of *Grupo Latinoamericano de Acción/Análisis de Mercados Sexuales* (GLAMsex), which studies visualize a variety of stakeholders and spaces that go beyond sexual work, as well as the conceptualization effort of these hybrid practices made by Piscitelli (2016). As Lamas says: "The circumstances where sex and money exchange are quite complex, and are inserted on social, economic, cultural and historical contexts" (2017). This broad analysis framework allows to make room to sociocultural varieties of sexual markets in Morocco, and also enables understanding the "space in-between" where many of the activities observed in the films of the sample take place and where there move some of the figures like the 'belly dancer' or the 'rewarded woman.'

As evidenced previously from GreGam (*Groupe de recherche et d'étude sur le Genre au Maroc*) thanks to the fieldwork with young girls in the city of Tangier (Cheihk, 2009, 2011, 2014, 2016), far from the image of conventional prostitution, associated to strategical estimations designed beforehand, activities in sexual markets start instead with a dynamic of amusement, going to discotheques, and end up inserted in dense exchanges of intimate economy that circulate affection, friendship, sexuality, gifts, travels, dances, smiles, prestige, social mobility and modernity: "Purchasing' and 'selling' intimacy is exchanging much more than sexual service and money." (Cheihk, 2016).

Thus, in non-forced sexual work, commercial sex would also be expressed as a socialization and consumption activity as well as an occupation that opens doors and facilitates social mobility and self-fulfillment. Even though it is true there are sectors of prostitution in Morocco, like in the transnational scope, linked to human trafficking networks, we can also point out an activity sector associated to sexual work and transactional activities that do not follow a simple classification such as paid sex. These authors' positioning gives us a margin of freedom to insert characters associated to sexual work, allowing us to open the scope to other profiles, like rewarded lovers or artistic professionals of cabaret environments, among others.

Considering these premises, this paper sets the grounds to reflect about cinematography representation patterns that seem to be undermining conventional imageries in Morocco. The main objective is to develop a coding using a content analysis that allows us to characterize the figurativizations and female roles appearing in the representation of sexual markets and associated activities and that show an ambivalent status. This will facilitate producing a data base for obtaining the first quantitative and qualitative indicators regarding how the imagery of women in sexual and erotic markets constitutes. This first approach is framed in a wider project where we will perform an in-depth analysis of the narrative storylines and the psychological profile attributed to characters, considering that psychologization has been, until the arrival of current cinema, the main explanatory factor of these activities, compared to the mention of structural issues based on economic, political, cultural and social aspects.

In this study we are interested in analyzing frontier spaces from the perspective of sociodemographic representation in the configuration of collective imagery. We start from the premise that the Moroccan cinema illustrates the practice of prostitutions with ambiguous boundaries and delimitations, due to the sociocultural and religious context in which the cinematography production is inserted in the country. The research questions are the following: What is their age range, sexual orientation, ethnic-cultural group and marital status? From the narrative perspective we are interested in identifying the following: what kind of activities and what places are associated to women with this context? What are the drivers and circumstances attributed to these characters? In what way does the Moroccan cinema show or represent sex as a taboo reality that doesn't seem to have a room on public space? What sort of sanctions are associated to these characters? Do these assessments change when films are directed by women? Taking in mind that only 4 films in the sample are directed by women.

2. Method

This study originates from several previous investigations about the Moroccan migratory cinema (Peralta, 2016, 2018a, 2018b). Those studies allowed us to have contact with the national filmography in its entirety, through the access to films included in the catalog of *Centre de la Cinematographie Marocaine* (CCM), an institution that depends on the Ministry of Information, which regulates the cinema sector in Morocco [1]. This catalog, that currently is only published in printed format, includes all of the productions of the country, except for independent films that have not requested any kind of economic funding, procedure or filming authorization through the CCM whatsoever. In this sense, the catalog has broad inclusion criteria. An example of it, is that 'Much Loved' is included, even though it is censored in Morocco and that it is an independent production that did not receive the so-called

avance sur recette. Nabyl Ayouch requested the filming permission to CCM, which is already an inclusion criterion, based on the information obtained from a personal interview from the center's director, Farim el Fassi (2017). In addition, films made by Moroccan filmmakers of the diaspora are included in this catalog. In this sense, our fieldwork was done using a highly significative sample of the total number of films made by Moroccan filmmakers. In previous studies, where there was done an exhaustive content analysis of the representation of migrations through the Moroccan cinema, we confirmed a remarkable presence of the prostitute figure in the national filmography as a whole, an issue that has not been treated from the filmic perspective, the reason why this different research line was opened, this time adding the researchers' anthropological and semiotic baggage. Today, the catalog includes films produced from 1958 up to 2017, grouping the history of 60 years of post-independence cinema. The first film that shyly deals with the issue of erotic-sexual markets is *Les beaux jours de Shahrzade* (Mostapha Derkaoui) and dates back to 1982.

Beyond the exploration of cinematography productions from the CCM catalog, we also developed a fieldwork about the industrial and cultural context of cinema in Morocco, based on the attendance to Festivals and specialized events, as well as on interviews to a total of 20 professionals of the world of cinema, as specified below:

- a) Filmmakers: Abdelkader Lâagta, Hassan ben Jelloun, Mohamed Ismaïl, Narjiss Nejjar, Jilali Ferhaty, Leila Marrackchi, Mohamed Mouftakir, Hicham Lasri, Faoruzi Bensaïdi, Saâd Chraïbi, Mohamed Nabyl, Nour-Edinne Lakmari.
- b) Actresses: Amal Ayouch, Nadia Niazi, Maryam Touzani, Imane El Mechrafi.
- c) Script writers: Youssef Fadel, Jamal Belmahi.
- d) Production staff: Lamia Chraibi, Rachida Saadi.
- e) Distribution: Imane Mesbahi.

These interviews were conducted throughout editions of *Festival National du Cinema de Tangier* in its editions of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. This festival represents the great cinematography event of the country and it is an opportunity to regroup, not only women and men filmmakers who presented their productions, but also more than 400 people invited who belong to the artistic and cinematography industry fabric of the country.

All these previous fieldwork, allowed us to identify the presence of figures related to erotic-sexual environments within the sample and, in addition, to recognize the relevance this representational pattern may have in a future, as we could notice when gathering opinions about the reasons why the Moroccan cinema is displaying such a noteworthy presence of the figure of prostitutes.

Our main methodological strategy was using content analysis, first to identify the films that include characters in the field of sexual and erotic markets, secondly, to approach their description by stablishing analytical criteria that facilitate the continuity of this field of study. On the other hand, from the semiotic perspective, the filmic-narrative analysis of some of the sample's examples that better illustrate revealing findings is essential as well.

2.1.2. Sample

The sample, as a whole, consists of the contents analysis of 51 characters belonging to a data base of 30 films, dated between 1958 and 2017. The analysis of the films is done from the 367 films included in the CCM catalog. This number of films indicates that at least slightly more than 8 % of the total of Moroccan films introduce some character related to sexual or erotic markets. The number of characters analyzed is superior to the number of films because while in some productions the protagonist appears in an individualized manner, in others two or more protagonists may appear, who are usually friends, working or living together. Regarding the quantitative delimitation of the number of characters, in this study we focused on women that play leading or secondary roles, excluding the analysis of walk-on women actresses. Even though we cannot say it is an exhaustive sample, it is a representative sample indeed, because the selection was not only determined by reading the synopses, which allows us to identify the main storyline, but also by the fact of watching more than 85% of the films from the catalog, which enabled us to include secondary roles as well. The films we didn't have personal access to, could be analyzed through the contributions of the 20 interviews performed to cinema professionals in Morocco. Access to films was done through the CCM, by purchasing the DVDs in Morocco, through producers, filmmakers and Internet, especially through the website 'Maghrebica', specialized in Moroccan cinema.

The steps followed in the investigation process are listed below:

- Reading of all synopses of the 367 films in the catalog and first screening of films.
- Production of content analysis codebook.
- Direct viewing of 274 films of the catalog (74.6%) to identify primary and secondary roles.
- In an alternate manner: interviews to professionals to compare and complete data.
- Data collection.

After the selection and delimitation of the sample, the content analysis card was designed so to characterize the female roles in contexts of sexual and erotic markets in the Moroccan cinema. To do this, we have taken the 'codebook' analysis model as reference, developed by the Italian Observatory GEMMA (Gender and Media Matter) for the study of women in fiction series. Designed by Milly Buonano (2012), she proposed a method to categorize the sociodemographic and psychological profile of female characters in fiction series. It has been used and adapted to other contexts and countries, such as the studies about soap operas conducted in Brazil by Maria Immacolata Vassallo, of the ECA/USP group (2008). The sociodemographic profile is constructed based on the following premises:

- a) Gender: this study is focused on women, but we note the exceptional cases in which gender diversity is managed in the context of erotic-sexual markets.
- b) Age: girls and teenagers (up to 15 years old), young (between 15 and 25 years old), mature age (between 25 and 45 years old) and older age (older than 45 years old). Even though sometimes film synopses allow to establish the represented age accurately, in this study it is not a priority to establish specific ages, but instead to insert characters inside any of the four age ranges we mentioned.

- c) Women's marital status: single, married, divorced and widow, pointing out as well the cases where women are represented from the 'mothers' profile (despite being single or not).
- d) Social class: indicators that allow to identify women as belonging to the low or popular class, middle class and high or privileged class.
- e) Place of origin: indicators showing where women live or where they perform their activity.

Regarding the socio-professional profile, this paper is focused on the following profiles:

- Cabaret singers and 'belly dancers.'
- Rewarded lovers.
- Prostitutes.
- Victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes.

There is a first inclusion criterion, the cabaret singers and belly dancers, associated with the participation of women in sexual and erotic markets, although not directly with paid sex as recognized in the sexual work. We are interested in observing how there are many boundaries examples in representations. Cinema helps understanding the complexity that takes place in sexual markets as studies about the phenomenon point out (GLAMSEX, Piscitelli, 2016). From the Western cinema view, possibly there is scarce relationship between a belly dancer and a sexual worker. However, in the Moroccan cinema's case, sometimes it is difficult to establish an uncrossable frontier between both profiles due to the contexts of cultural ambiguity where some films take place.

Halfway between that more artistic and ambiguous profile and the prostitute, there is the figure of the rewarded lover or women who have sexual intercourse with "lovers-clients" receiving gifts in exchange or any other of material compensation and where affective bonds or feelings of love can produce (Piscitelli, 2016). It is not about monetarized compensations in most cases, or at least not exclusively, but about other kind of exchange based on meeting certain needs or desires, that may include paying for an apartment's rent by the client up to offering gifts or other ways of compensation.

Our third category corresponds to prostitutes, namely, those who offer sexual services in a monetarized manner. We decided for the term prostitute, considering the film archetype, instead of the concept of sexual worker as professional category, because in most cases representations are not based on realistic-linguistic explicitations of sexual work, but instead the figurativization must be obtained from aspects implicit in the film's story.

To define women victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes we used the Protocol of Palermo 2001, article 3, that involves the use of threat or force or any other forms of coercion, such as deceit or abuse of power for sexual exploitation purposes. It can be practiced either through international networks or at local level. There is also the case in representations where the dealer belongs to the victim's family or is her partner.

Once the sociodemographic profile was defined we also included the spaces defining sexual and erotic markets as category of narrative interest, places through which women are linked or fixed to their role

(and with them, to associated imageries). We distinguish among the following varieties: cabaret, club/brothel, discotheque, private home (owned or rented) and the street. The cabaret is limited as the place where singers and belly dancers perform. The club/ brothel is a facility adapted for the practice of sexual work. Also, discotheques, street and private homes, either owned or rented, constitute film locations. This last modality is related to the organization of events and private parties. Finally, the case of hotels is paradigmatic in the Moroccan cinema, because their access, quite common in other cultural contexts as meeting and sexual transaction places, is controlled and officially limited to legally married couples. The films from the sample did not include them as location, not even as space of transgression, therefore we discarded them.

3. Findings

3.1.1. Films' background information

Table 1 shows useful data for contextualizing fieldwork, like the year of production, title, film direction and y logline.

Table 1. Background information [2]

Year	Title	Character	Logline
1982	<i>Les beaux jours de Shahrazade</i> Mostapha Derkaoiu	Naima (leading role)	Casablanca. Naima is a cabaret singer. A team of filmmakers proposes her to play a leading role in a film about her life.
1991	<i>Un amour a Casablanca</i> Abdelkader Lâagta	Salua (leading role) Afaf (Salua's sister) (secondary)	Casablanca. Salua is a student. She has an older lover that grants her access to certain privileges. And she also has a second lover, that man's son. Afaf, her sister, abandons the family home, to escape from her father's authoritarianism, and ends up prostituting for money. She marries a man that works as procurer.
1994	<i>Yarit ou le temps d'une chanson</i> Hassan ben Jelloun	Fairuz (leading role)	Casablanca. Fairuz is a cabaret singer. Said, a psychiatrist student with lung cancer falls in love with her and become lovers.
1997	<i>Les amis d'hier</i> Hassan ben Jelloun	Leila Batul (secondary)	Casablanca. Leila lives and works in Medina, she is a prostitute and recruits her clients while doing grocery shopping.
1999	<i>Ali Zaoua, Prince de la rue.</i> Nabyl Ayouch	Zaua (secondary)	Casablanca. Ali is a street child. His mother works as prostitute at home, the reason why he rejects her.
2002	<i>Jugement d'une femme.</i> Hassan ben Jelloun	Thoufa (leading role)	Casablanca. Thoufa, cabaret artist singer and mother of a toddler girl, is condemned to life sentence due to killing her husband, who did not want to divorce her.

2002	<i>Une histoire d'amour</i> Hakim Noury	Wafa (leading role)	Casablanca. Wafa has a client-lover. With the money she earns she can support her family. Aziz, an exemplary civil servant, falls in love with her.
2002	<i>Et après.</i> Mohamed Ismail	Ibtissan (leading role)	Tetouan. Mustafa and Ibtissan are brother and sister and they live in a modest family. He is a drug dealer and she tries to emigrate to Spain. She looks for a job and returns to her mother's house late at night. Finally, both emigrate together with fatal outcomes.
2003	<i>Les yeux secs</i> Narjiss Nejjar	Hala (leading role) Hala's mother (leading role)	Berber Middle Atlas Mountains. Hala is the chief of a community of rural women of a town where there are no men and where all of them dedicate to prostitution.
2003	<i>Casablanca by night</i> Mostapha Derkaui	Kaltoum (leading role) Kaltoum's mother (secondary) Kaltoum's aunt (secondary)	Casablanca. Kaltoum is a 15-year-old girl that needs to find money so that her brother may have a surgery, therefore she decides to work as a belly dancer.
2004	<i>Memoire en detention</i> Jilali Ferhaty	Two prostitutes from a nightclub	Two former prisoners get out of jail. One of them, the youngest one, goes to a nightclub to hire the services from two prostitutes.
2005	<i>Marock</i> Leila Marrackchi	2 unspecified names (secondary)	Casablanca. The main storyline is a love story between a Jew and a Muslim. Two prostitutes are hired for a service at the home of the protagonist's friend.
2007	<i>Nancy et le monstre</i> Mahmoud Frites	Nancy (leading role)	Casablanca. Nancy escapes from home to work as a cabaret dancer. The men wooing her are murdered under unexplainable circumstances.
2008	<i>Whatever Lola wants</i> Nabyl Ayouch	Ismahan (leading role) Lola (leading role)	Cairo. Ismahan was a popular dancer of a prestigious cabaret in Cairo. She now lives secluded after a social incident related to her profession. Her life changes when Lola, a girl from New York, comes looking for her to receive lessons.
2009	<i>Les Oubliés de l'histoire</i> Hassan Ben Jelloun	Nawal Yamma Amal (leading roles).	Brussels. Three Moroccan girls with different contexts and different origins converge in a human trafficking network for sexual exploitation purposes in Belgium.
2010	<i>Sur la planche</i> Leila Kilani	Badia, Imane Nawal and Asma (leading role)	Tangier. Badia and Imane work in a shrimp peeling factory in Tangier. They work as prostitutes at night. They meet Nawal and Asma, who work in a textile company, and team up with them to commit minor robberies and prostitute.

2010	<i>Les ailles de l'amour</i> Abdelhay Laraki	Hajja Hlima (secondary)	Casablanca. Thami is a butcher who wants to escape the strictness of his father in the family home. Hajja helps him to discover sensuality, freedom and the passion of love from her professional experience.
2010	<i>Terminus de Anges.</i> Narjiss Nejjar, Mohamed Mouftakir and Hicham Lasri	Role interpreted by the actress Bouchra Ahrich (secondary)	Intertwined trilogy of short films that reflect about AIDS unawareness in population. In the first film, a prostitute washes and recycles condoms her friend Rita saves for her, a young girl who works in a couple's home.
2011	<i>Mortre a vendre</i> Faouruzi Bensaïdi	Dunia (leading role)	Tetouan. Three friends perform a robbery in a jewelry. Malick, one of them, falls in love with Dunia, a young girl dedicated to paid prostitution.
2011	<i>Agadir- Bombay</i> Myriam Bakir	Leila (leading role) Ismahan (leading role)	Leila comes from Tafraout, but lives in Agadir. Her boyfriend exploits her sexually. Imane, a minor from the neighborhood, asks her to take her to explore the city.
2011	<i>L'amante du Rif</i> Narjiss Nejjar	Ala (leading role)	Chefchaouen. Ala wants to live a passionate love affair and abandons home. She finds <i>El Barón</i> , a hashish dealer that exploits her sexually.
2011	<i>Femmes en miroir</i> Saâd Chraïbi.	Madame Rita (secondary)	Casablanca. Rita is a lady owner of a hair salon who, in addition, works as procurer using the girls who work there.
2011	<i>Andalousie, mon amour</i> Mohamed Nabyl	Three women disguised as prostitutes (secondary)	Tangier. A group of Moroccan and Sub-Saharan emigrants live secluded in a hashish farm, thinking they are in Andalusia, when they are really in Morocco. A group of three women have the assignment to disguise as prostitutes and wave at them from a hill nearby to raise their morale.
2012	<i>Les chevaux du Dieu</i> Nabyl Ayouch	Unspecified name (secondary)	Casablanca. A woman of a marginal neighborhood works as prostitute as survival strategy, abandoning her son. She is rebuked by a young radical Islamist.
2012	<i>Zéro</i> Nour-Eddine Lakhari	Mimi (leading role) Samira (leading role)	Casablanca. Mimi is a prostitute and works in collusion with the policeman Zéro to swindle her clients. Zéro, at the same time, ends up becoming a hero after releasing Samira from a human trafficking network.
2012	<i>Dance of Outlaws</i> Mohamed El Aboudi	Hind (leading role)	After being raped and expelled from her house at 14 years old, Hind, now 22 years old, works as dancer and prostitute. She lives with a criminal in a cabin without electricity.

2013	<i>Graines de Grenades</i> Abdellah Toukouna	Chirine (leading role)	Chirine is 30 years old and works as prostitute to help her family. In the city, she falls in love with a painter from an affluent family.
2015	<i>L'orchestre de minuit</i> Jérôme Cohen-Olivar	Soraya (secondary)	Casablanca. Soraya is the prostitute-lover of an old member of the known Midnight Orchestra.
2015	<i>Much Loved</i> Nabyl Ayouch	Noha Randa Soukaina Hlima (leading role)	Marrakesh. The daily life of four women who live together and work as prostitutes for different reasons.
2017	<i>Burnout</i> Nour-Edinne Lakmari	Aida (leading role) Female procurer (secondary)	Aida is a 25-year-old girl who is studying the medical specialization in a hospital and who, through a female procurer, prostitutes for a very exclusive client, a politician organizing campaigns against abortion and who rapes her.

The presence of the prostitution topic in the Moroccan cinema dates back to 1982, and appears in a very discrete manner, where prostitution is not treated in a straightforward manner, but instead it is positioned in erotic markets, by turning the protagonist into a cabaret singer, but in addition, the storyline talks about the production of a film, therefore the distance figure is increased, since it becomes a fiction inside another fiction. Perhaps, it is a symptom of the treatment prostitution will have in the Moroccan cinema up until recently, as we mentioned. During the nineties, the production seemed rather shy, with one film every two or three years. During the 2000s it is when this topic shows a greater presence and steadiness. The year 2011 shows the greatest number of films related to the sample, with a total of 5, and in 2003, 2010 and 2012 three films per year are produced respectively.

From the 51 characters analyzed in the sample, 33 play leading roles (64.7%) and 18 secondary roles (35%). The categories of leading and secondary roles are very related to the film's main topic, but the fact that in the films there are female characters in leading roles doesn't mean that the film deals with the theme of erotic-sexual markets in a monographic manner. In some films, the leading role is shared among three or four women, usually friends who live and work together (*Sur la Planche*, 'Much Loved'...); whereas each character offers nuances in the way of interacting with their environments, promoting a wide range of contexts. In the evolution perceived in the sample, 'Much Loved' will represent a turning point, there, each one of the 4 protagonist women show different circumstances that individualize the narrative storylines and delve into these representations. Randa sniffs cocaine and rejects getting laid with men she doesn't find sexually appealing. She feels attracted to a woman older than she, and experiences her first lesbian relationship at her home, voluntarily and apart from her job. Soukaina struggles between an apparently love relationship with a man without resources, who wants her to abandon her activity, and a rich Saudi man, Ahmad, who proposes a marriage as second wife. This character is trapped in the uncertainty of the promises of a better life and reality, especially when she discovers that the Saudi keeps homosexual relationships with other men. Noha

(Loubna Abinar) is the job’s chief and manager. She is the oldest, the most charismatic and experienced of them. She can take out a bundle of bills from her vagina on her way home, in her private taxi, stolen from a Saudi client, or wear the hijab and djellaba to deliver money for her family, whom she supports economically. Her mother lives in Medina with another younger daughter and Noha’s son, who is two years old and whom Noha rejects. This collective protagonism can be also seen in *Sur la Planche*, *Les oubliés de l’histoire* or *Les yeux Secs*. The case of *Les Yeux Secs* is particular, there is represented a complete town where women dedicate entirely to sexual work, but the leading role is individualized in Hala, the community’s chief, and in her mother.

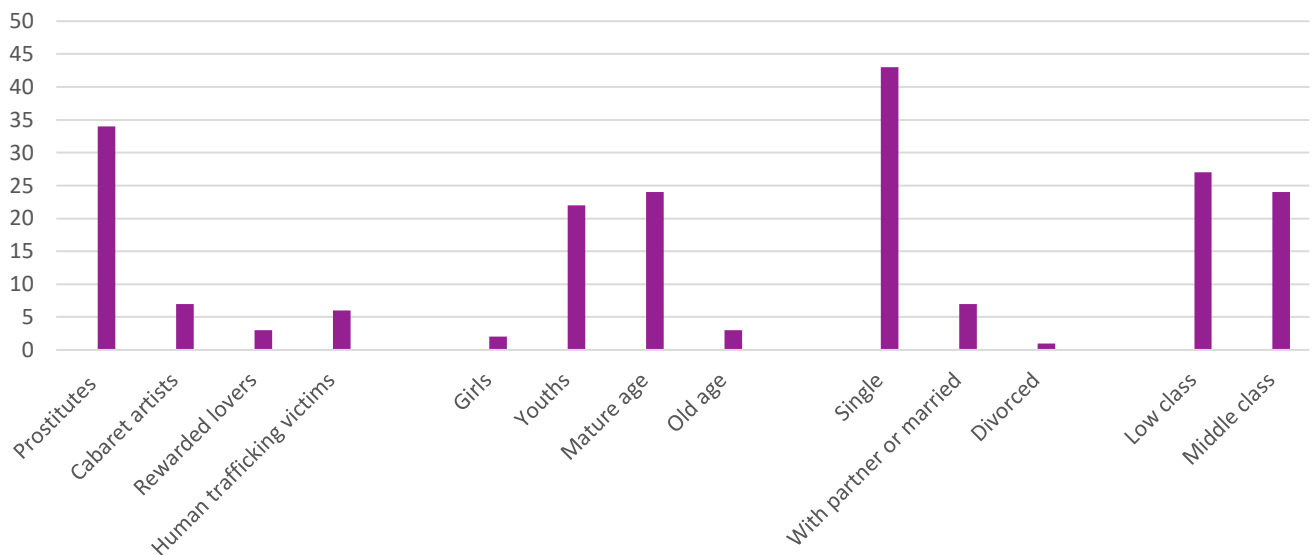
3.1.2. Majoritarian sociodemographic profiles

Graphic 1 shows the compendium of categories analyzed regarding the imagery of sexual and erotic markets in the Moroccan cinema.

Firstly, the first great distinction is done between women who work in prostitution or any of its varieties and women who are victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes. There are 45 characters that are part of the first category (88%) and 6 (11.7%) who group in the second category.

In the first group, we need to differentiate among several profiles: out of those 44 women, 34 are prostitutes (77.2 %), 7 are cabaret dancers or singers (15%) and 3 are rewarded-lovers (6.8%). There are two women who play the role of procuring clients, as seen in *Femmes en Miroir* and also in ‘Burnout’, but not from sexual exploitation or human trafficking but instead from women’s consent.

Graphic 1. Sociodemographic profile in the imagery of sexual and erotic market in the Moroccan cinema. (In numbers, based on a total of 51 characters.)



Source: authors’ own creation

Regarding the age range characters belong to, there is an equal representation with presence of young women (between 15 and 25 years old), with 22 characters (43%) and mature age women (between 25 and 45 years old), with 24 characters (47%). There are also two roles of girl protagonists, as well as three older women, in the age range of older than 45 years old.

Regarding the marital status, in most cases, with 43 characters (84%), it is assumed that women are single because there are no explicit indicators that show they are married or divorced. There are 7 women represented with partners or married (13.7%) and a divorced woman. There is no figure of the widow in the contexts of sexual markets. However, the presence of prostitute mothers is noteworthy, with a total of 6 women.

The samples that indicate belonging to a social class or the other show the following results: the profile of the wealthy woman belonging to the upper class and working as prostitute is discarded. 27 characters fit more with a profile of belonging to a low or marginal class (52%), while 24 (47%) could be more associated to the middle class.

Regarding sexual orientation and cultural diversity, results show that the diversity issue is only managed in 'Much Loved', where one of the protagonists is lesbian, and there also appears a transvestite character in the film. In relation to cultural identity, there appear characters associated to Arab as well as the Berber's identities, the two main identity substrates of the country. The presence of foreign women working as prostitutes is not confirmed for the moment.

3.1.3. Films' narrative and descriptive analysis

3.1.3.1. Prostitution and its modalities

The first category establishes a well delimited boundary between prostitutes and women victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes. The only film that deals with the perspective of human trafficking in a monographic manner is *Les Oubliés de l'histoire* and it does so through three female characters that, for different reasons, end up in a brothel in Brussels, sexually exploited by a network of dealers who confiscate their passports. One of the protagonists, Nawal, ends up committing suicide after playing the leading role in a mutiny among the night club girls so that patrons returned their documents. Compared to the representation of the organized mafia than can be seen in European films, in the Moroccan film human trafficking is also linked to the figure of husbands or boyfriends who act as "undercover procurers" of their partners, like happens in *Un amour a Casablanca*, *L'amante du Rif* or *Agadir-Bombay*. The common link between these three films is that women don't end up running into a situation of human trafficking due to economic reasons, but instead due to a process of search for personal liberation. In the first case, Afaf flees from her father's authoritarianism, but ends up marrying a man that forces her to prostitute in her own home. In *L'Amante du Rif* Ala wants to experience a passionate love like that of "Carmen", her female heroine, and confronts her mother, rejecting marriage with a "decent" cousin. Set in Chefchaouen, a population located North of Morocco, Ala ends at the disposal of "El Barón", a hashish dealer. When a friend asks her in a sequence: -what are you doing?, she replies resigned: - being a whore. The protagonist of *Agadir-Bombay*, Leila, lives a double life. In Tafraout, her home town, she is the daughter who comes from Agadir to visit her

mother. In Agadir, she is the exploited lover. She trusts that her boyfriend could change and fights for it, despite the constant display of spite, subjugation and deceit from him.

Apart from the exploitation, the limits of the erotic-sexual practice become more ambiguous when we try to distinguish the profiles and activities of women prostitutes, cabaret artists and rewarded lovers. In the first case, most films suggest without further interpretation difficulties that women live and work out of monetarized sex. Previously, we mentioned examples of thematic films, where these kinds of transactions are evident. With them, Leila Batul in *Les amis d'hier* finds her clients in the Medina of Casablanca while shopping groceries, Dunia in *Mort à vendre* works in a club of Tetouan, Hind makes a living from party to party with “dances outside the law”, Mimi dedicates to swindling clients once they get in the car in *Zéro*, the two women are hired for services at home of *Marock*, or women from a brothel that look after two former prisoners in *Memoire en détention*. In addition, there are the mothers that appear in films or the two figures of women that procure contacts in *Femmes en Mirroir* and ‘Burnout’. Even including women who disguise themselves to make immigrants believe they are prostitutes. All of them are linked to activities that have implicit the language of sex sale in exchange for money. But in the “suggested cinema” we try to illustrate there are cases such as Ibtisam’s, in the film *Et Après*. She returns home late at night. The mother waits for her in the kitchen and the following conversation takes place:

Et Après... (Mohamed Ismaïl, 2002)

Mother: There is no need for you to hide. I am looking at you! viper

Ibtisam: But, what is the matter now?

Mother: Aren't you ashamed? There is no longer any authority.

Ibtisam: What do you want me to do! I need to find a job

Mother: I know the kind of job you find in these hours late at night. You are the dishonor of the neighborhood.

In the case of cabaret artists there appears again a representational pendulum that needs a distinction between those films where the cabaret is simply an iconic location that reaches the symbol value (*Les beaux jours de Sherazade, Yarit...*) and those where it is a workplace and a bridge towards the exercise of prostitution. In *Nancy et le Monstre*, the young protagonist clearly combines the artistic profile with paid sex. The dancer goes to private homes and keeps monetarized relationships after her performance. In other cases, such as in *Jugement d'une femme*, the artistic performance of the leading role actress takes place in a highly sexualized context and she needs to cope with the constant reprimands from the local's owner to attend to clients' demands, but she is characterized as a woman that marks a categorical dividing line. “I am an artist, I sing.” In other occasions, the cabaret job represents a bridge towards a consolidated love relationship, such as in *Yarit ou le temps d'une chanson*, when Said falls in love with the singer Faioruz and moves to a more ambiguous transitional relationship framework, which in this case it is solved with sexual intercourse at the home of a friend of Said. This friend, while giving in his reduced space of intimacy, inflicts a voyeuristic look through which the direct representation of the sexual intercourse is avoided. In ‘Whatever Lola wants’ there is a transnational contrast on the figure of the belly dancer. Lola is a young girl of New York who travels to Cairo dreaming about the fact that the popular dancer Ismahan could give her lessons. However, the teacher

lives distanced from the world precisely due to a case of repudiation and social stigmatization of her profession. While for the former, belly dancing is a reason of prestige and professional success, but the later it was a reason for personal ruin. There are also women, like the Berber Hind en ‘Dance of Outlaws’, who lives completely on dancing but doesn’t work in cabarets but instead in events that take place in rural homes in the Atlas Mountains. On the other hand, in films that try to meddle a modernity aspect to the practice of prostitution we see how the cabaret is displaced by the discotheque as figurative scenario and the traditional belly dance by the contemporary dance, like happens in ‘Much Loved’ or *Sur la Planche*. The discotheque is represented as a working space, but also as a space of freedom.

We also go deep into a territory of scarcely delimited boundaries with women in the category of rewarded lovers, where the subtext of subtleness and insinuation becomes a pattern. Soraya in *L’orquestre de minuit* always appears accompanying an old age musician of a great orchestra, turned today into a character of mafia-like aesthetics. Soraya is a trophy woman: the way she dresses, using wigs, her scant interventions, forced smiles and mostly the lack of relevance of her role frame her within that status. In this case, it is interesting to confirm that even though she is the official companion of the musician, she maintains that over-represented aesthetic, which associates her with the archetype of *femme fatale* linked to films where some mafia-related behavior is shown, such as the case of the famous musician who had seen better days. A paradigmatic example of rewarded lover is Wafa, the protagonist of *Une histoire d’amour*, who supports her whole family with what she receives from an mature man she lives with. This pendulum between the figure of the lover and the client in a single character is manifested when she falls in love with a young civil servant and the “lover-client” locks her up in an outburst of jealousy to avoid her from going with him. Also, Salua, Afaf’s sister, in *Un Amour a Casablanca* is introduced as the young sexually liberated student, who date a father and a son at the same time without knowing they are family. She receives compensations from the father, like the fact of having rooms rented understood as a space of freedom. At the same time, he imprints his male gaze over the young lover’s body. In a sequence right after lovemaking, she falls asleep, he caress her foot and removes the sheets to look at her body (which we do not see) and sits back to drink a glass of wine. An off voice expresses his thoughts: *Where will I find a beauty such as this one? How long will I be able to satisfy her?*

3.1.3.2. Age, social status and empowerment

What films tell us about age is that while young women are more directly associated to paid sex and revert benefits for themselves, mature women have other circumstances, such as the fact of having children or being responsible for other people. They play roles that tilt between the need for paid sex and the stories that fit more with the profile of the economically supported lover. But also, mature women who no longer work as prostitutes but as teachers and facilitators of experiences and contacts for the new generations. We find the two cases of Madame Rita in *Femmes en Miroir*, a lonely character about 45 years old, who trains the employees of her hair salon to go out some nights, and the case of the elegant lady providing high standing contacts in ‘Burnout’. The former, from her hair salon, introduces the girls working there in the world and interaction patterns of the night. On the other hand, the case of the procurer woman in ‘Burnout’ is rather particular because it leads us to Aida, her client, a 25-year-old lady that specializes as physician in a hospital and that with an implicit denounce

message about the precarious situation of medicine students, she looks for a first experience in the world of prostitution. The procurer only works with exclusive clients, in this case a mediatic front page politician advocating against abortion and who lives a double life. Moreover, the politician rapes Aida brutally, generating a sequence of great impact through the view of the actress Sarah Perles. After being raped, Aida runs to wash herself up in a public restroom and isolates there in a state of shock. Thus, the film tilts between the innovative introduction in the Moroccan filmography of two unprecedented female characters due to their relationship with the world of prostitution, but adopts the majoritarian trend of moral sanction and filmic-narrative punishment.

Both girls and old age women play a residual role. In the case of the two teenage girls of the sample, they play the role of heroine girls. One of them is Ismahan, in *Agadir-Bombay*, who while trying to defend herself from a pedophile client, ends up killing him and thus uncovering a network of human traffickers for sex exploitation. The other heroine girl is Khaltoum, in ‘Casablanca by Night’, who grew up in a brothel. To help her mother pay for his brother’s surgery one night she escapes to the cabaret where her aunt works. Again, the moral sanction is translated into rape, that results in death for the aggressor. Elder women are also residual, not suitable for sexual activity (Justo, 2013). In the case of *Les Yeux Secs*, in a context where all women of the Berber population work as prostitutes as a way of survival, old age women live “sheltered”, “exiled” by their own daughters, in the barns far from town, behind an impressive snow barrier. But despite their age, elder women may play decisive symbolic roles. Hala’s mother, in this same film, spent 25 years in prison and returns to the town to have an influence in the community’s future by convincing all women to look for alternatives to prostitution in the sector of hand-made fabric.

The presence of single mothers is an outstanding feature in the analysis of the sample, another quite stigmatized circumstance in the Moroccan society and that appears in a polarized manner in cinema. There are cases, such as in *Ali Zaoua*, where the prostitute mother carries a huge moral burden as punishment. Her son rejected that she brought men home and he preferred to live in the streets of Casablanca, where he died by an accident between two youth gangs. Did the mother send her son to death? Is she the moral responsible for his disappearance? In other cases, the opposite happens, it is the mother who rejects her son. In ‘Much Loved’, Noha’s son lives with his grandmother. When Noha goes to his mother’s house, she ignores him completely, there is not the slightest hint of emotional affection towards him. She is only concerned about procuring money. Was he the results of an undesired pregnancy? A rape perhaps? Are they the sons of the stigma of the woman who dares to have sexual intercourse outside marriage? In general, films do not show whether these mothers, now dedicated to prostitution, had any kind of love relationship with their sons’ fathers in the past or not. The mother that abandons her son in *Les Chevaux de Dieu*, needs to confront an Islamist, who reprimands her for her activities and she alleges reasons of mere survival. Regarding the procurer Madame Rita in *Femmes en miroir* there are rumors she could have killed her own son, although it may be part of the urban legend surrounding her, since she is a mysterious woman. But the Moroccan cinema also displays, occasionally, the profile of the working mother, like in *Jugement d’une femme*, who always goes with her daughter to the cabaret and leaves her sleeping on the couch while she dances, taking care of her lovingly at all times. Or like Ismahan, the repudiated woman in ‘Whatever Lola wants’, who dedicates all her efforts on her daughter’s education.

In other cases, girls revert the benefits of their work on themselves, without being connected to family contexts (the three protagonists of *Sur la Planche* or some of the protagonists of 'Much Loved'). These are films where the practice of prostitution is associated to an environment of personal social promotion and even of access to places of amusement and leisure. In *Sur la Planche*, Badia, Imane, Nawal and Asma, the four protagonists, live in the city of Tangier at an unstoppable pace and combine their work during the day in a peeling shrimp and in a textile factory, with the world of night. They prostitute voluntarily and commit minor robberies. What separates this film from the hegemonic patterns is that it grants an empowering role to women, without using narratives of victimization or "moral punishments of narrative nature." For them, the street represents a space of freedom that allows them to dress as they like, drink or smoke whatever they like, say what they want to have access to any space whatsoever, such as nightclubs and pubs. In the opening sequence we see the leader of the quartet, Badia, who has a subversive and resolute character, walking facing her back towards the camera in the shadows of the night. An off voice presented with aphorisms, advances her way of understanding life: *I do not steal, I pay; I do not prostitute, I invite myself; I am not lying, I am only facing the truth: my own.*

4. Discussion and conclusions

In this study we tried to categorize the profile of women associated with sexual and erotic markets in the Moroccan cinema. Our proposal aimed to show there is a continuum of profiles and activities related to these environments and that all these take part in the constitution of the socio-sexual order, from dancers and cabaret singers to women with lovers-clients, prostitutes, procurers and in a different plane, women victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes, sometimes by their own partners. The majoritarian profile of female roles in the environment of sexual and erotic markets in the Moroccan cinema corresponds to women prostitutes (86%), who have paid sex relationships (51.3%), in a central age range between 15 and 25 years old (43%) on one hand, and on the other between 25 and 45 years old (47%), mostly single (84%) and without family responsibilities (86%). The results were always obtained considering a baseline of 51 characters belonging to 30 films, produced between 1958 and 2015.

Sexual and erotic markets are mainly related to urban contexts, being Casablanca the most represented city. Other large cities such as Marrakesh ('Much Loved') or Agadir (*Agadir Bombay*) and frontier cities of the north such as Tangier (*Ali Zauia*, *Sur la planche*) and Tetouan (*Morte à vendre*) or Chefchauen (*L'amante du Rif*), have been locations of filmic interest, as well as of sociological study interest. The Berber rural environment framed in the Middle Atlas Mountains, has been represented in *Les yeux secs*.

Regarding filmic spaces, unlike Western cinema, where there is an over-representation of the street, the practice of prostitution is more located in private homes mainly, emphasizing on the rent of chalets for private parties. Besides socio-religious and cultural reasons displayed throughout this study, this fact may be connected to the prohibitionist policy that does not favor the presence of clubs and turns street prostitution into a dangerous activity. In this sense, it is interesting to confirm the significant presence of procurer husbands or partners whose exploited women practice prostitution inside their own homes sheltering in the legal coverage offered by a marriage certificate.

Although most films denote an implicit belonging of women to a middle-to-low class, with scarce economic resources, there is no narrative reconstruction about the difficulties of “poverty” surrounding protagonists. Films are focused on activities of the present, instead of the circumstances leading them to get in contact with transactional markets. In this sense, the figure of women in sexual and erotic markets is quite dissociated from their contexts. There are scarce narrative texts that refer to backgrounds. The ‘voyeuristic’ view of the present is favored more instead.

Despite the story associating prostitution and poverty tends to be hegemonic, the economic aspect is not always the trigger. The concepts of sexual liberation (with young girls that flee from their authoritarian parents) and the access to spaces of freedom have also been considered in the Moroccan cinema, although in a minoritarian manner. In one case or another, around these female characters and their activities, there unfolds a cinema of ambivalent social denouncement that may show polarized proposals. Although these issues will be managed in future studies, we can advance that, narratively, these are films with a strong judgmental and patriarchal load, when not paternalistic. Women who transgress the social order are considered “bad women” and pay a high price in their lives. The storylines “punish” with tragic-dramatic or violent outcomes and quite paralyzing personal consequences for the life of women, which are usually presented as victims.

The initial hypothesis was demonstrated when confirming the ambiguity with which the Moroccan cinema usually illustrates the practice of prostitution from the borderline with other cultural variations, expressed from the subtleness, text-visual insinuation and the scarce professional demarcation. In the sample, out of 30 films, only ‘Much Loved’ represents sexual work in a straightforward and monographic manner. And therefore, it has been the most controverted film in the history of post-independence Moroccan cinema. In Morocco, bringing the taboo to the big screen and doing so in a realistic and detailed manner (we are referring to the inclusion of naked bodies, sex scenes, orgasms, etc.) is still synonym of social controversy. In addition to the difficulty of showing sex, there is the complexity of talking about sexual work. ‘Much Loved’ shows in the big screen sequences of naked bodies and sexual intercourse, drug consumption and alcohol, wild parties, failed erection attempts and violent sex. This example, although exceptional, has two interpretations. On one hand, that some Moroccan filmmakers are willing to break molds and come out of the era of the subtle, allegorical or indirect discretion that characterized the representation of sexual markets in the big screen. On the other hand, that the Moroccan society is not yet willing to openly accept the cinematography realism in specific issues that culturally belong to the private area. Therefore, we state that the Moroccan cinema is under a state of transition regarding the ways of representation and the arguments of films related to sexual and erotic markets.

The second hypothesis is also confirmed when validating that only some films deal with the issue in a monographic manner, nevertheless, the figure of prostitutes or any kind of variation irrigates the Moroccan filmography from beginning to end. ‘Much Loved’, ‘Dance of Outlaws’, *Les Yeux Secs* and to a lesser extent, *Sur la Planche*, can be considered thematic films. In them, the level of contextualization of the phenomenon reaches higher levels, illustrating daily life aspects with direct consequences for women’s lives. ‘Much Loved’ does so from the cinematography realism, ‘Dance of Outlaws’ from a gender that is halfway between the documentary and fiction, *Les Yeux Secs* from the

figurative language and *Sur la Planche* from the attempt of deconstruction of the hegemonic narrative. In the rest of films, the presence of women analyzed are at the service of other narrative storylines, other heroes and other purposes of moral nature. Is the figure of the prostitute an archetype difficult to eradicate in the cinema? Is its permanence, sometimes almost unjustified, another reflect of the sexist and patriarchal violence of structural nature embedded in our social schemes? Future studies should assume the fact from this double approach of cinematography and feminist studies.

In the Moroccan cinema there are still many realities sub-represented:

- a) On one hand, the issue of human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes, attuned with hegemonic filmic realities at global scale, still bets on the surface of the problem, without delving from the cinematography perspective in the structural causes and where the victimized woman is the great loser, with scarce or null personal agency nor the capacity to influence a change in the course of things. We join Andrijasevic and Mai (2016) postulates when they say that the representation of human trafficking also requires the fight to oust hegemonic rhetorics about the concept of “modern slavery” which only offer simple solutions to very complex issues without questioning the causes of inequality they are sustained with.
- b) On the other hand, it is essential to expose stories of empowered women and agents of their decisions, overcoming ideological frontiers of punishment and moral sanction for every woman distancing from the norm. Women that comply more with realities such as the ones described by Mériam Cheick (2011; 2014; 2016) in her fieldwork in the city of Tangier. From here, we appeal the convenience to make room for other narratives introducing subjectivities distanced from hegemonic models. Being women willing to skip legality, able to confront social and personal obstacles, cinema should contribute to expose that empowered look from a female view and far from narrative victimisms, as illustrated in films such as *Sur La Planche*, *Les Yeux Secs* or ‘Much Loved’. A still very minoritarian trend, not only in the Moroccan context, but also globally.
- c) Cinema in Morocco lacks female views. Sensitivities of women filmmakers are scarcely represented. Most of filmography is made by men who talk about women. Only four producers direct films in the sample: Narjiss Nejjar, Leila Kilani, Leila Marrakchi and Myriam Bakir. The female view is not a trivial issue. We dare to confirm that films directed by women show a higher level of female empowerment, as well as a lower level of victimization. The prostitute of *Terminus de Anges* who recycles condoms has a joyful, resolute character and plays an empathic and almost motherly-like role towards the young girl who provides the condoms and who lives deceived by her husband. The young girls of Leila Kilani in *Sur la Planche* are rebel, autonomous and irreverent. They do whatever they want, whenever they want and do not account to anyone. They understand that they enjoy a series of privileges unthinkable in other contexts, precisely because they prostitute whenever they want to and to whom they want to, and earn money for it. Women of *Les Yeux Secs* live in their own world, far from any male precept, and manage their resources their own way. And the young heroine of Agadir-Bombay, despite undergoing a rape attempt, she manages to defend herself and attack the aggressor. We do not want to say there aren't models of empowered women in films conducted by men, but when films are directed by women,

empowered views are more symptomatic indeed. ‘Much Loved’ represents again a particular example. Nabyl Ayouch leads the production but the script was co-written by his wife, the actress and documentary maker Maryam Touzani, an activist of women rights, and also by the leading role actress, Loubna Abinar, who in real life grew up in a neighborhood with prostitutes and admired them.

Our study suggests the need to point out some issues that are worth a detailed attention regarding future studies. On one hand, the representation of the practices of transactional sex regarding erotic dance and extramarital relationships. On the other hand, the representation and sanction of trajectories of personal liberation and social promotion linked to sex markets. It is also relevant, the tension in the representation between empowered and victimized figures, typical from the liminal condition of prostitution as patriarchal institution. Finally, the participation and incidence of cinema about these topics with the constitution of socio-sexual imageries, specifically in the representation patterns of explicit sex. Where is the Moroccan cinema headed in a society polarized between progressist sectors and the more and more influencing sectors of the most traditional Islamism? How will this conjuncture affect the production of films which topics disturb and generate social controversy? What is the role of cinema as invigorating element of transformations contributing to equality of rights between men and women? And the overcoming of taboos and women occupation from the personal freedom of public space? When will actresses stop suffering reprimands and discriminations in real life due to interpreting roles of prostitute or for showing they unclothed bodies?

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5. Notes

[1] <http://www.ccm.ma/>

[2] We offer a translation of films into Spanish in the order on table 1: *Los bellos días de Sherazade; Un amor en Casablanca; Yarit o el tiempo de una canción; Los amigos del pasado; Ali Zaoua, príncipe de la calle. Juicio a una mujer; Una historia de amor; Y después...; Casablanca de noche; Memoria detenida; Marock; Nancy y el monstruo; Lo que Lola quiera; Los olvidados de la historia; Al filo; Las alas del amor; Término de ángeles; Muerte en venta; Agadir-Bombay; La amante del Rif; Mujeres en el espejo; Andalucía: mi amor; Los cabellos de Dios; Zéro; El baile prohibido; Granos de granada; La orquesta de media noche; Much Loved; Burnout.*

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