



OSIRE GLACIER

*Femininity,
Masculinity,
and Sexuality
in Morocco
and
Hollywood*
The Negated Sex



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General Introduction: The Dehumanization of Women

This book is the first to formulate an ideology of emancipation for Moroccan women. It analyzes the central role played by discourse about the body or, more precisely, about sexuality in creating a sociopolitical sex and gender hierarchy in Morocco. The global gender gap report ranks Morocco 139 out of 145 nations.¹ Admittedly, a number of studies have addressed the issue of sex and gender inequality in Morocco. Typical topics of study include the veil, legal discrimination against women, tensions between modernity and traditions, and the heated debates raging between defenders of cultural specificity and those who defend the principle that rights are universal. However, these studies do not offer a synthesized vision that would allow us to understand the mechanisms producing women's inferiority. Oftentimes scholars conducting research of this kind even obscure the everyday sexual, economic, and sociopolitical exploitation they presume to be studying. Thus, this work exposes in an analytic manner the social and political dynamics that devalue the feminine.

I THEORETICAL APPROACH

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu examined the persistence of masculine domination in Mediterranean societies over several centuries in his formative work *La domination masculine*. In his book, Bourdieu unraveled processes transforming the history of gender into nature, and the cultural arbitrary

of these constructs into the natural.² He revealed that an androcentric vision of the cosmos produced the hierarchical construction of gender, and not the inverse.³ In fact, rigorous and relational divisions between the feminine and the masculine are consistently applied to social structures to legitimize the androcentric order of the universe.⁴ This division is subsequently made to appear natural by recourse to the visible differences between the female body and the male body.⁵ The phallus is conceived of as a symbol of virility, and the variations between biological bodies are presented as an objective foundation upon which the sex and gender hierarchy stands.⁶ This kind of masculine sociodicy is achieved through a collective work of socialization that is both widespread and continuous, and that transforms bodies deeply and durably.⁷ Various social customs and practices related to the body, but more precisely to sexuality, produce the social categories of feminine woman and virile man.⁸ This collective labor of socialization presents male bodies as powerful and imposes limits on women based on how their bodies look.⁹

Straight/curved, head up/eyes lowered, high/low, vertical/horizontal, outside/inside, superior/inferior represent some of the body-related discourse about the masculine and the feminine that participates in creating social distinctions between them.¹⁰ Inevitably, men assume without question that they are entitled to positions of power in the private sphere as well as the in public sphere. Various institutions including the marriage market, the family, schools, the workplace, and television ratify and reinforce structures that support masculine domination.¹¹

This collective invasion of the body is an expression of the political mythology but popular belief tends to reduce the sex and gender hierarchy to a social problem or a subject of interest to women only. This explains why, for example during the 2011 revolts in Maghreb and the Middle-East, including Morocco, protestors limited their demands, generally speaking to the resignation of authoritarian regimes, economic rights, and the respect for human dignity.¹² Their demands did not include any explicit pleas for equality between the sexes.¹³ But to relegate discourse about the body and sexuality to strict power relations between women and men is to completely underestimate the political dimension of this discourse.

As the philosopher Michel Foucault has shown, the body is directly inscribed in the political.¹⁴ More precisely, given that modern power has assumed the power to govern living beings, this power over life is developed according to two principle forms, both of which revolve around the

body.¹⁵ The anatomo-politics of the human body came first.¹⁶ The purpose was to maximize the body's potential, strength, utility, and docility. In fact, the body is only useful once the mechanisms of power and domination have succeeded at making it both a productive body and a submissive body.¹⁷ That is to say, from an economic standpoint, discipline increases the productive capacity of the body; but from a political standpoint it decreases the body's power, energy, and its desire to resist.¹⁸ The body is thus a paradoxical site for the maximization of work-force strength as well as domination. Later, and in parallel to the anatomo-politics of the human body, a bio-politics of the population developed.¹⁹ The body is imbued with policies specific to the human species, including policies of birth, mortality, health, longevity of life, and life expectancy.²⁰ The body thus becomes a privileged instrument of biopower.²¹

Moreover, Foucault highlights the importance of sex as a political tool.²² Sex is at the center of the anatomo-politics of the human body, and at the heart of biopower.²³ In other words, Foucault reveals how sex is deployed through discipline to train bodies whose energy are to be conserved and their strength intensified, while also revealing a politics of population control. Thus sex lends itself to minute surveillance and control as effectively as massive measures and interventions that target social bodies or groups as a whole.²⁴

In Foucault's apparatus of sexuality, the relations of power and domination enter bodies, but he does not elaborate whether the impact is different depending on a person's sex. The philosopher's premature and unfortunate death meant that his work was left unfinished. We do not know if he would have developed a gender dimension in later volumes of his history of sexuality. What interests this study is Foucault's contention that the body is under the direct control of the relations of power and domination that invade, discipline, train, manipulate, control, torture, and exploit bodies, and demand labor and political obedience from them.²⁵ Recall also that, according to Foucault, the body is the object of massive politics that impact both individuals and populations as a whole.²⁶

This study builds from the works of Bourdieu and Foucault in several respects. In the same way that Bourdieu focused on masculine domination, this analysis concerns itself with patriarchy in Morocco in the sense that masculine supremacy is codified through institutional structures like the law and through androcentric interpretations of religion. Masculine domination, patriarchy, phallogentrism, and misogyny reveal interdependent sociopolitical dynamics. Indeed, the

androcentric vision of the cosmos requires the production of the categories feminine/masculine and women/men, and they must appear natural. Biology thus ensures that these constructs created by humans are taken for granted. Sociopolitical discourse about the body and, more precisely, about the sexes creates subjective comparisons between the two and gives them diverging value that appear natural but are actually constructed.

As Bourdieu pointed out in his work, in Mediterranean societies, the phallus is upheld as a symbol of virility, honor, and power.²⁷ Similarly, in the third volume of his history of sexuality, Foucault analyzed the place given to the male organ in the social scenography of ancient Greece. The “necessary” male member was an expression of relations and activities that determined an individual’s status in the world, politics, and in the family. It could even determine one’s wealth, speech, liberty, and name.²⁸ Certain elements of this social scenography exist in Morocco. Emerging sometimes from the collective unconscious, popular beliefs can inform on the phallocentrism that underlies masculine supremacy in the country. I will cite two examples. First, the sexologist Abou Bakr Harakat speaks of the male organ in these terms:

In all regions and civilizations, and ever since man has become aware of his manhood, he has sought to prove and experience it through the erection.

An erect penis is a symbol of strength, power, and a tool for domination.²⁹

The sexologist, who calls himself a voice of authority in the field of sexuality, outlines popular unconscious perceptions about genitals without taking a moment to point out to his readers that the biological body does not exist in isolation from sociopolitical discourse about the body. The second example is a contemporary insult young boys use to denigrate girls: “pisseuses (pissers).” That the insult is “pisser” and not “shitter” makes the purpose of the affront clear. Women and men defecate in the same way. But, generally, men stand to urinate and women sit. By calling girls “pissers,” boys are reproducing the disparaging image of the female sex espoused in sociopolitical discourse about the body. Thus the insult is similar to all verbal abuses used to belittle someone according to their race, skin color, or class (insults like Negro, nigger, pleb, and redneck) except that it relates to sex and, therefore goes unnoticed given that women’s inferiority is upheld by the law and considered the norm. Sadly, flesh and

blood people are the targets of this kind of disparaging language about sex organs.

But if phallocentrism, and the misogyny that accompanies it is one of the major pillars of patriarchy, the regime also requires force in order to be properly maintained. While Bourdieu acknowledged the existence of domestic violence,³⁰ he explained that masculine domination was produced through symbolic violence,³¹ a form of power that is not physical but invades the body directly nonetheless, and permeates everyday life.³² Namely, symbolic power operates as a trigger by launching the behaviors internalized by bodies as a result of indoctrination.³³ However, in considering the persistence of patriarchy in Morocco, this study reveals that physical violence, the strength of the law, and masculine interpretations of religion play an equally important role as symbolic power. From the cradle to the grave, an androcentric vision of the universe is imposed on all Moroccans. This vision is inculcated in children and youth with a learning that balances symbolic violence with physical violence. It is subsequently stabilized by the forces of the law, and legitimated by masculine interpretations of religion.

The family, school, and a person's social environment as a whole are given the mission of raising the children and the youth. Far from celebrating free choice, this learning inculcates the ideas, perceptions, values, and behavior codes of the masculine order through the use of symbolic and physical violence. The androcentric vision of the universe is promulgated, legitimized, and maintained first and foremost by masculine interpretations of religion. The masculine order uses the divine as a tool to mystify children and youth through a diffuse and continuous indoctrination, and a propaganda that permeates all educational, media, and cultural channels. At the same time, other social mechanisms operate to suspend reason. For example, "la hchouma (modesty/shame)," is an instilled behavior that fosters emotions of guilt, and renders minds and spirits quiet and complaisant. "Hchouma" is taboo; but, mostly, it is censure in its most powerful form.

This kind of symbolic violence is reinforced with physical violence. In other words, the patriarchal regime turns equally to physical violence to maintain itself, and all authority figures within the patriarchal order are called upon to perpetrate violence. From parent to child, grandparents to grandchild, husband to wife, brother to sister, oldest sibling to youngest sibling, educational personnel to pupil, man to woman, employer to domestic, powerful man to weak man, the force of the law to protestors,

police officer to detainee, torturer to victim, violence traverses the social fabric and political structures. This violence marks the body, predisposes people to submissiveness or domination, and constrains them to either passivity or aggression.

In this regard, Foucault was right to suggest that power does more than simply deny, reprimand, and suppress.³⁴ In truth, power produces. Here, as it happens, its production is plural. First, it produces a masculine associated with domination, aggression, and violence. Inversely, it produces a feminine associated with submission, passivity, and gentleness. In other words, it produces women and men and therefore, produces two distinct social groups separated by a differential in power, and by the different privileges attached to their citizenship. In the past, popular discourse spoke of “sex” when distinguishing women from men. However, over the last few decades, the feminist discourse replaced the concept of “sex,” which is inscribed in biology, with the concept of “gender,” which comes from the social order, by demonstrating that the hierarchy between women and men is constructed. In this study, I contend that biological sex does not exist in and of itself because, in order to exist, it must be understood within a sociopolitical discourse, meaning that concepts of sex and gender conflate with one another. More explicitly, power produces the categories that are the sexes, gender, woman (al-maraa), man (ar-rajoul), women, and men. To designate the human person potentially liberated from the sociopolitical alienation of the feminine and the masculine, I speak of “people born with a vagina” or “people born with a penis.”

I want to highlight here the role played by the androcentric construction of sexuality on the production of the social categories of the feminine/masculine and women/men. As Bourdieu noted, according to the masculine vision of the cosmos, relations of power and domination invade the act of sex.³⁵ Similarly, Foucault found that in ancient Greece, sexual relations were conceived of as a game of superiority and inferiority.³⁶ Sexuality and, more precisely, penetration entered the two partners in a relationship of domination and submission.³⁷ For the dominate partners, sexuality was a social status; it was thus exerted as a privilege.³⁸ For the submissive partner, sexuality was a condition of surrender.³⁹ Some aspects of this androcentric construction of sexuality can be detected in the unconscious sociopolitical structures of Morocco – and of other countries. Sexuality is conceived of as a masculine domain with the feminine body as the territory for deployment. In the work of conditioning minds and

training bodies, libido is strongly encouraged among boys and male adolescents, and strongly reprimanded for girls and female adolescents. Essentially, the androcentric order of the universe denies feminine sexuality to better subordinate it to masculine sexuality. According to this perspective, sex is conceived of as a sexualized dynamic of affirmation and renouncement, taking and giving, domination and submission. In other words, the masculine order produces a particular conception of power. This power is sexed and sexualized, meaning it is a masculine power and a power whose ultimate expression is the sexual appropriation of the feminine body.

This power requires legitimation by a transcendent order like the forces of the law to maintain itself. The continuous sociopolitical work of learning, indoctrination, propaganda, and the training of bodies is so intrusive it seems to have effectively inculcated the principles, perceptions, behaviors, and values of the masculine order to children and young adults. This order effectively reduces these young people to the categories of feminine and masculine ready to perform the sociopolitical roles of women and men as adults, and amputates their human potential. But life will always retain at least some unpredictability. Oftentimes individuals will refuse to bend to these sex and gender categories, or to their associated roles and responsibilities. This is where the law intervenes and is legitimated by masculine interpretations of religion. The law dictates that the refusal to submit to the androcentric order is illegal. For example, the prohibition of homosexuality in present-day Morocco⁴⁰ criminalizes all persons whose sexuality destabilizes the foundation upon which the androcentric order rests as well as the writings of the categories of feminine/masculine and women/men based on perceptions of the body. In other words, homosexuality is a sexuality “against the masculine order” and is, therefore, conceived of, presented, and inculcated as a sexuality “against nature.”

In consecrating masculine power, the law and official religion nurture political violence. In fact, the body, the sexes, sexuality, and relations of women/men are inscribed in politics. If this aspect of the political sphere tends to be obscured, it is because people born with a vagina are not perceived as full human beings. We will return to this dehumanization but, for now, I want to point out that in modern Morocco, patriarchy is nothing less than state sexism based on biology and legitimated by masculine interpretations of religion. Said differently, it is inscribed in the prolonging of biopower as defined by Foucault,⁴¹ in the sense that state sexism depends on politics that govern the lives of entire social groups

and, indeed, the population as a whole. Here, however, we must be precise. Foucault identifies two types of power: the “power” deployed by the sovereign and by the forces of the law; and modern power characterized by a multitude of power centers and by the regulating force of the norm.⁴² Biopower developed with the advent of modern power in the west. Meanwhile, in Morocco, “power” in the sense of power deployed by “the sovereign and violence of the law,” and power in the sense of “multiple centers of power” coexist and interact with one another. More specifically, in terms of the issue of women, among these centers of power are the ulamas, women’s organizations, the Moroccan movement for human rights, political parties and international actors, including the United Nations women’s human rights program.⁴³ Thus, the concept of biopower is applicable in the Moroccan context.

The politics of the Moroccan state divide the population into two distinct groups based on bodily differences. One is inscribed in the nation as a full citizen, while the other occupies a conditional and subaltern position. The underlying policies of the Nationality code inform that a woman’s relationships with men determine whether she belongs to the nation or not. In certain cases, marrying a foreigner excludes women from citizenship.⁴⁴ Similarly, reproductive policies like the criminalization of abortion indicate that the bodies of women, and first their sexuality belong to the state.⁴⁵ However, the enjoyment of women’s appropriated bodies is bequeathed to men. Meanwhile, the underlying policies of the Moudawana (the Family code before 2004) continue to shape mentalities and social practices. This is important given that, based on the code, the sexist state recognizes procreation and domesticity as the only contributions made to society by people born with a vagina. Also, according to the code, the husband is obliged to support his wife,⁴⁶ implying that the population is divided between male providers and females excluded from the labor market. The law does not correspond to reality given that women work more and more, yet this legal writings continues to define who is considered a member of a legitimate productive force and, therefore, better paid, and who is not. Essentially, women are reduced to a reserve and supplemental labor force, and are underpaid as a result. In other words, the biopower likens people born with a vagina to a body that can be appropriated sexually, and to a body that is more severely exploitable than the masculine body from an economic standpoint. Also, keep in mind that throughout this book, when we are talking about sociopolitical writings of the body or again fictive writings of the body, we are

referencing this double theoretical framework where the androcentric sociodicy produces the categories feminine/masculine and women/men. By politicizing these same categories, the power that invades bodies produces highly discriminatory policies aimed at governing life.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of researchers, adopting various methodologies, have explored the themes of bodies, the sexes, femininity, masculinity, and sexuality in Morocco. However, to avoid accusations of orientalism or cultural imperialism, I limit my evaluation of the scholarship to the works of Moroccan academics, with only a few exceptions. I should also mention that this literature review reports solely on works deemed significant to the subject under study, and is far from being exhaustive. With that in mind, I will turn to the work of sociologist Fatima Mernissi, a pioneer in the field of bodies, sex, gender, and the sex and gender hierarchy. In *Sexe idéologie Islam*, Mernissi argued that in the Muslim patriarchal order women, not sexuality, are under attack.⁴⁷ Perceived as having an active or more precisely, an aggressive sexuality, women incarnate the dangers of a destructive and unbounded sexuality; hence the need to protect the social order.⁴⁸ Some of the protective measures imposed by this order are the wearing of the veil for women, surveillance of women's movement, and the segregation of the sexes.⁴⁹

According to Mernissi, two contradictory theories about sexuality exist in Muslim societies.⁵⁰ One theory stems from an erotic religious discourse that places women's bodies at the center of the life of the believer,⁵¹ while the other theory is derived from an orthodox discourse that, alternatively, seeks to free the believer from women's bodies.⁵² The second discourse degrades the feminine body, commodifies it, and reduces it to an object for brief utilitarian enjoyment to serve the orthodox purpose.⁵³ A double dynamic follows this kind of bodily objectification of women: the commodification of women, and the consecration of men's domination through the act of sex.⁵⁴ Indeed, by reducing the feminine to a tilth for man, the orthodox discourse defines the feminine and the masculine as two opposed essences: vertical/horizontal, animated/inert, and endowed with free will/deprived of free will.⁵⁵ But in order for women to incarnate this version of the feminine, they must suffer a mutilation⁵⁶ and henceforth, in the Muslim patriarchal order, women are deprived of their free will.⁵⁷ Reduced to property, they are subject to an absolute possession.⁵⁸

Mernissi concluded that the hierarchical principle of the patriarchal universe is realized, created, and maintained by sexuality but more specifically, by the act of sex.⁵⁹

Mernissi's theoretical studies on the body, the sexes, and the gender hierarchy are well-complemented by the field studies of Soumaya Naamane-Guessous and Abdessamad Dialmy. For *Au-delà de toute pudeur*, Naamane-Guessous interviewed five-hundred women from various age groups and social milieus about their sex lives.⁶⁰ A few years later, she extended her interests to include the masculine body and the concept of masculinity for her research on menopause and andropause.⁶¹ Naamane-Guessous's work converged with the research of Dialmy whose interests also included the masculine body and masculinity.⁶² The works of both scholars suggest that the categories feminine/masculine and women/men are defined and produced in a relational manner. For this reason, we tend to think of gendered concepts like masculine honor depending on the sexual conduct of women. This kind of relational understanding of sex and gender corresponds, among other things with the repression of feminine sexuality, an obsession with virginity, and the rape of women on their wedding nights in Moroccan society. The result is that, in Morocco the appropriation of women's bodies, the negation of feminine sexuality, and the subordination of feminine sexuality to masculine sexuality are an everyday reality.

Zineb Maâdi's research brings a new dimension to writings on bodies, the sexes, femininity, masculinity, and sexuality in Morocco.⁶³ She inscribed the issue of the feminine body both in the androcentric vision of the universe Bourdieu wrote about, and in the biopower defined by Foucault.⁶⁴ Essentially, Maâdi established a causal link between social writings of the feminine body and the politics of human development.⁶⁵ She noted that women have benefitted little from the various development projects initiated in Morocco post-independence.⁶⁶ In the work of Maâdi, an analysis of the inefficiency of development projects unmasks a paradoxical social writing of the feminine body. The feminine body is productive, but considered inactive; it labors, but it does not produce rights.⁶⁷ In other words, social writings of the feminine body constitute the first obstacle to human development projects. Consequently, life governing policies will fail to achieve the desired development as long as they ignore issues of the body, the sexes, femininity, masculinity, and sexuality in the country.

3 CONTRIBUTION, METHODOLOGY, AND CHAPTERS

This book is the first to formulate an ideology of emancipation for women in Morocco. Beginning with constructs of the body, the sexes, femininity, masculinity, and sexuality, it identifies the social and political mechanisms that transform the biological bodies of people born with a vagina into feminine bodies belonging to the collectivity. In order for this transformation to occur, women are subject to a process of dehumanization. The objectives of this study are tripartite: the study seeks to expose the mechanisms that devalue women's humanity; it attempts to chart the schemas of their sexual, social, political, and economic exploitation; and it aims to advance concrete solutions for re-establishing women's human dignity.

First, allow me to deconstruct a few erroneous beliefs. The alleged popular wisdom suggests that women's issues are not a priority. According to this view, it is the economy and, notably, economic policies that can secure employment, a decent standard of living, and access to education and health care for the entire population that should be prioritized. I agree that a significant segment of the Moroccan population lives in serious economic difficulty. However, this narrow perception of the economy is not complete. It is human beings who build a given country's economy, and who benefit from its development. People born with vaginas make up half of the population. Development cannot be realized without them. Maâdi came to the same conclusion in her field study if you recall.⁶⁸ Similarly, popular beliefs would have us believe that all discourse about sexuality unless completely frivolous and irrelevant, indicates a profound ignorance of Moroccan society. For example, in Morocco debates related to the feminine body are generally centered on the obligation to wear the veil or not. To speak of sex in this context is like speaking a foreign language. Similarly, to speak of the repression of feminine sexuality when women without access to clinics give birth in the streets seems inept. To do so is to ignore the determining role sexuality plays in women's dehumanization, their economic marginalization, and their limited access to gynecological care. In reality, it is a person's sociopolitical position in relation to sexuality that determines whether they are a full human being or a human being whose humanity is lesser, whether they are a master of sexuality or an object of this sexuality, whether they can fully enjoy their bodies or will be expropriated of their bodies, whether they are a full citizen or a conditional citizen, whether they are autonomous or

constantly under guardianship, whether they are a legitimate laborer or a reserve laborer, and whether they have a voice and needs or are instead deprived of these things.

As the [second chapter](#) of this study aims to show, androcentric writings of the body, the sexes, and sexuality produce the feminine, the masculine, and the sex and gender hierarchy. First, the chapter reveals that sexuality is constructed as a masculine prerogative. It opposes a masculine that desires against a feminine that expresses the desires of others, a masculine that initiates against a feminine that follows, a masculine that imposes its will against a feminine that subordinates itself. Essentially, the unequal dynamic between women and men is founded on the negation of the bodies of persons born with a vagina. This body is denied in the sense that it is not considered a body in and of itself. More precisely, it is conceived of as a body for men. In this context, a collective labor is needed to transform the biological bodies of people born with vaginas into bodies belonging to someone else: into feminine bodies. Mechanisms employed to serve this purpose include indoctrination, propaganda, and the training of bodies, as well as controlling women's movements, inculcating in women bodily behaviors considered appropriate for their sex, urging women to embellish their bodies, imposing limits on feminine space, isolating women, limiting women's freedom of movement, observing women's movements, and segregating women from men.

It goes without saying that this process of transforming the biological body into a feminine body dehumanizes people born with a vagina. However, this dehumanization is rarely presented as such. By assimilating the androcentric order to the biological, the biopower claims that women are merely "different." Because women are "different" they are subject to a citizenship status that is separate from men's. The result: the self-determination of people born with a vagina, their freedom of expression, and their bodily integrity are not determined by their humanity. Instead, for women such things are determined, or better, limited by the constraints of femininity.

As the [third chapter](#) of this study exposes, androcentric writings of the body, the sexes, and sexuality do not limit themselves to subordinating women to men solely in sexual terms. In fact, the appropriation of the feminine body and the sexual subordination of women that underlies these writings can only be consecrated, maintained, and perpetuated if people born with a vagina are subordinated to men in all spheres of life and at all times. To be properly exercised, women's alienation cannot be localized