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LOCAL ROOTS AND GLOBAL WINGS:
TELEVISION DRAMA AND HYBRIDITY IN MOROCCAN CULTURAL
IDENTITIES

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Local Roots and Global Wings: Television Drama and Hybridity in Moroccan Cultural Identities

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“Local Roots and Global Wings: Television Drama and Hybridity in Moroccan Cultural Identities” provides a snapshot of the Moroccan film and television industry in 2009 and 2010, on the eve of the Arab Uprisings. The dissertation examines how Moroccan state media elites and filmmakers struggle to instill seeds of democratic change within media structures and local media texts. It also shows how the influx of television dramas from Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S. provides an opportunity for ‘hybrid’ identities to emerge and allows viewers to interrogate the meaning of ‘modernity’ and ‘democracy’ at home and in various cultural contexts.

I examine how the process of cultural hybridization occurs through mass media. Specifically, I examine how television series coming from various locations redefine cultural boundaries in Morocco and allow individuals to form hybrid identities. Through a textual analysis of the most popular local and foreign television series shown in Morocco, as well as ethnographic fieldwork focusing on state elites, filmmakers and audiences, my dissertation reveals how local and foreign influences pervade the collective Moroccan imagination through state, production, and audience choices.

This multiperspectival approach, which looks at production, texts, and reception, allows for the examination of three phenomena: 1) How hybridity is constructed through both media production and exposure. 2) How different individuals construct their own distinctive ‘hybridities’, as state elites, filmmakers, and audiences have different patterns of socialization and interests in different cultures. 3) How the process of cultural hybridization and television viewing is not only cultural, but also deeply political, as a close look at state elites, producers, and audiences sheds light on the political tensions that emerge between these groups around questions of democracy, media censorship, and social change. As a whole, the dissertation shows how media elites use local media to disseminate dominant ideologies informed by the lingering influence of the former French colonial power and the authoritative Moroccan regime. Moreover, it highlights that many viewers watch and connect with ‘distant others’ on television as a form of passive political resistance to both local media content and policies.

After an introduction (Chapter One) and a methodology chapter (chapter Two), each chapter of the dissertation focuses on one particular aspect of the production-reception chain through the eyes of its players: states elites working at media institutions (Chapter Three), filmmakers and the local media texts they produce (Chapter Four), the influx of foreign dramas (Chapter Five), and audiences (Chapter Six). Each chapter also analyzes how culturally ‘hybrid’ identities get formed at these different stages– and for the different individuals participating– in the process of media production and reception.

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A manuscript based on the third chapter of my dissertation entitled "The Moroccan Media Field: An Analysis of Elite Hybridity in Television and Film Institutions" is forthcoming in *Communication, Culture & Critique*.

Dedication

In memory of my grandmother and my grandfather

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving mother

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines how television series coming from various locations redefine cultural boundaries in Morocco and allow individuals to form hybrid identities. The most popular television series broadcast in Morocco at the time of this study—in 2009 and 2010—were *Lalla Fatima* (Morocco), *Hagg Metwali* (Egypt), *Bab El Hara* (Syria), *Noor* (Turkey), and *Desperate Housewives* (United States). What this shows is that the global media scene is no longer characterized by the spread of one homogenizing U.S. culture. There are in fact many regional centers of cultural production in the world, and various cultural influences co-exist and merge in specific locations. For many years, globalization was viewed as an all-encompassing force leading to the disappearance of local cultural identities (Schiller, 1976; 1989; Herman & McChesney, 1997). This paradigm has been progressively replaced by theories of hybridization of culture, which recognize the co-existence of local and global forces (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 2006).

While there is a great deal of literature on hybridity, few studies provide a contextualized analysis of how cultural flows merge, interact and redefine identities in specific locations. This dissertation sets out to examine concretely how visual flows (specifically television dramas) coming from the wider Arab world, Turkey, France, and the United States, redefine cultural boundaries as well as national and post-colonial identities in Morocco. Through a textual analysis of the most popular local and foreign television series shown in Morocco, as well as ethnographic fieldwork focusing on state elites, filmmakers and young audiences, my dissertation reveals how local and foreign influences pervade the collective Moroccan imagination through state, production, and audience choices.

Morocco is an interesting case of hybridization. Historically, the country has been a crossroads for Islamic, Arab, Berber, African, European, and Jewish influences (Howe, 2005). However, this hybridity contrasts with the national culture promoted by the state, as the successive kings of Morocco have imposed a national culture based on the cult of their personality and their opulent life, leaving those who struggle to make ends meet excluded from the national project (Pennell, 2003). In this context, other locations as portrayed on television and satellite TV become an escape from local struggles (Sakr, 2001) and a means to reclaim a form of hybridity.

Broader Impacts

The concept of hybridity has been addressed by a wide array of scholars. Sociologists describe hybridity as a clash of cultures and consciousness that characterize the state of post-modernity (Giddens, 1990). Scholars in post-colonial studies have turned to hybridity to capture the tensions that arise when hegemonic cultures of ex-colonial centers persist in formerly colonized nations (Said, 1979; Shohat & Stam, 1994; Bhabha, 2004). Anthropologists describe the processes by which indigenous practices are ‘creolized’ under the influence of outside cultural forces (Clifford, 1988). Those who work in Media Studies use hybridity to study the technologies or images that propel cultural flows (Appadurai, 1996). These perspectives are all extremely useful. However, there are scholars within these disciplines, who are dissatisfied with some of the current definitions attributed to hybridity.

One of the recent criticisms is that individuals are often perceived as having little control over the process of hybridization. For example, Kraidy (2005) argues that media studies should give more agency to individuals, instead of assuming that cultural and

visual flows will always force hybridity on people. Similarly, Niezen (2004) criticizes sociologists who make the claim that hybridity is unavoidable because it is supposedly the by-product of the state of post-modernity. Finally, Shohat & Stam (1994) as well as Niezen (2004) criticize post-colonial scholars, who make ex-colonized nations look powerless and unable to negotiate or resist the hegemonic cultures of former colonies. These scholars argue that the phenomenon of hybridity is not an inescapable state, but rather a dynamic process of negotiation.

My dissertation builds upon this definition of hybridity as a dynamic process. Conceiving hybridity as a realm of possibilities, it hypothesizes that individuals may (or may not) decide to engage with the other cultures they are exposed to, or that they may decide to engage with some cultures and not others. By exploring the possibility that in one place, different kinds of people will seek different kinds of ‘hybridities,’ and by examining the various factors, socio-economic, personal and other, which structure these decisions, the dissertation makes a contribution to the scholarship on hybridity, and the variety of disciplines concerned with the phenomenon.

In addition, the use of a media and critical/cultural studies lens for this project provides many insights. The discipline has long emphasized the circularity of the media production-reception chain. Hall (2000), for example, has shown that producers, texts, and audiences are separate, yet co-dependent constituents of a circuit of production. More recently, scholars like Jenkins (2006) and Andrejevik (2007; 2008) have shown that producers, texts, and audiences are not only co-dependent, but that the lines between these entities have become blurred, as audiences’ responses to serialized television

programs for example influence the writing of that very same television program, creating an even stronger circular motion.

Hybridization theory recognizes that the media propel hybridization, but rarely point out that the phenomenon of hybridity itself may also be circular. This research reveals that hybrid identities are formed through circuits. It shows how media professionals put certain places in the collective imagination and how audiences select their own distant locations to connect with, either in accordance or in opposition, creating a feedback loop for producers. A media perspective shows that hybridity is both circular and contrapuntal, as elites and citizens/media officials and audiences negotiate and compete for different notions of hybridity. The dissertation also contributes to the growing literature on media, politics, and democracy in the Arab world, by showing how citizens use satellite television as a tool for passive political resistance against state-owned media and ideologies.

Ethnographic Fieldwork and Textual Analysis

This dissertation is the result of four and a half years of research, including four months of ethnographic research conducted in Rabat and Casablanca in 2009 with the help of a Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship offered by the Social Science Research Council and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and a subsequent research trip in 2010; the textual analysis of the most popular local and foreign television series broadcast in Morocco that I performed over the course of several months from March 2012 to July 2013; and the examination of various field and textual analysis notes.

I analyzed the role of media producers in the constitution of hybrid identities in Morocco, by interviewing 20 media professionals—state officials at national media

institutions, television executives, producers, as well as writers and directors of television series—and observing their daily work routines in television studios and network headquarters.

I also worked on an analysis of the most popular local and foreign television series in Morocco: *Lalla Fatima* (Morocco), *Hagg Metwali* (Egypt), *Bab Al-Hara* (Syria), *Noor* (Turkey), and *Desperate Housewives* (United States) in order to understand which local and foreign cultures pervade the popular imagination and how they are represented on screen. The sample comprised one entire season of *Lalla Fatima* (42 episodes), 5 episodes of *Bab Al-Hara*, *Noor*, and *Desperate Housewives* respectively, and 10 episodes of *Hagg Metwali* (approximately 50 hours of television in total).

Finally, 45 young people in the 19 to 32 years old demographic were interviewed (the median age in Morocco is 24.7 years) in order to explore how audiences develop cultural affinities with the nations represented on screen, and how they choose to engage with certain cultures and not others.

Chapters

The results of this research are presented as follows in the dissertation. After a first introductory chapter (Chapter One) and a methodology chapter (Chapter Two), each of the following chapters represents one particular aspect of the production-reception chain in Morocco. Chapter Three, for example, focuses on the forms of ‘hybridity’ enacted by state and media elites in film and television institutions. Chapter Four, focuses more closely on the Moroccan producers/filmmakers/writers and the films and television series they produce locally. Chapter Five highlights the foreign television drama liked and consumed by Moroccans. Finally, Chapter Six looks closely at audiences’ responses

and the mental connections they make with ‘distant others’ following global media exposure. However, understanding that each of these actors in the media production-reception chain do not operate in a vacuum, I often draw connections with other media actors within the chapters themselves.

More specifically, Chapter Two “Methodology and Theoretical Objectives” offers a full description of the project—including the research questions asked and the methodologies employed—; a historical review of various cultural influences that have made Morocco a global environment and a fertile ground to study the phenomenon of cultural hybridization (both before and after the introduction of global media via television and the satellite); a literature review on hybridity and how the concept relates/differs from other relevant concepts for the study of globalization such as cultural imperialism, post-colonialism, or cosmopolitanism; and a call for more empirically grounded analyses of the concept in localized settings.

Chapter Three “The Moroccan Media Field: Elite Hybridity” is based on interviews and workplace observations I conducted with 10 high profile state representative working at major media institutions such as national television networks, the ratings company, and various regulatory organizations, as well as a week of participant observation at a major Moroccan film festival. The chapter shows that high-level media professionals, as elites who have often been educated in France and currently work for the Moroccan government, allow for the continued influence of the French ex-colonial power in the television industry while making sure that the state’s cultural agenda is preserved in Moroccan TV drama. I argue that elites’ social background and their desire to re-affirm their position of power within Moroccan society make them

gravitate towards a specific type of French-Moroccan hybridity, one that is shaped by discourses of colonial supremacy as well as elitist and dominant discourses of power within the nation. I show the subtle ways in which, these two discourses are used simultaneously and concurrently to both ‘boost’ and ‘mar’ democratization efforts within media structures and perpetuate a game of appearances of “democratization without democracy” (a term previously used by Sweet, 2001).

Chapter Four “Morocco in ‘Reel’ Life: Pictures) of Democracy?” is based on 10 interviews and workplace observations with media makers (prominent filmmakers, writers, producers, and movie critics), as well as interactions with various media professionals at two major Moroccan festivals. It also features a textual analysis of the most popular Moroccan films and television series in 2009 and 2010. The chapter, which focuses on upper-class middle-level media professionals, shows that most TV writers and directors gravitate towards Western culture, but have to work within the constraints imposed on them by Moroccan state elites. I argue that their double-situatedness in two social circles—a Moroccan bourgeoisie, where Western commodities are synonym of status conferral, and a professional environment, where there is potential for social demise if elites consider they misrepresented Morocco—make them pursue a (state) Moroccan-Western hybridity that pervades their media texts.

I analyze four popular Moroccan films and one television series and show that filmmakers do attempt to address and visually represent the topics that interest many Moroccans today—namely the class, gender, and religious divides, which lead to striking inequalities and stall democratization efforts on the ground. However, I show that the films and series eventually stray clear of any significant critique or investigation of the

real causes behind these divides, and instead, preach a certain form of ‘social realism without social critique’ which eventually perpetuates the game of appearances played by the media elites themselves. I also show that a certain form of Western (re-appropriated and internalized) Orientalism pervades the texts themselves and takes them miles away from the concerns of the population and constructive debates on democracy locally.

Chapter Five “Dramas of Nationhood and Beyond” is based on a textual analysis of four highly successful popular foreign dramas in Morocco: Hagg Metwali (Egypt), Bab Al-Hara (Syria), Noor (Turkey), and Desperate Housewives (U.S.A). In this chapter, I show that audiences’ frustrations regarding the perceived low quality of Moroccan shows, and their inability to provide meaningful social critiques, translate into a massive exodus of audiences towards foreign programming coming from regional and global media hegemons, such as Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S.

I show that these foreign dramas are carriers of hybridity, as they provide peeks into alternative ways of life, present various perspectives on democracy and modernity in the Arab world and beyond, and provide opportunities for Moroccan viewers to interrogate their local circumstances. I closely analyze how their treatment of class, gender, and religion might be similar and/or different than the treatment of these themes in Moroccan shows.

Finally, I shed light on the experience of ‘hybridity,’ asking the question of how audiences themselves engage in self-reflective processes of cultural hybridization through these texts. Through viewers’ testimonies, I show that both feelings of cultural proximity and cultural curiosity are necessary for audiences to form meaningful connections to distant others on television. In other words, for audiences’ to experience the junctures and

disjunctures characteristic of the process of cultural hybridization (See Appadurai, 1996), they need to be both familiar with—yet to a certain extent unfamiliar and curious about—the places represented on screen. I show that these junctures and disjunctures operate on a variety of levels/continuums: not only spatial (degree of geographical proximity), but also temporal (degree of historical relevance in the Moroccan context), religious (level of familiarity/unfamiliarity with religious discourse presented on screen if any), and cultural (degree of adherence, recognition of cultural traditions represented and perceived level of ‘modernity’ of the text). And I demonstrate that different viewers feel different degrees of connection to the texts and cultures represented based on their own positioning in these various continuums of hybridity.

Chapter Six “Mental Trajectories of Hybrid Audiences” is based on qualitative ethnographic interviews that I conducted with 45 young viewers in Morocco, as well as a survey that 38 of them accepted to fill out about their demographic profile, their favorite television dramas, and the places they feel the most connected to and would most like to visit. In this chapter, I move beyond the common idea in both globalization and audience studies that audiences are ‘untraceable’ or too difficult to study empirically, as globalization and new technologies have spread audiences across a multitude of transnational spaces and a variety of media platforms.

I analyze the viewership patterns of young viewers of global television drama and show that viewers’ mental trajectories following global media exposure can be mapped in space. Through the use of qualitative (interview) data, and the making of visual cartograms (distorted maps) which reflect what particular countries are placed on the map through media flows, and what places of the world seem most attractive to viewers, I

show how different audiences make different choices of programming and mentally emigrate to different places based on them.

I argue that hybridity takes different forms for different viewers, as they form different affinities with the cultures they see on television based on a variety of structuring factors such as (but not limited to) class, gender, language proficiency, or personal biographies. I also show that audiences have a certain amount of power to move within and beyond these structuring factors, as the advent of new technologies such as satellite TV and the Internet has decreased the digital divide and empowered audiences from below with a wider variety of choices. I also demonstrate that these ‘structured’ choices to access media from one country or the other, coupled with the power of images on the imagination, often translate into actual desires of physical travel or emigration. Finally, I show that—for the most disenfranchised and marginalized populations—mental emigration is a form of passive political resistance to the politics of exclusion they experience every day.

As a whole, the dissertation provides an overarching picture of film and television industry in Morocco, as well as audiences. It also provides an empirical contextualized analysis of how ‘multiple’ hybridities (plural) emerge in one location and compete both culturally and politically, as previously existing power relations between different socio-economic groups within the nation get re-enacted and repatriated into hybrid identity formation. In other words, who you are as an individual and within a given society or nation (for. e.g. your socio-economic status, your gender, your personal biography) is likely to influence how you engage with other countries and the cultures that will go into the formation of a hybrid identity.

A Snapshot in Time

It is important to note that this dissertation is a snapshot of the Moroccan media industry and cultural hybridization at a certain point in time, in 2009 and 2010. As such, it is reflective of the political economy of Moroccan media, and the cultural influences permeating the media landscape at this specific time only.

The political economy of the Moroccan media could very well change a few years from now, as my dissertation research was conducted in 2009 and 2010 before the Arab Uprisings. Despite the fact that the Arab Spring did not mobilize Moroccans in large numbers (like it did in other Arab nations such as Egypt, Tunisia, or Libya for example), Moroccans were inspired by the movement and have been expressing growing discontent with regard to stalling democratization efforts. Moreover, there is increased pressure on the government to democratize its media and political structures. King Mohammed VI himself made an appearance after the Arab Spring promising a variety of democratic reforms. While the government has been very slow in implementing these reforms (Issiali, 2013), more protests in the region or in Morocco itself could possibly encourage or speed up democratic change, and the long awaited liberalization of mass media.

Similarly, the cultural influences permeating Moroccan borders via satellite television could also change a few years from now. In 2009 and 2010, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S. were the regional and global media centers producing the largest amount of television serials consumed and loved by Moroccans, but years before that, in the 1990's, Mexican and Brazilian Telenovelas were the biggest hits in Morocco, and Latin America had won the hearts and minds of many Moroccans. What countries will export or broadcast programs on Arab satellite networks 10 or 20 years from now, will be

the result of a variety of political economic and cultural factors unknown to us at this particular point in time.

Despite the ‘time stamp’ placed on this research, the dissertation provides an invaluable analysis of a media system and country undergoing a variety of democratic transitions. It also documents how the process of media/cultural hybridization informs and influences this period of democratic transition—and vice-versa, as it is also true that audiences’ beefs or desires with regards to democracy encourage them to look for alternative models of democracy in other countries, and engage with distant others via television.

Similarly, the process of media/cultural hybridization remains informed— all over the world and at any given point in time—by the same factors than the ones this research identifies, namely: the conflation of various global and regional political economic forces making television content from certain countries available to particular audiences at a particular time; structuring factors within the nation (such as one’s class, gender, language proficiency, level of education etc.) steering different audiences towards programming from certain countries versus others; and viewers’ ability to make choices of different locations to connect with beyond these constraining factors. Therefore, this contextualized ethnographic study of media globalization in Morocco does allow for the identification of ‘universal’ patterns of hybrid identity construction, even if the forms these multiple ‘hybridities’ will take will greatly vary from one place to the next, or from one individual to the next.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL OBJECTIVES

Moroccans have access to a wide variety of television programs coming from Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, the U.S., France, Korea, and continental Africa. This example shows that the global media scene is no longer strictly characterized by the spread of one homogenizing U.S. culture around the world. Instead, many different cultural influences converge in particular media environments.

Scholars have often described globalization as a phenomenon leading to the disappearance of local identities (Schiller, 1976, 1989; Mattelart, 1983; Hamelink, 1983; Herman & McChesney, 1997; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001). However, recent scholarship on globalization has moved away from this paradigm, and emphasized theories of cultural hybridization and the coexistence of local and global influences (Pieterse, 1994; Apparudai, 1996). Although there is a great deal of theoretical literature on the concept of hybridity (see Bhabha, 2006; Young, 2006; Kraidy, 2005; Kamau Brathwaite, 2006), few studies provide a contextualized perspective looking at how cultures merge, interact with, and redefine cultural identities in specific locations.

My dissertation provides a contextualized analysis of these processes by examining how visual flows coming from various cultural centers redefine cultural boundaries as well as national, post-colonial, and religious identities in Morocco. Specifically, I look at the television series coming from these various centers as powerful vectors of cultural flows and as tools for the imagining of the nation, the wider Arab world, the West, and, by extension, the world. I ask the following research questions: 1) How does the Moroccan television industry facilitate the emergence of culturally hybrid identities through television drama? 2) How do local and foreign dramas become carriers

of hybridity? 3) What mental trajectories do viewers take in a culturally hybrid media environment?

Media texts are ‘constructions’ (see Hall, 1997, 2000) in the same way that imagined communities are (see Geertz, 1973; Anderson, 1991). Therefore, a textual analysis of the most popular local and foreign television series shown in Morocco reveals which representations or versions of the nation and the world are channeled through Moroccan television screens. This textual analysis is supplemented by an analysis of the conditions of production and distribution of the local and foreign series and by an examination of the shows’ reception among Moroccan viewers. This multiperspectival analysis (production—texts—reception) provides a contextualized and comprehensive look at the hybrid forces that pervade media texts and allow individuals to locate themselves in various spaces of identity.

In addition to providing an interesting case study of cultural hybridization, the dissertation attempts to nuance and develop existing theories of cultural hybridity. Because hybridization was first conceptualized as an open-ended process in which multiple cultures can merge in a specific context at a given time (Appadurai, 1996), the concept has often been understood as the rejection of clarity and of all possible boundaries (Niezen, 2004). The ongoing movement of cultural flows everywhere in the world has led many to believe that national frontiers and clearly defined bounded identities have disappeared.

However, scholars such as Shohat and Stam (1994), Garcia Canclini (1995), Bhabha (2004), and Kraidy (2005) have warned against this interpretation and have shown that hybridity is a power-laden and asymmetrical process that does not lead to the

erasure of boundaries but rather to friction about where to draw boundaries. They have demonstrated that specific hegemonic forces—such as the spread of U.S. popular culture, the influence of previous colonial powers, regional centers, and state apparatuses—work to place boundaries around culture while dynamics of resistance work against these forces.

To build upon their work and to provide a more detailed picture of what these dynamics of power and resistance might look like on the ground, I analyze how conflicts over boundaries emerge via television drama. The very principle of boundaries implies the idea of separation between different spaces of identity as well as the creation of categories of inclusion and exclusion (Anderson, 1991; Cairns and Richard, 2006). As boundaries are redefined and widened by the influx of foreign television programs, new spaces of identity emerge and can collide with the old ones, creating dichotomies and friction at the local, regional, and global levels. I analyze how dichotomies emerge in the Moroccan context in media structures, texts, and viewers' attitudes and examine how they redefine cultural identities. By exploring how various spaces of identity are represented in television series and embraced or rejected by viewers, the dissertation gauges the extent to which one's sense of belonging in one space or the other(s) depends on one's local circumstances (ethnicity, class, and social status) and on the many hegemonic forces that pervade the nation at a specific moment in time.

I also examine the role of individual agency by looking at the cultural boundaries individuals draw for themselves within the wide array of possible choices they are given. I examine how viewers make a certain number of specific structured choices based not only on the structuring, constraining factors named above—the supranational and

national hegemonic cultural forces dictating which local and foreign programming is available in the first place and one's position in society and level of access to programming—but also on their ability or willingness to form cultural affinities with certain cultures and with their personal experiences. As Bourdieu has shown structure (social influences on people's behavior) and individual agency are complementary and mutually informed (1977; 1990).

I show how different individuals who occupy different positions in society choose to engage with the media of certain distant locations and to exclude other locations (like their own national media, for example). In this way, I make a contribution to the current literature on hybridization, which tends to overlook the role of individual agency in the process of media/cultural hybridization (see Kraidy, 2005).

In addition, the dissertation engages with the literature on audience studies and designs new methodologies for examining audiences in the globalization era. The literature on audience research has often argued that audiences are 'active' while watching television programs because they are able to negotiate the various meanings embedded in the texts (see Hall, 1973; Fiske, 1989; Katz & Liebes, 1993; Katz, 1996). But the mental trajectories audiences take when they watch local and foreign programming are rarely analyzed by audience studies scholars, who often argue that audiences are abstractly active yet 'untraceable' in the global era (see Ang, 1996, in press, 1996; Hay, 1996, 2001) as transnational media flows and new technologies have spread viewers across space and a variety of media platforms. In this body of literature, few studies interrogate how viewers connect with the distant others they see on television.

Finally, the dissertation makes a contribution to the fields of both media studies and globalization by shedding light on the political nature of the work of media and cultural hybridization. In the Moroccan context, for example, these foreign dramas are often perceived by viewers as a means to ‘escape’ or ‘resist’ the national context and constraining local policies. The dramas provide solace for the many individuals who experience a national politics of exclusion due to their social class, gender, or degree of religious observance (see Sabry, 2010). The dramas also provide glimpses of alternative ways of life for individuals who are critical of the high levels of corruption in the government or in the royal palace (Cohen & Jaidi, 2006). Finally, the dramas also offer opportunities to escape the state-controlled Moroccan media that disseminate the dominant ideologies of the palace.

In these various cases, television dramas become a terrain of mental emigration (Sabry, 2005a, 2005b), allowing individuals to imagine themselves in other locations to which they feel closely connected emotionally or culturally. In the context of a transitional society like Morocco, where state elites and citizens often have competing interests and definitions of what ‘democracy’ should look like, mental emigration is not only an emotional and cultural process but also a political space of contestation.

Therefore, the dissertation highlights the media’s key political role. I show that the authoritative regime uses the national local networks to disseminate the views of the palace and to put on a façade that democratic efforts are underway. I also emphasize that citizens watch a wide array of programs from abroad partly as a means of (passive) political resistance against the state ideologies presented in the local media. Similarly, I bring to light how processes of cultural hybridization come to be repatriated into the

formation of political identities as audiences use foreign programs to interrogate their own national context and glimpse other models of democracy.

Therefore, a multiperspectival analysis focuses on media institutions, texts, and audiences and highlights how competing political identities and national divides become apparent or emerge through the process of media and cultural hybridization. The dissertation sheds light on the power of mass media (especially entertainment media) to help shape both cultural and political subjectivities. However, it also points out that these political subjectivities often remain in the realm of the imaginary and the consciousness without necessarily translating into political action against the regime on the ground. That is especially true in Morocco, where movements of mass mobilization like the Arab Uprisings in 2010 and 2011 did not resonate with audiences in the same way that they did in Egypt or Tunisia and where a large section of the population—despite the various frustrations they experience with regard to their government—remain torn about whether or not they should love or hate the monarchy. The monarchy, after all, symbolizes both national unity and a coercive authoritative regime.

As a whole, the dissertation will contribute to the existing literature on media and hybridity in different ways: first, by examining how state elites, producers, and viewers make ‘structured choices’ to form cultural affinities with other nations or cultures through the media; second, by examining the different mental trajectories producers and audiences take when they are faced with programming from a variety of countries; last, by shedding light on the political nature of both media and hybridization, especially in societies undergoing various democratic transitions.

Research Questions and Methodology

In this project, I seek to understand how culturally hybrid identities emerge or articulate themselves through local and foreign television drama. In a place like Morocco, where national identities are often in flux as previously discussed, the project also examines the extent to which this cultural hybridization is part of a project of escapism or political resistance to the palace's ideas of the nation and the various connotations Morocco bears in the collective imagination of Moroccan citizens. The dissertation is structured around three principal research questions.

1) How is cultural hybridity constructed at the state and production levels?

To answer this question, I investigate how state television professionals and elites heading media institutions disseminate particular ideologies about the nation or emphasize certain forms of hybridity within media structures and media texts. Particularly, I shed light on the functioning of Moroccan media institutions and analyze state elites' discourses on Moroccan national culture and identity. I also examine the ties of Moroccan media institutions and state elites with other institutions from other countries, such as the former colonial power France. I then proceed to assess the extent to which state elites' discourses get rewritten in local series by media producers, writers, and filmmakers.

For this purpose, I conducted 20 interviews with **1) State representatives** at national media institutions such as the Moroccan Center for Cinematography and the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (the Moroccan equivalent of the FCC); **2) Television executives** at the two main television networks, RTM and 2M, including heads of production who oversee the development of television series or heads of

acquisitions who decide which foreign series to include in the national programming; **3) Television series directors, writers, and actors** involved in the creative process; and **4) Other media professionals** from organizations such as Marocmetrie, the newly created ratings organization partly owned by a French ratings company.

I was also able to conduct various observations of work routines both within these organizations and at two major film festivals where all the media players gathered in the summer. Finally, I gathered a wide variety of institutional materials from all the institutions I visited, including legal documents regulating media institutions in Morocco, networks' editorial guidelines, and organization charts. I also visited those organizations' websites.

The combination of interviews, observations, and institutional materials I collected allows me to draw a landscape of the television structures in Morocco. It also reveals which local and foreign influences are allowed inside of the Moroccan media industry and therefore the high spheres of the government (given that the media industry largely acts as a representative/mediator for the authoritative regime). Finally, this sampling provides insight into the local and foreign influences that pervade the local media texts.

The perspective of Moroccan state representatives and of media makers is particularly relevant because they are the ones who decide which programs and locations to highlight on the national (state-owned) networks. State representatives in media institutions provide editorial guidelines for the types of programs they wish to see on the state networks. Keeping these guidelines in mind, television executives make most of the decisions when it comes to selecting which local television serials will be afforded

funding and which foreign series will be given a broadcasting slot. Finally, television creatives such as producers, writers, and directors, who evolve in this media environment, tell stories with certain national or international emphases.

Through local television series, television professionals imagine the nation and the world in ways that viewers will either accept or resist. Through the foreign series they choose to broadcast, they place certain locations on the map and exclude others. By mixing local and foreign series on their television networks, media makers provide different representations of Morocco and different representations of other nations. They provide an environment in which both 'national' and 'hybrid' identities can emerge and be discussed. The role of media makers in the imagining of the nation and the drawing of cultural boundaries should therefore be thoroughly examined.

Nonetheless, it is also important to note that media makers' representations of the nation are not taken at face value by viewers. If Moroccans are dissatisfied with the ways in which the nation is imagined on their local television or if they simply want to escape the national context, they may turn to satellite channels or Internet sites that offer even more foreign programming (see Sakr, 2001; Rugh, 2004). But whether viewers stick with their national networks or not, the national product is often used as a point of reference to compare Morocco with other nations, and it is absolutely necessary to understand national structures of production, distribution, and broadcasting to get a full picture of the television landscape.

2) How do local and foreign dramas become carriers of hybridity?

To answer this question, I performed a textual analysis of the most popular foreign and local television series in Morocco. Ratings from the Moroccan equivalent of

Nielsen ratings, Marocmetrie, and a short questionnaire distributed to my respondents have allowed me to establish that the series Noor (Turkey), Hagg Metwali (Egypt), Bab Al-Hara (Syria), Lalla Fatima (Morocco), and Desperate Housewives (United States) have been the most-watched series in the past three years.

While the media texts are not necessarily hybrid in and of themselves—they were (for the most part) created in other national contexts, and producers in these countries did not necessarily have Morocco in mind when they created these shows—, they do carry foreign imageries and cultural representations with them. As such, they become ‘carriers’ of hybridity in the Moroccan context.

It is interesting that these shows all take family as a central focus and provide different views about what it means to be Moroccan, Arab, Western, or a citizen of the world.

- **Lalla Fatima** is a Moroccan sitcom about a stay-at-home mother who opens a small bakery to make a bit of money on the side but sees her business thrive and becomes a full-time business woman. The sitcom explores how her newfound independence and status of breadwinner affect all family members, and the show grapples with issues of tradition and modernity. The sitcom was so popular in the past Ramadan season that it gathered 61% of the Moroccan audience on average when it was shown (Deleule, 2008).
- **Bab Al-Hara** is a Syrian historical drama series following families in a Damascus neighborhood between the two world wars, when the French ruled Syria, and the local population chafed under foreign control and yearned for independence (Nammari, 2007).

- **Hagg Metwali** is an Egyptian soap opera about a polygamous man married to four wives and explores family dynamics, religion, patriarchy, and gender roles.
- **Noor** is a Turkish romantic soap that follows the love story of a wealthy Turkish businessman with a poor girl and presents its audience with a universe of exaggerated romanticism. Noor was such a hit that the number of Arab tourists in Turkey has risen tremendously since the airing of the show (Le Matin, 2008).
- **Desperate Housewives** tells the story of four housewives in U.S. suburbia who struggle with everyday life issues: love, sex, deception, adultery, and divorce.

On the Moroccan side, I analyzed one entire season of the show Lalla Fatima (42 episodes) and complemented this analysis with the study of four hugely popular feature films: Casanegra, Marock, Veiled Love, and Number One. Four feature films were added to this analysis, focusing mostly on dramas because they provided additional insight on the perspectives of media makers (who fluidly work in both the television and film industries). They were also the most-watched films in the box office of the past three years and were deeply anchored in the collective imagination of Moroccans during my fieldwork.

I then proceeded to analyze the most popular foreign dramas in Morocco by watching the first five episodes of Bab Al-Hara, Noor, and Desperate Housewives as well as the first 10 episodes of Hagg Metwali. I watched more episodes for Hagg Metwali than for the other foreign dramas because in this particular case, major characters were introduced from episodes 5 to 10.

With the textual analysis, my goal was to establish the kinds of cultural affinities with these nations that emerge through the texts. Therefore, I examined the various

representations of culture these series carry and highlighted the embedded themes, ranging from gender roles to religion, family life, emotional and sexual behavior, and social inequalities. These specific tropes were examined in light of their relevance in the Moroccan context. I explored the various ways that religion, gender roles, family life, emotional and sexual behavior, and social inequalities are discussed in the Moroccan public sphere and how the depictions of these themes in both the local and foreign dramas served to advance/interrogate various discourses on democracy and modernity in a transitional society such as Morocco.

The comparison between the Moroccan and foreign dramas helped to unveil which particular aspects of these other cultures are used as pretexts to either escape or resist the national context. The comparison also highlighted which particular features of these texts make people imagine themselves in other locations and locate themselves in various spaces of identity (local, regional, global, etc.). As Nietschmann (1993) argues, space is not just a tool for constructing identities; space becomes places bearing personalities that are part of people's identities.

Writing about television series "is a perilous business. There is no fixed object of study over which the critic can pore, hoping to extract a further nuance" (Gerathy, 1991, p. 7). In the context of Arab media, it becomes even more difficult to perform textual analysis; as Khatib notes, "the number of studies on the way the Middle East represents itself cinematically, namely the way it represents its politics is infinitesimal" (2006, p. 1).

Some of these pioneering yet rare studies include the works of anthropologists Abu-Lughod (1995, 1997, 2000, 2002), Das (1995), and Salamandra (1998). These scholars have shown that space is visually represented in television drama and that

television series can be anthropological objects that say a lot about the political dynamics, the social realities, and the cultural transformations of a given country (Abu-Lughod, 2000, p. 103).

Although the works of Abu-Lughod, Das, and Salamandra can be used as models to do textual analysis of media texts produced in a single national culture, there are currently no models for analyses of television drama that compare various series cross-nationally and in a hybrid media environment such as the Arab world. Therefore, a large part of this project is devoted to creating a road map for how to perform textual analysis in this type of context.

3) Which mental trajectories do viewers take in a culturally hybrid media environment?

Although local and foreign series can facilitate the emergence of culturally hybrid identities in Morocco, it is clear that not all viewers at the receiving end will automatically embrace the various cultures they see on their screens. Whereas some individuals might open themselves up to the rest of the world, others will be attracted to imagery and stories from certain locations only and others will limit themselves to national dramas. To answer this question, it is therefore important to gauge how different viewers receive the aforementioned dramas and to highlight the specific textual features that trigger a desire for escape from the nation or an interest in one culture or the other.

In addition, I explore how viewers' own circumstances initiate a desire to mentally travel to the various locations represented on screen. Structuring factors such as language proficiency (series are broadcast in a variety of languages that are not always understood by viewers), ethnicity (minorities such as Berbers, who feel excluded from the national project, might stay away from national series), and class and social status

(the upper classes have higher degrees of exposure to new media technologies and a greater interest in Western ways of life) will be examined, as they can determine the degree of interest in other cultures.

Although socioeconomic factors might have a strong influence on where people go mentally with these series, they are not necessarily the only determinants. If individuals have access to many local and global flows through their screens, they have more power to decide which culture(s) they might want to engage with. Personal histories and the role of individual agency are also examined because they also have an impact on how much viewers might decide to open themselves up to other cultures via television drama.

For this audience analysis, I have conducted interviews with young viewers in Rabat. I chose the 19- to 32-year-old demographic because the Moroccan population is predominantly young, with a median age of 24.7 years (CIA World Factbook, 2008). Young people are the ideal population to study in the context of globalization because they are standing at the crossroads of various influences. Their parents and grandparents ground them in their local communities and remind them about tradition and religion, whereas their peers, television, and new technologies open doors to alternative lifestyles. They often watch local television content with other family members during family dinners or holidays such as Ramadan, but they regularly retreat from the family unit when they go online to watch foreign dramas that they believe are too sexually or religiously offensive or simply not of interest to their parents. Because young people can speak about their own individual television usage and the usage of the whole family as a household, their testimonies provide a multigenerational picture of television viewing.

Moreover, young people are eager for foreign dramas because many young Moroccans today are dissatisfied with their lives and need an escape. Their job prospects are low, and many young people feel they cannot really express themselves freely, much less from a political perspective, given the underlying censorship in the country (Bennani-Chraïbi, 2000; Martin Munoz, 2000; Mernissi, 2008; Taia, 2009; Cheddadi, 2009). However, youth is an age of possibilities and projection into the future. Thus, when people do not find what they are looking for in their immediate surroundings, they often start dreaming about other locations (Cohen, 2004).

I recruited 45 viewers for interviews that took place in the streets of Rabat, the administrative capital of Morocco. To minimize selection bias, I interviewed one in three persons who were coming my way, provided that they were in the appropriate age range. I did, however, allow for the friends of participants to join the study and therefore conducted interviews individually or in groups of three respondents maximum. I used the social stratification of the city of Rabat, with its neighborhoods segregated along class lines, to make sure respondents from different socioeconomic backgrounds were included in the study.

The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to an hour and were semi-structured. In practice, that meant that I had a certain number of guiding questions but also allowed my respondents to bring new issues and topics to light. I asked my respondents to fill out a survey before the interview. The survey included demographic questions about age, employment status (student, employed, or not employed), profession, profession of parents, and city of origin. It also included two questions about television series. The respondents were asked to name their five favorite series in order of preference (and

regardless of their origin). They were also asked to name one series from each of the following countries—Morocco, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, France, and the U.S.—that they believed had tremendous success in Morocco.

During the actual interviews that followed the survey, I asked the following questions: Do you like locally produced Moroccan dramas, and why? Additionally, in the event that my respondents mentioned not liking Moroccan dramas, I asked, “What would be your ideal Moroccan series, the one you would create if you had the financial and creative means to produce?” When my respondents mentioned liking shows like *Hagg Metwali*, *Bab Al-Hara*, *Noor*, and *Desperate Housewives* (and a lot of them did), I asked them questions such as, why do you like this particular show? Can you tell me about the plot? What do you think of the country/city/place the action is set in? Other questions included, what makes Egyptian/Syrian/Turkish/U.S. series so popular today? What do you think of Egypt/Syria/Turkey/the U.S. (or any other place the respondent might have cited)? Are people living different lives in these places? If so, how different are they from what you know? How do you imagine your life in five years? Where would you like to be (if the respondent answered something other than Morocco)? How long would you like to stay there? Do you see yourself coming back to Morocco at some point? Is there any place where you would like to take a short vacation, and why?

In a first step, the answers to the survey and the questions were coded into data about 1) viewers’ preferences regarding local and foreign dramas and 2) viewers’ preferences regarding potential travel locations, as there was often a relationship between the places they saw on television and the places they wanted to visit. This information was turned into cartograms (distorted maps), using the mapping and spatial analysis

software MAPresso (Herzog, 2003). The cartograms helped to visually represent the mental geographies of viewers in space by enlarging the countries they connect with most through television drama and the countries they most want to visit. Different cartograms were produced for different groups of individuals, showing the great variety of mental geographies in one particular context. Finally, the ethnographic interviews served as a basis for the qualitative and interpretive data used to analyze audiences' experiences.

A Multiperspectival Approach

By combining a textual analysis of the most popular local and foreign television dramas with ethnographic fieldwork focusing on media elites, producers, and audiences, I use a multiperspectival approach (Meehan, 1986; Kellner, 1995; Frow & Morris, 2000) for the study of media and globalization in Morocco. I examine 1) **specific audiovisual texts** (the most popular local and foreign television series broadcast in Morocco); 2) **their conditions of production** (the workings of media institutions and the embedded national and post-colonial discourses of supremacy produced by state elites); and 3) **the mental trajectories of their viewers**.

With these combined methods, I am able to understand how the process of cultural hybridization is channeled through television drama at different levels: the macro (systems of governance, see Ong & Collier, 2005), the mezzo (a professional field of TV professionals), the media texts, and the micro (the individual). I am also able to explore how different socioeconomic groups within the nation (state elites, upper-class filmmakers, and upper-class, middle-class, and low-income viewers) form cultural affinities with other nations.

As Hall suggests in his Encoding/Decoding model, there is often asymmetry between the codes of “source” and “receiver” of media texts, which has much to do with the structural differences of relation and position between broadcasters and viewers (2004, p. 54). In other words, broadcasters and viewers will often have different visions of the nation and the world based on their different social positions in the national context. Although Bourdieu has already shown that individuals who belong to different social classes form different aesthetics of taste when they consume cultural products (1979), the different cultural affinities that different socioeconomic groups form with other nations based on these cultural products are rarely discussed. A multiperspectival approach allows me to bring to light the multiple ‘hybridities’ that are produced by different individuals occupying different spheres of Moroccan society and that compete through a circular motion of media production and reception. This approach not only provides insight into the connections and tensions between these media players from various angles but also highlights which aesthetic features, stories, and cultural representations of the nation and the world resonate with viewers.

A Long History of Hybridity

Multicultural Legacy in Morocco

Morocco stands at the crossroads of various cultures. Over the years, Morocco has hosted Berbers, Arabs, Jews, Muslims, and Europeans. It therefore provides an excellent opportunity for understanding the process of cultural hybridization or the process by which local and global forces interact to form complex cultural identities.

The Berbers, probably of southwest Asian origin, were the first to live on the land. As they led tribal lives in the mountains and did not form any kind of government,

intertribal wars easily broke out, and the land became much more vulnerable to outside invasions (Hargraves, 2006). In AD 40, the Romans conquered what is now the northern part of the country and stayed for 500 years. During that time, Roman Morocco was Christianized, and the first Jews entered the country. Years later in 632, shortly after the death of the prophet Mohammed, Arab armies arrived in Morocco with the intention of converting populations to Islam (ibid.). Arab migration continued for approximately 500 years with little resistance from the Berbers, who enjoyed the protection of their invaders and widely adopted Islam as a result of years of ethnic and cultural mixing (York, 2006).

Southern Spain was also under Islam, which gave birth to an interesting Moorish culture that flourished in Morocco and in the entire Mediterranean region from the 10th to the 15th centuries. The Moors were a mixture of Arabs, Berbers, Spaniards, and Jews who brought innovations in the fields of architecture and music (Scott, 1904). Another growing cultural influence in the region was that of the Ottoman Empire from the 14th to the 19th centuries. The Moroccan dynasties in place were successful at maintaining their independence from the Ottoman Empire and never really came under the rule of the East (Abun-Nasr, 1987). However, the Ottoman lifestyle, which combined Eastern and Western elements, was of great interest to Moroccans (Lewis, 1963). Because this new hegemon in the region shared the same faith (Islam), Moroccans inevitably often compared themselves to Ottomans (El Mansour, 1990).

During all these years of invasions and cultural mixing, the Berbers were mainly cooperative. Nonetheless, a few movements of resistance against Arab domination arose, and they served to maintain a divide between the two populations. The Berber culture was also able to survive because Berbers could keep some lands, which were siba,

meaning that they were not administered by any kind of Arab civic authority (Hargraves, 2006). This ethnic divide and the lack of territorial unification in Morocco were later exploited by European nations who wanted to gain power and influence through colonial expansion.

In 1912, France saw an opportunity to ‘divide and conquer’ when the Sultan of the time, Moulay Hafid, needed the help of the French army during a wave of deadly Berber attacks. As a result of the Treaty of Fez, which marked the beginning of the Protectorate, the Sultan agreed to give France civil authority over Morocco but retained religious authority and secular sovereignty (Pennell, 2003). Spain, however, which already had a long-standing relationship with Morocco, gained control of the northern part of the country. At this point, the Moroccan dependency on Europe was not only political but also economic (Gershovich, 2000). For hundreds of years prior to the creation of the Protectorate, Europeans were able to gain economic influence by wooing sultans with modern technical gadgets they had brought with them and by establishing trade relations, which were eventually disadvantageous to Moroccans (Hargraves, 2006). Already in the 19th century, Europe had complete financial control over Morocco, which made the colonization of Morocco all the more inevitable.

Within 20 years of occupation, the French gained control of all the unoccupied territories (siba) and, in the process, created a single administration for the country. For the first time in history, Morocco was unified, but paradoxically and unfortunately, this unification was not Moroccan but French. Although Morocco regained its independence from France and Spain in 1956, it still stands at the crossroads of the many cultural influences that determined its history. As a result, it is still hard today to pinpoint exactly

the specificities of the Moroccan nation without considering the various ways in which it is intertwined with the histories of other nations.

The Land of Contrasts

Moroccans live with contrasts in every sphere of life, and they have a very high tolerance for dualities of all kinds. Consistency of behavior is not necessarily a virtue, since behavior is very much context driven and contexts change a lot in Morocco. (Hargraves, 2006)

When Moroccan writers describe Morocco, they often point to the fact that Morocco is a country of contrasts (Cheddadi, 2009). First, there are contrasts that are visible to the naked eye and from a geographical perspective. Morocco has a diversified landscape of mountains and desert, imperial cities and urban centers, beaches and forests (ibid). Second, there are considerable differences between the lifestyles of different ethnic and religious groups such as the Berbers, the Arabs, and the Jews. Third, there are strong divisions between different populations in Morocco, as the legacy of tradition and the realities of living in a Third-World country often separate the rich and the poor, men and women, and the younger and the older generations (Bennani, 2009; Laabi, 2009). Fourth, the everyday routine itself is split between two very distinct spheres of life, the public and the private, as in Morocco the public is the street, an unclaimed space where there is absolutely no protocol to follow, and the private is the home where everyone is accounted for and relationships are clearly defined (Rosen, 2002, Njoku, 2006, Hargraves, 2006).

Although these various divisions that emerge from within account for the cultural diversity and richness of the country, they also create a split identity that often severs Moroccans' ties with their own country (Howe, 2005). Contrasts are often viewed as

paradoxes, which are hard to reconcile in one united idea of the nation. As Cairns and Richards (2006) suggest, the idea of a national culture requires the drive towards—if not the achievement of—unity, and it often involves the exclusion of contradictions, which speaks against the dominant group. In this particular case, Morocco is so clearly defined by these very contradictions that a singular national culture is hard to pinpoint.

The National Consciousness after Independence

Of course, Morocco is not the only country with internal contrasts and a long history of hybridity and multiculturalism. In fact, the same can be said of virtually all places on earth. As Rodinson argues, “Bear in mind that such naïve questions as ‘What is the origin of this people? Where did it come from?’ make almost no sense. All peoples are formed of a mixture of ethnic elements, and in most cases the constituents have often been present since prehistoric times” (1981, p. 49). Therefore, all nations are the result of years of cultural mixing to a certain extent, but in many places, this multiculturalism did not preclude the development of a strong national culture. Nonetheless, in the post-colonial context, national cultures burdened by the domination of Western nations were only able to truly emerge after decolonization. Additionally, in many cases, this process was not a one-way street but a process of negotiation to determine who would be in power and which ideas of the nation would be disseminated.

In Morocco, this was a particularly difficult process because the contender to power was not necessarily the party of the independence movement, as in many other post-colonial nations, but the king himself, because Morocco was one of the few constitutional monarchies in the post-colonial world. King Hassan II, who succeeded his father Mohammed V only a few years after independence, was not so much interested in

the constitution of a nationalist consciousness as much as he was interested in creating a culture of worship for the monarchy (Pennell, 2003). It was in the king's best interest to use the monarchy as a central feature of this new national project to blend the two categories together. The king acted strategically by fragmenting and weakening the political scene as he encouraged the scission of the independence party into two smaller parties and regularly held non-democratic elections, during which candidates with close ties to the royal palace were elected (*ibid.*). He also initiated a regime of repression, which regularly sent opponents to prison. His strategy also extended to the realm of religion as he quickly understood that to gain even more power, the monarchy should also be a central element of Moroccan religious fervor. Therefore, he embraced his role as “commander of the faithful”—a title given to sovereign Muslim rulers who claim legitimacy from a community of Muslims (*ibid.*). His son Mohammed VI has often claimed that he wanted to modernize this model. In his first address to the nation, he claimed that Morocco “strongly adheres to the system of constitutional monarchy, political pluralism, economic liberalism, regional and decentralized policy, the establishment of the state of rights and law, preserving human rights and individual and collective liberties, protecting security and stability for everyone.” In spite of these statements, many scholars have argued that his policies are very much in line with those of his father and that his attempts at modernization have remained on the surface so far (see Pennell, 2003; York, 2006; Hargraves, 2006).

Although most Moroccans have affection for their king, they also resent the censorship they are dealing with every day and the high level of corruption at work in many spheres of society (Cohen & Jaidi, 2006). They also do not necessarily relate to a

king who has absolute power, given that most people are struggling to make ends meet. The problem with the idea of a nation so closely equated with the monarchy is that feelings of ambivalence towards the monarchy get immediately translated into feelings of ambivalence towards the nation. Additionally, although Morocco is of course not devoid of a national culture—as it has its specific history as well as its own sets of traditions and customs—these feelings of ambivalence that emerge from within can harm Moroccans' sense of belonging to the nation.

Hybridity and the Perils of the Nation

As Moroccans, should we fatally define ourselves in relationship to others? (Ben Jelloun, 2009, p. 43)

It is difficult to define the 'nation' because these paradoxes emerge not only from within but also from the outside. The many cultural influences that have pervaded the history of the country have turned it into such a hybrid environment that cultural identity has become dialogically shaped in relationship to many distant others. Indeed, Moroccans' mores are constantly compared with alternative lifestyles from afar because these different ways of life have been imported to the local environment in some capacity and coexist with traditional ways of life.

Throughout history, Moroccans have had to live with a juxtaposition of contradictory cultural influences. Hybridity causes a disruption by forcing together dissimilar living things, making difference into sameness and sameness into difference (Young, 2006). For example, when the French came, they brought France with them, and that meant creating many public spaces such as parks and an entire infrastructure with new towns and grand boulevards (Hargraves, 2006). However, as previously stated, the

public in Morocco is often viewed as an unclaimed space that belongs to no one. The public parks and grand boulevards were somehow out of place, but they came to live side by side with the souks and the old medinas and became integrated into the city life.

As a result of many years of colonization and cultural hybridization, everything and its contrary can be found in Morocco (Njoku, 2006; Laabi, 2009; Laroui, 2009; Howe, 2005). This split identity has been reinforced in the last 30 years with the intensification of globalization currents. Many Moroccans have developed the habit of comparing themselves to others, and globalization provides even more opportunities to compare and juxtapose different cultural mores. As a developing country, Morocco is extremely concerned with the question of tradition and modernity. Moreover, although modernity itself is a construct, and the temporal distinction between premodern, modern, and postmodern is not really useful as it implies that individuals in the state of modernity are more enlightened than those in the state of premodernity (see Bamyeh, 2000; p. xii), many Moroccans compare their country to other countries to gauge which might be more traditional or more modern. In so doing, they often use Western conceptions of the term modernity, reappropriating some of the Orientalist discourse that is aimed at making them seem less modern (Edwards, 2005). These conceptions generally involve the equation of modernity with the West and a discussion of gender roles, emotional and sexual behavior, and religion, which implies that countries with higher rates of unmarried, professional, independent women, with more overt discussions of sexuality, and with higher degrees of secularism are supposedly more modern.

Under these standards, Moroccan society itself combines elements of tradition and modernity (Howe, 2005; Ben Jelloun, 2009; Laala Hafdane, 2003): not all women are

housewives or caretakers, as many Orientalist depictions suggest, and Moroccans have different degrees of religious fervor, from secular to orthodox, but Moroccans regularly feel that other nations are more or less modern in comparison. It is not because these nations are actually more or less modern, of course—a term extremely difficult to define anyway (Chakrabarty, 2003)—but because of the perception that they may be given the various meanings the term has come to signify in people's minds. These various tropes—gender roles, religion, emotional and sexual behavior, and many more—have not only become associated with certain ideas of tradition and modernity. They are also often used by citizens to gauge what is 'local' and what is 'global' because the traditional in Morocco is often associated with the local and the modern with the global. Writers such as Cheddadi (2009) or Jaydane (2009) show that when Moroccans are frustrated by the weight of traditions in their society or by the various inequalities that plague their country (discrimination against Berber citizens, strong class and gender divisions, a corrupt judicial system), they turn their attention to distant others who represent alternative lifestyles. The problem with this phenomenon, according to Cheddadi (2009), is that people easily relinquish their Moroccan identities for the lure of something else, and being Moroccan becomes an option or a choice:

It becomes more and more obvious that we can no longer think, without thinking about the world [...] Therefore, if we realize that we can be Moroccans or not, that the state of being Moroccan is a voluntary choice, a bet on the future, it is legitimate that we ask ourselves what it means to be Moroccan. How can we be Moroccan? What does that entail? What tacit contract of social, political, cultural, and affective nature unites Moroccans with one another? (Cheddadi, 2009, p. 11)

As a result, many Moroccans 'check out' of Morocco with their minds, whereas their passports physically retain them within the boundaries of the nation. Today, questions

such as “What is the nation? How does it differ from, compare to, or become informed by distant others?” are at the center of preoccupations in Morocco, as cultural identities are still in flux as a result of years of cultural hybridization. These questions have found a powerful medium of expression through the mass media as television and Internet content bring home from afar a plethora of images that provide access—although indirect and limited—to other ways of life. Television has become both a repository of the various influences that have pervaded the nation over the years and a medium through which new cultural boundaries are drawn.

Juxtaposed with everyday lifestyles, these images further contribute to the constitution of culturally hybrid identities that can come into friction with the palace’s idea of the nation conveyed on local networks. The images also redefine these cultural identities in unprecedented ways as international media content is made available immediately (or almost), thus reducing the time lag that used to characterize the relationship between the metropole and the colony (Fabian, 1983; Harvey, 1990; Giddens, 1990; Castells, 2000; Bhabha, 2004). Similarly, the cultural influences now come from multiple directions simultaneously through television and computer screens. As a result, Moroccans have even more access to a variety of cultures (see Eickelman & Anderson, 2003; Hirschkind, 2006) and can, as a result, compare their own national tropes with a variety of other cultural representations. They can also choose to escape the national context mentally through their usage of international media content.

Television Series at the Core of Cultural Hybridization

Television series are particularly popular in Morocco. The monthly reports from the Moroccan ratings company Marocmetrie regularly feature at least six television series

in the top 10 most-watched programs of the month (Marocmetrie, 2008; 2009). As Hafez suggests (2007), entertainment culture is at the core of media globalization because of its capacity to compress and aggrandize everyday life. Television series both situate audiences in their home and allow them to mentally travel beyond the home to the places represented on screen. In so doing, viewers are able to imagine themselves in imagined worlds and form new subjectivities as well as new discourses on personhood, nationhood, and belonging (Appadurai, 1996; Abu-Lughod, 2000). In Morocco, mass-mediated melodramas offer distinctive constructions of the world, especially within a context defined by traditional ways of life (*ibid.*). Additionally, it is not only Western texts that circulate but also Arab and local dramas as well, suggesting a need to move away from theories of globalization that solely emphasize the cultural hegemony of the West. In fact, through their national networks, the satellite, and the Internet, Moroccans can watch many television series coming from a wide range of places, such as the old colonial power France, the current world hegemon, the United States, and other influential countries such as Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and of course Morocco itself. A feeling of Arab nationalism has grown consistently since the 1930s, when many Arab countries were seeking independence from European powers (Rodinson, 1981), and television and satellite have done a lot to strengthen this feeling of regionalism among Arab countries (Sakr, 2001).

The various available television series help to maintain or to foster cultural affinities with the aforementioned countries. Therefore, they favor the emergence of culturally hybrid identities by bringing attention to these locations and by providing a means of access to these various cultures. By the same token, they provide a space in

which the nation is imagined in comparison to others. Television series carry representations of the nation and of the 'other,' which often reflect different categories of inclusion and exclusion with regards to the national project. They create spaces that are used as sources of identity or as sources of differentiation from others (see Khatib, 2006). Even though they carry representations of France, the U.S., Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and Morocco, which may or may not fully reflect the local realities in these locations, they provide opportunities to glimpse other ways of life and help to determine how the nation imagines itself in comparison to others.

Media and Cultural Hybridity in the Arab World

To understand how television in Morocco became a repository of cultural influences of the past and a medium through which new cultural boundaries are drawn, it is important to examine the historic and sociocultural contexts in which it was brought forth. As Sreberny (2000) argues,

In many non-Western contexts, the particular histories of media development, their intersection with political and economic power, and their contribution to and impact upon cultural values are still poorly understood; here media studies remains an emergent kind of analysis and makes as a serious analytic enterprise if conducted within broader socio-political contexts (p. 64).

These particular contexts give particular meanings to concepts such as cultural hybridity, cosmopolitanism, modernity, etc. because they explain the conditions that shape these hybridities or these modern and cosmopolitan identities (Kraidy, 2005, p. vi). To avoid the pitfall of using these words as catch-all terms devoid of meaning, I start by explaining the social, political, and economical contexts shaping the structure and reception of Moroccan and Arab television.

National Television in the Arab World: Safeguarding Nationhood

Iraq established the first national television system in the Arab world. The other Arab countries followed in the subsequent 20 years. There were different approaches to television programming during these years, according to Rugh (2004, pp. 181-199). Certain nations such as Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Libya, South Yemen, and Soudan rapidly adopted television and created their own networks as tools for political communication. Other nations such as Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and North Yemen were slower in their adoption of television and offered less intensely and aggressively political programming, focusing mainly on politically correct entertainment. At this time, all Arab countries had state-owned networks with the exception of Lebanon, the only nation whose TV networks were wholly owned and operated by private commercial interests (ibid. p. 195). Until the 1990s, the structure and content of Arab media did not change much and remained mostly under the control of each separate state. Therefore, the media were absolutely not global, only national. Anderson argues that the nation is imagined as limited because it has finite boundaries beyond which lie other nations and because no nation imagines itself as coterminous with mankind (1991, p. 7). Along these lines, authorities in these countries have erected boundaries around their nation-states to protect them from foreign influences and to maintain control. Debates emerged in academic circles and centered on the question of whether these boundaries were justified or not. For Poindexter (2006), state protectionism was positive in the sense that it helped safeguard against cultural imperialism, but for Niezen, the nation-state, the “entity most resembling the political structure and status of one’s erstwhile colonial oppressor,” might

not have been the best that could be hoped for as an “expression of collective, autonomous selfhood” (2004, p. 150). However, the television landscape changed drastically in the 1990s when satellite was introduced to the Arab world, and these questions were replaced by new ones. The debate no longer centered on nationhood and how much it should be protected by the state, but rather on the widening of boundaries to include pan-Arabic and global identities and whether these changes were beneficial to democratization in the Middle East (Sakr, 2001).

Pan-Arab and Global Television in the Arab World

During the Gulf War, national networks concealed important information and did not quite provide the objective news people were expecting. In the Arab world, those who could catch the signals of CNN or other French-speaking networks turned to them for their news, and the demand for Arab satellite television increased. Arab satellite television networks such as Al Jazeera, ANN, and Al-Arabiya were created in response to this demand. These news networks were not subjected to censorship other than that of their own countries (for example, Al Jazeera could not talk freely about Qatar but was free to do so about any other country in the Middle East). Therefore, these networks brought a new freedom of tone in the Arab television landscape and showed potential for democratization. Other Arab satellite networks appeared in the 1990s: the Egyptian Nilesat in 1990, the Saudi Arabian MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Center), ART (Arab Radio and Television Network), and ORBIT in 1991, 1994, and 1994, respectively, the Lebanese Future TV and LBC (Lebanese Broadcasting Company) in 1995 and 1996, respectively. These satellite networks helped bolster pan-Arab identities. As Bamyeh observes, “Emergent national or ‘pan’ identities may be based on an attendant

observation that cultural differences within the community imagined pale in comparison to those separating them from more distant cultural groups” (2000, p. 90). But this strong pan-Arabism did not exclude tensions and relations of power dominance within the Arab world.

Early on, Egypt established itself as the media center of the Arab world. The ‘Hollywood of the East’ was the biggest producer of entertainment for the whole region. Egypt’s status was threatened when the demand for programs grew in the Arab world and the capacities of production were depleted. To keep its privileged position, Egypt had to rely on foreign investors from Saudi Arabia who were bringing their ‘petrodollars’ to Egyptian productions. Unfortunately for the Egyptians, the Saudi Arabian market expanded rapidly to the point of being almost self-reliant, but Saudi Arabians were still lacking a certain ‘savoir faire’ with regard to television production, whereas Egyptians had acquired that ‘savoir faire’ over the years. Hence, Saudis and Egyptians had to collaborate (the Egyptian ‘savoir faire’ and the Saudi capital). However, none of these players was really willing to call this agreement a ‘collaboration’ as they were still fighting for ideological power in the Arab world. Truth be told, although Egypt maintained its status, the Saudi petrodollars have forced Egyptians to change the content of their television shows. As El Emary suggests, Egyptians had to make their productions less local to appeal to the wider Arab public (1996).

In addition to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, other countries later tried to establish themselves as media centers. After Egypt and Saudi Arabia created their ‘media cities’ or ‘media free zones’ (gigantic sets with great production capabilities) in 1990 and 2000, respectively, Jordan followed and created the ‘Jordanian Media City’ in 2001. Moreover,

various countries in the Arab world have tried to specialize in certain types of programming to strengthen their position in the media scene. For example, whereas Egypt focused on soap operas, Syria specialized in historical television dramas, and Lebanon specialized in the game show. Therefore, the Arab world is characterized by various centers of dominance, and it is important to note that these various centers are themselves constantly competing with other influences. In recent years, Turkish TV series have been immensely successful in the Arab world and have constituted serious competition for Egyptian and Syrian dramas. In 2007, the TRT (Turkish public television) earned more than 3 million dollars with its soaps and exported them to 22 countries in the Middle East and the Arab world (Le Matin, 2008). In addition to the Turkish threat, Arab programs are constantly competing with other programs coming from Latin America, France, and the United States, which are shown on the national and Arab networks and on foreign satellite channels that are available in the Arab world.

Television in Morocco

Television in Morocco reflects these tendencies. National, Arab, and global programs share space in Moroccan broadcasting schedules. National television networks offer 61.5% of local productions, 19.9% of Arab productions, and 18.6% of foreign productions (Hafez, 2007, p. 90). In addition, Moroccans have great access to satellite television channels from France, Spain, and the United States. The most popular networks in Morocco are, in order of preference, 2M International (state-owned, featuring many foreign programs), RTM (state-owned, mixture of foreign and local programming), Al-Jazeera (pan-Arabic, featuring news), Al Maghribya (state-owned, featuring traditional Moroccan programs), MBC (pan-Arabic, featuring regional and foreign

programming), Al-Arabiya (pan-Arabic, featuring news), Rotana Cinema (pan-Arabic, featuring regional and foreign programming), and Ikraa (pan-Arabic, regional and religious programming) (Abdul-Latif, 2007, p. 10). French and Spanish networks, however, are not watched by many, but French and Spanish programs can be frequently found on the national networks. Clearly, Moroccans can choose among a great variety of national, regional, or global programming. What does this say about Arab media today? Is it national, Arab, or global? Or is it all three at the same time? In his essay “What is global about Arab media?” Sabry (2005c) suggests that they are not entirely national, Arab, or global. He shows that there are many obstacles to the Arabness of Arab media (technologies imported from the West, Western styles of production, a great variety of programs coming from abroad) just as there are many obstacles to the globality of the Arab media (state control, low integration rates of new media, and the language used given that Arabic and even French are not *linguae francae*).

Theories of Globalization

From Cultural Imperialism to Polycentric Multiculturalism

The particular example of Morocco and the Arab world shows that we need to re-conceptualize certain theories of globalization. The framework of cultural imperialism is no longer sufficient to describe globalization processes. Herbert Schiller defines cultural imperialism as “the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system, and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even to promote, the values and structures of the dominant center of the system” (1976, p. 9). According to Said (1979), this dominant center is the Western world, which imposes its values upon

others. Said's theory of Orientalism suggests that "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony (1979, p. 5-6). Although Orientalism and media imperialism still clearly exist, they are in great need of a "drastic retooling in the contemporary era" (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 31). Today, there are powerful reverse currents as a number of Third-World countries dominate their own markets and even become cultural exporters. Shohat and Stam call for a "polycentric multiculturalism" that recognizes the diversity of cultural centers and flows but also their dialogues within and with one another as the process is mostly dialogical.

Hybrid Identities and Individual Agency

As a result of this polycentric multiculturalism, globalization theorists have moved away from cultural imperialism and now argue that global is not an all-encompassing force leading inevitably to the disappearance of local media and identities. This model, which recognizes the coexistence of various spatial levels, views globalization as hybridization. In Rowe and Schelling's words, "with respect to cultural forms, hybridization is defined as the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms and practices" (1991, p. 231). In many cases, local cultural forms combine with international or global cultural forms and become new cultural hybrids. In that context, Wellman's concept of 'glocalization' is a useful neologism as it means the combination of intense local and extensive global interaction (2001, p. 3).

Although hybridity is a nuanced and realistic framework for understanding globalization processes, there are still some gaps in the literature. For example, although

questions of power such as hegemonic processes are much discussed in the scholarly debates on hybridization, the equally important question of individual agency is often left out. If agency is rarely addressed, it is mostly because the postmodern tradition insists on decentering and displacement (Giddens, 1990). The growing complexity of identity work in the era of globalization, with the superimposition of local, national, regional, and religious identities as well as the blurring of lines between tradition and modernity, has led many researchers to think of globalization in terms of a lack of control. Giddens, for example, argues that “many of us have been caught up in a universe of events we do not fully understand, and which seems in large part outside of our control” (1990, p. 2-3). In this conception of hybridity, individuals are ‘lost in translation’ and engage in self-reflexive processes in an attempt to understand what is happening to them (ibid.).

If individuals can go in different directions when they watch television series, local (Morocco), regional (Syria or Egypt), or global (Turkey, France, the U.S., and others), they have more power to decide where they want to go mentally. The more choices people have, the more possibilities of connections with distant others emerge, and the more flexibility and individual agency people have in self-fashioning hybrid cultural identities. Consequently, the study of a multi-directional hybridization should go hand in hand with a close examination of individuals’ specific agentive choices (even in the event that these choices are subconscious and constrained to a certain extent). Additionally, hybridity should be examined in light of the mental trajectories individuals may or (may not) take when exposed to various visual flows.

Although individual agency here is understood as “the state of being in action or exerting power” (Free Dictionary, 2009) and in this context particularly as the possibility

of exercising power over one's own cultural landscape and identity, agency also often refers to political agency—the ability not only to make choices but also to act upon the world. This second definition of agency also has relevance in the Moroccan context as many viewers choose to stay away from national programs as ways of 'escaping' or 'resisting' the national monarchical view conveyed on local television stations.

Nonetheless, as Kumar shows (2007), the notion of an active audience capable of resisting the dominant ideologies encoded in media texts might lead to an individualized, textual, and semiotic notion of struggle, which in the end might or might not have any impact on the real world. Therefore, it can be assumed that agency in the era of cultural identity does not necessarily translate into agency in the social and political realms. In fact, the mental mobility of viewers who constantly imagine themselves in different places via television drama contrasts sharply with the social immobility that the very act of watching television entails (as opposed to various forms of action, such as collective struggle, for example).

Cosmopolitan Identities?

In the era of television and globalization, post-colonial citizens have additional dialogical interactions with other cultures, nations, regions, etc. Post-colonial subjectivities in Morocco, for example, are in conversation with many other 'others' from the wider Arab world, Turkey, the United States, etc. Therefore, one may ask whether viewers of television series who use these programs as tools for mental emigration become global citizens or cosmopolitans as a result of watching these programs.

Cosmopolitanism is an ideal that paints a future in which all cultures of the world will interpenetrate each other "until ideas of every culture will live side by side, in

combination, comparison, contradiction and competition in every place and all time” (Beck, 2002, p. 17). It views processes of hybridization as continuing until the world will become one gigantic place and assumes that differences will eventually wither away as citizens all become part of the global project. The problem with cosmopolitanism is that, as an ideal, it is hardly attainable. The example of Morocco alone has shown that cultural maps are becoming nebular and that it is highly improbable that all cultures will live side by side everywhere and at all times. Some cultures will live side by side; other will not, and which cultures intermingle depends greatly on particular contexts. Another issue with cosmopolitanism is that its implications are ‘sameness’ as opposed to ‘differences’ (generally emphasized in theories of hybridization; see Bhabha, 2004, p. 2). It assumes a shared view of the world, but the view emphasized by theorists of cosmopolitanism is often a “discourse centered on a Western view of the world” from the perspective of frequent travelers, university professors, etc. (Calhoun, 2002, p. 873).

In spite of these limitations, cosmopolitanism has some merits as a theory. It recognizes some agency in the process of globalization (although the word is rarely used). For example, Beck writes that “borders are no longer predeterminate, they can be chosen (and interpreted), but simultaneously also have to be redrawn and legitimated anew” (2002, p. 19). For Foster,

The cosmopolitan engages in self-constituting practices, willy-nilly, with the Other, before the Other as witness, in concert with the Other, in terms of the Other, through terms from the Other, never without the Other. Whether the cosmopolitanism’s utopian project comes to fruition depends on the social and political circumstances that shape her practice as well as on what she decides to do and who she decides to be (2006, p. 184).

In this dissertation, I propose the use of cultural hybridization as a major framework for

understanding globalization because it is much more realistic than cosmopolitanism in its representation of cultural processes. I do suggest, however, that the notion of individual agency should be examined alongside questions of power in discussions of hybridity.

The dissertation therefore examines how the state of hybridity is constituted at the intersection of various hegemonic forces—the state apparatus; apparatuses of various regional powers such as Turkey, Egypt, and Syria; the old colonial power, France; and the current world hegemon: the U.S. —as well as the agentive choices of individuals, who might choose to resist or escape the forces that pervade the nation, or they might decide to open themselves up to the world. The dissertation also investigates how visual flows reflect these processes and allow different individuals in the media production and reception chain and in different social strata of society to locate themselves in various spaces of identity.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MOROCCAN MEDIA FIELD: ELITE HYBRIDITY

At the time of this research, Moroccans were becoming increasingly frustrated with the ruling authoritative regime, and following the lead of other Arab nations like Tunisia and Egypt, protesters were starting to take to the streets to voice their concerns. Although the protesters did not wish to overthrow the power of the King and call for “a peaceful evolution rather than a revolution” (Tremlett, 2011), more pressure was placed on the King and his elites to provide more democratic structures, including a revamped media system. The media are part of a complex interrelated system of monarchical power, and arguments against the King or the government are also implicitly arguments about the media, and vice versa.

Because the Moroccan television industry is a public monopoly that is entirely state-owned, it is extremely important to scrutinize the institutions and structures of power that enable the production and dissemination of media discourses from the top. It is also necessary to understand the role and perspective of media elites because 1) as heads of the media industry, they are the ones who decide which programs, locations, and ideologies to highlight on the national state-owned networks; 2) as state elites, their tastes and cultural affinities with other countries are dominant in public discourse even if they differ from that of the rest of the population. Combining institutional data and interviews with media elites, this chapter presents a snapshot of the Moroccan media field in the years 2009-2010 and is based on four months of fieldwork research in Rabat and Casablanca.

The data for this chapter were collected through various means. I conducted interviews and observed the work routines of 10 high-profile state representatives

working at major media institutions, such as television networks, the national ratings company, and various regulatory institutions. In addition, I spent one week doing participant observation at the African Film Festival of Khouribga in Morocco, where I interacted with various state and media elites and attended conferences and roundtables organized by the state intelligentsia. I also attended the International Festival of 'Auteur' Cinema in Rabat, where I was able to collect a significant number of testimonies, institutional brochures, and legal documents explaining the major workings of the Moroccan media system. These testimonies and documents serve as the basis for the analysis in the chapter.

The analysis of the Moroccan media field reveals that, despite the end of the French Protectorate in 1956, there is still a lingering influence of the ex-colonial power in Moroccan media institutions. Media elites retrieve the French media model in an attempt to emulate the former colonial power and its democratic media structures. However, this French model is also adapted and changed by elites in the Moroccan context to provide possibilities for censorship at the local level and to allow for the King's and the government's unconditional control of the media. This specific form of French-Moroccan hybridity in the media yields many paradoxes. First, it creates a media system that prides itself as being on the path towards democratization while at the same time ensuring that nothing changes and that authoritarian rule is maintained. Second, it creates a huge discrepancy between elites, who gravitate towards discourses of French colonial supremacy as well as dominant discourses of power within the nation, and Moroccan citizens, who are not necessarily francophone and wish for better representation of their many struggles and interests on the national television networks.

In addition to revealing how hybridity is lived and understood by media elites as opposed to other Moroccan citizens, this chapter also provides a snapshot of a media system on the brink of change, like the rest of the nation. Analyzing the discourse of state and media elites at this critical juncture in Morocco's history is essential because the paradox of "democratization without democracy" (Sweet, 2001) and the disparities between the elites and the citizens have become so visible that the Moroccan population is becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of democratic structures, and protests are being organized to demand changes. Although the question of whether true change is possible cannot be resolved here (history will tell), the chapter provides a glimpse of the many democratic openings and closures at work in Moroccan institutions.

After a discussion of the literature and methodology that will be used in this chapter, I analyze the many similarities and differences—junctures and disjunctures, to use Appadurai's term—that characterize Morocco's relationship with the French media field. I first discuss Moroccan elites' motivations for seeking interconnectedness with the ex-colonial power, ranging from elites' personal knowledge of France and their desire to maintain a dominant status by using France as a symbol of high culture to the international pressures they face in favor of democratization and liberalization of the media system. Second, to understand the extent of the ex-colonial power's influence, I examine closely the specific institutional models, work routines, and media laws that were directly borrowed from France.

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the disjunctures from the French media model. Differences in work routines, media structures, and legal regulations will be assessed to understand how they reflect expressions of Morocco's national culture or

attempts by elites to assert the power of the nation-state and the monarchy through various mechanisms of censorship. Finally, I explore the reasons why media elites do not seek connections to countries other than France and why the rest of the world is generally perceived as a threat. For that purpose, I examine why images coming from abroad—through satellite, Internet, and an illegal DVD industry—are perceived as threats to local control, and I tackle the question of why Moroccan elites do not embrace the media of other Arab countries. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how problematic this specific form of French-Moroccan hybridity is for the Moroccan population as a whole.

Background Information: The Makhzen and Media Elites

Who are the media elites in Morocco, and what is their relationship to the establishment? These questions are important because Morocco differs from other post-colonial nations in terms of its power structures. Like most post-colonial nations, Morocco has a government representing the nation, but it does not exclusively rely on the government as its main form of power. Morocco is primarily defined by a monarchical power system (Makhzen) that overrides every other form of authority. The King of Morocco is at the head of three sacred institutions: “Al-Watan, Al-Malik, Allah” (the Nation, the King, and Allah), a slogan commonly used in Morocco. As the head of the state, as the face of the monarchy, and as the leader of all Muslim subjects in Morocco, the King and his three sacred institutions are key elements of the dominant national culture.

The governmental apparatus and the media industry (which belongs to this governmental apparatus) are designed to support and disseminate this dominant national culture. The media provide long accounts of the King’s whereabouts through daily news

accounts of royal activities, which ensure that the monarchy still makes the headlines news. Similarly, royal and governmental views are commonly presented as ‘hard’ facts even on contentious issues like the dispute between Morocco and Algeria over the territory of Western Sahara, ensuring that national interests are prominently emphasized. Finally, Arab and Muslim traditions are prominently featured in the media, with little emphasis of other religions and ethnicities in Morocco. For example, Berber culture is still relatively undermined even if Berbers account for approximately 60% of Morocco's 30 million citizens (Prengaman, 2001). In other words, the media stand for the monarchy’s conceptions of “the Nation, the King, and Allah” and exclude everything else in contrast. Media elites work at the heads of various media institutions as agents of this dominant national culture centered on the monarchy.

Historically, there are various reasons that account for the fact that the King’s authority is largely uncontested (even in the wake of the protests). The monarchy is extremely valued in Morocco because it is often regarded as a legacy from the past. As an institution, the monarchy is 1,200 years old (Lalami, 2011, *The Nation*). The present King belongs to the Alaouite dynasty, a dynasty that has spanned over 300 years, long before Morocco was considered to be a nation. At this time, Morocco was made of self-governing tribes, and the successive sultans of the dynasty were the only unifying link between them as they provided the administrative structure, the legal framework, and the military manpower to run the country. Throughout the years and following the wave of colonization, the Alaouite dynasty has come to be regarded as constant in Morocco’s history (Layachi, 1999).

Today, the King is not only the heir of Morocco's monarchal history but also the head of a strong nation. Following Morocco's independence from France in 1956, he emerged as "the symbol for national liberation and became, constitutionally, the supreme arbitrator, legislator and guarantor of political legitimacy" (Maghraoui, 2001, p. 12). In some ways, this is ironic because the real force behind independence was the nationalist party Istiqlal. During the French occupation, King Mohammed V—then called Sultan—was caught in the crossfire because he was accountable to the French and yet clearly receptive to the demands of the nationalists. Therefore, he had rather limited power. However, after independence, the King took advantage of the lack of political infrastructure (notably the fact that there was no elected parliament and no constitution) and of the internal divisions within the nationalist movement (the prominent nationalist figure Ben Barka broke away from the Istiqlal to form a new party: the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires or UNFP) to ensure that he would be the 'face' of the nation and its main ruler. His son, Hassan II, followed in his footsteps by writing a constitution that would help maintain himself in power. For example, Hassan II made sure that the Moroccan King remains untouchable under the Moroccan constitution by stating clearly his role of Amir al-Mu'minin (commander of the faithful). As such, the King commands total obedience from Muslim subjects in Morocco, and he is accountable to no one but God himself (Waterbury, 1970).

The elites in Morocco are individuals working for the King in the royal court or in various governmental institutions. The former King Hassan II publicly called high government and state officials *khudama* (loyal servants to the throne) and treated them as such (Maghraoui, 2001). Their role is not so much to act as figures of political authority

but rather to serve the interests of the royal court. Their primary mission is to make sure that the monarchic power system remains uncontested and to act as bodyguards for the Makhzen (royalty) and the three monarchal sacred institutions. Governmental elites (ministers and state representatives) work directly for the Makhzen and the interests of the palace. Even if Morocco is a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament, the King appoints the members of the government himself. He also has the power to dismiss ministers at any time and can call for new elections as he sees fit. Media elites, in many ways, have the same status as governmental elites given that they work for state-owned film and television companies that fall directly under the supervision of the government. Therefore, they are eventually accountable to the Makhzen.

Not surprisingly, the Makhzen uses television as its prime medium for disseminating the dominant ideologies of the palace. As Hidass argues (2010), broadcasting is the only mass medium in Morocco because most inhabitants have television sets and because the scope of cultural life is very limited in terms of theatrical performances, concerts, cinema events, and other nightlife activities. Like the colonial authorities present in Morocco during the Protectorate, the Makhzen was aware of the power of broadcasting and made sure it remained a state monopoly well after independence. Radio and, later, television stations were placed under the strict control of the royal palace. Opposition figures have not only been ignored and muted in the media; they have been consistently sent to jail or given exorbitant fines for questioning the sacred institutions. Between 1999 and 2009, the government arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced nearly 30 journalists (Lalami, 2011, *The Nation*). Article 5 of the press code, for example, states that “anyone found guilty of attacking the person of the monarch or

royal family can be imprisoned from between five to twenty years and be subjected to a fine ranging from 100,000 to 1,000,000 dirhams [added: ranging from approximately 12,000 to 125,000 dollars ” (Ibahrine, 2002, p. 634).

With such an overarching authoritative figure in the person of the King as well as repressive structures and punishments, it is easy to understand how the system maintains itself and remains mostly uncontested. For the most part, media elites follow the directives of the Makhzen. Of course, this is not to say that they are necessarily a monolithic group of individuals who all believe and stand behind the dominant ideology. It is very possible that many of them have conflicting views or would like to see changes to the system. However, because they are working directly for the government and the King, these conflicting views cannot really be expressed in this configuration.

Although criticism does not come directly from within the media industry, the media in Morocco are not only a story of unmitigated state control. The picture is more complicated. The royal court is under all kinds of pressure to modernize itself and to democratize its media structures. The campaign group Reporters Without Borders ranks Morocco 135th of 178 countries in its annual Press Freedom Index (Guardian, October 29, 2010), and this is not good publicity abroad for a country that prides itself on being more liberal and more democratic than any other Arab nation. Similarly, Moroccan citizens inside the country are losing interest in the national state-owned networks and their constant emphasis of royal activities. Even though the state provides no figures, it is widely known that citizens are increasingly turning to foreign satellite networks and the Internet, which have become to a certain extent spaces for dissent (Sakr, 2002). Additionally, as mentioned, protests are increasing all over Morocco, even if they are

nowhere near the intensity of the protests occurring in other Arab nations such as Egypt and Tunisia for example.

It is also worth noting that there are opposition parties and organizations in the current political landscape. Morocco has a variety of political parties, which are divided into two blocs. It has the “National Entente,” which comprises rightist parties such as the National Democratic Party (PND) and the Constitutional Union (UC), both founded by the regime and commonly known as ‘administration parties’ (Bendourou, 1996). It also has the “Democratic Bloc,” which comprises opposition parties such as Istiqlal, the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP), and socialist parties. In addition, Islamic organizations have grown and gained more popularity over the years as important oppositional forces in the current political configuration (even if only one of them, “Justice and Development,” is recognized as an official party). These organizations have often denounced the decline in moral values, society’s deviations from the Muslim faith, and the government’s responsibility in these failings (ibid, 1996). Some of them have criticized the constitution for not sufficiently dividing political power, for granting privileges to a small corrupt elite, and for conferring substantial religious authority on the King (Pruzan-Jørgensen, 2010). Unfortunately, the role of these various parties and Islamic organizations is still rather limited in the government, the parliament, and the judiciary—the three branches of the Moroccan political system. These three institutions are in fact viewed by the King as a mere extension of the monarchy and are not real agents of change. Nonetheless, the messages of the political opposition do reach populations and contribute to growing criticism of the current political situation in Morocco.

To address growing concerns in and out of the country, Morocco has been on the path to democratizing its system. The new King, Mohammed VI, personified these hopes when he ascended to the throne in 1999 and showed a desire to break from the authoritative rule of his father, Hassan II. He fired a man who had been his father's interior minister since 1979, shook hands with the poor, the handicapped, and the elderly (something that no other Kings before him had done), spoke publicly against corruption, created a system of 'alternance', allowing leftist parties that were in the opposition to hold cabinet positions, and created a new era of political liberalization in which Moroccans were seemingly freer to speak and air their grievances publicly (Maghraoui, 2001). In terms of the media system, Mohammed VI announced the creation of new democratic media institutions modeled after existing French regulatory institutions in France and devised a plan to create new private radio and television stations to put an end to the state monopoly. However, these efforts have been limited so far, and they appear to be no more than symbolic gestures at this point as the state still has a firm grip on Moroccan life and the media. Scholars today speak of "democratization without democracy" (Sweet, 2001), "change, so that nothing changes" (Hidass, 2010), "political openings and closures" (Sweet, 2001), "politics of appearances" (Souaiaia, 2007), and "the shadow of democracy" (Douai, 2009) to describe the current political situation in Morocco.

How is democratization without democracy achieved on the media front? This is achieved by borrowing French media models that actually revive colonial discourses and the perceived supremacy of the French ideals of republicanism and universalism while simultaneously adapting and reshaping them to allow for the domination of the Makhzen,

the government, and Islam (all in one). This particular form of French-Moroccan hybridity as advocated by Moroccan elites working in media institutions is the focus of this chapter.

Literature Review: Post-Colonial Hybridities

Hybridization occurs when various cultural influences confront themselves, merge to a certain degree, transform one another, and lead to the simultaneous production of similarities and differences between different contexts (Appadurai, 1996; Pieterse, 2003; Bhabha, 2004). The similarities can be brought about by different types of movement of culture in the era of globalization (Appadurai, 1996), such as the circulation of individuals (ethnoscapes), the movements of technologies, images, and information (technoscapes and mediascapes), the spread of global capital (financescapes), and ideologies (ideoscapes). Similarities can also be effected by the process of colonization, such as when European nations imposed their rule on colonized nations, pushing new infrastructures and cultural frameworks on individuals. The differences emerge (or re-emerge) when nations under the influence of globalization or colonization start to view these processes as a threat to their local specificities and fight to reclaim their national differences (Shome & Hedge, 2002). In many ways, the processes described in this chapter reflect this double trend of similarities and differences because Morocco's colonial history and ongoing ties with France in the era of globalization prompt elites to seek a certain kind of interconnectedness with France. However, at the same time, elites seek to inscribe their own cultural specificities in the media infrastructures borrowed from France.

Nonetheless, it is important to stress that hybridity is a much-contested term in post-colonial studies. Many scholars believe that the discourse on hybridity focuses so much on the celebration of mixed cultures and identities that it fails to acknowledge the power divisions that characterize the relationship between ex-colonizers and the ex-colonized (see JanMohammed, 1985; Parry, 1987; Dirlik, 1994; Hutnyk, 1998; Lopez, 2001). Parry (1987), for example, argues that “the emphasis on the hybridity of colonial discourse has the effect of obscuring what Fanon called the murderous and decisive struggle between two protagonists” (quoted in Loomba, 1994, p. 307). Similarly, Abdul JanMohammed (1985, p. 60) argues that the notion of “hybridity glosses over the economic and cultural plunder of the colonized and therefore can only be sustained by circumventing entirely the dense history of the material conflict between Europeans and natives” (quoted in Loomba, 1994, p. 308). Taking the criticism of hybridity even further, JanMohammed (1985) and Alidou (2011) argue that hybridity might involve the reassertion of the hegemony of the ex-colonizer by failing to provide a framework in which post-colonial subjects can interrogate power.

Acknowledging the criticisms of hybridity stated above, this chapter nevertheless retains the concept while being mindful not to elide colonial power and violence. As Shohat and Stam (1994) and Kraidy (2005) have shown, it is possible to use the term without sanctifying colonial violence, particularly when questions of historical hegemonies are raised (Shohat & Stam, 1994). In that vein, I will consistently use the term hybridity but will not celebrate it blindly. Hybridization in this chapter is viewed as a power-laden process because it is apparent that the drive towards cultural mixture is not always reciprocal and equally embraced. On the one hand, Moroccan elites seek

connections with French media institutions to achieve “political modernity” (Chakrabarty, 2007), i.e., a Eurocentric ideal of what modern political structures such as the state, civil rights, and democracy should be. On the other hand, French institutions wish to remain on a pedestal and do not show much interest in the former protectorate.

Furthermore, this chapter will tackle one question that is often left out of theoretical discussions on post-colonial hybridity: whose hybridity are we talking about? Post-colonial scholars who have adopted the term, such as Bhabha (2004), Prakash (1995), and even Said (1993), seem to imply that all post-colonial nations and individuals are hybrid because their history was inescapably undermined by colonial influence. For example, in one of his works, Said writes that “all cultures are hybrid [...] to ignore or otherwise discount the overlapping experience of westerners and orientals, the interdependence of cultural terrains in which colonizer and colonized co-existed and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories, is to miss what is essential” (1993, p. xx). The truth, however, is that post-colonial discourses of hybridity are mostly the preserve of elites in post-colonial nations. For everyone else—the lower and middle classes—the influence of former colonizers has progressively waned over time, and the knowledge of the language and culture of those nations is not as vital as it used to be. For example, it is reported that at least half of Moroccans can speak a little bit of French (Morocco Channel, 2011), but if we were to count the numbers of Moroccans who are fluent in French, this number would go down dramatically. As a consequence, more emphasis should be placed on class when discussing hybridity in a post-colonial context as not everyone in the nation will seek interconnectedness with the former colonial power. In fact, the rest of this dissertation

will show that non-elites form other types of hybridities with nations other than the former colonial power.

The Moroccan example demonstrates why elites are the ones engaging in this form of post-colonial hybridity. Structurally, Moroccan elites had to assimilate French culture in order to survive the French occupation and to keep their standing in society (Moore Henry, 1999). After independence, they naturally became the intermediaries of the French colonial dialectic and the carriers of new forms of organization imported from Europe and adapted to local conditions (*ibid*). In addition to being already inured to French culture, they also had a strong desire to be as powerful and privileged as the colonial elites who had ruled the country. In their attempt to create a new nation-state, they wanted to ensure for themselves the highest positions of power, and what better way to do that than to exploit the structures of power already established by the mother country (Fanon, 2006)? Finally, elites had little confidence in themselves when it came to devising a plan for the newborn independent nation without “sending out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country” (Fanon, 2006, p. 121). This lack of confidence came from the fact that the colonizer had relentlessly tried to convince Moroccans of the inferiority of their culture (Fanon, 1994, p. 45) to keep them away from the true conditions of contemporary citizenship and to squash desires for revolt (Memmi, 1965). As a result, Moroccan elites gave “new values to the native culture within the framework of colonial domination” (Fanon, 1994, p. 50) and maintained discourses of colonial/post-colonial hybridity in spite of the fact that these discourses did not resonate with the majority of the Moroccan population.

A term has been coined in the literature to refer to those individuals who are natives of a colonized country and yet act as agents of the colonizer: “comprador elites” (Gantman & Parker, 2005). The term is still used in the post-colonial era, as there are many individuals in former colonies who adapt the language and culture of former colonizers and, in doing so, perpetuate their influence. Fanon, for example, describes how the middle-class bourgeoisie and elites of the Antilles use their knowledge of French language and culture to achieve or to maintain a high social status:

The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionally whiter—that is, he will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of French language. [...] Mastery of language affords remarkable power [...] the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. (1952, p. 18)

Furthermore, Cabral (1994) shows that the former colonial powers take advantage of the social gap that creates itself as a result of a population divided between the indigenous elites, who are culturally connected to the former colony and have more power, and the popular masses, who lack this cultural and social capital. If upward mobility is only possible through interaction with the former colonizer, the latter can rest assured that colonial domination and exploitation remain in place.

Furthermore, comprador elites ascend to high positions in post-colonial governments and businesses and rely extensively on their political and economic ties with the mother country to devise business plans and state policies. In doing so, they once again strengthen the influence of former colonial powers. Dabashi (2011), for example, explains that comprador elites are agents of the West and the global economy because they both use their relation to Western capital to climb the social ladder in their local environments while being simultaneously used in various contexts by Western capital to

spread a hegemonic political-economic order: “the defining function of the comprador [...] is to shore up that relation of commerce to power [...] capital will use whatever and whoever is convenient for each particular time, place, and situation” (p. 54).

Krumah (1965) argues that, in fact, comprador elites are the agents of a neo-colonialism. He explains that “the essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent, and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system, and thus its political policy is directed from outside” (p. 1). He goes on to explain that neo-colonialism is the worst form of imperialism because those who practice it have power without responsibility, and those who suffer from it are exploited without redress. In other words, neo-colonialism is an insidious form of colonialism that is not officially and directly instated but works nevertheless through channels such as economic and political dependency.

Throughout the chapter, I will show that Moroccan media elites—who are in fact comprador elites—exploit their relationship to French language, culture, politics, and commerce to maintain their standing in Moroccan society while they enable continued influence of French colonial power and post-colonial forms of hybridity in the Moroccan media industry.

Methodology

Although the aforementioned literature provides useful frames for understanding the process of hybridization in a post-colonial context, it does not provide practical research guidelines on how to analyze hybrid formations in post-colonial institutions. As Parry argues (1987, p. 43), the current theories of colonial discourse are characterized by an “exorbitation of discourse” and a related incuriosity about the enabling socioeconomic

and political institutions and other forms of social praxis. Consequently, one has to look at other sets of literature to find suitable methodologies for the study of such processes.

In this chapter, I use Bourdieu's 'field theory' as a methodological frame for the study of Moroccan media elites. This notion is useful because "field research [...] calls for the examination of 'institutional logics': the simultaneous analysis of social structures and cultural forms, as well as the complex interplay between the two" (Benson and Neveu, 2005, p. 12). A field "may be viewed as a microcosm that brings agents and institutions engaged in the production of whatever that particular field produces" (Najar, 2007, p. 5). Bourdieu defines it as "a network, a configuration, of objective relations between positions" and explains that a field has a social position within larger power structures and hierarchies (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 96-97; p. 104). Hence, field theory allows me to look at Moroccan media elites as both producers of media content with their own institutional structures, regulations, and work routines and as a dominated fraction of the highest institution of power in Morocco: the King. Using this framework, I am also able to examine media elites' tastes, attitudes, and practices (what Bourdieu calls "habitus") as determined by their position in these two spheres of power: cultural production and the Moroccan Makhzen. Although Bourdieu focused on national fields of power, rising scholars have argued and shown that different national fields can in fact be interconnected in the era of globalization (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Benson & Saguy, 2005; Najar, 2007; Benson, 2010). By scrutinizing how the Moroccan media field is connected to the French media field, I will build on this scholarship by presenting a complex picture of institutional hybridization in which national, post-colonial, and global forces all play a role.

My research for this chapter focused on the main Moroccan media institutions: the two state-owned television companies, the National Corporation for Radiodiffusion and Television (Société Nationale de Radiodiffusion et de Television, SNRT) and Soread-2M; the Ministry of Communication (Ministère de la Communication); the Moroccan Center for Cinematography (Centre Cinématographique Marocain, CCM), an institution in charge of the financing and promotion of Moroccan cinema); Marocmetrie (the Moroccan ratings agency); the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle, HACA, the Moroccan equivalent of the FCC, a regulatory organization for television practices); and the (now closed) Moroccan branch of the network Al Jazeera. (For more details about the media organizations included in my research, see Appendix A).

In these institutions, I interviewed 10 high-level representatives who belonged to the Moroccan upper-class and intelligentsia. Some of these interviewees were spokespersons for their organizations and public figures; others were at the top of the hierarchy in their institutions and were able to make important decisions affecting media policy at the national level; and, finally, others were in high positions within their organizations without necessarily being at the very top of the organizational hierarchy. During the interviews, I tried not only to assess these individuals' visions of the organizations in question, but I also tried to understand their life stories, professional trajectories, and statuses in two fields of power: their institution and Moroccan society as a whole.

I have chosen to maintain the anonymity of my respondents given that the testimonies and materials I gathered ended up being more political than I originally

intended when I first started this project. Because there is still a high level of censorship in the film and television industry and in Moroccan society at large, it is hard to know in advance if people's statements will or will not be held against them. I did, however, feel that I had a responsibility to be truthful to my respondent's experiences, so I decided to leave their names out, but I did not omit the information they gave me in their testimonies.

In addition to these interviews with media elites, I observed the structures and work routines of the aforementioned Moroccan media institutions. I spent significant time in the institutions themselves to get a sense of the spaces and organizational structures. I also met with other employees who work under the supervision of my interviewees. I also met media professionals outside of the confines of the institutions when I was invited to the festival of Khouribga (Morocco). In Khouribga, I stayed in the same hotel as many of the key players in the Moroccan media industry and shared bus rides with them from event to event. I also attended conferences and roundtables, where media elites served as speakers. This festival not only allowed me to reconnect with some of my interviewees but also facilitated an understanding of how these various institutions and players relate to one another (for more details on the festivals and roundtables I attended, see Appendix B).

Finally, in each of the places I visited I collected brochures and leaflets detailing the mission, goals, and structures of all the aforementioned media institutions. I also searched online to find additional information about the laws that were enacted by these institutions to regulate media practices. For example, I analyzed the decree detailing the missions of the Ministry of Communication, the dahir (royal act) justifying the creation

of the High Authority of Audiovisual Communication, the dahir regulating audiovisual communication practices in Morocco, the decree detailing the attributions of the national television networks, and the specifications concerning the allocation of funds through the Moroccan Center for Cinematography. Through a combination of testimonies, observations, institutional data, and legal documents, I was able to render a picture of the field and the position of media elites in those institutions and in Moroccan society.

As I was conducting this research, the various interconnections with the French media field became apparent, and I started actively comparing the Moroccan and French media fields to gauge the extent to which media elites relied on the French media model. Having previous existing knowledge of France and its media structures, I was able to identify these connections very quickly. I worked in the French television industry for two years, first as a production assistant for a series of documentaries, then as an assistant commissioning editor in one of France's state-owned television networks (the French-German cultural network, Arte). To draw comparisons, I relied on this knowledge and analyzed the institutional data and legal documents coming from France's corresponding media institutions, which quite tellingly have names that served as models for naming the Moroccan institutions. These institutions were the French Ministry of Communication (Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication), the Audiovisual Superior Counsel (the regulatory media institution called Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel, CSA), Mediametrie (the French ratings agency), the National Center for Cinematography (Centre National de la Cinematographie, CNC), and France Televisions (the conglomerate of state-owned television networks). (For more details on the brochures, legal documents, and Internet sites I analyzed, see Appendix C)

Collecting the data for this chapter could have been a challenging endeavor. Given the degree of censorship in Morocco, I thought it would be extremely difficult to access this population of media elites. I was fortunate that media elites have often held positions as academics at some point in their career and have high respect for scholarly research. Similarly, my status as foreign researcher helped me to gain access to places that Moroccan non-elites rarely have access to given that the state intelligentsia is cautious to maintain social hierarchies within the country. Finally, it helped tremendously that I had worked in the media industry in France for a cultural television network that those elites regarded highly.

Post-Colonial Encounters: Junctures with the French Media Field

Why Elites Seek Interconnectedness with France

Media elites have various motivations and reasons for seeking interconnectedness with the former colonial power. First, their personal biographies and their own personal connections with France play an important role. Most of my interviewees are Moroccan men between 55 and 65 years old. Therefore, they have lived long enough either to have experienced colonial rule firsthand as children or to have witnessed its long-lasting influence. As educated elites, they received their education in French and, in some cases, even received additional training or work experience in France. For example, one of my respondents was born under the French protectorate. He received his education in French, and went on to become a high-level representative of a television network in Morocco. He later travelled to France and worked in the French television industry. When he finally returned to Morocco, he was offered an even higher position within the media industry than the one he previously occupied.

Media elites nurture their relationship with France not only because of their personal connections with the former colonial power but also because they have a desire to maintain dominant status as elites in Morocco. France is viewed as a symbol of high cultural capital in wealthy intellectual circles. Speaking French, talking about French cinema, and exhibiting a taste for French culture in general are markers of high class status and symbols of taste ‘distinction’ in Bourdieusian terms. Bourdieu has written extensively about ‘taste’ and has shown how the upper classes use ‘taste’—or their own perceptions of what good taste ought to be—as a means to distinguish themselves from other socioeconomic groups (1993, 1996). Bourdieu has also shown that this ‘taste’ is molded by the cultural capital these elites have acquired over the years, that is to say, the education, knowledge, and skills that they have acquired in their own social circles and that give them a higher status in society (1986). In the Moroccan context, elites use their knowledge of France as a way to assert their cultural capital. Examples referencing France abound in the Moroccan public sphere and in my own data. For example, in an interview with a journalist, Ahmed Ghazali, the president of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication, was asked to name his favorite TV program. He responded with, “C’est dans l’air,” a French show. Similarly, when I visited a prestigious school that trains the future elites of the country, I was given the chance with the director. The walls of his office were placarded with posters of illustrious French films, and he was watching the French cultural television network Arte. Whether this was a genuine portrayal of his daily activities or a well-crafted *mise-en-scène* was unclear, but in any case his many nonverbal references to France were instruments of status conferral. Finally, at a roundtable on “Film Production in Morocco” at the International Festival of ‘Auteur’

Cinema in Rabat, a university professor and expert on cinema regularly invited on television shows started his intervention with the following words: “I re-watched Jean-Luc Godard’s *Histoires de Cinéma* the other day and I was profoundly moved. He is really the greatest cineaste in this world, a philosopher, an artist... I understood why cinema was important.” His overt reference to French cinema to begin a discussion on the state of Moroccan film production is yet another example of how media elites use their knowledge of French culture as a way to display their expertise and their elite status.

However, the relationship that characterizes Moroccan media elites and the French media field is also one of institutional convenience. After independence, the Moroccan government had a strong desire to establish the emerging nation through the creation of television stations to promote Moroccan national culture. Nonetheless, creating an entirely new television system was a huge undertaking, and looking at pre-existing models such as the French one was more convenient than reinventing the wheel. France already had a television system since 1949 (the RTF, Radiodiffusion et Television Française). In 1956, the date of Moroccan independence, the country was already equipped with 500,000 television sets. Therefore, when the Moroccan government created the TVM (which stands for Moroccan television and was the first Moroccan television network in 1962), they borrowed many structures from the French television system. In addition, when creating new media institutions, the elites’ proficiency in French made it extremely easy for them to read, understand, and borrow some of the legal language used by the French. My respondents were very clear when they stated that “our model is a French one” and “We tried to do like in France. In 1956, at the time, we had no film schools or media programs. A lot of students were sent to France and other

European countries and they came back with their know-how.” Additionally, the trend of using the former colonial power as a model has continued, according to a television executive I interviewed: “Before, we used to buy films and series from abroad. When we started working on our own productions. We did not reinvent the wheel; we looked at what happens elsewhere, like in France for example.”

The interconnectedness with the French media field is not only a product of a willingness to seek successful models in the past—reviving Morocco’s own colonial past in the process—but it is also a purported attempt to achieve a better future, one of democratization achieved through neo-liberalism and political pluralism. As stated, Morocco is under pressure from the international community widely and from Moroccan citizens to democratize its media system, and two of its perceived flaws are the following: 1) All of the television stations are under the strict control of the state, and this state monopoly prevents the free circulation of capital and ideas. 2) The media system is in the hands of the Makhzen and, as such, fails to represent the cultural and political diversity of Moroccan citizens. To address these two critiques and counterbalance the power of the state, media elites have deliberately decided to infuse their current politics with “neo-liberalism—a political ideology that is committed to a market economy as the best allocator of resources and wealth in a society” (Coburn, 2000) and with political pluralism—a normative perspective in modern politics that emphasizes the importance for democracy and liberty of maintaining a plurality of relatively autonomous political and economic organizations (Russell, 2007). As Chakrabarty (2000) and Ivison (2002) argue, the principles of economic liberalism and egalitarian political pluralism are at the core of a Western discourse of Enlightenment and modernity that has become a global

lingua franca. Thus, it is no surprise that the media elites would use the vocabulary of neo-liberalism and political pluralism incessantly to prove to the world and to themselves that they are now on par with ‘modern’ democracies. Neo-liberalism emerged as a central theme in my interviews: “Here in Morocco, we embrace the challenge of change and modernization” and “the media were the government; the state was in charge for 45 years. We want to break this logic; the media are first and foremost an instrument of democracy; we want to open the audiovisual space to private entrepreneurs,” “Mohammed VI is on the path to audiovisual liberation through the liberalization of television structures and the creation of new private stations.” Egalitarian political pluralism was also a central theme in my interviews: “We want to preserve the political, cultural, and linguistic diversity of Morocco. We are liberalizing, creating a new culture, which guarantees pluralism, and gives every party—even those in the opposition—a right to speak. Pluralism imposes that they have a right of response.”

However, it is important to stress that Moroccan elites are not choosing to model their media system after a Western model of political and economic modernity generally; in fact, more specifically, they have made a very conscious choice to model their system after the French one. Not all Western countries combine elements of neo-liberalism and political pluralism. As Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue in their book “Comparing Media Systems”, there are striking differences within the Western world itself. The “North Atlantic” or “liberal media” model, for example, comprised of countries like Britain, the United States, Canada, and Ireland, is market dominated and characterized by strong liberalism and a weaker welfare state. Historically, most of these countries tend to have a more narrow range of parties and media discourses. In contrast, the “Mediterranean” or

“polarized pluralist” media model, comprised of countries like France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and France, is characterized by strong state intervention (even though it does not preclude liberalism) and organized pluralism, with a strong role given to political parties. In their quest for modernization and democratization, it is not surprising that media elites would gravitate towards a media model that allows them to maintain a high level of state intervention while being able to introduce elements of liberalism at the same time. Once again, France and its “Mediterranean” media model become appealing in the Moroccan context.

My research reveals that the Moroccan media institutions are clearly modeled after their French counterparts. In most cases, these Moroccan institutions have similar names and missions and use the same editorial guidelines and terminology as the French institutions. In the following section, I first lay out all the similarities between Moroccan and French institutions as well as the many efforts for cooperation and knowledge exchange. Afterward, in the following section, I focus on the disjunctures from the French media model. I will show how—in practice—French media structures and work routines are not only retrieved but also changed and adapted in the Moroccan context to allow for the King’s unconditional control of the media through censorship.

Similarities between Moroccan and French Institutions

Moroccan Ministry of Communication / French Ministry of Culture and Communication

Take the Moroccan Ministry of Communication, for example. If we compare it to the French Ministry of Culture and Communication (specifically the DGMIC, the subunit that deals with media and communication), striking similarities emerge. For example, the two institutions have similar stated goals. The French ministry states on the DGMIC

website that its mission is “to participate in the elaboration and execution of state policy in favor of audiovisual action” (Direction Générale des Medias et des Industries Culturelles, 2008). In very similar terms, the Moroccan ministry states that its goal is “to prepare and execute governmental policy in all the communication domains” (Ministère de la Communication, 2008).

High Authority for Audiovisual Communication / French Superior Audiovisual Counsel

Likewise, the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication, another important media institution in Morocco, is clearly modeled after its French counterpart: the Audiovisual Superior Counsel. The Audiovisual Superior Counsel was created in France in 1989 as “an independent administrative unit to protect audiovisual communication freedom” (Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel, n.d.-a). It aims to counterbalance the power of the state by nominating members that hold positions in the boards of trustees of all public institutions and by allowing them to make decisions with the government regarding important decisions. In addition, the Audiovisual Superior Counsel is a regulatory media institution that allocates frequencies to private radio stations, authorizes the creation of new television channels (analog and satellite), ensures that radio and television stations follow a set of legal rules, makes sure that political pluralism is respected by giving all political candidates the same amount of air time, and protects young audiences. In other words, economic liberalism and political pluralism are two of the most important goals of the organization.

In a climate of democratization in which the Moroccan government is trying to break away from the monopoly of the state by creating new private television and radio stations and by allowing opposition voices to speak out, it is no surprise that an

organization like the French Audiovisual Counsel would be emulated in the Moroccan context. The Moroccan High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle, HACA), created in 2002, has the exact same goals and functions. On the brochure defining the role of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication, one reads that the institution is also “an independent administrative unit, which regulates and aims to break the monopoly of the state, through its right of consultation and opinion and through the execution of its principles” (Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle, 2007, p. 6). Similarly, its functions are the following: “authorize the creation of private companies for audiovisual communication; granting licenses and authorizations for radio and television stations; defining their rights and obligations; ensuring that radio and television stations follow legal rules and regulations” (Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle, 2007, p. 8). The two institutions not only use the same vocabulary and terminology in the description of their functions, but they also have very similar founding principles. On the French side one reads, “We ensure that our fundamental principles are respected by services of audiovisual communication: the dignity of the human person; the plurality of thoughts and opinions; the protection of childhood and adolescence; the absence of hatred and violence regarding sexual, cultural, and religious orientations” (Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel., n.d.-f). On the Moroccan side, one reads that the values of the High Authority are “pluralism, diversity, honesty and objectivity of information” (Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle, p. 6) as well as “the respect of the human person and his/her dignity, protection of childhood and adolescence, and deference to codes and professional ethics” (Royaume du Maroc, 2002, p. 9). With the exception of

the mention of objectivity and professional ethics, the main values of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication are copied nearly verbatim from the French institutional documents.

Moroccan and French Television Networks

Strong similarities also exist between the French and Moroccan television networks. The television executives and managers I interviewed describe the same steps to green-light a television project and use the exact same terms as the ones used in French networks: the receipt of scenarios, the gathering of a special commission of personalities who select the most deserving ones (“La Commission de Programmes,” often called “CP” in its abbreviated version), the constitution of a budget (*devis de production*), the final contract, the production phase, and the final product in the form of a tape (the *Prêt à Diffuser*, often called “PAD” in its abbreviated version, which means “Ready to Broadcast”).

Although some elements of the overall structure and ownership of the Moroccan media system still differ from the French media system, they are currently in the process of being remodeled ‘in a French way.’ For example, all the national television networks in Morocco (1-Al Oula, 2-2M, 3-Arriyadiya, 4-Arrabia, 5-Al Maghribiya, 6-Assadissa, and 7-Aflam TV) are currently owned and operated by the state. All these national networks fall under the umbrella of a state organization called the SNRT, the “National Society for Television and Radiodiffusion.” In France, the situation is a bit different. A similar type of state organization exists in the form of “France Televisions,” a consortium of five state-owned television networks, but France also has three strong private networks, TF1, M6, and Canal+, as well as a collection of new smaller private networks

on the digital bandwidth. To demonstrate a good-faith effort to democratize and liberalize its system, Morocco purportedly seeks to allow the creation of private networks. The goal is to achieve a media system ‘a la Française,’ with strong state television and private networks coexisting.

Marocmetrie / Mediametrie

Marocmetrie is another media institution that was created in the context of the democratization of the media system in Morocco. The royal palace and the government believed that if Morocco was moving towards economic liberalization of its media system—with the possible creation of private networks and the rise of advertising as a means of support for these new networks—there had to be a national ratings organization that would assess the scope and size of the viewership for each network and program. A ratings organization would locate audiences so that advertisers could place their ads in these new private networks and would allow the government to reliably measure who exactly and how many people watch the national networks. Marocmetrie was created in 2005 to serve these various purposes. It was modeled after a French ratings company that has existed since 1985, Mediametrie. Actually, the link between Marocmetrie and its French counterpart Mediametrie is even more explicit than any other Moroccan and French institutions because Marocmetrie is actually a branch of the French company itself. As a representative of the organization explained during an interview, Moroccan authorities issued an international call for bids, asking foreign companies and investors to devise a plan for the creation of a Moroccan national ratings company. The Moroccan authorities chose the French company Mediametrie among a variety of candidates, such as the American giant Nielsen AGB, the German GFK group, and the Moroccan

Creargie. Mediametrie owns the majority of Marocmetrie and brings its audience measurement techniques and work routines directly to Morocco.

Moroccan Center for Cinematography / French National Center for Cinematography

The Moroccan Center for Cinematography (CCM) is the only institution that dates back to the time of the French protectorate. It was created in 1944 and mainly served the function of funding and promoting Moroccan cinema. As a Moroccan journalist puts it,

France wanted Morocco to be the Hollywood of the Arab world and wanted to fight the influence of Egyptian cinema, which was considered to be hostile to the French presence in Morocco. They had to stop the spread of popular Arab cinema and culture. It was therefore a cultural battle that gave rise to multiple productions unfortunately marked by the colonial ideology of the time, even if the majority of the films were in Moroccan Arabic with Moroccan actors. (Bennani, 2011, January 31)

After independence, the Moroccan Center for Cinematography continued to fund and to promote Moroccan cinema, but because the institution was growing and the French were gone, there was a need to develop legal regulations, to establish work routines, and to create a new generation of writers and directors. For all these purposes, many students were sent to the prestigious film school “IDHEC” in France, and upon their return they integrated into the Moroccan Center for Cinematography, where they brought French know-how to the Moroccan institution (Boughaba, 2011). Not surprisingly, over the years, the French National Center for Cinematography (CNC) became a model for the Moroccan institution. Today, the Moroccan Center for Cinematography uses the exact same terminology as that used by the National Center for Cinematography to describe its mission. On the websites of both institutions, one reads in similar terms that the principal goals are supporting film production, promoting our

cinema abroad, regulating by giving authorizations, usage visas, etc. (Centre National de la Cinématographie, 2008; Centre Cinématographique Marocain, n.d.-a). Similarly, it is clear that the Moroccan Center for Cinematography has chosen to use the same mechanisms as the ones used in France to fund cinema production. To protect French culture from being swept away by global market forces, the government has heavily invested in cultural products of all kinds, including cinema. The idea that state subsidies should fund artistic creation is often referred to as ‘the French cultural exception.’ In many ways, the National Center for Cinematography is a vessel for the expression of French cultural expression because the institution ensures that French-produced films receive a high percentage of their funding from state subsidies. These state subsidies come from the National Center for Cinematography, which collects a tax on the price of all movie tickets sold in France and redistributes this money to producers in the form of an ‘avance sur recettes’ (advance on benefits) recovered from subsequent box office receipts. In addition to this ‘automatic’ mechanism, the National Center for Cinematography offers additional and competitive sources of funding, such as support for writing and rewriting a script, for example.

The Moroccan Center for Cinematography adopted the model of the ‘French cultural exception’ and retrieved it in the Moroccan context. A representative of the organization explained to me, the system of the ‘avance sur recettes’ was adopted in 2004, even though in Morocco it is not funded by a tax on movie ticket sales but by the government directly. Similarly, the organization created the same types of additional competitive awards as those of the French institution. For example, support for the writing and rewriting of screenplays, an award for quality, etc. It also adopted the same

system of a commission to decide which films deserve to be awarded the specific types of awards available. This commission was given the exact same name in Morocco as the one that currently exists in France, “la Commission du Fond d’Aide,” and like its counterpart, it is composed of a dozen personalities from the arts, the government, and the various administrations of the institution. Clearly, the media structures in Morocco closely follow the French model.

International Cooperation and Knowledge Exchange

In addition to the numerous similarities between the structures of French and Moroccan media institutions, there is also a great degree of international cooperation and exchange between media elites and workers in France and in Morocco. French media institutions regularly send some of their employees to train people in Morocco. The motive is consistent with a ‘civilizing mission’ of the former colonial power. First, French elites perpetuate the colonial gaze by promoting their republican model and institutions as a universal ideal to former colonies. For example, the French Audiovisual Council regularly sends its employees to other countries, including Morocco, to “promote the French model of regulation and strengthen its ties with other authorities of regulation” (Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel, 2011). The institution also participates in the Francophone network of media regulation (REFRAM), which is a good way to connect with former colonies and to promote the French model.

Second, French elites continue to invest in the former colonies and benefit from a certain level of economic dependency. Marocmetrie, for example, is first and foremost an economic venture for France, with approximately 70% of the shares belonging to Mediametrie and the other French companies who have invested in it, Metricline and the

CSA and CMS Institutes (this information was given by a representative at Marocmetrie). This economic involvement in the media industry is symptomatic of a wider trend of French investments in various sectors of the Moroccan economy. To give a few examples outside of the media field, the French construction companies Alstom and TGV have invested in the construction of the tramway in Casablanca and the high-speed train in Rabat, respectively. Similarly, the French phone giant France Telecom owns shares of Meditel, the second mobile phone operator in Morocco. Although the monarchy presents these investments as paths to the development of Morocco, it is clear that for France, they are nothing more than opportunities for financial gain and the continued dependency of the former colony.

Finally, French media elites use former colonies such as Morocco to test new techniques and products before introducing them to France, which is again consistent with a colonial approach, as shown by Ann Stoler (1995). For example, Mediametrie introduced a new audience measurement technique called Watermarking: “This technology involves inserting a mark inaudible to the human ear into programmes. This mark contains the identification of the channel which broadcasts the programme and the regular broadcast time markers. The audimeters installed in panellists' homes can then recognize this information” (Mediametrie, n.d.-e). Once the technique was proven to be effective, it was adopted in France.

French elites are willing to promote their media system in Morocco, and Moroccan elites are also very willing to adopt it. Therefore, most Moroccan media institutions have also organized many trips to the headquarters of French institutions or hosted French delegations so that their employees could benefit from the knowledge of

French professionals. For example, the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication has always been in close contact with the Audiovisual Superior Counsel, and many of its employees have visited the institution. One of the brochures of the High Authority recounts the multiple visits: “Several work visits and training cycles have been organized for the Authority’s executives to visit the French Audiovisual Superior Counsel, especially during the installation phase and the start of the activities of the High Authority” (Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle, 2009b, p. 8). Moreover, “In October 2005, the president and the CEO of the High Authority went to the Audiovisual Superior Counsel for a work visit, in order to learn about the French experience regarding audiovisual regulation” (Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle, 2009b, p. 2), and “In 2007, a delegation of the High Authority went to the Audiovisual Superior Counsel to benefit from the rich experience of this institution in terms of the implementation of political pluralism” (Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle, 2009b, p. 8). Similarly, the Moroccan television network RTM regularly invites French scholars and professors from the French National Audiovisual Institute (INA) to come to Morocco to train its screenwriters, directors, and assistant directors, according to a network executive at the SNRT. When coupled with attempts to assert the power of the Moroccan monarchy and government through media censorship (as will be shown in the following section), these multiple efforts to mimic and communicate with French institutions allow a specific form of institutional French-Moroccan hybridity to emerge.

Asserting the Nation through Censorship: Disjunctures from the French Model

The institutional hybridity that characterizes Moroccan institutions and the lived

experience of media elites go far beyond a mixture of French and Moroccan influences broadly. Specifically, what goes into the mixture is a sense of French institutionalism, as shown in the previous section, combined with a willingness to assert the power of the Moroccan nation-state, as will be shown in this section. In the process, media elites do not necessarily seek to infuse the media system with local specificities and with Moroccan cultural diversity as a whole as much as they are seeking to represent their particular interests as a small and dominant section of the population. The assertion of the dominant national culture in the Moroccan media system is achieved by retrieving the French media system and tweaking it to ensure the power of the Makhzen and with it the two pillars of Moroccan power, the King and the nation. Of course, these elites face a major challenge in the process: They still must ‘appear’ democratic and show efforts to grant media makers and citizens in general freedom to express their grievances, but truly, they have no reason to want anything to change at this point, and they are afraid that any additional freedom would compromise their supremacy. As a result, through a series of mechanisms that will be described in this section, they engage in camouflaged politics that ensure the perpetuation of censorship with the simulacra of Western (more specifically French) democracy.

These camouflaged politics happen in subtle ways. At the structural level, institutions themselves counterbalance one another. Thus, for example, as will be shown, although the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication seems outwardly ‘democratic’ and grants media makers a certain amount of freedoms, the Ministry of Communication is a more repressive organization that can remove rights at any time. Similarly, although the Moroccan Center for Cinematography seems to encourage the

production of uncensored films that push the boundaries of Moroccan society, the national television networks that have a much larger viewership are more tightly controlled and censored. Moreover, camouflaged politics are also apparent in the legal documents issued by these institutions. Although the language of French institutions is widely used to describe the goals and missions of Moroccan media organizations, clauses restricting citizens' freedom and asserting the dominance of the palace are also commonly found in these documents (even if they are often buried in the middle and therefore concealed from the public eye). Finally, omissions are as important as what is actually written in legal documents. Important legal regulations that protect the rights of citizen to express themselves through the media are included in French documents but omitted in the Moroccan context.

For example, in a decree detailing its various missions, the Ministry of Communication claims to be an organization whose function is "to promote the image of Morocco and its project of modern and democratic society inside and outside of the country" (Ministère de la Communication, 2008, p. 4). For this purpose, the institution uses some of the same language as that used by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, which was discussed in the previous section. However, there are notable differences between the French and Moroccan institutions. Looking closely, one can quickly notice that compared with its French counterpart, the Moroccan institution is much more focused on media surveillance. The Moroccan decree specifies that the Ministry of Communication "designs and executes governmental communication and analyzes its consequences in the press," "sets up surveillance mechanisms and organizes communication in times of crises," "reinforces the action of the government by informing

and raising awareness” (Ministère de la Communication, 2008, p. 4), “studies how the government is perceived and executes its action,” “collects all the elements of information relevant to analyze the image of Morocco in international media,” and “collects, processes, and safeguards documents and databases concerning institutions, the social and economic sectors, and national and international events, which appeared in the press or in periodical national or foreign publications” (Ministère de la Communication, 2008, p. 5). Clearly, all these legal clauses allow the government to monitor closely what is said in the media about the royal palace, the state, the government, and all Moroccan institutions. Additionally, even though there is absolutely no mention of censorship in the decree, the institution uses all the information collected as a means to enforce censorship. For example, the Ministry of Communication conducted a comprehensive assessment of Al Jazeera’s news reports and programs in Morocco and found that its coverage “seriously distorted Morocco’s image and manifestly damaged its interests, most notably its territorial integrity”—an allusion to Western Sahara, a territory in dispute between Morocco and the Algerian-backed Polisario Front (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2010). As a result, the Ministry of Communication suspended Al Jazeera’s reporting in Morocco and shut down the Moroccan branch of the network in Rabat in late October 2010.

Although the Moroccan Ministry of Communication is in many ways outwardly authoritarian, the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication is supposed to act as a democratic mechanism of checks and balances. Creating a new institution modeled after a French regulatory organization and infused with principles of political pluralism and economic liberalism was a supposed attempt to break the monopoly of the state and one

of its main agents: the Ministry of Communication. The rhetoric for creating the High Authority was an intelligent one. Denying the existence of any censorship in Morocco would be too great a leap of faith for anyone, so the High Authority does not claim that censorship never existed. Instead, the High Authority plays the card of transparency and argues that there is censorship in Morocco but that the very existence of their organization progressively debunks it, creating a break from the past. In the words of a representative of the organization “Before 2004, there was no regulation, the media used to be perceived as an authoritarian. The media existed for and through the state. There was the minister of Information at the Ministry of Communication, and everything was linked to the state.” Sentences indicating that the High Authority is an agent of change for democracy abound in the brochures and legal documents of the institution: “We have great hope that through the association of our talents and efforts, and through a real awareness of the role and place of the media in the national democratic life, our media landscape will rapidly reach the level of development our country deserves” (Royaume du Maroc, 2005, p. 17). In the dahir regulating audiovisual practices in Morocco (Royaume du Maroc, 2005), one finds a multitude of sentences emphasizing democracy, freedom, political pluralism, and economic liberalism, a language strongly reminiscent of that used in the legal documents issued by the French Audiovisual Counsel. However, buried on page 24, Article 9 states that “[radio and television] programs should not be detrimental to the dogmas of the Kingdom of Morocco, as defined by the constitution, including Islam, the territorial integrity of Morocco, and the Monarchy.” This brief yet telling line suggests not only that the High Authority is not a truly independent organization but also that it is not the instrument of democracy it claims to be.

There are many other indications that the High Authority is still entangled in the politics of the royal palace and that it still acts as the palace spokesman. First, the organization is 100% financed by the King: “We are a state institution financed by state funds. Our budget is actually approved by the King, and part of the budget of the royal court for accounting reasons. The funds are immediately transferred to an account that I created myself, under the name of the High Authority” (Ahmed Ghazali interviewed by Bennani, 2011). Second, Article 3 of the dahir justifying the creation of the High Authority stipulates that the institution can be “consulted by our majesty on any question that he may have regarding the audiovisual communication sector [and that it...] suggests to our majesty the names of personalities, whose nominations at the heads of public organizations in the audiovisual sector, depends on our majesty” (Royaume du Maroc, 2002, p. 2). Therefore, it appears that in reality the powers of the High Authority are extremely limited, and the organization is very tied to the palace and to the government.

In addition, some of the sentences in these legal documents seem innocuous but are in fact regularly used to enforce censorship in camouflaged ways. For example, Article 6 of the dahir regulating audiovisual practices states that “the High Authority can [...] modify the frequencies or blocks of frequencies attributed to operators of audiovisual communication when some technical constraints appear” (Royaume du Maroc, 2005, p. 23). Similarly, Article 40 states that “a modification of frequencies can be made if [...] their usage by the operator gave rise to technical difficulties” (Royaume du Maroc, 2005, p. 33). At first glance, these statements would not catch anyone’s attention. However, before the Ministry of Communication decided to shut down the Moroccan branch of the Arab network Al Jazeera, the ministry first tried to harm the

station in more subtle and concealed ways. It used these two articles focusing on ‘technical’ constraints as legal grounds to prevent Al Jazeera from broadcasting from Morocco.

In May 2008, the Moroccan branch of Al Jazeera was forbidden to air its daily news television bulletin covering the Maghreb countries because the network had imported ‘technical’ equipment to broadcast via satellite without supposedly asking for the right authorizations. However, in response, the Al Jazeera bureau started broadcasting using digital streaming of its news, a technology that uses the Internet and requires no authorizations, according to one of my respondents who was a representative Rabat Al Jazeera’s bureau. This time, the Moroccan authorities failed at their camouflaged attempt at censorship. It is worth noting that, although the French Audiovisual Counsel clearly specifies on its website that “the counsel is not an instrument of censorship: it never intervenes in television networks or radio stations’ decisions to broadcast a program” (Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel, n.d.-a), this statement is absent from the documentation issued by the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication, leaving the door open for censorship and democratic closures.

The Center for Moroccan Cinematography is also an organization that wants to appear democratic and is modeled after its French counterpart, the Center for National Cinematography. Unlike the Ministry of Communication and the High Authority, the Center is relatively successful in this endeavor. As representatives of the Center explained to me, the organization helps fund and promote films that push the boundaries of Moroccan society. Recently funded films such as *Casanegra*, about the poor and unemployed youth of Casablanca, Marock, about the upper-class youth of Casablanca,

Number One, a satire about gender roles in Morocco, and Veiled Love, the story of a religious, veiled married woman who has an affair, all transgress important taboos in Morocco: social inequalities, religion, sex, and gender roles (See Chapter Four, pp. 130-168). However, once again, these achievements must be put in perspective. In fact, the audience for these movies is rather limited. As of 2009, Morocco had only 37 theaters, with an overall capacity of 2 million viewers, for a population that counted roughly 32 million people (Lavrabre, 2009). Therefore, these films do not represent a real threat to the status quo in the eyes of the government. They are actually viewed as an asset, an opportunity to promote Morocco abroad as a country of freedom, where its filmmakers have the freedom to show and say whatever they want.

For this purpose, the Moroccan Center for Cinematography organizes many festivals every year, such as the International Film Festival of Marrakesh and the African Film Festival of Khouribga, showcasing Moroccan films on an international scale. It is also no coincidence that most of the films funded by the Moroccan Center for Cinematography are directed by young Moroccan emigrants who live outside of Morocco. As a representative of the center explained to me, “We invite the young Moroccans who live outside of Morocco to our festivals. The Moroccan beurs who live in France, but also Moroccans living in other countries like Belgium, Norway, etc. And they come back to work with us. This is a cinema that is 100% about Morocco.” This strategy allows Moroccan authorities to deny Moroccans living in Morocco the opportunities to break taboos on screen, while benefiting from the fact that Moroccan immigrants abroad will promote their films in their host countries. Consequently, the Center for Moroccan Cinematography is really a diplomatic tool for authorities. It is yet another way to

camouflage some of the real issues that the country faces with regard to censorship.

In contrast, the Makhzen elites have a much tighter grip over film production when it matters. Additionally, in the realm of television, where the number of potential domestic viewers is much higher than in cinema, it is in the elites' best interest to maintain absolute control over writers and film directors so that the status quo is maintained and the supremacy of the royal palace remains uncontested. As mentioned in the previous section, the various stages to get a film or television series approved and produced are modeled after the French television system. However, there is a way in which these methods are re-adapted to better fit the purposes of the royal palace. In the French case, the funding for a made-for-television film or television series comes from a variety of sources, including the television station itself but also the Center for National Cinematography and the production company. The variety of funding sources makes it harder for one constituent to have full control over the final product, and more weight is placed on the production company and the creative team itself to mediate between these various constituents. In the case of Moroccan telefilms and television series, the Moroccan Center for Cinematography does not provide any funding, and the role of the production company is more limited. There are two possible cases, and in both situations the state is fully in control. In the first, the production company acts as executive producer for a project that was fully commissioned by the television network. In this case, the production company provides financial resources and equipment, but the creative worth comes from the network. In the second case, the production company comes up with a project that gets approved by the network; the network will then provide the majority of the funds and will oversee the entirety of the production process until its

final stages. In both cases, the television network has full control over the outcome: it can mold the project as it is being written and produced and can also decide whether the final product is in line with the ideology of the state and, consequently, whether it should be aired.

The system in place is efficient at maintaining the status quo. It follows that the elites are nervous about what might happen when the project for the creation of new private television stations is realized. Private television networks would be funded by private parties, who could mitigate the power of the state in terms of production. Therefore, although there is a general movement towards approving the creation of new private television stations for a system that mixes public and private networks in the French way, the Makhzen elites are also largely hesitant. Of course, these hesitations are not publicly displayed, but facts speak for themselves. Initiatives to create private stations are generally debunked or continuously postponed. Already in 1989, the now-public television network 2M started as a private venture owned by the company SOREAD. After the network had financial difficulties in 1997, the state immediately bought the majority of the station's shares, and the network became a state-owned network like all the others. In 2006, in the context of media liberalization, the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication started a process of approval of new radio and television licenses, with the intention of creating 10 new private radio stations and one private television network. The High Authority kept its promise, but the results did not satisfy everyone. The television network that was approved, Medi 1 Sat, was a satellite information network with limited reach in Morocco and was in line with the French-Moroccan hybridity of Moroccan elites given that French and Moroccan shareholders

initially owned it (Bennani, 2011). In June 2008, the High Authority started a second wave of licenses, with plans to create two more private television networks, but to date, these plans have not come to fruition and have been consistently delayed. Clearly, all these data suggest that the Makhzen elites are resisting the very democratic changes that they purportedly seek to achieve so that they can maintain their status of supremacy in Moroccan society.

Leaving Everyone Else Out of It: The World is Perceived as a Threat

In the process of asserting the specific type of French-Moroccan hybridity discussed in the last two sections, Moroccan elites attempt—with no real success—to limit the influence of other foreign influences. Flea markets sell illegal copies of expensive satellite equipment for very low prices accessible to many Moroccans today; even those who live in very low-income areas have access to satellite TV. To the great dismay of the elites, satellite TV and the Internet have opened doors for citizens to watch television stations other than the state-owned networks. Although there is nothing that the elites and even the King himself can do to prevent people from watching foreign networks via satellite, actions are taken to try to control audiences. One tactic is to not publicize the success of satellite networks in Morocco. Marocmetrie, the ratings organization, measures ratings using a variety of methods: 1) the Watermarking technology (a signature sound inside a program that is detected by Marocmetrie, 2) “parallel studies” that assess three times a year (the summer, the Ramadan, and the rest of the year) which networks are the most watched, and 3) “declarative questionnaires” asking people to report every 15 minutes the network they have been watching. According to a representative of Marocmetrie I interviewed, these methods allow

authorities to gauge the viewership for both the national and the satellite networks.

However, the authorities and the press are generally eager to boast about the achievements of the state networks and are unwilling to admit the overwhelming success of foreign stations; they only report the ratings for the state networks. As a result, the Moroccan public is led to believe that Moroccan stations are still the most-watched stations.

In addition to the satellite and the Internet, strong illegal circuits of media dissemination—such as an illegal DVD industry—facilitate access to foreign media content, withdraw attention from local productions, and prevent the development of a viable DVD industry. At the African Film Festival of Khouribga, media elites gathered for a roundtable on “Piracy in the Cinema Industry” and used very harsh words to talk about the phenomenon. In his introduction, a high-level representative of the Moroccan Center for Cinematography, described piracy as “a hold-up on artistic creation” and “a financial catastrophe.” A representative of the Moroccan screenwriters’ guild said it was “a plague,” and another employee of the Moroccan Center for Cinematography said that piracy was “pure evil that had to be eradicated.” Media elites do not hide the fact that they are at war against the phenomenon: “We are inside of a war, a war for cultural space” said the moderator of the panel. As a result, they do not hesitate to implement strong punitive measures for those who engage in the illegal importation and dissemination of media content. For example, a man who printed 1.5 million illegal DVD covers per day and was in possession of 760,000 DVDs at the time of his arrest was sentenced to prison and condemned to pay an exorbitant fine of 8.3 million Dirhams (Information given by a representative of the Moroccan Association against Piracy during

the roundtable discussion). However, in spite of these strong punitive measures, the illegal DVD market continues to thrive partly because there is no legal DVD market at all in Morocco, and buying a ripped copy of a DVD is the only available solution in the current market. Elites recognize that at the present time, they are losing the battle against illegal circuits of media distribution. As a cinema owner puts it, “We are compelled to fight piracy with the rules it imposes on us. In the fight between the legal and the illegal, it is always the illegal that has the most power.”

There are various reasons for the elites’ resentment of foreign influences. One obvious reason is that they wish to assert their supremacy through the dissemination of state ideology and the rehashing of French colonial discourses, as shown in this chapter. If audiences stray from the national networks that carry this specific ideology, they are exposed to other viewpoints and possibly even to critiques of Moroccan monarchical power. This explains why Moroccan authorities loathe Arab networks like Al Jazeera. Satellite Arab networks are subject to censorship in their own countries, but they are generally free to discuss openly other Arab countries’ policies. Criticism of Morocco is frequent on these networks, and the information reported by them varies greatly from the information reported on Moroccan state-owned networks. Therefore, the Moroccan-French hybridity sought after by Moroccan elites excludes other foreign influences from neighboring North African and Arab countries.

There are other reasons for the defiance against foreign media. On the economic level, for example, American films and television series, Turkish soaps, and Latin American telenovelas represent immediate competition for Moroccan films and television series that really suffer in comparison. The production of Moroccan films and television

series represent an important financial (and ideological) investment for Moroccan authorities, and the investment does not bring many payoffs if audiences choose to watch productions from other countries instead. More generally, there is a sense among elites that they are losing control over citizens who choose to engage with media from other countries and in the process develop different ideologies of identity that contradict elite notions of national culture. At the roundtable on “Piracy in Moroccan Cinema,” a representative of the Screenwriters Guild, said in a sad voice, “Even borders are no longer of any use with the spread of the satellite and the ADSL.” This feeling leads to frenzied attempts to hold onto power through repressive measures and through the strengthening of the French-Moroccan ideology on state-owned networks that are still easy to control.

The Seeds of Dissent: A Problematic Form of Hybridity

French-Moroccan elite institutional hybridity is problematic on multiple levels. It merges two hegemonic discourses of supremacy: French colonial discourse and autocratic rule. Moreover, it uses these hegemonic discourses to create an image of democracy while making sure that citizens are denied civil rights. If authorities cannot prevent citizens from being exposed to different types of media and ideologies through their media exposure, they are still very efficient in their enforcement of censorship, and any deviation from these two hegemonic discourses is heavily punished. As a result, few voices are able to rise to denounce the monarchical system (the recent protests expressed a desire for more democracy but were not an attack against the King).

At the “Piracy in Moroccan Cinema,” a few individuals in the audience had the courage to criticize the pervasive influence of the former colonial power as well as the

Makhzen discourse of supremacy. Nonetheless, they were marginalized by the authorities, who answered them in a very expedited and somewhat rude way, and by audiences, who seemed to think these men were crazy and completely out of line to interrupt state representatives. For instance, a man wearing a djellaba (the traditional Moroccan robe) openly criticized in classical Arabic the use of the French language and the influence of the colonial power in Moroccan politics as follows:

A Moroccan salute to you; don't forget the language of the mothers who fed you. You speak a different language than they do. [...] It is a disgrace that in Morocco, which produced the great Andalusian civilization and gave birth to Ibn Roshd [an influential medieval philosopher], the Moroccan minister speaks in French and violates the Moroccan constitution. He should have respect for the Arabic language and make a translation in order to show respect for other world governments and the audiences present here from other countries. I have never seen a French minister or Zionist minister forgetting his native language. Former French president Francois Mitterrand used to say that France had a great chance to lead Africa to the path of progress and civilization and that the use of the French language facilitated the economic, cultural, and civil affiliation of our country. We cannot accept that (Translated from Arabic).

Obviously annoyed, the moderator (and also a high-level representative at the Moroccan Center for Cinematography) answered:

Those who have been following the festival from the beginning know that we always used a mixture of French and Arabic. However, we always have a problem with the use of the Arabic language in situations like these. So don't put pressure on us when we have no choice. Anyway, respecting our audience, we should always give them the priority to speak.

Thus, the intervention of this man was quickly brushed off, allowing the discussion to continue in French with no Arabic translation.

Following this exchange, a university professor and cinema critic also criticized the elites who were participating in the discussion: "I would like to underline the hypocrisy of the government! You are all criticizing and penalizing the citizens who buy

illegal DVD copies at Derb Gharef (a section of the Casablanca flea market, where illegal hi-fi equipment and DVDs are regularly sold), but is there a legal DVD market to start with?” Once again, Nour-Eddine Sail answered in a very rude tone and quickly changed subject. The intervention of this professor created an uproar in the audience, and everyone started talking to their immediate neighbors. Direct attacks against elites, especially if they are present, are rarely seen in Morocco because one could be quickly labeled an opponent of the state and sentenced to prison. More general forms of protests targeted at policies and not at particular elites are more widely accepted. My neighbor whispered, “I think this professor is really starting to lose it... What was he thinking? People are talking about him a lot, you know... He is definitely making powerful enemies.”

Clearly, the general public is aware that the form of Moroccan-French hybridity asserted by the elites is problematic and unrepresentative of the population; this is one reason they choose to direct their attention to foreign media. The seeds for dissent are present in the current media landscape, with some individuals brave enough to publicly denounce these discourses and a general population that is starting to protest and denounce the lack of truly democratic policies in Moroccan politics and media institutions. However, at the present time, the Makhzen and the elites who work for them still have the upper hand over the rest of the population because the system they have created and maintained over time is successful in enforcing censorship, as shown in this chapter. In addition, as Chapter Four will show, media workers (including writers, directors, and actors) who work directly under media elites often work in fear and therefore have a tendency to conform to the French-Moroccan hybrid discourse in order

to maintain their status. Similarly, as will be shown throughout the dissertation, audiences mentally escape this discourse through their exposure to foreign media but avoid public criticism of the national networks because they are afraid it will be perceived as criticism of the King and the Makhzen (something that authorities would punish heavily). As a result, despite mitigating forces such as alternative voices on satellite television and the international and national pressure placed on Morocco to democratize media structures, the media system today remains primarily a top-down model that reinforces social inequalities between elites and non-elites.

Concluding Remarks

As this chapter has shown, the media field in Morocco is characterized by two simultaneous trends. On the one hand, the Moroccan media industry seeks linguistic, cultural, economic, and legal connections to the French media industry to serve a variety of purposes, such as increased cultural capital for the elites working in media institutions, the institutional convenience of borrowing structures and legal frameworks already used elsewhere, and a continued relationship with the former colonial power. On the other hand, the Moroccan media industry also re-adapts and re-shapes these media structures borrowed from France to inscribe Moroccan local specificities and, above all, to ensure that the interests of the monarchy are preserved through media censorship. As a result, the Moroccan media field is inherently hybrid, and this chapter powerfully represents the process of hybridization in post-colonial institutions.

In addition, the chapter provides many insights that help to refine current and existing theories of hybridization. It shows that hybridity is not a term that can be discussed generally by assuming that everyone is hybrid or that everyone is hybrid in the

same way. Different individuals will form different types of hybridities through their media exposure, and class and personal biographies are major factors in determining which cultural influences will go into the mixture. Although Moroccan elites gravitate towards a specific form of post-colonial hybridity that revives the French colonial power and asserts the supremacy of the nation-state, other individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds in Morocco form other types of hybridities (this will be explored in more detail in the following chapters).

In addition to the finding that class and personal biographies structure hybridity, the chapter also reveals that hybridity serves a variety of political and ideological purposes. On the one hand, Moroccan elites adopt the democratic discourse of the ex-colonizer as a political rhetoric of modernity while maintaining sovereign power and authoritarian rule through censorship in the media. On the other hand, as suggested in this chapter and further developed in the remainder of the dissertation, audiences often use television drama from other Arab countries, Turkey, and the United States as a way to create alternative forms of hybridity and as a form of passive political resistance against the hegemonic discourses of the Makhzen.

Because there are a variety of different hybridities and because they are often politically charged, they are bound to enter into friction with one another even if they exist in a system of codependency. For example, the media production and reception chain is a circular one, with producers providing media content that audiences may choose to engage with or not, which provides a feedback loop to producers. Even when audiences react in opposition to the producers by seeking alternative and foreign media sources, they are still conditioned by producers in the sense that their reaction is to a

certain extent a function of their disapproval of what they are offered in the first place on the national state-owned networks.

As friction between elites and non-elites becomes increasingly apparent and pronounced not only in Morocco but in many other countries in the Arab world, the future of Moroccan institutions, including media institutions, is unclear. Following the protests of civilians tired of authoritarian regimes in many Arab countries, including Tunisia and Egypt, protests in Morocco have also emerged. Although the protests were of a smaller scale than in Tunisia or Egypt (the monarchy is still largely respected by the population), the King and his Makhzen elites are anxious and taking initiatives to calm the population. Mohammed VI recently made a televised announcement on March 9, 2011, announcing a constitutional reform to ensure democracy and to give citizens more individual freedoms. The reform will ensure, among other things, a separation of powers with an independent judicial branch, free elections for parliament seats, a prime minister nominated by the political party that won the general elections, and reinforcement of the prime minister's powers. Whether the political reform will be successful depends on how well it will be implemented on the ground. This chapter on media institutions suggests that in Morocco at present, political reform is unfortunately more a game of appearances and camouflaged politics than it is a movement of real and significant change.

CHAPTER FOUR: MOROCCO IN 'REEL' LIFE: PICTURE(S) OF DEMOCRACY?

The death of King Hassan II in 1999 marked the end of a long period of repression for political opponents of the regime, known as the 'Lead Years,' (1963-1999), and a time of significant censorship for Moroccan filmmakers. During the Lead Years, filmmakers had to abide by the rules of the palace and project a peaceful image of Morocco. Therefore, most filmmakers avoided contentious topics such as structural inequalities between the rich and the poor and between men and women. They also ignored topics that had the potential to subvert traditional cultural values regarding issues such as women's sexuality or views of Islam. Finally, films could not be critical of the monarchy and the state. In the past decade, Moroccan films and, to a smaller extent, television series have broken some of these taboos in Moroccan society by questioning gender roles, presenting sexuality on screen, showing social inequalities, and offering alternative views of Islam based on Moroccans' lived experiences.

Analyses of the post—Lead Year films claim that Moroccan cinema has broken new ground since 1999 by integrating a social-realist style born out of the worldwide revolutionary Third Cinema movement of the 1960s and '70s. This movement blossomed in many post-colonial burgeoning independent nations as filmmakers wanted to draw attention to the injustices of colonization and to the hardships of the local populations, and they desired to use the "power of film as a social-realist tool to encourage change in society" (Carter, 2000, p. 67).

Scholars of Moroccan media such as Dwyer (2004, 2007), Carter (2000, 2009), and Orlando (2011) argue that Moroccan filmmakers were highly influenced by this genre throughout the post-colonial Lead Years but were unable to engage with this

cinematic style until after Hassan II and his ‘iron fist’ were officially out of the picture. They view the ascent of his (more liberal) son Mohammed VI to the throne as liberation for Moroccan cinema and claim that “since 1999, films have probed societal realities of contemporary Morocco, unfettered and uncensored” or that they are “significantly more critical and candid about Moroccan socio-cultural and political issues than in the past (Orlando, 1999, p. XII). Finally, they state, “In the past, cinema was constrained by the government fears at the time...officials allowed much less experimentation and innovation in films” (Carter, 2000, p. 68, quoting Derkaoui). Moroccan state elites sing the same tune: “In the past, the media were based on an authoritarian model. The media existed only for and through the state. There was the minister, the minister of information, and everything was linked to the state, not anymore” (Statement from one of my respondents: a representative of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication). In other words, there is consensus around the idea that the Moroccan film industry broke free of the state censorship of the Lead Years and positively reformed itself as a social-democratic tool in the past 15 years through the exercise of both realism and critique in its cinema.

In this chapter, I argue that although Moroccan films and series show previously forbidden images on Moroccan screens, they actually fall short of the aforementioned scholars’ excessive praise. Through a textual analysis of the five most popular films and television series in the years 2009 and 2010, *Casanegra*, *Marock*, *Number One*, *Veiled Love*, and *Lalla Fatima*, as well as interviews with 12 Moroccan filmmakers, producers, and critics, I show that contemporary Moroccan films are much more contradictory than the scholarship suggests.

The analysis reveals that Moroccan filmmakers use their creative and artistic vision to interrogate the meaning of democracy and modernity at home and in various cultural contexts. By focusing their plotlines and characters on questions that animate public debates on democracy, such as women's rights and sexuality, social inequalities, and religion, they provide a visual platform and basis for a national conversation about what 'democratic change' truly means in the Moroccan context. However, the chapter also highlights the limits of this discussion and points to conflicting currents that work against the possibility of using film as a tool for social change.

I argue that although the films do offer a realistic perspective on the gender, class, and religious divides hindering democratic efforts in contemporary Morocco, they are still impacted by censorship to a certain extent and do not offer a meaningful critique of the system in place, despite the claims of critics, scholars, and state media elites. Filmmakers go as far as they are possibly allowed to go (showing undeniable facts about Moroccan society and class, gender, and religious disparities), but they stop where they cannot go (investigating the real reasons behind these disparities by questioning the role of the palace and the authorities, presenting local solutions and alternatives to dominant ideologies about class, gender, and religion, and creating socially engaged characters who have the determination to fight for the implementation of democratic solutions). Their films offer a limited vision of the problems at hand and do not mention the possibility of change. Instead, they view 'defecting' from the country and emigration as the only pathways to a better life.

Therefore, most films in the post—Lead-Years period are characterized by “social realism without social critique,” to borrow one of Dwyer's terms in his recent study

(2011). Although Dwyer applied this term to only one film, I show in this analysis that social realism without critique is pervasive in the Moroccan film industry. Moroccan screens show ‘images’ that one would have never seen during the Lead Years, but the ‘messages’ of the films ultimately remain in alliance with the dominant ideologies of the palace, as characters who are shown breaking gender, class, and religious taboos on screen are also heavily punished for it.

I also argue that ‘social realism without critique’ ultimately reinforces the Moroccan government’s efforts of democratization without democracy, as discussed in Chapter Three, and perpetuates a game of appearances as these films are honest enough about Moroccans’ hardships to ‘appear’ devoid of censorship, yet they do not cross the ‘red line’ and do not investigate the causes of these hardships. In the end, the so-called lack of censorship in these films benefits the government, which can claim that it no longer restricts freedom of speech. Similarly, the films’ reinforcement of dominant ideologies coupled with a sense of fatality validate the belief in the Moroccan popular imagination that nothing can or should be done to reform the nation.

Moroccan contemporary cinema therefore feeds into the government’s rhetoric that there is no need for systemic change or collective uprising. In this context, it is no surprise that the Arab Spring did not have as much of an impact in Morocco as in other countries such as Palestine, Iran, and Egypt. Although it is admittedly not the role of cinema to be didactic or to prescribe change—cinema is an art form, after all—cinema can have a powerful impact on the popular imagination and an indirect impact on political consciousness and action.

After outlining a brief history of Moroccan cinema and the influence of social realism through and after the Lead Years, I begin the chapter by describing my methodology and providing a summary of the four films and one television sitcom at the center of this analysis. Because these four media texts are concerned with questions of democracy, I then focus my attention on understanding ‘democracy’ and ‘democratic change’ in Morocco specifically, given that democracy takes on different meanings in different cultural contexts. I move away from definitions of democracy that are informed by Western normative standards and steer clear of the international rankings of different nations’ democratic capacity, such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, Freedom House, the United Nations Development Program’s World Governance Survey, and the World Bank Institute’s Governance indicators. These rankings reflect a flawed measurement system in which the factors used to assess a nation’s democratic potential and worthiness are inherently imperialist and ethnocentric (Koelble & Lipuma, 2008; Keating, 2011). Therefore, I concentrate on the only meanings of democracy that matter: the ones that different citizens give to the word in a particular context.

Unlike the King, his Makhzen entourage, and media elites, most citizens in Morocco are not particularly interested in emulating Western ideals of democracy in the broad fields of politics, economics, and the law (see Chapter Three). Instead, they are concerned with what affects them on an everyday basis: the question of human rights. Important disparities between men and women as well as the rich and the poor affect Moroccans’ everyday experiences. I emphasize particularly the three elements of Moroccan society that are currently at the center of debates on democracy: gender roles and women’s rights; social inequalities and class disparities; and Islam and secularism. I

also show how these three debates are at the center of the four films and one television series chosen for my analysis. I argue that images of change concerning gender roles, social inequalities, and religion are countered by messages reinforcing the status quo. I address how these films and series both advance and hinder the cause of women, how social inequalities are both expressed and reinforced, and how sexuality and religious fervor are represented but only in a disembodied, moralistic manner.

In the following sections, I focus on the overarching themes of fatality and realism in Moroccan cinema and television and show that ‘escapism’ as well as ‘mental’ and ‘real’ emigration to Western nations are portrayed as the only chances for a better life. I will discuss how fatality and realism translate into ‘unhappy endings,’ a popular trope in Moroccan films, and I will explore how space (geographic or imagined) is used to conceptualize not only national class disparities but also dreams of escape through emigration.

To better understand how these films and series came to life—and the images and messages they disseminate—it is also important to explore the identities of the men and women behind the camera. In the final section of this chapter, I document the perspective of the filmmakers through a variety of interviews and press articles. I gauge the extent to which the filmmakers’ socioeconomic backgrounds and social circles affect the content they produce. I also delineate the differences between Moroccan filmmakers living abroad and those living in Morocco. Finally, I assess the levels of overt state censorship versus subdued self-censorship in Moroccan cinema to highlight possible limits on creative and political freedom.

Moroccan Cinema Before, During, and After the Lead Years

To understand the state of the Moroccan film industry today, it is important to outline the history of its cinema prior, during, and after the Lead Years.

The pre-Lead-Years period is characterized by two major historical events: colonization in the 20s and 30s and World War II in the 1930s and '40s. In the colonial period, a specific propagandist colonial film genre that supported French policy interests in Morocco emerged. The colonial films were made by French directors and supported the enrollment of Moroccan youth in the French Foreign Legion Army forces. Orlando (2011) describes them as films that combined artistic imagery and military power. Writing about *La Bandera* (1935), a classic film of the period, Orlando (2011) states, “Morocco [is] viewed as a country, where escape is possible and where the White man can be a hero, lover and live by his own rules without [...] the constraints of the society and the culture of the Metropole” (p. 3). In the 1930s, as World War II was looming, films continued to idolize the white man and supported the belief that the French empire could defeat the Nazis through the promotion of French patriotism.

The post-World War II, post-colonization era did not represent a form of social revolution for film in Morocco, despite the blossoming of revolutionary Third Cinema in other post-colonial nations (Armes, 1987). The films made after 1956 did not criticize the French colonial power as much as they tried to construct a vision of state based on the monarchy of Mohammed V and his elites, using the same propagandist gimmicks that colonial cinema had used. Starting in 1963, the government invested a great deal of money to hire filmmakers as government employees. In addition to fiction films, the government produced documentaries and newsreels supporting the monarchy’s vision.

This date marks the beginning of the Lead Years, which span the monarchies of both Mohammed V and his son Hassan II.

There are three stages in film development during the Lead Years: first, the propaganda films from 1963 to 1970; second, the politically correct ‘auteur’ and entertainment films, which could not tackle any topic and had to be wary of censorship, from 1971 to 1985; and third, the social-realist films, which began to emerge in response to the Third Cinema movement, from 1986 to 1999. During this phase, “young people became educated about the power of film as a social-realist tool to encourage change in society. Of course this meant the Third Cinema movement was viewed as dangerous by the monarchy, and filmmakers bore the brunt of censure” (Carter, 2000, p. 67).

Therefore, as much as young filmmakers were attracted to the genre, they were still to a large extent unable to make critical social-realist films about their country.

The death of Hassan II marked the end of the Lead Years and opened the door for social realism in Moroccan cinema. Yet, what is social realism and what are its roots? Can the post-Lead-Years Moroccan films be labeled as social realist?

Social Realism and the Influence of Third Cinema

Prior to World War II, cinema was an art of the imagination and somewhat disconnected from social realities. The Hollywood ‘dream factory’ produced polished films in studios featuring charismatic heroes and chronicling gripping love stories with little attention given to the realities of daily life. For example, despite its title, a film like *Casablanca* (1942) had nothing to do with life in the city of Casablanca and more to do with the romance of its protagonists. This genre inspired European cinemas and the colonial film genre in the Third World.

Social realism, in contrast, attempts to depict the real lives of people in a given time and place regardless of whether this time or place is physically remote from the filmmaker or the viewer (Novell-Smith, 2012, p. 148). The Second World War acted as a stimulus to a more social-realist approach in filmmaking. It was hard to dream, after all, when ideologies were being forced on people, citizens were fighting in combat, and people were dying. In this context, social realism in cinema emerged as an attempt to document the realities of life during the war and its aftermath by shooting on location and telling stories about the poor and the disenfranchised.

Although seeds of social realism were present in the 1930s with the work of French filmmaker Jean Renoir, one of the first films to be labeled as social realist is probably Visconti's *Obsessione* (1942). Because of its depiction of fascism, the film was banned in 1942 and released again in 1949 after the fall of fascism. Other post-war social-realist films such as Rosellini's *Rome Open City* (1943) and *Paisa* (1946), De Sica's *Shoe Store* (1946), Jennings's *Fire Were Started* (1943), and Asquith's *The Way to the Stars* followed in what is now known as the neo-realist movement. This movement, according to Italian Marxist film critic Guido Aristarco—a disciple of Georg Lukács—was not only about showing social realities but also about criticism of social hierarchies and structures: “For Lukács and Aristarco, the ideal realist work, irrespective of medium, was one which perceived bourgeois society from inside, but with a critical perspective embedded in the narration” (Novell-Smith, 2012, p. 154).

European neorealism inspired third-world filmmakers in the 1960s and 1970s as their nations had finally gained independence from colonizers, and a need to depict and criticize the hardships of colonization was deeply felt throughout the region. Third

Cinema emerged from this context and was born out of a belief that cinema could be not only realistic and critical but also revolutionary: “The initial Third Cinema manifestos [...] called for a tri-continental revolution in politics, and an aesthetic and narrative revolution in film form” (Shohat, 2003, p. 55). The radical mood of the times—expressed through anticolonial struggles, opposition to the Vietnam War, the student revolt, and other collective struggles—was shared by filmmakers who wanted to participate in a collective movement of revolutionary change and believed in the political function of cinema (Armes, 1987).

Prominent filmmakers in this tradition include Yilmaz Guney (1937-1984) in Turkey, Glauber Rocha (1938-1981) in Brazil, Satyajit Ray (1921-1992), Jorge Sanjines (born in 1936) in Bolivia, Ousmane Sambene (born in 1923) in Senegal, Miguel Littin (born in 1942) in Chile, Fernando Solanas (born in 1936), and Octavio Getino (born in 1935) in Argentina. Filmmakers were exploring topics that are important across the board in the Third World, such as the corruption of newly emerged elites in the post-colonial world and the struggle for national liberation (Armes, 1987). It is important to know that these filmmakers were subjected to great censorship. As Armes argues, “critical attitudes are tolerated scarcely anywhere in the Third World. [...] Advocacy for change is seen as hostility towards the state” (Armes, 1987, p. 92). Despite the censorship, many of them fought for their ideas and suffered the consequences: enforced silence, imprisonment, or exile.

The literature on Moroccan cinema and Moroccan elites themselves state that Third Cinema was an influence on Moroccan filmmakers all along, but the social-realist and critical nature of films could not blossom until after the Lead Years, starting in 1999.

This chapter will disprove the widespread theory of a realistic, critical, and even revolutionary post–Lead-Years cinema by showing that filmmakers can be indeed realistic without necessarily being critical or even radical in their narratives. The goal of the chapter is not to determine whether they should or should not be critical—after all, cinema as an artistic art form does not always have political ends. Rather, the goal is to provide a truthful depiction of Moroccan films post–Lead Years and to examine the consequences of this lack of criticism for the democratic debates that animate society.

Films and Television Series in the Analysis

Films and television series can be anthropological objects that say a great deal about the political dynamics, the social realities, and the cultural transformations of a given country (Abu-Lughod, 2000, p. 103). In this chapter, I analyze four films and one television sitcom that were extremely popular in Morocco in the years 2009 and 2010 when I did my ethnographic field research. The goal is to capture filmmakers' perspectives on their own nation, to understand the specific characteristics of Moroccan fiction (cinema and television), and to highlight the various cultural, social, and political debates in the Moroccan public sphere at that point in time.

The four feature films *Casanegra* (2008), *Veiled Love* (2008), *Number One* (2008), and *Marock* (2005) and the television sitcom *Lalla Fatima* (2001-2003) are at the center of my analysis. They allow for an understanding of the various debates in the Moroccan public sphere because they belong to the social realist genre. The goal of most filmmakers who adhere to the genre is to write screenplays that reflect the daily struggles of their fellow citizens. This genre emerged after independence and became the most popular genre in the late 1990s (Orlando, 2011).

I selected these four feature films and this television sitcom because they were at the top of the Moroccan box office (or had the highest television ratings) for consecutive years and are considered symbols of a new wave of Moroccan cinema following the Lead Years. Even though they were not all released in 2009 and 2010 (at the time of my fieldwork), these movies and sitcom were still being screened in movie theaters and on television sets across the country at that time. Many Moroccan audiences also watched and discussed them.

These stories have left a significant mark on audiences' memories because they are in a sense provocative and show behaviors that would not have been considered appropriate for movie theaters during the Lead Years (for example, a religious, veiled woman having sex before marriage, a Muslim family failing to observe the Ramadan fast, two young, disadvantaged men engaging in illegal activities in the streets of Casablanca, and a woman taking control of her husband and household). In addition, the films and sitcom question a certain number of cultural values in Morocco and interrogate what it means to be a country undergoing various democratic transitions. Therefore, these four films and the sitcom are perfect 'candidates' to gauge how filmmakers understand their nation and democratic change after the Lead Years. An analysis of both their images and messages allows an assessment of whether these films are tools for social change in Morocco.

Casanegra

Figure 1: Poster of the Film Casanegra



Source: <http://www.cinemagora.co.uk/movie-8020-casanegra.html#>

Casanegra was a huge hit and placed number one in the 2009 box office with 214,473 ticket sales and millions of (unaccounted for) Internet and illegal DVD market viewers (Centre Cinématographique Marocain 2010). Casanegra was directed by Nour-Eddine Lakhmari, a prominent Moroccan filmmaker who returned to his homeland after years of studying and making films in the Netherlands and Norway. He is known for his excellent depictions of urban life and his keen eye for social inequalities. The film chronicles the adventures of Adil and Karim, two twenty-something small criminals who are unemployed and dream of a better future. During the day, they are involved in petty crimes ranging from ‘hiring’ kids to beg for money on their behalf to engaging in fraud schemes. At night, they circle the streets of Casablanca, coined “Casanegra” (Black city) by Adil, who wishes to highlight its darkness and perils.

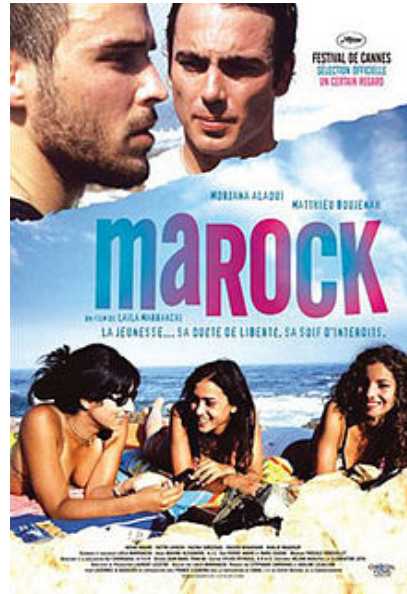
In the fashion of an American film noir such as Scarface (1983) or other films of the genre, Casanegra does not spare viewers any gangster violence and does not shy away

from revealing the social deprivation of its characters. Adil lives with his mother and his violent stepfather, who (almost) beats the mother to death on multiple occasions during the film. Unable to escape his precarious financial situation or to abandon his mother, he dreams of making \$6,000 in order to get a visa and emigrate to Malmö in Sweden.

His friend and partner in crime Karim is more realistic and down to earth. Instead of dreaming of Europe, he seeks to improve his situation in Morocco by taking a factory job that his father held for 30 years before him. He also falls in love and starts a relationship with an upper-class woman who sells antiques in a shop. His hopes of climbing the Moroccan social ladder unravel quickly, though, when he realizes that the factory job is exhausting, exploitative, and pays only 50 dirhams a day (the equivalent of 6 dollars). Similarly, his rich girlfriend breaks off the relationship when she discovers his low-income status. Ultimately, Casanegra is a story of shattered dreams and the inability to transcend class in Morocco.

Marock

Figure 2: Poster of the Film Marock



Source: <http://hayabusa1.blogourt.fr/158916/marock/>

Whereas *Casanegra* is about the young, unemployed, and disaffected youth of Casablanca, *Marock* is about the city's rich and privileged youth. The characters of *Casanegra* circle the streets of Casablanca at night, but the characters of *Marock* are often seen during the day studying on the roofs of their opulent mansions for their final exams. They are also chauffeured around the most expansive streets of Casablanca—such as Le Boulevard du Lido and Le Boulevard d'Anfa—and attend the most exclusive French high School: Le Lycée Lyautey. Whereas many characters of *Casanegra* can only dream of emigrating to the West, the high-schoolers of *Marock* all have the very real prospect of moving to France, Canada, or the United States after their graduation. These two films, because of their similar yet diametrically opposed topics, offer an interesting kaleidoscope of two very different classes in Morocco: the very poor and the very rich.

It is not surprising, then, that just as *Casanegra* was becoming a hit, audiences and

Moroccan critics were remembering Marock. This 2005 movie was a huge success and generated a great deal of debate in Morocco for several years. As of 2012, the film had generated sales of 300,000 movie tickets in Morocco alone and 140,000 movie tickets in France (Frangieh, 2012). It was also a critical success internationally as it was screened in the “Un Certain Regard” section of the 2005 Cannes Festival.

This Romeo-and-Juliet love story features a relationship between two upper-class high school students: Rita, a Muslim girl, and Yuri, a Jewish boy. Although these two individuals are shown as being ‘exempt’ from following societal or religious rules thanks to their upper-class status, they break the one rule they are not allowed to break: dating outside of their own religious group. For example, Rita is caught outside of a club making out with a boy but is not brought to the police station; while driving, her brother kills a little boy and faces no charges, and she refuses to observe the Ramadan fast, and no one finds that shocking. However, she is technically not allowed to pursue a relationship with Yuri. They both decide to let their love flourish anyway until a car accident takes Yuri’s life. The backdrop of this story of forbidden interreligious love features a great deal of social commentary about disparities between the rich and the poor and between the religious and the not so religious in contemporary Morocco.

Many controversies surrounded the film upon its release. The first revolved around the filmmaker herself: Laila Marrakchi. She was Moroccan but had a French address. She made a Moroccan film about Morocco but with the help of French funding. Moreover, she did not hide from anyone that the story of Rita was loosely inspired by her own personal experiences of growing up in the Moroccan bourgeoisie of Casablanca and later marrying a French man of Jewish descent. Critics wondered if her film could truly

be characterized as ‘Moroccan’ even if many recognized that it did accurately depict the privileged lives of rich Moroccans.

The film generated even more controversy because the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) thought that it was “attacking the sacred values of Islam and good morals” (Houdaifa & Tournassi, 2006). Scenes such as when Rita looks at Yuri’s Star of David after having sex with him and he proceeds to put it around her neck, saying, “I’ll give it to you, so you won’t look at it anymore and will think about other things,” were perceived as a “metaphorical conquest of Islam by Zionist operators” (Orlando, 2011, p. 47).

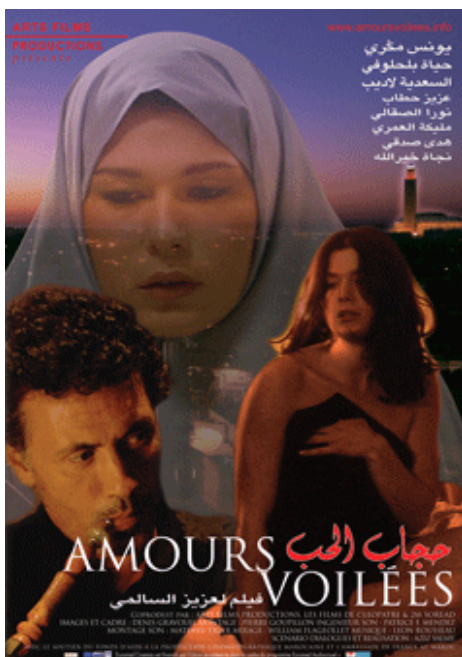
Yet the PJD had other reasons to be offended. The film is full of negative remarks against Islamists, often referred to as “les barbus” (a term meaning “bearded men” and used to speak pejoratively about Islamists). Debates between Islamists and non-Islamists as well as between the right and the left revolved around the question of whether the film should be censored because of its offensive material against Islam and its perceived Zionist message. These debates were all the more heated because the government was preparing for the 2007 legislative elections, and various political parties exploited the film to promote their ideological stances (Hirchi, 2011).

For different political constituents, the film came to represent multiple positions, “freedom of speech, the young ‘rock’ generation, intellectual and artistic honesty, and humanism, on the one hand, and disrespect for Moroccan tradition, diasporic elitism cut off from the homeland, neo-colonialist pandering to Europe’s Islamophobic preoccupations, and savvy self-publicity/provocation, on the other” (Edwards, 2007, pp. 288-289). Despite the various controversies, Orlando argues (2011) that the film was

memorable because it “attacked not only sexual taboos but also the larger questions of religious tolerance, archaic class structures, and the economic disparities between the rich and the poor in contemporary Moroccan society” (p. 45).

Veiled Love

Figure 3: Poster of the Film Veiled Love



Source: <http://cafeclock.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/hijab-el-hob-21.jpg>

Veiled Love, the third film in my analysis, was also perceived as a controversial movie because of its discussion of sexuality within the context of religion. Veiled Love was very successful in Moroccan theaters, placing second behind Casanegra in the 2009 box office with 179,341 ticket sales (Centre Cinematographique Marocain, 2010). Veiled Love is the story of Batul, an upper-middle-class pediatrician, who at the beginning of the film is portrayed as an honorable, unveiled, and unmarried virgin. As the story unfolds, Batul develops an attraction to Hamza, an attractive divorced man, and succumbs to her

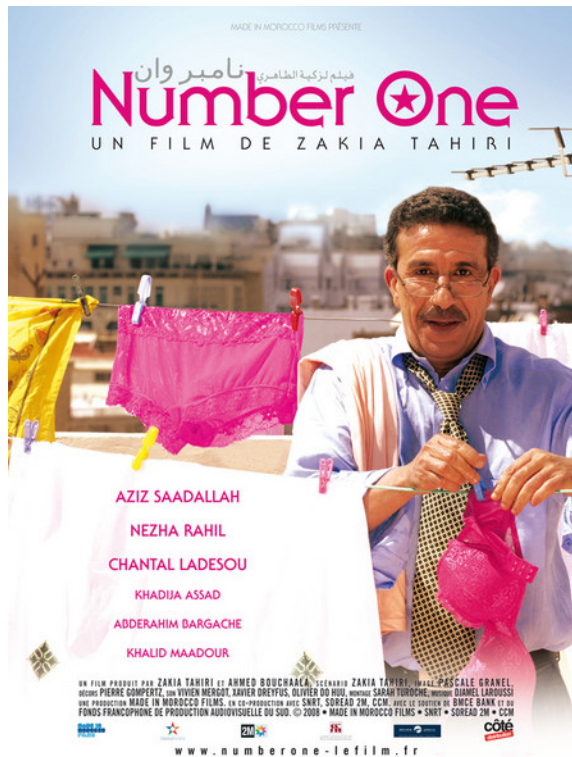
desires by having a sexual relationship with him. In the name of love and desire, Batul transgresses her own moral and religious code and compromises her intentions to be observant of Islam and to save herself for marriage.

Plagued by guilt and faced with a man she loves but who has no intention of marrying her, Batul becomes more religious to atone for her mistakes and starts wearing the veil. The film shows her ambivalence and confusion towards religion, sexuality, and gender roles as she adopts and abandons the veil multiple times, goes back and forth from embracing her sexual relationship with Hamza to rejecting it, and navigates multiple gender stereotypes, from the virtuous and honorable virgin to the sexual bombshell.

Unfortunately, what could have been an interesting exploration of the psyche of a complex and multilayered Muslim woman falls flat because the young male film director, Aziz Salamy, rendered a stereotypical portrayal of Batul and laced his film with a moralistic message. In the end, Batul ends up being punished for what is portrayed as deviant behavior. Her brother dies in a car accident while chasing after her and Hamza, and she becomes pregnant with what she calls “a punishment within her own flesh.”

Number One

Figure 4: Poster of the Film Number One



Source: http://toukimontreal.com/actualites/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Number_One.jpg

The fourth film in my analysis is Number One. Number One was also a popular success. The film placed number three in the 2008 general box office and second in the 2008 national box office (Centre Cinématographique Marocain 2009). As of 2009, it was also considered to be “number one” in the box office of pirated movies (Tahiri, 2009).

Number One is a comedy that tackles the question of gender roles in Morocco in the aftermath of the Mudawana, a nationwide reform of the family code in 2004. In fact, the film starts with a title card featuring an explanation of what the new law is about—“The Mudawana (reform of the family code in 2004) emancipates Moroccan women, gives them more rights, like for example the right to ask for and file for divorce.”

However, as the story unfolds, it becomes evident that the film, written and directed by Zakia Tahiri, a female director based in France, is about neither the law itself nor women. Instead, *Number One* takes the perspective of Moroccan men and how they are affected by women's emancipation in the age of the *Mudawana*. The filmmaker herself claims in an interview,

I profoundly, viscerally, effectively, aesthetically love Morocco, but how do you talk about a country with love and lucidity? It was in Casablanca in a mixture of dialectal Arabic and French, that I wanted deliciously to lose myself. So I designed Aziz, my Number One, whom I looked for, discovered, tamed. I hated him and pardoned him. He scared me, made me laugh and cry.” (Chabaa, n.p.)

Aziz, the male protagonist, is indeed the ‘number one’ of the film (pun intended), as the story is told from his perspective; his wife Soraya plays merely a supporting role. Aziz is the manager of a clothing manufacturing plant called Maroc Star. He is also an angry, misogynistic man who disrespects all the women in his life. He constantly yells at his female employees, and unable to remember their names, he calls them by numbers he has assigned to them. He is also very condescending to Soraya, who is expected only to cook, clean, and fulfill his every wish.

Aziz is ambitious and dreams of becoming ‘number one’ at his company. His boss tells him that he can get a promotion only if he lands a contract with Madame Morel, a French feminist who visits the factory for a few days. Madame Morel will order 80,000 pairs of jeans if Aziz can prove that he can produce a quality product and if he can show that he is sensitive to the cause of women in Morocco. This is Aziz's worst nightmare: having to bow to a woman to advance his own professional goals.

As Aziz's wife grows increasingly frustrated with his constant abuse, she seeks the help of a witch, who makes a potion to turn Aziz into a caring and loving husband.

After Soraya hides the potion in his food, Aziz becomes everything Soraya (and Mrs. Morel) had ever dreamed of: a women's rights supporter. Aziz starts encouraging his wife to take care of herself and pays for her trips to the hair salon or to the hammam. He also starts calling his female employees by their first names and shows understanding of their difficult working conditions.

Ultimately, everything ends well for Aziz, who lands the contract with Madame Morel, is voted 'number one' by all the women employed at Maroc Star, and becomes "Man of the Year" in the most-read women's magazine. The audience is supposed to believe that everything ends well also for Soraya, as Aziz refuses to take the potion that would turn him back into his old self (even though this is wishful thinking, as the subsequent analysis will show).

Lalla Fatima

Figure 5: Screen Capture of the Sitcom Lalla Fatima



Like Number One, the sitcom Lalla Fatima tackles the question of gender roles in Moroccan households. Although it was released before the reform of the family law code

(the *Mudawana*), it grapples with a very similar question: how are men and women affected by women's emancipation? The sitcom chronicles the lives of Lalla Fatima, her husband Sidi Ahmed, their daughter Hoda and their son Jamal, the grandparents, the neighbors, and the maid Aicha, who is a major character on the show. In this chapter, I focus on the first season of the show (42 episodes), during which Lalla Fatima sees her status change from stay-at-home mother to bread maker and breadwinner as she opens a small bakery and sees her business thrive. The sitcom explores how her newfound independence and status affect all family members.

Although more politically correct than the aforementioned films (given that it is directed at a wide audience at home), the sitcom raises important questions about Moroccan society: How are women taking control of their households and professional lives in the 21st century? How are men affected by these changes? Which social and class disparities persist? For example, it is evident that Lalla Fatima and her husband are in the upper middle class, whereas their maid Aicha is poor. Their interactions reflect important social hierarchies in the household unit. Finally, what are the prospects of Moroccan youth with such a high unemployment rate, and how can we stop the 'brain drain,' the massive waves of immigration of Moroccan middle- and upper-class youth to Europe and the United States? For example, Lalla Fatima and her husband despair that all their children are emigrating to Europe. When the series starts, they already have two older children living in Europe, and by the end of Season 1, their daughter Hoda decides to go study in France. Because of its broad appeal and scope of themes, the sitcom was a major success for the network 2M and captured 61% of Moroccan audiences (Bensouda, 2001).

Methodology

In this chapter, I use audiovisual textual analysis to examine the films and the television sitcom in my sample. Textual analysis is a data-gathering process used to understand how various cultures make sense of who they are. It involves looking for clues or traces of how people have made sense of the world in books, print media, audiovisual media, or anything that involves a creative writing process (McKee, 2003). As McKee argues, there is no single correct representation of any parts of the world, and, in the same way, there's no single correct interpretation of any texts. As a result, there is no standardized way to perform textual analysis, and determining which methods are best suited for textual analysis depends largely on the socio-cultural context in which the text was produced and the goal of the project itself (what one is looking for in a text).

My first priority in this analysis was to understand the environment in which these films and sitcom were screened and to identify the social, cultural, and political debates that surrounded their release. To achieve that goal, I watched all of these media texts initially 'in context' with families I knew and with some students I had interviewed. I also discussed them with filmmakers, actors, and a wide variety of audiences in the streets of Rabat and Casablanca.

Watching these films during my ethnographic fieldwork and discussing them with various constituents of the production-reception chain even before starting the formal analysis helped me to understand what to look for in these texts. I realized that much of the discussion revolved around the fact that these films and sitcom were supposedly provocative and represented a new wave of 'uncensored' and more 'democratic' Moroccan cinema after the Lead Years, so I decided to make the question of whether they were truly a tool for social democratic change central to this chapter.

In a second stage, I re-watched all of these media texts alone after my return from the field. I took various notes about the plotlines and twists and started to identify their common themes. I realized that they were indeed all concerned with democratic change, more specifically the question of human rights in the context of Islam as well as gender and social disparities in Morocco. I also noticed that the films' and series' characters spent a great deal of time comparing human rights in Morocco to human rights in other countries, especially in the West. I therefore paid close attention to all depictions of the West and to how space (geographical and imagined) was used to conceptualize national disparities and dreams of escape through emigration.

To gauge whether these films were advancing or hindering democratic efforts in the realm of individual rights in Morocco, I then proceeded to contrast the images that supposedly make these films tools for social change and advocates for greater individual freedom—uncensored images of women's sexuality, frank depictions of social disparities, and varying degrees of observance to Islam—with the actual messages the films communicate to their audiences. For that purpose, I analyzed the films' and series' endings closely to determine if there is a moral to the stories and whether characters living alternative class, sexual, or religious lifestyles are portrayed as deviant and ultimately judged and ostracized. Because any representation of social change falls short if it is not reinforced by a meaningful denunciation of current dominant ideologies preventing social change in the first place, I wanted to make sure that images and messages do not contradict one another.

In my audiovisual sample of four films and the television sitcom, I analyzed all of the images and messages depicting women and gender roles, social disparities, and Islam

and secularism particularly because these three themes are at the center of all debates on human rights and democracy in Morocco. They are also at the center of the media texts in my analysis.

In the following sections, I focus on each of these three topics one by one, and for each of them, I provide a twofold analysis of 1) the historical and cultural reasons why many Moroccans are longing for greater rights in that particular area of life and 2) how the films capture these democratic longings and whether their images and messages are tools for social change.

Gender Roles, Women's Rights, and Democracy in the Arab World

Debates on democracy in Morocco are fueled by questions about women's place in society. That is not a surprising fact if we consider, as Kandiyoti has argued, that issues of women's rights are invariably "part of an ideological terrain, where broader notions of cultural authenticity and integrity are debated and where, women's appropriate place and conduct may be made to serve as boundary markers" (1992, p. 246).

In the Arab world and in most post-colonial nations, the question of which rights should be granted to women—in the context of marriage, divorce, child custody, and many other areas of life—serves to delineate boundaries between tradition and modernity as well as between authoritarianism and democracy. Abu-Lughod (1998) explains that the redefinition of women's rights around concepts of democracy and modernity started early on at the turn of the 19th century through the various interactions colonized nations had with the West. Colonial occupation introduced questions about women's clothing and the veil and interrogations of women's role beyond the family unit. As colonized nations were fighting for independence, the role of women and family were also part of the

discourse around national liberation. These issues, she argues, became lively topics for anyone interested in social and democratic change.

Although colonial interactions and globalization have brought a dialogical relationship between Western and Arab forms of feminism, one should refrain from applying a purely Western perspective to the study of women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa. Western feminism often associates the West with modernity and the rest of the world with traditionalism and women's oppression. This feminism also has a tendency to bring attention to topics not culturally relevant to women in the Arab world. For example, the veil is often perceived as a form of oppression from which women must be saved, and white women are viewed as the saviors who know better than Middle Eastern women how to escape male domination (Abu Lughod, 1998).

To understand the true nature of feminism in the Middle East and North Africa, we need to understand the various perspectives of women working on the ground and how their political projects are inscribed within distinctive national histories and entangled with various experiences of colonialism and diverse relationships with the West. Scholars such as Mernissi (1975), Ahmed (1992), Abu-Lughod (1998), and Salime (2011) have documented feminist projects in various countries of the Arab world and have provided a more nuanced and realistic vision of feminism in the Middle East. They have shown how women borrow ideas from Western feminism while simultaneously remaining culturally relevant and sometimes even working within an Islamic framework. In Morocco, for example, Salime (2011) shows that feminists have had to embrace an Islamic framework for their movement to gain traction and to obtain the population's and the king's approval. Mernissi (1989), on the other hand, conducts a series of interviews

with low-income Moroccan women who took charge of their destiny and became ‘feminists on the ground’ by working their way up in various professional sectors and communities. As a whole, feminists in the Arab world are not interested in unveiling, and they embrace family values and women’s varied cultural and religious experiences (Abu-Lughod, 1998). But what particular forms have feminism and the fight for women’s rights taken in Morocco?

In many Arab countries—and Morocco is no exception—a Sharia-based family law, which provides codes of personal and ethical conduct for individuals and families, is the key to the gate of freedom and human rights for women (Charrad, 2001). The Sharia is a body of interpretations of the Qur’an and the Sunna (prophetic teachings) by Muslim scholars (Salime, 2011), and family law (the Mudawana) is a set of laws derived from the Sharia that are enforced in tribunals and in all walks of life. Until 2004, under the Mudawana, wives had a legal obligation to obey their husbands; the responsibility for the family and the household was entirely bestowed on the husband; the minimum age of marriage for women was 15 (whereas it was 18 for men); and women needed a legal tutor to contract marriage. It is therefore not surprising that for women’s rights activists in Morocco, changing the Mudawana became a first priority early on. In contrast, maintaining the family law became “central to Islamists and their Islamization project. It is the only state code that claims adherence to the Islamic Sharia and preserving it became a major goal of Islamic organizing” (Salime, 2011, p. XVIII).

In 1999, women’s rights activists in Morocco organized the One Million Signature campaign and asked for a reform of the Mudawana. The campaign was led by the Women’s Action Union (UAF) and was born from left-leaning parties. However, as

Zvan Elliott argues (2009), the movement was too secularist and polarized a large section of the population. As a result, it did not bring any immediate changes, but it was a strong and noticeable movement that led to a government proposal to re-evaluate the Mudawana. In 2000, the King formed a consultative commission to examine the Mudawana and possibilities for reform. Meanwhile, street demonstrations continued with marches organized on International Women's Day in both Casablanca and Rabat to bring more support to the cause. At about that time, Moroccan feminists realized that conservative forces had to be reckoned with and started working within an Islamist framework. Simultaneously, however, an interesting phenomenon occurred: Women leaders emerged within the conservative Islamist movement, leading to both "an Islamizing of the feminist agenda and a feminization of the conservative Islamist agenda" (Salime, 2011, p. XVIII).

The interconnections between both movements and the support of the King led to an approved reform in 2004. Under the new family code, women are no longer obliged to obey their husbands; the minimum age of marriage for women was raised to 18; both spouses share the responsibilities regarding family and household duties; women do not require a tutor to consent to marriage; and they can file for divorce on the grounds of "irreconcilable differences." "Mohammed VI placed the question of women's rights within the broader context of democratization and development of the country" (Zvan Elliott, 2009, p. 218) when he approved the reform of the Mudawana.

Although the reform is considered to be a success for women's rights in Morocco, women's daily lives remain widely unchanged in many areas despite the new law. Fathers are still households' legal representatives, and women remain legally and

financially dependent on their husbands. Similarly, despite the new divorce laws, many women are still reluctant to file for divorce even when they are unhappy in marriage and badly treated by their husbands, because there is a social stigma associated with divorce. Often, divorced women are considered to be promiscuous because they are neither saving themselves for marriage nor saving themselves for their husbands. In other words, they are neither what society views as ‘respectable virgins’ nor ‘respectable married women.’ Divorced women can also feel alienated from traditional familial circles, where many social interactions occur. They can also have a very hard time finding love and starting a new relationship because most men will pursue women who are still virgins. As Zvan Elliott argues (2009), many ordinary Moroccans, men and women, still adhere to old traditions, and “changing mentalities is harder than changing the law” (p. 218).

Is the Moroccan new wave of cinema reflective of a change in mentalities and therefore a positive social tool for the women’s rights movement? The following textual analysis provides answers to this question by looking at both the images and messages embedded in the films and sitcom in my sample.

Gender Roles, Women’s Rights, and Democracy: Textual Analysis

At first, it is easy to see why these new wave films and series like *Casanegra*, *Marock*, *Number One*, *Veiled Love*, and *Lalla Fatima* would be perceived as advocating for women’s rights in the aftermath of the *Mudawana*. These media texts do not shy away from showing women doing a variety of things that would have seemed inappropriate during the Lead Years, and the texts therefore appear to expand the realm of what a woman can do in the public eye.

Images of Women’s Independence

Most of these media texts present the viewer with a deviation from what would be considered the traditional family model of a working husband and a stay-at-home wife. We see images of strong women who either have or are gaining power independently of men in their households and in the professional world. For example, in the beginning of *Veiled Love*, the main protagonist, Batul, is clearly presented as an established working professional (a pediatrician) who is living a fulfilled single life and is financially independent despite the fact that she still lives with her parents. In a similar fashion, Nabila—Karim’s love interest in *Casanegra*—is also presented as financially independent as she runs a successful antique shop. Although women have held such positions prior to the *Mudawana*, never before have so many films represented women in their workplaces, and these images of Batul and Nabila are representative of this trend.

Rita, the young, rich high-schooler in *Marock*, is too young to be financially independent and relies heavily on her parents’ high income for her living, but she is also presented as a very strong female character in the sense that she takes ownership of all her ideas. Rita refuses to observe the Ramadan fast despite the expectations of her parents, her beloved maids, and her brother. Rita is also not afraid to engage in a forbidden relationship with a Jewish boy outside of her faith. Finally, she is also highly critical of social inequalities and does not miss a chance to highlight the hypocrisy surrounding Moroccan society’s different treatments of the rich and the poor. Hirchi (2011) describes Marrakchi’s character Rita as being “imbued with faith in her secular ideals” and with “the strength and determination she needs to carry out her social rebellion” (p. 94).

Although *Number One*’s Soraya is nowhere near as independent as Batul and

Rita, she manages to unsettle the established gender roles in the household by getting a potion to turn Aziz into a women's rights supporter. Over the course of the film, she stops being a slave to her husband and starts taking time for herself. Finally, Lalla Fatima (in the television sitcom of the same name) is presented as a strong woman who has the 'brains' of the family and the power to solve everyone's problems. In the beginning, it becomes apparent that her power is limited to the realm of the household, and despite constraining factors—Lalla Fatima is illiterate, and she has no marketable skill other than her cooking—she gains power in the professional realm as well by opening her bakery by the end of Season One. All of these women challenge in some capacity or other traditional views of gender roles in Morocco.

Images of Women's Sexuality

These women are also portrayed as being sexually active (either explicitly or implicitly) in numerous instances. As such, they are shown as 'owning' their bodies, which goes against a variety of taboos in Moroccan society. *Veiled Love* is probably the most daring film in that respect as images of an almost-naked Batul recur throughout the film. In a scene highly suggestive of masturbation, Batul stands in front of a mirror and looks at herself in lingerie. In another scene, she removes her bra to make love to Hamza. Later in the film, once their relationship is clearly established, Batul waits completely naked in a bathtub for Hamza. These scenes are all the more provocative in the Moroccan context because the character is a young, unmarried woman who is supposedly observant of Islam and wears the veil at numerous points in the film.

Similarly, both Nabila from *Casanegra* and Rita from *Marock* have sexual relationships outside of the traditional model. Nabila is a divorced woman who feels no

shame having a casual sexual relationship with Karim, and Rita consummates her relationship with Yuri despite the fact that she is not married and that he is not a Muslim. Finally, Soraya's sexuality is only implied yet clearly demarcated as she embarks on a journey of self-discovery and of emancipation from her husband. There are no explicit scenes of her naked, but various physical transformations suggest that she is taking ownership of her body, her femininity, and therefore her sexuality. She gets a new haircut, starts going to the hammam, and seeks tenderness from her husband Aziz. Of all the female leads, Lalla Fatima is probably the most desexualized being as there is no reference outside of family matters to her body and her relationship with Sidi Ahmed.

However, a thorough look at these films and series suggest that they are in fact contradictory and that they represent both a step forward and backward for women's cause. Showing images of women doing things that society condemns is a step in the right direction. However, changing the perception of these behaviors is the true challenge, and the films in my sample fail to cast a positive light on the female characters' agency and freedom to live how they want to live despite societal expectations.

Counter-Messages: Women's Independence

Although both Number One and Veiled Love suggest that they are concerned with the topic of independence and women's emancipation from men, they actually contain embedded messages that ultimately reinforce male domination. In Number One, Soraya emancipates herself to a certain extent (as discussed above), but only because her husband drinks a potion and not because she exercises her own agency and right to be treated decently by her spouse. In fact, she completely lacks agency throughout the entire

film, and even if she starts taking care of herself, it is mostly because her husband tells her to do so and gives her money to go to the salon. In *Number One*, women's condition is defined narrowly as trips to the hairdresser and the hammam, shopping, reading magazines, and aspiring to a peaceful life with a husband.

Other female characters in the film are equally deprived of agency. Aziz's factory workers, for example, are completely exploited by him for many years. They are made to work very long hours without any social benefits and cannot even take a sick day without being fired. They meekly accept their condition for many years. Yet when Aziz gets fired from his job for having gone 'soft' on his employees and failing to discipline them in the ways he used to do, they decide to go on strike to bring him back as their manager. It is puzzling that women who would endure so much prejudice and exploitation would revolt not for their own cause but only to restore their tyrant to the top.

What is deeply disturbing about this film is its ability to joke about male domination and women's submission—it is a comedy after all—while raising serious issues that are potentially tragic for women. In a particular scene, Aziz nearly rapes Soraya and tells her, "You are going to see if I am not a man! I am going to teach you who I am!" This shows that Aziz is not only domineering but also sexually and physically abusive towards his wife. Yet, as an audience, we are supposed to embark on this man's journey, care about him, and feel good about a transformation that has nothing to do with him, given that he simply drinks a potion. We are also supposed to cheer when he is awarded the title of "Man of the Year" by a popular feminist magazine!

The very fact that he is the star of a film about women's rights after the *Mudawana* exemplifies cognitive dissonance. However, when one adds his abuse to the

plot, we are left with a socially disturbing film that both reinforces male domination and condones violence towards women. We are also left with a film that gives credit to men for women's advances in the human rights realm. Again, *Number One* invites us to see the *Mudawana* from a male point of view. The film is telling us, "Sure, women's right activists worked hard for the reform of the *Mudawana*, but look how brave men are for putting up with these women who want to have it all!" Therefore, in spite of a plethora of images supporting the idea of women's emancipation (at one point in the film Aziz wanders around in the streets baffled at the changes he sees: a man doing laundry, a man with a baby carrier, women in cafes, etc.), *Number One* is a film that is harmful to the democratic longings of Moroccan women.

Under its seemingly provocative shell, *Veiled Love* is also very much a film of the status quo. It is true that the film breaks a variety of taboos by showing nudity on screen, extramarital affairs, and sex and religion at the same time. However, it punishes its protagonist Batul in the harshest way possible for engaging in all of these activities. The message of the film is clear and communicated from the very beginning in the following scene: When Batul meets Hamza for the first time and discusses with a friend her attraction to him, she says, "Deep down, I like his style a lot; I feel very attracted to him, but I have principles that I have to follow." Her friend tells her, "It is not your style, unless you want trouble." In other words, a woman who follows her desires instead of her principles will be punished, and this is exactly what happens to Batul at the end of the film as she acknowledges after losing her brother in a car accident and discovering that she is pregnant with Hamza's baby: "I deserve everything that is happening to me. I was punished a first time with the death of my brother and I did not repent myself and now, I

am punished again this time within my own flesh.” Batul is not only punished but is shown accepting her punishment, which suggests that other women should never do what she did.

The film also reinforces male domination because it communicates the message that women will be punished, and men can walk away without any consequences. In fact, after finding out that Batul is pregnant and visiting her at the hospital, Hamza literally walks away, and the relationship has no adverse effect on his life even though he “lived in sin,” to quote Batul’s words. In fact, throughout the film Hamza acts as if he cannot be bothered. When Batul expresses her feelings to him and hopes that he will marry her, he says, “What makes you think that you will succeed where all the other women before failed!” Hamza owes nothing to anyone and walks away with his life unchanged. In various Middle Eastern and North African cultures, the Muslim woman is often “endowed with a fatal attraction, which erodes the male’s will to resist her and reduces him to a passive acquiescent role. He has no choice; he can only give in to her attraction,” Mernissi argues, and therefore he bears no responsibility for his actions (1975, p. 41). The woman is thus found to be guilty because of what is perceived as her own sexual aggressiveness, whereas the man remains innocent because he did the only thing he was supposed to do: give in to her.

The same theme of male domination runs through *Casanegra*, which is a film entirely about men, chronicling the daily lives of two young, jobless, family-deprived delinquents, Karim and Adil. The female characters have very little substance and screen presence. Even though Nabila (Karim’s girlfriend) is presented as a strong woman, her scenes total no more than five minutes of screen time, and she represents nothing more

than a dream, ‘a trophy girlfriend’ for someone who wishes to climb the social ladder. The only two other female characters are nameless: 1) the girlfriend of Zriek, a crime lord Karim and Adil are working for and 2) Adil’s mother. The girlfriend of Zriek is shown only sitting with Zriek in bars and laughing at all of his bad jokes. She does not have a story line of her own. Finally, Adil’s mother is shown only suffering the physical abuse of her husband and running back to him despite the violence she endures. In the end, we are supposed to believe that all her problems are solved when Adil uses some money he has stolen to put her on a bus back to her previous husband’s in-laws. Women in Casanegra are only disembodied supporting characters who are unattainable, uninteresting, or completely submissive. Women are also unreliable because they either disappear when things get complicated (Nabila) or are unable to protect themselves and their children from abuse (Adil’s mother) and, therefore, are made to disappear.

Finally, even Lalla Fatima, which sends a positive message about women as anchors of Moroccan society through the creation of a strong lead character, fails to truly change mentalities. For example, in episode 17, “When we changed the floor and the sky,” the men and women in the household decide to switch roles to experience what it feels like to be the other gender. Although this switch in the gender division of labor offers some interesting insights about what women and men are traditionally expected to do in the household, it does not provide any level of critique because both genders eventually accept the stereotypical roles represented (and switched exceptionally during this episode)—cooking, knitting, women serving men, and men doing nothing and playing cards—when things return to normal. The episode clearly demonstrates that both men and women are relieved to resume their traditional roles.

Counter-Messages: Women's Sexuality

Although most of these films have images showing or suggesting women's sexuality, the messages embedded in these images fail to support all women's rights to truly 'own' their bodies in Morocco. This counter-message is communicated in very subtle ways given that, at first glance, we see women who are engaging in sexual relationships in many of these films. Looking closely, it becomes apparent that none of these women actually look Moroccan. All the women who have sex in these films are Moroccan women who look suspiciously Western. The underlying message of these films is that sexual liberation is something to be associated with the West, whereas more traditional Moroccan women who 'look' Moroccan should not engage in these behaviors.

Batul in *Veiled Love* has very white skin and light eyes and could easily pass as European. Similarly, both Rita in *Marock* and Nabila in *Casanegra* dress in tight, Western-looking clothes and look very skinny by Moroccan standards. As Mernissi argued in the late 1990s in her column in the feminist journal *Femmes du Maroc*, young Moroccan women gravitate towards Western body types and ideals of beauty and strive to achieve the "emaciated waif look" of Kate Moss and other prominent top models (Mernissi, 1998). In that sense, these films are following this trend. A dichotomy emerges when our Westernized and sexualized female leads contrast with other female characters in the Moroccan film and television landscape who represent a more traditional Moroccan localized model. For example, it would not cross these filmmakers' minds to have Lalla Fatima, a more traditional and curvy-looking Moroccan woman who at times wears the djellaba, openly discuss sex with her husband or even imply it in any way.

Most of the films I have analyzed portray the West as a place of sexual

depravation to emphasize the need for more virtuous sexual practices within the context of marriage in Morocco. For example, in *Casanegra*, Adil and Karim break into the house of a rich Moroccan transvestite who wears sexy lingerie, speaks French, and is clearly associated with French culture. It is strongly implied that her interest in the West has turned him/her into what the film unfortunately sees as an oddity of nature and a sexually deprived character. In *Veiled Love*, France is also clearly associated with sexually deviant behavior when Batul tells Hamza in a car scene, “We are not in France here. Here this type of adventure can lead to prison.”

Overall, all the films and the sitcom in my sample appear to be breaking taboos on the topics of gender and sexuality and seemingly advance debates on women’s rights and freedom. However, when one investigates more deeply, it becomes quite evident that telling stories of personal, sexual, and professional empowerment requires much more than shedding a few taboos and showing women doing things that society condemns ‘visually.’ Such empowerment requires an embedded critique of the dominant ideologies that hinder women’s advancement in terms of individual freedom and the presentation of viable suggestions to allow society to move forward on these issues.

Social Disparities: Democracy for Some but Not For All

In addition to gender disparities, Moroccans also worry about poverty and social inequality. In 2012, the population of Morocco reached 32 million, and 25% lived below the poverty line (Agence France Presse 2012 & African Development Bank, 2011). Thirty percent of Moroccans between ages 15 and 29 were jobless, and they made up 44% of the working population. Less than half of the households were connected to the drinking water system, and scarcely more were hooked up to the electrical grid.

Additionally, as of 2001, 4 million Moroccans lived in shantytowns (the majority of which were located on the outskirts of cities; Associated Press, 2001). At the time, the annual progression rate for shantytowns was 70%, so we can only imagine how many more there are today.

These statistics already sound quite appalling, but they actually “mask the number of people living just above the poverty line, who are still in a vulnerable position socially and economically [...] in 1999, this figure reached 25% of the population” (Cohen & Jaidi, 2006). Thus, we can safely say that if 25% are living below the poverty line and another 25% are just above it, approximately 50% of the Moroccan population lives in precarious circumstances.

Unlike the issue of gender rights, which the government has at least addressed publicly by reforming the *Mudawana*, the issue of basic individual rights such as access to food, water, education, and jobs is not addressed by authorities as much as it should be because it would require them to recognize the social disparities that characterize Morocco today. It would also put a spotlight on them as *Makhzen* elites working for the King and living a life of opulence diametrically opposed to the life of the majority of citizens. Comparing the aforementioned statistics on poverty to the following monthly expenses of the palace makes the contrast even more striking:

The Moroccan King, Mohammed VI, spends £3.6 million [\$8.8 million] a month on staff wages, £97,000 on car repairs and almost £53,000 on animal feed, according to a breakdown of the palace budget that has enraged his poverty-stricken subjects. Details of the lavish spending—the first time that the finances of a royal Arab household have been revealed—show that the king costs Moroccan taxpayers £144.6 million [\$353 million] a year, 18 times more than Queen Elizabeth. The palace spends £632,000 on electricity and water, £600,000 on telephones and £355,000 on petrol and fuel. The monthly clothes bill comes to £121,000, while stationery alone costs £61,000. The Moroccan royal family's

private wealth is estimated at £2.1 billion-£2.7 billion by the US financial magazine Forbes. (Sydney Morning Herald, January 25, 2005)

Although the king and the government do not hide their wealth, they also do not wish to make this a topic of importance in the Moroccan public sphere and in ongoing discussions about democracy. As Boutayeb (2005) argues, “the Moroccan authorities have been trying to find excuses rather than dealing with the real causes of such insufficiencies. The national initiative for human development (NIHD) launched in May 2005 by the King of Morocco has at least admitted that many districts and shanty towns, urban or peri-urban, and a multitude of rural communes live in uncomfortable situations characterized by difficult access to basic social services.”

The government has created programs like the “Cities without Shanties” program to get rid of shantytowns and supposedly to transition their inhabitants to better social habitations. However, when we look closely at what these programs offer shantytown populations, it is hard to say if these programs are truly helping. For example, one of the goals of this program is to re-house the dwellers in social housing units commonly referred to as “cement-ghettoes” at a cost of 120,000 dirhams per family (about \$15,000) and to offer them state financial aid that would cover one-third of the expense. Given that many of these city dwellers make between one and six dollars a day, \$15,000 could still be very much out of reach.

Yet, in the news, one gets the feeling that the government uses this program and others as an excuse to show that they are working on reducing poverty yet placing the responsibility on the dwellers themselves for not turning their lives around and moving to these social housing units. As one of my middle-class respondents mentioned, “They talk

about shantytowns in the news sometimes. What I don't understand is why these city dwellers do not want to relocate. They give them housing and everything. So if they do not want to take it, they are the ones who want to stay poor." Yet less often discussed in the news is that these government programs are not providing all the conditions necessary for these populations to move easily.

Besides poverty, another topic that the authorities are reluctant to mention is the rampant level of corruption in all walks of life.

In several key respects, Morocco has maintained a rentier economy in which the people whom one knows, and one's proximity to those in power and to the channels through which wealth is produced and circulates, typically are far more decisive than personal merit or the quality of products or services. In such a system, the special privileges and exemptions to which one has access because of personal relationships to key decision makers tend to take precedence over the logic of the market (Denoeux, 2007, p. 136).

As a result, the senior members of the armed forces and individuals with close ties to the monarchy benefit from all kinds of advantages and a certain degree of tolerance for illicit activities. If you are rich, powerful, and well connected in Morocco, you can get away with tax evasion or even murder, and in the event that you get arrested, you can easily offer a bribe to a policeman to avoid any charges.

If you are poor in Morocco, you can be charged with a murder you did not commit. (See Laila Lalami's beautiful 2009 novel *Secret Son*, about a boy from the slums of Casablanca who lives two lives, one of luxury as the illegitimate son of a wealthy businessman in which he gets to see firsthand how money opens doors, and another one in which he is poor, trapped by his class, and eventually accused of a crime that he did not commit.) You also have no money to bribe anyone to get out of a difficult

situation. It is evident that all Moroccans are not equal when it comes to access to the judicial system but also in all other walks of life: access to good schools, jobs, etc.

Consequently, it is not surprising that for at least 50% of the population, who barely make ends meet, discussions of democracy revolve around the question of social disparities. If you ask a poor Moroccan what democracy means to him or her, there is a high chance this person will say equal access to basic individual rights for everyone in Morocco, ranging from running water to non-discriminative employment policies and equality in law enforcement. The films and sitcom in my sample capture these debates, but the following section discusses the extent to which they actually criticize the order of established social hierarchies and support change.

Social Disparities: Textual Analysis

The films and sitcom in my analysis are more successful at denouncing social inequalities than gender disparities. Perhaps this result is because social inequalities are not forged in relationship to certain cultural traditions as much as gender roles are. They result from a social divide between the very rich and the very poor that is encouraged and perpetuated by the highest ranks of Moroccan society: the palace and its Makhzen elites. Without offering a full criticism of the Makhzen, filmmakers can still recognize these differences as a fact in Moroccan society. The films and sitcom expose visually and narratively various inequalities in Morocco and present them as barriers to democratic change in the country. However, when all is said and done, they are still not totally agents of change, as all the characters are and remain a product of their class, and there is a feeling throughout the sitcom and all of the films that this situation is how it should be ultimately.

Images: Disparities and Social Injustice

Casanegra is the most provocative and insightful film of the sample when it comes to exposing social disparities and showing the state of mind of the very poor. In fact, the film starts and ends with a scene of Adil and Karim running in the streets as they are being chased by policemen for one of the petty crimes they commit. The film shows that there is no rest and no sense of stability for disadvantaged urban youth, as they are forced to commit petty crimes to make a living and literally must constantly be on the run to survive in the mean streets. Swearing and Moroccan slang make up most of the dialogue; Adil and Karim literally ‘shout’ their frustrations with Moroccan society.

Even when they are not swearing, the characters literally scream their unhappiness to the world. In one scene when Adil looks at a postcard of Malmö and dreams of a better life, he is asked, “why do you spend your time looking at this postcard?” His answer captures the feelings of many poor urban youth and is now the most remembered scene of the film:

Because this postcard allows me to forget about all this shit. When I put my head on the pillow at night, I only have Malmö in my mind. No more traffic noise; no more cops running after us; no more snobs who run red lights because they drive fancy cars; no more drunks in the neighborhood; no more beggars on the sidewalk who use kids who are not their own; no more Islamist fundamentalists who force us into paradise; no more perverted Saudis and Kuwaitis dirtying this country; no more seeing my stepfather’s ugly face every morning; no more Casanegra. There is only Malmö left, and me sitting next to a small fireplace and looking at the snow falling.

In this soliloquy, Adil offers quite a detailed picture of poverty in the streets of Casablanca and a criticism of the rich, who are and act like they are beyond the law. His criticism here goes beyond that and includes pretty much everything he is fed up with.

Marock also exposes and denounces social disparities in Casablanca. Even though it presents the perspective of wealthy youth, social criticism is an integral part of the film. In fact, the very first scene of the movie sets the tone. Two poor little boys are near the entrance of a nightclub where Rita and her rich friends are partying. They talk about how much they would like to get inside of the club and check girls out. At this point, one of the boys says, “Forget it, you would have to work like a slave for years to even make it into this club.” The other’s boy answer is, “And them [referring to people inside of the club], you think they worked like slaves?” The film is concerned with social injustice in the sense that it shows how out of reach the simplest things are for the very poor and how taken-for-granted the privileges of the rich are.

In addition, the film voices an attack against the rampant corruption in Moroccan society, showing again the surreal discrepancies between the treatment of the very poor and the very rich. In both Marock (the film) and Morocco (the country), a poor boy’s life is not worth protecting, whereas a rich man’s murder is worth concealing. When Rita fights with her brother, she screams at him,

Shut your mouth! I did nothing wrong. I did not kill a young boy in a hit and run accident like you did. You were drunk. But thankfully, daddy was here; daddy is well-connected. Daddy paid the family of that guy, so that they keep their mouth shut. How much does the life of a boy in the slums cost? A hundred thousand dirhams? Two hundred thousand dirhams? How much did you pay so that Mao would not go to jail?

Few films in the Moroccan landscape have the courage to be so honest about the power of wealth and ‘connections’ over that of the law.

In addition to corruption, other forms of social injustice are portrayed on screen. The issue of exploitation in the workplace gets airtime in both Casanegra and Number

One, for example. In *Casanegra*, Karim takes over his old dad's job on the assembly line at a fish processing plant. We see an old employee with sore legs after having spent an entire day standing up. These images are contrasted with views of the big boss lounging in his office and laughing on the phone. After a hard day of work at the plant, Karim waits in line for his pay and receives only 50 dirhams (about six dollars). Thinking that there is a mistake, he argues for a better salary and then quits the job. When he sees his senile and handicapped father in a later scene, Karim asks him,

How did you manage to stick with this job for 30 years with the smell of fish, standing eight hours every day for this slave driver that was sucking the blood out of you? All this for what? To get to this point?

The scenes at the factory and with Karim's father are powerful because they point to a great deal of social injustice in the workplace and show that many people, just like Karim's dad, feel trapped within their social class with no recourse for anything other than an insignificant paycheck and a life of servitude. If Karim is able to slam the door of the plant and tell his boss off, it is mostly because he is young, single, and has nothing to lose. But the system is taking advantage of individuals who have children to feed and who, although they have very little to gain in this exploitative workplace, also have a great deal to lose if they have no source of income at all. This captures a wider sentiment in the Arab world that has given rise to the Uprisings (otherwise known as the Arab Spring).

In *Number One*, the factory scenes with Aziz's female workers are narrated in a comedic fashion, light-years away from the dramatic and serious tones of Karim's scenes at the plant in *Casanegra*. The horrible working conditions of these women are shown throughout the film. In the beginning, Aziz finds out that one of his employees is absent

because her baby is asthmatic and needs care. He shouts to his other employees, “I don’t give a shit; she’s suspended with no salary.” When asked by his big boss Mr. Laraki how things are going at the plant, he jokingly replies, “Very good. Except that we are not respecting the social agreements. We will just have a few complaints.” Later, when Madame Morel, the French manufacturer he is trying to impress, visits the plant, Aziz tries to pass as a fair employer: “Our workers are trained in the best conditions. They work 88 hours a week.” After seeing a look of surprise on Mrs. Morel’s face, he adds, “as a group, by taking shifts, of course.” He later brags that his jeans are inexpensive to convince Mrs. Morel to buy them: “One dirham twenty-five of manpower, it’s nothing. It’s almost like for free.” Despite the use of questionable humor, the film is successful at shedding light on exploitative practices in the workplace.

Counter-Messages: Disparities and Social Injustice

Ultimately, in all of these films and the sitcom, everyone is a product of their class. There is a sense that the poor should accept their condition and that any form of rebellion would be pointless. All the maids and factory workers portrayed in these media texts are defined by the role they are made to occupy in society: supporting the rich and powerful.

For example, in *Lalla Fatima*, the maid Aicha is constantly mocked, picked on, and presented as less worthy than her employers. She is stereotyped as a low-class, uneducated woman who is obsessed with television soaps and knows nothing about the world. In episode five, the couples in the family intend to participate in a TV show called *Me and My Wife*, which is supposed to test couples’ cultural knowledge. In a practice session at home, when the question “Where is the Great Wall of China?” comes up,

Aicha responds, “France... or is it Brazil?” As if portraying her as stupid were not enough, the show also spends a great deal of time stressing how ‘ugly’ she is. In episode 11, at some point Aicha tells Fatima, “I am trying to gain my beauty back,” and Lalla Fatima responds, “You never had it in the first place.” In episode 41, Aicha is also criticized for her rural accent. The young daughter of Sidi Ahmed’s colleague visits and tells her, “When you fix your mouth, we can talk.”

In spite of the prejudice she suffers, Aicha never questions these stereotypes and actually uses them to determine her own self-worth. The show also sends the message that she should be thankful to have such nice employers as the family always runs to her rescue to correct her multiple gaffes or to give her a lesson about life at the end of an episode. For example, in episode 15, Aicha gets a nice makeover (once again, the insinuation here is that Aicha is ugly and needs one to start with), but when she gets up the next day with her make-up all mixed up and scares everyone in the house, Lalla Fatima delivers the take-away line at the end of the episode in a patronizing lecture: “Artificial beauty does not last for more than a day!”

In Marock, Rita’s maid is portrayed as a loving substitute for Rita’s parents, who are never in the house, but she is stereotyped as a submissive and docile individual who has no life of her own, in a similar fashion to the ‘Black mammy’ stereotype often used to portray African-American maids in U.S. films about the Civil War or desegregation periods. Again, in Casanegra, we are supposed to believe that the factory workers would go on strike for their tyrant boss to come back but not to defend their own rights.

As much as the poor are seen as a product of their own class, the rich are also trapped in their social upbringing. Even though Marock’s Rita is portrayed as rebellious

and has no shame in pointing out inequalities in Moroccan society, she is not socially engaged in the sense that she does nothing to help the poor for whom she feels sorry. In fact, her pseudo-rebellion mostly revolves around her romance with a Jewish boy, which has no social implications beyond her own entourage. Moreover, Rita continues to enjoy the privileges that come with her class. When she is caught kissing a boy in public (which is usually reprimanded by the police), she tells the officer, “take me to the station, and you will see what will happen to me” (implying that there is nothing that she can do that could get her in trouble because of her connections). Similarly, her path throughout the film is predictable and remains unchanged. From the very beginning, it is clear that the destiny of an upper-class high-schooler who graduates is to emigrate to Europe or the U.S., and that is exactly what she does in the end.

In Marock, the characters who are outliers in their own class are quickly brushed off or brought back to the norm. For example, both Sofia and Asmaa (Rita’s friends) have parents who are rich but got into some kind of financial trouble. Both are faced with the situation of being unable to emigrate abroad after graduation like the rest of their rich friends do. Sofia tells Rita,

I am staying here after graduation. I am no longer coming with you to Paris. My dad has big financial problems. Do you see me here with the people from Moroccan universities? Fuck. They hate us here. I don’t even speak Arabic correctly. In this country, when you have no money left, you don’t exist anymore. My brother will lose it when he finds out. No more vacation trips to Paris, no more restaurants, no more fancy clothes.

Sofia quickly corrects her status as an outlier, though, as she decides to marry her way back up in the social hierarchy. An arranged marriage with a rich suitor she does not even love brings money back to the family and will allow her to emigrate like everyone

else. Asmaa is also supposed to stay in Morocco after high school. When she tells Mao, Rita's brother, "I am staying in Morocco. My parents do not have the means to send me abroad. I will go to med school here," Mao simply answers with a laconic "Je ne savais pas" (I did not know), and her situation is not dwelled upon. In Marock, the rich have to stay rich; otherwise it is better not to talk about it. In fact, as Edwards (2007) argues, the elite characters' ability to circulate across national borders serves "to efface the ways in which the Moroccan underclass may not" (p. 300).

As a result, these films trap everyone in their class and convey the message that this is the way it should be as everyone who has the slightest desire to deviate from the norm is sent back to the path established by his or her socioeconomic status (Adil dreaming of Malmö only to be brought back to reality at the end of the film: being chased by the police like in the beginning; or Sofia fearing she will have to stay in Morocco after graduation only to end up doing what everyone expects her to do in the end: emigrate to the West). Although one could argue that these films are simply trying to be realistic, it is quite obvious in the end that they in fact lack the desire and impetus to offer a true critique of established social hierarchies in Morocco.

Islam, Secularism, and Democracy in Morocco

In addition to gender and class, religion is another topic that fuels Moroccan discussions of democracy. Ninety-eight percent of Moroccans are Muslim (Hirchi, 2011), and the King of Morocco is considered to be both the head of the secular state and the "commander of the faithful" who acts as a "guarantor of the faith of Islam in Morocco" (Wegner, 2011). Therefore, Islam is an organizing factor of both people's personal lives and the state's political life. As Tessler argues (2002), there is a strong connection

between religion, politics, and democracy in the Muslim majority countries, “reflecting Islam’s character as a religion of laws pertaining to society’s organization as well as individual morality” (p. 348). Although one can safely say that Islam is in some way or another part of everyone’s life in Morocco, the degree to which one embraces Islam as an organizing element of life and the degree to which one is observant of Islam varies greatly from person to person.

On one end of the political spectrum, Islamists believe that individual, familial, and political life should be organized around the teaching of the Koran and the Sharia. Before Islamists joined the electoral arena in the 1990s, two types of political parties had developed: the pro-palace parties *Partis de l’Administration*, which provide unconditional support for the king’s initiatives—the Popular Movement, the National Rally of Independents (RNI), and the Constitutional Union (UC) all belong in this category—and the opposition parties, whose roots and references lie in the nationalist movement’s struggle for independence, including the conservative *Istiqlal* and the leftist socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) (Wegner, 2011).

Since 1997, opposition parties have been an integral part of the Moroccan government as new constitutional laws have allowed for the direct, universal election of parliamentary members, which allowed these parties to have consequential representation in the parliament. However, as the parties have integrated the government and followed the King’s lead on many initiatives, they have slowly lost their credibility as opposition forces and agents of change (Wegner, 2011). At around the same time in the late 1990s, a new moderate Islamist opposition party emerged: the Party of Justice and Development. The PJD was an umbrella party for various pre-existing Islamist associations.

For a variety of reasons, the PJD has become a prominent opposition party in the contemporary Moroccan political context. First, the movement has always received tacit support from the King, who viewed it as a chance to put pressure on the secular opposition. Additionally, as “commander of the faithful,” the King was still able to exercise a certain degree of control over the PJD by choosing religious leaders and acting as an authority regarding various religious and political issues. Similarly, as Al-Ghannouchi argues (2000), Islamists today seek a form of modernity “that is in response to local needs and that is in conformity with the local culture and the value system” (p. 100). This philosophy strikes a chord with many Moroccan Muslims who seek policies and changes that are adapted to their cultural and religious beliefs.

Over the course of the past 15 years, the party has gained a lot of steam. Since the party’s creation in 1998, each parliamentary election has been characterized by a rise in the number of seats going to the PJD. In 2007, the party was the projected winner of the election, but rumor has it that the King did not want a prime minister from the PJD and that the election was rigged. In 2011, however, the PJD won a larger number of seats in the parliament (although not the majority), and it is now governing with a coalition of parties previously in power. The current prime minister, Abdelilah Benkirane, is the leader of the PJD.

Although it is hard to quantify the number of Islamists in Morocco, Eickelman suggested that they made up approximately 20% of the population back in the 1990s (1994, p. 257). Universities have been an active recruiting ground for the PJD, and given the fact that the number of university students has nearly tripled since the mid-1980s, one suspects that the number of Islamists has, too. In addition, “there appears to be a

considerable gap between those who are actively involved and those who sympathize with some of the Islamists' general themes but are passive" (Wegner, 2011, p. 30).

On the other end of the political and religious spectrum, secularism has been on the rise as well. Secular Moroccans believe in the separation of the state and religion and do not necessarily allow Islam to be a guiding force in their lives. Njoku (2006) argues that the phenomenon is on the rise because the urban educated elite found employment in Western industries or other Western-style institutions in Morocco and now desire to emulate Western lifestyles: "Although many devout Muslims still live in the cities, the emergent Westernized class of professionals is gradually dropping its strict observance of religious duties" (p. 26).

Many of the elites who are government-appointed officials and work directly for the King are themselves very secular. Although the state itself is 'supposed' to be secular since Moroccan independence, this constitutes a paradox in the sense that the same ruling elites act on behalf of the King, who is the "Commander of the Faithful," and have a great deal of power over religious institutions and the interpretation of Islamic law (for example, the re-interpretation of the Mudawana). According to Al-Ghannouchi (2000), many of these ruling elites are therefore "pseudo-secularists" in the sense that, "Instead of establishing a separation between what is mundane and religious [...] pseudo secularists seek to impose full control over institutions and symbols of religion, and not to claim, but even monopolize the right to re-interpret religion" (p. 97). Ghannouchi points to the hypocrisy of these ruling elites who lead secular lifestyles when they see fit but still control and guide religious lifestyles.

Nonetheless, secularism extends beyond the ruling elites and the urban educated youth. Individuals from other socioeconomic groups who are also socially and economically disadvantaged and dream of the West or emulate the ruling classes might also desire to live secular lifestyles, whether they are fervent Muslims or not. It is important to keep in mind the variety of experiences and the variety of degrees of observance to Islam. Although Islamists and secularists are on two different ends of a spectrum, Islam and secularism are often intertwined. A fervent Muslim might believe in the separation of religion and the state but still live his or her life according to the guiding principles of Islam. Similarly, to conform to societal norms in Morocco, a fervent Muslim might hide his or her desire to live a more secular life. Finally, as discussed, a member of the government can lead a secular lifestyle and identify with Islam and/or control religious groups.

Islam often comes up in discussions of democracy and freedom because many individuals do not necessarily feel free to showcase their ‘real’ degree of observance to Islam, or if they do, they might wind up feeling ostracized for it. Islamists and very observant Muslims often feel that Islam is “generally regarded among secular-minded Muslims as a static phenomenon doctrinally and socio-culturally, and therefore anti-modern and retrogressive” (Esposito, 2000, p. 11). They often fall prey to a reverse form of Orientalism that has normalized Western lifestyles—including secularism—and stereotyped Islam as primitive.

In contrast, individuals aspiring to more secular lifestyles feel they have to hide from others to do so, especially during major religious events like Ramadan. The societal expectation is that everyone should observe Ramadan because it is a national religious

event. However, Boukhari (2008) argues, “Fervor and hypocrisy both characterize attitudes towards the Ramadan,” given that not everyone who claims to observe it actually does. In the summer of 2009, a public debate emerged around the issue of fasting. Two women from the Movement for the Defense of Individual Liberties (MALI) demanded that article 222 of the penal code be repealed. The article prohibits public rejection of fasting, and they cited their right to individual liberty. It is therefore quite evident that many questions concerning Islam animate discussions of democracy and individual freedom. Although some wonder if religion is in fact encroaching on the domain of individual liberties (like these two women), others wonder if the state and ruling elites themselves are encroaching on religious leaders’ rights to guide Muslim citizens.

Although it is very hard for Moroccans to publicly demand change on these various issues (on the surface, almost everyone identifies as Muslim, and Islam is to a certain extent a symbol of unity and peace for both the King and the nation), many discussions in Moroccan households behind closed doors revolve around the issue of not being able to show Islamic or anti-Islamic behaviors in public. Society often labels Islamists who are viewed as publicly displaying too many Islamic behaviors as “barbus” (a term referring to fundamentalist Islamists but often grossly used pejoratively to talk about all Islamists, even the moderate ones). Additionally, society is also very quick to label someone who fails to observe religious traditions as non-Muslim. For example, in a study about the role of Islam in everyday life, 64% of women interviewed and 54% of men interviewed believed that a person who does not fast during Ramadan is not a

Muslim (El Hayadi et al., 2007), even if one can easily guess that many if not most of the individuals who break the fast would still consider themselves Muslim.

If the films and sitcom in my study are in fact a tool for social change, then they should in some capacity debunk stereotypes about Islamists and fervent or non-observant Muslims, and they should emphasize the right to individual and religious freedom on both ends of the spectrum: Islam and secularism. They should also provide a view of Islam that is in sync with the richness, complexity, and variety of people's lived experiences. However, despite their ability to present characters with varying levels of devotion to Islam, these media texts in fact end up only reinforcing stereotypes about religion.

Islam, Secularism, and Democracy in Morocco: Textual Analysis

Breaking Taboos with Images of Islamic and Un-Islamic Behaviors

Again, it initially appears as if the films and sitcom in my sample do help break certain taboos in Moroccan society by showing characters with different degrees of religious observance and by advancing discussions of individual freedom in this area of life. These media texts show that individuals from different socioeconomic classes are likely to have different relationships to Islam and are subjected to different sets of societal expectations regarding their degree of observance. This is a realistic vision, one that probably would not have made it to movie screens during the Lead Years, when most film characters were portrayed as devout Muslims in a more uniform way.

For example, Marock does not shy away from showing the lack of religious fervor of its rich, urbanite youth. Rita refuses to fast during the Ramadan. The maid of the house wakes her up before dawn so that she can eat before the fast begins, and Rita sends her

away. Rita's brother also seems bothered that she is not fasting, but aside from him and the maid, no one really points it out, and it seems to be a socially accepted fact that Rita will not fast. Rita does not pray either and is never shown going to the Mosque. Her other friends are not shown doing any of these things, either. The very rich in Marock are portrayed as being above any kind of social expectations (after all, remember, they can get away with murder), and they live secularized Western lifestyles, anyway.

Interestingly, Casanegra also shows that poor and unemployed young people are not necessarily expected to be observant of Islam. Because the two main characters are petty criminals who break the law on a daily basis and must do anything they can just to survive, there is a feeling that their lives are so 'deviant' already that they could not sustain a pious religious lifestyle, anyway. The two characters are also left alone most of the time as no one is really there to support them, so they are also not accountable to anyone. Society has left them behind and no longer has any expectations of them (religious or otherwise). The entire film has no religious connotations. In both Marock and Casanegra, there is a sense that the very rich urban bourgeoisie and the very poor urban youth are considered to be above or below any form of religious expectations (even if, once again, there will be a variety of experiences even within these groups).

In most of these films, however, it is quite evident that the middle classes are socially expected to observe Islam to a higher degree. Aziz and Soraya are portrayed as belonging to the middle class, and Soraya's 'un-Islamic' behavior at the end of the film—as she drops the veil to live what is perceived in the film as a more Westernized form of femininity—is considered to be outside the norm and shocking to most of the neighbors who spy on her. Similarly, Veiled Love's Batul, who can probably be identified as an

upper-middle-class character, has many sexual escapades outside of marriage, which are considered ‘un-Islamic’ and punishable, as discussed in the section above. Although her upper-middle-class status confers on her a certain degree of freedom in her professional life and later allows her to raise a child out of wedlock, she is still held to certain standards that come with being part of the middle class. If nothing else, Batul has to at least keep up appearances that she is a devout Muslim, and the veil that she wears on multiple occasions during the film also serves to mask her sins. Finally, Lalla Fatima’s family—another middle-class household—is also portrayed as observant, even if very little airtime is devoted to religion.

Some of these media texts, like *Marock* and *Veiled Love*, do even more than just show that different classes are held to different standards regarding the degree of their faith; they also show that there is a great variety of experiences with Islam within each class. For example, although *Marock*’s Rita pursues a secular lifestyle, her brother Mao, who has been an Islamist sympathizer since he came back from his year abroad in England, is shown praying in the beginning and observing Ramadan. As Hirchi argues (2011), “the contrast between Rita and her brother helps give a sense of the variety of beliefs within the same demographic profile. Both characters represent a microcosm that can only be understood within the framework of a society struggling to reconcile religiosity and secularism” (p. 13).

Similarly, in *Veiled Love*, although Batul transgresses most rules and principles of Islam, her experiences contrast with those of other more observant characters within her own class. Her male cousin, Hannas, is a devout Muslim and Islamist who offers to marry her when she is considered to be a ‘respectable virgin’ at the beginning of the film,

but he walks away from her after finding out she has ‘sinned.’ Similarly, Batul’s mother and the rest of the family are presented as respectable, observant Muslims.

Although most of these media texts show different degrees of faith and observance on screen, they do not necessarily accept all of these degrees equally. The following sections show how these media texts maintain and reinforce a variety of stereotypes about both Islam and secularism.

Counter-Message: Reinforcement of Stereotypes on Islam and Secularism

Despite a high degree of pressure to maintain traditional mores, many Moroccans today struggle to define their own degree of observance to Islam and are torn between religious and secular lifestyles. To a certain extent, many of the films in my sample attempt to grapple with this phenomenon to provide a realistic picture of Moroccan society. Although this is a noble and worthwhile enterprise, it falls flat when characters’ struggles to locate themselves on the religious spectrum are trivialized and stereotyped. Moreover, the filmmakers use these characters to create stereotypes about both secularism and Islam.

Batul, for example, who starts off as a pious, veiled young lady, has religious phases (when she is seen praying, wearing the veil, refusing sexual intercourse before marriage, etc.) and secular phases (when she is seen dropping the veil, exploring her body, going to nightclubs, dressing like a bombshell, etc.). When she is religious, she is the stereotype of the ‘good’ girl who saves herself for marriage, makes her parents happy, and goes straight home after her workday. When she is secular, she is portrayed as a ‘bad’ girl who lives a depraved lifestyle and needs to redeem herself through religion.

The back and forth between her religious and secular phases could have been very powerful in showing the inner struggles that individuals, especially women, face when trying to determine how observant they should be and how they face various societal expectations and judgments from their peers. However, there is little nuance in these secular and religious phases as they appear back and forth in the blink of an eye and make Batul look like an immature teenager who is not thinking things through, rather than a multilayered young woman faced with a variety of inner struggles. Moreover, in making the choice to portray her as all ‘good’ at times and all ‘bad’ at others, the filmmaker ends up depicting secular behaviors as supposedly depraved, outside of the norm, and ultimately unacceptable. In the end, Batul is punished for her supposed non-Islamic behaviors, and the film’s ultimate message is, “Be an observant Muslim; otherwise you will be punished (that is, only if you are a woman, of course).”

Other films reinforce to a smaller extent negative visions of secularism. In Marock, the secular and westernized characters can do pretty much they want, but they are still being told that what they are doing is technically ‘wrong’ by people representing the voices of the mainstream population (for example, the cop who nearly arrests Rita for kissing someone in public or the maid who tries to get Rita to fast). In Number One, Soraya drops the veil, which causes uproar among her neighbors. In Casanegra, the French-speaking transgender character who engages in all kinds of activities that would not be sanctified by Islam (like having sex with prostitutes) is presented as deviant and ends up dead.

Although these characters present caricatures of what secularism supposedly represents and indirectly warn audiences about its supposed dangers, other characters do

just the opposite: offer stereotypical visions of Islam. In *Marock*, it is Mao, Rita's brother, who is the catalyst for many of these stereotypes. Mao starts off as a secular young man from the Moroccan high bourgeoisie. In a manner reminiscent of *Batul's* back-and-forth trajectory, Mao goes through a series of phases, from being secular to being religious to being secular again.

Mao leaves for England after killing a little boy from the slums in a hit-and-run accident. While abroad, he makes new ties with Islamists (or at least that is what his sister implies) and becomes more observant of Islam. Back in Morocco, Mao is a changed man who is shown praying and fasting during Ramadan. The implication is that that Mao is using Islam to absolve his sins and to clear his conscience. His sister Rita is even forthright about it when she states, "You know, Mao, I don't need religion to sleep well at night; you treat us like shit with your patronizing looks [referring to how Mao is judging them for not observing the fast, for example] and your rich daddy's boy Islam." In *Marock*, as Mao becomes more and more religious, he progressively turns himself into an instrument of oppression within his own house, punishing Rita and others for not fasting and for transgressing all kinds of religious rules. At some point in the film, he is so bothered by Rita's behavior that he actually hits her.

This plotline is extremely problematic in the sense that it seeks to place Islam, Islamists, and violence on the same level, as if these were inevitably intertwined. In the process, it reproduces the stereotype of the primitive and violent Muslim. The true meaning Islam has for many observant Muslims is diluted in this film, and as Mernissi (2000) argues, "Islam, the term meaning peace and submission, now invokes images of violence, totalitarianism, and irrationality" (p. 33). Therefore, *Marock* reinforces two of

the Orientalist myths that Kumar (2012) analyzes in her book *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*, namely, that the Muslim mind is incapable of rationality and that Islam is an inherently violent religion.

Worse, many of these films openly mock and criticize all characters shown as being very observant of Islam or suspected of being Islamists. Sadly, these characters are also quickly associated with fundamentalists even if they preach a moderate form of Islamism (meaning that they live lives organized around their religious beliefs and apparently vote for the moderately Islamist Party of Justice and Development). For example, the first time Rita sees her brother pray, she asks him, “Are you sick or what? What are you doing?” Then she tells her parents, “Mommy, daddy, your son has gone completely crazy.” She later tells Mao, “Do you think you’re in Algeria? Are you going to become a *barbu*?”—implying that the simple act of praying turns anyone into a fundamentalist.

In *Veiled Love*, Batul’s cousin Hannas is also ostracized for his faith and for following Islam on many occasions. He is presented as a boring, clumsy, and conservative introvert who bores Batul to death. In one scene, Hannas is daydreaming about Batul while he stands on a ladder at work and he falls on the floor, breaking a leg. In another scene, Batul rejects Hannas’s marriage proposal. In the end, when Batul’s friend fears that her friend will marry Hannas to save face and avoid the fate of being a single mother, she tells Hamza, “Because of you, she will marry this *barbu* (fundamentalist) that she does not even love.” (In actuality, Batul does not end up marrying anyone.) Clearly, the character of Hannas is in an undesirable position from

start to finish, and as much as Batul is ostracized for her lack of observance to Islam, he is ostracized because of his supposed over-adherence to Islam as a way of life.

What becomes evident through many of these films (especially *Veiled Love*) is that they consider Islamism and secularism to be two extremes, and only the characters who belong to the happy ‘middle’ or the ‘mainstream’— defined as having faith and being reasonably observant but not letting Islam guide every single aspect of one’s life— have a chance to live peacefully without being stereotyped or marginalized.

However, as a whole, there are in all of these media texts far fewer stereotypes of secularism than there are of devout Muslims and Islamists. This is a surprising fact given that pressures to be observant and follow religious traditions are commonly enforced by the palace, the state, and popular culture. In actuality, criticism of those who do not pray or fast during the Ramadan is more common than criticism of those who do. This finding probably has a lot to do with the cultural and religious allegiances of Moroccan filmmakers themselves, who as a whole are overwhelmingly more secular than the rest of the population (as will be shown in the last section of this chapter).

In any case, what these films show successfully is that religious freedom is a matter of being able to choose one’s degree of observance. They fail, however, to move past common stereotypes about individuals who are on the far ends of the religion-versus-secularism continuum. Consequently, they reinforce the status quo and fail to advance democratic discussions concerning the right to religious freedom in Morocco. Once again, although some of these films present some realistic visions of life experiences, there is no embedded critique of stereotypes and dominant ideologies. In

fact, all the films and sitcoms can be characterized by a certain degree of social realism and a lack of social critique.

Avoidance of Social Critique in Films and Television Series

Social Realism Deprived of Social Critique

With the exception of the sitcom *Lalla Fatima*, all the films in my analysis are associated with the social-realist genre that emerged in the 1960s in Africa, when filmmakers across the continent started recounting narratives according to their own value systems while openly criticizing the constraints of Western colonialism (Orlando, 2011). The goal of most filmmakers who adhered to the genre was to write screenplays that reflected the daily struggles of their fellow citizens.

The genre was picked up in Morocco in the late 1990s as the Lead Years waned (Orlando, 2011). Moroccan filmmakers wanted to provide realist descriptions of the social hardships encountered by the population during the Lead Years. Additionally, the political climate—the death of Hassan II, who was the iron fist of the Lead Years, and the ascension of a more liberal King to the throne—finally allowed for more political and artistic freedom to discuss a variety of contemporary experiences. As Diawara argues (1992),

The films in this category draw on contemporary experiences, and they oppose tradition to modernity, oral to written, agrarian and customary communities to urban and industrialized systems, and subsistence economies to highly productive economies [...] The heroes are women, children, and other marginalized groups that are pushed into the shadows by the elites of tradition and modernity (p. 141).

Films like *Looking for My Wife's Husband* (1993) by M.A. Tazi, which challenges women's traditional roles in society and sheds light on the practice of polygamy, and *Ali Zaoua: Prince of the Streets* (1999) by Nabil Ayouch, which focuses

on street children from the slums, are pillars of this new form of cinematic realism in Morocco. *Marock*, *Casanegra*, *Veiled Love*, and *Number One* follow in the same vein by portraying both elite and marginalized communities discussing the realities of Moroccan life on various levels (gender and social disparities, experiences with sexuality and religion, etc.).

Nonetheless, as this analysis has shown, attempting to be realistic and providing access to various populations on screen is not necessarily the equivalent of taking a position and advancing the cause of marginalized communities. Yet, scholars like Armes (2005) and Orlando (2011) have argued that social-realist texts allow Moroccan filmmakers today to be social activists, who

operate as free agents in a society of equal exchange that is not limited or determined by cultural mores or political prerequisites [...] they act as 'position takers.' [...] These positions concern the rights of women; homosexuals and children; human rights abuses and torture in the past and poverty in the present. (pp. 34-35)

If these scholars fail to see that many Moroccan filmmakers are still entangled in pre-existing “cultural mores and political prerequisites,” it is mostly because their analysis does not go beyond the images presented on the surface by social-realist texts. It is undeniable that these films raise previously censored topics and give an appearance of tolerance for alternative ways of life in areas as varied as gender, class, and religion. However, a closer analysis of many of these films also reveals that they are limited at truly changing mentalities and advocating for various populations' rights.

In a recent anthology about film in the Middle East, Kevin Dwyer (2011) remarked that *Ali Zaoua*, the 1999 quintessential social-realist film, was not as provocative as it claimed to be or as the press claimed it was:

Ali Zaoua is a new departure for Moroccan film [...] in focusing on street children, in conveying a great deal about their condition [...] but if Ayouch brings attention to a social problem, he stays clear of social critique [...] the film does not tell how many of the other children came to live in the streets [...] violence remains limited and originates within their own ranks. There is not a single instance of either public authorities or individual adults victimizing the children. (pp. 342-343)

This chapter shows that more recent social-realist films like *Marock*, *Casanegra*, *Veiled Love* and *Number One* also offer limited social critique by confining each character to the plight of his or her class and gender as well as the societal and religious expectations that come with them. Similarly, they fail to offer an analysis and critique of the social system that produces these problems and choose instead to focus on individual characters.

Fatality and Humor: An Escape from Social Critique

One reason that many of these films do not formulate a meaningful social critique when discussing a variety of issues is their embedded pessimism. With the exception of *Lalla Fatima* and *Number One*, which are social-realist comedies, all the other films in my analysis have unhappy endings. In *Casanegra*, Adil and Karim are back on the streets in the end. Nothing has changed for them as they are still being chased by police and have failed to fulfill their dreams of emigration and their hopes of climbing the social ladder. In *Marock*, Rita's boyfriend Yuri dies and she is sent back to the path that always awaited her: going to university in Paris. In *Veiled Love*, Batul becomes a pariah of society.

The unhappy ending is a popular trope in Moroccan social-realist films. It is used as a way to show the filmmakers' awareness of marginalized populations' dire living conditions and helps to convey a sense of realism. Although there is nothing wrong with

being realistic and refraining from selling audiences false hopes of Morocco's ability to move past social, gender, and religious disparities, the sense of fatality that these films communicate is problematic especially in light of the changes taking place in the region. Uprisings such as the 2008 Egyptian workers' strike, the 2009-2010 Iranian election protests, the Green Movement, the Arab Spring, and the Tunisian workers' strike in 2012 are proof that in many cases, collective action can lead to change in the region. Yet filmmakers choose endings that show no way out of the problems faced by the main characters.

Moving from the arena of 'realism' to the realm of 'critique' is hard to do without blaming the government, the palace, and the authorities at large for failing to address these issues in the first place. Moreover, social criticism is still something filmmakers cannot afford to do while being on the state's payroll (the film and television industry is once again state-owned). Whether we are past the Lead Years or not, filmmakers still refrain from blaming the state organizations and elites on which they actually depend. When I asked one of the filmmakers I encountered during my fieldwork to tell me whether he thought he had artistic freedom, his answer was very telling: "Yes, because we don't direct any film whose script has not been previously read and accepted by a commission." In other words, artistic freedom is only granted within the confines of a previously (self or government) censored script, which has been deemed acceptable by the state and, by extension, the palace. Although 'realism' and 'fatality' are accepted tropes because they give an appearance of an honest and uncensored cinema—which eventually benefits the government in its pursuit of branding Morocco as democratic to foreign audiences—self and government censorship prevent any 'slip up' in the social

criticism realm.

In addition to the themes of reality and fatality, another way that filmmakers escape true social criticism is through the use of humor. Second-degree humor allows filmmakers to formulate the start of a critique but also allows them to simultaneously debase and ‘lighten’ this very same critique. In other words, humor serves both purposes of shedding light on contentious issues and taboo topics while appearing to be politically correct given that filmmakers do not have to own up to these transgressions and can just say, “but it was only a joke.” As Houilassine argues (2006), Moroccan cinema is known for its “contemporary humor, both acerbic and upbeat” (p.7). A great example of that humor was the character of Aziz in *Number One*, who jokes about the terrible working conditions of his employees. In this notable scene, the filmmaker achieves the goal of bringing attention to the problem of labor exploitation (Aziz appears cruel and insensitive to workers, whereas his employees are portrayed as hardworking and failed by the system in which they operate). However, the filmmaker also turns the issue of women’s labor rights into a laughing matter, debasing the very same critique the film was initially trying to present. Similarly, Lalla Fatima’s incessant jokes about her maid’s supposed lack of sophistication and class bring attention to a class divide but also reinforce the stereotypes of poor uneducated Moroccans. In other words, despite their ‘good’ endings, the two comedies in my sample also fail to provide meaningful social criticism, and in both cases, filmmakers provide no alternative discourse to challenge or debunk dominant ideologies on gender, class, and religion. The status quo and a sense of fatality are reinforced.

Emigration, Internalized Orientalism, and Hybridity

Even though the films offer visions of gender oppression, class immobility, and

religious divides, they are ultimately conservative in that they do not even offer a trace of how Moroccan society might be changed. Furthermore, they fail to reflect on the ways in which collective struggle can impact social change. Emigration, real or imagined, is presented as the only chance to escape poverty, corruption, prejudice, and various ailments that afflict Moroccan society.

For poor socioeconomic classes, emigration is only imagined, as evidenced throughout *Casanegra* by Adil's dream of emigrating to Malmö in Sweden, a dream that is doomed to fail from the very beginning because Adil will never have the financial means to (illegally bribe someone to be able to) purchase a visa, let alone a flight and an accommodation. For the upper-middle class characters of *Veiled Love* and *Lalla Fatima*, emigration is a possibility but not a necessity. In both films, certain characters have experience with emigration, whereas others do not. Batul's love interest, Hamza, is a divorced man who returned from France after years of marriage there, but Batul herself does not seem to consider emigration an option. Lalla Fatima and her husband seem very rooted in Morocco, whereas all of their children but one have emigrated to Europe. Finally, for the rich urban youth of Marock, emigration is not only an obvious designated path but also a legal and transparent one.

The idea that emigration is the only acceptable form of escape in today's Morocco is problematic because it bolsters a certain form of internalized Orientalism that Moroccans inflict upon themselves. Hybridity in all of these texts takes the form of internalized Orientalism as most of the characters dream of the West broadly defined in one way or the other. The West is portrayed as a more desirable place than Morocco. Interestingly, although both Morocco and the West are themselves very diverse and

multicultural places, there is a feeling in all of these media texts that there are two uniform blocks opposed to each other in every way, and this idea is channeled through the use of colors, space, and even wardrobe in these films. In *Casanegra*, Orientalism takes form through a color scheme that is announced from the very beginning of the film. To start with, Adil coins Casablanca “Casanegra.” Casablanca becomes the “dark” city. In contrast, Europe (especially Sweden) becomes everything “white” and beautiful. The postcard of Malmö that Adil admires all day long shows a lot of white snow and, at one point in the film, Adil himself says that he dreams of going to Sweden to “look at the snow falling down.” He also daydreams about Swedish women, whom he thinks are “beautiful and soft, like egg whites.” The West and whiteness in general are deemed desirable, whereas Morocco and the Arab world are viewed as “dark” and devoid of any hope. Therefore, the color scheme of the film implies that Arabs are somehow inferior to white Westerners.

Internalized Orientalism is also apparent in *Marock* in somewhat more subtle (but no less harmful) ways. The protagonists’ lives are imbued with influence from both the former colonial power France (as they go to a French school, spend vacations in Paris, and speak better French than Darija) and U.S. imperial power. As Fanon (1952) and Dabashi (2011) argue, colonial subjects often internalize racist tropes inherited by the colonizers, especially the national elites who replace them at the highest ranks of administration. The youth in Marock are the children or grandchildren of these elites and have internalized the same tropes as their parents and grandparents. They live somewhat hybrid lives, retrieving elements of French culture into their lifestyles. However, their perception of the West extends beyond France, and France is mingled with America in

what is perceived as an idealized Western Other to which everyone should aspire.

As Edwards (2007) states, “if these youth look to Europe for their future after le bac (graduation), the commodities, products, and culture they consume are for the most part American” (p. 296). At one point in the film when Mao comes to apologize to Rita for hitting her and for his behavior (since he became an Islamist), he comes wearing a t-shirt with the word “America” with a small heart dotting the “i.” In the blink of an eye, Mao goes from being portrayed as a fervent Muslim, possibly Islamist, and an overtly violent man to a nice, apologetic secularist who is open to dialogue and loves America. Once again, the West, especially America in this particular case, is idealized as the solution to all problems. Whereas conflict and violence were associated with Islam (when Mao was religious and violent to his sister), peace and conflict resolution are associated with America (when Mao comes in peace wearing the aforementioned t-shirt). Therefore, there may be a (conscious or unconscious) political message as well hidden in this media text. In addition to these various associations through the use of commodities and wardrobe, the overall message of the film itself—that the protagonists must leave for the West no matter what—is Orientalist at its core. As Edwards (2007) argues, “If Marock claims contemporaneity, it is unable to offer more than a repetition of that oldest of post-colonial narrative resolutions: the departure from the nation that cannot contain the enlightened consciousness of the protagonist” (p. 301).

Interestingly, the comedies *Number One* and *Lalla Fatima* offer some criticism of the West. In a very funny scene in *Number One*, Mrs. Morel, the French feminist Aziz must impress, asks him to stop the car because she sees a poor little girl on the side of the road. Mrs. Morel wants to give her the Moroccan pastries she was offered as a welcome

gift earlier. Aziz speaks to the girl in Arabic and tells her, “This dumb-ass French woman wants to give you some sweets; you take them and you go.” Highlighted in this scene are Westerners’ patronizing tendencies to ‘help’ poor communities in developing countries by offering insignificant one-time gestures that will have no lasting effects while continuing to exploit these very same communities through the hiring of cheap labor (Mrs. Morel indirectly participates in the exploitation of Aziz’s workers, after all, given that she purchases jeans at a very low price).

In *Lalla Fatima*, the West is not always seen as a desirable place. In episode 13, Hoda, the couple’s daughter, decides to go study in France, and her parents try to give her a “death scare” (a term they use themselves) so that she does not go. By depicting what life might be like for a marginalized immigrant in France, they hope she will decide to stay with them. Although Hoda decides to go to France and disappears for a large number of episodes in season one, she returns in episode 42. Her brother asks her, “Why would you come back to visit? Life is so much better there.” Hoda replies, “That is what you think because you haven’t tried living in a different country. That is much harder.” Interestingly, in these films, the Moroccan middle classes seem to have a greater awareness of the challenges that come with emigration. This trend was also reflected in the actual Moroccan population as it will be shown in Chapter Six.

However, despite this awareness, ultimately emigration (or at least travel to the West) is still the answer to most characters’ problems, as Hoda does not consider the possibility of not going to France for her studies and in this way hopes to secure herself a better future in Morocco or elsewhere. Similarly, in *Number One*, Soraya’s dream of visiting Paris becomes potentially real when Mrs. Morel makes it a very real possibility at

the very end of the film by inviting them to Paris for Christmas. The very fact that this possible trip to Paris concludes the film shows that France (or the West) is in and of itself the ‘happy ending’ or the characters’ end point, whereas Morocco is still viewed as the more austere reality they must live with for now.

Men and Women Behind the Camera

To understand the men and women behind the camera and the social, economic, and political contexts in which they work, I conducted interviews with filmmakers and other film professionals. I interviewed five prominent filmmakers, who often subsequently organized individual screenings of their various films for me and in some cases took me along to sets as they were directing films or television series. In addition, I interviewed four producers and one movie critic, who gave me further insight into the Moroccan media scene and an inside perspective on the work routines of filmmakers. Finally, I interacted with approximately 20 other filmmakers at the International Festival of ‘Auteur’ Cinema in Rabat and the African Film Festival of Khouribga.

I have chosen to keep the names of my respondents confidential to protect their privacy. Although most of their comments about the industry were positive—either because they are truly happy or because they self-censored to a certain extent—at times there were hints of criticism that were often followed by, “Please do not include this part in your work.” These filmmakers and producers have to maintain their status in the industry to be able to work, and I did not want to do anything to jeopardize their positions.

If filmmakers have a hard time providing a meaningful social critique of the disparities plaguing the country, it is mostly because of their own position within the

“field of social relations” (see Bourdieu, 1993). As ‘mezzo-level’ professionals working directly under state and Makhzen elites and yet charged with the mission to draw and attract (as well as reflect the aspirations of) audience, they are caught in the middle. In actuality, this means that they have to satisfy audiences by accurately depicting their life situations and their various frustrations, but they also have to carefully avoid any criticism of the palace and the dominant ideologies in place. It is not difficult to understand how this double-situatedness in both media elites and viewers’ worlds leads to ‘social realism without social critique’. Filmmakers go as far as they are possibly allowed to go (showing undeniable facts about Moroccan society and class, gender, and religious disparities), but they stop where they cannot go (investigating the real reasons behind these disparities by questioning the role of the palace and the authorities, presenting local solutions and alternatives to dominant ideologies about class, gender, and religion, and creating socially engaged characters who have the determination to fight for the implementation of democratic solutions).

Self-censorship has a large role to play in Moroccan filmmakers’ avoidance of any contentious topics. Censorship is not direct in the sense that filmmakers are no longer sent to prison or fined millions of Dirhams for material judged as offensive (these practices were more common during the Lead Years). Instead, filmmakers may be unofficially ‘banned’ from receiving funding from the state or ‘banned’ from working with major Moroccan networks for years after material perceived as offensive has been made public. One of my respondents interviewed recollected years of not being able to work because of an action taken that this person now regrets.

The fear of not being able to work is in and of itself an incentive strong enough

for filmmakers not to cross the line and to instead reinforce the status quo. Although the palace is counting on this self-censorship to ensure lack of social criticism in film and television material, other measures institutionalized within the system help to ensure that films do not stray from standard expectations: the green-lighting of screenplays ahead of time, the execution of production within state-owned television networks, etc.

Censorship is counterbalanced by a great deal of professional freedom within the field of film and television in Morocco. As long as filmmakers do not cross the line, they enjoy a great deal of autonomy and liberty to create new projects and to explore different roles within the industry (not only as directors but also as writers, producers, and even actors). All the filmmakers I interviewed referred to a certain flexibility and ability to experiment within the industry. One of them said, “There are many opportunities here in Morocco. There is a lack of quality, and we need people who have received film training. If you have that training, a lot of doors are opened for you.” “Because the industry has limited funds, a filmmaker often ends up doing everything: screenwriter, director, and even producer. This confers a lot of freedom!” Overall, they seemed to have a greater degree of professional freedom than film workers in France or in the U.S., where the film industry is much more compartmentalized, and professional expansion and development are limited within one’s own craft.

This upwards mobility within the realm of the film industry is key to understanding the filmmakers’ positions and lack of desire to compromise themselves by taking risks. Unlike the great majority of the Moroccan population, filmmakers belong to a category of individuals who are not trapped within their own class and have a much easier time climbing the social ladder compared with any other professional group in the

country. The socioeconomic backgrounds of filmmakers run the gamut, with individuals like Laila Marrakchi, the director of *Marock*, who was born rich in the upper class of Casablanca, or like Nourredine Lakhmari, the director of *Casanegra*, who was born poor in a small town 250 kilometers south of Casablanca. For many filmmakers who were not born with silver spoons in their mouths, film became an opportunity to work closely with elites and to win the special treatment that comes with it. Filmmaking is also an opportunity to gain entry into a new ‘star-system’ bourgeoisie that enjoys great visibility and professional mobility. At events like the yearly African Film Festival of Khouribga, for example, filmmakers receive star V.I.P. treatment, from free luxury hotel rooms to catered dinners with members of the government, such as the ministers of culture and of communication. Through self-censorship, filmmakers maintain their newfound position in Moroccan society while helping to ensure that no criticism about the palace, the state, and dominant ideologies ever comes forth.

Because filmmakers are not technically allowed to critique, they often go straight to preaching escapism to the West as a so-called solution to Morocco’s problems. This fascination with the West, which pervades all the media texts in this study, is easy to account for given filmmakers’ own trajectories in and out of Morocco. Many Moroccan filmmakers have chosen to emigrate to the West (mostly to France, Spain, or Scandinavian countries) and currently live outside of Morocco. Orlando (2011) refers to this group as “Marocains residents a l’etranger (MREs),” Moroccans living abroad. It includes, for example, individuals like Laila Marrakchi (*Marock*) or Zakia Tahiri (*Number One*), who currently reside in Paris. They have decided to become permanent immigrants in France and have largely assimilated to the French cultural lifestyle. It is no

surprise, then, that they envision a similar path of emigration for their own characters.

The filmmakers who remained at home also have a great deal of experience with the West. All the filmmakers I had the chance to interview had either studied and lived in Europe for extended periods of time or had studied in Morocco but travelled and attended workshops in France or the United States. Western lifestyles have already been incorporated into their daily routines through these many travels. Similarly, members of the Moroccan bourgeoisie view Western commodities as attractive, and filmmakers attempt to maintain their (oftentimes newly acquired) class status by purchasing and showing off these commodities to the world.

Because of the Western influence on both their personal lives and their film training, filmmakers at home in Morocco have adopted various elements of the cultures with which they have become acquainted. For example, when I first came to visit the headquarters of a large television network, I met with a large group of filmmakers (men and women), who were smoking cigarettes outside of the studios and recounting their night at the club. Similarly, some of the filmmakers I encountered for my interviews asked me to meet them in underground bars. In a Western context, these might seem like innocuous scenes, but in a country where cigarette consumption is banned in public spaces, where alcohol consumption is prohibited by Islam and the state, and where a woman going to nightclubs unaccompanied by a husband is viewed as promiscuous, these scenes stand out as atypical. The dominant ideologies disseminated by the palace emphasize traditionalism, and traditionalism is constructed (at least by the palace, elites, religious authorities, the media, etc.) as a norm to follow. In that context, smoking cigarettes in the street, drinking, or going to a club are perceived as outside the norm for

many Moroccans, even if, of course, there is no such thing as a ‘norm,’ and rich, complex, and multilayered religious and cultural practices characterize Morocco today. Filmmakers live their lives disregarding most of these traditional standards and mimic lifestyles that they perceive as characteristic of the West. They are also highly secular in the sense that they are publicly not observant of Islam, which also explains to a certain extent why the films they make offer more favorable views of secularism than they do of Islam.

All in all, filmmakers’ double-situatedness in two social circles—a Moroccan bourgeoisie where Western commodities are synonyms for status conferral and a professional environment where there is potential for social demise if elites think they have misrepresented Morocco—makes them pursue a secular and state-centered form of Moroccan-Western hybridity in their media texts, which is different from the form of hybridity at work in Moroccan institutions (as demonstrated in Chapter Three) but still informed and influenced by it.

Because filmmakers have roots in Morocco and have been, in some cases, victims of the social, gender, and religious disparities discussed in this analysis, they feel close enough to these issues to shed light on them in their films. However, their upward mobility in Morocco makes them want to maintain their status and therefore remain uncritical of the status quo. Similarly, their obsession with the West takes them miles away from the concerns of the population and constructive debates on democracy locally. Hence, social realism without social critique carries on in Moroccan cinema and television.

Concluding Remarks

Contemporary Moroccan films and television series depict a certain number of realistic situations regarding gender, class, and religious disparities. In doing so, they break a certain number of taboos that plagued Moroccan cinema during the Lead Years. However, the analysis in this chapter has shown that they ultimately fail to challenge the status quo because they do not provide a meaningful social critique of the system and dominant ideologies in place. Therefore, they only perpetuate the social inequalities they claim to expose.

Interestingly, in the same way that media elites play a game of appearances when it comes to democratizing media institutions (as discussed in Chapter Three), filmmakers also engage in a game of appearances because they claim to address citizens' democratic concerns yet do not advance debates on democracy and individual rights in Morocco through constructive and positive visions of change. The only difference is that media elites care only about France, the palace, and institutional definitions of democracy: things that have nothing to do with the desires of audiences. Filmmakers are at least concerned with the same sociocultural topics that interest most of the population. However, ultimately, the result is the same in both cases as authorities and the palace receive no blame for crippling social inequalities, and media laws and media content express no 'true' desire to carry out true democratic reforms.

To be fair, one has to keep in mind that this analysis is a snapshot in time and that things might change in the future. There are a few reasons to be optimistic because filmmakers are able to break societal taboos and show never-seen-before images reflecting the multiplicity of the Moroccan experience. However, although this is a step

in the right direction, much more is needed in the long run for filmmakers to actually reflect and support the democratic aspirations of the population.

If film is to play a revolutionary role in Morocco, as Third World Cinema did in the 1960s and '70s, then Morocco cinema needs to be bolder. The contemporary Moroccan cinema and television landscape needs films that denounce social hierarchies, criticize gender inequalities, and reflect positive images of both the Islamic and secular practices of the population. It also needs films that seek constructive solutions to these problems either through film characters' involvement in social justice or through storylines devoted to the advancement of democracy locally. No matter how connected they are to the West, filmmakers should probably refrain from presenting countries like France, Sweden, or the U.S. as the ultimate form of 'escape' from Morocco's poverty, levels of corruption, and various inequalities. This practice encourages internalized forms of Orientalism inflicted by Moroccans on Moroccans themselves and prevents them from seeking and finding solutions locally.

Finally, media scholars who are concerned with the Arab world need to work more to identify the extent to which film and television content reflect the dominant ideologies of authoritarian regimes versus the aspirations of the population. More textual analyses of film and television series should be performed not only in Morocco but also in other Arab countries that have authoritarian regimes and are undergoing various democratic transitions. As this chapter has shown, transitional societies like Morocco can have a cinema that claims to be 'democratic' and 'uncensored' while in fact playing a game of appearances that ultimately supports (consciously or not) the regime in place.

Cinema is an important bastion of democratic change in the Arab world because

of its ability to enter the popular imagination. Hence, filmmakers have an important responsibility to reflect the democratic desires of the population and to move the conversation forward in constructive ways. This is not an easy task given their own position within the field of social relations, working directly for the state, catering to citizens, and being situated in both of these worlds at the same time. Undeniably, achieving this task will require a high level of negotiation and risk-taking, and it may be a while before it can be done safely within the confines of state-funded media institutions.

However, filmmakers already have social consciousness and the desire to expose social inequalities, so there is hope that one day, they will be able to push the envelope even further if the historical and political context changes. The death of Hassan II, for example, represented a positive change for filmmakers' creative and political freedom as his son and successor Mohammed VI has at least tolerated the depiction of social inequalities in Moroccan cinema. The Arab Uprisings were probably another positive change given that Mohammed VI vowed to enact positive democratic reforms (including media reforms). The creative and political freedom of filmmakers could take another leap forward if more mass protests or other unforeseeable events were to take some power away from the palace. Although there is no way to predict what will happen next, this 'snapshot in time' allows for a greater understanding of Moroccan cinema today and helps to outline possible ways that cinema and television could be a tool for social democratic change.

CHAPTER FIVE: DRAMAS OF NATIONHOOD AND BEYOND

Television is a key institution for the production of national culture, and the genre of melodrama is not only a form of entertainment but also a tool for the construction of national cultural identities in various contexts (Abu-Lughod, 2004). In her seminal work *Dramas of Nationhood*, Lila Abu-Lughod shows how television serials in Egypt have contributed to our understanding of the country's political dynamics, social realities, and cultural transformations, thereby producing new discourses on nationhood. Other scholars have attempted similar and equally important projects in other Middle Eastern countries, for example, *Salamandra* (1998, 2008, 2013) and *Al Ghazzi* (2013) in Syria, *Erolışık* (2013) in Turkey.

Although these texts successfully address the question of how contemporary national cultures are depicted, perceived, and re-appropriated by audiences, they do not investigate what happens when these national dramas cross borders and travel to other Arab countries. Yet the Egyptian, Syrian, and Turkish television industries are major regional media centers, and they export television dramas and soaps that viewers consume avidly across the Arab world. These dramas come to live with local shows and popular U.S. series on broadcasting schedules and satellite offerings, contributing to the production of a culturally hybrid media space and hybrid subjectivities. They help to fashion mental geographies that juxtapose and collapse different spatial levels of cultural belonging: the nation versus a sense of pan-Arab regionalism, the Arab world versus the West, and the local versus the global.

In this chapter, I take a close look at Egyptian, Syrian, Turkish, and U.S. dramas that are watched and loved in contemporary Morocco to understand the extent to which

they are carriers of hybridity. This chapter argues that Moroccans find in foreign shows accessible to them via satellite questions and answers to local issues, such as state authoritarianism and class, gender, and religious disparities (as described in Chapter Four). In this process, the shows widen cultural boundaries and provide a sense of belonging at a larger regional scale (the Arab world and the West), both redefining and moving beyond nationhood.

Specifically, I focus on four particular shows that were extremely popular in 2009 and 2010 when I did my fieldwork and are still considered classics of Egyptian, Syrian, Turkish, and U.S. drama: *Hagg Metwali*, *Bab Al-Hara*, *Noor*, and *Desperate Housewives*. Through textual analysis, I explore the themes that make these shows ‘hybrid’ in the specific Moroccan context: that is, characterized by a variety of ‘similarities’ and ‘differences’ compared with the themes explored in local Moroccan dramas (see Appadurai, 1996, and Shome & Hedge, 2002).

It is important to note that producers of dramas in Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S. did not necessarily have Morocco in mind when making these shows. Therefore, the textual features of the dramas themselves do not necessarily refer to the local conditions of Moroccans. Producers in Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S. are mostly ‘encoding’ what they perceive as being part of the popular imagination in their particular national contexts and may use other cultural references coming from other major media centers (and Morocco is not a major media influence anywhere in the world). Nonetheless, as Moroccans consume these foreign dramas and make connections to their own local shows or their own living conditions, they become ‘carriers’ of hybridity. The textual features of the shows allow Moroccans to establish relationships between their local cultures and the

distant others portrayed in these shows. Therefore, in addition to my textual analysis, I collected testimonies from 45 viewers to understand the similarities and differences as well as junctures and disjunctures that audiences themselves perceive in these shows.

Hybridity is a relational and contextual concept. In other words, a text is only hybrid in relation to something else: for example, another text, embedded or implied references to other cultures, the lived experience of audiences, who are the ones making the connections between the cultural representations embedded in the texts and their local circumstances. Similarly, hybridity is contrapuntal (a term coined by Edward Said). As Said explains, ‘contrapuntal’ means that audiences’ readings of texts are informed by dynamics of power and resistance (1993). In the context of globalization, it means that they identify national or supranational discourses of power within local and global media texts and criticize/resist those messages at the same time. Therefore, the chapter combines an analysis of these dramas’ textual features with the perception of audiences to understand how they relate to these shows and the particular elements in the textual features that allow them to create junctures and points of departure to other cultures as well as hybrid spaces of subjectivity.

With all that has been written about media texts and audiences, multiperspectival approaches (see Kellner, 1995) that combine both textual analyses of media products and audience perceptions are still too rare. Additionally, media globalization scholars have been concerned with theorizations of the concept of hybridity (see Appadurai, 1996; Pieterse, 2001; Bhabha, 2004), with texts alone—for example, local adaptations of global television formats (see Kraidy, 2006, 2009; Waisbord, 2004)—or with audiences alone (see Sabry, 2005; Darling-Wolf, 2000; McMillin, 2009).

The most comprehensive and multiperspectival work on hybridization is Kraidy's *Hybridity or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (2005), but although the book does feature observations about both texts and audiences, they are treated separately in different chapters, and specific texts are not connected to their particular audiences. Kraidy is aware of the need for more multiperspectival studies of hybridization, however, and this chapter follows his recommendation to bridge that gap while providing an empirical road map for how to perform textual and audience analysis in complex hybrid global media environments and societies, as few studies provide tools to do so (see Khatib, 2006).

Before we delve into the actual textual analysis, it is important first to understand why Moroccans turn away from the locally produced dramas available to them on the major Moroccan networks RTM and 2M and instead prefer Egyptian, Syrian, Turkish, or American shows that they mostly access via satellite. In the first section of the chapter, I briefly address the reasons for audiences' lack of interest in Moroccan dramas, including frustrations regarding the low quality of these programs, their inability to reflect social realities and capture the national imagination, and their ultimate reinforcement of an authoritarian regime.

In the same section, I then proceed to explain how the satellite provides a gateway to what is perceived as better quality programming and a glimpse of alternative ways of life in the Arab world and beyond. I show how the different national media industries of Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S. become major media centers at regional or global levels and how the programming and the national imageries they transport with them are retrieved in the Moroccan context.

In a second section of the chapter, I provide a definition of hybridity as simultaneous sameness and difference and delve into the textual analysis by investigating precisely what makes the themes explored in these texts ‘similar’ and/or ‘different’ from the themes explored in Moroccan dramas. I focus especially on the treatment of questions of class, gender, and religion because these were the issues Moroccans were interested in to start with and were the themes developed in Moroccan films and series.

In a third section, I focus on audiences more specifically to show precisely how they use these texts dialogically, identifying ‘junctures’ with their own ways of living, interrogating their own nation in the process, and finding ‘disjunctures’ or points of departure allowing them to compare the local or the national with other ways of life. I show that these junctures and disjunctures operate on a variety of levels/continua, both spatial and temporal, and highlight culture, religion, and perceptions of tradition and modernity. I explore the consequences of these connections for the construction of pan-Arabic regional identities (especially for Egyptian and Syrian shows), perceptions of the West (especially Turkish and American shows), and the politics of empire (the Ottoman Empire or the American hegemon).

In the last section, I show that these dramas can be read on many different levels and interest different people for various reasons. By giving examples of viewers who interpret different shows in different (sometimes diametrically opposed) ways, I show how people are drawn to or turned off by certain shows and cultures for a variety of reasons and eventually produce different kinds of hybridities.

Methodology

For the textual analysis element of this chapter, I chose to focus on four television dramas that were highly popular in Morocco in the years 2009 and 2010 when I was doing my fieldwork and that were cited most often by my respondents. I used my respondents as a measure of shows' popularity and chose not to rely on audience ratings to select the dramas included in my sample. As I have shown in Chapter Three, national ratings are biased toward local programming and exclude satellite offerings, which broadcast most of these foreign shows. I distributed a survey that would help me to identify which shows Moroccans had watched in large numbers in recent years.

In this survey, I measured shows' popularity in two different ways: First, I asked my respondents to cite their top five shows from any country. Second, I asked them to give me the name of one Egyptian show, one Syrian show, one Turkish show, and one U.S. show that they believed had had tremendous success in Morocco in recent years or presently. I initially had included other countries in the question, for example, Mexico, which used to be a major exporter of soaps to Morocco; Lebanon and Jordan, which both have developed media industries; and the Gulf countries. However, quickly realizing that my respondents had very little knowledge of any of the shows produced by these countries, I limited the question to Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S.

Hagg Metwali, Bab Al-Hara, and Noor were the most-cited shows for Egypt, Syria, and Turkey, respectively. Desperate Housewives was the second most-cited show in the U.S. category, but I chose to include it instead of the first most-cited show, which was Prison Break, a suspense action series. The rationale behind this choice was that Desperate Housewives was still considered to be a successful program by most of my

respondents and better lent itself to comparison with the other Arab and Turkish programs given some of the similar themes it explores (including but not limited to gender and class disparities, family dynamics, and tradition versus modernity).

I watched the first five episodes of each series. In one case, Hagg Metwali, I watched five additional episodes because they were important to understanding the mythology of the series; the first five episodes were mostly introductory, and three of the main characters were introduced in episodes 5 to 10. Because my knowledge of Arabic and the Egyptian and Syrian dialects is limited, I worked with a Moroccan research assistant familiar with the Moroccan, Egyptian, and Syrian dialects to view the Egyptian, Syrian, and Turkish shows (dubbed in Syrian Arabic).

We watched three-to-five-minute segments; we would then pause the episode, translate, watch another segment, and so forth. Although there are a variety of disadvantages to getting a delayed understanding of a sequence—including missing the immediacy of some of the emotions expressed by the characters or taking a longer time to make connections between various plot developments—there are surprisingly many advantages to this approach, too. First, the viewing experience itself lasted longer than the traditional length of an episode (an episode is one hour, and we would devote one-and-a-half to two hours per episode). In between sequences, we translated language, recounted the various plots, and discussed aspects of the series in relation to previous episodes or the particular contexts and cultures they were representing. As a result, we ended up paying more attention to details, as we probably spent approximately 50 hours watching, translating, analyzing, and discussing these dramas as we watched them.

Second, because I was not able to understand the language used as I was discovering a new scene, I paid more attention to other elements of the screen, the *mise-en-scène*, the body language of the actors, and the decors used to portray different spaces in these series, until I received a translation. Immediately after the end of an episode, I summarized the plot, the *mise-en-scène*, any new developments, the themes highlighted, and any significant relationship I could establish with the themes explored in the Moroccan films and dramas, which I analyzed in the preceding chapter.

For the portion of the chapter discussing the audience, I used both the survey (mentioned above) and the semi-structured interviews I conducted with 45 young people in the 19- to 32-year-old age range. As discussed in Chapter Two, I selected young people because the Moroccan population is a young population to start with, with a median age of 24.7 years (CIA World Fact Book, 2008). Young people were also more willing to talk openly about various topics and were oftentimes gateways to understanding other generations (like their parents and grandparents, for example). Respondents were randomly selected as I approached one in three persons coming my way provided that they were in the appropriate age range. Thirty-eight out of my 45 respondents agreed to participate in the survey. The remaining seven respondents wanted to have a conversation but did not want to answer any survey questions.

After the survey, I proceeded to a semi-structured interview, which included questions about whether the respondents liked locally produced Moroccan dramas and why. Additionally, in the event that my respondents mentioned not liking Moroccan dramas, I asked what would be their ideal Moroccan series, the one they would create if they had the financial and creative means to produce it. When my respondents mentioned

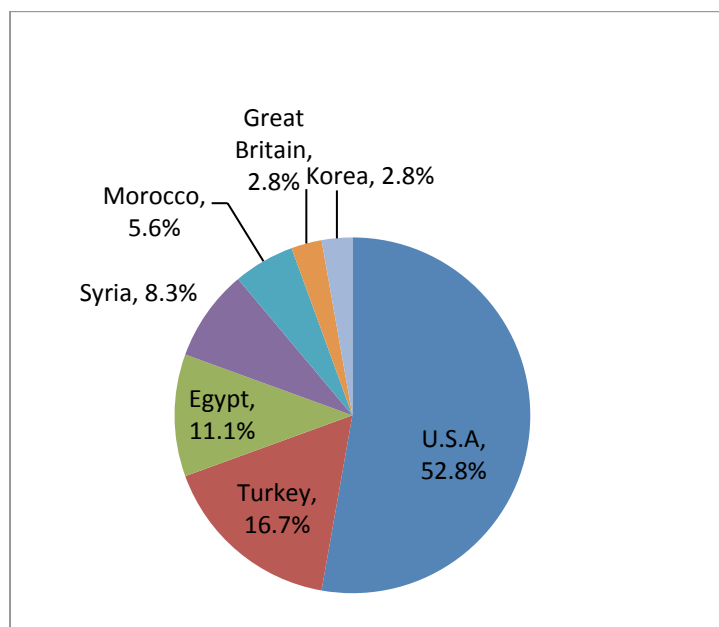
liking shows like Hagg Metwali, Bab Al-Hara, Noor, and Desperate Housewives, I asked them to tell me about the plot, to communicate what they liked about the specific show they were discussing. I also asked how they perceived the cultures these shows were portraying, either through these series or through previous knowledge of these cultures (if applicable). Other questions were included in the interviews, but they are not relevant for this particular chapter and will be addressed in Chapter Six, which delves into audiences more specifically (not only in relationship to the texts).

Through both the textual and audience analysis, I was able to assess the perceptions of other nations that Moroccan audiences develop through these texts and how they use these texts and locations portrayed on screen as ways to interrogate their own national identity and to dream of other possible alternative lifestyles. I was also able to understand how dialogical and hybrid spaces of identity are created through these texts.

One Door Closes, Four Others Open: The Exodus to Foreign Screens

Lack of Interest in Locally Produced Moroccan Dramas

Overall, Moroccans do not like the locally produced dramas broadcast on the main networks, RTM and 2M. As shown in the pie chart below (Figure 6), their favorite show is rarely a Moroccan show but is rather a U.S. show (52.8%), a Turkish show (16.7%), an Egyptian show (11.1%), or a Syrian show (8.3%). Only a small number of my respondents cited a Moroccan show as their favorite (5.6%).

Figure 6: Country of Origin of Favorite Show

During the interviews, all my respondents reported not liking Moroccan series, except for two respondents who were split—had both good and bad things to say about Moroccan dramas— and three who did not answer the question. Even the individuals who cited Moroccan shows in their top five favorite shows were either critical of their quality or ambivalent about whether they should like them. A large number of respondents explained that Ramadan was the only time of the year when they would consider watching a Moroccan show because it is something the entire family can watch together while breaking the fast. Even then, many respondents felt “forced” to watch these shows or felt that they served the sole purpose of “background noise.”

Over and over again, interviewees reported the same concerns with Moroccan shows. The first concern is the perceived low quality of Moroccan dramas. Most respondents thought that the writing and the narrative structure of the shows were poor.

Zineb, for example, reported not feeling close to Moroccan shows: “It’s the quality; the stories are not well developed. The Moroccans skip some important steps in storytelling; it is not well threaded.” Along the same lines, Houda believes that storytellers are lazy and not consistent enough to carry a story through and bring a satisfying resolution: “I liked this series *Al Abriah*. It was about a woman who had a lot of money and gave birth to a special-needs child. She secretly tells the doctor to switch her baby with another healthy one and bribes the personnel to do so. The switched kids grow up with siblings that are not truly theirs and who they end up falling in love with. I followed this convoluted story for a long time, and then, poof! No real ending. They basically told the viewer to finish from their own mind.” In addition to problems with storytelling, young people mentioned bad acting performances and sets as well as uninspiring themes. Ahmed, for example, said, “There are financing issues in the Moroccan television industry. When you see a Moroccan show, you get bored. There are no financial means. The actor does not play well. I see all the tricks. There are problems with quality, and the topics explored are uninteresting. They’re bland.”

As a whole, audiences were aware that many of these problems are due to the under-financing of the Moroccan television industry compared to bigger media centers in the region (Egypt, Syria) and beyond (Turkey and the U.S.). Given that Moroccan dramas are state—funded, meant for local national audiences, and do not export well for a variety of reasons (notably, the difficulties other Middle Eastern viewers would have understanding the local dialect, Darija, and the low quality of the programs themselves), they do not bring high revenues that can in turn be channeled into producing higher-

quality dramas. Audiences were extremely aware of these various facts concerning the political economy of Moroccan media.

In addition to concerns with quality, audiences generally felt a lack of engagement with the themes explored in these series and deplored their inability to capture social realities and national imagery. First, they believed that these shows were brushing off or concealing real problems in Moroccan society, for example, the high levels of corruption and the lack of justice. Omar, for example, stated, “I don’t like Moroccan series. They are so disconnected from reality. They show justice as if there were such a thing as justice, but there is no justice. They show you a policeman doing his job right, but there is nothing like this here. There are a lot of problems; lots of people do not have work. Do they talk about that in series?” Along the same lines, Asmae would like to see widespread problems like unemployment discussed in Moroccan television series: “I’d like to watch series that show the huge unemployment issue we have here, about young people and the use of drugs. Are there series like that here? Of course not.” Finally, Souad claimed, “I want to see the real Moroccan truth, the struggles of the youth, poverty. That would reflect Morocco’s reality today. It’s closer to us; it’s the truth. We do not need lies. It maddens me to see a film or a series that says life is beautiful. Life is not beautiful.” Indeed, young people wanted to see series about them and about the struggles they live every day.

Films fared a little better than series for some of the reasons explored in the previous chapter, namely, that they show social realities to a certain extent. Overall, however, audiences were aware that even in the instances in which problems and social

realities were exposed, little social critique or suggestions for change were offered in these films and series. For example, in a poignant testimony, Asmae told me,

I would like to see a Moroccan problem and a treatment (emphasized by her) of this problem. Some films and series, they talk about the problems encountered by women or poor people. But talking about problems just for the sake of it, it's not worth it. As audiences, we live the problems; we already know them. So, if you're not going to offer suggestions or potential solutions, really it's as if you said nothing. There is a need for new ideas in Moroccan cinema and Moroccan drama series. There is a need for hope.

Some respondents went even further in their criticism of Moroccan drama, berating the quality of the programs, the themes they explore, and the ideologies behind them. Ibrahim, for example, said, "These series carry specific ideologies in my opinion that are not connected to the sociocultural realities of people and the historical reality of Morocco: the ideologies that are lived by state institutions. They fail to analyze social structures intentionally [...] There are plenty of problems regarding democracy, illiteracy, and authorities and television executives want to deviate the attention of people who are marginalized and put it on series that address silly topics. So that they don't think about their problems, so that they do not complain. [...] The series on Moroccan television, it's a rhetoric to draw Moroccans into politics of illusion." Other respondents mentioned censorship in their responses. Farid, for example, said, "There are still taboo topics in Moroccan series. You know here, everything is a taboo topic. We have some good actors, and even comedians, who have TV series. When they travel outside of Morocco, they speak about everything. It's terrific, but when they are here, they have to remove this and that, and that. The networks belong to the state, so no one can say too much."

Questions of democracy were a huge concern for audiences, but they could tell that the series were carrying an ideology meant to debase and water down these concerns.

When asked what series he would produce if he had the means, Ahmed said, “If I made a series, I would speak about the years between independence and today: I would address the issues with political parties at that time, the problems with the economy, with education, with industries, with racism, all the problems of Morocco after independence. The system on which our society is based since 1666 is the Alaouite monarchy. At the time of independence, countries all over the world moved towards democracy, but the Alaouite dynasty did everything it could to prevent it. I would create a series that is social and political. But that is still difficult to do today.” Unlike producers or scholars of Moroccan media, some of my respondents were not afraid to point fingers at the monarchy for its past or recent authoritative tactics to control and tame the desires of the population.

What is remarkable about these viewers’ responses is that they show that audiences have a heightened consciousness of 1) the political-economic obstacles Moroccan drama faces compared to series coming from various media hegemonies, 2) the failures not only to expose problems but also to offer meaningful critiques of the system in place, and 3) the fact that it is only state- and monarchy-centered ideologies that are carried by the local shows. Yet, these voices are seldom found in the public sphere as the ratings agency Marocmetrie continues to boast the success of Moroccan networks by strategically excluding data from far more popular satellite stations, as discussed in Chapter Three, and as the governmental cinema agency, the press, and even scholars celebrate the advance of the post–Lead Years cinema, as discussed in Chapter Three.

It is striking that Moroccan viewers’ desires are diametrically opposed to those of state elites, who, as shown in Chapter Three, were mostly interested in re-enacting

hegemonic discourses of power coming from France, the former colonizer, and the state personified by the monarchy. These data make it evident that audiences are really put off by both forms of power and, as a result, show little interest in both state-produced Moroccan and French shows, for that matter (the latter are virtually absent from any answers provided by my respondents). In the absence of meaningful or quality programs, audiences turn to programming from other countries that they can easily find either on national networks or, to a larger extent, on the satellite. As Asmae puts it, “We have a deficit in terms of Moroccan series. As a result, we end up watching everything from elsewhere because we do not have a choice [...] If I find a series elsewhere that addresses some of the problems I have identified in my own society but in another context, I do not care where the series is from. I will watch it.”

Satellite to the Rescue

Satellite has played an important role in ending the monopoly of state television in various countries, and Morocco is no exception. For disgruntled viewers like Asmae, Ibrahim, and Ahmed, satellite networks offer alternative programming that does not operate within the confines of state-dominated ideologies. Buccianti (2010) refers to the satellite as the “beginning of the end for state domination of television in the Arab world” (p. 1), and Sakr (2007) stresses the democratic potential of satellite in the Arab world: “In the Middle East and North Africa, satellite broadcasting held out the promise of liberation from government-controlled media monopolies and tight censorship” (p. 1).

Indeed, prior to the advent of the satellite in the region in the early 1990s, all Arab countries had access only to national state-owned networks, with the exception of Lebanon, the only nation whose TV networks were wholly owned and operated by

private commercial interests (Rugh, 2004). In a practical sense, that means that the news and the various other programs broadcast on these networks had to reflect the views of the government (or at the very least not go against them). The high level of censorship occurring on these various networks became apparent in 1991 when the Gulf War broke out. The national networks concealed important information and did not provide the objective news that people were expecting. People who were able to catch television signals from CNN or various French-speaking networks realized that they were not getting the whole truth, and the demand for the creation of satellite channels grew.

The first Arab satellite network was the Egyptian Nilesat in 1990. Saudi networks followed suit with the immensely popular networks the Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) created in 1991 (now one of the Arab leaders in the production of entertainment programs and drama series) and the Arab Radio and Television Network (ART) created in 1994. The Lebanese also wanted their share in the satellite landscape and launched Future TV Lebanon in 1995 and the immensely popular Lebanese Broadcasting Company, known for its game, entertainment, and music shows in 1996. The Qatari news network Al Jazeera was launched in 1996 with the goal of providing objective news to the entire Middle Eastern region. Additionally, as an ever-changing television landscape, the satellite realm is constantly in flux, and these stations have since created a plethora of sister stations in order to diversify their offer. New satellite networks have been created all over the Arab world. Because these satellite networks are not accountable to anyone—except perhaps their local national governments—they have the luxury of being objective regarding the policies of every other nation in the Arab world. It is no surprise, then, that they would be seen as a threat by local governments throughout the Arab world who do

not wish to see their audiences operating outside of the dominant ideologies they seek to inculcate.

In Morocco, the government resisted the satellite for as long as it could. Sakr (2007) explains that it first established an exorbitant annual tax payable by all individuals in possession of a satellite dish and that represented three times the minimum monthly wage in Morocco. Later, the government agreed to the presence of the satellite as long as it could censor some of its programming. However, finding the task of censoring such a huge amount of content daunting, they finally gave up a fight that they could not win. The number of people in possession of satellite dishes went from one-quarter of the population in the early 1990s to three-quarters in the mid-1990s.

Today, Moroccans have access to a great variety of foreign programming not only on their local networks, which feature 61.5% of local productions, 18.6% of Arab productions, and 18.6% of other foreign productions (Hafez & Skinner, 2007, p. 90), but also on satellite networks from the wider Arab world and satellite television networks from France, Spain, and the United States. Faced with a great variety of choices, Moroccans turn to Egyptian, Syrian, Turkish, and U.S. programming when they want to watch quality or entertaining television dramas.

Regional and Global Media Centers

It would be difficult to talk about hybridity and about how these various foreign dramas from Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S. are repatriated in the local Moroccan context, without considering the various media industries in which they were originally produced. The following sections will outline how the media industries of these countries have become major media centers and exporters in the Arab world and in Morocco. They

will also provide necessary information about the historical, national, and cultural flows that have played a role in the formation and development of these various industries. Nonetheless, these sections do not offer a comprehensive and detailed review of the history of these media industries, these various nations, or the Arab region as a whole as this would be beyond the scope of this study.

Egypt: A Reigning But Waning Media Power

One of Egypt's best advantages over other media players in the Arab world is that its success precedes the introduction of the satellite. By the 1990s, Egyptian movies and dramas already had a long history of traveling across borders, landing on various Arabic state-owned television networks, and capturing hearts and minds in the region. It is no wonder, then, that the industry was labeled the "Hollywood of the Nile." Abu-Lughod (2005a) explains that "in terms of scale and seniority, Egypt is unrivalled. People in Egypt know this, just as they know that most of the stars who fill their magazines are Egyptian; that the Egyptian broadcasts on their own screens are also watched enthusiastically across the Arab world; and that many singers and actors from elsewhere come to live and work in Egypt" (p. 7).

To understand the success of Egyptian dramas today, one must take a trip back in time to the 1930s. The 1930s were the formative years of Egyptian cinema as they laid a foundation for the entire film and television industry today. Already in the 1930s, Egypt was ahead of other Arab countries in terms of media facilities. The Studio Misr, created by industrialist Tal'at Harb, was the most comprehensive facility in the Arab world and "monopolized the crucial processes of developing and printing film" (Armbrust, 2004, p.

81). The studio was a solid provider of infrastructure, equipment, and creative spirits, and the industry started to grow significantly.

After World War II, there was a great demand for social-realist films that looked at the hardships of war with lucidity and explored its aftermath (see Chapter Four for more details about this phenomenon worldwide). Egypt was no exception. As Armbrust (2004) explains, the war brought significant changes to people's lives as a great influx of workers from the colonial power—Great Britain—came to find labor in Cairo, replacing and often dislocating the Egyptian men who had been working in these jobs before them. The contrast between the prosperity of British workers on the one hand and the poverty of others on the other hand supplied a great deal of stories and created cinematic opportunities for filmmakers.

The Egyptian film industry took a second leap shortly after independence, from the mid-1950s until the early 1970s. This was a time, again, when filmmakers wanted to look at the country with realistic eyes to reflect on the consequences of colonialism. With the rise to power of the secular nationalist leader Gamal Abdel Nasser and the establishment of a presidential republic, they wanted to reflect on the various political and social transformations the country was experiencing. Egyptian drama series were born during that time, and like films, they reflected Nasser's secularist ideals (Abu-Lughod, 1995). Both dramas and films had to emphasize local themes and problems, such as the contrast between city centers and the countryside, peasants and urban dwellers, or challenges with the modernization of infrastructures such as transportation (see El Emary, 1996). Films also had to be educational to help people understand the underpinnings of the new republic and the need for secular politics, social policies, and a sense of pan-

Arabism in the Middle East. Nasser's government provided direct funding for the film industry and participated in its success at that time, with roughly 50 high-quality films produced each year (Armbrust, 2004).

However, after the presidency of Nasser, these policies were reversed, and the partial liberalization of media meant that the infrastructure (mostly studios and means of production) remained in the hands of the government, whereas funding came from private investors. This more complex setup precipitated a dramatic decrease in the number of Egyptian productions. According to Armbrust (2004), the problems Egypt was left with after the removal of governmental funding were reminiscent of the difficulties experienced by the Studio Misr in the 1930s. Egypt was once again struggling to secure funding for its film productions, just as the Studio Misr had a half-century prior. Back then, the studio, which was producing a large number of films, opened its doors to competing productions to get more cash and to make its daily operations more profitable. This contributed to a fragmentation of profits and to difficulties in expanding its own business. Industrialists or other rich individuals primarily financed film productions, and the industry was always on the hunt for investors instead of relying on steady financial support from the state, film revenues, or large production companies. What happened after the partial liberalization of Egyptian media in the 1970s is simply a variation on the same theme, and the story continues today as filmmakers and directors are looking for funding and turning to Saudi investors.

To keep its privileged position in the film and television industry, Egypt has had to make compromises and rely heavily on foreign investors from Saudi Arabia. This move was necessary not only to get projects started but also to build and expand its

audience in the satellite era given that Saudi networks like MBC are the leaders in the film and television drama markets and are solid suppliers of large audiences throughout the Arab world. However, behind the scenes, the Egyptian and Saudi collaboration turned into an ideological war of some sort. Little by little, Egyptians have had to change the content of their shows to satisfy Saudi investors. In actuality, that meant de-emphasizing the local and the national aspects of their shows to appeal to the wider Arab public:

The Egyptian soap is moving away from its local context. Certain issues specific to Egyptian society don't have a place anymore. It has to move away from any purely local problems that audiences are not aware of. Problems of transportation, family planning or the demographic boom, peasants and agriculture are only examples of this excluded message. In order to promote the Egyptian program on Arab screens, it is necessary to choose themes that interest the Arab viewer in general and to move away from any local theme or any specificity. (El Emery, 1996, p. 261, translated from French)

Similarly, Egyptian filmmakers have had to emphasize religion more as the Saudis rely on an ideology, the umma, that views religion as the binder of the Muslim community as a positive tool to work towards peace. As a result, the secularist ideologies inherited from the Nasserite Era have been progressively pushed out of the door.

Overall, it is undeniable that although Egypt succeeded in maintaining a key position as media player in the Arab world, it also did not gain any steam in the satellite era. Everything points to the waning of the Egyptian media industry over time, and this feeling is exacerbated by the success of other media industries and producers of melodramas in the Arab world, for example, Syria.

Syria: A Booming Industry with No Infrastructure

In a few short years, Syria created a television industry capable of competing with its Egyptian counterpart. In the 2000s, a large number of production companies were

launched, specializing in fictional television drama and feeding satellite networks to the Arab world. Syrians specialize in different sub-genres: the historical ‘period’ and ‘costume’ piece drama, the contemporary social urban drama, comedies, and science fiction. According to Salamandra (2013), these dramas compete with a roughly equal number of series from Egypt. This is a remarkable fact given the relatively young age of the Syrian fiction market. The dramas are also considered “both less expensive and more technically refined than their Egyptian counterparts” (p. 86), which gives them an edge and brighter prospects for the future.

Audiences in the Arab world appreciate these dramas for their ability to interrogate the past and what it means to be Arab (in the case of historical dramas) or their ways of addressing contemporary social issues in the region, such as social inequalities between elites and the poor, gender divides, etc. (in the case of contemporary dramas). In a way, the Syrian media industry is somewhat schizophrenic as historical dramas emphasize tradition and religiosity and do not threaten the political status quo, whereas politically engaged contemporary dramas cling to an “enduring socialist tradition in an age of commercial nostalgia” and Arab nationalist ideals with secular undertones (Salamandra, 2013, p.88).

Syrian cinema tradition itself is imbued with the Arab nationalist ideals that enjoyed great popularity throughout the Arab world in the 1960s. As Salti (2006) argues, filmmakers were gripped by “revolutionary fervor, articulated in the vocabulary of pan-Arab nationalism or local nationalism [...] Syrian cinema was a cinema that was socially and politically engaged, it was not crafted to entertain, it was impelled by a duty to crystallize the aspirations of the people and to represent their struggles” (p. 6).

Arab nationalism is an ideology that celebrates the past accomplishments of Arab civilization, the language and literature of the Arabs, and calls for rejuvenation and political union in the Arab world (Dawisha, 2003). Three different concepts can be found within the movement itself: the Arab nation, Arab nationalism, and pan-Arab unity. The 'nation' gathers a group of individuals who speak the same Arabic language, identify with Arab culture, and feel a sense of belonging to the same nation. 'Arab nationalism' is the "sum total of the characteristics and qualities exclusive to the Arab nation," namely, characteristics that can be found in every Arab nation and can be used as definers throughout the Arab world. Moreover, 'pan-Arab regionalism' is a contemporary idea that the different Arab nations should unite and form a single state (Choueiri, 2000). Pan-Arabism involves a desire to undo the colonial divisions formed after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Back then, France and Britain created arbitrary states and placed rulers who merely followed their orders at the head of these states. As Sela (2002) argues, Arab nationalism "gradually assumed a leftist coloration, calling for ... the creation of revolutionary Arab unity." (p. 154). That is especially true of the 1960s, when independence prompted political leaders to break out of the mold of colonization and emphasize Arab national identities and unity.

In many ways, the Syrian city of Damascus is the birthplace and 'beating heart' of Arab nationalism. Already in the 1860s and 1870s, major Syrian philosophers such as Ibrahim al-Yazigi and Francis Marrash grappled with the concept. Later, Damascus became the coordinating center of the Arab Nationalist movement. After the defeat and withdrawal of the Ottomans in the region, it became the residence of the first Arab sovereign, Faysal. Therefore, the city has a particular historical significance in the Arab

world. It is consequently no surprise that Arab nationalist ideals would leave such an important mark on the heart and artistic aspirations of the Syrian intelligentsia, most of which is involved in the production of the high-quality dramas made today (see Salti, 2006).

As much as they are attempting to maintain a tradition of Arab nationalism influenced by socialist and secularist ideas, Syrian filmmakers and producers are also dependent on Saudi petrodollars (in a similar fashion to their Egyptian counterparts). Although the Saudis are interested in the concepts of Arab nationalism and Pan-Arab regionalism that animate most Syrian series, they are less interested in the socialist and secular ideals that those series may support. It is therefore no surprise that living in close proximity to these more socially engaged contemporary dramas, one can find an entirely different breed of historical drama that emphasizes tradition and religion and is stripped of direct political commentary.

The schizophrenia of Syrian drama can be accounted for by the coexistence of a strong culture of Arab nationalism coupled with the supra-national influence of Saudi Arabia in the context of Arab satellite broadcasting. It is remarkable, however, that such contemporary politically engaged dramas could survive in this context (given that the Egyptian nationalist and secularist message did not survive the Satellite era). Although the Assad regime identifies as secular nationalist, Saudi investors do not appreciate religious or political subtext of any kind.

Perhaps the up-and-coming status of Syria and the fact that it provides enough historical series in line with the umma ideology with which Saudis identify is enough to appease minds and tolerate a few outliers. The survival of critical contemporary dramas is

even more extraordinary within the Syrian context itself as television is controlled and heavily censored by the state (despite the fact that it is not financially supported; see Della Ratta, 2012). For example, in August of 2011, the television drama *Fawq Al-Saaf* aired a scene that was an open criticism of the Syrian regime and that acknowledged—for the first time on national television—the existence of peaceful protests during the Arab Uprisings. One of the main protagonists was heard saying, “What happened to this country?” and in the background, protesters participating in the Arab Uprisings mass mobilization movement were heard screaming, “Hurriyya, hurriyya” (Freedom! Freedom!). Perhaps this is an example of “commissioned criticism,” an official and paradoxical project to create a democratic façade, as Cooke (2007) and Della Ratta (2012) suggest. Nonetheless, the birth of a generation of struggle is rarely shown on television in the Arab world, especially the protests that occurred during the Arab Uprisings and directly questioned the legitimacy of authoritative regimes.

Despite its many achievements, the Syrian media industry faces quite a few challenges. Similar to the Egyptian industry, it relies heavily on foreign investments. Unlike Egypt, however, which has a plethora of studios, Syria has even less infrastructure to rely on. It also has a much smaller national market for national television, with only one major satellite network. Ultimately, all of these factors make the Syrian industry even more reliant than Egypt on Saudi petrodollars and the major Satellite networks as Syrian filmmakers have no choice but to export their productions and to rely on others (Salamanda, 2013).

Eventually, the lack of infrastructure coupled with the ongoing civil war that has opposed the Syrian army to civilians and Islamist groups since March 2011 might be the

downfall of Syrian drama. Additionally, even though filmmakers and producers have been extremely resilient so far, the competition from newcomers in the Arab market, such as Turkey, might weaken their position over time.

Turkey: The Ottoman Empire Is Back

In the world of media production there is a great deal of unpredictability. Less than 10 years ago, no one could have predicted that Turkey would become a major media center and exporter in the Middle East. Yet, the Turkish entertainment industry has become a US\$6 billion-a-year business (Al-Arabiya, 2008), and that is mostly due to its success in Middle Eastern and North African countries.

The phenomenon started in 2007 when the satellite network MBC broadcast a Turkish Show, *Iklil al Ward* (Crown of Flowers), for the first time, and it was dubbed in Syrian Arabic. This was followed by the broadcast of *Sanawat al Dayaa* (The Lost Years), and *Gümüş* (Silver), which was renamed *Noor* for Arab audiences. The choice of dubbing these Turkish shows in Syrian Arabic might have contributed to the appeal of these shows. There had been a few attempts before that to dub foreign shows in classical Arabic, a language that is not used in everyday life and that made audiences feel like they were in a classroom taking an exam rather than watching an entertainment show.

Yet, in all likelihood, these Turkish shows became immensely successful because they were filling a gap by highlighting romantic and sexual relationships, family ties, and sentimentality broadly defined. Egyptian shows contained some romance but not to a great extent, and Syrian shows grappled with tradition, religion, and political developments, with little attention to romance. In addition, Arab viewers could relate to a population that is majority Muslim, shares some cultural and traditional mores with most

Arab countries, and yet presents differences that most Arab viewers find interesting (see Kujawa, 2011).

These factors made shows like *Noor* immediate hits, and 85 million viewers were reportedly glued to their TV sets for the finale of *Noor* (Buccianti, 2010). Saudi investors and broadcasters as well as other satellite networks throughout the Arab world therefore had many incentives to pursue their multi-million dollar relationship with Turkey. Additionally, since *Noor* in 2008, a plethora of Turkish soaps have invaded Arab viewers' screens.

The Undefeated U.S. Media Industry

Much has been said about Hollywood and the American television drama industry, so it is beyond the scope of this paper to recount this history. Instead, it is much more interesting to look at undeniable facts about the political economy of this reigning industry and to understand their effect on various cultures throughout the world, including Arab countries. Today, the U.S. "remains the dominant television exporter. 75% of dramatic television programs sold on the global television market are of U.S. origin" (Bielby & Harrington, 2008). Although this is true today, what makes these numbers even more striking is that they do not seem to have changed since 1973 (Hoskins & McFayden, 1991).

When marketed to foreign media industries, American dramas are very attractive partly because of their price. A high-quality television drama costs anywhere from 1.5 million dollars for a good cable television show produced on a network like AMC, Showtime, or even HBO to 13 million dollars for a major network primetime show, with much variation in between. Although the initial cost is high for American producers and

broadcasters, making copies sold at a minimal cost to foreign markets is easy after a show has garnered success domestically and has already provided high revenue streams (Hoskins & McFayden, 1991). The U.S. market is one of the largest domestic markets in the world, and high profits are easier to make than in most other smaller nations throughout the world.

Finally, the infrastructure of Hollywood remains unrivalled. Once again, a large domestic audience and therefore high revenues allow for investments in studio space, top-notch equipment and actors, and more money to experiment with projects until one successful formula is achieved. For example, the U.S. networks receive 9,000 ideas annually, out of which 300 sample scripts will be produced. “Pilots are made for 90-100 of these and tested by audiences at special showings. Largely based on this audience reaction, 12 to 30 pilots will be broadcast and about 10 will later be developed into series” (Hoskins & McFayden, 1991). More funds allow for the development of more projects in pre-production, therefore providing a wider array of choices, which in turn limit the risks of production (Turow, 1991). In this context, the chance of providing high-quality or well-liked programming is statistically more likely than in any other smaller domestic market. Smaller domestic markets have smaller audiences and revenue streams. They also have fewer resources for creating risk-reducing strategies similar to those used in the U.S.

It is therefore no surprise that American dramas have settled comfortably in Moroccan households. Again, 52.8% of my respondents claimed that their favorite show was an American one. American shows are mostly found on satellite television and sometimes on national television. In most cases, they are adapted for Arab audiences,

meaning that most sexual scenes or any glimpses of nudity are edited out of the film and series.

Hybrid Texts, at the Nexus of Many Influences

What is apparent is that the Arab media scene is characterized by various flows of dramas coming from numerous countries in successive waves. Producers and audiences show excitement for a particular country and its ways of life as portrayed on screen at a given time until another country and its flow of images make their entrance, and new excitement ensues. Although excitement might be greater for a particular media center/country at a given time, it is important to note that these various industries do not cancel each other out. Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S. provide images that become juxtaposed in a nebular Arab media environment, which produces dramas born at the nexus of these various influences.

Hegemonic forms of power persist in hybrid media environments. In the Arab world, for example, the U.S. media industry is still undeniably dominant for various political-economic and cultural reasons. Additionally, the success of Turkish television dramas is reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire's 400 years of domination in the region. Egypt and Turkey are regional media centers that have more cultural soft power than any other countries in the Arab world today. However, despite these hierarchies and differentiated forms of power, it is obvious that the framework of cultural imperialism alone is no longer sufficient to describe globalization processes (for more theorization on this topic, see Chapter Two). In fact, these power relationships are inscribed within the hybridity of Arab media, and media texts like melodramas are the repository of these

various political-economic and cultural power relationships and cultural influences at work regionally and globally.

With the exception of the U.S., which operates within its own vacuum as the dominant hegemonic world exporter, Egyptian, Syrian, and Turkish dramas are hybrid in the sense that they are born out of the various historic and political-economic influences identified in the previous sections. Egyptian and Syrian dramas can be associated with and connected to Saudi Arabia, as discussed earlier. Similarly, both Egyptian and Syrian dramas grapple with ideas of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism, and producers from each country look to each other to see how they embed these messages. Egyptian and Syrian producers also look at each other's creations to ensure they are not outpaced in a fast-changing Arab media industry, and they often take inspiration from each other. The producers of Turkish dramas turn their eyes toward the Arab world, their main audience, and create shows that they know will be liked by audiences throughout the Arab world or, again, Saudi investors and broadcasters. Often, this means adapting storylines to make them more relevant to Arab viewers, for example, including more references to Islam or to shared cultural mores and traditions. Finally, all of the dramas coming from Egypt, Syria, and Turkey borrow popular tropes of American soaps "marked by several coups de theatre—the return of dead characters, revelation of family ties, and missing children," all emblematic ingredients of the American soap (Stempel Mumford, 1995, quoted by Bucciante, 2010, p. 4).

Although it is evident that these media texts are hybrid in and of themselves, a more important question is how they become 'carriers' of hybridity in particular localized contexts. To understand how these texts become spaces of hybrid identity construction,

one needs to look at the particular features of these texts that connect (or disconnect) with viewers' local circumstances. In Morocco specifically, this means first looking at the themes that these Egyptian, Syrian, Turkish, and U.S. shows explore and how they are similar or different or simultaneously similar and different from the themes explored in the Moroccan films and series that Moroccans consume.

Because Chapter Four has already provided a textual analysis of Moroccan film and television series (see pp. 130-168), this particular textual analysis of the foreign dramas *Hagg Metwali*, *Bab Al-Hara*, *Noor*, and *Desperate Housewives* refers to the previous chapter, where necessary. However, the analysis also stands on its own as an exploration of the themes presented in these popular Egyptian, Syrian, Turkish, and U.S. dramas.

Media Texts as Carriers of Hybridity in Morocco

Hybridization fosters cultural mixing through the increased circulation of people, technologies, money, images, and ideas (Appadurai, 1996). Categories of culture that previously seemed fixed and stable become unsettled. Hybridization entails a multi-directional movement whereby local, national, and global forces interact, compete, and influence one another, thereby establishing new cultural forms or practices. These new practices are informed both by the local, something that is known, 'similar' to the local culture(s), and by the global, something that is other, 'different' from the local cultures. The simultaneous 'similarities' and 'differences' produced allow individuals to create both 'junctures' and 'disjunctures' vis-à-vis different cultural contexts that seem both familiar and exotic at the same time (Appadurai, 1990; Pieterse, 2001; Shohat and Stam, 1994; Shome and Hedge, 2002).

Moroccan viewers seek answers to important questions raised in the public sphere, namely, how Morocco can overcome the social inequalities, gender disparities, and religious divides that are stalling democratization efforts. As shown, Moroccan shows do not address these issues in a satisfying way and rather reinforce the dominant state ideologies concerning these various issues. When Moroccan audiences watch foreign shows such as *Hagg Metwali*, *Bab al-Hara*, *Noor*, and *Desperate Housewives*, they relate these series to their local circumstances. They look for ‘similar’ themes that might be treated ‘differently’ than in their own programming or society. In the process, they interrogate and redefine their sense of nationhood and create hybrid spaces of identity and citizenship at the nexus of various influences.

In this section, I assess whether the themes explored in Moroccan films and series (and that were at the core of the debate on democracy in Morocco)—social disparities, gender roles, and religious divides—are also addressed in the Egyptian, Syrian, Turkish, and U.S. dramas. Additionally, I analyze how these themes are developed in these foreign series, to identify any similarities or differences that might exist between them and the Moroccan films and series. That process allows me to gauge 1) which factors might make the foreign shows more desirable than the Moroccan shows in the eyes of Moroccan viewers and 2) which particular textual features of these dramas provide opportunities for audiences to connect or disconnect these dramas to their local circumstances (junctures and disjunctures). Before delving into the textual analysis, however, I briefly describe the plots and social contexts in which these series were released.

Foreign Series Analyzed

Hagg Metwali

Figure 7: Promotional Picture for the Television Drama Series Hagg Metwali



Source: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/566/fe3.htm>

Aylit al-Hagg Metwali (commonly referred to as Hagg Metwali) is an Egyptian series that was released during Ramadan in November/December of 2001. The series comprised 35 episodes, which were broadcast on at least five satellite channels, reaching wide audiences in the Arab world and beyond. The main character, Hagg Metwali, is initially a hardworking, poor salesman in a cloth shop. But after marrying Zubayda, the rich widow of his deceased boss, Metwali climbs the social ladder and becomes a successful businessman at the head of a textile empire. After the birth of a son and the death of his wife, Metwali remarries a woman named Amina, whom he charges with the task of caring for his son and keeping the household. Happy but obviously still not completely satisfied with his life, Metwali then marries a second wife (Ne'mettallah) who runs the successful textile business of her deceased husband, because he wants to take over her business. On the very same day that the second wife gives birth to Metwali's second child, he marries a third wife, a tax officer named Madiha, to avoid paying taxes and getting charged for his various fraud schemes. A younger fourth wife, who is after Metwali's wealth, follows, and the three first wives conspire to get rid of this fourth wife.

Each of the four wives has her own floor in a gigantic mansion that the family shares, and Hagg Metwali divides his time among the various floors.

The series created uproar throughout the Arab world mostly because of its theme: polygamy. Although Islam sanctions marriage for men with up to four wives, the practice is also highly discouraged and rarely practiced in many contemporary Arab societies, including Egypt. The rather idealized, uncritical portrayal of polygamy on the show coupled with the total acceptance of the situation by his four submissive wives led to a series of debates about the shows on various media outlets. Paradoxically, the National Council for Women broadcast promotional spots about gender equality during commercial breaks, which highlighted all the more the ways in which the program was not promoting gender equality (Elbendary, 2001). To address all these concerns, the cast and crew of the show appeared on a variety of talk shows,

but seesawed between arguing that the idea was to show polygamy in a bad light and arguing that polygamy solves the problem of large numbers of unmarried women in Egyptian society. Egypt's religious authorities have often said polygamy is an answer to the problem of aging, unmarried women who can't find someone to marry in a society that looks down on late-marrying females. (Hammond, 2005, p. 72)

In any case, the show has become a classic, and some of the language used by the characters has even entered the Egyptian lexicon (for example, Amina's trademark answer to her husband's various requests, "D'accord, ya hagg"; see Elbendary, 2001). D'accord is borrowed from the French language and means "I agree" or "sure" depending on the context. Hagg is a respectful way of addressing a man who has had the chance to take a pilgrimage trip to Mecca.

Bab Al-Hara

Figure 8: Promotional Picture for the Television Drama Series Bab Al-Hara



Source: <http://www.serieslive.com/article/1032/ramadan-2011-quelles-series-cette-annee/>

Bab Al-Hara is a television series that ran for five seasons between the years 2006 and 2010. The series belongs to a particular genre of television drama in Syria referred to as the ‘Damascene Milieu’ genre, which typically features

an imaginary or existing neighborhood in the old city of Damascus, typically at an unidentified point during the late 19th or early 20th centuries when Syria was either ruled by the Ottoman Empire or the French mandate authority; and in fact a constant feature of the genre is the struggle against foreign occupation. Accentuating the historical setting, the trademark of this genre is the nostalgic depiction of tradition and locality, especially in terms of the pace of life and the closeness of community. (Al-Ghazzi, 2013)

Indeed, Bab Al-Hara features a group of self-governed villagers in Damascus led by Chief Al Zaghim at an undefined time during the French occupation. The villagers have developed an exemplary sense of community and would do anything to protect their village from inside or outside threats. The inside threats are personified by the character of Idaghshiri, a lower-class unscrupulous individual who steals gold pieces from one of the respected figures in the village, the fabric shopkeeper Abu Brahim. The outside threat

consists of the French colonial power and its local representatives, who intrude on village matters and establish themselves as a regulating authority.

The show spurred a variety of debates all around the Arab world, especially because of its representation of women as homemakers totally uninvolved in the public life of the village and its perceived reinforcement of patriarchal values. In 2009, during the month of my fieldwork, some members of the cast were invited to the set of the talk show *Qarib Jiddan* (Up Close) on the network Al Hurra. The first question host Joshep Aissaoui asked was, “Your show seems to emphasize a pathological nostalgia for ancient patriarchal norms. Are you against modernity?” This question alone encapsulates much of the debate that surrounded the show. Yet again, for better or worse, *Bab Al-Hara* has entered the pantheon of hugely popular, instantly classic television dramas in the Arab world.

Noor

Figure 9: Fan Art Picture of Noor and Muhannad



Source: <http://images5.fanpop.com/image/photos/24800000/mehmet-gumus-turkish-couples-24856247-500-375.jpg>

Noor was broadcast by the satellite network MBC in 2008 after being shown in Turkey in 2005 with little success. The network dubbed the soap in Syrian Arabic and adapted some of the protagonists' names. For example, the male lead character Mehmet became Muhannad, a traditional Arabic name, and the female lead character Gümüş became Noor. In addition, the title of the show itself was consistently changed from Gümüş to Noor. The broadcasting format was also changed as the series initially had 100 episodes of one hour each and was shown on MBC as 154 episodes of 45 minutes each. The plot revolves around Muhannad, the heir of an urban business empire built by his grandfather, and Noor, his wife from the poor countryside, 'assigned to him' through arranged marriage. Although Muhannad starts off as a bitter, domineering husband who is emotionally distant from Noor, and Noor begins as a submissive wife who is a victim of her own situation, they both evolve over the course of the seasons. Muhannad becomes a loving and caring husband who treats his wife as an equal, and Noor becomes an independent and strong woman who follows her dream of becoming a fashion designer. Similar to Hagg Metwali and Bab Al-Hara, Noor was a huge phenomenon throughout the Arab world, albeit for different reasons. It is a known fact that the show triggered many marital crises throughout the Arab world, as Arab women started comparing their husbands to Muhannad and demanding to be treated like Noor. Al-Arabiya news (2008) reported that the show sparked a certain number of divorces in the Arab world. For example, a husband divorced his wife after she hung a picture of Muhannad on their bedroom wall; another one divorced his wife for putting a photo of him on her cell phone. Another man "fed up with his wife's obsession with Muhannad and constant complaints that he should be as romantic as the TV hunk [...] threw her out of the marital home."

Another reason for the show's popularity is the vivid debates it spurred concerning its non-adherence to Islamic values. The secular vision embedded in it (characters are shown drinking or having sex out of wedlock, for example) and the large number of romantic scenes led various religious authorities to demand that it be censored or taken off the air (Al Rayah, 2008). Lohaidan, the head of Saudi Arabia's Islamic shari'a courts, stated, "The owners of these channels that broadcast programs containing indecency and vulgarity (...) can be put to death through the judicial process (quada'an)." Given MBC's public mission of spreading the umma ideology to foster Arab unity through the use of religion, it is surprising that a show like Noor made it on the air to start with, but perhaps because Turks are not Arab, the show was allowed to operate outside the bounds of what was expected of Arab shows from Syria or Egypt, for example.

Desperate Housewives

Figure 10: Promotional Picture for the Television Drama Series Desperate Housewives



Source: <http://inourwordsblog.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/cast.jpg?w=470>

Desperate Housewives ran for seven seasons between the years 2004 and 2012 on the U.S. television network ABC and was subsequently exported all over the world. It

was the most popular show in its demographic worldwide in 2007 with an audience of 120 million (TVSA news desk, 2007). The action is set in the fictional town of Fairview, specifically on the fictional street Wisteria Lane. The show follows the experiences of five middle- to upper-middle-class married or divorced women in American suburbia. Lynette Scavo, a former businesswoman, is now a stay-at-home mom who cares for four misbehaving children. Gabrielle Solis is a former top model with an absent husband, who finds consolation in designer dresses and flings with her 16-year-old gardener. Susan Mayer, the divorced mother of a teenager, is looking to rebuild her life and find love. Bree Van de Kamp is the picture of the ‘perfect’ homemaker who keeps a pristine house and bakes divine pastries but who struggles to conceal that her marriage is falling apart. In addition to chronicling their daily life experiences in suburbia in a humorous fashion, the show features an ongoing investigation as the four women are trying to figure out why their friend and seemingly perfect former neighbor Mary Alice committed suicide or was killed (given that troubling evidence comes to the surface). Contributing to the appeal of this show is the wide array of the women’s experiences, even if ultimately, they are all highly domesticated and labeled as “desperate,” which seems to be a throwback to the 1940s and ’50s, before any feminist advances occurred (McCable, J. & Akass, K., 2006).

Textual Analysis: Themes Explored

It is not surprising that these four television drama series are all concerned with questions of class disparities, gender inequality, or religious divides. After all, these three themes were at the heart of discussions of democratization in Morocco and made their way into Moroccan films and television series, as shown in Chapter Four. A certain

familiarity with these themes helps Moroccan viewers to connect with these programs as they look for ways to refine their understandings of these various local issues. However, at the same time, these foreign drama series present something different that is attractive to Moroccan audiences, different readings of life in different places and different conceptions of social, gender, and religious dynamics.

As we will see in this textual analysis, these four dramas also present audiences with mixed messages about class, gender, and religion, just as the Moroccan shows did. However, as a whole, they are more optimistic than their Moroccan counterparts because they do often present audiences with characters who overcome these divides. As a result, they provide more hope for Moroccan viewers and give them ways to envision a life free of these local or national concerns.

Similarly, in the cases in which the dramas do not particularly present any critique or solutions, they are not inscribed within the authoritative vision of the Moroccan state (as are Moroccan film and television) and therefore present an opportunity for debate outside the confines of particular state-mandated ideologies. For example, although Hagg Metwali does present a misogynistic view of women, the uproar about the film revolved around the question of whether women should be portrayed in these ways. Moroccans who criticize the show can afford to be critical because they are not criticizing the monarchy or the nation in the process. However, in the case of a Moroccan film like *Number One* whose premise is based on the pretense that women are more liberated after the state reform of the *Mudawana*, critiquing the film and its actual reinforcement of patriarchal values might be perceived as a concealed criticism of the state. The state, after all, mandated the reform and funded the film.

From Rags to Riches: Overcoming Social Disparities

As discussed in Chapter Four, a major source of discontent in Morocco is the inability to transcend one's class in a socially divided society, and the fact that Moroccan productions reinforce the idea that one should in fact not even attempt to overcome class divides is one contributing factor to these local productions' lack of appeal. Hagg Metwali, Bab Al-Hara, Noor, and Desperate Housewives provide different understandings of class dynamics and class mobility than the ones presented in Moroccan films and series. As will be shown in this subsection, the shows either present characters that transcend their class status and climb the social ladder, or they present alternative visions of class relations within a given community. Even if they do eventually reinforce a certain number of stereotypes about class as well, they present alternative representations of social relations and provide opportunities for debate within the Moroccan context.

Hagg Metwali is the most blatant example of one individual not being limited by his class status as his rags-to-riches story involves transforming himself from a poor sales associate "with only clothes on his back" (to cite one of the characters of the show) to a rich businessman at the head of a textile empire. In many ways, Hagg Metwali is a show more about personal and professional success than about polygamy in and of itself. From the very first episode, Metwali has a dream in which he envisions himself marrying a rich woman and becoming a powerful man. The four subsequent episodes are devoted to showing him achieve this dream in very pragmatic, self-serving ways. Although Metwali is presented as a hardworking man who has the potential to elevate himself in society through his impeccable work ethic, his actions in the first five episodes show that he is in

fact looking for shortcuts and opportunistic ways to become successful, like what he sees in his dream: marrying a rich woman who bestows her fortune. And this is exactly what Metwali does. When his rich boss dies and his widow is left with some valuable goods, he marries her, takes over his former boss' business, and builds a textile empire. When his wife dies, the three new wives he marries all help him to protect his business and to achieve a higher status in society. Metwali does not even conceal his opportunistic ways. At some point during episode seven as he sets in motion his plans to marry a second wife, he says, "I want to start a new business, and Ne'mettallah is the key to this business. I want to enlarge my functions and have my business include the sector she works in, so I'll marry her." When his friend plays devil's advocate and tells him to think about how his first wife will feel, he says, "I do what is best for me and the larger picture." Although his selfish character does not make him particularly likeable, the story arc of this contemporary (self-centered), money-making hero (Elbendary, 2001) presents an appealing story of rags to riches, which is practically never seen in Moroccan films and series. As discussed in Chapter Four, Moroccan characters rarely climb the social ladder and are not even presented with opportunities to do so.

Nonetheless, Hagg Metwali does not necessarily offer a positive vision of class mobility, either. The show insists numerous times that Metwali supposedly made his fortune thanks to his impeccable work ethic and hard work. His boss, who passes away after the first few episodes, cannot stop raving about Metwali, calling him the "hardest worker I ever had." Metwali himself claims later that "my stores and my business are a success because and only because of my hard work." Although this is factually incorrect (as demonstrated when Metwali actually marries up and uses his wives' wealth to expand

his business), the rhetoric of ‘hard work’ as a tool for social mobility is really reminiscent of the ‘American self-made man’ myth present in U.S. society. This discourse, whether it is embedded in the American context or—as in this case, in the Egyptian context—tends to blame working-class citizen for their own economic plight by telling them that they simply do not work hard enough. Hagg Metwali does that numerous times by contrasting Metwali’s supposed work ethic to other characters who are supposedly not as deserving of high social status as Metwali is. For example, Sabbath, the maid working for Metwali’s boss in the first few episodes, is presented as a poor villager who will never climb the social ladder because of her inability to work hard and her questionable work ethic. Her character is portrayed as lazy and conniving, and the show offers very little insight into the hardships that she endures as a member of a lower social class.

Noor is another rags to riches story. First, the patriarch grandfather, head of the business empire supporting the family, was himself originally poor. Similar to Hagg Metwali, the story often mentions that he made his fortune through “hard work.” Second, the wife he chooses for his grandson Muhannad is from the same poor village he was from, and she also experiences a change in social status by marrying outside of her class. The show therefore presents viewers with two different paths towards enrichment and social upward mobility: 1) hard work and 2) marriage.

However, despite portrayals of social ascension, this show also reinforces a variety of stereotypes about class. Specifically, it demarcates differences between the low and high social classes, ultimately limiting its potential to truly offer optimistic messages to audiences who have anxieties about their lack of class mobility. For example, from the very beginning, Noor is portrayed as a low-income, low-class, fairly uneducated woman.

Moreover, she is told numerous times that she does not belong in the upper-class environment of her husband.

Quite tellingly, one of the first things her mother-in-law tells her is, “I would not let someone like you dressed like that marry my son. You better call me Madam; we are a very high-class family, and I will not tolerate it if you treat me as if I were low-class.” Paradoxically, the mother-in-law herself is from a similar modest background. However, she worked so hard to fit in and erase markers of her previous social status that she broke all ties between her present and past. The underlying message of the show, then, is that one is either rich or poor with no possibilities for in-between. Similarly, the set of experiences one is destined to have is ultimately bound to social status. Therefore, Noor offers a mixed message. Although social ascension is possible, it ought to be performed within the confines of class expectations, and individuals have to conform to these expectations.

Bab Al-Hara, in contrast, does not present viewers with any rags-to-riches story but does expose the viewer to alternative forms of class relations. The show clearly demarcates class. For example, the town’s robber embodies the lower social class in the village stratification, and he is presented as destitute and desperate. In addition, the town’s pharmacist is one of the richest (if not the richest) men in the village. He has a luxurious mansion and a wife who throws lavish parties. However, everyone—rich and poor—is revered for the role he must play in the community. There is deep respect and understanding of other people’s circumstances and of the idea that individuals (whatever positions they occupy in society) contribute to the common good. The show has an underlying social democratic vision as it promotes the idea of a welfare state or at least

the notion that society has a responsibility to all its members. For example, when the wife of a deceased guard expresses her inability to financially provide for her family, the village chief generously gives her money and offers to give her son a job. Therefore, in Bab Al-Hara, it is the responsibility of the authorities to care for the less fortunate. Again, this is a very different image from the portrayal of class in Moroccan films and series, in which the poor must fight for their own survival. They are accountable to no one, and no one is accountable to them. They simply must accept their hardships.

However, again, one could argue that despite a slightly more positive outlook on class, Bab Al-Hara is not quite as progressive as it sounds. The social democratic message embedded in the series means little if it is not accompanied by real efforts to give low-income and high-income characters equal air time or if both perspectives are not truly developed. In the case of Bab Al-Hara, the real stars of the show are the chief, his right-hand man, the rich barber and other successful store owners, and the head of the French militia. Poor characters, like the widow of the guard, only appear briefly as supporting characters who do little other than present opportunities to show how generous the wealthy villagers are. In this context, social democratic discourse becomes paternalistic and eventually supports the idea that poor people should accept their social status and simply vie for respect or charity.

Finally, Desperate Housewives does not really try to bridge the class divide in any consequential way in the first five episodes. Perhaps the only story of upward mobility is the one of Gabrielle, who is a Latina from a modest background and who first makes a lot of money by modeling and then by marrying Carlos, her rich husband. Yet this is not truly a story of upward mobility because the show barely brings up Gabrielle's past and

some of the hardships she might have encountered as a woman of color living in the United States. Instead, it tries very hard to blend her into this otherwise quite homogenous group of middle-class, middle-aged women who represent the stereotype of white middle-class America: nice lawns, brand new cars, dinner parties, gossip, and expensive jewelry.

However, if one expands the analysis to episodes from the later seasons, interesting class dynamics emerge. In the second-to-last season of *Desperate Housewives*, Susan Mayer's husband, James Delfino, accumulates debt, and the family is forced to move out of Wisteria Lane into an apartment across town. The social stratification of America—and its spatial representation through various neighborhoods—becomes apparent in this season. When Susan moves out, she becomes estranged from her three other friends, who start avoiding her. As her financial problems worsen, she starts working on the side for an online service, for which she cleans her apartment in sexy lingerie. When her part-time occupation is discovered and made public, she loses her day job and ends up having to work as a nanny for Lynette. This 'riches to rags' story shows that *Desperate Housewives*—although inconsistent over the course of its seven seasons and wavering between class stereotypes and deep criticism of class dynamics in the U.S.—does offer some critical views of social disparities.

Overall, the shows' messages are mixed as they often present pathways to social mobility while simultaneously reinforcing existing binaries between low- and high-income populations. However, it is important to note that as a whole, these four dramas do present alternative views of class to those presented in the Moroccan films and series.

Thus, they have the power to spark debates on social disparities, class mobility, and class relations.

Gender Relations: Manhood, Women's Domesticity, and Repressed Love

The four foreign shows examined in this analysis also present mixed messages about gender, either by reinforcing traditional views of gender roles or by presenting a picture of gender equality. For example, both *Hagg Metwali* and *Bab Al-Hara* are focused on manhood through their patriarchal definitions of what a 'man' should and should not do. In contrast, *Noor* and *Desperate Housewives* move beyond the male perspective and offer more complex and layered conceptions of gender and gender relations. Overall, they all offer opportunities to debate what the roles of both men and women should be in society. *Hagg Metwali*, for example, bolsters traditional arguments about manhood. In the show, male characters are typically in charge of the household, the business, or society at large. The lead character asserts his dominance at home by marrying multiple women who all serve the purpose of fulfilling his needs in one way or the other, as discussed in the previous section. In fact, *Metwali* himself rationalizes the whole idea of polygamy based on the fact that he is 'helping' these women who otherwise would be too old to marry or would experience financial problems. As long as a man is rich, he can and should support as many wives as his funds allow. *Metwali* is truly portrayed as the king of the castle as he shares his time between the different floors the wives occupy, and they fight for his attention and his time.

Moreover, it is obvious that *Metwali* exercises full control over the actions of his wives. Examples of this abound. In episode eight, *Metwali's* second wife is irritated that he is asking to marry a third wife, and she throws him out of her bed. He answers, "not

Hagg Metwali, you don't know who you are married to!" Later in that episode, after Hagg Metwali marries the third wife, Madiha, the newlyweds go to a club together. She offers to dance with him, and when he declines, she offers to go on her own. Metwali answers quite seriously, "I will divorce you if you go alone on this dance floor." In this scene, Metwali controls his wife's sexuality while not permitting her to do the same.

Bab Al-Hara also offers traditional definitions of manhood. These definitions differ slightly from those of Hagg Metwali but are in no way less harmful. In this show, manhood is constructed as physical strength as well as violence committed in the name of—or against—women. For example, in episode two, the barber's oldest daughter returns home for a visit and tells her mother that her husband has been hitting her. She also asks her to conceal this fact from the men of the family, who might want to get into a fight with him. The brothers have suspicions, however, and ask her, "Is he hitting you? If it is the case, I will hit him and make him regret he was ever born!" Never at any point is it suggested that situations can be resolved with words. In another telling example, one of the ladies of the village who is often presented as a domineering figure compared to her weak and frail husband, looks sad. Her friend asks her, "What happened? Did your husband hit you?" She replies, "I wish! At least I would know I was married to a man." This example shows not only that violence is associated with manhood but also that the common stereotype of women as either victims or offenders is inscribed within the narrative.

On the flip side of this violence, there is an imperative for men never to show their weaknesses. For example, after an altercation between the barber and Idaghshiri at a public reading, the chief congratulates the barber on remaining calm and keeping his

composure. In a compelling soliloquy representing his internal thought process, the chief of the village, Al Zaghim, verbalizes his thoughts on this imperative for self-composure: “Everyone calls you the chief and respects you. But you are weak and no one understands the pain in your heart. Who is going to replace you? You have a son who died at war and one who disappeared and never came back.” However, one should note that *Bab Al-Hara* is more subtle than *Hagg Metwali* in its portrayal of manhood as this soliloquy shows that these social constructions of manhood also weigh on men, who are in fact not always strong. The portrayal of manhood in *Bab Al-Hara* is therefore more multilayered and multidimensional, even if ultimately, traditional visions of manhood are presented in both shows.

One element that both shows emphasize about manhood is patriarchy. *Hagg Metwali* is a leader/manager/family head/business mogul, and no one can get in his way. Similarly, in *Bab Al-Hara*, the chief is a man, a paternalistic figure who gives pep talks to the entire village when riots emerge, for example.

In contrast, in both *Hagg Metwali* and *Bab Al-Hara*, women are presented as domesticated. For example, *Hagg Metwali* requires all his wives to stay at home, even the ones who originally functioned as independent women. For example, Ne'mettallah, who used to run her own business, is asked to stay at home. Even Madiha, the younger tax accountant, gives up her career to fulfill *Metwali's* wishes. In *Bab Al-Hara*, the entire life of the village is organized around men, who meet at city councils, in the streets of the village, or in cafes. Women are never supposed to leave the home and, as a result, are pretty clueless about the life of the village (for example, they do not know about the robbery and *Idaghshiri's* possible involvement until weeks after it has happened. Their

only role is to stay at home, cook, and take care of children). However, once again, in Bab Al-Hara, this portrayal of domestication does not appear as blatantly misogynistic as in Hagg Metwali, and that is mostly because Bab Al-Hara claims to be an accurate historical description of gender roles in the past, whereas Hagg Metwali is set in the contemporary period. In any case, the two shows present traditional visions of gender roles but also represent a wonderful platform for debate beyond the programs themselves.

Unlike Hagg Metwali and Bab Al-Hara, Noor and Desperate Housewives present women's perspectives and more layered representations of gender. Noor is a particularly interesting case in the context of gender relations in the Middle East and North Africa. The show's characters are initially archetypes of the various gender stereotypes, but over the course of the seasons, they change dramatically. By the end of the series, completely alternative visions of gender are presented to the viewers. For example, at first, the soap portrays Muhannad as a rich, domineering man who has total control over his wife and uses that control to hurt her emotionally. Noor is presented as this poor village girl whose only mission in life is to satisfy her husband and new family. She is presented as domesticated as she does little else than eat, interact with her evil mother-in-law, or sew all day long.

Little by little, Noor liberates herself by first asking to take vocational courses outside of the home (computer science and English) and then by developing an interest and career in fashion design. Meanwhile, over the course of the seasons, Muhannad falls in love with his estranged wife, with whom he was paired in an arranged marriage. He ends up proclaiming his love for her and gradually starts treating her like an equal. This evolution is shown in subtle ways over the course of time. For example, in the first few

episodes, Noor has to ask her husband's permission to do anything, even something as simple as registering for two vocational classes. He initially refuses and coerces her into being a good stay-at-home wife. Over time, Noor gains independence both professionally and within the household and does not rely on Muhannad's permission to pursue her desires. Her independence becomes evident when she temporarily separates from Muhannad (over the return of his presumed dead first girlfriend) and is able to rely on herself to make a living. Muhannad respects her desires even if they do not align with what he wants, and he tries to find a way back into her life, not through coercion but through love. As a result, compared with both Hagg Metwali and Bab Al-Hara, the show ends up presenting a nicer picture of gender equality.

Noor also offers an interesting perspective on gender relations between men and women. Its exaggerated romanticism fills the emotional void that many female viewers experience in their relationships. For example, during my fieldwork, I heard numerous times that Morocco is not a culture of emotions. One respondent even explained to me that there is no vocabulary for "love" in Moroccan Arabic:

The way you show a woman your love her is by buying her gold, not letting her know that you 'love' her. 'Habibi,' which means 'my love' is often said in classical or even Egyptian Arabic, but in Morocco, 'habibi' is said as a joke. Instead of saying I love you, you say 'I want you' or 'you make me melt' in Darija.

Another respondent said, "there is no love here; we really crave for affection. There is no expression of love in series; there is not even any love in the language we use." Clearly, a show like Noor taps into these repressed feelings of love by presenting characters who are open about their emotions.

In a similar fashion to *Noor*, *Desperate Housewives* presents both stereotypical gender roles and interesting twists on the traditional family structure. The premise of the show itself—housewives who are desperate—is a step above the common stereotype of the ‘happy’ good wife and homemaker of the 40s and 50s, but it is still a throw-back as it is also a vision of women as domesticated and trapped in their marriages (McCabe & Akass, 2006). However, these stereotypes are counterbalanced with the experiences of a few women who operate outside the bounds of that traditional female role. For example, the Mayer family is composed of divorced Susan and her daughter Julie. Susan does not fit the typical mold of a homemaker. Her cooking is notably horrible, her organization skills are lacking, and her young daughter is more of a mother figure to her than she is a mother figure to her own daughter. Over the course of the seasons, Susan marries plumber James Delfino and has a second child with him. The re-composed family offers a nice alternative to some of the other more traditional family structures presented in the show. Other things interrupting the traditional order of things happen as well. For example, Lynette goes back to being a business woman and her husband a stay-at-home dad, and Gabrielle runs the household and takes a job when her husband goes blind.

Both *Noor* and *Desperate Housewives* present enough references to traditional family structures to appeal to Moroccan viewers who might identify with or feel trapped by them, while at the same time providing alternative visions of gender roles. On the whole, these series provide opportunities to debate the question of gender equality either because—as in the case of the Arab series—they present gender stereotypes and opportunities for discussions outside the confines of the Moroccan state ideologies and laws on gender equality or because—as in the case of the Turkish and U.S. series—they

present a variety of family models informed by both traditional and alternative family structures.

Religion: Islam and Secularism

Unlike Moroccan films and series, which contained a certain number of stereotypes about religious fervor and secularism (see pp. 154-168), the four foreign series in the analysis present more respectful representations of both religious Muslims and secularists. The foreign shows do not equate religious fervor with fundamentalism as the film *Marock* does, for example, and do not equate secularism with total depravation as the film *Veiled Love* does. Although the Moroccan productions seemed to advocate a mainstream vision of Islam where no one is too much of anything, the foreign shows advocate either strict religious observance or a mixture of religious and secular practices in daily life without necessarily rendering caricatures on either side of the spectrum. *Bab Al-Hara* and *Hagg Metwali* cast religious Muslims in a good light; *Noor* presents both religious and secular Muslims in a positive light, and *Desperate Housewives* is mostly secular in its themes, with the occasional trip to the church (for example, the funeral of Mary Alice in the beginning of the series).

Bab Al-Hara provides the most comprehensive and full-fledged representation of Islam in a television series as religion is the organizing element of life in the village. The Chief makes decisions informed by religion and encourages everyone to be a good Muslim. Religion is presented as the common denominator for everyone, rich or poor, male or female. Religion is also viewed as the ultimate answer and solution to problems that are hard to solve, including the robbery. For example, after having exhausted all possible means of investigating the robbery and not finding any proof that Idaghshari

killed the village security guard to steal the gold pieces, the chief of the village and his advisors decide to have Idaghshari come and swear on the Qur'an. They think that this ultimate test will reveal whether he is guilty as no one would dare to swear on the Qur'an and lie. Not willing to stop claiming innocence, Idaghshari does swear on the Qur'an, but the knowledge that he is lying makes his hand tremble; his whole body is shaking, and his desperation is apparent. In the background, a song is playing that states, "The one who dares to put his hands on the Qur'an and swears in the name of Allah, he will live in agony if he is not truthful." Bab Al-Hara takes Islam seriously and carries the message that to be a good man, one needs to be a good Muslim.

The show attempts to lay out what the behavior of a good Muslim should be, and any non-Muslim behavior is criticized. For example, one of the village store owners constantly spreads gossip about other villagers. Gossip is haram (forbidden by Islam) as this verse from the Qur'an illustrates:

O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, for some suspicions are a sin. Do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would abhor it, [so similarly, avoid backbiting]. And fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful" Qur'an, [49:12].

Therefore, the show's main protagonists criticize or mock the store owner on multiple occasions during the first five episodes. His non-Muslim behavior makes him an outcast in the community. Everyone is expected to believe in Islam, and therefore, secularism is not even considered as an option for these characters.

Hagg Metwali presents himself as a virtuous Muslim man and as someone who leads his life according to the principles of Islam. Although the show Hagg Metwali does nothing to go against religion, Metwali's actions are typically justified through a re-

interpretation of Islam to suit his goals. For example, Metwali claims that he is marrying four wives because it is “allowed by Islamic law.” The law is based on the fact that the prophet himself married four times to provide financially for the women, but Metwali’s wives are not all in need. In fact, the first wife, Amina, comes from an upper-class background; the second wife, Ne’mettallah, runs a successful business, and the third wife has a good job at the tax office. Similarly, Metwali marries them to serve his own needs rather than theirs. He is also willing to steal (by encouraging his boss’ widow and future wife Zubeyda to keep a storage room with expensive cloth secret from the relatives who are supposed to inherit it) and commit tax fraud. Both practices are considered haram (not permissible) by Islamic law. Yet, Metwali continues to claim that he is a ‘good’ Muslim and, at the end of episode five, even visits Mecca.

Hagg Metwali triggered an intense religious debate about the question of whether the main character’s actions were halal (permissible) or haram (non-permissible) by Islam. In December 2001, the television sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi discussed the program on the Al Jazeera network.

He thanked the actor [...] and the director of the serial who, in his view, for the first time showed the halal (permissible) form of polygamy as something decent and socially acceptable. (He) [...] stated that the programme was true to Islam as it showed that polygamy could function in a smooth and relaxed way (Roald, 2003, p. 52).

The drama series did receive religious authorities’ seal of approval and is obviously not portraying religious fervor in a negative light. However, it interestingly blurs the lines of what a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Muslim should or should not be and in the process helps audiences situate themselves and wonder about what they would find appropriate conduct for a Muslim. Indeed, despite the television sheikh’s approval of the

program, audiences throughout the Arab had different views regarding Hagg Metwali's actions. Roald (2003) brings these voices to light in her analysis of audiences' reactions to the Egyptian TV serial. For example, Kassim, a Syrian viewer she interviewed claimed that "Metwali never committed haram, every action he did was within the framework of shari'a and was therefore halal." In contrast, Huda, a Tunisian native who watched the show with her family said, "we were all very upset; we felt that the guy Metwali was egoistic and arrogant. He looks upon himself as a good Muslim (salih) but in reality he is a hypocrite (munafiq)." Noor also blurs the lines in similar and even more obvious ways. In the Turkish show, characters show their allegiance to Islam by displaying their Qu'rans as decorative art in the living room. However, they live a life that goes against many of Islam's teachings. This is established from the very beginning as we see Muhannad drinking alcohol in a bar to forget about his dead fiancée, with whom he had had illegitimate pre-marital sex. Both religious fervor and secularism are presented in a positive light, with no judgment cast on anyone.

Finally, in *Desperate Housewives*, religion seems to have little impact on the characters' actions besides the occasional trip to church for life events such as weddings, funerals, etc. Nonetheless, the show hints numerous times at and provides an undertone of Christianity in the life of the white suburbs of Fairview. Bree is probably the most religious character of all as she is involved in the church and often visits the priest to confess her various sins. The idea that religion is something that you are somehow accountable to is present, but it is undercut by the various devious ploys of the housewives. Christianity—much like everything else in the series, ranging from nice lawns, fancy cars, impeccably decorated homes, and trips to the hair dresser—is a façade

behind which housewives like Bree seem to hide. Therefore, without much religious fervor, *Desperate Housewives* presents viewers with a subdued and humorous critique of using religion as a façade.

Overall, these programs present viewers with various degrees of religious fervor, from complete devotion to Islam in *Bab Al-Hara* to partial or assumed secularism in *Noor* and *Desperate Housewives*. In some cases, they also interestingly interrogate the notion of what defines a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Muslim (or in the case of *Desperate Housewives*, Christian). As Abu-Lughod (2005) argues, Arab programming “rarely places the Muslim outside of the frame; instead it makes and sustains distinctions between good and bad Muslims. It also reflects on what place religious identity and observance should have in daily life and asks what role Islam should have on society at large” (p. 31). These four shows all address these questions in one way or another.

As this textual analysis has shown, the viewing of Egyptian, Syrian, Turkish, and U.S. dramas in a Moroccan context exemplifies this process of cultural hybridization because it reveals how these shows can be used to interrogate/question one’s own sense of national belonging (and the questions around gender, class, and religion directly attached to it) and to simultaneously envision other possible foreign ways of life. In the process, these texts provide spaces of identity formation where both the local and the national become unsettled.

The Moroccan example also shows that Moroccans find enough ‘similarities’ between the cultures portrayed on screen and their own culture to form/feel meaningful connections to them while at the same time noting some major ‘differences’ in the cultural practices depicted on the screen. These similarities and differences provide

opportunities for individuals to create junctures and disjunctures vis-à-vis different cultural contexts (Appadurai, 1990; Shohat & Stam, 1994; Shome & Hedge, 2002).

Although analyzing the themes of these foreign shows was a necessary step for understanding their appeal in the national Moroccan context and the particular textual features that might allow Moroccan viewers to relate to them, it is important to take a close look at audiences themselves to understand the nature of the connections that they forge with these foreign television dramas. Audiences are the ones conferring meanings on these texts, and they are the ones creating spaces of hybridity through various junctures and disjunctures. In the following section, I take a look at audiences' perceptions of these dramas and show that spaces of hybridity are constructed at the nexus of various influences and on various continuums that factor in space, time, cultural, and religious mores.

Junctures and Disjunctures: Hybridity through Space and Time

I like Turkish series because there are similarities and differences between us and Turkey, because it is translated into Syrian Arabic, because our histories and our traditions blend in. They have a different race, but a similar tradition and religion.
(Ahmed, interviewed in 2009)

This quote shows the highly multilayered relationships that Moroccans establish with these foreign programs. Hybridity, as Ahmed shows, becomes possible when a particular culture seems familiar enough to allow connections yet exotic enough to be perceived as different and to satisfy cultural curiosity. In this section, using interviews conducted with my respondents, I show that a mixture of similarities and differences—cultural affinity and cultural curiosity—are prerequisites for the creation of hybrid spaces

of identity, and these connections operate on many levels: spatial, temporal, cultural, and religious.

Space: Cultural Proximity and Curiosity

As Khatib (2004) shows, “space, both physical and imagined, is not only part of the identity of people, but also a dynamic tool often utilized to define the identity of nations. As Lefebvre argues, ‘space is produced by social relations, which it also reproduces, mediates, and transforms.’ Space is thus constantly in flux and carries multiple meanings” (p. 69).

Space is negotiated when Moroccans seek connections to distant others via television programming. Cultural and geographical proximity is one element that makes a show or a particular culture depicted attractive to them. Jan (2009) defines cultural proximity as the desire for cultural products as similar as possible to one’s own language, culture, history, and values. Similarly, Straubhar (1991, 2003) explains that “audiences will tend to prefer programming that is closer or has most proximity to their culture.”

All of my respondents who noted liking Arab shows from Egypt or Syria, for example, emphasized that what they liked about these shows is that they are “close to home” and, as a result, share a set of cultural values and language that make them more accessible. For example, Aicha noted, “In Morocco, we speak Arabic, so it is easier to understand the other dialects we hear in Arab TV shows.” Along the same lines Hafid stated, “To gather everyone around a show, there are Egyptian TV series because everyone can understand what they are saying.” The combination of spatial proximity and language accessibility makes the Arab shows feel close to home. In addition, as Sakr

(2007) argues, media flows are facilitated in the Arab world because approximately 20 countries share the language.

Moroccans who watch Arab shows often use them to reinforce feelings of regional pan-Arabism. For example, Sabah explains,

We watch Arab series so we can reinforce our sense of belonging. We are the ones who watch a lot of Arabic series, Syrian and stuff, to reinforce the fact that we are Arab. If we were living in the Middle East, we would not care so much, but because we're not. [...] it's a serious problem, the same as in other North African countries. Egypt is a different case; they're close to the Middle East and they have an identity of their own. They don't need to stick by somebody. There is a serious identity crisis.

It is fascinating to see that these politics of space become repatriated in television consumptions habits. Here, space both physical and imagined is a source of internal struggle as Sabah and many other Moroccans feel both close and far—familiar and estranged—to the Middle East and, as a result, try to reclaim a larger sense of pan-Arab regionalism through television drama.

Cultural proximity in and of itself is not enough for the creation of hybrid spaces of identity. There is also a longing for the other, for understanding what is afar and unfamiliar. Therefore, both cultural proximity and cultural curiosity constitute a desire for hybrid identity formation. The very reason for the immense success of Turkish shows, for example, is that they fulfill this double expectation of familiarity and exoticism. As the respondent Leila explains,

Turkey is of interest to us; at the same time, it's a Muslim country. They have brown hair just like us... It reflects a little bit the social schizophrenia here. At the same time, it's a secular country where women are emancipated, well-dressed, and they even had relationships with German men. It's between the Arab and the Western world, and it was translated in Arabic, so it is accessible to everyone. It's interesting because it's far, but at the same time, people can identify with these characters. Noor is emancipated, beautiful, and classy, and Muhannad as well. We

studied that in class at some point, isn't it called something like the law of proximity?

Again, this testimony shows that politics of space get repatriated in hybrid television viewing experiences. My respondents viewed Turkey as a midway point between the Arab and the Western worlds, culturally close enough to feel familiar yet far enough and different enough to feel exotic and different.

In the case of the U.S. shows, the proximity is obviously not geographic, but as Aicha puts it, "America is the world's most renowned country because of its politics, so we are very familiar with it." In the particular case of the U.S., its status of global cultural hegemon instills a sense of proximity in many viewers. However, it is worth noting that for some respondents, the U.S. was simply too far and too inaccessible to be appealing, and these individuals reported not watching American shows for this particular reason.

The disjunctures were too hard to overcome:

I don't watch American series. Not really. The language is too difficult for me. When I am at home, I sometimes watch the ones that have Arabic subtitles. But even subtitles are hard for me to follow [...] and people are so different there; there is no conviviality, no human contact; they are not close to their families as Moroccans are, at least from what I see on TV" (statement from Dalal).

As a whole, respondents communicated that they had to be able to relate to the culture at least a little bit to be able to connect with it in any significant way. Countries that were too geographically remote or had no specific connection with Morocco seemed to spark no interest in terms of their television programming. For example, Aicha mentioned that "they had some Korean shows here, but people did not relate at all. Their culture is too too too far from ours."

Time: A Mixture of Past, Present, and Future

In addition to space, 'time' is another major feature of globalization. Some scholars argue that time has been separated from space as individuals can now communicate with individuals in other time zones from the comfort of their living rooms. Giddens (1990), for example, coined the term "time-space distancing" to refer to this process. He explains that places become increasingly "phantasmagoric" as technologies enable communications with distant others who are not physically embedded in one space or live in different time zones. Others argue that time and space have been compressed as new media technologies have allowed us to communicate instantaneously with distant others. Harvey (1990), for example, coined the term "time-space compression" to refer to the process of places growing closer as the speed of travel and technologies make the world appear more accessible and smaller. In any case, the perception of time is not as linear today as it used to be. This translates into media texts that superimpose past, present, and future with no particular order and deconstruct chronology (e.g., a series like *Lost*).

As categories of time differentiation become displaced through the process of globalization, many media producers and audiences attempt to reclaim more traditional notions of the passing of time. The producers of *Bab Al-Hara*, for example, stick to a chronological/historical depiction of events, and the drama moves very slowly (by the end of the fifth episode, only a week has passed). As Salamandra (1998) explains, "the past serves as a golden age susceptible to generations untenable in treatments of the present. A desire for simple, politically stable setting to construct a timeless account of social life, a portrait of pristine customs and traditions" (p. 232).

In terms of timelessness, Hagg Metwali is similar to Bab Al-Hara. Despite the fact that the show is set in the contemporary time period, the show is very atemporal. It very rarely shows anything contemporary, and most of the action is set inside an apartment that could belong to any time and age, or in the medina, which could also belong to any time and age. With the exception of one scene in the first five episodes, no car is ever shown.

Historical or timeless dramas become attempts to resist globalization and cultural hybridization by claiming a past that is both ‘rooted’ and ‘atemporal.’ This emphasis on history, nostalgia, and the past allows audiences to escape the ineluctable complications of the post-modern era: dispersion in space and time. History becomes repatriated in the process of cultural hybridization as audiences reflect on who they are as they make sense of a variety of cultural influences. Moroccan viewers reported feeling a need to have a common history with some of the countries portrayed on screen as this is another way to establish cultural proximity. For example, Asmae said,

Bab Al-Hara talks about the colonization period; it focuses on human relations, for example, between a father and his son. What we have lost nowadays. We do not manage to keep what is beautiful today. We forgot about respect, love between siblings, family ties. All of that gets lost in the routine of everyday life. This show, it really tries to give a real image of the Arab world for what it used to be and what it should be today. It talks about solidarity in the Arab world, our common history.

In general, my respondents were extremely aware of the history of the region. In fact, many respondents mentioned that a major reason they liked Turkish shows is that they actually have a history with the Arab world: “I feel closer to Turkish culture because we have the same religion, etc. You know, the Turks, they were here in the Maghreb, except for Morocco actually, but we have history in common.”

However, to fully resonate with audiences, history has to work at the service of a greater cause: understanding the present or learning from the past to create a better future. Audiences were fully aware of the fact that hybridity is constituted through the repository of various historical influences, and they sought to create spaces of hybridity that were reflective of this process.

Religious Practices: Religious Fervor and Secularism

Religion also played a role in the process of cultural hybridization experienced by the audiences. Various ideas about religious fervor and practices became repatriated into their conceptions of the local and the global. The local, in addition to being associated with the past and tradition, was associated with Islam and observance of religious practices. In contrast, the global tended to be associated with secularism. Obviously, Islam takes on different meanings for different individuals in different places, and that is true even within Morocco itself. However, regardless of one's degree of religious observance and beliefs, Morocco is a Muslim majority country, and religious fervor is encouraged by the monarchy because the king is the commander of the faithful. Therefore, there is a feeling of cultural proximity associated with other Muslim-majority countries, whereas secular societies are often viewed as somewhat unfamiliar and exotic.

For Asmae, who was a big fan of series that emphasize religion, Arab series represent a chance to learn unknown facts about religion and an opportunity to provide realistic portrayals of Islam that counter a variety of Orientalist messages made popular in various media outlets:

Through Oriental series, I learn things about religion they do not teach you in books or Qu'ranic schools. For example, I learned that the prophet had a deep level of respect for women. In a series I saw, he was trying to make a woman who

had her period feel comfortable. When people talk about Islam throughout the world, they talk about blood and knives, about men who hit their wives. A Muslim man is not allowed to beat his wife. This is not an adequate picture of our culture and religion. These series are closer to who we are.

In contrast, many other respondents turned to Turkish or U.S. series to see things that were considered haram (not permissible) in Islam and, therefore, to get a glimpse of more secular lifestyles. For example, Rachid stated, “When I watch Noor with my family, there are scenes that are really at the limit of what Islam would consider permissible. When I watch them with my family, I am really uncomfortable. But I am not going to lie; I am also curious about this, and I would watch on my own too.” Rafid explained, “What I like about Desperate Housewives is that they have a lot of problems regarding love, sex, and divorce. All of these are topics that are not really allowed to be openly discussed in an Islamic culture.”

Cultural Practices: Tradition and Modernity

Interestingly, audiences tended to associate local or Arab dramas with tradition. Turkish dramas, in contrast, were portrayed as a mixture of tradition and modernity, and U.S. dramas were discussed as the quintessential example of modernity. These visions meshed with the idea that Arab shows were representing the local, past, or religion, that Turkish shows were a mid-point between the local and the West, between Islam and secularism, and an interesting contemporary spin on a past history with the Ottoman Empire, and that U.S. shows were global, secular, turned towards the future, and modern. Ahmed, for example, stated, “I like American shows more than oriental series. I see modernity, freedom, a more developed country. I see a world that is different than ours.” Similarly, Hafid stated, “Americans are more developed than us, we need to transpose

their culture here.” Rachid said, “I like Noor because they are more liberated and modern than us.”

Clearly, this response is another example of internalized Orientalism (as discussed in Chapter Four) as this vision supports the “hegemonic North American notion of modernity—as spelled out in old modernization theory and theories of development—(that) locates the non-West at the far end of an escalator rising toward the West, which is at the pinnacle of modernity in terms of capitalistic development, secularization, culture and democratic state formations” (Beck, 2002, p. 22). In general, this distinction between tradition and modernity is not useful (and is actually harmful) when discussed in binary terms and focused on the premise that everyone should strive towards modernity. It implies that individuals in the state of modernity are more enlightened than those in the state of pre-modernity (see Bamyeh, 2000). Additionally, in this particular case, it revives and strengthens several discourses of power, such as the former long-lasting influence of the Ottoman Empire in the Arab world and the U.S. politics of empire.

Scholars have shown that certain conceptions of modernity can be imported from the West. Unfortunately, this also means that in certain instances, Orientalist discourses will be imported too. In Morocco, Edwards identifies a “global flow of Orientalist discourse” (2005, p. 2), which travels from France to the U.S. to the Arab world itself. Moreover, McMurray argues that the caricatural representations of Moroccans in the Western World travel all the way to Morocco:

It might be imagined, at first, that the Disney-fication of Morocco, or the way an inauthentic copy of the local is created for consumption in the West, has no effect on Morocco. Does it really matter to Moroccans how the United States “consumes” their country? It would not-or, at least, the effects would be less if it

could be shown that such images and transformations did not travel. But they do (2001, p. 134).

It is more useful to talk about tradition and modernity in terms of cultural practice, rather than focusing on development theories. As a cultural practice, modernity and tradition are enacted by individuals themselves who have more agency in the process. Therefore, it is very important to look at particular cultural contexts to determine what is traditional and what is modern. As Niezen (2004) points out, in certain instances, the traditional can be modern too. For example, when post-colonial subjectivities resist a certain form of modernity imported from the West, they will re-appropriate older traditional practices and modernize them to assert their own personal forms of modernity. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the seemingly traditional can be modern in certain instances and that there can be two forms of modernity, one imported from the West and one reasserted by post-colonial subjectivities in a dialogical relationship with themselves and with the former oppressors. For instance, Asmae, one of my respondents, felt it was important to reaffirm Arab identity and modernity on Arab networks. She also thought that Arab nations should export television programs carrying this vision abroad to correct the flawed assumption that Arabs are supposedly ‘not modern.’

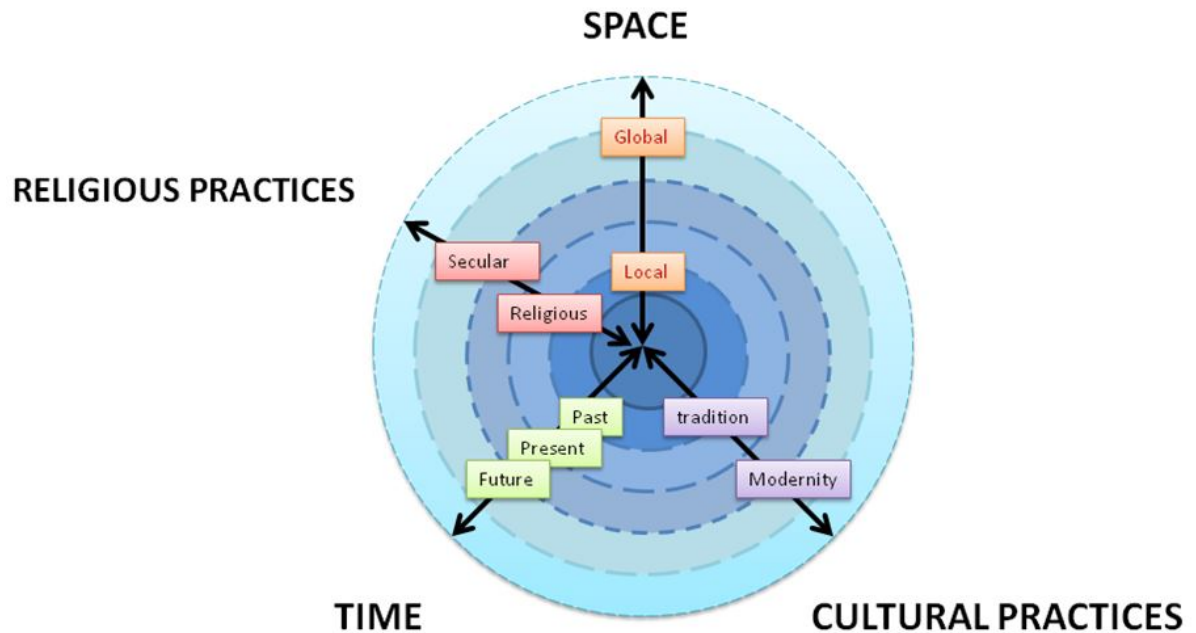
Arab media ought to fight the retrograde image of Arabs that can be found in Western media. There are Muslims, and yes, perhaps there are a few terrorists in our societies, but these are two very different things. We must make efforts to actively fight against this idea and show a ‘modern’ image of our society. We must show how respectful our religion is. We must show that men here are not violent. In fact, many of them are romantic.

In this example, Asmae shows that she is resisting oriental stereotypes and dominant ideologies spread by former colonial oppressors and by current Western hegemony. She also exhibits a willingness to engage in dialogical relationship with them

in the hope of rectifying or nullifying these stereotypes. Finally, through these processes, she is shaping her own vision of modernity. All these elements—the confusion between tradition and modernity, the coexistence of two definitions of modernity (one coming from the West and one coming from the Arab world itself), and the importation of Orientalist discourses—get inscribed within audiences’ conceptions of the local and the global and within spaces of hybridity formation.

Different ‘Hybridities’

In light of the analysis above, I hypothesize that audiences constantly negotiate these four dimensions: space, time, and cultural and religious practices. In fact, the dimensions represent continuums that they navigate, choosing to stay—more or less—rooted in their localities or local practices. Although these choices are not always conscious, they are still choices given that audiences’ relationships with texts are characterized by dialogical constructions. I contend that media audiences navigate these four continuums when they watch foreign television programming and engage in hybrid cultural processes (see Figure 11 below):

Figure 11: Continuums of Hybridity

Navigating these four continuums, media audiences are at the center of this circle. As we have seen, these various dimensions are not separated but interrelated. Similarly, the dimensions do not suggest any particular hierarchies or supposed orders of preference. Viewers choose to position themselves at different levels of these continuums when they watch foreign dramas. In actuality, that also means that different viewers will position themselves differently, with some choosing to watch a media text because of its perceived locality, emphasis on the past, or religion, for example, and others choosing to watch a media text because of its perceived emphasis on the global, secularism, and various forms of modernity. In addition, these categories are all porous and shifting from one text to the next and from one viewer to the next. For this reason, the concentric

circles are not separated by continuous lines but rather by non-continuous and porous lines that suggest the fluidity of this movement.

My data clearly reflected this phenomenon. For example, two of my male respondents engaged in a vivid debate about Bab Al-Hara right in front of me and interpreted the show along these various dimensions:

Farid: Bab Al-Hara, it's really fantastic. Syrian series reflect Arab culture.

Me: Can you specify what you mean by that specifically?

Farid: It's the man who makes decisions, and women just follow.

Zouhir: But Farid, things are no longer like this. Things have changed.

Farid: Yes, it has changed, but personally, I would like to get back to this past!

Zouhir: I wouldn't. If we were back in the past, my mom could not have started her project. She owns her own business and even takes care of my dad. She is a role model for me. I would like to be like her.

Me: If you get married, do you imagine that your wives will be working or staying at home?

Zouhir: I want to find a wife who will share her life with me. I have a good job and a good salary, but two people working is easier for material comfort.

Farid: I guess if she wants to....

In this dialogue, Farid and Zouhir are navigating both the time and the cultural practices (tradition versus modernity) continuums. For Farid, Syrian series represent a sense of the 'local' (more specifically the Arab region), and they bring back a 'past' that he wishes would return. The idea of man as a dominant figure and the woman as a follower is perceived as a 'tradition' to be maintained. In contrast, for Zouhir, the show is

an opportunity to think about gender roles that are shifting in the Moroccan, contemporary, ‘present’ context. The idea of the man as ‘dominant’ is considered too traditional, and Zouhir identifies with what he views as more ‘modern’ cultural practices, for example, his mother being able to become an entrepreneur and his wife contributing to the household’s expenses. This example goes to show that viewers will be drawn to these foreign dramas for various reasons and will establish diverse forms of hybridity along these continuums of space, time, culture, and religion.

Concluding Remarks

As I have shown in this chapter, popular foreign television dramas coming from Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S. allow Moroccan viewers to connect with distant others. Audiences are drawn to them because the themes they emphasize—class, gender, and religious disparities—are themes that are at the center of all discussions on nationhood and democracy in Morocco. Yet, they present a different and often more optimistic view of these issues than Moroccan productions because they create characters who overcome these various divides, or they provide opportunities for fruitful debate outside the frame of state-mandated television and ideologies. As a whole, these foreign dramas allow audiences to interrogate their own feelings about the nation and to create spaces of identity that include foreign imageries and ways of life. These hybrid spaces of identity redefine ideas about space, time, and cultural and religious practices in significant ways. Audiences will produce various forms of hybridity based on their desires to stay more or less rooted in their local surroundings, their degree of religious fervor, their level of interest in history or tradition and, finally, the internalized forms of

oppression and cultural imperialism that might draw them to nations wrongly perceived as more modern.

Many scholars have studied hybridization on a theoretical level and have advanced our understanding of multidirectional, transnational flows of culture in the contemporary era (Shohat & Stam, 1994; Pieterse, 2001a, 2001b; Kraidy, 2005). This chapter builds on their legacy but marries theory to practice as it uses the Moroccan example to provide an empirical, ethnographic case study of how various flows of culture (in this case television drama) compete for attention and become juxtaposed in global media contexts. The chapter reveals how audiences retrieve the textual features of global media texts as they work to find similarities and differences between the texts and their own circumstances. Using novel theoretical and empirical approaches, the chapter also shows exactly how connections operate on various globalization continuums of space, time, culture, and religion.

The lack of empirical studies of cultural hybridization that focus simultaneously on texts and audiences and on a variety of foreign influences (in this case at least five: Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S) is understandable. Such research can be daunting as one faces a large amount of interpretive data from both texts and audiences and because of the need to include the various histories of the countries discussed (at least to the extent that they are relevant to the particular context discussed). However, through this study I wish to show that spending some time and effort engaging in multilayered, multi-sited, and multiperspectival studies of cultural hybridization will in fact make a concept often described as ‘abstract’ more intelligible and concrete.

Whereas this chapter focuses on understanding the various ways in which hybridity is constructed in both media texts and audiences' perceptions, the following chapter focuses on tracing exactly 'where' audiences go mentally when they watch global television. Specifically, Chapter Six investigates how audiences in the globalization era might choose to connect with or exclude certain locations that appear on their screens. The various mental (and even in some cases physical) trajectories that audiences take are analyzed in an attempt to move beyond traditional understandings of both 'hybridity' and of 'audiences' as untraceable in the era of globalization.

CHAPTER SIX: MENTAL GEOGRAPHIES OF HYBRID AUDIENCES

Over the past two decades, it has become increasingly difficult to ‘define’ and ‘locate’ the television audience. First, globalization has turned the audience into a multitude of transnational and interconnected locales, which has made it difficult for researchers to know where to go to study audiences meaningfully. Second, the advent of new technologies has blurred the lines between the formerly distinct roles of producers and audiences and has spread viewers across a variety of media platforms. The combination of these factors has made it extremely difficult for researchers in both the audience studies and globalization scholarly fields to devise effective methodologies for studying the audience in empirical settings.

Audience scholars have written profusely about the difficulties entailed by such research and have reported that the number of contexts in which audiences operate are so boundless that it has become increasingly difficult to 1) locate audiences and to 2) study them given their dispersion both in space and across a variety of media platforms (see Ang, 1995, 1996; Hay, 2001; and Patriarche et al., 2013). Globalization scholars have experienced similar difficulties locating audiences as well as studying how the process of cultural hybridization itself redefines mental geographies and conceptions of space. Hybridity is commonly viewed as “the vertigo, the disorientation, the delirium created by a world of flows and images and screens” (Morley & Robins, 1995). Because it is often understood as the blurring of all boundaries, cultural hybridization is often viewed as an abstract concept that entails the rejection of clarity (Niezen, 2004) and consequently the impossibility of any tangible research.

Despite the fact that many scholars have criticized an overall “advance towards vagueness” in the fields of both audience studies and globalization (see Bamyeh, 2000 and Kraidy, 2005), few contemporary studies follow Kraidy’s recommendation that the “concept of hybridity must be operationalized in case studies. As an emergent phenomenon that eludes easy classification, hybridity poses a challenge to empirical research on media reception and to analyses of media texts. [...] Both empirical and textual approaches to hybridity must therefore be situated in a context whose structural elements ought to be explained” (2005, p. VIII).

In this chapter, I argue that such empirical audience research in hybrid media environments is possible, and I devise a methodology to ‘locate’ audiences and map their mental trajectories during and following global media exposure. I show that audiences might or might not develop affinities with a variety of distant others when they watch television programs from different places in the world, and that the mental connections they make can be empirically tracked.

The research presented in this chapter departs from previous audience research models, which studied how various gendered and national audiences read certain texts in particular settings. Scholars in this tradition, such as Katz and Liebes (1990), Morley (1993), and Radway (2003), to name a few, were particularly focused on ‘how’ audiences negotiated the meaning of particular media texts through “dominant-hegemonic,” “negotiated,” and “oppositional” readings. In this chapter, I am more interested in the question of ‘where’ audiences go mentally and the mental geographies they constitute for themselves as a result of global television exposure. I ask the following questions: How do people view the world through the television dramas they watch? What particular

countries and cultures end up on their mental geographies, and why? How do various attributes such as class and gender affect one's view of the world and one's mental map?

Although the focus of my research in this chapter is not on particular media texts and their interpretation but on the spatial and cultural connections that audiences form through them, I do build on these scholars' notion that audiences should be studied in their particular contexts ('radical contextualism') through the use of ethnographic methods. I also attempt to tackle a very important question these scholars asked but left unanswered, namely, how can we as researchers conduct ethnographic studies of audiences that are no longer confined to their national settings but have become mentally and physically dispersed in space through globalization flows? In this chapter, I formulate possible methodologies for undertaking this work by tracking Moroccan viewers' mental trajectories following television exposure.

Of course, I do recognize the complexity of the process of cultural hybridization and do not claim to uncover the multiplicity of ways in which media flows work on the imagination and subjectivities. Subjectivities and one's imagination cannot be put in a 'box,' as they are filled with fluctuating/reflective/conscious or unconscious processes that a researcher cannot fully encapsulate. However, I do contend that it is at least possible to track audiences' points of entry into other cultures: how they enter into contact with distant others through media usage, how they imagine these distant others to be, and whether they desire to see these mental trajectories materialize into actual physical trajectories to these locations.

As Patriarche et al. (2013) argue, "multi-method research designs are needed in order to capture the range of people's practices and meanings in relation to media and

communication technologies.” Through both quantitative and qualitative ethnographic data based on my interactions with 45 young viewers in Morocco as well as the use of new visual tools such as cartograms to represent audiences’ mental geographies on a map, I trace the mental (and potentially physical) trajectories Moroccan viewers take when they watch foreign television dramas.

My study shows that hybridity takes different forms for different viewers because they will form different affinities with the cultures they see on television based on a variety of structuring factors such as (but not limited to) language proficiency, level of education, and access to technologies, all of which are largely determined by class, gender, and various other attributes. I also show that audiences have a certain amount of power to move within and beyond these structuring factors as the advent of new technologies such as the satellite and the Internet has decreased the digital divide and empowered audiences from below with a wider variety of choices.

In this chapter, the word ‘structure’ refers to “the constraining patterns of culture and social life which lie outside of any given person” (Barker, 2008, p. 15). I do not necessarily use the word in the structuralist, post-structuralist, or Marxist sense because in this study, ‘structure’ is not viewed as an all-encompassing aspect of one’s life and decisions. Rather, structure and individual agency are seen as complementary and mutually informed, as Bourdieu has shown (1977, 1990). In other words, social structures have considerable influence on people’s behaviors and life decisions, but by the same token, people also have a certain amount of power to change the social structures they live in.

In this chapter, I also demonstrate that these structured decisions to access media from one country or the other coupled with the power of images on the imagination often translate into actual desires for physical travel or emigration. I discuss how mental or physical emigration acts as a form of ‘passive’ political resistance to local state ideologies and problems.

As a whole, the chapter breaks down how—in the particular context of television drama viewing in Morocco—audiences connect with various distant locations, forge various mental geographies, and travel to different places mentally and physically based on their interactions with media texts.

I first provide a literature review highlighting the current challenges of conducting research on both audiences and hybridization and stressing the need for empirical studies that map the mental trajectories of audiences. Then, I describe my methodology for this chapter, which includes the triangulation of various methods: quantitative, qualitative, and visual. In a third section, I show how viewers make structured choices (conscious or unconscious) to access television programming from a variety of countries, based on a variety of factors. I show how both supranational/national hegemonic processes of power (former colonial influences, regional and global cultural hegemons, national class/gender/ethnic disparities, etc.) and audiences’ own willpower to overcome them inform these choices. The data presented here allow for a more nuanced vision of the process and show that we need to move away from pessimistic perspectives focusing solely on the power relations embedded in hybridity or, alternatively, away from overly optimistic views of all audiences as empowered world citizens.

In a fourth section, I turn towards the multiple paths of mental emigration that audiences take based on what they like to watch. I show specifically the extent to which audiences feel a desire to travel to the places they see on screen, ‘where’ they want to travel, ‘how’ they imagine these places to be, for ‘how long’ they imagine themselves being in these places (a short visit, a few years, or permanently), and under what circumstances. I also show that these choices of mental emigration are often loaded politically as many viewers use these programs and their imagined locations as ways to passively escape local problems and to resist local state ideologies. Finally, I discuss the various implications of this research for both the fields of audience studies and globalization.

Literature Review

Audience Studies: From ‘Bounded’ to ‘Boundless’ Audiences

To understand how the audience came to be perceived as intangible in contemporary audience research, one needs to first take a look at the history of the field and trace how it went from viewing audiences as ‘bounded’ to viewing them as ‘boundless.’

After the World War II era, scholars had a top-down approach to the study of audiences, viewing them mostly as ‘objects’ of study, testing their particular theories, and using the audiences as a variable in their research designs. The mass media were viewed as: 1. tools for political propaganda (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1975; Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972). 2. A market-driven device to sell goods to people or to sell services to agencies (Lazarsfeld, 1941). 3. A means to reinforce social norms. Audiences were conceptualized as the passive receptacles of media messages, and scholars emphasized a

transmission view of communication (see Carey, 1989; Deetz, 1994; and Craig, 1999).

“Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?” (Lasswell, 1948, p. 37).

Research studies on audiences focused mostly on media effects, and audiences became the subjects of many experiments meant to prove that media messages had certain effects on audiences.

In the 1960s, the field slowly transitioned away from media effect theories and started to claim that the effects of the media were not direct but mediated by other communication processes such as face-to-face interactions with opinion leaders (mediation theories, see Klapper, 1960). Later, the field focused on the particular uses and gratifications audiences obtained from the media, such as emotional release, substitute companionship, or value reinforcement (see Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973).

However, the idea that gained the most traction by far within the field of audience studies is the ‘active audience’ theory, which claimed that audiences not only used the media for specific purposes but also actively interpreted everything they saw on television. In Katz’s words, “What interests us, however, is not what people take from television but what they put into it” (1996, p. 11). The focus was the activity of the audience independent of any other factors. Audiences were viewed as active decoders of media texts, and researchers were determined to understand how audiences negotiate the meanings of these texts. Researchers elaborated various typologies of audience responses, the most famous one being the distinction between “dominant-hegemonic,” “negotiated,” and “oppositional” readings of texts (see Hall, 2000; Morley, 1983) Although perceived as active, the audience was clearly viewed as an ‘object’ of research that could be dissected.

The idea of the audience as a clear and delineated laboratory for research was gradually dropped. The audiences were active, so what? What mattered more was to understand what made this activity significant, and for that, researchers had to study audiences in their particular contexts. Many scholars embarked on ethnographic audience research in localized settings. Scholars analyzed the place of television in the ‘home’ but also in various national contexts (see Lull, 1988, 1990, 1991; Silverstone, 1994; Radway, 2003). The trend called ‘radical contextualism’ emphasized that the multiple meanings produced by audiences always emerge in specific contexts (Ang, 1996). This trend was informed by the field of anthropology and directly related to wider sociocultural concerns such as globalization, which brought important questions of spatiality to the study of audiences.

Paradoxically, although ‘radical contextualism’ offered a more nuanced and suitable representation of the audiences, it also greatly complicated the task of researchers, who were overwhelmed by the infinite number of directions they could take as audiences were spread in a wide variety of contexts and media platforms. As Ang argues, “as a result, the very notion of watching TV undergoes a dispersal: what the activity is—what it entails and what it means—cannot be predetermined but depends on the influence of a plurality of interacting contexts. [...] If this is the case, however, it becomes difficult to demarcate when we are and when we are not part of the television audience” (1996, p. 249).

Not only is the audience dispersed across a variety of different contexts, but contexts are now interrelated. Through technology, one can access cultural products that would have been otherwise available only by travelling or physically crossing borders.

The various forces of globalization forced researchers to consider the cultures they investigate not as cultural wholes (Press, 1996, p. 114) but as landscapes where “multiple vernacular passages produce new spaces, across and through the institutionalized and marked/visible relations among spaces” (Hay, 1996, p. 364). In other words, the experience of watching television is changing to become a more fluid and deterritorialized process. Viewers are no longer confined to the national television product or to what a particular group of broadcasters within the nation has deemed to be of interest nationally, and to a certain extent, viewers can function as free-floating agents in the global cultural economy by engaging with certain flows of culture on their satellite TV offerings or on the Internet and by leaving others out.

In addition, it becomes even more difficult to view the audience as an object. In Ang’s words,

The audience no longer represents simply an object of study, a reality ‘out there’ constitutive of and reserved for the discipline which claims ownership of it, but has to be defined first and foremost as a discursive trope signifying the constantly shifting and radically changing heterogeneous ways in which meaning is constructed and contested in multiple everyday contexts of media use and consumption. (1995, p. 4)

To explore a wide variety of contexts and their interconnections, researchers should literally be everywhere! However, this is very difficult to achieve:

Researchers also need to be nomadic. They have to recognize, of course, that the problem of television’s power does not admit an easy solution, but they also have to admit that no solution is even conceivable without an acknowledgement of the complexity of the social and cultural relations in and through which audiences are embedded. (Silverstone, 1994, p. 133)

With such theories, the audience lost not only solid grounding in ‘space’ but also ‘substance’ as it became increasingly difficult to differentiate audiences from other players such as the creators of media texts and producers. In addition, the advent of new technologies spread audiences across a variety of different platforms. The concept of convergence best defines what is happening to audiences and producers today. Jenkins defines media convergence as “a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process” (2006, p. 18) in which audiences and producers meet half-way, and it is no longer clear who does what. Convergence means the blurring of lines between the formerly discrete roles of audiences and producers, but it also means the spread of audiences across a variety of media platforms (see Evans 2011; Krotz & Hepp 2012; Lundby 2009; Rudin 2011).

For Press (1996), in spite of the boundless nature of the audience, there are still possibilities for coherent wholes. She argues that researchers should focus on finding certain ‘closures’ in order to be able to make meaningful scholarly contributions. Even Ang (1995; 1996), one of the key figures of ‘radical contextualism,’ concedes that the field is in need of arbitrary closures. She states, “potentially, discourse is endless: the infinite semiosis of meaning. But to say anything at all in particular, you do have to stop talking... The politics of infinite dispersal is the politics of no action at all” (1987, p. 45). In other words, for audience studies to make any sense as a field, it has to start somewhere and stop somewhere. The question is, where do we find or place these arbitrary closures within the boundlessness? Ang herself has a suggestion (1995, p. 15). She recommends looking at these spatiotemporal instances when/where the social exceeds the topography of consumption, and when/where people enter into modes of

interaction that cannot be understood from their only position as media audiences.

Identifying when we are part of the audiences and when we are not is the key to understanding audiences, in her opinion. Yet, although her scholarship has the merit of pointing to the increasingly complex nature of the audience, it does not really provide methodologies for media researchers to follow this call.

One very tangible way to study audiences is to look at audiences' output and their practices, according to Bratich (2005). Audiences weave in and out of the television viewing experience, engage more or less in the production process, and are more or less connected to other distant locales, etc. Each step of the way, they leave traces of themselves on Internet forums, TV websites, and a wide range of other platforms. Using these traces as evidence, scholars can take a bottom-up approach to the study of audiences and analyze how audiences get to and from TV. As Hay argues, "considering the televisual as sociospatial problematic is therefore a way of thinking about social subjectivity that emphasizes the spatial distribution arrangement of bodies and that understand social bodies (individuals and populations) in terms of mobility and access to and from the sites where TV is located" (2001, p. 215).

Audiences are mobile. Therefore, the media researcher should approach the study of audiences from the perspective of the user's positioning and his or her potential trajectory (Richards, 2006). Similarly, given that audiences' roles shift over time, the most appropriate methodology for approaching audiences is succession mapping, which identifies audiences' behaviors at different points in time (Richards, 2006). Pinning down various viewers' positions and mapping their evolution over time will help researchers 'locate' themselves in the study of audiences. Yet although these scholars' ideas are

innovative, few researchers have followed their recommendations, and studies that devise particular methodologies to do this work of ‘mapping’ and ‘positioning’ are still scarce.

Similarly, in the field of globalization studies, researchers faced similar challenges in terms of locating their audiences or mapping shifting mental geographies in an increasingly hybrid media environment.

Hybridization: An Abstract Theoretical Concept?

Many globalization scholars think of hybridization in terms of displacement and lack of control (Niezen, 2004). They often argue that the constant transnational flow of people, technologies, capital, media content, and ideologies (Appadurai, 1996) has led to the blurring of boundaries and to the superimposition of local, national, regional, and global identities. As a result, audiences are viewed as being ‘lost in translation.’ Giddens, for example, argues that “many of us have been caught up in a universe of events we do not fully understand, and which seems in large part outside of our control” (1990, p. 2-3). In this context, it is no surprise that few globalization scholars want to embark on empirical research projects aimed at mapping out cultural hybridization processes. The concept of hybridization itself seems far too abstract.

A few scholars have challenged the notion that hybridity means the rejection of clarity and of all possible boundaries. For example, Shohat and Stam (1994), Garcia Canclini (1995), Bhabha (2004), and Kraidy (2005) argue that hybridity is a power-laden and asymmetrical process that does not exclude tangible hegemonic processes. In other words, various forms of power fight one another in specific contexts and ‘place boundaries’ around the notion of culture. In addition, these forms of power can come from outside of the nation (e.g., hegemonic forces such as former colonial powers, global

and regional media, and cultural centers, which disseminate their ideologies) or from within (the state, social elites, etc.). This view suggests that audiences do not necessarily control where the various flows of culture to which they are subjected come from, and depending on one's position in society, one's access to global media practices or hybridity itself may be limited.

Although it is important to acknowledge and identify the various hegemonic forces that impose boundaries around the concept of hybridity—by placing certain cultural influences on the map and excluding others—it is equally important to examine how much power audiences have within these constraints. How can we as researchers map the trajectories of audiences who engage in media hybridization processes if we do not even acknowledge that these audiences have at least a certain degree of leeway within/beyond the conflated boundaries that are established for them? However, in most hybridization studies, the constitutive power of audiences themselves is rarely acknowledged. Kraidy makes the most useful observation when he writes, “ultimately, the value of a theory of hybridity resides in the extent to which it emphasizes human agency” (2005, p. 151), but few scholars have investigated how human agency can manifest itself in globalization processes.

In the hybridization scholarship, the individual's role in navigating local/global processes is unclear. If this question is rarely addressed, it is mostly because the post-modern tradition insists on decentering, displacement, and lack of control (see Giddens, 1990). Similarly, the cultural hybridization scholarship that addresses these issues often views audiences as victims of these hegemonic flows of culture over which they have no control.

In the context of post-colonialism, however, choosing between wide varieties of TV offerings and contesting various meanings and representations is a way for audiences to assert a degree of power. Early literature on Orientalism tended to deprive post-colonial subjectivities of agency. In *Orientalism*, Said (1973) concentrated on dynamics of domination and overlooked dynamics of resistance. As he claims, “what I left out of *Orientalism* was that response to Western dominance which culminated in the great movement of decolonization all across the Third World [...] there was always some form of active resistance, and in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out” (1993, p. xi).

For Shohat and Stam (1994, p. 31), Conklin (1997, p. 4), and Niezen (2004, pp. 151-156), views that separated post-colonial subjects into two neatly separated categories of individuals—‘the dominant’ and the ‘dominated’—reinstated colonial boundaries that no longer existed (or at least not in the same form). It also merged all the different histories of the formerly colonized countries into one common fate. In these scholars’ opinion, these categories concealed the fact that post-colonial subjectivities have become hybrid and that processes of cultural hybridization vary from one post-colonial setting to the other (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 41-43). Nonetheless, critics of Orientalism successfully addressed these questions. Said himself acknowledges that all cultures are hybrid and that cultural hybridization is the result of dynamics of both power and resistance (1993, p. xxvi).

Today, the relationship that ties the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizers is more than simply one of opposition. It is a space of self-reference, dialogue, and contestation. Furthermore, in the era of television and globalization, post-colonial citizens have

additional dialogical interactions with other cultures, nations, and regions, etc. Post-colonial subjectivities in Morocco, for example, are in conversation with many other ‘Others’ from the wider Arab world, Turkey, the United States, etc. Audiences can exercise their power to choose between a variety of television offerings, and they can choose (consciously or unconsciously) to engage in an internal dialogue with certain cultures while leaving others out of their spectrum.

Similarly, viewers often counter even hegemonic forces that emerge within the nation itself and constrain audiences’ access to global programming. Class, educational, and digital divides still exist but are also shrinking. For example, in the case of Morocco, lower class individuals within the nation can now access the satellite in large numbers (by purchasing low-cost pirated transmitters) and can even access the Internet thanks to the proliferation of very low-cost Internet cafes. In other words, one no longer needs to be a rich businessman or a highly educated student to have a mobile cultural identity and access to different visual imagery (Ahmad, 1992; Dirlik, 1992; and Friedman, 1999). As a result, what seems to be an empowered public sphere globalized from below, has emerged in the region (Eickelman & Anderson, 2003; Hirschkind, 2006). Yet, few studies have analyzed empirically how this globalization from below articulates itself and the many hierarchies that individuals create for themselves to differentiate between (and choose from) the different locations they see on their screens. Moreover, few studies emphasize the political nature of global entertainment media, which—as we will see in this chapter—becomes evident when we notice that viewers in the region connect with distant others through the satellite as a passive form of political resistance against locally produced media that carry the dominant ideologies of authoritarian regimes.

As Beck (2002) argues, “borders are no longer predeterminate, they can be chosen (and interpreted), but simultaneously also have to be redrawn and legitimated anew” (p. 19). Thus, how can we as researchers analyze how cultural borders are drawn by audiences and constantly redrawn? Perhaps we have to think about audiences in terms of the mental trajectories they take. Sabry (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2010), for example, makes a promising attempt to redirect the discussion on audiences’ mental trajectories with his scholarship on ‘mental emigration.’

The idea that audiences mentally emigrate to other locations when they watch television programming is in and of itself not new. Appadurai (1996) has shown that media and migration have a joint effect on the work of imagination and allow individuals to picture themselves in different places. Additionally, Fiske (1978; 1987) identified escapism as one of the gratifications of mass media. He showed that audiences often watch television to mentally escape their local circumstances and to dream of distant others: “escapism [...] involves both an escape from or evasion of something and an escape to a preferred alternative.” Moreover, he asked the very important questions of “what is escaped from, why escape is necessary, and what is escaped to” (1987, p. 320). Similarly, back in the 1950s, Daniel Lerner (1958) coined the concept of “psychic mobility” and showed that consciousness itself is mobile, imbued with empathy and an ability to see oneself in other situations (even if one might be critical of his modernization theories. After all, Lerner made the outrageous claim that Third World citizens lacked this capacity for psychic mobility and empathy. This dissertation completely disproves this claim because Moroccan viewers constantly engage with the other through reflective and imaginative processes. Sabry’s more recent concept of

mental emigration is useful because it identifies these processes as being desires rooted in individuals' structure of feeling. He states that "mental emigration is a structure of feeling about the world and an active desire to be different in it [...] it is a cultural consequence of encountering in a globalized world and the product of local problems internal to Morocco (as a microcosm of Arab society), for example authoritarianism and poverty" (Sabry, 2010). His work in Morocco specifically identifies viewers' desires to be somewhere else (in this case specifically the West broadly defined) before they ever get to make an actual physical trip. His framework needs to be expanded, however, as one needs to move beyond a conception of mental emigration that is primarily turned to the West. Globalization scholarship should interrogate how multi-directional the process of mental emigration actually is, how people's specific desires to be/go somewhere else emerge through media exposure, and how people choose different directions.

There is no question that this kind of research is challenging precisely because it focuses on mental trajectories and desires deeply rooted in imaginative processes and subjectivities, which are not always easy to quantify or qualify. Perhaps this explains why the field of film tourism (see Beeton, 2005; Hudson and Ritchie, 2006; O'Connor et al., 2010; Riley et al., 1998; Roesch, 2010; Schofield, 1996; Tooke & Baker 1996; and Urry, 1990) has tackled some of the questions that both the fields of audience studies and hybridization have left to the side.

Film tourism "describes the effects that film and television productions can have on our travel decisions as they inspire people to experience the screened places firsthand. Not only is film tourism an excellent vehicle for destination marketing, it also presents new product development opportunities, such as location tours, film museums,

exhibitions and the theming of existing tourist attractions with a film connection” (Karadag, 2001, p. 2, citing Roesch, 2010). Scholars in the field of film tourism can follow audiences’ physical trajectories much more easily than audience or hybridization scholars can because in this particular case, there is a concrete audience output that is produced, an actual trip that can be quantified and measured.

In this chapter, however, I contend that we can also quantify, qualify, and even visually represent audiences’ mental trajectories and desires even before—or whether or not—they actually materialize as actual trips. This claim has implications for both the fields of audience studies and hybridization studies, which often stress the difficulty or impossibility of such research in globalized settings or study hybrid audiences from the perspective of a non-multidirectional movement (for example, focusing on binaries: the nation versus the West).

Although I experiment with new methodologies and draft some possible ways of mapping mental trajectories, I also do not claim in any way that this research is comprehensive. My hope is that this work will be re-appropriated by other researchers, perhaps contested, re-imagined, and expanded. As a researcher of media and hybridization, my wish is to see more empirical studies of the process of cultural hybridization in particular media and cultural contexts, and this chapter attempts to contribute to that effort.

Methodology

This research is based on my interactions with 45 young television viewers in the 19- to 32-year-old age range. I chose this demographic because the Moroccan population is predominantly young, with a median age of 24.7 years (CIA world fact book, 2008).

Similarly, young people stand at the nexus of various cultural influences. Their parents and grandparents root them in their local communities, whereas their peers, television, and new technologies open doors to alternative lifestyles. Therefore, they are good gateways for understanding other populations as well.

This research was conducted in 2009 and 2010 in Rabat, the administrative and economic capital of Morocco. The advantage of this major urban center is that it attracts individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds, such as people from the countryside who come to study or work in the city and urban dwellers. In addition, the social stratification of the city itself, with neighborhoods segregated by social status and income, provides access to a variety of populations.

I approached one in three people coming my way provided that they seemed to be in the appropriate age range. This method was chosen to minimize any selection biases when recruiting the study participants. The only exception to the ‘one in three’ rule was when respondents were accompanied and invited their friends to participate in the research as well. In those cases, I interviewed students in groups of two or three people maximum.

Nonetheless, although I wanted to minimize recruiting biases, I also wanted to ensure a nice distribution of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds so that my sample would be representative of the overall population in Morocco. Therefore, I used the social stratification of the city itself and explored different neighborhoods and spaces to make sure different types of viewers would be included.

For example, in Rabat, my explorations of the medina (old city center) in the middle of the day generally provided access to lower-income populations such as street

vendors or jobless young people sitting at cafes because they had nowhere else to go during the day. However, my explorations of the modern city center Agdal generally provided access to upper-middle class or upper-class respondents. My wanderings were not always conscious or calculated, but on the day I stood in front of trendy Bert's Café approaching one in three individuals entering, the population was obviously higher income; the prices for coffee were as high as European prices (a coffee was approximately 3 euros, and that is what some populations earn for an entire day of work). Finally, interviewing people in the streets adjacent to the major student residences such as Souissi I (public housing for male students) or Souissi II (public housing for female students) provided access to lower-middle or middle-class populations.

It should be noted that it was much more difficult to access the upper-class elites, who live in secluded mansions and communities and who were also, as a whole, less willing to be interviewed. This is reflected in my data as more lower- and middle-class respondents participated in my study.

For the 45 individuals I encountered, I compiled a variety of demographic, quantitative, visual, and qualitative data.

Demographic Data

Thirty-eight of my 45 respondents agreed to answer the survey, which included some questions about demographic information. I first asked my respondents to tell me their age and their ethnicity.

Next, I asked my respondents a few questions that helped me to categorize them in different socioeconomic groups (low-income, middle-class, or upper-class). As noted above, the location of the interview itself was a good indicator of class because of the

social stratification of the city of Rabat. Nonetheless, location in and of itself was not a perfect identifying factor. For example, although a large number of young socialites and upper-class students populated the streets of Agdal, the rich neighborhood of Rabat, poor Moroccans would also occasionally venture to Agdal to sell goods and services or simply to work for the rich. Similarly, the medina was full of low-income Moroccans, who were either vendors in the flea markets or unemployed youth who spent a great deal of time in the neighborhood cafes. However, the medina could also be a meeting point for middle-class Moroccans who wanted to go shopping or for rich tourists wandering around town. Because even in a highly stratified and socially segregated environment there are many exceptions to the rule, I had to be sure to consider factors other than the interview location to determine class.

I also asked participants to identify their parents' profession. This was an excellent indicator of class in the Moroccan context because one's profession indicates not only income but also one's status and connections (and in Morocco, status and connections are often inherited from one generation to the next, as there is still a strong tradition of nepotism (see Chaoui, 2013). With this information, I was immediately able to assess whether their parents held a position of social power. That element helped me to understand my respondents' upbringing, the financial resources they had while growing up, and the number of opportunities that would most likely be available to them in the future. For example, children of high-level government representatives were often categorized as upper-class; children of university professors or teachers were often categorized as middle-class; and children of craftsmen, street vendors, factory employees,

etc. were often categorized as lower-class. Again, these decisions were made in conjunction with other factors.

I also used respondents' own employment status (employed, unemployed, or student) as a measure of class. If my respondents were employed, I asked them to identify their profession. If my respondents were students, I assessed what types of schooling they were receiving, and that element also factored into my decision to categorize interviewees in one group or another. For example, young people who were attending exclusive private schools, such as French or American schools in Morocco, were more likely to be categorized as upper-class provided that their parents' profession also indicated wealth. Students in public universities were more likely to be categorized as middle-class provided that their parents were also identified as middle-class through their professions. If a student was attending a large public university but his parents were categorized as upper-class, I used the parents' profession as my primary measure because that was likely to be more indicative of their lifestyle at home. Finally, if my participants had received no schooling or had been unemployed for extended periods of time, I was very likely to categorize them as lower-income participants provided that, once again, the parents' professions reflected a certain lack of financial resources. If a respondent was a married, unemployed woman, I also asked her to specify her husband's profession and factored that into my assessment. I also asked my respondents to specify where in the city they lived, but I ended up not using this as a measure of socioeconomic status because many of my respondents were only in Rabat temporarily, either for their studies or for a short visit.

Finally, even though these last factors were not officially coded, other elements contributed to making an impression. The language of the interview itself often indicated class as well because upper-class populations in Morocco are socialized to speak English and French, either in the private schools or in the household. Middle-class populations learn French and Arabic in public school and are fluent in both languages. Lower-income populations generally receive little schooling. They are often illiterate and master only Arabic in most cases. Therefore, it is no surprise that most of my interviews in the low-income neighborhoods of Rabat were conducted in Arabic with the help of a Moroccan friend fluent in Darija, unlike my interviews with middle-class and upper-class respondents, which were conducted primarily in French or in some cases English. Similarly, the appearance and the clothing of one individual could also indicate a certain lifestyle. Many of my upper-class respondents were wearing luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Gucci or Western labels such as Mango and Zara, to name a few.

It is therefore not just one but a combination of many linked factors that helped me to determine the socioeconomic profile of my respondents. The figures below (12-16) reflect all the demographic information I have concerning my 38 survey respondents and provide an idea of who they were:

Figure 12: Age Distribution of Respondents
(n=38)

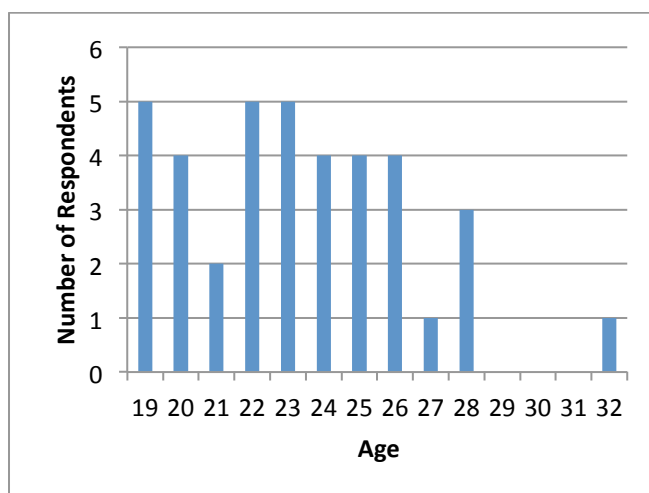


Figure 13: Ethnicity of Respondents
(n=38)

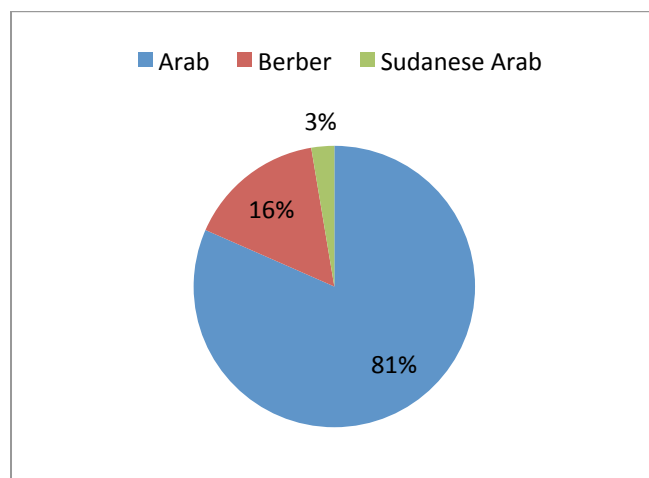


Figure 14: Gender of Respondents
(n=38)

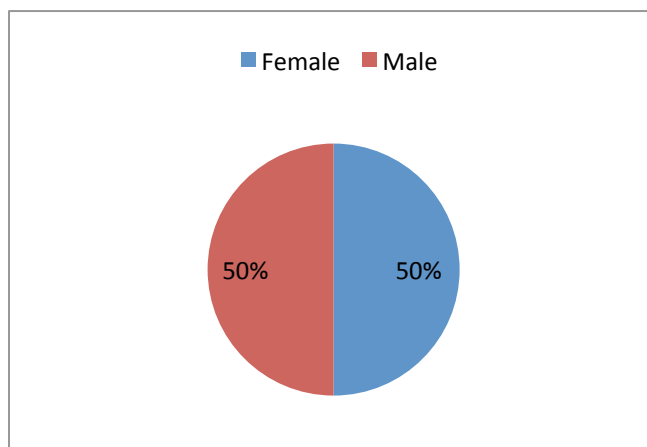


Figure 15: Employment Status of Respondents
(n=38)

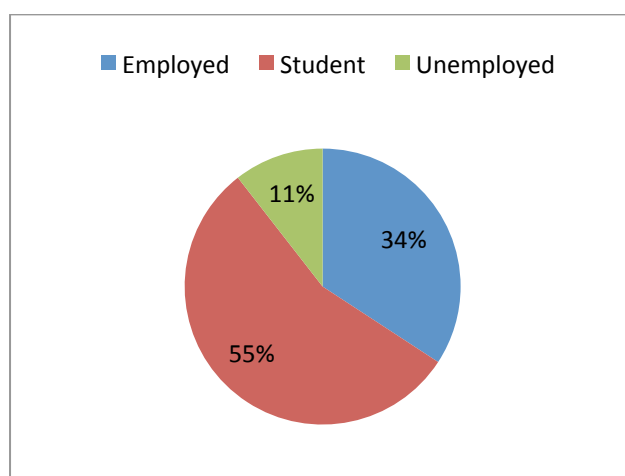
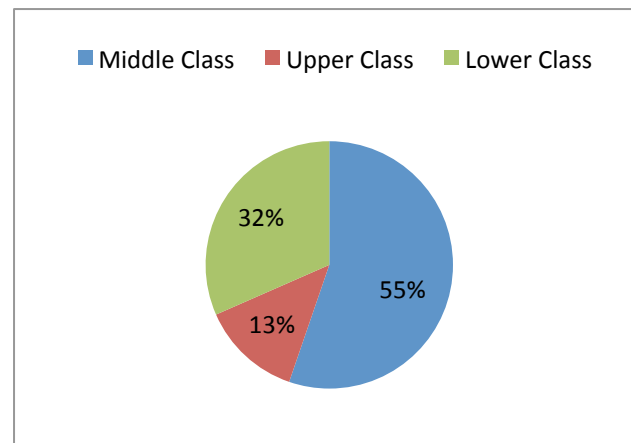


Figure 16: Socioeconomic Status of Respondents
(n=38)



Descriptive Quantitative Data

Initially, the survey that I administered to my participants was only supposed to collect basic information about who they were and to help identify the shows they liked. Included in the survey were the following two questions: 1) Name your top five favorite shows from any country. 2) Name a Moroccan/Egyptian/Syrian/Turkish show that you think was extremely popular in Morocco. These answers and the demographic information included above were supposed to be the only quantitative information included in this chapter. The bulk of the research was initially meant to be the interpretive ethnographic in-depth interviews that followed the survey.

In the interviews themselves, however, respondents provided additional information about the places that they were dreaming about or to which they had desires to travel or emigrate. As I noticed that there was often a discernible relationship between the countries of origin of the shows they reported liking and the places they were mentally emigrating to, I decided to take this information about their ‘desires for travel,’ code it, and turn it into quantitative data that I could correlate with the survey answers.

In the process, I noticed that there were often different patterns of viewership and different desires for mental and physical emigration among individuals of different class or gender, for example. In other words, certain individuals were more likely to cite programs from certain countries or were more likely to want to travel to certain places based on these structuring factors. Moreover, engagement with a particular television drama series from one country often translated into a very real desire to visit or emigrate to that country. I already had strong suspicions about this based on the interviews, but they could not have been entirely confirmed without the use of actual quantitative data.

The power of this quantitative data to show actual trends in the mental trajectories of viewers came as a surprise to me because this dissertation is first and foremost a qualitative ethnography of the process of cultural hybridization through media institutions, production, and consumption. For this particular chapter, however, the combination of the quantitative and qualitative data proved to be a more powerful research device for efficiently identifying trends in the positions of viewers.

I use the word “descriptive” to qualify my data because this is not a quantitative analysis with the purpose of making sweeping generalizations (statistical inference) about the entire Moroccan population and television consumption. My intention is not to find statistically significant relationships about Morocco or the process of cultural hybridization as a whole. Rather, I aim to identify the different mental trajectories of a certain number of viewers who consume global television dramas and to show how—in a particular context—multiple forms of hybridities and trajectories emerge at the nexus of television consumption and globalization. I also aim to show the various factors that might influence their mental geographies.

Visual Geographical Data

As mentioned, mental emigration poses a challenge to the study of audiences and hybridization in the sense that it is precisely a ‘mental’ process: a desire to imagine oneself somewhere else or a desire to be somewhere else. Representing desires is a complicated undertaking, especially desires that emerge in globalized media environments. However, there are innovative methods (used extensively in other fields such as geography or urban planning, for example) for visually representing various populations’ practices in space.

Through the use of cartography, it is possible to represent non-geographic information on a map. In this particular chapter, for example, cartography allows me to visually represent the number of people who watch certain drama series from certain countries and the number of people who desire to travel to the countries they see on screen.

Cartography is a practice that is probably almost as old as mankind and has been used by many civilizations in various contexts. Nonetheless, a newer way to represent visual information within the field of cartography itself is the use of cartograms. “Area cartograms are maps in which the sizes of geographic regions such as countries or provinces appear in proportion to their population or some other feature such as income, disease incidence, etc. (Gastner & Newman, 2004). In other words, cartograms are distorted maps that visually show the importance of certain locations over others with regards to particular phenomena the researcher is analyzing.

In that sense, cartograms are a wonderful way to represent visually which particular countries are placed on the map through media flows, the mental geographies

of audiences in a particular context, and which places of the world seem more attractive to them. In this chapter, I created a certain number of cartograms that allowed me to represent all of these audiences' practices in space.

In the contemporary field of cartography, the lingua franca of mapping and spatial analysis is the software ArcGIS. Nonetheless, although the software provides a variety of tools to create maps, it is rather complicated to use for a beginner or someone who has not received extensive training in cartographic methods (Wolf, 2005). Similarly, the software does not allow the creation of cartograms (distorted maps) because external scripts and programs are needed. A variety of newer open-source cartogram software is now available online, and these programs offer more flexibility for someone with no extensive statistical and geographical training. In this chapter, I used one of these online programs: the spatial analysis software MAPresso (Herzog, 2003).

The software allowed me to translate my data (countries of origin of shows watched by respondents and countries where they see themselves traveling or living) into spatial maps, and I was also able to produce different maps for different respondents according to various factors, such as class and gender, for example.

Qualitative Data: Semi-Structured Interviews

The qualitative data included in this chapter consists of 45 ethnographic interviews with my respondents. The interviews lasted anywhere between 30 minutes to one hour. They were semi-structured because the conversational format was much more inviting and friendly as well as less intimidating than a formal interview. I did not want to be overpowering. I wanted to give my interviewees a chance to raise other questions/issues I had not necessarily thought of, and I wanted to give them the freedom

to elaborate on what interested them. One example of this lack of structure was that outsiders would sometimes intrude in our conversations (e.g., friends of participants or interested pedestrians) and engage in vivid debates with the participants about their favorite show, the places they portray, etc. Some of my best data emerged out of these impromptu discussions, as my respondents spoke more freely when they were engaging in these conversations.

Nonetheless, I had a certain number of guiding questions that allowed me to steer the conversations in ways that would be meaningful to the study of television drama, hybridity, or mental emigration. Some of these questions were, why do you like this particular show? Can you tell me about the plot? What do you think of the country/city/place the action is set in? What makes Egyptian/Syrian/Turkish/U.S. series so popular today? What do you think of Egypt/Syria/Turkey/the U.S. (or any other place the respondent might have cited)? Are people living different lives in these places; if so, how different are they from what you know? How do you imagine your life in five years? Where would you like to be? If the respondent answered something other than Morocco, I asked, how long would you like to stay there? Do you see yourself coming back to Morocco at some point? Is there any place where you would like to take a short vacation trip and why? There were other questions that I have not included here because they are more relevant to and are discussed in Chapter Five.

For the interviews that were conducted in low-income areas of the city, I needed the help of a translator given that my knowledge of Darija is rudimentary and would not have allowed me to have full-fledged discussions with these participants. A friend who is

Moroccan but who emigrated to Europe and was visiting Morocco that summer acted as my interpreter.

Structured Choices in Hybrid Media Environments

In this section, I analyze the structuring factors that guide and possibly constrain viewers' choices when they are faced with a variety of media programs from a variety of countries. The structuring factors are either supranational (a variety of global or regional hegemonic forces shaping what content is available in the first place) or national (barriers placed on accessibility to programming for individuals of different class, gender, and ethnicity). Simultaneously, by recollecting respondents' personal biographies, I show that such constraints can also be countered.

I use the expression 'structured choices' to qualify audiences' power to navigate and choose from a variety of programs in the global era because it is a process that is informed both by power relations and by human agency. I show that, through a combination of constraints placed on their freedom and mechanisms they can put in place to counter them, viewers form multiple forms of hybridity through their media consumption.

Before we delve into the specific choices different viewers make, however, it is important to provide an overall picture of the television drama programming available to Moroccans and to explore which countries offer the most popular and least popular dramas to viewers.

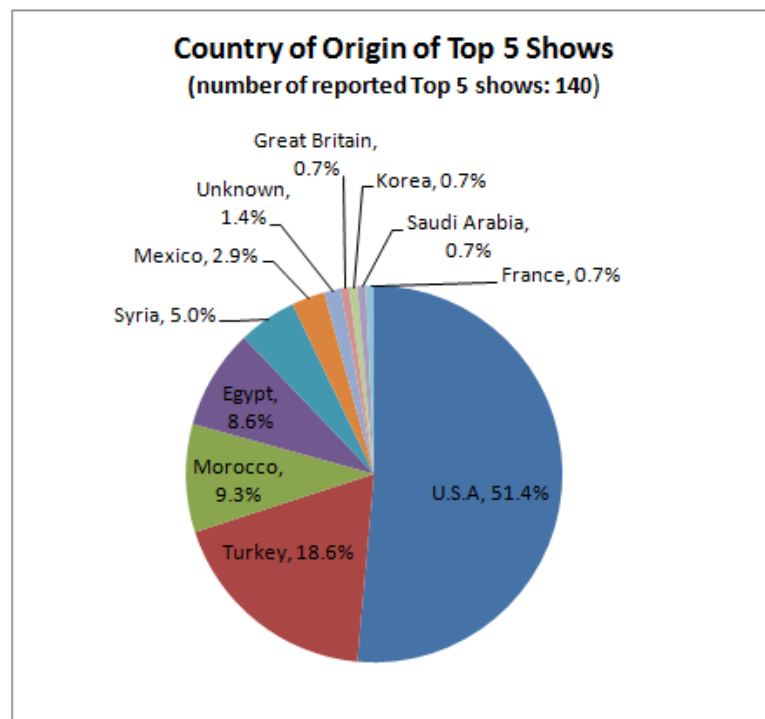
Countries on the Map

Morocco is a highly hybrid media environment in the sense that viewers can access and choose through their national and satellite networks programming coming

from a variety of countries. As demonstrated in Chapter Five (see pp. 202-216), which countries end up on the ‘mental maps’ is in large part a product of political-economic supranational forces at work in Morocco, e.g., the spread of the U.S. empire via mass media, the advent of Egypt and later Syria as regional media centers, and the more recent boom of the Turkish media industry.

Although these political-economic forces can easily account for which countries end up being part of the Moroccan television landscape, they do not tell us how viewers create hierarchies of preference within what is offered to them. The pie chart below (Figure 17) indicates the preferences of the 38 viewers that participated in my survey. These viewers mostly watch U.S. dramas, followed by Turkish, Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian, Mexican, British, French, Saudi, and Korean dramas (even though the numbers for the last four were minimal).

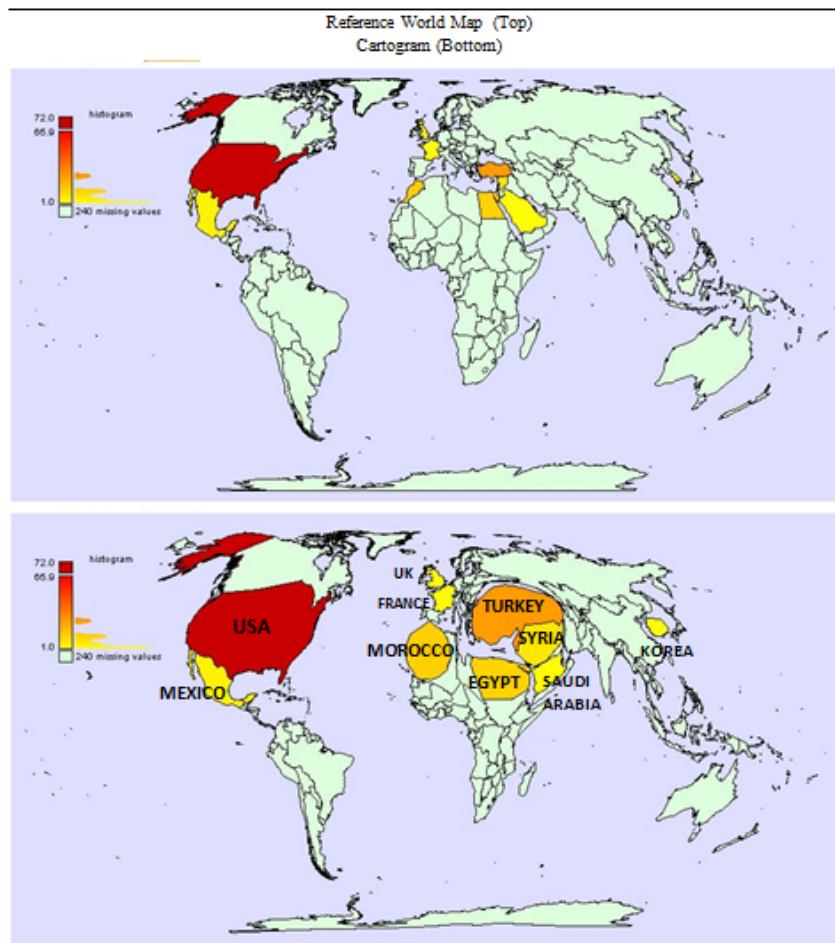
Figure 17: Country of Origin of Top Five Shows (All Respondents)



Using a cartogram, we can translate this data into spatial information. The cartogram below (Figure 18) indicates the countries of origin of the most-watched television dramas. The larger the distortion of a country, the more times a television drama from this particular country has been cited. Color also indicates popularity: the darker the color, the more popular this particular country's programming is among the respondents. Countries that are not colored or enlarged were not cited by any respondents. The first map is a reference map with no distortion to allow for comparison of the original country sizes and the distorted sizes.

The cartogram below makes it apparent that U.S. shows are the most popular among respondents and that shows from North Africa and the Middle-East (combined) are just a tad behind U.S. shows. A number of people cited Mexican, French, Korean, British, or Saudi dramas, which shows that these countries export to Morocco or have a presence on the satellite networks available to Moroccans. However, their popularity was extremely low overall.

Figure 18: Country of Origin of Top Five Shows Cartogram



Structuring Factors Shaping Particular Choices of Programming

What is fascinating is that if we use my data to make different maps for different subsections of the population, we quickly notice trends indicating that certain groups of individuals will likely be attracted to television dramas from certain countries, whereas other groups will be attracted to other countries. People of different socioeconomic classes and genders, for example, clearly had different affinities with regard to foreign programming. For each of these groups, a certain number of factors are either facilitating or blocking access to programming from certain countries.

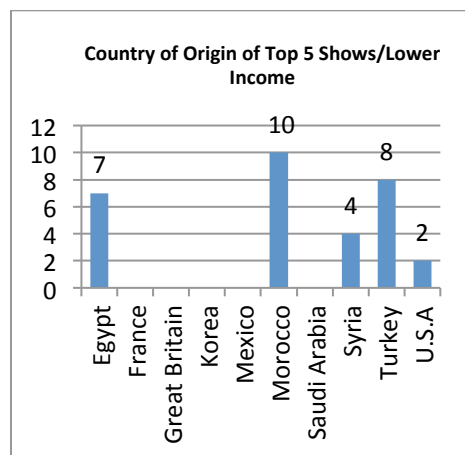
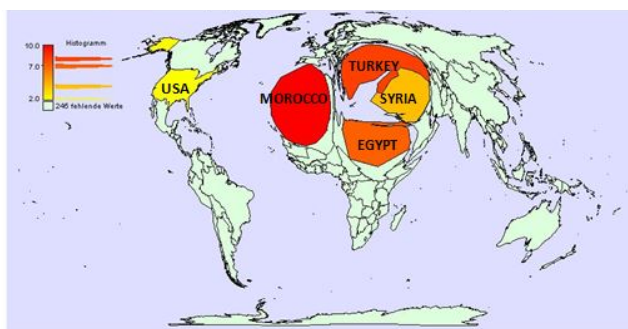
Variations across Class Lines

As shown in the series of cartograms below (Figure 19), class was a major indicator of one's preference for certain countries concerning the choice of television dramas. The higher the respondents' class status, the more likely they were to name U.S. shows in their top five drama series list. Similarly, the lower the respondents' class status, the more likely they were to name North African or Middle Eastern shows in their top five. There was an almost inverse relationship between lower-income and upper-class respondents as the former almost exclusively cited shows from the Arab world, and the latter almost exclusively cited shows from the U.S. The middle-class respondents represented a midpoint between the two other groups as they cited both Arab and U.S. shows (even if their preference clearly was for U.S. shows).

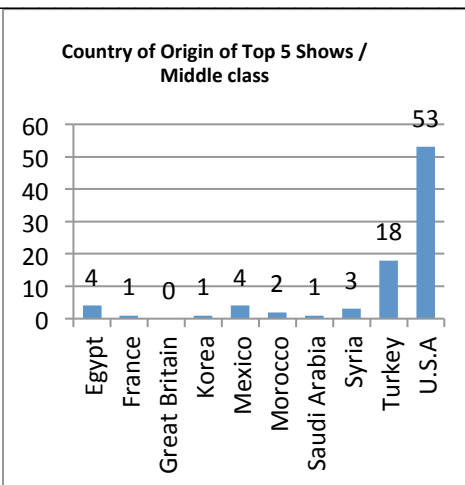
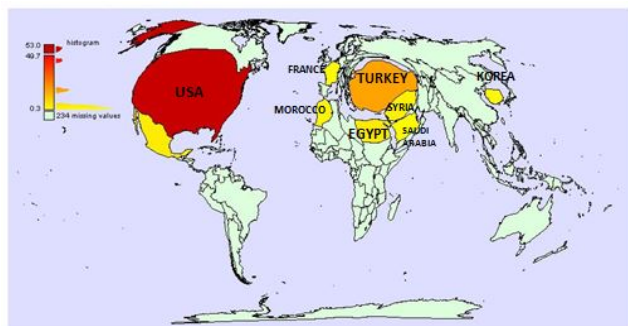
Figure 19: Countries of Origin of Top Five Shows by Socioeconomic Class

Cartograms and Corresponding Data

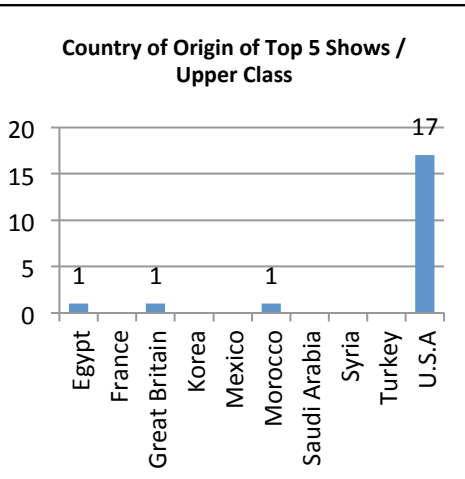
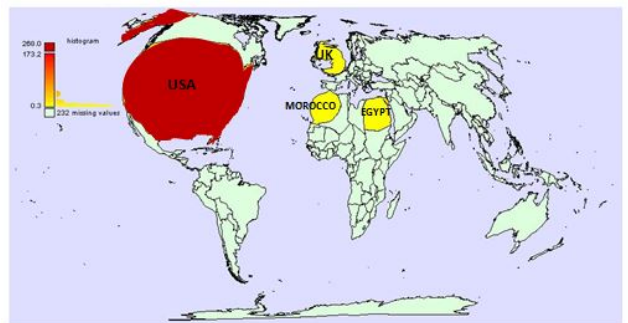
Low-income Respondents. N=12. Total citations=31



Middle-class Respondents. N=21. Total Citations=87



Upper-class Respondents. N=5. Total Citations=20



If these various populations choose shows from these different locations, it is because there are either facilitators or obstacles that steer their choices one way or the other. Lower-income respondents almost exclusively cited Arab shows because they were faced with an important language barrier when they tried to access/watch other shows. Many of them reported, “I watch Arab shows because they are the only ones I completely understand.” It should be noted that many low-income populations in Morocco often have full mastery of the local Arabic dialect (in Morocco’s case, Darija) and the Egyptian dialect that was popularized through the mass media in the region. Beyond that, the Syrian dialect is becoming extremely popular thanks to the Saudi satellite channels, which contributed to popularizing it, and many low-income populations are picking up on it.

However, many poor Moroccans do not speak a word of English or French (and most of the U.S. shows are dubbed in French). My low-income respondents often reported that it was hard to watch the American series that are shown with Arabic subtitles. Some of them said they could not read or write in Arabic, and others thought it was too challenging to try to read in Arabic while paying attention to a story at the same time. There was great interest among all of my respondents in U.S. shows, but that was usually coupled with a great deal of frustration regarding how much effort it would take for them to actually watch them. Interestingly, many of these respondents were not sure whether a series was American or French because of the confusion the dubbing caused and the lack of understanding of both languages.

Interestingly, the language barrier worked in completely opposite ways for my upper-class respondents. A little-known fact about Morocco is that there are populations

within Morocco who cannot speak the local dialect very well. The upper classes, who often try to emulate Western lifestyles, have very little exposure to their own local Arab dialect as they speak French or English from a very young age, are only socialized with people like them, and are never really exposed to the dialect. As Ahmed, one of my middle-class respondents, put it, “There are people here who do exactly what Americans do. They live just like them and forget about their own culture. There are people who can’t really speak Darija very well, so they speak a mixture of Darija, French, and English. We have a word for that here; we call that ‘the third language.’” Often, people who speak this “third language” not only have poor or mediocre mastery of the local Arab dialect but might also have limited knowledge of classical Arabic and the other Arab dialects as well. The testimony of Ikbāl, one of my upper-class respondents, reflected this phenomenon: “When I was little, we would watch Arte, the French network, with my dad. He was mostly into French documentaries or U.S. films and series. My mother could not understand Egyptian Arabic, so she would not watch any Egyptian shows. And even her knowledge of Moroccan Arabic is limited, so she does not watch too many Moroccan shows.”

In fact, the middle-class respondents were the ones who had the greatest working knowledge of the variety of Arab dialects and were also able to master French because they had learned it in school. In some cases, those respondents also spoke English. The mastery of a variety of languages gives them access to a greater variety of programs that they can understand. The data reflect this finding as the middle-class respondents were the ones who watched the most varied programming from the U.S., the Arab world, and a few other countries.

Moreover, a person's level of education and type of schooling were also extremely important in determining the kinds of shows watched because in Morocco, one's level of education ties directly to both class and language. Many of my respondents had never been schooled in their entire life or had difficult life situations that made it too challenging to stay in school to complete a degree. Therefore, they never learned to read and write in classical Arabic. They also never learned French, which is spoken in many universities. In contrast, most of my middle-class respondents had gone through public schools their entire lives and had been exposed to French one way or another during their educational careers. Finally, most of the upper-class respondents I interviewed (even though there were not many of them) had attended private and very exclusive French or American schools where they never had to read or write anything in Arabic. These diverse educational experiences led to different language acquisition skills and therefore different pathways of access to foreign television programming.

In addition to these linguistic and educational divides, the digital divide also increases the stratification of audiences across class lines. Although pretty much everyone has access to the satellite, not everyone has control over which network to choose. Access to technology remains more limited for lower-income populations than for others. For example, I noticed during my fieldwork that the richer one's household was, the more televisions or individual computers were present in the home. One of my upper-middle-class respondents, for example, explained that in her home, there were four televisions for five people (and computers as well!) and that this granted her a lot of freedom to watch what and when she wanted.

In contrast, Omar explained that he and his family all live under the same roof in a very small apartment and share one television. Because he is unemployed and does not want to be a burden to his family during the day, he goes to a café where he spends most of his time. “I cannot choose the television station there. I watch whatever is on, and usually it’s Arab programming.” Thus, once again, class or a precarious social status (such as employment) drives Omar out of his home and restricts his access to technology in significant ways, making it harder for him to access programs from the U.S.

In addition to these various factors that drive different socioeconomic groups in different directions, the themes explored in the series themselves are likely to attract particular socioeconomic groups. For example, lower-income participants liked to watch Egyptian shows because as Rachid stated, “In these shows, I see a nation with a society that is divided by class. It is the same as here; I can relate,” or as Mohammed put it, “I have Moroccan citizenship, but I do not count. In Egypt there are a lot of poor people too; I understand this culture.”

On the other end of the spectrum, it is very telling that upper-class respondents overwhelmingly stated that they liked U.S. shows. Again, the themes explored in the series themselves might help them to relate to their own elite status in Moroccan society. For example, one of my five upper-class respondents named a show like *Sex and the City*, which follows four privileged white women and features a lot of ‘haute couture’ expensive wear. Similarly, two of them cited as their favorite show *Gossip Girl*, a drama that chronicles the life of a rich Manhattan elite. For example, Ikbal told me,

Gossip Girl is my favorite show. It reflects American culture, or at least a part of it, the Upper East Side. I like the characters, their ways of speaking. It’s very ‘bourgeois’; I really like it. I try to speak like them when I speak with my friends.

Some of my friends are like them; they are sons and daughters of heads of state. I observed it's the same thing. We have pajama parties, catered housewarming parties. Some of my friends buy Louis Vuitton bags and do their shopping in Paris. We are a minority, but that is how things are for us.

In addition to class, gender was another population attribute that triggered variation in the kind of dramas accessed and watched. Once again, a certain number of structuring factors separated men and women in their media consumption and encouraged them to watch content from different parts of the world.

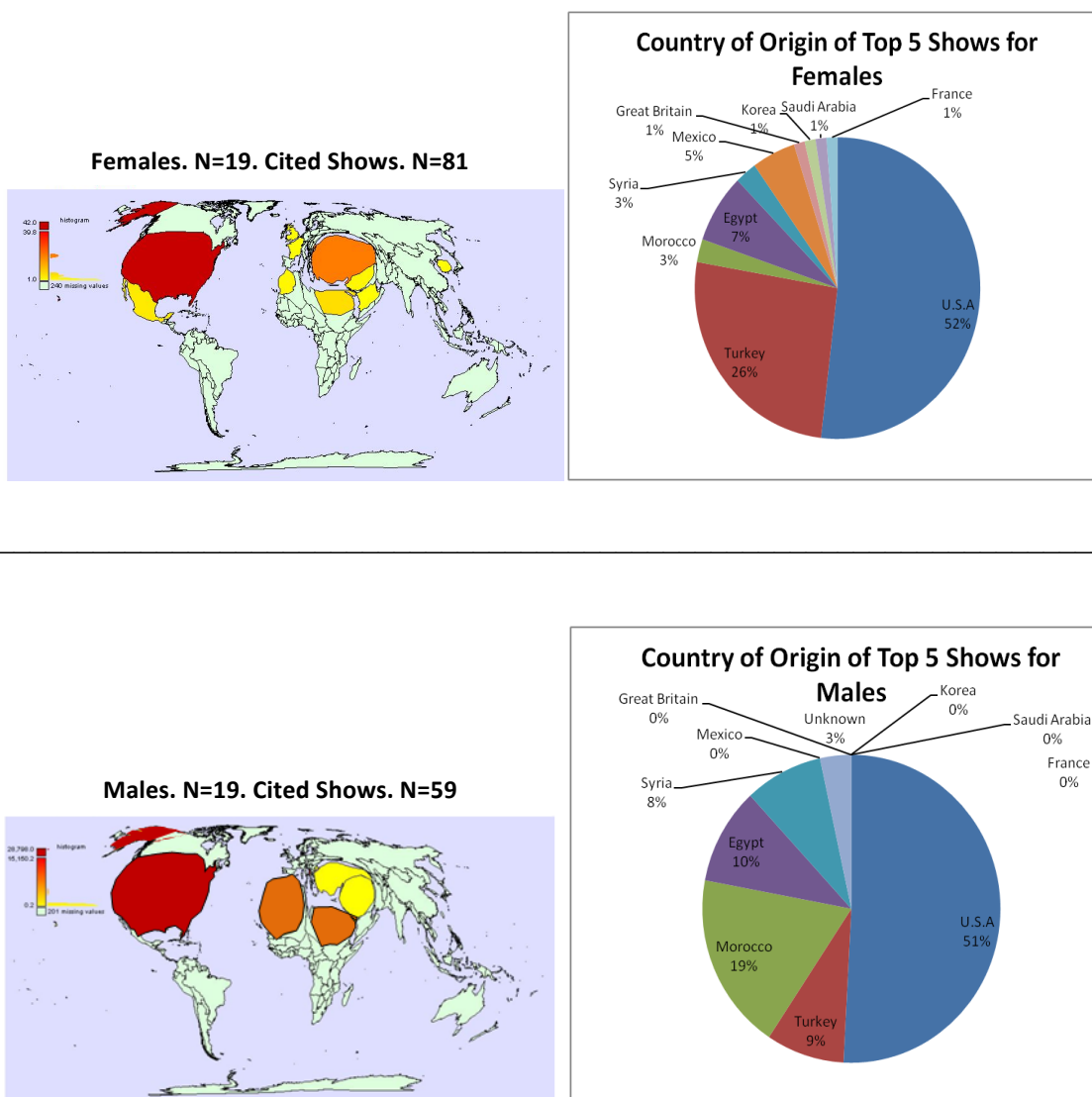
Variations across Gender Lines

As shown in the cartograms and pie charts below (Figure 20), men and women in my sample consumed television dramas coming from different countries. Even if the difference overall was not as striking as the class difference, there were clearly different trends between the two groups. Although the attraction towards U.S. shows was almost similar on both sides, males were more likely to watch Moroccan, Egyptian, or Syrian shows than their female counterparts, who preferred Turkish shows to Arab dramas.

Some of these differences are once again attributable to the themes explored in the Turkish versus the Arab shows. As discussed in Chapter Five (pp. 221-223), Turkish shows like *Noor* address women's cravings for romance or emotions and often portray men and women as equals. In contrast, Egyptian shows such as *Hagg Metwali* or Syrian shows like *Bab Al-Hara* often reinforce traditional values and gender roles that are likely to be more appealing to men than to women. In addition to this difference in themes, however, there is also a certain number of constraining, structuring factors that account for these differences between men's and women's programming choices.

Figure 20: Country of Origin of Top Five Shows by Gender

Cartograms and Corresponding Data



Again, access to education and technologies as well as mastery of languages were likely to be different for both groups. Females reported that they were more likely to remain students until they got married or found a job. There was not as much pressure for them to become breadwinners or the expectation that they would have to financially provide for their households in the future. In contrast, men were less likely to go to

college and more likely to be either employed or looking for a job. This finding was reflected in my data as 63% of the females were in school, and only 37% were employed or looking for a job. In contrast, 53% of the males were either employed or looking for a job and 47% were in school.

As a whole, women had more time than men to watch television during the day, which might partly explain why women occasionally cited some dramas from other countries like Mexico and Korea. A student's schedule allows for watching daytime television, and these shows were broadcast on the Moroccan networks during the day (not primetime). Additionally, as a whole, the women mastered more languages than their male counterparts did. Again, a combination of all of these factors contributed to this difference. The women's continued schooling provided opportunities to refine both Arabic and French, and their student schedules provided more opportunities for watching shows from different countries, which allowed them to refine other language skills in the process.

Overall, these data show that there are a variety of forces shaping the decisions that audiences make when they access foreign programming. Hegemonic cultural forces such as the spread of U.S. media and the regional Egyptian, Syrian, and even Turkish dominant centers of production place certain countries on the map and exclude others. Other forces within the nation make access to foreign programming a power-laden and unequal process in which certain populations across class or gender lines have more or less access to shows coming from certain countries, based on a variety of factors such as access to education, technologies, or languages. In other words, these structuring forces greatly affect the countries that will enter individuals' mental geographies through media

consumption. For instance, in Morocco, a lower-income man is more likely to be drawn to Moroccan or Egyptian programming for all the reasons cited above. A middle-class woman might consume a large number of shows coming from both the U.S. and the Arab world and might even be drawn to programming from other countries.

It is important to note, however, that there are far more variations between different populations than simply class or gender differences. These two variations happened to be the most obvious in the particular group of respondents that I interviewed, but one could extend the analysis to ethnicity and to a variety of other elements. Similarly, there are more structuring factors than simply access to education, technologies, or languages, but these were again the most obvious in these particular groups. This section is therefore not an exhaustive list of the variety of constraining structuring factors that steer audiences certain ways. It is, however, an empirical example of how these forces outside of audiences' control impact the directions they take when they watch television.

The Power to Choose: Personal Biographies

Although the constraining factors discussed above are undeniable and do contribute to splitting audiences across class and gender lines, it is important to note that audiences have also developed various ways of countering these factors. In other words, viewers are not prisoners of their socioeconomic status, gender, or any other attribute that may be used to define them. Disfranchised populations can and often do find their own ways to bridge the educational, linguistic, or digital divides that block their access to certain foreign programs. During my fieldwork, audiences' own power to choose within

and despite a variety of constraining factors became evident through the stories they would tell me.

With regards to the constraint of language, lower-income respondent Basma explained that she could not watch as many American series as she would like because she does not understand either English or French. Nonetheless, she explained that when she really wants to watch an American show, she sits down with the family's laptop and looks up for a translation as she is watching the show. Therefore, in this particular case, convergence—or the spread of audiences over a variety of media platforms—works to Basma's advantage. Using two technologies instead of just one (television and the Internet), Basma can piece together the meaning of a show that would have been inaccessible through only one technology.

Basma was not the only respondent who used technology to overcome the language barrier. Omar, for example, the unemployed lower-income respondent who spent most of his days at the café watching Arab shows, reported learning both English and French at another (low-cost Internet) café where he was spending the rest of his time. Therefore, at the regular café, Omar was mostly exposed to Arab programming and he could not change the channel, but at the Internet café where he was in charge, he could watch American or French films, visit American and French chat rooms, and learn both languages through these means.

The story of Omar exemplifies how one can overcome not only linguistic and technological divides but also educational divides. Nothing predestined Omar to learn both French and English and therefore to have access to and fully understand the variety

of programming coming from these countries. Omar never finished high school, as he reported:

I never finished high school. I did not know what to do after that. I tried to be a cook but the school was not the best. While I was studying they stopped conferring degrees and all of a sudden only gave certificates that had no value. I did not find any work after that; here you need piston [a French idiom meaning 'connections'] [...] The higher classes, who are rich, they study all these languages and grow up like Europeans. People with no money, can we do the same thing? I don't know, but I am definitely trying to be self-taught. I am learning all these languages in my spare time. Languages are strength, a means to get to know others. [Omar insisted that I conduct the interview in English.]

Through this testimony, it is obvious that viewers in Morocco have great power to exercise choices when navigating the various programming options available to them even if, in some cases, they have to work harder than others to make certain programs accessible to them.

What is fascinating is viewers' ability to navigate programs from various countries at different times and their potential to master a variety of technologies and languages that will give them access to these programs (and vice-versa). Rachida's story exemplifies the fluidity of this multicultural, multilinguistic, and multitechnological process:

At around 9 or 10, I used to watch Egyptian series and movies that are part of our culture. Then, I moved to telenovelas at about 10 years old. It was a boom. Everyone was watching them. I was fascinated that they were broadcast in classical Arabic. I managed to practice classical Arabic this way. At the time, I was struggling. At school, you have to write perfectly in Arabic. When you watch romances on TV, they use beautiful expressions, and I picked up classical Arabic from there. At 14 or 15 years old, I started watching telenovelas in French. I was watching the Brazilian and Mexican series dubbed in French because they were more subtle than the ones dubbed in classical Arabic. I moved from Arabic to French and later to English. Series like *Felicity*, *The Chameleon*, *Nikita*, or *Providence* started to come out. You develop your imagination through various phases, frames. After this period, I transitioned to the Internet; it was a natural transition. You watch all these shows and you want more information about them.

I got to surf for information. After I started college education, I did more elaborate searches. Talking to you, it's the first time I look back at everything I ever watched in this way. I am the youngest in my family. You're given some attention, but most of the time, you feel alone and you feel your older siblings are given more attention. All the emotions you do not invest in the circle of your family, you can channel them into television.

Rachida's testimony proves that some of the constraints discussed earlier can be not only countered but also turned into advantages by viewers who choose to invest time and effort into the television-viewing experience. In Rachida's case, the languages that could have been a barrier to her understanding of certain programs were learned through the process of watching these very programs. Like many other viewers, Rachida easily swims through waves of foreign media content and through a variety of media platforms that she uses to better control her viewing experience.

Rachida's testimony also shows that choosing between programs from various countries means much more than flipping through a variety of national or satellite networks or downloading a show on the Internet. In fact, these structured choices are repatriated into the very process of identity construction. When identity is formed at the nexus of various cultural influences, it becomes hybrid, inevitably imbued with imagery from distant others seen on television. This hybridity leads viewers to imagine what their lives would be somewhere else, and mental emigration becomes an integral part of the process of hybrid identity construction.

Multiple Hybridities: Multiple Paths of Mental Emigration

As Sabry (2005a) argues, mental emigration is a structure of feeling about the world and an active desire to be different in it. Foreign television dramas provide Moroccan audiences with an opportunity to do just that: mentally emigrate as the shows

they watch transport them to different locations and present them with alternative lifestyles. Most of the viewers I interviewed were engaging in deep reflective processes that involved watching a show set somewhere else, expressing a desire to live like the characters depicted in that show, and eventually interrogating their own lives.

For example, for Houda, a fan of Noor, the series not only triggered/reactivated a desire to change her own life but also ignited a desire to physically travel to Turkey:

They do things we would never think of doing in terms of sacrificing for who they love. They are rich, so they can dare to live their lives. I would like to be like them. My boyfriend and I, we love each other and we would like to run away, but our parents won't let us. My family is strict and our choices and our opinions do not count. I feel close to Turkish culture. It's my dream. I would like to see how people live in that country.

Similarly, as Rachida recollected a time in her life when she was watching an American show called *Felicity*, she said,

Felicity felt very authentic to me. I was identifying with her. I had just started my college experience and this show is about college, in New York. And it was a very realistic romance. Her love interest liked her but he liked another girl more. You could see what happened to both of their families, their pals. This show left such a lasting impression on me that I wanted to see for myself what the experience of college in America would be compared to my experience here. I was like wow! This is my next destination.

Although mental emigration might not always lead to desires to travel, my respondents often took that extra step and wanted to visit the place where their favorite show was set. In my questions, I simply asked them whether they imagined themselves living in Morocco or elsewhere, and if the answer was "elsewhere," I asked where they wanted to go and for how long. The respondents talked about their desires, which varied from wanting to stay in Morocco, visiting a foreign country as a tourist, living abroad for a few years, to permanently emigrating. I therefore used these four categories to code

their answers and to categorize mental emigration in these four different ways. The first two categories, ‘staying in Morocco’ and ‘being a tourist,’ were eventually merged because they were not self-exclusive, and most people who wanted to stay still desired to take tourist trips. Except for two respondents who did not express wishes to travel and did not cite the name of any country that they would like to visit, every other respondent was engaging in some form of mental emigration even if that meant just having the desire to visit a country for a short amount of time and returning to Morocco afterwards.

In addition to these four dimensions, I also looked at the motivations behind mental emigration, ranging from dreams of a better life, escape from the Moroccan local context, wishes to advance one’s studies or career by going abroad, or film tourism (the desire to physically visit the television sets and location of their favorite show). I also assessed the likelihood of their ability to make the trip they desired, based on their testimonies, their socioeconomic background, and their financial means.

In other words, in this study mental emigration means everything that precedes a trip to a location that seems appealing to the viewer, whether or not this trip can and will materialize. Mental emigration can be imagining oneself somewhere else in the world or actually dreaming of emigrating there. It can also be making plans to take a short trip somewhere.

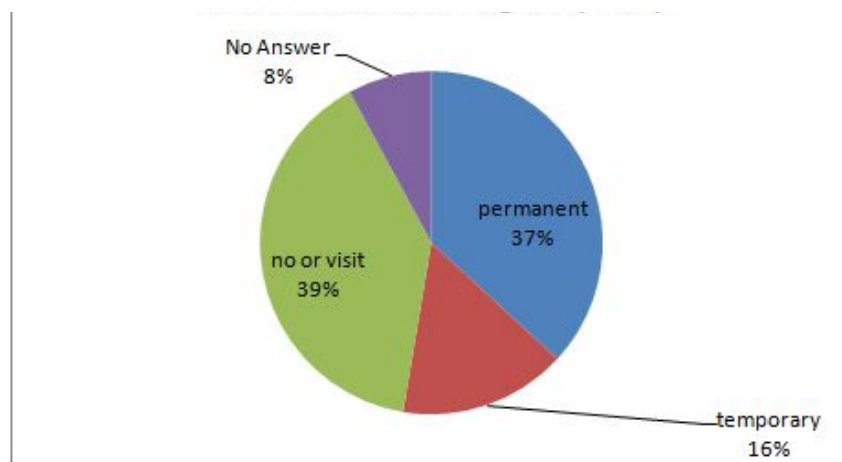
Of course, it is important to stress that because mental emigration is a deeply reflective process that emerges within one’s own subjectivity, there is not always a direct effect between foreign programs and desires to travel, and we cannot claim that after engaging with a foreign drama, one will inevitably want to physically emigrate. Rather, these desires are mediated by a variety of other factors. They emerge when viewers’

imaginations take them to the places they see represented on television and when their own life situations are marked by a certain number of growing dissatisfactions specific to each individual. They also emerge when the other places and stories on screen seem to present solutions to the local problems experienced by the viewer, as seen in Chapter Five. Nonetheless, the data I collected show that the media's power over the imagination is undeniable: television has the power to transport individuals mentally and even physically.

Mental Emigration and Desires for Physical Emigration

As a whole, the group of viewers I interviewed was really keen on travelling outside of Morocco. As shown in the pie chart below (Figure 21), 37% of my respondents wanted to leave Morocco for good and permanently emigrate somewhere else. In addition, 16% of my respondents wanted to live abroad for a certain number of years and later return to Morocco, and 39% wanted to spend their lives in Morocco, with most of these respondents wanting to take occasional tourist trips to other locations. The remaining 8% did not provide information about their desired places of travel.

Figure 21: Desire to Travel or Emigrate
(n=38)



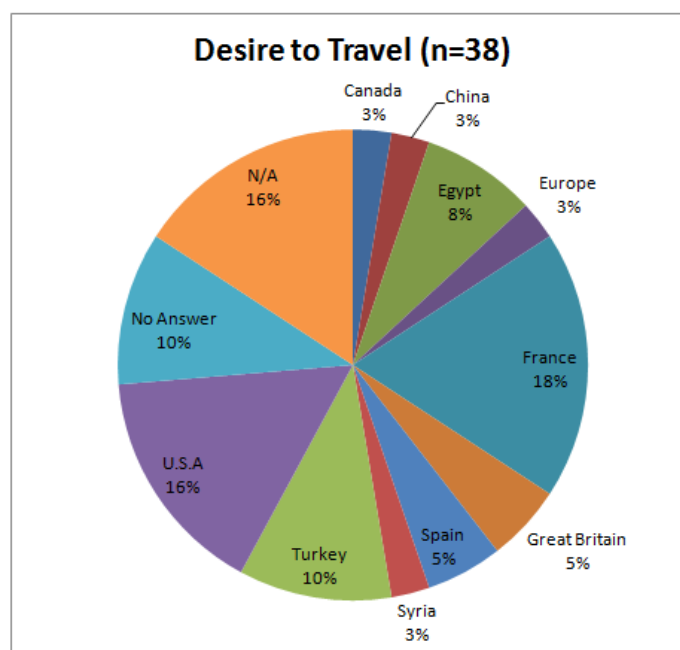
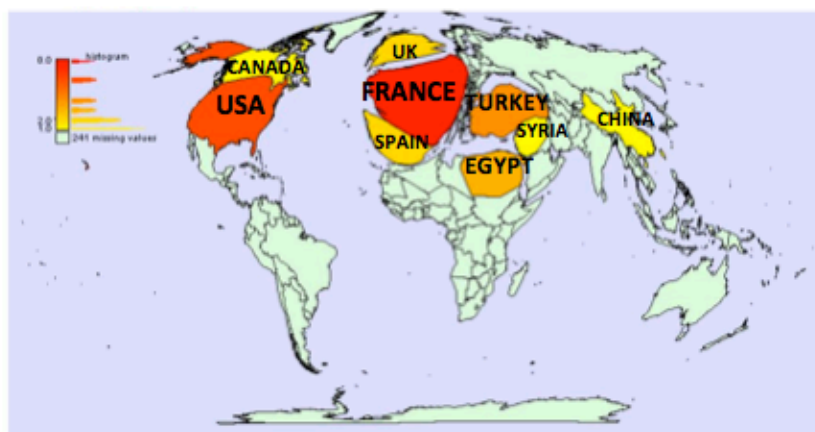
My respondents cited many reasons to explain why they wanted to leave Morocco for a consequential period of time. If 53% of my respondents either wanted to permanently emigrate or to live abroad for a few years, it was because they had 1) dissatisfactions with class, gender, and religious divides stalling democratization efforts or with the authoritative regime itself; 2) desires to find better life conditions in other places that present alternative lifestyles; 3) in certain cases, desires to advance one's education or one's professional career by studying or taking a job in the Western world; 4) desires to explore the places they engaged with for consequential periods of time every week through their favorite dramas. As for the 39% who wanted to remain in Morocco and take occasional tourist trips to various locations, the desire to stay connected to one's roots and family was often cited as a reason to stay.

Although television was one of the multiple factors spurring desires to leave, its power to ignite desires for emigration is clear given that 12 of my 38 survey respondents reported wanting to travel to the very same location their favorite show was from and gave the particular show itself as a reason why they wanted to go to that place. Similarly, a cartogram and pie chart showing where my respondents wanted to travel the most (see Figure 22 below) reveal that three foreign countries that are highly represented in the Moroccan media landscape, Egypt, Turkey, and the U.S., were also destinations of choice for many of my respondents. (Note that in this and some of the following pie charts, N/A means "non applicable" and reflects the fact that respondents were not in a position to answer the question. For example, if a respondent did not express a desire to go abroad, he would not be asked what countries he would like to visit. On the other hand, No

Answer means that the respondent could have answered the question, but skipped it (purposely or not).

Figure 22: Places Where Respondents Most Wanted to Travel

Cartogram and Corresponding Data



However, it is interesting to note that because these data take into consideration desires for emigration as a whole (not only desires for emigration that were triggered by television exposure), other factors played into their desires to travel to certain places.

France became the top destination of choice for my respondents despite the lack of French dramas present in the Moroccan landscape. In this case, it is not necessarily television that triggered a desire to leave for France, but respondents' familiarity with the former colonial power, their mastery of French as a language, and their knowledge of family members or friends who have already emigrated to France. All these elements contributed to making them feel that a network would be in place for them to adapt easily to French life.

Overall, however, there was definitely a relationship between the countries of origin of programming watched and the places where people wanted to emigrate. The table below (Table 1) shows that people who mostly watched programming from the Arab world wanted to travel to the Arab world, and people who mostly watched programming from Western countries wanted to travel/emigrate to a Western country.

Table 1: Region of Origin of favorite TV Shows and Desired Region of Travel

Desired Place of Travel	Shows from Middle East and North Africa	Shows from Western Countries	Total
Middle East and North Africa	8	0	8
Western Country	5	14	19
Other	0	1	1

Additionally, it is fascinating that in the same way that individuals' programming choices operated along class lines, both the types of travel one wanted to engage in

(permanent, temporary, tourist, or non-existent) and the destinations one had in mind also depended on class to a large extent.

Class and the Multiple Paths of Mental Emigration

There was a great deal of variation from one individual to the next regarding the places that they were engaging through multiple mental emigration practices. Indeed, social class was a major element in determining where one imagined oneself or intended to travel or emigrate in the near or distant future. Lower-income respondents were more likely to want to travel to the Middle East (Egypt and Turkey). Middle-class respondents were mostly interested in the Western world (France or the U.S.), whereas a few were drawn to Turkey or Syria, showing once again a broader dispersion across both the Western and Arab worlds for this group. Interestingly, my small group of upper-class respondents all wanted to travel to different countries in the West (not only the U.S. but also Canada, Great Britain, and France).

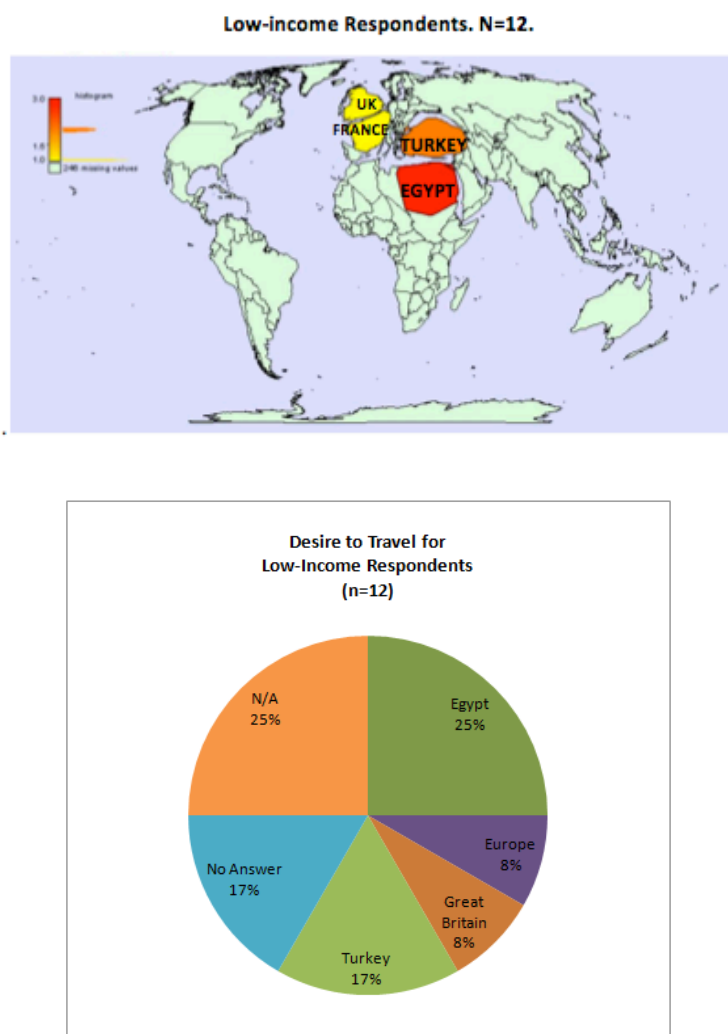
Even if there are small differences among the countries these various groups were drawn to in terms of media programming and the countries where they most wanted to emigrate, the trend overall was very similar: the higher the socioeconomic status of a respondent was, the higher the likelihood he or she wanted to emigrate to the West. Once again, middle-class respondents were more likely to have more varied answers that spanned both the Western and the Arab worlds. In other words, both the locations and meanings of mental emigration varied greatly from one group to the next.

Lower-Income Respondents:

Dreams of Permanent Emigration to Other Countries in the Arab world

Figure 23: Desired Places of Travel for Low-Income Respondents

Cartogram and Corresponding Data



For lower-income respondents, leaving the country was a dream. They had never travelled outside of Morocco, and they longed to discover the places they were connecting with through television drama. They also first and foremost wanted to escape the hardships they experienced on a day-to-day basis as marginalized populations in Morocco. Lower-income respondents seemed to want to leave with the greatest sense of urgency and for the longest time. Often, they wanted to permanently emigrate to a

different country in the Middle East, such as Egypt or Turkey. Yet, they were also clearly unable to leave because they lacked the funds to do so. Mohammed, who wanted to live permanently in Egypt, claimed:

If there was one place I could go in this world, it would be Egypt! I like the language, the culture, the films. I got accustomed to their dialect by watching films and series. I love their historical places. I am not happy here anyway. I think I would be so happy there.” I asked, “When would you like to leave for Egypt?” “Really, as soon as possible! Tomorrow if I could.” Me: “Are you going to try to go?” “I do not have enough money to go to Egypt now.”

For most of the low-income respondents, mental emigration was a deeply political process that included rejecting the national politics of social exclusion that they were experiencing. For Mohammed, “adopting” Egypt meant rejecting Morocco and its authoritative regime; it also meant formulating a criticism of what is wrong in terms of class politics in the nation: “The people who are in power here are evil. They are ruling the country with the idea that the strongest person should be the one who wins. I think that things are different in Egypt because they have a republic and a president. Morocco is a monarchy.” When the friend who helped me to translate Mohammed’s interview asked, “You say that, but Hosni Mubarak rules as if he was a king, and he will have his son take over. Why would you want to go to Egypt knowing it’s the same system and that power is also hereditary?” Mohammed’s answer showed how much he needed to believe that the grass was greener in Egypt despite all these elements pointing to the contrary: “As I said, I have Moroccan citizenship, but I do not count. I work a lot, and I don’t earn enough. In Egypt, there are a lot of poor people, but I understand from the films and series I watch that everyone is equally poor. It is a more equal society.” For many respondents, mental emigration was not only a point of reference and a channel for

criticizing Morocco's internal politics; it was also a much-needed device for them to be able to dream—no matter how unrealistic these dreams were—that they would be able to escape their difficult situation by going somewhere else one day.

Ironically, while being a form of political resistance for these disfranchised populations, mental emigration also undermined any possibility of actual political action. It is a passive form of resistance in which a variety of viewers' complaints against the authoritative state, the local programming, or the ideologies perpetuating class, gender, and religious divides become re-routed and erased as their imagination takes them somewhere else. With their minds in other places, viewers no longer need to face or address their local concerns.

Ibrahim, one of the few Berber respondents I interviewed, also felt marginalized by the authoritative regime on the basis of his ethnicity, and his analysis of the process of mental emigration as a politics of illusion still resonates with me:

There are plenty of problems regarding democracy, illiteracy, and authorities, and television executives want to deviate the attention of people who are marginalized and put it on series that address silly topics. So that they don't think about their problems, so that they do not complain [...] it's a rhetoric to draw Moroccans into politics of illusion.

This is not to say that there are no young people working on the ground and engaged in a variety of meaningful political actions. For example, two of my female respondents were organizers who were in charge of a student movement aimed at protesting against unemployment and the lack of opportunities for youth. However, they were protesting against an 'issue' in particular, not against the regime or the structural inequalities that precipitated the high unemployment rate in the first place. Although this is a good first step, the Arab Uprisings have shown that a combination of criticism

against the authoritative state coupled with denunciation of various social problems (including unemployment) is more likely to resonate with various populations and to trigger massive mobilization. Overall, however, most of my respondents were engaging in reflective processes through the dramas that they were watching rather than in any form of political action on the ground.

It is undeniably difficult to be politically active in the Moroccan context, as one always has to strike the right balance between advancing a cause and not going too far to the point of making powerful enemies. As much as censorship was at work for the filmmakers (as shown in Chapter Four), it was also definitely present in laypeople's lives in different ways. Pressure to be politically correct is quite strong in Morocco, as the government cultivates a culture of fear. It is quite unpredictable how and when the government will strike and enforce censorship, but there have been instances of direct censorship and disproportionate punishment for very minor offenses that would fall under the umbrella of freedom of speech in any other context. These examples of censorship remain on people's minds and keep them in check.

For example, one of my respondents took me to the side and whispered, "we really have to watch what we say all the time. Did you hear the story about the young 18-year-old boy who was sent to prison because he made a joke? He amusingly removed the name of the King from the national Motto "God, Nation, and the King" and replaced it by the name of his favorite soccer team "God, the Nation, and the Barca." The King was offended; he was found guilty and sentenced to prison. You never know who is hearing what you are saying and what the fallout may be." Even if in this particular example the prison sentence itself was eventually suspended, his story remained on everyone's mind

and reminded everyone that criticizing the King or the royal family is punishable by up to five years of prison in Morocco.

In the context of my interviews, this translated into self-censorship in many instances. Although this was rare, a couple of individuals I approached refused categorically to speak with me. One young man told me that he was applying for a position with the government and felt it was safer to not participate in interviews of any kind. The other one already was in a government job and said that he would rather not participate because he would not want his employer to find out that he was talking to anyone.

In addition to self-censorship, peer pressure is regularly the other ‘enforcer’ of censorship at the level of the population. For example, one of my low-income respondents was highly critical of Morocco and its government. He even used very strong language such as, “This country and those who control it are rotten!” A friend of his, who was passing by, gave him a friendly warning: “I would be careful what you say if I were you. Don’t you see that military guy behind you? He could hear you.” He answered, “When you have nothing, you have nothing to lose, so I’ll say what I want to say.”

Another example of this peer pressure occurred one afternoon when I went to a low-income neighborhood to recruit and interview low-income participants. My friend who regularly acted as my interpreter during interviews conducted in Darija was a Moroccan-born expatriate living in Europe and was visiting for a short period of time. As such, she did not feel the pressure to conform to any particular rule of political correctness in the Moroccan context. However, one day she could not come with me, and another lady who was from Morocco (and living in Morocco) kindly offered to act as my

interpreter for the afternoon. For a reason I could not understand at the time, all the interviews on that day did not seem to progress smoothly. Respondents seemed hesitant to share, and they would never go into details about anything. When I returned home and had these interviews fully translated, I realized that the interpreter herself was discouraging people from speaking with me! A transcript of my discussion with Basma, as mediated (and interrupted) by that interpreter, shows the extent to which peer pressure works to prevent discussions of any political topic:

Me: What is your favorite television show?

Basma: I like Hilmiyya Nights (Added: Dreamy Nights), the Egyptian show.

Me: Why do you like that show?

Basma: I like it because it shows the real life of the population, and it's political! There's everything in it: tragedy, politics, and a great deal of contentious topics.

Interpreter interrupts and speaks directly to Basma in Arabic:

Interpreter: Don't talk about politics!

Basma: But this is the reason why I like the show!

Interpreter: Why don't you talk about the comedic aspect of this show instead?

Basma: Well, there is really no comedy whatsoever in this show.

Interpreter: With a little imagination, anything can be seen in a positive light!

Basma: Why don't you just translate what I have to say? I really want to talk about the political aspect of this show. It really speaks to me and reminds me of what people experience here.

Interpreter: Well, I can't stay anyway. I gotta go. I need to go grocery shopping and cook.

This exchange is symptomatic of three phenomena. First, it shows the extent to which lower-income participants were willing to talk about politics in relation to TV drama, even though they were also using the dramas to dream or escape from their local surroundings. Despite the peer pressure, they were willing to be truthful about their television experience and about how foreign dramas helped them to be critical of the local politics of exclusion.

Second, it shows that this peer pressure and censorship does often work to stop such political discussions (for instance, I will never know what Basma thought was political in *Hilmiyya Nights*). If this phenomenon happens on a larger scale, it means that pedestrians in the street, friends, neighbors, or anyone really can act as a guardian of political correctness and halt the forming of collective political consciousness. If marginalized populations in Morocco are allowed to transfer their political subjectivities onto television drama and to engage in reflective processes this way, they are also not really ‘allowed’ to make public statements about it.

Third, there is a class dimension to this peer pressure and censorship. Middle-class populations are often the enforcers of political correctness because they have far more to lose than the poor Moroccans who are already at the bottom of the social ladder. In the exchange between Basma and the interpreter, this class tension was also at play as the interpreter was a middle-class married woman who had a clear, established status in Moroccan society, and Basma herself was a young lady struggling to make ends meet with no husband to support her and parents who were struggling as much as she was. In all likelihood, the interpreter did not want to risk talking about politics because she thought it could get her in trouble. In contrast, Basma probably thought that she did not

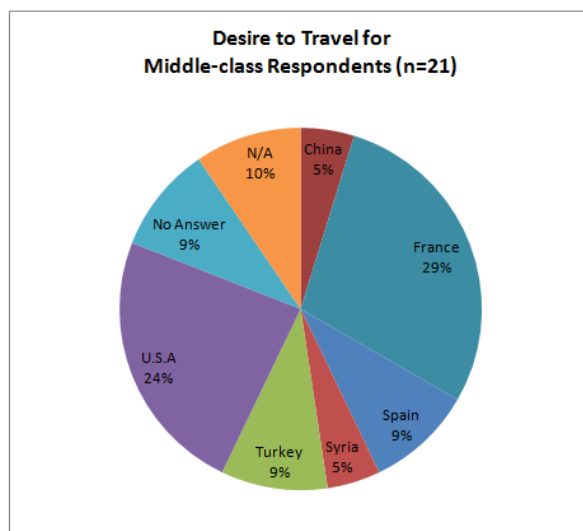
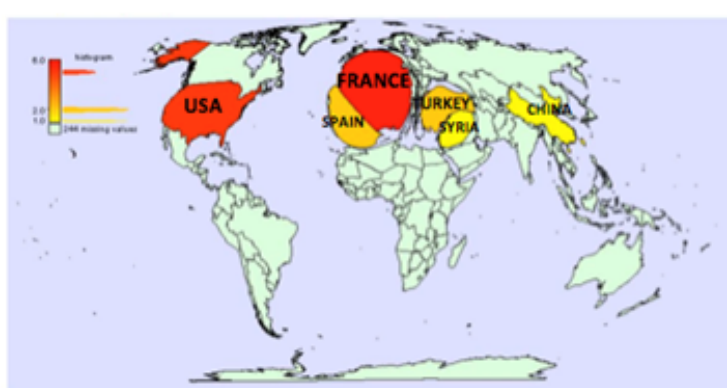
have much to lose. As will be shown below, the mental emigration processes of middle-class participants were indeed much more apolitical than those of the lower-income participants.

Middle-Class Respondents: Pragmatic Temporary Emigrants to France or Tourists

Figure 24: Desired Places of Travel for Middle-Class Respondents

Cartogram and Corresponding Data

Middle-class Respondents. N=21.



In contrast, middle-class respondents were less political about their television experience and more pragmatic about their wishes to emigrate. As a whole, they saw themselves as being rooted in Morocco (many of them told me, “I will die in Morocco”).

Nonetheless, many of them considered the option of leaving for a few years to advance their studies and careers, or alternatively, they were content with the idea of taking short tourist trips to various locations.

When I met Anas and Abdel, two middle-class students, they had just failed the entrance exams for the French *école préparatoire*, which were held in Morocco (the *école préparatoire* is a preparatory school in France that trains students to integrate into the most elitist French schools, the *grandes écoles*). They were determined to take the exams again the following year. Abdel told me, “If I leave Morocco, it will only be temporary. I will go for a few years and come back.” Despite their relentless efforts to emigrate to France for their studies, they were highly aware of the fact that being an emigrant abroad is not an easy position. For example, Anas had already spent three weeks in Paris and was critical of life in France:

People are not helping one another over there. They work during the week, go away for the weekend, and it starts all over again. The other emigrants who come back from France say that it is paradise and that it is easy to make money, but I went to France, and I noticed that it is not true at all. You have to work hard in France not even to get any kind of prestige but just to be able to make ends meet. And it is even worse for immigrants.

This heightened consciousness of the real hardships that await anyone who would live as part of a minority in France made the prospect of living in France forever less appealing, and that is why many only wanted to go temporarily. Similarly, Anas and Abdel as well as the majority of the middle-class respondents I interviewed were highly critical of the lower-income population that they saw as being ‘reckless desperate dreamers’ who would do anything just to leave the country. Abdel, for example, said,

Many poor people try to leave for Spain illegally. They go there because they can get on a small boat and try to reach the Spanish shores. Unemployment is a real

issue here; it pushes these poor young people to be suicidal. They are ready to do anything. They think that they have nothing, so they have nothing to lose. They risk everything for that boat ride of a lifetime; they think, "If I get there, I will leave; otherwise, I might as well die trying."

Because middle-class participants as a whole were not dreamers but rather pragmatic thinkers who had more knowledge of the dangers of emigration, they were more likely to want to go to France, a place most of them had a connection to one way or the other. As a result, they were also less likely than other populations to want to emigrate to certain places based only on what they saw in the television dramas they watched (which explains why France was their top destination and why many of them were not particularly interested in leaving Morocco). Nonetheless, that particular group displayed great curiosity for a variety of cultures beyond Morocco and France, and many of them reported wanting to travel as tourists to the places they saw on television, such as the U.S. or Turkey. In fact, all except two of the respondents who claimed they wanted to spend their lives in Morocco expressed interest in being tourists at some point during the interview.

The interviews clearly revealed that Turkey was a very attractive tourist location for the Moroccan middle class. The cartogram (Figure 24) does not fully reflect this finding because in my calculations, I used only the country that respondents most wanted to visit, and some respondents cited Turkey in addition to another favorite destination. A couple of my respondents reported that they had already taken a short trip to Turkey, whereas a handful of respondents reported wanting to travel to Turkey in the future. Often, these respondents cited the soap opera *Noor* as their primary motivation for these trips. These comments reflect a larger trend in Morocco and the Arab world because Arab

viewers of the Turkish soap have sparked a tourist wave in Turkey. Just a year-and-a-half after the broadcast of the final episode of *Noor*, which was followed by nearly 80 million viewers, the guardian reported that for the month of May alone, there was a 33% increase in Arab tourists to Turkey from May 2009 to May 2010 and an additional 150,000 visitors from that region.

As Hamasaeed (2011) explains, “the programme [...] advertised luxury items and Turkey itself as a beautiful location for tourism with its green landscapes and goods. This luxurious and elegant atmosphere surprised the viewers and made everyone want to visit Turkey, resulting in an increase in millions of tourists” (p. 225). Or as Buccianti argues (and as we have seen in Chapter Five), there are even deeper reasons for the sudden interest in Turkey: “with accessible language, Arab viewers discovered “the Other,” a neighboring country that history had estranged. Indeed, Arab Nationalism was essentially a reaction to Turkish cultural hegemony after the Young Turks revolution. By winning hearts and minds, *Noor* triggered a sudden reawakening and consideration for these [...] ‘lost years’ as well as several other dilemmas” (p.5). In either case, the *Noor* tourist boom in Turkey is a real phenomenon that has been facilitated by the elimination of visa requirements for ordinary foreign visitors from many countries, including the Middle East and North Africa, since 2006 (Balli et al., 2013).

The rise in organized tours bearing the name of the show and offering visits to the various sets, such as the waterside villa or Cevahir Mall where the main protagonists were often seen shopping, is a very tangible effect of this ‘*Noor* tourism.’ When Serdar Ali Abet, the owner of a successful tourism agency, rented the *Noor* waterside villa for about 140,000 dollars and started organizing daily excursions, many of his colleagues

were convinced that his investment was a mistake. However, “his profit increased by an unusual amount of 60% thanks to his introduction of the Noor villa tour into the Istanbul package” (Çayli & Özcan, 2011, p. 2). Cevahir Mall was the next destination on the tour, and as a result of the influx of Arab tourists, the mall had to increase the number of Arabic-speaking staff members. In addition, the mall’s executive committee decided to enlarge the mall’s praying room and to present it as a mosque (Çayli & Özcan, 2011, p. 2).

It is no surprise that this type of organized tour would be alluring for Moroccan middle-class populations. Historically, organized tours cater to middle-class travelers by offering them an opportunity to spend the money they earned in their jobs during the year and by providing discounted group packages that are more financially accessible than the luxurious hotels and villas that attract upper-class travelers. Yet, these tours do offer opportunities to glimpse these luxurious lifestyles through excursions, like in this case the Noor villa. The Noor tourism industry is tapping into this market by combining the usual features of the organized tour and by capturing audiences’ desires to experience the luxurious and romantic life of Noor and Muhannad. The difference is that, unlike lower-income viewers who can only dream of Turkey and other places, the desires of middle-class viewers are actually repatriated into a consumerist popular culture that offers them real possibilities of travel, albeit short ones.

Middle-class respondents were also interested in taking tourist trips to the U.S., but they were highly aware of the fact that the U.S. was more out of reach. Indeed, visa requirements for entry to the U.S. are far more stringent. To be granted a visa, one needs to be sponsored by an employer or have a particular reason that is deemed acceptable.

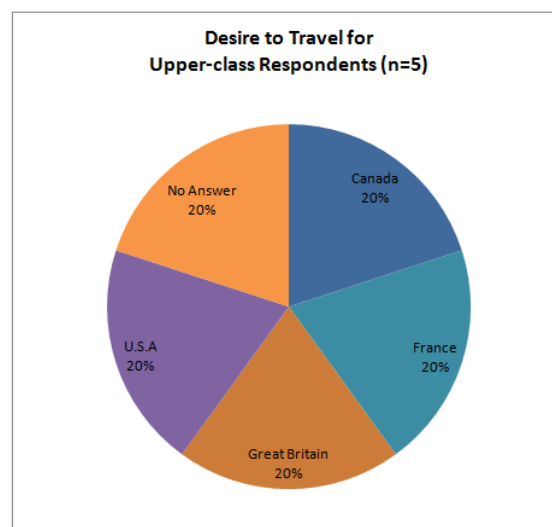
Although one may apply for a tourist visa of 90 days, denials of such visas are common, and the process of obtaining such visas can be lengthy, which makes it difficult to plan a vacation—not to mention that the U.S. is not as motivated to attract Arab tourism as Turkey is given the rise of Islamophobia in the United States since (and even pre-dating) September 11 and “the war on terror.”

Upper-Class Respondents: The Easy Path to Permanent Emigration

Figure 25: Desired Places of Travel for Upper-Class Respondents

Cartogram and Corresponding Data

Upper-class Respondents. N=5.



Finally, the great majority of my upper-class respondents wanted to emigrate permanently to a wide variety of Western countries. This was the result not only of watching television programs coming mostly from the Western world (mostly U.S. series and French news) but also of years of socialization in elitist circles that mimic Western ways of life. Unlike low-income participants who would virtually have no chance of ever emigrating anywhere unless they are willing to risk their lives as Abdel suggested, these young people's paths of emigration, both mental and physical, were already traced for them a long time ago (that phenomenon was shown in the film *Marock*, which was discussed at great length in Chapter Four). For them, leaving Morocco will require no sacrifice, illegal emigration, or possible death. It will require only that their parents write a check so that they can attend a prestigious university abroad.

Interestingly, I kept in touch with two of these upper-class respondents, and four years after I interviewed them, they ended up going exactly where they wanted to go. For example, Leila, who was a fan of humorous and ironic British sitcoms such as *Absolutely Fabulous* and others, reported at the time of our interview,

I would like to emigrate to London. Personally, I am not a Francophone, and I am not too much into American pop culture either. I am an Anglophone, so for me, it's London. Canada does not interest me. London, it's not France, and it's not the U.S. either. There is more history, a civilization. The real difference between the U.K. and the U.S., it's the degree of secularism. No one will look at you in the streets; people will stop if you are lost and help you. You can work with the veil, even though I actually don't wear it. I went to a bank and I saw a cashier employee with her Indian outfit. London, it's the example of tolerance for me.

Four years later, she emigrated to London, just as she had planned.

It is interesting that upper-class respondents understand the West more broadly than other groups do. In addition to France and the U.S., they included the U.K. and

Canada in their desired travel locations. My speculation is that they have a higher degree of knowledge of these countries because of their ability to travel frequently to these various places as tourists.

As this section has shown, these variations in viewers' desired places of travel/emigration are symptomatic not only of structural class differences but also of various other interconnected elements: for example, the foreign programs one watches, the mental geographies these programs contribute to forming, one's previous history with travel, one's knowledge of languages, one's desire to escape local hardships and politics, one's desire to advance his or her career, one's personality type (e.g., whether one is more of a dreamer or more down to earth), and so forth.

Overall, my ethnographic data reveal that different people will be drawn to programming from different countries and connect more or less with the cultures represented on screen. They might (or might not) imagine themselves living in these different places, depending on a variety of factors such as class but also a variety of other life experiences that might or might not have triggered a desire to leave. These various forms of mental emigration will produce different forms of hybridity from one person to the next.

Implications for Research

This study has numerous implications for both the fields of globalization and audience studies. On the one hand, through the use of a contextual, empirically grounded analysis of media reception, this study confirms some of the theoretical advances made in both of these fields. On the other hand, it moves beyond the theoretical paradigms emphasizing the 'dispersal' and 'abstractness' of the audience and proposes numerous

ways to conduct empirical research in the context of both media globalization and audience research.

1. Hybridity Is Not a ‘Disorganized’ Assemblage: Hybridity is ‘Structured’

As shown in this chapter, audiences make structured choices when they choose to watch media programming from certain countries in a global media environment. They also make structured choices to engage more or less with the cultures represented on screen. These choices are structured because various constraining factors guide them. For example, global or regional media hegemons indirectly dictate which programs will be available to start with, and the various class/gender differentials restrict certain viewers’ access to education, language acquisition, or technologies, preventing them from accessing programs from certain countries.

In that sense, hybridity is still a power-laden asymmetrical process, as Shohat and Stam (1994) and Kraidy (2005) have shown. Nonetheless, I contend that audiences do have a certain power to move within and beyond these sets of constraints, which explains why the selections of programming/countries they make are still choices and not mere impositions.

By tracking both the factors that restrict audiences’ ability to access the programming of certain countries in particular contexts and the decisions viewers make to overcome these restrictions in a variety of ways, the researcher can position viewers in relation to various cultural media influences. In that sense, hybridization no longer has to be perceived as a “sense of disorientation, a disturbance in the direction, in the beyond: an exploratory relentless movement” (Bhabha, 2004) or as “the rejection of clarity” or of any boundaries (Niezen, 2004, p. x) in a highly deterritorialized world order (Appadurai,

1996). In fact, deterritorialized audiences can be ‘re-territorialized’ in space if the researcher positions him- or herself in a specific cultural context and analyzes the variety of directions audiences can take from there.

2. Multiple Audiences = Multiple ‘Hybridities’

This chapter also shows that there are multiple ‘hybridities’ (plural) as viewers access programming from different countries. As demonstrated, people of different socioeconomic groups or of different genders, for example, developed cultural affinities with certain countries or regions of the world.

The idea that different audiences will consume different cultural products is not new. For example, in his early studies, Morley (1978, 1986, 1992) showed that various audiences have very different viewing experiences based on different factors such as class, gender, religion, ethnicity, and a variety of other attributes. Similarly, in an entirely different body of literature, Bourdieu (1984, 1993) has shown that individuals of different socioeconomic backgrounds will be drawn to different cultural artifacts. Nonetheless, in these two cases and others, class and cultural differences between viewers are discussed in terms of the cultural goods that are available to them within the nation. Cultural theory does not often address the idea that class ‘distinction’ is also at the origin of the consumption of different global/supranational cultural products and result in the production of different hybrid subjectivities. However, my findings in this study suggest that different hybridities are formed through consumption of television programs from different countries by individuals of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Class and cultural consumption ought to be studied in relationship to cultural hybridization.

In addition to socioeconomic background, other factors such as one's previous experience with travel, one's degree of frustration with local policies and lifestyles, one's personality, and personal biography affect which countries will affect how and the extent to which one might or might not connect with distant others. There are not only multiple directions that viewers can take, but there are also different ways in which hybrid flows of culture and images will come to inhabit (and unsettle) various spaces of identity. These spaces include one's individual subjectivity and sense of self in the world, one's cultural identity and feeling of national belonging, or one's political identity and citizenship. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the multiplicity of the process and its plural form, as Kraidy (2005) suggests, and to let go of any generic, catch-all definition of hybridity in the singular form.

3. Hybridities are Formed in Relation to Political Subjectivities.

As this chapter demonstrates, for lower-income participants, both television dramas and the mental emigration processes they triggered were political in nature. These respondents used foreign shows as ways to disengage from their own nation and its politics of social exclusion and to dream of a better life somewhere else. Even though middle- and upper-class participants were much less political, one has to keep in mind that a large number of the Moroccan population lives precariously and is technically classified as low-income. As mentioned in Chapter Four, 50% of Moroccans either live under the poverty line or are just barely above it (Cohen & Jaidi, 2006; Agence France Presse, 2012; African Development Bank, 2011). Therefore, based on the findings from this study, it is highly likely that at least 50% of the population engages in the forming or

re-affirmation of political identities through the process of media and cultural hybridization.

It is important to note that a few middle- and upper-class participants were also critical of local politics (even if it was more rare among this population and also expressed in more subdued ways). At the very least, middle- and upper-class respondents were also dissatisfied with local programming and thought it did not adequately represent the daily experiences of Moroccans, as shown in the viewers' comments in Chapter Five (pp. 194-200). Moreover, all socioeconomic groups moved away from the dominant ideologies spread by the regime in the media and consumed foreign dramas instead. Consequently, the actual number of individuals for whom global entertainment media is political is probably far above 50%. In a region of the world where authoritarian regimes have thrived for many years and where citizens are growing increasingly frustrated with their governments, it is no surprise that political feuds between rulers and citizens become repatriated into the process of media production and reception. After all, the national media in most Arab countries reflect the ideologies of the state, and foreign media programs present opportunities to mentally escape these ideologies.

Sections of this chapter have shown that global entertainment media and the process of cultural hybridization that such media entail can become outlets for passive political resistance against the authoritarian regime. What is 'resisted' here is everything that was mentioned in previous chapters, ranging from the hegemonic post-colonial and state-centered ideologies of the regime reinforced in the media (as discussed in Chapter Three) to the local Moroccan media texts that attempt to show real-life situations without ever formulating social critiques of the government or the disparities tearing apart the

country (as discussed in Chapters Three and Four). Nonetheless, in most cases, the political resistance that marginalized populations formulated through global entertainment media remained at the level of the imagination either because these viewers were more intent on escaping their local surroundings through these dramas than on changing them through political action or because the peer pressure to conform to the dominant ideologies was too high in a context in which censorship is still a concern.

4. Hybridity Can Be Empirically Documented Only in ‘Local’ Contexts.

This research confirms what many scholars of globalization and hybridization have claimed (see Sreberny, 2000; Kraidy, 2005, and others), namely, that we need to contextualize our understandings of hybridity in empirical settings. To understand the particular cultural flows that pass through a location at a given time and how audiences may or may not engage with them, we as scholars need to be ‘rooted’ in one particular location. Turning researchers into ‘nomadic’ scholars (see Silverstone, 1994) who erratically track down various flows of culture throughout the world makes no sense in terms of feasibility and will only lead to further ‘dispersion’ and ‘abstractness’ in our understanding of hybridity.

However, few studies devise actual methodologies to operationalize empirically the process of cultural hybridization. In that sense, this research attempts to break new ground by proposing a variety of quantitative, qualitative, and visual methods aimed at ‘mapping’ audiences’ mental geographies and trajectories. It also calls for more research studies that will attempt to do this work of ‘mapping’ in other specific contexts and in even more detailed ways.

5. Global Audiences Should Also Be Studied in Local Contexts

Although the question of how various audiences negotiate the meaning of particular media texts has been widely explored by audience scholars such as Hall (1987, 2000), Morley (1993, 1995), Katz and Liebes (1990), Radway (2003), Press (1996), and Ang (1995, 1996a, 1996b), the field of audience studies has often pushed aside another important question: How do we empirically study global audiences who are spread across transnational settings? This question was at the heart of many debates on audience studies in the late 1990s and 2000s, but as we have seen, it was quickly brushed off because the mental, physical, and technological trajectories of audiences in the global and convergence era were deemed untraceable. Researchers felt they had to be simultaneously everywhere and nowhere to be able to study global audiences, and that greatly complicated their task.

The question continued to be discussed at the theoretical level, and scholars such as Ang (1995) and others called for more empirical studies of audiences in local and global contexts, which—without returning to earlier paradigms in audience studies that viewed audiences as ‘bounded’—would at least try to demarcate the various trajectories of audiences. This chapter recognizes the difficulty of this task and proposes a variety of ethnographic and visual methodologies to achieve it in a contextualized local setting.

Concluding Remarks

In the globalization era, audiences are indeed dispersed as many scholars have argued. Nonetheless, I contend that this dispersion should be no cause for giving up on the project of finding out where their imagination is taking them. In this chapter, I have shown that mapping technologies that have never been used in the context of

globalization and audience studies (such as cartograms) help to provide a snapshot of audiences' mental geographies at a certain point in time.

One reason scholars have been hesitant to use maps in these fields is that “this overall movement [of hybridity] has so many ramifications that its significance is difficult to map—as if any mapping exercise in the process validates maps, while the point is to recognize the limited and contingent status of any kind of map” (Pietersee, 2001, p. 239).

Indeed, if hybridity is understood as ‘the lack of boundaries, having any kind of map would be irrelevant. However, if we understand hybridity as a conflation of the boundaries that are placed on people through hegemonic processes and the boundaries people place for themselves within this environment, any map that would represent the actual ‘boundary-making’ process would be useful. That is why cartograms are so relevant to the study of hybridity and audiences: they are special kinds of maps that represent distorted ‘subjective’ boundaries, not actual geographical areas.

Nonetheless, cartograms alone do little to unveil the multilayered and textured process of cultural hybridization as the mental emigration practices integral to the process are deeply rooted in people’s subjectivities and imaginations. Therefore, cartograms ought to be used in conjunction with ethnographic observations and discussions with audiences themselves to understand how ‘hybridities’ emerge through media consumption.

There are some limitations to this kind of research. First, one must acknowledge that whatever the positions and mental trajectories of viewers at a certain point in time are, they are just that: snapshots of hybridization at a given point in time. For example, if

the same research had been conducted 10 years ago, telenovelas from Mexico and Brazil would probably have been cited by many of my respondents, and mental geographies reflected on cartograms probably would have reflected cultural affinities with these countries. Ten years later, telenovelas have not been entirely phased out, but they do not engage viewers in the same ways they used to.

Second, one must also recognize that no generalizations can ever be made about how people experience hybridity as a whole. This chapter reflects the mental geographies of my 45 viewers, no more and no less. Although we can still pick up on trends that likely reflect to a certain extent segments of the population, we cannot say for sure that these mental geographies would have looked the same if my research had been done in Fez instead of in Rabat or if I had recruited 45 entirely different individuals in my study.

Nonetheless, such empirical research is instrumental if one is interested in the process of cultural hybridization and how it can be researched and explored in a certain location—without making sweeping generalizations about a country or a certain population. This type of research allows for an understanding of the various cultural influences permeating a particular country through mass media, and it investigates how audiences find points of entry to these various cultures and places represented on screen. Moreover, it shows the extent to which and how viewers mentally emigrate to these locations.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

This dissertation makes contributions to the fields of media and globalization studies, as it sheds lights on three largely overlooked phenomena in the current literature on cultural hybridization and critical/cultural media studies:

1. Hybrid Identities Are Formed Through Both Media Production and Exposure
2. Multiple ‘Hybridities’ Can Emerge in Particular Media/Cultural Environments
3. Hybridity is both a cultural and a political process

1. Hybrid Identities Are Formed Through Both Media Production and Exposure.

Cultural hybridity is often presented as a phenomenon affecting mostly audiences. Little consideration is given to the political-economic forces that allow certain cultural influences to pervade particular nations through the mass media at certain points in time, the condition of production and importation of local and foreign television programs which become part of the collective imagination, or the particular textual features of the media texts themselves (See Garcia-Canclini, 1995; Appadurai, 1996; Kraidy, 2002; 2005).

In the current hybridization and post-colonial studies literatures, little attention is placed on how wider political-economic structures— such as media institutions— also become sites of hybrid cultural formations in a post-colonialglobalized world (Parry, 1987). Similarly, little light is shed on how the elites that run these institutions may choose discourses of hybridity that revive colonial and national discourses of supremacy, which may be at odds with the rest of the population (as seen in Chapter Three). Audiences’ responses in post-colonial settings are often ‘de-contextualized’ from their

local settings, and not analyzed in relationship to the media discourses and dominant ideologies disseminated by those in power.

For this reason, in addition to examining how hybridity is lived by audiences, the dissertation offers an analysis of other forms of hybridity experienced by state elites and filmmakers working within national film and television organizations (see Chapter Three and Four). It provides for the first time, an intimate look into the inner workings of Moroccan media institutions, as well as the local media texts produced by them and the foreign media texts competing with local productions.

Taking a multi-perspectival approach (see Kellner, 1995), I am able to show that state representatives, producers, texts, and audiences are separate, yet co-dependent constituents of circuits of production. I can also clearly demonstrate that the experience of cultural hybridity is also formed through circuits, as media elites and producers attempt to put certain areas of the world in the collective popular imagination and audiences select their own distant locations to connect with, either in accordance or in opposition, creating a feedback loop for producers. As a result, the dissertation shows that hybridity is both circular and contrapuntal, as elites and citizens/media officials and audiences negotiate and compete for different notions of hybridity.

With its added focus on media institutions and texts, the analysis not only pushes the boundaries of the current literature on media and globalization, but also expands the body of scholarly work on the Moroccan film and television landscape more specifically. Other literature on Moroccan media, for example, focuses on the development of mass media in Morocco (Boyd, 1999; Rugh, 2004), on historical, textual, and critical analyses

of Moroccan cinema (Dwyer, 2004; Carter, 2009; Orlando, 2011), or on Moroccan audiences (Sabry, 2005).

High levels of censorship within Arab media industries generally prevent researchers from getting access to media organizations in the Arab world. A variety of circumstances (detailed in the dissertation) allowed me to interview state elites and media representatives who are generally protected by gatekeepers. Consequently, I was able to share knowledge about Moroccan media institutions, which is commonly only accessible to insiders.

2. Multiple 'Hybridities' Emerge in Particular Media/Cultural Environments.

Taking a multiperspectival approach, and bringing the combined perspectives of state elites working at media institutions, producers, filmmakers, and various audiences, also allows for an investigation into different strata of the Moroccan population and into various groups of individuals who occupy different social positions within the Moroccan society.

State elites at the head of major media institutions such as the CCM (Moroccan Center for Cinematography) or the HACA (High Authority for Audiovisual Communication) are government-appointed representatives who are in direct contact with the monarchy and the government and who live in the highest social and political spheres of Morocco (as shown in Chapter Three). The producers and the filmmakers, who work for major Moroccan television networks, were either born into the upper class, or were poor Moroccans from the countryside or middle-class citizen who were fortunate to gain entry into the filmmaking world and who effectively joined the upper class in this way (the film and television industry is one of the few professional spheres that actually

allows for upward social mobility in Morocco, as shown in Chapter Four. Finally, audiences have varied socio-economic backgrounds, but include a large proportion of low-income and middle class viewers (see Chapter Five and Six).

A close look at these different groups within the nation brings to light the fact that people of different social backgrounds connect very differently with different parts of the world. The idea that one's class is likely to influence one's taste, or that taste acts as a marker for social distinction between different classes, is of course not new in the field of cultural studies (Bourdieu, 1984;1993; 1996; Adorno, 2000, 2003). However, the tastes of socio-economic groups are generally almost exclusively discussed in relation to their consumption of particular cultural products within the nation. In the globalization era, it is no longer sufficient to claim that class influences taste and cultural consumption within the nation, since transnational media flows make cultural artifacts from various parts of the world available to citizens. Therefore, it is important to analyze not only how taste leads to the consumption of different cultural products, but also how it translates into the formation of different cultural affinities with different parts of the world for individuals of different class backgrounds. In that sense, the dissertation makes a significant contribution to the fields of cultural studies and globalization, by showing that cultural differences in the era of globalization can be claimed through the expression of taste and class. The analysis presented in this dissertation makes apparent that different kinds of hybridity emerge because these groups have different tastes and different positions within Moroccan society and the field of social relations.

As shown in Chapter Three, state elites bolster a (state-centered) Moroccan/French inspired form of hybridity in their media institutions. As shown in

Chapter Three, producers and filmmakers oscillate between the (state-centered) Moroccan influences of the elites they work for and the Western World, as a symbol of both status conferral and escapism from local pressures. As shown in Chapter Six, High income viewers—who, unlike upper-class producers and filmmakers, do not have to work for state representatives—almost exclusively engage with the West, especially the U.S., France, or Great Britain. Middle class viewers form both Western and pan-Arab or Middle Eastern hybridities, moving back and forth between media coming from various countries in these regions. Finally low-income viewers mentally emigrate to countries of the Wider Arab world and the Middle East like Egypt, Syria, and Turkey, forming pan-Arab and Middle Eastern hybridities exclusively.

Therefore, cultural hybridity takes different forms for different individuals in different social positions, and it is more accurate to use the term ‘hybridities’ in its plural form. While Kraidy emphasized the plurality of the term in 2005, there was to date no study that showed—both theoretically and empirically— how various potential ‘hybridities’ articulate themselves in one particular media and cultural environment.

In addition, the dissertation pushes the boundaries of the current research on media and hybridization, by asking how individuals themselves make particular choices of local and global programming, and by exploring how they choose to engage with certain cultures and not others. I show that there are a number of constraining factors structuring people’s choices, including 1) the historical, cultural, and political-economic forces determining what media programs from what countries are available to start with. For example, influences of the former colonizer (France), as well as influences of global and regional centers of cultural production like Hollywood, Egypt, Syria or Turkey,

clearly restricted access to certain cultures, while shedding light on particular nations. 2) One's level of literacy, foreign language acquisition, education, or access to technology, as these factors are likely to constrain access to certain programs and possibilities to connect with distant others. However, I also posit the argument that, despite these constraining structuring factors, people still have a certain degree of individual agency to choose what programs they want to watch and which other nations they want to engage with. Furthermore, I show how new technologies such as Satellite television and the Internet have reduced the digital divide, and empowered audiences from below by facilitating access to a wider variety of programs.

As a result, the dissertation breaks down the entire process of cultural hybridization through mass media in one particular context. It not only traces how multiple hybridities emerge for different individuals in one place, but how these choices are structured and articulated. Presenting the different steps involved in the process of hybrid identity formation empirically allows the dissertation to assert the notion that hybridity is not an abstract process as if it often suggested in the globalization scholarship (See Chapter Two and Chapter Six). Media flows are not chaotically crossing paths, merging, and blurring boundaries everywhere. In fact, the process is rather structured, as certain cultural influences are allowed to pervade a media/geographical space at a given time because of historical, political, and economic reasons, and individuals connect with some cultures over others because of their personal circumstances and the choices they are able to make.

3. Hybridity is both a cultural and a political process

When I first started working on this project, I did not plan to investigate the political tensions embedded in the process of media and cultural hybridization. At the time, I envisioned the entertainment media, and particularly television dramas, to be mostly devoid of political undertones. I was mostly interested in the ways local and global dramas affect viewers' sense of cultural belonging in the nation and beyond. However, when I started my field work, it became obvious that in a society like Morocco at the cusp of the Arab Uprisings one's own sense of national belonging is immediately tied to politics. A large majority of my respondents felt that they were victims of national politics of exclusion, based on their social class, gender, or ethnicity and that they lacked a political voice.

In the local dramas, they were looking for signs that those in power were aware of these struggles and willing to bring them to light on the screen. Disappointed with the lack of these perspectives, they turned to foreign dramas which could give them a peek of what life elsewhere would look like, and open their minds to what they viewed as potentially better models of democracy and social equity elsewhere. Clearly, the political tensions embedded in society at large, over questions of democracy, citizenship, and social change, were repatriated in the process of media production and reception and re-enacted by different players in the media chain.

More specifically, as seen in Chapter Three, state representatives at media institutions played a game of appearances and camouflaged politics. On the one hand, they borrowed French discourses of democracy within their media structures (such as political pluralism and neo-liberalism) to give an illusion of democracy. On the other

hand, they reinforced hegemonic discourses of power within the nation through various mechanisms of censorship.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the large majority of audiences were absolutely not interested in hegemonic discourses of power and visions of democracy/authority borrowed from the ex-colonial power or the authoritative regime, respectively. As seen in Chapter Four, audiences defined democracy in other ways. For many viewers, true democratic change meant a more equal society on the ground and the hope that every citizen would be treated equally regardless of class, gender, or degree of religiosity. As seen in Chapter Five and Six, viewers were drawn to television dramas from other countries (Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the U.S.), as these programs presented opportunities for viewers to see how social, gender, and religious dynamics played out in other cultural and political settings. These programs also offered alternative models of democracy in the Arab world and beyond.

Producers and filmmakers, who were simultaneously trying to please the state elites they worked for and the audiences that these dramas were made for, were literally caught between the institutional forms of power promoted by the elites and the very real democratic aspirations of the population. This was reflected in the textual features of local dramas themselves, which promoted a certain form of “social realism without social critique” (Dwyer, 2011). In other words, they went as far as they possibly could in terms of showing the dire social realities of Moroccans, but they also stopped before it could get them in trouble with the state. They avoided any reflection on the roots or causes of poverty, gender inequality, or religious divides, and made no mention of the government’s responsibility in creating and maintaining these inequalities.

Because political consciousness was a significant element of both citizens' interest in television drama, and their desire to connect with distant cultures, the political nature of both global entertainment media and cultural hybridity is irrefutable.

Interestingly, a picture of local and global television drama, their producers, and viewers, also is in many ways a snapshot of a media system caught between authoritarian rule and democracy at a key moment in time, in 2009 and 2010 right before the Arab Uprisings.

While there is already a great deal of value derived from taking a snapshot of a media system undergoing a variety of democratic transitions at this particular time, future research on Morocco, its media system, and cultural hybridization, should involve chronicling the changes (or lack thereof) that have occurred since the beginning of the the Arab uprising in 2011. When I was in Morocco in 2009 and 2010, a new media reform had been approved. The state had extensive plans to liberalize the television industry, which is currently entirely state-owned. However, the reform was stalling for a few years, already, and was not being implemented.

When the Arab uprisings occurred in 2011, they did not have as much of an impact on Morocco as they did on other countries such as Tunisia or Egypt for example, (The Moroccan monarchy is still largely respected by the population despite growing frustrations.). However, at the time, it did increase the pressure placed on the government to carry on with the reform. Two years later, the reform is still stalling, but it would be interesting to investigate whether real intentions of democratic change are behind it, or whether it is rather meant to perpetuate a game of appearances and camouflaged politics. A third option would be to explore whether this interrupted reform process is a way of implementing limited forms of democracy.

The larger question about whether change is possible within Moroccan media structures is central to this project. If the Moroccan media ever become liberalized in the ways the reform proposes, state-owned networks will compete with privately owned networks, which could bring new perspectives beyond state-centered ideologies. To maintain themselves economically, these new networks will have to capture the ‘hearts and minds’ of Moroccans and include stories about daily experiences and local struggles. This reform could drastically change how Moroccans relate to their own media, foreign programming, and the world.

In addition, future research should investigate the extent to which consumption of foreign dramas, and the mental emigration processes that they spur in audiences, encourage or derail meaningful political action on the ground. While my dissertation has shown that global dramas are used by viewers as forms of political resistance against local ideologies and local media, this resistance was passive for the most part. The viewers, who were victims of national politics of exclusion based on their class, gender, degree of religious freedom, or any other attributes, engaged with the dramas and the locations they portrayed to ‘escape’ their immediate local circumstances and dream of distant others.

One could even argue that these dramas were a small, yet consequent part of complex web of factors that prevented a mass mobilization of citizens in Morocco during the Arab Uprisings. As one of my respondents’ put it “The series on Moroccan television, it’s a rhetoric to draw Moroccans into politics of illusion” because citizen engage in imaginative processes rather than in meaningful social action on the ground.

However, despite the validity of this argument, it is also undeniable that the first step towards political mobilization is political consciousness, and a great majority of my respondents identified entertainment satellite television as a way to interrogate local politics. Therefore, these programs do enable, at the very least, the emergence/re-affirmation of political stances and identities.

Many new questions stem from this very realization: how can Moroccan filmmakers create television dramas that have the power to redirect the collective imagination on the ‘local’? What kinds of media texts would be able to channel political consciousness and encourage social action that truly advances democratic efforts in the region? Should producers and filmmakers of ‘entertainment’ media even be tasked with the responsibility of promoting social change?

These are questions that Moroccan filmmakers and audiences will grapple with long after the Arab Uprisings and any potential changes in the media system. These are also questions that scholars researching the media industries of the Middle East, North Africa, or any society undergoing democratic transitions, will have to explore because—as this dissertation has shown—the power of film and television on the collective imagination and political subjectivities is undeniable.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

List of Media Institutions Included in this Research

Institutions
<p><u>Société Nationale de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision (SNRT) formerly « RTM »</u></p> <p>(Translated as “National Corporation for Television and Radiodiffusion”)</p> <p>Owner of the following national television networks: 1-Al Oula, 3-Arriyadiya, 4-Arrabia, 5-Al Maghtibiya, 6- Assadissa, 7-Aflam TV</p>
<p><u>Société d’Etudes et de Réalisations Audiovisuelles (SOREAD—2M)</u></p> <p>(Translated as “Society for Research and Audiovisual Productions (Soread—2M)”)</p> <p>Owner of the popular television network 2M</p>
<p><u>Ministère de la Communication</u></p> <p>(Translated as “Ministry of Communication”)</p>
<p><u>Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM)</u></p> <p>(Translated as “Moroccan Center for Cinematography”)</p> <p>Center for the funding and promotion of Moroccan cinema</p>
<p><u>Marocmetrie</u></p> <p>Moroccan ratings agency</p>
<p><u>Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle (HACA)</u></p> <p>(Translated as “High Authority for Audiovisual Communication”)</p> <p>National regulatory organization for television practices</p>
<p><u>Al Jazeera’s Moroccan bureau (now closed)</u></p>

Appendix B

List of Festivals and Roundtables Attended

1. 15ème Festival International du Cinéma d’Auteur de Rabat (Maroc)

(Translated as “Fifteenth International Festival of ‘Auteur’ Cinema in Rabat”)

Under the Patronage of our Majesty King Mohammed VI, June 20-30, 2009

- ➔ During the festival, I attended a roundtable on “Film Production in Morocco” on June 26, 2009, at the Bibliotheque Nationale (“National Library”) in Rabat.

2. 12ème Edition du Festival du Cinéma Africain de Khouribga (Maroc)

(Translated as “Twelfth Edition of the African Film Festival of Khouribga, Morocco”)

Under the Patronage of our Majesty King Mohammed VI, July 18-25, 2009

- ➔ During the festival, I attended a roundtable on “Piracy in the Cinema Industry” on Sunday, July 19, 2009, at the Hotel Golden Tulip Farah.

Appendix C

Brochures, Legal Documents, and Websites Analyzed

Moroccan Institutions	French Institutions
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Ministry of Communication</u></p> <p>Ministère de la Communication (2008). <i>Décret n° 2-06-782 du 3 rabii I 1429 (11 mars 2008) fixant les attributions et l'organisation du ministère de la communication</i>. Royaume du Maroc. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.mincom.gov.ma/MinCom/Fr/MenuGauche/s+orienter/</p> <p>Ministère de la Communication (n.d.). <i>Organigramme du Ministère de la Communication</i>. Royaume du Maroc. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.mincom.gov.ma/MinCom/Fr/MenuGauche/Le+Minist%C3%A8re/Organigramme+du+minist%C3%A8re/sous+rub+fr.htm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Ministry of Culture and Communication</u></p> <p>Fillon, F. (2009). <i>Décret no 2009-1393 du 11 novembre 2009 relatif aux missions et à l'organisation de l'administration centrale du ministère de la culture et de la communication</i>. Journal Officiel de la République Française. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.inventaire.culture.gouv.fr/telechar/decret-2009-1393_du_11-11-09_mission-organisation-adm-centrale-MCC.pdf</p> <p>Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (2010a). <i>Organigramme institutionnel du Ministère de la culture et de la communication</i>. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.culture.gouv.fr/mcc/content/download/5458/36622/file/organigramme_institutionnel_MCC.pdf</p> <p>Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (2010b). <i>La Direction Générale des Médias et des Industries Culturelles</i>. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.culture.gouv.fr/mcc/Le-ministere/Missions-et-organisation/Themes/La-direction-generale-des-medias-et-des-industries-culturelles</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>High Authority for Audiovisual Communication</u></p> <p>Royaume du Maroc. (2002). Dahir n° 1-02-212 du 22 jourmada II 1423 (31 août 2002) portant création de la Haute Autorité de la</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Audiovisual Superior Counsel</u></p> <p>Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. (n.d.-a). Rôles et missions du CSA: que fait le CSA? Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.csa.fr/conseil/role/role_csa.php</p>

<p>communication audiovisuelle modifié par le Dahir n° 1-03-302 du 16 ramadan 1424 (11 novembre 2003) et par le Dahir n° 1-07-189 du 19 kaâda 1428 (30 novembre 2007) et par le Dahir n°1-08-73 du 20 chaoual 1429 (20 octobre 2008). <i>Bulletin Officiel</i>, n°5036.</p> <p>Royaume du Maroc. (2005). Dahir n°1-04-257 du 25 kaâda 1425 (7 janvier 2005) portant promulgation de la loi n° 77-03 relative à la communication audiovisuelle. <i>Bulletin Officiel</i>, n°5288.</p> <p>Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle (2007). <i>Brochure Institutionnelle</i>. Rabat Ryad: Royaume du Maroc.</p> <p>Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle (2009a). Rapport synthétique d'activité de la haute autorité de la communication audiovisuelle—HACA. Rabat Ryad: Royaume du Maroc.</p> <p>Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle (2009b). <i>L'activité de coopération internationale de la HACA: 2004-Janvier 2009</i>. Rabat Ryad: Royaume du Maroc.</p>	<p>Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. (n.d.-b). Rôles et missions du CSA: la gestion et l'attribution des fréquences. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.csa.fr/conseil/role/role_gestion.php</p> <p>Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. (n.d.-c). Rôles et missions du CSA: le suivi. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.csa.fr/conseil/role/role_suivi.php</p> <p>Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. (n.d.-e). Rôles et missions du CSA: les bilans. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.csa.fr/conseil/role/role_bilans.php</p> <p>Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. (n.d.-f). Rôles et missions du CSA: les sanctions. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.csa.fr/conseil/role/role_sanctions.php</p> <p>Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. (n.d.-g). Rôles et missions du CSA: les nominations. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.csa.fr/conseil/role/role_nominations.php</p> <p>Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. (n.d.-h). Rôles et missions du CSA: les relations internationales. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.csa.fr/conseil/role/role_relations_internationales.php</p> <p>Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. (n.d.i). Rôles et missions du CSA: les autres compétences du CSA. Retrieved on 02/01/2011 from http://www.csa.fr/conseil/role/role_autres_competences.php</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Marocmetrie</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Mediametrie</u></p>

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