



Femininity, masculinity, and sexuality in morocco and hollywood; the negated sex

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BOOK REVIEW

Femininity, masculinity, and sexuality in morocco and hollywood; the negated sex, by Osire Glacier, New York, NY, Palgrave MacMillan, 2017, 193 pp., \$129.00 cloth, ISBN 978-3-319-53284-4

In this age of #MeToo, many women have returned to the arguments of early radical feminism, in which the sex difference is the root cause of male domination. It is women's body, specifically the reproductive potential it has, that is warped by patriarchal culture into a perpetual domination cycle.

This perspective shares a great deal with Osire Glacier's arguments in her recent work, 'Femininity, Masculinity, and Sexuality in Morocco and Hollywood: The Negated Sex.' As a Moroccan woman now in the US, Glacier contributes to a long history of analyses of sex and gender in Morocco with her work, in which she argues that women – described as 'people born with vaginas' – are thoroughly subjugated within the Moroccan context, dehumanized through their bodies, intellect, and lives and relationships. The way Glacier goes about this argument is by combing through Moroccan literature, using many great writers who are largely, and quite sadly, ignored by the West.

The specifics of the Morocco case detailed by Glacier make it clear that women are not even slightly close to equality. Her argument provides us a very convincing portrayal of subjugation. But Glacier goes further by analyzing a Hollywood film – *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* – showing us many ways in which the main characters' behaviours are conceptually the same as the portrayals of Moroccan women she provides us. I do not really understand why the book has 'and Hollywood' appended to the title, since this single film is the example of Hollywood films. While Glacier does a good job deconstructing the antics in the film, demonstrating the ways even Western ways of treating women have strong similarities with the way it happens in Morocco, a single film, used repeatedly, still does not make the monograph an analysis of Hollywood. It is an analysis of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*. A minor quibble, perhaps, but the reader should be aware that most of the book is a close reading of Moroccan literature. That is done quite well.

The most interesting part of this work is the way Glacier takes the theories of women's subjugation and male dominance, and demonstrates the ways these two structures operate in novels from Moroccan writers. Her informants are the characters in fiction, comprising the most famous Moroccan writer, Tahar Ben Jelloun, and about fifty other Moroccan novelists, both male and female, most less familiar to Western readers. For her theoretical foundations, she draws on a wide range of Moroccan social science as well as the French social scientists such as Bourdieu and Foucault.

There are three central sections to this work: A Negated Body, A Negated Intellect, and A Negated Life. A short conclusion provides suggestions for how we can solve the problems of the subjugation and negation of women. In the first section, Negated Body, Glacier begins with the recognition that sexuality remains a male/

masculine domain. Men 'learn that they can demand sex from their partners by any means – the law, an abusive interpretation of religion, psychological coercion, and the whip if necessary' (25). Language supports this structure, through the agency of the penis, which leads to permission for sexual violence. She argues that language is a primary mechanism for maintaining male sexual domination. This includes, of course, the fixation on the sexual conduct of women reflecting family honour. Men are the subject of sex, women the object. Glacier points out that in Moroccan Arabic, it is impossible to conjugate having sex with a female subject. I wondered whether the ways in which English, for example, has changed to allow such female subject conjugations (e.g. she fucked him), has led to any particular liberation. I think not.

In this section, Glacier effectively points out how masculine domination makes the feminine the object of sex, including the fact that the rare female predator feminizes her male victims, making this aberration still reflect male agency. Even with the recognition that 39.3% of men were open to their wives taking the lead in sexual intercourse (from a study by Dyalmy, 34) leaves the majority of men either opposed to this, or unable to assert approval. Sex remains structured as a dominance/submission ritual, even in the West (using examples from *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*). Power penetrates, appropriating female sexuality, even female sexual pleasure. Women serve men, noting a study by Nadia Kadri finding that 43% of women faked orgasm, clearly designed to cater to male accomplishment. Glacier then spends some time on sexual violence by men, the ways it is used by the state, and in war. She describes the torture of Mariam Outmouhine who was told by police officers that 'zeb al-makhzen twil' – 'the penis of the state is long' (44). Glacier rightly points out that 'rape culture will persist as long as sexuality continues to be associated with masculine domination, with an abusive and terrorizing masculine power, with women's subjection, and with a violence suffered through forced penetration and the humiliation experienced by victims' (46). Glacier spends the remainder of the chapter discussing male control of procreation, abortion, and breast-feeding, all of which lead to an impoverishment of the female sense of self. She ends this section with a critique of the beauty myth.

The next section focuses on women's negated intellect through sexual division of labour, misogyny in the public sphere, erasure of public female figures, and demonization of women. She moves then to a critique of the economic subjugation of women, recognizing that the rise in educated females has done little to promote egalitarian workforces, instead producing feminization of unemployment. She next shows the ways the economic system and the sexual division of labour supports prostitution. The chapter is quite effective.

The last main chapter focuses on women's lives, including negative judgment of single women, women as symbolic goods in marriage, and the difficulty that comes to women in the public realm – a world for men. Marriage does not save women, but instead is the mechanism of their appropriation, serving men. Finally, while recognizing the hard-fought reforms in the Family Code, Glacier says this:

In the other Morocco, the one of authoritarianism and socioeconomic disparity, some men need their customary outlet to sleep soundly. They must control their wives and their children, and have absolute reign over their households, because otherwise, without this consolation, they would be crushed under the weight of the high costs of living and terrible work conditions; they would suffer too much from obeying weakly the ruling power in order to survive; and from living fearfully under a sociopolitical order imposed by the lashes of the belt and torture. In an authoritarian regime, the alienated man alienates his wife; inversely, a liberated man would have a liberated wife (159).

Glacier's conclusion, while short, makes recommendations for solving this serious continuing crisis of denying women subjectivity. We need women's input, women's leadership, women's intellects, for our survival. Culture is a terrible excuse for continued oppression of half our species. Democracy will be unattainable until we all recognize what we lose by the negation of women.

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