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CRAFTING LIVES, NEGOTIATING AMBIVALENCE:

LOVE, FRIENDSHIP AND INTIMACY

AMONGST YOUNG WOMEN IN A MOROCCAN BOOMTOWN

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To the girls and the women who have accompanied my days in al-Azaliya, for having shared with me their time, thoughts, stories, secrets, sorrows, fears, desires, hopes and conflicts, as well as listened to mine. I do hope that, somehow, this thesis might live up to their beauty.

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NOTES ON TRANSCRIPTION OF MOROCCAN ARABIC

I have used a simplified version of the ALA- LC Romanisation system (1997) for transcribing words and sentences in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), as well as for those in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic (*darija maghrebiya*) to make the ethnographic quotations consistent. At the same time, however, I tried to respect as much as possible the sounds of Moroccan Colloquial Arabic words and people's personal speech style by transliterating /e/ instead of /a/ for $\text{َ} / \text{ِ}$ when necessary. Furthermore, some of the sounds present in Modern Standard Arabic are missing in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic, and hence I have amended it in the notes of the Table of transcription.

TABLE OF TRANSCRIPTION

Arabic	Name	Standard translit.	Strict translit.	Notes
ا	alif	a	ā	In Moroccan Arabic, this is sometimes pronounced as the / ā / in “father,” and sometimes the /a/ in “mad”.
ب	bā'	b	b	
ت	tā'	t	t	
ث	thā'	th	th	The sequence ث is written t'h. This sound is not present in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic.
ج	Jīm	j	j	
ح	hā'	h	h	
خ	khā'	kh	kh	The sequence خ is written k'h

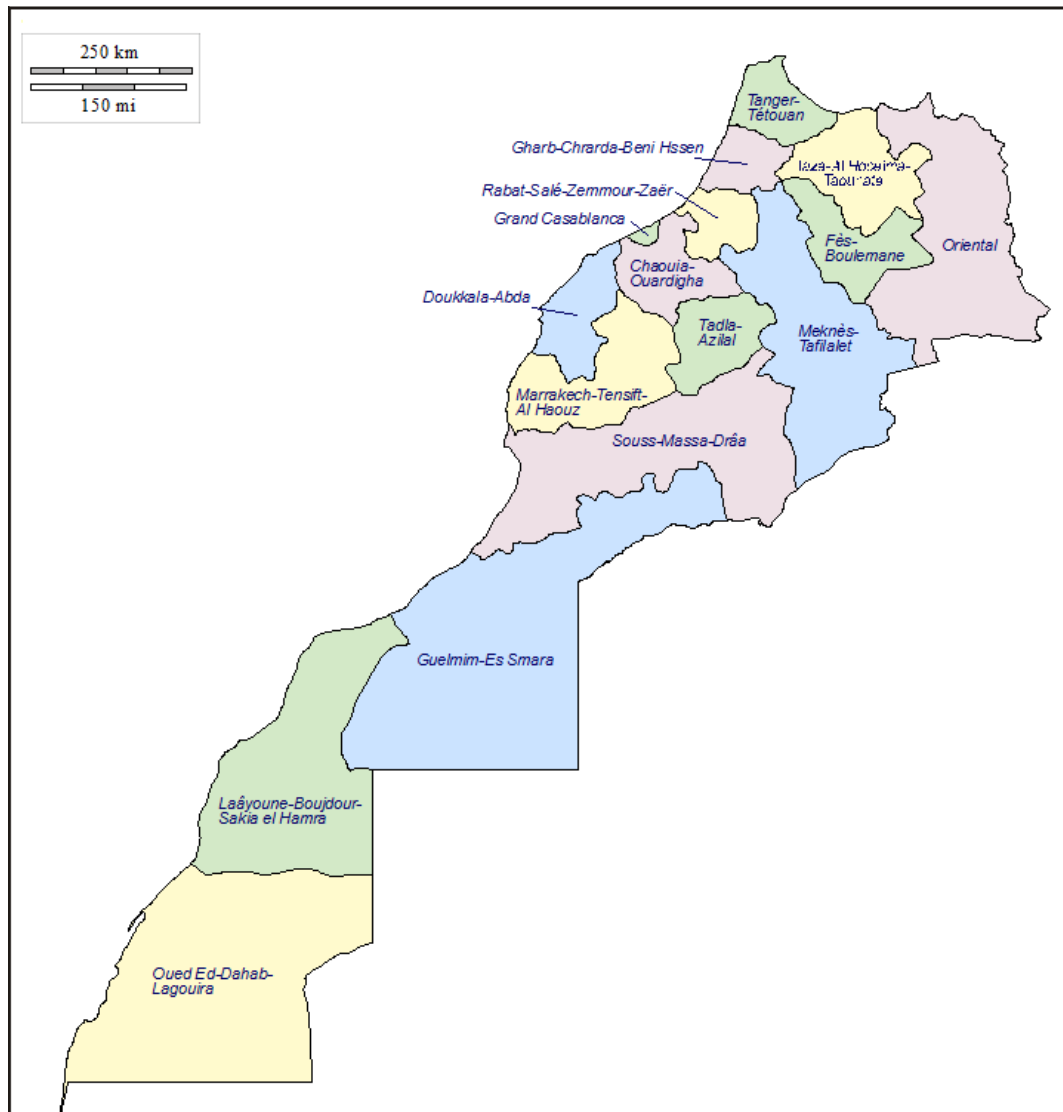
د	dāl	d	d	
ذ	dhāl	dh	dh	The sequence ذه is written d'h. This sound is not present in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic.
ر	rā'	r	r	
ز	zāy	z	z	
س	sīn	s	s	
ش	shīn	sh	sh	The sequence سه is written s'h
ص	sād	s	s	
ض	dād	d	d	
ط	tā'	t	t	
ظ	zā'	z	z	This sound is not present in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic.
ع	'ayn	`	'	Different from hamza
غ	ghayn	gh	gh	
ف	fā'	f	f	
ق	qāf	q	q	Sometimes this is pronounced as /g/ in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic.

ك	kāf	k	k	
ل	lām	l	l	
م	mīm	m	m	
ن	nūn	n	n	
ه	hā'	h	h	
ء	hamzah	'	'	Omitted in initial position
ة	tā' marbūtah	a or at or atan	ah or at or atan	Usually as ah , but sometimes as at or atan .
و	wāw	w	w	
ي	ya'	y	y	
ي	(yā')	iy or i	īy or ī	Romanised īy except in final position.
آ	'alif maddah	a, 'a	ā, 'ā	Initially ā , medially 'ā

Letter representing non-Arabic consonants present in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic:

ف		v	v	
ب		p	p	

MAPS



Map 1 – Morocco, administrative division (Source: D-map)

INTRODUCTION

“Love is a problem in Morocco!”

On a hot afternoon in May 2009, I was strolling with Najat,¹ a bright and sophisticated 23-year-old student, in the main avenue of al-Azaliya, a city of roughly 100,000 inhabitants, situated at the foot of the Moroccan Middle Atlas Mountains. I had arrived in the town a few weeks earlier to carry out field research on transnational migration to Italy and Spain, which has transformed the imaginaries and the everyday lives of its inhabitants since the mid-1980s (Harrami & Mahdi 2006, 2008). Najat was the first girl with whom I became friend and that afternoon we found ourselves sharing our difficulties and troubles. I was grappling with the hot weather and the sense of unfamiliarity with the rules of everyday life there, and trying to work out how to become part of it. Najat was battling with her love troubles. “You know, love in Morocco is a really big problem!”² she commented bitterly. From time to time, she would take off her sunglasses to wipe her misty eyes and fix the wisp of hair that had slipped out from her coloured veil. Unwittingly, I found myself listening to her heart-breaking story, trying somehow to console her. At that time I could not foresee to what extent my involvement in some intimate dimensions of her life would reshape, and eventually entirely shift, the trajectory of my research in such an unpredictable way.

Six months before, Najat had met Si Mohammed, a professional in his mid-30s, whose elegant manners and open-mindedness, she said, had enchanted her from the onset. Overwhelming Najat with lavish attentions and daily calls for a month, Si Mohammed won her trust and they started a relationship. They dated regularly and secretly, exchanging romantic love letters in French, until they decided to arrange an informal meeting with her parents, to whom Si Mohammed declared his intention to marry their daughter. In Najat’s eyes, this proved that he was a serious man (*ma’qul*). Just when she thought that her love story was about to develop into marriage, however, her fiancé became elusive and erratic. Najat had many dreams which indicated that

¹ All the names are pseudonyms. I have also altered the details of life stories and changed the names of the places to protect the identities of the people involved in the research, in order to protect their private lives.

² Fieldnotes, May 17, 2009. Najat speaks Arabic, French and English fluently. The language she chose to talk to me in was English.

another woman had come between them. Even though Si Mohammed denied any involvement, Najat learned through her female networks that her dreams had unravelled the mystery of what was going on.³ Trying to make sense to her fiancé's behaviour, she speculated that his lover must have bewitched him by the use of his sperm.⁴ Being both a modern and religious girl, she explained, she could not rely on the help of a sorceress (*shwefa*) to counter the magic spell. Although she considered his semi-official marriage proposal as a guarantee of his sincere commitment, Najat clarified that she had protected her honour as a "respectable" girl is expected to do.⁵ Si Mohammed continued declaring his love for Najat. Hinting at his problems with his family, however, he said that their marriage "was not written by Allah." Eventually Najat concluded: "Love in Morocco breeds only problems, especially for girls like me. I love him to distraction, like in a novel. But men love in a different way. They don't respect women and think they are superior to them."⁶ Only *praying*, she explained, *praying* and *dancing* could somehow alleviate her suffering.

By introducing me to the slippery world of emotions and destiny, Najat's spiritual and romantic aspirations captured my attention in a way that I could only understand after several months of fieldwork, when I realised that her story was far from being unique. The significance of her personal experience does not rest simply on the insights it provides into the expectations, desires and ambivalences that permeate love relationships in Morocco and their unpredictability. More than the most "private" dimensions of sentiments, indeed, the questions that are relevant to my reflection lay behind and beyond the young women's quest for love and its setbacks: Why has love

³ According to my interlocutors, there are various types of dreams, those engendered by concerns, ruminations and thoughts of everyday life and those that are associated with revelation and considered to be premonitions (*ro'ya*). The latter are produced by the roaming of the soul (*ruh*) which travels around outside the body and may anticipate forthcoming events. On dreams in Morocco, see Pandolfo (1997); on Egypt, see Mittermaier (2010, 2012).

⁴ Fieldnotes, 28 May 2009. Like personal belongings, and bodily substances such as hair, sweat, or spittle, sperm is an ingredient for love filters and potions. Magic (*siher*) is associated with a woman's desires to make a man love her, to be married to him, to harm him for revenge or jealousy and to have control over male sexuality and behaviour (Schaefer-Davis 1983; Kapchan 1996: 236-271; Davis & Davis 1995).

⁵ With this expression, Najat referred to her virginity. The expression '*ndha sharaf*, literally meaning "she has honour/she is a virgin," reveals the intimate bond between female honour and virginity.

⁶ Fieldnotes, 25 May 2009.

become a problem in Morocco? Why is religious vocabulary often mobilised and why is Islam regarded as “the solution”, including for love troubles? In order to answer these questions, this thesis endeavours to disentangle the multifaceted gendered imaginaries and the discourses on love that shape the “politics of intimacy” in a Moroccan boomtown. By exploring the complexities and ambivalences permeating young women’s affective worlds, it focuses on their experiences of love and intimacy that infuse friendship, romance and family ties.

This work is the result of 14 months of ethnographic research carried out in Morocco between 2008 and 2010, during which I shared my everyday life with girls and women of different generations, levels of education and social backgrounds. My intention, however, is more than providing an ethnographic account of young women’s intimate relationships in the contemporary globalised Moroccan landscape. On the contrary, I aim to demonstrate that the study of intimate relationships (romantic love, family affection and friendship) can provide an important contribution to the understanding of the dynamics of subjectivation and agency. Love and intimacy, indeed, are vital sites of self-crafting (Kondo 1990; Moore 1994, 2007), where young women embody dominant gendered practices and imaginaries. At the same time, they craft themselves and their affective worlds by creatively inhabiting the different gendered imaginaries available to them. By dwelling on the complexities and ambivalences that these processes entail, this thesis intends to show that intimate relationships are also critical terrains where the broader social dynamics characterising Morocco nowadays can be investigated, because it is precisely within them that tensions and contradictions become particularly intense. Within intimate and affective relationships, indeed, young women come to terms with the clashes between vast imaginative horizons and the material circumstances in which they lead their complex lives. Imagination and creativity are the means through which they cultivate desires and sensibility that challenge the society where they live. Meanwhile, they experience the tensions between romantic fantasies and moral/material constraints, spiritual and worldly aspirations, as well as between divine destiny and personal agency.

Talking of love in al-Azaliya

Some scholars have defined “romantic love” as a passionate and intense attraction between two individuals, unlike “companionate love,” which instead entails the

sentiment of amity and affection between two persons whose lives are deeply intertwined (Jankowiak & Fischer 1992: 150; Jankowiak 1995, 2008: 13). In my analysis, in contrast, I do not provide an *a priori* definition of “romantic love”; but rather I take it as an ethnographic and theoretical issue (Palilla & Hirsch 2006) and focus on the concrete ways in which this type of love is experienced, imagined, sensed and practiced. So as to grasp the contradictions that the quest for love engenders, I will move the analysis away from a “heteronormative” (Butler 1993) definition of love and situate it alongside and against the other forms of love and attachment that inhabit and shape family ties, friendship and other modes of intimate connectivity. In addition to the relations between the sexes, I will explore how young women build up, cultivate and nourish ties of friendship and intimacy with other girls and women. Alongside the power and authority that mould hierarchical relations amongst women and female relatives, female friendship and same-sex sociability are critical arenas of subject formation and gender performance (Abu-Lughod 1985, 1986, 1993; Osella & Osella 1998).

In Moroccan Arabic, *l-hobb* (Modern Standard Arabic or MSA: *al-hubb*) is the most generic term used when talking of love. Within the impressive range of semantics and vocabulary used to describe various sentiments and states of mind associated with love in Arabic as well as in the Moroccan dialect, *l-hobb* is a polysemic term. It refers to religious commitment to Allah, as well as to romantic love and passion, family affection and amity (Mernissi 2000, 2008). With my queries, however, the polysemy of the term seemed to evaporate, and it appeared to refer implicitly to “romantic love” and premarital relationships. I was intrigued by the multifaceted imaginaries and emotions that the word “love” evoked in my interlocutors. Some women and girls would flush and lower their gaze or smile in complicity as I mentioned it. Others scolded me when I publicly said *habiby* (my beloved one), advising me to use the term *khatiby* (my fiancé), which entails an official engagement, *khotoba*. As in all Muslim countries, in Morocco premarital love liaisons are considered illegal according to Islam and state law. In theory, a man should ask for a woman’s hand in marriage, and afterwards the marriage contract (*‘aqad*) is signed before a notary (*‘adul*). Beyond the normative discourses, daily practices make apparent a more intricate reality where young women navigate the social norms to accommodate personal desires and social expectations. Far from

people's eyes, some girls have secret affairs, exchange SMS messages and calls, arrange dates and have sexual encounters.

In high school and at university, some girls talked passionately about love and their premarital relationships, even in cross-sex groups of friends – which they regarded as a sign of modernity and open-mindedness. In contrast, shy young men and/or deeply religiously committed ones felt ashamed (*key-hsham*) discussing sensitive topics such as love and sexuality in front of a girl (or an older person) because they considered it improper or even an act of fornication (*zina*). Thus, by listening to female and male love talks, I came to realise that the spheres of sexuality and intimacy are variable and the ways in which people discuss love largely depend on the contexts, the situations and the interlocutors. At the same time, the different ways in which young women conceptualised “love” reveal the forms of religiosity and subjectivity that their engagement with different ideas of modernity entailed. Religiously committed girls claimed that premarital romantic love is forbidden (*haram*) by Islam and contrary to morality. For them, love was a gift that Allah sends down on the devout couples who cherish the forming of a long-life union as a sign of His mercy. Meanwhile, they highly esteemed emotional and physical intimacy between the marital couple as something that should be nurtured and cultivated. There were also young women who thought that being veiled and religious did not preclude the yearning for romantic love as part of their being “modern and educated.” At times, my interlocutors contextually mobilised these competing discourses and moved between seemingly conflicting statements in different times and contexts.

While dreaming of romantic love, young women were aware of the dangers of love liaisons and lamented that the problem of Morocco is the dominant “mentality” (*'aqliya*), described as traditional and backward. Even though university educated women recognised the generational gap with their *madrasa*-educated mothers, some of them defined their male peers as “savages”, as they regarded women as a “bit of flesh” rather than a person with sentiments, thoughts and ideas. Unlike the young women who dreamed of romantic love, others interpreted marriage as a union that creates new bonds of kinship between the two families rather than two individuals. They expected love to blossom after marriage and hence tried to be pragmatic and make a “good marriage” instead of relying on an unstable sentiment doomed to “run out in seven years”, as a local saying goes. There were also women who did not invest much in love and instead

enjoyed the money, gifts, items and favours that their boyfriends and lovers provide. Amongst the women who valued female economic independence as of paramount importance, however, some thought that a couple should share the livelihood in a *modern* and *equal* relationship. These competing imaginaries and ideas on love and gender relations led me to raise a set of questions: What are the cultural references of young women? What projects of society lie behind the different ways of understanding intimate and cross-sex relationships? By reflecting upon the role of emotions and passions in contemporary Moroccan society, this thesis aims to uncover the “political dimensions” of sentiments and the ways in which they have become the battleground for competing political projects.

The politics of intimacy

Among the various romantic imaginaries and notions of love, for many young women like Najat the quest for romantic love is laden with promises of happiness and self-fulfilment. In their discourses, “true love” (*le vrai amour*) also epitomises a particular form of “modern sensitivity” in contrast with the relationship based on conjugal duties and habit that, in their eyes, bind their parents. In different ways, the interweaving of love and social change in young women’s narratives reveal the multiple local, national and global forces that shape their daily lives in a town characterised by deep changes.

Over the last three decades in particular, al-Azaliya and its inhabitants have witnessed rapid social, political and economic transformations. Local dynamics of modernisation in the Tadla Plain initiated since the protectorate (1912-1956) have been implemented during postcolonial times, including mass schooling. These long terms dynamics have recently intersected with the processes of market liberalisation and globalisation. In addition, towards the end of his reign, King Hassan II (1961-1999) initiated a process of political opening up, after 30 years of violent repression of all the forces opposed to the regime. The enthroning of his son Mohammed VI in 1999 further fuelled the promises of democracy. This King declared his will to “turn the page” of Morocco’s violent past and announced the beginning of a “new era” (Vermeren 2002). Likewise, he encouraged freedom of speech, human rights and women’s rights, as well as the struggle against illiteracy, poverty and unemployment. While the political “opening up” has fostered great expectations amongst the Moroccan people, neoliberal reforms have continued to enrich business elites and sharpened class divisions and

inequalities (Cohen 2003, 2004; Cohen & Jaidi 2006; Pennel 2000: 340-391; Joffre 2009). Moreover, before the international economic crisis in 2008, transnational migration from the plain of Tadla to Italy and Spain has brought about new paths of upward social mobility for individuals and groups of people. Migrants' remittances and investments have engendered a remarkable economic dynamism and a widespread sense of "rural cosmopolitanism" in al-Azaliya and its surroundings.

These interrelated processes have opened up – even among young women with middle and lower-middle class and poor backgrounds, who are the main focus of this thesis – possibilities of life unthinkable for the generations of their *madrassa*-educated mothers and grandmothers. At the same time, young women experience in their daily lives the complexities and ambivalences that these changes bring about. As I shall show in this thesis, mass education, the search for job opportunities and transnational migration, as well as the use of the internet and satellite television are some of the means by which the young women of al-Azaliya cultivate new orientations, aesthetics and sensitivity. New media technologies available on a large scale by the late-1990s (Mernissi 2004) have contributed to fostering new expectations about love and conjugal life that intersect and compete with local romantic practices and ideals (Davis & Davis 1989, 1995a; Davis, S. 1989; see also Abu-Lughod 1989). In turn, the new ways of thinking about themselves, as well as about their professional and private lives, have become the spaces of complex everyday negotiations.

Notwithstanding the hopes and fantasies that the grand narratives of "true love" bring into the lives of many young women of al-Azaliya, their romantic dreams remain unrealised or turn out to be ephemeral, an illusory ideal that fades away when it comes in contact with "reality." Young women often complain that marrying the beloved one is difficult because love and marriage continue to be thought of as two separate spheres of life in Morocco. Imagined as a pure and elective union between two individuals, love manifests itself in "real life" as a crucial site where competing gender imaginaries and power relations, as well as modes of intimate connectivity seem to collide. Thus the quest for "true love" and premarital romance does not merely clash with the ideology of feelings and ethics of the subject described by my interlocutors as part of Moroccan "customs and traditions" (*adat wa t-taqalid*). Nor is it simply at odds with social expectations about sexuality and ideals of female modesty (Abu-Lughod 1986) without creating moral concerns for reputation. It also collides with a form of "politico-

theological imagination” (Pandolfo 2007) which has reshaped Islamic practices and public discourses on morality in al-Azaliya.

Especially in the last decade, the multiplication of religious channels on satellite television, as well as the courses of Qur’anic recitation for women in the neighbourhood mosques, have all encouraged the spread of Islamic pedagogies and religious teachings for daily life, with a strong emphasis on personal piety (Mahmood 2005). A renewed interest in Islam in everyday life is part of what has been labelled “Islamic Revival,” or more precisely “the Islamic awakening” (*al-sahwa al-islamiya*), that have characterised the Muslim world for the last three decades. In general, the “Islamic Revival” has promoted the search for an “authentic modernity” through the return to “true Islam” and the cultivation of inner virtues, the ethical reform of society and the rejection of “Western values,” as a remedy for moral decadence. The anthropologists Filippo Osella and Benjamin Soares (2009) have proposed the term “Islamic reformism” to cover the currents and positions that have promoted projects of social, moral and political renewal since the 19th century, such as Islamic modernism, Islamism and political Islam. Alongside this definition, which emphasises the historical dimension of the current project of reform as well as its intrinsic variety, I will also use the notion of “Islamic Revival” to refer to the contemporary shape that Islamic practices and discourses take in al-Azaliya. As I will show in this thesis, the “Islamic Revival” has contributed to shifting the meanings of “modernity” and of being a “modern subject” by posing subjectivity, intimate relationships and forms of sociality at the heart of its ethical-political project.⁷ Within reformist discourses, love outside marriage is regarded not only as forbidden according to Islam, but also as *alien* to Moroccan society altogether.

Under neoliberal globalisation and increased tensions between “Islam” and the “West” (Herrera & Bayat 2010: 3), reformist discourses have influenced young women’s sense of self and their political imagination. Enthusiastically engaging with the “Islamic revival,” some young women adhere to the ideals of virtue and piety; others endeavour to accommodate personal desires for spirituality and forbearance with the search for romance and glamour, consumerism and self-realisation, as well as with social expectations and family allegiances. Yet, while the Islamic reformism tries to respond to the anxieties closely connected to social, political and economic transformations, it also produces anxieties and conflicts (Schielke 2009). By conveying

⁷. See also Osella, C. (2012) and Osella F. (forthcoming) for interesting parallels in Kerala.

a normative vision of religiosity and subjectivity, it has worked to marginalise other affective worlds and existential possibilities. Overtly expressing criticism about the contemporary calls for moralisation, some young women speak out against the social control they feel is exercised over their lives and bodies. They recall that, in their parents' time, "hippyism" was the trend and that their mothers donned the *zif* (Moroccan headscarf) only after marriage or later on.

Intricate lives, conflicting subjects: a theoretical perspective

By focusing on intimate relationships and their ethical reform, this thesis intends to contribute to the debate initiated by some anthropologists on the relationships between Islam and subjectivity (Mahmood 2001, 2005; Hirschkind 2001, 2006; Pandolfo 2006, 2007; Osella & Soares 2009; Schielke 2009). In doing so, however, it moves away from the paradigm of self-cultivation, which has dominated the anthropological debate in the last decade, to analyse the intimate relationships and the forms of sociability *within* which the young women I met "craft themselves" (Kondo 1990), as well as rethinking their affective and moral worlds.

In their studies of the "Islamic revival" in Egypt, Saba Mahmood (2001a, 2001b, 2005) and Charles Hirschkind (2001, 2006) have provided compelling insights into the ways in which committed Muslims engage in bodily and sensory techniques to mould a moral self and cultivate individual ethics. In an endeavour to restore the coherence and intelligibility of the motivations and sensibilities animating the "Islamic revival", their studies have opened up a novel debate on the relationships between subjectivity and Islam. In particular, the work of Saba Mahmood has explored the generative pathways of agency and subject-formation through the re-interpretation of Foucault's "technology of the self". In other words, subjectivation is intended not only as the working of power in the formation of the subject, but also as the active making of the self (Foucault 1978, 1980; Butler 1997:2). Specifically, Mahmood does not interpret agency merely as a synonym for resistance to social and patriarchal norms. By analysing how the attendees in the mosque movement mould themselves by submitting to a set of norms instead of subverting them, her aim is to "think about the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consumed" (2005: 23). This theoretical passage is an important contribution to the understanding of agency and self-crafting beyond the dichotomist opposition between "subordination" versus "resistance."

Notwithstanding Mahmood's theoretical sophistication, various scholars (Pandolfo 2007; Osella & Soares 2009; Schielke 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Abenante & Cantini forthcoming) have pointed out that the focus on coherence in the formation of the moral self has ended up smoothing over the ambiguities, conflicts and creative tensions that shape people's lives. As a critical counterpart of this body of literature, some of them have highlighted the frustration that seems to be fostered by the failed promises of the "Islamic revival", and the setbacks that religion may engender in people's lives (Schielke 2009a, 2009b, 2010, forthcoming). Others have described the various ways in which religious vocabulary is mobilised to discuss illegal migration amongst Moroccan youths (Pandolfo 2007), as well as to make sense of the unfilled dreams of love (Menin 2012).

In conversation with these works, therefore, I move the focus of my analysis from the formation of the "moral selfhood" to the multifaceted ways in which young women in al-Azaliya negotiate new orientations and sensibilities *alongside* and *against* the increasing influence of Islamic reformism. My intention is to document the complex ways in which these young women craft their sense of self and their lives by conflating competing, and at times conflicting, subject positions, aspirations and desires. In doing so, they also navigate the social norms and the ambiguities of personal relationships. Besides eliding complexities and contradictions, the specific idea of agency as the intentional cultivation of an ideal self, which informs Mahmood's work, has made invisible the relational dimension of subjectivation and the moral conflicts that it engenders in daily lives. As I will show in this thesis, young women's sense of self is intimately embedded in their worlds of affective and social relationships, which are considered as a source of power and love, nurture and control (Kondo 1990: 10, 22, 34-45).

Intimate relationships (romance, family ties, friendship) are critical terrains for the analysis of the relational and creative dimensions of subjectivation. By shaping competing practices and discourses on love, every society forges various gender norms and imaginaries, as well as sexuated bodies. Far from passively incorporating dominant gender norms, young women creatively inhabit, reflect upon and challenge the ideas of femininity and subjectivity available to them. While documenting the intersection between love and power within intimate relationships, at the same time, my analysis aspires to understand how, within the processes of becoming gendered subjects *in-*

relation-to-others, young women cultivate sensibilities and desires that at times escape the determination of power (Moore 2007).

Various feminist scholars (for instance, McNay 2000: 7-10; Moore 2007) have argued that the Foucauldian paradigm of subject-formation, with its emphasis on the process of subjection and repetition, has often failed to grasp the most creative and imaginative dimensions of agency and self-crafting. In particular, Henrietta Moore (2007: 44-45) has proposed a theory of agency and self-crafting that balances the Foucauldian focus on the positive effects of power – namely, the making of the subject – with a theoretical approach that calls attention to what escapes the determination of power.

Drawing on the contribution of black feminism and post-structuralist theory, Henrietta Moore (1994; 2007) has elaborated a “non-unitary theory of the subject” that conceptualises subjectivity as a site of multiple interlocking differences (see also De Lauretis 1990: 116). According to Henrietta Moore (2007: 17), “Individuals are multiply constituted subjects who take up multiple subject positions within a range of discourses and social practices. Some of these subject positions will be contradictory and conflicting, and individuals constitute a sense of self through several, often mutually contradictory, positions rather than through one singular position.” This definition emphasises the existence of competing and contradictory discourses on femininity and subject positions that are contextually available. Far from being neutral, Moore (1994: 50; 2007: 35) has argued that gendered discourses and practices are hierarchically organised in any given time and place, and hence this means that some of them provide socially sanctioned paths of self-fulfilment and discipline. Whilst these subject positions are produced within the workings of power, difference and ideologies, for Moore these do not determine altogether the individuals’ ways of identification and dis-identification over time (Moore 2007:41). In order to understand how people inhabit and embody, collide with and discard, identify and challenge the subject positions in which they find themselves situated in specific historical circumstances, one needs to account for fantasy, desires and unconscious motivations alongside rationality and strategies (Moore 2007: 41-42; 44-45; see Pinelli 2011 for further ethnographic insights on fantasy).

The attention paid to fantasies, contradictions and multiplicities enables a grasp of the conflicting aspirations and desires that inhabit the sense of self and the everyday life

worlds of young women in al-Azaliya. The particular focus on the “self” that the theories on subjectivation inevitably entail, however, often results in a lack of ethnographic and theoretical attention to the dimensions of relationality and connectivity (see as exceptions, for example Kondo 1990; Abu-Lughod 1986; Joseph 1993, 1994,1999). Even though the relational nature of the selfhood is largely recognised in feminist writings, there is a need to further account for the webs of personal and intimate relationships within which people craft themselves and their lives. As Tom Boellstroff (2005:6) has noted, “Too often discussions of agency assume structures of power against individual “negotiation,” losing sight of how agency is also a transindividual social fact.” By investigating the formations of subjectivity *within* the forms of intimate connectivity and sociability within which their sense of self is embedded, therefore, I aim to enhance the understanding of the ways in which young Moroccan women make choices, as well as coming to terms with material constraints, obligations and social demands. Henrietta Moore (1994: 3) has argued: “The intersubjectivity of experience is not confined [...] to dialogue and to the concrete nature of sociological circumstance. Intersubjectivity is also about identifications and recognitions. It is about desire and the projection and introjections of images of self and others.”

The expressions of ambiguity and contradictions that permeate the biographies and the personal trajectories of the young women I met are inevitable aspects of being part of the webs of intimate and social relationships (Kondo 1990: 26). Dwelling on ambivalence and contradictions is not merely a way to convey the complexities of the process of self-crafting. It also enables further insights into the ways in which people shape their lives in increasingly intricate worlds. This point leads me to the second level of my analysis.

As I have noted above, love – and the various experiences and narratives to which it gives shape – often evokes expectations of personal and social progress (Hirsh & Wardlow 2006; Palilla & Hirsch 2006; Cole & Thomas 2009). Looking at their parents, whose marriage was arranged and in their view “without love,” some young women voice sentiments and desires which they describe as “modern.” In other words, discussing their intimate relationships, young women reflect upon the ways in which broader political, economic and social dynamics impinge upon their lives. In order to investigate these processes, I will endorse a generational perspective and ground my

analysis in the lives and words of different generations of women. Firstly, the notion of “generation” (*jil*) is a vernacular idiom through which the young women I met compare and contrast their personal experiences with those of their mothers. Likewise, they elaborate theories on the self and their personal relationships, on power and their society. Secondly, the notion of generation is also a key theoretical tool for discussing the trajectories of social change. Jennifer Cole and Deborah Lyn Durham have proposed the term “regeneration” to highlight the “mutually constitutive interplay between intergenerational relations and wider historical and social processes” (Cole & Durham 2007: 17).

By grounding the study of social change in the lives and words of women of different generations (girls, mothers and grandmothers), I intend to provide a nuanced and complex image of the past. Despite the “generational gap” between young women, their mothers and grandmothers in relation to the notions and imaginaries of love, indeed, the lives of the previous generations were shaped by important social and economic transformations. Moreover, this level of analysis aims to document the ways in which young women and their mothers construct meanings and practices around the encounters with neo-liberal globalisation and Islamic reformism, as well as the other forces that shape their everyday life-worlds.

Research methodology and positionality

As mentioned above, I went to al-Azaliya to study the implications of transnational migration on people’s everyday lives and gendered imaginaries. During the three-month period that I spent in Meknes in 2008 taking a course of Moroccan Arabic at the university, many people insisted that, if I *really* wanted to grasp the meaning of migration in Morocco, I should go to the Tadla Plain. This is what I did. My accidental involvement in the love troubles and intimate worlds of the young women whom I met in al-Azaliya, however, led me to focus on the tensions and complexities running through their lives.

In addition to the material and historical circumstances in which the research has been carried out, the specific forms that the ethnographic relationships have taken over time and the anthropological knowledge constructed upon them deserve theoretical and methodological attention (see for instance, Abu-Lughod 1986, 1990, 1991; Moore 1994b; Viswesvaran 1994, 2003). The ethnographical encounters in the field are shaped

by the researcher's and her/his interlocutors' positionality, namely the social and embodied positions defined by their "situatedness" in terms of gender, class, sexuality and other axes of social difference (Haraway 1988, 1991). Far from defining fixed and unchangeable positions, the complex ways in which these axes of difference intersect and overlap should be analysed in specific contexts, thus paying attention to the shifting positions one person comes to occupy contextually. As a methodological and theoretical tool, attention to positionality also entails a sensibility towards the power relations between the anthropologist and her/his interlocutors under the political and historical circumstances of their encounters (Mohanty 1990; Abu-Lughod 1993). Besides nationality, gender, social class and age, my theoretical orientations, interests and sensitivity have inevitably situate myself in the field and led me to develop a particular gaze on the object of my enquiry. In discussing my research trajectory and positionality, I will focus on those aspects that facilitate an understanding of the type of knowledge that I have constructed around my interlocutors' words, dreams and practices.

I arrived in al-Azaliya as a foreign PhD student supported by a respected university professor who originated from the Tadla and who found me a host family in the middle-class neighbourhood that I will call *hay el-Mounia*. As I will discuss in more detail (in Chapters 1, 4 and 6), *hay el-Mounia* is born out of the internal migration of state school teachers and *petits fonctionnaires* who benefited from the national policy of mass education and entered the public sector in post-colonial times (Adam 1968; Vermeren 2003; Cohen 2004). Over the last few decades, some families and individuals have migrated to Italy but return during their holidays. After four months, I decided to move to Rabi'a – a low-income district that first took shape as a squatter settlement during the 1950s – so as to have a look at migration from a different perspective. In Rabi'a, two related families hosted me in 2009 and 2010. These people, their closest relatives and social networks, became my "adopted family" (see Chapter 2).

Living with Moroccan families made me aware that some subject positions and social roles were negotiable in different times and contexts, while others were not (Bellagamba 2000; Sacchi 2003). When my position as "special guest" shifted into that of a quasi-family member, I became involved in domestic work, which is a female responsibility. Being part of a family has entailed being subjected to the rules of cross-sex interactions that my hosts considered appropriate for a young woman. Through my involvement in the everyday worlds of these women and girls, I started incorporating

what they considered the “appropriate” modes of inhabiting a space, acting and speaking. Especially through mistakes, misunderstandings and misinterpretations, I developed over time an embodied comprehension and awareness of the social life there (Csordas 1990). Little by little, I moved from the position of a western woman (*gauriya*) to that of “like a Moroccan woman” (*bhal maghrebiya*). Some adult women of the neighbourhood gave up referring to me – when talking to my hostesses – as “that foreigner (*had l-gauriya*)”.

During these first months of fieldwork, I investigated the trajectories of mobility of women and men towards Southern Europe. I started by following the social networks connecting al-Azaliya with the surrounding rural villages. After a successful migration, many migrants from the countryside invest their money in a business or build a house in al-Azaliya as a materialisation of their social mobility. With the help of two female research assistants, I carried out a survey in four neighbourhoods (including the two places where I lived) to collect “raw data” about the housing practices, marriage and family ties, migration and transnational connections of their relatives. This material was very useful in order to grasp the extent to which both internal and transnational migration is embedded in the lives and imaginaries of people in al-Azaliya. At the same time, I quickly realised that collecting information in this way engendered suspicion amongst some interlocutors (see also Schaefer-Davis 1986). With acquaintances and people with whom I developed relationships of friendship, I conducted various in-depth interviews, as well as I had informal conversations in English, French, Moroccan Arabic and Italian – according to the language skills and preferences of my interlocutors. Even though these tape-recorded interviews were of paramount importance, I felt that the most important things I learnt came from sharing an everyday life with the women and girls with whom I built up relations of friendship and closeness. As a *gauriya*, I could access some spaces of male sociability more easily than most of my female friends, as well as cut across class divisions due to my status as an Italian researcher. Yet I was an unmarried woman and this had important implications in the ways I was positioned. At home there and within the social networks, I built up over time, I created the most important ties with women and girls. When I visited the families of migrants in the rural villages or in various districts of the city, the women would point to the men as the “authoritative” voices and sources of information about migration. Once the interview was over, though, I would spend my time with the women, helping to cook and clean, as

well as strolling in the fields, decorating feet and hands with *henna*,⁸ and chatting over a mint tea.

Friendship and trust with some women and girls gave me access to other aspects of their lives and enabled me to grasp their viewpoints on family ties, love and affection. As friends, we became for one another someone with whom to share intimate thoughts and desires, fears and concerns. Thus, I felt that limiting my study to the practices of mobility was making me lose sight on other dimensions of their everyday lives which my interlocutors considered of paramount importance. Therefore, I shifted the focus of my research from migration to the marriage strategies of young women and their families, by paying attention to the ways in which these interwove with their longings for social and geographical mobility. Many girls aspired to marry a migrant so as to migrate to Italy and Spain, but others desired to migrate alone and lead an independent life. In other cases, transnational mobility was not part of their imaginative future. Women's discourses about love, marriage and conjugal relationships helped me to deepen my understanding of the intertwining of migratory strategies and marriage practices. On the other hand, these ideas about romantic love and intimate relationships made apparent other imaginative horizons and trajectories of self-crafting available to the young women in al-Azaliya.

Arguably, an ethnographic study of love involves an "intimate" dialogue between the researcher and her/his interlocutors and hence raises questions about the boundaries between "information", "friendship" and "intimacy." Not necessarily, however, intimacy and friendship were the basis of intimate conversations. Although I always clarified the subject of my enquiry, I realised that, at times, my strangeness allowed the "secrecy" of our discourses. Furthermore, in my interlocutors' eyes, my identity of *gauriya* brought about a set of imaginaries on love, sexuality and gender relations in the "West" writ large. Those girls who projected onto me images and expectations of modernity and freedom would talk overtly about their intimate relationships, asking questions about the sex lives and relationships of the Italian young. In other cases, my identity as a "western woman" was connected to ideas of immorality and sexual looseness, which led some girls and women to draw boundaries between "us" and "them", "Muslims" and "westerners/Christians (*nsara*)", depicted as abstract and

⁸ *Henna* is a natural red dye powder that women use to decorate the feet, hands and head in celebrations (betrothal and marriage) and for their personal appearance.

homogeneous categories. Notwithstanding the power of these imaginaries, establishing ties of friendship and trust with some young women made me realise that these boundaries were more nuanced and negotiable than I had expected.

Putting into words the complexity of my interlocutors' experiences, however, is a tricky task. Lila Abu-Lughod (1993: 7-30) has argued that telling stories is a powerful tool for accounting for the complexities of the lives of flesh-and-bone people, who face setbacks and conflicts, express doubts and confusion, change their minds and make contradictory statements in different contexts and at different times. Besides being an important methodological tool, the use of life stories and personal narratives in feminist anthropological writing (Personal Narratives Group 1989; Shostak 1981; Abu Lughod 1993; Pinelli 2011) has proved to be a critical site for investigating the complex interplays between forms of subjects, agency and power relations. Far from proposing a coherent narrative on love in Morocco, this thesis is committed to contradictions and multiplicities. A single life or story cannot explain everything, but a prism of lives and relationships that I accessed through these ethnographic encounters can provide an "intimate glimpse" into the social, political and economic dynamics characterising "Morocco in transition" (Vermeren 2002).

A note on the "Arab spring"

I left Morocco in autumn 2010. A short time later, protests and demonstrations ran through the Arab world, ending authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. Moroccans demonstrated in support of the Tahrir Square protesters in Cairo, before giving birth to the *Mouvement 20 fevrier* (named after the day on which it began). They claimed equal access to education, health services and upward social mobility, as well as constitutional reform to redefine the role of the monarchy.

In order to break down the protests' momentum, King Mohammed VI announced on television on 9 March 2011 his intention to form a commission for constitutional reform (Benchemsi 2012: 58). Against the backdrop of ongoing social tensions, on 17 June 2011 the King presented the draft of the constitution on television and announced an imminent referendum on 1 July. The activists campaigned to boycott the new constitution because in their view the King apparently transferred part of his political powers to the Prime Minister and the Parliament, while in fact he retained fundamental

economic and political powers.⁹ Yet the Constitution was approved with a 98.7 percent majority. In the November 2011 election, Moroccans voted for the first time for the members of Parliament, who were previously nominated by the King, and the Islamist *Parti de la Justice et du Developpement* (PJD) won 27 percent of the seats.

Unlike other Arab countries, political power in Morocco was not reversed. As Béatrice Hibou (2011) has noted, “le pensable politiquement resterait défini par le *Makhzen*”. While international media celebrated the “Moroccan exception” as the tangible proof of the “democratic transition” under way under Mohammed VI’s reign, the *Mouvement 20 fevrier* voiced discontent and disillusion over the reforms undertaken by the King (Hibou 2011), and called for equal redistribution of wealth and social justice.

Despite the expectations of change fostered by Mohammed VI (Hegasy 2000, 2007), neoliberal globalisation in Morocco has weakened the developmental roles of the state (education, public sector employment and health care), but not necessarily its sovereignty. Instead of diminishing the presence of the state in the social, economic and political life of Morocco, privatisation and liberalisation have increased the power of the monarchy (Bogaert & Emperador 2011; Graciet & Laurent 2012). Far from “turning the page” from the previous style of governance of clientarism and patrimonialism, the King has maintained a parallel government (made up of a new generation of men, mainly school friends and advisors), whose influence pervades political and economic sectors of society (Cohen & Jaidi 2006: 6; Graciet & Laurent 2012).

Perhaps, it may be naive to talk of love, friendship and intimacy when decisive processes of political transition are under way in Morocco as in many other countries in North Africa and the Middle East. As I suggest, however, the sentiments and desires that take shape within the intimate relationships reveal similar tensions and paradoxes. When talking of love, indeed, young women reflect upon the broader process of social change and the ways it impinges on the everyday. Love, indeed, is not simply a powerful moral idiom (Marsden 2007; Schielke forthcoming), an ideal of personal

⁹According to Ahmed Benchemsi (2012:60), journalist founder of *Tequel* and *Nishan*, the electoral process was undertaken not only in a climate of televised propaganda, but also in the total absence of any control of national identity cards. “The Kingdom’s new constitution may look generally liberal, but in fact [it] remains and even strengthens the forces of absolutism and oligarchy.” Moreover, the version in Arabic has maintained the expression *ihitam wa tawaqeer* which refers to those who claim to be the prophet’s descents; furthermore, the annual ceremony to celebrate the sacred figure of the King was held as usual on 30 July 2011.

attachment and subjectivity. In many cases, the quest for love manifests itself as a form of political imagination, namely the hope for a better future, that calls into question the naturalised mechanisms in which Moroccan society works. Notwithstanding the changes promoted by Mohammed VI, my interlocutors' experience is often that intimate relationships are ambiguous spaces which make visible unfilled promises and enduring inequalities. As some young people stated, love, politics and religion continue to be taboo topics in the society where they live.

The Chapters

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first part - entitled "Subjects and personal ties in a changing world" – explores the everyday lives of young women through the analysis of their family and interpersonal relationships against the backdrop of the broader socio-economic transformations that have crossed through al-Azaliya in the last three decades. By grounding my analysis in the words and lives of women of different generations, it describes the ways in which these social changes have contributed to new ways of thinking of themselves and their affective worlds. After having provided a description of the historical and contemporary dynamics of social change in al-Azaliya in *Chapter 1*, *Chapter 2* explores the affective worlds of three women of three generations. Specifically, it focuses on the ways in which they craft themselves *within* family relationships, by moving between different discourses on kinship and marriage. In a generational perspective, the chapter reveals the shift of intimacy and emotional investment from the birth family to the marital bond. Unlike the older generations who depict marriage as an inevitable fate and a break in a woman's life trajectory, many young women think of marriage as a choice and an important site of emotional investment and personal fulfilment, along with the search for professional and self-realisation. Far from following a linear trajectory, the chapter shows how these transformations are laden with contradictions and moral dilemmas in the lives of young women.

Chapter 3 investigates the everyday micro-practices of trust, closeness and intimacy through which young women and their mothers create personal ties and social networks. While many studies have focused on the various relationships with kinswomen (uterine or affine), this chapter focuses instead on two types of bonds that women choose to create and maintain with other women: friendship and milk kinship. The comparison

between mothers and daughters reflects important changes in the forms of sociability and the construction of personal bonds. Nowadays, indeed, intense female networks and ties contend with the rise in importance of conjugal intimacy and the marital bond. While milk ties have become undesirable for various reasons, the erosion of female networks and neighbourly bonds engenders a sense of fragility. Unlike their mothers, young women long to build cross-sex friendships and forms of alliances with their male peers with whom they share important dimensions of everyday life.

The second part of the thesis, entitled “Sensibility and sociability under reform”, focuses on the ways in which the “Islamic revival” promotes the return to “true Islam” through the reform of the self, personal and social ties, as well as of forms of sociality. It proposes a nuanced analysis of the engagement of young women and their mothers with the “Islamic awakening” in al-Azaliya, by illustrating the various ways in which they negotiate their desires, subjectivity and emotional worlds alongside and against changing Islamic ideas and practices. In particular, *Chapter 4* analyses the role of television in providing access to multiple imaginaries through which young women construct a new kind of religious subjectivity, trying to reconcile the desire to be fashionable and religious, cool and pious. On the one hand, entertainment and news programmes, films and soap operas, accompany the rhythm of their daytime, by circulating romantic imaginaries, as well as different gender models and images of possible lives. On the other hand, the proliferation of religious programmes makes Islamic knowledge and practices available to them. In accounting for the way in which a new religious horizon has slipped into everyday life, I describe how women and girls use images and vocabularies conveyed by satellite television to rethink about themselves and their life-worlds.

Chapter 5 provides an ethnographic account of the discourses and practices that are circulating within a mosque movement as well as of the relationships of amity engendered by sharing the same spiritual path. By focusing on the relationality of the piety, it aims to illuminate the socio-political dimensions of the mosque movement that I attended. Secondly, it looks into the sense of discontent that religious activism generates amongst diverse people, by discussing the “secular” and “progressive” positions held by other women, and their viewpoints on the “Islamic Revival.” While the mosque movement attendees represent the present both in terms of spiritual progress and as a return to the authentic past, some other women regard these movements as a

“virus” infecting Moroccan society and as a danger for women’s freedom and rights. The chapter shows to what extent the language of authenticity has continued to be a normative frame of reference since the time of the colonial debate on the definition of an “authentic modernity”.

Chapter 6 discusses the local politics of leisure and explores the problems of having fun in a society where the demands of restraints and forbearance are at the forefront. While a large body of literature has recently focused on the problems of how to lead a pious life in a world of global consumerism and western modernity, this chapter investigates the search for fun and diversion by Sanaa, a young woman with a middle class background, and her mixed group of friends. It argues that the consumption practices of this group of people, their search for fun and the desire for a life elsewhere are elements of social distinction and self-making. At the same time, they are ephemeral practices to balance the fragility of the present and the uncertainties of the future, which in fact reflect the loss of power affecting the middle classes.

The third part, entitled “Romantic love, powers and ambivalence”, discusses young women’s imaginaries and experiences of love, romance and sexuality by focusing on the micro-practices through which the dangers of physical and emotional intimacy are described and handled. Specifically, *Chapter 6* revolves around the narrative of Ghislan, a professional woman in her 30s, showing how she moves through multiple discourses on the self, love and social change in Morocco to reflect upon her emotional life. Against the backdrop of the perceived corrosive effects of Western modernity, the chapter shows how the idea of a “purified Islamic modernity” provides Ghislan with a religious vocabulary through which she relocates and recomposes the contradictions and unfulfilled promises that run through her intimate life. In doing so, it draws attention to two competing narratives on modernity and subjectivity within which the story that she tells about her life takes shape.

Finally, *Chapter 7* engages with the “quest for *true* love” of a group of young people (men and women), by focusing on the forms of subjectivity and sensitivity that it makes possible (and impossible). Not only does love open up a reflection about the self, but it also contributes to the articulation of a social critique that denounces injustice and power relations. Exploring the manifold places where young people search for love (far away from the neighbourhood, among friends, in the occult, on the internet), I show that this quest reveals itself as a dangerous adventure along the thin lines between the visible

and invisible, agency and destiny, personal desires and social constraints. The various ways in which young people navigate the social norms also demonstrate that the search for love is not necessarily based on progressive assumptions nor does it entail an open criticism of power.

PART ONE

**SUBJECTS AND PERSONALITIES
IN A CHANGING WORLD**

CHAPTER 1

AL-AZALIYA

1.1. Social change and everyday life

Leaving behind the Atlantic coast, with the white fortified city (*qasba*) and modern buildings of the capital Rabat, the coach travels for five hours towards the Middle Atlas Mountains of Central Morocco, along a road dotted with villages and towns and flanked by the cultivated wheat fields of the Chaouia-Ouardigha Plain. From time to time, it stops at the coach stations in the main towns. A few beggars climb on board to ask for alms, while the vendors show the travellers their wares: chocolate and snacks, wipes and natural products with therapeutic properties. As the journey proceeds, the Phosphate Plateau appears on the horizon like an immense expanse of yellow hills and arid steppes. The palm trees lining the modern streets of Khuribga seem like a mirage in this lunar-type landscape. Built during the French Protectorate (1912-1956) as the administrative centre of the Phosphate Plateau, Khuribga has now become a city for emigration to Italy (see Capello 2003, 2008). Gradually, this arid scenery turns into a geometric sweep of irrigated farmland. When the high peaks of the Middle Atlas Mountains fill the horizon, it is a sign that the coach is approaching the city of al-Azaliya.

Al-Azaliya is one of the medium-sized towns located in the fertile Tadla Plain, which is part of the administrative region of Tadla-Azilal. The Tadla-Azilal is a diversified ecological area inhabited by arabophone and Berber *tamazigh* populations extending from the Tadla Plain to the Middle Atlas Mountains, Central Morocco (A.a. V.v. 1992). For the inhabitants of the big cities – the centres of cultural, economic, religious and political life in Morocco – the Tadla is *l-'arobiya dyal talien*, namely “the countryside of those who migrated to Italy.” Since the mid-1980s, this vast agricultural region has become the epicentre of the mobility trajectories of men and women going to Italy and to Spain, and hence transnational migration has become a defining feature of al-Azaliya and its surroundings (Jacquemet 1999; Harrami 2002a, 2002b; Harrami & Mahdi 2006, 2008; Harrami & Zmou 2010; Menin 2011). Far from indicating simply an ecological area, this expression also evokes an imaginative “hierarchy of places,” where

the term *l-'arobiya* stands in opposition to the notion of *madaniyyah* (civilisation), derived from the term *medina* (city). In everyday conversations, the term *l-'aroby*, which literally means “peasant”, is used to designate uncouth manners and an uneducated person (see also Persichetti 2003).

Historically, the city of al-Azaliya has developed around the fortified town (*qasba*) and the old city (*medina l-qadima*), which together continue to be the heart of the artisan and commercial life of the town. Alongside the “new city” (*la ville nouvelle*) built for the French in colonial times¹⁰ are the neighbourhoods born out of the inward migration of civil servants (*petits fonctionnaires*) and school teachers during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the poor districts that have taken the place of the shantytowns (*bidonvilles*). Nowadays, amongst the villas of professionals and senior civil servants one can find modern houses built by the newly-rich, in other words the successful migrants. In the past three decades, in fact, transnational migration has deeply affected the local economy and the everyday lives of young people and their families (Troin & Berriane 2002; Harrami & Mahdi 2006, 2008). Besides the migrants’ remittances and investments, businesses have been set up by many returnees who aspire to make their way up through the local hierarchies. The exotic names *Caffè Milano* and *Pizzeria Venisia* embody fragments of Europe within the city, and images from abroad circulate on national TV programmes such as “My country” (*Blady*) and “The stars of migration” (*Noujoum Al-Hjra*) (Harrami 2002a, 2002b). Yet it is especially during the summer holidays that migrants arrive in Morocco in their cars with Italian and Spanish number plates. They bring with them stories, articles and images from abroad that contribute to the imaginative construction of “the outside” (*l-brra*) (Elliot 2011; Menin 2011). In addition to migration and the transnational connections binding this region to South Europe, “the outside” has intruded into the lives and imagination of the inhabitants of al-Azaliya through the hundreds of satellite dishes installed on the rooftops from the 1990s onwards. Likewise, internet points (*cyber*), always crowded with young men and women, have mushroomed in every corner of the city.

¹⁰ The first Resident-General Hubert Lyautey promoted the modernisation of Morocco at the same time as preserving its past. For instance, he preserved the architecture of the *medina* for the Moroccans, and built the new city for the French colonials, civil servants and officials, as well as for the urban Moroccan elite. On the symbolic and geographical boundaries in the city of Sefru in relation to ethnographic research, see Rabinow (1977).

In the modern sectors of al-Azaliya, there are several cafés frequented exclusively by men and boys, from which “respectable” women keep their distance. Yet in a few youth cafés and snack bars, girls can meet their friends and the couples can arrange secret meetings thanks to the mobile phones that have become affordable since the 2001, when competition amongst telecommunication companies reduced the prices considerably (Bowen et al. 2008: 227). In front of the maxi-screens in the cafés, young people gather to watch football matches and seductive Lebanese and Egyptian pop stars singing passionate love songs. The radios of the yellow cabs (*petit taxis*) and Mercedes cars that run back and forth throughout the city play the songs of the popular singer Shakira as well as the recorded Qur’anic recitations and cassette sermons that compose the “ethical soundscape” (Hirschkind 2006) of the city. In the narrow lanes of the *medina*, as well as in the modern avenues, women dressed in the Moroccan *jallaba* walk side by side with fashionable girls who have started donning the veil on the wave of “the Islamic awakening.” Young people strolling in same-sex groups give rise to games of gazes and seduction, courtship and romance kept secret from other people’s eyes.

This brief overview provides an insight into the social life and atmosphere of the city where I conducted my fieldwork in 2009 and 2010. Like in other medium-sized towns in the Tadla, the encounter with transnational migration, globalisation, neo-liberalism and Islamic reformism in the past three decades has turned al-Azaliya into a town fraught with contradictions. By tracing of history of al-Azaliya from the 1930s to the present, this chapter aims to provide a description of the historical and contemporary dynamics that have shaped the biographical trajectories and imagination of the young women, their mothers and grandmothers. In particular, I will focus on the local, national and global forces that touch on the young women’s everyday life-worlds, by shaping the ways in which they reflect on themselves and imagine their future.

1.2. The Tadla under the French Protectorate (1912-1956)

As the architectural structure of the city testifies, transnational migration in the Tadla is only a recent, albeit pervasive, phenomenon. Since the mid-1930s, al-Azaliya and the lives of its inhabitants have been profoundly affected by the colonial presence in the region and its aftermath. From the early years of the French Protectorate (1912-1956),¹¹

¹¹ The Sultanate of Morocco was under the French-Spanish Protectorate between 1912 and 1956. More precisely, the Fez Treaty (30 March 1912) established two areas of colonial

indeed, the Tadla Plain was the focus of colonial economic and political interests. Within the colonial mapping by the first Resident-General, Louis Hubert Lyautey (1919-1925), this region was included under the category of *le Maroc utile*, which indicated the fertile and cultivable lands, as well as the areas rich in water, forests and mineral resources (Vermeren 2002). The historian Richard Pennell (2000: 171) has argued: “As a first step, roads, rivers, beaches, collective tribal lands and forests were turned into *makhzen* propriety. Then in August 1913 a *dahir* [decree] established procedures for registering private lands”.

Despite the resistance of the local population, the Tadla Plain was brought under control in 1934. The main tribal groups who populated the plain, namely the Beni Amir and the Beni Moussa, were “fixed to the soil” through the geometrical division of their territories along tribal lines and divisions (Prefol 1986: 26-29). In 1936, the French Protectorate promoted the modern agricultural sector in the Tadla through the development of a system of irrigation and intensive agricultural production (Prefol 1986; Swearingen 1987), as well as encouraging the agribusiness industry. In the eyes of the colonisers, the Tadla Plain embodied the agrarian dream of the “African California.” In other words, the climate, longitudinal location and water sources of Morocco, and of this region in particular, made it akin to California in the eyes of the colonisers (Prefol 1986; Swearingen 1987: 59-77). Within the *politique des berrages* initiated in 1927 by the second Resident-General, Théodor Steeg (1925-29), the protectorate started the construction of a dam in Kasbah Tadla. When it was completed in 1932, the dam was able to irrigate three perimeters of 45,000 hectares of the Beni Amir Plain. Over time, the perimeters were extended further, through the development of a canalisation system in the Beni Moussa territory for the growth of intensive agriculture for export (Prefol 1986; Troin & Berriane 2002). In addition to wheat and barley, new crops were introduced, such as cotton, corn, alfalfa, legumes, vegetables and arboriculture.

The Moroccan anthropologist Mohamed Mahdi (2000:15) has argued that French colonisation – more than postcolonial development and modernisation – triggered intense processes of transformation of the countryside during the last century. As in

influence, and as a result the French ruled South and Central Morocco and moved the capital from Fez to Rabat, whereas Western Sahara and the Rif (Northern Morocco) became subject to Spanish control.

other regions of Morocco, the development of the agricultural sector in the Tadla had important implications. Not only did the protectorate's intervention overturn the social, political and economic organisation of the local population through the expropriation of their collective land, but also it created a binary and asymmetrical economy in the region. Alongside the modernised capital-intensive sector for export to France and then to the European market, the small peasants (who were and are the majority) relied on the subsistence agriculture based on a work-intensive economy (Joffré 2009: 157). With the development of a modern agriculture, the French Protectorate established the administrative, transport and commercial sectors in the main towns of the Tadla. Indeed, the protectorate created the *Office de l'Irrigation* (the Irrigation Office), and the *Office de Mise en Valeur Agricole* (the Agricultural Development Regional Office) to manage the irrigation system as well as the *Office des Affaires Indigenes* (Offices of Indigenous Affairs) to manage relations with the local populations. In their attempt to turn cattle and sheep ranchers and occasional farmers into "intensive farmers" (Prefol 1986: 71-78), the French colonial officials imposed the "modern agricultural techniques" on the local people of Beni Moussa and Beni Amir. On the other hand, the promotion of irrigated agriculture and the creation of an agribusiness industry (in other words, three sugar factories) favoured inward mobility in the Tadla, which has continued for several decades in the post-colonial period.

1.3. From post-colonial nation-building to neo-liberalism

Morocco formally gained its independence from the French Protectorate on 12 March 1956 with the abolition of the Treaty of Fez. Before that, the *Sultan*, Mohammed V, secured Moroccan independence with the Accord of La Celle-Saint-Cloud (1955) and returned to Morocco on 16 November 1955 from his two-year exile in Madagascar. On that occasion, the King was acclaimed by the nationalists as the symbol of the unity of *Islam, malik, watan* (the King, Islam and the nation) (Vermeren 2006: 11; Zaghali 2008: 24). From the 1920s, indeed, Morocco witnessed the formation of the nationalist movement that opposed to the French Protectorate and its attempts to fuel divisions by fragmenting the population into "Berbers" and "Arabs" in order to break down potential unrest.¹² The Moroccan *salafiya*¹³ was an important ideology and a powerful means of

¹² For instance, through the *dahir Berber* (16 May 1930) the French established two areas that would be subject to Berber customary law and Islamic law respectively (Vermeren 2006: 10-

political mobilisation against the French Protectorate as a threat to Morocco and its Islamic identity. In 1944, the nationalist leader Allal al-Fassi (1910-1974) formed the Istiqlal Party (the Independence Party), which became a leading force in the struggle for independence. Despite the presence of the Alawite dynasty since the 17th century, far from being concentrated in the *makhzen* (the government, administration, authority) political power in Morocco was contested by multiple political and social forces. Various scholars (Hibbou 2006; Vermeren 2002, 2006) have claimed that the French Protectorate that contributed to the strengthening of the Kingdom by enforcing the religious and political authority of the Sultan and the *makhzen* against the entrenched social and political forces that have characterised Morocco. The legitimacy of the Kingdom was further consolidated by the claim of descent from the Prophet, which means that the King is thought of as possessing *baraka*¹⁴ (blessedness) and which granted Mohammed V both religious and political leadership in post-colonial nation-building (Zeghal 2008: 9). During the early years of independence, the struggle for political power between the nationalist Istiqlal party and the King Mohammed V (1956-1961) was particularly intense. Mohammed V was able to impose his political hegemony against the Istiqlal, by mobilising the entrenched social and political components of the political system in Morocco (e.g. the notables and the *'ulama*, the religious authorities). As well, he fuelled the contradictions within the National Movement and eventually dismantled the *Armée de la libération Marocaine* (Moroccan Liberation Army, abbreviated as ALM). After having included the conservative forces of the Istiqlal, the King was confronted by its left wing that formed an independent party in 1969, *l'Union National des Forces Populaires* (UNFP). When Mohammed V died in 1961, his son Hassan II (1961-1999) enacted the first Constitution (1962). Under the pressure of both the nationalist and socialist forces, the first Constitution established a parliamentary monarchy and introduced a formal multiparty political

11). The nationalists opposed such interventions as a threat to the unity of Morocco and its Islamic identity.

¹³ The term *salafiya* derives from *salaf*, namely the first three generations of pious ancestors in the history of Islam, comprising the companions of the Prophet Mohammed. Beginning in the 18th century, *salafiya* rested on the various religious reforms undertaken over different historical times and contexts that advocated the return to the written texts of the Qur'an and the Sunna (the words and deeds of the Prophet). Under the influence of the two main centres of religious reforms, Arabia and Egypt, the *salafiya* developed in Morocco between the 19th and 20th centuries (Zaghal 2005, 2008; Pennel 2000: 141-142).

¹⁴ For a discussion of religious and political power in Morocco, see Geertz 1968; Waterbury 1970; Munson 1993. On the Muslim Brotherhood, see Eickelman 1976.

system. At the same time, it granted the King fundamental political, military and religious roles (Pennel 2000; Charrad 2001; Vermeren 2002). The King was given the charge of appointing the Prime Minister, chairing the Cabinet and heading the army, but most importantly, the Constitution institutionalised the inviolability and his “sacredness” and his role as “Commander of the faithful” (Art. 19).

Despite the opposition of the *Istiqlal* and the *Union National des Forces Populaires* (UNFP), Hassan II succeeded in establishing an authoritarian constitutional monarchy tightly linked to Islam, by fragmenting its political opponents and by mobilising his patronage networks (Vermeren 2006:19-30; Pennel 2000: 297-316; Tozy 1999; Zeghal 2008: xiii). Throughout his reign (1961-1999), Hassan II further shored up the fragility of his power through the abusive use of state violence. The chapter of Moroccan postcolonial history spanning between 1963 and 1991¹⁵ has come to be known as *les années de plomb* (the Years of Lead).

Against the backdrop of the political turmoil following independence, the population of al-Azaliya has been growing significantly due to continuous inward migration in the Tadla (Couvreur-Laraichi 1973; *Recensement General de la Population et e l'Habitat* 1982, 1994, 2004). After the departure of the French opened the public sector to Moroccans, professionals from Marrakesh, Meknès and Fez moved to al-Azaliya to enter the top echelons of the public sector due to the lack of a cultural elite trained in the modern French school system (Couvreur-Laraichi 1973). The majority who entered the public sector in post-colonial times, however, were *petits fonctionnaires* and schoolteachers who had benefited from the national policy of mass education. Despite their humble backgrounds, these *diplomés* could climb the social ladder thanks to modern education, which was the central mechanism for social mobility (Vermeren 2003). Between the 1960s and 1970s, several modern districts were built in al-Azaliya to provide housing for these *petits fonctionnaires* and schoolteachers (Couvreur-Laraichi 1973). Besides the job opportunities opened up by the public sector, many people migrated to al-Azaliya after having left their villages in the countryside and the mountains to flee famine or in search of a better life in what appeared at that time as a modern boomtown. The poorest migrants built huts (*dwallas*)

¹⁵ In 1963, the King attempted to dismantle the leftist components of the UNFP through arbitrary arrests and violent repression. From the 1965 to the early 1990s, both Marxist-Leninist activists and Islamist groups faced violent repression by the *makhzen* (Slymovic 2005).

made of soil and straw in the slums (*bidonvilles*) that mushroomed around the outskirts of the city. These peripheral districts have been replaced by low-income neighbourhoods over time and progressively integrated into al-Azaliya through a new urban plan (*nouveau plan urbain*).¹⁶

During the formative postcolonial period, in al-Azaliya as elsewhere in Morocco, development policy and nationalist ideology promoted the formation of a modern and urban middle class through education (Adam 1968; Cohen 2004). Yet access to the public sector was almost saturated in a decade and so the state enacted an Education Reform programme (1965) to restrict access to secondary school education. In the context of a political and economic crisis, the education reform led to the uprisings of 1965. Between 23 and 25 March 1965, students, unemployed graduates (*diplômés-chomeurs*) and the poor dwellers of the slums of Casablanca protested against their plight. The riots were violently repressed by the state and hundreds of people were killed, imprisoned or disappeared (Vermeren 2006: Ch. 4 and 6; Slymovics 2005). In such a tense political climate, Hassan II declared a state of emergency that lasted until 1970, during which all political activities (in the parliament, as well as in trade unions) were formally interdicted. Afterwards, the *makhzen* (the government, administration, authority) attempted to create a new political alliance and the enactment of a new Constitution in 1970, yet two failed coups against the King (in 1971 and 1972) further destabilised the political system, and thus Hassan II had to reaffirm national consent (Vermeren 2006: 68-9). Faced with increasing discontent over royal policies and financial crisis, in 1973 the King promoted the “Moroccanisation” of foreign properties and industries, which required a majority of Moroccan ownership of foreign banks, industry and trading companies. Furthermore, Hassan II launched the “Green March” in 1975 with an impressive demonstration of around 350,000 Moroccans, in order to reoccupy Western Sahara, which was still under Spanish rule, and bring it under the unity of Islam and the Moroccan Kingdom. Despite the symbolic power of this military enterprise, it was extremely expensive and led to a worsening of the economic situation in the short term. In order to deal with the economic crisis, therefore, in 1981 the government announced a rise in the prices of basic products in accordance with the dictates of the World Bank. People’s demonstrations in Casablanca were violently put

¹⁶ In the region of Tadla-Azizal, the level of urbanization was 33.9 % in 1994 and 36.5 % in 2004 (*Recensement Général de la Population et de l’Habitat 1994-2004*).

down by the state and repression against the left-wing activists – accused of having stirred up the upheavals and undermining the national security – started again. This period was also the watershed in the national economic policy. Indeed, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank then imposed on Morocco the Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) from 1983 to 1993. The SAP compelled the government to carry out neoliberal reforms in the institutional, legal and social sectors, thereby ending the post-independence economy of domestic protection. In Morocco, the economy mainly relied – and still does – on tourism, migrants’ remittances and phosphates. Thus, the consequences of the economic neoliberal reforms – for instance, cutting social services, healthcare and education – together with market liberalisation have had significantly affected the middle-classes (Cohen 2003, 2004) as well as catastrophic impacts on poor and low-income families (Joffré 2009: 160). Thus, instead of reducing poverty, the “open-door policy” has worsened the living conditions of the poor and increased the divide between the elites and the middle classes by reducing the real possibility of social mobility (Cohen 2003, 2004; Cohen & Jaidi 2006).

Under the difficult economic circumstances that Morocco was facing in the 1980s, drought and famine between 1979 and 1984 fostered a rural exodus throughout the country. Notwithstanding the political and economic crisis in Morocco, the population of the urban centres and the irrigated perimeters of the Tadla had continued growing, due to inward migration, until the 1970s. In the 1970s, however, the crisis of the non-irrigated agricultural sector (*bur*) led to increasing tensions in the area. Due to the cuts imposed by the Structural Adjustment Plain, the privatisation of the agricultural sector and the disengagement of the state, the Tadla Plain could no longer integrate incoming migration flows (Harrami & Mahdi 2006).

1.4. Transnational connections and global fantasies

One important consequence of the liberalisation of the agricultural sector was the development of agricultural credit and demands for payment before the harvest, imposed by the *Office Régional de Mise en Valeur Agricole* (Ceslovi 2007: 6). The immediate need for cash and the lack of job opportunities led many people, including fathers with a family to maintain, to migrate to Italy from the countryside as well as from the main towns of the region (Harrami & Mahdi 2006). According to several scholars (for instance, Kharoufi 1983; Dal Lago 1994; Frisina, Gandolfi & Schmidt di

Friedberg 2004; Harrami & Zmou 2010), migration from the Tadla Plain developed thanks to the proximity of the Beni Meskin. The Beni Meskin is a group of cattle ranchers originating from Settat who have practised transnational mobility to Italy outside any institutional channels since the late 1960s. After having collected money through agricultural and other seasonal jobs in Italy, some migrants returned to Morocco to invest the gain of their migration in the Tadla. The anthropologistes Noureddine Harrami and Mohammed Mahdi (2006:39) has pointed out that “Les signes de richesse manifestés, à leur retour, par ces migrants qui occupaient la couche la plus basse de la hiérarchie sociale locale sont devenus dans la région la preuve irréfutable de l’existence d’un *El Dorado* dans l’autre rive de la Méditerranée.”¹⁷ Apart from creating an imaginary of Italy as a land of possibility, their presence in the Tadla has favoured the circulation of information germane to the establishment of migratory chains. From being a city of inward migration due to the development of the agricultural sector in the 1930s, in the last two decades documented and undocumented migration (*harraga* from the verb *haraq*, ‘to burn’) to Italy and Spain has become a prominent phenomenon (de Haas 2007; Harrami & Zmou 2010).

Besides promoting a widespread sense of “rural cosmopolitanism” (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan 2003), in the last two decades, migration (*hijra*) has favoured economic dynamism in the Tadla, whose economy is mainly based on agriculture and the agribusiness industry, cattle and sheep breeding, commerce and handicraft (including carpentry, pottery, tannery and weaving). The migrants’ remittances, their investment in land and construction, in agriculture development and local business, have contributed to the rapid growth of al-Azaliya, as well as to urbanisation of the countryside.¹⁸ By turning fortunate farm workers into landowners and poor but ambitious youths into local businessmen, migration has also enabled new trajectories of social mobility and transformed the local hierarchies of status. Long regarded as a “male enterprise,” with important consequences for the women and children who stay behind (Sadiqi & Ennaji 2004, Sadiqi 2008), migration in the Tadla Plain has increasingly become an aspiration also for many women and girls since the last decade (Harrami & Zmou 2010).

¹⁷ “The signs of wealth that these migrants, who had occupied the lowest level of the local social hierarchy, manifested on their return became regarded in the region as irrefutable proof of the existence of an El Dorado on the other side of the Mediterranean” (My translation).

¹⁸ Noureddine Harrami, Colloque, Ecole Doctorale de Meknès, 15 December 2008.

Thus, transnational migration towards Southern Europe has become a critical dimension of the local fantasies and everyday lives of the young in al-Azaliya (as I will discuss in detail in Chapter 6). The fashionable items, clothes and electronic devices that migrants bring with them in their summer holidays (Salih 2003), as well as the second-hand European commodities available in the local weekly market are material reminders of the lure of “the outside” (*l-brra*). From the rural areas to the main towns of the Tadla, migration embodies the dream of a better life for many young people. Unskilled workers and unemployed university graduates (*bitalyin*), who feel they are excluded from any trajectory of social mobility that was once opened up by education,¹⁹ think of migration as the concrete possibility of “building their own future” (Menin 2011, forthcoming; see also Capello 2009). Yet the very possibility of achieving their dreams clashes with the many barriers that prevent their mobility and therefore fosters a sense of frustration and exclusion. Especially after the international security policies promoted in the post-9/11 world, in fact, crossing the European-Moroccan borders has become increasingly difficult and hazardous for aspiring migrants. Not only have the borders beyond the European Union territories been dislocated, externalised and militarised on the basis on bilateral agreements between Spain and Morocco; the European Union has also provided the borders with information systems for detecting “illegal” migration, thus turning their territorial boundaries into “digitised border zones” (Broeders 2007). For instance, Spain has created the Integral System of Exterior Surveillance to detect people smugglers and clandestine migration along the Spanish-Moroccan borders (see Carling 2007a, 2007b).

On the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, Morocco has actively contributed to border control. Within the international political arena, Morocco’s ability to detect illegal border-crossing has become a critical dimension of its diplomatic and economic relationships with the European Union. The recent Moroccan migration law (02/2003) enacted against the backdrop of the European Union’s increased concern after the 16

¹⁹ In Morocco the unemployment rate in 2010 was 31.3 % amongst urban educated people aged from 15 to 24 and 19.1 % amongst those aged from 25 to 34 years old (*Royaume du Maroc, Activité, emploi et chômage 2010*). There are no comparable data available in relation to the region of Tadla. According to the *Royaume du Maroc, Activité, emploi et chômage 2010*, the rate of unemployment in the administrative region of Tadla-Azilal was 11.5% among the population from the age of 15. In the urban centres, the rate of unemployment among young people aged between 15 and 24 was 18.8 % and amongst those aged between 25 and 34 it was 17.7 % but significantly higher (about 20%) amongst the educated (*Enquête Nationale sur l’Emploi. Direction de la Statistique 2009*).

May 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca, restricts the criteria for legal entry into Morocco. At the same time, it has strengthened the sanctions against undocumented migrants crossing the Moroccan frontiers illegally and against smugglers.²⁰ Increasingly restrictive migration policy ambivalently overlaps with the Government's efforts to consolidate its ties with the Moroccan diaspora in Europe and to institutionalise²¹ migration through the establishment of research Institutes and Ministries, such as the *Ministère Délégué Chargé de la Communauté Marocaine Résidant à L'Etranger*.

In addition to the enactment of a restrictive migration policy and transnational border control, the global crisis that started in 2008 has had important consequences for both migrants and aspiring migrants. On the one hand, the lack of job opportunities and precarious working conditions in Italy and Spain have severely affected the lives of migrants and the families who rely on their remittances, as well as affecting the economy of the region. The hundreds of bricks stored in the open air at the factories indicate that housing construction has come to a halt. Many migrants have returned to Morocco and some have started to trade in European items (electronic devices, machine parts and clothing). Some families have become split between Italy and Morocco: while unemployed wives have returned to Morocco with their children, awaiting a better perspective, their husbands have stayed abroad. On the other hand, the crisis in Italy and Spain has reduced the young Moroccans' chances of migrating, because of the scarcity of work contracts that are required in order to enter those countries legally. Although people are aware of the situation, migration continued to be on the horizon in the imagination of many young people whom I met in al-Azaliya during my fieldwork.

1.5. The emergence of a “global youth culture”

Migration is a critical dimension of the “youth culture” in al-Azaliya, being a site for projecting the dreams of a better future and negotiating their identity within their peer groups. Far from being only an escape from alienation and unemployment (Cohen 2004;

²⁰ According to the current migration law, people who enter and remain illegally in Morocco risk sanctions from 2,000 to 20,000 DH (about 100 to 1,000 Euros) and/or imprisonment from 1 to 6 months (Art.42). People who cross the frontiers illegally risk being fined from 3,000 to 10,000 DH (about 300 to 1,000 Euros) and/or imprisonment from 1 to 6 months (Art. 50); people smugglers risk being fined from 50,000 to 500,000 DH (about 5,000 to 50,000 Euros) and/or imprisonment from 1 to 2 years (Art. 52). See Elmadmad (2004) for details.

²¹ In fact, the *Office National de L'émigration* has been established in Casablanca since post-colonial times, to organize male migration to Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.

Capello 2008), many young people also fantasise about migration as offering the possibility of leading an exciting life and having access to globalised consumption (Bennani-Chraïbi 1995). The young's desire for migration reveals other facets of the "global youth culture" that have taken shape since the late 1980s through mass schooling²² and satellite television, as well as new patterns of sociability and leisure (Davis & Davis 1989, 1995; Davis H. 1989; Bennani-Chraïbi 1995). At that time, Moroccan public culture spilled over from state control due to the circulation of smuggled decoders and satellite dishes as well as pirate CDs of American, French and Arabic videos and films being available in video shops (Ossman 1994; Pennel 2000: 384-386). The young's engagement with foreign cultures, both Arab and European, has contributed to shaping new forms of subjectivities and desires, and provided Moroccan young people with a "new globalised imagination" (Davis & Davis 1989, 1995; Davis H. 1989; Bennani-Chraïbi 1995; Mernissi 2002, 2004b).

The availability of new media technology is another important dimension shaping the global youth culture in al-Azaliya. As elsewhere in Morocco, young people in al-Azaliya have enthusiastically accessed the internet and the World Wide Web since the mid-1990s. Even though many people have an internet connection at home, the young also go to Internet cafés so as to surf out of parental supervision, search for information, listen to music and chat with their friends throughout the world on Messenger, Skype and Facebook. Furthermore, mobile phones, which have spread rapidly in the last decade thanks to their reasonable prices, have been changing the forms of sociality for the young and multiplying the possibilities of interaction between the sexes (Bowen et al. 2008; Kriem 2009).

Thus, the spread of media technology in Morocco has widened the young's imaginative horizons, as well as changing patterns of sociability and leisure. Far from looking just to Europe and the West as a source of inspiration and projection, the young are particularly attentive to the music, fashions and lifestyles of the Middle East. The young women whom I met have access to an impressive variety of television programmes from the news on al-Jazeera to the American films on Middle Eastern broadcasting stations like MBC and Rotana Cinema. They also switch from the

²² In the province of al-Azaliya, the rate of young people who were attending high school in 2004 was 22.8 % (of whom 11.1% were female), professional secondary schools 17.8 % (of whom 8% were female) and university-educated 11% (of whom 3.9% were female) (*Royaume du Maroc, Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2004*).

Lebanese reality TV *Star Academy* to Mexican, Turkish and Egyptian soap operas and TV serials; they daydream while listening to romantic love songs like Celine Dior's Titanic lyric *My heart will go on*, as well as watching music video clips on MTV and dancing to folk music (*sha'by*). Most of them read Arabic, French and English literature and chat on the internet with their friends in other Arab or European countries. At the same time, the emergence of a globalised youth culture in al-Azaliya is paralleled by the rise of "the Islamic revival" and its call for forbearance and salvation. Especially in the last decade, al-Azaliya and its inhabitants have witnessed a novel awareness about the importance of Islam in everyday life. Like elsewhere in Morocco, neighborhood associations and Quranic lessons for women in the mosque, street-corner Islamic market have multiplied. The religious market in al-Azaliya includes CDs sermons, taped cassettes of Quranic recitations, booklets and religious books. Moreover, satellite religious broadcasts led by charismatic preachers have been calling for a return to Islam as *the solution* to the moral decay and the disrupting influence of "the west". The complex interlocking of neoliberal globalisation and Islamic revival have worked to promote the moral reform of entertainment, fashion, beauty and sociability (as I will discuss further in the second part of this thesis). Against the backdrop of the tension between "Islam" and the "West" (Herrera & Bayat 2010:3), these new forms of political-theological imagination oriented towards the return to "true Islam" and the re-Islamisation of Moroccan society have become increasingly influential. Beyond dichotomist oppositions, however, daily life continues to be nuanced and multifaceted, and young people often try to mediate between conflicting aspirations and desires. While many young women have remoulded their dress-style and bodily comportment in accordance to the "Islamic revival," others combine coloured veils, which embody female modesty and religiosity, with the fashionable clothes of the main European chainstores that are available to them in the weekly second-hand markets (*l-bal*). In the small shops and stands that fill the streets of the old city, these young women can buy second-hand European shoes that the migrants trade between Europe and Morocco as well as a large variety of coloured veils and modest garments.

1.6. Political "opening up" and new religious imagination

The "Islamic revival" in Morocco is part of a global process, historically rooted in the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Middle East conflicts, that has witnessed the increasing

presence of Islam in the public sphere in the last three decades (Roy 2003; Grillo 2004; Salvatore 2004; Grillo & Soares 2005). At the same time, the encounters between globalisation and Islamic reformism in al-Azaliya should be situated within the national politics that have shaped the recent history of Morocco. From the early years of his reign, indeed, Hassan II struggled to establish and maintain the monopoly of the religious and political spheres. In 1977, he promoted the policy of Arabisation of state education in order to undermine the basis of critical thinking which had formed generations of left-wing political activists during the previous few decades (Vermeren 2006: 75). This facilitated the penetration of Islamic ideas and influence in universities and high schools, which began to compete with socialist ideology.

During the 1980s, the activists linked to the Islamist movement *Justice et Charité* (*al-Adl wa l-Ihsan / Justice and Charity*, abbreviated as JC) also promoted Islamist ideas in the *bidonvilles* of Casablanca, where they were providing the population with basic social services and charity (Vermeren 2006:52-3; 2002: 86-86). Unlike the 19th century *salafiya* that gained momentum within the nationalist movement, the Islamist groups that emerged as political actors during the 1980s represented a real political opposition to the state and hence they became the target its violent repression (Slymovics 2005; Zhagal 2008). By combining a mystical message and an Islamist political stance, Sheikh ‘Abdssalam Yassin,²³ the charismatic leader of the *Justice et Charité*, and his political programme formulated a radical critique of the existing political order. Furthermore, ‘Abdassalam Yassin overtly challenged the monarchy in the letter that he addressed to Hassan II in 1974. Not only did Yassin’s letter call into question the religiosity of the King and call for his repentance, but more importantly it queried the “sacredness” of the King and his legitimacy. Hassan II refused to tolerate ‘Abdassalam Yassin’s challenge to the legitimacy of his religious authority as the “Commander of the faithful” and to the state monopoly of the religious sphere. After being arrested and put into a psychiatrist hospital without trial for three and a half years, Yassin was kept under house arrest until 2000, from where he continued writing books and delivering his message.

Despite the state’s attempt to repress Islamist opposition, the “Islamic revival” gained increased social and political influence in Morocco as part of the general trend in the Middle East. In the 1990s, the Gulf War (1990-1991) made apparent the Moroccan

²³ On the complex figure of Yassin, see Zagal 2008, in particular Chapters 4 and 5.

Islamism in the public sphere. The *makhzen*'s intervention as a United States ally was firmly opposed by national press and the opposition parties (Istiqlal and *Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires*²⁴), as well as by the people who expressed their dissent against the regime through massive demonstrations in 1990 and 1991 (Pennel 2000: 370; Vermeren 2006: 86-87). Disillusioned with the existing channels of political participation, many people joined Islamist groups like *Justice et Charité*, which according to Mohammed Tozy (1999) became the most influential Islamist movement in Morocco that many people regard as the real political opposition. At the same time, the Cold War (1989) brought the discourse on human rights on the international stage. Under increasing pressure from the international press and the human rights activists²⁵ who denounced the state violations, as well as because of diplomatic and economic interests, Hassan II initiated a political dialogue (Vermeren 2002, 2006; Coher, Jaidi 2006; Zeghal 2008). After 30 years of violent repression of all the political oppositions to the regime, Hassan II created a *Conseil Consultatif des droits de l'homme* (1990) and released the political prisoners (1991). He initiated a process of political liberalisation (1991-1999) that culminated with a constitutional reform (1996) and the creation of *le gouvernement de l'alternance* (1998-2002). For the first time in post-colonial Morocco, the opposition parties that formed a *koutla* or *bloc démocratique* (Istiqlal, *Union socialiste des forces populaires* and *Parti du progrès et du socialisme*) entered the government led by the exiled socialist leader Abdelrahman Youssoufi²⁶ as a Prime Minister.

On the other hand, the “political opening up” posed the problem of controlling the Islamist movements's access to the political arena. In order to exclude from the electoral competition the dangerous competitors like ‘Abdassalam Yassin, Hassan II co-opted the

²⁴ In 1975, UNFP become *Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires*.

²⁵ Apart from international human rights organisations like Amnesty International, Moroccan activists and ex-political prisoners had created associations for the defence of human rights since the 1970s in France and after that started doing the same in Morocco. For instance, the association *Comité de lutte contre la répression au Maroc* was created in France in the 1970s, the *Association de défense des droits de l'homme au Maroc* in Morocco in 1984, and the *Organisation marocaine des droits de l'homme* also in Morocco in 1988. See Slymovics (2001) on a discussion of the Indemnity Commission, and (2005) for a detailed overview of the violations of human rights in Morocco and the emergent “civil society” in the 1980-90s; see Orlando (2009, 2010) for an overview on testimonies by political prisoners.

²⁶ Abdelrahman Youssoufi (1924) was a political activist in the nationalist movement and among the founders of the UNFP in 1959 and member of the USFP created in 1975. He was condemned in the grand trial of Marrakesh (1969-75), he remained in exile in France until 1980, when he is gratified by the King.

moderate section of the Islamist movements by legalising the new *Parti de la Justice et du Développement* (*hizb al-'adala wa-tanmiya / Justice and Development Party*, abbreviated to PJD), which entered in the political elections of 1997. Unlike the Justice et Charité, the PJD accommodated itself in relation to the state's attempts to integrate and domesticate it (Zeghal 2000: Ch. 6). Since then, the PJD has significantly increased its political influence and nowadays it is the major political party in Morocco.

1.6.1. Mohammed VI, the “new man”

Hassan II died in 1999. His son Mohammed VI continued the process of political reform. His accession to the throne was presented in the national and international media as the beginning of a “new era” (Vermeren 2002: 31). Besides emphasising the continuity of the monarchy, in his discourse on the throne in 1999, Mohammed VI declared his will to end the violent history of Morocco and his commitment to the promotion of human rights and democracy (Cohen & Jaidi 2006; Vermeren 2002). To actualise his statements, the King announced a set of political and juridical reforms to improve the rights of women and ethnic minorities (notably the Amazigh population) as well as to fight against unemployment and social injustice, poverty and illiteracy. In many ways, the “King of the poor” – as Mohammed VI became called – encouraged expectations of political change amongst Moroccans and the young in particular (Vermeren 2002; Hegasy 2000; 2007). Initially, these expectations were fulfilled in a set of highly symbolic political acts. Firstly, Mohammed VI allowed the return of the exiled Marxist leader Abraham Sertafy and removed Driss Basri – who embodied the symbol of the “Years of Lead” during the former reign – from the Ministry of the Interior. Secondly, the King reformed the press and allowed freedom of speech, which encouraged the emergence of a vibrant cultural landscape (Orlando 2009). In this changed political climate, the different social and political actors who compose the varied substrata of the so-called “civil society” (Cohen & Jaidi 2006: Ch. 4; Hegasy 2010) have gained increased visibility in the public sphere. These include associations and NGOs as well as long-established women's movements, human rights movements, Amazigh movements, Islamist movements, and the *diplomés-chomeurs*. Under the pressure of the former political prisoners and human right activists, the King created an *Instance Équité et Réconciliation* (IER) in 2004 to investigate state abuses and compensate the victims, which is the first one established in the Arab World (Slymovic

2001, 2005, 2009; Hegasy 2010). Likewise, he reformed the Personal Status Law or *Muddawwana* (2004), which has been acclaimed in the international arena as a significant step towards democratic transition and gender equality.

Even though limited and controversial, the political “opening up” has encouraged the emergence of an overt “citizenry” amongst previous Moroccan “subjects.” In addition to left-wing political forces and social movements (feminist, human rights and Amazigh), the “moderate” Islamist forces nowadays compete in the political arena, while the main opposition Islamist party in Morocco, *Justice et Charité*, has continued to be illegal. However, the 16 May 2003 suicide bombings in Casablanca and Mohammed VI re-thought his politics. Indeed, this event made tangible the “Islamist threat” in Morocco had important consequences for the international image and self-image of a country, which until then had considered itself safe from Islamist violence. Since then, Mohammed VI strengthened the security policies and re-centralised his religious authority (Zeghal 2008: 242; Vermeren 2009). The government enacted an anti-terrorist law to re-establish the control and detention of people without an arrest warrant (Slymovics 2005) and reinforced its control over the mosque to regulate the content of the Friday sermons. In this tense political climate, the King tried to marginalise the PJD Party and prevent its participation in the political elections of 2002 (Cohen & Jaidi 2006: 109-111). Mohammed VI also changed his attitude towards *Justice et Charité*.

In 1999, when ‘Abdassalam Yassin addressed an open letter of admonition to Mohammed VI, the latter did not give importance to it, and released him in 2000. In contrast, when Abd assalam Yassin’s daughter Nadia, taking over from her father as another charismatic leader of *Justice et Charité*, questioned the relevance of the monarchy for Morocco and expressed her preference for a republic in an interview in 2005, she was accused of “attacking the monarchy.” She appealed to freedom of speech to claim her right to legitimise her opinion, but risked up to 5 years in prison if trialed and convicted. In other words, facing the contestations and claims of the emergent “civil society” has become a difficult issue for Mohammed VI, who has tried to alternate between a rhetorical political dialogue, authoritarianism and repression.

As part of the King’s strategy of consolidation of his political and religious power, as well as of containment of the rise of the PJD, the former Minister of the Interior

Fouad Ali El Himma²⁷ formed the *Parti de Authenticité et Modernité (hizb al-Asala wa al Mu‘asara / Authenticity and Modernity Party*, abbreviated as PAM) in 2008. PAM emerged in the political arena in the communal and regional elections in 2009 as the strongest party (Vermeren 2009; Eibl 2012). Unlike the PJD, the PAM advocates a secular vision of Islam, as well as a clear division between religious and secular affairs (Eibl 2012). It also overtly defends the role of the King as “Commander of the Faithful” against the claim of the PJD or other Islamist group to embody an authentically Moroccan Islam. In other words, it is marked by an anti-Islamist stance and a firm opposition to the PJD, which the former accuses of promoting an “imported” and “non-authentic” vision of Islam. According to Ferdinand Eibl (2012), however, regarding the PAM as more than just a tool of the monarchy reveals a general elite change in Moroccan politics introduced by Mohammed VI, which nowadays includes technocrats, civil society actors and entrepreneurs. Despite the PAM’s success in 2009 local elections, the November 2011 parliamentary elections witnessed the leading role of the PJD as the main party in Morocco.

1.7. Gender politics: the reform of the *Muddawwana*

Among the various reforms carried out in the last decade by Mohammed VI within the frame of the promotion of human rights, the reform of the *Muddawwana l-ahwal al-shakhsiya (Code du Statut Personnel / Personal Status Law)* has shown the centrality of “the woman issue” in the establishment of a “new Moroccan modern reign.” By declaring the equality between men and women, indeed, the reform of the *Muddawwana* in 2004 significantly improved Morocco’s reputation in the international political arena (Cavatorta & Dalmaso 2009). Yet this reform was the result of the confrontation between the various social and political actors who compose the Moroccan society, such as the left-wing parties, the Islamist PJD and Islamist movements, as well as the so-called “civil society” (including feminist, human rights). Following the history of this debate enables one to grasp the conflicting definitions of personhood, family and gender relations that coexist in Morocco nowadays, as well as the competing projects of “gendered modernity” that are at stake.

²⁷ Fouad Ali El Himma was also a close friend and former classmate of Mohammed VI and he is part of the new generation of technocrats that compose the new political class in Morocco (Vermeren 2009)

In post-colonial times, the codification of the *Muddawwana* was part of the re-Islamisation of the legal system and society against the legal pluralism promoted by the French²⁸ to undermine the unity of the nation (Mernissi 1979; Bursken 2003: 72). Since the struggle for independence, reformist *salafi* nationalists like ‘Allal al-Fasi (1910-1974) have regarded the Islamic law (*shari‘a*) as central to the construction of national and Islamic identity, as well as a means for the social reform of Morocco according to Islamic principles. As some scholars have noted (Mernissi 1975: 153; Charrad 2001: 5), *salafist* reformists codified the patriarchal model of extended family and male dominance so as to cement the alliance with rural notables against urban nationalist elites. Unlike other Maghreb countries (notably Tunisia), indeed, the *Muddawwana* was firstly codified in 1957-58 according to the Maliki school – which is the official Sunni school followed in Morocco (Mir-Hosseini 1993). The first versions included guardianship in marriage (*wilaya a-nikah*), the father’s right to compel the daughter to marry (*jabar*) after authorisation of the judge and the nuptial gift for the bride (*sadaq* or *mahr*; darija, *sdaq*). It fixed the minimum age for marriage at 15 for girls and 18 for boys and maintained polygamy and the husband’s right to repudiate the wife according to the Sunna.²⁹ The *Muddawwana* was reformed in 1956, 1970, 1974, and 1979 to resolve its shortcomings. Yet when the feminists’ claims intersected with the human rights discourse in the 1980s, the public debate became particularly intense and various feminists and progressive intellectuals engaged in the discussion.³⁰ In 1992, the *Union de l’Action Feminine* launched a “one million signature campaign” to press the government to introduce radical reforms in the existing *Muddawwana* (for instance, the end of polygamy and guardianship, the raising of the minimum age for marriage and the right to juridical divorce). Hassan II received a delegation of feminist representatives, established a commission and undertook the reform (1993), thereby affirming his role as “Commander of the faithful” and his monopoly on the religious sphere and

²⁸ Notably, the French established two areas as subject to Berber customary law (Dahir Berber, 16 May 1930) and Islamic law respectively in order to divide the population into “Berbers” and “Arabs”.

²⁹ Meanwhile, it envisioned juridical cases in which the wife can initiate divorce. For example, in the case of prolonged absence of the husband; lack or inadequacy of maintenance (*nafaqa*); physical defects or mental illness; discord or harm between the spouses.

³⁰ Discussing the *Muddawwana* and its various reforms, Moroccan sociologist Fatema Mernissi (1975, 1981) has underscored the sharp divide between law and daily life, by pointing out that the gender roles prescribed by it are not only archaic but also do not reflect the reality and the fundamental economic role of women in the survival of the family.

interpretation of Islamic law (Cavatorta & Dalmaso 2009: 496-7). Although the reforms were limited and in line with Salafist ideology, some changes³¹ provoked sharp reactions amongst the Islamists, who condemned the feminist campaign as an act of “apostasy” (Bursken 2003: 83).

When the *bloc democratique* came to power in 1998, the left-wing parties developed the *Projet plan d'action national pour l'integration de la femme au developpement* (1999), which comprised a radical reform of family law.³² Although the project of reform was in line with the general trend of family law reforms in the Muslim world, the plan gave rise to mass campaigns, petitions and confrontations by the Islamic movements, which judged it as the perilous and heretical outcome of the influence of western ideas. The PJD launched a campaign to inform Moroccans about the dangers of foreign ideas as a threat to Moroccan families and the survival of Islam in Morocco and in 2000, Nadia Yassin, the leader of *Justice et Charité* joined the debate. Nadia Yassin argued that only the return to Islam was the solution to the predicaments of women and Moroccan society. In her view, the reform promoted by the government and the feminist groups reflected the westernisation and the corruption of the privileged classes without addressing the real problems of the masses. The debate evolved around the struggle for the definition of “cultural authenticity.” Facing the Islamist accusation of apostasy, in turn, the feminists claimed that the Islamists were themselves the products of the influence of foreign ideas and *wahhabism*, which they opposed to the moderate Salafist tradition which had characterised Morocco so far. *Wahhabism* is a movement developed in the 18th century in the Arabian Peninsula from the thoughts of ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), who promoted the return to a “pure” and “original” Islam against innovations (*bida*). With the term *wahhabi*, these feminists stressed the “inauthenticity” of the Islamists’ stance, which they regard as imported from Saudi Arabia and financed by petrol-dollars.

³¹ For instance, marriage could not be contracted without the woman’s consent before the public official (*‘adul*) any more and the *jabar* was abolished.

³² It included the raising of the minimum age of marriage for girls from 15 to 18; the option of guardianship for women who had attained legal majority (22); the abolition of repudiation, to be replaced by equal access to juridical divorce for both men and women; the right for divorced women to care for their children until the age of 15 even in case of remarriage; the man’s maintenance payments for children in the case of divorce; division of property during marriage; creation of family courts; and so forth. For more details, see Bursken (2003).

On 12 March 2000, liberal women's associations and political parties (PPS, USFP and the Istiqlal party) organised a demonstration in Rabat to support the reform of the *Muddawwana*, while Islamist groups and the PJD organised a countermovement in Casablanca to protest against foreign and anti-Islamic influences. Fearing a lack of support from the masses, the feminist groups invoked the intervention of the King, who established a Royal Commission to work on the reform. Mohammed VI's intervention as legitimated arbiter affirmed his role as "Commander of the faithful" and leading executive power in the process of modernisation of the Moroccan Kingdom. Indeed, the reform (2004) declared the equality between women and men as well as significantly improving the legal protection of women and children. For instance, it raised the age of marriage for girls from 15 to 18, eliminated male guardianship in marriage when the girl comes of age, restricted polygamy, granted women the right to initiate divorce procedures and made it mandatory for repudiation to be referred to the court for a judicial decision. However, the long process that culminated in the reform of the *Muddawwana* reveals how the notions of self, family and gender relations have been turned into a battlefield for the definition of "cultural authenticity" (Mernissi 1979). Since colonial times, family and gender relations have been (and continue to be) at the core of the competing projects of "modernity" upheld by political actors who aim to orient social change in different directions.

These events have occurred far from al-Azaliya, but they have had a significant resonance in the media and public debate. My interlocutors discussed the reform of the *Muddawwana* and many young women and their mothers argued that it improved the position of women by granting them further rights in marriage, childcare, polygamy and divorce. As I will show in the chapters that follow, the debates that surrounded the reform of the *Muddawwana* are part of the ways in which young women reflect on themselves and their intimate relationships, and discuss power and political change in the society where they live. Even though, young women considered very important the legal recognition of equality between women and men, indeed, they also claimed that women were still being discriminated against in everyday life and that there is no equality in love and family relationships.

1.8. Conclusion

By tracing the history of the Tadla Plain from the 1930s to the recent processes of market liberalisation and globalisation, this chapter intended to shed light on the structural forces that have been shaping the everyday lives and imagination of the young women of al-Azaliya - the focus of this thesis -, as well as of their mothers and grandmothers. A historical analysis of social change shows how the contemporary transformations that characterise the Tadla Plain nowadays are profoundly rooted in the colonial presence in the region and its aftermath, as well as in the national and international processes. From the mid-1930s, in fact, the French Protectorate promoted the development of a modern agricultural sector through the construction of dams and a modern system of irrigation (Prefol 1986; Swearingen 1987; Troin & Berriane 2002). As in other regions of Morocco, colonial intervention has triggered intense processes of economic, social and political transformation in the Tadla. On the one hand, the development of the agricultural sector and the related agribusiness industry, indeed, has created a binary economy, namely the subsistence agriculture for small farmers and the modernised capital-intensive sector for export. On the other hand, job opportunities created through the establishment of the administrative, transport and commercial sectors in the main towns of the Tadla favoured inwards mobility, turning cities like al-Azaliya in a boom town during the 1960s and 1970s. After the departure of French administrators, this also paved the way for the formation of a “modern middle-class” that entered the public sector in post-colonial times.

Against the backdrop of the nation-state building and the political turmoil characterising post-colonial Morocco, al-Azaliya and its population continued to grow. It was only in the late 1970s that the combination of the economic crisis, the imposition of the Structural Adjustment Plan by the World Bank (1983-1993) and the drought (1979 - 1984) reversed the migration flows in the Tadla Plain. Under these difficult circumstances, the lack of job opportunities and the availability of migratory chains to Italy have led many people to leave their villages in the countryside as well as in the main towns of the region (Harrami & Mahdi 2006). In the last three decades, transnational migration has been profoundly affected the social and economic life of the inhabitants of al-Azaliya and the Tadla in general. Not only has migration opened up new trajectories of upward mobility and reconfigured the local hierarchies of status and power, but it also has created new imaginaries and desires amongst the young. In the

last decade, however, the desire for migration – which is so widespread amongst the young, including girls – has clashed with their real possibility of migrating. The new border regimes established in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack have severely undermined their social mobility through migration. This has had important implications in a context where the lack of job opportunities has particularly affected educated people and where migration has long been a practical alternative to unemployment. Indeed, the majority of the young women who are the focus of this thesis are highly educated despite their poor and lower middle-class backgrounds. Yet they face unemployment and precarious working conditions. Other girls with middle-class backgrounds are experiencing a worsening of their social and economic position due to economic insecurity intensified by a global market and neoliberal policies (Cohen 2003, 2004). As I tried to show, while migration is a defining feature of this region, other broader social, economic and political forces have deeply affected the everyday lives of the inhabitants of al-Azaliya. By focusing specifically on those aspects that touch on the young women’s lives and imagination, I argued that the interlocking of transnational migration, neo-liberalism, globalisation and Islamic reformism have produced complexities and anxieties.

Since the 1990s, the engagement with American, Arabic and European culture through satellite television, music and the internet has contributed to the emergence of a new globalised imagination (Davis & Davis 1989, 1995; Davis H. 1989; Bennani-Chraïbi 1995; Mernissi 2003, 2004). In their everyday lives, the young women of al-Azaliya access vast imaginative horizons through mass schooling, transnational migration, satellite television and the internet that contributed to shaping their gendered imaginaries, intimate desires and sense of self. Yet the emergence of a “global youth culture,” as well as of new patterns of sociability and leisure, coexists in ambivalent ways with the calls for moralisation and forbearance that characterise the “Islamic revival” in al-Azaliya. Since the 1990s, in fact, new forms of politico-religious imagination oriented towards the re-Islamisation of Moroccan society have gained increased visibility in the public sphere especially in the aftermath of the “political opening up” initiated by Hassan II (Vermeren 2002, 2006, 2009; Zeghal 2008). Satellite television broadcasts, religious associations and Islamist groups have worked to remould the local discourses on morality in al-Azaliya and to circulate new ideals of modern religious subjectivity.

The political transition and the reforms promoted by Mohammed VI have also fostered great expectations of social and political change amongst the young (Hegasy 2000). At the same time, young women have experienced social change in ambivalent and complex ways, since the emergence of new ways of thinking of self and their society, as well as their intimate and professional lives, clash with new moral and material constraints that shape their everyday lives where the betrayed promises have turned into frustration and disillusion.

In the chapters that follow, I will provide a nuanced picture of the ways in which the multiple and overlapping structural forces that I have traced so far have affected everyday life in al-Azaliya, by presenting the specific stories and narratives of flesh-and-bone people (Abu-Lughod 1993). These forces have different effects on the young women who occupy different social positions and hence touch on their lives in dissimilar ways. In particular, I will start by exploring the multiple ways in which the young women negotiate new desires and sense of self within their relational and affective worlds.

CHAPTER 2

A SENSE OF SELF

2.1. Love, affection and family ties

Over the last three decades, Moroccan girls' access to mass education has postponed the age of marriage and opened up new possibilities in life (Davis & Davis 1989), thereby transforming women's life-trajectories and dominant ideas of femininity. Moreover, the diffusion of the ideals of the nuclear family and conjugal intimacy amongst the poor and lower-middle classes has shifted the ways in which young women think about themselves and their emotional worlds. The older generations of women I met in al-Azaliya describe their sense of self and belonging as intimately embedded within their birth family and the female worlds in which they carry out a large part of their social lives. These women were married off at an early age and experienced marriage as an inevitable fate, a painful fracture in the female trajectory towards adulthood. Marriage marked the transition from being a *bnt* (daughter, girl, virgin, unmarried woman) to a *mar'a* (adult, married woman), with the acquisition of the social roles of wife and mother (Dwyer D.H 1978: 61-62; Schaefer Davis 1983: 19-45). Although the term *bnt* is still used for unmarried women regardless of their age, the granddaughters of these older women imagine marriage as a site of emotional investment along with the search for self-realisation and professional careers. This generational shift reveals the transformations of intimacy and emotional investment from the birth family to the marital bond.

This chapter documents the complexities and contradictions that accompany these moves by exploring the affective worlds of different generations of women in Rabi'a, one of the peripheral neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya. Specifically, I base my analysis on the lives and narratives of three women: Hasna, the youngest, her mother Nura and her grandmother Naima. Far from being a linear passage from "arranged marriage" to "love", from "family constraints" to "free will", the experiences of these three women reveal a nuanced and complex picture of contemporary transformations in their affective life. Despite contemporary transformations in the notions of love, affection and family ties, young women's quest for romantic love often collides with personal and family

honour, and exposes them to family control and moral dilemmas. In order to illustrate these points, I focus on how Hasna, Nura and Naima have constructed their sense of self *within* their family ties.

From different perspectives, anthropological literature on North Africa and the Middle East has emphasised the centrality of relationality and connectivity in the construction of the selfhood (Rosen 1979, 1984; Abu-Lughod 1986; Joseph 1993, 1996, 1999). Suad Joseph (1999) has defined “intimate selving” as the life-long process of becoming a self within intimate relationships that transform over the course of one’s life. Thus, imbued with contradictions and shaped by social and cultural dynamics, becoming a self is a process in which people are actively engaged and through which they become deeply involved in each others’ lives. According to Joseph (1993, 1996, 1999:12), relationality intertwines with gender and age hierarchies to produce what she has defined as “patriarchal connectivity.” In other words, the self takes shape within the family ties where males and seniors are privileged over females and juniors, and where gendered and age dominations are legitimised by kin idioms and morality. At the same time, the intimate embeddedness of the self within webs of relationships does not deny the possibility of agency, personal initiative and self-crafting (Joseph 1999:11).

The notion of “intimate selving” provides fascinating insights into the ways in which Naima, Nura and Hasna have crafted a sense of self *within* their family ties and affective worlds, where intimacy and power, protection and control interweave in complex and ambivalent fashions. For these women, being part of a family entails a “mutuality of being: persons who are members of one another, who participate intrinsically in each other’s existence” (Sahlins 2011a, 2011b). Family ties provide the members with a place in the world of social relations in which they live. Under chronic conditions of unemployment and financial insecurity, the family supplies protection and nurture, reputation and honour, emotional closeness and security. Family members also manage important transitions in people’s life trajectories and remain a source of material and emotional support throughout the course of their existence, unless serious conflicts occur and ties are “cut off.” Yet Joseph’s focus on the reproduction of patriarchal relations risks smoothing over the ambivalences and contradictions characterising family relationships.

Looking at family ties as “an area of life where people invest their emotions, their creative energy, and their imaginations” (Carsten 2004: 9), I argue that family and

affective ties are vital sites where the women I met negotiate personal aspirations and desires. At times, they voice desires and ideas of femininity that challenge and collide with the ideals of feminine modesty, connectivity and male authority. My emphasis on social change notwithstanding, I do not intend to provide a fixed image of the past or to obscure the complexity of the lives of adult women. Elderly and middle-aged women have always negotiated their desires and aspirations, by moving through multiple discourses on marriage, love and kinship. The stories of Naima, Nura and Hasna illustrate the ways in which they have crafted their sense of self and their affective worlds under different historical and social circumstances.

2.2. Rabi'a

Rabi'a is one of the peripheral neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya born out of internal migration since the 1950s. It took shape as a squatter settlement when men and their families started leaving behind their natal villages (*bled*)³³ in the Middle Atlas Mountains and in other regions of Morocco³⁴ in search of a better life or fleeing from famine and drought. Other families came from the countryside or the mountain areas to provide their children with a modern education, which was an important mechanism for upward social mobility. The oldest inhabitants cannot say when exactly they settled in Rabi'a and they chronicle their own arrival and that of the new settlers by referring to *l'amm al-masira l-khadra* (the Green March), the march for the re-appropriation of Western Sahara in 1975.³⁵ Only in 1992 was the neighbourhood included in al-Azaliya through a *nouveau plain urbaine*.³⁶

Rabi'a is located along the asphalted road that climbs from the *qasba* (the fortified city) up to the forests of the Middle Atlas Mountains. From here, al-Azaliya comes into sight as a wide agglomerate of brightly-coloured houses surrounded by the irrigated plots of cultivated land of the fertile Tadla Plain. Hundreds of satellite dishes cover the

³³ The Moroccan term *bled* conveys a set of meanings, such as the country, the countryside, one's natal place. For a discussion of the term, see Geertz (1979) and Rosen (1979, 1983).

³⁴ Based on the survey I carried out in Rabi'a in 2010, the oldest families come from different regions and towns throughout Morocco, such as Khalat Mguna, Zagura and Marrakesh as well as from various Berber villages in the Middle Atlas Mountains. Most of them still own land in their natal places.

³⁵ I am grateful to Professor Abdelmajid Zmou, Université Sliman de Beni Mellal, who suggested that I should ask people to chronicle their arrival in relation to *'amm al-masira al-khadra* (the Green March, 1975).

³⁶ Prof. Abdelmajid Zmou, personal communication 2010.

rooftops. During the summer afternoons, when the temperature reaches up to 45-50 degrees, a few people venture along this road before the afternoon prayer (*salat al-‘asr*).³⁷ Old men in *jallaba* or *gandora* (traditional Moroccan gowns), their heads wrapped in turbans, sit in small groups in the shade of the olive trees, while the children (*drari*, sing. *drri*) play football in the dirt field. From the main road, a gravel path leads to the heart of Rabi’a, an intricate set of narrow alleys winding up and down a row of houses (*diur*, sing. *dar*). Within these quiet alleys, people lead their daily lives out of sight of the *brrani* (outsiders).

“I descend to the city” (*nhabt l-medina*), people say, emphasising the geographical distance from the city centre. This geographical distance reflects the historical marginality of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants, resulting in a lack of services of prime importance, such as schools, public baths, and ovens for baking bread. In 1993, two public fountains were built, and before running water came to the houses, women and girls used to fetch the water from the river for daily cleaning, cooking and drinking needs. Two mosques provide literacy classes for women and, recently, lessons of Qur’anic recitation for women, which has already been the case for a long time in other parts of the city.

During the daytime, when people work and children attend school lessons, women dressed in pyjamas do their housework, carrying their babies on their backs, wrapped in sheets. Children are sent back and forth to friends and relatives to bring items and run errands in the four well-furnished shops. Teenage boys spend some free time in the smoky internet point to play pool, smoke cigarettes and surf the internet out of their parental control. Men and boys work as plumbers and mechanics, taxi drivers, retailers, shopkeepers and teachers, building-site workers or local factory workers, whereas few are civil servants. Some women work outside the neighbourhood, but many of them are housewives and/or are involved in the informal economy organised within the neighbourhood.³⁸ Like their mothers, young women work either at home or outside, but many others have achieved the baccalaureate or/and study at university hoping to get a good job. More than their parents, young people experience the frustrations of living in an increasingly globalised world but with limited resources or possibilities of satisfying

³⁷ Apart from people working in offices, who have to follow an official timetable, the rhythm of social life continues to be marked by religion.

³⁸ I discuss this point further in Chapter 3.

their aspirations. As unemployment and precarious working conditions mean it is hard to make ends meet and build one's future, many neighbourhood youths work as street vendors to supplement their income. The lack of means and social connections to find a stable job leads many of them to migrate illegally (see also Pandolfo 2007). Even though the return of migrants from Europe since the 2008 financial crisis has made many aspiring migrants aware of the difficulties of living and working abroad, other youths still think that they would be successful.

Like other neighbourhoods largely made up of migrants, the social life in Rabi'a is intimately embedded within, and continuously reshaped by, the ties amongst its inhabitants and the everyday practices through which they gave birth to a community that continues to face social and economic marginality. People living in Rabi'a for generations feel they are part of a "moral community" and share a sense of identity that distinguishes them from the inhabitants of the modern and wealthy neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya, "where people live their lives on their own." They are aware that neighbourly ties have loosened over time and recall with nostalgia when neighbours used to help each other in daily matters, sharing utensils, work and services. At the same time, they remark that there is still *niya* (good moral intention) and leave their doors open from dawn to sunset.

2.3. Interlacing hi/stories

Hasna, her mother Nura and her grandmother Naima are some of the women with whom I met in Rabi'a. I first met Hasna, the youngest, a bright 28-year-old young graduate in French literature. Nura, her mother, is a slender woman with a strong personality and great dignity. Nura has lived in Rabi'a since childhood and has never attended school. Today, she is 50 and is the mother of five children: two daughters and three sons. Nura's mother Naima is a woman of about 70.³⁹ Naima has lived most of her life in the neighbourhood and she is one of the few witnesses to its foundation. During her lifetime, she has been a wife, a mother, a cook and a tireless worker. She is known as a storyteller and a devout Muslim, whose moral qualities make her a respected woman in the community where she lives.

As the weeks passed by, the stories I was told by these women shed light on the intricacies of their family and social ties. By moving within the circle of their relatives,

³⁹ Naima does not know her actual age because her birth was not recorded.

friends and neighbours, I could disentangle the relationships between families and households. Hasna, Nura and Naima, indeed, belong to a family which originated from a village in the South of Morocco. In the early 1950s, they left their village because drought and lack of paid work made it hard to earn a living. The men migrated first and found work as sharecroppers for a family of landowners, and could keep a quarter-share (*raba'a*).⁴⁰ Their female relatives and children then joined them and they settled in Rabi'a when Morocco was still a French protectorate (1912-1956). At that time, there were a few houses belonging to two large Amazigh families, who owned the cultivated fields nearby. The first generation of migrants married their children off both to their extended female kin and to their neighbours, thereby creating intricate and overlapping kin ties. Initially, families comprised a senior man, his married sons and grandchildren.⁴¹ When the seniors died, each son established a separate household in the neighbourhood. People refer to the extended family as *l-'ai'la kabira* (the big family), and in general to their relatives as *l-'a'ila*, *la familia*, *l-ahl* (one's people). In Moroccan Arabic, *l-'a'ila* also indicates the nuclear family, which educated people call *usra* (MSA). The younger generations think that marrying within the family reflects the mentality of the "old people" (*nas kabar*) for whom leaving a cousin unmarried was shameful. Many of them wish to marry "far" (*ba'id*) from the family, and their mothers generally support their desire to choose their own spouse.

In Rabi'a, as elsewhere in al-Azaliya, people situate themselves and are located within and in relation to their family networks.⁴² Neighbourhood women refer to Naima's offspring as *Ayt*⁴³ *khalty*⁴⁴ *Naima Ahmed* (my maternal aunt Naima Ahmed's people). Tracing ties among families and individuals through a "female genealogy" might appear unusual in a society where the relevance of patrilinearity and virilocality is

⁴⁰ On *raba'a* and other forms of agricultural work, see Rosen (1979: 41-3).

⁴¹ On family ties and housing practices in Morocco, see Geertz (1979). Newcomb (2009: 10-14) has noted that Geertz's analysis does not consider the role of female networks, thus missing vital aspects of the meaning of family ties and the social organization of space.

⁴² Besides genealogical origin (*asl*) and locality (*bled*), Lawrence Rosen (1979:19-21, 91-106, 1984: 18-30) has stressed the importance of relatedness (*wld*) to understand the ways in which Moroccan people whom he met in Sefru visualized themselves and others and created social networks and mutual obligations.

⁴³ *Ayt* is the Amazigh equivalent of the Arabic term *bani*, which, according to Hildred Geertz (1979), is used to refer to ordinary groups without noble descent or well established families.

⁴⁴ People in this region address old and married women as *khalty* (my mother's sister) as a sign of respect, instead using their names; *hajja* (pilgrim) or *shrifa* (literally, descendent of the Prophet and honorable) and *Lalla* (my lady) are more formal expressions.

ideologically emphasised in social practices and discourses. This way of drawing connections between people reflects the history of the relations between families but also the primacy of the family over the person, as the stories of Naima, her daughter Nura and her granddaughter Hasna will demonstrate.

Naima, Nura and Hasna assert their own personality and negotiate their desires by moving within multiple and conflicting discourses on kinship, the self and femininity available in the society in which they live.⁴⁵ Even though they do not necessarily articulate resistant discourses on kinship and marriage, practices and comments at the margins of dominant discourses - as well as silence, irony and ambiguity - are some of the means through which they express their criticisms of the intimate forms of power in which they are involved.

2.4. Naima: “Once you marry, you become an outsider”

Hasna introduced to me her grandmother (*jedda*) Naima Ahmed, leading me to the two storey house where she lives with her two unmarried daughters. Like the oldest houses in the neighbourhood, Naima’s house is organised around a central open-pit room⁴⁶ - “the centre of the house” (*wast d-dar*) - surrounded by four poorly furnished rooms (*byt*, pl. *byut*), a small kitchen and toilet facilities. This housing arrangement reflects the ideal of the extended family. Natural light and fresh air flow through small windows and the internal slit that pierces the levels of the house in the central hall. This slit is called *l-‘ayn ad-dar*, “the eye of the house”. Around the “eye”, the house is built like a human body, a space of mediation between inside and outside, human and nonhuman (Pandolfo 1997: 25-26).

Naima and her daughters share their meals, drink tea, watch television, pray, receive their guests and sleep in the living room. In this room, Naima narrated⁴⁷ the history of her family and personal mobility in al-Azaliya against the backdrop of significant historical events: the return of King Mohammed V (1955) and his death (1961). Laden with silences, metaphors and narrative conventions, her story was difficult to understand. However, as soon as I became familiar with the people and

⁴⁵ On the paradoxes surrounding kinship and genealogical idioms see also Pandolfo (1997: part II).

⁴⁶ In other cases, there can be a courtyard (*lacour*, from the French *court*). In this hall or on the rooftop, women carry out part of their housework.

⁴⁷ I conducted five interviews with Naima between 2009 and 2010. Hasna’s comments were essential to my understanding of Naima’s story.

places that inhabited her tales, I realised that another story was taking shape, a story that Naima has performed several times to transmit to her descendants the memory of their “origin”, but also her views on marriage, femininity and family ties. Naima’s recollections reveal her struggle to recompose the bonds with her maternal kin and her beloved brother, the people who provided protection and love, care and material support in situations of marginality and the dislocation of family ties.

Naima was born in the early 1940s in a village in south Morocco. Her father died when she was a baby. When her mother remarried, Naima’s maternal grandmother⁴⁸ took care of her and her older brother Said until she died. Naima has never attended school and her life has been hard since childhood. In the village where she grew up, female work in the fields and at home was essential for the survival of the extended families of farmers. Women woke at dawn, prepared *harira* (Moroccan soup), ground the flour, baked bread, cared for livestock, cut the wild grass and collected wood for the fire. They also crafted straw mats, carpets and other handmade items, which the men sold at the weekly marketplace. When her grandmother died, Naima and her brother Said remained with their maternal uncles. As a fatherless orphan, she was aware that that her maternal uncles represented the kin ties upon which her survival and sense of self depended. At that time, girls and women were under male legal control and guardianship (*wali*), which marriage transferred from the birth family to the husband (Charrad 2001:32). Without male protection, they were considered at the mercy of anyone.

Naima’s mother arranged her marriage to her friend’s son when she was 6. Early engagement and seclusion ensured surveillance over young girls’ sexual behaviour and family honour. “I was such a little girl, I didn’t know where to sleep, I just slept where I wanted,”⁴⁹ Naima commented upon her engagement and emphasised that the mere sight of her fiancé provoked in her profound distress. Whenever he came to visit her home, Naima’s reaction was harsh: “I used to say to my brother: ‘Why have you brought him? What do we want from him?’ I carried on telling my brother off, may God bless him!”⁵⁰ On these occasions, she avoided any interaction with her fiancé because, she explained,

⁴⁸ Before the *Muddawana* (Persona Law) was codified (1957-1958), family issues like child care in cases of divorce and widowhood were regulated by *shari’a* (Islamic law), often melded with local customs (Charrad 2001). By remarrying, women lost the right of child care.

⁴⁹ Naima, Interview, n.3, June 2009.

⁵⁰ Naima, interview, n.3, June 2009.

“Talking to him was *hashoma* for me, so I didn’t speak to him at all. I didn’t speak to him until the wedding day.”⁵¹ The Moroccan term *hashoma* evokes a complex set of meanings, comprising both an internal state of deference and modesty and a conduct oriented towards values of propriety and a denial of sexuality and interest in love (Schaefer-Davis 1983: 23). Besides shyness, Naima’s avoidance of her future spouse also expressed her moral dignity and respectability as part of her adherence to the code of modesty (see also Abu-Lughod 1986, 1986b: 160).

Like many women of her generation, Naima was married off soon after she reached puberty. “I had my period and a year after I got married,” she said, resorting to a common narrative convention used by adult women to talk about marriage (Schaefer-Davis 1983: 28). By that time, Naima and her maternal uncles had already moved to al-Azaliya, whereas her fiancé was working in the province of Casablanca. Meanwhile, her paternal uncle’s son (*wld ‘ammi*) asked for her hand in marriage. She commented:

I didn’t want [to get married], I was scared, I didn’t have any idea about marriage I didn’t want any of them. The one who wrote,⁵² he brought me, that’s it. He came and brought me, and I bore my children with him. He was the first one for me and I was the first one for him.

Naima’s words describe marriage as an unquestionable destiny in the female trajectories towards adulthood. Even though she was scared, she accepted her marriage with resignation because she could not oppose her relatives nor did she expect to have a say in the choice of a husband. Her wedding was celebrated during the *‘aid al-kabir* (the Feast of the Sacrifice),⁵³ after the two families had agreed upon the bride wealth (*sdaq* or *mahr* in MSA) that the groom should pay. Naima also received a dowry (*dahza*), comprising traditional Moroccan clothes *jallaba* and *qaftan* as well as ritual gifts (*henna*, sugar loaves, salt and olive oil). The initial part of the wedding is the *henna* party, during which female relatives and friends decorate the bride’s hands and feet. Accordingly, Naima’s relatives and neighbours gathered at her home to witness the verbal offer and acceptance of marriage between the two families, in the presence of religious students (*talab*) and an Islamic scholar (*fqih*) who recited the *fatiha*, the first

⁵¹ Naima, interview n. 2, June 2009.

⁵² Naima refers to the act of marriage (*‘aqd dyal zawej*), even though at the time of her marriage it was not required. See Charrad (2001: 164) for more details.

⁵³ Poor people would celebrate marriage during *l-‘aid l-kabir* to save the money for the ram slaughtering.

Sura of the Qur'an. After the guests had been fed, they all moved to the groom's place in the province of Casablanca, where the celebration continued. Finally, the bride and groom were left alone in *l-laylat l-dokhla*, literally meaning "the night of entrance" or of defloration. That night was critical for the married couple and their families since the girl's blood – which proved her virginity on which the honour of her family rested as well as the groom's virility – was shown publicly. Naima did not mention it.

2.4.1. "My origin comes from my father!"

The expression *l-laylat l-dokhla* (the night of the entrance) alludes also to the entry by the bride into her husband's house according to the virilocal ideal. Even though Naima had known her mother-in-law since childhood, she commented: "[in the in-law's house] You become an outsider (*brraniya*) because their home is not like yours."⁵⁴ Naima's words evoke a widespread female imaginary that describes marriage as a painful fracture in a girl's life because, leaving her natal home and the intimate female world that characterised her life as a *bnt*, the bride (*'arosa*) entered a new household where she occupied the lowest position and performed all the housework. Cultural norms required the new bride to be shy and deferential. The relationship with her female in-laws was often imbued with jealousy and distrust, since they were competing for the material and emotional support of the husband-son-brother (Maher 1974; Mernissi 1979; Rassam 1980). Furthermore, in the early years of marriage, the marital bond was fragile because the spouses were strangers to one another and only the husband had the prerogative to divorce. Children, especially males, increased the bride's status and are still regarded as vital sources of support for the future when women can enjoy freedom and independence (Mernissi 1975; Schaefer-Davis 1983:38).

As Naima stressed, marriage marked the passage from her natal group to that of her husband's, but not to his genealogical "origin" (*asl*).⁵⁵ She claimed: "I have an origin. My origin comes from my father. *asl* is such an important thing! The value of origin is very high for God [...] It's the same for the bride and the groom. I follow my father, he follows his father."⁵⁶ By stating that her *asl* came from her male agnates (*nasab*), Naima affirmed an identity that was independent from that of her husband. She

⁵⁴ Naima, interview no. 3 (2009).

⁵⁵ On the notion of *asl*, see Abu-Lughod (1986); Eickelman (1976); Geertz, Geertz and Rosen (1979); Rosen (1984).

⁵⁶ Naima, interview no. 3 (2009).

situated herself within her father's lineage and thus emphasised the importance of her birth family *over* the marital bond and her in-laws (*nsib*).⁵⁷

After having spent a year with her husband, Naima began travelling between her natal village and al-Azaliya to stay with the people whom she continued to consider her family: her maternal uncles and her brother. She recounted the following episode to illustrate the loving and affectionate bond with her brother: while her husband had gone to his natal village, leaving Naima under the protection of her brother-in-law (*loussi*, f. *lousti*), her beloved uncle Amir arrived to bring Naima to al-Azaliya because her beloved brother wished her to be with him for his wedding.

My brother said [to her uncle]: "If you don't find the money for her to travel from them, here is the money, bring me my sister. I won't celebrate my wedding until my sister comes". Hence I came. I came, *a lalla!* My brother celebrated his wedding. He gave me clothes and gifts.

After the wedding, Naima remained with her brother for six months in al-Azaliya, and hence her husband sent her brother-in-law (*loussi*) to bring his wife to her natal village, where he was waiting for her. When her husband returned to his workplace in Casablanca, Naima never visited him for seven months. She explained: "His brother came by force and stayed at the *bled*."⁵⁸ Listening to her grandmother's narrative, Hasna smiled complicitly and commented: "By force (*bzzez*) means that Grandma didn't want to go back to her husband; so he had to send his brother to bring her back to him." Indeed, Naima used to spend long periods away from her marital home. In the first years of her conjugal life, mobility was an essential dimension of her life, which enabled her to negotiate her desires and balance the stress of a conjugal life which was far from her relatives.

Six months after King Mohammed V returned to Morocco (16 November 1955), Naima gave birth to her first daughter in her natal village. Two years later, she bore Nura, Hasna's mother. With two daughters and her beloved ones far away, Naima

⁵⁷ Discussing the tension between the bride's natal family and her husband's, Abu-Lughod (1986) argues that matrilineal kin is subsumed in patrilineal ideology amongst the Awlad Ali. From very different perspectives, other scholars have emphasised instead the "uterine dimension" of kinship in Arab societies (Maher 1978, 1989; Barry 2000; Bonte 2000; Conte 2000; Persichetti 2004), describing the life-long and affectionate bonds which characterise the ties created by and through women.

⁵⁸ Naima, Interview, 2009.

decided to talk to her husband. “Eventually, I said to him: ‘I want to go with my uncles to al-Azaliya.’ At that time, he didn’t know al-Azaliya. He stood up and left with my uncle”. This episode shows that, instead of becoming incorporated into her husband’s family, as dominant discourses and ideals of virilocality and female submission entailed, Naima incorporated her husband into her own family networks. Initially, she remained alone at her natal village, then she asked her mother-in-law (‘*aguza*, ‘*agusa* or ‘*adosa*) for permission to join her husband. “I said: ‘I want to go, allow me to go.’ My mother-in-law said: ‘If you want to stay, the river that brings you, brings us.’⁵⁹ If you want to go, bring him his sons. Go to him’.”

Naima left her village in the late 1950s. Moving to al-Azaliya was a meaningful event in her life. Not only did it enable her to recompose her family ties, but also it opened a different way for her to articulate her stories, shifting from passivity to agency and self-determination. So far, other people had made decisions about her life, migration and marriage. By affirming her desire to join her birth family, she made herself the protagonist of the story she told about her life.

2.4.2. “I wanted to dwell with my beloved ones”

I have noted Naima’s emphasis on her genealogical origin and identity as distinct from that of her husband. In everyday discourse, though, she never described her paternal relatives as a source of affection or belonging. Over the years, she cultivated and nourished ties with her matrilateral kin, whom she considered as her main source of love and support. “I had my uncles and my brother here. I didn’t want to stay at the *bled*. I wanted to go where the people I love were, and stay with them. I’ve grown up with them since I was young.”⁶⁰ Naima’s words clearly demonstrated that the sharing of her childhood with them made her maternal relatives more intimate and important to her than the blood ties with her male agnates upon which her social identity rested. Along with Naima’s discourse on the importance of “origin” (*asl lbled*) in order to claim an identity independent from her husband, her intimate sense of self and belonging rested on the people to whom she was bound by intense sentiments of love and affection. These ties were what turned Rabi’a into her “home”.

⁵⁹ This proverb means “we are in the same situation.”

⁶⁰ Naima, Interview, 2009.

In Rabi'a, Naima and her husband built a hut (*nwayil*) to live in. Four years after the death of King Mohammed V (26 February 1961), she bore her first son. After that, many families came over and the newcomers were incorporated into the local community. In these processes, women have played important roles, by cultivating ties amongst female neighbours and relatives, exchanging visits and services, as well as managing the informal economy, fostering children and arranging marriages. Within her female networks, Naima became known as a cook for wedding (*zwejj*) and naming celebrations (*sbo 'a*). As she said: "I would pay for the electricity and the water, and I would buy something that I wanted, I'd buy something for my daughters if they wanted it, that's what I used do."⁶¹ Naima does not regard work as a female duty. Her husband did not only provide for family maintenance (*nafaqa*), as he was expected to do, according to the Islamic law and social ideas about masculinity. He also gave Naima money for shopping. This denotes trust and mutual respect in their relationship, as well as the authority that she gained through her work, which enabled her to make purchases for herself and her children, to go to wedding parties or pay long-distance visits to her relatives without pleading with her husband for money. She said: "If I wanted to go to any wedding party, I went without my children. I'd say to him 'I want to go.' He'd say: 'Go'."⁶²

Working was not only an essential contribution to her family income, but also a critical aspect of Naima's sense of self, because she rated her economic independence from her husband of paramount importance. With the money she earned, Naima contributed to the purchase of a plot of land, where they built a house, room by room. In the room where she still spends most of her time, she bore her youngest daughters Hakima and Haifa. As long as Naima was healthy, her home was an important site for female sociality and still today friends, neighbours and relatives are dropping in and out, through the red iron door that remained open from dawn to dusk. Nowadays, Naima can take pride in her position as the mother of several children, as the "knot" of her offspring. Her house is known among the women of the neighbourhood as "the house of Naima Ahmed" (*ddar khalty Naima Ahmed*), instead of by her husband's name.⁶³

⁶¹ Naima, Interview, 23 June 2010.

⁶² Naima, Interview, 23 June 2010.

⁶³ In general, the house and the family group are associated with the name of the oldest men. See also H. Geertz (1973).

2.5. Nura: “I wanted seriousness, then love came”

Nura is the second-born daughter of Naima. Most times, I met her sitting on her doorstep, patiently sieving grain to remove the grit, after having washed it in the river, and then spread it out on a mat on the forecourt of her house to dry in the sun. The wheat comes from the dry land (*bur*) that her husband owns in his natal village in the countryside of Marrakech. The women of Rabi’a refer to Nura’s children as “the children of Nura, daughter of Naima Ahmed” (*Ayt Nura Naima Ahmed*), thereby drawing a genealogical connection between Naima, her daughter Nura and her children. According to patrilinearity and public discourses on social identity, the *asl* (genealogical origin) of the children follows the father’s line. As I have noted, however, the ways in which neighbourhood women map the social universe in which they live and connect people to one another reveal the history of the relations between families. In other words, the case of Nura, like that of her mother Naima, shows the strength of the social memory of their local community and the dominance of family groups over the individuals, especially in situations of mobility and dislocation. In Rabi’a, the social identity is intimately intertwined not only with the act of dwelling and becoming embedded within a place, but also with the history of the family group which a person belongs to or has become connected with.

Nura has grown up in Rabi’a from childhood. Moreover, she belongs to an extended family rooted in the neighbourhood since its foundation. All the women have known Nura since childhood as a resolutely strong-minded woman who has never let anyone bully her nor has she danced to their tune. In contrast, her husband Khalid, a gentle and peaceful man, arrived in Rabi’a when he was a boy. At the age of 14, his father died, and being the only child, Khalid migrated to al-Azaliya, where his paternal uncle (FB) had already relocated, to support his mother. He remained at his paternal uncle’s home, working in his shop, until the tensions that arose with his cousins and aunt drove him to find another place. Khalid rented a room in Rabi’a with a friend, but the other boy fled with his savings. Without money, Khalid was forced to live on the street. Naima’s uncle saw Khalid sleeping in the fields and housed him until he had saved enough money to rent another room. He also offered him his daughter in marriage, but something went wrong.

Fragments of the story of the encounter between Nura and Khalid were recounted to me on several occasions by her sisters and her daughter Hasna, and they all laugh at

the intense hatred that Nura nourished for him. Khalid fell in love with Nura from the time when he saw her coming back home from her field work with her younger sisters. Along the way, he tried several times to approach her. Every time, however, Nura would shout at him abruptly, regarding his attempts to approach her in the street as disrespectful and improper because they could have compromised her honour and respectability. The ideal of “modesty”, which is part of the way in which Nura conceives of herself as a respectful and virtuous woman, does not, however, turn her into a docile and passive subject. Her strong personality, recognised by many women in the neighbourhood, is the other side of her sense of dignity and authoritativeness, which enabled her to win her husband’s respect and trust. Over time, Khalid’s perseverance persuaded Nura of his serious intention. When he asked her to marry him, she kept silent. Interpreting her silence as a sign of acceptance, Khalid went straightaway to her father to ask for her hand. Nura married at the age of 16.

Recalling these events over a cup of tea in her living room, along with her daughters, Nura said: “I could not stand him, but after he asked for my hand, my attitude toward him changed. After marriage, love (*l-hobb*) came. I wanted the seriousness (*bghit l-m’aqul*)”. Nura’s words about love *as* seriousness evoke a common imaginary on the dangers of intimacy between men and women. By and large, love talk is considered a means to seduce and enchant girls, whereas a man with sincere and serious intentions does not speak of love in the street. Such a man rather demonstrates his seriousness by asking the girl’s family for her hand in marriage and thus taking up his responsibility towards her. After their marriage, Khalid built a shanty in Rabi’a, where Nura gave birth to her first daughter, Hasna. Afterwards, they rented a room until they could afford to buy a plot of land to build their house, which is still under construction, like many houses in the neighbourhood. The first years of conjugal life were difficult. Even though Nura lived immersed in her world of social relationships, her husband was very jealous and forbade his young wife to leave the house in his absence. One day, Nura went to her mother, determined not to return to her marital home. Her parents, however, warned her that she would remain segregated at home, as they were worried about scandals and rumours. In people’s eyes, being a divorcee was a shameful and stigmatising condition for women and their family. Thus, Nura decided to return to her marital home and began negotiating her position with her husband. Her daughter Hasna loves to recount the incidents of insubordination of her mother as

micro-practices through which she challenged her husband's control over her. She often told me that when her parents went to the *medina*, Khalid required Nura to wear the traditional *jallaba* and to veil her face with the *niqab*, but as soon as his back was turned, she removed the *niqab*, saying that her nose was too thin and made it slip away. It was through patiently dialoguing with him, I was told, that Nura managed to transform her husband's tough character over time, building up a relationship of trust and affection as well as opening up space for her freedom and autonomy.

During the daytime, when Khalid was at work, Nura spent a large part of her time with her female relatives, friends and neighbours. Especially, with her uterine kinwomen Nura exchanges regular visits, as well as sharing special dishes and help in daily matters. Cultivating family bonds (*silat r-rahim*) is not only considered a moral and religious duty, but is also an important aspect of Nura's affective and material worlds. In addition to uterine ties, friendship and homosociality are critical aspects of Nura's daytime, where she enjoys a large degree of personal autonomy and independence (see also Abu-Lughod 1986; Maher 1974:132; 1989:128-29). She is actively involved in the female social life of Rabi'a, by taking part in celebrations, where she plays the drums, sings songs and dances. Along with same-sex sociability, Nura spends her time with her husband when he is not working. Unlike the middle-class modern couples of al-Azaliya, Nura and Khalid do not take part in leisure activities, such as going for a stroll or spending their free time outside the home. Even though their love differs from that portrayed in Hollywood and Indian movies, the relationship between Nura and Khalid is imbued with sincere affection, respect and geniality developed over the years of a good marriage. Khalid is a devoted husband, who does not go to cafés with his male friends after a working day, but prefers spending his free time at home with his family. In the dining room, Nura, her husband and their children laugh and joke over a glass of tea. When satellite television broadcasts love scenes, Nura and Khalid exchange a quick glance and then lower their eyes ashamed, before he switches the channel.

2.5.1. Mothers and daughters

Like her mother, Nura has never attended school. When she was a girl, she did farming work with her sisters to contribute to her family's livelihood. Nura and her husband wanted their children to be educated because they considered education of paramount

importance, but also because they hoped that their children could build their own future. Apart from the older son, who dropped out of school at 13 to migrate illegally to Europe without success, all her children are studying at high school or university. Nura is particularly proud that both her daughters Hasna and Karima have a university degree and wishes that they had the opportunity she did not have.

There is an intense love between Nura and her daughter Hasna and their relationship is laden with care, affection and good humour. In general, the bond between a mother and her children is thought to embody the most intimate and intense form of love and attachment. A son or a daughter are morally indebted to their mother forever, and this debt fuels sentiments of devotion, respect and loving affection. Mothers and daughters are supposed to be similar and to share common features, moral values and behaviour as a sign of their intimacy. As an extension of her mother, Hasna derives her social identity from Nura amongst the adult women in Rabi'a who call her "the daughter of Nura (*bnt Nura*)". Along with intense love and profound attachment that bond Nura and her daughter Hasna, hierarchy and discipline are important dimensions of their relationships. As a mother, Nura is considered responsible for her daughter's education and behaviour. Although she regards her daughters' education as a priority, Nura has always required them to contribute to the domestic work. During her life, Nura has never been idle and she expects her daughters to be the same. Since Hasna was 6 years old, she has learnt from Nura to master domestic skills such as cleaning the house, sweeping away the dust that the wind brings inside from the dirt roads, doing the laundry, preparing the meals and baking bread. Even now, in the early morning Nura still shouts at her daughters, "Get up! (*Nudo*).” They do not dare to refuse or challenge the stream of orders issued by their mother, as this would be a sign of disrespect.

Domestic work is important to discuss the values and the view on femininity that Nura has tried to pass on to her daughters. Even though she is aware that her daughters' daily experience is immeasurably distant from her own in many respects, she has taught them all the tasks that in her view turn a girl into a capable and thrifty housekeeper (*hedga*). In the social milieu where Hasna lives, women consider that being a capable housekeeper (*hedga*) and a modest girl are necessary in order to find a husband, even though the reality may be different. Passed on from Nura to her daughters, the knowledge related to domestic work is rooted in manual dexterity, through which young women are judged by other women and which are part of their sense of self. Bread,

baking and family ties are interwoven in the adult women's discourses in Rabi'a about the moral quality of the household. This is not only because people prefer homemade bread (*l-khobs dyal d-dar*) – which in their view has a different taste from “the alley bread” (*l-khobs dyal zanqa*) available at the grocery store⁶⁴ – but also because these discourses reflect the moral values of domesticity and modesty. Each day, Nura and her daughters bake several circular loaves to go with the main meals such as *tajin*⁶⁵, as well as with breakfast and afternoon tea. While baking bread embodies the female quality of being capable (*hedga*), at the same time various jokes that circulate amongst women ridicule male expectations of female modesty and deference.

In folk imagination, indeed, “proper femininity” is associated with the “home” and the neighbourhood, as the expressions *bint d-dar* (house girl/good girl) – and its opposite *bint z-zanqa* (street girl) – reveal. For this reasons, Nura does not want her daughters to loiter around if they do not have errands to run, or university lectures or work to go to. From time to time, however, Hasna goes to a café or ice cream shop in the medina with some friends, and her mother says to her “Don't go to the cafés with those people, don't show up with them or other people will start gossiping.” Despite her trust in Hasna, Nura is worried that rumours and gossip could cause trouble for her daughter, and indeed, people in working-class neighbourhoods like Rabi'a have little privacy, as their lives and conduct are scrutinised by their neighbours.

The mother-daughter relationship is one site where Hasna and her sister embody domestic skills and ideas of modest femininity, and learn discipline and generational hierarchies. On the other hand, they learn the micro-practices through which the dominant discourses on kinship, marriage and sexuality are critiqued and contested. As I noted above, Nura's daughters discuss the ways in which she deals with her husband and the micro-practices through which she negotiates her desires. Within this vertical and intimate relation, the girls learn to acquire skills and knowledge germane to their transition along the female positions of wife, mother, and mother-in-law that define people's imagination about women's life courses. In fact, Nura's idea of modest femininity does not entail passivity and submission to male authority, but rather dignity

⁶⁴ According to the dominant discourses, male babies are preferred to females as descent is traced through them and women without brothers are pitied; but daughters lift the mother from the weight of domestic chores and life-long emotional support (Dwyer 1979; Schaefer-Davis 1983; Davis & Davis 1989).

⁶⁵ *Tajin* is the traditional Moroccan main dish made of stuffed chicken or other meat and vegetables.

and respectability. Women and girls are aware that the roles of wife and mother may bring power and authority over male relatives, because of their capability of turning a house into a “home” (hooks 1998). Around the table in the living room, the members of Nura’s family gather to share their meals from a single plate,⁶⁶ being careful not to eat the others’ portions. Eating from a single plate and drinking from the same glass embody the moral values of sharing, altruism and solidarity, which are part of “being a Moroccan family” and in turn *make* them a family. Being part of a family provides its members with a place in the world of social relations in which they live, as well as duties and responsibilities towards each others. Yet these notions of the gendered self and intimate ties increasingly compete with other aspirations, ideas of femininity and paths of self-fulfilment that are available to the young women like Hasna, to whom I will turn now.

2.6. Hasna: “I don’t need any man”

Hasna is the eldest of five siblings. This gives her authority over them, although she often complains about how authoritarian her brother has become since he came of age. When she was 19, Hasna won a scholarship to university, where she studied French literature. After graduating, she was unemployed for several months until she found a job in an international company in Casablanca. She often recalls the years she spent far away from her family as very important in her self-becoming. During her stay in Casablanca, in fact, she could enjoy living on her own in a big city, being independent and having a space for herself. Hasna has little free time for herself during the week, being busy with both her job and the domestic chores. At the same time, living away from her family was a hard experience during which she faced loneliness and daily difficulties. She started chatting on the internet to deal with homesickness. By chatting on the internet, she come to master different Arabic dialects and became friend with other Moroccan young people living in other Arab countries, with whom she shared thoughts and experiences. Like many young people of al-Azaliya, Hasna long dreamed of migrating to Italy or Spain, which she envisioned as a paradise, but listening on the

⁶⁶ Sharing meals occupies a special place in the imagination of what a family should be, often thought of in contrast with “western families”, where both parents are busy with their work and everyone thinks of themselves. This idea is widespread among my interlocutors and I was often told that family ties in Morocco are not like the “West,” where young people want to be independent, “cut the ties” with their parents and leave home once they come of age.

internet to the experiences and problems of young immigrants in Europe or in the Gulf led her to change her mind.

In 2008, Hasna lost her job due to the international financial crisis and returned to al-Azaliya. After returning home, she went through a difficult time in her life because she could not find another job. During this period of unemployment, Hasna gave home tuition to small groups of neighbourhood children and eventually enrolled in vocational training, thanks to a scholarship. When I met her in 2009, she was completing her internship in an office, but was unhappy because she felt that she had not studied at university for that and wanted to give a meaning to her life. In her view, however, being busy with a job was better than staying at home all day.

Like many young women with working-class backgrounds who have obtained *la license* (a university degree), Hasna dreams of having a good job and a family, which she interprets as two important areas of achievement for a woman. Like her grandmother, she considers it important to have a job and be economically independent, even though, as a girl, her parents do not expect her to contribute financially to her family's livelihood. When she eventually found a job as a translator, she felt self-realised and was happy that she could buy something for herself, items for the house and gifts for her mother and sister. Having a job, however, was not just about earning money. For Hasna, working was also a means for self-realisation and freedom of mobility, for spending time away from domestic work and the neighbourhood, for meeting people and learning from new experiences.

Compared with her mother and grandmother, Hasna's experience reveals the different gendered imaginaries and aspirations that inhabit her sense of self. Indeed, the dream of migrating to Italy and the possibility of chatting with other young people on the internet, the access to university education and the search for a professional career, which are all part of Hasna's daily life and imagination, were unthinkable for her mother and grandmother. At the same time, these striking transformations have also brought in her life new tensions and contradictions. In fact, when Hasna is working, domestic chores become a double burden for her. "Even though a woman works, she always has the burden of domestic work, while a man is not expected to contribute", she would say referring to the gender division of domestic work between herself and her brothers, between women and men.

Despite her desire to have a good job, the precariousness and uncertainty that characterise her professional life make her doubt her personal choices and aspirations. When she was studying *à la fac* (at university), indeed, Hasna received several marriage proposals that she refused, because of her desire to complete her university studies first. Occasionally, she has regretted not having married and wondered whether it was worth investing so much energy in her university studies to eventually find herself unmarried and without a stable job at the age of 28. In the social milieu where Hasna lives, marriage is considered a critical event in male and female life trajectories alike. Although it is not compulsory according to Islam, people say that “marriage accomplishes religion (*zawej ikmml din*)” or “it is half of religion (*zawej nss din*)” and they comment about an unmarried woman in her late 20s that “she’s missed the bus (*fat ‘liha lkar*)”. When Hasna visits her grandmother, Naima often asks her with loving concern: “When are you going to get married?”

Being highly educated and unmarried is not the only conflict that Hasna faces. She also has to deal with the moral dilemmas between her longing for a love marriage, the ideal of modest femininity and family values. Unlike her mother Nura and her grandmother Naima, who denied an interest in love as signs of dignity and female modesty, Hasna underlines the importance of love in marriage. She aspires to have a love marriage with an educated man, with whom she can share ideas, interests and projects. Even though she would like to spend time with a young man before a formal engagement (*khotoba*), she is aware of the ambiguity of her desire. She feels that by dating, she would betray her family values and expectations. She told: “Women always have to say no, even though inside their heart they feel the opposite. They always have to hide their feelings!” For Hasna, every girl dreams of love, but represses her desires because of family and social control. On the other hand, however, the image of herself as an independent subject collides with the intimate connectivity with her relatives, because her sexual behaviour could compromise the family honour and respectability.

Although she reflects critically on family and social control, Hasna experiences the affirmation of her desires as both a right and a betrayal towards her beloved ones. “Sometimes, I feel as if I had two heads” are the words with which she epitomised the conflicting desires and aspirations that fragment her sense of self into competing self-images: a dutiful daughter, a committed Muslim and a young educated woman who desires to control her personal life. Her desire to choose her future husband

notwithstanding, Hasna is aware of the dangers of premarital liaisons. Like her mother, she values the seriousness and reliability of a young man on the basis of his intention to take on his responsibility instead of dating secretly. “I do not want to date. If a man has a serious intention, he should come to ask for my hand. Then we can get to know each other”, she said in this regard. Indeed, Hasna did not want to risk her reputation and lie to her family nor did she want to find a husband on a website, as some university friends did. In a moment of sadness, she said: “I do not need any man. I’ve always been alone and I can stay alone for the rest of my life.” At the same time, she often wondered whether she could ever have a family, a husband and children. These thoughts engendered suffering in Hasna’s heart, not simply because of the social pressures on girls to get married, but also because the identity of wife and mother are part of the way in which she imagines herself in the future.

2.7. Conclusion

By exploring the everyday worlds of Naima, Nura and Hasna, I delved into the multifaceted discourses and micro-practices surrounding family ties in a low-income neighbourhood of al-Azaliya. As I have shown, these three women do not articulate their autobiographical accounts nor understand their life simply as an isolated self; but rather their sense of self is both connected with and distinct from their family and intimate ties. Their “intimate selving” (Joseph 1999) illustrates the ways in which they imagine themselves and their affective worlds in different historical and social circumstances. It shows continuities and discontinuities related to the ways in which the broader changes that have occurred in Moroccan society over the last fifty years have worked to re-configure the experiences and imaginaries of love, marriage and family ties.

In Naima’s time, the elders’ authority to arrange marriage at an early age was not questioned nor was a personal marital choice imaginable for her. Like other women of her generation, she describes marriage as a fracture in her life trajectory, which she accepted as the natural fate of a woman. In her narratives, she is silent about several aspects of her conjugal life in order to comply with the code of modesty and because she does not refer to marriage as a source of emotional fulfilment. Throughout her life, her bond with her birth family has remained a source of identity and belonging, as well

as of material and emotional support. Far from being a marginal aspect of her life, though, marriage has enabled her bodily and symbolic transformation and given her a position in society as a wife, a mother and a mother-in-law. Details of her recollection show the relationships of mutual trust and respect between Naima and her husband. Yet Naima has built her sense of self on (material and emotional) independence from her husband and on an enduring allegiance to her birth family.

From Naima, her daughter Nura learnt the values of duty, independence and dignity. As a respectable and serious woman, she never dated nor wished to speak to her husband before marriage, as she expected that love would blossom after marriage, when husband and wife share the hardship and duties of conjugal life with mutual respect and trust. Nura's marriage was not arranged by her parents but neither was it a love relationship that developed into marriage. Even though she could decide about her marriage with Khalid, Nura evoked images of marriage as responsibility, family honour and duty, instead of investing it with romantic expectations. She wanted a serious spouse and adhered to the code of modesty that she considers appropriate for a woman. Female modesty is not passivity or submission, but rather values of honour and dignity through which Nura has led her life, by negotiating her position with her husband and personal relationships alike.

In different ways, Naima and her daughter Nura succeeded in negotiating their marital relationships and experienced significant degrees of independence and autonomy. I cannot say to what extent this was the result of their strong personalities, or the dislocation of family ties and power relations between their natal families and those of their husbands, who found themselves somehow indebted. In any event, the vertical relationship amongst close female relatives, and mothers and daughters, are vital spaces where discourses and knowledge on marriage and the power within intimate ties are not only socialised, but also called into question. At the same time, these vertical bonds, where forms of femininity are forged and incorporated, make apparent the changing ideas of love, intimate connectivity and conjugality amongst generations.

Like many young women of al-Azaliya, Hasna went to university and dreams of achieving her aspirations of having a good job and a family. Unlike her mother and grandmother, she grew up in a society where mass education, transnational migration to Southern Europe, media technology and female work are all a significant part of her everyday experiences. Yet Hasna's experience shows that the contemporary

transformations in young women's lives are far from being a linear passage from "arranged marriage" to "love", from "family constraints" to "free choice". Even though she desires to marry to an educated husband, with whom she can share thoughts and ideas, she is aware that, according to her family and social values, dating endangers a female reputation. The moral dilemmas engendered by the tensions between aspirations and social demands are not easy to handle because touch on intimate dimensions of her sense of self. Despite Hasna's reflections upon social and the family constraints on women's intimate lives and their bodies, she feels that she cannot behave independently from the people whom she loves and for whom she feels responsible. Furthermore, Hasna's story enables a reflection on the material constraints that shape her sense of self and her affective world. Hasna invested in education and a job, but the precarious working conditions in which she finds herself reveal the betrayed expectations of social mobility. The international crises have affected female job opportunities more directly than those of males, and her access to the formal work market is fragile and precarious. Unmarried and without a stable job, Hasna experiences her dependency as frustrating and painful.

Thus, the stories of Naima, Nura and Hasna provide a nuanced picture of the consequences of social and economic transformations in their family and affective worlds, which show complexities and contradictions. Compared with their mothers, Hasna enjoys more freedom in the definition of her life-trajectory, but she is confronted with moral and material constraints. In the past too, love was a source of generational conflicts and the diverse experiences and discourses are also the result of shifting positioning in people's life trajectories. Elderly and middle-aged women have always negotiated their desires and aspirations, by moving through multiple discourses on family and femininity, male authority and sexuality, and marriage and intimacy, available to them in different historical and social circumstances (Cole & Thomas 2009: 4). These three stories also testify to the intensity of ties amongst uterine relatives and the ways in which women's family and personal relationships stand alongside the marital bond as critical spaces for sociality, material support and emotional investment. In the next chapter, I will move the analysis from family ties to female sociability and personal relationships, by investigating the bonds that the women and girls whom I met chose to create with other women.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S AFFECTIVE AND SOCIAL WORLDS

3.1. Female intimacy and sociability

From autumn onwards, night falls early on the Middle Atlas highlands. The cold climate drives the inhabitants of Rabi'a into their homes and the front doors are locked at sunset. During the warmer months, in contrast, when the daylight lengthens, prolonging the rhythms of social life, young men and boys stand around with their all-male gangs until late; their sisters and mothers go shopping with their female relatives and friends in the crowded streets of the medina or stroll in the main avenues of the city. Sitting on small wooden stools in their doorways, women and girls enjoy the breeze blowing from the forest. Under the starry sky, close relatives and friends exchange stories, jokes and memories. The people of al-Azaliya call the threshold of their homes *fum l-bab*, "the mouth of the door." By connecting the interior of the house (*d-dar*) - a vital place where people's bodies and personal ties are nourished - with the world outside, "the mouth of the door" makes visible the interwoven networks of kinship, friendship and neighbourliness that shape the social life in the low-income neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya. Indeed, it is in the home, or sitting on the threshold in the narrow alleys of the neighbourhood, that women and girls carry out a large part of their daily lives and activities.

This chapter investigates the personal ties of young women, their mothers and grandmothers, by starting from the everyday places of female sociability in the neighbourhood (houses, thresholds and alleyways) to the school or the workplace. Both separate from and parallel to the men's, female sociability is a vital aspect of everyday life, where women enjoy a large degree of personal autonomy and independence (Abu-Lughod 1985). Many studies have maintained that the fragility of the marital bond renders women's networks essential in the material, emotional and social worlds of women (Maher 1974, 1989; Davis 1983; Abu-Lughod 1985; Altorki 1986; White 1994). By documenting women's personal networks in Morocco, Vanessa Maher (1974:132; 1989:128-29) has stressed the "structural importance" of female ties, especially with their uterine kinswomen. According to Maher, the women's networks provide material and emotional support under structural conditions of vulnerability, divorce and poverty,

as well as working against male authority and the incorporation of the bride into her husband's kin group. In the previous chapter, I illustrated the intensity of the vertical and horizontal ties amongst uterine kinwomen as well as the transmission of gendered knowledge that occurs between the generations. Besides cultivating intense ties with their uterine kinwomen, many women whom I met in al-Azaliya also create relationships of closeness and intimacy with other women by sharing bodily substances (breast milk), trust, secrets and material support. Specifically, this chapter focuses on two horizontal bonds that women intentionally create with other women, investing them with care, trust and affection: milk-kinship (*rada'a*) and friendship (*sadaqa*).

Long concerned with the study of kinship ("blood-ties" and marriage) as the founding and structural aspect of non-western societies, anthropological literature has devoted scarce attention to female friendship⁶⁷ and milk ties. In fact, tracing a sharp division between various relationships is not always an easy task. Friendship, kinship⁶⁸ and neighbourly relationships are fluid, overlapping, situational and flexible rather than determined by roles and rules (see also Geertz, H. 1979). Social and personal relationships change over time; neighbours become friends or friendship relations are turned into kinship.

Moving away from a definition of kinship based on an analytic opposition between the "biological" and the "social," Janet Carsten (1995, 2000: 1-36, 2004) has described "relatedness" as the life-long process of *being* and *becoming* connected with people through "mundane rituals of everyday life". By focusing on the experience of kinship, Carsten has analysed the "banal" practices of relatedness through which social bonds and inter-subjectivity are brought into being. This perspective has allowed me to focus on the ways in which the women and girls I met were creating and cultivating relationships of closeness, trust and friendship, because it also shows the emotional, creative and performative dimensions of these forms of relatedness. At the same time, however, subsuming both friendship and milk ties under the general notion of

⁶⁷ In the past decade, friendship relations have received a new kind of academic attention. See Bell & Coleman (1999), Desai & Killick (2010) and Descharmes, Heuser & Kruger (2011). Few studies, however, have focused specifically on female friendship; amongst the recent publications, see, for instance, Dyson (2010).

⁶⁸ Dale Eickelman (1974:208; 1981:108-116) has suggested that the Moroccan notions of *qaraba* (closeness) is an experience-near concept which enables one to grasp the local notions of identity, family and other social ties better than through the experience-distant concept of kinship.

“relatedness” may elide the specificities of these forms of intimate connection. As Amit Desai and Evan Killick (2010: 5) have noted, “relatedness” has become a catch-all category which includes a variety of experiences, and hence it runs the risk of concealing the concrete ways in which people distinguish between different types of relationships. Even though ties are transformed and “re-worked” over time, the women and girls I met contextually drew boundaries between the various modes of being related. In fact, they compared and contrasted milk-kinship and friendship with other relationships, thereby investing them with particular meanings, values and expectations, as well as elaborating ideas of self and others, of love and morality.

By discussing the lived experiences of different generations of women, my intention in this chapter is to demonstrate the vital importance of female friendship, trust and intimacy in their everyday lives. At the same time, I aim to reflect on the ways in which social, economic and political forces have contributed to transforming their everyday social and affective worlds. The comparison between mothers and daughters, indeed, reflects important changes in the forms of sociability and the construction of personal bonds. In the changed material and social circumstances, some bonds from the past have become difficult to maintain, or undesirable *vis-à-vis* the shifting configurations of the family, as well as the longings for middle-class consumerism and conjugal intimacy.

3.2. Homes, alleys and thresholds

Homes, alleys and thresholds are the everyday spaces where the adult women and girls with whom I shared my days in the low-income neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya build their social, affective and economic worlds. They dedicate a large part of their spare time to cultivating relationships with their female relatives, neighbours and friends, even though their networks are far from being limited to the neighbourhood where they live. Some adult women work outside the neighbourhood as seamstresses, nurses, factory workers or (in a few cases) as school teachers, but many stay at home. After having cleaned the house, baked the bread and prepared the meals, close female relatives exchange visits if they live in the same neighbourhood. Unlike people in the wealthy districts, most of them do not phone their friends and relatives to announce their visit (provided that they live in the same city or neighbourhood), but simply knock

at the door. Being received and receiving friends at any time is also regarded as a token of closeness and hospitality.⁶⁹ Guests are invited to stay longer for tea and are fed with lunch leftovers at any time, since hospitality and generosity are regarded as important social values.

Female relatives, friends and neighbours drop in and out of one another's homes for a quick visit or a chat. Seated comfortably in the sitting-room, they spend hours talking and watching television; they exchange news, stories and jokes, as well as chatting and laughing in a relaxed and intimate atmosphere. In the spaces of same-sex sociability, gender ideologies and dominant discourses on family, sexuality and marriage are challenged, reversed and reaffirmed in the jokes, stories and conversations that women share. When closely-related men and young kinsmen drop in, the oldest women do not change their attitude, nor does their presence change the atmosphere of physical intimacy and amusement. In low-income neighbourhoods like Rabi'a, homes are often lived in as "female public places" (Holmes-Eber 2003:17), where women carry out a large part of their everyday social life. Within the house, women and girls celebrate religious festivities and the most important events in people's life-trajectories, such as a naming ceremony, circumcision, *baccalaureate* diploma, betrothal, marriage and death.

Houses and their dwellers are connected to each others in the broader structure of the alley (*zanqa*). A few narrow alleys define a residential block (*bloc*), an administrative classification of the space within the neighbourhood (*hay*). The alley is another arena of daily interactions and socialisation based on social networks and mutual obligations amongst neighbours. As I noted in the previous chapter, many families in Rabi'a are related to each other through interwoven and overlapping kin ties, resulting from marriages amongst extended families and neighbours, as well as from breast-feeding. Residential proximity and long-standing neighbourly ties, especially among families who live in the same alley, often engender close relationships among neighbours (*jar*, pl. *jiran*; f. *jara*, pl. *jarat*). The intricate interweaving of family and neighbourly ties also contributes to shaping women's perceptions of the spaces outside as a variable extension of their houses. Thus, they feel free to step out in pyjamas or

⁶⁹ Various degrees of formality and informality are reserved to different types of guests according to the level of intimacy and closeness. Geographically distant relatives and formal guests are reserved different levels of formality and patterns of hospitality; in other words, special dishes are prepared and guests are entertained and looked after.

wrapped in a loose sheet (*izar*) to venture into the neighbourhood undisturbed, saying: “there are neither male strangers nor cars in the streets.”⁷⁰

Since residential proximity (*jora*) is considered an important dimension in the construction of social ties, women try to get on well with the people who live in the same alley. Neighbours drop in and out of one another’s homes to ask for utensils and help, and to share meals and special dishes, as well as to visit one another. Neighbourly ties are also important because women exchange information about unmarried girls and hence, when they want to marry off their sons, they may search for a “good girl” within their networks of female relatives, friends and neighbours. There are women known as *khotba*, who help to find a girl and to arrange the marriage through their mediation, for small amounts of money. Sometimes, small groups of female relatives may come from other districts or rural villages in the Tadla Plain to low-income neighbourhoods like Rabi’a, looking for a bride for their sons who have often migrated to Italy or Spain. They knock at the door, ask for water, and start a conversation. Considered a reliable source of information, next-door neighbours are often asked to provide information about a particular person and his/her family. Consequently, women and their daughters care about their reputation (*suma’a*) and about what neighbours think and say about them.

Economic, affective and instrumental ties interweave and overlap in a complex manner within female personal networks, since women manage the informal economies of the neighbourhood (see White 1994 on Turkey). Many women work at home, weaving carpets and embroidering, doing *henna* decoration and crafting adornments for traditional clothes. Others say about themselves “I’m just sitting at home (*glsa f-dar*)”, although they are involved in home-based handicraft activities organised within neighbourly female networks. Dressed in a *jallaba* or pyjamas, women and girls stand in the field of olive groves or in the narrow alleys of the neighbourhood to roll coloured silk-like threads (*barma*)⁷¹ of several metres long with which decorations are crafted.⁷² *Barma* involves many women and girls in Rabi’a and other poor neighbourhoods,

⁷⁰ Fieldnotes, 24 May 2010.

⁷¹ The term *barma* means rolling and is derived from the verb *barm*.

⁷² Coloured silk-like threads are used for crafting various types of decorations for *jallaba*-s made of thin plastic hoses and silk-like threads and crafted at home by women.

enabling them to earn a small amount of money respectably⁷³ without altering their domestic work and childcare duties. At home, women and girls interweave and knot silk-like threads while chatting with relatives or sitting comfortably on the sofa in front of the television. ‘*Amara* (decoration for *jallaba*) is paid at 1 dirham (0.10 Euros) per metre and sold for 2.⁷⁴ Women who organise the work keep 1 dirham for themselves. As Naima’s unmarried daughter said to me: “A little or nothing [there is no choice].”⁷⁵ Despite the low wage that these types of handicraft provide, earning small amounts of money is of vital importance for women and young women with low levels of education and they recognise the economic and symbolic value of their work. From house to house, children deliver back and forth materials and piecework to be handcrafted, as well as money and messages. The coloured threads connect women and houses,⁷⁶ where they complete the manufacturing, thus revealing the importance of female networks in the construction of the social and economic worlds of women and girls in the low-income neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya.

3.3. The other and the hidden intention

Not all neighbours and acquaintances become friends, nor are all neighbourly relationships without tensions and conflicts. Insofar as personal relationships occupy such a central position in adult women’s everyday lives, they are (and were) fraught with sentiments of ambivalence and misgivings. Fears of gossip⁷⁷ about one’s life and sexual behaviour are widespread and make women wary about sharing their intimate secrets. In her study of village Moroccan women, Susan Schaefer-Davis (1983: 89-102) has pointed out that rumours and gossip were part of the informal politics through which the women whom she worked with manipulated the flow of information in order to endanger another woman’s reputation, and consequently that of her family. On the

⁷³ Unlike *barma* and other activities, which women carry out at home, working as a house cleaner (*l-khaddama*) is regarded as a very humble job, while for example working in men’s cafés as a waitress is considered dishonouring for a woman.

⁷⁴ The price may vary more, according to the handicraft. A skilled woman can produce three metres per hour, while women who roll *sobra* earn up to 50 dirham (less than 5 Euros) a half day.

⁷⁵ Fieldnotes, Hakima, 28 June 2010.

⁷⁶ Women who organize this work in Rabi’a provide materials and on a daily basis set the number of pieces required to be sold to local dressmakers or to the tailors in the city.

⁷⁷ The inhabitants of al-Azaliya refer to those women who know what is going on and who observe carefully what other people do as gossipers (*bargaga*, from the verb *bargag*).

other hand, gossip is also about being part of a community and being intimately involved in one another's lives (Gluckman 1963; Gilmore 1978).

Within the neighbourhood, people and their vicissitudes are object of conversations and reflections which often become a social commentary on the destiny and personal will, on morality and the transgression of the social norms. By discussing one another's lives, women and girls comment upon personal relationships and elaborate theories on the nature of human beings, and on how to deal with the unpredictability of human intentions and behaviour. According to my interlocutors, the nature of human beings and their social identity are multiple, shifting and situational⁷⁸ because the person's carnal self (*nafs*) is drawn by multiple desires and instincts. Etymologically, the Arabic notion of identity (*huwiya*) comprises the presence of the *other* (*huwa*, the "he"), thus evoking continuous movements within and against the immobility of the subject. Inhabited by traces of alterity and the possibility of loss (see also Pandolfo 1997), the carnal self should be dominated and integrated through the development of reason (*'aql*). My interlocutors say that "Moroccans have two heads" (*maghrarba 'andhom juj rios*) or "Moroccans have a thousand heads" (*maghrarba 'andhom alf ro'os*), meaning that human nature is complex and multiple. These expressions also suggest that what stands beyond and behind the appearance is difficult to grasp because one's *niya* – the "real" intention or hidden purpose – often remains unknown and unknowable. Like selfhood, the "other" is a mystery whose personality can emerge only over time. Only by looking at the ways in which she/he behaves in different relational contexts and situations, my interlocutors think that it is possible to understand the various aspects of the person's identity.⁷⁹

Women and girls often rely on their inner feelings and intuition to penetrate the inscrutability of the other, because they say that they can feel in their heart when a person's intention is genuine. In their view, there are people with a "white heart" (*qalb bied*) - indicating a sincere and pure intention (*niya*) - who deserve trust and friendship, whereas those with a "black heart" (*qalb khol*) may intentionally harm and manipulate

⁷⁸ Clifford Geertz (1974: 26-45) and Lawrence Rosen (1984) have made a similar point in their fascinating analysis of the social construction of personhood in Morocco. On the *'aql-nafs* dynamics, see Rosen (1984), Schaefer-Davis (1983) and Davis & Davis (1989: 6, 47-49; 157-165). On *'aql*, see also Abu-Lughod (1986).

⁷⁹ Intention is thought of as arising from the heart. For a detailed discussion of *niya*, see Rosen (1984: 47-56). For Rosen, the term *niya* conveys various meanings such as intent, design, purpose, plan, will, volition, inclination and desire.

other people through plotting, gossiping or even magical influence (*siher*).⁸⁰ Indeed, the notion of subject is conceived as a porous entity that may be *acted upon* (Mittermaier 2012) by other invisible forces: human, non-human and transcendental. Qur'anic inscriptions are hung on the walls of the houses to protect their dwellers from the influence of the devil (*shytan*) and the encounters with the *jinnun* (spirits, sing *jinn*); but also, as I was told, from wicked human sentiments and intentions. Sentiments of envy (*l-hasd*) and jealousy (*l-ghira*) are thought of as harming people (deliberately or intentionally) in various ways because the personhood is considered permeable to the others' sentiments. The fear of the evil eye (*'ayn*) and magic spells which enemies may cast on their victims is widespread amongst women and girls alike. Whilst many tales of magic spells and bewitching relate to sexuality, love and marriage, magic is also the language through which women talk about the tensions amongst neighbours.

While women's and girls' everyday practices and discourses reveal the complexities of personal relationships, at the same time, they emphasise the ways in which these have changed over time. They claim that when the families were extended, neighbours also "gathered a lot" (*kay-tjam'o nas bzzef*) and "people were close to each other" (*kano nas grab 'la ba'diyathom*). Neighbours and relatives used to share their food with others, and particularly on special occasions, when a lamb was slaughtered and the meat was shared, "No one would eat alone (*makan ta had kay-akol l-makla bohdo*)." They often complain that social and personal relationships have weakened over time because people have become more egoistic (*anani*) and materialistic (*maddy*). Although women's networks continue to play a vital role in low-income neighbourhoods by shaping women's and girls' social, affective and economic worlds, my interlocutors claim that in the past there was more solidarity and *niya* (good intention, simplicity) amongst neighbours, who would gather to clean the grain after harvest and help each other in daily matters. Women's comments about the erosion of solid female networks and neighbourly bonds contribute to the construction of an idealised past which elides conflicts and tensions. Yet they also reflect upon and make sense to the broader social and economical changes that have impinged on their personal and social relationships, thereby engendering a sense of fragility and vulnerability.

⁸⁰ Women refer in this regard to "those who are not scared of God...(*lly ma kay-khafosh llah...*)", meaning that they can expect anything from people lacking in values.

Against the backdrop of the broader transformations that have occurred in al-Azaliya over the past three decades, I will describe the ties that women and girls intentionally choose to create with other women. As their multifaceted experiences show, being neighbours or relatives is not enough to become good friends. In a world where envy and betrayal are regarded as the other side of social relationships and people's "real" intention often remains unknowable, girls, as well as their mothers and grandmothers, consider amity, trust and intimacy as highly elective. Fears of betrayal and vulnerability are in fact other facets of interdependence, mutuality and connectivity. In addition to mutual sympathy and affinity, there are some aspects, such as good intention (*niya*), trust (*tiqa*) and love/affection (*muhabba*), which turn two acquaintances or relatives into close friends. In different ways, the narratives of women and girls demonstrate that friendship is a very special bond between two women and a rare incident in one's life, but also a fragile and performative bond. For these reasons, perhaps, many old and middle-aged women whom I met decided to turn it into milk kinship, to which I will turn first.

3.4. Breast-milk creates relatives

"There is a breast between us (*hna binatna l-bzzula*)" is the way in which people evoke the intense sentiments of affection, love and moral obligations infusing milk kinship (*rada'a* or MSA *rida'a*), namely the bond of brotherhood (*l-khawa*) which women create between their babies through breastfeeding. Milk kinship is one of the three types of kinship comprised in Islamic law, alongside blood (*nasab*) and affinity (*musahara*). Like the bonds established through marriage and filiations, breast-milk has the legal power to engender kinship ties and marriage (and sexual) interdictions, but not descent or heritage rights.⁸¹ Yet milk kinship has been under-theorised in anthropological literature, which has long focused on "blood" as the founding substance of kinship (Fortier 2001, 2007: 16). Discussing the focus on cross-cousin marriage, especially between parallel cousins (FBD), the anthropologist Soraya Altorki (1980:233) has pointed out: "None of the numerous anthropological studies published on marriage and social organisation in Arab societies deals with the institution of *rida'a*, fosterage or,

⁸¹ The four legal schools do not agree on the extent to which these should be applied (Altorki 1980), nor are the social practices related to milk-kinship the same everywhere; the latter, in fact vary considerably according to local contexts and social class.

better, 'milk-kinship'." Drawing on her upper class Saudi Arabian interlocutors, Altorki (1980) has argued that women used milk-kinship as the means to cement female alliances and prevent undesirable marriage unions, especially between parallel cousins; furthermore, milk-kinship dispensed women from modest dress-styles and behaviours in the presence of *nasab* kinsmen. Meanwhile, Altorki noted that the decline of milk-kinship and its social significance was paralleled by the spread of new dietary habits (such as milk powder) and housing arrangements oriented towards the nuclear family.

Building on Altorki's idea that breast milk is produced by both male and female fluids, but belongs to the husband,⁸² Françoise Héritier (1994: 95-108, 1996) has described milk as a mere "vector" of male substance: as transformed sperm, breast milk does not affect the formation of the personhood nor does it transmit character. Héritier's "implicit somatic theory" has influenced French scholarship on milk kinship within Maghreb. For example, drawing on ethnographic research in Mauritania, Corinne Fortier (2001, 2007) has described a "duogenetic" vision of reproduction. She has argued, "One can find in Sunni Islam, therefore, alongside the monogenetic and masculine point of view of the Qur'an, a 'duogenetic' point of view establishing that the union of the two sexual fluids is necessary for reproduction" (Fortier 2007: 26). While recognising that a woman's body is neither passive nor a vector of a male substance, Fortier has nevertheless traced milk back to sperm.

Peter Parkes (2005:313) has criticised Héritier's theory for lacking any ethnographic or juridical evidence and argued that it results from the "imaginative symbolic extrapolation of the Arab saying reported by Altorki that milk is from the man (*al-laban al-fahl*); but we shall find that this is a popular reflex of a specific Sunni *juristic notion*." In contrast, Parkes has endorsed a historical and comparative perspective to document the essential roles that milk kinship has historically played in North Pakistan's dynastic reigns. Accordingly, since Islam forbade adoption, milk kinship established trustworthy alliances amongst freed slaves (*haratin*) and local princes (*shorfa*), while excluding marriage and inheritance rights. In his view, legal texts had to reconcile social practices with the Islamic physiological premise that maternal milk stems from uterine blood, transmits the female character and belongs to women. By reversing Héritier's argument, Parkes (2005:325) argued that milk is "a

⁸² See Altorki (1980, footnote 3).

sanguinary symbol of *uterine kinship* – in ideologically marked opposition to agnatic (jural and spiritual) descent”.

Within up-to-date anthropological literature, thus, breastfeeding has been interpreted either as a female strategy to handle family ties and domestic life within extended families and co-residential settings or in terms of political alliances. Milk-kinship was used to establish long-standing alliance and cliental relations among social groups of unequal status (Khatib-Chahidi 1992; Parkes 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006). Within this second line of research, it is to be situated Remco Ensel’s study on the practice of co-lactation and milk-kinship in Southern Morocco (Ensel 1999: Ch. 4, 2002). According to Ensel, men often downplay the importance of milk kinship because they have little control over this female practice through which women bring about “a relation that is alternative to kinship based on blood” (Ensel 1999:123). Apart from cementing patron-client relations, Ensel (1999:119) has also noted that co-lactation may testify to longstanding friendship between women, but unfortunately he does not provide ethnographic evidence or further develop this point.

In different ways, these studies have enhanced the understanding of milk-ties, yet they lack specific attention to women’s standpoints. The women and girls whom I met in various districts of al-Azaliya and the surrounding villages do not describe milk kinship in terms of political alliance nor do they reduce it to a female strategy to handle family ties. Without discarding these interpretations, I would nevertheless like to shed light on other ways of looking at this intimate female practice. The words and metaphors that women and girls used in order to describe milk ties give voice to intense sentiments of closeness and love, as well as stressing the moral obligations and material support which bond milk relatives. Even though practical motivations are often mentioned, my interlocutors described milk kinship as a bond of intimacy that women voluntarily and intentionally choose to create, as the narratives of Naima (whom I introduced in Chapter 2) and other women will illustrate.

3.4.1. “Like the branches of a tree”

Naima breastfed the son of her close friend and neighbour Halima, who, in turn, breastfed one of Naima’s daughters. Through co-lactation, the two friends created a special bond between their children and families that has lasted for generations and has been further strengthened by residential proximity and daily interactions. Naima’s milk

son lives next to one of her daughters in Rabi'a, and his son, a little boy named Samir, is treated by her daughters and their children as part of their families. He often sleeps and eats with them. With these words, Naima explained to me what *rada'a* is: "Once you and your neighbour have breastfed your own babies, you can help each other in nursing. If a woman has borne a baby and she does not have milk because the milk hasn't come down yet, I can nurse it, but only if you get along with her and your husband agrees, otherwise you shouldn't do it."⁸³

According to Naima, *rada'a* is a practice that enables women neighbours to help each other in nursing and childcare, as well as to supply breast milk if a woman is lacking this. Material and practical motivations are important aspects of her explanation also because through ordinary micro-practices of mutual help and solidarity women can develop networks behind and beyond family and conjugal ties. Yet these motivations do not uncover the emotional and moral meanings that Naima attaches to this practice between two women, two friends. Discussing her personal experience, she described breast-milk as an intimate female practice which cements intense ties between two women *already* related by horizontal ties of friendship. Her words below emphasise to what extent *rada'a* made the bond between her and her friend Halima stronger and intimate:

Our friendship deepened because of breast-feeding; our dialogue increased a lot, we got on very well, may Allah bless her [...] I would behave well with her, I have never spoken behind her back or said mean things about her. If ever I heard such a word about her, I would bristle and say: 'What do you want from her? What did she do to you?' [...] We wouldn't allow bad things between us. We didn't argue, affection/love between us increased (*tatzid l-mahabba*), we didn't fight. [We were] Like a family, our babies were like blood siblings (*bhal l-'a'ila, bhal khot f-ddm*), just I and my daughters and my sons and all my relatives.⁸⁴ We do not arrange marriages among our children. It's called brotherhood, milk brothers (*khawa, khot mn rada'a*).⁸⁵

Naima's recollection reveals the sentiments of intimacy between two close friends and the way in which co-lactation has intensified mutual affection and trust. Throughout their lives, Naima and Halima shared secrets and worries about family and conjugal life,

⁸³ Naima, Interview no. 3.

⁸⁴ Naima does not include her husband in the web of relationship she created from breast-feeding. Arguably, other women would include their husband in the milk-ties and submit to their decision, but here I focus on the women's stress on their own power to create kinship ties.

⁸⁵ Naima, Interview no. 3.

as well as helping each other in case of need. By turning their friendship into kinship through *rada'a*, Naima and Halima have cemented their relationship of friendship and created a special bond between their children as the extension of the mutual love they nourish for one another. Women and girls are aware of the female power to create kinship ties through breastfeeding as well as knowing the consequences in terms of marriage interdictions, even though they do not agree on the boundaries of milk kinship ties. In this regard, Camille Lacoste-Dujardin (2001) has argued that co-lactation is believed to create a biological bond between the milk mother and the child akin to kinship, thereby allowing women to exercise a form of power that transgresses the strict and exclusive rules of patrilineal filiation. By stressing the voluntariness of this bond, Naima claimed the power of a female substance to create kin ties independently from her husband and from male control over the female body and reproduction (Maher 1992). As she specified, women should ask for their husband's permission before nursing another woman's baby, since breastfeeding creates new kin relationships between two unrelated families. Like other women I met, however, Naima confessed that she did not ask for her husband's permission when she nursed her friend's baby. Alongside the social filiation which transmits patrilineal descent and excludes women, milk ties were also the kin bonds that women could choose and create for themselves.

Like Naima, women and girls often compare milk brotherhood (*khawa*) to blood ties (*nasab*) to emphasise its importance and the moral obligation it entails. Indeed, blood is a powerful idiom in which closeness (*qaraba*) is articulated in everyday practices and narratives. Far from assimilating the former to the latter, though, they emphasise that the emotional and moral features of milk kinship make these relationships more intense than those of blood ties. The voluntariness of milk kinship emerges also in the parallel that Latifa, a schoolteacher in her 40s whom I met in Rabi'a, traced with friendship (*sadaqa*). She said: "It's like friendship (*sadaqa*), not obligatory, only if you want to, not by force."⁸⁶ At the same time, she specified that friendship and milk kinship entail different levels of involvement, duties and expectations. Unlike friendship, co-lactation has broader social implications insofar as "the family enlarges, branches out (*tat-zid l-'ai'la*, *tat-frr'a*)." Latifa used the metaphor of the branches of a tree to emphasise that women's breast milk creates life-long bonds

⁸⁶ Latifa, Interview, 6 September 2009.

of affection and moral obligations between the milk mother and her child, as well as between milk siblings and other members of the two families.

The intense sentiments of love and affection that bond two friends who decide to breastfeed their babies also infuse the relationship between the milk mother and her daughter. This intimate and loving type of connection is captured by the reflection of Meriem, a university-educated young woman in her late 20s who lives in another low-income neighbourhood of al-Azaliya. She said: “The women who breastfed you – as you were such a little baby and she gave you something so important, she breastfed you, so a very sacred relationship remains between you and her (*tatbqa dik l-‘alaqa mqdsa bzzaf*).”⁸⁷ By describing the sentiments of devotion and gratitude that she cherishes for her milk-mother, Meriem evokes the sacred nature of *rada‘a*. Her words suggest that the milk mother deserves profound devotion because the debt created through the gift of her breast milk cannot be reciprocated completely.⁸⁸ This debt is so intense because nursing was not a duty for the milk mother, but rather a voluntary choice that expresses the desire to create a special bond of love and affection between people who are not related. This precious gift makes milk ties stronger than family ties: “The relation is very strong (*mtwtida bzzaf*), the bond is important, it’s more than family! It’s more than family!”⁸⁹

The “sacredness” infusing the vertical relationships between a child and her/his milk-mother also permeates the horizontal bond between milk-siblings, and these moral and affective qualities compel the provision of material support in case of need. Meriem narrated to me an episode that clearly demonstrates the intensity of milk ties over blood ties. When her brother decided to migrate to Spain, it was his milk-brothers who helped him to find a passage on a boat, even though the family have several kinsmen who live abroad (both in Spain and Italy). Once he reached the Spanish shores, his milk brothers provided help and protection, whereas his relatives refused or failed to support him.

From different perspectives, these narratives illuminate overshadowed dimensions of the anthropological study of kinship. Through their words, women emphasise to what extent milk kinship is a voluntary bond that they intentionally choose for themselves as a sign of love and friendship between two friends. They also stress the importance of

⁸⁷ Meriem, Interview, 1 October 2009.

⁸⁸ See Creyghton (1992) for a discussion of breast milk, *baraka* (blessing) and illness in Tunisia.

⁸⁹ Meriem, Interview, 1 October 2009.

this bond alongside and against patrilineal filiation and blood ties, and male control over them. Other discourses surrounding this intimate female practice show that the meanings of milk ties have been transformed vis-à-vis broader processes of social and economic change. Notwithstanding women's and girls' celebration of the importance and "sacredness" of milk kinship, however, it has become less desirable for various reasons. In very different ways, migration and the dislocation of family ties in Morocco and abroad, as well as new housing arrangements oriented towards the ideal of the nuclear family, and nutritional practices like milk powder, have turned milk-kinship in an unsuitable bond. Many women explained to me that milk-kinship may be dangerous nowadays because young people meet out of parental control, fall in love and start a relationship. Afterwards, they may turn out to be milk-siblings and hence their love relationship is *haram* (forbidden) according to Islam.⁹⁰ This concern expresses the anxieties about parental loss of control over marriage and social reproduction in a context of intense mobility, as well as one where young men and women have several opportunities to meet, date and find romance. It reveals the changes occurring in the structure of family and social life. In the experience of many old and middle-aged women, female ties and networks were of paramount importance for the emotional and material survival of women as they worked to compensate for the stress of conjugal life in extended families (Maher 1974, 1989:128-9; Mernissi 1979). Nowadays, the ideal of the "modern" family life oriented towards the nuclear family and conjugal intimacy has become dominant in al-Azaliya and has resulted in new housing arrangements and social practices. Thus the transformations in family and social life are undermining women's practice of co-lactation, which is regarded by some educated young women as "traditional and backward." By and large, the ideal of the nuclear family as "modern" (*asri*) is widespread amongst young educated women, even though they cannot fulfil the economic dimensions of the dreams of middle class consumerism and conjugal intimacy. While recognising the healthy properties of breast-milk, some educated women I met say that they prefer to integrate milk powder into their babies' diet, which they regard as a modern practice that enables them to work or enjoy mobility. By discarding *rada'a* as a way of "enlarging the families", therefore, these young women

⁹⁰ The discovery of milk-ties between two lovers as a barrier to their marriage is a popular topic in love poems as well as in Indian soap operas (Parker 2004:605). In the Arab story of *Antar and 'Abla*, Antar's rival induces him to think that he has been breastfed with his sweetheart, to prevent his marriage (Chelhold 1995:374).

express their desire to reduce their family obligations and duties.

3.5. Friendship, trust and closeness

Like Naima and Halima, two female friends (*sahba*, pl. *sahbat* or *sadiqa*, pl. *sadiqat*) may choose to strengthen their bonds by turning them into kinship through a marriage arrangement and co-lactation. Not all friendship ties are turned into kinship and affinity, however, since women often choose to let friendship be a life-long bond of trust, care and affection between two close friends. Yet, while women's narratives testify to the importance of friendship relationships in their lives, in anthropological literature friendship has either been subsumed into the study of kinship or studied as a form of ritualised joking relationship categories of "ritual", "pseudo" or "fictive" friendship moulded on ideas and structures of kinship (Desai & Killick 2010:4). According to Anthony Giddens (1992, 1999), the rise of the importance of friendship reflects the shift from a past dominated by kinship ties to a present of atomised individuals, as part of a linear trajectory from "tradition" to "modernity." Without assuming a tautological nexus between friendship and modernity, other scholars have addressed friendship as a specific subject of theoretical and ethnographic reflection (Osella & Osella 1998; Bell & Coleman 1999; Bellagamba 2006; Nisbett 2007; Santos-Granero 2007; Strickland 2010; Desai & Killick 2010; Descharmes, Heuser & Kruger 2011). Only a few scholars, though, have focused on female friendship (for instance, Altorki 1986; Maher 1989; Uhl 1991; Dyson 2010). Discussing female friendship in Andalusia, Sarah Uhl (1991) has argued that the epistemological assumptions that associate women to private/domestic and men to public/extra-domestic has had important implication in the treatment of friendship. While friendship has been recognised as a male-oriented institution, women's social worlds have been largely circumscribed to domestic place and kin-ties. She has stated: "The absence of female friendship is more strongly associated with adult women, who have usually taken on the roles that are considered the apex of female identity and value: wife and mother" (Uhl 1991: 91).

The majority of the old and middle-aged women I met in al-Azaliya described friendship (*sadaqa*) as a vital experience in their lives before and after marriage alike. Like milk-kinship, friendship relationships provide women with material and emotional support which contributes to strengthening their sense of self by making them feel socially and economically independent from marital and family ties. I have noted the

importance of female networks in women's access to the neighbourhood's informal economy and practices of mutual help. In addition to the material and emotional help which friends provide to each other, friendship is an essential space where women experience horizontal relations of trust and intimacy, as well as fun, pleasure and diversion. Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman (1999:2) have claimed that any endeavour to understand the nature of friendship and amity entails "posing fundamental questions about our understanding of agency, emotion, creativity and the self." Not only does friendship entail ideas of love, loyalty and mutual respect, but also, as a particular form of relatedness, it has its unwritten rules that good friend should respect in order to maintain their relationship. By and large, women and girls invest friendship with particular meanings, values and expectations. "If a woman trusts you, she will share all her secrets with you" women say, to emphasise that trust, intimacy and reciprocity are some of the ingredients that characterise the relationships between two close friends. In adult women's telling, often friendship develops in the neighbourhood through concrete practices of help in daily matters, such as child bearing and house cleaning. Many of them recalled the close friend with whom they have shared the joys and sadness of life since childhood. At times, however, marriage ended friendship relationships because the bride's relocation away from the birthplace separated two friends who could not be able to visit each other frequently. At times, the husband and his relatives opposed to female friendship which they considered as competing with family duties and responsibilities (Maher 1974; 1989; Uhl 1991). Yet these women have continued to cherish the memory of their best friend for the rest of their life.

3.5.1. Zhora and Layla

The narrative of Zhora, a woman in her 40s who lives in Rabi'a, illustrates how the interweaving of friendship with residential proximity reinforced existing kinship ties. At the same time, her friendship with Layla went beyond both family and neighbourly relationships and became a long-life and exclusive bond of love, reliance and mutual care.

Zhora and Layla become friends at the age of 12, when Zhora's father divorced her mother, who moved back to her parental home in Rabi'a. They were two girls of

roughly the same age, two paternal cousins (*bnt 'amm*)⁹¹ and neighbours, but their lives were also different. When her father left them, Zhora and her mother found themselves in financial difficulties, and hence the girl had to work in agriculture to help her mother to make ends meet. While Zhora's girlhood was hard, her cousin Layla could enjoy financial security and family unity. The special bond of friendship with her cousin Layla helped Zhora to fill the void caused by loneliness and the difficulties characterising her everyday life. She said:

We were inseparable, except that I worked and she didn't. We met in the evening until night. I would often stay overnight and she did the same. When I wasn't working, we would spend time together, we dressed up and went to the *medina* to buy something, to do shopping, she and I, we were inseparable.⁹²

From girlhood, the friendship relationship between Zhora and Layla was made of everyday acts of solidarity, care and mutual help through which they used to handle daily matters. Helping each other with the housework and running errands was also the chance to spend time together when Zhora was not working in the field. Once they had finished their housework, they loved spending their spare time chatting and going shopping in the old city. Their outings and strolls in the old city for shopping or just for pleasure were important moments of fun and diversion. The intense way in which Zhora talked about her friend reveals to what extent their relationship was not only an essential source of material and emotional support, but also of happiness and pleasure that helped her to cope with the difficulties of everyday life. An important feature of their elective and intimate bond was that they confide each other the innermost thoughts and secrets because they knew that they could entrust each other with their confidences without fearing of gossip or betrayal. Zhora said: "Our relationship was very intimate (*'alaqa hamimiya bzzef*), I would tell her my secrets and she would tell me her secrets, and everything remained between us alone; only between us girls."⁹³ In her recollection, Zhora often referred to Layla as "my sister" (*khoty*), an intimate and trustworthy friend with whom she has shared the happiest and saddest incidents of her life. As she emphasised, being a cousin and neighbour was not enough in order to become close

⁹¹ Literally it means "my father's father's daughter", but in fact Zhora is referring to the daughter of her paternal uncle on her mother's side, as she explains later in the interview from which her words are quoted throughout this section.

⁹² Zhora, Interview, 4 June 2010

⁹³ Zhora, Interview, 4 June 2010

friends and develop “true friendship” or, as she puts it, that type of friendship that “comes from the heart.” In her eyes, indeed, this particular type of relationship, which is entrenched in pure sentiments of affection and solidarity, is a highly elective and rare bond:

Friendship from the heart (*sadaqa mn l-qalb*), not lies, from my heart and hers. Still now, we are friends, not that kind of friend that is just for a while and then you argue; we have never argued. She is a loyal friend, we were like sisters (*kif l-khut*), our friendship was tranquil, good forever, it has lasted until now. If I needed something, I would go to her and for her it was the same. When she got sick, I would cry for her and when I got sick, she would cry for me, and I would sympathise with her. Once she was sick and I went on crying, I wanted to die for her. All night, I cried for her, she was seriously ill, I sympathised with her because our friendship was from the heart, not from lies.⁹⁴

Zhora’s words give voice to the special interdependence and the affectionate intimacy between two women tied by friendship from the bottom of their heart. Since their girlhood, Zhora and Layla have cared and worried about the other during both happy and difficult moments they went through in their lives. They have also shared important phases of their life-trajectories, like the experience of marriage and giving birth, as she told me “When we married, we married in the same place, and at that time, two soldiers took us [married us].”⁹⁵ The fact that they have continued to live in the same neighbourhood after marriage has enabled their friendship to last until now. Living close to each other, though, was not enough to make the friendship relationship between Zhora and Layla last so long. Throughout her narrative, Zhora emphasised the reciprocity, sincerity and spontaneity infusing their relationship, as well as particular care with which they have nourished their bond over the years. Trust, solidarity, equality, reciprocity and genuine affection are some of the ingredients that make two good friends, but friendship is also highly fragile and performative (see also Bellagamba 2006; Descharmes, Heuser & Kruger 2011). Thus, care should be taken through the exchange of visits, gifts, secrets and material support as well as by avoiding anything that might compromise mutual esteem and hurt the other’s feelings. Like Zhora and Layla, close friends confide in each other about family and conjugal problems, sharing intimate aspects of their lives without fearing that their secret thoughts might be

⁹⁴ Zhora, Interview, 4 June 2010.

⁹⁵ Zhora, Interview, 4 June 2010.

disclosed to other people. Disclosing one friend's secrets to other women or failing to provide material and emotional support in the case of need can easily compromise friendship because it breaks off the special bond that friendship had made possible. Women's everyday narratives and comments on the female intimacy, trust and betrayal reveal the moral values with which they invest their personal relationships, as well as the particular subjects and ideas of intimate connection that friendship brings into being.

3.6. Intimacy, ambivalence and betrayal

The old and middle-aged women's narratives demonstrate that friendship has always been a horizontal bond of trust, affection and care alongside other types of vertical relations and forms of intimate relatedness between two women. On the other hand, the palpable transformations in the modes and the places in which friendship relations come into being nowadays are particularly telling about the formation of a "youth culture" that have been shaped against the backdrop of the broader change occurred in the social life and in people's life trajectories in al-Azaliya. In many respects, young women's experiences and imaginaries connected with friendship differ from those of the old and middle-aged women. Compared to the older generations, indeed, girls spend much time away from their home and have more opportunities to create bonds of friendship and closeness with both girl and boy friends beyond the boundaries of the neighbourhood. Many young women who study and work spend their daytime with friends and classmates at school and university. In addition to school and workplace, young women spend their leisure with their friends, doing sport together at the gym or in public gardens, as well as strolling in the city, attending student cafés or surfing the internet in the cyber cafés. Far away from their neighbourhood, young women can meet their classmates and become friends with people from different social and economic backgrounds.

Documenting the emergence of the social category of "adolescence" (*murahaqa*) in a small Moroccan town in the late 1980s, Susan and Douglas Davis (1989, 1995) has argued that friendship and peer-groups had acquired importance for a new generation of young people who accessed "television culture" and the new possibility of cross-sex sociability connected with mass education. Along with the emergence of the social categories of "the adolescents (*murahiqa*)," friendship and peer-groups have increasingly become vital sites of identity formation and everyday sociability (see for

instance, Davis & Davis 1989: 88-101; Osella & Osella 1998; Nisbett 2007). Participation in peer-groups and in “global youth culture” enables young women to experience not only horizontal relations and reciprocity against the hierarchical principles structuring kinship relations, but also new types of relationships with their male peers.

Notwithstanding the significant changes and opportunities that have reshaped their lives and imagination, though, girls and adolescents continue to be deeply involved in the intense social life animating the low-income neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya. It is often within the informal and physical intimacy permeating women’s gatherings and networks that girls’ friendship relationships come into being. Especially if they grew up in the same neighbourhood or attended the same school, milk-sisters and female cousins of the same age may become intimate friends. In Rabi’a, female cousins and milk-sisters exchange frequent visits, spend time together in the medina and watch their favourite programmes on television; they share clothes and items, as well as exchanging gifts, care and confidences. Given the fragile nature of friendship, being relatives is often considered as an added value in a friendship, as well as having grown up together since childhood, and sharing new experiences and the difficulties of the everyday life.

Alongside the friendship ties with neighbours and relatives, female friends choose each other on the basis of sympathy and personal inclines. Sharing similar levels of education and experiences, common interests and worldviews are all important aspects whereby young women build up friendship ties. In general, young women describe friendship as a “pure sentiment,” namely a non-instrumental relationship, based on moral values such as equality, sharing, altruism, mutual obligations and loyalty. Even though they are imagined in terms of “pure sentiment”, friendship relationships are also shaped by common life-styles and consumption practices, which make it difficult to overcome class divisions altogether (I will discuss this point further in Chapter 6). In general, girls highly esteem friendship relations, but at the same time, their experiences are also fraught with sentiments of ambivalence because major possibilities of socialisation seem paralleled by the fragility and precariousness of these bonds. In young women’s narratives, the longing for female intimacy often mingles with fear, mistrust and suspicion because they argue that sentiments of envy (*hsad*) and jealousy (*ghira*), as well as betrayal and gossip, could easily emerge among female friends. Despite girls’ longings for emotional closeness and amity, they are often careful when

confiding intimate secrets, especially about love and sexuality, because of fear that their friends could gossip about them, thereby compromising their reputation. Many young women regard the other girls as potential rivals in love matters and think that many of them are hypocrites, alleging that they show a “yellow grin” (*dahka safra*), meaning that they show a friendly attitude while hiding other purposes or negative sentiments. The following sections try to capture the multiple images and the conflicting desires that surround female friendship through two stories: Hasna and Heba, Houda and Karima. Against the narratives that depict female friendship as particularly fragile, the story of Hasna and Heba illustrates how sharing similar experiences and worldviews has allowed the development of a genuine bond of friendship and trust.

3.6.1. Hasna and Heba

Hasna met Heba during a training course that she was attending in 2008, after she had lost her job in a multinational company in Casablanca and come back to al-Azaliya (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.). Besides being the same age, they chose one another on the basis of certain affinities and fondness. By sharing time together, they also worked out that they shared similar social positions and personal experiences. Despite their modest backgrounds, indeed, they had both invested in education with the hope of obtaining a good job, self-realisation and contributing to their families’ income. They both became highly educated, but they faced the difficulties of finding a good job as well as of being unmarried. Heba and Hasna became very important and close to each other. Sharing the same ambitions and frustrations contributed to strengthening their friendship also because this lifted them from the suffering infusing their intimate lives and sense of self. Indeed, comparing the situation in which they found themselves led them to reflect upon the broader social and economic forces that impinge on their lives and enabled them to situate their personal experience in a broader framework, instead of thinking of it as the result of personal failure or wrongness. This shared awareness also broadened out to laughing and sarcasm as ways of breaking the tensions and enjoying each other’s presence instead of focusing only on everyday problems and worries.

Heba is very dear to Hasna also because she knows that her friend really cares for her and their relationship. Even though Hasna had several male and female university acquaintances when she was studying at university, she deemed that their friendship was subordinated to the university studies and that they were not “real” friends. From

time to time, Hasna phoned her classmates, but she hardly received a phone call without a request for help with their exams or for information. In contrast, she knows that Heba phones her to listen to her news, reflections and worries, and they meet for the sake of the pleasure of spending time together. Besides the emphasis she puts on friendship as a “pure sentiment,” Hasna’s experience of amity reveals the everyday micro-practices and rituals through which she cultivates and nourishes her friendship bond through little acts and gestures of care and loving attention. Hasna used to visit Heba and often stayed overnight and Heba reciprocated. When one of the two travels somewhere, she brought back a small gift for her friend. They trusted each other by sharing their secrets and reflections, hopes and desires, which both were sure will remain just between them. Not only did they share ideas and thoughts, but they also knew that they could count on each other whenever they are in need.

Hasna and Heba helped each other in everyday things and learned a great deal from each another. For example, Hasna is skilled in using computers and helped her friend when a virus invaded her computer. In turn, Hasna learned pastry-making from Heba and they prepared pastries and cookies for special occasions or just for the pleasure of doing it together. Likewise, they supported each other in the most important matters, like the search for a job. For example, when Heba found a job in an office in al-Azaliya, she did her best to help Hasna to obtain a job in the same place as soon as a secretarial position became available. By shedding light on the way in which their friendship has come into being, the story of Hasna and Heba demonstrates that female friendship is an important dimension of their everyday lives and sociability, which enables them to compare their personal viewpoints and share opinions and experiences. In doing so, they also reflect on the structural forces that shape important aspects of their lives and develop micro-practices of solidarity and mutual help to tackle daily problems.

3.6.2. Houda and Karima

Friendship enables young women to experience a special type of interdependence between two subjects based on relationships of trust and intimacy with a female peer. Far from being only a space for emotional closeness and intimacy, friendship also exposes young women to fragility and vulnerability. Apart from the betrayal by a friend, the bond of friendship may break off because an argument creates emotional distance

and resentment; likewise, the emotional distance can result from lack of care for the friendship bond or from the fact that the incidents of lives lead two friends in different directions and drift them apart. Some young women, who have suffered from their friend's betrayal and endured it as a painful wound, often have constructed a very negative view of female friendship as a result. The betrayal by a friend is particularly painful because it breaks off the unwritten rules that friendship implies and requires between two good friends and, with them, the intimate form of interdependence that it had made possible, like in the experience of Houda and Karima.

I met Houda, an educated young woman in her mid 20s, in hay el-Mounia, one of the middle-class neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya born out of the inward migration of civil servants and school teachers who entered the public sector in the 1960s and 1970s. Even though she thinks that "true friendship" is rare, Houda told me that she believes in friendship. When I asked her if she had a close friend, however, she replied that she did not have any friend because the majority of the girls are deceivers (*ghaddarat*, sing. *ghaddara*). I could grasp the apparent contradiction between her conflicting utterances when she told me the story of her friendship with Karima. Houda and her friend Karima grew up together in the same neighbourhood and knew each other from when they were children. Since childhood, they attended the same schools and, after school class and homework, they enjoyed watching American films, which they preferred to the Egyptian and Moroccan ones, because they also shared a passion for English language and culture. "We were closest friends, like sisters (*knna shabat bzzef, shabat bhal l-khwatat*),"⁹⁶ Houda commented bitterly upon the exclusive bond that tied them from childhood. They shared school classes, leisure time and mutual affection for years until another girl insinuated herself into their friendship relationship during high school and hence problems and conflicts arose between them. Together with this girl, indeed, her friend Karima started spending time with boys and dating them, thereby interrupting the everyday rituals and reducing time that she and Houda used to spend together.

During adolescence, female friendship and same-sex sociability become vital arenas in which female friends converse about love and romance, as well as where they compete, judge each other and craft themselves through feminine performances in cross-sex interactions (Abu-Lughod 1986; 1990; Davis & Davis 1989). Adolescents exchange with their female friends experiences and information about cross-sex

⁹⁶ Houda, Interview, 1 June 2010.

relations, learn about each other's stories and have confidential conversations about sexuality, courtship and seduction. During the transition from girlhood to adulthood, therefore, the exclusivity that marks the dyadic bond between two girls may be undermined by the arrival of a boyfriend. Likewise, the arrival of another friend could activate dynamics of competition and exclusion, as it happened between Houda and Karima.

Karima and the other girl longed for experiencing romance and love, in contrast, Houda did not want to spend time with boys and date them and hence she felt excluded by her best friend. So as to involve Houda in their outings with their boyfriends, Karima and the other girl gave her home number to a boy whom she did not know. When the boy called her at home, however, Houda's father answered the telephone and this created problems with him because he started inquiring about her relationship with the young man. Thinking back to this event, Houda commented with a mixture of resentment and sadness: "I have shared so many things with her and see what she did to me!"⁹⁷ In her view, her friend Karima broke their intimate bond by disrespecting her will, but also by compromising her relationship of trust with her father. Thus, after this episode, Houda decided to end her friendship with Karima completely and, since her closest friend betrayed her, she has developed a very negative idea of female friendship. She said that she prefers male friends because boys do not gossip and are more serious and trustworthy than girls: "Boys are better than girls, and their friendship comes from the heart (*drari, homa, hssan l-bnat sadaqa mn l-dakhl dialhom*)". By comparing and contrasting female and male friends, Houda stressed that male friends are trustworthy because they provide help and support without hidden intentions or negative sentiments, and for the sake of friendship. In her view, the absence of rivalries and jealousies that often infuse same-sex relations makes amity with male peers more solid and reliable, as her words testify: "There is no trust [with female friends], while you can trust male friends, you can share your problems with them and they will help you, do you understand?"⁹⁸

In many ways, Houda's vision of friendship with male peers is an idealised one, which perhaps reflects her personal experience and her fear of female gossip and betrayal. At the same time, the idea that young men are more trustworthy and loyal than

⁹⁷ Houda, Interview, 1 June 2010.

⁹⁸ Houda, Interview, 1 June 2010.

girls is widespread among young women, who claim that they cherish sharing personal information with their male friends, while girls gossip out of envy or jealousy. These young women's comments upon the importance of cross-sex friendship and dialogue reveal important change in their everyday experiences and imaginaries. Yet their lived experiences cross-sex friendship - to which I will turn next - shed light the complex ways in which these desires are negotiated alongside and against gender and social norms.

3.7. Cross-sex friendship relationships

Many young women develop friendship relationships with their male peers, with whom they share their daytime life at school, university or the workplace. Unlike their mothers and grandmothers, who regard close friendship relationships with males as a taboo, they consider cross-sex friendship as an important source of mutual enrichment and exchange. These friendship relationships challenge the dominant gender practices and imaginaries that shape cross-sex interactions because the search for emotional intimacy between the sexes is laden with dangers. In Moroccan Arabic, the terms *sadiq dialy* and *sahby* (my friend) are used interchangeably among male friends, whereas in cross-sex interactions, *sahby* assumes a sexualised connotation and indicates "boyfriend." Dominant gendered imaginaries, indeed, describe cross-sex interactions as laden with sexual attraction. Hence, if a boy and a girl are often seen alone together, especially in isolated places, rumours circulate quickly. When friendship relationships with their male peers overcome the boundaries socially considered "appropriate" in cross-sex interactions (for instance, school classes, university lectures or study groups, and the workplace) and become more intimate and "dyadic", however, young women's viewpoints diverge significantly.

Some girls think that young men in general are unable to restrain their passion and therefore "they always try to get closer (*drari dima kay-qarrabo*)."

Given the male "nature", thus these girls argued that friendship between girls and boys cannot exist outside the socially prescribed boundaries (*hudhud*) of cross-sex interactions. In contrast, other young women think that friendship between girls and boys can exist if young men are well-mannered (*mrabbyin*) and educated (*qaryin*), qualities that make them able to respect the "proper" boundaries between good friends so as to avoid ambiguities. The nature of these boundaries varies according to the sensibility of each

person, from physical contact and hand-shaking to the avoidance of spending time alone together in isolated places. Notwithstanding their longing for cross-sex friendship and dialogue, however, young women negotiate carefully intimacy and distance within their relationships with male friends along the invisible thin line that may rapidly turn a friendship bond into an invitation to romance or to ambiguity. For instance, Hanan told me that friendship between boys and girls should resemble the bond between brothers and sisters (*ghir sadaqa bhal khot*), in other words, laden with feelings of affection and care, but also respecting proper distance and the avoidance of sensitive topics, like love and sexuality. Hanan is a young woman who lives in a low-income neighbourhood and works in the orange factory in al-Azaliya. In her view, boy and girl friends can spend time together, provided that they remain in public places and avoid being alone together in the isolated ones.

Emotional closeness and physical intimacy between boys and girls are full of danger because gossip can spread around, endangering the girl's reputation. Furthermore, the corrupting influence of the devil (*shytan*) easily insinuates itself into them, mastering their will and good intentions. For Hanan, since physical proximity can arouse in the boys a sexual desire, it is the women's responsibility to avoid meeting alone with their male friends. In her view, young men often pretend to be friends but in fact they are searching for moments of physical proximity and opportunities to get closer to their female friends by saying that they need to confide in them, as an excuse to meet privately. This view reflects the widespread idea that young men are smart and dangerous because of their inflamed sexuality and thus they try to deceive naive girls so as to take advantage of them. In order to prevent their physical advances and ambiguities, therefore, Hanan told me that "serious girls" should refuse their male friends' invitations to emotional intimacy, as well as preserving proper physical boundaries. Furthermore, she described emotional intimacy and trust as potentially dangerous because a young man may disclose to his male group at the café the confidential conversations shared with his female friend and so her secrets (*asrar*) may circulate and reach the girl's brothers. Hanan's reflections capture the ambiguities permeating friendship relationships, as well as the ways in which the desires for cross-sex amity challenge and clash with the dominant gendered discourses and practices.

Like young women, their male peers regard friendship with the opposite sex with intense curiosity and interest because they consider it a non-competitive relationship

where boys feel free to bring into play different aspects of their personalities and emotions. As I have noted before, young women often celebrate male friends as more trustworthy and reliable than girls, while in contrast the narrative of Samir stresses the competitiveness and fragility of male friendship. When I met Samir in hay el-Mounia in 2009, he explained to me that friendship is a tricky issue because someone can only understand whether his friend is sincere and trustworthy when he is in need. He said: “It’s difficult to find a friend because, as we say, when do you discover if he’s a true friend? You need time, maybe you find lots of friends, but friends who stay with you in case of need are few.”⁹⁹ Discussing some common spaces and practices of male sociability, Samir said that he does not like drinking or smoking in men’s cafes, but that he prefers to go by car outside the city to visit nature spots in the mountains or the countryside. Comparing friendship with males and females, he confessed that he appreciates friendship with girls because it is less competitive than male friendship, and with them, he feels free to talk and express his emotional side. The lack of competitiveness and the possibility of express one’s emotionality are two important qualities that make friendship relationships with girl friends particularly appreciated by some young men. These are also stressed by Abdelhadi, a young man in his late 20s who is completing a PhD in chemistry.

Like Samir, Abdelhadi told me that cross-sex friendship is very important because it enables boys and girls to develop a dialogue and share their worldviews. He said: “The girl understands how the boys think, what they like to do, many things...and the boy understands the girls, the ‘female culture’.”¹⁰⁰ With the expression “female culture,” Abdelhadi referred to the different ways in which, in his view, young women think and construct their affective worlds, as well as what they desire and expect from the men. From his girl friend, he said he learnt that young women like those men who respect them and listen carefully to them, valuing their friendship. At the same time, Abdelhadi is aware of the difficulties and troubles that can arise in a society where expressions of friendly intimacy between unrelated men and women are publicly scrutinised and regarded with suspicion. Since friendships between men and women are subject to social control, he emphasised that a “real friend” should not overstep socially

⁹⁹ Samir, Interview, 7 June 2010.

¹⁰⁰ Abdelhadi, Interview, 30 June 2010.

prescribed boundaries and should avoid those behaviours that could compromise his girl friend's reputation.

For example, I am at work with a girl, we are in the lab to do research and we are friends. We do not hang around together and we do not say that we are friends, no! If you are an adult, [friendship] is seen in a negative way, because there could be someone who likes my friend and wants to marry her. Seeing her with me, he can judge her in a negative way. This is the problem with our society.¹⁰¹

As his words show, notwithstanding young people's longings for cross-sex friendship relations, friendship between the sexes continues to be regarded in ambivalent ways. In Abdelhadi's view, cross-sex friendship can trigger ambiguities and problems in medium-sized towns like al-Azaliya, where a person's behaviour is always under people's gaze. He is critical of dominant moral codes and gender ideology that preclude boys and girls from the possibility of demonstrating their friendship in public and cultivating ties of cross-sex amity and sociability outside the boundaries of marriage and kinship. At the same time, he respects social boundaries between the sexes as a sign of care and sincere interest towards his female friends because he does not want to engender her reputation.

Since public expressions of friendship and amity between the sexes are regarded as perilous and compromising (especially for girls), the internet has become an important arena where cross-sex friendship relationships and amity are cultivated (Mernissi 2003, 2004). Through Facebook, MSN or Skype, young women and adolescents can create a form of emotional intimacy and dialogue with their male peers, while, at the same time, mediating the dangers of physical proximity (as I discuss further in Chapter 8). Even though some young women would prefer being free to sit in a café with their male friends without being judged negatively, they consider the internet a safer place of interaction. The cyber cafés in al-Azaliya are always crowded with young people searching for information, listening to music and watching videos on YouTube or other websites, as well as using the internet to communicate and make friends. Without overtly challenge or subverting the social and gender norms, in some cases, the young play with the cross-sex "proper" behavioural codes.

¹⁰¹ Abdelhedi, Interview, 30 June 2010.

3.8. Conclusion

By comparing the experiences of friendship and trust between different generations of women, this chapter intended to complicate and challenge the view that friendship is an expression of a “modern sensibility” or is the product of recent social and economic transformations. By exploring the concrete ways in which relationships of trust, friendship and intimacy between women come into being, are cultivated and maintained (Desai & Killick 2010:15), my intention was also to shed light on how friendship and female sociability are shaped by ideas of morality and gendered imaginaries. Created and nurtured within the everyday spaces and practices of same-sex sociability, female close personal ties play vital roles in the lives of the girls and the women of al-Azaliya. While women’s worlds are organised along hierarchies of age, social positions and personality, my interlocutors describe friendship and milk kinship – which may coexist, overlap and interleave with family ties – as horizontal bond of trust, affection and care. In different ways, their narratives stress their intention to create these ties besides other types of vertical relationships and intimate relatedness. Female friendship and same-sex-sociability are also critical arenas of subject formation and gender performance (Abu-Lughod 1985, 1986, 1993; Osella & Osella 1998) alongside shifting ideas of conjugal bonds and intimacy. Indeed, the friendship relationships of young women, their mothers and grandmothers are shaped under changing material contingencies and social ideals. For these reasons, I have situated milk kinship and friendship in relation to other forms of relatedness, as well as to new ideals of family life and gender relations which contribute to re-moulding desires, orientations and imaginaries.

For old and middle-aged women, friendship and milk kinship were formerly of paramount importance in their lives because they provided moral and material support in daily matters. These ties have enabled women to experience various levels of closeness, security, personal autonomy, trust, enjoyment and reciprocity, as well providing as access to the social life and informal economies of the neighbourhood. Women’s everyday micro-practices of trust, closeness and intimacy have created personal relationships and networks that blur the boundaries between kinship, friendship and neighbourliness. At the same time, however, women differentiate between the levels of intimacy and duties that different modes of relatedness entail. While milk kinship brings into being a life-long bond between two women and their children, thereby intensifying existing friendship relations, friendship ties are particularly

vulnerable and performative. Consequently, they require trust and time to consolidate. Old and middle-aged women, like the girls, expect their friends to cherish their secrets and confidences, and provide affective and material support in case of need; thus, any lack of caring may compromise their mutual trust and affection.

Nowadays, intense female ties contend with the rise in importance of the marital bond and the desires for independence from family relationships and obligations. In particular, for adult women who married very young and experienced marriage as a traumatic event and a rupture in their affective worlds, stressing the voluntariness and affective features of milk-kinship is also a way of talking about a bond they *chose* for pleasure, for themselves. The intense love, which bonds women and their children in milk-kinship, competes nowadays with the raised level of investment in conjugal love and nuclear family. Under changing circumstances, indeed, some types of relatedness between women and families, such as milk-kinship, have become less desirable and appealing. Many women not only consider these ties perilous because young people meet and date out of parental control, but also feel that they entail intense emotional involvement and moral obligations, which have become difficult to maintain. At the same time, the erosion of women's networks and neighbourly bonds engenders a sense of vulnerability in low-income neighbourhoods, where mutual help and solidarity continue to be of paramount importance. Even though women complain about the spread of individualist and egoistic attitudes, female networks are still fundamental institutions embedded within women's lives in the low-income neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya. Women's networks provide women with access to informal economies as well as to forms of material support, which are separate and interwoven with family networks. In fact, many young women and their mothers continue to rely on their female networks to get access to goods and information, to make ends meet and to tackle daily problems (see also Singerman 1995).

For young women and girls, friendship and amity are important experiences as well as vital sites of identity-formation where they can compare viewpoints and situations, sharing their leisure time, expectations and desires. Even though girls continue to be deeply involved in the social life animating the low-income neighbourhoods of al-Azaliya, they also spend more time away from home and have more opportunity to make friends and enjoy leisure far from home. Amongst young women with working-class backgrounds who have access to mass education, the

experience of friendship is also marked by differences of class which become apparent in the different consumption practices which contribute to shaping young people's forms of sociability in al-Azaliya. In general, even though young women describe friendship as a very important dimension of their live, their narratives and reflections often interlace desires for intimacy with sentiment of ambivalence and mistrust. Unlike their mothers, who do not mention male friendship as relevant in their experiences, many young women desire to build cross-sex friendships with their male peers, with whom they share important dimensions of everyday life, such as school, university, leisure and the workplace. As I have noted above, during adolescence same-sex sociability and friendship are vital arenas where female friends converse about sexuality, courtship and seduction, but they are also very competitive ones. Young women judge each other and compete through their performances in their relations with young men, and hence sentiments of envy and jealousy easily emerge between female friends. Both boys and girls find cross-sex interactions less competitive than same-sex friendship relationships. Not only do young women express interest and curiosity towards the young men as reliable friends, but they also nourish the desire to create cross-sex trust and intimacy. Since this desire challenges the dominant gendered imaginaries shaping cross-sex interactions, young women try to negotiate intimacy and distance, and the internet proves to be an important arena to do so.

PART TWO

**SOCIABILITY AND SENSIBILITY UNDER
REFORM**

CHAPTER 4

BEING COOL AND PIOUS

4.1. Watching television and dubbing identities

This chapter investigates the ways in which the spread of satellite television has contributed to reshaping young women's imagination and everyday practices by exploring their creative and selective engagement with the worldly and religious landscapes that television provides. Specifically, it focuses on the ways in which young women appropriate cinematic images and mass-mediated stories to reflect upon themselves and their moral worlds. Since the late 1980s, the spread of satellite television on a large scale in al-Azaliya has provided young women with access to new imaginative horizons and images of "possible lives" (Weiss 2002), although they are not equally accessible to them. By analysing the spread of television and satellite television in Morocco in the 1980s and 1990s, some anthropologists and social scientists (Davis, D. & Davis, S. 1989: 115-117, 1993, 1995; Davis, H. 1989; Bennani-Chraïbi 1994; see also Abu-Lughod 1989 on Egypt) have described the boundary-straddling identities of Moroccan adolescents as caught up between two conflicting aspirations: living a "modern westernised life-style" and respecting the "traditional values" embodied by family and religion. Alongside mass schooling and new patterns of leisure time, these scholars have claimed that media consumption has enabled young people to cultivate orientations and expectations that have challenged "traditional" values, especially regarding sexuality, marriage and gender roles. For instance, Susan and Douglas Davis (1989, 1995; Davis, D. 1995) have documented how adolescents in a Moroccan town have learnt "how to love and lead their lives" by reading *Photoman* and magazines, as well as watching French, Indian and Egyptian films and soap operas. In order to describe young people's endeavours to reconcile these mass-mediated images with family and Islamic values, Douglas Davis (1995) has borrowed the image by Fatema Mernissi (1993): "the mosque and the satellite." According to Douglas Davis (1995: 577), this image captures the aspirations of many Moroccan young people to conflate creatively traditional and Islamic cultural heritage, symbolised by the *mosque*, with the access to modern western technology and its cultural products via *satellite* television.

Nowadays, young women and men in al-Azaliya continue to face cultural dilemmas and moral conflicts while the accessing competing, and at times contradictory, imaginative horizons. Yet the boundaries between “modernity” and “tradition” have been significantly re-articulated against the backdrop of the political events that have marked the post-9/11 world. Thus, if I had to choose a metaphor to capture the young’s sense of ambivalence and disorientation, I would rely on the local expression “*Iqra’* on top, *Rotana Cinema* below.”¹⁰² Some Moroccan youths use this expression to discuss what they perceive as the “cyborg” identity and self-styling of their female peers. *Iqra’* and *Rotana Cinema* are two Saudi-owned satellite channels that broadcast respectively religious programmes and films in Arabic. With this reference to these well-known television channels, Moroccan youths ironically indicate those girls who match headscarves of brightly coloured thick material with tight-fitting jeans, so as to craft themselves as both pious Muslims and fashionable film stars. This is a mocking image which does not do justice to the desires and aesthetic orientations that motivate the young women. Nevertheless, it reveals the sense of ambiguity and the disorienting “incoherence” about an everyday world inundated with conflicting images: aggressive advertisements and consumer invitations, sensual pop stars and religious preachers’ calls for salvation and redemption, as well as reality shows and entertainment, western movies and TV series from Mexico, Turkey and Egypt. At the same time, this image accounts for the slipping of a new “politico-theological imagination” (Pandolfo 2007) into the everyday life of my interlocutors. Especially in the last decade, the proliferation of religious broadcasts and of charismatic television preachers who call for a return to “true Islam” have made available to young women religious knowledge and teachings for everyday life with a strong emphasis on forbearance and moral virtues (see also Eickelman & Anderson 2003). Far from being just a matter of “fashion” and “surface”, I argue that the aesthetic qualities of the “sartorial reform” (Masquelier 2008) under way in al-Azaliya reveal important aspects of the Islamic revival. The current “sartorial reform”, indeed, enables a grasp of the ways in which young women fashion new identities and life-worlds by embodying competing cultural referents in their identity.

By exploring young women’s everyday engagement with satellite television and its mass-mediated stories, my goal in this chapter is to illustrate the ways in which they

¹⁰² The expression in Moroccan Arabic is *l-fuq Iqra’, l-taht Rotana Cinema*”.

craft new subjectivity in the attempts to reconcile the desire to be both modern and religious, fashionable and pious. Satellite television provides young women with access to images and vocabularies through which they reflect upon their everyday worlds and “dub” new identities. Specifically, I use the notion of “dubbing” (Boellstroff 2005: Chapter 1) to describe their creative and bodily engagement with satellite TV. This notion evokes the bodily performance through which the “original” sounds, voices and meanings are translated into another language. In this process, the meanings are altered, selectively appropriated and accommodated, re-voiced and hence inevitably betrayed. As I will show in this chapter, the need to scrutinise and re-draw the boundaries of bodily behaviour, life-styles and attires that are considered acceptable for “true Muslims” illustrates the burst of new religious imagination in young women’s daily lives. At the same time, it reveals the uneasy coexistence of consumerist desires, the search for forbearance and the quest for romantic love.

4.2. Unbounded satellite landscapes

In the last decade, the Moroccan broadcasting system has undergone significant changes. Understanding the relevance of TV in the process of nation building, Hassan II developed the national broadcasting system *Radiodiffusion et Télévision Marocaine* (RTM), which he established in 1962. Indeed, in addition to the violent repression and authoritarian censorship through which the King confronted the political opposition to his regime (Orlando 2009), he used television as a means of pro-regime propaganda. In 1989, the predominantly French language private channel 2M SOREAD was launched with the purpose of entertaining. This was one of the first private television stations in the Arab world, which turned public in 1996 in a broader move towards the political liberalisation and freedom of speech which was under way. As Bouziane Zaid (2009: 28-30) has noted, the rebranding of the two public TV stations has been influenced by the elite and upper-middle classes’ tastes and hence they have propagated a consumer lifestyle inaccessible to the poor and the lower-middle classes. The predominance of formal Arabic and French excludes illiterates and *madrassa*-educated people, as well as the Amazigh speakers, from engaging in televised debates. On the other hand, new television programmes have addressed the issues of poverty, corruption, human rights violations and government ineffectiveness, and have also allowed ordinary people to talk over the microphone and express their views; all this has turned 2M into a symbol

of freedom of speech. Furthermore, the accession of Mohamed VI in 1999 further fostered the promises of democracy and freedom of speech (Orlando 2009). Through the *Haut Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle* (the High Commission for Audiovisual Communication), he established in August 2002 a legal framework for the liberalisation of the audio-visual sector in Morocco.¹⁰³ By adopting the Audiovisual Communication Law (2004), parliament ended the state's monopoly by enabling the liberalisation of broadcasting, and thus the number of radio stations and television channels has increased significantly.

My interlocutors think that 2M has contributed to dismantling the state monopoly on information. Yet, it was especially the arrival of the satellite dishes that has enabled Moroccan people to “broaden their minds” and get to know what is happening in their country beyond the state censorship of sensitive political news and events.¹⁰⁴ Since early 1990,¹⁰⁵ in fact, satellite channels such as CNN and MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Centre) have burst onto the scene, giving people access to unlimited worlds. Fatima Mernissi (2003:10) has described the proliferation of satellite dishes on the rooftops of Moroccan houses as a “media revolution” because of the challenge they have posed to national and Saudi-owned television stations. In her view, satellite channels like *al-Jazeera*¹⁰⁶ have played an empowering role amongst women, illiterate people and the young by turning them from “manipulated subjects” to “active viewers” (Mernissi 2004a, 2004b). Even though Fatema Mernissi has captured critical aspects of the “Arab media revolution,” nevertheless, I will provide a nuanced interpretation of the empowering features of satellite TV. To do so, I will document the complex and multifaceted experiences of my interlocutors with the unbounded landscapes that television provides.

¹⁰³ According to Zaid (2009), there are eight channels: Al Oula (or RTM) and 2M, which are general news and entertainment channels; the sports channel *Arriadia*; the education and cultural channel *Arrabiaa*; a channel for the Moroccan *Al Maghribia*, which is loved by many people living in Morocco; the religious channel *Assadissa*; the regional TV for the southern region, *Laayoune*; and Arabic and French service news channel *Medi I Sat*.

¹⁰⁴ On censorship, press liberalisation and vibrant contemporary cultural production see Vermeren (2002: Chapter 10, 2009: Chapter 15); Tozy & Hibou (2002); Orlando (2009). On the continuity of censorship, see, for example, Graciet & Laurent (2012);

¹⁰⁵ In 1992, it became legal to own a satellite dish and the government tax on possession of one was abolished.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Jazeera was launched in 1996. Unlike the state-owned and state-censored national television stations, Al-Jazeera presents controversial views about the governments of many Arab states.

Learning, discovering and understanding are some of the terms in which many young women and their families describe the impact of *l-parabol* (the satellite dish) in Morocco. Alongside *al-Jazeera* and documentaries on *National Geographic AbuDahbi*, they watch a wide range of entertainment programmes on international and national TV such as Moroccan sit-coms as well as cuisine, travel or news programmes (on Arab media, see also Kraidy 2009; Sakr 2001, 2007). According to their personal preferences, young women switch over from the Lebanese *Star Academy* and the Turkish and Egyptian soap operas¹⁰⁷ to video clips and American films broadcast on *Fox Movies*, *Rotana Music*, *Rotana Cinema*, *ART (Arab Radio and Television)* and *MBC*. In addition to the entertainment and information that satellite television provides, young women stress the important role that it has played in fostering a deeper understanding of the role of Islam in everyday life, and hence the return of Moroccans to religion. In the last decades, indeed, religious broadcasts on the conservative Saudi channels such as *Haqiqa* or *al-Nas*, as well as the more innovative channels like *Iqra'* have proliferated (Kraidy 2009; Esposito 2010). In some of these programmes, conservative religious preachers condemn the corrupting effects of foreign films and programmes, stating that *shytan* (the devil) is at work. By invoking the fear of doomsday and the afterlife, they call believers to repent and return to “a purified Islamic morality.” Furthermore, various scholars (for example, see Abu-Lughod 1995; van Nieuwkerk 2008b; Moll 2010) have explored the connections between the sensationalised phenomenon of the “born again star,” some charismatic televised preachers and the new Islamic appeal. Since the early 1990s, TV stars and actresses have recounted in books and television broadcasts their path from laxity to piety in the intimate confessional style of self-telling. According to Lila Abu-Lughod (1995), the testimonies of “repentant actresses” have been publicised and capitalised on by Egyptian Islamists to support their calls for morality and salvation. In addition to the adoption of Islamic dress and the veil, many of these film stars have also renounced their careers so as to take care of their husbands and children,

¹⁰⁷ In her groundbreaking work on television production and audiences in Egypt, Lila Abu-Lughod (1990, 2005) has shed light on the modernist pedagogical intent permeating TV serials for women and the multiple ways in which working-class and rural women have interpreted these programmes and used them to reflect upon their lives. Unlike Egypt, which is the most important producer of movies and TV serials in the Muslim worlds, Moroccan national television production has been modest. Until the 1980s, Moroccan filmmakers confronted not only the dominance of Egyptian, Indian, American and French movies, but also a lack of state financial support and audience attention. On the history of film production in Morocco see Dwyer (2002, 2004), and on its recent developments see Orlando (2011).

while others have chosen the pathways of compromise, for instance playing only the role of pious characters. Alongside conservative religious channels, the modern and innovative channel *Iqra'* has initiated a novel style of televangelist preaching. In particular, charismatic preachers like the Egyptian 'Amr Khaled (whom I will discuss later in detail) have promoted Islamic teachings with a strong emphasis on personal piety. Rather than invoking the flames of the hell or condemning "the West" writ large, these enormously successful and influential preachers have tried to reconcile the demands of modern life with the principles of Islam, thereby giving shape to new forms of Muslim subjectivity.

By stressing the importance of satellite television in reforming people's intimate desires and religious imagination, my intention is not to reduce the search for a virtuous life to the influence of religious programmes and Muslim televangelists. As in other Muslim countries, reformist Islam has a longer history in Morocco than that, being embedded within the colonial encounters of the Arab countries with the West in the 19th century (Ahmed 1992; Abu-Lughod 1998). Its contemporary configurations have taken shape against the backdrop of broader international historical dynamics – such as the Gulf War (1991), and more recently the 9/11 terrorist attack, the USA military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq and the discovery of an "Islamist threat" in Morocco since the suicide bombings in Casablanca in 2003 (Chaarani 2004). However, as I will show in the sections that follow, television is an important site around which my interlocutors' discourses on the "Islamic awakening" revolve and through which they engage with the reformist ideas that the religious programmes convey. Specifically, by documenting their everyday micro-practices and reflections, I will discuss the multiple ways in which young women engage with mass-mediated images in their everyday lives. Satellite television represents at the same time a new source of knowledge and authority (Eickelman & Anderson 1999; Eickelman & Piscatori 2004) and a *reversed* moral world, a flight from "reality" and an essential part of construction of the everyday world.

4.3. Television and diversion in everyday life

Satellite television accompanies the daily activities of many women and young women I met in al-Azaliya as well as contributing to filling their spare time. While watching television, they clean the house, prepare a meal, chat and drink tea with their guests or

simply relax by enjoying their favourite programmes. For instance, Ihlam's engagement with television reveals the intricate blending of religious and worldly desires that multiple images of "possible lives" to which she accesses make possible. At the same time, it illustrates the ways in which she selectively appropriates and reworks the various imaginaries and mass-mediated stories displayed in her favourite Turkish soap-operas and reality-TV shows to construct her everyday world.

Ihlam is a 26-year-old young woman who lives in hay el-Mounia. After having obtained a university degree in French literature in 2006, she was unable to find a stable job and hence she started helping her older sister in the latter's dressmaking shop. Most of their customers bring along their own fabrics, which they have bought in the various shops of the *medina* (old city), and a drawing of the dress they have admired in their favourite TV serial or in a women's magazine such as *Femmes du Maroc* (the Arabic version is *Nissae Min Al Maghrib*). Sometimes, their customers request "modest" rearrangements of the original models. Ihlam and her older sister are modern dressmakers (*khayata 'asriya*), renowned for the beautiful garments that they sew for lower prices than in the boutiques. In their shop, the television is always switched on and accompanies the rhythm of the sewing machines and their conversation. Apart from government offices and private companies, as well as the modern stores and supermarket that stay open, most of the small shops of al-Azaliya remain closed after the Friday sermon (*khutba*) or open in the late afternoon.

Veiled and elegantly dressed in the modest and fashionable Turkish dress that she saw in her favourite television serial, Ihlam is also deeply committed to her religion. On Friday afternoons, after having attended the sermon in the mosque, she remains at home to pray and read the Qur'an. Every evening after sunset, from the minaret of the mosque the *mu'adhdhin* calls the faithful to prayer, "God is the Greatest...(*allahu akbar*)", and "God is the Greatest..." the people repeat in a soft voice. For an instant, everything seems to stop. In their homes, people turn the television volume down and interrupt their chattering to listen to the call to prayer (*adhan*). For many young women like Ihlam, Friday is a special day also because they can watch the prime show *Star Academy*, the popular pan-Arab reality show where talented young people from various Arab countries compete in dancing, acting, singing and performing.

Launched by the Lebanese satellite channel LBC (Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation) in 2003, *Star Academy* has had unprecedented success throughout North

Africa and the Middle East (Kraidy 2009b). Its popularity is accompanied by the controversial debates about (im)morality that it has generated and the concerns about its corrupting influence on the young.¹⁰⁸ Several cameras follow the everyday life of a group of mixed unmarried boy and girl students in “academia” and the programme is broadcast 24 hours a day on the television screens. Like many other young women, Ihlam passionately follows the daily broadcast of the events and fortunes of the *Star Academy* participants. Initially I was puzzled by Ihlam’s attraction for the mass-mediated stories. Thus, I started paying attention to the ways in which she interlaced her interest for reality shows like *Star Academy* with her cultivation of piety as two apparently parallel worlds. Against the backdrop of the “Islamic awakening” and its appealing promises of hope and salvation, the competing aesthetics, fantasies and subjectivities that television brings into the life-worlds of young women like Ihlam are not essentially contradictory and irreconcilable – even though some of my interlocutors would conceive of them as such. On the contrary, worldly and spiritual horizons intersect in complex ways in her everyday life, where religious piety and consumer desires for Islamic fashion coexist side by side.

The everyday life of Ihlam is in fact far away from the glamorous and wealthy world of which the *Star Academy* participants aspire to be part. While passionately watching the events and romances of the protagonists of *Star Academy*, she also keeps a moral distance. Ihlam said that she does not intend to engage in romance, but rather she aspires to marry a “good Muslim” – meaning a religious and honest man who prays regularly, does not drink alcohol and leads a pious life. She would condemn girls who have premarital relationships and search for “worldly love”, in other words, love that is not directed towards God or one’s family. Ihlam desires to lead a life according to Islamic principles and regards dancing and singing in public as an immoral and anti-Islamic activity – not to mention the idea that unmarried men and women could cohabit under the same roof. On the one hand, reality shows like *Star Academy* seem to bring

¹⁰⁸ Marwan Kraidy (2009) has analysed the debates that have arisen around *Star Academy* and the different ways in which it has been understood in Lebanon and Kuwait. Through a contextualized analysis of the reception of *Star Academy*, his study has highlighted the various political implications of the disputes that have arisen in these two countries. While in Kuwait the programme was at the centre of a parliamentary debate launched by Islamists concerned about the corrupting effect on public morality and family values, in Lebanon it was debated against the background of the assassination of President Hariri (in 2005) and the Cedar revolution.

into her existence these exciting experiences that in her “real world” she considers moral and religious transgressions. The mixture of fascination and repulsion that the *reversed* moral world proposed in these programmes reveals the complex dynamics of identification and dis-identification that these mass-mediated stories engender. Indeed, Ihlam greatly enjoys watching programmes and imagining lives of a kind that she does not really want to live, because she thinks they are contrary to her moral values. Precisely because they are far away from her everyday world, these programmes provide an escape from the difficulties of her everyday life as well as amusement and diversion. Since she graduated in French, Ihlam has participated in numerous state entrance examinations to become a teacher in a state school, but has never succeeded, due, in her view, to widespread corruption and her lack of reliable social connections (*wasetta*). University educated, unmarried and unemployed, she took a vocational training course in modern dressmaking to earn some money and help her sister. She has little time for herself and her family does not enable her to enjoy much mobility, except when she has some errands to run. Ihlam has always described her father, a retired schoolteacher in his 60s who originated from a village in the region, as a conservative and “very strict” man. He does not allow his daughters to spend their free time with their friends in the city, or other types of diversion. During the week, Ihlam spends the whole day (from 9 am to 10 pm) sewing in the shop and watching her favourite television series, while on Sundays she and her sisters help their mother in cleaning the house. As a flight from “reality” and a mediated time-space for amusement and diversion, therefore, television programmes like *Star Academy* fill her daytime with experiences and possibilities that she cannot have in her “real” life. However, far from being only an escape from her daily life, TV programmes are an essential part of the ways in which Ihlam constructs herself and her religiosity. By contrasting her life with mass-mediated stories, she traces the boundaries between “proper” and “improper” Islamic behaviour. Meanwhile, she selectively incorporates and appropriates images and life-styles into the fashioning of herself and her appearance. Indeed, Ihlam does not earn a real salary because, apart from the earnings of her older sister who runs the shop, a large part of the money is given to their parents. Thus, she does not have access to the Islamic fashion that she contemplates in TV programmes and women’s magazines, nor can she afford to buy the elegant headscarves and modest clothing available in chainstores like the Turkish *Tekbir*, which has become increasingly popular in the big

cities of Morocco (Guessous 2011: 217). When she has some spare time from shop work and housework, she sews for herself the clothes, taking inspiration from the various models that she has admired on television. By sewing together imaginative materials and traces of the enchanting worlds to which she does not materially have access, Ihlam creates her own pathways into them. These fragments of Ihlam's everyday life illustrate the micro-practices through which she accommodates consumerist desires, Islamic fashion and the search for forbearance. They also shed light on how images and stories broadcast on satellite TV are selectively appropriated and reworked in "real life". Along with the emergence of a globalised Islamic fashion, satellite TV has created a new sense of historical time – as a time of salvation and hope – which intersects in a complex way with earthly time.

4.4. Televised romance and pious lives

Television is deeply embedded in women's daily lives (see also Abu-Lughod 2005). Not only does it fill young women's daytime by providing them with diversion, emotional involvement and entertainment in their homes, but it also contributes to reshaping their activities and sociability. Let me elaborate further on this point by moving from hay el-Mounia, the middle class neighbourhood where Ihlam lives, to the house of Amira in Rabi'a. Amira is the eldest daughter of Naima Ahmed (see Chapter 2) and in her company and that of her daughters I have spent several lazy afternoons chatting and watching television. By describing these afternoon's gatherings, in which these women watch their favourite TV series, I will illustrate the ways in which they compare and contrast their own experiences with the ideals and image of romance and love proposed on television.

In Amira's house, the television is always on, while her daughters carry out their domestic chores and relax in the living room with their guests. Her daughter Lubna, aged 26, has not completed high school and in her spare time she weaves 'amara decorations¹⁰⁹ while watching her favourite programmes on satellite TV, like *Fox Movies* and *National Geographic AbuDahbi*, where, she explained, she can admire exotic animals and outstanding landscapes. On the hottest days I spent at Amira's home in the summer of 2010, the Mexican soap opera *Diablo*, broadcast daily from 6 to 7

¹⁰⁹ For further details on this type of handicraft and the way it is organized in Rabi'a, see Chapter 2.

p.m., had replaced the afternoon prayer time as a benchmark for setting timetables, arranging meetings with friends and neighbours or going into the city centre for shopping and leisure. The unbearably hot weather led the girls to postpone their outings from “after the afternoon prayer” (*mura l-‘asr*) at about 5 p.m. to “after *Diablo*” at 7 p.m., also because they did not want to miss an episode of this involving TV series.

Set in New York, the soap opera (*musalsala*) tells the story of *Diablo* – the nickname of a “crook” with a troubled childhood - and the shady affairs in which he finds himself involved despite his attempts to change his life. The protagonist has never known his biological father with whom his mother Esperanza had sexual relations when she worked as a domestic in the man’s family house in Mexico. When she became pregnant, she migrated to the U.S. in search of her lover who had moved there. After being caught by the police, *Diablo* starts a relationship with the beautiful attorney Manuela who defends him at the trial, and he decides to give up crime. Unfortunately, he then finds himself implicated in the criminal organisation of which his biological father is the boss. *Diablo*’s story is one of committed attempts at redemption, but it is also about the obstacles he finds when he tries to change his life. At the same time, his present life intersect with the reminiscence of the troubles he has had to face from when he was a little boy and which led him to become a criminal.

During *Diablo*, Amina’s home was often crowded with relatives and neighbours, who stayed on after drinking tea to watch television. The intricate plot lines of *Diablo* often moved the women to tears or laughter, and kept them deeply involved in the story. At times, someone brook the silence by commenting on the turbulent story of passionate love, betrayal and vengeance of the protagonist, by saying “Oh poor thing! (*meskin!*)” Only during the commercial breaks would women and girls provide clarifications to me about the previous episodes, to help me to follow the development of this intricate story. After joining the group, I realised that *Diablo* was something more than mere entertainment and diversion.

By intruding into people’s homes, with images of places and lives away from the personal experiences of this group of women and girls, programmes like *Diablo* – alongside other films, television series and entertainment programmes – contributed to moulding the images of the “West”. They also provided imaginative materials for discussing the shifting of boundaries between “Muslims” and “Westerners”, or in this case, between “them” and “me.” Some of the middle-aged women whom I met at

Amira's home are illiterate or have recently attended a literacy class at the mosque, while others have a low level of education. In my conversations with them, Italy and "the West" writ large were subjects of curiosity and fascination, which they often turned into expressions of criticism of the moral lives that the Christians (*nsara*), in their view, lead. For example, I was often told that, unlike Moroccans, the young in "the West" want to be independent from their family and to live their own life as soon as they reach the age of majority, as the girls and women came to know through television serials like *Beverly Hills, 90210*. Furthermore, women and girls would ask me whether I wear mini-skirts in Italy like the women they watch in the TV series, or about various aspects of life in Italy, especially in relation to sexual mores and gender relations. By questioning me about marriage ceremonies and family ties, for example, some of them found it very peculiar that Italian women do not claim a *sdaq* (dowry) and also quite immoral that unmarried couples could live together and have children. Girls and their mothers did not regard television merely as entertainment and a diversion from their daily routine, but also as a source of knowledge through which rethink and reflect upon themselves and their lives. Naturally, *Diablo* was not the only soap opera that women and girls watched. Among the various television serials, my interlocutors recalled the troubled and exciting incidents of *Guadalopi* for having enthralled generations of people in Morocco during the mid-1990s.

Guadalopi was the way my Moroccan friends pronounced the name of the protagonist of the television series *Guadalupe – The Secret of Our Lives*. *Guadalupe* is the most successful remake of the Venezuelan soap operas *La heredera* (1981) and *Mi adorable Monica* (1990). It was produced in Mexico (1994-95) and transmitted dubbed into Moroccan Arabic during the mid-1990s. Against the backdrop of betrayal, intrigues and revenge, there is the troubled love story of Guadalupe and Alfredo, whose miserable fate is marked by the history of hatred and revenge that tie their respectively families: Zambrano and Mendoza. After her father's death, Guadalupe lives with her poor mother until she marries Alfredo. In fact, Alfredo marries Guadalupe as part of his revenge, before truly falling in love with her. Pointing out the emotional aspect of their involvement, many women and girls told me they followed passionately the moving story of Edith Gonzales paying the part of *Guadalupe*, who often moved them to tears and sympathy. For instance, Ghazela, a woman in her 50s, told me that she was deeply moved while watching *Guadalopi* because her story was so sad and tragic that people

would profoundly sympathise with her. The girls and women with whom I discussed this TV serial described the protagonist as a nice, beautiful girl, dressed in her long skirt and shirt-sleeve blouse and they said that even though everyone fell in love with her, her life was hard and full of suffering. In the mid-1990s, many of the girls whom I met in Rabi'a or elsewhere in al-Azaliya were at the *collège* (junior high school) or early years of high school and they agree that this TV series had profoundly influenced the ways in which young people would behave and dress. In this regard, Ghazela's daughter Lina said that when she was at the *lycée* many people identified themselves with their heroine, and pitied her for her tragic and unfair situation, since she was poor and fatherless, yet also beautiful and full of positive values. Lina depicted Guadalupe as a *Cinderella* and said that many boys were in love with her and dreamt of her. According to Lina and other girls, the series was so successful and influential that even in their waking lives, adolescents tried to "physically absorb" and incorporate their heroine, by mimicking her bodily movements and style. As Lina explained in this regard, "*Guadalopi* had a limp when she walked, and you could see young people in the street hobbling as she did!"¹¹⁰ In the period in which *Guadalupe* was in vogue, according to Lina teenagers were fascinated with this story and started wearing the same kind of top and long skirt as their heroine, which they could find in many shops in the *medina*. Furthermore, she added, "Everybody started dating (*kulshi kano kay-sahbo*)." In Lina's view of that period, which arguably reflects her own coming of age and that of her peers, Guadalupe's tragic story somehow fuelled dreams of romantic love. This passionate and contrasted story reveals the tension between personal desire and social and material constraints, with which young people could identify and recognise themselves.

Thinking of its success, my interlocutors agreed that no longer is there a television series that has emotionally involved Moroccan people so deeply. In many respects, however, the memory of the TV serial *Guadalupe* is also associated with a bygone past of loose morality from which many people have tried to move away. Few young women who used to watch *Guadalupe* passionately, nowadays call attention to the perils of television and avoid watching movies in which, they claim, *shytan* (the devil) is operating. For example, Hakima, an unmarried daughter of Naima, was a fervent viewer, but turned to Islam in the last few years. She said: "TV is negative precisely

¹¹⁰ Fieldnotes, 12 July 2010.

because if young people watch a girl on TV with her belly uncovered, everyone will want to walk around with a bare belly.”¹¹¹ In some ways, Hakima was talking of the intimate power of fascination and identification that the visual and bodily engagement with the *reality* of the filmic images and stories exert on people. It is precisely this visual and bodily engagement that, in her view, dangerously blends aesthetic fruition and practicality, life and dreams (Taussig 1991).

Far from defining the daily practices through which people craft themselves and their imaginative horizons, the relations between “real” life and television is one of creative and selective appropriation of images, styles and vocabulary. At the same time, Hakima’s words, which mirror her personal involvement in revivalist Islamic practices and discourses, cast light on the shifting perception of morality and religion in everyday life. In other words, her reflections resonate with a widespread concern about the uncontrolled invasion of western cultural products (but increasingly also from the Middle East, like the Lebanese or Egyptian pop stars). These discourses express anxiety about the young’s engagement in illicit relationships, consumerism and individualism that television is assumed to foster. The perceived increase in pre-marital relationships and behaviours described as “anti-Islamic” – such as dating, drinking alcohol or smoking – is also at the heart of the concerns about social reproduction and the disruption of social and family ties in reformist discourses. The idea that satellite TV and globalisation in general lead young people to become and behave like the *guer* (the Westerners) is not just a critique of the current status quo and an admonition. By redrawing the discursive and semantic boundaries between Muslims, *real* Muslims and the *guer*, it is also germane to the call to redemption and the return to Islam. Notwithstanding the increased influence of revivalist ideas in people’s lives and imaginations, however, many girls and women continue to watch TV, by switching from soap operas and movies to religious programmes and they contextually mobilise and interlace different (and at times opposing) narratives. While displaying moral ambivalence towards “the Westerners”, at the same time some girls and women would talk vividly of “the love of the *guer*” (*l-hobb dyal guer*) that they have learnt about in romantic Hollywood movies and TV series. Comparing their personal experiences with the image of romantic love proposed in Hollywood films, some of them concluded that in Morocco that kind of love – namely a form of romantic love and mutual care that

¹¹¹ Fieldnotes, Hakima, 30 September 2010.

binds the lovers together through thick and thin – does not exist at all or is very difficult to find amongst the men. My pious interlocutors contrasted this view with that of an “Islamic sentimental education.” For example, Siam, a young veiled university student aged 23, clarified adamantly that the highest form of love is spiritual love for God and that, unlike western societies, in Islam there is no place for romantic love apart from marriage. For Siam, the open-door policies to the West (*infitah*) and the diffusion of satellite TV have contributed to the spread of premarital sex and love affairs, which are opposed to Islamic and social values, being “foreign” to Moroccan society. Counterpoising “the love of the *guer*” with a more “authentic” view, she described the intense love that the Prophet Mohammed nourished for his wife ‘Aisha. By quoting a *hadith* (deeds and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed), she explained to me that Aisha, after eating some meat off a bone, used to pass the bone to the Prophet who would place his mouth at the same place where hers had been. Likewise, when she offered him a cup of water, he would place his lips at the same place where she had drunk. In Siam’s view, the behaviour of the Prophet towards his wife proved the intense love and intimacy which tied them.

Reverting to worldly love among ordinary human beings, she differentiated, however, between a love marriage (*zawej dyal hobb*) and a marriage of interest (*zawej mslaha*), which in her view is widespread in al-Azaliya. Describing her viewpoint, she claimed: “*L’amour est eternal*. If it’s real love (*vrai amour*) it lasts forever, like in *Romeo and Juliet*.”¹¹² Despite her animosity toward the perverting influence of “western culture”, Siam articulated her personal understanding of love by drawing on heterogeneous cultural references, including the Shakespearian *Romeo and Juliet*, which is a topos of romantic love among young women in al-Azaliya. Like Siam, many other women and girls with whom I discussed this topic would often interlace a reformist vocabulary with the various images and life-worlds that are circulating in the globalised world of literature, movies and entertainment. Even though they often described them as opposite, the ways in which they discussed and articulated their intimate desires indicated the presence of more nuanced and complex interlockings.

In the wake of the Islamic Revival, the everyday lives and desires of people in al-Azaliya have not necessarily become more pious. Yet reformist discourses capture and

¹¹² Fieldnotes, 21 May 2010. So as to make herself clearly understood by me, Siam interwove French and the Moroccan dialect and Standard Arabic according to the topic.

voice the widespread sense of crisis that permeates the present and nourishes the return to the “true Islam” as a remedy to the “social mess.” In order to account for the slipping of a new “politico-theological imagination” (Pandolfo 2007) into the everyday life of my interlocutors, in the next section I turn to the ways in which the women and girls whom I met narrated the Islamic awakening and the novel significance that Islam has acquired in their everyday lives.

4.5. A religious time in a mundane world

Satellite television is not only depicted as a *reversed* moral world, but it is also part of the ways in which many women and girls whom I met narrated their return to Islam. By and large, many women and girls agreed that the 9/11 terrorist attack and its aftermath have had important consequence in Muslims’ lives and self-perceptions. Discussing the “Islamic awakening” in Morocco with girls and their mothers, however, they stressed that high-level education and satellite TV have contributed significantly to fostering a deeper understanding of Islam. According to my interlocutors, in the early 1990s only a few families installed satellite dishes because it was expensive, and hence people would go to the homes of relatives, friends and neighbours to watch satellite channels and programmes. Nowadays, all the families whom I have known own a satellite dish and many of them agreed that religious satellite channels like *al-Nas*, *al-Haqiqa* and *Iqra’* have influenced the ways in which people reflect upon the meanings of religious practices in their everyday lives. By watching satellite TV, indeed, some university-educated young women told me that they came to know more about Islam. For example, they explained to me that they learnt how to pray *salat al-istikhara*, the prayer through which Muslim people can ask for God’s advice when they have to make an important choice or decision, about their marriage, study or migration. Indeed, this prayer is recited when someone feels lost and confused about an important decision they need to take and God’s advice manifests itself through a dream vision or a strong feeling that helps to orient the person. Others told me that through satellite channels they came to know about the practices that could help protect themselves and their homes from the perilous influence of black magic, envy and the evil eye. In this regard, Raqya, a woman in her 50s who was my neighbour in Rabi’a, told me she had learned how to prepare “the water of the Qur’an” (*al-ma’ al-qur’an*) by watching the religious channel *al-Haqiqa*.

“The water of the Qur’an” is a healing water used to cure various forms of diseases, including *jinn* possession or magic spells. She explained that on *al-Haqiqa*, the religious preacher Mohammed al-Hashimi told his listeners to wrap the television with a sheet when religious scholars recited Qur’anic verses and to put a basin of water underneath to produce this healing water. Thus, instead of relying on the *fqih*-s (religious scholars) as she used to do, Raqiya prepares her own Islamic remedies to protect herself and her husband from magic (*siher*) attacks¹¹³ by her mother-in-law. Since she got married, she said, her mother-in-law has tried to undermine her conjugal life by creating sexual problems between them. Raqya can physically perceive her mother-in-law’s magic influence because her “head boils” and her body is suddenly infused by negative emotions and distress. Whenever she recognises that her mother-in-law’s wickedness is intruding into her conjugal relationship, she prepares the “water of the Qur’an”. She said:

I’m illiterate and I don’t know to read the Qur’an. I just know how to pray, I do *al-Haqiqa* [television channel], I leave it turned on all night without listening to it, I put the water under the TV and I leave it all night. I sprinkle that water around my home and I pray *l-fajar* [the dawn prayer], I put it on his body and I feel better [...] even if she does something, God keeps it away.¹¹⁴

As her words above illustrate, even though she is illiterate she feels empowered by satellite television because she can resort to the practical knowledge and the teachings of Islamic preachers which she has acquired by watching television. Before she started watching this religious programme, her husband used to go to the *fqih* (religious scholar) in the neighbourhood mosque whenever they had sexual problems that were related to magic influence. The *fqih* would recite some Qur’anic verses over the water, from which Raqya’s husband had to drink, wash himself and offer some to his wife as well.

¹¹³ According to people’s beliefs, women may put a magic potion in food, the home or clothes, as well as using pictures, personal belongings and bodily substances of the person they want to bewitch, such as hair, sweat, spittle or sperm; whereas others go to the ‘*attar*, a special herbalist who prepare magical curses. Condemned as being opposed to religion (*dīn*), ‘*attar*-s’ magic practices are situated in an awkward position within contemporary religious landscapes. The ‘*attar* is a seller of herbal products, spices, tea, cosmetics, soap and other natural remedies. See, for example, Davis (1983), Kapchan (1996).

¹¹⁴ Interview, Zhora, 4 June 2010.

I discussed this practice also with Naima's daughter Hakima, who explained to me that this water is part of *al-ruqiya ash-shar'ia* and heals what modern medicine cannot cure. She said, "The Qur'an is the cure of all diseases (*qur'an dwa dyal kull l-marad*)."

Like other women, Raqiya and Hakima explained to me that at one time, people would go to the religious scholars to ask for healing water, whereas now they are aware that anyone can prepare it by reciting some Qur'anic verses over the water. Illiterate women can use CDs and cassettes of Qur'anic recitation. In other words, television satellite provides women with an authoritative theoretical and practical knowledge through which they mediate their intimate and social relationships, as well as the invisible forces that permeate the worlds, the subjects and their bodies.

As several studies have highlighted (for instance, Eickelman & Anderson 1999; Eickelman & Piscatori 2004; Roy 2003), the proliferation of sources of religious knowledge in the form of CDs and cassettes for the recitation of the Qur'an or sermons (Hirschkind 2001, 2006), religious websites, book markets and satellite religious channels have precipitated the fragmentation of religious authority. As an authoritative source of Islamic knowledge and information about correct religious practice, television has become part of the ways in which many women and girls in al-Azaliya rethink themselves as well as act within their worlds of intimate and social relationships. Furthermore, Islamic reformism accessed *via* satellite television seems to have created a split in the timeline, infusing the present with new spiritual meanings and transcendental hopes. My devoted interlocutors often described the present as a *break* with the *past*, when, in their view, religion was melded with local traditions and superstitions. In many cases, I was told, they would call "shameful/*hashoma*" what diverged from local customs and traditions, whereas nowadays they claim that they have become more aware (*wa'y*). Hakima said to me in this regard: "According to religion it was shameful, for people it was just normal. We didn't know."¹¹⁵ In other words, becoming "aware" has also shifted the perception of morality itself and made them realise that, for example, not veiling was *haram* (forbidden) for women. In this process, satellite television has played a leading role. According to some young women, the ways in which Islam is taught and discussed nowadays differ deeply from the way it was done before. Previously, religious scholars would read and explain the Qur'an on Fridays on

¹¹⁵ Fieldnotes, Hakima, 22 September 2010.

the national TV, but their teachings were far away from the everyday problems that people had to face. It was the arrival of a new generation of preachers like ‘Amr Khaled¹¹⁶ that motivated people to draw closer to religion precisely because it is said that Khaled was able to “talk to their heart”.

A university graduate in economics but without any formal religious training, Khaled’s televised lessons (*dars*) have provided a new means by which people can orient themselves in the contradictions which permeate their daily life, touching on topics like personal piety and family ties, as well as the uses of the internet, leisure and dating. Unlike traditional Friday sermons (*khutuba*) in their neighbourhood mosque, where the preacher (*khatib* or *imam*) stands in front of the people and speaks from the pulpit (*minibar*) according to what the Prophet would do before the *umma*, ‘Amr Khaled uses a language close to people’s daily experience and sensibility. Thanks to his ability to move the listeners to tears and laughter, he has become a popular television preacher among women and young people from different socio-economic backgrounds since the late 1990s. In 2002, when he was forced to leave Egypt, he continued preaching from satellite broadcasts on *Iqra’* and *ART*, taped sermons and on the internet (see Wise 2003; Hofheinz 2007).

In his satellite programmes, ‘Amr Khaled addresses the problems which are relevant to people’s lives by connecting *hadith*-s and religious teachings with everyday experience. He also recounts the life of the Prophet and his companions as a model for facing the challenges that modern society poses to Muslims. In so doing, he encourages his audience to share their doubts about religious practices and moral behaviour, and to talk of their inner conflicts and emotions. The dynamics of intense identification and emotional recognition of other people’s experiences, which his style reproduces in his viewers, is similar to the melodramatic effects of the soap operas. Listening to ‘Amr Khaled reciting the Qur’an or recounting the life of the Prophet, many people have felt moved to tears. These people told me that, through his televised lessons, they have understood that instead from being far away from their lives, Islam is relevant to them.

As various scholars have pointed out (for instance, Wise 2003), the Egyptian preacher ‘Amr Khaled, with his trim moustache and modern dress-style, has

¹¹⁶ For a detailed account of ‘Amr Khaled and his style of preaching, see Wise (2003); see also Nieukerk (2008); Rock (2010). For a comparison between Amr Khaled’s and Yusuf al Qaradawi’s reaction to the Danish Cartoon Controversy, see Wise (2006).

inaugurated a new style of preaching by promoting a non-political message focused on personal salvation, piety, ethical reform and the redeeming love of God. Instead of invoking the fires of the hell and strict prohibition, his teachings are oriented towards the search for compromise: how to live as a good Muslim in modern society. Khaled's persuasive style of preaching and his ability to move his listeners' emotions have turned him into an influential and appreciated figure among many of my interlocutors. Some young women told me that the involving ways in which 'Amr Khaled would read and explain the Qur'an provoked intense feelings and steered his viewers towards the cultivation of moral behaviour (*khulq*) and modesty (*l-hiya*), not as an obligation but rather as an invitation to salvation. Despite his search for compromises, however, 'Amr Khaled sets out some important boundaries between what is permitted and what is unacceptable to "real Muslims". The latter includes, for instance, premarital sex and non-Islamic forms of entertainment such as drinking alcohol, clubbing or using drugs. As far as dress-style is concerned, Khaled addresses mainly women and young women by inviting them to dress modestly and to veil. His emphasis on aesthetics is also to be analysed as a specific politics of fashion which combines visible signs of modesty and piety with a fashionable style, thereby showing young people in particular that being both "cool" and "pious" is part of the formation of modern Muslim subjectivity.

Khaled's focus on the promotion of personal piety and salvation, rather than on political issues, represents a critical shift in Islamic reformist discourses and imaginaries. As Lindsay Wise (2003) has argued, however, notwithstanding his de-politicised vision of Islam, 'Amr Khaled uses the pedagogy of personal ethics to promote de facto the Islamic social reform of society and the return to "cultural authenticity". Referring to the setbacks in people's everyday lives as part of the broader contradictions of living as a "good Muslim" in a modern society influenced by western culture and life-styles, 'Amr Khaled claims "Islam is the only solution" (Rock 2010). The anthropologist Samuli Schielke (2009) has provocatively asked: to what is Islam a solution? As many women and young women have clarified, the availability of information on Islam through religious television channels, books and websites on the internet is an important aspect that has led many people to know better their religion and hence to draw closer to Islam. Yet, most importantly, they feel that the knowledge they have acquired is profoundly relevant for their lives. In turn, major religious awareness and knowledge seem to have fuelled anxieties about the correct boundaries between

haram (forbidden) and *halal* (permitted) and increased the sense of moral ambivalence towards everyday life.

4.6. Islamic fashion and consumer desires

The influence of the “Islamic revival,” and of religious preachers like ‘Amr Khaled, is visible in the “sartorial reform” occurring amongst women and girls in al-Azaliya with which I started my reflection at the beginning of this chapter. Far from being just a matter of surface, the shift in styles of dress and bodily comportment reflects the complex ways in which women, and girls in particular, fashion themselves vis-à-vis the changing perceptions of morality and modesty. In other words, aesthetic qualities are blended with ethics, and considered to be an essential part of it.

Looking at family pictures up to the late 1990s in the homes of women in various districts of al-Azaliya, I realised that most of them were unveiled. The western-style trousers and blouses, skirts and miniskirts they were wearing in the pictures have now been replaced by coloured veils and modest clothes which cover the female body shape from men’s gaze. Especially from 2001 onwards, indeed, many of the young women whom I met have started donning the veil and frame their choice in the language of a “religious awakening.” Hasna and her female cousins, for instance, have disclosed that ten years ago only a few young women were wearing the veil and many others were horrified at the idea. “With this heat I would suffocate,” most young women would think about wearing the veil, especially during the hot summer days. Apart from very religious people, I was told, veils were put on and off contextually, for going home after having been in the *hammam*, or to take the Islamic studies exams (see also Guessous 2010: 212). While the veil was perceived in the past as an unbearable “burden” and a practice by older women, today it is described by my interlocutors as a religious obligation as well as a mean to express their religiosity and feel closer to God. It is not only the young women in their teens and twenties who have turned to piety, but many women older than that have also put on the *hijab* (veil) and are paying attention to Islamic fashion. For example, Khadija, aged 33, is a dressmaker in Rabi’a who specialised in traditional clothes (*khayata taqlidiya*) and receives her clients at home. These are female neighbours, friends and relatives for whom she tailors *jallaba* or pyjamas. Recently, her clients have also asked Khadija to tailor for them the Saudi

Arabian *khymar* (long dark veil) they saw on satellite TV and which has been incorporated into local ways of dressing modestly and fashionably (see also Osella & Osella 2007: 11-12 on Kerala). In summer 2010, for instance, the Saudi *'abaya*, the long robe with wide sleeves that women and girls admired in satellite TV, was in vogue.

Like elsewhere in Morocco, however, donning the *hijab* in al-Azaliya entails different forms of religious commitment and bodily practices. The so-called Islamic fashion is multifaceted, and what should be labelled as “true Islamic” or “forbidden (*haram*)” is subject to local debate. For deeply religiously committed girls, as I discuss further in Chapter 5, the “true *hijab*” requires one to reorient dress-style and inner dispositions towards ideals of modesty and decency, and also to avoid intimate cross-sex interactions and hand-shaking. In contrast, other young women claimed that being veiled and religious does not preclude the desire to be fashionable. Some of these young women also yearn for romantic love, as well as longing to spend leisure time in respectable cafés, have male friends, and to work and be self-fulfilled, as part of their being “modern and educated.”

By and large, young women want to be well dressed and stylish and they enjoy doing shopping as part of their pleasure in consumption and searching for glamour. They creatively combine different styles, including in their repertoires the second-hand clothes from European youth chainstores, which are available in the weekly markets, as well as the fashionable garments sold in the shops of al-Azaliya, provided that they can afford to buy them. According to their orientations, as I have discussed above, they also take further inspiration from various television programmes such as western or Egyptian movies, and Turkish or Mexican soap operas. A huge variety of veils are available in many shops and stands, along with Chinese productions of “traditional” Moroccan clothes and other low-cost items. In other words, fashion and veiling are far from being mutually exclusive. On the contrary, dress-style is an important arena where many young women harmonise their longing for fashion with their concerns for modesty, their desire to be both cool and pious.

4.7. Conclusion

In the wake of the Islamic revival, worldly and spiritual desires mingle and clash in complex ways in the lives of young women in al-Azaliya and everyday life continues to

be fraught with dilemmas. The various ethnographic vignettes that I proposed in this chapter showed how the longings for consumerism and fashion, romance and piety are variously combined in the formation of “modern religious subjectivity.” I have chosen to re-tell the “Islamic revival” in al-Azaliya through the satellite television and its filmic metaphors because they are important aspects of the women’s and girls’ narratives about the emergence of new morality and subjectivity. As I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter, satellite television occupies a central position in people’s lives and imaginations. It not only contributes to shaping the rhythm of the women’s social lives and their modes of sociality, but also intrudes into my interlocutors’ homes, with images and mass-mediated stories which are far away from their own worlds of meanings and values. By providing wide imaginative horizons through which women and girls re-think their moral worlds, indeed, television has contributed to shaping new desires and aspirations.

Through their visually engagement with satellite TV, girls and their mothers bring the identities and life-worlds broadcast in films, soap operas, news and religious programmes in their own everyday lives. In doing so, they creatively and selectively appropriate them to create metaphors and narratives so as to make sense of their troubled identities and daily experiences.

The contemporary satellite landscapes are saturated with worldly and spiritual invitations. On the one hand, in different ways “the love of the *guer* (Westerners)”, Turkish, Egyptian and Mexican soap opera foster new romantic expectations about their intimate lives. On the other hand, religious channels calling for restraint and forbearance have proliferated. Many young women meet in their homes to watch religious programmes, look for information on the internet and reflect upon how to be good people and how to live a better life in an increasingly complex world. Even though the influential television preachers ‘Amr Khaled promotes religious teachings for reconciling the contradictions of everyday life, often these competing imaginaries and life-worlds come to a clash.

In order to account for the ambivalent and creative encounters between young women and satellite television, I have suggested that the notion of “dubbing” – here meaning the bodily performance through which one form is brought into another – enables one to capture the ways in which they embody and craft new identities and social practices. The women and girls whom I met mould their subjectivity through

multifaceted cultural and global references, trying to conflate conflicting expectations and desires. Those who aspire to live according to the Holy Book have endorsed a reformist narrative, which emphasises turning to Islam as the remedy to the moral decay of Moroccan society triggered by uncontrolled liberal economy and consumerism. The “Islamic revival” has also produced a narrative on the past, which is often described by my interlocutors as a period during which people were not aware of the importance of Islam and religious practices in everyday life. Depicted as a linear trajectory towards a “modern” and “conscious” understanding of Islam, the “turning to piety” is laden with promises of social and personal progress.

Many other young people move eclectically from pious to mundane forms of fun and entertainment, trying to accommodate conflicting aspirations and contradictions or learning how to live within them. The young women who aspire to be both *cool* and *pious* have refashioned themselves by mitigating their consumer desires with material constraints and new moral dress-codes. Being both cool and pious, however, is not so easy and unproblematic because some conflicts are difficult to be handled. Notwithstanding the wave of religious revival in al-Azaliya, however, there are also women and young women who do not feel ready to remould their dress-style and sociality. Thus, they feel they are often confronted with religious subjectivity which has contributed to defining normative discourses on authenticity, gender and morality. In the next chapter, I will discuss this point further by exploring the visible and invisible pedagogy that is circulating within a group of women who attend mosque lessons, as well as the discontent that the emergence of reformist practices and discourses engenders.

CHAPTER 5

PIETY AND POLITICS

5.1. Islamic activism and discontent

Wearing a long loose robe, her head covered by a sober dark veil, Saliha would go to the home of her close friend Hayat to rehearse some Qur'anic verses for the course in recitation that they were attending in the neighbourhood mosque. Saliha, a 16-year-old student, was my neighbour in Rabi'a. Sitting together in the living room, the two friends used to listen to each other reciting the Qur'an and quoting the *hadith* (deeds and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed). They also chatted and laughed in an intimate atmosphere of deep conversation. For Saliha, Hayat was more than a friend. She was a model of virtue and piety. As she told me, it was Hayat who helped her to understand the *real* meaning of Islam and as a result a deep bond developed between them.¹¹⁷

The mosque lessons (*dars*, pl. *darus*) are part of the broader networks of the mosque and reading groups, religious associations and Islamic book markets that compose the multifaceted landscape of the "Islamic revival" in al-Azaliya. Animated by the desire to deepen their knowledge of Islam, women and girls meet weekly in the mosque to memorise the Qur'an and study the Sunna (the authoritative tradition of the prophet Muhammad). According to my interlocutors, the increased participation of women – and people in general – in the mosque in the last decade demonstrates the renewed importance of religion in everyday life. In the past, they argued, only the elderly would attend the mosque regularly, while practising women prayed at home and many others did not perform the five prayers a day. Nowadays, in contrast, attending the mosque (darija: *jam'a*, MSA: *masajid*) on Friday has become part of the daily life and imagination of many women and girls in al-Azaliya. Even though people's responses to the pervasive call for personal piety are multiple and nuanced, many girls like Saliha and Najat have enthusiastically embraced Islamic reformism and its promise of salvation.

This chapter investigates the mosque movement that I attended in Rabi'a in 2010 with Saliha and other women from the neighbourhood. In particular, I will concentrate on the teachings and pedagogies that circulate both inside and outside the mosque, as

¹¹⁷ Fieldnotes, 10 June 2010.

well as focusing on the relationships of amity engendered by sharing the same spiritual path. Within the anthropological debate on the “Islamic revival,” Saba Mahmood (2001a, 2001b, 2005) has shed light on the bodily techniques and the cultivation of spiritual virtues through which the participants in the mosque movements in Cairo fashion themselves as pious subjects. In her groundbreaking study, Mahmood has analysed piety as a critical aspect of personal ethics and self-cultivation. In doing so, she has demonstrated that the “subject of freedom” of feminist scholarship constitutes a limit to the anthropological understanding of the motivations, desires and sensibility animating the mosque movements. In contrast, the Foucauldian paradigm of self-cultivation has enabled Mahmood to make intelligible to others forms of agency and subjectivity that do not share the neoliberal implications subsumed in the feminist commitment to progressive politics. Indeed, far from subverting or re-signifying the norms, the women studied by Mahmood inhabit them so as to cultivate a virtuous self.

Mahmood’s work has provided a fundamental contribution to the understanding of the “Islamic revival” in general beyond its uncritical assimilation into the category of “political Islam.” On the other hand, however, the focus on the “self” has reduced politics to micro-politics (Osella & Soares 2009) and hence overshadowed the relational and social qualities of piety. In my analysis, I consider the formation of the pious selfhood as a critical feature of the mosque movement that I attended in Rabi’a. Nevertheless, my analysis moves away from the “paradigm of self-cultivation” and focuses instead on the relational dimensions of piety and on the forms of sociability that this movement promotes. Specifically, this chapter sheds light on those aspects which emerged during my fieldwork and that cannot be accounted for through an exclusive focus on the self and on the dynamics of subject-formation. Besides attending the weekly encounters at the mosque, indeed, I was involved in everyday conversations and took part in women’s sociality *outside* the mosque. As I will demonstrate, piety is constituted *in* and *through* personal and social exchanges. By focusing on the relational and social qualities of piety (Anderson 2011), my goal is also to highlight the socio-political dimensions of the mosque movement that I attended and the different ways in which my interlocutors discussed it.

In the first part of this chapter, I will provide an ethnographic account of the teachings and pedagogies promoted within this group of Qur’anic recitation. I will focus on the concrete ways in which these types of teaching and knowledge work to reform

women's sensibility and sociability according to Islamic principles. Then, I will illustrate how these teachings circulate outside the mosque and find their way into women's everyday conversations and personal relationships. Family ties, friendship and women's personal networks are important sites where various forms of pious engagements occur. In the second part, I will explore further the debate about the changing religious practices and discourses under way in al-Azaliya by looking into the sense of discontent that religious activism generates amongst diverse people. Such a sense may emerge from the frustrated promises of social justice and a better life that are fuelled by the reformist movement (Schielke 2009, 2012). Yet there are also people who think that the Islamic reformists – or “Islamists” as they would define them – convey a normative vision of Islam that elides the manifold ways of being Muslim and of expressing one's religiosity. Thus, I will focus on the viewpoints of those people who interpret the ethical reform of Moroccan society undertaken by Islamic activists as a dangerous political project. The critics and opponents of the Islamic revival include “ordinary Muslims” who regard the visions of Islam promoted within these movements as “too strict,” as well as left-wing feminists, women professionals and “secular”¹¹⁸ intellectuals. These women do not merely associate Islamic reformism and the return of the veil with backwardness and conservatism. Most importantly, they regard these movements as a danger for women's rights. They often resort to “an authentic past” and to the “customs and traditions” to claim the legitimacy of their critiques. My argument is that, beyond its dichotomist frame, the debate animating social and political life in al-Azaliya is unfolding the globalised and de-territorialised (Roy 2003) features of contemporary Islamic reformism.

5.2. The mosque lessons

On Sundays at 2.00 p.m., a heterogeneous group of roughly 25-30 women and girls would gather in the neighbourhood mosque to read and memorise the Qur'an. Many of those attending the mosque lessons had a low level of education or were *madrassa*-educated, but there were also a few high school students and some educated women. Whereas the majority used to wear the veil and the Moroccan garment (*jallaba*), a few others wore a headscarf that extends over the torso (*khymar*) and the face veil (*niqab*)

¹¹⁸ I use the notion of “secular” to refer to those people who consider religion a private matter, and include a large variety of positions, from atheist to not strictly practicing believers.

and covered their body from head to toe. During the meetings, women and girls studied and recited the Qur'an under the guide of a preacher/teacher (*da'iya*) by the name of Sumiya.

Sumiya, an unmarried woman in her late 20s, lives in the neighbourhood and works as a secretary. Even though she does not have a formal Islamic training, she has attended mosque lessons for several years. She promoted the creation of the reading group because, as she told me, many neighbourhood mosque in al-Azaliya has a reading group and hence she thought it was important that Rabi'a had one. Sumiya is also involved in a religious association in al-Azaliya connected with the Islamic-oriented *Parti de la Justice et du Développement* (PJD), to which illiterate attendees would refer generally as "the association" (*jama'iya*). Before analysing the style of preaching and the contents of the lessons delivered by Sumiya, I will briefly describe the theological and political positions of the PJD.

According to the anthropologist Malika Zeghal (2005: 146), the PJD, the only legalised Islamist party, represents "an unprecedented and atypical actor on the Moroccan political stage". The PJD emerged, among the various modern revivalist movements, from the alliance of individuals with heterogeneous religious and political paths with the purpose of participating in the political competition opened by Hassan II at the end of his reign (Zeghal 2008: Chapters 7 and 8). Specifically, the PJD resulted from the unification in 1996 of one strand of Islamist groups brought together by Abdelilah Ben Kirane under the *Mouvement unité et réforme* (Movement of Unity and Reform, abbreviated as MUR) and the *Mouvement populaire démocratique et constitutionnel* (Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement). In 1998 this heterogeneous group of conservative *'ulama*, new graduates in Islamic studies, former participants in the *shabiba al-islamiya* (the Islamic Youth) and the heads of Islamic charitable associations, became the PJD. The various components of the party¹¹⁹ made

¹¹⁹ In particular, Malika Zeghal (2008: chapter 8) has identified three levels in the PJD's political and theological discourses. The first level is the theological position articulated in the writings of Ahmed Raysuni, an intellectual and head of the MUR until 2003. Drawing on the Middle East reformism of the 19th and 20th centuries, Raysuni developed a humanist theology that situates religion *in the world* as well as setting the *umma* (community of believers) above the state. Consequently, the foundation of politics rests on the formation of a community of pious citizens who define the "common good" (*maslaha*) and their own leaders. The second level draws on the political programme expressed in the MUR's charter. Apparently, the MUR aims at the establishment of an "electoral caliphate," which respects popular sovereignty and pursues the reform of society according to the unchangeable basis of the Qur'an and the Sunna.

possible its dual identity and language: on the one hand, the monarchist and legalistic PJD and on the other, the MUR, which holds an ambiguous ideological position towards the monarchy and supports the formation of an Islamic state through preaching, the media, charity and religious associations (Zaghal 2008: 178-9). In order to accommodate its claims with the rules of a multiparty system, the PJD calls for the moralisation of public life, by turning religion into social and political “ethics”, instead of overtly proclaiming an Islamic state or defining itself as a religious party.

Sumiya’s teachings resonate with the PJD’s ideal of an ethical civic society within an Islamic frame of reference and stress the importance of personal ethics for the formation of a community of virtuous citizens. During the weekly lessons that I have referred to above, Sumiya would provide women with Islamic teachings for their everyday life. Always smiling, she spoke to the women in a gentle and friendly way. After calling the attendees to prayer, Sumiya invited them to recite the Qur’an in turn, corrected their pronunciation and encouraged them to improve. In the second part of the lesson, she read some verses from the Qur’an, explaining their meanings in the Moroccan dialect so the women could understand. Sumiya also integrated her explanation with the *hadith* of the Prophet Mohammad. The women listened to her carefully while the children ran around after each other and clambered onto their mothers’ laps. They were questioned and asked questions. Besides recounting the episodes concerning the exemplary life of the Prophet Mohammed, Sumiya also made extensive reference to the everyday lives of ordinary people, in order to demonstrate that Islam is a religion for everyone. By referring to her personal experience and that of her acquaintances, she stressed to what extent the quality of life improves when someone prays regularly and lives according to Islam. Sumiya’s style of preaching, with its emphasis on personal narratives and experiences, resembles that of the Egyptian televangelist ‘Amr Khaled (see Chapter 4). Like him, she proposed a “moderate” and humanist vision of Islam, while at the same time establishing important boundaries between what is forbidden (*haram*) and what is permitted (*halal*) according to Islam, as the following example will illustrate.

Touching on various aspects of Islam, such as the correct performance of the prayers and ablutions, Sumiya’s lessons called attention to the importance of stepping

The third level is expressed in the PJD’s intervention in parliament and represents the public, legalistic and monarchist version of the MUR.

beyond the mere observance of the pillars of Islam. As she said, “Praying or fasting for the sake of social approval is not enough, because it is the intention (*niya*) that really matters.”¹²⁰ The cultivation of personal ethics was indeed a critical aspect of Sumiya’s lessons. In order to clarify this point, she gave the example of the veil (*hijab*) and said that veiling is an essential aspect of female modesty (*hiya*) and a duty for Muslim women. Nonetheless, a person should not pray or veil because she feels obliged (*bzzez*) or is searching for social approval but rather because she wants to feel closer to God. Sumiya noted that nowadays the *hijab* has become like a fashion and many young women combine the veil with tight-fitting jeans. Far from being simply a piece of fabric that covers the head, she explained that the “real *hijab*” entails an inner and physical transformation. Indeed, it requires the complete covering of the body (including arms and feet) with loose garments that conceal the seductive female body, as well as a comportment oriented towards the value of female modesty (*heya*). In other words, Sumiya presented veiling and dressing modestly as a religious obligation, but insisted that these should be a personal choice. Notwithstanding her kind manner, however, she drew a clear distinction between the “true” *hijab* and “veil-fashion,” which contributes to the definition of a normative vision of Islam and of modest femininity.

5.2.1. Personal ethics and social connectivity

Several aspects of Sumiya’s teachings reveal to what extent piety is not only a cultivated quality of the “self,” but also a particular way of *relating* to the others. As such, it is moulded in and through personal and social exchanges. As she explained, some important qualities for Muslims include personal attitude/ethics (*akhlaq*), upbringing/education (*tarbiya*) and good behaviour towards others (*tsarrufat*). Amongst the episodes from the life of the Prophet that Sumiya quoted, she emphasised especially those that revealed his conduct towards other people and his endeavour to guide them along the right path to provide the women with an authoritative model of virtue. Indeed, bringing someone closer to God is considered a duty for a “good Muslim,” as well as a visible manifestation of piety, intended as a particular way of behaving *in relation* to others. While stressing the exceptional virtue and piety of the Prophet, Sumiya insisted that anyone can pursue a virtuous life through his/her comportment and invited the women to give the example rather than judging or

¹²⁰ Fieldnotes, 11 July 2010.

imposing their personal vision on other people. In order to persuade the mosque attendees of the importance of being an example for other people, she recounted the ways in which she and her religiously committed friends persuaded some school friends to cover their feet and pray regularly:

At school, we would never say “pray!” to our female friends. At prayer time, we said: “Sorry, we need to prepare for praying” and gave them an example. We would never impose on them by saying, “You should cover your feet,” but rather would suggest that covering one’s feet is very important. Little by little they joined us.¹²¹

According to Sumiya’s teachings, being a “good Muslim” entails social engagement and responsibility towards the others as part of expressing and cultivating spirituality. The cultivation of personal and social relationships is also germane to the moral and social reproduction of Moroccan society. In other words, giving an example, responding to the needs of others, and nurturing family and social ties open personal piety to social activism. Consequently, a person should pay attention to neighbourly ties, by behaving correctly, showing solidarity and generosity, and by avoiding gossip and behaviour that can compromise good neighbourly relationships. In particular, family and conjugal relationships are of paramount importance in Sumiya’s teachings precisely because they enable the formation of society and hence the establishment of the community of Muslims (*umma*). In what follows, I will delve further into Sumiya’s teachings on marriage and conjugality. Through the reform of affections and intimate relationships, her preaching works to re-establish a community of pious citizens in a world that she described as exposed to the corrosive influence of the West as well as by corruption and social injustice.

5.2.2. Marriage and conjugality

Amongst social and personal relationships, marriage and conjugality occupy a critical position in Sumiya’s lessons. Marriage prevents the young from engaging in premarital illicit relationships and debauchery, which are assumed to be so widespread in contemporary Moroccan society. She explained to the women that marriage and conjugal relationships are regulated by the Sunna, and thus, there is no need for

¹²¹ Fieldnotes, July 2010.

mediation between Allah and believers because only God can influence the lives of human beings. In line with the Salafist vision of Islam, Sumiya informed women and girls about the meaning and values of marriage, by explaining that following the “true Islam” entails the abandonment of traditional practices and superstition, like visits to the local saints (*wali*). She admonished girls and their mothers that visiting the saints so as to find a husband, become pregnant or win the love of one’s husband, is not only ineffective but also blasphemous.

Given the importance of marriage at both the individual and social levels, Sumiya pinpointed the Islamic practices that regulate the selection of a spouse and the subsequent marriage arrangements, which should involve not only the individual, but also the family and the community. Before asking for a girl’s hand in marriage, a young man and his family should observe how she gets along with others, as well as asking her neighbours to provide further information about the girl and her family. Likewise, the girl’s family should not be tempted by the offer of a substantial sum of money as a dowry (*sadaq*), but rather be careful, before accepting a marriage proposal, to ask for information about the morality of the candidate and his family. Moreover, Sumiya stressed the limitations of human agency and the importance of divine guidance in worldly matters. For example, she advised the mosque attendees to pray the *salat al-istikhara* which, as mentioned (see Chapter 4), Muslims pray in order to ask for God’s advice before taking any important decision. Following the Sunna helps avoid problems that can easily emerge when people focus on materialistic and worldly matters. In Sumiya’s view, many families nowadays focus on money in marriage decisions, instead of considering the more essential aspects of a candidate, such as his religiosity, ethics, behaviour and personality. The fragility of the marital bond rests precisely on the lack of application of Islamic principles and the growing focus on wealth, consumerism and appearance instead of on values and morality. This is apparent in marriage celebrations, which are also central to Sumiya’s discussion about morality and decency.

In general, wedding celebrations are not simply germane to the construction of the personhood, but also vital dimensions of women’s social life, especially in the working-class neighbourhoods in al-Azaliya. Between 2008 and 2010, I attended several weddings and engagement parties in both towns and countryside villages in Morocco,

observing an impressive variety of ceremonies and rituals.¹²² This variety is largely based on wealth and social class, as well as on personal tastes and religiosity. Some couples celebrate “modern” (*‘asry*) weddings with their relatives and friends while others have simple celebrations at home before leaving for their honeymoon. In fact, “traditional” (*taqalidy*) and “modern” (*‘asry*) features mingle in various ways. Some families celebrate their weddings in a rented lounge. These can be spectacular events lasting the entire night, during which the bride changes up to seven times into colourful dresses, including a western white wedding dress (*la robe*) and an Indian *sari*, inspired by Hollywood and Bollywood films respectively, as well as special Moroccan garments. At these wedding parties, the guests dance to the rhythm of a modern band (*l-group*) playing folk music (*sh‘aby*), listen to the traditional musicians and enjoy entertainment provided by the *shikhat*, the singers and dancers, with their sensuous performances (Schaefer-Davis 1983; Maher 1974). According to Sumiya, these types of ceremonies are characterised by the ostentation and consumerism. Furthermore, the presence of modern musicians who play licentious love songs, the men and women who dance together, and the provocative and immodest performance of the *shikhat*, render these weddings “un-Islamic.” In contrast to the vulgar ostentation of wealth and immorality, she explained that Islamic wedding parties should be simple and that people should gather together with the mere purpose of honouring the greatness of God. For Sumiya, simplicity does not entail austerity, but having fun in “Islamic ways”: for instance, folk music (*sh‘aby*) should be replaced by religious music, *anashid*, and women and men should gather separately to celebrate the wedding.

As far as conjugal relationships are concerned, Sumiya insisted that the marital couple should nourish love, amity, intimacy and mutual understanding by following Islamic principles. She endorsed a vision of gender roles based on the ideas of the complementarity between men and women, where they each have different roles and responsibilities as defined by Islamic law (*shari’a*) and Sunna. Criticising those women who try to manipulate their husband through magic so as to make their husbands love and desired them sexually, she suggested that women should rely on what she defined

¹²² For a comparative study of Moroccan marriage rituals and celebrations in the early 1900s, see Westermarck 1914. Drawing on ethnographic research in various villages of the Moroccan Middle Atlas Mountains, Vanessa Maher (1973) has provided an interesting analysis of the relationship between marriage, property and social stratification; see Comb-Schilling (1989), for a historical political analysis of various ritual performances in Morocco, including marriage.

as “*halal* magic,” in other words, the practices that encourage conjugal intimacy and cultivate a successful companionate marriage. Sumiya did not expect love to precede marriage, but rather she defined love as a divine gift that God sends down on the couple who live according to Islam. In her view, there is an “Islamic way” to deal with one’s husband and the *Sunna* provides important indications that Muslims can follow to lead a satisfactory conjugal life according to Islam. Accordingly, women are responsible for creating a climate of dialogue and mutual understanding within their marital homes; they should also take particular care of their conjugal and sexual relationships.

By alternating a “scriptural register” with a vocabulary close to the everyday experience of women and girls, Sumiya offered some specific examples. For instance, she advised: “Don’t be aggressive with your husbands when they come back home, talking about the problems with the children, money etc., because they have also worked all day and are tired. Be patient and discuss family problems at the right time.” Furthermore, Sumiya’s teachings touched on very intimate dimensions of women’s conjugal life. She advised them to take special care of themselves and their body so that their husbands would continue to desire them sexually and hence not wish to engage in extra-marital affairs. She added: “When you women go to wedding parties, you are well dressed and perfumed, but you do not take the same care of your appearance for the sake of your marriage! When your husband comes home, you present yourself in pyjamas after having done the housework!” These utterances made women laugh and smile because most of them could identify themselves with this picture. At the same time, Sumiya recognised that sexual intercourse can be a source of tensions and conflicts, as men are more willing to have sex than their wives are. In her view, sexuality should not be a taboo topic between a husband and his wife; when the wife does not feel like having sexual intercourse, she should mediate and explain to her husband that she is tired, instead of simply turning her back to him.

These ethnographic vignettes testify that Sumiya’s lessons aimed to promote a good understanding between the spouses even in the most intimate aspects such as sexuality. In contrast to the “traditional discourse” that emphasises female shyness and avoidance of topics related to intimacy and sexuality as an expression of female modesty (see Chapter 2), Sumiya presented sexual intimacy as an essential dimension of conjugal life according to Islam that should be discussed and nurtured with particular care along with amity and companionship. Her words illustrate that, kept in its proper

place – namely, within marriage – the love between men and women is highly esteemed in reformist discourses. As Lila Abu-Lughod (1998: 181-195) has noted, Islamist positions in fact interlace the call for a return to “cultural authenticity” (against Western values and life-styles) with “westernised” aspects of (bourgeois) domesticity: the ideals of conjugal love and nuclear family.

5.3. “Invisible” pedagogies

The lessons that Sumiya delivered to women and girls in the neighbourhood mosque are an important aspect of the “explicit pedagogy” of her teachings through which she promoted the reform of personal relationships and sociability according to Islamic principles. Besides her lessons, this “explicit pedagogy” revealed itself in the rhythm that Sumiya gave to the meetings and their rituality, in her use of the voice and other bodily expressions, as well as in the forms of sociability and entertainment that she promoted amongst women attendees, through which she drew boundaries between “Islamic” and “non-Islamic.” Even though in fact few women and girls in Rabi’a participated in the mosque lessons, these teachings circulate *outside* the mosque and are discussed amongst female relatives, friends and neighbours, who also exchanged information on TV religious broadcasts or religious books. In addition to this “explicit” pedagogy, Sumiya delivered her teachings and tried to bring neighbourhood women and girls closer to God through other more “invisible” pedagogies that would overcome the space of the mosque and make their way in women’s personal ties and sociability. In order to clarify this point, I will describe the way in which she turned a wedding celebration into an occasion in which she could promote Islamic values and ethics.

On 2 August 2010, I accompanied Sumiya to a wedding party in Rabi’a where she performed *anashid* music (religious music) with a few neighbourhood women. When we arrived at the wedding, we sat in a room where our hostesses served us a meal. I said to Sumiya: “Is there no class today?” She answered smiling: “We will do the lesson here!” I thought that she was joking, but when we went to the terrace crowded with women and girls sitting on the carpets, I realised that she really intended to deliver a lesson. After having taken her place at one side of the room with the other women, Sumiya captured the attention of the wedding guests. She started by clarifying that that wedding was different from those with the band playing folk music and *shikhat* dancers because they would celebrate the marriage according to the dictates of Islam.

Nevertheless, she anticipated that the participants would have fun, by dancing, singing and enjoying the party in the presence of God. She said: “We meet in the presence of Allah and have fun, because there is everything in Islam.”¹²³ With her group, Sumiya started playing the drums and singing *anashid* songs to celebrate the divine magnificence. At the same time, she invited the women to dance and have fun. After each song, a PJD activist who came with Sumiya told religious stories and commented on some *hadith* related to marriage and marital relationships. Starting from these religious stories, Sumiya and the PJD activist commented upon the importance of dialogue, love, respect and mutual understanding between the spouses, as well as upon their mutual obligations. Quoting Imam Sadiq,¹²⁴ the PJD activist told a story on the importance of the wife’s obedience towards her husband: before leaving on a journey, a man ordered his wife not to leave the house in his absence. Since the woman’s father was sick, she asked the Prophet for permission to visit him. The Prophet replied that she should obey her husband and stay at home. When her father’s condition worsened, the woman asked the Prophet again for permission to visit her father, but the answer was the same as before. When her father eventually died, the woman’s husband was still on a journey and hence she asked the Prophet for permission to attend her father’s funeral, but again this was refused. Once the father was buried, the Prophet informed the woman that, because of her obedience, Allah had forgiven her father’s sins and her own.

This story emphasises the subordination of women to their husband and the priority of the marital bond over the birth family. As I noted in Chapters 2 and 3, in their narratives about their marriage, old women articulate the tensions between the marital bonds and the allegiance toward their birth family. Likewise, I stressed the ways in which they try to maintain strong relationships with their relatives as well as building up female networks that work against male authority and the incorporation of the bride into her husband’s kin group. In contrast, the reformist views about the conjugal bond delivered by these activists work to obliterate alternative discourses on the tensions in marriage, by associate them with “the tradition.” Put in other words, by upholding the ideal of female obedience to the husband and the primacy of the conjugal bond, Sumiya and her friends convey “authentic” Islamic ideas that elide the anti-structural and

¹²³ Fieldnotes, 26 September 2010.

¹²⁴ Quoted from al-Wafi, part 12:115 (as quoted from al-Kafi).

alternative discourses on family ties and conjugality to which women have long resorted in order to contain and challenge male authority and power on them.

It is worth emphasising another dimension of Sumiya's teachings that emerged clearly during the wedding party. Far from inculcating fear, Sumiya proposed a view of Islam as a joyful path towards happiness and salvation that the believer can achieve through reform of the forms of sociability and entertainment. Indeed, she did not deny the importance of fun and enjoyment as significant experiences in life, but rather she tried to orient them towards a spiritual purpose by defining "Islamic ways of fun" (see Bayat 2002, 2007; Nieuwkerk 2008; Chapter 6 for further discussion). Accounting for these spaces of sociality *outside* the mosque lessons revealed the micro-pedagogies through which Sumiya involved the women in the neighbourhood and brought them closer to Islam by penetrating women's everyday spaces of sociality and relationality. At the same time, the mosque lessons and the study of Islam have opened up important spaces of sociality, where women have forged authoritative models of femininity as well as building up relationships of friendship. In what follows, I will further discuss these relational dimensions of becoming religiously committed, by reverting to Saliha's spiritual paths and her friendship with Hayat.

5.4. Saliha: becoming religiously committed

In addition to attending the mosque lessons with Saliha, I had the opportunity to spend some time with her because her family lives in the same alley as my host family. Saliha is the youngest of five siblings, of whom three live abroad: one in Spain and two in America. Before her eldest brother migrated to America, he was a teacher in a primary school and had never travelled outside Morocco, and hence for him, arriving in America was a risky adventure (*mughamara*).¹²⁵ It was in America, she explained, that he started attending the mosque and meeting Muslims from all over the world. In such a cosmopolitan and deterritorialised environment, her brother learnt about "the true Islam" (*Islam sahih*). Sarah thinks that many migrants who live abroad know Islam better than people in Morocco do. Nowadays, however, the situation has changed since people have started studying, by attending Qur'anic lessons, and even those who are

¹²⁵ Fieldnotes, 18 July 2010. I never met her brother because he does not come to Morocco every summer, and hence this account relies on Saliha's and her mother's words. Yet my interest lies in the way Saliha elaborates on her brother's experience and its relevance in relation to her own religious path.

illiterate can learn about Islam through satellite broadcasts. In contrast, she argued, in the past, many people were illiterate and ignorant of Islam and hence religious practices were contaminated and blended with local customs and traditions (*adat wa taqalid*).

In order to clarify her argument, Saliha told me that she started wearing the veil at the age of 13 because of the pressing demands of her family, particularly her father. Although she specified that her parents never forced her (*mashi bzzez*), she also said that initially did not want to veil (*ma kensh baghiya*). Her siblings in America also influenced her choice. In particular, her sister's husband, an African-American man converted to Islam, would repeat insistently that she should wear a veil. Initially, Saliha started veiling only during their conversations on Skype so as to feel at ease. Little by little, however, she became used to the veil and changed her dress-style. Explaining her change of mind, Saliha told me that, when she first donned the veil at the age of 13, she was unaware (*ma kntsh 'arfa*) of the "real" meaning of the *hijab*, which she regarded as a "traditional practice." In her view, indeed, the schoolteachers of Islamic education (*tarbiya islamiya*) do not explain the "real" meaning of the veil, nor do they address topics related to everyday life.¹²⁶ These schoolteachers are often conservative (*muhafidin*) and speak a language which is alien to young people's daily issues and concerns. In contrast, her schoolmate Hajat helped her to understand the importance of Islam in everyday life and became very important in her spiritual path. Before becoming friend with Hajat, Saliha went through a personal crisis, and her friend suggested that praying regularly and leading a pious life would help her to find peace in her heart. Hayat's example of piety and forbearance led her to study and practise Islam regularly. Saliha commented: "Sometimes you get along better with a friend than with your own sister or parents."¹²⁷ As her words emphasise, sharing an interest in religion and worldviews bonded them closely together.

Thanks to her friend, Saliha worked out that the practice of the *hijab* cannot be reduced to putting on the *zif* (Moroccan foulard) or the "modern *hijab* ('*asry*)," an expression through which she referred to young women who veil but also wear tight-fitting clothes. Saliha also reoriented bodily comportment towards the values of modesty and decency, for instance by avoiding shaking hands with men because, she explained, as science has proved, the palm of the hand is full of nerve endings and

¹²⁶ In this regard, Saliha used the term *waqi'*, which means reality.

¹²⁷ Fieldwork, 18 July 2010.

therefore it is a very sensitive part of the human body. In her view, the contact between a man and a woman can create *fitna* (chaos lit., temptation, enchantment) and hence she was very careful to maintain proper boundaries with neighbourhood boys and schoolmates. In fact, Saliha considered herself to be a sociable person, who loves laughing, joking, and talking with others. Yet she thought that emotional intimacy and physical proximity between boys and girls fuel misunderstandings and may lead a person away from the proper behaviour. She was also aware that her religiosity created problems with her classmates at school, because many of them did not understand her motivations and judged her view as being “too rigid”. In her view, most teenagers nowadays want to follow Western fashions and life-styles. These young people listen to rap music that is full of swear words, as well as to love songs. Saliha abhorred rock and folk music (*sha‘aby*) because she thought that music orients emotions and inner dispositions and hence she preferred listening to sacred music (*anashid*), possibly without instruments. Only with her friend could Saliha share a common worldview and exchange books on religion. The two friends watched religious broadcasts together on TV, and searched for information on various Islamic websites on the internet and on *Facebook*, where they found answers to their doubts by reading various religious scholars’ advice and their quotations from the Sunna. On Fridays, Saliha and Hayat would go together to pray at a mosque in the city, where the imam was renowned for his sermons. While Saliha could share many interests and worldviews with her friend, she did not feel free to address some issues with her “traditionally-minded” parents. She felt that they did not understand her vision, which they regarded as a way of challenging their authority. For Saliha, her father’s attitude was “traditional” because he was not inclined to open dialogue and discussion on religious topics.

As the story of friendship between Saliha and Najat demonstrates, the sharing of Islamic sociability and spiritual paths enables women and girls to create and strengthen their ties of friendship and closeness. Thanks to her friend, in fact, Saliha turned the pressures and the irksome demands of her family to adhere to a “traditional” ideal of modest femininity into a project of self-discipline and forbearance. In her re-discovery of the value of living her life according to Islam, she invested religious practice and spirituality with a different meaning from that of her “traditional” parents. Her siblings, who embraced a pious life in the context of migration, also influenced the ways in

which she reflected upon the meaning of Islam in daily life and articulated her discovery of an Islam “purified” from traditions and local customs.

Describing her spiritual path, Saliha resorted to the religious vocabulary that characterises the “Islamic revival.” This vocabulary enabled Saliha to elaborate her personal experience as a linear trajectory from “tradition” to “true Islam,” from past “ignorance” to present “awareness”; as well as from social / family constraints to the deliberate adherence to the purified Islamic morality as part of her self-becoming. Her “authentic” vision of Islam, though, was elaborated in a prism of globalised references and transnational networks, as well as within specific family and friendship relationships. Saliha’s story reveals the complex desires and motivations that animated her choice; at the same time, it questions the thin line which separates personal choices, intimate desires and social demands in the contexts where reformist narratives have become a powerful image of salvation and morality.

5.5. Voicing discontent: the dangers of Islamic activism

Like Saliha and her friend, many women and girls from different districts of al-Azaliya have engaged with the “Islamic revival” within their family and social network. Even though competing understandings of the role of religion in daily life continue to coexist in al-Azaliya, the standards of public morality have become more restrictive. What it means to be a Muslim and how to live according to Islamic principles have become a concern in everyday life. For many people, the return to Islam represents the solution to the corrupting effects of western modernity, as well as to the spread of individualism and the fragmentation of family and social relationships. Notwithstanding the wave of religious revival, however, not all the women and girls felt they were ready to change their dress-style and forms of sociability. There are also women and girls who intend altogether to change their lives according to the “piety turn” (Osella & Soares 2009: 11) and overtly expressed concern and criticism vis-à-vis what they described as the increased rooting of a rigid “Islamic moralism” (Abu-Lughod 1995). Not only did they overtly affirm their conviction that the visions proposed by modern reformists *are not* more “true” and “authentic,” but also they regarded them as particularly dangerous because they entail a normative vision of Islam and Muslim subjectivity.

Even though various levels of discontent about Islamic revival are expressed by different people, here I will focus on the words and experiences of some feminists,

leftists and intellectuals whom I met in al-Azaliya. Some of them had been politically active within the leftist student movements since the 1980s, as well as in women's groups and progressive political parties, whereas other women and young women were teachers, lecturers and other professionals. The majority shared high levels of education (baccalaureate, graduate and post-graduate) and had middle-class backgrounds. Social class, education and life-style situated these women in different social positions from the lower-educated women and girls who attended the mosque lessons in low-income neighbourhoods like Rabi'a. Yet these were not the only factors that shaped their worldviews and inclinations. Nowadays the *hijab*, as well as the neighbourhood mosque groups and religious associations, are widespread amongst girls and women across the classes, professions and levels of education (see also Mahmood 2005: Ch. 2). Specifically, therefore, I explore the viewpoints of three women: Hasaniya, a feminist activist in her late 40s, Samar, a university professor in her mid-40s, and Ibtisan, a lawyer aged 35. Apart from being university educated and professionals, these three women shared a leftist/progressive perspective and they married the men with whom they had a love relationship, but their personal trajectories were different and I am wary about generalisation. Their reflections, however, share a vocabulary and common ways of looking at the present in relation to the past.

5.5.1. "Like a virus that comes from outside"

Hasaniya became politically engaged in the left-wing *Union National des Etudiants Marocaines* (UNEM) in the early 1980, when she was at university. Today, she is an activist in the feminist association *Ligue Démocratique des Droits de la Femme* (LDDF). In our conversations, she often expressed profound concern about the pervasive proselytism by Islamist women in all the neighbourhoods in al-Azaliya and the spread of the *hijab*, which she regarded as a "return to the past." In order to understand the feminist anathema towards the *hijab*, Nadia Guessous (2011: 231-32) has suggested that one should consider the centrality of the veil in the debate on women and modernity that has traversed the Islamic world since the late 19th century. During a public discourse held in Tangiers in 1947, in which King Mohammed V aligned himself with the nationalist movement against the colonialists, the King's daughter, Lalla Aisha, gave a speech. Her public appearance – without a face veil and dressed in European

clothes – became an icon of progress and “emancipation from tradition” (see also Mernissi 1979). Within a leftist and progressive imaginary, therefore, women are uncovering of their head and body has historically been associated with “progress” and “modernity.” In Hasaniya’s reflections, however, the “resurgence” of the veil is not only described as a “return” to the past, but also as a *new* phenomenon, which does not belong to “Moroccan tradition.” Recollecting her girlhood, she told me: “Women who studied didn’t wear the veil, or if they did, they would tie it in this way [behind the neck] and so the face appeared. Today they wear modern clothes up to here [the waist] and don the foulard.”¹²⁸ In her view, these garments and headscarf styles come from “outside”. She said: “This is the veil of Saudi Arabia or perhaps of Iran, but not of Morocco!”¹²⁹

Far from being simply a new fashion, Hasaniya described the “sartorial reform” under way in al-Azaliya as part of a specific political project that aims at the Islamisation of Moroccan society. In addition to garments and veil style, this project manifests itself in the ways in which the forms of sociability, as well as family relations and cross-sex interactions, have been increasingly subjected to moral scrutiny and reform. For example, she said that Islamists (*osoliyin* or *ikhwani*) in al-Azaliya have promoted gender division in every aspect of life. Like other aspects of social life and entertainment, she explained, wedding celebrations has been oriented towards strictly religious purposes, and hence dancing, listening to music and other local traditions are now considered *haram*. She added that in the past, greetings like hand-shaking and laughing were considered normal (*‘adi*) amongst related men and women, neighbours, and people of different generations. In contrast, today they are presented as *fasad* (prostitution, debauchery) in Islamist discourses. She said in this regard:

Now they [“the Islamists”] have started saying that music is *haram*, that men should stay on one side and women on the other, that the woman must veil. It’s something which has penetrated Moroccan society, not something which has originated from inside, that’s not part of our society’s culture! It’s like a virus which has got in and created dangerous consequences.¹³⁰

Hasaniya’s words above describe the “Islamic revival” in Morocco as a “virus”

¹²⁸ Hasaniya, Interview, 17 June 2010.

¹²⁹ Hasaniya, Interview, 17 June 2010.

¹³⁰ Hasaniya, Interview, 17 June 2010.

which has come from “outside” and has “infected” every aspects of the society, by intruding into both personal and public lives. In her view, neighbourhood-rooted Islamist proselytism has worked since the mid-1980 to promote the re-Islamisation of society, which the state initially supported in order to undermine left-wings movements. Besides mosque movements and Islamic charity, Hasaniya maintained that satellite TV has contributed significantly to reshaping people’s imaginaries in the last decade. She argued that the spread of satellite dishes throughout Morocco and TV liberalisation have ended state censorship on television (*tathir dyal talfaza*) and any type of TV programme and channel have become available. At the same time, she deemed that the mushrooming of Islamist-oriented channels has insinuated a *wahhabi* ideology. With the term *wahhabi*, Hasaniya referred to the excessive religious conservatism and the political influence of Saudi Arabia. In particular, she deemed that fashionable television preachers exert outstanding influence on women, as her comments upon the spread of these types of religious broadcasts on satellite television testify:

I do not watch them, I do not like them, but women really like ‘Amr Khaled, you see? The thought he teaches is Islamist. Women see those handsome preachers like him, cool, and at the same time, he talks of Islam in such a moving way that everyone follows ‘Amr Khaled. The woman who stays at home and does not live in peace, maybe she does not love her husband, so she follows ‘Amr Khaled.¹³¹

Hasaniya referred to the Egyptian televangelist ‘Amr Khaled (see Chapter 4) to highlight the ways in which religious programmes broadcast on satellite television have succeeded to deliver a conservative vision of Islam through a new styles of revivalist preaching. As she noted, indeed, ‘Amr Khaled’s way of talking about Islam profoundly conquers women and girls. Despite his modern self-fashioning, however, she stressed that the vision that he proposes is “Islamist” and conservative. In addition to the influence of Saudi Arabian television channels, Hasaniya argued that migrants too have contributed to “importing” Islamist religious practices and discourses from outside. For instance, she explained that her paternal cousin embraced an Islamist view after migrating to Italy and that since then he has promoted his ideas amongst his relatives, moving women to wear the veil and dress modestly. By expressing concern about the pervasiveness of Islamic activism, Hasanya resorted to “the past” and to the “customs

¹³¹ Hasaniya, Interview, 17 June 2010.

and traditions” to claim the legitimacy of her critiques. Yet the language of “authenticity,” which informs the claims of Islamic reformism as well as the criticisms of its opponents, requires further scrutiny.

5.5.2. A struggle for “authenticity”

Like Hasaniya, Samar described the spread of the *hijab* and of political Islamism in Morocco as “a step backwards (*un retour en arrière*)” and “a regressive thought (*wahd l-fikr regressive*).” Samar is a sophisticated French university lecturer in her mid-40s who originated from South Morocco. Dressed in jeans and a short-sleeve blouse, she was the only woman who defined herself as “secular,” meaning that she was not a practising Muslim. Like Hasaniya, Samar related the proliferation of Saudi-owned satellite religious channels to the “return” to a rigid Islamic morality. She articulated this idea as follows:

This regression comes from something else; now I watch television, including the Middle Eastern channels, and the majority, not all but the majority, transmit the message that women should do this and that. I know lots of women viewers who influence each other [by transmitting Islamist ideas].¹³²

As her words testify, Samar emphasise the “extraneousness” of these ideas, which in her view do not belong to Morocco. Far from being on the result of the influence of satellite TV, she also underlined the role of the female network and religious activists in the spread of Islamism. In her view, in fact, female Islamist activists and religiously committed women promote the Islamist ideal of modest femininity among their female relatives, friends and neighbours, as well as amongst strangers. Commenting upon the pervasiveness of Islamist ideas and this type of proselytism, she said:

Now, you often find women who don the veil and say to you: ‘May God forgive you!’ as if you were on the wrong track, not a good person – an alcoholic, a drug addict or a smoker. They say ‘May God forgive you’ because you don’t don the veil, do you understand?¹³³

In other words, Samar criticised the ways in which activist women feel it is legitimate to judge the others’ life and behaviour to draw boundaries between what is

¹³² Ibtisan, Interview, 7 June 2010.

¹³³ Ibtisan, Interview, 16 June 2010.

halal (permitted) and what is *haram* (forbidden). At the same time, she suggested this reflect a broader change in the social and political climate in al-Azaliya. By expressing a profound concern and discontent over the moralistic climate in Morocco, Samar highlighted, like Hasaniya, the “extraneousness” of the *hijab* to Moroccan traditions. For her, the spread of the *hijab* is a visible trait of broader political dynamics under way in the Muslim world, as she said: “The *hijab* is not originally Moroccan. It is a political though, a political position because it comes from another region, from the Middle East, it’s not ours.”¹³⁴ In other words, Samar appropriated and reversed the reformist language of authenticity to legitimise her critique and to discuss the political project that lies beyond the contemporary call for forbearance and piety.

I have discussed these topics also with Ibtisan, a lawyer whose family originated from al-Azaliya and who grew up in the fortified city (*qasba*). Her father worked as a carpenter in his own shop and Ibtisan described him as conservative (*mohafid*) and traditional (*taqlidi*). Unlike her parents, however, she went to university, and from when she was a girl she wanted to be free (*horra*), go to cafés, and have a relationship with the boy she loved, but she has faced family and social control. While she was at university, she met her future husband, a student at the Faculty of Law, with whom she had a love relationship for 10 years before they married. She described herself and her husband as “modern” (*asriyin*).

Commenting upon the “sartorial reform” in al-Azaliya, she said that when she was a little girl, she was not allowed even to wear a *jallaba* because it was considered a garment for married women. As a girl, she was expected to wear a miniskirt or trousers, while today women and girls alike dress in the *jallaba*, *hijab* and *khymar* because of the influence of television, which in her view particularly affects women with a low level of education. On her maternal side of the family, she is the only one who is not veiled, unlike all her aunts and cousins (including young girls). “Once, they said to me: ‘Now that you are married, you should veil’. I said ‘No’. My husband wants me to veil, do you know why? [...] Because he says that if people see you with the veil they respect you!”¹³⁵

For Ibtisan, the *hijab* has become like a fashion for many girls and women. At the same time, it also embodies Islamist thought (*fkr islami ikhwani*) as she said: “From

¹³⁴ Ibtisan, Interview, 16 June 2010.

¹³⁵ Ibtisan, Interview, 13 July 2010.

being a social movement, little by little it has become a political movement (*haraka siyasiya, politique*).”¹³⁶ Ibtisan is very critical of the ways in which Islamist activists have been trying to discipline and reorient the very intimate dimensions of people’s lives, including their marital relationships, as her reflections below show:

I won’t tell any woman what to do, because every woman knows how to treat her own husband, there is not a single way. I apply Islam but according to my viewpoint, because in Islam, the woman is not the slave of the man. The woman is like the man, only she has her periods and gives birth...¹³⁷

In various ways, Hasaniya, Samar and Ibtisan complain about the pressures they feel are made on their bodies and their intimate lives, within their networks of relatives, friends and neighbours, since female modesty, sex-segregation and rigid moralism have become the normative ways of practising and discussing Islam in al-Azaliya. In order to legitimise their view, however, these women resort to the language of authenticity. They appropriate and reverse the reformist arguments about “cultural authenticity” to elaborate an opposite understanding of social change and express their concern for the current situation. Instead of denouncing the corrosive influence of the West writ large and calling for a return to cultural authenticity, they call into question the very notion of “authenticity” promoted by the reformist preachers on television as well as by the activists of the political party PJD. Hasaniya, Ibtisan and Samar in fact describe the *hijab* as alien to Morocco because it is not part of the “traditional” styles of veiling. As discussed in Chapter 1, the debate on the reform of the *Muddawana* (personal status law) was articulated precisely around the struggle to define “cultural authenticity” and to protect it from foreign influences. In this debate, as well as in everyday conversations on these topics in al-Azaliya, tracing the argumentation back to “western” or “indigenous” sources continues to be a delicate issue, as the narratives of these three women illustrated. While they criticise the spread of revivalist visions of Islam, they also feel the risk of being accused of emulating “western thought”.

¹³⁶ Ibtisan, Interview, 13 July 2010.

¹³⁷ Ibtisan, Interview, 13 July 2010.

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to cast light on the ongoing debate on the ethical and political dimensions of the Islamic revival in al-Azaliya by looking at religious activism from different perspectives. In the first part, I have provided an ethnographic account of the course in Qur'anic recitation that I attended in the mosque of Rabi'a in 2010. Specifically, I explored the teachings delivered by the religious teacher during her lessons, by drawing attention to the relational and political dimensions of piety. In this regard, I have argued that moving the analysis away from the exclusive focus on the ethical formation of the pious self enables one to have a grasp of the social and political implications of the mosque movement as well as the forms of sociability that it promotes. Indeed, piety is not only about self-cultivation, but also about religious activism, social connectivity and proselytism as the fact that the religious teacher is also involved in the PJD demonstrates. By analysing the “visible” and “invisible” pedagogies endorsed by the teacher of this course, I intended to show how sensibility and affections, intimate ties and sociability are the focus of a broader project of re-Islamisation of Moroccan society. The project of re-Islamisation is embodied and translated into specific practices and discourses that touch on intimate dimensions of women's and girls' lives, such as marriage, conjugality and sexuality.

The theoretical and ethnographic attention to the social dimensions of piety has enabled me to move my analysis beyond the mosque and to explore how the circulation of Islamic ideas and knowledge penetrate within female networks and personal relationships. As the narrative of Saliha illustrated, not only does Islamic activism provide women and girls with authoritative models of femininity, but it also contributes to the creation of friendship relationships and intimacy. In general, family ties, friendship and female personal networks are some important sites where women and girls promote reformist ideas and try to lead their friends and relatives along the “right path.” This is precisely what disturbed Hasaniya, Samar and Ibtisan, who looked at the political project underneath these forms of ethical activism.

In the second part of this chapter, I focused on the viewpoints of these three women. The reflections of Hasaniya, Samar and Ibtisan revolved around the veil and the form of sociability promoted by those people whom they defined as “the Islamists” (*osoliyin* or *ikhwani*). In their view, what is at stake in this “sartorial reform” is not simply the veil itself. On the contrary, they argued that reformist discourses on the veil

entail a normative and “authentic” definition of female body and subjectivity. Far from being simply a short-lived fashion, indeed, these three women regarded the shifting of dress-styles and bodily comportment of the inhabitants of al-Azaliya as the perilous outcomes of the penetration of *wahhabi* political thought from the Middle East.

Their positions do not simply reveal a tension between two irreconcilable “religious” and “secular” sensibilities (Mahmood 2009). Rather, Hasaniya, Samar and Ibtisan contested the political project that lies behind the contemporary call for forbearance and the normative vision of Islam promoted in the name of “cultural authenticity”. In other words, these three women described the spread of Islamist currents in Morocco as a movement “backwards” which undermines women’s freedom and self-determination precisely because the imposition of the veil, modesty and sex-segregation have become the normative way of promoting and living Islam. Nevertheless, Hasaniya, Samar and Ibtisan articulated their reflections and critiques in a dichotomist frame that opposes both “westernised” and “authentic”, “original” and “imported” visions of Islam. Indeed, they mobilised these dichotomist categories to position themselves in the broader discussions about social change, women’s rights and democracy. Under the continuous accusation of emulating “Western thought”, these three women ambiguously endorsed the language of “authenticity” and “tradition” to legitimise their views and reverse reformist arguments. Speaking of Islamic reformism in Morocco as a “perilous virus” which comes from “outside,” from the Middle East and the countries of immigration, and hence is not part of the Moroccan tradition, Hasaniya, Samar and Ibtisan complained about the pressures they felt on their bodies and intimate lives, within their networks of family and neighbours.

There are two other main points that I would like to make, as a conclusion. Firstly, these two groups of pious and progressive women are not homogeneous, nor are their views more or less “authentic”. As elsewhere in the world, these competing political perspectives should be regarded as the outcome of the historical encounters, intersections and circulations of heterogeneous ideas, thoughts, and philosophical currents. Indeed, being feminist, Islamist, communist, progressive, liberal, traditional, atheist or secular are all competing ways of being a (political) subject in contemporary Morocco. Yet the rhetorical attempts by Hasaniya, Samar and Ibtisan to mobilise the discourse on tradition and cultural authenticity in order to elaborate a critique of the

reformist political project reveal the hegemony of Islamic reformism in defining the frame of the discussion on these topics.

Secondly, the narratives of Hasaniya, Samar and Ibtisan demonstrate to what extent the language of authenticity has continued to be a normative frame of reference since the colonial debate on the definition of an “authentic modernity”. Indeed, tracing their argumentation back to Western or indigenous sources continues to be a delicate issue while speaking of women’s rights, gender equality and individual freedom. This was demonstrated during the long process that led to the reform of the *Mudawwana* in 2004. The debate on “authenticity” discloses the globalised and de-territorialised features of Islamic reformism (Roy 2003). As Lila Abu-Lughod (1998:143-169) has noted, the selective repudiation and inclusion of the “West” particularly emerge in the notion of family and conjugal intimacy, oriented towards the crafting of the educated housewife and bourgeois domesticity.

In the poor neighbourhoods where I worked, however, women’s engagement with the pietist movements sheds light on other less visible motivations and desires. These women and their family lead their lives under an increasingly neoliberal regime, which has widened the class divide. Far from the possibilities of middle-class consumerism, they feel excluded from their hopes of upward mobility through education and reliable social connections, but equally immersed in the same globalised world. More than the language of progressive politics, Islamic reformism and its call for moral reform provide a meaningful language that addresses the problems of their daily lives and resonates with their own experience.

CHAPTER 6

FUN, GLAMOUR AND TRANSGRESSION

6.1. Having fun in a time of forbearance

Over the last decade, the complex interlocking of globalisation and Islamic reformism in al-Azaliya has worked to promote the moral reform of entertainment, fun and sociability. Charismatic televangelist preachers like ‘Amr Kahled, as well as some neighbourhood mosque teachers such as the one whom I have discussed in Chapter 5, have motivated people to reorient the experiences of leisure, joy and fun towards spiritual purposes (Bayat 2002, 2007; Wise 2003, 2006; Nieuwkerk 2008). In different ways, these teachers persuade their interlocutors that fun and Islam are far from being incompatible, and that in fact there are several “Islamic ways to have fun”. Regarded as particularly responsive to the appeals of a globalised culture and media consumption (Bennani-Chraïbi 1995), young people have been the focus of public attention and concern in recent times (Cohen 2003). “Kids these days want to behave like the Westerners” some people in al-Azaliya would say, blaming the negative influence of western media and globalisation which, in their view, have pushed the young to engage in premarital love affairs and in despicable “anti-Islamic” lifestyles and activities, such as clubbing and drinking alcohol. Everyday discourses about the negative influence of global media on the young variously intersect with and echo the condemnation of TV series and movies in conservative religious programmes. As I argued in the previous chapters, these discourses have also contributed to rebuilding a sense of morality in the public and private life of many inhabitants of al-Azaliya.

A large body of literature has recently focused on the problems of how to lead a pious life in a world of global consumerism, transnational interconnections and neoliberal economies. Yet, as Filippo Osella and Benjamin Soares (2009) have pointed out, few studies have paid attention to the desires of ordinary young Muslims who do not necessarily aspire to be pious or who combine pious and less pious aspirations (see, in this regard, Schielke 2008). Thus, in this chapter I will focus on the problems of having fun in a society where religious demands of restraint and forbearance are at the forefront. Specifically, I will discuss these issues by describing the multiple meanings and imaginaries that Sanaa and her mixed-sex group of friends connect with the

experiences of “having fun”. Sanaa is a young woman in her mid-20s who lives in Hay al-Mounia. Sanaa and her friends are all educated young people and share a middle-class background. They consider themselves to be somewhat religious and, albeit not strictly practising, respectful of some of the fundamental pillars of Islam, such as fasting during Ramadan. From the perspective of young women like Sanaa, having fun at a time of forbearance has become increasingly awkward, because they feel they are subjected to moral scrutiny.

The sociologist Asef Bayat (2007) has argued that far from being a recent currency, in fact “anti-fun-damentalism” is not intrinsic to contemporary Islamic reformism. Nor is the fear of fun, amusement and joy simply based on concern for the potential diversion away from faith, as anti-fun ethics has common features within communist, secular, religious and bourgeois hegemonic discourses. Nevertheless, as a potentially subversive element of youth subculture, fun is dangerous due to the threats it poses to the authority and the political establishment. According to Bayat (2007:455), “fun also presupposes a powerful paradigm, a set of presumptions about self, society and life that might compete with and undermine the legitimising ideology of doctrinal power when these ideologies happen to be too narrow, rigid and exclusive to accommodate [the] ethics of fun.” As I have shown in the previous two chapters, some reformist Islamic currents have tried to domesticate fun, joy and amusement so as to direct them towards transcendental purposes. Moreover, when it is not directed towards a purpose, the search of fun for its own sake may also be subject to moral reproach and variously described as childish, immodest or pointless also by people who do not endorse a reformist vision of Islam.

By following Sanaa around the places where she liked spending her free time and meeting the people whose company she frequented, I will show that her desire to have fun is not simply a search for hedonistic pleasure. On the contrary, friendship, fun and consumption are all important dimensions in the formation of middle-class youth culture (see also Nisbet 2007 on India), where Sanaa and her friends negotiate identities and social norms. Within their peer-group, these young people give particular shape to the global flows that inundate their everyday lives, as well as elaborating shared meanings around the pervasive traces of “the world outside” (*l-brra/ kharij*) that are circulating in al-Azaliya. Tales, goods and narratives on *l-brra* circulate within peer-groups and are part of everyday conversations, thereby fuelling the dream of migration

as the possibility of being able to “see what lies *beyond* Morocco” and lead an eventful life. By sharing knowledge, fantasies and stories about migration, at the same time, these young people fabricate a new sense of being “here” (*hnaya*) in al-Azaliya.¹³⁸ The lure of the “world outside” and its materialisation in the dream of migration reveal the tensions in the lives of middle-class young who are experiencing the worsening of social and economic possibilities under market liberalisation (Cohen 2004). Sanaa’s everyday life also compels a reflection on the nature of the challenges that her longings for fun pose to the dominant politics of leisure in al-Azaliya. By claiming her “youthfulness,” she also articulates a critique of the society where she lives. Sanaa reflects upon the various forms of discipline that she feels imposed on her body and selfhood. Thus, her heterosocial practices disclose to what extent fun and transgression are also gendered experiences. The visions of the social relations and the freedom based on the idea of the individual and autonomous subject that Sanaa upholds challenge the dominant gender practices and ideals of modest femininity in al-Azaliya.

6.2. “Subversive fun” and the politics of leisure

Comparing and contrasting al-Azaliya with Casablanca and other Moroccan big cities, many young people complain that the city does not provide many opportunities for fun and diversion. The only cinema hall in the town was closed some years ago, but especially in the last few years, mainly Indian movies were screened. Before that, in contrast, middle-class families with children used to frequent the cinema to watch Disney cartoons and American movies, and groups of friends also enjoyed French cinema and Italian realism such as Pier Paolo Pasolini and Federico Fellini.¹³⁹ In al-Azaliya, there are no discotheques or clubs where one can dance, apart from the bars of the hotels where alcohol is served, but “good girls”, if they are allowed to go out at night, do not dare to go there for fear of being mistaken for prostitutes. The modes of spending leisure, as well as the people one meets and the places one frequents are variously defined by sex, class, social position and consumption practices. In turn they

¹³⁸ On the cosmology of migration in the Tadla Plain, see Elliot 2011.

¹³⁹ These notes are based on informal conversations and interviews with people of different ages, but I could not find other specific information on the cinema halls in the region. On the history of cinema and cinema halls in Morocco in general, see Dwyer (2002, 2004) and Gayle Carter (2009); for a specific focus on recent developments, see Orlando (2011).

are also central aspects of the way in which the people of al-Azaliya define and judge each other.

Even though boys and girls meet and spend time together in various contexts and situations, homosocial ideals regulate the “politics of leisure” in al-Azaliya. According to the dominant discourse on gendered sociability and leisure, from childhood, *drari* (unmarried young men and boys) are expected to spend their free time away from home. After school or work, they enjoy the almost unlimited freedom “hanging around” in the city with their all-male gangs of friends. Picking up girls, playing football, swimming in the river and going around by car or moped, surfing in the internet cafés or sitting for hours over a coffee are some of the social activities of young men in al-Azaliya.¹⁴⁰ These everyday activities are important sites of male performance and of construction of their gender identity. Spending time with friends and going to cafés after work are part of the institutionalised forms of homosociality that continue after marriage and at times compete with conjugal intimacy and family time. Yusef, a young man in his 20s, described going to cafés as a central aspect of homosociality in al-Azaliya. He told me that men and boys meet in their favourite café, spend their time together and exchange their views with their male friends:

Sometimes, we go to a café and sit. We talk about university studies, and find out what’s up. Did you argue with your school director? We talk a lot about marriage, have you met a girl? Do you like a girl? Do you want to get married? How to find a wife...maybe because we are approaching the age of marriage and we talk a lot about marriage and football, we watch football match and laugh at them.”¹⁴¹

Besides watching football matches and chatting with his friends, Yusef explained to me that the cafés are also the place where young men and boys can smoke cigarettes, as smoking in front of one’s father or older relatives is considered disrespectful. As with other types of goods, cigarettes are circulated, shared and bought for the others in the

¹⁴⁰ The picture of young men’s homosociality is incomplete because, as a woman, I could not take part in their activities. However, it draws on the interviews I conducted with some young men about male friendship and sociality, and the observation of young men in the families with whom I lived and of male gangs in the neighbourhoods. On leisure activities and friendship amongst Moroccan adolescents in Morocco, see Davis and Davis (1989, 1995). On young men’s activities in an Egyptian village, see Schielke (2008).

¹⁴¹ Yusef, Interview, 24 June 2010.

name of the egalitarian spirit that bonds friends together.¹⁴² While many young men generally keep their diversion and fun within “morally acceptable limits”, on some occasions (for instance, weddings, parties, celebrations of special events, or availability of extra money), they gather to drink alcohol and smoke hashish at home and in isolated places far from people’s gaze, since these are considered *haram* (forbidden).

Prolonged education and unstable employment have contributed to delaying marriage and, thus, the social passage towards manhood. Even though all male groups and sociability are vital sites for performing masculinity (*rijuliya*) both in relation to girls and in opposition to them, adult boys who are not yet men (*rajil*) and who continue to hang around are subjected to criticism because these are regarded as childish or flippant. In this case, the expression “they just hang around” (*ghir key-doro*) assumes a different meaning. This suggests a lack of social responsibility and maturity, since such a person wastes his time with his friends like a teenager, instead of investing his energies in constructive and family-oriented activities.

Compared to their male peers, young women and female adolescents spend more time at home, where they are often involved in domestic chores, but there are also some girls who are exempted from housework and hence enjoy their leisure in various ways. At home, they spend their free time watching their favourite programmes on television, reading novels and magazines, listening to music and chatting on the internet, as well as writing or indulging in beauty sessions. As I argued in Chapter 3, female sociability is an important dimension of girl’s daytime; inside and outside the neighbourhood friends exchange visits and stroll in small groups in the main avenues of the city to do shopping. Apart from family sociality or errands to run, as well as study and work-related activities, whether a young woman can enjoy freedom of movement or whether she leads a mundane life depends mostly on her parents’ ideas and inclinations. In general, however, she is not expected to enjoy the same freedom of movement as her brothers or to attend the same places. “Good girls” keep their distance from the cafés of the main streets of al-Azaliya, where men and young men gather to have a coffee or tea with their friends. In the city centre, however, there are also a few cafés and student snack bars, as well as ice-cream parlours, where girls sit for hours chatting, and exchanging stories and jokes in the company of their girl and boy friends. Since girls’

¹⁴² For inspiring parallels on the values of equality and sharing amongst middle-class males in India, see Osella & Osella (1998) and Nisbet (2007).

leisure time is more disciplined than that of their male peers, some parents worry about “what people might say” and hence do not allow their daughters to stand around without a purpose or go to cafés. Since “what people can say” is a serious preoccupation for girls, as well as for their family members, hence other micro-politics of sociability take place far away from people’s gaze. In particular, the internet has increasingly become an essential dimension of cross-sex sociability and friendship, and many young people spend considerable time and creative energy in creating friendship relationships through Facebook or other chat. On the internet, indeed, young women and men exchange ideas and confide to each other, and, at times, they create level of intimacy and closeness, which they are unlikely to create in their everyday lives. Apart from “virtual” cross-sex intimacy and friendship, however, girls may circumvent family or brotherly control through various tricks. For example, they can claim that they have to study at a friend’s home, have university lectures or study groups to attend, or errands to run. Cultural events, language schools, youth centres, the internet cafés and student cafés are some of the places where girls can meet their schoolmates, become friends and fall in love.

Even though fun without a purpose is not *a priori* discarded or condemned, the search of fun for its own sake is often interpreted as a sign of male immaturity and female immodesty. As I have noted, the public discourse on fun has a markedly gendered connotation. For girls, having fun outside the structured forms of sociability (which include family and social leisure, same-sex sociability and friendship), as well as outside religiously or culturally oriented forms of entertainment, may be regarded with suspicion and as morally reprehensible. Insofar as girls are supposed to have more “moderate” fun than their male peers, the overt longing for fun is often associated with debauchery and lack of proper family control which lead to the transgression of contextually defined “proper” social norms and gender roles. Furthermore, it is depicted as “empty”, “useless” and a “waste of time” in other words, as time spent without socially-valued meanings and intelligible purposes.

In what follows, I will discuss Sanaa’s longing for fun and amusement by focusing on her everyday consumption practices and heterosociability. Far from being empty and pointless, fun contributes to shaping the everyday experiences of Sanaa and her middle-class group of friends, moulding their individual and collective identity, as well as their viewpoints on society. Sanaa, indeed, invests fun and diversion with a set of meanings which reveal her globalised fantasies and cosmopolitanism aspirations. At

the same time, challenges some ways in which femininity and the female body is imagined and defined in her social milieu.

6.3. The West (*l-gharb*) and the East (*l-sharq*)

When I first met Sanaa standing dressed in tight jeans and a fancy T-shirt, I took for granted that she was a migrant coming back to al-Azaliya for holidays, even though her dress style was not uncommon amongst the young women and adolescents in hay el-Mounia, the middle-class neighbourhood where she lives. Built to provide housing for the *petits fonctionnaires* and school teachers referred to earlier (Adam 1968; Vermeren 2003; Cohen 2004), in the last few decades, it has witnessed continuing mobility and the social reconfiguration of its population. Some families who have moved up the social ladder have relocated to residential areas, while an increasing number of young people and families have migrated to Italy¹⁴³ and now return during the summer. Intentional migrations, in turn, have brought about the social mobility of village families and individuals, who have created small businesses and moved to the city. While the older inhabitants of hay el-Mounia complain that the relationships amongst neighbours have weakened and that people keep their front doors closed, many others enjoy the sense of privacy and distinguish themselves from both the working class neighbourhoods and the newcomers. Closing the front doors, however, does not imply an absence of gossip and rumours.

Along the main paved roads of hay el-Mounia, some residents park their cars, which multiply when the migrants come for their summer holidays. The flows of gifts,¹⁴⁴ photographs, clothes, goods, stories and images that accompany their arrival is part of the intense transnational connections between al-Azaliya and Italy (as well as Spain), and is a critical moment in the social construction and fantasy of the world outside (*l-brra*). The pervasive materialisations of *l-brra* in al-Azaliya, with their

¹⁴³ Many families complain that the neighbourhood is becoming *sha'aby* because of internal migration and the arrival of migrants' families from the countryside who have enhanced their economic situation through migration.

¹⁴⁴ These flows of goods, stories and images are particular intense during the summer, but are also part of the everyday life of the inhabitants of al-Azaliya. Not only do low-cost flight connections enable migrants to come back for religious and family celebrations, but they also bring products from Europe through the Moroccans who deliver them. On the important role of consumption and commodities from the perspective of migrant women who come back to Morocco, see Salih (2001, 2003).

seductive invitations to take part in the cosmopolitan world that commodities evoke, fuel young people's aspirations to migration. The "outside world" and its traces are sources of a cosmopolitan imagination which ambiguously embodies both "paradise" (*jenna*) and a threat to social morality and personal integrity (Bennani-Chraïbi 1994; Persichetti 2003). Migration is an important feature of the "youth culture" in al-Azaliya alongside the variety of images broadcast on satellite TV and the internet, and global products (for instance, clothes, European brands and electronic devices) which people access from second-hand shops and the weekly market.

According to Sanaa, for young people and adolescents in Morocco, both the East (*l-sharq*) and the West (*l-gharb*) are critical sources of identity and belonging and, at times, this may trigger contradictions and uncertainties in their lives and sense of self. She said: "Now, the problem we have in Moroccan society is that we are an Islamic state, we are Arabs, but despite that, we have the European culture in our brains."¹⁴⁵ With these words, Sanaa underlined the contradictions between the various souls of Morocco. Sanaa explained to me that, like herself, many young women and girls want to feel free (*horra*) to go out and stand around, as well as having love relationships and go travelling, yet not all families would allow their daughters to enjoy this level of freedom and mobility.

Therefore, this life remains hidden, hidden from family and social life. You always have to conceal your love relationships. The majority keep them secret because their mother cannot bear to think that their daughter would travel with a man who is not her husband.¹⁴⁶

In Sanaa's view, growing up with these contradictions has enabled her to "broaden her mind" and develop a critical viewpoint of her society. Compared with the majority of young women whom I met, in fact, Sanaa would express openly her unconventional ideas and not care much about what people thought of her. Initially, I was confused by her outspokenness, and hence I used to ask her general questions about what, according to conventions and public morality, is considered "appropriate" or "improper". Most of the time, Sanaa answered: "It depends... (*'ala hsab*)". In her view, certainly, living in a city or in the countryside makes a difference, but also within the

¹⁴⁵ Fieldnotes, 20 June 2010.

¹⁴⁶ Fieldnotes, 28 May 2010.

cities themselves there are many factors that influence one's personality and inclinations such as family, social class, education and religiosity. She said: "There are families who are educated (*qariyn*), but have a narrow-minded mentality (*'aqliya*) and illiterate people who are more open-minded." My questions often led Sanaa to long reflections on the many variables that lead someone to draw these boundaries. For example, when I asked her what young people in al-Azaliya want, she replied:

It depends. There are people who want to marry and have a family, there are girls who want to work and marry, and those who want to stay *célibataire*. There are couples who cohabit secretly before marrying. Some young people want to choose the person they love while others marry a relative.¹⁴⁷

With her comments and explanations, Sanaa was calling into question my attempts to find a fixed moral order within the complexity and multiplicity running through the daily lives of young people in al-Azaliya. In many ways, Sanaa's family epitomised the differences in orientations and sensibilities that coexist side by side in al-Azaliya. Her father is a liberal high school teacher and he is not very happy about his wife's recent turning towards piety. For the past few years, she has attended mosque lessons and also a neighbourhood religious association. Even though she always stressed that the inner intention is more important than strictly religious practices and physical appearance, at times she expressed disappointment over her daughter's dress-style. Sanaa has two older brothers, who are professional and economically independent men in their 30s with very different personalities and interests. One of them lives and works in Marrakesh, where he met and married the woman with whom he fell in love; the other, in contrast, has recently become very religiously committed and wanted his mother to find a "good Muslim wife" for him. While Sanaa has a relation of mutual understanding with the former, she feels uneasy with the latter, as he often comments on her behaviour and dress-style. Nevertheless, she regarded these differences within her family members as a sign of the liberty that her parents have given them and she does not intend to give it up.

Unlike the generation of her parents who were able to climb the social ladder thanks to the opportunities opened by education in post-colonial times, however, Sanaa often expressed scepticism towards the value of education in her society. Apart from

¹⁴⁷ Fieldnotes, 23 May 2010.

prestigious institutions in Morocco or abroad, Sanaa considered studying at the state university to be a waste of time, since many university graduates are unemployed or have temporary jobs in contexts where corruption (*rashwa*) is widespread and personal connections (*waseta*) matter more than formal education. Furthermore, the neoliberal economy adopted in Morocco under the Structural Adjustment Plan (1983-1993) has eroded the possibility of the generation of Sanaa and her friends of entering the public sector through education (Cohen 2004). Sceptical of state education and desiring to be economically independent, Sanaa decided to obtain a diploma as a computer technician in a private school, yet the jobs she could find were mainly temporary and unstable ones. When she was not working, Sanaa would fill her daytime by watching her favourite Turkish and Egyptian television serials on the satellite TV, as well as entertainment programmes and music channels like MTV. She liked going to the gym, doing Oriental dancing, practising martial arts and surfing on the internet. She has several hobbies, but in general she does not like staying at home and much prefers being with her friends or going to cafés. Consumption, leisure and sociability are important sites where Sanaa negotiates social norms and gender practices, and to which I turn next.

6.3.1. “One hour for myself”

According to Sanaa, dedicating one hour to herself and her personal appearance on a daily basis is imperative for her wellbeing, as well as being the right of every young woman. In the neighbourhood where she lives, there are a few hairdressers’ shops and beauty salons, where women and girls take care of their appearance, by styling their hair, eyebrows and nails, as well as having their makeup and a manicure done. Sanaa used to go once a month to Nabyl’s shop, which is renowned as the best hairdresser’s in her neighbourhood, to have her hair and eyebrows done because she considered it important to have a trim and “modern” look. Many veiled women and girls as well, who long to be fashionable, go to Nabyl’s shop and the beauty salons in the city.

Alongside the ubiquitous picture of the King, the walls of Nabyl’s salon are papered with images of western actresses and models, and fashion magazines and catalogues are available to customers who are looking for inspiration on how to make their appearance stylish. Many girls and young women regard European women as being particularly beautiful and fashionable, as well as looking at Lebanese singers, and

Arab dancers and actresses. Going to the beauty salon is not only a common practice for middle-class women and girls in al-Azaliya who want to take care of their appearance, but is also one of the ways through which they reinterpret the local ideas of body and beauty.

In her study of salons in Casablanca, Susan Ossman (1994, 2003) has pointed out that in beauty parlours and hairdressers are important space where girls and women who are attentive to international fashion trends remould and embody ideas of beauty and body. Unlike the *hammam* (steam bath), where the body as a whole is completely immersed in an aqueous milieu, purified, scrubbed and massaged, in the modern beauty salons the attention is fragmented into care of different parts of the body: face, hair, nails, eyebrows and legs. These different ways of treating the body entail competing ideas of femininity, which also convey images of social class and urbanity through which young women re-imagine themselves and shape their appearance.

As part of their practices of taking care of their appearance and relaxing too, most women and girls¹⁴⁸ in al-Azaliya attend *hammam* regularly with their female friends or relatives, and spend hours scrubbing and soaping their bodies with soap and other natural products, washing their hair with *henna* and removing their body hair. While attending the *hammam* once a week or biweekly is affordable for almost all women and girls, the treatments and products in beauty parlours require more money. The women and girls whom I met in low-income neighbourhoods like Rabi'a cannot afford to go to the beauty salons but prepare a large variety of natural products at home, like caramel hair removers, face creams and *henna* hair colour. While taking care of one's appearance has always been a form of female self-cultivation in Morocco, by embodying global images of beauty and by attending beauty parlours, women and girls also mark their status, wealth and class distinction. Through their consumption practices and beauty care, they bodily and sensually inhabit the globalised flows which have intruded into the everyday life of the inhabitants of al-Azaliya and through which they craft themselves as particular gendered subjects. For Sanaa, being attractive and *a la mode* is part of her self-image as a modern, educated middle-class girl. Yet, being trim and cool according to the global trends entails having time and money to buy

¹⁴⁸ There are also religious women who do not attend *hammam* because they think that it is a place for promiscuity.

fashionable clothes, frequenting the beauty salon and having the latest mobile phones, which are all markers of class distinction.

In al-Azaliya, hairdresser shops are not only spaces where multiple ideas of beauty work to promote a “modern body,” but are also female places of sociability, where women and girls meet to chat over a coffee, exchange information and gossip. Sanaa used to go regularly to Nabyl’s shop to have her eyebrows plucked, as well as to chat and exchange news when she had some spare time. Nabyl, a married man in his 40s, enjoyed discussing his ideas with some of his clients. One day, when I accompanied Sanaa to Nabyl’s to have her haircut done, his shop was empty and hence we somehow started a conversation about marriage and conjugal ties, comparing Morocco and Italy. Even though Nabyl is married, he expressed very critical ideas with respect to marriage, lamenting that in most cases it is not a free choice but rather a social obligation: “In Morocco, you *must* marry, have children, have a family, otherwise you are not considered a person, an individual (*fard*).”¹⁴⁹ With these words, Nabyl meant that the dominant idea of personhood in Morocco is not separated from family and social ties, but rather enmeshed in webs of obligations and constraints, which leave little room for self-expression and self-determination. Sanaa nodded in agreement. According to Nabyl, people living in cosmopolitan cities like Casablanca, Rabat and Marrakesh have more freedom to live as they wish because there is less social control than in small towns like al-Azaliya, where deviation from social and religious norms entails social sanctions and marginalisation. For example, he said, few unmarried couples live together in al-Azaliya because, apart the fact that the crime of fornication (*zina*) is liable to be punished by with imprisonment according to the law, people are narrow-minded and would judge it scandalous. The situation, he added, is even worse for gay couples, who cannot live together without being rejected, as homosexuality too is forbidden according to Islam and punished with imprisonment.

Nabyl’s comments are particularly interesting considering that, apart from an elitist circle of secular intellectuals and artists, my interlocutors generally claimed that marriage is not only a social and religious duty, but also what makes life worth living. In fact, more and more educated young women were expressing their disillusionment and scepticism about marriage and claimed that they wanted to stay single and enjoy

¹⁴⁹ Fieldnotes, 26 June 2010. Nabyl speaks fluent French, constantly interwoven with the Moroccan dialect.

their freedom. Some of them, who were highly educated and economically independent, affirmed that they did not intend to accept male control and authority and hence they found it difficult to find a man who lives up their expectations. In some cases, their disillusionment and scepticism about marriage were connected to their personal experiences and the suffering they went through because of the failure of their love relationship. For example, Hafida, a close friend of Sanaa, confided her fear in engaging in love relationship and marriage.

Hafida, an unmarried woman in her 30s, worked as a hairdresser in her rented shop in the adjacent neighbourhood. When she was 20, she started a love relationship with a young man that lasted for years. Although they loved each other, unfortunately they never married because his family opposed the marriage. In particular, she said, his mother was very jealous and did not intend to share her son's love with another woman. Since that experience, Hafida explained that she had never wanted to marry nor did she desire to become involved in a love affair, because any man would try to limit her freedom. She said: "I'm scared to start a new life from the beginning, do you understand? *La liberté*...Now I can talk and laugh, but when you have a love relation...I cannot, I'm scared. A man can tell me: 'Don't go there! Don't talk with your friends!' I cannot. This is the problem."¹⁵⁰ Even though Hafida disclosed that she was missing something in her affective and sexual life, she preferred staying single rather than endangering the independence that she had gained through her work, and which she considered of paramount importance.

During our meetings, Hafida and Sanaa would often discuss love and marriage, and both agreed that there is no gender equality in Morocco. In Hafida's view, Moroccan women do not have the same rights as men, although education has contributed significantly to enhance the situation of women and the recent reform of the *Muddawwana* (2004) protects the wife and children in the case of divorce. She commented in this regard: "Even though some men are against this, thank God women began to study and their situation has improved a lot. Women are not like in the past, we've become almost like Europe."¹⁵¹ Like Hafida, Sanaa stressed that education and work are now important dimensions in young women's lives and independence and agreed that the reform of the *Muddawwana* has limited male privilege by recognising

¹⁵⁰ Hafida, Interview, 6 June 2010.

¹⁵¹ Ibidem.

the value of women (*qima*) and their rights (*huquq*). Notwithstanding these important changes, however, they both underlined that there is still gender inequality in everyday life, and this becomes particularly intense in intimate relationships. Like her friend Hafida, Sanaa stated that she did not want a jealous and possessive partner who bosses her around: “I don’t want one who tells me not to go out, not to do things...some men love so intensely (*kay- bghiu bzzeeeeef*) and do not want their wife to go out. I don’t want that type.”¹⁵² Considering herself to be an educated and independent girl, who knows about life, in contrast, Sanaa affirmed that she does not intend to accept any compromises, nor does she care about appearing a “modest woman” in other people’s eyes. Aware that she has had a boyfriend for a few years, Sanaa’s parents would like her to get married so as to silence possible gossip about her. Even though for Sanaa being in love with someone is an essential condition for any her future marriage plan, she considered herself to be still too young to get married and preferred to enjoy her freedom and have fun with her friends.

6.3.2. Killing time and having fun

There were times when Sanaa was not working regularly and hence had more free time. Especially when she felt bored or melancholic, strolling in al-Azaliya and sitting in the café with her friends enabled her to “change her mood (*nbdll l-jua*).” More than staying at home, indeed, Sanaa liked spending time outside and having fun with her friends, which she considered was an important aspect of her life. As mentioned before, her friends live in middle class neighbourhoods and their families have experienced an upward mobility thanks to a modern education that has enabled them to become teachers and civil servants in the public sector. Apart from those who study at university or obtained diplomas for skilled jobs, some friends of Sanaa’s work in the public sector like their parents or manage a small family company. Thus, Sanaa shared with her friends similar socio-cultural backgrounds, life-styles and global imaginaries, which all contribute to moulding their forms of sociability and their everyday experiences. Consumption practices, embodied in markers of status like mobile phones, fashion brands and stylish clothes, as well as doing things together, are important aspects of their middle-class identity.

¹⁵² Fieldnotes, 19 May 2010.

Sanaa and her group of friends had various meeting places, but they used to meet on the first floor of a café in the modern sector of al-Azaliya; here, they could enjoy watching football matches and music video-clips on the maxi-screen as well as spending hours talking, laughing and joking over a coffee. From time to time, other friends rang them on their mobile phones to check where they were so as to joining them. In al-Azaliya, the first floors of the cafés are places where couples of lovers meet and can date away from other people's gaze. Sanaa's friend Habiba liked going to cafés also because she could smoke cigarettes, as smoking in public in al-Azaliya is largely associated with prostitution and lack of modesty. Sanaa recounted that when she was in high school, she ventured into an all-male café with her female friends because she wanted to try the thrilling experience of transgressing gender roles and penetrating this forbidden "male place." She particularly enjoyed the sense of transgression and commented, laughing: "Doing forbidden things is the greatest fun!"

During the winter, when every day seemed the same, spending all afternoon in a café was boring and, in Sanaa's view, escaping routine became difficult in a city where the range of leisure and entertainment activities is limited. At times, Sanaa and her group moved to the flat of her friend Khaled to watch a movie. In Moroccan dialect, people like Khaled are named *zufri*, a term which refers to young unmarried men who live alone and are often thought of as leading a wild life without the responsibility that marriage and a family entail. Since girls who enter a man's flat make people gossip, Sanaa and her female friends are careful to avoid the gossipers when they enter and leave Khaled's flat. Despite her wariness and circumspection, Sanaa enjoyed transgressing some social roles as part of fun and was quite aware that her behaviour makes people talk about her. Nevertheless, she claimed she did not want to feel conditioned by what people say because going to cafés or to the swimming pool with her mixed-sex group should be regarded as ordinary activities for young people. In her view, indeed, everything in Morocco is hidden because conducts that deviate from the social and gender norms are subject to public reproach and people fear of the others' judgement and gossip. This is a form of social hypocrisy (*al-nifaq al-'ijtimayya*), which made people feel entitled to tell her how to behave and dress.

Not only did Sanaa's search for fun and transgression clash with the modest view of femininity and social mores, but also it is at odds with the moral reform of sociability and entertainment under way in al-Azaliya. For example, Sanaa lamented that some

female neighbours and relatives who frequent the mosque insistently advised her to veil so as to become “pure internally (*nqiya f l-dkhl*).” Even though she did not describe herself as a strictly practising Muslim, she considered of herself as a believing Muslim and deemed that a person should not be evaluated on the basis of their appearance. She also noted that donning a veil and dressing modestly have become fashionable in al-Azaliya and thus many young women want to conform to what has become the “dominant model.” In contrast, in Sanaa’s view, the choice of veiling entails not only covering one’s head but also changing one’s bodily behaviour and forms of sociability. She said: “I do not want to wear a veil. If I had a veil on, I could not sit in the cafés, go swimming, or have male friends.” In other words, for Sanaa there is a contradiction between the “pious appearance” and the mundane practices of many girls. She deemed that not all veiled girls are animated by the desire to be modest and/or incorporate a religious self, but rather, she suggested that many of them use the veil to display a positive image of themselves. In her view, veiled girls who go to cafés with men, date and have sex are simply hypocrites (*munafiqat*, sing. *munafiq*) who hide themselves behind a veil in order to appear to be “good girls” and maybe find a husband. Discussing the rigid tone characterising public morality nowadays, Sanaa recalled that in her parents’ time, “hippyism” was the trend and that her mother donned the *zif* (Moroccan headscarf) only after her marriage. By speaking out against the social pressure and control she feels are exercised over her life and body, Sanaa articulated a critique of the society in which she lives and the social hypocrisy that in her eyes permeates it. While Sanaa claimed her right to have fun and live her life as she wanted, in contrast, other girls whom I met considered that displaying indifference to social norms expresses an individualist and immature attitude because it entails irresponsibility towards the family and misrecognition of connectivity as an essential part of the self. In other words, Sanaa’s search for fun and diversion entails a discourse on the subject, personal relationships and society that challenges the dominant views of femininity and connectivity.

6.3.3. Summer nights and daydreams of elsewhere

When the winter days are over, there are several activities through which young people have fun in al-Azaliya, like strolling and sitting in the gardens, having a picnic or

organizing a day trip to the town's natural surroundings. In the hot summer days, Sanaa and her friends used to go to the swimming pools of the big hotels located a few kilometres away from al-Azaliya. Unlike the cheapest public swimming pool – which Sanaa described as not clean enough and crowded with people, mainly boys – the swimming pools in the hotels are quiet and bordered with flower gardens. Many middle-class families with children, as well as young people and migrants back in Morocco for the summer holidays, enjoy this relaxed and playful atmosphere. Women sit comfortably under the shade of beach umbrellas, while young women in bikinis, or partially covered with tight-fitting shorts and a tank-top, sip refreshments or swim in the pool. Going every day to the swimming pool, though, is not only expensive, but also boring after a while, and hence Sanaa and her friends alternated this activity with a day-trip by car or by moped in the surrounding areas. During the summer evenings, Sanaa's parents allowed her to stay out with her female friends until 11 pm to stroll in the medina or in the neighbourhood. However, the girls preferred joining her groups of friends in the café they go to regularly or, when a car was available, driving up into the Middle Atlas Mountains. When they were climbing up the mountain by car in the silence of the night, listening to loud music made Sanaa feel filled with a sense of freedom and light-heartedness. Under the starry sky, she and her friends sat for hours chatting, singing and joking, as well as exchanging stories about the “outside” (*l-brra*), over a non-alcoholic beverage. Indeed, many of Sanaa's friends have been abroad or are currently living either in Italy or Spain, while others aspire to migrate to “see what lies *beyond* Morocco.”

Migration is not only a powerful dimension of youth culture in al-Azaliya, but also a site of imagination where young people negotiate their identity and trace the boundary between those who have directly experienced *l-brra* and those who have not. In summer, therefore, when Sanaa's migrant friends come back to Morocco for holiday, migration becomes a pervasive part of their conversations. Images, goods and tales from the world outside (*l-brra*) that circulate within peer-groups intrude into young peoples' imaginations, thereby fuelling the dream of migration and their aspirations of a “better life”, as well as their sentiments of frustration and exclusion (Cohen 2003, 2004). In turn, the imaginary and the flow of goods that envelop “the outside” contribute to shaping young people's ideas of what a better life looks like.

As Sanaa used to clarify, young people think of migration in very different ways and have very different motivations. For many young people in the Tadla Plain, migration has become an integral part of the performance of adult masculinity¹⁵³ in a context where other life-trajectories are not considered available or desirable and where economic uncertainties make it difficult to find a place in their society (see also Juntunen 2003, 2008). Some countryside youths want to migrate in order to invest their earnings in land, marriage and a household in Morocco – long-term investments which also epitomise the idealised trajectory from boyhood to mature manhood.¹⁵⁴ Besides durable investments, which in fact require a great deal of money, many returning migrants invest in ephemeral forms of consumption such as fashion brands, cars, material wealth, sex and fun, which they enjoy with their friends (McMurray 2001; see also Osella & Osella 1999, 2000). Many young people with lower classes backgrounds feel that Morocco is unliveable in for those who lack the means, money and social connections (see also Pandolfo 2007). “If you don’t have money nobody respects you” or “if you don’t have a car, people don’t even greet you in the streets,” I was often told by Sanaa’s friends. They also express frustration at the commoditisation of social relations in a society where everything can be bought, including reputation, sex, wives, diplomas, public competitive entrance examinations, job positions and visas. Thus, many unskilled workers and unemployed university-educated people (*bitalyin* or *diplômés chômeurs*) alike think of migration as the only possible way to “build their own future,” and at times, *l-brra* takes the shape of a paradise in these young people’s imagination, a land of social justice and rights (see also Capello 2009). Yet the crossing of the European borders has become increasingly difficult in the last decade and hence reliable connections abroad and economic resources to buy a work contract or a visa¹⁵⁵ are critical factors in determining the concrete possibilities and ways of migrating (Ceslovi 2007; Menin 2011).

¹⁵³ For an insightful analysis of migration and the performance of masculinity in Morocco see Juntunen (2003, 2008).

¹⁵⁴ As happens amongst the migrants in Kerala described by Osella & Osella (1999, 2000), maturity, wealth, masculinity, and reputation are negotiated in various arenas of social life, in which successful migrants have to carefully balance personal interests with moral obligations within the extended family and their social networks.

¹⁵⁵ In the local market of mobility, people can buy work contracts, tourist visas, fake papers or a boat passage, depending on the money they have or can collect.

For Sanaa and her friends, the dream of migrating to Italy or Spain not only evokes the achievement of wealth and adulthood, but it also revealed their aspiration of living an exciting and eventful life. Amongst Sanaa's friends, Khaled and Karim lived in Italy for several years and can speak Italian fluently. The stories that Khaled told about his experience abroad were mainly framed within the trope of adventure laden with risks and dangers (*mughamara*) – the encounter with the unknown and unexpected, in which they can demonstrate their value –, which is widespread in male narratives. He said that he had travelled a lot, while trading in Italy, although I could never establish why and how exactly he returned to Morocco. Likewise, Karim, who has now returned to al-Azaliya, told me that he lived in Italy for ten years working as a singer and married an Italian woman, but silenced many aspects of his decision to return to Morocco.¹⁵⁶ Like her friends, Sanaa articulated her longing for migration as a desire to “see the world” and to experience the excitement of having a different life. “Just as you came to Morocco to see how people live here, I also want to go to Europe and see how they live there,” she said.

Against the backdrop of a collective imaginary of abroad upholding migration, these young people's narratives illustrate their desire to experience as an exciting adventure and an eventful life. At the same time, their dreams of migration reveal the tensions between their longings for globalised consumerism and cosmopolitan imagination on the one hand and, on the other, the worsening of social and economic possibilities affecting the middle classes under market liberalisation and the disengagement of the state (Cohen 2003, 2004). Indeed, Sanaa often complained that job instability and unemployment prevented her from living up to her expectations and thought of migration as a solution. Indeed, in Sanaa's narrative, the desire for the search for personal fulfilment interwove with the need to escape from a present perceived in terms of immobility and precarity. She would like to have a good job and be economically independent, live in a modern furnished flat apart from her family and own a car, and to travel in and out of Morocco. Thus, migration becomes a site of projection of the search for a better future.

Other friends of Sanaa overly described the difficulties and troubles they had to face abroad. Once they arrived in Italy and Spain, they realised that making money

¹⁵⁶ I could not understand the story of Karim, why he came back, or what he had been doing in Italy.

easily and honestly was harder than they had expected. They suffered from discrimination and loneliness because worked out that being “Moroccans” and/or “migrants” in Italy often had a negative connotation and hence making friends with their Italian peers was not easy. Instead of reaching the land of opportunities, many middle class friends of Sanaa found unskilled jobs and experienced racism. They found themselves working for a low wage, which they used mostly to pay the rent, the bills and the cost of living and hence realised that the reality they found in Italy and Spain was far from the paradise of their dreams. They tried to demystify the image of the life abroad as a paradise so as to convince Sanaa and her friend Asmaa that they had better stay in Morocco. Notwithstanding their attempts, the two girls are intrigued by the idea of being independent and enjoying the freedom and life-style that they cannot pursue in a medium-sized city like al-Azaliya. Sanaa’s friend Asmaa had tried twice to arrange a *marriage blanc*¹⁵⁷ without achieving her dream and the last time I met her in 2010 she was looking for a labour contract or a visa to buy.

The experience of migration also fuelled competition within peer-groups, by creating a hierarchy between those who can talk about *l-brra* and those who can only listen to their friends’ telling. Returning migrants are quite aware of the power that they exert because they fabricate stories and play with their friends’ imaginaries.¹⁵⁸ For example, Nawel is another of Sanaa’s friends whom she has known since childhood because they lived in the same neighbourhood. A few years ago Nawel went to live in Italy thanks to a *marriage blanc* that her brothers, who had already migrated, arranged for her with an Italian man. In summer 2009, she came back driving what appeared to be her own car. Looking like a celebrity, with her fake *D&G* sunglasses and *Valentino* handbag, Nawel told her friends about the new fashions and exciting life she leads in Italy. Her stories animated the evenings of the holy months of Ramadan, when Sanaa and her friends would meet at various cafés after a day of restraint and fasting, broken by an abundant “breakfast” (*ftor*) at sunset. Nawel claimed that she worked as the manager of a brand shop in Verona and earned a lot of money. Nawel seemed aware of the fascination that her tales about Italy and her display of items exert on her friends Sanaa and Asmaa, who listened to her carefully. While her narratives contributed to

¹⁵⁷ *Marriage blanc* is an unconsummated marriage for visa purposes, arranged through payment.

¹⁵⁸ Of course this is one aspect of the multifaceted experience of migration, looked from a particular perspective. Being a returning migrant is far from easy and they complain about the pressure that they feel from relatives, neighbours and friends who have helped them to migrate.

shaping their imaginary of the “outside” and their dreams of migrating, they also remoulded the sense of locality. With pretentious manners, Nawal regarded al-Azaliya as a place where many people have a narrow-minded mentality. Looked at from the standpoint of the cosmopolitan imaginary which circulates among Sanaa and her friends, al-Azaliya appears as a small and boring city. The comparison between their everyday life and the cosmopolitan culture they aspire to become part of made them feel impatient and discontented.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to explore the search for fun and transgression of a group of middle class young people against the backdrop of the contemporary process of ethical reform of sociability and sensibility. Notwithstanding the calls for forbearance animating everyday life in al-Azaliya, Sanaa and her friends do not aspire to lead pious lives, nor do they intend to remould bodily conduct and sociability in accordance with the wave of “religious revival” and its promises of salvation. Far from being pointless, the search for fun and transgression is a critical space of sociability where Sanaa and her friends share their common experience of everyday life, as well as an important dimension in the construction of a globalized middle-class identity. Furthermore, as an experience of transgression, fun breaks taboos and speaks the unspeakable. Sanaa’s everyday practices and heterocality challenge the dominant politics of leisure in al-Azaliya and reveal the competing ideas of the subject, freedom and social relations. She described her search for fun as part of her being a modern and an independent young woman. She claimed her right to live according to her personal worldview instead of by respecting social norms and cultural mores that she described as “customs and traditions (*adat wa taqalid*).” In fact, her transgressive behaviour challenges the dominant vision of modest femininity precisely because it claims independence from social relations and family connectivity. In addition to her critique to the dominant the gender ideology and ideal of modest femininity, Sanaa’s reflections emphasised the highly normative visions of Islam that have been promoted in al-Azaliya in the last decade through the reform of sociability and sensibility. Sanaa criticised girls’ superficial adherence to it as a form of hypocrisy and a contradiction, but she was aware that her behaviour made people talk about her.

The multiple discourses and social practices that Sanaa and her friends articulate around their search for fun and transgression also reveal the tensions running through the lives of these middle-class young people. Besides enabling a critique of their society and of social hypocrisy, fun also provides the immediate joy and self-fulfilment which reformist Islam promises in exchange for restraint and patient forbearance (Bayat 2003: 457; 2010). As I have shown, fun contributes to the everyday and, at the same time, its instantaneous and transient features turn it into an escape from it. The tensions between the globalised imaginaries of these young people and their precarious working condition materialise itself in the desire for migration. This point is further expanded as follows. Sanaa's experience of fun moulds and is moulded by particular consumption practices and heterosociality, which are all critical aspects of her self-image as a modern, educated and independent middle-class young woman. In this sense, fun is a social practice through which Sanaa crafts herself and her experience by inhabiting and giving particular shapes to the multiple cultural references and globalised landscapes that enter her everyday world. The search for fun also enables her to imagine other "possible lives" (Weiss 2002) and hence migration becomes a site of projection of the search for a better or different future. Alongside the sense of intimate interconnectedness with the world "outside" (*l-brra*), however, the search for fun and diversion by Sanaa and her group also reveals the failure of the progressive narratives that characterised the experiences of the previous generations. As I have pointed out, Sanaa and her friends grew up in families where their parents at their age had stable salaries, mainly in the public sector with lifelong benefits, and enjoyed a conformable middle-class life-style. For their parents, access to the French modern educational system enabled their upward mobility. In contrast, the younger generations are experiencing a worsening of their social and economic possibilities in the situation of economic insecurity and market liberalisation (Mijer 2000; Cohen 2003, 2004; see also Herrera & Bayat 2010).

Shana Cohen (2004) has pointed out that integration in the global market and the state's retreat from social and economic intervention in Morocco have all created a climb in unemployment and low-paid employment among young educated people. These dynamics, which have also resulted in lack of paths of social mobility, have spread a sense of loss amongst the educated urban young and led them towards the search for consumer-oriented paths of self-fulfilment. These young people face temporary employment and economic insecurity in a society that they perceive as laden

with corruption and injustice. They also experience a sense of loss of the ideals of progress and education through which the post-colonial state supported the formation of a middle-class as part of its nationalist ideology of state-building (Adam 1968). At the same time, their longing for globalised consumption practices and the possibilities of a better life which migration seems to promise ambivalently conceal the forms of discipline and subjectivation inherent in the global neoliberal economy. While fun, glamour and diversion represent ephemeral and instantaneous ways in which these young people take part in the “global youth culture.” In fact, these young people are involved in its flow of goods, images and fashions without really finding a place in the society where they live. Indeed, the life-style and the consumption practices that these middle-class young people pursue contribute to make them a particular type of “desiring subject.” The contradictions between aspirations and material constraints, as well as between competing visions of the subject and the gendered imaginaries, which have taken shape against the backdrop of the encounter between a global youth culture and the calls for moralisation, become particularly intense in love relationships, as I will show in the following two chapters.

PART THREE

**ROMANTIC LOVE, POWERS AND
AMBIVALENCE**

CHAPTER 7
THE IMPASSE OF MODERNITY

7.1. “After the motorbike had gone...”

“Without satellite TV I’d feel lost!”, Ghislan used to say whilst we were watching various television broadcasts in the living room with her family or in her room on the top floor of a villa in a middle-class neighbourhood of al-Azaliya. Ghislan is a 33-year-old woman who graduated in economics in Rabat and works in a bank. Every evening, she chooses her clothes for the next day, matching her shoes with the brightly-coloured veils she keeps in her wardrobe. When she was a little girl, she dreamed of having a nice car, an office and a good job. Unlike her classmates who flirted with boys, as a teenager she was devoted to her study. Her family wanted the girls, like the boys, to be educated and build their future. Originating from a rural village in the Tadla Plain, Ghislan’s parents moved to al-Azaliya when her father became a *petit fonctionnaire* after having obtained the *baccalauréat*, rising to a managerial position over time.

Her mother Aisha attended primary school until she reached puberty. Although it was a widespread practice among peasant families, Aisha never forgave her parents for withdrawing her from schooling. Not only was the school far away from home and they were afraid that something might happen to her on the way, but also they did not regard education as essential in a girl’s upbringing. Aisha was married off at 15. She was not consulted nor did any contact occur between the bride and the groom before the wedding day. Aisha recounted to me that she was afraid of marriage, but also curious about her fiancé, whom she saw at a distance, riding his motorbike. More than marriage, it was the image of herself on the motorbike that occupied her fantasy. In Aisha’s recollection, the motorbike evoked the dream of freedom and adventure of a girl who had never stepped out her natal village. Yet, as she said, things turned to be different. “I just wanted the motorbike. I liked the motorbike, I wanted it! When I got married, he sold the motorbike to pay for the wedding. The motorbike had gone and what remained

for me was the tiredness, my mother-in-law, the washing to do, the mosque...there is no God but God.”¹⁵⁹

During the first years of marriage, Aisha’s life was hard. She moved to her in-laws’ home, where she worked in the fields and carried out all the housework, as a young bride was expected to do. After 40 years of conjugal life, however, the marital bond between Aisha and her husband is filled with affection, tenderness and respect. Her husband does not declare his love through his words because it would be *hashuma*,¹⁶⁰ she explained. In her eyes, it is his gestures that give voice to his sentiments.

Aisha has spent her life taking care of her five children – two sons and three daughters – and devoted her spare time to tailoring and embroidery. Since her children have grown up, she has attended the lessons in Qur’anic recitation at the neighbourhood mosque. While cooking and cleaning, she often listens to the cassette of *Surat al-Baqara* that she is trying to memorise for her final examination. Thinking over the experience of the village women of her generation, she said: “Every mother hopes her daughter is better than she is. She wants her daughter to be well dressed, educated, and independent from her husband, with her own money in her pocket! I want her to work [...] I don’t want her to carry on crying! Because we cried so much, and what scared us in our father we feared in our husband.”

Ghislan took after her mother with her sensitivity and patience, but she is also feisty and determined. For her, marriage is not a woman’s natural fate, but rather a project based on love, respect and trust. As I aim to demonstrate in this chapter, however, modernity does not always keep its promises and, at times, brings about something unpredicted. Dwelling on the gap between expectations and the materiality of life, I explore the ways in which the unexpected manifests itself in the intimate and affective life of Ghislan. My intention is to show how love can become a site where competing gendered subjectivities and notions of modernity come to a clash. To do so, I focus on the ways in which Ghislan contextually mobilises multiple discourses on love and social change to tell the story of her intimate life.

¹⁵⁹ This quotation and the ones that follow it are part of a long interview conducted in Moroccan Arabic, 9 June 2010.

¹⁶⁰ The term *hashuma* has diverse meanings in Moroccan *darija*, as noted in Chapter 2. In Aisha’s words, it embodies the inner state and conduct, expressing values of modesty, purity, and lack of interest in sexuality and love (Abu-Lughod 2007: 128-177).

Specifically, this chapter starts with a reflection on the notion of love by discussing anthropological literature on the emergence of new ideas of marriage and conjugality in the contexts of rapid economic, political and social transformations (for instance, Ahearn 2001; Hirsch & Wardlow 2006; Palilla et al. 2007; Cole & Thomas 2009). Despite the significant insights that recent anthropological literature has generated, I found that some implicit assumptions about modernity and love can prevent one from understanding the tensions arising from the intersections between competing ideologies of sentiments and forms of attachment. I will suggest that analysing the spread of new ideas of romantic love and conjugal intimacy in relation to a longer history of the circulation of images and practices of love enables further insights into the tensions that these encounters generate. By following Ghislan's narrative, I will draw attention to two competing master narratives of modernity and subjectivity within which the story that she tells about the different aspects of her life takes shape (Bruner 1987).

7.2. Globalised loves and fantasies of modernity

Love has been under-theorised in anthropology. Not only has anthropologists' interest in kinship and political systems left little room for the analysis of emotions and intimate ties, but also the sphere of feelings has long been regarded as too mysterious and intimate to be investigated (Luz & Abu Lughod 1990). Moreover, as the historian Luisa Passerini (1999) has noted, in the formation of a new idea of Europe in the late 19th century the narratives of modernity intersected with the notion of romantic love, and the sensitivity connected with it, which was thought of as a specific trait of European civilisation.

Based on a definition of passionate love as an intense emotional and sexual attraction towards a person beyond the family bonds, some social scientists and anthropologists have demonstrated that romantic love is a cultural universal rather than a prerogative of western societies (Jankowiak & Fischer 1992: 150; Jankowiak 1995, 2008: 13). From different theoretical approaches, other anthropologists have explored love as an analytical problem (for example, Ahearn 2001; Hirsch & Wardlow 2006; Palilla et al. 2007). Instead of wondering whether romantic love is omnipresent or culturally specific, they have investigated how people reflect, experience and discuss love in different parts of the world. They have maintained that the spread of new ideas

of romantic love and conjugal intimacy is linked not only to the processes of globalisation and transnationalism, but also to specific social and economic changes occurring in the contexts of market liberalisation. As they have noted, people often connects the idea of love and conjugal intimacy to narratives of progress as a particular way to cultivate a “modern selfhood”.

These studies have contributed to opening up the debate on the ways in which people of flesh and bone imagine their intimate lives and craft themselves under local articulations of market liberalisation and globalised patterns of consumption, transnational migration and media technology. Yet they implicitly assume that “modern love” and “modernity” have originated and spread from the “West,” instead of thinking of modernity itself as a global, albeit unequal, process, a battlefield of embodied meanings, social practices, affections and imaginations. Other scholars have pushed the debate beyond the analysis of love under contemporary forms of globalisation and neo-liberalism. By endorsing a historical perspective, for instance, Jennifer Cole and Lynn M. Thomas (2009) have shown that specific discourses and social practices connected with love, sexuality and conjugal relations are the result of broader dynamics. Other scholars have documented that the regulation of sexuality, based on a monogamous and heteronormative interpretation of modernity, has been an integral part of colonial practice aimed at disciplining subjects and creating modern citizens (for instance, Ferguson 1999: 166-206; Najmabadi 2005; Osella F. in press). In the Muslim world at large, debates about modernity have a long history dating back to the end of the 19th century. As various scholars have shown (Ahmed 1992; Abu-Lughod 1998), far from being neutral, “woman issue” became the centre of the reform of Islamic society during the historical encounter with European imperialism.¹⁶¹

Building on these theoretical insights, I investigate the recent spread of new semantics of romantic love and novel images of conjugal life through soap operas and satellite TV, the use of the internet and mobile phones, in relation to a longer history of the circulation of ideas and imaginaries of love. As Francesca Orsini (2006:1) has argued, “Idioms of love have a long history, and within every culture or cultural area

¹⁶¹As Leila Ahmed (1992) and Lila Abu-Lughod (1998) have pointed out, during the historical encounter with European imperialism in the late 19th century, the debate on modernity in the Middle East was linked to the ‘woman issue’, thereby taking on a new visibility in the public sphere. The historical encounter with European imperialism shaped a new discourse on women as well as the processes of definition of an ‘authentic modernity’, where Islam was often socially constructed as a space for cultural resistance to Western hegemony.

there will always be more than one available at any given time”. Like elsewhere in Morocco, in al-Azaliya transnational forces have contributed to reshaping local ideas, imaginaries and practices of love over the last few decades (Davis, S. & Davis, D. 1989; Davis, H. 1989; Davis, D. 1995; Naamane-Guessous 1991). New ideas of love do not collide with “tradition”, but, rather, they coexist alongside and against other romantic languages and practices, at times interweaving in complex ways (see also Marsden 2007). Furthermore, in a historical moment in which the reform of affections, sensibility and sociability are at stake, the idea that modernity “comes from outside” competes with the search for a purified Islamic modernity. The micro-practices by which young women creatively appropriate or discard different notions of love are part of the process through which “modernity” and “tradition” are re-thought, embodied and brought into being in everyday life. By focusing on the ways in which Ghislan combines and reworks repertoires and practices of lovemaking, I will discuss the encounters between heterogeneous romantic imaginaries. Whereas the next two sections of this first part mainly focus on the imagination and the semantics of love, the second part descends into the lived experience of love and sexuality. In this way, I aim to fill the gap that characterises a large part of anthropological literature on intimacy, in which the study of sexuality has been largely detached from the analysis of love and vice versa.

7.2.1. Romantic Encounters

On a lazy Saturday afternoon, I was waiting for Ghislan to finish her make-up to go for a stroll in the city. Switching on the television in her room, I saw that *Titanic* was being broadcast on the satellite channel *Fox Movies*. Amongst the most successful Hollywood films, *Titanic* (directed by James Cameron in 1997), tells the love story of Rose, a girl engaged to a rich aristocrat, and Jack Dawson, a poor but charming young man, against the backdrop of the journey from Europe to America and the tragic sinking of the Titanic. When I innocently asked Ghislan if she had already watched this film, she replied with overt concern at the naivety of my question that she had watched *Titanic* several times on television as well as with her friends on the big screens of the cafés. She came to sit by me on her sofa and confessed that she had never managed to hold back her tears when Rose wakes up after the collision of the Titanic with the iceberg and realises that her beloved Jack is clinging lifeless to the wooden panel that saved her,

surrounded by the icy waves of the Atlantic Ocean. I also asked what she thought of that story, and Ghislan replied: “All human beings have the same feelings and the same needs. Human nature is the same everywhere.”¹⁶² Moreover, she specified that in Arabic literature there are numerous stories of troubled love akin to the Shakespearian *Romeo and Juliet*, which tell of two lovers whose passionate and pure love remain unrealised. She mentioned, for example, *Antar and Abla* and *Jamil and Buthaynah*, and asked if I knew the Tamazight legend of *Isli and Tislit*, a famous example of lovers thwarted by their families, which nowadays has been commoditised in an annual bride market festival.¹⁶³ Like *Romeo and Juliet*, she explained, *Isli and Tislit* belonged to two different tribal groups, and because of the opposition of their parents, they left behind their villages in the High Atlas Mountains to reach Imilchil (Tadla-Azilal region), where in desperation they cried themselves to death. According to the legend, their tears formed two lakes.

By emphasising the longstanding poetry and literacy tradition on love in the Middle East and North Africa (see also Mernissi 2000, 2008), Ghislan recited by heart some verses from the popular love story of *Layla and Qays*, which she had learned in elementary school. Belonging to two neighbouring clans, Layla and Qays fell in love but her family opposed their union. Qays used to compose poems for Layla and eventually he became possessed by love like a madman (*majnun*). The story of Layla and Qays is part of the ‘*udhri*’ tradition, which epitomised the ideal of passionate, chaste and unrealised love (*al-hubb al-‘udhri*), and was variously elaborated in the repertoire of love poetry (Allen 2000:10). Sufi tradition has incorporated this tragic love story by sublimating Qays’s passionate love for his beloved one as a token of the mystical union with God, whereas Layla symbolises the transcendental experience of divine love (Davis & Davis 1995). In general, Sufis have devoted close attention to the various states of mind, as well as the agonies and delights connected with passionate love (*‘ishq*), conceived as a mystical and sensual pathway towards God (Webner 2003).

Drawing on Islamic textual tradition, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba (2005) has pointed out that love, marriage and sexuality are multifaceted concepts and vital aspects of the social organisation of Muslim societies. Even though the Islamic concept of sexuality

¹⁶² Fieldnotes, 6 October 2010.

¹⁶³ I do not explore in detail the vast “Arab” or “Amazigh” tradition on love because I ground my analysis on the texts, poetry, films, songs, and legends that my interlocutors spoke about to me. For further information, see Allen 2000, 2008.

recognises sexual pleasure *within* marriage, Bouhdiba has noted that two opposite visions of love – namely *al-hubb al-'udhri* and *al-hubb al-badawi* – have captured the collective imagination for centuries (Bouhdiba 2005: 126-9). Unlike the tormented and idealised chaste love of the *'udhri* tradition (*al-hubb al-'udhri*), *al-hubb al-badawi* embodies sensual love and carnal desire. Ancient Perso-Arabic poems,¹⁶⁴ oral poetic traditions (Abu-Lughod 1986; Fortier 2003, 2004), and folk songs have played a critical role in moulding imaginaries, repertoires and languages for love and sexuality (Reynolds 2008:307; Kruk 2006:301-306). Oral transmission in Morocco and Egypt through public performances of storytelling has been documented until recently (Reynolds 2008) and various notions of love have been cultivated.

In the last few decades, these stories of passionate and unrealised love have encountered other mediated stories conveyed by Hollywood, Egyptian and Indian films, Mexican and Turkish soap operas, and also CDs of popular (*sha'abi*) and *rai* music, besides other contemporary forms of celebration of love-passion (Davis & Davis 1995; Cheikh 2010). These multifaceted imaginaries provide various sets of codified feelings and bodily dispositions, words and images by which young women whom I met voice their sentiments and construct romantic expectations. Although distant in time and space, *Titanic* and *Qays / Majnun* unfold two imaginaries of love that coexist side by side in al-Azaliya and resonate in the hearts and minds of my interlocutors. Unlike the romantic stories narrated in Hollywood movies that always have a happy ending, the stories of both *Titanic* and *Majnun* tell the tragic and passionate love between two young people divided by class differences and the opposition of their families respectively. Rose and Jack Dawson challenge class division and consummate the passionate love they nourish for each other, whereas the love between Layla and Qays is not consummated, and remains eternal and pure. In very different ways, the love of the protagonists of these stories confronts the rules of their society. However, the former tragically ends with the death of Jack while the latter ends in madness or anguish, thereby becoming a social commentary on the dangers of love-passion. The emotions and words through which the young women whom I met voiced their romantic

¹⁶⁴The Perso-Arabic tradition, which deeply influenced the lyrics of the troubadours and courtly love, as well as Arabic literature, popular prose, epics and poetry, is laden with references to love: from divine love to profane love and sex manuals (Allen 2000, 2008) comprising heterosexual, homosexual and lesbian liaisons, and human love with *jinn*s (Crapanzano 1973, 1975, 1977; Davis & Davis 1995).

experiences and imaginaries interweave pleasure and loss, as well as inebriation and fear. The longing to encounter the other and its mysterious alterity discloses the thin line that separates love from madness.

7.2.2. Dangers, pleasure and madness

Like many educated young women, Ghislan regarded Moroccan Arabic as too harsh for talking about love and preferred instead to speak and write in French: *Je t'aime, je t'adore*, and *tu me manque* sound to her more romantic than the Moroccan terms.¹⁶⁵ In Moroccan Arabic, in fact, there are various terms to talk of love, passion and desire and some of them derive from the Classical Arabic tradition, which includes more than fifty-one terms for talking of “love” (Mernissi 2008). Not only do these words express complex geographies of emotion, but they also entail ideas of personhood and the passions that inhabit its bodily selfhood.

According to Ghislan, the emotions connected with being in love (French: *être amouré* / darija: *moghrama*) are located within the heart (*qabl*), and make the person physically and emotionally excited. The heart beats (*l-qalb tay-drab*) and one feels excited and cheerful. Unlike a general attraction (*i'jab*), love entails deep emotional commitment and involvement. When someone is in love, there is something special in the heart and one experiences a sense of loss of control over the emotions and thoughts. The head is completely absorbed by the beloved one and, as Ghislan told me, “your mind keeps working as if you are dreaming but in fact you are awake” (*bqa rask khddam bhal kat-hlmi o nti fayqa*)”.

The term *l-hobb* deriving from *al-hubb* (MSA) is the most widespread term in Moroccan Arabic used to refer generally to “love,” including love for God, parents, relatives, beloved and so forth. The Arabic term *es-sababa* expresses a form of deep and delicate love, but some educated young women also use the term *el-hoyam* to describe the authentic sentiments that come from the heart and make the brain stop thinking and the imagination (*l-khayal*) wanders. The sense of loss of control and rationality epitomises the dangers that the experience of “love-passion” triggers.

In the poetic-musical form called *malhun* – developed in southern Morocco since the 15th century and in the urban handicraft milieus – feelings of love are expressed

¹⁶⁵ Fieldnotes, 4 October 2010.

through words derived from the roots ‘-*sh-q*, *gh-r-m* and *h-w-a* (Cheikh et al. 2010), which in Moroccan Arabic convey a form of passionate and extreme love. Sometimes likened to courtly poetry, this genre also includes libertine and erotic registers. According to my interlocutors, ‘*ishq* and the related verb *kan-‘ishqk* (I love you) denote the ardent and passionate love which binds two lovers together. The term *ghram* evokes the idea of love as passionate and conflicting feelings, while *hawa* (which also mean “air”) and the verb *kan-hawak* (I love you) are used to stress that the lover’s mind is roaming and his head is in the clouds.

Besides the vocabulary of oral poetry and Classical Arabic literature, love phrases in contemporary *darija* dialect continue to express the overwhelming force of love (*l-bgho*). For example, *kan-bghik* (I love you, I love you) and *kan-mut ‘alik* (I would die for you) are common expressions which young women use to convey deep feelings of love and passionate attachment. Other terms explicitly connect the feelings of love and loss of self to madness, such as *kan-hammaq ‘alik* (I am mad about you), *kan-hbal* (I am mad) or *kat-tsaty* or *mjnuna* (neutral). The conflicts between reason (‘*aql*), sentiments (*ihsas*) and the heart (*l-qalb*), which the vocabulary of love captures, reveals the tensions between personal desires and social demands. It is around these tensions that various narratives on the dangers of love-passion revolve. The Moroccan vocabulary of love is also a reminder that the delights of love-passion may lead one to madness and the loss of self and rationality – states of mind that are cultivated and, at the same time, feared by my interlocutors.

For the Moroccan sociologist Fatema Mernissi (2000:106-7), it is not surprising if love has been variously associated with a state of confusion and madness (*junun*), and sentiments of loss and suffering which enslave and lead someone to compromise their honour. Drawing on religious texts and literary sources, Fatema Mernissi (2008:148-49) has pointed out that love is often described as a dangerous and destabilising force that subverts the religious and social *status quo*. Carnal passion (*shahwa*) and desire (*hawa*) distract attention from God, and thus should be controlled by reason (‘*aql*). Since the seductive power of women creates *fitna* (chaos lit., temptation, enchantment), the female sexuality and the “dis-order” that their bodies bring about are domesticated and disciplined within the Muslim social order (1975). Mernissi (1987:108-137, 1996) has argued that this particular understanding of love as a subversive force has resulted

historically in sharp tensions between conjugal intimacy and family love, and legitimised parental opposition to love marriages.

The anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod has criticised Fatema Mernissi (1975) for locating the negative interpretations of love and sexuality within religious tradition. In contrast to Mernissi, she has argued that love, love marriages and sexuality are regarded as dangerous amongst the Bedouin Awlad ‘Ali people in the Egyptian Western Desert precisely because they jeopardize the forms of authority based on gender and generational hierarchies on which the social order relies (2000 [1986]: 118-170). As Abu-Lughod has shown, oral poems (*ghinnawa*) enabled a discourse on intimate emotions that stands in sharp contrast to public ideologies of honour and modesty. Oral poems provided a set of images and words by which the Awlad ‘Ali articulated sentiments of loss and vulnerability, love and attachment. Focusing on their veiled sentiments has enabled Abu-Lughod to unfold unexplored dimensions of their social life. This, however, did not enable her to state what the “true” face of Bedouin culture was since the discourses on subjectivity, modesty and morality collided alongside one another, and the ideas of modesty were intricate and multi-constituted.

In al-Azaliya, love manifests itself also as a dangerous encounter with the alterity, where “here” and “elsewhere,” human agency and divine destiny interweave in complex manners, as the narrative of Ghislan will demonstrate. Following her self-narrative along the thin line between “dream” and “real life”, the sections that follow focus on the ways in which she mobilises multiple discourses on love and social change to make sense of the unpredictability of intimate relationships. As I will show, her personal aspirations clash with the local discourses that emphasise the dangers of love and passion. Her progressive interpretations of cross-sex relations collide with other gender practices and ideals of femininity. Personal will clashes with the broader worldly and transcendental forces that impinge upon people’s existences. At another level of analysis, Ghislan’s narratives reveal two competing master narratives of modernity and subjectivity. Against the backdrop of the corrosive effects of globalisation and “western modernity”, a purified idea of “Islamic modernity” provides a religious vocabulary by which she recomposes the contradictions and unfilled promises infusing her intimate life. Likewise, it fosters a nostalgia for the time when love was “pure”.

7.3. The unfilled promises of the “dream of love”

According to Ghislan, Moroccans have witnessed impressive transformations in the last 30 years. Whereas her father’s generation, she explained, was formed within French culture, which was seen as “the model of civilisation” par excellence, the “Arabisation” of the state school system undertaken during the 1980s contributed to a return by the Moroccans to their own culture. Moreover, various political and social events that occurred in Morocco and the Middle East have led to the rediscovery of national and religious identities. In her view, the arrival of satellite TV has played a critical role in these processes: “Satellite TV came to Morocco in the 1980s, but one needed state authorisation. Initially there was only one channel on TV, but then the 2M channel started broadcasting information previously censored.”¹⁶⁶ For Ghislan, it was especially the spread of satellite TV that has enabled Moroccans to know what was going on throughout the world as well as learning about Islam through religious broadcasts and the internet. At the same time, she thinks that satellite TV has disseminated consumerism, individualism and depraved models of behaviour amongst the youth.

As a teenager, Ghislan loved watching Indian and Egyptian films broadcast on national television, more than American comedies and films with Bruce Lee or James Bond. Even though the former types focused upon the tragic incidents of two lovers thwarted by their family, she said, they were respectful (*mhatarmiyn*). “There was a boy who loved a girl, and he would sing and dance. It was a romantic story, not like today. Have you seen what the singers look like? There’s Haifa, the Lebanese singer. Nowadays, TV and the satellite are full of such things!”¹⁶⁷ In Ghislan’s view, these changes have had a profound influence on young people, their desires and self-images, as well as the relations between the sexes, because television passes on not merely a story, but also cultures and ways of being. “Once”, she said, “TV serials pushed one to reflect, while today they are a means of not thinking at all, only make-up and appearance!”¹⁶⁸ In other words, she claims that many entertainment programmes, movies or music video-clips available on satellite TV promote consumerism and ephemeral messages amongst young people, instead of positive models and values with which adolescents can identify themselves. In particular, the pervasive presence of seductive

¹⁶⁶ Fieldnotes, 2 October 2010.

¹⁶⁷ Interview conducted in Moroccan Arabic on 30 June 2010. Since Ghislan often mixes the Moroccan dialect and French, I have left the original expressions in French.

¹⁶⁸ Fieldnotes, 3 October 2010.

and provocative singers and actresses on television has a negative effect on boys: “When a boy sees a naked girl, what does he look at? Her brain? He sees in her the model for singers. [...] Television always gives you models, whether negative or positive. Our generation had good models!”¹⁶⁹

Moreover, Ghislan emphasised the crisis that “the family” is undergoing because of contemporary life-styles that lead parents to be away from home all day and weaken family ties. Yet she understands that globalisation and modernity are multifaceted phenomena, which are extremely difficult to control, given the ways in which they intrude into daily life. Besides satellite TV, mobile phones and the internet have contributed to remoulding forms of cross-sex sociability and young people’s everyday practices. She said: “Nowadays you can talk at home on your mobile, with texting you can send a message about anything to anyone and you receive a message back, then the internet....now everything has got into our homes”¹⁷⁰. The pervasive presence of new communication technologies has changed young people’s patterns of interaction and weakened parental control over them. In contrast, when Ghislan was an adolescent, boys and girls had few opportunities to meet outside the school, and hence young men put love letters in the textbooks or delivered romantic messages to their beloved ones. “It was romantic indeed and that love was pure!”¹⁷¹ she commented. Lovebirds arranged secret meetings at the street corner or a few blocks away from their home for fear that parents or siblings might see them. They exchanged words of love, but they were shy (*kay-hashmo*).

In Ghislan’s eyes, the moral decay of contemporary Moroccan society is profoundly affecting people’s intimate lives, and remoulding the relationships amongst young people. “There are no more sentiments *de cœur vers le cœur* (from heart to heart); it has become *le corp vers le corp* (body to body). There isn’t the idea of marriage!”¹⁷² For her, since love has turned into a longing for the consumption of other people’s bodies there is no seriousness and respect in love relationships: boys and girls jump from one relationship to another just as they change their clothes. She used expressions like “bad / negative” (*khayb*) or “gone bad” (*basl*) to describe the present. In contrast, in the past, love bonds were based on feelings of pure love and the desire to

¹⁶⁹ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

¹⁷⁰ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

¹⁷¹ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

¹⁷² Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

build a life together: “If the boy loved the girl [...] he truly loved her, and the majority got married, the majority.”¹⁷³ Amongst her female friends, many married their boyfriends (*sahb*), while she finds that the situation has changed now. She said: “At that time, although the girl talked to her boyfriend and they went out together, they loved each other sincerely [...] Today, you find the girl who has so many affairs and a hundred phone numbers in her mobile.”¹⁷⁴ In other words, mobile phones have made it easier for boys and girls to keep in touch and develop intimate ties away from parental control, but at the same time love relationships have become more fragile and vulnerable, and hence in many cases they are laden with suspicion and mutual mistrust. Ghislan’s words capture a sense of anxiety about the corrosive effects of modernity and globalisation, which have spread consumerism, individualism and immoral behaviour among young people.

However, the sense of nostalgia for a lost and idealised past,¹⁷⁵ that permeates Ghislan’s reflections, requires further analysis. Even though she defines her religiosity as moderate, in many ways her focus on the moral decay connected with the outburst of satellite television, the internet and mobile phones, resonates with reformist discourses and their call for moral reform of Moroccan society. As I have shown in the previous chapters, these discourses indicate that the remedies for moral decadence are the return to Islam, the cultivation of inner virtues and the rejection of “Western values”.

7.3.1. Destiny and predestination

At first glance, the sense of loss and nostalgia for the past – when love relationships were based on “pure love”, around which Ghislan’s narrative revolves – seems to reframe the past and present, personal and collective in a “coherent narrative”. Even though she often endorsed reformist arguments, her narrative cannot be contained in a single frame. In fact, Ghislan contextually moved between different registers and vocabularies to make sense of the shifting features and ambiguities of intimate liaisons,

¹⁷³ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

¹⁷⁴ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

¹⁷⁵ Some studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s document that premarital and extramarital love relations existed long before globalisation. Accordingly, “traditional methods” transmitted by generations of women to their daughters were used to restore virginity artificially on the eve of the wedding; in a similar fashion, scandals were accommodated and forgotten (Mernissi 1982; Davis 1983; Naamane-Guessous 1991:191).

as well as to bring together personal ambitions, social responsibilities and her own spirituality.

One evening, I went to visit her after work and she explained how complicated love has become, in Morocco and in all Arab countries alike, because it seldom turns into marriage – a idea that is widespread among other young women and men whom I met. “According to Islam”, she said, “marriage is a project (*zwej howa masro'*) which both of you should desire. You should know the person you are marrying, see him, talk to him, discuss things (*khasik tshofi, khasik thadri ma'ah, khasik tnaqsh*), but you shouldn't let too much time go by, as love diminishes (*l-hobb kay nqs*).”¹⁷⁶ Noticing that I looked puzzled, Ghislan took a piece of paper and drew a flame on it: “Love is like a fire (*bhal l-'afiya*). At the beginning, it burns brightly (*sha'ala*), then, it dies out”. Ghislan's theory that love diminishes over time is in contrast to the idea that love is like a form of madness and a consuming desire, as celebrated in the *'udhri* tradition and love poetry, according to which the enduring flame of eternal love (*l'amour eternel*) is thought to burn forever. “At first” she went on “you're lost in the thought of him. You think about what he told you, what he did. When he calls you, your heart thuds and when he doesn't, you suffer so much. Then the flame dies out and you become like relatives.”¹⁷⁷ Given the fleetingness and transience of love, Ghislan suggested that important decisions like marrying should be taken when the flame of love-passion is still burning intensely. In her view, however, the outcome of a relationship, is not simply a matter of love or individual will, but rather of predestination and the destiny (*qadā' wa qadār*) that Allah writes for each person when their soul is first infused into their body.

Intrigued by the way she talked of love by shifting from a worldly horizon of passion and transience to a mystical one, I asked Ghislan to clarify the connections between love and destiny. In response, she went back to her piece of paper and said: “Maybe you love Jack and then meet Michael. You thought of marrying Jack, but eventually you get married to Michael.” I pressed her to explain further in which ways destiny may affect such intimate choices and she replied: “Destiny means whether or not something is written for us. Allah knows everything, the day you will come to life, what will happen to you, when you'll get married and to whom.” Drawing upon her

¹⁷⁶ Fieldnotes, 14 June 2010.

¹⁷⁷ Fieldnotes, 14 June 2010.

Islamic knowledge, she explained that before coming into the world, each person (*insan*) knows his or her own future, but then forgets it at the precise moment of birth. Some people may have premonitions of the future through their dreams, when the soul (*ruh*) departs from the body and moves between past, present and future (See also Pandolfo 1997: 165-204; Mittermaier 2010).

In an attempt to grasp Ghislan's viewpoint regarding the relationship between predestination and free will in matters of love, I asked: "What is the position of free will? Put in these terms, everything is fated to be." "No," she replied firmly. "The two angels (*mala'ika*) who alight on your shoulders write everything you do: the good and bad actions. There is room for responsibility and choice, but there are things that we cannot decide." Some months later, I grasped the broader sense of her words when I stayed overnight at her home, and Ghislan recounted to me a very sad story. When she was 24, she received some text messages on her mobile, sent by mistake from someone she did not know. Persuaded that the message was important, she let the stranger know that she was not the person he was looking for. By chance (*sodfa*), as she said, they started talking by mobile phone, and then decided to arrange a meeting because they were both living in al-Azaliya. After that, they started dating in cafés where none of her brothers or relatives could see them. "Then, it became love (*mn b'ad wlla l-bgho*)" Ghislan said to describe how this accidental meeting developed into a pure sentiment. After three years together, they agreed he should go to her father and ask for her hand in marriage. Ghislan informed her parents that a man would come to ask for her hand and they prepared to greet their guest. To their astonishment and deep disappointment no one came knocking at the door. Only a few days later, Ghislan's sweetheart told her that he would have to undergo an operation and wanted to assure her that he would survive. Ghislan did not trust him and jumped to the conclusion that he had changed his mind without having the courage to face her and thus, deeply hurt by his behaviour, she decided to break off the relationship and avoid any contact with him. Afterwards, when she learnt that her beloved had passed away, she went through a period of profound distress and suffering. "I was so shocked that after that I did not date anyone else, in case that story might repeat itself again. It's hard to let someone enter your heart."¹⁷⁸ She describes this incident in her life as a catastrophe (*nakba*). Despite her despair, Ghislan eventually recovered herself and fell in love with another young man. It was

¹⁷⁸ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

only after the failure of this second love story – which I will discuss below – that Ghislan “started to believe in God” and now uses a religious vocabulary to recompose the tensions and contradictions infusing her intimate life. By recasting her love stories in terms of destiny and predestination (*qada’ waqadar*), her narrative illuminates the theological imagination that informs her understanding of subjectivity, future and human agency as submitted to the divine law. Her reflections on the limits of personal will and aspirations are a reminder that subjects not only act, but are also *acted upon* by divine and non-human forces (Pandolfo 1997; Mittermaier 2011, 2012: 259).

7.3.2. The love of the Arab man

Two years after the death of her beloved one, Ghislan’s maternal aunt visited her family with her son Ahmed, to whom Ghislan had been emotionally bound since childhood. After studying in Casablanca, Ahmed had migrated abroad and hence they had not seen each other for ten years. The words with which Ghislan began her story, however, presaged the tragedy and suffering that the illusory happiness of love eventually brought into her life. “You can’t change what is written (*ma ‘andik ma-t-bddli had shi li maktab*)...even if I love you and you love me, when Allah wants something for you...there is nothing you can do. Since then, I have believed in God (*mn tmma amint b-llah*). It’s not yours, there is nothing you can do.”¹⁷⁹. When Ghislan met Ahmed, an intense feeling blossomed: “I don’t know if it was love or what...neither of us said a word, I felt something and he too – as you look into each other’s eyes the fire is burning (*kayshofo l- ‘ynin w l-‘fiya sha‘la*)”. When Ahmed went abroad, they kept in touch by the internet and mobile phone until his mother became very ill, and his father was working far away. As Ahmed has no sisters or female relatives, he asked Ghislan to help care for his mother. “We were one family, one house (*knna ‘ai’la wahda, dar wahda*)”, she said, to explain that the ties between the two families legitimised her cousin’s call for help. Recalling that time, Ghislan smiled and her eyes became dreamy.

I spent such a wonderful week! Outings, sweet words, beautiful conversations...I loved him, I was crazy about him, [and he said] “I love you, I’m crazy about you”. If he just saw someone turning to me, he shouted at him...at that time we were still beautiful, without the veil. You go out and he doesn’t want you to, you feel that the man is jealous of you (*ka-thassi l-rajol li kay-ghir ‘lik*)...If you want to go out,

¹⁷⁹ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

he says ‘no, I’ll come with you’... the love of the Arab man [...] I spent a week as if I had set foot in paradise (*bhal ila hatti rjel f-janna*).

Ghislan’s words reveal her ambivalence between the desire for respect and equality between men and women, and on the other hand the fascination that this form of virile masculinity, expressing its love through jealousy and control, exerted on her. Indeed, she regarded Ahmed’s sentiment of jealousy (*l-ghira*) as an authentic male expression of love and attachment.¹⁸⁰ By underlying the different ways in which the Arabs and “westerners” experience love and love relationships, Ghislan tried to teach me about her “love of the Arab man” –as “you’re not Moroccan, you don’t know what the Arab man is like”. She said that a woman feels relaxed (*kat-hass mrtaha*) because he keeps his word (*‘ando kalma*) and he is resolute (*‘ando la decision*). She said: “We girls want a man with these characteristics, we love this type. Even if you say you don’t...but you like the man who is determined!”¹⁸¹ Even though Ghislan feels allured by a man who takes the reins, mingling gallantry¹⁸² with power and protection, she thinks that women exert another type of power based on intelligence, their ability to seduce and charm men with their words. Seduced by the female body, men lose their control, whereas “a woman is more intelligent and knows how to talk and deal with him. The man is influenced by female words.”¹⁸³

Reverting to her story, Ghislan explained that after her flawless week with Ahmed, his mother was hospitalised and died. Ghislan returned to her family and kept in touch with her beloved cousin for a year, by exchanging messages and calls until her uncle, Ahmed’s father, died too. Ghislan and her family went to visit Ahmed’s home and once she arrived, she discovered that her cousin had married another woman. She wanted to cry and scream, but her parents did not know about their relationship, and hence she kept silent until she became ill with a fever. Later on, Ghislan came to know that Ahmed’s wife was a neighbour who used to help her aunt with her domestic chores. The girl was in love with him and continued to clean the house and cook for Ahmed and

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter 2 for further analysis on love and jealousy in family ties.

¹⁸¹ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

¹⁸² In her ethnographic study on courtship and seduction in Mauritania, Corinne Fortier (2003) has noted that “gallantry” – meaning the male ability to protect a woman, and to anticipate and provide for her needs – is a site where men behave with honour and generosity towards a woman as part of their performance of masculinity. But “gallantry” is also ambivalent because it constructs the woman as a person who is weak and in need of protection and control.

¹⁸³ Fieldnotes, 14 June 2010.

his father after her aunt died. Since it was not acceptable for a young unrelated woman to enter the home of two men, Ahmed's father imposed on his son to marry her. At this point, Ghislan became serious: "I told you: you love me, I love you, but marriage is something else (*zwaj haja okhra*)". For the second time, Ghislan went through a state of sorrow and depression. "I was always crying, I didn't go out," she commented.

A few years after the death of his father, Ahmed divorced the girl and expressed to his aunt his wish to marry Ghislan. Notwithstanding the affection that she still nourished for him, she refused because she could not trust him anymore: "I still haven't forgotten, he is a betrayer (*ghaddar*), it shouldn't have happened! He's my maternal aunt's son (*wld khalty*). If it had been someone else, I would have said ok, but we were tied together by blood (*l-'alaqa li kant tajma'na damm ba'd*)" she said. After her tragic love affairs, Ghislan gave up lapsing into the dream of love with boundless passion. Even though she has now had a liaison with a divorced man for three years, she does not dare to love unconditionally anymore:

There's love between us, but all of them took something away from me, because it isn't *l'amour fatal* or 100%. I love him, but there is always a part of my brain that says I don't give you 100%, I give you 90% or 80%. Always this part of my brain keeps saying "he's lying" as *j'ai perdue toute la confiance à l'homme* [...] I tell myself maybe I love him – maybe I'll give you my heart, but another thing may separate us, as it separated me for the first and the second ones. Now one part loves and the other stays away – as if you were in a dark street and your brain is awake, that's what I feel.¹⁸⁴

Dwelling on the wounds in her heart (*qalb*), Ghislan gave voice to the intricate conflicts between her desire to love and the fear of suffering again. As she said, drained of the trust that her beloved ones took away from her, her heart is not able to love unreservedly anymore because her brain (*dmagh*) controls the intensity of her emotional involvement. On the one hand, she interprets these tragic incidents through the notions of destiny and predestination, thereby situating human agency on a theological horizon that transcends individual will and desire: the first time, a tragic death separated Ghislan from her beloved one, the second time the social order led Ahmed to subordinate his will to parental authority and family allegiance. On the other hand, Ghislan thinks that Ahmed should have been sincere with her, even though he felt he could not challenge

¹⁸⁴ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

his father's authority. In other words, her liaison with her cousin makes apparent the tensions arising from the encounter with other forms of power and authority that constrain the agency of individuals. Her recognition that human agency cannot challenge "what is written" notwithstanding, Ghislan's narrative also entails responsibility and the demand for agency as a moral imperative to which Ahmed failed to respond. More than the risks that physical intimacy implies, it is the dangers of emotional closeness that urge Ghislan to subordinate her feelings to rationality because, as popular wisdom suggests, love makes often people vulnerable and fragile.

7.3.3. Women who outstrip men

By quoting the Qur'an, Ghislan said that God made women from Adam's rib, which lies near the heart, and hence they are more sensitive (*hanin*) than men. Men, however, do not want women who are also *capable*, as "they do not accept that women can be better than them ('*ayalat keyfuto 'lihom*)". Even in foreplay, she explained, "men want to keep women underneath; they don't let them on top."¹⁸⁵ In Ghislan's view, male sexual desire (*shahwa*) is inflamed as they cast their gaze on the female body. "Of course, women think of sex, too. Perhaps they don't admit it as they're ashamed, but they think of it!" Some young women deny their sexual desires in order to comply with the code of modesty, because premarital sexual intercourse (*'alaqa jinsiya*) is an intricate issue for young women in general, as she explained: "For me virginity is not essential, but you may have problems. Men at large don't accept a woman who is not a virgin. That's a risk, as you never know how your liaison will end. For you it's different. It's hard, don't you think? When there is no freedom it's hard"¹⁸⁶.

By shifting her discourse from destiny to hardship, Ghislan talked openly about female sexual desires, but she also expressed her uneasiness regarding the constraints surrounding female sexuality. Like other educated young women, she described virginity as (male) social expectation. According to Naamane-Guessous (1991), most young women have sexual experience before marriage. Beyond the real state of things – which is rather difficult to verify – the ways in which young women evoke the discourse on virginity as a limit to the legitimacy of female sexual pleasure reveal a social critique to the discipline and control of the female body. In other contexts, however, Ghislan

¹⁸⁵ Fieldnotes, 3 October 2010.

¹⁸⁶ Fieldnotes, 6 October 2010.

mobilised discourses on virginity to draw a line between “Muslims” and “westerners” – she considers the latter to be somewhat lacking in values and far away from the Holy Book. In 2009, Ghislan decided that it was the right time to “follow God’s pathway (*nmshi f-triq dyal llah*),” and hence she put on the veil, which she described as the starting point towards a path of cultivation of spiritual virtues and forbearance. Despite her desire to refashion herself, her dress-style and bodily conduct, her aspiration to lead a pious life in fact clashed with her yearnings to have an emotional and sexual life:

I feel that *je veux faire l’amour*, but I don’t; I control myself but it’s hard to restrain myself (*nafsi*). I can do it, but the man can’t control himself easily (*rajal mashi sahal bash ihkam rasso*). That’s why religion says that we should marry young, why so? [...] If you delay marriage until 30, it gets harder and harder! But you study first – studying has delayed my marriage (*l-qraya hiya li t’atlatni zwej*). I can’t marry someone who tells me ‘no’ as I’ve suffered for studying, I was the first one.¹⁸⁷

Notwithstanding her endeavours to overcome her carnal self (*nafs*) and restrain her sexual desires, Ghislan’s words address the unresolved struggle between the pursuit of a pious life and the worldly desires that drag her in the opposite direction. Furthermore, the rational control over her bodily passions discloses the tensions and ambivalence between competing views of femininity, which often make her oscillate between the longing for sexual freedom, the concern for social norms, and the search for a pious life. Her reflections on “Islamic early marriage” resonate with the reformist argument that describes it as a means to contain the widespread “sexual mess” and moral decay of Moroccan society. Yet it is at odds with the dreams of self-realisation, career and independence that she had projected for her future since childhood. Due to her search for personal fulfilment, she has passed the age regarded as appropriate for a woman to marry, and recognises that restraining sexual desires becomes harder and harder. Even though marriage is thought of as part of the duties of a “good Muslim” who is willing to follow the path taught by the Prophet, Ghislan could not accept a man who would restrict her freedom.

In her spare time, she used to watch *Na’am, Mazelto Anisa* (Yes, I’m not married yet), a TV series (*musalsala*) broadcast on NTN (Nile Television Network) which tells the story of an highly educated woman (starring Elham Shahin) who works as a teacher

¹⁸⁷ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

and lives in her flat alone. Despite her cultured and bourgeois entourage, she suffers from pressure by her family and peers for her to marry. While watching this story, Ghislan often connected it with her personal experience – even though her family does not pressure her –, thereby articulating her sentiments within a broader frame. In her view, this TV series addressed the uneasy condition of those women who have pursued their aspirations and then find it difficult to find a husband who lives up to their expectations. Nevertheless, she believes that a woman should not marry out of fear of being considered a *bayra* (spinster) – a stigmatised condition in the society in which she lives. She received several marriage proposals which she refused as they set unbearable conditions, such as leaving her job and meeting her friends, not dressing fashionably, or living with the groom’s family in the countryside. “Life comprises past, present and future,”¹⁸⁸ she said. In other words, Ghislan claims the right of self-fulfilment beyond marriage, but she also describes the passage from an “age of dreams” to an “age of maturity”. As she commented, ideas of love change according to one’s age, education, job and most importantly, experiences (*tjriba*):

Day by day, you begin to understand life, not the dream-world but real life, because when you are 30, life is real, while before you looked at *la vie imaginaire*: we eat potatoes and sleep serenely. Now you don’t think so any longer; a man has to be serious, with his work and his money, and you with yours, the same *niveau*.¹⁸⁹

According to Ghislan’s words above, in “real” life passionate love and sentimentality are not enough. Only under some conditions can marriage be a place of self-realisation and emotional investment. Thus, her narratives on passion and love – which she came to interpret as a dream (*l-halam*) and *la vie imaginaire* – give way to more pragmatic considerations: economic stability, independence and seriousness.

7.4. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the expectations of modernity and self-fulfilment that inhabit the imaginative horizons of everyday lives, in fact modernity does not keep its promises, and the yearnings and hopes surrounding the dream of romantic love remain partially unfulfilled. At times, however, something different from what was originally promised

¹⁸⁸ Fieldnotes, 3 October 2010.

¹⁸⁹ Ghislan, Interview, 30 June 2010.

is realised, such as being highly educated, unmarried and 30. As I have tried to show, Ghislan's narrative embodies the tensions and conflicting desires that mould her sense of self and her emotional worlds. By pursuing education and economic independence, she has realised her mother's dreams that her daughter's life would be better than hers was. While the master narratives of progress and modernity connect Ghislan's life with that of her mother, love becomes the centre of ambivalent discourses and conflicting desires; some expectations seem to conflict with the dominant ideologies that contribute to moulding her as a gendered subject. Even though she thinks of physical and emotional intimacy as the foundation of marriage, she is aware that love and marriage continue to be treated as two separate spheres of life. Indeed, as Ghislan lapses into the dream of love, she encounters the multiple forms of power and structures of authority that constrain individuals' lives. Not only can parents interfere with or object to a love marriage, but also most young men do not accept women who are not virgins or who have a higher social position. As she grows older, she works out that romantic love is an illusion and only a fleeting passion.

Moreover, Ghislan's narratives enable a reflection on the way she connects her own story to the broader history of Morocco. Thinking back to her past through the gaze of the present, she uses a religious vocabulary to recompose the tensions infusing her emotional life. Indeed, she articulates her experience in terms of destiny and predestination (*qada' wa qadar*), thereby illuminating her understanding of subjectivity, future and human agency as submitted to the divine law. By accepting human fragility as God's will, in part she reconciles her sense of despair and fragmentation. It is precisely when her love affair with Ahmed fails that her faith in God intensifies. The story that Ghislan tells about her life (Bruner 1987) is shaped from a form of theological imagination (Pandolfo 2007) which is circulating in the mosques movements and TV satellites. It promotes the search for an authentic modernity through a return to the "true Islam" and the rejection of "western values", as a remedy to the moral decay of modern life. Such a theological interpretation provides Ghislan with a view from which she glimpses the past and re-interprets social change in Morocco in terms of a twofold movement. On the one hand, modernity entails a step forward on a universal time line, in the direction of the achievement of (technological) progress. On the other, modernity also means literacy and education, both of which lead to a religious awakening. As such, it is a spiritual movement backwards, towards the past and the original model that

the Prophet taught. Likewise, Islam provides Ghislan with an intimate place where she recomposes the failure of the dream of love and recovers her sense of self. Yet her subjectivity does not conform to adherence to the ethics of the pious subject (Mahmood 2001, 2005) nor is a reformist project completely filling its promises. Rather, her life-world reveals the complex interplay of different narrative registers (Pandolfo 2005, 2007, Schielke 2009) within which she recomposes the various subject positions she takes up in her daily life. Along with her pious aspirations, Ghislan discusses sexuality and openly acknowledges her sexual desires. While Ghislan recalls nostalgically the idealised past in which love was pure, in her experience pure love manifests itself as a perilous and ephemeral state. Unlike the fantasies and discourses elaborated around it, love does not stand apart from the economic, material and religious worlds. On the contrary, love is a vital site where different competing powers and desires, allegiances and ideologies of attachment seem to collide.

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE QUEST FOR TRUE LOVE

8.1. Love, self and society

This chapter aims to disentangle the sense of excitement, ambivalence and frustration that permeate the narratives and lived experiences of “true love”. In the previous chapter, I have analysed how Ghislan calls into question the dream of love and use a religious vocabulary to recompose the contradictions that it brings about in her emotional life. Here I will focus on the ways in which romantic love also provides a language through which young women elaborate a discourse that overtly challenges the power relations in their society. Specifically, I draw attention to those discourses and desires which occupy an awkward position against the backdrop of the increasingly rigid tone permeating public debate on morality in al-Azaliya. To do so, I will put into dialogue the reflections that some university-educated young men and women have shared with me. Despite the working class backgrounds of many of them, they all feel that they have grown up in a globalised society and experienced social change in terms of a “generational shift”. Unlike their parents, whose marriage was arranged and, in these young people’s view, “without love”, they aspire to a love marriage as the way that can offer modernity, happiness and self-fulfilment.

By focusing on the theories on power relations that romantic love enables, I do not intend to suggest that these are new. As Fatima Mernissi (2008:165-185) has noted, for the generation of progressive intellectuals who were adolescents at the dawn of independent Morocco, claims of love expressed a personal and political critique of “tradition”, arranged marriage and the political establishment upon which their society relied. My aim in this chapter is rather to shed light on the expectations that “true love” brings into young people’s life-worlds, as well as the particular subjectivities and sensibilities that it makes possible (and impossible) in specific historical, political and economic contexts (Cole & Thomas 2009: 4). By stressing the processual and relational features of these dangerous encounters, I will investigate love, courtship and romance as important sites in which the young negotiate their aspirations and intimate desires. As I will show, it is while searching for the other – the “true love” – that one cultivates

oneself and becomes a certain kind of person. Not only does love enable a reflection on the self, but also a social critique precisely because the expectations that “true love” fuels and betrays in young people’s existences illuminate the multiple constraints and paradoxes under which they experience its intriguing promises. The various obstacles that they face when they try to realise their romantic aspirations lead them to reflect on the intimate ties between love and powers. These voices, which cannot be labelled “feminist”, “atheist” or “liberal”, risk being silenced and self-censured under the contemporary calls for moralisation which inform the public and intimate lives of young women and men in al-Azaliya. By following these young people in the visible and invisible spaces where they search for love, romance and seduction (in cafés away from the neighbourhood, among friends, on the internet, through the force of the occult), I will explore the micro-practices through which they navigate the ambiguity of intimate relationships and creatively inhabit the social norms.

8.2. The subject of “true love”

Romantic young women celebrate love, with the thrilling emotions which “falling in love” entails, as a positive and noble state of mind. Love represents the proper basis for a successful companionate marriage and a happy family life, but it also evokes ideas of personal and social progress. As they crave to love and to be loved, they criticise arranged marriages as “traditional practices” which, in their view, are based on pragmatism and rational calculations. In contrast, they describe “true love” as a specific form of “modern” sensibility, which some young women actively work to cultivate and embody. It is, indeed, in terms of diverse emotions, desires and aspirations that they interpret the difference between their parents’ notions of love and intimacy and their own ideas. The ideal of “true love” is often epitomised by the tragic incidents of the protagonists in the Shakespearian tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* and by some romantic Hollywood films, where the lovers stay together through thick and thin, and their love clears any hurdle.

So as to shed light on the *aesthetics* and the *ethics* ideal of the “subject of love,” as well as on the processes of self-crafting which are at stake, I start from the narrative of Jamila, a university student of French literature, aged 22. I use the term “aesthetics of the subject” to mean the sets of emotions and bodily performances, sensibilities and worldviews that are attached to this type of subjectivity; whereas I use the term “ethics”

to convey the values and ideals infusing its moral action and understanding. When I first met Jamila in 2009, she would wear tight blue jeans and T-shirts long enough to cover her buxom hips. After we became friends, she often invited me for mint tea at her home as well as for an ice cream or Italian pizza in youth snack bars and cafés. Jamila introduced me to her boy and girl friends, who have “romantic sensibility” like her and hence my research became deeply interwoven with their quest for true love.

Jamila loves talking of love, which in her view is “a very interesting and important topic (*un sujet très intéressant et important*),” but also a topic dear to her heart. At times, she would read me the love poems she writes in French and ask many questions about the relations between boys and girls in Italy. In her view, Moroccans and westerners think of love differently, as she came to realise by watching TV and reading novels. As Jamila is very attractive, when she stands around men make comments about her beauty and follow her. “Have you seen how they behave? Can you catch what they say?” she would say as we strolled together in the streets of al-Azaliya. She commented that many Moroccan men look at women as a body to possess instead of a person with a soul. In contrast, for young women like Jamila, “true love” is a match of soul mates. Unlike the commoditisation of love liaisons or the sentiment of affection (*wlfa*) which in her view is what binds the spouses together in an “arranged marriage”, “true love” manifests itself through the desire for exclusiveness, and as an intense emotion of mutual attraction and uniqueness.

When I came back to al-Azaliya in 2010, I was surprised to see that although Jamila was wearing a stylish tight-fitting long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, a brightly-coloured veil covered her curly hair. I asked her why she was wearing the veil and she answered: “You know, Laura, according to our religion a woman should be veiled.” Changing the subject of our conversation, she asked me to go to her home the next day, as she wanted to show me something very important for my research. The next day, we were sitting in front of the computer screen in her home in the working class (*sha‘abi*) neighbourhood where she lives with her family, reading the PowerPoint presentation on love that she had prepared for her French class.

Her presentation started with a definition of “love” as a multifaceted sentiment, comprising the parents’ love for their children, the love for God, and the love for an ideal or a lover. She listed the various states of mind connected with *l’amour charmant* and *l’amour romantique*, such as intense desire and pleasure, but also vulnerability and

suffering. “In the latter case,” she commented, “it’s better to give up.” In the middle of her explanation, her mother Malika came in to serve us mint tea and homemade bread; perhaps having grasped the subject of our conversation, she turned to me and advised me to be careful with men’s love talk because they try to seduce women through declarations of love without a sincere interest or serious intention. Always speaking in French and displaying sophisticated manners, Jamila desired to mark her way of being a woman, which significantly differs from that of her illiterate mother. After her mother had left the room, Jamila reverted to her presentation, explaining that love between women and men can develop into carnal attraction (*l’amour corporel*) and spiritual love (*l’amour de l’âme*). Unfortunately, she commented, spiritual love is rare in Morocco.

In Morocco, we need a change. Morocco is an extraordinary country, its culture, traditions, history; the main problem is its inhabitants. People’s mentality should change. Men regard women as a piece of meat, they do not love women nor do they want to discuss their ideas with them; they just want to possess their body.¹⁹⁰

As her words testify, Jamila discussed “true love” and its frustrating absence through narratives of modernity that are laden with promises of a better life. For Jamila, the majority of marriages in Morocco do not rely on love. “For example,” she said, “my father and my mother did not know each other before marrying. They just got married, so what is love for them? It’s just a habit...that’s why people say that love comes with time.”¹⁹¹ In her view, when people like her parents refer to love, they are in fact talking of “getting used to each other” (*l’habitude*), throughout a life spent together. In contrast, for her, as for many young women I met in al-Azaliya, “true love” entails fidelity, equality and care between the couple. The moral qualities with which she invests “true love” shed light on the idealised *ethics* of the subject, which this particular romantic sensibility brings into being. As love exists as a powerful imaginary in young people life-worlds, as well as “a mode of subjectivity and morality” (Schielke forthcoming), its absence or ephemeral nature in “real life” is experienced as painful and frustrating. Jamila eventually concluded, “In love relationships, there is nothing we can call love in Moroccan society.”¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Fieldnotes, 6 June 2010.

¹⁹¹ Fieldnotes, 6 June 2010.

¹⁹² Fieldnotes, 6 June 2010.

By cultivating a romantic sensibility, not only did Jamila imagine herself as a particular gendered subject, but she also criticised male attitudes towards women and their “backward mentality” as the main limits to “true love.” In Jamila’s view, men are unable to treat women as equal human beings. Furthermore, she claimed that love clashes with religious norms and social values of female modesty. As she said: “In Morocco, and according to religion, you cannot have love affairs before marriage, it’s forbidden (*c’est interdit*). Virginity is very important for a woman.” Despite her desires for emotional and physical intimacy, Jamila connected love with the dangers of loss of honour and respectability. At the same time, the frustrating absence of “true love” led Jamila to reflect upon the gendered ideologies that shape the intimate dimensions of her life.

8.3. Courtship, romance and seduction

Jamila’s words give voice to the contradictions and tensions surrounding “the dreams of love” (see also Schielke 2009a, 2009b, 2010 for Egyptian young peoples’ love troubles). Nowadays, many young married couples in al-Azaliya sit together in respectable cafés, and hold each other’s hand while strolling in the streets and in public gardens. New forms of leisure and public displays of intimacy have become acceptable. For unmarried people, in contrast, talking intimately or sitting alone together breed suspicions and may land a couple in trouble as rumours run quickly by word of mouth. In general, love affairs are kept secret and sexuality is discussed carefully.

Despite family and social control, young people have various opportunities to meet and make friends, flirt and date at school and university, in the internet cafés and the shopping malls – provided they are far enough away from their neighbourhood. In street cross-sex interactions, young men follow the girls whispering sweet words and commenting on their beauty. While describing young men as aggressively displaying their sexual desire (*shahwa*), young women often emphasise their own passivity in courtship although they are active players in flirting. As the gaze (*nadra*) is considered sexualised and its proper use is subject to bodily cultivation, exchanging glances is a weapon of seduction. Moreover, besides male expressions of verbal annoyance, “love” and “I love you” written in English on the walls in the neighbourhoods and in high

schools are another facet of cross-sex interactions.¹⁹³ Girls display shyness and a lack of interest when boys follow them asking for their phone number, whereas if the girl accepts, an exchange of text messages can start. In the intimate space of their own room or on the rooftop, they receive calls and text messages from their boyfriend out of parental control (see also Lee Bowen et al. 2008; Kriem 2009). Girls engage in romantic relationships through mobile phones without meeting their counterpart in person, but mobile phones also enable them to arrange secret meetings on the first floor of cafés in the city centre. As I was told, the secret, rule-breaking, and dangerous nature of premarital affairs makes them deeply thrilling.

Secret (or virtual) affairs may develop into stable love relationships lasting for years and end up in marriage – even though, according to my interlocutors, the chances of marrying the beloved one are rare. In fact, the term “relationship” (*‘alaqa*) entails different levels of emotional and physical intimacy (see also Naamane-Guessous 1991). For some girls, beeping, and chatting by mobile phone or on the internet regularly, are considered a love affair. For others, “having a relationship” (*dirshi ‘alaqa*) involves some form of physical intimacy. In general, when girls talk about sexual relations (*relation sexuelle* or *l-‘alaqa jinsiya*), they do not refer necessarily to the penetrative act. Most young women are careful about remaining virgin until marriage as they say that virginity socially embodies a woman’s value (*qima*) and the honour of her family. Public display of the bride’s blood is not common any more and, in many cases, it remains a private issue between the marital couple. Although the groom’s family may require a certificate of virginity (*shahadat al-‘uzoba*), various strategies can be used to disguise whether or not the girl is virgin, such as the surgical restoration of the hymen.¹⁹⁴ Since “good girls” are expected to remain virgin until marriage, young women may engage in sexual practices that leave the hymen intact, such as kissing, foreplay or even anal sex (see Foster 2002: 98-110 on Tunisia; Sadeghi 2010: 273-290 on Iran). Other girls, instead, who regard sex as the natural development of intimacy with a stable partner, claim that most young women nowadays do not arrive at marriage

¹⁹³ Caroline Osella and Filippo Osella (1998) have noted that among adolescents in Kerala, besides displays of verbal annoyance and aggressive masculinity, male expressions of tenderness, care and attention lavished upon girls shed light on the ways in which the principle of hierarchy is subverted, reversed, played with and re-affirmed.

¹⁹⁴ According to my female informants, surgical restoration of the hymen, which is illegal in Morocco, costs around 6000 dirham (about 600 euros).

as a virgin and consider those who deny having any sexual intercourse within long-standing relationships to be liars.

Apart from social and family pressure to preserve their virginity and reputation, young women face other kinds of dilemma. Not only do parental disapproval and financial uncertainty put marriage out of many young males' reach, but also they are aware that love affairs do not necessarily lead to marriage, because most young men may consider them "bad girls" and thus not suitable wives. In female narratives (including songs, proverbs or sayings), romance is also depicted as a "male game." Whilst young women describe themselves as *romantique* and willing to get married, in their view most "boys just want to spend their time with girls (*drari ghir kay-duzo l-wqt*)" – a statement which many young men generally would agree with. Young women recognise the seductive power of words but often experience the deception of their boyfriends as unexpected, a sudden change of mind. They blame men for using "love talk" and promises of marriage to enthrall them and conquer their trust (*tiqa*), but, in fact, they just want to have a sexual encounter or win a bet with their male friends. "Fishing/hunting the girls" (*tay-seid l-banat*: to pick the girls up), street displays of hot comments on women, flirting and romance are all arenas in which young men compete in same-sex gangs and fashion themselves through different masculine performances (Osella & Osella 1998, see also Fortier 2003: 241-46 on Mauritania). As soon as they gain the girl's love, they lose respect and interest and hence look for another girl to play with. As young women are often afraid of being deceived by the men who "play at love" (*kay-l'abo b l-hobb*), especially at the beginning of a love relationship, they negotiate carefully their expressions of emotional and physical intimacy with the men's expectations about female modesty and sexual purity. In the games of seduction, female rejection is thought of as arousing male desire and, aware of the social norms and the dangers of love, young women handle their intimate relations skilfully. At the same time, they reproduce gender roles and imaginaries which prevent them from expressing their own desires in order not to pass for a "bad girl."

8.3.1. Passion, magic and money

Male narratives reveal a reversed imaginary: girls are depicted not only as victims of male power and deception, but also as active players in games of seduction, flirting and romance. In fact, the Moroccan young men I met display different attitudes towards

love, as well as various degrees of commitment, frustration and ambivalence. Some young men who do not consider love as the proper basis for marriage tend to associate it with debauchery and religiously forbidden pre-marital relations. Others, instead, who regard love as a fundamental aspect of life, declare their serious intention to marry the girls with whom they have a liaison. At the same time, they also claim that girls can be treacherous and deceitful, as well as having sex for money or carnal pleasure. These contrasting images and discourses on women as creatures both pure and devilish are often interwoven in male narratives and are contextually mobilised.¹⁹⁵

Generally, young men agree that physical attraction (*l-hobb l-jsd*) is the basis of male involvement. “Maybe you sleep together and that’s it,”¹⁹⁶ I was told by a university-educated young man in his mid-20s. Even though love at first sight (*awl nadra*) may exist, a love relationship is thought to develop from intellectual love (*l-hobb taqafy*) and emotional involvement (*l-hobb watif*). When marriage is at stake, their opinions often diverge. Young men who want to choose their wife maintain that having a relationship before marrying enables the couple to understand whether they can bear each other’s flaws. Female virginity seems to be a very sensitive issue for young men when they are thinking about their future wife; some of them told me that they would marry their fiancé if she lost her virginity with them (but not in previous relations), whereas very few publicly state that they would marry a girl who was not a virgin. In both cases, female gossip and rumours suggest a more nuanced reality.

Like young women, young men are worried about being deceived, and at times complain that the women try to hustle, cheat and exploit them in various ways so as to get their money, get married or out of visa interest. “Love is essential, something very important in a person’s life (*l-hobb shi haja daroriya shi haja mohimma bzzaf l-hayat dyal l-insan*)”,¹⁹⁷ an educated young man who had migrated abroad told me. At the same time, he underlined how difficult it is to find a trustworthy and sincere girl. Emigrants, indeed, frequently complain about their difficulties in finding “true love” because, in their view, most young women are interested only in money or visas. In contrast, non-migrants tend to connect the impossibility of fulfilling their dreams of love to their lack of economic independence. Accordingly, many young women are

¹⁹⁵ On the ambiguity of the representations of femininity see also Dwyer 1978, Mernissi 1975; Crapanzano 1985.

¹⁹⁶ Fieldnotes, 27 July 2010.

¹⁹⁷ Samir, Interview, 6 July 2010.

attracted by the possibility of a life of middle-class consumerism instead of “love.” On the other hand, young men recognise that the ties between economic transactions and emotional attachment are critical aspects of the social (and legal) construction of masculinity (Mernissi 1979, 1988; Conway-Long 2006) as well as shaping mutual expectations and a proper display of nurture and care. Many young women expect their boyfriend to phone them, to bring them gifts, and to pay for their taxi, outings and others items they need, and young men do not allow women to pay for them (at least publicly). In fact, the notion of “transactional relationships” –which emphasise the exchange of material resources in intimate relations, thus avoiding the association with prostitution (Mark 2002, Cole 2007:74-101) –captures different types of intimate exchanges. In Morocco, money is part of the traditional forms of caring and taking care in marital and premarital relations alike. Consequently, many women evaluate the intensity of their partner’s love and fidelity by the male ability to provide money, gifts and financial support to them (see also Naamane-Guessous 1991; Cheikh 2009). Other educated women, in contrast, consider female economic independence and sharing livelihoods to be of paramount importance in a modern and equal relationship.

Despite the male celebration of love as a positive and noble sentiment, many young men criticise those who behave like the protagonists of movies like *Titanic* or those of Bollywood, “where the man sings and plays the guitar under a girl’s window and lose his mind.”¹⁹⁸ Maintaining rational control over the emotions is a critical aspect of male narratives as well as being part of the social view of masculinity, according to which the mature person should be able to dominate his or her carnal self (*nafs*) with the use of rationality or social understanding (*‘aql*).¹⁹⁹ For various reasons, therefore, some young men prefer their mother to choose their future wife as, in their view, she is seasoned enough to understand female *quelb*, namely the tricks to bind and manipulate a man. These narratives should be situated and interpreted vis-à-vis the intricate ways in which notions of personhood and emotions, selfhood and agency, intersect with local discourses which emphasise the dangers of love and attachment. Passionate love, as I noted in Chapter 7, may be associated with the dangers of enslavement and magic

¹⁹⁸ Omar, fieldnotes, 27 July 2010.

¹⁹⁹ As noted in the previous chapters, the cultivation of *‘aql* is also part of the social construction of adult womanhood. See, for example, Abu-Lughod (1986) for a detailed analysis of female honour/modesty; for the social construction of womanhood in Morocco, see Dwyer (1978), Davis (1983); on the dynamics related to *nafs/‘aql* in adolescents with a gender perspective, see Rozen (1984) and Davis & Davis (1989).

influence, which both lead to dependency and the inversion of proper gender roles, as well as with immaturity and individualism. The fear of magic is widespread in al-Azaliya and at times makes people careful and suspicious. While some youths consider magic (*siher*) as pure superstition, others believe that the bewitched person (*mshur*) becomes obsessed with his beloved to whom he feels powerfully drawn sexually and emotionally. For these reasons, young men may interpret intense love and passion toward a woman as a sign of her magic influence (Kapchan 1996: 236-271; Davis & Davis 1995b; see also Ben Jelloun 2003) and thus decide to give up. Tales of magic reveal the ways in which young men connect love and vulnerability. At the same time, they also provide a vocabulary to voice and make sense of sentiments of passionate attachment and dependency on the beloved one that some men might otherwise censor.

8.4. Secret lives and public secrets

If a “war of the sexes” seems to be underway vis-à-vis the shifting gender roles which women and men perform (Conway-Long 2006; see also Vidal 1977), generational conflicts are also part of the ways in which young men negotiate ideals of love, care and selfhood. The narrative of Bader, a student at the Medical School in Casablanca, enables one to grasp the contradictions that inhabit some intimate aspects of his life in a society where love and marriage are treated – as he claimed – as two separate spheres of life. The way he articulated generational conflicts on love and marriage, however, reveal the moral systems and allegiances which come to shape conflicting aspirations and expectations.

One afternoon, I was at Jamila’s home when she received a call on her mobile phone from a male friend with whom she had arranged a rendezvous at a youth café. Along the way, she said that it was worth talking to her friend because he had had many liaisons. Stylish and attractive, Bader was sitting with his group of male friends drinking coca-cola and juice. Jamila introduced me as a friend interested in what young people think of love, for my PhD. In Bader’s view, young people differ significantly from their parents who, he stated, had not experienced love together. For example, he said that his parents did not meet before marrying, but he also emphasised that the young lead their lives in an increasingly globalised world and hence develop new desires and orientations:

Morocco was an underdeveloped country with few contacts with the outside world. Then television came and people started watching what was going on in the world. People watched movies and wanted to experience the same things. Then the internet arrived; with Facebook I chat with people around the world, I have many European friends with whom I discuss lots of things. Just wait some years and we will become like you!

By emphasising his being “tuned”, Bader used the narrative of progress and technological advancement to describe the trajectory from “backwardness” to “modernity” which enabled people to “broaden their minds”. At the same time, Bader underlined the tensions that this creates in youths who want to experience and take part in this globalised modernity. “Morocco” he said “is different from the West. Here there is no place for love. According to Islam, you can’t have affairs, you have to marry. You can’t go to your parents and say ‘I love this girl’, as you feel ashamed (*kat-Hasham*). They wouldn’t accept it”. Moreover, he explained that, belonging to a rich and well-known family in al-Azaliya, he cannot marry the girl he loves without his mother checking on the girl’s origin (*asl*), and he commented: “Of course, I don’t know the girl’s *asl*, her grandfather and so on”. Listening carefully to Bader’s words, Jamila came closer to me and whispered: “You see, love does not exist in Morocco.” In other words, Bader compares two different assumptions and worldviews about marriage choices. On one side there is love, which the young generation passionately longs for. On the other, there are respectability, honour, family, social class, hierarchy, prestige, origin and descent, which are all social values connected with immanence. From his parents’ perspective, premarital love is ephemeral and disconnected from the social and family values upon which marriage rests – and, put in these terms, the inequality of the comparison is quite apparent. As Bader’s narrative suggests, young men are allowed to “play at love” as part of their “natural needs”, but when marriage is at stake, other types of reasoning are often prioritised. These competing views of love, marriage and family create conflicts and tensions because they involve not only duty and obligations, but also forms of nurture and love which are socially constructed and often experienced as opposite.

Given the division between love and marriage which, in his view, characterises the intimate lives of many young men and women, Bader argued that there is no (public) place for love in Moroccan society. For love affairs are forbidden and marriage choices are often disconnected from love, in his view, so true love slips into a secret

life. When he said that many married men have love affairs and lovers, but try to preserve their honour and respectability by keeping them secret,²⁰⁰ Jamila whispered to me: “this is men’s carnal pleasure”. Bader described premarital and extra-marital relations as a “public secret” (Taussig 1999) in Morocco. Alongside conjugal life (which is connected to the family, reproduction and the public moral order), premarital and extra-marital relations represent the antisocial and hidden site of passionate love and sexual pleasure (Mernissi 2008; Bouadiba 2005; Abu-Lughod 1986). Whereas reformist discourses call for early marriage as a solution to the supposed proliferation of illicit relations, Bader called for love and free choice. Even though he stated that he believed in love and discussed passionately about his quest for love, Bader also disclosed that he had never been *truly* in love: “If you really love someone, you can’t stay away from her and you cannot easily start dating another girl. I had an affair recently, but I could go for even a week without meeting her, so it wasn’t true love”. “True love”, which Bader learned about through television and Hollywood films, remains an ideal, rather than an actual experience. Bader has had several liaisons while waiting to meet “true love”, aware that eventually his mother will check his wife’s *asl*. Arguably, he does not seem so convinced that “true love” exists in reality, nor that it is worth investing in it against other more durable forms of love and attachment.

8.5. “The party of love”

Bader is not the only young man to whom Jamila thought it was worth talking. Rashid is a 24-year-old schoolteacher in a primary school, whom I met at Jamila’s home, when he came to visit her. Jamila introduced Rashid to me as her close friend (*mon ami intime*) and as soon as she explained what our conversation was about, he positioned himself as a supporter of the “party of love” (*le parti de l’amour*). Rashid started his reflection by emphasising the sharp difference between the young and their parents. Like Bader, his narrative revolved around the generational conflicts with his father, which he articulated in terms of “different sensibilities”. “You see”, he said, “here in Morocco we have two generations: the former one considers love as something...not concrete, that come after marriage, but it is love like getting used to someone? But we, the new generation, talk

²⁰⁰ The expression ‘shameful before people’ (*hssoma gddam l-nas*) reveals to what extent the perception of public morality may be also related to people’s gaze.

of love as “true love” before and after marriage alike.”²⁰¹ For Rashid, unlike the pragmatism of the former generation, the young long for a different kind of intimate life and consider “true love” as a moral value that is worth pursuing for its own sake. At the same time, he emphasised the widespread commoditisation of love amongst youngsters and noted that there are girls and boys alike who have several liaisons simultaneously, including veiled women who have sex with different partners just for pleasure or money. For Rashid, love means being unable to live without the beloved one, as happened to him when he was in high school. Unfortunately, he did not dare to reveal his sentiments to the girl until her marriage was arranged. For Rashid, love relations are complicated because, when youths want to turn love into marriage, tensions often arise:

The problem is the love relationship...many times it happens that, even if you love her, you don't get married. Love is...you find someone with a similar mentality, and age as well. It's not a problem whether she is one year older or younger, but not a big difference. For the older generation, that's normal: men in their mid-30s look for girls aged 18 or 15. When you talk of love, you are a weakling, hence, for the older generation, you can't discuss love in front of your father.²⁰²

As his words illustrate, Rashid aspires to have a love relationship with a girl of his age, with whom he can share the same mentality, interests and projects. The words also indicate respect and deference between son and father as an obstacle to intimacy. Rashid criticises the dominant gendered norms according to which a man cannot declare his sentiments to his father without passing for a “weakling.” In his view, the kind of love he searches for contrasts with the “traditional sensibility” embodied by his father, for whom marriage is a sacred union which should be built on solid values and seriousness, rather than on unstable passion and impulsiveness. Sentiments of love (*hobb*) and affection (*wlfa*) are expected to blossom *after* marriage as the bond between husband and wife strengthens. Consequently, those who set love and conjugal intimacy before birth family are regarded as lacking *'aql* (reason or social understanding).

While Rashid was voicing discomfort over the form of “traditional” masculinity that prevents him from expressing himself and his sentiments, Jamila suddenly cut in on the conversation. She said something that really surprised me: “Nowadays, it is not

²⁰¹ Interview, 9 June 2010. Here as elsewhere, Rashid switched from French to Moroccan Arabic.

²⁰² *Ibidem*.

possible to talk of love if religion is at the forefront...it's a matter of power".²⁰³ Rashid agreed with Jamila and went on: "Talking of love is talking of power. It's a political issue because you attack...you touch on the King, religion, the system". When I asked him: "Isn't there freedom of speech?," he replied "There is freedom of speech, but it's limited."²⁰⁴ In elaborating his reflection on the tight connection between love and power, Rashid concluded by saying that open discussions about love, politics (*siyasa*) and religion (*din*) are still taboo topics in Moroccan society. By connecting their intimate lives to the structural forces that work to shape them, Rashid's and Jamila's comments illuminate the ways in which love touches on and challenges different types of power.

8.6. Love and powers

The language of "true love" provides Jamila, Bader and Rashid with a set of embodied feelings, values, languages, compartments and imaginaries through which they imagine themselves as particular types of gendered subjects. By displaying different sensibilities, they position themselves against an essentialized notion of "tradition," which in their view the generation of their parents embodies. The great expectations of personal and social progress that "true love" fosters in their lives, however, remain unrealised or only partially realised. Even though the absence of "true love" in their real life manifests itself in very different forms within their experiences, the gap between expectations and "real life" leads them to reflect on family, gender and generational relations in their social milieus. In their narratives, true love reveals itself as a utopian project that challenges the status quo by calling into question the ways in which society works. These young people are aware that their quest for "true love" occupies an awkward position under the increased influence of Islamic revival in Morocco, as Jamila's words eloquently indicate. Against the various discourses that associate love with immorality and/or religious transgression, it is by affirming the *morality* of love that Jamila and Rashid claim the legitimacy of their desires and criticise the split that the division between love and marriage engenders in their lives. They feel that love is still *unspeakable* in "public" and that they do not have a public voice to articulate their claims because love remains a taboo topic in Moroccan society. Despite political

²⁰³ Interview, 9 June 2010.

²⁰⁴ Interview, 9 June 2010.

liberalisation and the increased freedom of speech promoted by Mohammed VI, these young people feel that overtly discussing love and sexuality risks calling into question the political-religious establishment on which society relies. In particular, Jamila's words and actions reveals her ambivalent engagement with Islam, which she practises as part of her own values and identity, but also sees as a limit to other aspirations and subject positions. Even though she recognises that premarital love is contrary to Islam and public morality, she craves to experience "true love" as part of her being modern and aspiring to a different conjugal life from that of her mother. At the same time, while supporting the ideal of love as a transformative force that challenges the (patriarchal) social, religious and political establishment, Jamila has decided to wear the veil as a "good Muslim woman" is expected to do in her social milieu.

Putting into dialogue the narratives of Jamila, Bader and Rashid further unravels the gendered nature of the constraints and possibilities under which they lead their lives and craft their sense of self. In male narratives, the respect between son and father is often experienced as an obstacle to intimacy and love marriage. For a man, expressing intimate sentiments about a woman in front of one's father is not acceptable. Against the form of "traditional" masculinity that his father embodies, Rashid claims other ways of "being a man". The tensions that they face are, I suggest, not simply the result of an uneven transition from "backwardness and tradition" to "modernity" or a generational gap, as they often tend to frame it. In their daily life, in fact, young men also negotiate their intimate sentiments with social expectations and financial constraints, family obligations and dominant visions of masculinity which are also all part of the ways in which they think of themselves and make their moral choices. In this regard, it is important to underline that financial constraints, including economic dependence on the family, put marriage out of many young males' reach. Moreover, there may be a tension between romantic love in "real life" and parental love which is largely thought of as the most enduring and reliable form of affection and support. In a similar fashion, Jamila drew a difference between herself and her mother. Nonetheless, while recognising the generational change that differentiates her from her mother, Jamila defines men as "savages." She turns her narrative on love into a critique of the gender ideologies and power relations that shape cross-sex interactions in her daily experience. In her view, the problem in Morocco is the male mentality, which she describes as traditional and backward. Considering herself to be educated and modern, she aspires to have equal

relations with her male peers, by whom she wants to be recognised and respected as a thoughtful person. Whilst Jamila finds it difficult to build up relations based on “true love”, male friendship enables her to share ideas and thoughts, as well as to experience cross-sex trust and intimacy.

8.7. “Mediating” the dangers of intimacy

Not all parents I met would check the genealogical origin of their son’s future wife and oppose love marriage, nor do all love liaisons end. Some families support love marriage, while in the case of family disapproval, there are several tricks which can enable the couples to manoeuvre the situation and succeed in marrying. There are couples who manage to make their liaison look like a family arrangement, with the help of female relatives and friends, and often parents can be quite aware of the situation while pretending to believe in the official version. When marriage is at stake, however, pragmatic considerations may weigh more heavily than “true love,” and young people do not always intend to oppose their families in the case of lack of approval and support –even if there are some young people who do. Far from being simple, these choices may create moral conflicts and suffering. Yet, along with moral and material constraints, a sense of precariousness and uncertainty often infuses love affairs. On the one hand, the image of love as a tragic fate is not only a central aspect of the ways in which romantic love is imagined in some literary and cinematic traditions. It is also part of the way in which love manifests its absoluteness and intensity (*‘ishq*) –as a tormented passion potentially leading to obsession and madness.²⁰⁵ On the other hand, the idea that true love is often unfulfilled and thwarted by broader social forces or destiny – a central trope in so many tragic stories, from *Layla and Qays* or *Romeo and Juliet* to Egyptian or Bollywood movies - helps to alleviate the suffering that unrealised dreams engender. In other words, these multifaceted imaginaries on love-passion provide a set of emotions, vocabulary and “significant stories” to which young people may resort to make sense of the end of their love stories and to recompose their emotional worlds, as I began to think during a meeting with Najat when I returned to al-Azaliya in 2010.

In the introduction, I described my meeting with Najat in 2009, when she was going through a difficult time in her life. After having sworn his love for her and his serious intentions, her fiancé had changed his mind and became elusive, and hence she

²⁰⁵ Osella and Osella (1998) make a similar point in their study of flirting in Kerala.

was trying to make sense of it. It was her words which aroused my interest in love as a topic, but what she told me when I returned to al-Azaliya in 2010 led me to reconsider some issues differently. After I had left in 2009, she learned through her female networks that her sweetheart had married another woman. “I kept thinking of us, the places where we had been together, the things we had done, our moments of intimacy,”²⁰⁶ she said. He continued to declare his love, telling her that even if people love each other, they do not always get married. Notwithstanding her intense love for him, Najat accepted her destiny: “Maybe it was fate, that’s what Allah wanted for me.” I was quite surprised by her composed resignation. In the weeks that followed, Najat disclosed that she had recently started a relationship with a young man whom she had met on the internet, and she seemed deeply involved. Every day they phoned each other or chatted on the internet, spending hours talking about love and the sentiments they nourished for each other. “Love on the internet does exist,” she said. She disclosed that she often found herself fantasising about him or imagining kissing him. In Najat’s view, a virtual relationship on the internet enables young people to know each other better and to develop a spiritual love as a basis for physical intimacy. At the same time, she realised that the tragic end of her earlier story had taught her a lesson, making her aware of the dangers of love and physical intimacy. “I was so naïve...” she said, thinking about her ex-fiancé. In our conversations, Najat would contextually “plot” the end of her love story through different, and at times conflicting, narrative registers and vocabularies: on the one hand, the lovers thwarted by the family and the weight of social norms, on the other hand, she emphasised the wisdom of accepting one’s unknowledgeable future written by God. Along with these narratives, Najat would also talk of her ex-beloved one as “*habily l-ghaddar...*” to emphasise his treacherous behaviour, thereby relying on Moroccan wisdom, “My beloved is a deceiver, he married another woman without telling me” (*habiby l-ghaddar, tzwj wa ma-khbarsh*).

One day, we were sitting in a café and chatting over an avocado juice, when she explained that different notions of love coexist and not all Moroccans mean the same thing in their love talk, as it depends on their education, religiosity, family attitude and mentality. She took a piece of paper and wrote in English “love exists for educated and religious young women”. According to Najat, men and women are bound by spiritual love and physical love, both of which she had experienced. Yet her narratives also

²⁰⁶ Field notes, 19 May 2010 (in English).

disclosed the ambiguity of romance and the ways in which she tried to negotiate intimacy and distance:

Physical love exists. I'm an educated woman and I can't say that it doesn't exist. But spiritual love must be the basis of physical love. There are limits, however, and the first is virginity. There are several types of *zina* [fornication]. *Zina* for me is the penetrative sexual act, the direct contact between the male and the female genital organs. There are other types of *zina*, such as kissing and touching each other's bodies, for some people even talking is *zina*. Modern educated women have a different view, they are more open-minded.²⁰⁷

Najat recognises the different ways in which the boundaries of *zina* may be located according to different interpretations of Islam. By positioning herself as a modern, religious and educated woman, she refers to *zina* as sexual intercourse, thus leaving room for other types of sexual practices. In a society where the outcome of love affairs is often unpredictable, in her view a young woman who is not a virgin may risk facing problems with her husband, but of course it depends on the husband. While the woman loses her equal position in the conjugal couple, "men" she said "can have several liaisons and wives. There's no equality between men and women except before God. Nowadays the situation is changing as women study and work". Despite her critical reflections on power in love relations, Najat does not believe in female independence. "Are they happy (women with their independence)?" she wondered. "I want to get married, to have a family, I want someone who will take care of me, and wait for me to come home, someone I can travel and squabble with. I don't want to be alone." In envisaging her future, Najat aspires to achieve self-fulfilment in both her professional and conjugal life. Despite her negative experience, Najat continues to believe in romantic love as part of her being a young modern religious woman. As her words testify, the internet enables her to handle the ambivalence connected with romance, by negotiating closeness and distance. At the same time, her attempts to mediate her desires for romance with social expectations of feminine modesty lead her to sublimate physical intimacy as "spiritual love".

8.8. A soul mate on-line

Like Najat, many young women engage in virtual romance with young men in Morocco

²⁰⁷ Fieldnotes, 11 June 2010.

or abroad and use marriage websites to find a husband. On such web-sites, people can enter their profile and select a partner with specific characteristics. Unlike those who are sceptical about the possibility of finding true love on the internet, they use it as a means to accommodate their desires of emotional intimacy with their lovers, as well as to find their soul mate. Even though virtual liaisons are often confined to fantasy, they are invested with emotional meanings. At times, young people decide to meet in the “real world” and the relationship ends up in marriage.

In other words, the internet has become a critical site for cross-sex sociability, where people re-negotiate, reproduce and play with social norms about gender and sexuality. The story of Samira, a university educated and veiled woman in her late 20s, illustrates the ways in which the internet has enabled her to actively look for a husband with whom to build up a relation of emotional intimacy without risking her reputation. Not only did Samira use the internet to look for her husband, but she also manages to keep her relationship secret and make it look like a “traditional marriage.”

When I first meet Samira, she lived with her family in a working class neighbourhood in the outskirts of al-Azaliya and worked as a teacher in a private primary school. Unlike Najat, Samira considered it improper to talk of love and intimacy with a man who is neither her fiancé nor her husband. According to her, love can exist on the internet, but one is likely to encounter deceivers and liars. She started surfing in the cyber café close to her workplace. Online she happened to meet young Arab men who were looking for virtual sex and displayed their genitals at the camera, and hence she immediately deleted the contact. She also became friends online with a young man who started talking about sex and love, and hence she stopped chatting with him, considering he was not serious in addressing these topics. Eventually, on a Muslim website for friendship and marriage, Samira found the profile of Mohammed, a man from the Tadla Plain, and wrote to him.

When she first told me about her “virtual” relationship, they had met six months earlier and he had just asked for her hand in marriage.²⁰⁸ She was extremely happy as she believed she had found her soul mate. She explained that she understood that Mohammed was serious because he had never mentioned “love” until he was sure that she was serious and thus asked her hand straightforwardly. Afterwards, he revealed that he lived in Germany. He did not put this information in his profile for fear that many

²⁰⁸ Fieldnotes, 27 August 2009.

girls would only take an interest in him in order to go abroad. Samira chose him because he seemed to embody the features that she had been longing for: he is religious and serious, and they share the same level of education, all of which she values as important aspects for mutual understanding. Moreover, she had always desired a formal engagement.²⁰⁹ However, their love seemed destined to end tragically when her boyfriend's parents opposed his marriage with Samira²¹⁰ because they did not consider her a suitable wife for their son.

In December, when her fiancé returned to Morocco for a holiday, Samira and Mohammed had their first meeting. Samira asked her best friend Wafa' to come with her. Wafa' recalled²¹¹ that Samira and her fiancé were so shy that they could hardly say a word or look into each other's eyes. Mohammed insisted to his parents that Samira was a serious girl, until eventually they agreed on their marriage. In August, Samira celebrated her engagement (*khotoba*) with her female friends and relatives, by giving a "traditional" *henna* party at home. Her parents, however, do not know that Samira met her fiancé on the internet, and her story remains a secret that she shares with only her closest friends.

Even though both Samira and Najat are university-educated and religious veiled young women, their personal narratives disclose the gendered imaginaries and notions of love that shape their agency and expectations. Unlike Najat, Samira situated *love* within engagement and marriage. She considered it inappropriate to speak of love with Mohammed until he declared his intentions to marry her. Samira behaved modestly and appreciated the reticence and shyness of her boyfriend as a proof of sincere feelings, and also of respect and seriousness. They did not meet alone, but in the presence of Samira's friend, who witnessed the shyness and embarrassment between them. After the betrothal, their relationship became more intimate. After Mohammed sent her the money to install a high-speed connection at home, they chatted on Skype every day. Samira started studying German because her husband – as they are now married - wants her to continue to study so as she could have the possibility that he had not.

By displaying different sensitivities, Najat and Samira craft themselves as specific gendered subjects and envision diverse types of agency. Najat expresses her passionate

²⁰⁹ Fieldnotes, 29 July 2009.

²¹⁰ Fieldnotes, 1 August 2009.

²¹¹ Fieldnotes, 5 May 2010.

sentiments to her boyfriend as part of being a “modern” religious girl, while Samira’s shyness adheres to the local code of modesty and “traditional” femininity. Yet Samira did not wait for a man to come and ask for her hand, as a “modest woman” is expected to do, nor did her fiancé accept his parental opposition without trying to demonstrate to them that she was the woman for him. Samira used a Muslim marriage website to find a husband according to her wishes and preferences and struggled to win her in-laws’ esteem by demonstrating herself be a serious and respectable woman. In other words, the ways in which Samira and Najat talk about love, emotions and intimacy reveal the competing images of femininity (Moore 1994, 2007) available in al-Azaliya, as well as the micro-practices that they use in order to negotiate the social norms.

8.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to illustrate the different ways in which young men and women discuss and experience “true love”. Various cultural references and imaginaries provide young people with sets of embodied emotions and dispositions, as well as vocabulary and significant stories through which they fantasise, create expectations and make sense of their lived experiences. The new media technologies like satellite TV contribute to reshaping local idioms of love and to creating novel romantic imaginaries and sensitivities, which my interlocutors define as “modern”.

The quest for “true love” reveals the powerful ethics and aesthetics of the subject which convey not only a particular ideal of subjectivity and attachment, but also a discourse on love as an alternative and utopian ethical-political programme.

Love becomes a language through which these young people challenge established powers and claim the contingency of the way in which their society works. In doing so, they challenge “the burden of tradition” and the split that it engenders in their intimate life. By endorsing a purified/purifying notion of modernity, however, they conceal the fact that “tradition” is multi-constituted and comprises different discourses and registers, as well as enabling various social practices. In other words, “true love” and tradition are not necessarily opposite and mutually exclusive; rather, “true love”, intended as a specific discourse on modernity, competes with other forms of love, nurture and care, which for many young people are as important as the search for romantic love and conjugal intimacy.

Notwithstanding the expectations surrounding the dream of romantic love, the quest for love is also laden with ambivalence. In particular, young women connect love with the dangers of loss of honour and carefully negotiate their desires of intimacy with male expectations about female sexual purity. While love is imagined as an elective union between two individuals, the lived experiences of courtship and romance become important sites where young people negotiate their aspirations and intimate desires, but where they also reflect upon the ways in which love, intimacy and powers interlace in intimate relationships. Love is sought far away from one's neighbourhood and the gaze of acquaintances: among friends, on the internet and in the force of the occult. Blending the boundaries between visible and invisible, real and virtual, love as a search for the other is a journey towards the unpredicted and a self-exploration. In this journey, love reveals itself as a dangerous adventure along the thin lines between visible and invisible, personal desires and social constraints. Both male and female narratives emphasise the vital importance of love, yet romantic love at least remains unrealised. The absence or ephemeral nature of "true love" in their everyday experiences leads them to reflect upon the constraints and paradoxes under which they live out its intriguing promises. I have emphasised that these young people use the notion of "true love" to reflect upon themselves and their society, as well as articulating a discourse on power in terms of gender and generational conflicts. The narratives of young women and men reveal the different ways in which they position themselves vis-à-vis transgressive practices like courtship and romance. While young men are allowed to "play at love", for girls, engaging in premarital relationships may affect their reputation and their family's honour. These young women criticise what Fatima Mernissi (1982), discussing the relations between virginity and patriarchy, has defined as "social schizophrenia". This manifests itself in double standards of behaviour and social mores for men and women; for instance, in the fact that "[t]he deflowered virgin becomes a lost woman, but the man, like the legendary phoenix, emerges from the fray purer, more virile, better respected"(Mernissi1982: 186).

Not only does the different social understanding and treatment of male and female premarital affairs reinforce the distinction between love and marriage; for men it also creates a division between "good girls" to be married to and "bad girls" to date. As young women are aware of the social norms, they try to manage their intimate relations skilfully, showing that the divisions between the two categories are, in fact, more

nuanced and manipulated than the public discourses suggest. For instance, the use of the internet is an importance space for cross-gender sociability, where young women negotiate their desire for emotional intimacy and physical distance. At the same time, the various ways in which young people navigate the social norms and tackle the ambiguity of intimate relationships demonstrate that the search for love is not necessarily based on progressive assumptions nor does it entail an open criticism of power.

CONCLUSION

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AND MATERIAL CONTINGENCIES

Over the few last decades, the emergence of a new “politico-religious imagination” (Pandolfo 2007) oriented towards the return to “true Islam” has gained increased visibility in the Muslim worlds. Especially in the aftermath of the 9/11 terroristic attack and the so-called “war on terror,” a growing body of anthropological studies has focused on the religious imagination and the moral economy that characterise the so-called Islamic revival. The ethnographic and theoretical attention to the relationships between Islamic commitment in the piety movements and the ethical self-fashioning has been one of the most innovative aspects of this scholarship (Mahmood 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Hirschkind 2001, 2006). However, these studies’ focus on the coherence in the formation of the moral selfhood have elided other fields of sensibility and existential possibilities, as well as the ambiguities and the creative tensions shaping people’s complex lives (Osella & Soares 2009; Pandolfo 2007; Schielke 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Menin 2012; Abenante & Cantini forthcoming).

In al-Azaliya, the influence of the Islamic revival, with the processes of “moralisation of society” that it has promoted, has become apparent in the proliferation of the mosque reading groups and religious associations, as well as in the street-corner Islamic market, which includes recorded Qur’anic recitations and cassette sermons, religious books and Islamic fashion. Furthermore, religious programmes broadcast in satellite television, which have made available to young women and their mothers religious knowledge and practices, represent another important dimension of the Islamic revival in al-Azaliya. The increased importance of religion in everyday life manifests itself in young women’s renewed interest in the correct Islamic practice in everyday life. Most of the young women I met have started donning the veil after 2001 and describe their spiritual paths in terms of “religious awakening,” a “rediscovery” of their national and religious identities. Their engagement with a “purified Islam” as a particular way of being “modern” is also narrated as a break with the past. Notwithstanding the influence of Islamic revival in al-Azaliya, the young women I met did not simply try to incorporate an ideal selfhood by adhering to the Islamic model of piety. While some of them have tried to adhere to the ideals of virtue and piety, others have endeavoured to

accommodate their desires for spirituality and forbearance with other, at times conflicting aspirations. In many cases, their lived experiences reveal the uneasy coexistence of spiritual and consumerist desires, the search for romance and self-realisation.

Moving the analysis away from the Foucauldian attention to ethical subject-formation, this thesis has shed light on the complexities and ambivalences that shape young women's intimate and moral worlds in a Moroccan boom town characterised by rapid social, political and economic transformations. As I tried to show, the young women of al-Azaliya experience in their everyday lives an impressive widening of their imaginative horizons. In the last few decades, their access to mass education, transnational migration and the spread of the new media have contributed to shaping desires and leases of life unthinkable for their *madrassa*-educated mothers and grandmothers. The engagement of these young women with American, Arabic and European cultural products through satellite television, music and the internet has contributed to reshaping intimate aspects of their everyday lives, such as gendered imaginaries, desires and sense of self (Davis & Davis 1989, 1995; Davis H. 1989; Bennani-Chraïbi 1995; Mernissi 2003, 2004). Furthermore, the availability of the internet and mobile phones has profoundly transformed the young's cross-sex sociability and intimacy. Nowadays, young people with different social and economic backgrounds arrange secret meetings in cafés, chat on the internet and text romantic messages to each other out of parental control. Unlike the older generations of women who described marriage as an inevitable fate for women, many young women imagine marriage as a choice along with the search for self-realisation and professional careers. They aspire to choose their husband on the basis of affinities, common interests and "true love." In many ways, this generational change reveals the transformations of intimacy under way in al-Azaliya and the growing importance that conjugality and the ideal of nuclear family have gained in the young's intimate fantasies and expectations. The new ways in which young women in al-Azaliya think about themselves, their affective and professional lives have been made possible by broader economic and social changes. At the same time, the emergence of novel sensibility and romantic imaginaries have triggered contradictions, moral dilemmas and uncertainty in their everyday lives.

Romantic love proved to be an important gateway to penetrate into the paradoxes and complexities that inhabit young women's moral and affective worlds. Conceived of as a powerful imaginary of subjectivity and intimate connectivity, romantic love has provided an insightful perspective from which to look at the forms of sociability and gendered ideals shaping the "politics of intimacy" in al-Azaliya. In order to understand what romantic love *is* and *does*, however, I moved my analysis beyond a "heteronormative" definition of love so as to include the multiple experiences of love and affection, trust and closeness that shape the social and affective worlds of my interlocutors. This approach enabled me to investigate romantic love in relation to other forms of intimate connectivity. Above all, romantic love reveals itself as a great narrative, the seductive dream of an elective union between two individuals which pushes on the backdrop other forms of love and relatedness. Lapsing into their romantic dreams, however, young women often work out that in "real life" love competes with other forms of love and affection, as well as challenging other modes of connectivity and homosociability.

Not only does the search for romance and "true love" occupy an awkward position against the backdrop of the calls for moralisation that characterise "the Islamic revival" in al-Azaliya. It, also, collides with the multiple forms of material and moral constraints that shape young women daily lives. Indeed, the young women I met negotiate new desires, orientations and aesthetics alongside and against family allegiances and social values as well as dominant expectations about modest femininity. The existence of competing ideals of emotional attachment (e.g. family love *vs* conjugal intimacy) creates moral dilemmas and conflicts. At times, these are not easy to handle because they inform the ways in which the young women imagine and situate themselves in relation to their family and their social entourage. Even though romantic love is a pervasive feature of youth culture, in "real life" it manifests itself as a dangerous adventure along the thin lines between personal agency and destiny, desires and constraints.

Ambivalence, subjectivity and intimacy

By focusing on young women's intimate and affective worlds, I tried to demonstrate that the study of intimate relationships can contribute to enhance the understanding of agency and subjectivation. Building on feminist anthropological theories on the

subjectivity and positionality, I suggested that “a non-unitary theory of the subject” (Moore 2007: 40) provides some useful theoretical insights to explore the ways in which young women craft themselves and their lives by negotiating conflicting aspirations and desires. Specifically, the notion of subjectivity as “a site of difference” has enabled me to explore the concrete ways in which young women I met contextually takes up and discards, challenges and reflects upon the manifold subject positions they occupies. A close attention to contradictions, puzzlements and ambivalences that inhabit these processes, has further enhanced the understanding of their agency and trajectories of self-becoming (Kondo 1990: 45).

The notions of gendered subjectivity and agency proposed by Henrietta Moore are useful also because they pave the way for further analysis of intersubjectivity and relationality. Instead of framing the processes of subject formation only in terms of individual negotiations alongside and against structural forces, I have focused on the concrete ways in which young women mould their sense of self *within* forms of intimate connectivity and sociability. By drawing attention to issues of relationality and connectivity, I intended to shed light on the inter-subjective dimensions of self-crafting, namely the ways in which the subject is formed through and in relation to others. Indeed, the young women I met do not think of themselves merely as an autonomous and individual subject, but rather they shape their sense of self *within* a prism of family and social relationships, where power and love, nurture and control interweave in complex and ambivalent ways (Kondo 1990: 10, 22, 34-45; Joseph 1992, 1999). As I showed in the first part of this thesis, subjectivity emerges in family and social relations, as well as through the manifold horizontal bonds that enable young women to experience different levels of intimacy, trust and amity. Describing the values, feelings and expectations of female intimacy, girls and their mothers make apparent the notions of self and the other, of love and morality that inhabit their personal relationships. For my interlocutors, being a subject means being situated in a web of family and social relations and entails feeling deeply involved in each others’ lives. Female friendship and homosociability are also critical arenas of subject formation and gender performance (Abu-Lughod 1985, 1986, 1993; Osella & Osella 1998). Close friends share secrets, confidences and information about their family and intimate lives, and elaborate discourses and reflection upon gender relations and male authority.

My focus on the intimate connectivity and sociability within which young women's sense of self is embedded, indeed, did not deny the possibility of personal agency (Joseph 1999:11). The young women articulate their sense of self as both connected with and distinct from their family, intimate and social ties. By underling the embeddedness of the self in family and social relationships, my analysis intended to provide a complex picture of how young Moroccan women negotiate their aspirations and make their moral choices. The micro-practices through which they accommodate their personal desires with family obligations and social demands reveal clashes between competing powers, affects, allegiances, constraints, aspirations and desires that inhabit their affective worlds. At the same time, they make apparent the competing fields of sensibility and intimate attachment within which they are involved. Family and personal relations, indeed, are also shaped by power and authority, gender and generational hierarchies, which reflect broader imaginaries about femininity and masculinity. Far from limiting my analysis of agency and subject formation to the dichotomy of "subordination" *versus* "resistance" (Abu-Lughod 1990; Kondo 1990; Mahmood 2001, 2005), my intention was to draw attention to love, nurture and intimacy as vital sites of subjectivation and agency. As I have tried to demonstrate, in the process of becoming a subject in relation to others, the young women I met critically reflect upon and challenge the ideas of femininity and subjectivity available to them. Like their mothers and grandmothers, they negotiate their personal desires within their family and social ties, by moving between different discourses on kinship, marriage and sexuality. In the spaces of same-sex sociability, women and girls comment upon power relations as well as using silence and irony to reverse dominant discourses.

Along with the active making of the self, girls and women's narratives reveal spheres of existence and modes of thinking about the subject that include the ways in which people grapple with the invisible, as well as the non-humans and transcendental forces that act upon them. In other words, by discussing of the complex relations between individual freedom, personal desires and divine destiny, they lead us to rethink the notion of agency. Agency is not only thought of as individual action, it but also includes the experience of being acted upon (Mittermayer 2012) as a critical dimension of becoming an agentive subject.

Sensibilities and social change

Intimate relationships are also critical terrains to investigate broader contemporary social dynamics that impinge on young women's lives because it is precisely within them that social tensions and contradictions become particularly intense. As I have tried to show, many young women describe their experiences and ideas of love in terms of a "generational gap". In their imaginary, romantic love often evokes ideas of personal and social progress, as well as seems to convey a particular form of "modern" sensibility. By actively cultivating and displaying a "romantic sensibility", many young women craft themselves as particular types of gendered subjects that challenge dominant view of femininity as well as modes of intimate connectivity. By connecting their private and public lives, the young people I met contest "traditional" marriage practices and open up a discourse on the self and their society that makes visible power relations and asymmetries. In their words, romantic love often evokes a universalist language that overcomes class divisions and social inequalities. As such, it displays a creative tension toward the future. It enables one to imagine a different world of subjects and intimate relationships, thus a different society. Notwithstanding the hopes and desires that surround "true love", the young women experience physical and emotional intimacy in ambivalent ways and their romantic dreams of love often remain unrealised. The troubles that romantic love engenders disclose the material conditions under which the young live its intriguing promises. Even though romantic love and romance are pervasive features of "youth culture", young women lament that they remain a "public secret", taboo topics that do not find a place in public space. In "real" life the dream of love emerges as a battleground between competing powers and desires, family allegiances and ideologies of attachment.

Not only are young women aware that their quest for "true love" and romance challenges religious values and occupies an awkward position under the increased influence of Islamic revival in Morocco. They also complain that love and marriage continue to be treated as two separate spheres of life in Moroccan society and that they are oriented by two separate logics. Besides social and family constraints, however, young women lament that the majority of their male peers have a "backward mentality" and hence they negotiate carefully their desires with social expectations about modest femininity and virginity. In doing do, they also reflect upon the ways in which love, gender, and power entangle within intimate relationships. While young women

complain that men are unable to treat them as equal human beings, young men, in contrast, point to generational conflicts and the respect between son and father as the main obstacle to intimacy and love marriage.

Besides the fact that premarital love is at odds with social and religious values, my interlocutors articulate the troubles of love mainly in terms of gender and generational conflicts. Nevertheless, young young's conflicts shed light on the economic dimension of the dream of romantic love and conjugal intimacy, based as it is on the ideals of middle class consumerism. While parental disapproval and gender ideals that shape cross-sex relations are concrete obstacles to love marriage, it is important to remind that financial uncertainty and precarious employment make marriage out of the reach of many young couples. Despite the multiplication of images of possible lives available to young women, my analysis of intimate relationships emphasised the manifold structural forces that impinge on their lives, desires and sense of self. The increasing disconnection between desires and reality engenders suffering and discontent in different dimensions of young women's professional and private lives. The majority of the young women I met, indeed, have few resources to enable them to take part in the dreams of cosmopolitanism and globalised consumption. Notwithstanding their high levels of education, many of them face unemployment and precarious working conditions intensified by neoliberal policies (Cohen 2003, 2004). Other girls with middle-class backgrounds are experiencing a worsening of their social position due to economic insecurity.

In general, the social and economic transformations that have occurred in Morocco in the last three decades have had important consequences in the family and social life of the inhabitants of al-Azaliya. The comparison between mothers and daughters show the ways in which some bonds have become difficult to maintain, or undesirable vis-à-vis the shifting configurations of the family, as well as the longings for middle-class consumerism and conjugal intimacy. Nowadays, intense social and female ties contend with the rise in importance of the marital bond and the desires for independence from family relationships and obligations. At the same time, the erosion of women's networks and neighbourly bonds engenders a sense of vulnerability in low-income neighbourhoods, where mutual help and solidarity continue to be of paramount importance. In others words, these social and economic changes have brought about new ways of thinking of oneself, one's life-trajectory and intimate life, but also a

profound sense of fragility and disorientation. The Islamic revival captures and tries to respond to these contradictions and sense of crisis by calling for a return to Islam as *the solution* to the moral decay and the disrupting influence of “the west.” Intimate relationships, religious sensibility and sociability have become the centre of this project of ethical reform oriented towards the return to “true Islam.” Like romantic love, Islamic reformism conveys a universal ideal of personal and social progress that elides the anti-structural discourses and practices on family and social ties comprised in “the tradition”. Against the backdrop of Islamic revival in Morocco, more and more people in al-Azaliya have been trying to lead a pious life. Yet, the sense of moral decay has not decreased in daily life.²¹²

In a context where competing projects of society and gendered modernity are at stake, the young women have experienced social change in ambivalent and complex ways. The emergence of new ways of thinking of their intimate and professional lives continues to clash with moral and material constraints, as well as with precarious working conditions and gender inequality. Thus, by focusing not only on their expressions of “agency” and “resistance” but also on their ambiguity, ambivalence and contradictory aspirations, I intended to provide further insight into the hopes and fears, the desires and frustrations that inhabit young women’s affective lives and sense of self. At the same time, my intention was to emphasise the multiple hegemonic discourses and social forces that mould intimate dimensions of their existence in a specific historical, political and social context.

²¹² I am deeply grateful to Samuli Schielke for pointing out this aspect.

Glossary of the main Moroccan Arabic Terms

Note: The plural version (in brackets) is provided only for those terms which are used both in the singular and the plural in the text

- asl* ---- genealogical origin
'aid l-kabir ---- “the great feast” or “the Feast of the Sacrifice”
'a'ila ---- “the big family” (also called *'ai'la kabira*), may indicate the nuclear family as well.
'aguza (or *'agusa* or *'adosa*) ---- the mother-in-law
'aib ---- shame
'alaqa ---- relationship
'alaqa jinsiya ---- sexual intercourse
'aqd d'yal zawej ---- the act of marriage
'arosa ---- bride
'ars ---- wedding
'asri ---- modern”
'ayn ---- the evil eye
'ulama (religious authorities)
brra ---- literally meaning “outside”, is used to refer to country of immigration
brrani ---- outsiders
bayra ---- spinster
bled ---- natal villages, country
bloc ---- administrative classification of the space within the neighbourhood
bur ---- non-irrigated agricultural sector
bnt ---- (daughter, girl, virgin, unmarried woman)
cyber ---- Internet points
da'iya ---- preacher/teacher
din ---- religion
drri (*pl. drari*) ---- child, boy, unmarried man
dars ---- lessons
dar (*pl. diur*) ---- house
fqih ---- Islamic scholar
fatiha ---- the first Sura of the Qur'an.
gandora ---- traditional Moroccan gowns
gaury (*pl. guer*) ---- the westerner
ghigha ---- jealousy
hay ---- neighborhood
hedga ---- capable, housekeeper
hijra ---- migration; it refers to the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina
huwiya ---- identity
halal ---- that which is permissible and legal

hammam ---- steam bath
haram ---- that which forbidden and unlawful
hashoma ---- sentiment of modesty, shyness, as well as shameful
hob ---- most general term for love
hadith ---- sayings and deems of the Prophet Mohammed
hijab ---- veil
hiya ---- shyness, modesty, timidity
jallaba ---- traditional Moroccan gowns
jora ---- residential proximity; *jar* (pl. *jira*) ---- neighbour
jinn (pl. *jinnun*) ---- spirits
jam'a ---- mosque
khotoba ---- formal engagement
khawa ---- brotherhood; bond created through breast feeding
khimar ---- long dark veil that cover the head and extends over the torso
medina ---- the city, *l-medina l-qadima*, the old city
makhzen ---- the government, administration, authority
mar'a ---- adult, married woman
murahaqa ---- adolescence
nafs ---- carnal self, psyche
niqab ---- face veil
nsara ---- the Christians or/and the European
niya ---- good moral intention
qada' wa-qadar ---- destiny and predestination
qaraba ---- blood ties, genealogical closeness , closeness
qabl ---- heart
qasba ---- fortified city
rada'a ---- milk-kinship
siyasa ---- politics
siher ---- magic
sadiq ---- friend
sadaqa ---- friendship
sahb ---- friend; in cross-sex relations indicate the boyfriend
salat al-istikhara ---- special prayer that Muslims pray before taking any important decision.
sdaq ---- dowry
shari'a ---- Islamic law
shikhat ---- singers and dancers who perform sensuous songs and dances
shytan ---- the devil
shahadat al-'uzoba ---- the certificate of virginity, often required for marriage
tiqa ----trust
umma ---- community of Muslims
wali ---- marriage guardian
waseta ---- social connections

zanqa ---- alley; important arena of social relations within the neighbourhood

zina ---- adultery, fornication

zif ---- general name for the Moroccan foulard

zwej ---- wedding

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