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Strangers at Home. A Reading of Marco Turco's Film, *La Straniera*, Italy 2009

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Summary:

This article focuses on the movie, *La straniera*, based on the homonymous novel by Younis Tawfik (Milan, Bompiani, 1999). It is about a young Moroccan immigrant woman in Italy, who is viewed through the various perspectives of native and non-native Italians. As such, the film calls for the elimination of mental borders and is a plea for mutual understanding and against exclusion. Marco Turco entrusted the score to Natacha Atlas, Tim Whelan and Hamilton Lee, whose compositions are influenced by many musical traditions.

Keywords :

Moroccan immigration in Italy, Younis Tawfik, Marco Turco, Ahmed Hafiene, Kaltoum Boufangacha, Italian cinema, *La straniera*, migration and gender.

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Strangers at Home. A Reading of Marco Turco's Film, *La Straniera*, Italy 2009¹

by Isabelle Felici

When Marco Turco came across the novel *La straniera* (The stranger) written by Younis Tawfik, an Iraqi writer settled in Italy more than thirty years ago, the book was a best-seller². The Italian director, who had already made many films and documentaries, was intrigued by the female character: Amina, a young Moroccan woman living illegally in Italy. In the movie, as in the novel, the story is alternatively told by the female character, who survives through prostitution, and by the other protagonist, the architect (Najib), also a migrant, though someone well established in the Italian society: he has been living in Turin for thirty years without maintaining any contact with Arabs, until he meets Amina.

Viewpoints change continuously in *La straniera*. In the film as in the novel, the representation of the female character passes through the masculine filter of the writer and the director. Origins shift too: the story is first told by a non-native author writing in Italian, then by an Italian director who identifies with the two strangers established in Italy. The film, like the novel, pictures the neighborhoods of the two protagonists, both in their country of origin and in the colorful – or less colorful – quarters of Turin at the beginning of the 21st century. The viewer, like the reader, is brought into “another world” which exists round the corner of his street. In that other world, there are people he encounters every day, knowing nothing about their previous lives in their native country. For the film characters, it happens to be Morocco, which is the “aim of many of our holidays, a fascinating land but a world we often only know in a superficial and folkloric way³”. To insist on this closeness/distance, the structure of the movie, imitating the structure of the novel, does not follow a linear path. Flashbacks take the spectator from Turin, Italy, to Telouet or Marrakech, Morocco, and *vice versa*. These transitions, underlined in the novel⁴ by poems inserted in the story, are conveyed, in the movie, through classical cross-fading images.

Marco Turco does not neglect any opportunity to translate into cinematographic language many details of the novel⁵, including, as already noted above, the narrative structure. However, he had to manage with a number of demands⁶, either imposed by the producers or by circumstances: for that reason the male character in the movie is a Moroccan instead of an Iraqi as in the novel. Indeed, it was impossible to organize the filming of the architect's youth in Iraq. Other changes in nationalities, which I will specify below, were also made, but always with the blessings of the writer. As if he were giving a signal of consent, Younis Tawfik can be seen in the movie near the main character played by Ahmed Hafiane, a Tunisian actor who has started a career in Italy with *La straniera*⁷.



Reception in the architect's office⁸

Such changes introduced by the director activate a subtle game inviting the viewer to wonder which person is the real stranger and in the eyes of whom. Feeling like a stranger is part of the migratory experience; it has often been described in the literature of many countries and in numerous cinematographic sequences. It has also been depicted in Italian literature and cinema as it has been experienced by many Italian immigrants for the last two centuries in many towns and villages and streets, all over the world, from Marseilles to New York, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, in Australia, etc.

Now, unlike in the past, Italy receives masses of foreigners. People lose their ordinary landmarks as can be seen in this quotation, from Gian Carlo De Cataldo's novel *The Father and the Foreigner*:

[Diego] felt lonely in the middle of a hostile crowd, lonely with his half salmon in a plastic bag in one hand and tomatoes and oranges in the other. Was that the way foreigners felt? Walid didn't seem to feel uneasy in Italy. On the contrary, Diego realized with a certain and obscure fear that he was the one who felt out of place⁹.

The meaning of this quote is ambiguous and things are turned upside down: because of immigration, Italians might now feel "strangers at home". Following his Italian character's point of view, Giancarlo De Cataldo immerses his reader in the reality of Piazza Vittoria market, in Rome, which is very similar to Porta Palazzo market, in Turin, shot by Marco Turco in *La straniera*. This market is praised in tourist leaflets as the biggest open market in Europe and is recommended as a must see for the tourists visiting Turin¹⁰.

The market has always been, above all places, a scene of migration in all parts of the world. It is a meeting place; it is often an important step on the economic side: people start selling on the market before opening a store¹¹. Native Italian can find it exciting to experience first hand the exoticism in a multiethnic market where they can change their ordinary life without a long and expensive travelling. It is not a coincidence if a long sequence of the movie takes place in the Arab area of the market, next to where the architect lived for thirty years without ever going there. The viewer observes from a steady point of view the character plunging into it and discovering it.



Najib at Porta Palazzo's Market

Another sequence of the movie has the same function and is the counterpart of the sequence at the market, when the architect returns to his native town after thirty years. The same phenomenon is working the other way around, now affecting the character in his native country: so as to suggest both closeness and distance, the camera follows the architect in the taxi which brings him from the airport to the Medina of Marrakech and to the famous Jemaa El-Fna square, passing through the most recent and modern style avenues. The spectator (re-)discovers this environment together with the character and feels, by empathy, both at home and in another world.

Prostitution, metaphor of social relationships

In this movie, the feeling of estrangement occurs not only in places but also when the heroes meet other people. The viewer wonders: who is the Italian and who is the foreigner? There are many opportunities of contacts between Italian characters and migrants: the architect's colleagues (a man and a woman), the bar owner, who is the synthesis of several characters in the novel, the policemen of the Migration office, (who were totally absent from the novel) and Amina's clients.

Amina's clients potentially represent the most frequent occasion of contact between Italians and migrants in the movie. Nine million individuals (almost all men) have recourse to prostitution in Italy¹². Prostitution is not the main matter in the film¹³ nor in Tawfik's novel and it only remains in the background. The writer has collected the testimony of a Moroccan woman for whom events forced her into a life of prostitution. The story of that woman, which inspired Amina's character, corresponds to a social reality: among Italy's fifty or seventy thousand prostitutes, fifteen to twenty five thousand are foreigners, mostly from Nigeria or East European countries. Morocco is far from providing the largest number of prostitutes in Italy.

In correspondence with this social reality, and even if for decades the masculine word "marocchino" has been used pejoratively to designate any sort of person "looking" as non-Italian or non-European, the feminine word "marocchina" does not necessarily imply a negative point of view. In Italy, this type of generalization is reserved to black women, as shown in a very sensitive way by the writer Igiaba Scego in her first novel:

The thing I hated most in my life was the commonplace. [...] In the collective imaginary in Italy, a black woman had precise placements, from the top to the dreariest slums. In the best cases, black women were soul or jazz singers, Olympic athletes, gorgeous models... In the worst, we were lost women, greedy for money and set out to sell ourselves for a couple of filthy bucks¹⁴.

If in the Italian collective imagination, women from Morocco do not have a pre-settled role, it is different in Morocco: a man who leaves the country is called a student, but a single woman leaving the country alone is a prostitute. The Moroccan press regularly echoes polemics, particularly with the Gulf countries where some poor quality television programs back up the stereotypes¹⁵. It is undeniable that in terms of sexual tourism, Morocco's reputation lays on troubling facts confirmed by the Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans residing abroad. This foundation publishes the data of Moroccan migration: "in the Emirates, 70% of the 13 000 migrants are women and half of them belong to prostitution networks¹⁶". Countries where prostitution is exacerbated by poverty, illiteracy – fueled by bad governance and corruption – and by some forms of tourism are often stigmatized. On the contrary, there is little criticism towards rich countries (in this case Western and Middle-East countries), from where many clients come. Relying on Internet forums¹⁷, the affluent sexual adventurers can even exchange bar and hotel addresses in Morocco, where prostitution is illegal and punished by imprisonment. This stigmatizes the prostitute, but not her client who justifies (or creates) the institution of prostitution.

By representing the character of a prostitute, Marco Turco follows a long cinematographic tradition: Amina follows Francesca, in the episode of *Paisà* (Rossellini, 1946) which occurs in Rome, and Cabiria (Fellini, *Nights of Cabiria* 1957¹⁸). We also keep in mind the feminine character in Monicelli's movie *The Great War* (1959), in Pietrangeli's, Pasolini's and Visconti's movies shot in 1960 (*Adua and Friends*, *Mamma Roma* and *Rocco and his brothers* with Nadia's character) and others films where prostitutes are locked up in a brothel: *The Lovemakers* by Bolognini (1961), Fellini's *Roma* (1972) or *Love and Anarchy* by Lina Wertmüller (1973). These are only Italian examples but the prostitute is a movie role all over the world. From Pabst to Von Stroheim, Renoir, Ophüls, Fassbinder, Wilder, Mizoguchi and Scorsese, the list is endless and could be extended to other artistic fields as painting¹⁹, photography, theatre, opera, musicals, where representations of prostitution are countless.

These few Italian examples remind us that, under this aspect of prostitution, Marco Turco's movie makes the movie viewer feel "at home", in his own element. These pictures are familiar to him and represent a codified imagination. Fellini likes the picture of the prostitutes waiting in the rain (in *Nights of Cabiria* and *Roma*, and also in Pietrangeli's *Adua* and in *La straniera*). Almost as frequent is the "dance" of the clients' car (again in Pietrangeli and Fellini, as well as in Marco Turco). Most of the time, the client is off screen or invisible, because he is sheltered by the car window. The negotiation seems to occur with the car not with the man who hides inside, as we can see in many films and again in *La straniera*.



Amina and the clients' cars

The sequences of the film where the protagonist evolves in the reality of prostitution are absent from the novel. They reflect Amina's inability to overcome an invisible and cruel barrier created by her social status rather than her origin. She is caught up in a vortex generated by the relation between dominated and dominant. Prostitution could be for Marco Turco, as it has been for Godard after Mizoguchi, « the metaphor of social relationships as a whole²⁰ ». Amina, like Francesca, Cabiria, Nadia, Adua, Mamma Roma and like the more recent Vesna (Carlo Mazzacurati, *Vesna va veloce*, 1996) and Nadja (Ivano De Matteo, *La bella gente*, 2009), all of them, Italian or foreigner, force society to deal with its contradictions and hypocrisy. The non-Italian origin of Amina is a contingent reality and has a narrative function. In fact, if Amina is on the wrong side, it is from the social point of view: she is on the side of those that the society exploits without leaving them any hope neither expectation. The ending is almost always desperately hopeless: there is no escape for the Tokyoite prostitutes in *Street of shame* (Mizoguchi 1956), there is no escape for Adua, even if her lot is not as tragic as Nadia's (Visconti) nor Mamma Roma's (Pasolini). There is no way to escape for Amina either.

The ending chosen by Marco Turco is completely different from the one Tawfik imagined for his work. Instead of a "fabulous-medical" inspiration, which characterizes this part of the novel, not the more successful – only a reader out of his mind or with bad intents would judge the whole novel by its ending –, Marco Turco uses the grey and horrendous background of a detention center for illegal immigrants. After the smiles and despite the happiness for being together again, it is impossible to forget that the two lovers, Amina and Najib, are locked up in the center where they are filmed with a long diagonal rear track-shot that makes them weaker and weaker. Even if the more optimistic viewers, encouraged by Natasha Atlas' comforting voice, can believe that for Amina the vortex has calmed down, it is also very obvious that many other human beings will remain on the wrong side of the fence.



The end. The detention center for illegal immigrants

The identity game

This ending sequence is already anticipated in the third part of the movie, when the story reaches its turning point and derives completely from the narrative scheme of the novel. In the course of an ordinary police operation, Amina is arrested, interrogated and booked in the police files. The sequence taking place at the police headquarter is the pivot of this turnover. Many minutes pass, allowing the viewer to understand that there is hopelessly no way out: a female police officer with a nice and sweet voice submits Amina to a bureaucratic interrogation, off screen, while the pictures show her when she is shot for the data sheet, when she is booked and her fingerprints are taken. The sequence concludes with a fade to black, unique in the film, just after a long horizontal rear track-shot: Amina's tiny figure remains all alone under the marble plaque which reads that *all are equal before law*.



Amina at the Police Building

In this way, Amina is labeled and receives an identity which seals her hopeless exclusion.

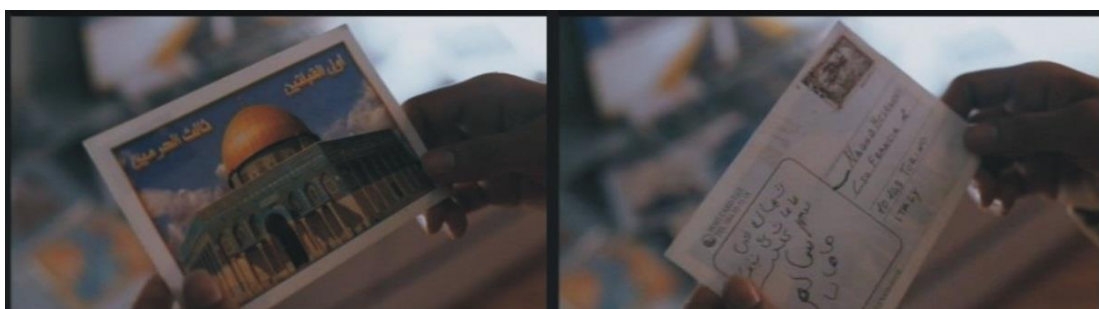
The architect, too, has to play the identity game: in Tawfik's novel, he remains anonymous, but he gets a name in the movie, Najib, as well as a second name and even a business card. A freeze frame allows the spectator to read it: Arch. Naghib Menraoui (and to notice that it is transcribed in the Egyptian pronunciation not in the Moroccan one).



The architect's card

Once again, the revealed identity leads to an unexpected turnover, missing in the novel: while the architect is trying to find Amina, who has disappeared, their stories intersect again thanks to a phone call made by the police woman who had arrested Amina. From that moment, the movie's rhythm changes and speeds up, there are no more flashbacks: the viewer shares the characters' present time and their fight against exclusion. The game does not stop for the architect: the only scheme he can imagine to enter the detention center for illegal immigrants is to give up his own identity. He has no more name, only the face of someone born elsewhere.

Najib had no alternative. Had he continued to play the identity game, he would have lost his bearings. So many labels had been attached to his image that he had even become inaccessible to himself. For his female colleague, in love with him, he is *the Arab*; for some fellows crossed one night in a shady place he is a "marocchino di merda", in spite of the white cashmere scarf he always wear around his neck; but for the young Moroccan girl, he is Italian. Amina blames him for having forgotten his own language and for behaving like an Italian. She makes him discover the only reasonable position, from which he can overcome the real social and moral obstacle, which prevents him from staying by her side: "There's only one thing I am sure of: it is that I was not born here". Before he could come to that conclusion, Amina had made him more visible as an alien, exposing details that make him closer to her: for instance a postcard she sees while she is nosing around his sumptuous flat. The viewer sees the picture very quickly, but thanks to a freeze frame, al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem can be recognized and a few words written in a clumsy Arabic can be read.



The postcard, both sides

These tiny details reveal the director's search for authenticity. Even in the dialogues, Marco Turco pays attention to the linguistic aspect. The Dutch actress who plays Amina, Kaltoum Boufangacha, is of Moroccan origin and her accent is authentic. Even Ahmed Hafiane's Tunisian accent, which creates a distance very similar to the one manifested by the character, is plausible, particularly when he goes back to Morocco after thirty years of absence and meets again with his family: they are surprised to find him so changed, even in the way he talks. The function of this linguistic distance is both narrative and psychological. This is perceptible in a sequence that takes place in a luxurious restaurant in Turin:

Amina : *Ana smiti Amina*²¹. [My name is Amina.]

Najib: It's a pretty name.

Amina: *Ma tkalmch al 'arabya?* [Don't you speak Arabic?]

Najib: I don't understand your dialect.

Amina: *Darija! Ana ntkalem l'arabya al fossha. Ana qarya.* [Dialect! I speak literal Arabic. I can read and write.]

Najib: Listen. I have been here since thirty years, more or less, and I haven't frequented Arab people. Italian is my language.

Incomprehension expressed by Najib is more due to a refusal to communicate in Arabic than a difficulty in understanding Amina's pronunciation²².

Multicultural Italians

The Italian main characters of the movie are all very friendly towards strangers and immigrants. Unlike many other representations of the migratory phenomenon in Italy, *La straniera* does not show feelings of rejection²³. Marco Turco has decided to portray an open-minded, welcoming and human, Italy. This aspect of contemporary Italy is as authentic as the xenophobic habits, frequently depicted by the media²⁴.

Marco Turco's Italian characters, while open-minded, are not free from stereotype and prejudice. With difficulty, these characters acknowledge their prejudices. The architect's female colleague seems to see Najib as an Arab lover who makes her fantasize²⁵; the male colleague (who was the cause of the meeting between Amina and the architect and was, in the novel, not an Italian but a compatriot of the protagonist) desires exotic experiences and, despite having a Brazilian wife, he is always seeking new "cultural" experiences to satisfy his immoderate libido.

The other two Italian characters, the bar owner and the police woman, were invented for the film and are absent in the novel. They have an important narrative function as they are told the two protagonists' story. They also symbolize the possibility to wipe out our usual and ordinary mental boundaries. It is the Italian bar owner who helps Najib find Amina's tracks. Najib first meets him after his wandering in the multicultural market of Porta Palazzo, that "other world" so close to him but also so distant, in a bar crowded only with Moroccans. Najib, and also the viewer, feel surprised not to meet a stranger in such a place:

Najib: But you are Italian!

Bar owner: My wife is from Casablanca and I am a Muslim. Is it OK for you?
Najib: Of course, sorry. I am sorry.



The bar owner between his wife and his employee

Other boundaries disappear thanks to the police woman, played by Sonia Bergamasco. Amina's interrogation is a sort of puzzle game in which the various pieces are alternatively shown. The flashbacks and the same story told from Najib's point of view change the ordeal into a friendly give-and-take. The two young women exchange their experiences and hopes about love and motherhood. They also achieve together the limits of illegal complicity: Amina is left alone for a while. She thinks she can understand that she has the possibility to escape, even if the whole sequence is ambiguous. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about Najib and the police woman's complicity when the architect manages to be locked up in the detention center for illegal immigrants in order to meet Amina, about to be expelled from Italy.



Amina and the policewoman

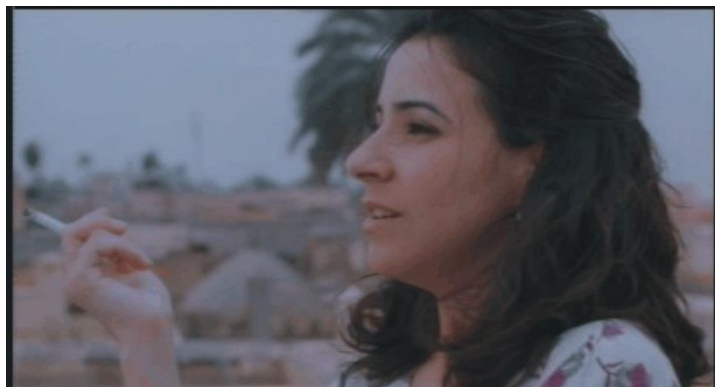
Beyond complicity, the police woman (Sonia Bergamasco) feels empathy towards Amina, undocumented alien but so much like her as a woman. The two characters seem to merge together. This can be seen through the repetition, in two different circumstances, of the following dialogue:

- I'm only doing my job.
- So, it's a shit job!

This last expression "shit job" is first pronounced by Amina during the interrogation and is repeated, in a following scene, by the police woman while she speaks to her superior

(another police woman). She uses the words Amina had previously shouted at her face. This repeated dialogue emphasizes the sensation, for the viewer, that boundaries are artificial. Real or mental borders have for only result to stop the emancipation process.

Amina “contaminates” another woman who becomes able to adopt someone else’s point of view, to act and feel according to another code; Amina herself has been “contaminated” by Italian women, for instance in the way she dresses or makes her hair. The two sequences shot in the restaurant, just like the two sequences mentioned at the Market, suggest that to know the code is enough to cancel reactions of rejection, to melt in the scenery, to find the right place, that is, to be (and not only to feel) at home. These sequences also underline, even inadequately – a more elegant dress than the usual ones – the sense of Amina’s struggle for emancipation, a struggle she started when she was a child and had to take off her foulard, not for religious but for social reasons. This fight of hers is slowed down because she cannot find the resources to maintain herself. That is how, as a woman, Amina gets a universal dimension. In fact, in the movie, Amina has a double in Morocco. This double is represented through Najib’s younger sister who, unlike many young Moroccans, is not “shaped for exile²⁶”. On the contrary, she is determined to succeed, with or without²⁷ a headscarf, not to depend on anybody except herself. Thanks to the struggles fought by many women like Amina, she feels strong enough to find her own way to emancipation from any kind of domination.



Najib’s sister, the double of Amina

The film calls for the elimination of mental borders through the universal dimension of Amina’s character, the games played around origins and nationalities, the soundtrack, which incorporates many different musical influences. As such it is a plea against exclusion and for mutual understanding.

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¹ An Italian version of this article has been published by *Line@editoriale*, the electronic review of the Toulouse University Italian research center (*Line@ editoriale*, n°3, Presses Universitaires de Toulouse Le Mirail, 2012, "Migranti e italiani, ma chi è lo straniero? A proposito del film di Marco Turco, *La straniera* (2009)", on line:

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² Younis Tawfik, *La straniera*, Milan, Bompiani, 1999. 125 000 copies of the novel have been sold in the first two years.

³ Ada Lonni, *Immigrati*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 2003, p. 54. My translation.

⁴ For a study of Tawfik's first novel, see my article: « Regards croisés sur l'immigration marocaine en Italie. *La straniera* de Younis Tawfik » in *Babel*, Université du Sud Toulon-Var, n.11, 2005, p. 255-286, and on line: <http://www.transfinito.eu/spip.php?article1351>.

⁵ On this topic, see Francis Vanoye, *L'adaptation littéraire au cinéma*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2011.

⁶ During a meeting at the University Paul Valéry of Montpellier (France), in February 2011, « L'Italie des Autres », Marco Turco talked about these necessities and about the huge difficulties encountered by the project of this "small movie full of passion". Started in 2005 and completed in 2009, after two years of interruption, the film has no distributor. It has been shown during several festivals or cultural manifestations, and also at the University of Montpellier.

⁷ He plays Hassan, a Tunisian mechanic immigrated in Italy, in Carlo Mazzacurati's film, *La giusta distanza* (2007). In an interview, Ahmed Hafiane describes how he has been contacted while he was shooting *La straniera*: « Conversazione con Ahmed Hafiane. Nei panni dell'arabo in Italia, con onore », *Cinemafrica. Africa e diaspora nel cinema*, 3 November 2007, <http://www.cinemafrica.org/spip.php?article486>

⁸ The photograms are taken from the movie and they are reproduced with Marco Turco's kind permission.

⁹ Gian Carlo De Cataldo, *Il padre e lo straniero*, Rome, e/o, 2004, p. 21. (My translation.) The novel has been published in an English translation, *The Father and the Stranger*, New York, Europa Editions, 2008.

¹⁰ See, for instance, *L'Eco di Torino*, 31 October 2010. <http://www.ecoditorino.org/porta-palazzo-torino-il-mercato-allaperto-piu-grande-deuropa-come-meta-turistica.htm>. See also Mohammed Lamsuni's short stories that take place at Porta Palazzo: *Porta palazzo mon amour*, Naples, Mangrovia, 2006 (first edition 2003, Avicenna).

¹¹ This economic phenomenon is typical of immigration; see the inquiry I have conducted in an area with a huge concentration of Italian migrants in a small town of North-eastern France: Isabelle Felici, « Le marché de Villerupt, vivante et pittoresque illustration du brassage des populations », François Roth ed., *Lorraine : Terre d'accueil et de brassage des populations*, Nancy, Presses universitaires de Nancy, 2001, p. 287-299.

¹² In the field of prostitution, data are obviously approximated. That estimation was given by an Italian newspaper, "Prostituzione in Italia. Ecco i numeri", *laRepubblica.it*, 21 December 2002:

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¹³ But prostitution is the main subject of Marco Turco's last film: *In altri tempi*, 2013.

¹⁴ Igiaba Scego, *Rhoda*, Rome, Sinnos, 2004. My translation.

¹⁵ See for example Hicham Houdaifa, "Prostitution, sorcellerie, une bien piètre image de la femme marocaine...", *lavieeco.com*, 20 September 2010: <http://www.lavieeco.com/news/societe/prostitution-sorcellerie-une-bien-pietre-image-de-la-femme-marocaine...-17540.html>

¹⁶ The situation is the same in Saudi Arabia (28 000 Moroccan migrants). We quote from an article by Ibrahima Koné, from March the 2nd, 2009, published on the site yabiladi.com (in French) for Moroccans in the world: <http://www.yabiladi.com/article-societe-3064.html>.

¹⁷ For an analysis of these Internet forums, see Natacha Ordioni, « Une analyse postcoloniale du tourisme sexuel », *Oublier les colonies*, Isabelle Felici & Jean-Charles Vegliante eds., Paris, Mare & Martin, 2011, p. 323-336.

¹⁸ Fellini shows, *en passant*, many prostitutes in *Roma* 1972.

¹⁹ Or both painting and cinema. This might remind us a scene in *Senso* (1954) where Luchino Visconti made a deviated use of a painting by Telemaco Signorini, *La toilette del mattino*, 1898, where the painter represents prostitutes in a brothel. See Leonardo Campano, « Iconografia dei Vinti », in *Camillo Boito e il sistema delle arti. Dallo storicismo ottocentesco al melodramma cinematografico di Luchino Visconti*, Giacomo Agosti & Costanza Mangione eds., Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2002, p. 153.

²⁰ Alain Bergala, *Godard au travail*, Paris, Cahiers du cinéma, 2006, p. 102.

²¹ The words in italics are pronounced in Moroccan Arabic. The architect answers in Italian. We transcribe and translate from the original soundtrack.

²² In the novel, this linguistic difficulty between the Middle East character and the Moroccan girl is totally plausible. On the contrary, it is very improbable that a young Moroccan went to Italy in the seventies and became an architect. In those times, many Moroccan students received grants to go and study in French or English speaking countries, not in Italy.

²³ Among the films that describe, and denounce manifestations of xenophobia, we would like to quote *Pummarò* (Michele Placido, 1990) and *La giusta distanza* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 2007) as well as the more recent *Terraferma*, (Emanuele Crialesi, 2012). See Sonia Cincinelli's anthology of movies dealing with migration in Italy: *Senza frontiere, l'immigrazione nel cinema italiano*, Rome, edizioni Kappa, 2012 (first edition 2009).

²⁴ It must be said that xenophobia has been in a way institutionalized in Italy with the presence, in Silvio Berlusconi's government, of ministers from the Lega Nord Party. A painful example of a former minister's attitude is given by a regional TV channel, c6tv, during a meeting organized by the Lega Nord Party in front of the Moroccan Consulate in Milan, on March the 19th, 2010: <http://www.c6.tv/video/8552-borghesio-spacciano-sporcano-il-consolato-marocchino-va-spostato-gli-immigrati-fa-di-ogni-erba-un-fascio>

²⁵ Recent examples of Arab lovers can be found in contemporary Italian novels: Rossana Campo, *Lezioni di Arabo*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2010 (but the story takes place in Paris) and also, from a parodic point of view, in the funny and caustic novel by Amara Lakhous, *Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio*, New York, Europa editions, 2008 (*Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a Piazza Vittoria*, Rome, e/o, 2006) through the vision of Stefania, Amedeo/Ahmed's girlfriend.

²⁶ This expression, "Tagliato per l'esilio" (shaped for exile), is the title of a short story and of the homonymous volume by Karim Metref, *Tagliati per l'esilio*, Naples, Mangrovia, 2008.

²⁷ An American woman writer of Moroccan origins concludes her analyses of the debate occurred in France upon the foulard (and not the veil), paraphrasing a famous sentence: « I do not approve of the headscarf, but I will defend to the death the right of women to wear it. » Laïla Lalami, "Beyond the Veil", New York, *The Nation*, 10 December 2007. <http://www.thenation.com/article/beyond-veil>