

Marginals, victims and feminist whores. Continuities and ruptures in the mediatization of the sex trade in Argentina

Marginales, víctimas y putas feministas. Continuidades y rupturas en la mediatización del comercio sexual en Argentina

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Abstract

Since 1994 Argentina has had an organized movement of women in the sex trade and who, from different political identities, demand the recognition of their rights. This article reconstructs the local public debate about the sex trade based on its mediatization. We will characterize three periods of mediatization that express the displacements and continuities in the positions on commercial sex in Argentina. A first period is devoted to prostitution as a dimension of "marginality"; a second moment is dominated by the overlap between trafficking, sexual exploitation and sex work; and there is a third period in which sex workers take the public stage by deploying specific media discussion and advocacy strategies. Confirmed here are the three dominant archetypes in this mediatization of prostitution—the marginal, the victim and the feminist whore— that correspond to the changes in the women's movement and public policies. They express the specific states of the sociosexual imaginary in each period.

Key words: mediatization, sex trade, feminisms, Argentina

Resumen

Desde 1994 las mujeres que ejercen comercio sexual en Argentina se encuentran organizadas y, desde diferentes identidades políticas, demandan el reconocimiento de sus derechos. Este artículo reconstruye el debate público local sobre comercio sexual a partir de su mediatización. Caracteriza tres períodos que expresan los desplazamientos y continuidades en los posicionamientos sobre sexo comercial en Argentina. Un primer período abocado a la prostitución como dimensión de la "marginalidad"; un segundo momento dominado por el solapamiento entre trata, explotación sexual y trabajo sexual; y un tercer período en el que las trabajadoras sexuales toman la escena pública desplegando estrategias particulares de discusión e incidencia mediática. Se afirma aquí que los tres arquetipos dominantes en esta mediatización de la prostitución—la marginal, la víctima y la puta feminista— se corresponden con mutaciones en el movimiento de mujeres y las políticas públicas y expresan estados específicos del imaginario sociosexual en cada periodo.

Palabras clave: mediatización, sexo comercial, feminismos, Argentina

1. Introduction

In 2012, in a half empty classroom at Universidad de Buenos Aires, the Association of Women Prostitutes of Argentina (Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de Argentina - AMMAR) developed and presented a rough draft of the law on sex workers. At the end of 2017, in the same school but in an auditorium with 700 seats full of people, the film *Alanis*¹ was shown, followed by a debate with the President of AMMAR, Georgina Orellano. *Alanis* is a film considered a "child of the times": it expresses the tensions and debates regarding the sex trade. It does not romanticize or expose it as an experience of mere violence or coercion. The story, the portrays the life of a woman who offers sex services in her apartment, beginning with the searching and shutting down of her operation by the police. Alanis is left in the street with her son and her partner in jail accused of pandering. The rest of the story shows how Alanis's life is affected by this punishing intervention by the State.

Police persecution was the reason that over 20 years ago, a group of women working in prostitution began to demand their rights from the State and civil society². From different political identities and conceptions on the activity –sex workers and women in situation of prostitution³- began to fight against the regulations that oppressed them, among others, the right to freedom. The organization of these collectives is a milestone in the historic political dispute regarding regulation of the sex trade, and that starting from this moment had a new key figure.

The transformations on the subject in the last three decades in Argentina implied specific modes of mediatization that we will try to reconstruct throughout this article. The objective is to characterize three moments of public controversy regarding the sex trade that –for analytical purposes- allow for analyzing the development of the positions in regards to prostitution, sex work, and people trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation in contemporary Argentina. They also show the rise and fall of the network of alliances involving gender and sex activists as well as political parties.

We identify a first period that presents prostitution like an aspect of social "marginality" to be portra-

yed and denounced, and in which the voice of the women organizations is practically absent. A second time period dominated by the anti-trafficking policies in which sexual exploitation, sex work and trafficking overlapped. Here, women in situation of prostitution would be eclipsed in the fight against sexual exploitation, and sex workers would be object of criminalization and delegitimizing politics as interlocutors. A third period, that of present day, is one in which the sex workers take the public scene by force based on strategies of communication and advocacy strategies.

2. Theoretical Framework

We begin by understanding mass media as gender technologies (de Lauretis, 1992) that disseminate moral education strategies. The line of investigation that frames this work studies the processes of configuration of meanings on the gender relations, positions, and practices. Its social valuation is in the frame of the sex-gender system, "cultural symbols" and "the normative concepts" (Scott, 2000) that make these differences socially intelligible.

Prostitution, as object of public controversy, is fertile ground for observing the sociosexual imaginaries of an era. The historic debates on the activity show its key place in the configuration of moralities and also explain the diversity of disciplines that have been used to study it. In this sense, any state of the issue would be incomplete. Therefore, we indicate two focuses that have been ineludible in the investigations: the discussion on the social status of synthesized prostitution in the sexual exploitation or sex work dichotomy (McKlintock, 1993; Pateman, 1995; Kempadoo, 1997; O`Connell, 2002; Osborne, 2004, among others); and the sex market government models –prohibition, abolition, regulation and depenalization- (Guy, 1994; Berkins & Korol, 2007, among others). From gender studies, the polarization of the debate and its link with the conceptions on women's sexuality has also been made an issue (Ferguson, 1984; Chapkis, 1997).

These approaches have their correlative in Argentina with already classic works like that of Guy (1994) and Múgica (2001); and other more recent that would be referred to throughout the article.

There is also a series of work on mediatic representations of the sex market (Sabsay, 2002; Saiz-Echazarreta, 2016).

3. Methodology

In regards to methodology, this article is a critical analysis of perspective of the discourses (Pêcheux, 1980; Angenot, 2010) that shows the relation between these and its production material conditions (Hall, 1981). An abductive approach of the materials (Ginzburg, 1989) is performed, which is to say, the circumstantial interpretation is preferred, that "starts with the facts without, at first, having any particular theory (...) the consideration of the facts suggests the hypotheses" (Ford, 1994: 75). Para Ginzburg, the value of this approach lies in the possibility to find *revealing indications in the marginal and irrelevant details*, (1989: 123). In the communicational and cultural analysis, circumstantial knowledge engages the connection of the cultural objects with the resources that these mobilize in their configuration: imaginaries, valuations, memories, experiences that are put into action in each discursive practice. At the same time, we are in line with the feminist cultural critique (Richard, 2009) that seeks to understand the disputes in the distribution of resources and symbolic power in and from culture.

We select from this article a combination of materials that offer indications to comprehend the mediatization of prostitution and developed what Thompson calls "depth hermeneutic" (1991). A heterogeneous and random corpus comprised of press clippings and audiovisual products was used. The purpose of this article is not to analyze in depth fragments of the materials but rather observe them like a discursive *continuum* that constitutes a dominant rhetoric on prostitution for each period. Thus, we propose three communicational archetypes that work as analyzers of mediatization and correspond to particular historic moments in the debate on sex trade. The first period is defined by the socioeconomic and political crisis in Argentina and the criminalization and stigmatization of prostitution as part of the urban marginalities. The second is oriented to the rise of the anti-trafficking discourse and politics in a context of gaining rights in terms of gender and sexualities and the recovery

of the social plot. Finally, present day is marked by the explosion of the feminist struggles and their impact on the debate on sexual agency.

4. Marginals (1995-2008)

The first period of analysis comes from the mid-1990s –time in which the laws of urban coexistence are being discussed and women in prostitution begin to organize- to the passing of Law 26.364 on prevention and sanction of people trafficking and victim assistance in 2008.

In this first period, mediatization of prostitution was defined by the social historical frame –the sociopolitical crisis of the late 1990s⁴ and the later recovery -, by a mediatic conformation of concentrated property (Becerra & Mastrini, 2006) and the consolidation of the *tele-reality* (Vilches 1995; Mondelo & Gaitán, 2002) as communicative framework. There was an symbolic irruption of a group of marginalized subjects, conflicts and scenarios, in different objects of mass culture: New Argentine Cinema; non-fiction literature; video activism and documentarist groups and the music subgenre called "cumbia villera" made in poor neighborhoods, televised journalistic reporting. During this stage, the imagining of prostitution was based in classic rhetoric imaginaries and operations (criminalization, the pathologization and moralization). But two features stand out: the inclusion of women that offer commercial sex in the group of mediatized urban "marginalities" and the gradual growth of a victimization rhetoric.

Televised narratives on prostitution⁵ constructed the *social context* like a space inhabited by people in conflict with the law, morality, other members of society. But above all, they are identified as *the marginals*. The social context was not thought of as the set of institutions and agencies that organize everyday life, but rather an exterior and conflictive space that threatens a naturalized order of said life. This social cartography locates the threats that stalk society and defines the limits of people and socially acceptable and unacceptable practices. Social problems are problems of *poor people and marginals* alternatively known as *exotic, sick, criminals and victims*.

Prostitution, as a practice that goes against of gender norms, historically in conflict with the law, morality and good society, was one of the recurring topics of this reality. It was mediatized based on two dominant narrative modalities: the *dramatic/ of denouncement*, that approaches prostitution like a social problem and whose main operations are the victimization and criminalization. And the *color modality*, that presents its as part of the urban sociability, a scenery of a life in the sex trade. Main operations are exploration and education (Justo von Lurzer, 2011).

Each modality presents a stereotypical position of the person: the *victim*, that suffers from having crossed the limit between natural, normal, good sex (Rubin, 1989), and the *disruptive*, that has crossed that limit but has know-how and sexual rationality that is valued. Of course, the possible positions within the sex market are not limited to these, not only for the diversity of activities involved in this market but rather for the diversity of paths of entry, permanence and conditions of exercise, to mention some of the variables that give depth to a universe that, in its journalistic and fictional version, is homogenized and simplified.

A central aspect of this period that is going to remain as a characteristic of journalism to present day is the resource of experience as mechanism of authentication. They would favor the casuistic approaches that displace the information and the argumentation as modes of interpretation and explication of the facts. What is interesting is that of the "cases" presented (girls, grandmothers, travesties, foreigners, VIP girls, legal, clandestine, enslaved), the one that does not form part of the universe during this period is the organized woman. Excluded is the discussion and analysis of the political organization and action of the women that offer sex for money. This absence is even more important if we remember that the period corresponds to debates and interventions in the governing of the sex trade.

The inclusion of the voice of the activists would imply complicate the representations, avoid the homogenization of the sex trade and, especially, reestablish prostitution in a frame of demands of the citizens and the collective as condition of political action. Thus, the very individualization and essentialization of the casuistic would be stirred and

would require explicative frames that will exceed the personal trajectory and replace the structural dimension.

Another significant fact is that the frame of a compassionate and committed television and the denouncement form a knot leading to transformation; the television represents for change. The social and political crises that marked this period included a disbelief in the government institutions and of party politics as instrument of social intervention and therefore the place of the transforming agent could not be in that territory. Neither could it be occupied by the women in prostitution in the sense that they are construed as victims and not as subjects of political action. Thus, a condition of possibility is created in that the political figure be the television itself as medium.

The victim, then, is a necessary figure to this communicational scheme that will feed more and more the spectacle of the rescue. The color narrative modality was gradually abandoned in favor of the dramatic of denouncement, based on the tendency of the public and political agenda that began to address prostitution in the frame of discussions on human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation.

5. Victims (2008-2015).

The process of political debate and activism that goes from the mid-2000s to the first passing of the trafficking law was promoted and sustained by feminist abolitionist organizations in association with legislators and with the support of the national and provincial governments that decided to adjust to the guidelines of international policy (Morcillo & Varela, 2017)⁶. Between 2008 and 2012, this process continued until achieving not only the modification of the original text to eliminate consent and consider all forms of prostitution as forced, but also the creation of a series of punitive policies on the sex trade.

The regulatory dimension was always in the center of the debate: what mode of governing prostitution is the most appropriate, what are the policies derived, who are its agents of implementation and control, and who are the policies aimed at. This period

was of consolidation of a hegemonic viewpoint; people trafficking will be the prism for prostitution. During this phase, all that related to the sex market is reduced to a problem of trafficking and all intervention of the sex trade was reduced to salvation or punishment. Between 2008 and 2015, regulatory policies are put into place that decreased the rights of sex workers. Among the most significant: the generalized closure of brothels nationwide, the 2011 prohibition to publish sex trade advertisements in graphic press and campaigns against the sex trade in public areas via promotional flyers.

5.1 Invisibilization of sex work: be victim or cease to exist.

This second phase does not produce a radical shift from the previous period but rather continues its tendencies. The victim figure had already been built as a mediatic reference, the rescues from situations of exploitation and the experiences of “leaving a life of prostitution” were common stories. The massification of the emblematic figure of Marita Verón⁷ and the identification via the mediatic construction of her case had condensed into the motto “not one more female victim of the prostitution ring”. Any of us could be Marita or, even more so, from now on we are all Maritas. If before the casuistic predominated via biographical narratives, now that is going to combine with the construction of an anonymous set of victims often supported by a statistic of tautological reliability (number of women missing or rescued from the prostitution rings).

The closing of brothels officially came about based on decrees, local laws and/or revisions of criminal codes. It was also based on the intervention of civil society organizations and neighborhood organizations that carried out symbolic closures and denouncement procedures very similar to those that had been shown by media in previous years. What was tendency in the previous phase –for neighbors to organize to “eradicate” prostitution from their residential areas (Sabsay, 2009)- found in the anti-trafficking campaign a box of resonance and resort to procedures stabilized by journalism.

Note that in Argentina, prostitution is not a crime. However, exploitation of prostitution of others and people trafficking for the purposes of sexual ex-

ploitation are crimes. Also, offering sex services in public space continues to be illegal in many of the country’s provinces. The norms passed and/or implemented during this phase go directly against the exercise of all forms of sex trade and are not accompanied by public policies of reemployment for women in prostitution or include alternative ways to work in sex trade like the rehabilitation of cooperatives among women. Neither are they accompanied by the repealing of norms that penalize prostitution in the public space. They indicate, then, a cultural and political perspective that sees the sexuality of women as an object to protect and care for by third parties. Any alternative that proposes an articulation between body, sex, and money that deviates from the conceptualization of sexual exploitation is seen as an aberration or directly excluded from the horizon of the possible.

The punitive-victim scheme of this period promoted the tendencies of that previous phase until the mediatic and political existence of sex workers became practically non-viable. A symptomatic example was the Decalogue for the journalistic treatment of trafficking and sexual exploitation (Red PAR, 2010) whose 6th article recommended “to not use terms like sex work or sex worker for the treatment of human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation or cases of prostitution”. Although it would not be correct to use the terms in trafficking cases, that refer to a crime and not work, it is not necessarily applicable to cases of prostitution which is considered a work activity for large group of people. In a context dominated by abolitionist positions⁸, a decalogue of these characteristics eliminated a key figure of the debate from the representational surface and conditioned the journalistic work to impede offering plural information and important sources. In this sense, the abolition of prostitution is a paradigm of intervention that sustains the need to eradicate all forms of prostitution from societies in the sense that they constitute a mode of slavery and violence against the women who practice it.

During this period, then, the media continued the habitual strategy of stigmatization and criminalization: prostitution is linked with crimes like drug trafficking or gambling, irregular immigration status and the pornography industry. These affirmations stem from the revelation of the journalistic notes published in the newspapers *La Nación* and *Clarín* between 2008 and 2015 –the largest and

with nationwide publication- with the key words: prostitution, sex work, sexual exploitation, pandering and human trafficking.

In relation to the discourse of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, three issues appear: the systematic denouncement of searches and closing of prostitution spaces based on the argument for dismantling networks and rescuing victims. There is also circulation of biographical narratives of salvation and an exit to exploitation. In fact, some testimonial givers like Alike Kinan⁹ became new spokespeople for the abolitionist movement. The denouncement of police collusion to facilitate the functioning of prostitution spaces was also widespread.

5.2 Violence as prism

There are two facts that contributed to the stabilization of the victimization rhetoric. In 2009, the Law of Full Protection was passed to prevent, sanction and eradicate violence against women (herein referred to the Law of Gender Violence) and the Law of Audiovisual Communication Services (herein referred to as Law of SCA). The first typified the multiples modes of violence and put the "female victim" as the dominant figure. The abolitionist discourse would endorse its positioning in this frame and would reaffirm that all forms of prostitution constitute violence.

The Law of SCA was articulated with the law of gender violence to protect the rights of women in relation to the sexist and stereotyped representations. Of course, I do not sustain at all that these laws constituted a regression. They have been victories of the women's movement and of the organizations that worked for a democratic radio diffusion. I am presenting the way in which certain positions were formed based on that window of opportunity. It is no coincidence that prohibiting advertising of sex services in graphic media occurred in 2011 in the context of a strong discussion on sexism in the media. It had been called mediatic violence and it was understood that the services being offered in the advertisements referred to situations of trafficking and/or exploitation.

The sex workers not only distance themselves from the classification of victims but characterize the

violence on the sex market in a way that is more complex than feminist abolitionists: it is not sexual violence but rather institutional and economic violence –economic exploitation derived from the lack of legislation that regulates the labor conditions – those that are central to the construction of demands on the State.

It is necessary to indicate that these multiple victimizations –victims of violence, of prostitution networks, of media sexism- are established as paradigms in a context of extending more rights on genders and sexualities¹⁰ and in the process of revitalizing of the State as a political figure and of the policy like a tool of social transformation. It also coincides with the phase of steady recovery of the economy and the provision of subsidy policies to national industry and production. These events implied come changes in the programming schedules and in certain promotional strategies. The entertainment and news continue being to today the top spaces, but *tele-reality* decided in favor of local fictions produced via incentive programs. It is paradoxical that in this context of dynamization of the debate on gender and sexualities and of democratization of audiovisual communication media, sex workers made a great effort to legitimize and make their voice heard as well as their demands.

In synthesis, in this stage, the subsumption of all forms of sex trade, exploitation and trafficking, and the generalization of victimization rhetoric as tone created as scenario of monological mediatization (Voloshinov, 1992).

6. Feminist whores (2015 to present)

The combination of politics implemented during the previous stage and the impasse of the dialogues for the pre-eminence of the anti-trafficking discourse required the development of new strategies on behalf of the sex workers movement. It was imperative to reposition their demands and experiences in a context of invisibilization, delegitimization and rights abuse due to punitive policies (Varela & Daich, 2014). There is an interesting first movement in the way of publicly presenting the debate: the most traditional axis on the different models is used to focus on the consequences of politics implemented using the argument of the battle against sexual exploitation and trafficking.

This would be the crack in the abolitionist scheme via which the sex workers would portray various modes of political and communicational activism. Becoming victims of the anti-trafficking policies was a tactic that corrode the victimization rhetoric from within.

One of the traits of this communicational dispute would be the subversion or reassigning of meanings of many of the mottos that had become common sense, for example: "Not one prostitute less" and "No customers, no money"¹¹. There were also new mottos and interventions to decrease the confusion existing between sex work and trafficking. When the crusade began against advertisements in graphic media, flyers started to be used –known as "papelitos"– in public space, stuck to lamp posts, columns and walls of commercial spaces. Organizations of the civil society and the Buenos Aires City Government carried out "clean up" campaigns considering that behind these papers there was a potential situation of sexual exploitation. The practice became commonplace and today it is often that you see people take down papers as they walk by. The sex workers created a counter-campaign that explained the difference between sex work and trafficking and showed the consequences of prohibition: increase in promotional costs, increase in the price of internet advertising, among others. From AMMAR, they carried out a poster campaign that said: "Don't be an accomplice. Don't take it down. Trafficking can't be beat by taking down our papers. Stop persecuting sex workers. #SexWorkIsNotTrafficking. We are not victims, we are jeopardized workers".

Another one of the mottos that undermined common senses was "the whore that stopped you", created in the context of the first national women's strike (08/03/2017) alluding to the popular insult. In a similar sense, sex workers fully support the motto "They are not our children" to differentiate themselves from certain political expressions (those responsible of the genocide are not children of the whores, those who govern against the people are not children of the whores).

In specific relation to communication media, sex workers engaged three types of actions: on one hand, the intensive use of social networks as platforms of political activism (Clúa, 2015). They produced personalized communication pieces

and products: the magazine of the Constitución neighborhood, *Tacones lejanos*; various *fanzines*; a weekly radio program on the Subte union station, *Servicio completo. El programa de las putas feministas*¹²; and some audiovisual pieces like *Trabajo sexual en primera persona*¹³, a series of interviews. Thirdly, they took control of the traditional mediatic spaces. In this period, we find a growing number of interviews with important figures of the movement. A new displacement in the biographic narratives: those voices represent a political collective with an institutional inscription. They do not project the individual experience of all the women in the sex market but rather indicate the particularities of a group within that set. There is no homogeneity but rather a heterogeneous one.

During this stage, AMMAR began to generate reports in alliance with university researchers, civil society and defense organizations that were open and respectful of their demands¹⁴. This information was presented in lectures, workshops, academic events and other educative, cultural and political spaces. In 2017, Georgina Orellano, president of AMMAR, even gave a TEDx Talk¹⁵.

Another milestone was the opening of AMMAR to other sectors in the sex trade. Up to that point, the large majority of the activists and the demands were related to sex workers in the street and establishments destined to such purposes. With the rise of the anti-trafficking policies, the closing of the establishments and raids on the so called "privados" –apartments in which one or several women performed sex work– the spectrum of the demands became larger and the composition of the collective became more diverse. More sex workers joined, in addition to porn industry actresses and internet workers.

Interventions were made on the abuses of sex worker rights like the launching of *Putyseñal* (a cell-phone app to report cases of institutional violence) or the campaign to repeal the criminal laws still valid in various Argentine provinces carried out in together with workers from the popular economy affected by the same laws. In discursive terms, another of the modes of pressuring abolition and its punitive actions was the establishing of the slogan "Always with the prostitutes, never with the yutas"¹⁶.

Calling one's self "feminist whore" thus transformed into a sign of identity for those who protest for the rights of sex workers and for many other people that have been observing in that syntagm a way to dispute meaning inside the feminisms and women's movement. Contrary to other Latin American countries, like Brazil, in those which the stigma "whore" was quickly adopted by defense organizations of the rights of women in prostitution, Argentina maintained a certain distrust and tended to reject this term. In the case of the women in situation of prostitution (AMMADH) sustained very early on the idea that "No woman is born a prostitute" and in the case of AMMAR, for years it denied the term "whore" and opposed it in the case of the worker¹⁷.

The diversification of AMMAR, the changing of the leading groups, the alliances with other figures also from the international environment –the exchange with collectives and key figures from Spain was important (Martinez-Perez, 2017)– became strong in a local context in which the debates in the feminisms became more intense. The #NiUnaMenos¹⁸ movement that began in 2015 formed a very heterogeneous group of organizations, collectives and feminist people. It began to carry out actions against the violence and later its spectrum of intervention was broadened. In June of that year, the first large march was held by #NiUnaMenos and preparatory assemblies were made for such and the following public actions –including the first national women's strike –. AMMAR not only participated actively in these spaces but also managed to make their demands heard and included in the movement. The debates recovered old axes of dissent: victimization as political positioning for the demanding of rights and discussion on what dimensions of the life of women would construct terrain for political demand. Sexual agency and the right to pleasure are two topics that revitalized the feminist agenda.

Likewise, every year for the last 30 years in Argentina, National Women's Meetings are held. They feature an enormous amount of workshops on various topics and perspectives or antagonistic political positions; sex workers did not have their own space until 2016 in the 31st annual meetings. These workshops that have now been held 3 years in a row have more attendees sign up than spots available, especially young people, interested in hearing AMMAR's position.

The lemma *feminist whore* was established, then, in circumstances of opportunity to redefine the meanings of feminism as emancipatory movement and of political figures that embody it. It is not that previously there were not disputes on victimization and delegitimization of the voice of sex workers, it was rather that the abolitionist hegemony was solid and there was little room for argument.

The *feminist whores* now make their demands from their place within the women's movement and confirm their condition as feminists without incompatibility of their condition as sex workers. This syntagm also reconfigured the increasingly embodied public debate on prostitution within the women's movement; sex workers came to remind us that they are not the other feminism, but rather since the beginning, they have formed a part of this movement (Lamas, 2016). They recovered for themselves feminist conceptions that jeopardize the paternalistic positionings on sex work.

7. Conclusions. Towards a new sorority

Currently, we are in a moment of ambivalent public presentation of the sex trade (Martinez-Perez, 2017) What issues are put on stage or given new meaning by the actions of the sex workers in communication media and the public sphere today? Among other issues, feminist empowerment, given that they took power of the political identity; the poor working conditions in capitalism, establishing alliances with other workers collectives; freedom of choice as to one's own body, given that the tactically recover the national struggle for the right to abortion; the pleasing dimension of the sex work exercise because they insist in discussing female sexuality still gripped by the pleasure/danger dichotomy. *Put a feminist*, in this sense, reinscribes the controversy on sex work in a broader discussion of sex roles and laws for genders and their margins of sexual agency. Probably for that reason, it is a inclusive syntagm that engages dialogues with figures that are not necessarily questioned by the regulatory debates on the sex trade.

When I began to research prostitution and communication, I did it with the conviction of that which was put in public consideration when the sex trade

mediatized had much less to do with prostitution as an activity than with the socio-sexual imaginaries of a given historical moment. The mediatization spoke of moral education that was disseminated in the media and in the state of socio-sexual debates of a society. This is true for each one of the characterized periods in this article. But what is particular about this in this last stage in which we find ourselves today is the indicative use of prostitution, that speaking of prostitution in reality refers to an absent figure (sexual organization of society or the moralization of women's sexuality) that appears explicitly exposed by the movement of sex workers.

Some twenty years since the movement was organized, ten years since the surging of the debates on gender and sexualities materialized in the granting of rights for a vast number of people but that had excluded the demands of sex workers, and in full social uprising for the claim to legal abortion, safe and free, today we find ourselves where it is clear that *without whores there is no feminism* and that the state anti-trafficking policies defended by abolitionist feminism facilitate the infringing of rights and the deployment of multiple acts of violence on women. Without a doubt, the deafening message of this last phase is that there is no sisterhood possible without the *zorras*¹⁹ inside.

Notes

1 *Alanis*, 2017. Director: Anahí Berneri. The film was awarded the Concha de Oro at the San Sebastián Film Festival for best director and best leading actress, among other international awards.

2 In Argentina, there are two organizations that defend the rights of women in prostitution: AMMAR Association of Women Prostitutes of Argentina in Action for Our Rights, that form part of the Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina and AMMADH Association of Argentinean Women for Human Rights, today AMMADH. The activists of the first are defined as sex workers and demand labor rights while those of the second are considered women in situation of prostitution and fight for its abolition.

3 We will use the name "women in prostitution" to generically refer to people who work in the sex trade. We reserve "sex workers" and "women in situation of prostitution" to refer to categories of self-representation of people grouped in organizations referred to in this work.

4 We refer to the economic and social crisis Argentina suffered stemming from the implementation of neoliberal

policies that went into effect during the 1990s. There were growing social manifestations that led to the resignation of then President Fernando De la Rúa in 2001. For a characterization of this period, see: Svampa, 2003; Schuster et al, 2002; among others.

5 In particular, we refer to journalist research programs like *Punto Doc*, *Blog*, *La Liga*, *Ser Urbano*, *Humanos en el camino*, *Código*, *GPS*— and some other realist fictions like *Disputas* and *Vidas Robadas*. *Disputas* was the 11-episode mini-series produced by Ideas del Sur, broadcast by *Telefé* in 2003. *Vidas Robadas* 131-episode soap opera also broadcast by *Telefé* in 2008 and produced by *Telefé Contenidos*. It was based on the case of Marita Verón's kidnapping by a network of human traffickers for purposes of sexual exploitation in 2002.

6 The work of Morcillo and Varela traces the origins of prostitution abolitionism in Argentina and its political rise and fall.

7 Marita Verón was a young girl kidnapped by a sexual exploitation network in 2002 in Tucumán and continues to be missing and whose case became the emblem of the fight against human trafficking in Argentina.

8 Abolitionism of prostitution is a paradigm of intervention that claims the need to eradicate all forms of prostitution from society in the sense that they constitute a mode of slavery and violence against the people who practice it.

9 Alike Kinan was the victim of a trafficking network in Patagonia Argentina and won the first condena al Estado for that crime. Her proxeneta was also sentenced to go to prison in 2018.

10 Among others, the Law on Sex Health and Responsible Procreation (2002), of *Complete Sexual Education (2006)*, of *Gay Marriage (2010)*, of *Gender Identity (2012)*.

11 The originals were: "Ni una mujer víctima de las redes de prostitución" and "Sin clientes no hay trata".

12 Available at <https://ar.radiocut.fm/radioshow/servicio-completo-1/>

13 Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4beAeNR5B-s>

14 These alliances led to the creation of the Emancipatory Unity Front for the recognition of Sex Worker Rights in Argentina (FUERTSA).

15 Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnOsAj1Wz0M>

16 Yuta is a slang term to refer to the police and over time took on a negative connotation.

17 Speech by Elena Reynaga in the World AIDS Conference (2003) <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundosalud/2008/08/06/hepatitissida/1218022470.html>

18 The #NiUnaMenos movement began as an initiative of a group of journalists, writers, intellectuals and artists and went viral initially via social networks. Cfr. Rodriguez, Paula (2017) “#NiUnaMenos”. Buenos Aires: Planeta.

19 Zorra is a popular insult used to accuse women of going against the mandates of traditional sexual morality.

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