

Urban Capitalism and Prostitution: An Analysis of *Princesas*

Juliana Luna Freire
University of Arizona

*“Me llamo calle
un día me vendrá buscar un hombre
bueno mi corazón no es de se alquilar
calle sufrida, calle tristeza de tanto
amar calle, por la gran ciudad
me llaman puta, también princesa”.*
– Manu Chao, *Me llamo calle*

IN 2008, a group of sex-workers from Madrid called Hetaira, Colectivo en Defensa de los Derechos de las Prostitutas (Hetaira, Women’s Collective in Defense of the Rights of the Prostitutes), organized a conference to discuss ways to guarantee those rights. At one of the meetings, the representatives of the group described the effects of the *Plan Municipal Contra la Explotación Sexual* (Plan of Action of the city of Madrid Against Sexual Exploitation), and how that measure changed certain work zones in the city of Madrid. They claimed that the excessive police control of places such as the Casa de Campo, and the installation of cameras in downtown Madrid, for example, were measures that inhibited prostitution and forced them to relocate to other work areas (Espejo “Hetaira”). This conference was also attended by Fernando León de Aranoa, director of the movie *Princesas* (2005), which takes place in Madrid. Even though it is a fictional work, this movie is based on interviews with this often misunderstood and marginalized social group. This analysis describes how capitalism shapes the imaginary cartography of this urban space by creating a moralistic discourse that attempts to punish prostitution and cleanse the city, and how Aranoa’s film opposes such position.

In order to create the image of a modern city, attractive to both tourists and capital, prostitutes are denied public space, criminalized, and associated with poor immigrants who are trafficked as sex slaves and subject to deportation. When stigmatized groups suffer constant surveillance by the state and society, they might become geographically and socially marginalized, and consequently the economic value of a city area is increased. The movie, however, attempts to problematize this essentializing view of prostitutes as criminals by representing parts of their lives often left unrepresented: their daily routines, romantic dreams, and family struggles. This work uses feminist theories

related to sex work, exploitation and the stigmatization of prostitution as well as urban theory to analyze the interaction between capitalism and space.

The feminist literature dealing with the theme of prostitution has identified different causes for it: the sociologist Wendy Chapkis differentiates between “radical feminists” and “sex radical feminists”. Among the radical feminists, she claims, there are those critics approving of some sexual relations that are based on love, or those opposing all forms of heterosexual sexuality since they fundamentally constitute patriarchal oppression (120). Amongst the Sex Radical feminists, Chapkis differentiates between those that consider all sex forms as positive, or as neither oppressive nor liberating, among others (12). Along this spectrum of so many divergent feminist voices, it is possible to locate, at one extreme, the radical feminists’ view that affirms prostitution consists of a malady that should be fought. On the other extreme, we are faced with questions from liberal feminists such as Christine Overall’s: “What’s Wrong with It? Evaluating Sex Work”.¹ The film analyzed here, however, questions any univocal view: distinct discourses coexist in *Princesas* in an attempt to portray the life of Madrid’s prostitutes in a realist tone.² In order to do this, it makes references to both the exploitation of the women’s body and her submission but it also portrays the *performance* of prostitution as a commercial transaction taking place between willing participants in the urban environment.³ What prevails, in the end, is a criticism of contemporary Spanish society’s ambiguous position on prostitution: it is represented as an undesired *otherness* that needs to be removed from the public urban space, but also a desirable *female other* that is sought in private and available through a commercial transaction.

Princesas tells the story of two young wom-

en, Cayetana (Candela Peña), and Zulema (Micaela Névarez), and their lives as prostitutes in the city of Madrid. Cayetana, or Caye, is a brunette from Spain who does sex work and dreams of finding love. Zulema, on the other hand, is an undocumented immigrant from the Dominican Republic, who works in Madrid and hopes to save some money to bring her son to live in Spain with her. These two women live in the same apartment building, and end up meeting after Zulema is violently beaten by a police officer who asks for sexual favors in exchange for a promised work permit. The two women become close friends, even though their work and life conditions are fairly different: Zule works on the streets, rents her apartment for only part of the day, and is constantly afraid of being caught by the police. Caye, on the other hand, has an apartment of her own, uses newspapers classifieds to announce her services, and saves money for breast augmentation. The plot is further complicated with Caye’s relationship problems and the violence to which Zulema is increasingly subjected, and the latter tests HIV positive. In the final part of the film, Zulema gets revenge; she passes the disease on to the police officer and then returns to the Dominican Republic to be with her son.

According to Maggie O’Neill, the discourse on prostitution has received different nuances over time (15). Initially seen as “deviant activity and slavery” in the eighties, it would later come to be seen as a consequence of the “socio-economic need” of women and their exploitation by men’s sexuality (327-328). Most recently, there is also a discourse on “erotic labor” (16). These discourses seem to overlap sometimes: in Madrid, for instance, media representations of prostitution seem to be often associated with slave-trafficking of women, *la trata de mujeres*. Even though the statistics predict that about 85-

90% of sex workers are undocumented immigrants (Zabala), the media's choice of focusing on sexual slavery of women exclusively rather than on economic hardship is a political problem that should be questioned. By emphasizing a representation of prostitutes as individuals being exploited by other individuals, Spanish society frees itself from the urgency of dealing with the large population of women immigrants coming to their cities in search of better financial conditions. Instead, it is also necessary to acknowledge, the existence of a market for sex work that constitutes a key element in the perpetration of such activity--or the main cause, as some Marxist feminists would defend.⁴ Even though the socioeconomic disadvantage of these women might not be the only cause for their activity, a great number of those causes still play a major role in keeping them in the same circumstances. Russell Campbell, in *Marked Women*, discusses the relationship between financial need and oppression, saying that "financial need is overwhelmingly identified as a motivating factor for women to enter the profession. Depending on the setting in which the prostitution takes place, there may be an element of coercion" (4). In this quote we can note three conflictive factors that arise when analyzing this issue: money, space, and oppression. These three elements are essential for our understanding of the dynamic of the film.

In Madrid, the prostitutes working on the streets used to have two main work places: the Casa de Campo and the streets and squares closer to the residential areas. The Casa de Campo is a far-off place, separated from traditional residential neighborhoods that would be uncomfortable with the presence of prostitutes. Therefore, most people who used to drive to Casa de Campo in the evening clearly had the intention of hiring prostitutes. In the residential areas,

(mainly of the working-class) or in commercial areas, both "hidden" and overt street prostitution exist. Recently, however, street prostitution suffered increased attack by moralist, religious, and family discourses, as well as by political measures such as the aforementioned Plan of Action of the City of Madrid. In fact, one of the procedures of the Plan was to limit access by car to the Casa de Campo in the evening, and it has produced some changes in that space. These measures echo a description given by Campbell, claiming that sex workers are

denied civil rights and subjected to laws that curtail their freedom, making them liable for fines or imprisonment for exercising their profession; and their stigmatized conditional and marginal legal status makes them vulnerable to violence and exploitation by pimps, police, landlords, and clients. (5)

Even though not specifically describing Spain, Campbell's words refer to common social reactions to the presence of prostitutes in the metropolitan space. By stigmatizing their lives and representing them not as free women working for a living, but rather as illegal women forced into prostitution, they lose some rights and access to certain spaces, and lose face in their struggle to be respected as individuals in the city.

This attempt to criminalize prostitution and its relation to economic issues becomes even more complex considering the increasingly uneven distribution of wealth among countries and the consequential migration of individuals from the developing countries to the developed ones in search of financial survival. According to the Spanish legislation, prostitution is legalized, even though the exploitation of other individuals for the purpose of prostitution is a crime.

Because of the barriers set up by the Ley de Extranjería (Foreigner Law), in order to be entitled to lawfully work in the country, many of the women immigrants resort to prostitution in the informal market (Virsedá and Villa 1). Thus, the issue of prostitution grows larger in political importance as it becomes ideologically related to the issue of immigration: in fact, the false causation between prostitution and slave trade is reinforced by government and non-government alike, as well as by some feminist groups. In the northern part of Spain, in 2007, a conference entitled *Jornadas "Explotación de Mujeres en Catalunya"* (against the exploitation of women in Catalonia), the organizers based themselves on the United Nations last report to state that the demand for prostitution (by men) was the main cause for the growth of sex commerce and of trafficking of women for sex purposes (Espejo "Prostitución"). Furthermore, one of the representatives claimed that prostitutes suffer from Stockholm syndrome (Espejo "Prostitución"), a term used to classify the victims of violent aggression (usually kidnapping) that survive the abusive relationship, and consequently create some sort of bond with the perpetrator. It could be argued that their perception is correct in the sense that statistically most of the prostitutes are foreign women, but automatically associating them with slave trade is a posture that fails to understand the other two factors mentioned by O'Neil, i.e., prostitution as a commercial transaction and as erotic labor. Consequently, the movie questions this dominant discourse that substitutes the word *prostitution* as a synonym for *white slave trade* and *the trafficking of women*. Considering that none of the women prostitutes represented are working against their will, Aranoa's discourse contrasts the media image. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize prostitutes as victims of their socioeconomic situa-

tion: the Spanish Cayetana not as much, but the Latina Zulema suffers due to her status as an immigrant. She lies to her family in the Caribbean claiming to work at a bar, and endures the physical aggression of the policeman because he promised the permit to work legally. We can notice that prostitution per se is not oppressing her, but the fact is that she feels as though she has to bear the client's aggression to avoid the bureaucratic Ley de Extranjería. As Urban geographers Phil Hubbard, Roger Matthews and Jane Scoular affirm, the legislation created in the European Union has been at times a panicked reaction to the visibility of prostitution on the streets, "denying the idea that immigrant women might voluntarily become prostitutes, political debate figured all non-EU prostitutes as trafficking victims and, in the same move, as illegal migrants" ("Regulating" 141). Consequently, the emphasis on the image of prostitutes as undocumented women from Africa and Latin-America creates the need to fight immigration in order to both liberate (and deport) those supposedly exploited women, but also to prevent prostitution from spreading throughout a given European nation. Thus, the official discourse avoids the political problem of women immigration and work permits with a moralistic discourse on family values and sexual exploitation of women based on ethnic stereotypes. The generalized association of the terms *prostitution* and *white slave trade*, which entered the mainstream discourse, has been used to promote gentrification of the urban space and make it more economically valuable. In other words, to make this public space worth more, it was necessary to remove those "sexualized bodies" under the pretense of opposing exploitation. According to Hetaira's position, such measures, also used in Madrid, make prostitutes' lives more dangerous, since they are forced into different areas that are

less protected by the community that had been created amongst them.

Aranoa's attempt to represent different causes of prostitution and racially diverse sex-workers can be seen as an attempt to question much of the totalizing discourse that connects immigration with trafficking of women described previously. One example is the inclusion of several Spanish women who are not forced to prostitute themselves. The result, thus, is a representation that resists the criminalizing view of prostitution, and makes us rethink the marginalization and stigma attached to these women. The director affirms,

Las mujeres invisibles carecen además de voz. Oiréis a muchos hablar en su nombre, nunca a ellas. Cuando las quieren salvar, cuando las quieren proteger, cuando las quieren esconder, cuando las quieren echar, tampoco podréis escucharlas porque nadie les pregunta nada. (León de Aranoa, qtd. In Zabala)

The invisible women lack voice as well. You will hear many speak on their behalf, never to them. When they want to save those women, when they want to hide those women, and when they want to throw those women out. Also, you won't be able to hear them because nobody asks them anything. [my translation]

This aforementioned lack of voice seems particularly similar to the concept of Stockholm syndrome: when some feminist groups claim that the prostitutes are not aware of their situation as victims, so others should speak on their behalf, these feminists are repressing the political position taken by certain prostitutes themselves. For instance, the *Hetaira* group is constantly fighting against laws that banish, prohibit, or criminalize prostitution because many of those

measures cause even more stigmatization against sex-workers. Instead, *Hetaira* representatives affirm that they wish there could be rules and laws that regulate prostitution in order to provide more protection and guarantees for those working in the city space (Espejo "Hetaira"). Therefore, the fact that the film was elaborated based on talks and interviews with those women shows deliberate intention to problematize this representation of them in mainstream media.

In the film, however, there is not an idealization of prostitution either. There is interplay between the view of prostitution as a commercial transaction and also as submission of women (in the cases of both immigrants and Spanish nationals). To illustrate this idea, let us analyze one of the strongest scenes: Caye is on a date at a restaurant, romanticizing her meeting with a man she feels attracted to--who does not know that she is a sex worker. She recognizes one of her clients at a different table. She turns white with fear, and when she momentarily leaves the table to go to the restroom, her client follows her and asks her for sexual favors in the bathroom. Initially she refuses saying, "Not today, not today", but because of his perseverance and his large monetary offer, she accepts. The camera, inside the restroom, focuses on Caye's face, crying while refusing the offer; but in their closeness, he grabs her and insists. Perhaps we cannot say it was rape, since in the end she accepts the money as a symbol of the selling of sexual pleasure, but there was not free will on her part in offering her services either. The scene also demonstrates Caye's difficulty in separating her personal and work space, and how society does not achieve that separation either: hegemonic ideology fails to understand the concept of a prostitute having a normal life, or a romantic date at a restaurant. A possibility is that Caye's violation was not physical, but her free will was violated by

three elements, namely: the power of capital, the physical power of man, and the social expectations that identify her solely as a prostitute, not as a woman. Furthermore, this specific sex scene (one of a few shown in the movie), reinforces her anguish upon not being able to refuse the act: she cries and then performs fellatio, kneeling down in front of her client and devoting her time to his sexual pleasure.

Going back to the ambivalence of the term *prostitution*, seen either as an exploitation or as a choice, both extremes are clear in this very strong scene: the money convinced her to sell her own body; however, at the same time, the emotional strength and violence question the idea of the freedom of a prostitute to choose to be a prostitute, or to selling her own body as a sign of free will.⁵ Instead, it more accurately represents a woman who is trapped by social and economic expectations to act and behave in specific ways.

Similarly, the issue of an audience of men and its expectations requires a discussion of authorship and the visual elements of the film itself. Campbell affirms that even though the representation of prostitution has been a popular theme in cinema, “the roles are usually written and the performances directed by men” (5). As a privileged man representing women minorities, Aranoa’s authorship can certainly give rise to a number of questions of authenticity. In Gayatri Spivak’s insightful scholarship about voice, she disagrees with the idea that subalterns will express themselves if given a voice, asserting that

According to Foucault and Deleuze (in the First World, under the standardization and regimentation of social capital, though they do not seem to recognize this) the oppressed, if given the chance (the problem of representation cannot be bypassed here), and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics (a Marxist thematic is at work

here), can speak and know their conditions. (78)

Spivak objects to the idea that a subaltern is possibly able to reach a larger audience when communicating a discourse. Even though Aranoa’s social message seems to be speaking in favor of the rights of the prostitutes, the production, script, and camera shots are established by masculine, privileged perspective, albeit well-intentioned. The distinction between Aranoa’s discourse and the voice of the prostitutes consist of what Spivak calls “[an] asymmetry in the relationship between authority and explanation” (77). His voice is broadcast through this means of communication, and his discourse becomes part of the hegemonic discourse.

Consequently, our view of the prostitute protagonists is also re-elaborated according to his view: without taking for granted the social message present in his work, the dynamic between bodies and images point towards a necessary questioning of the visual elements present in the film. This relation has been intensively surveyed when discussing Hollywood cinema and much discussed regarding the objectification of women on the screen. The term *scopophilia*, as discussed by Laura Mulvey in relation to the use of women’s bodies to produce the pleasure of the gaze to male spectators (8), should be considered in relation to certain images of the film itself, and in relation to how Aranoa’s use of visual elements objectify (or not) the body in the frame. One example is the scene in which the prostitutes working at the Casa de Campo show their bodies in order to attract clients. The image of those women in short bright skirts is not criticized in the film, but rather, also serves the purpose of creating a fascination in the audience. Similar to the process in which the bodies attract the attention of the men on the street

who walk by to admire them, the position of the camera attracts the attention of the spectator. Not much emphasis rests upon overweight or ugly prostitutes--there is only one drug addict--and nobody seems to be an alcoholic. The two protagonists and some beautiful extras help create an eroticized visual effect. Even when they are at home, in underwear or naked, in the disco or on the streets of Madrid, the actresses appeal to the camera with flattering, sexualized images.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note the way femininity is performed by the distinct women represented. A study on the performance of femininity of nightclub dancers in the United States could help us understand this issue. In her study, Mary Trautner differentiates the behavior of the dancers according to the social class of their clientele: either working-class or executives. When comparing their dress-code, the way they dance and talk, their make-up, and even their physical style (age, size, weight, color, etc.) compared to the social space where they work, Trautner tries to prove how the performance of gender is also influenced by the performance of a social class (773), and of the economic level of those who one may be trying to attract (778). The same key distinctions can be applied to the market differences in the many prostitutes represented in *Princesas*. The film costume design, thus, also recreates a visible distinction between the foreign street sex-workers at the Plaza in front of a beauty parlor and those Spanish prostitutes spending all afternoon at that same beauty parlor, waiting for the phone calls of their clients. While the foreign prostitutes at the Plaza wear short, shiny, and sexualized clothes, the prostitutes inside the shop have a common look, similar to any other Spanish woman of the time. The older prostitute, very elegantly dressed, explains that she has only rich and powerful clients, whose names she cannot reveal. This division

among prostitutes is not only based on nationality or class, but also ethnicity. This way, when Caye decides to get dreadlocks, just like Zulema has, she claims that she does so because an exotic appearance will be more lucrative. In other words, there is an ambiguous game of rejection and attraction regarding the foreign prostitutes: they are a commodity of exotic appearance, but at the same time, they are cheaper due to their illegal status and their non-European origin.

Still in regards to the commercial aspects of prostitution, the way they advertise their services also suffers this differentiation: Caye is a call girl and seeks clients with an advertisement in the newspaper without a photo. In a different fashion, at the Casa de Campo a distinct marketing strategy takes place: the prostitutes, Zulema included, exhibit their body and juggle objects in an attempt to attract clients in a poorly-patrolled area in the evening.⁶ Just as takes place at the mall, the clients drive by in the comfort of their cars and in relative anonymity and elect the prostitute they want, as if they were window-shopping. An analogy can be made with urban geography and the capitalist market: Don Mitchell analyzes the presence of malls and the change that they imply for the public space, in which the body—in this case, a man's body—has the ability to move inside an urban space without involving himself with it, just like a "spectator" ("Shopping" 138). In regards to the Casa de Campo, men have access to the *commodity* of sex, inside their own cars, with the autonomy to initiate the capitalist transaction or not. This act of "window shopping" for a prostitute symbolizes the possibility of purchasing what many consider merchandise, announced by the visual signs⁷ that mark them as sex-workers (where they are located, the time of the day, the way they are dressed, etc.).

The use of the Casa de Campo as an area

of prostitution follows the normative urban geography that attempts to remove the prostitutes and the social groups considered undesirable from central areas of the city.⁸ In the city of Madrid, the central neighborhoods, on the other hand, suffer the process of gentrification as described by Diane Ghirardo.⁹ This process of real estate speculation is directly related to the way in which urban space is used: when the government decides to take measures to diminish prostitution, the housing prices increase, and so does the appeal of the city to tourists. In the city of Madrid, this is evidenced in the increased surveillance by police officers in the central areas of the city, now revitalized for businesses and tourism, and also through the use of cameras in traditional areas of prostitution, such as the Calle Montera. By imposing more control over those spaces, the police limit prostitutes' access to public space (and work), and consequently, the prostitutes search for other areas in which to work. Regarding such measures, the problem of access to public space signifies the reduction of work for such prostitutes: Zule rents her small apartment for only 8 hours daily, in a neighborhood far from the city, while a different family rents the same apartment in the evening. This process is called *camas calientes* (hot beds). Since she has no private space to host her clients in the evening, she must face the danger of working on the street, charging a smaller price precisely because she works on the street. This seems to create a vicious cycle, in which she will be trapped in the lower ranks of prostitution. Hubbard refers to this control of space using the term "new spatialities of exclusion" ("Regulating" 146). These are spaces to which certain Others have limited access, and the restriction of the work space leads to an increase in competition. Consequently, this geography of prostitution is also affected by the immigration issue.

In one of the scenes of conflict between the Spanish prostitutes and the immigrants at the Plaza, the issue of the legal work permits is one of the tools used by a Spanish prostitute to scare the immigrants. She does not use it to judge them morally, or because she is against immigration per se. Instead, she uses it as a result of the division of urban space and economic opportunities: the prostitutes on the street represent competition for the same clients, and just like any other capitalist structure, the increase in offer means less economic gain. In other words, in Economy terms, too much availability of prostitutes makes their salaries much smaller, since they have to compete for the same clients. Because the prostitutes on the street have cheaper rates due to their economic need and lack of documentation, the Spanish prostitute calls the police since she sees herself as hampered by the presence of immigrants and work competition. Moreover, when she calls the police she never mentions being a prostitute herself, but rather states that she is someone from the neighborhood watching a group of dark-skinned women, whom she automatically labels as "Africans," accusing the prostitutes of starting a fight. Their voices are not heard and they are not seen fighting. In Don Mitchell's clarifying study on the relationship between space and race he interprets Herrnstein and Murray, and Smith and claims that

'race' may be understood as a 'strategy' for advanced capitalist societies; if race can be seen as a natural basis for unequal access to rights, if race can be presented as a commonsense reason why some in society are more privileged (with money and in the eyes of the state) then such inequality is made to appear as pre-ordained, as simply the natural order of things. ("A Place" 256)

In the case of prostitution in the EU, there are constant references to the dark skin of the prostitutes. The media draws attention to the idea of Africans and South American sex workers as dominating the market, but it tends to homogenize any racial diversity amongst those. This could be what Mitchell identifies as the “*social* construction of races” (“A Place” 256). In other words, color and race constitute a complex dynamic, in which nationality is being taken into consideration, and so is economic status (in a sense that the acceptance of foreign prostitutes is denied because of their financial situation and their occupation). Therefore, the Spanish sex worker that calls the police to go after the (supposedly) immigrant prostitutes, seems unaware that her own behavior increases police monitoring and stigmatization of her type of work, even as a Spanish citizen.

Even though she does the same job the other ones do, the Spanish sex-worker that calls the police uses her moralist discourse to judge prostitutes and ethnic minorities--mainly Africans--and present them as an Other that should be controlled for the social good. According to Hubbard,

we can interpret on-going attempts to remove prostitution from Paris and London both as strategies of capital accumulation (i.e. encouraging urban gentrification) as well as of social reproduction (i.e. marginalising those who threaten the moral values that underpin the reproduction of the nation-state). (“Cleansing” 169)

In fact, when she calls the police to scare the prostitutes away, the Spanish prostitute is helping “cleanse” that space, which consequently helps increase the economic value of that neighborhood. For her, personally, the possible control of the immigrants would not only mean the

economic benefit of her house value, but also the increased number of clients for herself. According to the analysis by Neil Smith, social institutions react against the use of public spaces by certain minorities and attempt the “eradication of signs of disorder” frequently associated with social and ethnic minorities, or those who “steal” the city (Smith 13). In this case, it is important to notice how the sight of prostitution is more threatening to this cartographic imaginary of an ordered city than the existence of such acts. By cartographic imaginary we can understand the way an image of a space is constructed by a certain political discourse, and how its distinct elements (space, time, capital, and social elements) are mentally elaborated as part of this image. Thus, hidden types of prostitution are more tolerated than street prostitution, mainly because they are less visible and do not directly oppose this imaginary. This brings up a discussion of the strategies used to eliminate unwanted individuals from specific areas of the city. As Hubbard affirms,

the identification of sex workers as a criminal Other appears an extremely effective strategy for displacing sex work from valued city centre sites and—at the same time—reasserting the moral values that lie at the heart of the nation-state. (“Cleansing” 1695)

This desire to remove these individuals who are socially marginalized from certain areas of the city is demonstrated in the film when Caye and Zule walk down the street of a commercial area and go to a clothing store. The seller, dressed according to a more recent fashion standard, looks at the two women, judges their appearance and asks them to leave the store. The seller reads their visual signs as markers of their social position as outcasts. The camera takes

a long shot of their happy attitude as they are walking in downtown Madrid, cuts to a close-up of the grimacing face of the seller, and in the next cut we see their backs while they are leaving. Neither of Caye nor Zule appeared to have any intention of stealing anything nor were they soliciting; the criminalization was not justified. However, the feeling of invasion of a middle-class space by the two sex workers broke with the image that the shop keeper wants. As Hubbard asserts, in this scene the moral values of a society are being used to criminalize specific Others and cleanse a space in the city.

Finally, *Princesas* cannot be classified as a strictly anti-prostitution or pro-prostitution film. The stories that contribute to the plot of the film help to create a realistic view of prostitutes' lives. It questions the dominant discourse that criminalizes sex-work as solely a result of slave trade by portraying women from different geographical origins and social classes, at the same time that it humanizes them by showing their friendships, dreams, and daily lives. The dialogues about their wishes for the future equate them with so many women: they desire to find a special man and have a monogamous life. The semi-philosophical monologues by Caye describe the world of princesses, who get dizzy when far from their kingdoms, and who want a man who can free them from that situation. Their work depends on men, and their goals in life also revolve around them. This portrayal is somewhat counterbalanced by Zule's posture because she does not have dreams of finding a man, but rather dreams of returning to the Dominican Republic to be with her son. In this case, we have a woman striving to fulfill another traditional role of women, that is, maternity.

In conclusion, the film represents Aranoa's attempt to raise questions regarding prostitution and to represent a distinct reality for sex-

workers that is often erased from mainstream discourse. By showing two sex-workers as protagonists, Aranoa's work helps construct a sympathetic portrayal that humanizes them and also denounces the unfair treatment and spatial exclusion they suffer in the city of Madrid. It also casts doubt on the false equivalence between immigration and prostitution, and how this association works to control the public space. None of the feminist perspectives is exclusively emphasized; however, both the exploitation and the commercialization of pleasure are perceivable in this visual narrative. This work also shows how capitalism itself relates to the issue of prostitution by cleansing the public space and marginalizing unwanted Others. As illustrated in the song by Manu Chao, written specially for the film and quoted in the epigraph, they are women ("whores, also princesses") that search the streets of the city for a way to survive in the capitalist economy. They suffer the difficulties of immigration, of gaining recognition from society as workers, and of occupying a space that is denied to them by the police, the media, and traditional family values.

Notes

¹Others within the same line of thought include Carole Pateman, "What's Wrong With Prostitution?" in *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 189-218; and Igor Primoratz "What's Wrong With Prostitution" in *Philosophy* 68 (1993), pp. 159-182 (qtd. in Spector 245).

²Aranoa, when giving an interview at the *Mundo* newspaper, claimed that "the movie tries to set just the first step: that of normality; it attempts to describe those girls as if they were employed with something else, without conducting a moral judgment about what they do or do not do" [my translation] ("Fernando León").

³Nikki Roberts argues that "the whore is dangerously free" for her capacity to become liberated from social control due to her financial independence (354), in comparison with other women in the system. In this way, this relation of liberty created by the capital produces a new

formulation of relationships of the prostitute in the urban space.

⁴Such as Gayle Rubin's *The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex* (1975).

⁵When analyzing the pornographic industry, Faren Párvez, in *The Labor of Pleasure*, discusses the "emotional work" in the sex industry. According to the author, "[...] in addition to performing the physical act, sex workers must also display arousal and pleasure to satisfy most viewers" (606). Therefore, for sex workers, the act itself is not solely based in the issue of corporality: they provide their bodies and make men believe they are able to sexually satisfy a woman, by watching her feel--or pretending to feel--pleasure. In the case of Cayetana's movie scene in the bathroom, it is particularly problematic since her client seems particularly motivated because of her initial refusal to perform it in the bathroom. In this situation, it was not pleasure, but rather her fear that enticed him. This reinforces the case for the oppressive situation of the women, also objectified in this interaction.

⁶Regarding the myriad of ways to announce prostitution, "there is remarkably little surveillance of off-street sex work by police or health-based projects, with the rise in 'hidden' prostitution most obvious in the increase of advertising of escorts on the Internet, in pornographic magazines, and via networks of taxi drivers" (qtd. in Hubbard et al. 148). Since hidden prostitution is not visible in the public areas of the city, it does not represent such a menace to the established societal morals and, consequently, is not as repressed as street prostitution.

⁷Regarding the way that certain signs mark those women as prostitutes, and how the cinema repeats those images, the book by Campbell titled *Marked Women* indicates "the social structures and practices that single the prostitute out. At times in history, for example, a distinctive dress code for the prostitute has been compulsory; for the contemporary streetwalker, it's an economic necessity to signify her availability through her attire and posture, especially when the law forbids soliciting. The system compels the prostitute to mark herself off from respectable women, creating a coding of physical appearance, which is instantly recognizable and can be readily appropriated by the cinema" (7-8). The term mark is particularly interesting considering the discourse on architecture and urban improvement trying to visually mark a city with signs of ostentation and beauty, whereas attempting to erase the marks of prostitution that might influence the image of that geographical space.

⁸In the city of Madrid, two different forces seem to

oppose in relation to the changes desired for the city, either as improving the configuration to benefit a larger population, or to improve the richer neighborhoods: "the approach to refiguring Madrid that the PSOE adopted, out of necessity opened the door for later city governments (that did not share the socialist planners' desire to use planning as a tool for achieving social justice), to use design over planning to effect a different kind of change in the city and the urban region, one predicated not on social justice but on urban boosterism and selling place" (Compitello 405).

⁹"Reconfiguring the Urban Sphere" in *Architecture after Modernism* by Diane Ghirardo. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996. 171-228

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