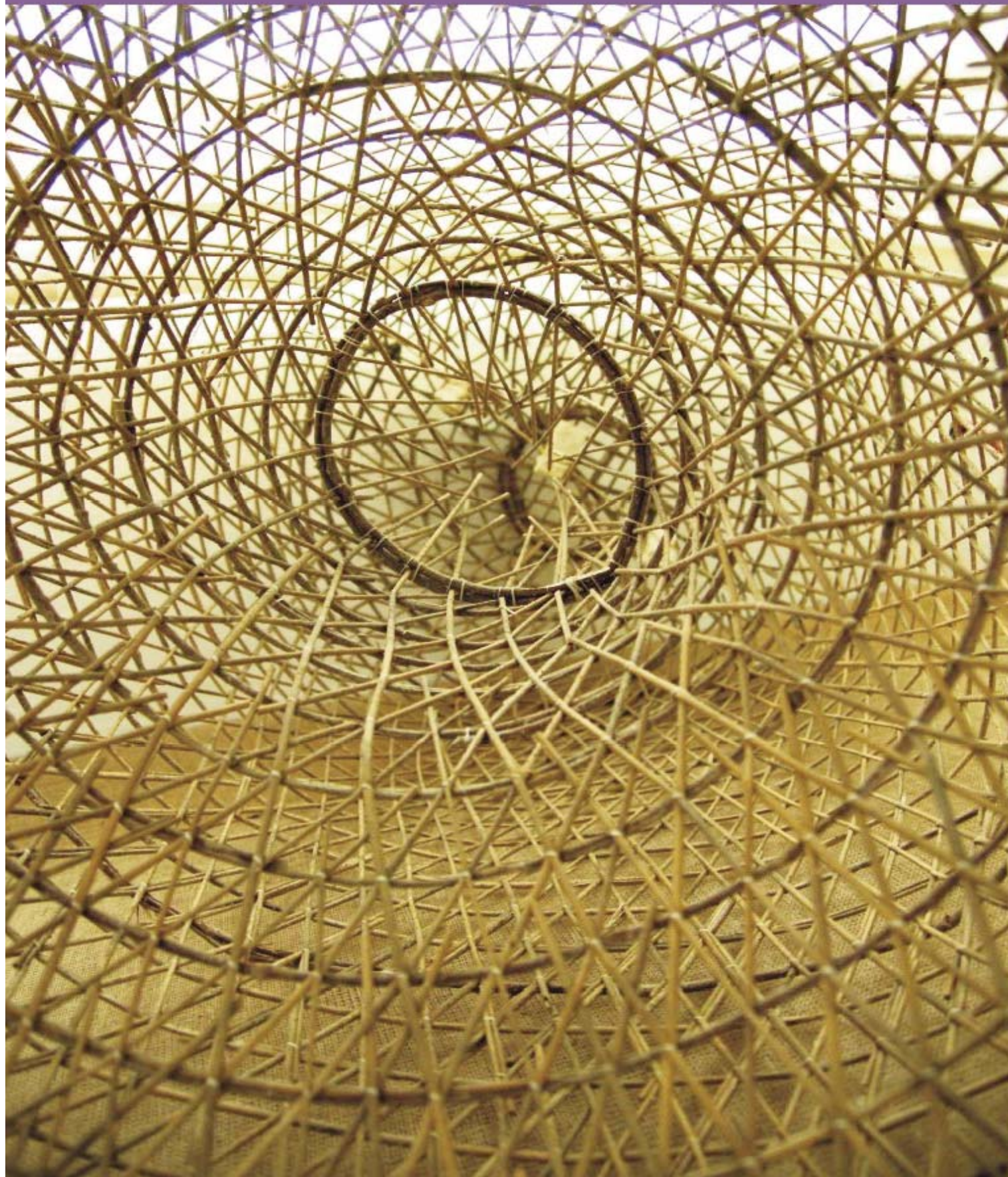


# ARCHIVIO ANTROPOLOGICO MEDITERRANEO

anno XII/XIII (2009-2010), n. 12 (1)

on line



ARCHIVIO ANTROPOLOGICO MEDITERRANEO on line

ANNO XII/XIII (2009-2010), N. 12 (1)

SEMESTRALE DI SCIENZE UMANE

ISSN 2038-3215

Università degli Studi di Palermo  
Dipartimento di Beni Culturali, Storico-Archeologici, Socio-Antropologici e Geografici  
Sezione Antropologica

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David Gilmore

## *Sexual Segregation in Andalusia. Then and Now*

In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault wrote the following lines: «A whole history remains to be written of spaces – which would at the same time be the history of powers [...] from the great strategies of geo-politics to the little tactics of the habitat» (Foucault 1980: 46). Recently, social scientists have been probing the politics of the habitat in terms both of power hierarchies and gender. They are examining how cultural norms and taboos configure the landscape of a society, determining where men and women should be at any time, and measuring how such rules impact the distribution of power – formal and informal. An ecological approach to gender has long been a staple of feminist sociology and of women's studies. In her groundbreaking *Gendered Spaces*, Daphne Spain perhaps best summarizes the prevailing position

Spatial segregation is one of the mechanisms by which a group with greater power can maintain its advantage over a group with less power. By controlling access to knowledge and resources through the control of space, the dominant group's ability to retain and reinforce its position is enhanced. Thus, spatial boundaries contribute to the unequal status of women (Spain 1992: 15-16).

More recently, cultural anthropologists have taken up the challenge of defining the spatial dimension of gender. For example, Sheba George (2005) writes about the separation of the sexes in an Indian immigrant community in a North American city. She notes that the divide between men and women and the exclusion of women from symbols of authority is clearly manifested in the physical placement of men and women and reaches an apogee, not surprisingly, in the parish church. The «gender hierarchy – she writes – is starkly delineated and enforced, as best exemplified by the physical separation of the congregation by sex» (George 2005: 125). Nothing that certain key areas in the community are

«off limits to all women and girls», she argues convincingly that such proscriptions in the heart of the community's spiritual consciousness reinforce the subaltern status of women (*Ibidem*). Recent studies of Northern Ireland (Reid 2008) and of Istanbul, Turkey (Mills 2007) have likewise shown how powerfully spatial segregation influences the social and political status of women. Similar studies by other social scientists in other parts of the world show that “place discourse” (Reid 2008: 489) articulates with identity issues, systems of sexual inequality and with patterns of social change (see for example Staeheli and Kofman 2004)<sup>1</sup>.

Some parts of the world manifest sexual segregation more strongly than others, of course. Stark rules of separation and exclusion are especially well known to students of the Middle East and the Mediterranean where there still exists a residual opprobrium attached to women being unaccompanied in public spaces. Perhaps “sexual apartheid” is too strong a word to be used today for these societies, but in much of the rural Mediterranean many public locales, especially public houses and government offices, are still “off limits” to women. Consequently, women's access to the critical nodes of socializing, commerce and decision-making, is thus effectively limited (see Sciamia 1981; Herzfeld 1985a, 1985b, 1991; Taggart 1991; Brandes 1992; Mills 2007). Obviously such symbolic systems of segregation and of distancing have crucial consequences for gender relations since they determine the literal parameters of “place.”

One anthropologist working in Latin America, Setha Low (1996) calls this dimension of community life “spatialization” – an ungainly but useful neologism. Cultural anthropologists have argued for years that spatial arrangements are a powerful means by which society's order is communicated to individuals and “felt” by them. The power of space is that it semiotically functions as

a «morphic language» (Hillier and Hansen 1984: 198), a primary means by which society is both interpreted and experienced. The interplay among the factors of gender, status, and space arises from the constant re-negotiation and re-enforcement of historical patterns of differentiation, exclusion and hierarchy and the degree of “public access” (Weismantle 2008: 123). As Bourdieu (1977) noted long ago, the power of a dominant group lies in the ability to maintain social constructions, images, and norms that make the present order of things “natural”. My goal here is to describe sexual segregation in rural southern Spain and to report on how this age-old scheme is currently being infiltrated by women in an effort to re-negotiate “place”.

### 1. *Public/Private : Male/Female?*

The “public-private” distinction originated as a heuristic device in feminist studies in the 1970s as a way of conceptualizing the spatial confinement and political disfranchisement of women (Lamphere 1974). In this binary scheme, “public” means the open spaces wherein lay the reins of power, governance, commerce, information exchange, backdoor politics, and public discourse<sup>2</sup>. Conversely, “private” connotes the secluded domestic realm, indoors, the domain of the family: enclosed places, thus “marginalized” space (Reid 2009: 490-491). Although long a staple in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean area studies, the public/private scheme, like most hoary conceptual dichotomies, has come in for much second-guessing lately<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps Abu-Lughod’s criticism (1998) is the most salient. She argues that like all conceptual dualisms, such a binary scheme ignores empirical ambiguities and is a reproduction of facile “orientalism” (see Mills 2007; Reid 2009). Still, most feminists would probably agree that this venerable dichotomy is useful if only as a starting point in measuring gender asymmetries (Staeheli 1996; Benhabib 1998); and what most feminists object to is not the conceptual division itself, but «the gender hierarchy that gives men more power than women to draw the line between public and private» (Fraser 1998: 331). Even in Middle Eastern studies the spatial dichotomy has been useful to delineate the fluidity of boundaries, their recent shifts and infiltrations due to nascent women’s movements (Cope 2004; Nagar 2004; Mills 2007). Instead of regarding the division of space as a static “thing”, a processual approach seeks to enlighten how borders are ne-

gotiated, re-negotiated and diluted as an ongoing process (see Cole 1991). Here the object is to highlight «the ways in which power and experiences from one sphere infiltrate the other sphere» (Staeheli and Kofman 2004: 10).

A watershed example of this new approach is a recent study of female factory workers in Fez, Morocco, by Cairoli (2009). She shows how working-class women who were previously confined to the home have upended the private/public dichotomy by reformulating their conception what is public and what private. In the view of these women, the factories where they work are an extension of the domestic sphere, and their relationships there with fellow workers and employers have taken on the idiom of kinship: women workers are “sisters”; male employees are “brothers” and the owners and bosses of the factory are “fathers.” Thus, Cairoli says: «workers transform the public space of the factory into the private space of the home in an attempt to assuage the contradiction inherent in their presence inside the factory, outside the home» (Cairoli 2009: 542). Like Cairoli and others working in areas that have been historically sex segregated, I rely here upon the public/private split as a starting point in a discussion of gender spatialization and its current vicissitudes in Spain as a means of grasping contours of gender in a broader sense, a metaphor for “place.” This is not only because the public/private division is ethnographically and cognitively valid today, but also because this very split between a male and a female domain, as it exists in the minds of women, has encouraged a unique form of feminist resistance. But unlike the case in Morocco reported by Cairoli, the women of rural Andalusia have inverted the classic public/private split not by transforming public into private but by doing the opposite: appropriating the public and turning it into private, thus reformulating the boundaries of sex within the moral order.

### 2. *Andalusia: Sexual Boundaries*

First let me give some ethnographic context<sup>4</sup>. Andalusia is the largest region of Spain and makes up the southern part of the peninsula. In many ways it is similar to America’s “Deep South”, under-industrialized, classically agrarian, culturally conservative and traditional. Andalusia is also well known for cultural peculiarities, from which others often disassociate themselves as being backward and “Moorish” – not sufficiently “European” that is. Aside from the

olive-oil drenched cuisine and fine sherry wines, the most obvious examples of Andalusian exceptionality are a regional obsession with the bullfight, the nucleated whitewashed hill *pueblos*, and the sequestering of women. Andalusia is the region closely identified with the stereotypical Spain of the travel posters: flamenco music, raven-haired *señoritas* peeping out of iron grates, Arabic architecture, perfumed gardens and the sexual double standards of machismo and donjuanismo. My fieldwork took place originally in the 1970s and 80s in a farming town in Seville Provinces, but subsequently expanded to a number of *pueblos* throughout Andalusia.

I begin with the Andalusian custom of female seclusion. Certain areas of the built environment in the Andalusian *pueblos* are defined implicitly as either female or male territory, the male space being outdoors, the female space being indoors. These sexual “frontier-lines”, as Lévi-Strauss (1961: 397) calls them, are strictly drawn; trespass is moral transgression of a particularly egregious kind. These strict ground rules of course affect both sexes, touching men too, because there are places in which men must not set foot (e.g. the marketplace). But the rules of place impact on women more onerously by denying them access to the “important” domains of civic and social control. By this I mean that women’s appearances in places like parks and plazas, government offices, bars and taverns and public spaces, are still strictly limited by a barbed wire of convention, exiling the female from public life, enacting a kind of cultural house arrest. Severe sanctions come into play against women who are “out of place.”<sup>5</sup> In Andalusia women who venture out have historically maintained a stance of what Herzfeld (1991: 80), writing about Greece calls «submission and silence». Their bodies and voices take on a veiled or “muted” covering. I am not speaking here even by allusion of the Islamic practice of veiling but rather the distinct, but obviously analogous, practice of deference, muteness, concealment – the masking of females “invisible”. The journalist Anne Corneliesen (1976) captured the custom perfectly in the title of one of her books on southern Italy: *Women of the Shadows*. Let me describe one incident early in my fieldwork that vividly illustrates this pattern.

One evening in 1973 I came upon an old woman dressed in black outside a tavern with her face turned toward the wall. With her black shawl held up to her eyes, like a veil, she looked very uncomfortable and seemed almost on the verge of tears. As I passed her and went into the

bar she stopped me with a whispered “*buenas noches*”, and having gained my attention timidly asked me a favor. What she wanted was for me to convey a message to her son who was drinking and playing cards inside the bar. I hastened to accept her request and did so and she left immediately. The young man got up abruptly and went home. Later this man told me that like most older women his mother would not even step across the threshold of a bar, not even in the direst emergency, and because of this they must find some man as a surrogate to transmit messages within (this is the era before telephones were widespread in this part of Spain). So her discomfort was due to the conflict between her need to contact her son and her anxiety about entering the forbidden male world.

When women and girls do appear outside the home in Andalusian *pueblos*, for example in the agricultural work gangs during the olive harvest, which they do often because of a shortage of male laborers at this the time, they are garbed from head to toe in layers of covering not normally seen in the village. Their hair, normally exposed during evening walks and on other festive occasions, is ritually covered in the presence of strange men during the harvests. This is a “liminal” or interstitial time when the more general rules governing sexual segregation are relaxed temporarily (see Brandes 1980; Taggart 1991). Men and women mingle together in olive-harvesting squads. The covering of the females however is complete and from a visual and sartorial perspective bizarre, even to the women themselves. The women wear two layers of exterior clothing: skirts worn over full-length trousers, sweaters over shirts and the hair covered by both a cloth and a hat, all this resulting in a visual negation of the body, a burqa-like transformation of person into shapeless bundle. Many complained privately that they felt “curious” or “strange” (*curiosa*) wearing such thick swaddling, nevertheless given the social pressure, they all succumbed. It is as though some danger inherent in the female body normally under control, were unleashed in this promiscuous mixing of the sexes, so the women’s bodies and hair have to be concealed, deleted as it were<sup>6</sup>.

The confinement to the house is an everyday burden for women, a life sentence. Let me give one poignant example from my own fieldwork experience: there was the case of my neighbor Filomena, a peasant woman in her early fifties. Her husband, a hard-working farmer, was typically absent all the time either at work or in the neighborhood tavern. Filomena had only her

four grown sons, also wanderers, and no daughters to keep her company. Because of this abandonment and the paucity of female neighbors on the small narrow street she lived on, was basically restricted to the home and, on Sundays, to the church. People pitied her because of this isolation and called her a “*pobrecita*”, or a pathetic case. But she found an ingenious way to compensate for her misfortune of being confined to the home. Once I found her leaning rather theatrically outside her front door with her hand on her head, looking pale and tense. Breathing deeply and clutching her heart, she breathlessly told me and my wife, who was, as Filomena, a medical doctor, that she had developed “an allergy” to her own house. Not a part of the house, she said, but the “whole damned thing”. She could not abide remaining inside for another minute and had to “take the air” or die.

Filomena suspected her illness had something to do with the nasty chemicals her husband used his farming and then brought into the house, traces of insecticide maybe, she wasn't sure. But the local doctors could find nothing wrong with her and her husband scoffed. So she asked for some corroborating support from my wife, so that her husband might bow to foreign medical authority and let her take the air on occasion just to counteract the allergy to the house. We promised to speak to her husband, which we did shortly afterwards. A gentle, tolerant man, he smiled indulgently, nodded knowingly, but said nothing. Afterwards, Filomena began to take restorative walks around the block which I believe did her much good. But what stuck in my mind was that our neighbor needed medical justification to get of her own house for a few minutes a day. Other women with more rigid husbands, or stronger superergos, were less fortunate.

### 3. *Sexual Quarantine*

This form of female “house arrest” is corroborated by legions of ethnographic reports from southern Europe (for a review, see Cole 1991); it is a sexual quarantine that stands out as an empirical fact of particular salience. In Fuentes, whenever the subject of women's “place” arose, people would repeat a phrase like a mantra: “*la mujer de la casa, el hombre de la calle*” (women indoors, men outdoors). As such it must be accepted as a fragment of reality as personally experienced by every person every day. My own experience in Andalusia suggests the depth of

commitment to sexual segregation leading to a occasional incongruities between reality and the senses. Things that were visibly there were elided or openly denied. For example, men would tell me emphatically, with a great deal of satisfaction, that women would never venture outside their houses except to go to the village market. But not more than fifty feet away from where we were talking, one could plainly see of women picking cotton or weeding sunflowers, more women in fact than men, since most of the male laborers were then in Germany or Switzerland. When alerted to this fact, the men would simply dismiss it as a sort of statistical deviation by assuring me that what I was witnessing was anomalous, unusual, rare, out of the ordinary, perhaps a mirage, or due to special circumstances never clearly explained. But it was clear to me that this discrepancy between what I saw and men's idealization about the “place of women” represented an example of wishful thinking. “Women are at home” (*la mujer de la casa*) was a talismanic obsession that if repeated often enough might become true or at least allay a certain male anxiety about women being out of place. The men were in their own minds the masters of village space.

The sanctions imposed upon women out of place were usually gossip and community-wide censure, resulting in ostracism and ruined reputation as a *puta* (slut). «What is she doing walking the streets?» A man can be a *callero* (street corner fellow; bon vivant, spoken with some sneaking admiration), but for a woman to be called a *callejera* is the same as calling her “a woman of streets”, a streetwalker. Of course this has the same connotations as in English or any other European language. This contumely could then rebound upon a woman's family, blackening her daughters and sisters, so compliance with the rules was almost always assured by the pressure of public opinion. Above and beyond the abstract force of gossip, however, there were additional punishments meted out to wayward girls, some of them bordering on the violent. Let me provide one example from my fieldwork. This happened in the 1980s, a time when things were just beginning to feel the winds of change. Having met some male friends in the 20s and 30s for the evening, I was out walking at dusk. We came upon a group of about twelve boys, 13 or 14 years old, milling about in one of the central squares of the pueblo. Observable everywhere in the streets, these youth packs are called *pan-dillas* (cliques or gangs) and are a fixture of outdoor life in the pueblos. While nothing unusual



in that male *pandillas* are often seen lurking at any time of day or night, my ethnographic alarm bell went off and told me this group was poised for some mischief which might be of interest. The boys looked purposeful and expectant. So I made inquiry to my companions who told me the following. What I was witnessing was the first stage of a traditional adolescent activity called the “*abuchear*”, meaning loosely shouting, jeering, or hooting. My informants understood what was going on because they had participated in such rituals themselves in their teens.

The boys were in fact lying in wait for some unsuspecting and, more importantly, unaccompanied, young girl to pass by. When one did, they would rush after her, hollering obscenities, jeering and grasping at her clothing, driving her crying to her home, at which point they would relent and reorganize to repeat the process with another victim. The boys did not physically molest the girls (actual physical abuse is against the rules in these communities and rape unheard of), but their victims were usually shaken up and frightened. In one famous case of *abuchear*, I was told, a girl ran home in tears, her clothes in tatters, and told her father that she recognized the persecutors. Angry and insulted, her father then went to the boy’s house to extract an apology from the boy’s father; some words were exchanged. But the response of the hooting boy’s father remains a classic piece of folklore in the pueblo. Rather than being chagrined or apologetic, the father coolly replied «Why thank you for telling about this: that means my boy must be a real macho. And what is your daughter doing out in the streets?»<sup>7</sup>.

#### 4. *The Public House: Power and Privilege*

Turning now to adult entertainments, we note that in the rural Mediterranean World social life centers on the village café or public establishment. As the main theater for masculine interaction in small villages, this “central place” may be a coffee-shop or teahouse as in the Muslim Middle East, or a bar or casino as in south Europe. Providing not only comestibles, but also entertainment, meeting rooms, and electronic services, these places serve as men’s clubs where regulars meet, eat and drink, play cards, gossip, and more germane to our interests here conduct business. In southern Europe these institutions are functionally equivalent to traditional “men’s houses” in other cultures as Vale de Almeida (1966: 7) notes in his book on Portugal.

No one has expressed this pattern of public-house sex segregation better than the French ethnologist Germaine Tillion who writes:

On the Christian shores of the Mediterranean, one may follow the zigzag path of an invisible frontier. On the inner side of this frontier, men walk the street alone; they go alone to the bars; and a woman’s presence in a café – even in the company of a near relative – to this day appears as unusual as it would in Baghdad (Tillion 1983: 167).

This “invisible frontier” pervaded rural Spain – at least until the 1980s. The male-only café was a symbolic moat dividing men and women in villages not only in the south of the peninsula, always culturally conservative, but throughout the country including up-to-date Catalonia as Ed Hansen (1976) noted in his article *Drinking to prosperity*. This sex barrier was pervasive irrespective of class, social position or marital status of the people involved, as we have seen in the example above. Every ethnography of rural Spain acknowledges the central role of the bar or tavern in the lives of village men and the exclusion thereof of women as Henk Driessen (1983) points out. Indeed, because of its social functions (as well as inviting climate) the Spanish bar has been the enduring fieldwork site for much of the male-oriented ethnography done in the past forty years. Because of its central role in formalizing sex apartheid, in the classic period of post-war Spain, the public house has received some belated attention from anthropologists in and of itself, as well as serving as a passive site for participant-observation fieldwork. Studies by Hansen (1976), Stanley Brandes (1979), Driessen (1983), the Corbins (1984), and myself (1975, 1985, 1991) describe functions of Spanish bars and casinos (the *casino* is a private club, often with class pretensions and occasionally with musical, sporting, or other themes). These functions are critical to understanding gender relations and social processes in the towns and villages of rural Spain.

First, simply as recreational locales, Spanish drinking establishments provide a context for making friends and for the advancement of expedient goals. Hansen (1976) shows how important this strategic function was in Catalonia under Franco, because other loci for association were outlawed by the dictator, an observation that holds true for other regions. In Andalusia, Driessen (1983) shows that bars also serve as an arena for the maintenance of male dominance and the building up of “macho” identity. Since Andalusian men must stay out of their homes to preserve their manly self-image, they use the bar as a kind

of exclusive men's club. Having this home-away-from-home enhances their ability to evade their wives, to exclude women from business and back-room politicking, and to manage symbols of masculine superiority. Thus bars function more than as passive contexts: they reify and defend gender boundaries. In a similar way, Bourdieu (1971, 1977) sees the Kabyle house in Algeria as the key setting in which body space and architectonics are integrated in the spatial symbolism of the home, social structures becoming concretized and embodied in everyday practice. Long ago Bourdieu proposed the concept of *habitus*, a generative principle of collective representations used to reproduce symbolic codes and existing structures as homologous systems. But for Driessen, Andalusian bars not only represented a defended repository for a threatened masculinity, but also help to «keep women in a subordinate position» (Driessen 1983: 131). Kept out of the bars, women are denied access to power nodes and networks ensure naturally in public places where ritualized exchange takes place. What Driessen says for Andalusia, however, seems equally relevant for other parts of Spain including Castile (Brandes 1979) and Aragon (Lison Tolosana 1966). For in the north, too, the sexes are socially segregated, to a greater or lesser degree, and men congregate in single-sex bars to enact rituals of masculinity and to run things.

All of the work on the bar in the Mediterranean area in the past three decades shares a conception of the central public place as a micropolitical nexus or arena; that is, a critical locus where strategic goals are met by men manipulating an informal political field constituting the economically active population of the *pueblo*. As Vale de Almeida says in his book on hegemonic masculinity in southern Portugal: «In Mediterranean societies, the bar or café is a focal institution in public life. It is the main stage of masculine sociability; it is the male gender that is associated with public life» (Vale de Almeida 1996: 88). Thus the public house is by definition the local expression of the male occupation of the public "space" that contextualized political life. But an invisible frontier that lasted from who knows when to just a few years ago has been challenged, assaulted and indeed overthrown through the ingenuity of village women informed by the growing power of feminist unity, and abetted by a particular form of modernization that has been underplayed in the literature on social change of the region: American TV shows.

### 5. *The Present: a Reversal of Public/Private*

In many pueblos of rural Andalusia, dramatic change has transformed the gendering of public space. As everyone knows, women in Spain now comfortably inhabit public spaces, hold elective office, walk boldly about the streets and plazas, linger in the parks, and have all the privileges that men enjoy in going wherever they want. Men have generally acceded. But one place remains still to a certain extent "off limits" to women, and that is the neighborhood drinking establishment. Recently Andalusian women have taken major steps to infiltrate and indeed take command of this remaining bastion of male domination. How they did so presents an interesting tale of spontaneous social change in Andalusia, and also perhaps a lesson to woman in all such genderized social environments.

As in most pueblos, the public houses in Fuentes are of four kinds, based on government registration, taxation, licensing, history and culture. First and the oldest are the traditional neighborhood *tabernas*, dimly lit dives which hark back to the Franco era and beyond; serving wine and beer, they are usually patronized by older working-class men. Second are the slightly more upscale "bars" which arose in the boom years of the 1960s and cater to a younger, hipper modern crowd, having modern accommodations and serving fancy liquors. Third is the new-style "pub" (pronounced "poof"), dating to the early 1980s and modeled after an idealized version of the English public house. Patronized by more sophisticated village youth, they are elegantly furnished and stylish turned out with cushioned sofas, colored lighting and a fancy range of imported beers and expensive whiskeys. Last are the still more fashionable *discotecas*, dating to the late 1980s, which feature live rock music, karaoke, dancing, and resemble an American or French night club (I am not counting the stuffy casinos, or private clubs here, which are mainly patronized by the elite and the elderly). The latter two establishments, the stylish pubs and youthful *discotecas*, are known specifically to welcome and to accommodate women and girls on weekends, and many unmarried young women attend on Saturday nights, always, however, in groups – it is still rare to see a single woman in a public house of any sort. The more forward-looking bars also welcome females, but usually get them only on weekend nights either in sizable groups or accompanied by male companions. But the smoky masculine *tabernas* – especially the old-fashioned and rough working-class dives – remain strictly

sex segregated. Women are still reluctant to enter such a manly world of smoke, card-playing, televised sports, heavy drink and male camaraderie. Indeed women in Fuentes still do not feel comfortable in many of the bars and *tabernas*. They still complain about a sense of alienation when it comes to the traditional public houses. «Why should women be made to feel like prostitutes for going where men go all the time?» is an often-heard complaint. For many women, disbarment from any of the public establishments in the village, even the hole-in-the-wall *tabernas*, represented a last frontier of sex discrimination, a galling challenge that sooner or later would have to be breached, don Quixote and the windmills. So some banded together and enacted a very dramatic remedy to turn the situation around. Before describing these recent developments, I must digress to explain the operative cultural principle of *ambiente*.

Literally this expression might be rendered in English as “ambience” or “atmosphere”, but it means much more in colloquial Spanish. Perhaps “gaity” or “gregariousness” would be better glosses. When queried about its meaning, people in Fuentes will say that *ambiente* is the key to the enjoyment of life and the source of emotional fulfillment for people of both sexes, for young and for old, a key to happiness. *Ambiente* emanates primarily from crowding, from the presence of many people in small spaces – from togetherness, interaction, social intercourse, conversation and camaraderie. Propinquity creates social contact, providing the pleasures of sociability that are so keenly felt in isolated small towns. Without experiencing *ambiente*, a person is said to be “sad” (*triste*) and lonely (*solo*) and is pitied as a *pobrecito(a)* (sad sack). For example, a man without a neighborhood bar to go to every night or a man without dozens cronies is considered a “sad one” and a “lost soul.” People who live in isolated farmsteads outside the town are always said to be unhappy, lonely and desperate. Men who inhabit the bars nightly for rounds of drink, cards and other sorts of manly fun are “happy” and “lucky.” Many people say simply that *ambiente* is “life”, and life without *ambiente* is not only depressing but also not truly human. In Andalusia, the worst fate to befall a person is not poverty or poor health, but loneliness. There is also a verb form, *ambientar*, to make merry, to socialize. When you go to a public place to meet friends or when you arrive at a festival or enter a crowded bar, people will say it’s time to “*ambientar*”, time to make happy. Probably the closet terms in colloquial English would be “get loose” or “start partying.”

It should be obvious from the above, that *ambiente* is less accessible for women than for men, because any man can simply visit his local tavern and achieve some modicum of *ambiente* (there are always crowds, albeit all-male). But for many women, who are still confined to the home, *ambiente* is difficult to achieve. If a woman has many daughters, sisters and other living kinswomen within reach, she can socialize indoors and be fulfilled. But many women are bereft of such company, and for them a state of loneliness is common. Having put up with this sexist exclusion from a treasured part of life, and motivated by the women’s movement in the 1980s, the *pueblo* women finally got fed up with this state of affairs and decided to do something about it. The result is the banding together and the creation of the revolutionary concept of the “private festival”, on the face of it a contradiction in terms.

#### 6. Bar Wars: To Go Boldly Where No Woman Has Gone Before

In Castilian *fiesta* means festival, feast, holiday – whether religious or secular. A *fiesta* in Andalusia is by definition a public event, and access is unrestricted. Spanish secular *fiestas*, such as Carnival and the summer fair, and even religious holidays such as Holy Week, are times when everyone is outdoors celebrating and cavorting. *Fiestas* are periods of broad disinhibition, bar-packing and carousing, moral rules temporarily relaxed. Women are permitted free reign in *fiestas*: they can visit the bars, drink and indulge themselves like men without much criticism (there is always tongue-clicking among the more conservative). Pre-determined by the ritual or liturgical calendar, *fiestas* are leaderless and no one is ever in charge. Nobody has the power to limit access to such a public event. However, a sea-change has occurred in Andalusia regarding the concept of *fiesta*. On recent fieldtrips (2002, 2006), I was told that women in the pueblos had devised a way to challenge the male monopoly over public spaces. Their strategy is to imitate a custom they have witnessed on American TV shows: throwing a private party in a public space. They call this a *fiesta particular*. Previous to about 1990, such a thing was unheard of in Andalusia.

I should point out that “*particular*” in Spanish differs slightly the synonym “*privado*.” The latter, as in English, is a legalistic term meaning private property or individual ownership. Analogous but not isomorphic, *particular* carries the sense of something controlled by a person or per-

sons for the specific purpose of limiting access: thus it connotes “exclusivity *in jus*” rather than “private, *in rem*”. So a *fiesta particular* (we might call it an exclusive affair), has the curious self-contradictory sense of a public but restricted festivity or celebration – historically an alien idea in Spain. By the 1990s, women in the pueblos had begun to pool resources and rent out bars for evenings. By means of this radical invention, they have seized control of male-only spaces and invaded the last bastion of male exclusivity. Having established a beachhead in “enemy terrain”, the girls invite like-minded female friends and liberated men to join them, posting a sentry at the door. When anyone approaches who is unacceptable to the new spirit of gender-bending, the sentry sternly announces “*fiesta particular!*” turning the intruder away. Thus an unprecedented custom has entered the world of the village, potentially an upheaval in gender rules. Few social scientists have examined the implications of such a spontaneous challenge to prevailing orthodoxies. Are women using the *fiesta particular* to network, to “do deals”, advance careers? We must remember that such trivia are, in aggregate, the stuff of “social change”: tiny first steps in the long journey of cultural transformation. It happened in the following way.

In the waning years of the last century, a number of young women came up with a novel idea for entertaining themselves on weekends. Constituting an informal *tertulia*, or friendship society, four women aged between 22 and 25, unmarried, without serious *novios*, or boyfriends, they found themselves bored and unable to abide by the rigid rules of female housebound imprisonment that their mothers and grandmothers rigidly followed. Of course they had all been to the bars with men, and had been accustomed to going in large groups of single girls to the *disco-tecas* on Saturday nights for drinking and dancing. But they felt something was missing in their liberated lives, something to do with control over the environment. Having watched American TV shows in which public halls were rented by women for parties, they conceived the idea of doing the same thing in the local bars. So when one mentioned her bright idea of going en masse to a local bar and paying the owner in advance for drinks, asking his wife to prepare tapas, or snacks, and to decorate the bar with bunting. They had seen similar preparations in American movies and on the TV Teledramas made in Spain that imitate what they like to call the “California life style”, that is, modern hedonistic self-expression. Essentially, the intention of the young wo-

men here was threefold: first to give vent to the need for female for control over entertainment, and second, to demonstrate their newfound assertiveness and defiance of male dominance, and third, just to have fun.

On the face of it, the contradiction in terms among public, private, particular, exclusive and the implicit the overthrow of male dominion, was not an issue to the first rank of organizers, the “revolutionaries”, as they joking began to refer to themselves. The girls were more intent upon making a social success and establishing a precedent, thereby getting men and older women accustomed to seeing crowds of unaccompanied females gallivanting in the streets and drinking and socializing in public houses. Upon hearing of this, my first reaction was to query people in the older generations to see what kind of response the girls might have encountered. The older men’s reactions were perhaps most interesting. I spoke to a few “regulars” of a bar that had been usurped by women for an evening in 1999, men in their 50s and 60s. In discussing the events, I found a surprising degree of acceptance and even grudging approval. One man said simply that women ruled inside the house and did most things formerly reserved for men, and so why should they not also rule in the public houses? Another older gent, less sanguine, argued that the bar was the “last refuge” for older males, a sanctuary and escape from the female-dominated world of the indoors, a male fortress. Still, this man smiled and chuckled, adding sheepishly that despite all his misgivings and the wrench of seeing a tradition toppled, he was delighted to have the female company (they let him in that night out of pity if I got it right). He added that just to be able to look at all the pretty young things was a “fashion show” and a “feast of the eyes”, as he put it. I detected more a note of moral resignation but also a certain understated elation at the turn of events.

Other interviews with men revealed more of the same. One man in his 50s reported that seeing so many unattached women in bars is something he had awaited for 40 years and was pleased about it. He hoped they would come in more often while the regulars were assembled and not just on their own nights with the younger men; the girls were a “boost for us tired old dogs”, he added, smirking and tapping his temple alongside the eyebrow as men in Andalusia do to indicate something visually striking. Out of about twenty preliminary chats with the older men, I got the impression more of relief than of anything else, as though an ageless battle, bravely

but uselessly fought for decades, had been honorably concluded with little real damage to either side. In the spirit of sexual ecumenicalism (a favorite expression among young women), the men granted the women their long-overdue rights and indeed expressed a measure of approval and solidarity with sisters and daughters: a happy surrender. The “old ways”, many men said, are not only a thing of the antiquated past, the “old Spain”, but also something they associated with the Franco dictatorship (which ended in 1975); so any change has the whiff of political freedom – for both sexes.

Older women, however, had mixed reactions. One heard the usual criticism of old people who have suffered some injustice or deprivation and want their successors also to suffer. But some mothers and grandmothers, women over 50, felt proud and supportive, although of course they vigorously denied that they themselves would ever think of entering a bar without their husbands. And so, with only minor disapproval and little active opposition, the young girls of Andalusia have found the key to *ambiente* and at the same time a means of undermining the vestiges of patriarchy in public places. The solid wall of sexual bias has crumbled under their gentle assault, guised in the form of innocent entertainment. More than anything, the recognized symbolism of the female-dominated “private party” represents a revolution in both the moral structure of space in the village and in the contours of sex as cognitive constructs. And with *ambiente* come deeper boons: the increased social velocity of gregarious exchange, promiscuous mixing, and the possibility of social networking, career advancement, commerce, and of course on a psychological plane, unity and sisterhood, although my data on this aspect of the private party remain exiguous. Further research is planned for next year.

### 7. Final remarks

So with all this in mind, we return to the question of why women have always been excluded from the male-owned spaces of life, the bar being the *fons et origo* of patriarchal property. Based on observations about how bars are used by men to create a society of equals, we can make a few interpretations, none of which is singly valid. First, the bar is the place where informal exchange of commodities takes place. Such exchanges are a kind of shadow economy. To say that women are excluded from this of world power-brokering by being excluded from taverns is only to state the

obvious, but the question remains as to why this should be so. Exclusion here readily translates to subordinate and oppression. What about the use of alcohol as a prime factor in sexual divisions? Drinking is of course associated with loss of control and with sexuality in many pre-industrial cultures (Marshall 1979: 85). Alcohol works as an inhibitor to the moral sense, so that drinking often precedes sex; therefore it must be denied women except on special occasions, another instance of women’s disfranchisement. Yet the fact that alcohol is served in the café does not seem an adequate explanation for women’s exclusion by itself. As in other part of Spain and also in Mexico (Brandes 1979, 2002), men will sit for hours over a coffee or soft drink in bars and some regulars do not even drink at all, simply smoke and play cards – although this is unusual. For instance, I knew a man in Spain who spent most of his waking hours in the local tavern without ever drinking anything stronger than chamomile tea. Freely given without even prompting, his excuse was “doctor’s orders” (he had a blood-sugar level problem). And alcohol of course is not served in Muslim Middle East (the Turkish *meyhane* is a major exception, very much like a Spanish *tapas bar* or Greek *taverna* in the voluminous flow of liquor).

But in southern Europe, alcohol, like most narcotics in most cultures, perhaps even more so, is a masculine privilege. But all this take us back to the sexual double standard which saves all the fun for the men. But which comes first: chicken or egg, sex or drink? Women’s entry into the world of the public house in Andalusia, of course also means an equality of tipping and the privilege to indulge in the most public of all activities, no small matter here. So the symbols of women’s empowerment begin to pile up within the context of the private party: equality of place, freedom of movement, equality in commerce, equality in public access, moral equality, and last but not least equality of being inebriated. What all this shows, beyond the power of innovative (and certainly not passive) manipulation of rules, is the validity of the processual approach to public/private, as proposed by feminists. If we return for a moment to the initial literature cited, we see that the dichotomy remains useful methodologically as well as a persistent “social fact” that must be taken into account in any understanding of change. As Reid astutely puts it in relation to Northern Ireland (2008: 500) the negotiation of public space and the integration of personhood and self-identity are inextricably mixed with the use of “territory”. Her subject of course is sectarian politics and religious divisions in the

context of The Troubles. Here in southern Spain, territoriality means something superficially different, not “named” factional cleavages so much, but rather venerable gender barriers that define spatialization in small communities and thus determine what Weismantel (2009) calls public access – the morphic language of patriarchy. As Mills writes, «visions of what it means to be a woman continue to be articulated in relation to the spaces of collective memory and of everyday life» (Mills 2007: 351). The dynamic approach to gender and territoriality that Mills and other social geographers have taken promotes «the imagining of space as already ramified in its meanings and uses» in everyday life, as Fincher (2004) calls it: seeing “multiplicities” rather than “dualisms” in the gendered frontiers of territory. The ideology and the idiom of space should not be seen as passive backdrops, but as primary discriminators of social relations, no matter who the actors (Reid 2008: 500).

Finally, let me conclude with the usual – though in this case sincere – plea for further cross-disciplinary research. Ethnographers have done very good work in the past two decades in southern Europe, especially rural Greece (see Herzfeld 1991; Papataxiarchis 1991) on the subject of sex, public houses, power and social change<sup>8</sup>. However, parochial as usual, anthropologists working in the area have lagged in communicating with the sister disciplines. More than twenty years ago, the human geographer Edward Soja deplored the lack of research «on the spatial dimension of societal organization on a level equivalent to the extensive examination of kinship and contract relations» (1979: 8) speaking directly to the lack of inter-disciplinary fertilization. Some anthropologists have heeded the call; for example the first-rate work of Herzfeld (1991), Low (1996), Lawrence (1996), Gilmore (1996) George (2005) and others. More recently the call has been heard by other social scientists. But it is truly astounding that in her book on gender and space in which she provides a whistle-stop overview of sexual segregation from the Paleolithic to the post-industrial age, Daphne Spain (1992) never even mentions the Mediterranean or alludes to its vast area literature on sexual apartheid, except for a brief mention of the Turkish *harems/se-lamlık* household division. I sincerely hope that a dialogue can be heard among other social scientists and cultural anthropologists working in the Mediterranean area. Now in its death throes, sexual apartheid needs just as much attention as do racial and class segregation – and for the same mix of intellectual and humanitarian reasons.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more on the subject of space, ground rules, and society – that is, the third dimension of social structure – see the following works: Bourdieu (1971); Buttner and Seamon (1980); Lawrence (1996); and Low (1996). There is a fine summary of the literature in Lawrence and Low (1990). For works specifically on gender and space, see: Ardener (1981); Callaway (1981); Hirschon (1981a, 1981b); Hirschon and Gold (1984); Spain (1992); Thompson (2003); Nagar (2004).

<sup>2</sup> René Hirschon (1991: 72) refers to this dichotomy as “interiority/exteriority”. Many other rhetorical devices are employed to capture Mediterranean sexual apartheid, almost one per ethnographer (see Sciamia 1981). For recent examples of such an approach outside the Mediterranean area, see Johnson (2002); Staeheli and Kofman (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Many anthropologists have examined sexual symbolism in the Mediterranean area from a variety of dualisms: left/right (Campbell 1964); sheep/goat (Blok 1981); seed/soil (Delaney 1991); honor/shame (Pitt-Rivers 1977); activity/passivity (Herzfeld 1985; Brandes 1980), etc.

<sup>4</sup> Between 1972 and 2006, I have visited and re-visited the inland areas near Seville, Cordoba, and Malaga cities. I am mainly familiar with the following agrotowns: Fuentes de Andalucía, Montilla, Carmona, Ecija, La Campana, Osuna, and Utrera, as well as smaller coastal pueblos like Santa María, Sanlúcar de la Barremeda in Cádiz Province, and one mountain town: Zahara, in Málaga Province. My field trips to Spain were supported at various times by generous grants from the following agencies: The National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the HF Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Joint Committee of US Universities and Spain’s Ministry of Culture, the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the American Philological Society, and the Research Foundation of the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

<sup>5</sup> The title of a book by Braquette Williams (1996).

<sup>6</sup> The sexual/anatomical symbolism is obvious. For excellent account of the sexual symbolism of the Andalusian olive harvest, see Brandes (1980). Brandes (1992) also provides superb description of spatial hierarchization in Spanish culture, especially of children’s games and adult puns, riddles, and folklore; see also Taggert (1991).

<sup>7</sup> Compare the symbolic sanctions for sex trespass here with the violent physical punishments meted out in aboriginal New Guinea and South America, where women could be raped or clubbed to death for spatial violations (Lévi-Strauss 1961: 213-214).

<sup>8</sup> For more ethnography on the traditions of bars, cafés, and the like in Greece before the turn of the present century, see Loizos and Papataxiarchis (1991); Papataxiarchis (1991); Zinovieff (1991); and Dubisch (1993).

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