

**A Geometry of Bodies:  
Women and the Raval in Catalan Female Photography  
(1950-2012)**

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“L’investissement du regard n’est pas privilégié chez les femmes comme chez les hommes. L’œil, plus que les autres sens, objective et maîtrise. Il met à distance, il maintient la distance. Et, dans notre culture, la prévalence du regard sur l’odorat, le goût, le toucher, l’ouïe, a entraîné un appauvrissement des relations corporelles... A partir du moment où le regard domine, le corps perd de sa chair.”

Luce Irigaray

Privilege, materiality, and spatiality. The gaze characterizes. It constructs and deconstructs, gives and takes away. It is pure selection. But, when it comes to questions of gender, in a world ruled by the male way of seeing, it is selection from a distance; it ignores the needs of the body because it does not come to know the body through proximity. By virtue of this distance, our reality is separated from that which the eyes register, and that separation in turn leads us to contemplate the body from outside and, as Elaine Scarry reminds us, as parts, shapes, and mechanisms more than in terms of capabilities, needs, or as a source of life (1985, 285). Through its being seen, the body loses materiality and becomes a discourse that can be manipulated without regard for the consequences upon whatever surrounds it, be it a social or an urban space. In this context, the female body is objectified and stripped of its agency. However, this cartography acquires new directives once the female body and eye are given precedence. If it is through the body that we see and experience urban space and the social space (that it in turn produces) then it stands to reason that a new conjugation of these constitutive elements –body, gaze, city– enables the development and construction of a cartography that breaks away from the hegemonic forces that restrain them.

In terms of photography, we can appreciate distance through perspective; we can see how it organizes the space that it registers but also how, conscious of its creative and organizational power, at times it tries to offset that lack of physical closeness through a critical reading that emphasizes precisely its own shortcomings. Photographs are therefore constructed but also construct discourses and are not therein related only with the act of taking photos per se but also with institutional practices, social contexts, and discourses of transmission and circulation. Indeed, these relationships are what give power to the act of seeing.

Keeping in mind this possibility of a new narrative through the eye, the question that gives rise to this analysis is related then to the gendered construction of spaces through the perspective of the photographer: How does the lens reshape the space captured by the photographer? The (a)temporal space created by the image intersects with the memory and the different narratives carried by the place itself and the viewer. Thinking about the Raval, the genesis of this Barcelonan neighborhood is tied to its popularity as the red light district, defined mainly by alcohol, drugs, and prostitution, where women in the street become women of the street.<sup>1</sup> Although it is true that this characterization has changed in recent decades, the neighborhood is still related to this underworld of exclusion where genders are still defined by the spaces they occupy. How does the photographer break with these stereotypes? How does the photographer renegotiate the predominant narratives, be they visual or textual, to reshape this space? How does she redefine the role of gender in public space? To answer these questions we will trace the creation of a feminine construction of this space through photography, starting with the images developed during the 1950s and 1960s,<sup>2</sup> and will conclude by focusing on the work

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<sup>1</sup> The history of the Raval is linked to the development of the working classes since its inception, given that it was the location where Catalan industrialization originated. However, from the 1920s onward, social groups and commentators began to call it the Barrio Chino, an iconography imagined with negative connotations that would go on to influence its image even nowadays (Ealham, 2005, 374). This conceptualization is rooted in the expansion of illegal activities during and immediately subsequent to World War I, during the course of which the criminal underworld became intimately connected to the bourgeoisie that existed beyond the boundaries of the Raval (Ealham, 2005, 380). This context made possible only one function for women in the Raval, prostitution. For a more detailed explanation of the construction of exoticism in the Barrio Chino, see Ealham (2005), McDonogh (1987), and Paco Villar (1996).

<sup>2</sup> The rationale for starting the timeline here is twofold: first, it coincides with the development of a nascent documentary impulse in Spain, and, second, it is tied to an increasing interest in the margins of photography as evinced by the work of Francisco Candel. Joan Foncuberta describes how against the backdrop of experimentation in the years that preceded the Civil War, “salonismo” (the pursuit of awards given by conservative jurors interested only in a very narrowly specific set of formal characteristics) and official or apolitical documentarian works became the gold standard set by photographic associations (2008, 73-78). From the 1950s onward, we can perceive a resurgence of the discursive tendencies of the 1930s, where pure plastic creation is abandoned in favor of a search for honesty through the lens. As Joan Colom explains in an interview on the photographic output of these years, photographers broke with preceding academic tendencies because, “buscàvem una fotografia directa, sense esteticismes, realista i amb un tema, no simplement imatges boniques i aïllades. Volfem una fotografia que captés la vida, viure el carrer. Un plantejament que s’apartava dels criteris més aviat acadèmics del moment” (Ribalta, 1999, 35). The relationship with Francisco Candel is much more complicated: until then all of the literary and photographic pieces centered on the Raval (e.g. Brangulí or Margaret Michaelis) had a sociological objective that lead its creators to observe the neighborhood from afar, without giving a voice to its inhabitants. Candel is the first to portray it from inside and thus give voice and influence to its subject matter. This change of direction allows for a new type of photography that exists in greater proximity to the place and farther away from the institutional interests of the city.

that Consuelo Bautista did in the Raval between 2008 and 2009, which culminated in her exhibition *Raval* (June 2012– January 2013).<sup>3</sup> Even though the theme of gender does not seem to be the focus of many of these projects, their perspective as female photographers and the negotiation posed by the presence of different cultures in their images reveal a (re)construction of gender in public space, while simultaneously offering a novel perspective on how neighborhood space is conceptualized, specifically through the malleability of the urban, social, and cultural images that shape it through bodies. Along these lines, this analysis will critique a masculine historiography, reevaluate the value of gender as a category for analysis in photography, and examine how space and otherness are constructed in this specific context. Questions of visibility and invisibility necessarily arise from here, as well as concerns about the construction of realities through the construction of the body in a new cartography that is both urban and corporal. We are not talking about finding moorings outside of art that can offer us an interpretation to grab hold of, as Stephen Greenblatt affirms (1991), but rather we seek to situate this photography in relation to other representational practices working jointly with history and culture in order to thus reveal the mechanisms that undergird them.

The underlying basis of this investigation is the contrast between stability and mobility. On the one hand, place has the ability to apprehend lasting meaning, as explained by Teresa del Valle in *Andamios para una nueva ciudad*. On the other hand, however, this very same place allows for a dynamic in which movement – be it material or not, a change in the interpretation of history or the construction of some determined type of space – leaves that discourse behind in the place where it came from, voids it of meaning and updates it, constructing a narrative in which the past becomes a shadow that precedes the present (1997, 102).<sup>4</sup> In this way, contingency and continuity reshape movement, but in both cases the experience of everyday life is what gives it meaning; lived-in space is the key.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For the creation of this chronology, we have taken two points of reference: that women took the photographs, and that the subject matter comes from the Raval (or Barcelona in those cases where we find links in the development of a female gaze). The selection of the Raval is due to its social, cultural, and urban centrality (see, for example, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Del Valle explains how social memory is elaborated from the present, which underscores the notions of selection and fiction at work in an operation reminiscent of Hayden White's concept of fiction in history in "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," where the historian interprets history as a narrative construct. Here we see the drafting of narrative constellations that Henri Lefebvre lays out in his concept of the urban matrix, as we will see in greater detail below.

<sup>5</sup> This conceptualization of space imagined by del Valle, specifically as related to the question of gender, is intimately tied to the definitions of urban space postulated by Lefebvre (1992) and Michel de Certeau (1988) that sought to differentiate between space and place.

The everyday, as explained by Michel de Certeau, becomes a set of practices of resistance that break away from rational planification through the everyday violence of a rhetoric of the passerby:

The ordinary practitioners of the city live “down below,” below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk –an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban “text” they write without being able to read it... The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped by fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. (1988, 93)

This quotidian quality is what street photography attempts to capture, where the photographer, as a sort of *flâneuse*, captures movement through the performance of the everyday walk. Through this process the urban text is rewritten and searches for new readings in that materiality that appears to be permanent. And here, photography grants us the necessary distance to perceive the contingency/construction of meanings in everyday life given that a photo, like space, does not narrate anything on its own except when it establishes a link between its viewer and the subject matter, although once this link is established both are inserted into a narrative, in a story that molds and constructs. This back and forth suggests predestination toward change, despite both the city and space being based on notions of inevitability and durability that have become part of the same culture that created them.

Through the collaboration between photographer and spectator, in which the former creates and the latter decodifies, photography is made out to be a construction of visual narratives, so that reading images as “visual records of time past,” is a way to construct versions of history (Fryer Davidov, 1998, 3). From this point of view and following the theoretical stance of Hayden White (1986), interpretation implies assigning categories of meaning to the images and ordering them in a sequence of visual and verbal language in such a way that from these pieces a narration or discourse begins to take shape; this narrative or discursive whole can then take as its central focus countless different features (chronology, a linear mode of perception based on different criteria such as gender, class, etc.) and in being open to such approaches create narrative patterns that are potentially as varied as the readers of the images (Fryer Davidov, 1998, 3). In this fashion, both the photo catalogue as well as the exposition become narrations that include but also exclude and, therefore, marginalize and open discursive spaces in different parts of culture: the viewer of the photograph conjugates various spaces characterized by sequence, including one that we could call syntagmatic, where the photograph is read in the order created by the exposition and the catalogue, and another that we could call

paradigmatic, where the photographs are read in the order created by the experience and knowledge of the viewer which thus can vary widely according to differing viewpoints. This same phenomenon occurs with the space that surrounds us and with which the image is (re)constructed. We seek out those parts that we recognize and assign them meaning within our own discourse, which is how the city or the image also takes shape:

This city can be known only by an activity of an ethnographic kind: you must orient yourself in it not by book, by address, but by walking, by sight, by habit, by experience; here every discovery is intense and fragile, it can be repeated or recovered only by memory of the trace it has left you: to visit a place for the first time is thereby to begin to write it: the address not being written, it must establish its own writing. (Barthes, 1982, 33-36)

We can draw from this distinction a double reading that will be useful for the analysis of the Raval portrayed by the photographers that we are going to analyze. First we have what could be considered stable: these narrations can and do create a canon and therefore can be considered as representative and constitutive of a supposedly unique reality.<sup>6</sup> Then we have movement: the image and the multiplicity of readings that can emerge from it enable the existence of a new way of looking that branches off from the canon and heeds different aspects and in doing so gives new form to the image, its context, and, by extension, what we describe as “reality”.<sup>7</sup> Here, movement, the unexpected, memory, and the posterior

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<sup>6</sup> André Malraux explains how from the museum, together with the ample photographic reproduction of multiple objects, “a Babylonian style seems to emerge as a real entity, not a mere classification – as something resembling, rather the life-story of a great creator. Nothing conveys more vividly and compellingly the notion of a destiny shaping human ends than do the great styles, whose evolutions and transformations seem like long scars that Fate has left, in passing, on the face of the earth” (1978, 46). Narration is constructed a posteriori, in a search for causality that, in reality, lacks the spontaneity that it attempts to grant. Here in this case, space in the museum is what gives narration this air of inevitability.

<sup>7</sup> In this sense, and reminiscent of what Malraux states regarding museums, we should turn to Griselda Pollock’s definition of the image in her article “Missing Women.” According to Pollock, this concept is problematic within the framework of a “woman’s image” because it assumes a fully formed, defined, and meaningful world in which images are judged relative to the world they reflect, reproduce, or distort – although such an analysis could be applied to any type of context if we are mindful of how any given construct is the result of a discursive practice. The *real* is always present as a criterion by which images are valued and is itself never questioned as a product of representation. The image is true or false as a reflection of the *real* and, in this way, positioned in a hierarchical relationship where the *real* precedes and determines the image (1990, 203). Nevertheless, the *real* is neither beyond scrutiny, fixed nor unique; rather, it is also a construct and therefore is as malleable as the image since it is itself also an image (1990, 204). The images of male and female photographers are constructs; they result as much from material, social, and ethical practices as the social, cultural, and political narratives or discourses of the space of the Raval and the female body.

visualization of these routes that have created a new reading of social and urban context show us just how uncontrollable these urban, social, and cultural discourses are. This manifold operation perceives the canon – whether spatial, social or cultural–, discerns the malleability of its boundaries, and goes on to critique and deconstruct it. As a consequence of this expansion beyond the canon, a decentralization of place results and together with it the possibility of (re)construction through ambiguity, movement, difference, and conflict, all of which point out the possibilities for interstices opened by the everyday that can alter the permanent – or, at least, longer-lasting – discourses imposed by the physical presence of streets and buildings, or the action of social structures or a canon. Physical permanence imposes an urban map just as it establishes a social reading; the attention paid to these uncontrollable movements and discontinuities creates a new sequence of spaces and readings and, consequently, the refutation of a singular, canonical reading. In this sense, photography, as a visualization of urban wandering and the “real” rendered image, can allow us to uncover new discourses and possibilities in urban places while simultaneously encouraging a spatial memory that lays out a way of narrating built upon the traces left behind by the city’s wanderers. These new readings offer the possibility of reintroducing the female body and its gaze as a force with the capacity to create, through a multiple urban and photographic subjectivity, both urban space and photographic canon. The remnants collected by photographers such as Milagros Caturla or Consuelo Bautista, to mention the two extremes of our chronology here, become essential pieces of this new urban narrative as they unleash a destabilization of conventional meaning in urban discourse.<sup>8</sup>

In the photographic chronologies of the Raval,<sup>9</sup> including the genealogy that contextualizes the images in *Raval* by Consuelo Bautista and which are included in the back of the catalogue, what really stands out is that the gaze is always masculine.<sup>10</sup> Keeping in mind the chronological

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, the chronology developed in this article, as well as its being centered on the Raval, is also but one discourse among many; however, this new imagining hopes to reveal a new way of perceiving space, place, and the photographic canon that has reigned until now. Consequently, this article will not construct a detailed genealogy of all the female photographers that undertook their work from the 1950s to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, but rather it will highlight the most relevant examples and examine how they dialogue with a masculine canon by both creating and deconstructing new corporal geographies.

<sup>9</sup> Before we proceed, it should be pointed out that here I am not so interested in marking the direct connection with examples that I am going to mention as much as I am in the dialogue that is established between these images and how continuity, contingency, and change become their central markers.

<sup>10</sup> The exception that confirms the rule, although only recently, is Margaret Michaelis (1902-1985), an Austrian who photographed the Raval during the years she lived there (1933-1937). Many of her photos were used by GATCPAC (Grup d’Arquitectes i Tècnics Catalans per al Progrés de l’Arquitectura Catalana) in its articles and exhibits. Her work could be considered one of the antecedents from the years of the Republic of the New Documentary photography spoken of by Joan Fontcuberta, although it does not generally figure in the later anthologies of photographers. Her exclusion can be attributed to several

timeline established above that begins toward the end of 1950, context favors the exclusion of the female gaze, but this extreme exclusion makes us question even more its role in the construction of space in the Raval, where women generally have heightened visual prominence, especially with regard to its development in the years subsequent to the dictatorship.<sup>11</sup>

If we observe photographs without regard to the gender of the person who took them, we can ask ourselves whether it is relevant if the author is male or female. Eric Homberger (1991) asks if photography has a gender and appears to conclude that it does not given that, disciplinarily speaking, the shared language and medium implies no separation between male and female photographers. However, there is a social and cultural context that does indeed modify the content of the images: the way in which the female body is perceived and portrayed, and how this perception and portrayal configure urban space is undeniably influenced by the gaze. Here we are not necessarily talking about understanding these images through a feminist reading, but rather as the product of a female gaze. That is, they do not necessarily convey an intention of protest; instead they display the influence of a female gaze that sketches out spaces and constructs a female and urban body based on certain limitations.

These limitations or differences in context come to light if we set in juxtaposition the work of Joan Colom (Barcelona, 1921-2017) and Milagros Caturla (1920-2008), two contemporaries during the period we are interested in here.<sup>12</sup> Neither was a professional photographer, at least not at first, yet both attained recognition for an activity that started as a pastime. As I explained in a previous article, Joan Colom, an accountant by trade, had a late start in photography at 36 years old. Along with other photographers, including Ignasi Marroyo, Jordi Munt and Jordi Vilaseca, in 1960 he founded the group *El Mussol*, which attempted to drive new tendencies, with an all-out counter-hegemonic assault on the principles of other groups” (2014, 57). He was part of the emergence of what Josep Maria Casademont calls the “*nueva vanguardia*” of photographers like Francesc Català-Roca and others who appeared a few years later around the *Agrupació fotogràfica de Catalunya* and *Sala Aixelà*: Xavier Miserachs, Ricard Terré, Ramon Massats, Oriol Maspons and Colom, among others

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reasons, including: that she worked for the Republic; that she was a woman who was moreover divorced, and an exile in Barcelona during these years; that she was a foreigner, which would justify excluding her from later publications that came out in the years following the Civil War. Indeed, only recently have her images published in the *GATCPAC*'s magazine been credited to her. Jordana Meldenson has a detailed study of Michaelis' work in her article (2003).

<sup>11</sup> The dictatorship formally differentiates between men and women, completely eliminating the equal rights attained by the latter in the years of the Second Republic. For a detailed study of the social roles of women in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and under the dictatorship, consult Mary Nash (1983) and María Teresa Gallego Méndez (1983).

<sup>12</sup> The selection of these two examples is not made at random; through a comparison of the contexts of their production, we can see how in spite of their being contemporaries their gazes construct, limit, objectify, create, and maintain distance, as Luce Irigaray explains.

(2011). Colom's photography became known through expositions in different centers and art galleries at the time, and the interest in his work was rekindled during the 1990's when expositions and publications rediscovered his work (Sendra Ferrer, 2014, 58).<sup>13</sup> The path followed by Milagros Caturla's photographs, on the other hand, has been marked from the beginning by her condition as a woman, which has limited their exhibition almost to the point of disappearance.<sup>14</sup> Her work became present through a photography contest for women organized by the Sección Femenina, the women's branch of the Falange, in 1961. The photographs were displayed in the Salón de la Virreina, and Caturla won fourth place with her photo "Fervor". The Agrupació Fotogràfica de Catalunya was charged with organizing the exhibit and its subsequent publication in the association's review (March, 1962), which includes Caturla's photograph. The Agrupació Fotogràfica was divided into the "male group" and the "female group", with the former being in charge of editing and publishing the magazine that, as explained by Caturla herself in an interview, excluded the activities of the female group and, in turn, caused their work to be disseminated in many fewer professional circles with less exposure overall. Caturla continued to show her work in contests and exhibits,<sup>15</sup> although her name disappeared from subsequent genealogies of photography, in spite of

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<sup>13</sup> The interest in Colom's work faded once he abandoned the practice of photography following the publication of *Izas, rabizas y colipoterras* (1964) by Camilo José Cela. The book's first run was very successful, so much so that a second edition was published. One of the women photographed recognized herself and filed a lawsuit against Colom who, despite never going to trial, did not pick up the camera again until 1990. In 1999, the MNAC (Museu Nacional d' Art de Catalunya) recreated the 1961 exhibit of *El Carrer* (with photos taken between 1958 and 1960) that was originally shown in the Sala Aixelà. Commissioned by David Balsells and Jorge Ribalta, the 1999 exhibit was followed by a series of international publications. In 2013, Balsells and Ribalta commissioned another exhibit in the MNAC, *Yo hago la calle. Joan Colom, fotografías 1957-2010*, which gathered together a large part of Colom's work. Colom is also counted among the members of the group AFAL (Agrupación Fotográfica Almeriense), considered to be at the heart of the photographic renewal of the mid-century. Laura Terré commissioned an exhibit of this group under the framework of PhotoEspaña2016, positioning Colom within a moment of renewal and renovation that goes beyond the mere practice of photography as a hobby that he professed.

<sup>14</sup> The information on Milagros Caturla referenced here was researched and published by Begoña Fernández Díez on the internet (<http://emilbeatphotography.com/photographic-research>). Accessed June 25, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> In 1958 she won third place in a contest among members of a course given by the AFC, which included both male and female participants; José Tomás won first place and Andrés Basté second. In August of 1961 she won second place with her photo "Maternal" in the IV Salón Nacional de Fotografía Artística "Fiesta Mayor de Gracia", a mixed contest where first prize went to Eugeni Forcano and second to Ramón Vilalta. On August 3, 1961 she won fifth place with her work "Recela" in the XVII Salón Nacional de Arte Fotográfico (Vilanova i la Geltrú). In April of 1962, she took fourth in the IV Concurso fotográfico de la sección femenina. On August 11, 1962 she won third place with her work "Faces" in the XVIII Salón Nacional de Arte Fotográfico (Vilanova i la Geltrú).

the quality of her images and the fact that she rubbed shoulders with prominent photographers such as Eugeni Forcano.<sup>16</sup>

Joan Colom is the first predecessor who needs to be mentioned, for various reasons: his focus on the Raval and, therefore, on urban space, and his characterization of the female body. Returning to the idea of movement, we can see how Colom's images emphasize the idea of physical and discursive movement and through them question the nature of what the Raval was at that time – Barrio Chino –, a place marked by crime and prostitution. However, the masculine gaze – both the photographer's and the one that characterized the Raval as Barrio Chino –,<sup>17</sup> endures and colors the search for change even in his later work, which perpetuates the same place occupied by the female body in the nineteen-sixties even though the neighborhood finds itself in a very different social and historical moment.<sup>18</sup> We are not talking about a monolithic representation of the neighborhood, but rather an example of the presence of the male gaze that objectifies women and dismisses them to home and family spaces.

In the following photograph, we can see, for example, how the masculine gaze defines not only the body of the woman, but also the urban space that we have before our eyes, in a repetition of the gesture of the official city:

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<sup>16</sup> Caturla's work owes its reappearance to sheer coincidence. Tom Sponheim, an American tourist visiting Barcelona in 2001, bought some negatives in the Encants market. When he developed the photographs, he was astonished by their quality and set out to find the photographer using social media. Following his lead, Begoña Fernández Díez took up the search and wound up uncovering the photographer's identity in 2017. Since then, Caturla's photographs have been exhibited in the festival of analogue photography *Revela't* under the title "Las fotos perdidas de Barcelona" (Vilassar de Dalt, May 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Here we are not trying to affirm that the intention behind Colom's photographs was to make all women out to be prostitutes, but his work does depend on a male gaze that cannot be surrendered. I have analyzed his work through the construction of public space in the past (2014); here, however, I am interested in the construction of his male gaze and how it shapes spaces in the Raval in order to link this narrative with Bautista's work later.

<sup>18</sup> The Raval has been the object of reforms since Idelfons Cerdà's plan for the Eixample. At the heart of these reforms lies the myth of the Barrio Chino and the moral and hygienic discourse that have always accompanied it and that set in motion the reforms that were produced in the Raval before, during, and after the Olympic Games of 1992 in a process of gentrification and property speculation that changed the physiognomy of the neighborhood (Ealham 2005, 397). These changes formed part of a social program of cleansing and colonization of the area that expelled the endemic population, which was considered undesirable, and replaced it with new middle class inhabitants, in part through the creation of services aimed at the more securely established sector of the population that did not necessarily live in the neighborhood yet. Of course, these sweeping changes did not completely eliminate problems such as prostitution, drugs, or crime, but these are no longer the Raval's defining characteristics like they were during the dictatorship.



1. Joan Colom, *Fotografías de Barcelona, 1958-1964*. © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VEGAP, Madrid.<sup>19</sup>

The man's body serves materially as a frame for the photograph and for the female body: the darkness of his suit makes him practically invisible, resulting in the spectator's eyes being drawn to the woman's body; while the male figure is thus to a degree overlooked, it is simultaneously accentuated by the objectification of the female body that it enables (Sendra Ferrer, 2014, 66). Like its place in urban space, the female body is mutilated: she is denied her whole being, the ability to speak, and the subjectivity that her body should grant her. It is not just a question of how a woman is transformed into a woman of the street, but rather that her body is manipulated and fetishized, fluctuating between lack and excess. This mutilation allows us to perceive boundaries, which is to say that the photographer is conscious of the creative power harnessed through photographic techniques, here through framing and composition. The mutilated female body creates a visual axis that organizes the discursive space, but it does not transform this space, even though it occupies it. Here she has no agency; she is just another object that is part of the Raval's surroundings, like its buildings or streets, as is perhaps even more evident in the following photograph:

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<sup>19</sup> Reproduction, including downloading of Joan Colom works, is prohibited by copyright laws and international conventions without the express written permission of Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



2. Joan Colom, *Fotografías de Barcelona, 1958-1964*. © 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VEGAP, Madrid.

In this example we can appreciate how the female body is the organizing axis of the image, as confirmed by the focus on her and the blurry background that takes up most of the image. Nevertheless, it is striking how the woman's body is absorbed by the architecture of the neighborhood in the same way she is absorbed by the act of looking performed by the masculine gaze, not just the photographer's but also any and all who might pass by. She is under continuous observation as a spatial representation of the Raval in its most exotic context. Although Colom is attempting to re-read the Raval not as heterotopic but rather as an example of interstitial public space in which the street is the essence of the Mediterranean polis inasmuch as it is the source of a unifying power that defines a supposedly real but nevertheless unregulated neighborhood, the female body, in how it is construed, reveals the very discourse and practices that act upon and socially restrict it. The spontaneity of the photograph and the resulting emphasis on the idea of realism transmitted through Colom's technique,<sup>20</sup> which seeks to capture a natural, uncreated space, reinforces the limited space of women that is characterized by a for granted and unavoidable daily life. Be that as it may, the framing of the female body in any given spatial configuration here is not the product of chance, however much it may appear so due to the way in which Colom took the photos: the use of a specific camera; that it was hidden; the use of black and white; the graininess of the images; the alleged lack of focus, even though corrected when developed (as can be seen in the contact sheets that are conserved in the gallery Colectania). These are all defining characteristics of street

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<sup>20</sup> Joan Colom took his photographs while hiding his camera from view seeking, on the one hand, the spontaneity of the moment and, on the other, to avoid conflict with the people whose paths he crossed.

photography: the idea of wandering aimlessly through the streets, without formal structure or theme so that photography is defined not by the photographer but rather by the surroundings and what is captured is considered more real. All the same, this search for liberty is carried out within a matrix of power relationships that (re)organize urban and social spaces. These characteristics can be appreciated in other photographers of that same time and the years that followed, like Francesc Català-Roca or Xavier Miserachs, in which the women in these cases are largely a mute group, subject to the relations of power transmitted through space. In this sense, space is performative: the types of encounters both implemented and captured construct the gaze's narration and structure as well as limit and map space according to a determined tradition, one that is in this case masculine. We can see in the photograph a repetition of patterns that also exist in literature. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explain, in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, how the portrayal of women in literature responds to their position in capitalist patriarchy, where men hold all "authority" and control words. Literature and, by extension, art rationalize socio-sexual patterns that they see around them. If we apply this idea to Colom's photography, and then later to Caturla's, we see how both underscore the idea of a complex urban matrix characterized by a tangled labyrinth that is not exclusively physical and through which the power relations that act upon society become manifest, and therein we find an immaterial base upon which bodies are organized and mapped.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, perceiving urban space as a group of relations, even if these are power relations, does not mean the imposition of a fixed hierarchy, but rather quite the contrary: these are mobile and modifiable relationships since they are, as Pollock tells us, not realities but images and therefore malleable, changing spaces.

Keeping in mind this urban matrix of power relations, Milagros Caturla's work seems to be very conscious of how context contours the feminine. In her photographs where women are the protagonists, the ways in which the female body is given space to act draw attention to social practices that limit and confine, which can in turn lead us to designate her work as photographic "salonismo".<sup>22</sup> Their movement in a supposedly

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<sup>21</sup> The starting point for this reflection is Henry Lefebvre (2003), who proposes to reconceptualize "the city" as "the urban" in order to acknowledge the contingency that is part and parcel of "the real". Once again, we come back to Pollock's definition of the image.

<sup>22</sup> Photographic "salonismo" refers to a style indebted to the aesthetic propositions of late-Pictorialism, which is directly linked to painting by both theme and technique. This type of photography was intimately connected to the photography associations and salon exhibits that arose during the dictatorship. Oriol Maspons already criticized this type of photography in 1957, citing how limited it was not formally, but rather thematically, since here "se sacrifica la ética" and the contests "comprometen irremisiblemente la libertad de quien se deja llevar por ellos" (1957). This critique points out the relationship between salon photography and the regime given how it comes to be either through Francoist associations or within the limits of censorship. Caturla's work first appears within this same context, which gives us a clue as to the limited scope available to female photographers, although the technique and themes in some of her works push against the limits of this type

exterior, public space is clearly demarcated, even to the point of being claustrophobic. This limitation comes from the framing of the female body within a religious practice that determines where she can be in public places. In one of the photographs we can see a line of young girls walking down the street dressed for their first communion. At the head of the line is a female figure that appears to be a nun who is flanked by two other women dressed in black or with veils, whose purpose is to reinforce both the integrity of the single file line as well as the social norms to which the girls are subject. The everyday, almost *Costumbrist* tone of the image, the use of black and white that emphasizes the presence of the line, *chiaroscuro* and the dialogue between urban place and the human figure, and the image in motion all remind us once again of the techniques that we saw with Colom, the search for spontaneity and “reality” that comes out of capturing the momentary. In this case, however, the female body is not objectified by photography but rather its socialization within the parameters of a discourse derived from practices that engage the body. By offering a whole female body bounded by walls, the framing produces a perspective best characterized by proximity, trust, and acknowledgement, through which a feminine discourse that seeks out and individualizes the body is cultivated. Colom’s limitation is breached here by Caturla’s gaze, which peers into the photograph in order to explore and reveal its inner spaces. She also mutilates the body, but through its urbanity.<sup>23</sup>

Caturla’s physical mutilation of the female body is very different than what we saw with Colom. In one of her photographs, she presents a close-up of a woman’s feet. We can see her feet and ankles up to what appears to be a coat resting on the asphalt. The woman in the image has removed one of her high-heeled shoes and is resting her semi-nude stocking-covered foot on the other, still covered by its shoe probably so that the other one doesn’t touch the ground. Her feet and the parts of her legs that can be seen are right in the center of the image and allow us to catch a glimpse of the asphalt, but nothing more. The axis and center of the image grant complete prominence to the woman’s feet and emphasize her everyday femininity but also a tiresome modesty that demands she rest. Her body is the source of perception; it is simultaneously the point of departure for the construction of discourses that she uses to define herself from within, but it can also be used by others to define who she is. There can be a tremendous difference between these perceptions, which is evident through our contrast here of Caturla’s work with Colom’s. Caturla does not attempt to map an ideal body, in the way advertising eroticizes the female form or

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of photography. It should be noted, however, that both Joan Colom and Oriol Maspons or, later, Colita, do their work at the margins of these institutions, creating their own groups and tendencies as they sought “una fotografia que revele su tiempo y su operador” (Maspons, 1957).

<sup>23</sup> This physical limitation is much clearer if we compare these photos with others that have masculine subjects, where we can appreciate a wider variety of themes that spread their physical presence throughout urban space.

how Colom packages it for consumption. We see the body in its intended use, in its reality, with the social restrictions that inscribe it. She is not subordinated to her surroundings or the masculine gaze; rather, she seeks out her own femininity in her body and through her body. Unlike the previous images, her femininity is detached from her environment, just like she detaches her pain-inducing heel. The female body here produces knowledge and devises new ways to approach discourses that shape reality, while at the same time questioning the posture of the prior cognizant subject by making its personal and social profiles visible. The reprioritization produced by Caturla's fresh perspective does not remake the organization of the space occupied by the female body; rather, she confirms it, by showing it from the other side, the female side. The body unmasks the authority and powers that regulate the day-to-day life of women.<sup>24</sup> In both cases, Colom and Caturla, the boundaries between the public and the private converge upon the most intimate of our interfaces with the world, the body, which is also decidedly public and the means – and perhaps even more appropriately, the spectacle – through which experience is visualized. Along these lines, the way we read urban geography infiltrates and informs the way we read the bodies that permeate it.

The language of photography therefore becomes a system that repeats and (re)constructs, but also allows for the modification of established structures. Caturla inserts herself into feminine spaces that she knows and reveals them in all of their familiarity, as we can see in the photographs in the school for girls. The photographer has no need to hide her camera like Colom did, because she belongs to/in this space and can pass unnoticed and blend in with what she captures. Otherness for her is not an external representation. However, these spaces are not exterior; they are interior, respecting the heterotopia of the schools for girls, the institution that, like religion, gives structure to the urban matrix and the places occupied by bodies therein. As happens with her city photos, here Caturla respects the limits in force, repeats the language of social discourse that limits the body, and in doing so, makes it visible and insists on the presence – and necessity – of other voices.

This interplay of photographic language and the relationship between photographers and images can also be seen in Colita (born Isabel Steva i Hernández in Barcelona, 1940). One of the most important and famous photographers in Spain, she established her journalistic career in association with the Catalanian Gauche Divine (alongside photographers such as Oriol Maspons, Julio Urbiña and Xavier Miserachs, who guided her in her professionalization as a photographer) and the Film School of

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<sup>24</sup> This lack of change in social structure persists even today. In the description included with Caturla's work in the *Revela't* festival, the author explains that “[d]e profesión maestra, funcionaria de la Diputación de Barcelona, *murió de Alzheimer, soltera y sin descendencia*” (Venteo. Italics mine). In no other case is personal information about the photographer included, and here we see how a woman's identity is tied to her domestic roles.

Barcelona. Her work covers themes drawn from the social, cultural, and physical reality of Barcelona in the last four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the city and its neighborhoods, especially the Raval and Somorrostro; portraits of personalities from the worlds of literature, film, and music; flamenco and gypsies; performance and transvestism; and her work in daily journalism and reports published in magazines including *Interviú*, *Destino* or *Triunfo*, where she reflected on political change, protests, electoral acts, and social issues like psychiatric centers.<sup>25</sup> This professionalization helps Colita to develop a detailed consciousness of the photographic medium and thus separates her from the circles in which Caturla carried out her work.<sup>26</sup>

It is in Colita's work that we can see a true questioning of the photographic perspective in regards to the female body. Her photos that take women as their protagonists show a beauty and strength that transcends social parameters. They are conscious of the place of women in society but seek to counteract it with irony and a sense of protagonism that grants agency to the body.

Through irony, Colita plays with the objectification of women and in doing so emphasizes and critiques oppressive masculine discourse.<sup>27</sup> In

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<sup>25</sup> Journalism will be essential for the development of the Spanish documentary form and will also offer a field where female photographers can work in photography, even before the Civil War. In the world of professional photography, there is only one known antecedent that predates 1939, Anna Maria Martínez Sagi (1907-2000), "únic testimoni gràfic en femení a la premsa barcelonina entre 1900 i 1939. En un ofici dominat pels homes, la primera signatura d'una dona no s'ha trobat fins a l'esclat de la Guerra Civil" (González Morandi, 2015, 158). In the 1960s and 70s, in addition to Colita we see photographers such as Joana Biarnés (Terrasa, 1935) – although her work differs from Colita's for how it is primarily journalistic in nature - or Pilar Aymerich (Barcelona, 1943). Following the dictatorship, the sweeping changes in the political, social, and cultural panorama gives way to a new series of female photographers that will evolve the documentary genre toward "documentalismo intimista" (Carabias Álvaro, 2016, 154). In the 80s, Encarna Marín (El Ronquillo, Sevilla, 1954) and Cristina García Roderó (Puertollano, 1949), the only Spanish member to date of the Magnum agency, stand out. In the 90s, Pilar Pequeño (Madrid, 1944) is an important figure, although all of the photographers mentioned here remained active and continues to exhibit their work in these years. Many of them, such as is the case with Encarna Marín, are the protagonists of their own work; however, in this essay we are going to restrict our scope to the photographers who worked with women in Barcelona.

<sup>26</sup> Colita's work has been recognized with prestigious awards on multiple occasions: in 1998, the city government of Barcelona awarded her a gold medal for artistic merit alongside Oriol Maspons and Leopoldo Pomés; in 2004, she was given the Creu de Sant Jordi by the Generalitat de Catalunya; and the FAD prize of honor in 2014. Also in 2014, she was granted the National Prize in Photography, which she rejected in protest of the state of culture and education in Spain. Her work has been exhibited since 1965 and published in numerous books. Her work figures in the collections of the Museu Nacional D'Art de Catalunya, Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofía and Fundación Elsa Peretti, among others.

<sup>27</sup> While it could be affirmed that Colita's critique or irony here does not necessarily arise from her prior intentions or the fact that she is a woman – since neither can be known directly through the image –, they nevertheless become visible in how she composes and develops the language of photography in the photograph. Colita uses the language available to her and emphasizes, marks, and delimits it in the composition of the image, making it

her photograph “Jorge Herralde y sus secretarias” (Barcelona, 1970),<sup>28</sup> we can see how, in the first place, by adopting the female perspective – limited to ground level just like the camera lens – she becomes the affirmation of resistance by imitating the gaze and logic of the masculine way of looking. The discomfort of this gaze highlights the containment of a subjugated and objectified space. What’s more, here space is represented through conventions that take up the techniques of street photography and yet break with its pictorial references, capturing space according to the experience of those who live it. Objects and subjects are represented according to subjective hierarchies that the producer considers important. The image thus becomes a space of experience that is susceptible to different subjective, ideological, and historical inflections. And so, Colita’s photography evokes how she perceives the spaces and places of women in the spaces and places of men. However, her images do not show merely women subjugated to masculine will, but also a genuinely female perspective on physical and social space. This approach takes into account spaces represented and spaces of representation, and, more importantly, the social spaces from which representation is made and the reciprocal postures that are derived from there.

This awareness of spaces of enunciation that reveal the urban matrix within which the female body has to create its own place of existence is expressly disclosed in her image “Putas del Barrio Chino” (Barcelona, 1969). Here, the space of the Raval maintains the same conventions that we saw in Colom: women are observed bodies and women of the street, as seen through the framing of their bodies by the men’s gaze. However, there is an important change in perspective here; while it is true that the men, like the buildings, frame a specific reading of the female body, here they meld with the walls. This image echoes the language of preceding photos: the bodies are shot from behind, in full movement in black and white, recalling the supposed spontaneity of the camera’s snap.<sup>29</sup> The women’s bodies, on the other hand, occupy the whole street as the center and axis of the image, not to be objectified like the masculine gaze would see them, but to be given strength. The proximity of the camera to their bodies emphasizes this

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visible and showing its consequences on the female body. Joking and irony are essential parts of the image and the source of its inescapable critique.

<sup>28</sup> It was not possible to get the permission needed to publish Colita’s photographs. However, both images can be found in her website ([www.colitafotografia.com](http://www.colitafotografia.com)), in the section “Images,” under “Gauche Divine” (<http://www.colitafotografia.com/gauche.html>) and “Barcelona” (<http://www.colitafotografia.com/barcelona.html>) respectively.

<sup>29</sup> Francesc Català-Roca has a similar photograph, “Señoritas en la Gran Vía de Madrid (1955)”, in which six women walk arm down the famous boulevard. They are shot from behind, but at a distance. In spite of the similarities between the two photos, the space occupied by the bodies in Català-Roca’s is one socially ascribed to them – they are out shopping –, which strips them of the strength and agency we see in Colita’s. Indeed, any comparison between the two photos necessarily becomes a critique, albeit an involuntary one, of Català-Roca’s. Furthermore, the fact that the women in Colita’s photo are prostitutes gives her a platform for making a powerful and much more relevant social critique of space and the “consumption” of the female body.

strength and breaks with the privileged gaze as it acquires and gives materiality to their bodies. In the way they walk and how they cling to and support each other, we can perceive an agency that fractures the street's structure; what we witness is not submission but rather protest. The framing, how their bodies spill over the physical boundaries of the photograph, move them beyond established limits in this act of protest. The reading of the physical place remains unchanged, but the use these women make of it calls into question and critiques established parameters of accessibility and respectability. Here we see the violence of everyday acts that was spoken of by Barthes and de Certeau: the image deconstructs within established parameters and from within a photographic and urban language that is recognizable to viewers; its structures are made subversive through a clear and direct language that does not employ euphemisms.<sup>30</sup>

All of these examples confirm how the spaces that make up the urban matrix, to return to Lefebvre's term, configure life, mobility, and the activities of women, and, in many cases, they express feminine stereotypes that become lived realities, as del Valle explains in relation to the creation of an urban feminine space (1997, 28). They are examples of how photography and space differentiate and organize hierarchies, building a generic space that is configured by the sexed construction of culture (1997, 32). All of these relationships – between male and female photographers and between/with space – reveal the structural axes of social life: time, space, and gender. In other words, space, be it physical or photographic, traps moments that configure and determine its usage, and in this context, the space from which one looks is neither abstract nor exclusively personal, but rather ideologically and historically construed as it determines the point of departure of its producer and the position of consumption of its viewer.

Consuelo Bautista is very conscious of these directives and dialogues with them in order to give them a new structure that responds to the needs of feminine, urban bodies.<sup>31</sup> Although thematically very broad, her photography stresses social concerns such as immigration or violence against women, and she has carried out several projects in consort with the city of Barcelona. A resident of the city for 25 years, she has undertaken projects in Cuba, Colombia, Israel, Galicia, and Asturias, among other

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<sup>30</sup> This intersection of spaces can also be seen in the work of Pilar Aymerich, who explicitly conjures in her images the questioning of women in public space and the social limitations imposed upon them by the male gaze in her reports on the feminist movement in Barcelona (see Laura Terré (2012), which looks at demonstrations and protests during the final years of the dictatorship and then the transition). This photographer challenges oppressive discourse using its own words and space against it, uncovering and criticizing the limitations imposed by the gaze on body and space, in a move reminiscent of Colita. In the work of these two photographers, distance is translated into proximity: the switch of perspective grants the body a new materiality and, in the process, attempts to redefine space through the centrifugal force emitted by the images.

<sup>31</sup> Here we have an unavoidable jump in our chronology, since it is not until Consuelo Bautista's work that we come across a female photographer that centers her body of work on the Raval.

places, and her work has circulated in diverse national and international publications.<sup>32</sup>

In “A las invisibles” (Gijón, 2009),<sup>33</sup> a black and white publication in tabloid format, she reflects upon, as she herself explains, “la vida cotidiana de las mujeres que han inmigrado a España desde diferentes lugares del mundo buscando mejorar sus condiciones de vida” (Bautista fotografía). The presence and work of these women are essential in the economy of the country, given that they engage in “work of great social responsibility.” Nevertheless, many of them are squeezed by the pressure of the debts accumulated during their trip to Europe and forced into networks of prostitution (Bautista fotografía). In spite of the importance of their presence in Spain, they are, as the title states, invisible in the social space that they themselves prop up. These images grant them physical presence, make them visible, show them in the spaces they occupy, and dialogue with the discourse that oppresses them. To visualize means to conceptualize women in a concrete space, which helps to see them in a new, more comprehensive dimension. It means to recognize the mechanisms of oppression and its limitations, and to exert influence on the processes of social transformation and show how power should center itself in the control of real and symbolic space (del Valle, 1997, 102). In this sense, the format of the images is essential: the tabloid format and the free distribution of 30,000 copies included in a local newspaper materially reveals the insertion of these images in an institutional, social, and urban space. Visibility is forced upon the eyes of spectators and breaks the segregationist concepts that exclude these women. They break free from the control of that real and symbolic space through the creation of a new paradigm that incorporates them into memory and social space by way of the newspaper, a system that circulates them through urban space, be it public or private. It is important to note that, like we saw with Colita, the images and the way in which they circulate do not break with established structure but rather take advantage of it in order to facilitate movement and, in turn, emphasize the lack of visibility and acceptance of these women.

Although the images were created for an exhibit in Gijón, they were shot in Barcelona. This transfer could be thought to wipe out the reference to the Raval by neutralizing its urban and architectural presence; however, the focus on the physical body and the construction of a social body through the female form jointly recodify the social and economic relationships that constitute the Raval and shape its community through the proximity of said bodies. All of the body’s materiality, which is lost through the gaze, as Irigaray explained, comes rushing back in its proximity and centrality. If the

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<sup>32</sup> Consuelo Bautista is a founding member of the Center for Documentary Photography of Barcelona (lafotobcn.) and in 2007 was awarded the Artes Plásticas de Barcelona prize for her work “A las invisibles”, which precisely articulates the connection between her photography and the city of Barcelona.

<sup>33</sup> This project can be viewed at the following site:  
[http://consuelobautista.com/web/a\\_las\\_invisibles.htm](http://consuelobautista.com/web/a_las_invisibles.htm)

body facilitates a re-reading of place, as de Certeau and Lefebvre explained, then modifying the body, its representation, and its construction by looking can also affect and reconstruct place. This publication opens with a photo of female mannequins –objects of the body par excellence, but here markers of an international body linked to immigration– but goes on to refute this image with the photos that follow, where female bodies are given presence and life, and humanized. They are bodies that occupy public spaces, are almost always covered up or from behind, sometimes mutilated, and recall Colom and Caturla’s images. However, this mutilation ennobles their faces seen in their striking roughness, as a body part connected to the working environment that enables their presence in the urban place.



5. Consuelo Bautista, “A las invisibles” (Gijón, 2009). Published with the author’s permission.



6. Consuelo Bautista, “A las invisibles” (Gijón, 2009). Published with the author’s permission.

This same process of insertion also prevails in her project on the Raval. As is described in the introductory paragraphs, *Raval* seeks to complete a historic vision, a historic itinerary that formally integrates Bautista’s images into a selection of photographs from 1870-2004 curated by the Arxiu de Fotografia de Barcelona. This conceptualization of the project as a way of completing a historical vision emphasizes from the very outset ideas of the construction of a narrative, of a determined view of the neighborhood, and of dialogue with the place of memory.<sup>34</sup> Through both the images of the neighborhood’s communal memory and those captured by Bautista, what is sought is described by Judit Carrera as “mirada polièdrica” that strives to pull the neighborhood out of stereotypes and prejudices “per oferir un retrat pacient del bategar de la vida als espais públics del barri” (2012, 13). In this sense, the neighborhood is framed by a narrative that emphasizes its function as public space and, therefore, continuing the philosophical line that goes from Aristotle to Hannah Arendt or Richard

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<sup>34</sup> As del Valle reminds us, along the lines of Anton Blok (1992) and Pierre Nora (1991, 2006), places of memory are sites and themes where memory converges, compresses, and enters into conflict with and defines the past, present, and future (1997, 123). Applying del Valle’s rationale, choosing the Raval as the point of reference, making it the place where memory appears, confirms that social memory is not the product of chance or improvisation but rather conscious planning by power relations. The creation of this memory using photography prominently features the creation of a social body, since it demarcates and establishes the area to be defined through image, which has traditionally been considered a direct reference, documentary evidence for the links that it establishes between time, place, and event.

Sennett, as akin to democracy, given that it allows for the development of fundamental values such as equality, freedom of expression and pluralism, that is to say, the coexistence of different people in the same community (Carrera, 2012, 15). However, what we should highlight in this case is not the quasi-utopian perception of public space in the Raval, but rather how it is a place for encounters and, therefore, conflict, movement, and interruption as defined by Jane Jacobs (1992). If in this context we have in mind how the performativity of public space in the Raval has been monopolized by a masculine gaze, the work of Bautista and these other female photographers goes on to identify this part of the city as an affirmation of women's space. The kinds of encounters captured and the ways in which the gaze's narration is constructed here structure, limit, and map space from a new perspective. This return to the Raval as a zone of resistance, with a nod to its anarchist past, is significant because it lays bare the urban, social, and gendered structures that identify this place. It becomes a synecdoche for those other conflicts that shape social relations and structure urban spaces, be they tourism, gentrification or immigration. Here the intimate relationship between public space, access, and the construction of identity –all essential elements in the construction of urban space– are made manifest.

Along these lines, we can affirm that Bautista shows us an open space, a border space in which movement, dialogue and change give protagonism to the idea of contingency and ephemeral encounter that enable a challenge to and reconstruction of the basic structures of urban place. That said, this focus expands beyond the conception of the neighborhood as public space and the questioning of its organization according to a narrative that stretches out along its history. It is true, as Xavier Theros indicates (2012, 22) that the objective of these images is to search for a new identity without renouncing completely the old one, but what stands out above all in Bautista's work is a new characterization and positioning of the female body.

In these images, we continue to see a direct dialogue with the photographs of the neighborhood that precede this project. As in Joan Colom's work, Bautista immerses herself in the streets of the Raval like just another pedestrian without offering us a guidebook of the streets or places, making the Raval just another neighborhood with streets just like anywhere else, in the process making it a pure space in which we are all spectators and actors (Theros, 2012, 23). The female body is embodied on several occasions in a pleasant image that eliminates and avoids overt references to its sexuality, but without dismissing its gender:



7. Consuelo Bautista, *Raval* (Barcelona, 2008-2009). Published with the author's permission.

Their presence here becomes just another part of the urban and social landscape, hinting at the utopic possibilities for the community. The casual, free movement of female bodies in this image and the complicity between them personifies and reconstructs the idea of a friendly and open community that is sought in the Raval. Nevertheless, the ongoing reading of Bautista's two projects makes us question the utopic nature of the urban place that Carrera proposed. The coexistence of an underground world in which women's bodies continue to be exploited once more points to the idea of selection and discursive narration that we have been considering since the beginning of this analysis.

On the other hand, the fact that these spaces are much more heterogeneous than those offered by Caturla indicates a change of perspective in the female lens, an evolution that responds to social context in spite of the ways that the latter continues to impose limitations. Just as in the other examples, the camera lens moves at the height of passersby and neither discriminates nor shows the intention of framing; it captures actions in motion, centered on urban dynamism as it seeks out the elusive instant:



8. Consuelo Bautista, *Raval* (Barcelona, 2008-2009). Published with the author's permission.

The scant definition of the image and the predominant darkness make the action the focus of the photograph. Its characters can be made out in the shadows although their gender cannot, resulting in a neutrality that brings to the fore their humanity. The festive atmosphere could be one of the topics that stand out in her photography, which on the one hand emphasizes movement but on the other, as Bakhtin explains (1984), permits a relaxation of norms and an elimination of hierarchies that allows the entire social stratum to rise to the surface.



9. Consuelo Bautista, *Raval* (Barcelona, 2008-2009). Published with the author's permission.

Bautista does not overlook, as we see in the above photograph, what lies beyond the reach of the gaze, what remains hidden and forms part of the social makeup of the Raval. The most compelling aspect of this image is how it keeps that other social stratum hidden: the narrative selection established by the general concept of the project does not explicitly seek out social critique, yet it quietly creeps into the image. Bautista sustains this silence as she shows the place of the other in the Raval's desired communal utopia, and here its materiality takes shape precisely through its absence. Once again, here she reconnects with her previous body of work, and through the criteria we apply here to our reading of this photograph, the presence of a yawning silence and with it the untold stories it holds, we must acknowledge and account for it in all of the images, just like with her prior project "A las invisibles".

This image, however, is not at the margins of the everyday that it captures. And that is how a new scene is set in which characters are not limited by their gender, nor by class, origin or religion: almost everyone is captured with their back toward the camera with the freedom of anonymity, free from the generic constraints that act upon us all. Just like in the work of the photographers that we have seen in this essay, the places these people occupy in space is significant, but in this case space has a different nature, and its opening and permissiveness make women not women in the street or women of the street, but rather just another group of pedestrians that, among other things, happen to be women. I am not claiming here the neutrality of the gaze, but rather pointing out how the gaze consciously

seeks out equality and tolerance from different angles. Without a doubt, there is still a trace of the objectification of women that creeps in like a shadow, suggested by the vertical lines of the buildings and the narrow labyrinthine streets that transport us to the Raval's past, and images like the following that linger and haunt:



10. Consuelo Bautista, *Raval* (2008-2009). Published with the author's permission.

But like the torn sheet of paper that we see in this image, this view is in the midst of a change, it is being lost to the passage of time, although it forms part of the social and cultural palimpsest of the Raval. The superposition of images, like the photographic narration of *Raval*, evokes the connection with past images and how, in spite of the change that is sought, traces of what is meant to be erased persist in the manuscript. The lack of context in this poster takes a back seat to the rip that cleaves it and compels us to find a new reading within the context forced upon us by Bautista's photographic narration.

And so, here there is a change in the perception of the neighborhood and its nature, which we observe through an opening of perspective and the amplitude of themes that emphasize the diversity of the passersby. In this way, movement continues to be present, but it is no longer unidirectional, which makes the spectator question the stable patterns that give shape to the captured space. If, as we said at the outset of this paper, both gaze and place create hierarchies, then the fact that the power to control social and symbolic space passes into the hands – or eyes – of the female gaze, one which voids and neutralizes as it searches for openings, implies that we recognize the categorization of this power and, in our new reading of it, modify and invert it. Bautista's dialogue with the photographic memory of the Raval, which forms the basis of the historical itinerary into which she inserts her images, thus becomes a reflection on social memory as it accesses the comprehension of mechanisms of power through the construction of the past. Her images present themselves as the culmination, but not the end, of an evolution in which the male gaze begins to lose its monopoly on representation. In this new vision, public space is perceived as a collective that doesn't necessarily singularize or limit.

If in urban spaces we find monumental indications such as street and square names that mark a process of formal historical recognition, the spaces selected by these photographs as they ignore these indications and certain places, –like those created by gentrifiers and the gentrified–, and emphasize others as they recover the utopic past of the Raval as a popular neighborhood entails the creation of an alternative and subversive space that gives voice to those marginalized groups. They construct a parallel narrative that undermines the structure of institutional place and emphasizes the dynamic of change. The choice of the Raval as the center of her work establishes a politics of enactment aimed at introducing an egalitarian social memory in which, perhaps, women draw attention precisely because they are not the objective but rather form part of a much larger, more heterogeneous group that reshapes the social fabric and the places that make it up. Photography here opens a space for subversion that fosters the inversion of ordinary time and space and breaks with specifically gendered conditions as could only be allowed by the presence of female spectators and producers. It alters the logic of the masculine gaze and, although it maintains the language and distance that we saw with Colom –or maybe precisely because of that–, it becomes a commentary on the containment of

women, which in turn allows us to read these photographs as an affirmation of resistance that helps us see and understand how place is marked by gender in the societies in which we live. Photography, intimately tied to the idea of image described by Pollock, thus becomes not a place of memory, but a landscape that helps to (re)configure the cultural and political reality of a territory.

And so we come full circle back to where we started with the quote from Luce Irigaray: it is true that as a consequence of the privileging of the gaze the body loses materiality. However, through the examples that we have seen in this essay, we can affirm that through photography the gaze can also grant materiality to the body by the simple fact of making it visible. This new materiality, this reappearance of the female body, (re)constructs new corporal relationships and, consequently, new spatial ones that give a new shape to the place of the Raval. The objectification in the examples that we have seen gives way to a new selection and a new discursivity, which imply the resignification of the physical bodies of women and of urban place. Accordingly, the female eye mounts a new cartography by moving beyond cultural and ideological dictates that were believed immutable, and in doing so mitigates the footprint left by what was once considered original or “real”. Her gaze uncovers the imbalance between the image and lived experience and results in a new, female socio-spatial map that can account for her place in this world.

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