Gender and pentecostalism among the Gitanos of Madrid: Combining approaches

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In this article I take a dichotomous approach, exploring two periods in the development of Pentecostalism among Gitanos in Madrid, and two analytical approaches to the Gitano Pentecostal phenomenon and its relation to gendered subjectivities, identities and identifications. I first look back to the early spread of Gitano Pentecostalism in the early 1990s, and outline the ways in which it was portrayed by Gitanos as a trigger for change in gender relations. I then I focus on the present, discussing the life of a couple, Juanón and Agata, and their differing involvement with Pentecostalism. The article stresses the very varied areas of Gitano everyday life in which Pentecostalism makes its presence felt, and the multiple analytical approaches needed to make sense of the Pentecostal complexity. In particular, I stress the need to explore the detail of individual lives so as to understand the experiences of Pentecostalism of Gitanos in Madrid.

Keywords: anthropology, Gitanos, Spain, gender, Pentecostalism, methodology, methodological individualism, religious experience

In his essay, *The Witch as a Category and as a Person* (1989), Michael Jackson points to a key problem in the anthropological analysis of religion: the need to elucidate the relationship between 'conventional notions' – in this case, of witchcraft – and 'personal experiences' – in this case, of women who confess to being witches among the Kuranko of Sierra Leone. This is, he tells us, the tension between 'episteme and experience, knowledge and event' (1989: 89). The enterprise is complicated by a 'pathology' present in both Kuranko and anthropological thinking, namely a shared tendency to 'bury the experience of the individual subject in the categories of totalizing explanation' (ibid.). The same problem is faced when theorising the relationship between gender and Pentecostalism among Gitanos (Spanish Gypsies/Roma)[1] and for reasons

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[1] I use the term Gypsies/Roma in preference to either 'Gypsies' or 'Roma'. There are persuasive arguments for using and for avoiding both terms, and I aim to acknowledge but also bypass debates concerning the cultural/ethnic unity of these groups and the moral and ethical rights and wrongs of using either 'Gypsy' or 'Roma'.

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very similar to those that Jackson outlines. Firstly, in studies of gender and Pentecostalism in Western and non-Western contexts the main aim so far has been to measure the impact of Pentecostalism upon gender relations or upon the status of women, so that dominant approaches have been distinctly generalising (e.g. Cucchiari 1990, Scott 1994, Martin 2001, Mate 2002, Lorentzen and Mira 2005). Secondly, like the Kuranko, Gitanos too are fond of totalising explanations. The anthropological literature emphasises their strong tendency towards cultural closure, towards the affirmation of unequivocal expectations regarding behaviour which divide and rank the social and moral world into what is Gitano and what is not, and which define belonging (Gay y Blasco 2011; cf. Stewart 1997, Streck 2003: 136). These highly reified moral schemas revolve around the elaboration of the oppositions Gitano/non-Gitano (*Payo*) and men/women as different categories of persons and are abundantly verbalised in every day life as well as in ritual contexts (Stewart 1997, Gay y Blasco 1999). And thirdly, Pentecostalism in general and Gitano Pentecostalism in particular strive towards the imposition of clear-cut, unambiguous classifications upon the world. The most basic of these, the distinction between the saved and the damned, overlaps in the Gitano case with the Gitano/Payo dichotomy. Taken together, these three dynamics direct our attention towards the normative, the expected, and the shared or communal in the study of Gitano Pentecostalism and can distract us from the distinctiveness and indeed the analytical relevance of individual experience.

However, as anthropologists we know that belief and conversion can be made sense of only partially by way of generalising explanations – explanations that focus on categories, whether *etic* or *emic*, as the main focus of analysis. There is something irreducible to the stories I have been told and the events I have witnessed amongst Pentecostal[2] Gitanos in Madrid, and in some important senses each expression of (dis)belief, each religious epiphany, remains a one-off. For example, I have often heard Gitanos talk of drug addicts as displaying, in an extreme form, the lack of self control that they say characterises young men more generally. I can confidently argue that this perception has important implications for the ways younger pastors and trainees attempt to reach positions of authority within ghetto churches across Madrid. And yet this statement takes me only so far in capturing the 'lived experience' (Rosaldo 1984: 178) of conversion for a young man who, moved by a Pentecostal service, enrols in a radical detoxification program run by the *Iglesia de Filadelfia*, the Gitano Pentecostal Church.

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[2] The Gitanos of this area use the term 'Evangelical' (*Evangélico*) as opposed to 'Pentecostal', but for the sake of clarity I use 'Pentecostal' throughout the article. The Gitano Pentecostal Church in Spain is called *Iglesia Evangélica de Filadelfia* and in the article I refer to it as 'the Church of Filadelfia'.

My aim in this article is therefore methodological and reflexive as well as ethnographic. I take a dichotomous approach, exploring two different periods in the development of Pentecostalism among Gitanos in Madrid, and two different analytical approaches to the Gitano Pentecostal phenomenon and its relation to gendered subjectivities, identities and identifications. In the first part of the article I look back to the early 1990s, a time when Gitano Pentecostalism was gathering momentum in the southern periphery of the city, when it was seen by the Gitanos who lived there as a novel yet undoubtedly powerful and transformative force. I outline here the ways in which, twenty years ago, Pentecostalism appeared to these Gitanos as a trigger for change in gender relations, between and among men and women, and the ways this perception was conveyed through normative and generalising depictions of experience. At this time, ideals and rules that were described by the Gitanos as 'new' and as 'Pentecostal' existed side by side with others that they called 'Gitano' or part of *ley Gitana* or 'Gitano law'.[3] Central to these Gitanos' concerns was the notion that these new expectations involved a transformation in relations between men and women, and also among men. In this first part, then, I discuss how Gitanos described conversion's impact upon gendered hierarchies and I also review the conclusions that, twenty years ago, I drew from their statements. My purpose here is to highlight the normative, public and shared dimensions of the Gitano Pentecostal expansion.

In the second part of the article I jump from the early 1990s to the present, and discuss the life of a couple, Juanón and Agata, and their differing involvement with Pentecostalism. After twenty-four years of marriage, Agata, a mainstay of the local church, shocked her family and her community by leaving Juanón and their children for a non-Gitano man, a North-African immigrant. Never a fervent Pentecostal, Juanón has found in Pentecostal themes and preoccupations a framework within which to make sense of events in his life at a time of deep personal unhappiness and turmoil. Agata too continues to use Pentecostalism as a key reference point when reflecting on her life and her actions, even though she is no longer able to attend Gitano church services. In this second part of the article, then, I discuss the place of Pentecostalism in one man's and one woman's shifting gendered subjectivities and my aim is to elucidate the immediacy of the religious experience that is so often obscured by the kinds of totalising approaches that Jackson refers to. I also outline how my close friendship with Agata and my position as intermediary between her and

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[3] Elsewhere I have described the 'Gitano law' as 'an objectified set of rules and customs' that in the eyes of Gitanos separates them from Payos (2011: 446), similar to the Hungarian Rom's *romanes* as described by Stewart (1997), to the Californian Rom's *Romania* as described by Sutherland (1977), or to Engebrigsten's Romanian *Romanimo* (2007).

Juanón has drawn my attention to the more individual and perhaps analytically elusive dimensions of the religious experience.

In taking these two very different perspectives in the same article I face a problem already encountered by Patrick Williams in his analysis of the French Manus Gypsies' relationship with the dead (2003). Having decided to start by discussing the place of the dead among the living, and to go on to the place of the Manus among the *Gadzos* or non-Gypsies, Williams highlights the danger that the second theme will appear to the reader as a 'deployment, an explanation of the first' (2003: 2). In what follows, I do not intend the account of the Pentecostal transformation of gender hierarchies to provide the context within which to place Juanón and Agata's story, or their story to be read as exemplifying the broader trends that I discuss first. Indeed my choice of two disparate narrative strategies and two relatively distant time periods is designed to avoid this kind of contextualisation. Rather my purpose is to show how central the normative affirmation of morality is to the Gitano way of being in the world, but also how Gitano individuals search for existential alternatives and explore moral and practical compromises. I want to emphasise the very varied areas of Gitano everyday life in which Pentecostalism makes its presence felt, and the multiple analytical approaches needed in order to make sense of the Pentecostal complexity. Ultimately, I want to draw attention to the unavoidable gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions in our understanding of Gypsy/Roma Pentecostal experiences, and to highlight the need to take our accounts as partial no matter how thematically broad or historically comprehensive our reach may be.

Men, women and Gitano Pentecostalism in the early 1990s

In 1992 and 1993, I spent eighteen months among Gitanos in a small, state-built ghetto in the periphery of Madrid. Four hundred people lived there, in low-quality housing built by the council two kilometres away from the edge of the city. They had been gathered from a variety of shanty-towns as part of a Madrid-wide Gitano integration program. They were scrap collectors, small-time drug dealers, itinerant sellers, beggars and, at the more affluent end of the spectrum, vendors with official permits to set up stalls at open-air markets. Every evening except on Friday, the ghetto's small prefab church would fill to the rim and the sounds of flamenco-inspired singing and clapping would reverberate through the evening air. And yet Pentecostalism was very much a novelty for these Gitanos: although a few had converted in the late 1970s, most had only come across the Gitano Church – the Church of Filadelfia – in the previous five to ten years, and why and how the Church was becoming so successful was often a topic of conversation in the ghetto. My informants were interested in the changes that conversion to Pentecostalism brought about and discussed both individuals' behaviour and the impact of the Church on the Gitano way of life, on its present and its future. As to myself, I wanted to understand how Pentecostalism transformed Gitano identities as well as the Gitano 'imagined community', the way Gitanos conceptualised themselves as a group vis-à-vis the Payos. I saw Pentecostalism in terms of its impact on Gitano notions and practices to do with personhood, gender and community and attempted to link narratives of conversion to transformations in social relations (cf. Gay y Blasco 1999, 2000).

In their explanations of Pentecostalism both to me in interviews or to each other at gatherings or services, converts emphasised that joining the Church made people 'better at being Gitano.' Pastors as much as average converts regularly referred to the 'Gitano law' and to its precepts about male and female behaviour, blending normative statements with depictions of actual experience. Pentecostal women, they explained, should be models of Gitano femininity and scrupulous in their adherence to the 'Gitano law' – respectful to men, modest in their dress and manner, hard working and, above all, vigilant in protecting their virginity until marriage. Women's role as witnesses for God, their 'testimony' (*testimonio*), a pastor explained to me, centred on their obedience, on their appearance, and on their sexual restraint: it was through their avoidance of 'provocative' (*provocativo*) dress and make-up and through their submissiveness that women would bring their husbands, and perhaps even others, into the fold of the Church. At prayer meetings and women-only gatherings, pastors' wives discouraged other women from displaying too much '*conocimiento*' (knowledge or awareness of right and wrong) an essentially masculine attribute: they should witness through their silence and modesty rather than with words. Convert women, as 'exemplary Gitanas' (*gitanas ejemplares*) had to be mindful of their lack of knowledge and display this awareness in their deferential behaviour. And this subservience had to extend to a crucial area of relations between men and women, namely, sex.

The Gitanos I met in the ghetto, converts and non-converts alike, emphasised the enjoyment of sex as essential to both men's and women's make-ups. They expected men and women to want to have enjoyable sex on a regular basis, and they emphasised that making sex pleasurable for their spouses was an important part of their responsibilities as Gitanos. Converts picked up on this theme, and described sex to me as an essential duty for both husbands and wives: the devil was constantly trying to lure men and women away from their marriages and their families, and converts had to fight against him by ensuring that their partners were sexually satisfied. 'Our bodies' – the wife of a pastor told me – 'are not our own; husband and wife should not refuse themselves to the other. . . It is as wrong in a man as it is in a woman to refuse to have sexual relations with their spouse.' And yet, men were often described as having less capacity for self-control in this area, less capacity to do without sex than women. Although the obligation to have sex applied to both spouses, being sexually available to their husbands was portrayed by converts as essential to women's more general subservience, central to the strategies they had at their disposal in order to encourage men onto the path of righteousness.

To me it seemed that Pentecostalism reinforced rather than challenged the subordination of Gitano women. And yet converts recurrently emphasised that the Church had in fact improved women's lot. Like their non-convert neighbours and relatives, converts underlined the propriety of women's dependence on their husbands' will but, taking up New Testament texts, they also emphasised the husband's obligation to 'honour and respect his wife'. They would often quote Peter's first letter, 'You husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing on the women, as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life in order that your prayers may not be hindered' (1 Pet.3: 7). Crucially, women's improved position was described as a direct consequence of the Pentecostal transformation of male behaviour:

> The woman whose husband is a convert and nonetheless complains, should be kept on bread and water, and given a blow from time to time. Now, if it is 2am and he has not come back, little sister, you know he is with the brothers, and you are at peace, while before . . . and sisters, we know that in the Gitano life and in the Payo life all the husbands hit their wives and the woman who says she is not beaten up is a liar.

This statement, which was part of an 'advice' (*consejo*) given by the wife of a trainee pastor at a women's prayer meeting, embodies the theme that dominated Pentecostal talk on relations between husbands and wives in the early 1990s: the notion that the Pentecostal male code of behaviour brought with it important benefits to women. At another woman's prayer meeting, a pastor's wife explained the advantages of having a convert husband: upon conversion, she said, 'men stop doing all the evil things (*se quitan de todo lo malo*), drugs, drinking, going around with other women, stealing, killing, and beating up their wives, except a slap here and there because we sometimes deserve it'. After converting, she explained, husbands and wives had their meals together and were able to chat. Before, 'women would feed the men first, and eat what was left, and even fan the flies away for them, now it has all changed'. And non-converts too agreed that Pentecostal men 'give a better life to their wives' (*les dan mejor vida a sus mujeres*): a non-convert mother told me that she wanted a Pentecostal man for a son-in-law because 'they are much less likely to get involved in fights and problems with the police, they are more careful with money, they don't come home drunk.' Converts, she emphasised, would not beat their wives beyond the occasional slap. And indeed, pastors too emphasised that men were the judges of women's behaviour and had the right to punish them when they 'deserved' it, as the 'Gitano law' dictated, but not as severely as was said to happen 'in the world'. The expectation in the ghetto was that convert men would remain strongly in control of women and their activities, but that they would be more benevolent than their non-convert neighbours.

Whereas women's witness or testimony revolved around their subservience, men's centered on the notion of 'formality' or self-control (*formalidad*): male converts were expected to abstain from drugs, alcohol and tobacco, not to engage in feuding or fighting, to be faithful to their wives, and to give up attending 'worldly entertainments' (*diversiones mundanas*) such as gambling or going to the movies or to discos. Some of these activities – like smoking, drinking or going to discos to chat up Payas – played an important role in Gitano ideals of young male behaviour. Others, especially drug-addiction and its corollaries, were portrayed in the same negative terms by converts and non-converts alike. It was those manly qualities that commanded 'respect' (*respeto*) from other Gitanos, and that in the ghetto tended to be seen as defining older and influential men – the 'men of respect' (*hombres de respeto*) or conflict mediators – that converts emphasised as most desirable.

Convert men made strong efforts to portray themselves as 'self-controlled' (*formales*) and hence as 'respectable' (*respetables*), as embodying those manly qualities that 'in the world' or according to 'the Gitano law' worked to sanction male influence and high status. In the early 1990s, the people of the ghetto expected Gitano men in their late teens and twenties to be reckless and display little knowledge, and to acquire control over their passions and their will slowly and with age. Only older men of fifty and over, fully displaying the virtues of knowledge and respectability, could exercise influence over others within and outside their kin groups, becoming conflict mediators or 'men of respect' (*hombres de respeto*). And so young convert men did their best to appear respectable and to distance themselves from those symbols of masculinity that Gitanos linked to youth and lack of self-control or recklessness: they did not drink or smoke, would not easily engage in fights, and stressed that they did not use prostitutes or have sex with non-Gitano women. They participated in long prayer meetings, accompanied their elders in visits to other churches, and tried in every way to behave as model converts. During my fieldwork those who sung in the choir in the ghetto's church were forbidden by the minister and themselves made a point of not wearing long hair – as most non-converts youths did at the time – because of its connotations of sexual potency and unrestrained courage.

Strikingly, some men in their early twenties were given positions of authority within the Church. As trainees and even as pastors they were expected to exercise kinds of authority over their congregations that in paralleled those of the elder over his family or of the ‘man of respect’ over the people who called him to arbitrate. Pastors made decisions about the organisation of church’s activities, the punishment of wrong-doers, and the management of the church’s money. They were called to mediate in conflicts – marital problems, quarrels over selling locations, and feuds – that involved converts, sometimes together with some ‘men of respect’, sometimes on their own. Just as with the ‘men of respect’, the pastor’s authority depended on the acquiescence of his congregation, and pastors were the recipients of deference in much the same way as mediators were, without regard to age. Significantly, this innovation in the way conflicts were managed and authority was allocated did not seem to interest the Gitanos much: it was the arena of relations between men and women, rather than the transformation of masculine political hierarchies, that drew the attention of the people of the ghetto.

By the time I moved out in 1993, I believed that the opening up of new possibilities of advancement for younger men signified the beginnings of an important change in the way political relations were organised, with men as young as their early twenties increasingly taking over areas that had been under the control of much older conflict mediators. My analysis paid attention to the ways converts managed to disassociate male self-control and respectability from their traditional age context emphasising their acquired rather than ascribed components. The Church had managed to generate a combination – young and respectable – which could not be realised outside its parameters so that the meaning and experience of masculinity had the potential of being radically reformulated for the Gitanos of the ghetto. This transformation, crucially, was being achieved by dint of a continuity with what were key principles in the Gitano organisation of daily life, the notions of ‘respect’, ‘self-control’ and ‘knowledge’. On the other hand, the arena of social relations that the Gitanos emphasised as most thoroughly transformed by Pentecostalism, relations between men and women, appeared to me to remain largely unchanged. The control of men over women was, if anything, being strengthened by the spread of Pentecostalism. The Church was providing added justification for women’s subordination and it was not giving women any significant new possibilities for exercising additional control over their own lives.

Intermezzo

At the time of my fieldwork, the Gitanos of the ghetto made a clear distinction between ideals and norms of behaviour that they defined as ‘Pentecostal’ and those that they described as simply ‘Gitano.’ That is, just like the scholars writing about the relationship between gender and Pentecostalism, these Gitanos were intent on identifying and measuring the impact of the new Pentecostal church upon their lives, and in particular upon relations between the genders. In order to do so, they resorted to clearly bounded stereotypes and ideals, highly verbalised prescriptions as to what constituted appropriate feminine and masculine Pentecostal behaviour. It is these prescriptions and stereotypes that I have described above.

The period since the early 1990s has seen the establishment of Pentecostalism as 'the Gitano religion' (*la religión gitana*) in the south of Madrid, both in the eyes of the Gitanos themselves and in those of the surrounding Payos. The local government in the city now provides Pentecostal, rather than Roman Catholic, teachers of Religious Education in all schools with more than ten Pentecostal children. In the ghetto most of the people who were children in the early 1990s, who were born after their parents had converted and who grew up immersed in the Church of Filadelfia, are now parents themselves. Given the ongoing pattern of early marriage, many families include four generations of regular church-goers. Although many Gitanos in the area still would not consider themselves Pentecostal, almost ten years into the twenty-first century Pentecostalism is deeply embedded in the fabric of everyday Gitano life. Today, it is much more difficult than in the 1990s to separate gender ideals defined as 'Pentecostal' from others. This means that questions regarding the impact of Pentecostalism upon Gitano gender relations appear much less relevant than twenty years ago. What continues to be pressing, however, is understanding the place of Pentecostalism in the gendered sense of self of these Gitanos.

In what follows, I aim to uncover this role of Pentecostalism in the production of Gitano gendered subjectivities, focusing on the processes through which ideals of gendered behaviour that make reference to religious themes become charged with experiential meaning. Core Pentecostal categories involving the opposition between God and the Devil, as well as normative depictions of ideal behaviour like those outlined in the previous section, are activated in strongly emotional ways in the conflict between Juanón and Agata. What we learn is that these categories and norms do not stand alone and nor are they absolute: they are embedded in broader symbolic fields, and they play out in contradictory and conflicting ways in the lives of a variety of actors.

Gitano Pentecostalism and gendered subjectivities: the story of Juanón and Agata

I met Juanón and Agata in 1992 through Dolores, one of my key informants in the ghetto where I had been carrying out fieldwork. Dolores was a pastor's wife at the local Pentecostal church and, whereas most Gitanos in the area had been reticent and reluctant to talk with me at all, she had been open and welcoming from the beginning. I think she took pity on me, and also she was keen to convert me. Whereas the majority of Gitanos disliked my presence in the area, Dolores was uncharacteristically supportive and ready to extend her missionising zeal to me, a Paya. And, when I decided to move into the ghetto, I asked Dolores if I could stay in her house. Having a young, unmarried Paya as part of the household would have encouraged gossip regarding her husband's reputation and, after some days of thinking, Dolores suggested that I move in with her sister Agata and her husband Juanón. They took me in, and Agata and I hit it off immediately. Agata and Juanón had two young children, and I soon became an established part of the household, a mixture of baby-sitter, best friend, guest, and anthropologist.

At the time, Agata seemed certain of her place in the world. She had grown up in a large extended Gitano family, first in a Gitano shanty-town, then in a council flat in an area of the city with a large Gitano population. Her parents were economically well off by comparison with other Gitano families nearby, and were generally well liked and respected. Her father's patrilineage was large and powerful, and controlled much of Gitano life in the neighbourhood. The second of five sisters, her erratic school attendance had finished shortly after turning twelve. At fifteen, her parents arranged her betrothal to Juanón, seven years older and a relative of her mother. She married at sixteen and, when I met her seven years later, she and Juanón had two young children. To start with, and as was usual for young Gitano couples at the time, Juanón and Agata shared a flat with Teresa, his mother. When she died they kept her council flat five minutes on foot from the ghetto, and it was there that I lived during my fieldwork.

Whereas Agata had grown up supported by a loving and stable family, Juanón's story was more complicated. His father had left Teresa when Juanón, the younger of four brothers, was a young child. Intent on revenge, Teresa had tracked her husband's lover down and cut her face with a blade. She had then settled down to a life of virtual widowhood, strict virtue and perpetual mourning, supported by 'the Gitano law' in her desire that her sons never forgive their father. Indeed, Juanón never saw his father again and his contact with his paternal relatives has remained limited throughout the rest of his life. With the loss of his father Juanón also lost the daily contact with this agnates, essential for a young man growing up in a strongly patrilineal context where feuding and the threat of feuding was crucial for the development of a masculine identity. Throughout his early teens, Juanón saw his older brothers marry and establish independent households. He lived alone with Teresa, in their small council flat, and worked with her selling textiles at her several weekly market stalls. Like so many Gitano men of his generation, he became a drug-addict and only managed to give up heroin as a married man. In his late teens, Juanón met and fell in love with a young Paya woman, established a relationship with her that lasted some years, and resisted his mother's attempts to find him a wife. Then, in his mid-twenties, much later than most of his contemporaries, he finally agreed to marry Agata, a girl from a good family much younger than him, whose mother belonged to the same patrigroup as Teresa. Juanón and Agata had met only a few times before their betrothal, and theirs was an arranged marriage.

When I met Agata and Juanón in 1992 she seemed to me to be happy, enjoying what life had to offer her at the time. As a young married woman, and like her sisters and female cousins, Agata was particularly concerned with demonstrating her Gitano-ness, with behaving 'properly' (*bien*) in Gitano terms, which meant protecting her sexual virtue and being obedient to her husband, and also keeping a good house and being an efficient provider. She seemed to me to be successful in her endeavours, good at being a Gitana, fitting well into her social and cultural environment. Juanón was a very different kettle of fish, appearing withdrawn and surly much of the time. Although I never talked with Juanón on my own (both of us were aware of the dangers of gossip and of my morally ambiguous status as a young Paya) I could tell that he did not 'fit in' in the way that his wife did. At an age when the majority of Gitano men would spend much time and energy in strengthening relations with other men in their patrigroup, Juanón socialised with his in-laws, if at all. He did not go out with other married men and hardly saw his brothers or other consanguines. Unusually for a Gitano, it was his wife's family that provided Juanón with a place in the world, a point of reference for his daily activities. But, even though Agata's family were keen converts, Juanón's own church attendance was very much half-hearted and erratic.

Juanón was also unique in his preference for his own company. He used to spend his afternoons and early evenings alone, at home, often watching nature or history programmes, or playing primitive computer games on his television (this was the early 1990s). Over dinner he would sometimes ask me, timidly, about life 'abroad', quick questions about the weather or the food, or probe shyly my knowledge of geography or history. His interest in the world beyond the complexities of Gitano social relations – everybody else's favourite topic of conversation – clearly set him apart. But he also always seemed sad and dissatisfied. Agata believed that he still loved his Paya lover. Together, we wondered if he would be happy 'in the end', and make her happy too. And yet, in spite of his idiosyncrasies, Juanón took seriously his responsibilities and privileges as husband and head of the household. These included sanctioning Agata's recreative activities such going to the shopping mall with her sisters or taking part in a play organised by the Pentecostal Church. He worked hard, and did his best to be a good provider for his small family.

At this time, Agata attended the local Pentecostal church regularly. Pentecostalism was central to her life and, like her parents and all her sisters, she went to church every day and was always keen to participate in women's activities and meetings. Agata worried constantly about Juanón's lack of interest in the Church, believing that it would result in his return to drugs. She often put pressure on him to attend services and prayer-meetings, and sometimes recounted dreams that dramatised the dangers that threatened Juanón's soul. In one, the Devil promised that he would relinquish his hold over Juanón if only Agata would have sex with him. Agata submitted to the Devil's embrace, but this was a trick to capture her too and both she and Juanón were damned. On those evenings when he did go to church, Juanón appeared to me to be disengaged and unenthusiastic, and even in periods of more regular attendance he remained peripheral to the goings-on, an observer rather than a participant. At the local church, just like in his life as a Gitano more broadly, Juanón struck me as a misfit, a lonely, dissatisfied man. Privately, I wondered what Juanón really thought about the Pentecostal Church, and about God.

In the years following my leaving the ghetto I stayed in close contact with Agata and Juanón. Agata and I would talk regularly on the phone, and discuss everything in our lives – our children, our work, our husbands. Throughout the years Juanón remained a constant preoccupation for Agata, and their marriage a source of ongoing frustration. Year after year, Agata continued to fear that Juanón did not love her and did not desire her, that his heart remained with the Payo woman that he had loved before his marriage. I would see Juanón once or twice a year, when I visited Madrid on short fieldwork trips, and he seemed to grow older very much unchanged. From time to time he would go church, but would never keep it up for long periods. In the last years found friendship and companionship in his brothers-in-law, the husbands of Agata's younger sisters, and he saw his own brothers even less than before. The family managed to prosper moderately and in 2000 Juanón and Agata had another child, a daughter, as well as their first two grandchildren. All in all, Juanón seemed to be living an average life, one without strong ups and downs, a life that suited his introvert temperament, a life without strong emotional demands.

And yet Agata's and Juanón's marriage was slowly deteriorating. Juanón seemed unable to provide Agata with the passionate love that she wanted, and Agata seemed unable not to demand this from him. Agata often complained that Juanón took her for granted, that he did not love her or desire her, and that he damaged her self-esteem: 'he told me so many time that I was rubbish, I ended up believing it.' Agata's energies became more and more engaged by the church and by a local NGO, and she was deeply involved in protests against council plans regarding where Gitano children were to be schooled, making appearances on national television and radio. In 2008 she left Juanón twice, taking the two children who remained at home and moving in with her widowed father, only to return after some weeks. Finally, late in 2008 Juanón and the children woke up one morning to find that Agata was not in the house. With Agata's sisters and brothers-in-law, they searched for her everywhere, all the time careful not to arise the suspicions of other Gitanos, something which would have irreparably damaged the family's reputation. They found her ten days later: for some months she had been having a love affair with a North African immigrant she had met whilst selling at a market, and had moved in with him. By force, they made her return to her home. Juanón promised to change his ways, to show his love to her and, with the help of his sisters- and brothers-in-law, kept her under close guard. A month later, Agata eloped again, this time for good.

It is now over a year since Agata left Juanón and her children. Without Agata in his life and in his house, Juanón seems to have lost his purpose. Agata was the main organiser in the family, the one who kept track of payments, made appointments with doctors, and ensured the smooth running of the household day to day. She cooked, cleaned, made sure everybody's needs were met. She also was a woman of standing in the community, as she herself told me, 'a Christian, well known and respected by everybody.' Now, Juanón said in tears, 'my house has broken down, it's like a ship that is sinking, the rats are running away' – not only life inside the family is emotionally in tatters, but their reputation vis-à-vis the rest of the Gitano community has received irreparable damage. Overall, Juanón's emotions are constantly up and down, and he is deeply miserable: he asks me to pass messages on to Agata, promising his love and begging her to return to him, but also writes to her graphically threatening to kill her and her new partner if he finds them. He has insisted on keeping their youngest daughter with him, rather than allowing one of her aunts to take her, but seems unable to care for her properly. He has made little effort to learn how to do the basic household tasks, and his condition and that of the child is a huge worry for the rest of the family, as well as for Agata.

At this juncture and in the midst of his pain, Juanón has turned to Pentecostalism. Although his attitude towards the Church of Filadelfia has always been tepid, he has found in the symbols and morality of Pentecostalism a framework within which to evaluate Agata's behaviour. He now attends the local church, and he reads and re-reads her Bible, which she left behind, and prays until late and night. Pentecostal themes now pepper his talk in a way that they never did before. The intensity of Pentecostal rhetoric matches the intensity of his feelings in a way that ordinary Gitano discourses on female immorality alone cannot. Faced with the enormity of Agata's defection and of its impact on his life and that of his children, it is the vivid images of sin and eternal damnation put forward at the church that Juanón is drawn to. God and

Agata are now on opposite camps: 'God', he told me, 'is a gentleman', whereas 'Agata is a whore. I have God on my side, and not her. Doesn't she happen to know that the price of sin is death, both spiritual and physical?' Sometimes he states his hopes for a future without Agata using Biblical images: 'I will build up my house again, I will restore my house.'

In our conversations, Juanón repeats again and again that he loves Agata, and that he wants her to come back. He says that he did not show his love to Agata whilst they were together, and it is clear that he regrets this. However, he is not to blame for Agata's leaving: 'the only possible explanation for the way she has hurt us is that an evil spirit has entered her. My Agata was never like this, she was a decent woman, this is not her.' Not only has Agata behaved in the worst possible way 'according to the Gitano law, *gitanalmente* (in the Gitano way)', but she has caused unbearable pain. She has 'thrown us aside, left us in the cold without cover', and she has done this after detailed planning. This lack of care for her family and the fact that she had to 'machinate' (*maquinar*) in order to prepare her escape mean, according to Juanón, that she is 'possessed' (*endemoniada*).

Juanón is not alone in interpreting Agata's behaviour through the lens of Pentecostalism. Shaking with emotion, her eldest daughter explained to me: 'As a person she's failed, as a Christian she's failed, as a woman she's failed. She is going to live her life with the devil, we will live our lives with God.' Her son added: 'She will be in hell for all eternity for what she's done to our house. We will be in heaven with the angels, we will take our joy with them, when the second coming arrives we will be taken up to worship God, and she will not be there.' To Agata's older children there is no doubt that their mother is condemned, that she will go to hell when she dies. Agata's sisters, all of them long-standing converts, also believe that her defection indicates that she was tempted by the devil, and gave in. The breakdown of Agata's house, the depression in which Juanón finds himself, the sadness of her children, are all 'the work of the Devil. The Devil is very clever, he is always waiting to see where he can strike. He is celebrating now.' And yet, according to her sister Maria, Agata can still save herself: 'I know they (Agata and her partner) are sharing a house with some immigrants who are Pentecostal. This is God calling her, God telling her to come back and redeem herself.' In these accounts, possession is the result of a failure in the part of the person possessed and constant vigilance is essential in order to avoid it. Agata gave way to her desires, and so the Devil has taken over her life. But possession does not mean that Agata's action is completely obliterated: she still retains the capacity to choose to go back to her family and reject the Devil. Indeed, the whole family, sisters, children, and also Juanón, constantly attempt to encourage Agata to return, by letters or in phone-calls.

The family's Pentecostal-inspired account of Agata's abandonment explains her immorality in terms of relationships with supernatural beings, evil spirits as well as the Devil, and also with an unsuitable man. These new relationships replace the positive and morally good ones that dominated her earlier everyday life. As a good wife and a woman, Juanón told me, 'Agata didn't belong to herself, she had to give herself to her children and her family, she was obliged to them.' Now, by contrast, 'all she wants is to please her body, she thinks about pleasure over and above her children and family, she has thrown away her Christian life, she has thrown away her whole life, she is possessed'. Juanón talks about Agata's motivations in terms of selfishness and inability to put others first, that is, to behave as a Gitano, Christian woman should. This self-interest challenges his ideal of womanly behaviour so radically that it can only be explained as a symptom of possession. Cut off from all relationships with the family, Agata's only relationship is with her lover and with the Devil, and she is dominated by the urges of her body. Thus, whereas in the past it was Agata who was a Christian, as he explained to me, 'Now I am the one who has God'. Juanón is also now the one embedded in morally acceptable social relationships: 'now I am the one who has the children, now I am the one who has *her* family, now I have the love and support of everybody, now and forever.' He goes as far as to claim for himself Agata's dead: 'She has forgotten even her little mother may she rest in peace, she doesn't even know that her uncle died on the day of her mother's birthday, may she rest in peace'.

And yet Agata herself continues to view herself as a Christian, and to think carefully about God and his judgement. She interprets the success of her plans to leave Juanón for her new partner as a sign that God was happy with her decision: 'I said to God, "if you allow me to go with him (her partner) it is because he needs me more than my children, and you want me to take care of him".' When explaining to me why she left Juanón she is sometimes adamant that she did not sin: he had never loved her, had never treated her appropriately or appreciated her as a woman or as a wife; she had every right to leave him. But nonetheless she also states, 'I know I have done wrong, I have left my children, what kind of mother would do that?' A year after leaving her family, Agata worries constantly about their well-being, and turns to God: 'I think will forgive me if I ask him forgiveness day and night'. Since leaving her family Agata has continued to pray, to listen to Gitano Pentecostal music and to fast and, although she cannot attend Gitano churches,[4] she has recently started attending a Pentecostal church whose members are overwhelmingly Latin American immigrants. There she has met other women with stories in some ways similar to her own: several who had to leave their children behind in order to migrate, one who lost her children to her husband after a difficult divorce and another who had her child removed by the social services because of mistreatment. Like for Agata, life is difficult for these women: they are poor, far from their relatives, in many cases have no papers and often they are at the mercy of exploitative employers and rapacious landlords. These women explain their hardships as stages in God's plan, for them and for their families: separations, heartaches, reversals of fortune, all are depicted in terms of God's will, 'He always knows best.' Amongst them Agata has found reassurance that her decision to leave was right, indeed unavoidable, 'the only thing I could do', and that God understands and loves her.

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[4] Although Agata has not formally been banned from the Church of Filadelfia, she has been banned from the district of Madrid where her family lives. She would not contemplate attendance to a Gitano church in a different district, since she has relatives or acquaintances in the majority of Gitano churches in Madrid.

For both Agata and Juanón, then, Pentecostal images and categories provide powerful emotional validation for their choices. And yet, both continue to feel deep doubts and guilt: Juanón about his treatment of Agata during the many years of their marriage, Agata about leaving her children. Both also feel ashamed: Juanón as a cuckolded husband, Agata as a good Christian wife brought low by an affair with a non-Gitano man. Clearly, Pentecostalism is essential to how they experience their lives, and their selves, as a Gitano man and a Gitano woman at a very difficult juncture. In the Gitano Pentecostal ethos Juanón and Agata find a series of apparently absolute precepts about good and evil, as well as concrete directions regarding women's and men's obligations and acceptable behaviour. And yet both spouses have been able to establish their own links with this Pentecostal symbolic array, doing so from very different standpoints. Juanón brings Pentecostal images of possession, hell and damnation closely in line with Gitano precepts regarding wifely virtue. Agata, on the other hand, relies on Pentecostal notions in order to shore up the also widespread Gitano notion that husbands must love and satisfy their wives. And, at the immigrant church, she has found models of femininity which are Pentecostal but not Gitano and that enable to see herself as still deserving of God's love. The strength with which both Agata and Juanón turn to Pentecostal images and precepts in order to reflect upon their lives and make choices demonstrates how deeply embedded Pentecostalism is in the Gitano cultural universe today but also its unevenness and multivocality, as well the unavoidable permeability of Gitanos to the world around them.

Concluding remarks

In the early 1990s, Gitano Pentecostalism was, to use Cucchiari's words, a 'gender-system-in-the-making', a new 'calculus of human worth' (1990: 687). The

Gitanos I worked with were deeply aware of the transformative effects of this emerging morality, and reflected on it by comparing 'Gitano' and 'Pentecostal' gender precepts whilst portraying both as independent, seamless and coherent systems of meaning. I am sure that, like today, back in the early 1990s Agata, Juanón and their kin related both to Pentecostalism and to 'the Gitano law' from very individual standpoints, navigating the fissures in these two overlapping and seemingly holistic world-views, looking not just for certainty but for ambiguity and compromise. As a novice anthropologist I was too preoccupied with the normative to be able to know what to do with their struggles and, like others interested in the relationship between gender and Pentecostalism, I treated individual lives and statements primarily as instances of broader dynamics and collective world-views.

Twenty years later, my long-term, deeply personal involvement with Agata, Juanón, and their family has made me confront the tensions between norms and actions, discourse and experience, the shared and the particular – the very intractability of singular lives. Paradoxically, attention to individual trajectories foregrounds how very important the affirmation of a reified morality is to the lives of the Gitanos of Madrid: it is because of this affirmation that Agata has been cast out of her family and her neighbourhood, or that Juanón tried, albeit with limited success, to be a good Gitano man over many years. But, as these examples also demonstrate, Gitano individuals engage prescriptive, holistic models of the world like Pentecostalism in ways that are irreducibly singular, contingent and unpredictable. Take Juanón: without Agata's defection I think it unlikely that he would have turned to the Church. Pentecostal themes became powerful and immediate for him only when she left even though as a Gitano amongst devout Gitano Pentecostals he had Pentecostalism within his reach for decades. And take Agata, who met a stranger's gaze whilst selling at an open-air market, fell in love, and has transformed her life beyond her and her relatives' wildest imaginings. Seen by other Gitanos as a fallen woman, the precepts of the Gitano Church remain essential to how she orients herself in the world.

Gitano Pentecostalism, then, is much more than the normative statements and generalised patterns to do gendered behaviour that first I encountered in the early 1990s and that I have outlined in the first half of this article. These patterns and statements are without doubt essential to the Gitano Pentecostal phenomenon, and they provide us with a relevant and useful methodological starting point. But for Gitanos like Agata and Juanón Pentecostalism is also uncertainty, gut feeling, hope, and expression of heart-wrenching despair. As such, it is to be found in the meandering, shifting detail of each of their lives, day to day, moment to moment. And yet, like water gathered between cupped hands, these lives cannot but trickle out of the grasp of our analysis.

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