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Joanna de Groot

The Space of Gender and the Gender of Space: Reflections from a Historian of Nineteenth-Century Iran*

It is a great pleasure to speak at your conference and to pay my own tribute to Anna Vanzan whose work I have long valued. My lecture will bring the interest in histories of women and of gender in Iran which I shared with Anna into wider conversations about the importance of spatial elements in gender and women's history and the importance of "women" and "gender" as essential categories for the exploration of spatial histories. In the third decade of the twenty-first-century historians of women and of gender are well aware of the importance of the process called "decolonisation" whereby we seek to unpack and challenge monolithic, ethnocentric, and exclusionary practices in our research and writing. Anna's commitment to linking her expertise on Iran to the wider domain of women's and gender history and to issues of migration and ethnic diversity in Italy today is exemplary in this respect. I want to honour and follow her example by beginning my talk with a discussion of women's and gender historians' engagement with spatial issues making that a basis for my reflections on women, gender, and space in nineteenth-century Iran. In the spirit of "decolonisation" I will foreground a range of global material and situate that material in the context of global exchanges and power relations from ancient Greek diasporas and the so-called "Crusades" to the Atlantic trade in enslaved people and histories of European exploration and colonialism since 1500. In the spirit of current feminist thinking I will take an intersectional approach to my general discussion of gender and space and to my consideration of spatial approaches to histories of women and gender in Iran.

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Over the last half century practitioners of women's and gender history have researched and theorised the role of spatial elements and influences on sex and gender and critiqued gender-blind practices in disciplines like geography, history and sociology when considering issues of space.¹ A few exemplary images will give some idea of their impact and the rich variety of aspects of gendered space. Early modern depictions of Italian women in urban marketplaces remind us of the complexities of gendered practices in urban centres where women were both traders and consumers moving between households, farms, or workshops and urban commercial spaces. The presence of women of African, European and mixed descent, both free and enslaved, together in the markets of the Caribbean demonstrate multiple spatial intersections between local commercial activity and the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved people which sustained European colonial projects. Other cross-cultural and colonial spatial relationships with their gendered dynamics emerged from the missionary activities which helped to constitute those relationships across and within social, physical, and cultural spaces. Migrant nuns schooling Polynesian pupils in nineteenth-century Hawaii, like counterparts in seventeenth-century Peru or twentieth-century Africa, embodied powerful unequal and gendered relations (adult/child, colonial superiors/subordinates, Christian/non-Christian) enacted within and across spaces. In globalised variants of the trade in sexual services, Dutch and Japanese merchants in Deshima (the designated point for Dutch/Japanese contacts in Japan) socialised with local women sex workers, and with servants brought by the Dutch from their Indonesian empire. This encounter, recorded by a Japanese artist was shaped by Japanese state policy, Dutch commercial and colonial interests, and the cultural conventions of sexualised entertainment which brought the local women to an event which was also a formal social exchange between Japanese and Dutch. The participants in this encounter are best understood by exploring their movements through cultural, social and physical spaces as male agents of trade and diplomacy or as subordinate female entertainer/sex workers and servants all negotiating linguistic and cultural differences as well as unequal power relations.

1. I apologise in advance for the Anglophone bias in the scholarly references in this piece. In the case of the general historiography on gender and space this reflects my own linguistic limitations (English and French): in the case of references to Iran I have focussed on references accessible to non-Persian readers in order to encourage them to explore Iranian history and culture.

Turning to consider an image of ancient Greek women woolworkers, and of eighteenth-century weavers in India, we can reflect on the gendered, classed and global elements shaping the spaces of female labour. This might happen in household spaces where work, family, and social life intersected. It might be associated with ritual or religious spaces as in ancient Greece or medieval western Europe, with global links to raw materials, markets, and investment as in eighteenth-century India, or the nineteenth-century southern US. It might involve spatial interaction between men and women or the separation of women's work spaces from those of men, involving contests over control of those practices by state, faith, or community, and slippages between different practices. In all cases crucial spatial elements intersected with political, material, and cultural discourses and practices. The image of women wool workers on an ancient Greek vase is shadowed by the myth of Penelope enacting her elite woman's role as a virtuous wife defending her household and her marriage and weaving cloth, as her husband Odysseus moves through other spaces of male heroic achievement. The practical and cultural significance of ancient Greek women's activities as textile producers had spatial aspects from ritual dedication and collection in temples to the spaces occupied by weavers and their looms.² Brunias' portrayal of women in Dominica presented complex intersections of race gender and enslavement underpinning the lives of traders, wives, and servants/slaves, while offering a racialised and exoticised European perspective on those lives to potential European buyers or viewers.³

These briefly described visual materials suggest the rich and complex potential for spatial approaches to women's and gender history. This potential has been identified in work by historians of women and gender and by social, cultural, and spatial historians who have heeded that work, which can be seen in scholarship on a range of topics. The gendered and spatialised constructions of ethnicity and war developed during the so-called "Crusades" which brought western

2. See Susan Cole, *Landscapes, gender and ritual space: the ancient Greek experience*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004, pp. 214-225; Ian Jenkins, *The ambiguity of Greek textiles*, in «*Arethusa*», 18/2 (1985), pp. 109-132.

3. David Bindman, *Representing race in the eighteenth-century Caribbean: Brunias in Dominica and St Vincent*, in «*Eighteenth-Century Studies*», 51/1 (2017), pp. 1-21; Amanda Bagnieris, *Coloring the Caribbean: Agostino Brunias and the painting of race in the British West Indies, c. 1765-1800*, PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2009; Sarah Thomas, Natasha Eaton, *Swollen detail, or what a vessel might give: Agostino Brunias and the visual and material culture of colonial Dominica*, in «*Atlantic Studies*», 2021.

Europeans to the eastern Mediterranean as warriors, settlers, pilgrims, and rulers reconfigured travel, social structures, personal relations and cultural practices in both areas.⁴ The movements through physical space involved in the “Crusades” shaped, and were shaped, by understandings and enactments of gender, class, ethnic, and religious differences, inequalities and interactions, whether in poetry and written narrative or in practical arrangements for work, worship and governance. The powerful links between gender and the mutually constitutive ritual and social structures of the ancient Greek *polis* were manifested spatially in the sacred sites within settlements and on the border of the polis and the organisation of the rituals undertaken by women and men at those sites.⁵ Monica Burguera’s work on confrontations between peasant and urban interests in and around nineteenth-century Valencia shows that both gender and class contributed to the formation and enactment of relations between rural and urban spaces, which involved female vegetable traders, young male manure gatherers, and city residents and regulators.⁶

This varied scholarship is the product of significant conceptual and methodological effort as well as empirical research into spatial histories, to which historians of women and gender have made transformative contributions. Two key interventions by such historians have been in the evolving debate around ideas and practices of “public” and “private” spheres, and in the perceptions and practices of urban history, and it will help our consideration of gender and space in nineteenth-century Iran to consider both of these. Turning to the public/private issue, the revival of women’s history in the 1970s centred in part on attention to that issue. This

4. An early discussion is in James Brundage, *Prostitution, miscegenation and sexual purity in the First Crusade*, in *Crusade and settlement. Papers read at the first conference of the SS-CLE and presented to R. C. Smail*, edited by Peter Edbury, Cardiff, University College Cardiff Press, 1985; a collection with a range of perspectives is *Gendering the crusades*, edited by Susan Edgington and Sarah Lambert, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2001; an overview is found in Christoph Maier, *The roles of women in the crusade movement: a survey*, in «Journal of Medieval History», 30/1 (2004), pp. 61-82; see also Lydia Walker, *Miraculous rivers and monstrous cities: landscapes and gender performance in thirteenth-century crusading culture*, in «Journal of Medieval History», 2021, pp. 1-19; Jeson Ng, *Women of the Crusades: the constructedness of the female other, 1100-1200*, in «Al-Masāq», 3/3 (2019), pp. 303-322; for an intersectional approach see Elena Lourie, *Black women warriors in the Muslim army besieging Valencia and the Cid’s victory: A problem of interpretation*, in «Traditio», 55 (2000), pp. 181-209.

5. Cole, *Landscapes, gender, and ritual*, especially chapters 3, 4, 6.

6. Monica Burguera, *Gendered scenes of the countryside: public sphere and peasant family resistance in the nineteenth-century Spanish town*, in «Social History», 29/3 (2004), pp. 320-341.

was because it was highly visible in prescriptive writing, fiction, and scientific, social, or political commentary in western European sources, and also because western feminist thought and politics of that period identified public/ private distinctions as sources of gender inequity and exploitation. In the 1980s and 1990s social theorists like Sylvia Walby and Deniz Kandiyoti⁷ connected their explorations of and debates on patriarchy, gender and class to histories and analyses of public and private spheres. Such explorations were paralleled by work on gender, work and household by various historians.⁸ This work initiated debates on change and persistence in the forms or perceptions of these so-called spheres which shifted into analyses of relationships between patriarchy, understood as a system of male domination and privilege, and other socio-cultural systems – capitalism, imperialism, heteronormativity, racial hierarchy. It included conceptual discussions

7. Classic formulations with a western perspective (Walby) and a wider approach (Kandiyoti) are in Sylvia Walby, *Patriarchy at work*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1986 and Ead., *Theorizing patriarchy*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990 and also Ead., *Women's employment and the historical periodisation of patriarchy*, in *Politics of Everyday Life*, edited by Helen Corr et al., Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1990, pp. 141-161; Deniz Kandiyoti, *Bargaining with patriarchy*, in «Gender & society», 2/3 (1988), pp. 274-290, and Ead., *Islam and patriarchy: a comparative perspective*, in *Women in Middle Eastern history*, edited by Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron, New Haven-London, Yale UP, 2001, pp. 23-42; plus Ead., *Rethinking bargaining with patriarchy*, in *Feminist visions of development: gender, analysis and policy*, edited by Cecile Jackson and Ruth Pearson, London-New York, Routledge, 2005, pp. 135-154; see also Drude Dahlerup, *Confusing concepts, confusing reality: a theoretical discussion of the patriarchal state*, in *Women and the State*, edited by Anne Sassoon, London - New York, Routledge, 1987, pp. 93-127; Mervat Hatem, *Class and patriarchy as competing paradigms for the study of Middle Eastern women*, in «Comparative Studies in Society and History», 29/4 (1987), pp. 811-818; Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale: Women in the international division of labour*, London-New York, Zed Books, 1998; more recently see Anna Pollert, *Gender and class revisited; or, the poverty of patriarchy*, in «Sociology», 30/4 (1996), pp. 639-659, and Vrushi Patil, *From patriarchy to intersectionality: a transnational feminist assessment of how far we've really come*, in «Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society», 38/4 (2013), pp. 847-867 and the articles by Merry Wiesner Hanks, Susan Amussen, Androniki Dialeti, and Matgaret Hunt in a forum reviewing historians use of notions of patriarchy in «Gender & History», 30/2 (2018).

8. Influential examples are Martha Howell, *Women, production and patriarchy in late medieval cities*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986; Judith Bennett, *Confronting continuity*, in «Journal of Women's History», 9/3 (1997), pp.73-94. Paula Miller, *Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, 1500-1900*, Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1998; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, sex, and subordination in England 1500-1800*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1995; Sheila Rowbotham, *The trouble with patriarchy*, and Sally Alexander, Barbara Taylor, *In defence of "patriarchy"*, both in *People's history and socialist theory*, edited by Raphael Samuel, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981; Leonore Davidoff, Catherine Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class*, London, Routledge, 1987 and an important challenge in Amanda Vickery, *Golden Age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history*, in «Historical Journal», 36/2 (1993), pp. 383-414.

as well as explorations of specific historical situations and evidence, returning at times to the debate initiated by Vickery.⁹

As noted by Wiesner Hanks when introducing more recent reflections on these matters, this scholarly debate has moved attention away from patriarchy as a category of analysis towards other formulations of gendered power relations and unequal differences. However, these recent reflections and work like that of Flanagan on urban development suggest that for some scholars at least reference to patriarchy and gendered spheres is still useful.¹⁰ Studies of gender power relations in families still make use of the notion in relation to male authority and privilege in household and kin networks. This practice has been deployed in the study of topics including honour, work, and parenthood in various European, African and Middle eastern settings.¹¹ There is also a rich seam of scholarship

9. See Leonore Davidoff, *Regarding some 'Old husband's tales': public and private in feminist history*, in her *Worlds Between: Historical perspectives on gender and class*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995; Anne Summers, *Common sense about separate spheres*, in her *Female lives, moral states: women, religion, and public life in Britain, 1800-1930*, Newbury, Threshold Press, 2000; Jane Rendall, *Women and the public sphere*, in *Gender and History: retrospect and prospect*, edited by Leonore Davidoff, Keith McClelland and Eleni Varikas, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000, pp. 57-70; Leonore Davidoff, *Gender and the "great divide": public and private in British gender history*, in «Journal of Women's History», 15/1 (2003), pp. 11-27; Susie Steinbach, *Can we still use "separate spheres"?* *British history 25 years after Family Fortunes*, in «History Compass», 10 (2012), pp. 826-837; Joan Landes, *Further thoughts on the public/private distinction*, in «Journal of Women's History», 15/2 (2003), pp. 28-39; Judith Bennett, *History matters: patriarchy and the challenge of feminism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006; Androniki Dialeti, *From women's oppression to male anxiety: the concept of patriarchy in the historiography of early modern Europe*, in *Gender in late medieval and early modern Europe*, edited by Mariana Muravyeva and Raisa Toivo, New York, Routledge, 2013, pp. 19-36 is a useful overview.

10. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Forum introduction: reconsidering patriarchy in early modern Europe and the Middle East*, in «Gender & History», 30/2 (2018), pp. 320-330; Maureen Flanagan, *Constructing the patriarchal city*, Philadelphia-Rome-Tokyo, Temple University Press, 2018; Mark Kann, *Punishment, prisons, and patriarchy: Liberty and power in the early American republic*, New York, NYU Press, 2005; Stephanie Smith, *Gender and the Mexican Revolution: Yucatan women and the realities of patriarchy*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2009; Alex Shepard, *Manhood, credit, and patriarchy in early modern England c. 1580-1640*, in «Past & Present», 167 (2000), pp. 75-106; Susan Amussen, Allyson Poska, *Restoring Miranda: gender and the limits of European patriarchy in the early modern Atlantic world*, in «Journal of Global History», 7/3 (2012), pp. 342-363; Daniel Kaiser, *Pomest'e and prozhitkii: Muscovite patriarchy on the ground*, in «Russian History», 42/1 (2015), pp. 82-96; Marion Gray, *Productive men, reproductive women: the agrarian household and the emergence of separate spheres during the German enlightenment*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2000, especially chapters 1, 3; Cristian Berco, *Producing patriarchy: Male sodomy and gender in early modern Spain*, in «Journal of the History of Sexuality», 17/3 (2008), pp. 351-376.

11. Claire Griffiths, *Engendering humanism in Africa: patriarchy and the paradox of empire*, in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 46/3 (2013); Chitra Sinha, *Debating patriarchy: the Hindu Code Bill controversy in India 1941-56*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press India, 2012; Karl Kaser, *Patriarchy after patriarchy: gender relations in Turkey and in the*

exploring changing intersections between “patriarchal” formations of state and household as organisational, cultural and rhetorical practices during the early modern period. Drawing on Weberian, materialist and feminist thought they have focussed on western Europe but also explored other parts of the world.¹²

Among the more lasting of these debates was historians’ engagement with the work of Habermas on the “modern” public sphere which proposed both a conceptual framework distinguishing “public” relationships and activities and a historical narrative of their coming into being. His formulations have been debated by historians as well as by social and political theorists, notably by those who have responded to their gender blindness, both conceptual and empirical.¹³ Explorations of male and female roles in the early modern period and

Balkans, 1500-2000, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2008; Mary K. Vaughan, *Modernizing patriarchy*, in *Hidden histories of gender and the State in Latin America*, edited by Eugenia Rodriguez and Maria Sanchez, Durham-London, Duke University Press, 2000, pp. 194-214; Dorothy Hodgson, *Pastoralism, patriarchy and history: changing gender relations among Maasai in Tanganyika, 1890-1940*, in «Journal of African history», 40/1 (1999), pp. 41-65; Steven Ruggles, *Patriarchy, power, and policy: the transformation of American families 1800-2015*, in «Demography», 12/1 (2015), pp. 1797-1823.

12. Liping Wang, Julia Adams, *Interlocking patrimonialisms and state formation in Qing China and early modern Europe*, in «Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science», 636/1 (2011), pp. 164-181; Julia Adams, *The familial state: elite family practices and state-making in the early modern Netherlands*, in «Theory and Society», 23/4 (1994), pp. 505-539; Ead., *The familial state: ruling families and merchant capitalism in early modern Europe*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005; Susan Amussen, *An ordered society: gender and class in early modern England*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1988 and *Caribbean exchanges: slavery and the transformation of English society, 1640-1700*, University of North Carolina Press, 2009; Ead., *Failing at patriarchy: gender exclusion and violence 1560-1640*, in *Negotiating exclusion in early modern England*, edited by Naomi Pullin and Kathryn Woods, New York - London, Routledge, 2021; Julie Hardwick, *The practice of patriarchy: Gender and the politics of household authority in early modern France*, University Park, Penn State Press, 2010; Miller, *Transformations of patriarchy*.

13. See chapters by Nancy Fraser, Mary Ryan and Geoff Eley in *Habermas and the public sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Cambridge (Ma) - London, MIT Press, 1992, pp. 109-142, 259-288, 289-339; Laurence Klein, *Gender and the public/private distinction in the eighteenth century: some questions about evidence and analytic procedure*, in «Eighteenth-Century Studies», 29 (1995), pp. 97-109; Jane Rendall, *Women and the public sphere*, in «Gender & History», 11/3 (1999), pp. 475-488; Joan Landes, *The public and the private sphere: a feminist reconsideration*, in *Feminists read Habermas*, edited by Johanna Meehan, New York - London, Routledge, 1995, pp. 91-116; Dena Goodman, *Public sphere and private life: toward a synthesis of current historiographical approaches to the old regime*, in «History and theory», 31/1 (1992), pp. 1-20; Christine Kulke, *Equality and difference: approaches to feminist theory and politics*, in *Women’s Studies in the 1990s*, edited by Joanna de Groot and Mary Maynard, London, Macmillan, 1993, pp. 132-148; *Women, writing and the public sphere, 1700-1830*, edited by Elisabeth Eger et. al., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001; Eric Laurier, Chris Philo, ‘*A parcel of muddling muckworms*’: revisiting Habermas and the English coffee-house, in «Social and cultural geography», 8/2 (2007), pp. 259-281.

of cultural and ideological perceptions of “public” or “private” at that period have been combined with interrogation of the terms and their use by historians. Focussing on the “long eighteenth century”, they have explored female “public” agency in various social and political setting and challenged simplistic binary oppositions between two monolithic and distinct spheres. They have drawn primarily on cultural and political texts but also on archival material texts, and while the focus on patriarchy and separate spheres has shifted. Kelleher’s work linking the ideas of Habermas on the public sphere with those of Foucault on confinement and madness and with recent scholarship on queer space and heteronormativity, like Palmer’s study of enslavement, households and race, indicate some continuing resonance of those concepts.¹⁴

The other area where the “spatial turn” has impacted on the practices of gender and women’s history has been through gendered interventions in historical geography and urban history. Building on the work of social thinkers like Doreen Massey, scholars began to apply gender theories and feminist thought to those disciplines. They combined the analytical categories of gender and space to demonstrate how specific spaces or understandings of space and place were gendered, and how gender differences are partly created through the organization and representation of space.¹⁵ Such notions of creation and organisation are time related concepts which of course have resonance for historians and for the well-established fields of urban and settlement history. Gender aware historians brought their understanding of the dynamics of gender inequality, gender

14. Paul Kelleher, *Reason, madness and sexuality in the British public sphere*, in «The Eighteenth Century», 53/3 (2012), pp. 291-315; Jennifer Palmer, *Intimate bonds: family and slavery in the French Atlantic*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, especially chapters 2, 3, 6.

15. Doreen Massey, *Space, place and gender*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1994 and her *For Space*, London, Sage, 2005; see also Sarah Mills, *Gender and colonial space*, in «Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography», 3/2 (1996), pp. 125-148; *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women’s History*, edited by Dorothy Helly, Susan Reverby, Cornell UP, 1992, recent surveys of the state of the field include Karen Harvey, *A place called sex: gender, space and modernity in eighteenth-century England*, in «History Workshop Journal», 51/1 (2001), pp. 158-179; *Mapping gendered routes and spaces in the early modern world*, edited by Merry Wiesner-Hanks, Farnham, Ashgate, 2015, introduction and chapter 2; Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Crossing borders in transnational gender history*, in «Journal of Global History», 6/3 (2011), pp. 357-79; *Gender in medieval places, spaces and thresholds*, edited by Victoria Blud. et. al., London, University of London Press, 2019, introduction; Danielle Van den Heuvel, *Gender in the streets of the premodern city*, «Journal of Urban History», 45/4 (2019), pp. 693-710; Daphne Spain, *Gender and urban space*, in «Annual Review of Sociology», 40 (2014), pp. 581-598. See also *The city before modernity*, edited by Lin Foxhall and Gabriele Neher, special issue of «Gender & History», 23/3 (2003).

power relations, gender interactions and gendered meaning to histories of space and place, just as they brought an interest in space/place issues to studies of genders and sexualities in the past. These approaches have shaped work on areas as diverse as the study of gendered practices and the cultural politics of ancient Greek shrines, work on the gender dynamics of the streets and buildings of nineteenth-century London and on the gendering of urban practices in early modern Rome.¹⁶ Themes which have attracted attention are the interactive shaping of privacy and social interaction, the dynamics of the trade in sexual services and the role of distinctive types of buildings such as coffeehouses and bachelor residences and sacred sites like anchorites cells and churches. There has also been much attention to cultural perceptions and meanings and their interactions with social and material activities.¹⁷

This scholarly work has enriched women's and gender history by incorporating spatial approaches within the study of gender and women in relation to work, family and politics, while giving spatial and especially urban histories to gender analysis. By developing these links historians of women and gender have moved thinking forward in several significant directions. Moving on from looking at binary oppositions between public and private, interior or exterior, urban and rural they have opened up issues of fluidity, liminality and mobility, and the use of intersectional analyses to understand the articulations of gender with other vectors of difference, power and inequality.¹⁸ They

16. Jane Rendell, *The pursuit of pleasure: gender, space & architecture in Regency London*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002; Linda Nead, *Mapping the self: Gender, space, and modernity in mid-Victorian London*, in «Environment and planning», 29/4 (1997), pp. 659-672 and Ead., *Victorian Babylon: people streets and images in nineteenth-century London*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000; Elizabeth Cohen, *To pray, to work, to hear, to speak: women in Roman streets c. 1600*, in «Journal of Early Modern History», 12/3-4 (2008), pp. 289-311; Cole, *Landscapes, gender*.

17. *Women's Space: Patronage, Place, and Gender in the Medieval Church*, edited by Virginia Raguin and Sarah Stanbury, Albany (NY), SUNY Press, 2006; Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Medieval anchoritisms: gender, space and the solitary life*, Suffolk, Boydell & Brewer, 2011; Liz Hicks, *Religious life in Normandy, 1050-1300: space, gender, and social pressure*, Suffolk, Boydell & Brewer, 2007.

18. Anne Bailey, *Modern and medieval approaches to pilgrimage, gender and sacred space*, in «History and Anthropology», 24/4 (2013), pp. 493-512; Jeanne Kilde, *The "Predominance of the feminine" at Chautauqua: rethinking the gender-space relationship in Victorian America*, in «Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society», 24/2 (1999), pp. 49-86; Heghnar Watenpaugh, *Deviant dervishes: space, gender, and the construction of antinomian piety in Ottoman Aleppo*, in «International Journal of Middle East Studies», 37/4 (2005), pp. 535-565; Amanda Flather, *Space, place, and gender. The sexual and spatial division of labour in the early modern household*, in «History and Theory», 52/3 (2013), pp. 344-360; Sarah Rees Jones, *Public and private space and*

also pay attention to the spatial dynamics of women's agency and their resistance as gendered subalterns, alongside explorations of the workings of unequal power and oppression. This has underpinned work on women traded as entertainers in eighteenth-century Maharashtra, at lesbians and housing in the twentieth-century US, or travel and enslavement in nineteenth-century Cuba as well as work on contested and fluid spaces in the early modern period.¹⁹ Historians' work on gendered spatial dynamics has also played a role in supporting major shifts in historical practice aimed at decentering western ethnocentrism and incorporating global and imperial dimensions in histories of gender and space. From critiques of gender blind work on empire and studies of colonialism and missionaries to on migrations in different periods and on gendered cultures of travel and cross cultural encounter, this scholarship has shaped, and been shaped by, intersectional analysis, and by attention to mobility in space. It has also added much to the growing influence of perspectives which emphasise a mutually constitutive approach to unequal but interactive past relationships and processes.²⁰

gender in medieval Europe, in *The Oxford handbook of women and gender in medieval Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 246-261.

19. Faisal Devji, *Gender and the politics of space: the movement for women's reform in Muslim India, 1857-1900*, in «South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies», 14/1 (1991), pp. 141-153; Jayakumari Devika, *Negotiating women's social space: public debates on gender in early modern Kerala, India*, in «Inter-Asia Cultural Studies», 7/1 (2006), pp. 43-61; Kedar Kulkarni, *Performing intimacy: Slavery and the woman's voice in eighteenth-century Marathi lavani*, in «South Asian History and Culture», 12/2-3 (2021), pp. 206-221; Camilla Cowling, *Gendered geographies: Motherhood, slavery, law and space in mid-nineteenth-century Cuba*, in «Women's History Review», 27/6 (2018), pp. 939-953; James Davidson, *Bodymaps: sexing space and zoning gender in ancient Athens*, in «Gender & History», 3/3 (2011) pp. 597-614; Ferhunde Ozbay, *Gendered space: a new look at Turkish modernisation*, in «Gender & History», 11/3 (1999), pp. 555-568; Eric McDonald, *Being at a feast and drinking to excess: hospitals and patriarchal manhood in early Barbados*, in «Journal of Caribbean History», 53/1 (2019), pp. 1-26; Eric Dursteler, *Renegade women: gender, identity, and boundaries in the early modern Mediterranean*, Baltimore (Md), Johns Hopkins University, 2011; Selma Özkoçak, *Coffehouses: rethinking the public and private in early modern Istanbul*, in «Journal of Urban History», 33/6 (2007), pp. 965-986; Shirine Hamadeh, *Invisible city: Istanbul's migrants and the politics of space*, in «Eighteenth-Century Studies», 50/2 (2017), pp. 173-193; compared with Stephen Robertson *et al.*, *Disorderly houses: residences, privacy, and the surveillance of sexuality in 1920s Harlem*, in «Journal of the History of Sexuality», 21/3 (2012), pp. 443-466; Lauren Gutterman, *"The house on the borderland": lesbian desire, marriage, and the household, 1950-1979*, in «Journal of Social History», 46/1 (2012), pp. 1-22; Jessica Hinchy, *Obscenity, moral contagion and masculinity: Hijras in public space in colonial North India*, in «Asian Studies Review», 38/2 (2014), pp. 274-294.

20. A paradigmatic example of the mutually constitutive, intersectional approach to race, gender and empire is Catherine Hall, *Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002; Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing home: emigration, gender and the middle class in Lebanon 1870-1920*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001; Adele Perry, *On the edge of empire: gender, race, and the making of British Columbia*,

As someone working on gendered histories of nineteenth-century Iran, I really value the decentred, interactive practices of gendered spatial history / spatialised gender history. They enable me now to consider how this rich body of work on gender and space has supported my own explorations of women and gender in nineteenth-century Iran, beginning with two stories. Firstly between July and September 1852 the British Resident in Bushire (the senior political and commercial official there), the British ambassador in Teheran and British officials in India were in correspondence about a range of issues raised by the conversion of an Armenian woman known as Karapet and her son to Shi'a Islam.²¹ While there are gaps in the story which is of course filtered through the partial and value laden views of male British diplomats we can identify some interesting themes. The story is anchored in varied but intersecting spaces. In geographical terms the woman in the story may have had connections to the major regional capital of Isfahan in central Iran, had been married in Bombay, and in the 1850s was a resident of Bushire a port city on the Gulf. Her original husband and his relatives may well have moved to Bushire from British ruled India, and/or from Isfahan, as part of their work for the British. In terms of social spaces these geographical movements embedded the woman and her family within the Armenian communities in Bushire and perhaps earlier Isfahan, communities which were distinct but not wholly separate from Muslim neighbours. It also embedded some of her male

1849-1871, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001; Eve Stoddard, *Positioning gender and race in (post) colonial plantation space: connecting Ireland and the Caribbean*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; Inderpal Grewal, *Home and harem: nation, gender, empire and the cultures of travel*, Durham-London, Duke University Press, 1996; Simon Dagut, *Gender, colonial "women's history" and the construction of social distance: middle-class British women in later nineteenth-century South Africa*, in «Journal of Southern African Studies», 26/3 (2000), pp. 555-572; Diane Robinson Dunne, *The harem, slavery, and British imperial culture*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006; *A new imperial history*, edited by Kathleen Wilson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, introduction, chapters 1, 14, conclusion; Kathleen Wilson, *Rethinking the colonial state: family, gender, and governmentality in eighteenth-century British frontiers*, in «American Historical Review», 116/5 (2011), pp. 1294-1322; parallel discussions of gender, space, and imperial power can be found in Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and power in the early Mughal world*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005 and Leslie Peirce, *The imperial harem: women and sovereignty in the Ottoman empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.

21. This first narrative is based on a close reading of a partially dated sequence of letters and reports compiled between July and September 1852, to be found in series R/15/133 [Bushire Resident's reports and letters 1852-3] held in the records of the UK India Office as part of the Asia and Africa collections at the British Library. The narrative is in a report from the British Resident to a Bombay official dated September, copying material sent to the ambassador in Tehran in July; the name "Karapet" / "Karapetian" is an Armenian family name rather than a given name, which in the case of this woman remains unknown.

relatives in the physically, socially and legally separate space of the British Residency as employees of the British. This involved gender distinctions between work spaces used by men involved in commercial and diplomatic transactions and household and neighbourhood spaces in which women as well as men operated. The proximity of Armenian and Muslim residents in the woman's neighbourhood is indicated by the development of a relationship between Karapet and a Muslim man with whom she began to cohabit, causing concern among both Muslim and Armenian neighbours, including in the latter case relatives.

Spaces of work and residence were of course also gendered culturally, and movement across religious spaces arising from the "conversion" of the Armenian woman and her son to Shi'a Islam (the majority faith in nineteenth-century Iran) had familial, religious and communal significance. The contest between mother, relatives, and British and Iranian officials over the conversion of a male youth concerned his position inside or outside family space (where and with whom would he live?) as well as his position in religious space (the activities of particular faith groups). It also linked kinship, work, gender, and legal status since the key issue for British officials was the status of mother and son as potential British subjects or persons entitled to British protected status, a status arising from the work relationships of male relatives to the British. Another powerfully gendered spatial consideration in this story relates to sex and marriage. According to the British account, Karapet separated from her husband and went to live with a Muslim man and then sought to convert to Islam and to claim his "protection" and persuaded her son also to convert with promises of a wife and money. This allowed neighbours, relatives, and British officials to label her «a woman of bad character», «leading [...] a disreputable life» whose decision to change faith was «provoked» by reproaches (presumably from relatives or neighbours) about her «immoral conduct». It also raised the issues of divorce, of "separation" and of under whose male "protection" Karapet would or should be living. The moralised spatial question of her place in a household, or marriage, or kin group, or the sphere of British legal and diplomatic protection was shaped by gendered codes of sexual and marital conduct, and status. Although not fully articulated in the source there are hints of the clash between British understandings of husbandly protection, divorce and separation and those of Iranians. The latter can be seen in the distinction made between Karapet's "cohabitation" with a Muslim man and her seeking his "protection" (indicating a more formal recognition of their

partnership) in conjunction with her change of faith. These combined a social and physical shift into another household space with a new partner with entry into a different religious space. The gendered dynamic of space was also manifest in the contests over custody of Karapet's teenage son, whose legal and communal position and future was far more of a British concern than the situation of his mother.

The other spatial variable in the manoeuvres recounted in the British records was the imperial context in which the British officials pursued Karapet's "case". The Resident in Bushire took up the issue with British colleagues in the Iranian capital Tehran and in the British governmental hub in Bombay. This signalled how British presence in Iran was part of a trans-Asian and transnational web of interests and activities supporting and supported by commercial and imperial interests in India, and reliant on relationships with Indians, Iranians and other locals. From high level involvement with rulers and elites to the employment of Indian and Iranian clerks, soldiers, interpreters and manual workers, the British imperial project relied on its spatial agility and connections to sustain work and power. British officials dealt with high officials in the Iranian government who claimed the Karapets as Iranian subjects from the long established Armenian community in Isfahan, thus demonstrating a modern grasp of legal notions of the subject and of record keeping which allowed them to reference an urban census. Equally they were dealing with local employees and their families claiming British protection on the basis of work for the British, of kinship to male employees, and/or of origins in British ruled India. On the one hand imperial effectiveness depended on the ability to use and manage the relationships on which empire depended within and across local, regional, and transnational space. On the other hand, local people and communities had to manage the powerful presence and views of the British whether over legal and physical control over their employees or about conversion and freedom of religion.

This individual story illustrates the rich potential of an approach to gendered spatial histories of nineteenth-century Iran which focusses on their complex, interactive, and fluid features, linking a small urban ethnoreligious community and a particular woman's family to global networks and influences. The power of communal opinion, of transnational religious customs, values and practices and of state and imperial interests was offset by Karapet's personal agency in renegotiating her religious affiliation, her sexual situation and her place of residence. Having taken the initiative to separate from her husband

and leave his “protection” to live with someone else, when confronted by communal criticism she also took steps to strengthen her position by publicly confirming her change of protector and deciding on her conversion and that of her son. While these decisions were shaped by the constraints imposed by unequal power relations (women’s need for male “protectors”, communal moral judgements) they show Karapet seeking solutions to her situation, using her capacity to offer sexual and personal partnership and resisting attempts to make her change her mind. As much recent scholarship on spatial history argues individuals and groups make, contest, control and negotiate spaces, shaping them through relationships and movement as well as by using material, cultural, legal and political resources.

The second personal history which I read in spatial terms concerns an episode of marital crisis in an elite family in the capital of Iran a generation after Karapet’s encounter with neighbours and British officials. It is related in an autobiographical postscript to a political text on women and marriage written in 1894-5 by a woman called Bibi Khanom Astarabadi, pro-woman author and later reforming activist in the field of girls’ education.²² Bibi Khanom recounts how nine years into her marriage she confronted difficulties as a mother and explored the possibility of her husband taking a second *sigheh* (= temporary) wife as both a potential sexual partner and an additional domestic worker. She then had to deal with problems which arose in consequence of putting that change into practice, including a tempestuous visit from the woman from whose household the *sigheh* wife (called Banu) had come, leading her to leave her house and husband and take up residence with relatives. After a number of arguments and negotiations with her husband she returned to the marital home and resumed affectionate relations with him, shortly after which the *sigheh* wife returned to the household from which she had come.

22. The core text I discuss is the section entitled *An episode of my life* placed at the end of Bibi Khanom’s polemical piece, *The vices of men*. A Persian version of the text was published as *Ma’ayeb i-rijal: dar pasokh beh ta’aleb al nesvan* = *The vices of men: in response to the women’s question*, edited by Afsaneh Najmabadi, New York, 1992. An English translation has been published in *The education of Women and The vices of men: two Qajar tracts* (trans and ed. with an introduction Willem. Floor and Hasan Javadi), Syracuse (NY), Syracuse University Press, 2010; Bibi Khanom’s text is at pp. 57-126 of this English version and the *Episode of my life* is at pp. 117-126. In order to assist non Persian readers to access the material I shall reference this English version, drawing on three parts of that book: [1] the main narrative under consideration to be referred to as *An episode*; [2] the section *Who was Bibi Khanom?* which is pp. XVI-XXV in the introduction to the whole *Two tracts* text, to be referred to as “*Two tracts*, Introduction”; [3] the main body of Bibi Khanom’s tract to be referred to as *The vices of men*.

I will comment on the spatial dynamics of this narrative under headings similar to those used for the spatial analysis of Karapet's story. I will highlight ways in which spatial analysis challenges oversimplified and orientalist assumptions which still underpin much discussion of women in nineteenth-century Iran, as they underpinned reforming discourses about the "backwardness" of those women. Such discussions emphasise the segregation and seclusion of women as the principal determining features in their lives and as constitutive of their inequality and oppression. In a society where women's access to formal education, to public political roles and to many occupations and activities was significantly restricted by socio-cultural codes of gender separation and by male privilege in politics, business, religion, law, and education such an emphasis is understandable. However, closer consideration of women's lives and of gender dynamics in nineteenth-century Iran reveals a much more complex picture requiring an intersectional approach. The exclusions described here were affected not only by class/status, location, and occupation, but also female agency resisting or negotiating with them. As will be shown in the discussion of Bibi Khanom's story and of some more general material to which I will turn later, the spatial dynamics of nineteenth-century Iranian women's lives were rich, relational, and contested as well as unequal.

In physical terms that story challenges any simplistic notion of women's confinement. Bibi Khanom calls herself an "Astarabadi girl" identifying connections with the capital of the province of Mazandaran in northern Iran, from where her family with its connections to the military, the *'ulama* (= religious specialists) and the royal court had moved to Tehran. Her husband was from a family which had moved from Qarabagh in the Caucasus to Tehran following Russian conquests there in the early nineteenth century.²³ Nor were women's movements through geographical space shaped only by their family situation. The girl whose contested position as a *sigheh* wife is at the core of the story was brought from Rasht in northern Iran by a widow to work in Tehran, and left that household for another when dissatisfied with her situation before joining that of Bibi Khanom.²⁴ Both Bibi Khanom and her mother Khadijeh Khanom moved between the family quarters (*anderun*) of the royal household (where Khadijeh Khanom lived

23. *An episode*, p. 117; *Two tracts* introduction, p. XVII.

24. *An episode*, p. 120-121.

and worked as a tutor) and their family homes. Khadijeh also moved between houses in Tehran and in Mazandaran province as well as going as a pilgrim to Karbala in what is now called Iraq where she subsequently lived. Later in life Bibi Khanom would move between her family home and the premises where she ran a school.²⁵ As conflict over Banu (the girl from Rasht) developed, her former mistress pushes into Bibi's house to seize her. While framed by conventions which based women within households and emphasised male authority and protection, (Bibi goes to an uncle's house when she leaves her husband; her mother persuades her brother to take her to Karbala) it was possible for women to manage and manipulate these spatial conventions in pursuit of their own agendas.²⁶ They might spend much time within the physical space of a household but also moved through space to other locations which they might enter as employers, teachers or servants and not just as kin or spouses.

As emerges in this last point, the spaces used, occupied, or created by Iranian women had-gendered socio-cultural as well as physical and geographical features. Most obviously it is unhelpful to see the households which were central to women's lives as simply "domestic" spaces when in fact they were sites of productive, creative and service work, as well as of social networking among neighbours, patrons, and clients with all its political and cultural meanings. The peasant girl who entered Bibi Khanom's house sought work and security; Bibi's educated mother worked as a *mulla-bashi* (= tutor) in the royal household creating professional and patronage connections used by both mother and daughter, as when the latter stayed in the royal *anderun* during her dispute with her husband: the marriage of Khadijeh Khanom was arranged by patrons at the Shah's court, not kin and Bibi used her own household space to host religious gatherings and to start a school and the households of others to negotiate a reconciliation with her husband.²⁷ The lives of these two women confirm evidence from many sources which show women entering households as traders, domestic workers, midwives, skilled craft workers, carers, and entertainers as well as visitors seeking sociable contact or in pursuit of conflict, as with the quarrel over Banu the Rashti girl.

25. *Ibidem*, pp. 121-122; *Two tracts* introduction, pp. XVII, XXI-XXII; *Vices of men*, p. 58.

26. *An episode*, pp. 121, 123; *Two tracts* introduction, p. XVIII.

27. *An episode*, pp. 121-122, 123-124; *Two tracts* Introduction, pp. XVII, XXI-XXII.

Indeed, proper consideration of even the limited and uneven evidence about the lives of nineteenth-century Iranian women challenges us to revisit assumptions about the confining and “domestic” character of household space and its complex gender dynamics. In Bibi Khanom’s story alone we can see houses as spaces where women move in and out, where they undertake paid work as well as caring for children, and are spaces which can be invaded, and where women negotiate with patrons and relatives over marital, sexual, and household arrangements. These activities were shaped by class and age as well as gender, requiring an intersectional approach. Banu, the Rashti rural girl, moves through space as a migrant and a protégé of the widow who brings her to Tehran, as an asset whose sexual and domestic services are traded by other women, as a domestic worker, and as the sexual partner and possible *sigheh* wife of several men.²⁸ Class relations and material transactions among women as well as between women and men (and between adults and children) made the *anderuns* of elite households far more than sites of female segregation, seclusion, and subordination. In the royal palace they were part of the politics and culture of the ruling dynasty and its court, just as the homes of Bibi Khanom’s family might be the location for neighbour’s quarrels and religious rituals.

The uses and perceptions of *anderun* space in more advantaged households interacted with those of the *birun* (= the “outer” household space where men undertook social, political, and cultural activities) rather than just operating in dualistic separation opposition to it. The moment when Bibi Khanom and her husband struggle physically with the female visitor who storms into their house to take back Banu illustrates just such an interaction.²⁹ It also signals the complex and not always binary spatial intersections of femininity and masculinity among nineteenth-century Iranians, which are more usefully explored in terms of permeable boundaries and as nodes for both female and male networks extending beyond individual households. As I have discussed elsewhere, masculinities were formed and enacted in household as well as in other spaces (streets, bazars, seminaries, fields, teahouses, texts).³⁰ Similarly femininities could be made and expressed in bath-houses, shrines, and

28. *An episode*, pp. 119-121, 124-125.

29. *Ibidem*, p. 120.

30. See Joanna de Groot, *The bureaucrat, the mulla and the maverick intellectual “at home”*: domestic narratives of patriarchy, masculinity and modernity in Iran 1880-1980, in «Gender & History», 27/3 (2015), pp. 791-811.

workplaces, and in Bibi Khanom's case authorship, and later in her life in schoolrooms, as well as in so-called "domestic" spaces.

Bibi Khanom's narrative illustrates the disadvantages, challenges, and constraints faced by elite women in spaces defined by gendered and classed patterns of kinship domesticity, sexual intimacy and marriage which supported male (? patriarchal) privilege. It also reveals the existence of various opportunities for women to exert their own agency in resisting or managing such constraints and disadvantages. The poor migrant girl manoeuvring between households and relationships to make use of her work skills and sexual potential, like Bibi and Khadijeh moving across royal, religious, and cultural spaces to renegotiate marriage and motherhood, deployed skill and energy to protect their interests and meet their needs. They also deployed intersectional identities with Banu slipping between employee, protegee carer, peasant, sexual partner and rival, and wife, just as Bibi Khanom slipped between wife, mother, patron, writer and cultured woman, employer, older woman with a younger sexual rival in her marital/ household space. If Banu contested conventions of female covering and transgressed bodily and social spatial practices by not wearing her veil in the presence of non-related men, Bibi Khanom manoeuvred in spaces controlled by kin and patrons to re-establish her marriage and move forward into feminist activism. She challenged women's cultural exclusion by becoming an author, underpinning her work with the education she obtained in the royal *anderun* and with the support of female friends and networks.³¹ Deploying her grasp of the cultural spaces of classical poetry in Persian, of the Quran, and of the colourful and bawdy vernacular language of Tehranis, her tract, *The vices of men*, speaks back to a misogynist text, *The education of women* published in the late 1880s which is in fact a catalogue of negative stereotypes of women. The text mobilises literary skill, popular argot, and polemical energy to confront *The education of women* with its critique of male misconduct, locating the author's own efforts within the space of female networks reading and reacting to this male text and sharing experiences of gender inequity.³²

These two stories of Karapet and Bibi Khanom open up insights and questions about how to develop gendered spatial analyses of

31. *An episode*, pp. 121-122; *Vices of men*, pp. 62-65; introduction to *Two tracts*, pp. XVIII.

32. *Vices of men*, pp. 57-59, 63; introduction to *Two tracts*, pp. XI-XII; *The education of women* is other piece published by Floor and Javadi in *Two Qajar tracts*.

the lives of nineteenth-century Iranians. Gendered spaces need to be explored intersectionally, giving due attention to class/status, to religion and occupation to ethnicity and community and to global power structures. They also need to be understood as interactive and relational, considering the roles of movement, of liminality and of mutually constitutive processes. The challenge is to recognise the restrictive dynamic of many women's lives in work spaces, streets, and their exclusion from key areas of religious, entrepreneurial educational and governmental space alongside women's agency and their ability to manage the effects of unequal power. I will end my discussion by linking the insights provided by the two narratives to more wide-ranging points about gender and space in nineteenth-century Iran.

As Banu's story indicates, women's productive contributions to life in nineteenth-century Iran involved complex relationships to space. So-called household work such as processing food, making clothes, creating dairy goods and textiles for sale involved movement within and between outdoor and indoor spaces whether among the flocks and tents of mobile pastoralists or the fields and houses of rural settlements.³³ Women's work also linked spaces ranging from the production of dairy goods and textiles for nearby markets to activity as skilled carpet makers who by the 1870s were using imported capital and raw materials as well as local resources and household labour to create carpets for global export markets. This last activity linked spatialised relations of household production to waged workshop weaving and to international market forces, which operated through but also modified established workspace relations between men and women, among women, and between women and children.³⁴ Women

33. The sources quoted in Willem Floor, *Agriculture in Qajar Iran*, Washington, Mage publishers, 2003 give evidence of women's work, as do numerous reports submitted to the Royal Geographical Society, and the gazetteers of various regions of Iran which I am currently investigating, for example Hyacinth Rabino, *Gazetteer of Kermanshah*, 1907, hel as India Office Records [IOR] L/MI:17/15/19 in the Asian and African collections of the British Library; Ahmad Seyf, *Silk production and trade in Iran in the nineteenth century*, in «Iranian Studies», 16/102 (1983), pp. 51-71; pictures like those shown in my lecture taken by visitors to Iran like those of Bakhtiari women by Isabella Bird and Douglas Lorimer and those of Kurdish women of the rural poor and of a modest urban family taken by the Tehran-based Russian photographer Antoin Sevruguin present women in around their houses/homes for both work and leisure. The picture of elite women socialising indoors painted by an Iranian artist in the 1860s makes an interesting comparison with outdoor socialising as shown by Sevruguin.

34. Annerle Ittig, *A technical and historical study of the Qajar carpet industry*, D.Phil thesis, Oxford 1983, pp. 138 and Ead., *Ziegler's Sultanabad carpet enterprise*, in «Iranian Studies», 25/1-2 (1992), pp. 103-135; Leonard Helfgott, *Ties that bind: a social history of the Iranian*

producers who might also be training girls, like the men who managed family labour in the home or contracted for their products and dealt with external investors, patrons or buyers whether local or foreign used and moved through spaces which were personal and intimate as well as global and unequal.

We have already seen how *anderun* space, while in part a matter of gender separation which defined it as “other” in contrast to the household *birun*, and to external spaces, was also a permeable space with outward facing as well as inward facing features and practices. Similar themes emerge when we consider the gendering of outdoor urban space and of religious activity. While conventional narratives of gender inequity in nineteenth-century Iran stress the exclusion and/or segregation of women from so called public urban spaces, a more revealing approach comes if we consider how women might have been in such spaces alongside men, albeit differently. As recorded in prints, photographs, and paintings as well as indirectly in written records urban women as well as men shopped in urban bazars, visited public baths and religious premises, and used streets as routes to social visits.³⁵ They might adopt distinctive covering garments and keep their distance from men or use different parts of urban facilities or enter them at different times. It might be more useful to reflect on how Iranian women used and managed the gendered conventions of urban space than to accept the discourse of female invisibility created by (mainly male) European visitors and Iranian reformers. Women might not join processions through urban streets but they came out on roofs to observe them. They might need to wear concealing garments, although this

carpet, Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994; Mansureh Ettehadiieh, ‘Western companies’ investments in the Iranian carpet industry in the 19th century, in «Ganjineh-yi Asnad», 28/3 (2018), pp. 64-93 (in Persian); Ahmad Seyf, *Carpet and shawl weavers in nineteenth-century Iran*, in «Middle Eastern Studies», 29/4 (1993), pp. 679-689, and also Id., *Carpet manufactures of Iran in the nineteenth century*, in «Middle Eastern Studies», 26/2 (1990), pp. 204-213, and his *Iranian textile handicrafts in the nineteenth century: a note*, in «Middle Eastern Studies», 37/3 (2001), pp. 49-58; the comments of nineteenth-century observers compiled in Willem Floor, *The Persian textile industry in historical perspective, 1500-1925*, Paris, L’ Harmattan, 1999, has much evidence on women’s craft work. Photographs of women tending animals, working at “domestic” tasks making dairy products and food as well as textile goods as well as working as servants and entertainers (as shown in my lecture) to some extent compensate for the scattered and limited nature of the written evidence, such as that in Muhammad Tahvildar’s *Jughrafiya-yi Isfahan* (1870s), or the European referred to above.

35. Sevruquin’s photographs of urban women in Tehran and Qazvin or Sykes’ pictures of a butcher’s stall in Kerman, like depictions of women shopping and of female urban traders by Iranian artists, affirm women’s use of urban space: see also Lady Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia*, London, Murray, 1856, pp. 122, 130, 145-46.

varied significantly according to class and community, but thus dressed they can be seen in bazars, shrines, and public squares, using those spaces for their own purposes.³⁶ Beyond that there were situations when women did take to the streets as protestors whether alongside men or in female groups. From the 1840s onwards there is evidence of women's involvement in food/price protests in their localities, as they also protested the Shah's 1890 granting a European the monopoly for trading tobacco, whose production was a sizeable Iranian industry and whose consumption crossed classes and genders.³⁷

The tobacco protests of 1891 like those of 1905-6 in Kerman in which women played a crucial role, had a religious dimension and as with urban spaces religious spaces can also be seen to have had complex gender dynamics. While the dominant structures of religious practice were male dominated, and some religious spaces like pulpits and *madraseshs* (centres of formal religious education) were inaccessible to women, more typical spatial practices involved both men and women, but in differentiated ways.³⁸ Thus many of the rituals and ceremonies associated with the annual commemoration of Husein, the founder/martyr of the Shi'a Islamic tradition followed by the majority of Iranians brought men and women together in the same space, albeit distinctively grouped by gender as well as status. Visual and written sources show that *rawzehs* (= recitations and chants recounting Husein's martyrdom)

36. Women's use of urban space went beyond the pursuit of material needs as can be seen from visual records of their going out to religious assemblies, watching public events, gathering and needing water before travelling and gathering in mosques to protest their concerns. Sources like Edward Eastwick, *Journal of a diplomat's three years residence in Persia*, 2 voll., London, 1864, vol. 1, pp. 231-232, notes women's presence on the streets as do Augustus Mounsey, *Journey through the Caucasus and the interior of Persia*, London, 1872, p. 158, and Robert Binning, *A Journal of 2 years travel in Persia*, London, 1857, p. 393:

37. Eastwick, *Journal*, pp. 288-291 records their role in protests as do English government sources FO60/74/24 August 1840 (in Isfahan); FO60/146/0 December 1849 (in Tehran); FO60/290/11 August 1865 (in Shiraz); FO60/335/16 August 1871 (in Shiraz); FO248/547/24 July 1893, FO248/572/26 October 1893, FO248/602/16 November 1894 (in Shiraz); FO248/599/26 April 1894 (in Isfahan); FO60/565/19 March 1895 (in Ardebil); FO248/935/15 November 1908 (Kermanshah area). Iranian sources such as *Vaqa'i yi Ittifaqiyeh* [= Record of events], edited by Ali Sirjani, pp. 238, 243-244 (Shiraz December 1878, August 1885) and reports from Iranian agents of the British on the 1891 tobacco protests for example in FO 248/533; VI, 379 for 18 June 1891 which records the death of women in a demonstration.

38. The role of women in this religious/political clash between rival sects in Kerman city in south-eastern Iran was recorded in the British consular records held as FO 248/846 (diaries for 10-17 June, 9-23 July, 21-28 October, 28 October - 4 November, 11-19 November) and FO 248/878 (diary for 10-24 March 1906): a general account of the upheaval based on Iranian accounts from the 1950s is found in Gianroberto Scarcia, *Intorno alle controversie tra ahbari e usuli presso gli imamiti di Persia*, in «Rivista degli studi orientali», 33/3-4 (1958), pp. 211-250.

could take the form of all female events like the one organised by Bibi Khanom for women friends and contacts but often involved both men and women. There is similar evidence about the audiences for the *ta'zieh*s, dramas which enacted Husein's martyrdom and surrounding events, and were performed in village squares as well as grand urban performance centres (*tekkiehs*) commissioned by urban elites including the Shah.³⁹ Other Shi'a activities like pilgrimages to local shrines or sacred centres like Mashhad in eastern Iran and Karbala were often undertaken by family or communal groups, although as has been seen women going on pilgrimage could do so to separate from family in search of some autonomy. Weekly visits to cemeteries were another distinctively female religious activity. Rather than seeing these as confused or inconsistent practices we might consider that these uses and meanings of religious spaces expressed both religious discourses of gender difference and the embedding of religion in the life and outlook of communities. The religious articulation of gendered social links, cultural norms and power relations was in part manifested in spatial forms.

I hope that I have been able to open a conversation between the specifics of work on nineteenth-century Iran and the wider field of spatially-aware women's and gender histories and of gendered spatial histories. My own thinking and research on nineteenth-century Iranian experiences of work, family, and gender/sexual power have been stimulated and enhanced by reading and reflection on that wider field. It has enabled me to critique conventional assumptions about gender separation, segregation, and subordination as foundational and constitutive features of gender dynamics which Iranian made and lived in the nineteenth century. The effect of that critique is not to dismiss such assumptions out of hand but to establish nuanced and reflective ways to evaluate their relevance, to recognise their limitations and to

39. While scholarly work on nineteenth-century religious practices is rather gender blind (see *Ta'zieh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, edited by Peter Chelkowski, New York, NYU Press, 1979) and Jean Calmard, *Le mécénat des représentations de ta'ziye*, in *Le Monde iranien et l'Islam*, vol. 2, 1974, pp. 73-126, and *Le Monde iranien et l'Islam*, vol. 4, 1975, pp. 133-62), it can be supplemented by visual records of women alongside, but separated from men, at ritual meals, recitals, and drama performances of women reciters, and of all women activities like cemetery visiting and *rawzehs*. They can be set beside sources like Bibi Khanom's *An episode*, pp. 121-122, or the memoirs of Abdollah Mostofi translated in his *Administrative and social history of the Qajar period*, 3 voll., Costa Mesa (Ca), Mazda, 1997, vol. I, pp. 152, 161, 163, 166-167, 169-170, as well as comments by visitors like William Ouseley, *Travels in various countries of the East, more particularly Persia*, 3 voll, London, Rodwell and Martin, 1823, vol. III, pp. 165-167; see also Sadiq Humayuni, *Ta'ziyeh dar Iran = Ta'ziyeh in Iran*, Shiraz, Intisarar-i Nawid, 2000, pp. 78-79, 106.

deepen our understanding of the concepts involved. Similar points apply to my thinking and writing about women's agency, about the mutual constitution of unequal power relations, and about intersectional approaches to the study of women and gender in nineteenth-century Iran in its global and imperial setting. The invitation to present this piece has been an invaluable stimulus to develop my work in this way and my deep thanks are due to the *Società Italiana delle Storiche*, and to your President, Raffaella Sarti, for giving me that opportunity. In my view the inclusion of spatial elements in research, in analysis, and in writing enables me, like other historians, to better explore and understand past lives at every level and in every form from the most intimate and personal to the most global, with many forms and levels in between. At a time when our lived experiences and understandings of space in all its forms and at all its levels are being changed and challenged by the global pandemic it continues to be important to draw on, and disseminate the knowledge, ideas and insights which we gain from our study of the past.

