

CHAPTER VIII

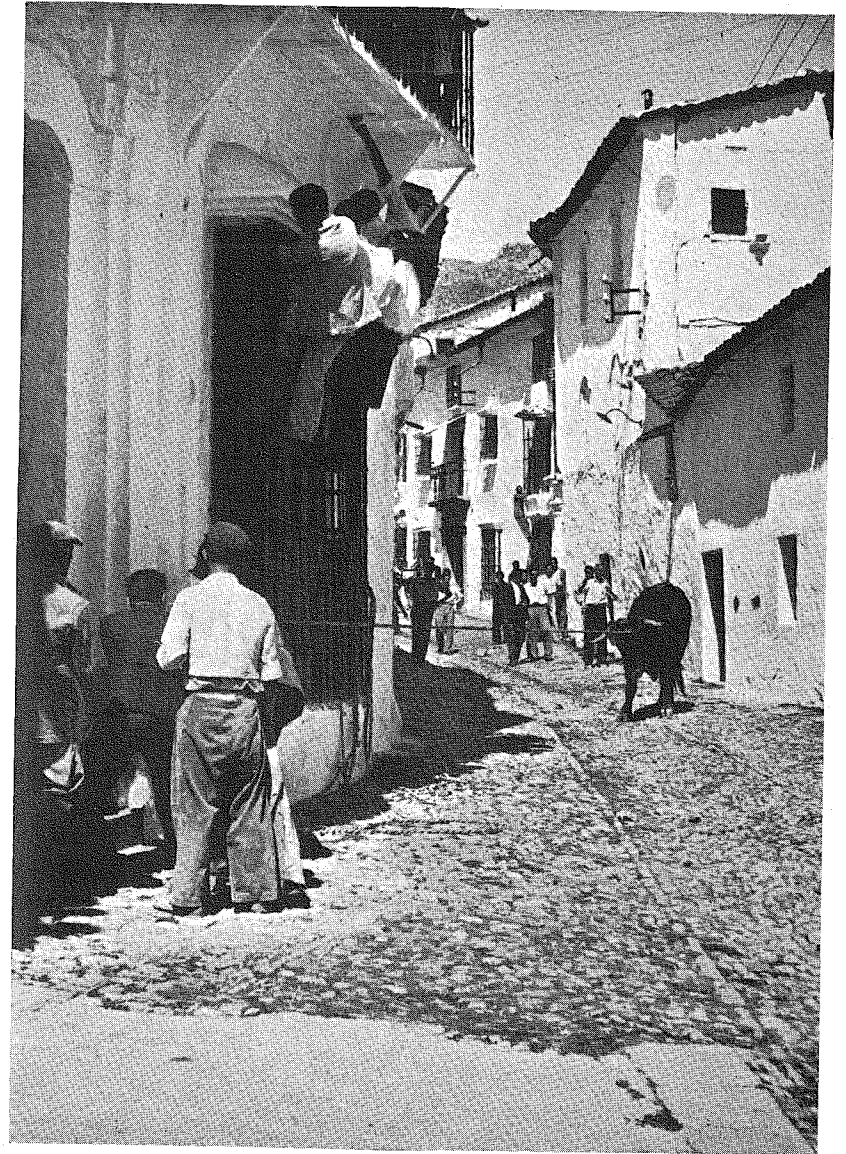
The Sexes

(iii) The Values of the Female

IT IS now possible to discuss the values attaching to womanhood. We have seen how the tasks of the community are distributed between the sexes and have observed the importance of the role of the male sex in relation to the legal structure of the state; man's pre-eminence, that is to say, in formally conducted social relations. On the other hand, we have observed that women play a predominant part in the home and, on that account, in the structure of neighbourly relations. And this may be allied to the fact that the women are in the pueblo all the time while the majority of men must leave it in order to work. The male social personality has been related to the conception of manliness. The feminine counterpart of the conception, which expresses the essence of womanhood, is *vergüenza*, or shame. In certain of its aspects only, for the word has first of all a general sense not directly related to the feminine sex and it is this which must first be explained.

It means shame, the possibility of being made to blush. It is a moral quality, like manliness, and it is persistent, though like manliness or like innocence, which it more closely resembles, it may be lost. Once lost it is not, generally speaking, recoverable, though a feeling remains that it is only lost by those whose shame was not true shame but a deceptive appearance of it. It is the essence of the personality and for this reason is regarded as something permanent.

It is closely connected with right and wrong, since its presence or absence is detected through an ethical evaluation of the person's behaviour which is thought, in fact, to be determined by it, but it is not synonymous with conscience. It is, rather, its overt or sociological counterpart. The social



5. The Day of the Bull



6. Corpus Christi procession

anthropologist possesses no technique for examining the motivations of the individual conscience; but, fortunately for him, people are disinclined to let pass without comment behaviour on the part of their fellows which they would feel guilty to indulge in themselves, and are even willing sometimes to decry publicly that which they would do themselves if they had the chance, and believed they could do without it being known. The code of ethics to which *vergüenza* is related is that which incurs the moral stricture of the community. To use Marett's distinction, it relates to "external moral sanctions" not to "internal moral sanctions" or conscience.¹ Thus, to do a thing blatantly makes a person a *sin vergüenza* (shameless one); but to have done it discreetly, would only have been wrong. This, then, is the difference. Shamelessness faces the world, faces people in particular situations. Wrong faces one's conscience. Let me now try a definition:

"*Vergüenza* is the regard for the moral values of society, for the rules whereby social intercourse takes place, for the opinion which others have of one. But this, not purely out of calculation. True *vergüenza* is a mode of feeling which makes one sensitive to one's reputation and thereby causes one to accept the sanctions of public opinion."

Thus a *sin vergüenza* is a person who either does not accept or who abuses those rules. And this may be either through a lack of understanding or through a lack of sensitivity. One can perceive these two aspects of it.

First as the result of understanding, upbringing, education. "Lack of education" is a polite way of saying "lack of *vergüenza*". It is admitted that if the child is not taught how to behave it cannot have *vergüenza*. It is sometimes necessary to beat a child "to give him *vergüenza*", and it is the only justifiable excuse for doing so. Failure to inculcate *vergüenza* into one's children brings doubt to bear upon one's own *vergüenza*.

But, in its second aspect as sensitivity, it is truly hereditary. A person of bad heredity cannot have it since he has not been endowed with it. He can only behave out of calculation as though he had it, simulating what to others comes naturally. A normal child has it in the form of shyness, before education

¹ R. R. Marett: "The beginnings of morals and culture", in *An Outline of Modern Knowledge* (London, 1931).

has developed it. When a two-year-old hides its face from a visitor it is because of its *vergüenza*. Girls who refuse to dance in front of an assembled company do so because of their *vergüenza*. *Vergüenza* takes into consideration the personalities present. It is *vergüenza* which forbids a boy to smoke in the presence of his father. In olden times people had much more *vergüenza* than today, it is said. Another polite form illustrates this aspect of shame. To be shameless in this sense is to be *descarado* or *cara dura* (hard-faced), and this is a far more serious matter than to be "thick-skinned", the nearest expression in English to it.

It is in this second sense, as a moral quality innate and hereditary, that the term *sin vergüenza* reaches its full force as an insult, that the epithet used to a man's face is tantamount to insulting the purity of his mother.

The value attaching to a word depends upon the situation in which it is used. The humorous use of *sin vergüenza* is common, particularly in reference to infants and pets. The affectionate father pinches the little boy's cheek and tells him adoringly that he is one. This is not only a form of humorous inversion but also a statement of a truth: the child is not old enough to understand the values of society and therefore a sense of shame in relation to conduct is not demanded of it. It amounts to telling it that it can do no wrong. As it grows older the term will acquire more weight. The first situation in which it will hear the serious use of the expression is in relation to its excretory habits. This is the first situation in which a sense of shame is required. Other forms of conduct will become reprehensible in those terms as the child grows up. But the humorous use recurs whenever the indulgence associated with childhood is evoked: whenever, for example, middle-aged men feel boyish.

It will hardly surprise the reader to learn that *vergüenza* is closely associated with sex. While to cheat, lie, betray or otherwise behave in an immoral manner shows a lack of shame, sexual conduct is particularly liable to exhibit shamelessness, and particularly in the female sex. Lack of shame exhibited in other behaviour is, as it were, derived from a fundamental shamelessness which could be verifiable if one were able to know about such matters in the person's sexual

feelings. It is highly significant that the more serious insults which can be directed at a man refer not to him at all but to a female member of his elementary family and in particular to his mother. Personal reproach, while it refers to a man's character or actions, is answerable, but when it concerns a man's mother then his social personality is desecrated. At that point, if he has manliness, he fights. Up till that point matters can be argued. A man must make a living for his family, and this will lead him into conflict with other men. To fail to meet his family responsibilities would appear more shameless than to take advantage of people for whom he was not responsible. A certain licence is conceded to the male sex, so that a man is not judged so severely either in matters relating to business or in his sexual conduct, where the need to justify his manliness provides an understandable explanation of his shortcomings. "Men are all shameless", women say. The essence of his shame will be seen in his heredity, however. And therefore a reflection upon his mother's shame is far more vital than a reflection upon his own conduct. By extension, any reflection upon his sister's shame is important to him since it derives from his mother's. The whole family is attained by the shamelessness of one of its female members.

Just as the official and economic relations of the family are conducted in the name of its head, the husband, who has legal responsibility for and authority over its members, so the moral standing of the family within the community derives from the *vergüenza* of the wife. The husband's manliness and the wife's *vergüenza* are complementary. Upon the conjunction of these two values the family, as a moral unity, is founded. From it the children receive their names, their social identity and their own shame. Shameless behaviour on the part of their mother—marital unfaithfulness is the most serious example of this, though one form of shamelessness implies the others and is implied by them, since *vergüenza* is something which either one possesses or one lacks—brings doubt to bear upon their paternity. They are no longer the children of their father. He is no longer father of his children. The importance of a woman's *vergüenza* in relation to the social personality of her children and of her husband rests

upon this fact. Adultery on the husband's part does not affect the structure of the family. This is recognised in the law of the land in the distinction which it makes between adultery on the part of the husband or wife. A husband's infidelity is only legally adultery if it takes place in the home or scandalously outside it.¹

A wife's *vergüenza* involves a man, then, in quite a different way to his mother's. Her unfaithfulness is proof only of her, not of his, shamelessness, but it defiles his manliness. In a sense it testifies to his lack of manliness, since had he proved an adequate husband and kept proper authority over her she would not have deceived him. This much is implied, at any rate, in the language which appears to throw the blame for his misfortune on the deceived husband himself. In English, the word "cuckold" is thought to derive from cuckoo, the bird which lays its egg in the nest of another. Yet the word refers not to him who plays the part of the cuckoo, that is, the cuckold, but to the victim whose role he usurps. The same curious inversion is found in Spanish. The word *cabrón* (a he-goat), the symbol of male sexuality in many contexts, refers not to him whose manifestation of that quality is the cause of the trouble but to him whose implied lack of manliness has allowed the other to replace him. To make a man a cuckold is in the current Spanish idiom, "to put horns on him". I suggest that the horns are figuratively placed upon the head of the wronged husband in signification of his failure to defend a value vital to the social order. He has fallen under the domination of its enemy and must wear his symbol. He is ritually defiled.

The word *cabrón* is considered so ugly that it is never mentioned in its literal sense in Alcalá. Even shepherds refer to the billy-goat of the herd by the euphemism *el cabrito* (the kid). Yet, figuratively, the pueblo uses the word in a wider sense than is general. It applies there to both the cuckold and the cuckold, to any male, in fact, who behaves in a sexually shameless manner. It will be noted in the rhymes quoted on page 172 that the horns are attributed to someone who was neither cuckold nor cuckold but had left his wife and children in order to set up house with another woman.

¹ Viz. Criminal Code, art. 452, also Civil Code, art. 105, § 1.

The best translation of *cabrón* as the pueblo uses it is "one who is on the side of anti-social sex".

While the greatest importance is attached to female continence—and the Andalusian accent upon virginity illustrates this—incontinence in the male has been shown to carry quite different implications. Sexual activity enhances the male prestige, it endangers the female, since through it a woman may lose her *vergüenza* and thereby taint that of her male relatives and the manliness of her husband. Yet *vergüenza* in a woman is not synonymous with indifference or frigidity towards the opposite sex. Quite the contrary, it is the epitome of womanhood and as such finds itself allied in the ideal of woman with the beauty and delicacy which are most admired. The sacred imagery of Seville or the Saints of Murillo illustrate this point abundantly.

The avoidance previously noted between the girl's father and her *novio* can now be explained. Until the young man marries her and thereby becomes a member of her family and therefore a person concerned in her *vergüenza*, he represents a threat to it and through it to that of her family. The avoidance may be seen to relate to the ambiguity of his position as, at the same time, both the potential future son-in-law and also as a threat to the family's *vergüenza*.

In the juxtaposition of these two conceptions, manliness and *vergüenza*, there are two possible bases of interrelation: one social, the other anti-social. In marriage, the wife's *vergüenza* ratifies the husband's manliness and combined with her fertility proves it. Through his manliness he gives her children, thereby raising her to the standing of mother and enabling her to pass her *vergüenza* on. The instincts implanted by nature are subordinated to a social end. But if these instincts seek satisfaction outside marriage then they threaten the institution of the family. Extra-marital manifestations of female sexuality threaten the *vergüenza* of her own kin. On the other hand, the male attempt to satisfy his self-esteem in a sexually aggressive way is also anti-social but for a different reason. If he approaches a woman who has *vergüenza*, he involves her in its loss and through that loss in that of another man's manliness, a husband's or a future husband's. Within the community of the pueblo this cannot

but be a serious matter, and Chapter XI will show how the pueblo reacts to such a threat. Expressed in moral terms, *vergüenza* is the predominant value of the home. It involves restraint of individual desires, the fulfilment of social obligations, altruism within the family, personal virtue and social good. Masculinity, on the other hand, unharnessed to female virtue and the values of the home which it upholds and economically supports, means the conquest of prestige and individual glory, the pursuit of pleasure, a predatory attitude towards the female sex and a challenging one towards the male; hence social evil and personal vice. According to the values of the pueblo it is only a force of good as long as it remains within, or potentially within, the institution of marriage.

The value system expressed in these conceptions has been treated so far as if it were common to the whole of the society of Alcalá and uniform throughout even a far more extended area. Yet this is hardly to be expected. Anyone acquainted with the social history of Europe will have observed the variation in the customs relating to sex, both from one country and also from one period to another, but above all from one social class to another within the same country and historical period, while on the contrary certain values are characteristic of a particular class throughout European history. The "immorality" of aristocracies is traditional, while, to take an example from a different class, the attitudes in relation to sex defined by Freud have been declared to be valid only within the middle-classes of Protestant or Jewish cultures. In fact, generally speaking, there is a difference in attitude not only between the sexes but also between the Andalusian *señorito* and the pueblo (*plebs*). It cannot be said to amount to a serious difference in values so much as a difference in the opportunities to implement or defy them. Men with more money and greater freedom of movement have more opportunity to indulge their masculinity in what would, within a community, be an anti-social way. If the behaviour of the *señoritos* conforms less strictly to the morality of the pueblo, it is because they escape the full force of the moral sanctions of the community. They demand, at the same time, a stricter

mode of conduct from their womenfolk. On account of the social prestige which they enjoy, they feel themselves entitled to justify their masculinity in relation to the opposite sex, even though this involves them in conduct which they regard as morally wrong. It does not involve them in loss of shame as long as their womenfolk are not involved in any way. The sanctions which hold the anti-social manifestations of sex in check cannot depend upon the public opinion of the pueblo in cases where the pueblo would never know anything about it, but only (apart from conscience) upon a particular concern for other social personalities which is expressed in the word "respect". A young man who came to the pueblo as a summer visitor explained once that while friendship with an attractive girl was virtually impossible on account of the desire which the young man would have of making a conquest, there were, nevertheless, certain relationships of trust which obliged him to avoid placing himself in a situation where he might be the prey to temptation. These relationships of trust were created by the respect which he had in the first place for the girl's husband or *novio*, secondly for her father, and thirdly for her brother. If one were not acquainted with the persons in question then there was no obligation to refrain from gallantries. There was, however, one final exception and this was when one felt respect for her of the kind which one might have towards one's wife, or such that one might wish to make her one's wife.¹ In effect, these restrictions virtually exclude any young woman who is regarded as a social equal, and in this way the manifestations of anti-social sex are projected outside the circle of local upper class society.

It is possible to see now that the conceptual basis of sexual behaviour is the same in the society of the *señoritos* of the large towns as in the pueblo, only the background of sanctions against which it is brought into play differs. The community not the system of values is different. When a wealthy summer visitor attempted to persuade a young girl of the

¹ The respect is of course for her *vergüenza*. To achieve her conquest would entail the loss of her *vergüenza*, which would involve one in a relationship with her male relatives incompatible with that between affinal kin. In a slightly different way a man is said to lack "respect" for his wife if he indulges in extra-marital adventures.

pueblo to allow him to set her up as his mistress in a flat in Seville, he was frustrated. The religious associations under the leadership of the wives of the *señoritos* of the pueblo packed her off to a convent.

If the essential values of manliness and *vergüenza* are similar throughout the social structure of the pueblo, there are, nevertheless, certain points at which differences of status and *naturaleza* cut across the values relating to the sexes. The social relations of the family are conducted in different spheres by the husband or the wife and these are relatively of greater or lesser importance according to the position of the family in society, its relationship to the community or to the state. The position of the administrators' wives furnishes an example. Their husbands have a function to fulfil which gives them a basis for their relationship with the pueblo. But the wives, on the contrary, coming mostly from the big towns, find themselves restricted by their conception of social class and their *naturaleza* and by the fact that they participate in few of the activities which unite the women of the pueblo. They tend not to establish deep friendships except with one another, to stick much to their houses, and to bemoan their fate in having to live in such an outlandish place as Alcalá. Several who come from Malaga, Jerez or Cádiz spend much of their time there with their parents. The position of the *señoritos'* wives is not the same. They play a leading part in Church affairs and are attached to the pueblo, apart from their membership of the community by birth, through their work in organising the Church brotherhoods, and the various other functions in which, officially or unofficially, women intervene.

In brief, the significance of sex in a society comprises much more than what is termed the division of labour. The sex of a person determines his position not only in regard to the organisation of productive or useful labour but to all activities, and not only in regard to activities but in regard to the values which influence conduct.

In this society it can be seen that men are entrusted with authority, with the earning of money, the acquisition of prestige—a woman taking her status by and large from her

husband), with relations of an official character, that is to say, with institutions recognised by the law of the land—in consequence of which the sanctions which the law exerts apply more effectively to them, that they spend a greater amount of time outside the pueblo and the home, that they are permitted a more aggressive attitude in sexual behaviour, and that they gain prestige through qualities of strength and above all courage.

Conversely, women are entrusted with the maintenance of the home and all that it means, are more continually in the pueblo, and are more susceptible to the sanctions of personal criticism or gossip in the dissemination of which they play a more important part, as they also do in religious observances. A greater reserve is required of them in matters touching sex, and they are thought to be the repository for the whole family of the quality of shame upon which the sanctions of morality operate. They gain admiration through beauty and delicacy, but physical courage is not required of them.

These differences, by no means comprehensive, are seen to vary in relation to social status according to the relative importance in their lives of forces exterior to the pueblo, or of forces deriving from the personal contacts within it. Thus, illiterate people are more dependent upon personal contacts than are those who can read for themselves the notices in the Town Hall and the provincial newspaper while, to give another example, people who employ a servant, in that the womenfolk no longer go to the fountain or the wash-house, are relatively less dependent upon it. The distinction will also be seen to be significant in relation to the institutions which are described subsequently.