

Domestic religiosity in the 18th century Spanish Court: elite women, everyday life spaces and material culture.

An approach to a study in progress¹

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Resumo:

O principal objetivo deste artigo é desenvolver uma abordagem das questões e práticas relacionadas com a devoção e espiritualidade, relativas às mulheres pertencentes à burguesia e à média nobreza, no âmbito de suas vidas domésticas, durante o final do século XVIII, em Madrid. Concentrar-nos-emos em desvendar os caminhos do grupo formado pelas esposas dos servidores da monarquia espanhola. Esta investigação será baseada na análise da cultura material que aparece nas suas cartas dote e nos inventários *post-mortem*.

Palavras chave:

Mulher; Religiosidade; Espaços domésticos; Quotidiano; Cultura material.

Abstract:

The main objective of this article is to develop an approach to issues and practices related to devotion and spirituality, concerning to women belonging to the bourgeoisie and the middle-nobility, in the framework of their domestic lives, during the late 18th century in Madrid. From these pages we focus on unravelling the ways of the group formed by the wives of the servers of the Spanish Monarchy. This investigation will be based on the analysis of the material culture appeared in their dowry letters and *post-mortem* inventories.

Keywords:

Women; Religiosity, Domestic spaces; Everyday life; Material culture.

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Introduction

Over the last decade, several approaches have been developed in the context of the international Early Modern historiography that focuses on the study of genre, everyday life and material culture². Silvia Evangelisti examined Italian historiography: *Subjetividad, cultura material y género: Diálogos con la historiografía italiana*³. Moreover, as result of international multidisciplinary collaboration were published *At home in Renaissance Italy*⁴ and *Portas adentro: comer, vestir e habitar na Península Ibérica (ss. XVI-XIX)*⁵.

The dowry receipt is used as a source to know the elements provided by the bride for the new home. They were directly related to her owner and will enable us to know the levels of consumption, aspects related to taste, as well as the practices of everyday life, as they were presented in the book *Tomar estado: dotes e casamento (séculos XVI-XIX)*⁶.

Nowadays, much is known about the remnants of the rich material culture of Early Modern women. Both gender and material culture are useful categories of analysis and that interrogating their intersection bears fruitful results. In order to understand more fully the daily lives of Early Modern women, their beliefs, we must pay careful attention to the material traces of their lives⁷.

Objects explicitly connected to religious devotion were a common sight in Early Modern homes, mainly in the form of sacred images of Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints, whereas in territories in which the Reformation had taken hold they had all but disappeared⁸.

² Amanda Vickery and John Styles (ed.), *Gender, taste and material culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, New Have, Yale University Press, 2007.

³ Silvia Evangelisti, "Cultura material y relaciones de género en la historiografía italiana de la Edad Moderna", in Pilar Pérez-Fuentes Hernández (ed.): *Subjetividad, cultura material y género: Diálogos con la Historiografía italiana*, Barcelona, Icaria, 2010, pp. 195-219. Also Sandra Cavallo and Isabelle Chabot (dir.): *Oggetti. Genesis*. V/1 (2006).

⁴ Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis, *At home in Renaissance Italy*, London, V&A Publications, 2006.

⁵ Isabel dos Guimarães and Máximo García (ed.), *Portas adentro: comer, vestir e habitar na Península Ibérica (ss. XVI-XIX)*, Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Universidad de Valladolid, 2010

⁶ María Marta Lobo de Araujo and Alexandra Esteves (ed.), *Tomar estado: dotes e casamento (séculos XVI-XIX)*, Braga, Centro de investigação transdisciplinar Cultura, Espaço e Memória, 2010.

⁷ "Forum: Early Modern Women and material culture", *Early Modern Women: An interdisciplinary journal*, vol. 4 (2009), p. 135-138.

⁸ María Cruz de Carlos, Pierre Civil, Felipe Pereda and Cécile Vincent-Cassy, *La imagen religiosa en la Monarquía hispánica. Usos y espacios*, Madrid, Casa de Velázquez, 2008; Julio

Devotional objects were brought into the home in a number of ways. They were sometimes placed there because the householder had acquired them. Other times, they would have been handed down through the family, as recorded in the testamentary documents that stipulated how the estate of a deceased person was to be divided between their heirs. This second case of bequeathing family property also included choosing this kind of item as part of a woman's marriage dowry. A third case involved donating or gifting these objects either as wedding presents or as bequests.

The function of pious objects in the home was not limited to the inherent reason for their existence, that is, to meet the spiritual needs of the people who owned them. They also took on significant value as representative objects, thereby playing a dual role. On the one hand, the material wealth that many of these items stood for served to give them symbolic meaning, reflecting the wealth of the person who owned them, someone who would be regarded as being in a particular social class and having a distinguished status. On the other hand, possessing these objects was a statement by the owners of their religious and moral beliefs as good Catholics and their willingness to openly display their support of the Church, firmly rooted in Spanish society following the Council of Trent⁹.

Even when in the late 18th century had begun to be perceived new forms of religiosity, primarily within the social elite of the population, such as Jansenism¹⁰, practices associated with religiosity, piety and devotion, expressed in the ownership of certain objects, were still part of the blurring of the boundaries between the concept of the public and the private that characterised this period. This includes a series of attitudes that, despite taking place within the home and in areas that were set aside for worship, did not dispose them

Caro Baroja, *Las formas complejas de la vida religiosa: Religión, sociedad y carácter en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid, Akal, 1978; Carlos Alberto González Sánchez, "Imagen de culto y espiritualidad. Funciones y normas de uso en la vida cotidiana (siglos XVI-XVIII)", in Manuel Peña Díaz (ed.), *La vida cotidiana en el mundo hispánico (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, Madrid, Abada, 2012, p. 387-405.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ José Miguel Caso González, "Jovellanos y la nueva religiosidad" in *De Ilustración y de ilustrados*, Oviedo, Instituto Feijoo de Estudios del siglo XVIII, 1988, p. 21-30; Teófanos Egido, "La religiosidad de los ilustrados" in Ramón Menéndez Pidal-José María Jover Zamora (dir.), *Historia de España, XXXI. La época de la Ilustración, I. El Estado y la cultura (1759-1808)*, Madrid, Espasa, 1988, p. 395-435; Antonio Mestre, "La espiritualidad del siglo de oro en los ilustrados españoles", *II Simposio sobre el Padre Feijoo y su siglo*, Oviedo, Cátedra Feijoo, 1983, p. 363-407.

of the element of social display that was apparent when they were carried out in the church or the street.

This article presents a brief outline of the role of women in the elites of Madrid within the devotional context described above. This includes their presence in the areas within their homes where religious objects were displayed and their links with them¹¹.

Areas set aside for devotion in the home

The decision to locate religious objects in one room or another inside the home would go a long way toward determining whether they were considered as decorative items, collectors' pieces or intended for devotional purposes. The following sections discuss each of the rooms where religious objects are known to have been placed, with particular attention to the existence of possible religious practice by women¹², based on an analysis of a material culture under their ownership.

The oratory was a room normally found in residences owned by members of the nobility. Records tell us that many homes belonging to 16th and 17th courtiers had an oratory¹³. This was referred to by Countess D'Aulnoy in her "questionable" travel journal:

¹¹ A general point of view in Natalia González Heras, *Servir al rey y vivir en la corte: Propiedad, formas de residencia y cultura material en el Madrid borbónico*, Tesis doctoral inédita. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2014.

¹² Silvia Evangelisti, "Cultura material...", cit., p. 195-219; Natalia González Heras, "La esposa del funcionario: Cotas de poder femenino dentro de la residencia del hombre de Estado", in María José Pérez Álvarez, Laureano Rubio Pérez and Alfredo Martín García (eds.), *Culturas políticas en el mundo hispánico*, Madrid, FEHM., 2012, p. 2105-2117; Amanda Vickery, "His and hers: Gender, consumption and household accounting in 18th century England" in Lyndal Roper and Ruth Harris (eds), *The art of survival: Essays in honour of Olwen Hufton. Past & Present* (2006), p. 12-38; "Fashioning difference in Georgian England: Furniture for him and for her", in Paula Findlen (ed.), *Early Modern things: Objects and their histories, 1500-1800*, Londres, Routledge, 2012. Antonia Garrido Flores, "La devoción en la casa: Córdoba en el Antiguo Régimen", *Hispania Sacra*, LXVI 134, julio-diciembre (2014), p. 575-600.

¹³ Jean Baptiste Gattico, *De oratoriis domesticis et de sus altares portatilis juxta veterem et recentem Ecclesiae disciplinam ecclesiasticorum seculariumque virorum singula jura et privilegia complectentem*, Roma, apud Gregorium Roisechi, 1752; Anonymus, *Disertación apologética a favor del privilegio que por costumbre introducida por la Bula de la Santa Cruzada goza la nación española en el uso de los oratorios domésticos. Leída en la Real Academia de Buenas letras de Sevilla en 25 de octubre de 1771, por el Doctor don Francisco de Paula Baquero*, Sevilla, José Padrino; Juan José de Erice, *Controversia moral sobre el uso de los oratorios domésticos*, Pamplona, Antonio Castilla, 1788; Antonio Sánchez, *Carta crítica a una persona de carácter*,

“The churches of Madrid seem very beautiful and well ordered, but they are little frequented by noble gentlemen, who hear mass and pray in the private chapels in their homes. They only go to church on certain days of the year, at Easter, for example”¹⁴.

This eye-witness account may slightly exaggerate the attitudes being described, a frequent occurrence in travel journals¹⁵, but it does give us a hint that perhaps we should question if this might really be the case.

The location of oratories and private chapels was explicitly marked by a cross on the layout plans of Madrid homes studied from the second half of the 18th century.

One example is the mansion house commissioned by the 2nd Marquis of Grimaldo in 1763 on Calle Ancha de San Bernardo¹⁶. The Marquis, who came from a military background and had been a gentleman of the King’s chamber since 1764, had set aside an area specifically designed for religious worship¹⁷ in his palatial home. Its location in the scheme of rooms comprising the reception area meant it was openly on display to whoever was visiting the occupants of the house. However, its position in the area at the back of the house meant passing through the many reception rooms at the front of the building, facing the main façade, plus those in the two side wings, which faced Calle de la

de disciplina eclesiástica, sobre el uso de oratorios domésticos por el privilegio de la Bula de la Santa Cruzada, Madrid, Oficina de don Jerónimo Ortega y herederos de Ibarra, 1792. On domestic oratories in colonial America, see Gabriela Sánchez Reyes, “Oratorios domésticos: piedad y oración privada”, in Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru (coord.), *El siglo XVIII: entre tradición y cambio*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005, p. 531-552; Paulina Zamorano Varea, “Espacios domésticos de religiosidad. Los oratorios coloniales: Santiago siglo XVIII”, in René Millar Carvacho and Roberto Rusconi (coord.), *Devozioni, pratiche e immaginario religios: espressioni del cattolicesimo tra 1400 e 1850: storici cileni e italiani a confronto*, Roma, Viella, 2011, p. 83-108.

¹⁴ Countess d’Aulnoy, *Viaje por España en 1679-1680*, vol. I, Barcelona, Iberia, 1962, p. 186.

¹⁵ Gloria A. Franco Rubio (coord.), *Miradas propias y ajenas en un baile de espejos. Transferencias culturales entre España y Gran Bretaña en el siglo XVIII a través de los viajeros. Tiempos Modernos. Revista electrónica de Historia Moderna*, n. 21/2 (2010); Natalia González Heras “Topografías domésticas madrileñas desde la perspectiva de los viajeros franceses” in Dominique Pico and Guillaume Hanotin, *Échanges et transferts entre deux cultures: France et Espagne au temps de Philippe V*, Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, (in press).

¹⁶ Archivo de Villa de Madrid. Archivo de la Secretaría del Ayuntamiento. (AVM. ASA.) 1-45-37. Virginia Tovar Martín, “Diseños para un palacio madrileño del siglo XVIII”, *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileños*, n. XXI (1984), p. 53-67; *El palacio del Ministerio de Justicia y sus obras de arte*, Madrid, Ministerio de Justicia, 1986.

¹⁷ John Bossy, “The Mass as a social institution, 1200-1700”, *Past & Present*, n. 100 (Aug., 1983), p. 29-61.

Manzana and Calle de los Reyes, until the “holy of holies” was reached. This prevented anyone entering the house from having direct access to the area, and its position, with a window overlooking the garden gave it peace and quiet, thereby providing the right atmosphere for prayer and meditation.

The area was also directly connected with the lounge areas and bedrooms used by the occupants of the mansion. These rooms were arranged around the central courtyard, according to the customary segregation of the sexes within the home, meaning that the lady of the house could also use the devotional area. Doña Irene de Navia, wife of the 2nd Marquis of Grimaldo from 1750 onwards and daughter of the Marquis of Santa Cruz de Marcenado, had access to the prayer area from her private rooms, the same as her husband. This enables it to be defined as a neutral space, in terms of gender, where men and women could practice their religious faith either together or separately.

However, further down the elite ranking, the oratory ceased to be located in a room of its own and was more likely to be an item of furniture containing all the objects required for liturgical use and that could be stored away. This kind of arrangement would be similar to the one recorded in the inventory of items produced after the death of the Marquis of Portago in 1754. The piece is likely to have been used jointly by him and by his wife, Doña Juana García de Lamadrid and stood in the main bedroom of his house on Calle Príncipe: “A cupboard overlaid with different woods inside and out that has served as oratory measuring two and three quarter *varas*¹⁸ high and two and a quarter *varas* wide with its lock and valued at one thousand two hundred”¹⁹.

The purpose of the lock and key mechanism on the door of this item of furniture, plus the lock on the door to the oratory in the house on the square of Puerta Cerrada, due to be occupied by Don Juan de la Cruz Belbis de Moncada y Pizarro, Count of Villamonte, and Doña María de la Encarnación Toledo y Gonzaga, daughter of the Marquis and Marchioness of Villafranca, was probably to ensure the safekeeping of the valuables stored inside. In the case of the Count and Countess of Villamonte, a stemmed chalice, a golden cup and base and a spoon were valued at 213 Spanish silver *reales* and quarters²⁰.

Holy objects and those used for liturgical purposes were not only afforded a high monetary value because of the materials they were made from, but also

¹⁸ A *vara*, meaning “rod” or “pole”, is an old Spanish unit of length, equivalent to roughly one yard, or a little less than 1 metre.

¹⁹ Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid (AHPM.), Protocolo (Prot.) 16471. “Un armario cubierto de diferentes maderas por dentro y fuera que ha servido de oratorio de tres baras menos cuarta de alto y dos y cuarta de ancho con su cerradura y falleba en mil doscientos”.

²⁰ AHPM. Prot. 18185, f. 662 r.-710 v.

great symbolic value, and in some cases they might also be valued as part of a family estate. An example of this is the chalice referred to in the will of Madrid-born writer and translator Inés Joyes (1731-1808), which had been passed down through her family for generations²¹.

The location of the objects described above in a drawer of the sacristy, a specific place for storing oratory ornaments used for religious purposes, or inside an item of furniture serving as oratory that could be locked, prevented any possible desecration of either the objects or of the religious space.

The holy image on which worship was focused in the house in Puerta Cerrada was an effigy of Christ on the Cross. The body was made of ivory and the cross was ebony and the whole piece was mounted on a base made of the same wood. It was valued at 1,500 *reales de vellón*²². This item has a threefold value, similar to that of the previously described objects. Firstly, its pious value as an image, in this case a significant one, intended as an object of devotion. Secondly, its inherent value as an artwork, a decorative item, possibly even representing its owners' status as collectors. And lastly, its symbolic-social value, conveyed by the rich materials the image is carved from and its authorship, distinguishing its owners as belonging to a particular social class compared to those who did not possess an item of this kind.

An analysis of these features does not provide many clues that point to this space and its contents as being directly related to the devotions of either the gentleman or the lady of the house. According to records, the new residence of the Count and Countess of Villamonte was built with funds advanced from the legitimate inheritance by Don Juan's father and mother. These objects might hint at the private devotions of his parents, the Marquis and Marchioness of Bélgida, and that the oratory could be defined as a mixed space, open to the devotional practices of both sexes and, by extension, to various other members of the family.

However, if we look at dowry letters to glean information on how oratories were set up and the various objects they contained, we find the same items appearing again and again.

The first of these are the cruets, the two small containers made to hold the wine and water used at mass. They were usually made from silver or silver plate and engraved or decorated with precious metal, making them very valuable as

²¹ Mónica Bolufer Peruga, *La vida y la escritura en el siglo XVIII. Inés Joyes: Apología de las mujeres*, Valencia, Universitat de Valencia, 2008.

²² The *real de plata* coin was made of silver and the *real de vellón* was made of billon, or "less than half silver". AHPM. Prot. 18185, f. 662 r.-710 v.

well as beautiful objects. Their frequent appearance in dowries suggests that they came to represent one of the attributes of the woman in the new family unit being formed by the marriage. This would have been connected to the fact that she was a devout Catholic. But it also had a special meaning when the items in question had been in the family for generations and were being passed down via the woman to the new family unit being formed by marriage, thus continuing the lineage according to the precepts of moral treatises dealing with the family, which had remained unchanged over the centuries²³.

Such is the case of the dowry brought to her marriage in 1803 by Doña María Josefa Surbille Abad Wautres y Cifuentes with Don Tomás de Estrada y Lancero, a guard in the Flemish Company corps. The daughter of the late Don Luis Surbille, who had been general archivist for the Secretary of the Universal Indias Office, brought a number of items to the marriage, including: “Two latticework silver cruets, weighing twenty-two ounces, four hundred and forty *reales*. Made for a hundred and sixty *reales* each, three hundred and twenty”²⁴. Their increased value of 760 *reales de vellón* was in addition to their value for the family. The goods comprising the bulk of the dowry were part of the paternal inheritance, plus other items belonging to his mother, Doña Eulogia Abad y Cifuentes, and the heirs of a previous marriage by the bride with Don Manuel Uriarte y Leoz, who held the positions of book keeper and secretary to the Duke of Osuna in the 1780s.

Other religious items that made an appearance as part of dowries were holy water fonts. They should be linked to their function as recipients for water, which had a symbolic meaning connected with spiritual cleanliness and hygiene. This was despite the fact that in the society being discussed here, the use of water for bodily hygiene had almost entirely lost its importance compared to the traditions of civilisations such the Romans or the Muslims. The use of water was mainly limited to washing face and hands, with a change of underwear, normally made of fabrics such as cotton or linen, replacing washing for the rest of the body. In the Christian religion water was still regarded as a substance that cleansed and purified and it was used for this purpose in the sacrament of baptism or in washing rituals:

²³ Among sixteenth century treatises, Fray Luis de León, *La perfecta casada*; in the same line for eighteenth century, Fray Antonio Arbiol, *La familia regulada*, first edition published in Zaragoza, Herederos de Manuel Román, 1715.

²⁴ AHPM. Prot. 21756, f. 409 r. “Dos vinagreras de plata caladas, su peso veinte y dos onzas, cuatrocientos y cuarenta reales. Hechura a ciento y sesenta reales cada una, trescientos y veinte”.

“El uso sagrado del agua bendita, es también muy conveniente en todas las casas, y para todas la personas, porque es un eficaz defensivo contra la vigilancia y conato del demonio...”²⁵

These fonts were almost certainly sumptuary pieces, made from silver and therefore commanding high prices. They showed off the owner’s distinguished status, but their ownership by brides could also have been related to the purity expected from the future wife, a reference to the purifying effect of the holy water contained in these fonts.

The fonts might also have reflected the owner’s family or social origins, as was the case with the font included in the dowry for Doña Manuela María Martínez de Laguna. She was a member of the Linen Guild and had a shop in Calle de las Postas, inherited from her late husband, Don Tomás de Uriarte. On her second marriage to Don Francisco Bovadilla Alcocer, a sub-lieutenant in the Toledo city military corps, she contributed a golden font with the King’s arms, valued at 360 *reales de vellón*²⁶. The fonts could also express the owner’s devotion for a particular figure, as can be seen from fonts showing the image of the Virgin, who was also directly linked with the idea of purity mentioned earlier.

The reliquary was defined by the *Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy*²⁷ in the first instance as “the place where relics are stored and kept”, but also as “the decoration embellishing a relic. This may be metal or another material and take various forms”. The first definition is understood to refer to a specific place inside a building. For example, reliquaries in monasteries, where relics were kept and are still preserved today. However, as rooms in private homes were not normally set aside for reliquaries, any relics that were listed in the dowries of women from the social sphere being studied here were kept in other locations²⁸.

These “various forms” that relics could take gave rise to what could be described as personal items of jewellery worn by the owner. It was common to have medallion-reliquaries, although we cannot be certain that all the ones that we have evidence of actually contained any remains that could be linked to a particular dedication. Some of them have a glass fronted frame on both

²⁵ Fray Antonio Arbiol, *La familia regulada*, libro III, capítulo VIII, Madrid, Gerónimo Ortega e hijos de Ibarra, 1789, p. 150.

²⁶ AHPM. Prot. 19510, f. 372 r. “Una pila dorada con las armas del rey, tasada en 360 reales de vellón”.

²⁷ *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, 1737.

²⁸ Gabriela Sánchez Reyes, “Retablos relicario en la Nueva España”, in *Actas III Congreso internacional del Barroco americano: Territorio, Arte, Espacio y Sociedad*, Sevilla, Universidad Pablo de Olavide, 2001, p. 616-630.

sides containing a religious image. Images of Saint Joseph, the Virgin, the Child Jesus, Saint John, Our Lady of Carmen, Saint Francis and Saint Anthony have all been documented.

These items of jewellery were linked to the many functions mentioned earlier in relation to the religious objects found inside the home. They were decorative items used to accessorise clothing, displaying the wearer's Catholicism as well as emphasising their social status if the item was made from some kind of precious metal. It was also used as a talisman or amulet that protected the wearer because of the devotion he or she had for the holy object or person.

Reliquaries used for personal adornment also included rosaries, which are frequently listed in dowries, along with medals and crosses. However, the low monetary value of many of them, confirmed by the valuations recorded in notarial deeds, means we can state with some degree of certainty that the main value placed on such items was purely devotional. They may also have had sentimental value if they were a gift or a small family legacy with a high symbolic value.

Private Areas

Bedrooms and boudoirs were other places in the home where religious worship took place. These rooms would acquire more personal meaning, providing an intimate space for prayer and reflection, although they lacked the holy status afforded to the oratory. The existence of religious practice was confirmed by the presence of images, which, as mentioned earlier, took on a powerful significance as the reflection of Counter-Reformist religiosity. This was in contrast to the Reformed Church, which had discontinued their use as part of a piety and devotional practice that was attempting to move away from the expression of religious fervour through the worship of images²⁹.

Representations found in these rooms took on a variety of formats. Paintings³⁰, engravings³¹ and carved figures as items with inherent pious value were combined with the appearance of images on a highly symbolic item of furniture such as the bed.

²⁹ Carlos Alberto González Sánchez, "Imagen de culto y espiritualidad...", cit., p. 387-405.

³⁰ Jesús Bravo Lozano, "Pintura y mentalidades en Madrid a finales del siglo XVIII", *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileños*, n. XVIII (1981), p. 193-220.

³¹ Javier Portús and Jesusa Vega, *La estampa religiosa en la España del Antiguo Régimen*, Madrid, Fundación Universitaria Española, 1998.

The bed included in the 1780 dowry of Doña Ana María Vicente, wife of Don Pedro Antonio de Cuéllar, who held the post of Marshal of the Council of the Inquisition, was described as follows: “An imperial bed with a golden and red patterned headboard with a Mary in the centre”³². It was valued at 420 *reales de vellón*. The imperial bed was an item made to be displayed in a boudoir or bedroom in the private areas inside the homes of the elite class. The picture of the Virgin Mary on this bed could, once again, be understood from a range of perspectives. Firstly, as an expression of devotion for the figure of the Virgin by the owner of the bed. Secondly, in the sense that the religious image on the headboard of the bed protected the marriage that would be consummated there and any children born as a result. Bearing in mind the high mortality rate of both mothers and babies in childbirth, the presence of the Virgin on the headboard of the bed where delivery was to take place was a kind of insurance protecting women and their children. Lastly, it was a way of saying that the owners were good Catholics.

Religious imagery was also the main theme of the various paintings, engravings and sculptures placed in bedrooms and boudoirs. There were small items compared to the ones found in other rooms in the home, such as the lounge, and they had important symbolic meaning. The fact that they were placed in rooms intended for the individual to engage in quiet prayer enables us to see what their devotions centred on. They were images that people would kneel before to pray, and their artistic or monetary value was not as important as their sacred meaning³³.

The Virgin³⁴ seen as intercessor between the devout and the divinity took on unprecedented importance in women’s prayers, due to their female condition. The Incarnation was frequently venerated and provided comfort and spiritual support for women facing pregnancy and childbirth. Other female scenes were also objects of devotion, such as the Visitation, in which the Virgin Mary was depicted visiting her pregnant relative Elizabeth following the Annunciation by the Angel Gabriel³⁵.

³² AHPM. Prot. 19007, f. 35 r. “Una cama imperial con su testero dorado y encarnado en dibujo y una María en medio”.

³³ Olivier Christin and Dario Gamboni (eds.), *Crises de l’image religieuse*, Paris, Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’homme, 1999.

³⁴ Javier Portús Pérez, *El culto a la Virgen en Madrid durante la Edad Moderna*, Madrid, Consejería de Cultura de la Comunidad de Madrid, 2000.

³⁵ María Cruz de Carlos Varona, “Representar el nacimiento. Imágenes y cultura material de un espacio de sociabilidad femenino en la España Alto Moderna”, *Goya. Revista de Arte* (2007),

Both representations appeared in the dowry brought by Doña María Antonia Zamora y Sauca to her marriage in 1795 to Don José Manuel de Plaza y Torrecilla, a lawyer to the Royal Councils: “Two similar pictures, one of the Visitation and another of the Incarnation, measuring one *vara* in height and one and a quarter *varas* wide with golden frames and valued at six hundred *reales*”³⁶. The same image of the Incarnation is found in the items that made up the dowry list for Doña Joaquina Aguado, wife of Don Buenaventura Manuel de la Viya, an official in the Secretary’s Office at Madrid City Council in the same year: “Two quarto illustrations of Saint Francis and the Mystery of the Incarnation with glass and golden frame valued at sixty”³⁷. Also in the dowry of Doña Juliana Díaz Manrique, wife of Madrid City Councillor Don Fernando Gómez Lozano in 1803: “Another companion to the previously listed Our Lady of the Incarnation in the same kind of frame valued at ten *reales*”³⁸. However, their monetary value highlights the difference between the most expensive pictures, which had a combined value as artwork and devotional object, and those produced specifically for home worship.

Pregnancy and childbirth were also reflected in ownership of figures depicting the Child Jesus³⁹. Images of the Virgin with the Child in her arms or on her lap reflected an idealised maternity, but the Child Jesus or Saint John were also owned as individual sculptures and served as role models for the owner when learning how to look after children. The characteristics of the two carved three-quarter height figures of the Child Jesus included in the dowry of Doña María Antonia Zamora y Sauca⁴⁰ could well have fulfilled this

pp. 231-245; Jacqueline M. Musacchio, “Conception and birth” in Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis (eds.), *At home in Renaissance Italy*, London, V&A Publications, 2006, p. 124-136.

³⁶ AHPM. Prot. 20385, s/f. “Dos pinturas iguales la una de la Visitación y la otra de la Encarnación de vara y media de alto y vara y cuarta de ancho con sus marcos dorados en seiscientos reales”.

³⁷ AHPM. Prot. 20557, f. 79 r. (2ª foliación). “Dos láminas de a cuarta, San Francisco y el Misterio de la Encarnación con cristal y marco dorado en sesenta”.

³⁸ AHPM. Prot. 21982, f. 33 v. “Otra compañera de la antecedente de Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación con igual marco en diez reales”.

³⁹ Barbara Barieau Mauldin, *Images of the Christ Child. Devotions and iconography in Europe and New Spain*, Tesis doctoral inédita. Universidad de Nuevo México, 2001; Ana García Sanz, “Análisis de una devoción doméstica: La imagen del Niño Jesús en diferentes ámbitos de la vida cotidiana”, in Gloria A. Franco Rubio (ed.), *La vida de cada día. Rituales, costumbres y rutinas cotidianas en la España moderna*, Madrid, Almudayna, 2012, p. 229-247; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, “Holy dolls. Play and piety in Florence in the Quattrocento”, in Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, family and ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Chicago, Londres, University of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 310-329.

⁴⁰ AHPM. Prot. 20385, s/f.

practical role, which went beyond the boundaries of what might be expected of a religious image.

However, in contrast to the traditional notion that images of the Virgin mother accompanied by the Child Jesus were predominantly owned by women rather than men, we cannot be sure of the level of devotion paid to them by each of the sexes and they seemed to be owned in fairly equal measures among the 18th Madrid elite. It has been calculated that 56.25% of the pieces were owned by women and 43.75% by men⁴¹.

Reception Areas

Certain rooms in the homes of the elite were especially conceived and set aside for receiving visitors. Pride of place was given to items that demonstrated the owner's social status. One piece of furniture that reliably served this purpose was the display or religious cabinet. It was designed to act as a showcase and consisted of an outer structure in either metal or wood and glass. The contents could be viewed through the glass windows. A wide range of items could be kept inside, from larger figures of Christ, the Virgin, the Child Jesus and all kinds of Saints, to smaller pieces such as medals, reliquaries and rosaries. This piece of furniture reached its height of popularity in the second half of the 17th century and was a feature in many homes⁴². With the arrival of the Bourbon dynasty on the Spanish throne and the gradual introduction of new modes and forms from France, this item of furniture began to fall from favour over the course of the 18th century and its appearance in home inventories declined. However, not all of them were lost and we can see how these display cabinets retained their family value as inherited dowry items, similar to other devotional or religious objects. It would have been treated as an old item of furniture that was part of the family inheritance and would have been passed down to the new family unit being formed by the daughter's marriage. This must have been the case of the: "Two similar cabinets with glass on three sides and containing imitation wax fruit and a Child Jesus in the same material valued at three hundred *reales de vellón*"⁴³, brought to her marriage with widower Don José Chavarino, in

⁴¹ See Natalia González Heras, *Servir al rey...* cit., p. 377-389.

⁴² Amaya Morera Villuendas, *El escaparate, un mueble para una dinastía: Ostentación y devoción en el Madrid de los siglos Modernos*, Tesis Doctoral inédita, UNED, 2010.

⁴³ AHPM. Prot. 19433, f. 595 v-596 r. "Dos urnas iguales con sus cristales de terciá y dentro de ellas varias frutas imitadas de cera y un Niño Jesús de la misma especie en trescientos reales de vellón".

1780, by Doña Margarita Gutiérrez Duquén, daughter of Don Juan Francisco Gutiérrez, a Captain in the Brabante Cavalry Regiment.

The paintings that hung on the walls of these reception areas, mostly large-scale works with valuable carved golden frames, were considered in a different light when compared to the images displayed in boudoirs and bedrooms. Their devotional value was superseded by their status as works of art, and they were placed in these rooms as decorative items⁴⁴. These artworks were valued by specialists in sums that tended to be in excess of 300 *reales de vellón* and the author's name was sometimes recorded. They reflected both the owner's Catholic faith and her social and financial status. These images should also be seen as part of their role as illustrations of the social tastes and trends at that time.

The cult of the Immaculate Conception, which Rome was forced to make official due to the power and strength it acquired after being promoted in Spain by the monarchy, made Our Lady of the Conception a frequent sight in people's homes⁴⁵. The image is estimated to have been present in 30% of homes owned by Madrid elites involved in serving the State, and in 63% of these cases this devotion was embodied in the form of goods brought by the future wife⁴⁶. Doña Margarita Gutiérrez Duquén, who we mentioned earlier, brought to her marriage: "An image of the Conception in a golden frame of two and a half *varas* long and one and a half wide valued at six hundred *reales de vellón*"⁴⁷. The picture was included with other items of high monetary value, whose sumptuary value is made abundantly clear:

"A Roman image of Our Lady of the People in glass with golden frame valued at four hundred *reales de vellón*.

Another of the Solitude in copper of over half a quarto with its frame valued at six hundred *reales de vellón*.

Two miniature illustrations, one of Jesus and another of his Most Holy Mother with ebony frames and glass valued at six hundred *reales de vellón*"⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ Olivier Christin and Dario Gamboni (eds.), *Crises de l'image...* cit.

⁴⁵ Suzanne Stratton, "La Inmaculada Concepción en el arte español", *Cuadernos de arte e iconografía*, t. 1, n. 2 (1988), p. 3-128.

⁴⁶ See Natalia González Heras, *Servir al rey...* cit., p. 377-389.

⁴⁷ AHPM. Prot. 19433/595 r. "Una imagen de la Concepción con su marco dorado de dos varas y media de largo y una y media de ancho en seiscientos reales de vellón".

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

"Una imagen de Nuestra Señora del Populo romana en cristal con marco dorado en cuatrocientos reales de vellón.

Otra de la Soledad en cobre de más de media cuarta con su marco en seiscientos reales de vellón.

The Immaculate Conception was also listed in similar circumstances in the dowry goods of Doña María Antonia de Quintana Recacoechea in 1795. The daughter of Don Antonio de la Quintana, member of the Royal Taxation Council, and wife of Field Marshal Don Diego Ventura de Mena y Cortés contributed the following: “A painting of Our Lady of the Conception two *varas* high and one and a quarter wide, golden frame with cards, valued at four hundred *reales*”⁴⁹. Likewise, Doña Magdalena de Bretín, future wife of General Income Tax Office official Don Miguel Ignacio de Villacastín, also in 1795: “A large Conception in a golden frame valued at seven hundred and eighty *reales*”⁵⁰. A similar value was listed for the increase in dowry recorded in 1803 by Don Fernando Gómez Lozano, mentioned earlier, in favour of his wife Doña Juliana Díaz Manrique: “A painting of Our Lady of the Conception of two and a half *varas* high and one and two-thirds of a *vara* wide, in a golden frame with old plaques valued at seven hundred and twenty *reales*”⁵¹. The high monetary value of this item was in stark contrast to a much inferior painting on the same subject that had also deteriorated over time; we do not know its location in the home but we can guess that it must have been placed some distance away from the other painting and therefore outside the ‘display’ area. It was described as follows: “Another of Our Lady of the Conception painted in ordinary old-fashioned style and damaged, measuring two *varas* high and in a wide black frame, valued at twenty-four *reales*”⁵². The culmination of the image of the Immaculate Conception as a work of art to be exhibited in one of the main display areas inside the home was the image contributed in 1803 by Doña María de la Concepción Martínez de Viergol, future wife of Don Pedro Monfort y Viergol, lawyer to the Royal Councils and accountant of the Madrid Properties, Charges and Income office, as part of her dowry: “A large

Dos láminas de miñatura una de Jesús y otra de su madre Santísima con marcos de ébano y con sus cristales en seiscientos reales de vellón”.

⁴⁹ AHPM. Prot. 20078, f. 322 v.-323 r. “Una pintura de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción como de dos varas de alto y una y cuarta de ancho, marco dorado con tarjetas, en cuatrocientos reales”.

⁵⁰ AHPM. Prot. 20678, f. 11 r. (7^a foliación). “Una Concepción grande con su marco dorado en setecientos ochenta reales”.

⁵¹ AHPM. Prot. 21982, f. 32 v. “Una pintura de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción de dos varas y media de alto y vara y dos tercias de ancho, marco dorado con tarjetas antiguas en setecientos y veinte reales”.

⁵² AHPM. Prot. 21982, f. 33 r. “Otra de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción pintada a lo antiguo ordinaria y maltratada de dos varas de alto y lo correspondiente de ancho marco negro en veinte y cuatro reales”.

picture of Our Lady of the Conception in a golden frame by Castro valued at two thousand *reales*⁵³.

Other representations of the Virgin in various formats also enjoyed similar status as works of art. The painting of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary provided as part of the dowry for Doña Inés María de Mateo, daughter of Don Bartolomé Mateo y García, an accounting official of His Majesty's Royal Household, Chapel and Chamber and wife of Don Juan de la Cruz Adanero, treasurer of the Monte Pío association for widows of mayors and magistrates of the realm: "A painting of Our Lady of the Assumption, original by Matías de Torres of two and a half *varas* high and just two wide with golden frame lately valued at one thousand five hundred *reales*"⁵⁴. These were splendid works and the explicit mention of the artist they were attributed to emphasised their importance as material possessions.

Afterword

As described in the introduction, this paper is an initial outline of the topic and presents an approach to a study in progress. Based on this, in addition to the devotional objects discussed here, other forms of domestic religiosity, such as religious literature, can be examined to ascertain whether they can shed further light on the issue.

Using this method, tangible objects can enable us to delve into people's religious practices and try to ascertain their beliefs. The people studied here lived surrounded by a series of objects whose meaning transcended the limits traditionally established by economic history, and they are extremely valuable for a better understanding of their owners' attitudes. Establishing categories for analysis such as a person's sex adds a further dimension to this type of study, which seeks to cover all aspects revealed by the documentation in order to understand the topic in all its complexity.

⁵³ AHPM. Prot. 21596, f. s/f. "Un cuadro grande de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción con marco dorado, su autor Castro, en dos mil reales".

⁵⁴ AHPM. Prot. 19655, f. 14 r. (4^a foliación). "Una pintura de Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, original de Matías de Torres de dos varas y media de alto y dos escasas de ancho con marco dorado tasada últimamente en mil y quinientos reales".