

POWER AND MOTHERHOOD IN THE 16TH CENTURY: PERPETUITY AND MEMORY THROUGH ARCHITECTURE¹

PODER Y MATERNIDAD EN EL SIGLO XVI: PERPETUIDAD Y MEMORIA A TRAVÉS DE LA ARQUITECTURA

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Abstract

Traditionally, we associate motherhood with the practice of caring for children. And that is correct, but we must be cautious because in care we find a wide range of habits that encompasses desires and needs that vary greatly according to social class, gender, age and time. In general, in the mentality of the 16th century, the mother not only played her motherhood role through upbringing, but sometimes it was more important to bequeath a lineage, a surname, goods or a house. It is on this point that this text is based in the spirit of recovering the agency of elite women, but also of the ones belonging to other social classes. On the one hand, as women who are promoters and patrons of a

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heritage that empowers them in the city (*matronage*) while allowing them to protect their descendants and perpetuate the lineage of which they consider themselves the guardians. On the other hand, women who are not of high lineage but who defend the house in which they live, even if it is not their property; because they have children and ask for shelter to be protected under a roof. Both cases can be interpreted as expressions of power, although at very different levels, because if in one case they are moved by the desire of projection and promotion of that mother as the matron of a lineage; in the other, being a mother and having children in charge can be a burden but also an argument in favor of defending the tenancy or occupation of a house. For this study we make use of archival documentation of the sixteenth century, but specifically from Granada, with a view to focusing on the various cases observed in the same city.

Keywords: motherhood; mother; architecture; houses; 16th century.

Resumen

Tradicionalmente unimos maternidad con la práctica del cuidado hacia los hijos e hijas. Y así es, pero hemos de tener cautela, pues en el cuidado hay un abanico amplio de hábitos que abarca deseos y necesidades muy variados, atendiendo a clase social, género, edad y época. Por lo general, en la mentalidad del siglo XVI, la madre no solo ejerce la maternidad a través de la crianza, sino que a veces era más importante legar un linaje, un apellido, unos bienes o una casa. Este es el punto del que se parte en este texto, con el ánimo de recuperar la agencia de mujeres de élite, aunque también de otras clases sociales. Por un lado, como mujeres impulsoras y mecenas de un patrimonio que las empodera en la ciudad (*matronazgo*) a la vez que permite proteger a sus descendientes y perpetuar el linaje del que ellas se consideran guardianas. Por otro lado, mujeres que no son de alta alcurnia, pero que defienden la casa en la que viven, aunque no sea de su propiedad, pues tienen hijos y piden amparo para estar protegidas bajo un techo. Ambos casos los podemos interpretar como expresiones de poder, aunque a muy diferentes niveles, pues si en un caso les mueve el deseo de proyección y promoción de la madre como matrona de un linaje, en el otro, el ser madre y tener hijos puede suponer una carga, pero también un argumento a favor para defender la tenencia u ocupación de una casa. Para este estudio se hace uso de la documentación de archivo del siglo XVI, aunque con más particularidad en Granada para acotar la casuística vivida en una misma ciudad.

Palabras clave: maternidad; madres; arquitectura; casa; siglo XVI.

1. BACKGROUND AND PRELIMINARY HYPOTHESES

The study of women and architecture in the sixteenth century has not aroused interest until recently. Research in this field must be approached from a broad perspective in which, on the one hand, the distribution of spaces according to gender must be analyzed, but, on the other hand, architectural practice must be thoroughly studied from various angles. One of the most discouraging examples is probably that of women exercising the profession due to the scarcity of data available, in clear contrast to the important patronage that many of them undertook.

This topic has been part of my research in the last two decades, focusing essentially on the historical context of Mudejar art and delving into the sixteenth century (Díez Jorge, 2011). I am interested in the spaces designed or assigned according to gender: forbidden spaces, places designated for women, circulations and times used in a building according to gender. Likewise, I have addressed the patronage of women in architecture and I have revealed the names of women workers and craftswomen in construction. My interest in this line of research has allowed me to lead different research teams and coordinate various projects and collective works on the topic (Díez Jorge, 2014; 2015a).

It is worth mentioning in this realm the works by Esther Alegre Carvajal (2021, 2022), focused on the sixteenth century and including well-documented and accurate reflections. In the specific case of Granada, reference needs to be made to the research carried out by María Encarnación Hernández López (2018), whose doctoral thesis I had the pleasure of directing and which I hope will be published soon.

In the various analyses on women and architecture, it has been possible to confirm their initiative in architectural promotion, sometimes in relation to their role as wives, especially in the case of certain lineages, since marriages entailed both political and family alliances whose importance was reflected in architecture. Equally important was the role of mother, since we should not forget that these marriages and lineage alliances were reinforced and culminated with the birth of a son; however, their analysis in relation to architecture has been hardly explored.

With this background in mind, this text approaches motherhood based on the hypothesis that it was seen as a mechanism of prestige and social recognition that women, especially those of a certain lineage who were aware of this, had in mind to preserve their memory through architecture.

2. MATERNAL PRACTICE OR MOTHERING

In these pages I cannot cover everything that motherhood in the 16th century entails, so I will focus on reflecting on it through a specific aspect, such as architecture. Some of the practices I point out here are common to both men and women, although it is evident that there is a different nuance since it is a society that clearly distinguishes the roles that correspond to one and the other, that distributes the tasks of daily care that are understood to correspond to women without any questioning, although we find men who also carried out this upbringing. On some occasions, it is the women who, due to the absence of the husband, either because of death or because he is away for long periods of time (as for example during the war), assume the role of achieving prestige for the lineage to which they belong, and then the role of mother acquires a more visible relevance.

It is true that one of the roles traditionally assigned to women throughout history has been that of being a mother. In our current societies, the debate has been going on for years that being a woman does not necessarily imply having to be a mother and that the whole sphere of the ethics of care, as Carol Gilligan (1982) pointed out, should not be an area that is primarily demanded of women. Among these contemporary debates, I am particularly interested in highlighting the reflections carried out on maternal thought years ago by Sara Ruddick (Ruddick, 1989). This maternal thinking and ethics of care assigned to and developed by women throughout history has involved a practice that we can call *mothering*, used to refer to the function of upbringing but not to the biological fact of being a mother. And it is now being advocated that this *mothering* should be shared by men and women.

I do not intend to apply current concepts to the past, and specifically to the sixteenth century on which this text focuses, but it is true that it is extremely interesting and suggestive to approach motherhood at that time from a broader perspective. First of all, we must start from the fact that the

care practices traditionally associated with women were not always carried out by the biological mother; on many occasions, this care was carried out by other women. It was an assumption of roles: they were women who were not biological mothers but took on and assumed this responsibility with minors because they understood that they had to do so. This is the case of the tutorship or guardianship of minors, which was so frequent throughout the 16th century. In a tutorship, the court appoints a physical or legal person—the guardian—to make decisions affecting the minor's assets or patrimony. In a guardianship, the court appoints a physical or legal person—the tutor—to make personal decisions on behalf of the pupil. The guardianship is always for the purpose of managing the minor's estate in the manner that would be most beneficial. Generally, the guardian or the tutor is a person related by kinship, although not always. It is a role that someone acquires legally but that undoubtedly entails a social contract before society that this person is going to take care of the minors, and we find numerous cases of both men and women who accept this responsibility. It is the moment when we clearly see in the documentation the role that uncles, aunts and grandparents exercised in the care of the minors. These tutors are going to defend the houses and the goods of the minors in front of possible abuses of third parties on their patrimony. And of course, women often appear in many occasions playing a strong role and defending this function that they have assumed. This is seen, for example, in the letter of guardianship and tutorship issued in Córdoba and requested by Marina Fernández, widow of Pedro Fernández, for her grandchildren because they were orphans and minors, pointing out that they belonged to her by right as their maternal grandmother and closest relative². Particularly noteworthy is the mention of *aguela materna* (maternal grandmother) in the document, as if being the mother of the mother gave more strength to her petition.

Within this practice of care was the professional practice of child-rearing without being the biological mother. I am referring to wet nurses and nursemaids, a widespread profession in the sixteenth century. Or even women

2. Archivo del Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife (APAG), L-103-5, 1545, September, 26. Letter of guardianship and tutorship requested by Marina Fernández, widow of Pedro Fernández, for her grandchildren, because they are orphans and minors.

who accepted to raise children from extramarital relationships with their husbands. They are not the biological mothers but they assume that role. This is the case of María de Loaisa, a neighbor of Ugíjar, in the Alpujarra of Granada, who, probably for various reasons —affection, responsibility for the upbringing of a minor, charity, economic profit— take in *administration* a son that her husband had with a woman in his service, but also the minor girl and the servant girl with whom her husband had relations, we do not know whether forced or consensual, trying to leave everyone in the best possible conditions³.

Another contemporary debate is the demystification of the maternal instinct and the assumption of the reality that not all women have it, even if they are mothers, along the lines raised by Elisabeth Badinter (1981) and as shown by Orna Donath in her work *Regretting Motherhood* (2016). I suppose we can also wonder if there were regretful mothers in the 16th century and it stands to reason that there were. Some data that corroborate this show the number of abandonment of children in hospices and convents, but also the unwanted pregnancies that we know there were at the time, or even the tremendously hard situation that some women had to go through when they saw that they could not feed all their offspring and on more than one occasion they must have regretted having so many children. Nevertheless, in spite of hunger and poverty, they did their absolute best to raise their children, pleading with the authorities when necessary. This is the case of Isabel López, a widow who says that when her husband died, she was left with many children and daughters to feed, and in order to escape poverty she married one of them to Bartolomé Pérez, a clog maker who supports everyone with his work «and I have no one to resort to but him because the rest of my children are minors and my daughter, his wife, is pregnant and will give birth in a few days, and he has to go to war as a soldier to war in the service of Your Illustrious Lordship and he is not accustomed to it and if he were to leave, I and his wife and the rest of my children would be lost», for

3. Archivo Diocesano de Guadix (ADG), Caja 4005, documento 38, folios 6r-7, 1579, October, 12. Testament of Doña María de Loaisa, legitimate daughter of Cristóbal de Toledo and Isabel de Robledo, neighbors of Talavera de la Reina, wife of Hernando de Cepeda, neighbor of Ugíjar in the Alpujarra, new settler with her husband by royal favour.

this reason he begs that his son-in-law be released from going to war because «if he goes, it would mean death for all of us»⁴.

Not all women would want to be mothers, nor did they all experience pregnancy and childbirth happily. When we see 16th century paintings of women giving birth, as is the case of paintings depicting the birth of the Virgin (Fig. 1) or the birth of St. John the Baptist, they generally convey an affective feminine environment that was created among women at the time of giving birth, as the laboring woman usually appears surrounded by other women, whether midwives, servants or members of the family nucleus. We could think of an emotional world of solidarity and female sorority created around childbirth, but we cannot forget that childbirth also took place in dramatic circumstances, alone, without assistance.

It should therefore be noted that not all women would want to give birth; the situation would be very different for those who felt that they had one more mouth to feed in an environment of poverty, for those who had become pregnant as a result of rape, or those who had an unwanted pregnancy and were not married in a society that did not approve this type of behavior, or



Figure 1. The Birth of the Virgin with Saint Catherine. Saint Bartholomew Altarpiece of the parish church of San José, Granada, Petrus Christus II, ca. 1506. Archbishop of Granada. Photograph: Pepe Marín

4. APAG, L-198-70-6, October, 4. Petition of Isabel López so that his brother-in-law, a clog maker, does not go war.

simply for those afraid of dying in childbirth since there was a relatively high mortality rate.

The roles assigned to women throughout history, and specifically in the 16th century, involved learned practices with an inclination towards helping others, and on many occasions, relationships could take precedence over duty, although there were also normative obligations as a mother. That care and those practices meant exercising other skills such as empathy, perseverance, patience, ability to listen, commitment, responsibility (Comins Mingol, 2009). In this sense, and although somewhat prior to our period of study, the words contained in *Le livre de la Cité des Dames* by Christine de Pizan, written between 1404 and 1405, suffice (Pizan, 2000). One of the main virtues highlighted about women in this work was their ability to mediate and care, and both tasks are somewhat interrelated since they mediated with the ultimate goal of caring for or protecting someone. On the more specific aspect of care, Christine de Pizan writes about the capacity of women because «even if all sons were good, it is easier to see daughters stay by their parents' side, visit them often, take care of them in sickness and old age» (book II, chapter VII) and gives examples of this practice of care not only with daughters of kings and illustrious personages but also of other classes such as the woman who breastfed her imprisoned mother (book II, chapter XI).

All this does not imply nor should it deny the role that men could have played in the tasks of *mothering*, and I am not only referring to the recognition of paternity, of which there are many examples, but also to care. This is the case of Hernando Romero Ponce, lieutenant captain of the captaincy of Álvaro de Luna, who decided to take care of his son from war wounds and in 1500 makes the request to be able to live in a room of the houses that belong to his majesty in the fortress of the Alhambra to be able to stay with him and take care of him, a demand that is granted⁵.

It is true that the basic premise of maternal practice is the care and maintenance of the child's life, attending to his or her needs for growth and achieving his or her socialization in the reference group. And in this task men and women participated but undoubtedly in an unequal way, and this implies accepting that the emotional world was from this point of view

5. APAG, L-1-3, 1500, August, 4.

diverse; for example, the behavioral habits and learning of emotions before the arrival of a minor at home would be different between men and women from the very moment of the birth of the little one and of course later according to the roles assigned to one and the other in their upbringing (Díez, 2019). But in women themselves, motherhood was experienced and exercised in very different ways (Bolufer, 2010).

3. PRESTIGE AND SOCIAL RECOGNITION: MOTHERHOOD THROUGH ARCHITECTURE

In certain circumstances, the role of mother sought power and prestige. On the one hand, as an exemplary model of being a good mother, of being virtuous in that facet and thus wanting to be remembered. On the other hand, women of illustrious lineages left orders and commands to keep their surname in the memory and, at the same time, their children strove to promote that ancestry. In this way, women mothers had a way to achieve prestige and social recognition.

A useful instrument to achieve that prestige was through architecture, among other artistic manifestations (Martínez & Serrano Estrella, 2016). Let us take as an example the funerary spaces through which they managed to perpetuate their lineage and their memory. Far from anonymity, during the sixteenth century it was customary to put the name of people of a certain social rank on the epitaph of their tombs, sometimes indicating their place of birth, their lineage or their descent. It was a way to preserve their name with their honors and virtues. This practice was common to both men and women. According to the social class, we will find tombstones that were in the main chapel or presbytery, normally it was the case of the patrons and logically they were people of important lineages. Funeral chapels were also frequently erected on the sides of the church and the closer they were to the presbytery, the more important the deceased person was presumed to be. Those classes with slightly less power were located at the foot of the church.

The fact of being a mother was one of the qualities that stood out in women (Barker, 2020, p. 145). This aspect can be seen and read in epitaphs such as the one written by Diego Hurtado de Mendoza to Juana of Austria (1535-1573), princess consort of Portugal and infanta of Spain, daughter of Charles I of Spain and Isabella of Portugal:

No te detengas, que es muy corto el día
 y larga la jornada. Doña Juana
 yace en el hueco de esta piedra fría;
 hija de Carlo Quinto; cara hermana
 de Filipo Segundo; madre pía
 de Sebastián, la gloria lusitana.
 Lo demás, curioso caminante,
 es largo de contar, pasa adelante.⁶

(Ponce, 2014).

The infanta is remembered for her illustrious lineage as a daughter and sister and, of course, as a pious mother, in this case of the king of Portugal, Sebastian I. Her prestige and virtue increased by being remembered as a mother who gave birth to a king, who did what she had to do as an infanta and strategically speaking, to give sons and daughters who could be kings and queens consorts with whom to seal political alliances. But it should be noted that this was not the only quality and sometimes it was not the main one during the sixteenth century. In the funeral of Queen Isabella of Valois (1545-1568, wife of Philip II of Spain) that took place in Seville in 1568 (Pozuelo, 2001), the main virtue highlighted was that of having achieved peace between Spain and France, but not as a mother, but for what she herself meant in the marriage policy of the time and for some of her diplomatic actions and wise advice. The role of mother remained in second place, although it was interrelated, since it was considered that the peace achieved with the queen was preserved «with two daughters who, as hostages and pledges of love, left her husband to the king, and with that she finished establishing and confirming peace» (San Pedro, 1568, ff. 39v-40r), as we read in one of the dedications, specifically the one placed by the Cabildo and the people of Seville in the ephemeral architecture that was designed for the funeral honors, following the description made by Laurencio de San Pedro. In the same way it is reminded in this dedication that her death was the result of a third pregnancy, highlighting as a virtue her heroic death due to the longed

6. Translation: Don't stop, for the day is very short / and the journey is long. Doña Juana / lies in the hollow of this cold stone; / daughter of Carlo Quinto; dear sister / of Philip the Second; pious mother / of Sebastian, the Lusitanian glory. / The rest, curious wayfarer, / is long to tell, pass on.

search of an heir that would maintain the political stability. Thus, it can be concluded that the main thing to be remembered in this case was not motherhood but the political action she did and for which she was recognized and praised; but it was intermingled with motherhood, considered as an obligatory and required political task in her case (Fig. 2).

Outside the royal sphere we have numerous examples in which there are times that the epitaphs remember them as mothers, but this is not the case in other occasions, perhaps because they were not or because, if they were, other virtues were chosen for them or they indicated it in their wills. For example, there are tombstones in the main chapel or presbytery of a series of Spanish women of the sixteenth century in the Church of Santa María de Monserrat de los Españoles in Rome. There is a tombstone of a woman who died in 1586, Isabel Jiménez, which indicates *Charissime uxori*, that is to say, her role of wife is praised but not that of mother, either because she was not or because it was so decided, and close to this there is another burial of a woman in 1560 in whose epitaph *Matri optima* is emphasized (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

In numerous churches of the peninsular territory there are tombstones and sepulchers of women who left their name next to that of their husband,

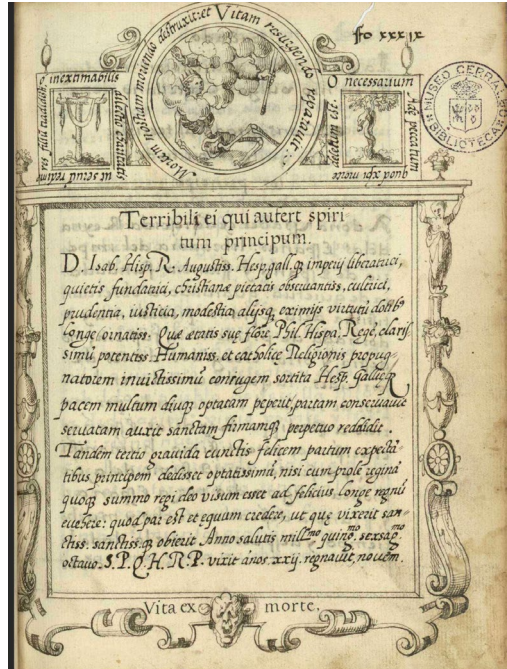


Figure 2. Dedication of the Cabildo of Seville at the royal funeral of Juana of Austria, 1568. Manuscript preserved in the Museo Cerralbo (Catalogue number 264-75), digital copy available <https://bvpb.mcu.es/es/consulta/registro.do?id=485498> [accessed December 17th 2021]. (Creative Commons).



Figure 3. Tombstone of a woman with epitaph as *Charissime uxori* in the presbytery of the Church of Santa María de Monserrat de los Españoles, Rome, 1586. Photograph: María Elena Díez Jorge.

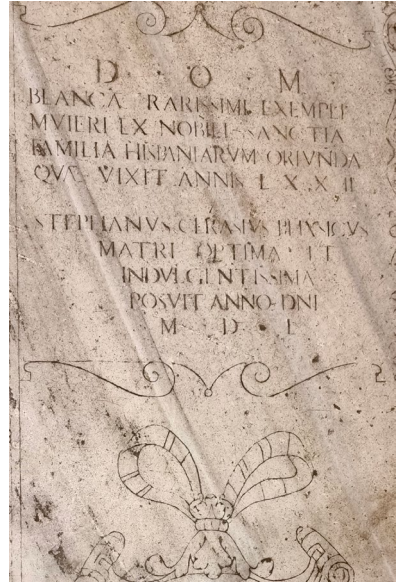


Figure 4. Detail of the tombstone of a woman with epitaph as *Matri optima* in the presbytery of the Church of Santa María de Monserrat de los Españoles, Rome, 1560. Photograph: María Elena Díez Jorge.

in many cases reminding that they were co-founders or founders and promoters. But there is no need for their husbands to be there, since as widows they also sought to promote their image and that of their heirs. This agency of women of a certain class in search for their prestige and trying to perpetuate that of their heirs was assumed by them with a special interest.

There is enough data to prove it, such as the case studied in Granada which provides wonderful examples. Some of those women are remembered together with their husbands. A good example is that of the parish church of San José (Fig. 5). On the tombstone of one of the side chapels we read that Diego Lizano, juror of Granada, and his wife María de Olarte lie there, and that both founded and funded the chapel, reminding that he died in 1528 (Collado, 2007). Also in that church we know of the participation carried



Figure 5. Interior of the parish church of San José, Granada, 16th century. Photograph: María Elena Díez Jorge.



Figure 6. Presbytery or main chapel of the parish church of San José, Granada, sponsored by Leonor de Manrique and completed in 1535. Photograph: María Elena Díez Jorge.

out by Isabel Méndez de Salazar, a funerary chapel right next to the presbytery, although in this case the tombstone only alludes to Alonso Méndez de Salazar, mayor of the court of the Chancery (Collado, 2010, 178). And the most relevant is the main chapel, that of the patrons, carried out by Leonor de Manrique, in which she left testimony of her promotion with an inscription under the framework stating the following (Fig. 6 and Fig. 7):

Esta capilla mando hacer y dotar la muy magnífica señora doña Leonor Manrique para sepultura del muy magnífico señor Pedro Carrillo de

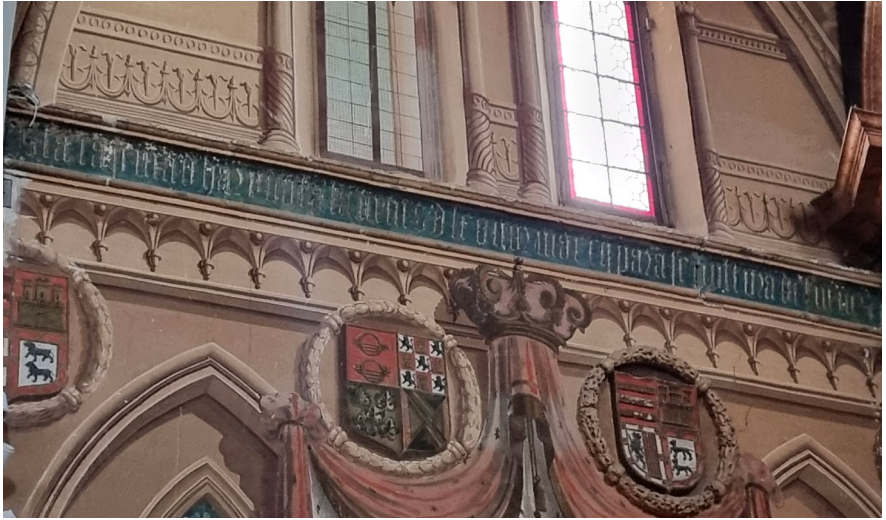


Figure 7. Detail of the beginning of the inscription that runs along the entire presbytery of the parish church of San José, Granada, which states that the chapel was commissioned by Leonor de Manrique. Photograph: María Elena Díez Jorge.

Montemayor su marido y suya donde también está don Martín Córdoba, su hijo a quien Dios en la flor de su juventud quito la heredad temporal para dalle la eterna, acabose año MDXXXV (Collado Ruiz, 2010, p. 171)⁷.

Her name was engraved for the memory, as the maker and founder of this architecture that she sponsored. Not only is she mentioned first, a remarkable aspect since it was common for the name of the man to appear first in the inscriptions, but it also shows her virtues, as men did with their heroic deeds; hers are her marriage and having given birth to a son, being a mother, even though he died at an early age.

In the same Church of San José another series of tombstones illustrate the different ways of being considered a woman, because although in some of

7. Translation: This chapel was ordered to be built and funded by the very magnificent Mrs. Leonor Manrique for the burial of the very magnificent Mr. Pedro Carrillo de Montemayor, her husband, where Don Martín Córdoba, her son, from whom God took away the temporal inheritance in his very youth to give him the eternal one, it was finished in the year MDXXXV.

them the name of the husband and the wife appear as founders of a chapel, as we have already pointed out, in others the name of the man appears but not that of the woman, who remains invisible, as in the case of the one at the foot of the church, which indicates the following: «ESTA SEPULTURA ES DE HERNANDO DIAZ DE VALDEPEÑAS ESCRIBANO DEL CRIMEN DE LA AVDIENCIA REAL I DE SU MUGER I HEREDEROS»⁸ (Fig. 8).

Hernando Díaz de Valdepeñas was a registered scribe in Granada and was the one who wrote the wills of Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba—the Great Captain—and his wife María de Manrique, sister of the promoter of the main chapel or presbytery (Mártir Alario, 2011, p. 49).

There are numerous examples of women who lead these burials, especially when they are widowed, and many times they must be continued by their heirs. This is the case of María de Manrique and her lavish and splendid burial next to her husband, Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, in the convent of San Jerónimo. We should especially note one of her daughters, María de Sarmiento, who will fund this space to complete the work started by her

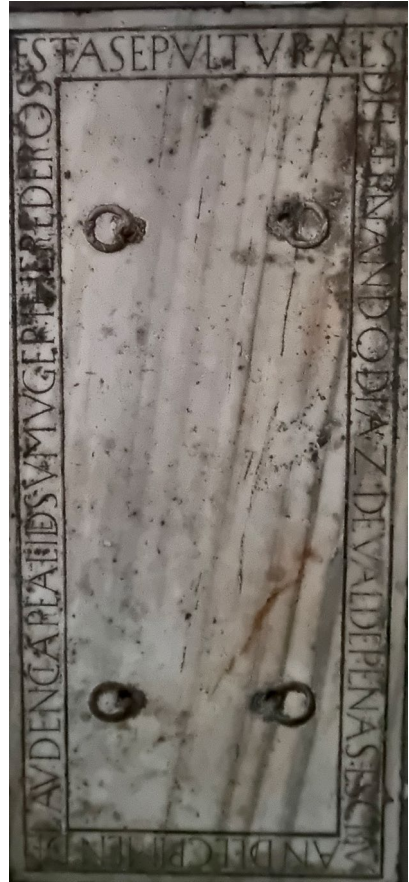


Figure 8. Tombstone of the scribe Hernando Díaz de Valdepeñas in the parish church of San José, Granada, in which only his name is mentioned since his wife and heirs are mentioned but not named. Photograph: María Elena Díez Jorge.

8. Translation: THIS IS THE GRAVE OF HERNANDO DIAZ DE VALDEPEÑAS CRIMINAL SCRIBE OF THE ROYAL COURT AND OF HIS WIFE AND HEIRS.

mother, although it will be her grandson who will finish it (Hernández López, 2018, pp. 79-132).

But they do not necessarily have to be illustrious ladies, there were also women of the second nobility and wives of public officials who had the desire to buy a chapel for themselves and their successors, as in the case of Jerónima de Verdugo, who leaves in her will of 1595 her desire to buy one in the Church of San Andrés, her daughter will try to fulfill that last will, but would not succeed either (Collado, 2007, 257-259). Presumably, in this attempt by the daughter to fulfill her mother's will, there could have been a confluence of affective issues, but also of respect for her mother's authority, as well as the need to promote herself. By making these funerary chapels during their lifetime, or by leaving the dispositions and orders in their will stating how they wanted them to be, these women mothers are exercising control of how to prestige their lineage and their sons and daughters are tied to this. They are heirs to a mother's commands and in a certain way to the submission to comply with those directives and orders by the obedience that is due to the wishes and last wills. However, this does not mean that they always did it, although they did in a great part, nor that they did it willingly, since there are cases in which this will is taken as their own and others in which certain given dispositions are modified and eluded. In this case that we have indicated of Jerónima Verdugo, her wish was willingly continued by her daughter Leonor de Cañaverl, wife of a *veinticuatro* knight of the city, Francisco Maldonado de Ayala, as can be seen in the will of the latter when she insisted on this idea that seems to have been difficult to achieve for both mother and daughter and that the latter transformed into a family will (Collado Ruiz, 2010, p. 182).

In addition to personal promotion, this interest in burial has to do with feelings and family ties, which women especially emphasize in their wills, so it is not surprising to find the desire to be buried with their loved ones, whether or not they were of noble birth. Mari Díaz Navarrete, a neighbor of Granada, ordered that when she died her body should be taken to the Monastery of La Merced in Granada but that she should then be buried in the Monastery of San Francisco in the city of Guadix, where her father and her mother were buried; in this case it is not a question of keeping alive the memory of a family pantheon for a question of lineage or personal promotion

but rather to be with her loved ones, with her parents for whose souls she also ordered that various masses and prayers be said⁹.

4. MOTHERS GUARDIANS OF THE LINEAGE: THE LEGACY OF THE MAIN HOUSES

The ladies in power had a special concern for family housing. Many of them buy and acquire real estate and obtain house favors as I have already studied in other works (Díez Jorge, 2015b). But I would like to focus now on the role they exercised as mothers through houses.

First of all, it is fundamental for the sixteenth century to address the subject of the entailed estate. The purpose of the entailed estate was to perpetuate in the family the ownership of certain goods according to the conditions that were dictated when establishing it or, in the absence of them, to those prescribed by law. It was usually vested in the first-born male. In this way, the main houses passed preferentially to the sons in case there were any, while other secondary houses were transmitted as dowry to the daughters.

The concern that men and women had for the main houses as an image of their lineage becomes evident and this role is not one that women neglected, on the contrary. Married women or widows were involved in leaving the imprint of their surname or that of their husbands and in establishing the entailed estate for their houses, although again the condition of widow makes their names more clearly visualized in the documentation. This practice was maintained throughout the sixteenth and also in the seventeenth century, as is well documented for Granada in the sixteenth century in some cases of widows concerned about the entailed estates and about the main houses being inherited by their firstborn (Casey, 2008, p. 215). However, being a mother does not always mean acting blindly in favor of the children and disputes between the firstborn and the mother are seen more often than expected, since sometimes the link to the entailment of the estate left them with less economic power (Aranda Bernal, 2015).

Faced with the situation of the entailed estate and the primacy of the male, not all women remained impassive and in certain circumstances, they

9. Archivo de Protocolos Notariales de Granada (APNGR), G-30, ff. 432r– 436r, 1529, July, 5.

filed lawsuits, not so much against an older brother, which would mean opposing the mandate of their parents, but against other men with family ties who, in the absence of a first-born male, claimed the entailed estate over a legitimate daughter and heir simply because she was a woman. Some sources of the 16th century, such as the so-called *Crónica del Emperador Carlos V* by Pedro Girón, left a record of disputes that took place at that time by women who had confrontations for the entailed estate, such as the one that took place in 1540: reference is made to the lawsuit between Gonzalo Vázquez, married to Antonia de Arauzo, and a cousin of hers for the right to the entailed estate since it was maintained that it did not correspond to her because she was a woman, even though she was the heir daughter. It was finally granted to the cousin but feeling some pity the emperor appointed Gonzalo Vázquez court bailiff of Valladolid (Girón, year 1540, ff. 80v-81r, pp. 158-159 of the edition we studied).

They defended their lineage and blood over their husband's if necessary. This is the case of Beatriz Galindo. Not being in agreement with the will made by her husband, Francisco Ramírez de Madrid, secretary of the Catholic Monarchs, who died in 1501, she claimed some goods that were hers and which she considered that her deceased husband should not have disposed of in the will, and for that reason a litigation with the children of her deceased husband and his first wife —Juan Ramírez and María de Oviedo—¹⁰ took place. Beatriz de Galindo claimed several properties and a large amount of money. Among the properties we find part of some houses in the Alhambra. The house had been given as a royal favour to her husband but she claimed the improvements made in this house for herself and for her sons by blood —Fernán Ramírez and Nuflo Ramírez— then minors. Finally, the royal order sentenced that the house was not part of the partition because it had been given to Francisco Ramírez de Madrid and not to her. Beatriz Galindo lost the battle although she fought and defended her patrimonial interests and those of her children.

They were visible women in the society of their time and left their mark in the promotion of architecture, contributing to the expansion and fame of their lineage of which they felt responsible and proud. If their lineage,

10. Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Registro General del Sello (RGS), 1-1504.

which could be at the same level as that of their husband, could be undermined by that of their husband, they also fought for it. Nothing better for all this than promotion through architecture and especially with the main house because it symbolized lineage. The main houses were identified with a lineage and had to go to the firstborn or to whoever was to be the visible head of that lineage. This visibility of the main house as the social image of a surname explains why when a serious crime was committed, the house was condemned to be abandoned and sometimes demolished, as happened with the high dignitaries of Castile who rose up against Alfonso X, or with those in Seville who took a stand against the Catholic Monarchs in the war of succession with Enrique IV (Orlandis, 1944, p. 115). The physical destruction of the main houses of those considered traitors was a measure included in medieval law and was maintained throughout the 16th century: a very visible case was that of Fernando de Córdoba y Valor, known as Abén Humeya, whose house in the Alhambra was destroyed and whose land was sown with salt to purify it for the crime of leading the Morisco rebellion between 1568 and 1571, a testimony that is still remembered centuries later¹¹.

This personal projection through the main houses is evidently known by women and some of them choose to lead and promote its construction. In Granada there are several cases of this sort, one of them being that of Bazán. We have been able to study in depth the initiative of some noble women, such as the case of the Bazán family in Granada, in which María Manuel, widow of Álvaro de Bazán, began in 1500 to rearrange and group small and diverse properties to constitute some main houses in Granada. Close to those houses, María Manuel founded the church of Sancti Spiritus, blessed in 1504, as a burial place for the lineage, taking the body of Álvaro Bazán to the main chapel for burial; she also built a convent for Dominican nuns. This entrepreneur lived there with her granddaughters and one of them, also called María Manuel, will later maintain part of the houses (López Torrijos, 2006).

11. APAG, L-190-22. This is a document from 1795 where the accountant overseer of the Alhambra notifies that construction is being carried out on this site and explains that it was sown with salt but that construction had now begun. The Crown replied that the soil had already been purified and that it was of no use to keep it unbuilt on.

Another case is that of Leonor Manrique de Lara, married to Pedro Carrillo de Montemayor, son of the lord of Alcaudete (Jaén), who settled with her husband in Granada at the end of the conquest. In 1505, after the death of her husband, she took advantage of her comfortable economic situation to dedicate herself directly to the promotion and patronage of architecture and art. She became the main patron of the Church of San José (Hernández López, 2016). There, on a nearby lot, she built her palatial house at the same time that the neighboring church was being built. After the death of Leonor Manrique, her daughter Elvira Carrillo, related by marriage to the Mendoza family, made important modifications to the house, providing it, among other things, with a passageway that connected it to the neighboring church. Elvira Carrillo was the one who inherited these main houses as Alonso, son of Leonor Manrique and the one who would have inherited the family estate, had died; as had another daughter, Ana; while the remaining daughters, Francisca and Beatriz, were nuns and had renounced their inheritance upon entering the convent (Hernández López, 2018, pp. 309-318) (Fig. 9).



Figure 9. Main entrance to the house of Leonor de Manrique, 16th century, next to the parish church of San José, Granada. Photograph: María Elena Díez Jorge.

5. PROTECTION, CARE AND DISPUTES: THE HOUSE AND ITS ASSETS

Of course, the situation of widowhood in some cases provided women with certain *winds of freedom*, especially in the case of those with certain economic and social power, but often left them in an absolutely unprotected situation as can be seen in the documentation when they argued their misery by being poor and widows. Some with a relatively high position fell into disgrace when they became widows and had children to support. Having a house was essential in order not to become *terribly poor*. A few of them found shelter in relatives and friends or even in the Crown, as in the case of a favour granted by the Monarchs in 1501, in which Juan de Porras, treasurer of Vizcaya, was instructed to give the house he had taken in Granada to Leonor de Villalobos, as she was the widow of Lucas Manuel, who died serving as a guard, to help raise their son¹². This is not the only case as there are others such as the cession also in 1501 to María Hernández, a widow, of a house built by her near the church of San Pedro¹³; and also, to another widow, Mencía de la Madrisa, a small house in the Alcazaba¹⁴.

The care and upbringing obviously depended fundamentally on the people who were responsible for the children, but also on having a roof over their heads and a minimum set of household goods to live under. It is an interrelated set that from the inside should create an emotional shelter where the child would be protected. In the will of a widow, Isabel Alderete, who was very ill, there is evidence of the anguish of leaving her children without a home and without care; there is great concern for her four children who would be orphaned when she died because the children's grandmother is older and might not be able to take care of them. The options left to her were few and while for the girls she begged that, being minors, maidens and honest, they should enter the convent of Santa Catalina de Siena, for the boys she asked that their estates be rented to support them¹⁵.

12. AGS, Cámara de Castilla (CCA), Cédulas (CED), 5, 334, 3.

13. AGS, CCA, CED, 5, 277, 3, f. 277.

14. AGS, CCA, CED, 5, 38, 1.

15. APAG, L-103-101, year 1544. Judicial decrees, inventories, accounts and partitions of the assets of Luis de Dehesa, deceased in the Indies and of his wife Isabel de Alderete, also deceased, among their minor children.

To have a house implied to be protected in some aspects and the truth is that during the XVI century women aspired to be able to leave a patrimony, both immovable and movable, to their children in order to help them survive. When they became widows, their role in charge of the children increased and the pressure and anguish grew, as the obligations that were previously shared in some aspects fell then solely on women who had to earn their living immersed in a society that was full of obstacles. It must not have been easy to be a mother in those circumstances, but as legal guardians of their children, many of them showed their tenacity and their ability to defend those assets. For example, between 1567 and 1568 a lawsuit is documented between a widow, María Jiménez, and her brother-in-law, Pero López Ligeró, for a part of the house and property that she defends as belonging to her children¹⁶. It is about a house in the Alhambra and some belongings that the grandparents of those minors had left when they died and that the said Pedro López Ligeró did not want to give them.

There are many different examples. For instance, Mariana de Torres, a very poor widow with children, lives in a house that needs many repairs and she cannot take care of them nor pay the ground rent and asks to transfer the said ground rent, also requesting in the same document to be guardian and curator of her children «for greater strength and validation of what she grants and other things that may be offered for the benefit of the said minors»¹⁷. Inés de Guzmán, neighbor of Granada, widow of the congregation of Santa Escolástica and for the good of herself and her children, as legal guardian of her six children and since they have some houses and an undivided *pro indiviso* store, she leases said goods for a period of eight years with the purpose of obtaining profitability to the real estate and to be able to support her children¹⁸. I could mention many other cases similar to this one that take place in the same year in the city of Granada, sometimes they ask to be freed of the ground rent of the house or they look for the best profitability, always in name and for the good of the minors, like those of María Avellaneda or

16. APAG, L-221-13.

17. APAG, L-221-94-25, without date (16th century).

18. APNGR, G-30, ff. 305-306v, 1529, February, 8.

Francisca García, to name but a few¹⁹. All of them are widows with children and on behalf of them and for them, but also for themselves, they decide to administer and manage the assets in the way they understand best.

And they must not always have done it well. This is how it seems to be read in the claim that two siblings, Alonso de Peñuela and Isabel de Peñuela, children of Lope García de la Peñuela and Isabel de Estremera, issued on a part of the family house they had in Granada. Both were minors, so they made use of a guardian to represent them in the case. The father was dead but the mother was still alive²⁰. There was a ground rent on the house and the minors maintained that they were poor because of this tribute and that the house was going to be seized because of this debt. The guardian of the minors alleged that by giving up their property, the minors were deceived and clearly wronged. The thing is that their father had died twenty-two years ago and these minors had an inheritance of eighty thousand *maravedis* that their mother should be in charge of managing as their guardian. This inheritance was to be given to the children by their mother, but as she had been losing everything and nothing was left, it was alleged that this part of the inheritance owed to them by their mother could be paid with the house so that it would not be lost. Who knows if it could be the case that mother and children were not at odds but that it was a legal strategy to try to safeguard the house and that at least it would remain in the hands of the children and would not be sold. The story did not have a happy ending and finally, children and mother were kicked out of the house.

In addition, in each of these houses there are small micro-stories of mothers wanting to bequeath their belongings. The documents show affectionate mothers because between the lines we can breathe affection with the expressions they use in their wills such as «my beloved daughter» or «for the affection I have for her». In others, there is a silence that can oscillate between having handled a cold formalism to testament or the distance of a relationship that not for being a mother had to be full of tenderness. A tense situation can be appreciated, for example, when Marina de Peñuela, widow of Cristóbal Valmeja, appointed mayor of Loja by the King, gives the dowry

19. APNGR, G-30, ff. 466v-467v, 1529, August, 3.

20. Archivo Histórico Provincial de Granada (AHPGr, Sección fisco, 3164-1), 1523-1738.

to her daughter Inés Mejía; that dowry was retained because there was a lawsuit between mother, on the one hand, and daughter and son-in-law on the other hand; the text is formal, without a glimpse of affection, only lawsuits and appeals that led to part of the goods of this dowry being seized twice²¹.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Motherhood is a social fact and has its historicity, and through architecture we can study some of its variables and ways of understanding it. In the case studied we can find certain common patterns such as the use of architecture by some women to show their virtue for having been a mother, for having fulfilled the role they had been assigned. In others to promote their lineage and pass the baton that would have to be picked up by their sons and daughters, knowing that this memory would contribute to their social prestige even when they were already dead. But not all women lived and understood motherhood in this way, nor could they all be promoters of architecture, since for some of them, being widowed and with children, maintaining the house was a very difficult burden to bear. In this way, with a specific case study, we have been able to appreciate that there were mothers who were passive, others active; some who protected their sons and daughters, some who filed lawsuits against them; while others went out to claim their rights.

In short, my initial hypothesis, which posed motherhood as a mechanism of prestige for elite women, is corroborated not so much from the point of view of being considered as a loving mother of her children, but especially from the political point of view, in the sense that the birth of these children reinforced family alliances that began with marriage. The women we have studied from the 16th century made use of architecture to promote themselves as guardians and promoters of these lineages and wanted to be remembered for that, through their epitaphs and through the promotion of funerary chapels and main houses. Men also used architecture to show off their lineage through the exaltation of victories, feats and historical deeds. The feat of women, their heroic virtue, was to conceive children that would

21. APNGR, G-30, ff. 564v-566v y 567r-569v, 1529, October, 20.

reinforce and perpetuate the union of lineages, preserving that memory through architecture.

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