

EUGENIO CAJÉS'S *MEETING AT THE GOLDEN GATE*:
PURITY AND PROCREATION IN
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MADRID*

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St Joachim and St Anne Meeting at the Golden Gate (Fig. 1), painted by Eugenio Cajés (1574–1634) between 1604 and 1605, is the sole remnant of a major commission for the construction and execution of two altarpieces for the Cercito Chapel in the church of San Felipe el Real in Madrid. At the centre of the composition the Virgin's parents embrace before the gate of Jerusalem, and an angel descending from heaven brings their heads together. They are surrounded by a group of three men and three women, and in the foreground, on the right, there is a girl holding a piece of fruit. An inscription at her feet identifies her as 'doña Franc[isc]a Cercito de / hedad de 2 años'.¹ This little girl was the two-year-old daughter of Pedro Cercito and his wife Melchora de Avendaño, who commissioned the painting as part of the decorative programme for their chapel in the Augustinian convent church.

Described by Antonio Palomino (1655–1726) as 'a very excellent painting' and 'one of the best [Cajés] made',² the *Meeting at the Golden Gate* is today conserved in the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid. The work has also been praised by modern critics, who have drawn attention to the painter's emulation of Italian artistic precedents. Roberto Longhi argued that its composition was reminiscent of Andrea Boscoli's *Visitation* for Sant'Ambrogio in Florence, painted in 1596, and went so far as to describe Eugenio Cajés, who was born in Madrid and worked in Spain, as a 'perfect Tuscan'.³ More recently scholars have

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1. The inscription is reproduced below (Fig. 16). I disagree with the previous reading of it as 'Doña Franc[isc]a de la Cerd[a] de hedad de tres años', in D. Angulo Íñiguez and A. E. Pérez Sánchez, *Historia de la*

pintura española; escuela madrileña del primer tercio del siglo XVII, Madrid 1969, p. 229; which was followed in J. M. Pita Andrade, *De Greco à Picasso ... Cinq siècles d'art espagnol* (exhib. cat.), Paris 1987, p. 170.

2. A. Palomino de Castro y Velasco, *El museo pictórico y escala óptica*, Madrid 1724, fol. 301^r: 'y otro de San Joachin, y Santa Ana, quando se encontraron en la puerta Dorada, que es muy Excelente Quadro, y esta azia los pies de la Iglesia, en la segunda Capilla, como entramos a mano izquierda, en una hornacina a mano derecha; que es de lo mejor que hizo'. The painting was, however, not mentioned by Lázaro Díaz del Valle, Jusepe Martínez or Juan Agustín Ceán Bermúdez.

3. R. Longhi, 'Un S. Tommaso del Velazquez e le congiunture italo-spagnole tra il 500 e il 600 [1927]', in *Saggi e ricerche 1925–1928*, Florence 1967, pp. 113–27 (120–21). Longhi referred to Boscoli's painting of the *Meeting at the Golden Gate*, but it is clear that he meant the *Visitation*.

argued that the softness and idealisation of his treatment of the faces signal the artist's knowledge of paintings by Correggio (1489–1530), whose works Philip III had commissioned Cajés to copy in 1604. It has also been suggested that the juxtapositions of colour demonstrate Cajés's admiration for Federico Barocci (1535–1612) and that the elegant elongated figures of the painting indicate his familiarity with the work of the Cavaliere d'Arpino (1568–1640).⁴ Overall, critics concur that this painting testifies to Cajés's studies of the Italian paintings in the Spanish royal collections, and also his contact with the Italian painters who worked on the decoration of the Royal Monastery of El Escorial.⁵ Whether Cajés ever visited Italy himself is unclear, although the *Meeting* has been invoked in support of that suggestion.⁶

Illuminating as this appraisal may be, there are evident limitations to a stylistic classification of Cajés's *Meeting* exclusively based on Italian models. For example, such an approach does not explain why the patrons chose an iconographic subject that had become increasingly rare, especially since the traditional association of the Meeting at the Golden Gate with the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin had been questioned by theologians in the late sixteenth century. Nor does it address the significance of Cajés having introduced portraits into a narrative scene. Above all, focussing on the painting's style fails to take into account the specific context for which this painting was conceived.

As it happens, the family chapel for which Cajés painted the *Meeting* was dedicated to a very particular and little-studied cult, that of the 'Holy Child' of La Guardia, known locally as 'Santo Niño', 'Santo Inocente' or 'San Cristobalito'.⁷ The child in question, a young Christian, was the purported victim of one of the most notorious blood libels in late medieval Spain, which led to the execution of several Jews and *conversos*. The boy had subsequently become the focus of popular devotion and the Cercito chapel, located at the very centre of Madrid, played a key role in the early modern dissemination of his cult. The Trinitarian friar Antonio de Guzmán claimed in his *Historia del Inocente Trinitario* (1720) that from the very

4. Angulo Íñiguez and Pérez Sánchez (as in n. 1), pp. 215–17; Pita Andrade (as in n. 1), pp. 168–70; A. E. Pérez Sánchez, *Pintura Barroca en España, 1600–1750*, Madrid 1992, pp. 93–95; *El Greco to Velázquez: Art During the Reign of Philip III* (exhib. cat.), ed. S. Schroth and R. Baer, London 2008, pp. 217–18, 292. On the painting's Italianism see also J. Camón Aznar, *La pintura española del siglo XVII*, Madrid 1978, pp. 55–56.

5. For the Escorial painters see R. Mulcahy, *The Decoration of the Royal Basilica of El Escorial*, Cambridge 1994; the recent discussions by Á. Pascual Chenel, 'I Carducho e i Cajés', in *Spagna e Italia in dialogo nell'Europa del Cinquecento* (exhib. cat.), ed. M. Faietti, C. Gallori and T. Mozzati, Florence 2018, pp. 224–31; and R. J. Long, 'Italian Training at the Spanish Court', in *On Art and Painting: Vicente Carducho and Baroque Spain*, ed. J. Andrews, J. Roe and O. N. Wood, Cardiff 2016, pp. 223–39. On Eugenio Cajés's work for Philip III see M. de Lapuerta Montoya, *Los pintores*

de la Corte de Felipe III: La Casa Real de El Pardo, Madrid 2002, pp. 305–25.

6. *El Greco to Velázquez* (as in n. 4), p. 218. For the claim that Cajés travelled to Rome around 1595 see Jusepe Martínez, *Discursos practicables del nobilísimo arte de la pintura*, Madrid 1866, p. 114: 'En este mismo tiempo floreció otro gran sugeto, que estudió mucho tiempo en Roma, llamado Eugenio Cagés, celebrerrimo pintor'. Martínez's text was written c. 1675. It has been shown that many of his biographical anecdotes were fictitious, but also that the information relating to Rome seems to be based on his first-hand experience in that city around 1625; see idem, *Discursos...*, ed. M. E. Manrique Ara, Madrid 2006, pp. 75–76.

7. The otherwise compelling catalogue of the exhibition *El Greco to Velázquez* (as in n. 4), p. 217, incorrectly translates the references to the Holy Child of La Guardia as 'Guardian Angel', and 'Christ child'.



IMAGE IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

1. Eugenio Cajés, *The Meeting at the Golden Gate*, 1604–05. Madrid, Real Academia de San Fernando

moment the Cercito placed the now lost carved image of the Holy Child's crucifixion on the chapel's high altar, 'such was the devotion of the faithful, that they continually came to [the image] to beseech Our Lord for aid in their labours through the intercession of the Holy Child'.⁸

The church and convent of San Felipe el Real and the Cercito chapel are no longer extant, having been demolished shortly after their expropriation in 1836, as part of the Spanish state's programme of *desamortización* (confiscation) of ecclesiastical property. Cajés's *Meeting* would seem to have remained at San Felipe el Real until it was looted by Napoleonic forces around 1812. The canvas is recorded in Paris in 1813, but returned to Spain in 1814 and transferred to the Real Academia de Bellas Artes, where it is still conserved today.⁹

The purpose of the present study is to redress the previous art-historical oversight with regard to this painting, through an in-depth study of the artistic, devotional and socio-cultural significance of the *Meeting at the Golden Gate* in seventeenth-century Madrid. An analysis of the extensive and to date unpublished archival documentation for the commission Cajés received from Pedro Cercito makes it possible to reconstruct key elements of the lost chapel and its decoration.¹⁰ These sources, when read together with devotional texts that circulated at the time, reveal the personal motives that underpinned the foundation and decoration of the Cercito chapel. In turn, these elements demonstrate how the painting's significance, and in particular its iconography, extend well beyond questions of style and artistic borrowing.

I. PEDRO CERCITO AND THE HOLY CHILD OF LA GUARDIA

The point of departure for this contextual reading of Cajés's *Meeting at the Golden Gate* is the patrons themselves and the devotional programme they commissioned for their chapel. The patron of the chapel, Pedro Cercito Infanzón, was originally from Zaragoza.¹¹ On moving to Madrid, he secured a series of lucrative legal

8. Antonio de Guzmán, *Historia del inocente trinitario el Santo Niño de la Guardia, natural de la ciudad de Toledo*, Madrid 1720, pp. 188–91 (191): 'fue tal la devoción de los Fieles, que de continuo acudían a ella a pedir a Nuestro Señor remedio en sus trabajos por medio del Santo Niño'. The chapel is also briefly mentioned by Francisco de la Vega, *Chronica de la Provincia de Castilla, Leon y Navarra, del Orden de la Santissima Trinidad, Redencion de Cautivos. Segunda Parte*, Madrid 1723, pp. 233–34.

9. The Cercito chapel was partially dismantled as well as re-dedicated (to the Virgin of Humility), in the mid 17th century; see Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid [hereafter: AHPM], P. 5333, Francisco Sierra, fols 173^r–75^v (testament of Francisco Herrera, 15 Aug. 1647), here fol. 173^r; the previous dedication of the chapel is discussed below in this article. In 1667, the Herrera-Cercito family sold the chapel for 4004 ducats; see Guzmán (as in n. 8), pp. 189–90. A fire at San Felipe el Real in 1718 may have damaged the

chapel and, as discussed below in n. 75, Cajés's painting presents degrading that might be related to fire damage. For the painting's appearance in Paris and subsequent return to Spain see Angulo Íñiguez and Pérez Sánchez (as in n. 1), p. 229. For the fire of 1718 and the demolition of the Convent of San Felipe el Real c. 1836 see B. Mediavilla Martín, *El Convento de San Felipe El Real de Madrid*, Guadarrama 2017, pp. 135–38 and 321–27.

10. The two contracts for the paintings, dated 1604 and 1605, were published by C. Pérez Pastor, *Noticias y documentos relativos a la Historia y Literatura españolas* (Memorias de la Real Academia Española, XI), 1914, pp. 108 and 112. However, his résumés of their contents were not accurate, and this went unnoticed in subsequent studies of Cajés's painting by Angulo Íñiguez and Pérez Sánchez (as in n. 1), p. 229.

11. He was the son of the *zaragozano* Pedro Cercito Infanzón and María López, whose family came from a town near Toledo. See AHPM, P. 1214, Francisco



2. Convent of San Felipe el Real in Madrid, 1863. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

positions. By 1591 he was working as a *procurador* (procurator) and, a few years later, he was appointed as one of the forty *procuradores del número* of the *Reales Consejos* (Royal Councils). These men were procedural experts, who assisted clients with lawsuits and represented them at court. The number of posts was strictly controlled and they were costly to obtain, which indicates the Cercito family's wealth. Since his post was at the royal court, between 1601 and 1606 Cercito would have worked between Madrid and Valladolid, where Philip III moved it during this period.¹² In the meantime, he had married Melchora de Avendaño. Over the course of their married life, the couple had three children, Antonio, Beatriz and Francisca, and amassed a considerable fortune. On 10 April 1603, they made a public, visible demonstration of their status, wealth and piety by buying an empty chapel in the church of San Felipe el Real for one thousand ducats.¹³

Suárez, fols 649^r–54^r (will of Pedro Cercito Infanzón, 8 Aug. 1608), here 649^r. The surname Cercito probably comes from a homonymous, now abandoned town in the Pyrenean valley of Acumuer, around 120 km north of Zaragoza. A group of churchmen with the surname Cercito, active in late 16th- and early 17th-century Aragon, may be related to Pedro; this group included Miguel Cercito, bishop of Barbastro from 1586–95 (P. Sáinz de Baranda, *España Sagrada*, Madrid 1862, XLVIII, *tratado* LXXXVI, pp. 51–52), the canon Juan Cercito, who was involved in various legal processes at the turn of the 17th century, and the *licenciado* Miguel Agustín Cercito. Publications authored

by, and mentioning, these Cercitos are available on the websites of Iberian Books (University College Dublin) and the Catálogo Colectivo del Patrimonio Bibliográfico Español.

12. R. L. Kagan, *Lawsuits and Litigants in Castile, 1500–1700*, Chapel Hill NC 1981, pp. 52, 57–60; J. Caballero Aguado, *Historia de los procuradores de los tribunales de Madrid y de su ilustre colegio*, Madrid 2012, pp. 47–92. Guzmán (as in n. 8), p. 189, argues that Cercito was in Valladolid prior to 1603.

13. AHPM, P. 1429, Gabriel de Rojas, fols 415^r–20^v (10 Apr. 1603). The agreement was reached after consultation made by the Augustinians and their prior

The Augustinian monastery of San Felipe el Real had been founded in 1546 with the support of Philip II (Fig. 2). Its privileged location in the centre of the Spanish capital, together with its celebrated *Lonja de San Felipe*, a raised terrace that provided a space for people to exchange news, rumours and gossip—for which it became known as the *mentidero* (talking shop)—made it one of the most frequented churches in the city.¹⁴ Since 1574, it had served as the seat of the confraternity of the Royal Procurators.¹⁵ The couple's decision to establish their family chapel in San Felipe was probably motivated and facilitated by this professional tie. Their unprecedented decision to dedicate the chapel to the Holy Child of La Guardia, however, requires further explanation.

The Cercito chapel at San Felipe el Real was the first, and to the best of my knowledge the only, private chapel ever dedicated to the cult of the Holy Child of La Guardia, a town near Toledo. The cult commemorated a case of alleged ritual murder during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. Around 1490 a *converso*, a Christian of Jewish descent, was convicted of stealing a consecrated wafer, for which he was imprisoned. After weeks of torture, he and a group of Jews and other *conversos* of Jewish descent confessed to a story that echoes common tropes from medieval anti-Semitic blood libels.¹⁶ According to their confessions under torture, the group had been plotting to cast a spell on the Spanish Inquisition, for which they required a consecrated host and the heart of a Christian child. To this end, they had abducted a boy in Toledo and kept him in La Guardia until Good Friday, when they subjected him to a re-enactment of Christ's Passion. The Dominican Grand Inquisitor, Fray Tomás de Torquemada (1420–98), took a special interest in the case. After a long trial, the accused were tortured and burnt at an *Auto de Fe* held in Ávila on 16 November 1491.¹⁷ The victim's identity remained obscure during the trial and his body was never found.¹⁸ The Holy Child's hagiographers, including the Trinitarian Guzmán, later argued that he had bodily ascended to heaven, like Christ.¹⁹ By the time Pedro Cercito dedicated his chapel to the Holy Child, this narrative had been commemorated in an altarpiece displayed at the

Agustín de la Mota, who decided to raise Cercito's initial offer of 800 ducats to 1,000. See also Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional [hereafter: AHN], Clero, Secular Regular, L.6842, fol. 52^r (8 Apr. 1603); and Mediavilla Martín (as in n. 9), p. 11.

14. Gil González Dávila, *Teatro de las Grandezas de la Villa de Madrid*, Madrid 1623, pp. 243–46; Mediavilla Martín (as in n. 9). On the *mentidero* see F. J. Castro Ibaseta, 'Mentidero de Madrid: la corte como comedia', in *Opinión pública y espacio urbano en la Edad Moderna*, ed. A. Castillo, J. S. Amelang and C. Serrano Sánchez, Gijón 2010, pp. 43–58; and F. Rodríguez Marín, 'Cervantes y el mentidero de San Felipe', *Revista de la Biblioteca, Archivo y Museo*, 1, 1924, pp. 443–50.

15. Caballero Aguado (as in n. 12), pp. 57–60.

16. For further reading on anti-Semitic blood libels see R. P.-C. Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany*, New Haven CT 1988;

The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook of Anti-Semitic Folklore, ed. A. Dundes, Madison WI 1991; E. M. Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe*, Oxford 2015; and M. Teter, *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth*, Cambridge MA 2020.

17. More broadly on *Autos de Fe* see F. Bethencourt, 'The "Auto da fé": Ritual and Imagery', this *Journal*, LV, 1992, pp. 155–68; and C. Maqueda Abreu, *El Auto de Fe*, Madrid 1992.

18. The original records have been lost but some of the trial documents were published by F. Fita, 'La verdad sobre el martirio del santo Niño de la Guardia, o sea el proceso y quema (16 noviembre, 1491) del judío Jucé Franco en Ávila', and 'Memoria del santo Niño de la Guardia, escrita en 1544', *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, XI, 1887, pp. 7–160.

19. Guzmán (as in n. 8), pp. 108–10.

shrine of La Guardia, located on the outskirts of La Guardia itself, and in a number of widely circulated devotional texts.²⁰

The La Guardia cult can be seen as part of the broader phenomenon of cultic anti-Judaism that became widespread in late medieval and early modern Europe. Scholars have shown that cases of Jews allegedly profaning consecrated hosts and sacred objects, which were then venerated by Christian populations, occurred in Germany, Austria and beyond. These objects were considered to be miraculous relics and pilgrimage sites were built around them.²¹ On the other hand, less is known about the religious cults that grew up in the wake of accusations of ritual infanticide.²² With regard to the Holy Child of La Guardia, historians have assumed that, after the trial, a devotional cult swiftly emerged and quickly spread across the whole of Spain.²³ Yet the scarcity of information recording the early years of the cult of the Holy Child suggests that devotion was mostly local. Shrines and devotional practices were established at the site of the purported martyrdom in La Guardia, and at the monastery of Santo Tomás in Ávila, which housed the stolen host.²⁴ The earliest recorded mention of the boy as a saint was in a text written by the La Guardia physician Damián de Vegas in 1544. This is now known only from a copy made c. 1573 by the Toledan dramatist and chronicler Sebastián de Horozco.²⁵ In 1583, the new *señor* of La Guardia, Juan Cristóbal de Guardiola, supported the first printed treatise dedicated to the Holy Child, written by Rodrigo de Yepes, a local monk who was then at the royal monastery of San Jerónimo in Madrid.²⁶ A few years later, around 1587, the Trinitarian Order took charge of the sanctuary.²⁷

20. The altarpiece is now lost; for engravings believed to be based on it see below, p. 270 and Figs 5–7. For two commemorative texts see nn. 25–26.

21. The central references on this issue are focussed on host profanation. See M. B. Merback, *Pilgrimage and Pogrom: Violence, Memory, and Visual Culture at the Host-Miracle Shrines of Germany and Austria*, Chicago 2012; C. W. Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond*, Philadelphia 2007; and M. Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews*, New Haven CT 1999.

22. Despite the rich literature on the phenomenon of ritual infanticide, only a few studies address its development in the form of religious cults. See D. E. Katz, *The Jew in the Art of the Italian Renaissance*, Philadelphia 2008, pp. 119–57; Hsia (as in n. 16); and A. Vauchez, 'Antisémitisme et canonisation populaire: saint Werner ou Vernier († 1287), enfant martyr et patron des vigneron', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, CXXVI, 1982, pp. 65–79.

23. It is not possible here to discuss at length the cultural impact of the La Guardia episode in late 15th to early 17th-century Spain. Fita's publication (as in n. 18) aroused interest among historians and it has since been claimed that the incident played a significant role in the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.

The most comprehensive studies on the case remain Y. F. Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, 1, Berlin 1929, consulted here in the Spanish edition, *Historia de los judíos en la España cristiana*, Madrid 1981, pp. 621–38; and H. C. Lea, 'El Santo Niño de La Guardia', *English Historical Review*, iv, 1889, pp. 229–50.

24. For the veneration of the stolen host see Fita (as in n. 18), pp. 152–55; and Martín Martínez Moreno, *Historia del martirio del santo niño de La Guardia*, Madrid 1786, pp. 65–66. The evidence on the early cult of the Holy Child is discussed below.

25. Sebastián de Horozco, 'Noticias curiosas sobre diferentes materias'; Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid [hereafter: BNE] MS 9175, fols 32^r–41^v. Most of the other information now available comes from later hagiographies with specific agendas related to proving the Holy Child's long-standing cult (such as Guzmán, discussed below in n. 27); see also Martínez Moreno (as in n. 24). I differ from Lea (as in n. 23), pp. 246–50, in treating these sources with caution. For an overview of the imagery of the Holy Child, with no attention to its religious cult, see P. Rodríguez Barral, *La imagen del judío en la España medieval*, Barcelona 2009, pp. 215–33.

26. Rodrigo de Yepes, *Historia de la muerte y glorioso martirio del sancto Innocente, que llaman de la Guardia, natural de la ciudad de Toledo*, San Jerónimo el Real 1583.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the religious cult had developed two distinctive facets, one socio-political, the other devotional. Firstly, the cult of the Holy Child provided a focus for the sustained public discourse against *conversos*. Despite being baptised Christians, *conversos* were never freed from social prejudice against their 'impure' lineage and the suspicion of their being heretics. Underpinning this social anxiety was the belief that impious tendencies were transmitted by blood. The Spanish Inquisition had been established precisely in order to fight against crypto-Judaism. The upper echelons of Spanish society, and particularly the ecclesiastical institutions and military orders, sought to protect themselves against infiltration from any such religious impurity by excluding *conversos* on the basis of a set of discriminatory laws, the so-called *Estatutos de Limpieza de Sangre* ('purity of blood statutes').²⁸ There was a strong tie between the Holy Child of La Guardia and this wider context of anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim tension. Not only had the original libel accused *conversos* of the boy's death, but a compilation of manuscripts indicates its direct connection with the *Limpieza de Sangre* statutes. Damián de Vegas's now lost hagiographic account was written only three years before Archbishop Silíceo approved the statutes in Toledo Cathedral in 1547; significantly, Sebastián de Horozco's copy of that text is appended to a series of documents which include a transcript of Silíceo's statutes.²⁹

Over the next sixty or so years, the widespread application of the *Limpieza de Sangre* statutes throughout Spain led to them becoming the subject of debate. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the effectiveness of investigating indefinite generations of ancestry in search of 'impure' origins had been called into question, and some advocated limiting the statutes to three generations only.³⁰ We may assume that Pedro Cercito, in particular, was not among them. In 1591, he had acted as procurator in the notorious trial against Hernán Suárez Franco, a member of a rich *converso* family from Toledo.³¹ The case centred around Suárez Franco's claim to *hidalguía*, a noble status that offered fiscal exemptions, as well as the recognition of the purity of blood of the person's lineage.³² One of the strategies used by the litigants was the accusation that he was a descendant of the Jewish Franco family, five members of which had been condemned for murdering the Holy Child of La Guardia. The effectiveness of this legal strategy was enhanced by the circulation of existing devotional hagiographies of the Holy Child and the

27. The most notable Trinitarian publication is Guzmán's *Historia* written in 1720 (as in n. 8). This friar was well-informed and had access to the now largely lost archives of the shrine of La Guardia and San Felipe el Real. Nevertheless, his book seemingly contains several exaggerations about the antiquity and popularity of the cult (such as his dubious affirmation that king Ferdinand, the emperor Charles V and Philip II visited the sanctuary) that earlier sources do not sustain.

28. The fundamental study remains A. A. Sicroff, *Le controverses des statuts de 'pureté de sang' en Espagne du XV au XVII siècle*, Paris 1960.

29. Madrid, BNE MS 9175, fols 32^r–66^r. See n. 25 above.

30. Sicroff (as in n. 28), pp. 182–209.

31. On the Suárez Franco family of Toledo see L. Martz, *A Network of Converso Families in Early Modern Toledo: Assimilating a Minority*, Ann Arbor 2003.

32. Pedro Cercito signed a memorial related to the case in Madrid on 22 Dec. 1591; Madrid, Real Biblioteca, XIV/3040, fol. 684^v. This volume is analysed in M. Morales Borrero and R. A. Martínez de Bergantes, 'Noticia sobre el bachiller Fernando de Rojas. La "iuris allegatio" de Hernán Suárez Franco', *Cuadernos para investigación de la literatura hispánica*, xxvii, 2002, pp. 81–142.

publication of new ones, detailing the names of the alleged assailants. Suárez Franco bitterly complained to the Inquisition that his opponents were using a 'printed book on the matter' as an evidence of their false accusation.³³ He tried, unsuccessfully, to counter the accusations by commissioning an alternative hagiography in the form of a *comedia* from Lope de Vega, whose *El niño inocente de la Guardia* (c. 1597 or 1598) meticulously obfuscated any reference to the Franco family and their purported crimes.³⁴ The memory of the alleged ritual murder case thus took on a clear political significance in the wider tensions over blood purity, and its concerns were echoed by a range of other contemporary anti-*converso* religious cults.³⁵

In light of this burgeoning socio-political and devotional significance of the cult of the Holy Child, and Pedro Cercito's personal involvement in a prominent legal case in which the cult was cited, it may be argued, with some confidence, that a key dimension of the Cercitos' dedication of their chapel to the Holy Child of La Guardia was to make a bold anti-*converso* statement at the heart of Madrid. Indeed, as procurator in a lengthy legal case he had demonstrated his commitment to the defence of the 'pure' Christian tiers of Spanish society.

The political dimension of the chapel was combined with the devotional concerns of the cult of the Holy Child of La Guardia that had developed over the course of the sixteenth century. The cult swiftly gained renown among parents who sought divine protection for themselves and their offspring during childbirth and their children's infancy.³⁶ By the late sixteenth century, the small shrine erected on the purported site of the boy's crucifixion had become a centre of pilgrimage for the people of La Guardia and its surroundings. Families went to the shrine to pray for divine intercession and sought miraculous cures for their sick or injured children, and even the resuscitation of those who had died. Given the absence of

33. Madrid, AHN, Inquisición, 3075, exp. 98, s.f. (letter of Hernán Suárez Franco to the High Council of the Inquisition, 25 June 1586): 'y lo andava diciendo a todos y mostrando las sentencias y el libro ympreso dello para que se estendiese esta mala opinion'. I owe this reference to Felipe Vidales Yepes (as in n. 26) was the only book on the Holy Child in circulation at the time. A hagiography of the Holy Child was included in Juan de Marieta's *Historia ecclesiastica y flores de santos de España*, Cuenca 1594 and 1596; this was later published as a separate volume, Juan de Marieta, *Tratado del santo inocente de la Guardia, martyr, natural de la ciudad de Toledo y de santa Casilda virgen, de la mesma ciudad*, Madrid 1604.

34. See Lope de Vega, *El Niño inocente de La Guardia*, ed. A. J. Farrell, London 1985; for discussion see A. Madroñal Durán, 'Nuevos datos sobre "El niño inocente de La Guardia"', de Lope de Vega', *RILCE: Revista de filología hispánica*, xxxi, 2017, pp. 283–301; and A. Samson, 'Anti-Semitism, Class, and Lope de Vega's "El Niño Inocente de La Guardia"', *Hispanic Research Journal: Iberian and Latin American Studies*, III, 2002, pp. 107–22.

35. One of these was the cult devoted to St Pedro Arbués, an inquisitor from Zaragoza who was allegedly murdered by *conversos* in 1485. See M. Scholz-Hänsel, 'Arte e Inquisición: Pedro Arbués y el poder de las imágenes', *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte*, vi, 1994, pp. 205–12; D. Rico Camps, 'La imagen de Pedro Arbués. Literatura renacentista y arte medieval en torno a Don Alonso de Aragón', *Locus amoenus*, I, 1995, pp. 107–19; and idem, 'El sepulcro de Pedro de Arbués y su contexto', *Boletín del Museo e Instituto Camón Aznar*, LIX, 1995, pp. 169–204. A later example was the notorious case of the profanation of the Cristo de la Paciencia in 1632; see F. Pereda, *Crimen e ilusión. El arte de la verdad en el Siglo de Oro*, Madrid 2017, pp. 209–56, esp. 242–56; and J. I. Pulido Serrano, *Injurias a Cristo. Religión, política y antijudaísmo en el siglo XVII*, Alcalá de Henares 2002.

36. Yepes (as in n. 26), fol. 53^v: 'en niños quebrados, y en tullidos y enfermos y trabajados'. Copied in Marieta 1594 (as in n. 33), fol. 58^r. The martyr's intercessory specialisation is not present in Sebastián de Horozco's c. 1573 copy of the 1544 text by Damián de Vegas (as in n. 25).



3. Anonymous, *The Martyrdom of the Holy Child of La Guardia*, c. 1572. La Guardia, Shrine of the Holy Child

the martyr's corporeal relics, the focus of this pious devotion was a wooden relief of the Holy Child's crucifixion, which depicted two of his Jewish and *converso* executioners removing his heart (Fig. 3). According to the legend, this sixteenth-century image worked miracles and was itself a votive image; the sculptor had been brought back from the dead as a child through the Holy Child's intercession.³⁷

37. Sebastián de Nieva, *El Niño Inocente, Hijo de Toledo, y Martyr en la Guardia*, Madrid 1628, fol. 173^r; Guzmán (as in n. 8), pp. 146–47. The image is

recorded in the sanctuary in 1583 by Yepes (as in n. 26), fols 13^v–14^f.

Over time the families who visited the shrine filled its interior with votive panels and wax *ex-votos*, which further attested to the efficacy of the Holy Child's image. Guzmán, in 1720, transcribed sixty-eight votive inscriptions which were present at the site near La Guardia at the time of his visit. Not all of them gave the age of the beneficiaries, but fifty-four inscriptions recorded votive offerings made by parents on behalf of miraculous healings and the resuscitation of their children. In contrast two of the inscriptions record the Holy Child's intercession to overcome difficulties related to maternity.³⁸ Only two of these votive images remain in the shrine today, recording two families' gratitude to the Holy Child for his intercession: one for the miraculous healing of a child (Fig. 4), and the other for an infant having been brought back from the dead following a carriage accident.³⁹ As parents of three children, Pedro Cercito and Melchora de Avendaño may have invoked the Holy Child of La Guardia in matters relating to them and also to procreation, contributing in turn to their decision to dedicate their family chapel to this martyr.



4. Anonymous, votive tablet of Matías Díaz, 1639.
La Guardia, Shrine of the Holy Child

II. THE CERCITO CHAPEL

The chapel of Pedro Cercito and Melchora de Avendaño was located on the left side of the nave in the church of San Felipe el Real, between the side entrance and another chapel, to which it was connected by a door. When they purchased the chapel it was not dedicated to the cult of any saint. Its previous 'images and adornments' were retained by the convent authorities and, presumably moved to other locations.⁴⁰ In his will, drawn up in 1608, Pedro Cercito stipulated the chapel's liturgical programme, reflecting devotional, professional and family concerns. Around that time, he had been appointed to the Toledo tribunal of the Inquisition

38. Guzmán (as in n. 8), pp. 273–313.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 286 and 291. I visited the chapel most recently in Oct. 2017.

40. This emerges from the purchase document of 1603. AHPM, 1429, fol. 416^r: 'la qual dicha capilla sitio y edificio della le vendemos por la forma y manera que al presente esta y sin las ymaxenes y demas adereços que en la dicha capilla se tiene porque todo esto queda para nos y este dicho monesterio y convento'. The lack of references to a previous chapel

dedication in this document, as well as in the related Augustinian documentation (as in n. 13) and earlier sources, does not support statements by the 18th-century chroniclers Guzmán (as in n. 8), p. 189, and De la Vega (as in n. 8), p. 234, that the chapel was a popular centre of devotion to a miraculous image of the Holy Child by 1594. This appears to be another of Guzmán's dubious affirmations about the antiquity and popularity of the cult, as discussed above at n. 27.

as both a notary and *familiar*, a position granted to laymen charged with detecting cases of heresy.⁴¹ He established six annual chanted masses and a series of weekly masses. A sung mass commemorating the Holy Child of La Guardia was to be celebrated annually on the first of April, the day of the martyr's alleged death. The lives of Pedro and Melchora and of their family and friends were to be commemorated on the feasts of St Anthony of Padua, St Peter Apostle, St Anne and All Saints. Pedro's position as procurator was also acknowledged: a sung mass was held in honour of the royal procurators on the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin. The couple's deep-rooted allegiance to the Inquisition was likewise marked in the weekly masses, held every Monday, in honour of the Supreme Council of the Inquisition, the inquisitors of the Toledo Tribunal, and all the representatives and *familiares* of the Inquisition resident in Madrid. The selection and appointment of chapel's patrons and chaplains, as well as the granting of permission to relatives, friends and descendants who wished to be buried there, were to be governed, in perpetuity, by the *Limpieza de Sangre* statutes. Moreover, Pedro Cercito specified that his own descendants could only be buried in the chapel 'if they marry Old Christians, untarnished by any race of Moor, Jews or any other condemned sect'. The inquisitors of the Toledo Tribunal were nominated to ensure these regulations were upheld.⁴²

In 1604, Cercito commissioned the master mason Fernando Gutiérrez to renovate the chapel's interior, and the sculptor Juan de Porres to coordinate the construction of two altarpieces (*retablos*).⁴³ As will be discussed in more detail below, the main altarpiece consisted of a series of paintings dedicated to the martyrdom of the Holy Child of La Guardia, while the lateral one displayed a single painting, the *Meeting at the Golden Gate*. Following common practice in Spain, Juan de Porres subcontracted the different elements of the altarpieces to a number of sculptors, carpenters and painters. The first of these to be engaged was the young artist Eugenio Cajés,⁴⁴ who was commissioned by Porres to produce six

41. Cercito's role as *familiar* of the Inquisition is only stated in his will. Notarial documents dated between Apr. 1603 and Jan. 1608 describe him only as royal procurator (*procurador del número y consejos de su majestad*). His appointment to the Inquisition is probably connected to the fact that his wife's two sisters were both married to *familiares*. See AHPM, 1214, fols 649^r, 652^r.

42. AHPM, 1214, fols 652^v–54^r (here 654^r): 'si se casaren ... con cristianos biejos limpios de toda rraça de moro e judios y otra secta reprobada'. I have found no evidence that the cult of the Holy Child was ever connected to inquisitorial patronage, despite what is suggested by M. Scholz-Hänsel, '¿La Inquisición como mecenas? Imágenes al servicio de la disciplina y la propaganda inquisitorial', *Boletín del Seminario de Arte y Arqueología*, LX, 1994, pp. 301–17; and idem, 'El Santo Niño de La Guardia: La pintura como medio de propaganda Inquisitorial', *La Balsa de la Medusa*, xxx/xxxI, 1994, pp. 43–62.

43. Both contracts were signed the same day: 7 May 1604. Cercito's contract with Juan de Porres is AHPM, P. 1206, Francisco Suárez, fols 493^r–94^v; his contract with Fernando Gutiérrez follows on fols 495^r–96^v.

44. The other subcontractors were all engaged later. The *dorado, estofado, encarnado* and minor painting of the altarpieces were given to the painter Andrés Cerezo. See AHPM, P. 3282, Bartolomé de Dueñas, fols 34^r–35^v (25 Apr. 1606). The painter Luis de Carvajal appears to have carried out two minor scenes for the lower *banco* of the altarpiece of the Holy Child; AHPM, 3282, fols 556^v–57^v and 576^r–77^v (24 and 25 Sep. 1607); and AHPM, 3282, fols 685^r–94^r (15 Jan. 1608), 'las dos ystorias de pintura que estan avaxo del dicho retablo que hizo el dicho Luis de Carvajal pintor'. Cercito also paid 150 *reales* to the sculptor Antonio Riera; AHPM, 3282, fol. 689^r (15 Jan. 1608).

paintings for the altarpieces. At that time, Cajés had seemingly yet to make his name as a painter. Porres had previously collaborated with his father, Patricio Cajés, who probably recommended his son for the commissions, no doubt also showing Porres examples of his work.⁴⁵ It is also possible that Pedro Cercito had occasion to meet Patricio and Eugenio himself, in 1603, when he acted as procurator on behalf of the Academy of Painting of Madrid.⁴⁶ Whether or not he did so, however, it is clear from the documents that relate specifically to the work on the two altarpieces that although Cercito specified the iconographic programme for both of them, he did not specify the artists.

The first document is a contract between Porres and Cajés, signed on 7 September 1604. This established that the price of Cajés's paintings would be decided following an appraisal of the work, and two thirds of the total would go to Cajés, one third to Porres.⁴⁷ Nine months later, that contract was succeeded by a new one, drafted on 5 June 1605, stipulating that Cajés would receive three quarters of the appraisal price, minus 900 *reales*; the rest would go to Porres.⁴⁸ Crucially, this modification was accompanied by a significant change: portraits of Pedro Cercito and Melchora de Avendaño were to be added to the main altarpiece, and Cajés was asked to be ready to add some portraits to the *Meeting*, should he be requested to do so.⁴⁹ He was instructed to go to Madrid to 'paint [studies for] the aforementioned portraits',⁵⁰ which suggests that at the time he was dividing his time between Madrid and Ávila, where he was working on an altarpiece for the city's cathedral.⁵¹ Evidently, the painter had demanded better payment conditions from Porres, claiming that he was a skilled artist and deserved more money, commensurate with the expansion of the original commission.

Regrettably, no depiction or description has been identified of the main altar of the Cercito chapel, devoted to the Holy Child of La Guardia. Cercito's contract with the mason Gutiérrez ordered that his coat of arms was to be displayed on the frontal of the altar.⁵² His contract with Porres specified that a carved crucifixion

45. See Pérez Pastor (as in n. 10), pp. 95, 107. For Patricio Cajés (Arezzo c.1540–Madrid 1612) see Lapuerta Montoya (as in n. 5), pp. 71–128.

46. See AHPM, P. 2188, Alonso Carmona, fols 1371^r–74^v (22 June 1603). This document has been published by A. Matilla Tascón, 'La Academia Madrileña de San Lucas', *Goya*, CLXI–LXII, 1981, pp. 260–65 (261), who, however, transcribed Cercito's surname incorrectly as 'Jerjito'.

47. AHPM, P. 2267, Diego Ruiz de Tapia, fols 902^r–03^r (7 Sep. 1604), here fol. 902^v.

48. AHPM, 2268, fols 460^v–62^v, 464^r (7 June 1605). As I argue below, the *Meeting at the Golden Gate* had probably been painted or was nearing completion by this time. An unspecified number of paintings by Cajés were appraised by the painters Jerónimo de Mora (for Porres) and Antonio de Iturbe (for Cercito); see AHPM, 3282, fols 685^r–94^r (15 Jan. 1608); this document is an agreement between Pedro Cercito and Juan de Porres regarding the payment of different elements

of the altarpieces, but it does not give any information on the prices of Cajés's canvases.

49. AHPM, 2268, fol. 461^v: 'y mas a de haçer otro quadro grande de once pies de alto poco mas o menos y seis pies con la moldura de ancho poco mas o menos, que se a de poner enfrente de la puerta de la dicha capilla en un nicho que para este efecto esta hecho y ha de ser de la ystoria del señor san joaquin y señora santa ana a la puerta dorada y si la parte quisiere que se pongan en el dicho quadro grande algunos rretratos se an de poner'.

50. AHPM, 2268, fol. 461^{r-v}: 'para los quales a de traer al dicho Eugenio Caxes a esta villa de donde sacare o dichos rretratos'.

51. A few weeks after having been commissioned by Porres for the Cercito chapel, in Oct. 1604, Cajés was commissioned to paint the now lost *retablo* of the chapel of San Segundo in Ávila Cathedral, which was still unfinished in Feb. 1605. See Angulo Íñiguez and Pérez Sánchez (as in n. 1), pp. 221–23, 227.

of the Holy Child in half relief was to occupy the central space of its second storey. Beneath this sculpture was to be another of the apostle Peter, the patron's name saint, holding the keys of heaven. The only other elements mentioned are five paintings representing unspecified episodes of the Holy Child's martyrdom.⁵³ All of these five paintings were assigned by Porres to Eugenio Cajés, although he was permitted to re-assign two of them to his father Patricio.⁵⁴ In Cajés's second contract it was established that portraits of Pedro Cercito accompanied by St Peter, and of Melchora de Avendaño alongside 'the saint she was named after, or one of her choice', were to be added in the two lower panels of the series representing the martyrdom of the Holy Child.⁵⁵

The choice of a carved wooden relief for the central image of the *retablo* suggests that it was meant to be a copy of the miraculous image of the sanctuary of La Guardia (Fig. 3). Reproductions of miraculous images were often considered to retain the thaumaturgical powers of their originals.⁵⁶ Guzmán states that the relief displayed in the Cercito chapel so stirred the devotion of residents of Madrid that many of them went on to pay for perpetual masses to be said in the chapel.⁵⁷ Similarly, it is possible that Cajés's paintings of the Holy Child's martyrdom drew on those included in the early sixteenth-century altarpiece that was displayed on the high altar of the sanctuary. That altarpiece is now lost, but a series of engravings of the Holy Child's mock trial (Fig. 5), flagellation (Fig. 6) and crowning with thorns (Fig. 7), published by Rodrigo de Yepes in 1583, are believed to be based on it.⁵⁸ Later woodcuts and engravings depicting additional episodes were published

52. AHPM, 1206, fol. 495^{r-v}: 'Yten es condicion que el altar que a de hacer de nuevo lo a de chapar un frontal de azulexos y a los lados y todo con unas armas que el dicho Pedro Zerzito le diese que an destar enmedio del frontal.'

53. AHPM, 1206, fol. 493^{r-v}: 'y se declara que en la primera orden y caxa denmedio a de acer un san pedro apostol con su libro y llaves rredondo. Y en la segunda caxa de la calle de enmedio a de acer el crucificamiento del niño ynocente de la guardia de medio rrelieve y en los demas tableros en cumplimiento de sus cantidades segun la dicha traza firmada se le ha de dar al dicho Juan de Porres las ystorias que a de poner en ellas tocante al nyño ynocente'.

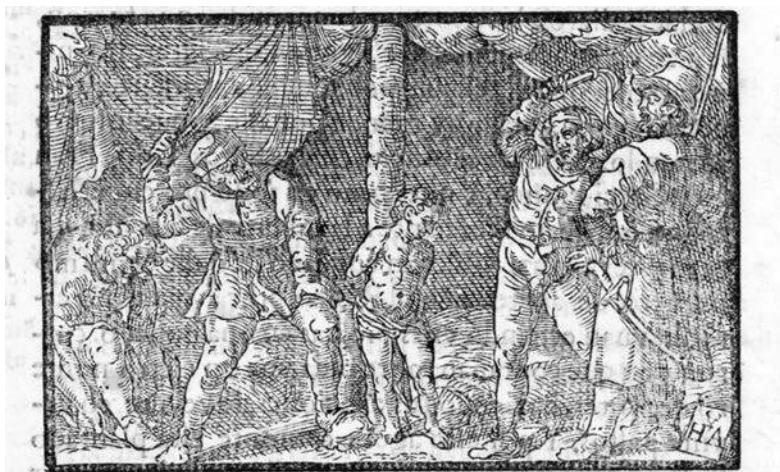
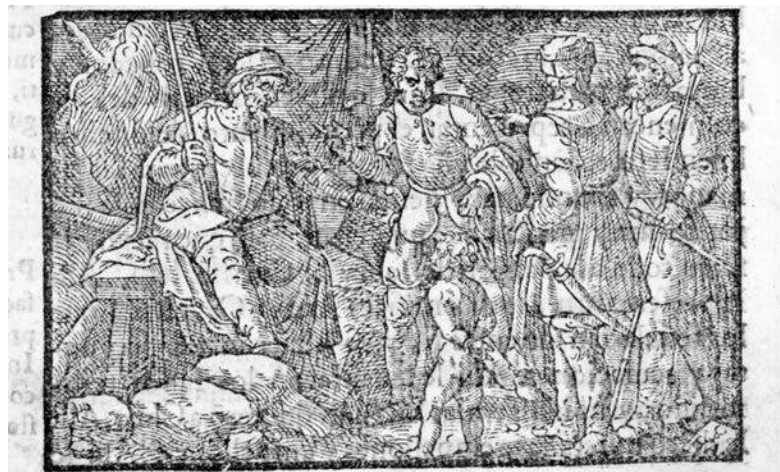
54. AHPM, 2267, fol. 902^{r-v}: 'y porque en el dicho rretablo se an de hacer los dichos çinco quadros de pinturas y el otro de san joaquin y santa ana se an concertado y por la presente se concertan en esta manera que el dicho Eugenio Caxes toma a su cargo la pintura de los dichos seis quadros de su mano los quatro, y los otros dos que el los señalaren a de haçer Patriçio Caxes pintor su padre de su mano, que se los a de dar el dicho Eugenio Caxes si quisiere de manera que cumpla con pintarlos el dicho Eugenio Caxes todos seis de su mano/o los quatro y los otros dos de la del dicho su padre como sean de los del rretablo y no el grande de santa ana que este a de ser de mano del dicho Eugenio y no de otra'. There is no archival

evidence to confirm whether or not the reassignments to Patricio ever happened. However, the fact that he is not mentioned in the appraisal documents (AHPM, 3282, fols 685^r–94^r, 15 Jan. 1608) strongly suggests that Patricio did not participate in the commission.

55. AHPM, 2268, fol. 461^r: 'Que el dicho Juan de Porres da como tiene dada la pintura de pinçel del retablo al dicho Eugenio Caxes y el la toma, que son çinco quadros para el rretablo de la historia del niño ynocente de la Guardia y en los tableros de la primera orden a de aver dos rretratos uno del dicho Pedro Cercito con San Pedro su abogado, y otro de su muger del dicho Cercito con el santo de su nombre o el que ella pidiere. Ambos rretratos a los dos lados'. The instruction concerning the saint to be depicted with Melchora de Avendaño is curious. I have been unable to find any reference to a St Melchora in Spanish devotional culture. Probably, the idea was similar to the portraits of Juan de Miranda and his wife in Pastrana. See L. Ruiz Gómez, 'Maíno en Pastrana: el "Retablo de los Miranda"', *Boletín del Museo del Prado*, xxiv, 2006, pp. 14–23.

56. On belief in the miraculous power of sacred images and their replicas see J. Garnett and G. Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles: Transforming Images in Italy, From the Renaissance to the Present*, London 2013, pp. 191–219.

57. Guzmán (as in n. 8), p. 191.



5, 6, 7. Engravings showing scenes from the martyrdom of the Holy Child of La Guardia, from Rodrigo de Yepes, *Historia de la muerte y glorioso martyrio del sancto Innocente, ...*, San Jerónimo el Real 1583: the mock trial, flagellation, and crowning with thorns

by Guzmán and the author of an eighteenth-century print recounting the story; some of these may also have been based on the altarpiece at the La Guardia sanctuary.⁵⁹

Cercito ordered Gutiérrez to transform an existing 'high niche' on the eastern wall of the chapel into a secondary altar, and Porres to supply an altarpiece for it, depicting St Joachim and St Anne.⁶⁰ The importance of this painting is signalled in Porres's first contract with Cajés, which specified that 'the big one of St Anne'—by implication, the largest of the entire commission—had to be 'by the hand of the said Eugenio, and not by another'.⁶¹ Cajés's revised contract of June 1605 gives the measurements: besides corresponding satisfactorily with the *Meeting at the Golden Gate* without its frame (2.72 × 1.43 metres), these facilitate a reconstruction of the altar (Fig. 8). As we have seen, the revised contract raised the possibility of adding portraits to the *Meeting*. The document also confirms that he had already started work on the painting,⁶² so he might have had to adjust the composition to accommodate these additions.

III. ANNE AND JOACHIM AT THE GOLDEN GATE

The choice of the encounter between Anne and Joachim as the sole focus of an altarpiece was quite unusual in early modern Spain, since the subject was usually depicted only within cycles of the lives of St Anne and of the Virgin. Furthermore, the traditional view that the Meeting at the Golden Gate and the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin were effectively the same episode had come into question. It is, therefore, necessary to identify the intended significance of the singular altarpiece commissioned by Pedro Cercito. To that end, the remainder of this article will consider the devotional, ecclesiastical and iconographical traditions which lay behind the commission, and scrutinise the relationship between the two altars within the chapel as a whole.

The embrace between Anne and Joachim at the gate of Jerusalem originated in the *Protoevangelium Jacobi*, or Infancy Gospel of James, a second-century text that described the birth and life of Mary, as well as the infancy of Jesus.⁶³ The work

58. Yepes (as in n. 26), fols 13^v–14^r, 30^v, 31^v, 32^v. See Rodríguez Barral (as in n. 21), pp. 229–30; and Scholz-Hänsel, '¿La Inquisición como mecenas?' (as in n. 42), pp. 305–06.

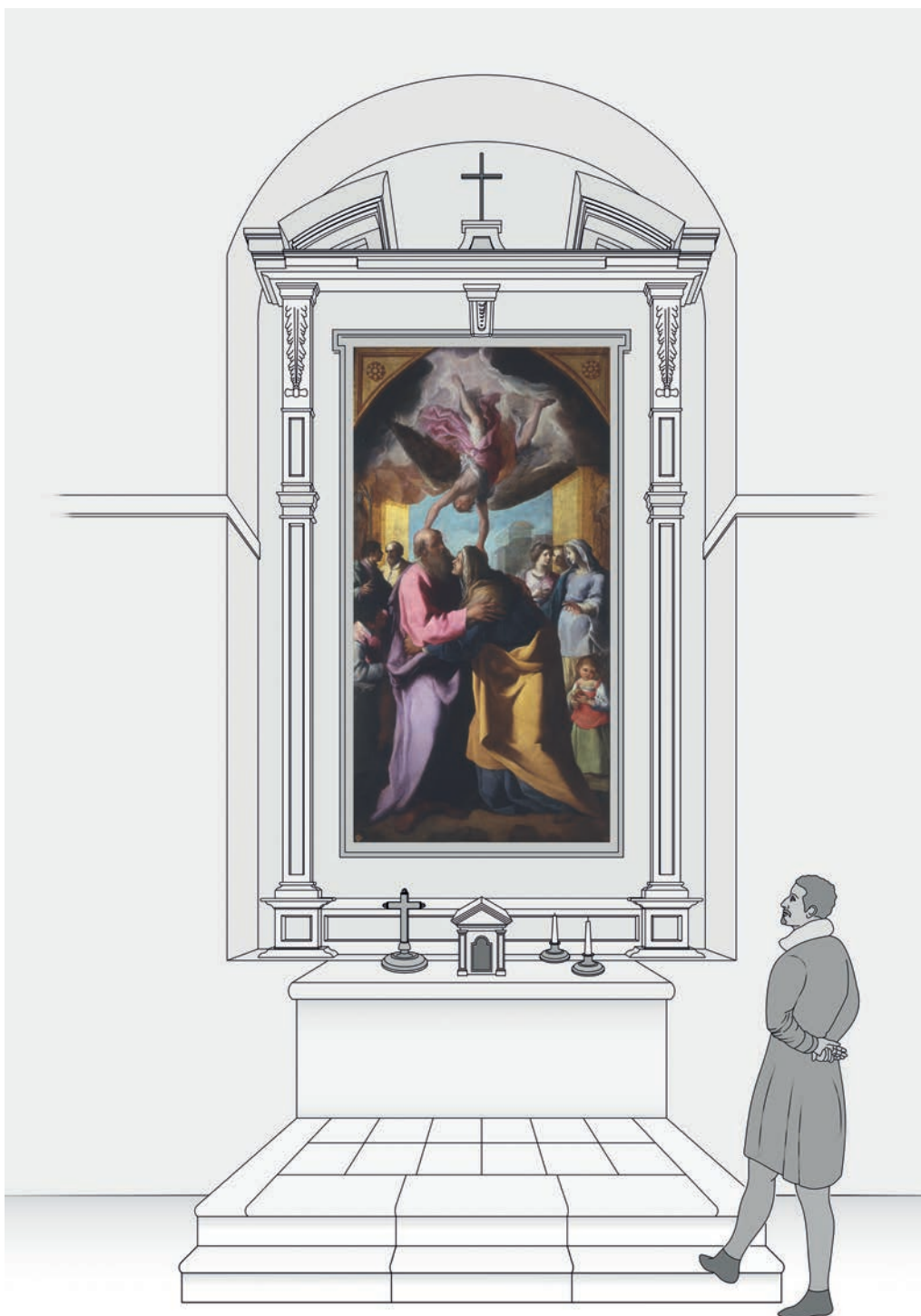
59. Guzmán (as in n. 8); and Andrés de la Muela, *Vero Retrato del Santo Niño Inocente de la Guardia*, 1776 (BNE, INVENT/43500). By 1720, the 16th-century altarpiece had been moved to a lateral wall of the high altar; see Guzmán, p. 145. The latest record of the altarpiece still in the sanctuary is in 1786; see Martínez Moreno (as in n. 24), p. 87.

60. AHPM, 1206, fol. 495^v (to Gutiérrez): 'Yten se obliga y es condicion que a de adereçar el otro altar del nicho al alto que estubiere un altar para decir missa en el'. Ibid., fol. 493^v (to Porres): 'demas de un quadro de la gloriosa santa ana ... san xuaquin con su moldura enbuelta y la historia dello asentada e puesta

en la capilla en donde se le ordenare poner el dicho Pedro Zerzito'.

61. AHPM, 2267, fol. 902^v (cited above, n. 54).

62. AHPM, 2268, fol. 460^v: 'y debaxo del dicho concierto el dicho Juan de Porres avia encargado al dicho Eugenio Caxes la dicha pintura, y para ello en diversas veces le avia dado trecientos y sesenta y dos reales y los lienços y el dicho Eugenio Caxes avia comenzado y proseguia en la dicha pintura'. The use of the word *pintura*, especially in singular form, confirms that they were referring to the *Meeting at the Golden Gate* as the started and yet unfinished painting. Throughout the archival documents, the *Meeting* is primarily referred to as *quadro*, *quadro grande* and *pintura*, while the scenes of the martyrdom of the Holy Child are referred to as *tableros*, *historias*, *quadros*, and *retablo*.



8. Reconstruction: Madrid, San Felipe el Real, Cercito Chapel, lateral altar

narrates how Joachim, rejected from the temple because he was childless, retired to the wilderness for forty days to pray and fast. Anne, his wife, together with her slave Juthine, mourned his absence. On seeing a nest of sparrows on a laurel tree in her garden, Anne lamented her infertility and prayed for a child. Then, Anne and Joachim individually received announcements from an angel that they would conceive a child. Joachim went back to Jerusalem with his flocks and met his wife, who was waiting for him at the Golden Gate. Anne joyfully threw her arms around Joachim's neck and together they celebrated the conception of their child. This apocryphal episode was widely disseminated through Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* (c. 1260).⁶⁴

Cajés represented Anne raising her gaze towards Joachim and clasping his waist with her arms, while Joachim supports her by the shoulders. A winged angel descends from an opening in the heavens, arms extended, and lays one hand on the head of each saint, a gesture symbolising their divine union. The presence of the angel during the encounter, although absent in the textual sources, was well and long established as an iconographic tradition which, although by that time largely discarded in Italy,⁶⁵ still retained widespread currency in early modern Spanish visual culture.⁶⁶ While adhering to this tradition, Cajés nonetheless enhanced it,



9. Eugenio Cajés, after Correggio, *Ganymede*, 1604

63. *Protoevangelium Jacobi*, I.1–IV.10; see *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, Greek original and English translation with introduction and notes by R. F. Hock, Santa Rosa CA 1995, pp. 32–39.

64. See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, transl. W. G. Ryan, introduction E. Duffy, Princeton NJ 2012, pp. 537–38. (This volume offers a translation of Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea vulgo historia lombardica dicta*, Leipzig 1850.)

65. Especially since the late 15th century, Italian artists increasingly turned to other iconographic models for representing the Conception of the Virgin. For further discussion see V. Francia, *Splendore di bellezza. L'iconografia dell'Immacolata Concezione nella pittura rinascimentale italiana*, Vatican City 2004; *Una donna vestita di sole. L'Immacolata Concezione nelle opere dei grandi maestri* (exhib. cat.), ed. G. Morello, V. Francia and R. Fusco, Milan 2006; and C. Franceschini, 'Captive Origins: Giorgio Vasari's *Tavola della*

Concezione as a Manifesto for Artistic Success', in *The Renaissance of Origins. Beginnings, Genesis and Creation in the Art of the 15th and 16th Centuries*, ed. S. Hendl, F. Métral and P. Morel (forthcoming, Turnhout 2021). Earlier Italian examples of the iconography are the *affresco staccato* from the Chiostrino dei Morti of Santa Maria Novella (1350–60), now in the church's museum; and the panel attributed to the Maestro della Predella dell'Ashmolean Museum, now at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston (c. 1370–75). Also see L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, II.2, *Iconographie de la Bible. Pt. 2, Nouveau Testament*, Paris 1957, pp. 159–61.

66. Spanish 16th and 17th century examples including an angel are: the panel attributed to Alejo Fernández in the parish church of Espera, Cádiz (c. 1504–10); a panel dated c. 1500–35 at the Museo del Prado, inv. no. P001330; Pedro Berruguete's painting for Santa Maria in Becerril de Campos, Palencia;



10. Titian, *Philip II offering the Infante Fernando to Victory*, 1573–75

Antonio de Comontes for the convent of the Concepción in Toledo; one of the scenes of the stone *retablo* of the Baptism of Christ in San Lesmes in Burgos; Juan de Zamora's panel in the *retablo mayor* of the church of the Immaculate Conception in Zufre (c. 1545); a painting attributed to the circle of Juan de Villoldo in the *retablo* of the church of Reñera (1549); a scene in the *retablo* of Santa María de los Mártires in Íscar; Diego de Pesquera's relief for the *retablo mayor* of Santa

Ana in Ogijares (c. 1567); the painting in the *retablo* of Joachim and Anne in the chapel of Santo Tomás in the Colegiata de Daroca (1586); Eugenio Cajés's canvas at the Colección Granados in Madrid (c. 1615–20); Nicodemo Ferrucci for the Descalzas Reales de Valladolid (1611); Pedro de Raxis for Granada Cathedral (1615–16); Jerónimo Jacinto Espinosa (El Escorial, c. 1645); and Vicente Carducho at the Royal Palace in Madrid (c. 1638). The Maestro de Sigüenza



11. Nicodemo Ferrucci, *The Meeting at the Golden Gate*, 1611. Valladolid Convent of Descalzas Reales

by introducing a more innovative and dynamic depiction of the celestial messenger. He represented the angel with a bold display of foreshortening, that echoes the angelic figure in Titian's *Philip II Offering the Infante Fernando to Victory* (Museo del Prado, 1573–75) (Fig. 10),⁶⁷ and is also comparable to Correggio's *Ganymede*, which Cajés had recently copied for Philip III (Museo del Prado, 1604) (Fig. 9). Some noteworthy later examples of this archaising trend were produced

presents another variation of this iconography with the angel standing behind Joachim and Anne (Museo de Huesca, c. 1515–19). Many of these images are catalogued in the photographic collections of the Arxiu Mas (Fundació Institut Amatller d'Art Hispànic, Barcelona); the Fichero Iconográfico de la Fundación

Universitaria Española (available online); and the Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico (available online).

67. I owe this observation to Juan Luis González García.



12. Jerónimo Jacinto de Espinosa, *The Meeting at the Golden Gate*, c. 1645. El Escorial

by Nicodemo Ferrucci for the main altarpiece of the Church of las Descalzas Reales in Valladolid, which depicted scenes from the life of the Virgin (1611) (Fig. 11), by Pedro de Raxis for the Chapel of St Anne in Granada Cathedral (1615), and by the Valencian painter Jerónimo Jacinto Espinosa (c. 1645) (Fig. 12).⁶⁸ Ferrucci and Espinosa represented the angel's hands as almost resting on the saints' shoulders, a variation of the gesture that was harshly criticised by Francisco Pacheco in his *Arte de la Pintura* (1649) because it gave the impression of 'forcefully bringing them together'.⁶⁹ Pacheco preferred compositions without angels uniting the saints, recommending, as examples, an engraving by Albrecht Dürer (1504), paintings by

68. Queen Margarita chose the themes of Ferrucci's painting and the other 31 canvases that Christina of Lorraine, Duchess of Medici, sent her as a gift for her new convent in Valladolid. See L. Goldenberg Stoppato, 'Pinturas florentinas para las Descalzas Reales de Valladolid y otros regalos a España', in *Glorias efimeras. Las exequias florentinas por Felipe II y Margarita de Austria*, coord. M. Bietti and J. Urrea Fernández, Valladolid 1999, pp. 86–112 (88, 101). For a discussion of the challenges of producing religious paintings for Spanish patrons see the seminal essay by E. Goldberg, 'Circa 1600: Spanish Values and Tuscan Painting', *Renaissance Quarterly*, LI, 1998, pp. 912–33; and also M. Falomir, 'Dono italiano e "gusto spagnolo" (1530–1610)', in *L'arte del dono. Scambi artistici e diplomazia tra Italia e Spagna, 1550–1650*, ed. M. von Bernstorff and S. Kubersky-Piredda, Cinisello Balsamo 2013, pp. 13–26; and F. Pereda, 'True Painting and the Challenge of Hypocrisy', in *After Conversion: Iberia and the Emergence of Modernity*, ed. M. García-

Arenal, Leiden 2016, pp. 358–94. For Raxis see B. Navarrete Prieto, *La pintura andaluza del siglo XVII y sus fuentes grabadas*, Madrid 1998, p. 35. Little is known about Espinosa's canvas, but A. E. Pérez Sánchez, *Jerónimo Jacinto de Espinosa (1600–1667)* (exhib. cat.), Valencia 2000, pp. 86–89, relates it to another work, a *Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple*.

69. Francisco Pacheco, *Arte de la pintura*, ed., introduction and notes by B. Bassegoda, Madrid 1990, pp. 573–74: 'Algunas pinturas antiguas solían poner dos ángeles vestidos de blanco sobre la puerta, o en el aire, mirando a Santa Ana, los cuales la saludaban diciendo: "Alégrate Ana de ver a tu esposo que viene a visitarte", lo cual tiene bastante autoridad; y muestra esto más decencia, habiendo de pintar ángeles, que pintar uno en medio de los dos Santos, como se hace de ordinario, puestas las dos manos en los hombros de ambos como juntándolos por fuerza'. The *Arte de la Pintura* was largely written between 1634 and 1638.



13. Pellegrino Tibaldi, *The Meeting at the Golden Gate*, c. 1590. El Escorial

Pedro de Campaña (church of Santa Ana in Triana, Seville, c. 1564) and Pellegrino Tibaldi (lower cloister of El Escorial, 1590) (Fig. 13), and the version he himself painted for the Jesuit College of San Hermenegildo in Seville (now at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando).⁷⁰

Cajés's contracts specify that the canvas had to depict St Anne and St Joachim at the Golden Gate.⁷¹ He represented the entrance to Jerusalem as an archway decorated with monochrome carved reliefs of two figures. The figure on the right

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 572–75.

71. AHPM, 2267, fol. 902^r (Cajés's first contract) specifies '... otro quadro ... de señor san joaquin y señora santa ana a la puerta dorada'; AHPM, 2268,

fol. 461^v (Cajés's second contract) refers to it as 'la ystoria del señor san joaquin y señora santa ana a la puerta dorada'; see also AHPM, 3282, fol. 685^r (the appraisal agreement between Cercito and Porres),

may be Moses, who also appears in other representations of this subject, while the other prophet remains unidentified.⁷² Foregrounding the archway in the upper part of the canvas are two corners of a fictive frame, painted with illusionistic architectural features in powdered gold, transforming the top of the composition into a *trompe l'oeil* arch that would have blurred the boundary between the painting and the original structure of the recess in the chapel.⁷³ In the background, the open gateway offers a glimpse of blue sky above the outline of the buildings. The use of powdered gold as a pigment for the Golden Gate is another archaising element that had become outmoded in Italy, while continuing to form part of early modern Spanish visual culture.⁷⁴ For this composition, the use of an intense gold colour, as well as the monochrome reliefs of the gateway and the background architecture, may have been prompted by Tibaldi's treatment of the subject at El Escorial (Fig. 13), a work of which Cajés would have had first-hand knowledge. The scene is completed by two groups of people who surround the Virgin's parents. Behind Joachim two men are engaged in conversation, as are three women behind Anne. To the left of the embracing couple a young man leans on a stone ledge, and on the right stands a young girl. With a display of symmetry, the man and woman depicted at the far sides of the painting both look towards the centre and gesture towards the divine embrace with their hands. Unfortunately, the poor condition of the *Meeting at the Golden Gate* hinders a more detailed analysis of the canvas.⁷⁵

describing 'un retablo de pintura con su marco dorado de la gloriosa santa ana e san joaquin de la puerta dorada y otras figuras'.

72. Moses appears in the frame of Dürer's 1504 woodcut on this subject. Earlier, similar compositions had been painted in the mid-15th century, as in Konrad Witz's *Meeting at the Golden Gate* (c. 1440, Basel Kunstmuseum), where there are small sculptures of Moses and Aaron on each side of the gate. See G. Dette, 'Der grosse Olsberger (?) Altar', in *KonradWitz* (exhib. cat.), Ostfildern 2011, pp. 110–25 (121). The use of relief sculptures to decorate the Golden Gate is present in Spain in the works by the Maestro de Sigüenza at the Museo de Huesca (c. 1515–19); Ambrosius Benson's panel for the *retablo* of St Anne in Santa Cruz la Real in Segovia and now at the Museo del Prado (c. 1528, largely based on Dürer); and Tibaldi's fresco at El Escorial (1590).

73. A similar strategy was used some years later by Juan Bautista Maino in the upper canvases of his *retablo* for San Pedro Mártir in Toledo, now in the Museo del Prado. See *Juan Bautista Maino, 1581–1649* (exhib. cat.), ed. L. Ruiz Gómez, Madrid 2009, pp. 138–41.

74. An interesting late example is the altarpiece by the Florentine Nicodemo Ferrucci for the Descalzas Reales in Valladolid (1611). Goldenberg Stoppato (as in n. 68), p. 101, suggests that the gold might have been added after the arrival of the painting in Spain. Earlier Spanish examples which seem to use gold for the Golden Gate include Pedro Berruguete at Becerril

de Campos; Alejo Fernández at Espera; Juan de Borgoña for the chapel of the Concepción in Toledo Cathedral; and sculpted images such as Juan de Juni's *retablo* in Valladolid Cathedral (c. 1554), and Diego de Pesquera in Ogiñares.

75. I thank Judit Gasca Miramón, the restorer at the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, for her expert opinion on the painting's condition. The depth and tonal range of Cajés's original colouring has been lost, which may have been caused by the re-lining of the canvas, or the effects of the fire that broke out in the church of San Felipe el Real in 1718. The painting has also lost toning layers, and this has exposed elements which Cajés seemingly overpainted later, such as underdrawings for the buildings in the background. The degraded condition of the painting is especially apparent in the lower part of the canvas. Anne's and Joachim's feet have undergone restoration at some point, as have the hand of the woman in blue and the upper body of the girl. Unfortunately, the detailed reports of the only documented restoration of the painting (1988) have not been preserved; see P. Rodríguez Mostacero, 'Museo. Trabajos de conservación realizados en el taller con motivo de la remodelación y apertura al público del Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando', *Academia: Boletín de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando*, LXVII, 1988, pp. 347–70 (350). On restorations more generally see P. Taylor, *Condition: The Ageing of Art*, London 2015, esp. pp. 166–68, 180–84 and 211–16.



14. Eugenio Cajés, *The Meeting at the Golden Gate*, c. 1615–20. Madrid, Colección Granados

An engraved reproduction, made in 1873, is of some assistance in analysing the main features of the composition but, as I shall discuss below, is untrustworthy as a record of the original image.⁷⁶

Some years later, Cajés used his composition to create another depiction of the same subject, now in the Colección Granados in Madrid, for an unknown location (Fig. 14).⁷⁷ The similar proportions of the two scenes strongly suggest that

76. See below, Fig. 19 and n. 112.

77. This painting has been attributed to Cajés by Á. Pascual Chenel, 'Dibujar, especular y más dibujar. Los Carducho y Cajés, entre la formación italiana y la escuela española', *Boletín de Arte-UMA*, XL, 2019, pp. 281–93 (285). Its composition and dimensions (1.66 × 1.15 metres) do not coincide with what we know of Cajés's other depictions of the subject. A canvas by Cajés was inventoried on 9 Feb. 1669 in the collection of Catalina de Alvarado, wife of the

Inquisition *familiar* Juan de Torres y Barrantes: 'Dos países de a bara en lienzo de la historia de Jacob digo de Job y la puerta dorada de mano de Eux.º caxes con molduras negras'; cited by M. B. Burke and P. Cherry, *Collections of Paintings in Madrid, 1601–1755*, 2 vols, Los Angeles 1997, I, pp. 623–26. It might have been the same painting noted by Angulo Íñiguez and Pérez Sánchez (as in n. 1), p. 248: 'Abrazo de San Joaquín y Santa Ana. Madrid. José de Madrazo. 1,39×0,83. Catálogo, 1856, p. 83, n°337'.



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15. Eugenio Cajés, *The Visitation*, after 1605

Cajés relied on a drawing or painting of the Cercito altarpiece in creating some of the figures and architectural features of the Granados *Meeting*.⁷⁸ He also used a similar composition in a drawing of the *Visitation* (Fig. 15), which was probably a preparatory study for another painting.⁷⁹

The inclusion of the descending angel uniting the heads of the Virgin's parents and the use of powdered gold in Cajés's *Meeting* for the Cercito chapel seem to testify to the conservative and, for the time, somewhat old-fashioned taste of Pedro Cercito and Melchora de Avendaño, echoing trends that still persisted in Spain at that time. In order to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between Cajés's *Meeting at the Golden Gate* and the concerns of his patrons, however, closer scrutiny must be paid to the painting's devotional significance.

IV. IMAGES OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE VIRGIN

Until the late sixteenth century, the embrace of Anne and Joachim was commonly understood to represent the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. As such, it was one of several iconographies that had been employed since medieval times to represent the complex idea of the Virgin having been conceived without Original Sin. However, by the time Pedro Cercito and Melchora de Avendaño commissioned their altarpiece, this Marian significance had been called into question by theologians. One of the most important criticisms of the representation of the meeting at the Golden Gate as a depiction of the Immaculate Conception was made by the Jesuit theologian Johannes Molanus in his influential treatise on sacred imagery, *De picturis et imaginibus sacris* (Louvain 1570, extended version Ingolstadt 1594). Molanus condemned the depiction of the kiss between Anne and Joachim on the basis that their physical contact could give the erroneous idea that the Virgin had been conceived by carnal means.⁸⁰ Artists therefore increasingly preferred to use other iconographic models to represent the Immaculate Conception, or new ones developed during the sixteenth century. By the outset of the seventeenth century, it was the depiction of the Virgin as the woman of the Apocalypse that had become the normative image.⁸¹

78. The stylistic similarities of the Granados *Meeting* with Cajés's *Terrestrial Trinity* in a private collection (1616), his *Santa Leocadia* in the church of Santa Leocadia, Toledo (1616) and his *Virgin and Child with Angels* now in the Museo del Prado (1618) suggest a date close to 1615–20. The canvas is degraded and has lost toning layers, as is especially visible in Anne's back and the hand of her female companion. I am grateful to José Miguel Granados for his kind permission to see this painting, and to Benito Navarrete for sharing his ideas about Cajés with me.

79. For the attribution of this drawing to Cajés see 'I segni nel tempo'. *Dibujos españoles de los Uffizi* (exhib. cat.), ed. B. Navarrete, Madrid 2016, pp. 138–39, no. 38.

80. Johannes Molanus, *Traité des saintes images*, introd., transl., notes and index by F. Boespflug, O.

Christin and B. Tassel, Paris 1996, pp. 471–72.

81. On the iconographic development of the Immaculate Conception see M. Levi D'Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, New York 1957; Francia (as in n. 65); and *Una donna vestita di sole* (as in n. 65). The fundamental work on the Spanish context remains S. L. Stratton, 'La Inmaculada Concepción en el arte español', *Cuadernos de Arte e Iconografía*, 1, 1988, pp. 3–128, later augmented and published as eadem, *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art*, Cambridge 1994. See also A. Prosperi, 'L'Immacolata a Siviglia e la fondazione sacra della Monarchia Spagnola', *Studi Storici*, XLVII, 2006, pp. 481–510; F. Pereda, 'Vox Populi: Carnal Blood, Spiritual Milk, and the Debate Surrounding the Immaculate Conception, ca. 1600', *Medieval Encounters*, XXIV, 2018, pp. 286–334.

The debate over whether the embrace at the Golden Gate was a suitable means of representing the conception of the Virgin hastened the already evident decline in the choice of this subject for paintings. However, the diminution occurred at varying rates across Catholic Europe, and it was in Spain that the scene was used for the longest period of time.⁸² It has been claimed that the subject had completely disappeared from Spanish art by the first half of the seventeenth century,⁸³ but Cajés painted at least two other canvases of the same iconography,⁸⁴ while other examples include the works by Ferrucci, de Raxis and Espinosa mentioned above, and a drawing by Santiago Morán in the Uffizi, to name but a few.⁸⁵ Therefore, as a first line of enquiry, Cajés's *Meeting* in the Cercito chapel must be considered in the context of the sustained appeal of this subject, despite its having been divested of its traditional theological significance as the representation of the Immaculate Conception.

The writings of three contemporary authors shed light on the reception of images of the Meeting at the Golden Gate in Spain during the opening decades of the seventeenth century. The first is José de Sigüenza, prior of El Escorial, who, in 1605, tried to justify the presence of Tibaldi's fresco in the royal monastery (Fig. 13):

The first station, as I said, is the Conception of the Virgin, a most beautiful *historia*; St Joachim, or as St Matthew calls him, Jacob, and, his wife, St Anne, embrace at the Golden Gate (of the stories of the Virgin's early life, those were admitted that the common people have come to know, because there are no others that are more established, nor more certain).⁸⁶

82. As pointed out by Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception* (as in n. 81), pp. 20–28, who, however, focuses on images dated prior to 1550. Examples of this iconography produced in the second half of the 16th century are Juan de Juni's *retablo* in Valladolid Cathedral (c. 1554); the *retablo* of Santa María de los Mártires in Íscar; Campaña's panel for Santa Ana in Triana (c. 1564); Diego de Pesquera in Ogijares; the sculpted scene by Juan Bautista Vázquez 'El Viejo' (c. 1575–84) for the *retablo mayor* of Santa María de la Coronada in Cádiz; the *retablo* of Joachim and Anne in the Colegiata de Daroca (1586); Tibaldi's fresco at El Escorial; and the small canvas for the *banco* of the *retablo* of Sts Mark, Anne and John the Baptist at the Cathedral-Mosque of Córdoba, attributed to Pablo de Céspedes (1595).

83. As mistakenly argued by Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception* (as in n. 81), p. 39. It seems more probable that the episode declined by the beginning of the 18th century, since it was omitted in Juan Interián de Ayala, *Pictor Christianus eruditus, sive de erroribus, qui passim admittuntur circa pingendas, atque effigendas Sacras Imagines*, Madrid 1730 (published in Spanish in 1782).

84. That is, the Granados *Meeting* and the painting in the collection of Catalina de Alvarado (see above, n. 77).

85. For Santiago Morán's drawing (c. 1610–26) see D. Angulo Íñiguez and Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, *A*

Corpus of Spanish Drawings, II, *Madrid School 1600 to 1650*, London 1977, no. 287; and (with illustration) B. Navarrete, 'El triunfo del dibujo español en la Galería de los Uffizi', in *I segni nel tempo. Dibujos españoles de los Uffizi* (exhib. cat.), ed. idem, Madrid 2016, pp. 13–44 (25). Other 17th-century examples in Spain include: Ferrucci in Valladolid (1611); Pedro de Raxis in Granada Cathedral (1615–16); the painting of the chapel of the Conception in Segovia Cathedral (c. 1620–40); Espinosa's canvas at El Escorial; and two drawings and two paintings attributed to Vicente Carducho by Á. Pascual Chenel, *Vicente Carducho. Dibujos. Catálogo razonado*, Madrid 2015, pp. 300–05.

86. José de Sigüenza, *Fundación del monasterio de El Escorial*, ed. F. C. Sáinz de Robles, Madrid 1963, pp. 233–24: 'La primera estación, como dije, es la Concepción de la Virgen, una historia bellísima; abrázase el santo Joaquín, o, como le llama San Mateo, Jacob, y Santa Ana, su mujer, en la puerta dorada (admitiéronse en estas historias primeras de la Virgen las que el vulgo tiene recibidas, porque no hay otras más asentadas ni ciertas)'. This passage is quoted and translated by Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception* (as in n. 81), p. 28; I disagree with her translation of 'más asentadas' as 'more accurate' and offer an alternative reading as 'more established'; according to the *Diccionario de Autoridades*, vol. 1 (1726), 'asentado' refers to that which is fixed or stable. Sigüenza's judgement was repeated by Francisco de

Sigüenza's comment in parentheses indicates his awareness of the controversy surrounding the use of this iconography to represent the Conception; evidently, he felt the need to legitimise the fresco's apocryphal representation on the basis of its wide popular appeal and long tradition in Marian cycles. His testimony also confirms that, despite Molanus's criticism, the historic images of the Meeting at the Golden Gate displayed in churches and convents continued to be read and understood as representations of the Conception of the Virgin.

A Jesuit writer, Pedro de Ojeda, contributed a similar view in a treatise defending the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, published in 1616. Referring to an 'antiquissima' image of the encounter between Anne and Joachim at a convent in Uclés, Ojeda described the iconography as 'the picture used by all the old painters for this mystery'.⁸⁷ Interestingly, he stated categorically that the scene was no longer used to depict the Virgin's Immaculate Conception. Echoing Molanus, he told his readers that this was due to the need to avoid any possible misunderstanding arising from the physical contact between Anne and Joachim.⁸⁸ Among the general population, however, the notion that the Virgin had been conceived by means of a kiss seems to have continued to circulate. Throughout the seventeenth century, Spanish authors repeatedly condemned the idea, typically described as a belief of devout but ignorant old women.⁸⁹

Some decades after Cajés produced his painting for the Cercito chapel, Francisco Pacheco, in his *Arte de la Pintura*, provided a new interpretation for the encounter at the Golden Gate. He argued that the Conception of the Virgin had taken place 'a few days later' than the meeting of Anne and Joachim,⁹⁰ which he

los Santos, *Descripcion breve del Monasterio de S. Lorenzo el Real del Escorial*, Madrid 1657, fol. 59v: 'la Concepcion de nuestra Señora, historia vellissima, en que se ven el Santo Joachin, y Santa Ana Su Muger, abraçandose en la Puerta dorada (que es lo mas assantado, y recebido)'.

87. Pedro de Ojeda, *Informacion eclesiastica en defensa de la Limpia Concepcion de la Madre de Dios*, Seville 1616, fol. 15v: 'Hallo desta inmemorial antiguas señales en el Convento de Ucles, cabeça de toda la Orden [de Santiago]. Ay allí una capilla con una imagen antiquissima de la Concepción: la pintura es el encuentro de S. Ioachin, y Santa Ana a la puerta del Oro; dibujo de todos los pintores antiguos en este misterio'. This passage is quoted Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception* (as in n. 81), p. 39.

88. *Ibid.*, fol. 16f: 'Advierto aqui, que ya esta pintura de la Limpia Concepcion con san Ioachin y S. Ana abraçados no esta en uso, y con razon, porque no se de ocasion a los ignorantes de que piensen que la Concepcion de la Virgen consistio en aquel encuentro de sus santos padres a la puerta del Oro, y que fue por obra del Espiritu santo. Contra la qual pintura escrivio prudentemente Molano'. Cited by Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception* (as in n. 81), p. 39. Ojeda was involved in the negotiations about the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception that developed in Rome; see P. Broggio, 'Teologia, ordini religiosi

e rapporti politici: La questione dell'Immacolata Concezione di Maria tra Roma e Madrid (1614-1663)', *Hispania Sacra*, LXV, no. extra 1, 2013, pp. 255-81 (274-75). On these negotiations see Prosperi (as in n. 81); Pereda, 'Vox Populi' (as in n. 81); and A. Álvarez-Ossorio, "'¡Quiéren los españoles definir!': La Inmaculada Concepción y la monarquía de España durante el siglo XVII', in *Intacta Maria. Política y religiosidad en la España barroca* (exhib. cat.), ed. P. González Tornel, Valencia 2017, pp. 55-73.

89. The comment about the old women occurs in contemporary literature about St Anne. See Valentina Pinelo, *Libro de las Alabanças y Excelencias de la Gloriosa Santa Anna*, Seville 1601, fol. 131f, 'viejas simples y devotas'; Andrés de Soto, *Libro de la Vida y Excelencias de la Gloriosa Santa Ana, Madre de la Madre de Dios*, Brussels 1607, pp. 105-06, 'algunas buenas viejas'; and Pacheco (as in n. 69), p. 573, 'el ignorante error de unas antiguas mujercillas que afirmaban según un grave autor, que por aquel beso, sin otro medio, fue concebida la Virgen Nuestra Señora'; Pacheco referred in the margin of the page to a sermon about St Anne ('Guillerm. Parisien., *Serm. de Sta. Anna.*') as the source of the belief itself, a text which has not yet been traced. Pope Innocent XI formally condemned the belief as erroneous in 1677; see Francia (as in n. 65), pp. 87-88.

associated with the revelation to the two saints of Anne's forthcoming pregnancy, as well as of the name of their daughter-to-be. Both episodes were, therefore, legitimate subjects for representation, but should be treated as separate. Both old and modern depictions of the Meeting at the Golden Gate should be understood according to this interpretation.⁹¹

The efforts made by these authors to give a satisfactory explanation for depictions of the Meeting at the Golden Gate, and to define or distinguish its significance *vis-à-vis* the Conception of the Virgin, signals that the subject continued to be part of seventeenth-century Spanish visual culture, for a considerable time. Pacheco even included a series of precise instructions on how to represent the episode correctly, and it may be supposed that other seventeenth-century Spanish examples of the iconography are today untraced. In terms of the meaning ascribed to the Meeting at the Golden Gate, these literary testimonies reveal that there was no single interpretation of the scene, despite the evidently waning influence of the medieval Immaculist tradition.

The contractual documents regarding Cajés's *Meeting* refer to the canvas consistently as a *historia* of St Anne and St Joachim before the Golden Gate, or else as a painting of St Anne. None of them makes any mention of a link to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin or the moments prior to that occurrence.⁹² In the absence of any further evidence, and bearing in mind the date of the painting's commission, we can conclude that that it was not intended to be viewed as a representation of the Immaculate Conception. It is thus more fruitful to explore the meaning of the *Meeting* in relation to its association with contemporary devotion to St Anne, and with the liturgical programme of the Cercito chapel as a whole.

V. ST ANNE

The Mass to be sung in the chapel on the feast day of St Anne was dedicated to the parents of Melchora de Avendaño and to Alonso de Mendaño and María de Escobar, a married couple who were friends of the Cercitos.⁹³ St Anne was often invoked as a divine intercessor for concerns related to procreation and family life. She was believed to mediate on behalf of mothers and her intercession was especially invoked by childless women.⁹⁴ In the early seventeenth century St Anne

90. Pacheco (as in n. 69), p. 572: 'Pocos días después de la historia pasada'. Pacheco probably took this idea from Alonso de Villegas's popular hagiographical compilation, which he used throughout his treatise. See Alonso de Villegas, *Flos Sanctorum, y historia general de la vida y hechos de Iesu Christo ... y de todos los Santos*, Madrid 1588, t. III, fol. 2^{r-v}; and Barcelona 1615, fols 350^{r-51^v}.

91. Pacheco (as in n. 69), pp. 572–75.

92. AHPM, 1206, fol. 493^v (Cercito's contract with Porres, May 1604): 'un quadro de la gloriosa santa ana ... san xuaquin'. AHPM, 2267, fol. 902^r (Cajés's first contract, Sep. 1604), 'otro quadro ... de señor san

joaquin y señora santa ana a la puerta dorada'; fol. 902^v, 'el grande de santa ana'. AHPM, 2268, fol. 461^v (Cajés's revised contract, June 1605): 'la ystoria del señor san joaquin y señora santa ana a la puerta dorada'. AHPM, 3282, fol. 685^r (appraisal agreement between Cercito and Porres, Jan. 1608): 'un retablo de pintura con su marco dorado de la gloriosa santa ana e san joaquin de la puerta dorada y otras figuras'; fol. 688^v, 'el quadro de señora santa ana'; fol. 690^v, 'quadro de señora santa ana'.

93. AHPM, 1214, fol. 652^v.

94. D. Oren-Magidor, 'From Anne to Hannah: Religious Views of Infertility in Post-Reformation

was appealed to as an intercessor in questions of maternity and fertility across the strata of Spanish society. At the upper end of the social scale, the devotions connected to the births of the children of Margaret of Austria, Queen of Spain 1599–1611 by her marriage to Philip III, included a votive mass dedicated to St Anne. It has been shown that the queen and the women of the court considered that paintings of the Birth of the Virgin possessed a divine agency that facilitated the healthy development of pregnancies.⁹⁵ As a less exalted example, in Tendilla (Guadalajara) there was a church devoted to Anne, to which sterile women went to ask for her saintly intercession; many reputedly became pregnant as a result.⁹⁶

The idea of St Anne as a divine exemplar of fertility was also a central theme of numerous sermons and devotional texts.⁹⁷ In some of these, special emphasis was placed on the advanced age at which she conceived the Virgin. Thus, a sermon by the Carmelite Friar Cristóbal de Avendaño praised the patience and piety of the Virgin's elderly parents. He emphasised the importance of prayer in attaining Anne's sought-after conception, and described the couple's difficult experience as one of being 'rendered into dust, become mere soil due to their age, wholly mortified by their many years'.⁹⁸ St Anne was, accordingly, also revered as the patroness of married couples. In his *Libro de la vida y excelencias de la gloriosa santa Ana* (1607), Fray Andrés de Soto invoked the revelations of St Bridget in this context, recalling that Anne had appeared to Bridget and had implored her Son, Christ, to intercede on behalf of married couples 'so that they bear fruit for God'.⁹⁹

If we read Cajés's painting in the context of devotional texts such as these, a possible alternative meaning emerges for the scene of the Meeting at the Golden Gate—one removed from debates on the Immaculate Conception and instead related to day-to-day family concerns regarding procreation. Located in their family chapel, the painting of the emotive encounter between the Virgin's parents could evoke Pedro Cercito and Melchora de Avendaño's own experience as parents. The inclusion of family portraits in the chapel's two altarpieces (as discussed below)

England', *Journal of Women's History*, xxvii, 2015, pp. 86–108 (88); E. J. Campbell, 'Prophets, Saints, and Matriarchs: Portraits of Old Women in Early Modern Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, lxxiii, 2010, pp. 807–49 (831–32); C. Valone, 'The Art of Hearing: Sermons and Images in the Chapel of Lucrezia della Rovere', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxxi, 2000, pp. 753–77 (769–70). See also the essays contained in *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society*, ed. K. M. Ashley and P. Sheingorn, Athens GA 1990.

95. M. C. de Carlos Varona, *Nacer en palacio. El ritual del nacimiento en la corte de los Austrias*, Madrid 2018, pp. 116, 121–25.

96. On the Tendilla sanctuary (now lost) see Juan de Robles, *La vida y generación y excelencias y miraglos de la gloriosa Sancta Anna*, Seville 1550, s.f. This volume was first published in 1511 and was later reprinted in 1523, 1550, 1558, 1563, 1573, 1575, 1577, 1583, 1587 and 1590.

97. See Manuel de Vargas, *Sermon predicado entre los dos coros de la Santa Iglesia de Sevilla, en la fiesta de la señora santa Ana madre de la Virgen santísima Maria Señora nuestra, y abuela de Dios encarnado*, Seville 1620, esp. pp. 1–2, 21–23; and Pinelo (as in n. 89), book 1.

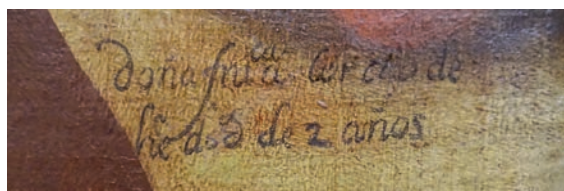
98. Cristóbal de Avendaño, *Sermones para algunas festividades de las mas solenes de los santos, predicados en la Corte de Madrid*, Valladolid 1628, fols 75–88 (86^r): 'estaban por su vejez hechos polvos, hechos tierra, mortificados con su ancianidad'. It is not known whether Avendaño, who was active in Madrid around 1609, was related to Melchora; see B. Velasco Bayón, 'Cristóbal de Avendaño', in *Diccionario Biográfico electrónico (DB-e) of the Real Academia de la Historia* (available online).

99. Soto (as in n. 89), pp. 187–90 (190): 'para que fructifiquen para Dios'.

lends further weight to the hypothesis that Cajés's *Meeting at the Golden Gate* should be understood within the context of specific devotional concerns linked to family and procreation.

VI. FAMILY PORTRAITS

The archival records which mention the portraits that Cajés was to add, if requested, to the *Meeting at the Golden Gate*, are much less informative than those regarding the portraits around the altarpiece of the Holy Child.¹⁰⁰ In the painting of the *Meeting* itself, however, the inscription identifying Francisca, Pedro Cercito's and Melchora de Avendaño's daughter, confirms that Cajés included at least one portrait to the composition; and I shall argue in this section that there are four others.



16. Detail of Figure 1: inscription identifying Francisca Cercito

The inscription on the stone surface below her feet reveals that Francisca, the youngest daughter of the patrons, was two years old when the canvas was painted (Fig. 16).¹⁰¹ What little we know of Francisca Cercito (1603–47) is that she later married one don Francisco de Herrera, with whom she had five children, and that both she and her husband were buried in the Cercito chapel in San Felipe el Real.¹⁰² Cajés's depiction of Francisca is one of the very few known child portraits integrated into Spanish devotional religious paintings.¹⁰³ Due to the loss of toning layers and inferior repainting, the little girl's head and body appear disconnected

100. See above, n. 55 (altarpiece) and n. 49 (*Meeting*).

101. The inscription is cited above, p. 257. Cajés's authorship is confirmed by the handwriting, which fully coincides with his signatures in the contemporary *Fall of the Rebel Angels*, now in the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (1605), and in later works such as the *Terrestrial Trinity* in a private collection (1616). For these paintings see respectively Angulo Íñiguez and Pérez Sánchez (as in n. 1), pp. 217 and 250; and Pascual Chenel, 'Dibujar, especular' (as in n. 77), pp. 287–88.

102. See AHPM, 5333, fols 173–75^v (testament of Francisco Herrera), 15 Aug. 1647; and *ibid.*, fols 342^r–48^v (inventory of Francisca Cercito), 14 Sep. and 18 Nov. 1647. See J. S. Thacher, 'The Paintings of Francisco de Herrera, The Elder', *Art Bulletin*, xix, 1937, pp. 325–80; he mistakenly took Francisca's husband for the homonymous painter Francisco Herrera the Elder, an error pointed out by F. J. Cornejo, 'Noticias de Francisco de Herrera el Viejo en Madrid y del retablo mayor del Colegio de San

Basilio, de Sevilla', *Archivo Español de Arte*, LXXIX, no. 316, 2006, pp. 355–70 (356).

103. Its rarity is compounded by the fact that most documented Spanish examples of child portraits are depictions of children from the royal family and senior nobility. This is partly due to the fact that there are still no comprehensive studies on child portraiture in early modern Spain. On portraits of royal children see G. Cobo Delgado, 'Retratos infantiles en el reinado de Felipe III y Margarita de Austria: entre el afecto y la política', *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte*, xxv, 2014, pp. 23–42; M. Kusche, *Juan Pantoja de la Cruz y sus seguidores B. González, R. de Villandrando y A. López Polanco*, Madrid 2007; *idem*, *Retratos y retratadores. Alonso Sánchez Coello y sus competidores Sofonisba Anguissola, Jorge de la Rúa y Rolán Moys*, Madrid 2003; and T. J. Tiffany, "'Little Idols': Royal Children and the Infant Jesus in the Devotional Practice of Sor Margarita de la Cruz (1567–1633)", in *The Early Modern Child in Art and History*, ed. M. K. Averett, London 2015, pp. 35–48. Specific examples of child portraits are cited in the notes below.



17. Detail of Figure 1, with portraits of, as identified here, Pedro Cercito (in yellow) and the couple's son, Antonio Cercito (in green)

(Fig. 18). The degraded condition of this section of the canvas prevents a detailed analysis of Francisca's features,¹⁰⁴ but it seems feasible to suggest that Cajés represented her looking towards the main entrance of the family chapel, which would explain the direction of her gaze and the angle of her head. It should be recalled that the canvas was located in a high niche in the wall (Fig. 8).

The inclusion of inscriptions stating the name, age and year of a child's birth was a common visual convention in child portraits and provided a means to register the ephemeral nature of their subject matter.¹⁰⁵ Less frequent is the inclusion of the fruit she holds, probably a pomegranate or an apple. In this period Spanish depictions of children were usually adorned with objects worn in everyday life such as amulets, charms, medals, little bells and crucifixes, which served as elements of protection against illness and the evil eye.¹⁰⁶ It seems probable that Cajés or his patrons took this detail from Italian or Dutch traditions of family portraiture, in which younger children often appear holding a piece of fruit, which on occasions signalled the continuity of the family line.¹⁰⁷

104. This degrading evidently dates back to before 1873, the date of the engraving illustrated below (Fig. 19).

105. Examples are Alonso Sánchez Coello's portraits of Albert (1573) and Wenceslas of Austria (1574), and in Juan Pantoja de la Cruz's portrait of the *Infanta Ana Mauricia*, then nine months old (1602); all three of these paintings are now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The convention was also used in early modern Netherlandish painting; see, e.g., *Pride and Joy: Children's Portraits in the Netherlands, 1500–1700* (exhib. cat.), ed. J. B. Bedaux and R. Ekkart, Amsterdam 2000, esp. cat. nos 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 15.

106. See, e.g., a painting of a Palafox boy (1643) illustrated in Y. Vu, *Príncipes y granujas: los niños en la gran pintura europea de los siglos XVI–XIX; colección de la Fundación Yannick y Ben Jakober* (exhib. cat.), Burgos

2013, p. 13. For discussion of the objects depicted with children see Cobo Delgado (as in n. 103). For one of the few Spanish exceptions to this tendency see n. 107.

107. It is unlikely that Cajés was familiar with Juan Pantoja de la Cruz's portrait of the *Infanta Ana Mauricia*, who is depicted with her right hand touching one of several apricots on a table and the other clutching a goldfinch, since it was sent to the queen's relatives in Austria (see Cobo Delgado, as in n. 103, pp. 27–28). For northern European examples see S. J. Hansbauer, 'Das oberitalienische Familienporträt in der Kunst der Renaissance: Studien zu den Anfängen, zur Verbreitung und Bedeutung einer Bildnisgattung', Ph.D. thesis, Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg 2004, Abb. 1, 2, 8, 9, 17, 25; and the contributions to *Pride and Joy* (as in n. 105). On Dutch fruit symbolism see J. B. Bedaux, 'Fruit and Fertility: Fruit Symbolism

Cajés is not an artist who is well known for his portraiture. His depiction of Francisca, with its identifying inscription, is the earliest securely known example of this aspect of his output.¹⁰⁸ His amended contract specifically commissioned him to add portraits to his composition of the *Meeting at the Golden Gate*, so it is most unlikely that his representation of a two-year-old child, for whom he found space at the very edge of the canvas, was the only one he added. I believe that more portraits may be identified in the groups of men and women located behind Sts Joachim and Anne—which, in fact, constitute one of the most original elements of Cajés's canvas. Early modern depictions of the Meeting at the Golden Gate often include shepherds accompanying Joachim and women waiting alongside Anne, drawing on the *Protoevangelium Jacobi*. Cajés's composition is unusual in showing such a large number of people. Moreover, the adults in the background are wearing fine clothes and their poses suggest dignity and status. As another remarkable feature, they are engaged in conversation rather than observing the scene in their midst. The two men in discussion behind Joachim (Fig. 17) most certainly cannot be identified as shepherds.

in *Netherlandish Portraiture of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, *Simiolus*, XVII, 1987, pp. 150–68.

108. The only portraits by Cajés which have been identified before now are: those of Spanish governors in *The Recapture of San Juan in Puerto Rico* for the Palace of the Buen Retiro, now in the Museo del Prado (1634–35); a portrait of Cardinal Cisneros based on prints, now in the Colección del Patrimonio Histórico Artístico de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid (1604); and the portrait of Lope de Vega now at the Museo Lázaro Galdiano, a dubious attribution.



18. Detail of Figure 1, with portraits of Francisca Cercito and, as identified here, Melchora de Avendaño (in blue) and Beatriz Cercito (in pink)

If, as I propose, these men and women were portrayed from life, then the question arises as to who was represented. A wide range of candidates is provided by Pedro Cercito's will, which lists the names of the family members and friends to whom he dedicated masses and granted permission for burial in the chapel.¹⁰⁹ However, the inclusion of Francisca makes it most likely that the other family members were portrayed as well; that is, Pedro himself, his wife Melchora and their two elder children Antonio and Beatriz.¹¹⁰ The bald man with the light-grey beard, dressed in pale yellow, may be identified as Pedro, and the young man with the outstretched arm as his son Antonio. The woman in blue on the right of the canvas, with a white veil, can be identified as Melchora, and the younger woman dressed in pink, her hair only lightly veiled, as her daughter Beatriz (Fig. 18). The woman standing between them, whose appearance recalls the work of Correggio, and the man in the foreground leaning forward, were probably intended as one of the women who accompanied Anne and a shepherd who accompanied Joachim, figures conventionally depicted in this scene. If so, then the dark area below the shepherd, which is almost unintelligible due to deterioration of the canvas, most likely included a depiction of a lamb held by all four legs.¹¹¹ The damage to this part of the painting must have already occurred by the time of the 19th-century copy (Fig. 19), in which the area is incongruously filled by a stump.¹¹²

In the sixteenth century, portraits in religious images became a matter of concern for theologians and theoreticians of sacred art, especially after the Council of Trent.¹¹³ Spanish normative ecclesiastical texts strictly regulated the display of portraits in church and chapel altarpieces. The only portraits permitted were those of donors, who were to be represented as devout, humble and without any feature that could be deemed lascivious.¹¹⁴ In the seventeenth century, however, attitudes had begun to change. The painter and art theoretician Vicente Carducho, who served as court painter with Cajés, provided a rationale for the inclusion of portraits

109. AHPM, 1214, fols 649^r–54^r.

110. Although the ages of Antonio and Beatriz are not mentioned, their order of birth is clear from the documents. See AHPM, 1214, fol. 653^r.

111. Shepherds with lambs were sometimes represented in scenes of Anne and Joachim, as in, e.g., the allegory of the Immaculate Conception by Hernando de Esturnio in the Colegiata de Osuna (1555); Tibaldi for El Escorial; Ferrucci for the Descalzas Reales de Valladolid; and the drawing by Santiago Morán at the Uffizi (c. 1610–16; see '*I segni nel tempo*', as in n. 79, p. 25). Also relevant are two paintings attributed to Vicente Carducho by Pascual Chenel, *Vicente Carducho* (as in n. 85), p. 304; they were executed respectively for the convent of Encarnación in Madrid (c. 1616) and the Royal Palace (1638). See the collection of the Arxiu Mas (as in n. 66) for early 16th-century works.

112. Drawing by Aurelio Blasco, engraving by Ricardo Franch, 305 × 220 mm. See C. Barrera, *Calcografía Nacional: Catálogo General*, Madrid 2004, p. 566; and R. Casariego, *Catálogo general de la Calcografía Nacional*, Madrid 1987, pp. 220–21.

113. A central example is Gabriele Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre et profane*, Bologna 1582; a Latin edition was published in Ingolstadt in 1594; see also the modern edition, introd. P. Prodi, Bologna 1990.

114. See, e.g., Rodrigo de Castro, *Constituciones synodales del Arçobispado de Sevilla*, Seville 1587, fols 37^v–38^r: 'que no se puedan pintar ni pinten en los retablos, ni en los altares ni junto a ellos retratos de personas algunas, sino fuere de los que los mandaren hazer, y estos se pinten devotos y humildes, y no con figura y ornato lascivo'. Castro's guidelines were repeated verbatim in 1604 by Cardinal Niño de Guevara. For discussion see A. Rodríguez G. de Ceballos, 'La repercusión en España del decreto del Concilio de Trento acerca de las imágenes sagradas y las censuras al Greco', *Studies in the History of Art*, XIII, 1984, pp. 153–59; and C. Saravia, 'Repercusión en España del decreto del Concilio de Trento sobre las imágenes', *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología: BSA*, xxvi, 1960, pp. 129–43.

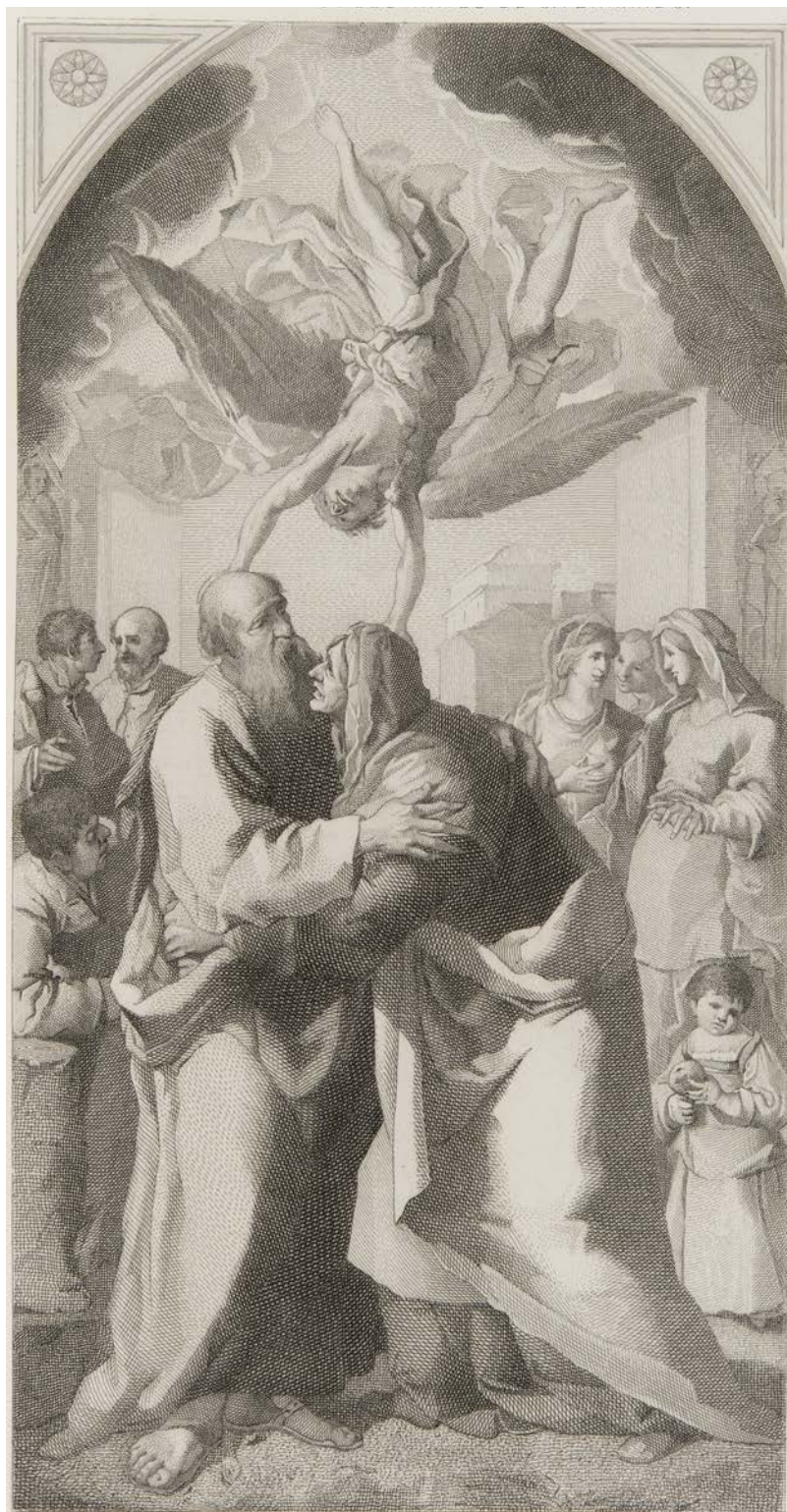


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19. Ricardo Franch y Mira, after Eugenio Cajés, *The Meeting at the Golden Gate*, 1885



20. Juan de Roelas, *Adoration of Christ with the Ayala Family*, c. 1600–10.
Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

in religious paintings in his *Diálogos de la pintura* (1638). He argued that they were the only way for the painter to represent a person's devout contemplation of a sacred image.¹¹⁵ Conveniently blending devotion and contemplation, the episode

115. Vicente Carducho, *Diálogos de la Pintura*, ed., prol. and notes by F. Calvo Serraller, Madrid 1979,

p. 344: 'Y quando vemos estar retratada alguna persona en un quadro de una nuestra Señora, ó

of the adoration of the Christ Child by the shepherds, and less frequently by the Magi, became a customary religious scene to which portraits were added. Some examples show the donors clearly distinguished from the religious figures. For instance, the *Ayala Adoration*, probably painted for a family chapel between 1600 and 1610, conflates an idealised representation of the Adoration of the Shepherds with a more naturalistic family portrait in the foreground (Fig. 20).¹¹⁶ The young daughter, her hands guided by those of her mother, conspicuously shows a lavish medal with the Ayala coat of arms, clearly displaying the family's wealth and prestige. Nonetheless, the predominant trend seems to have been that of integrating the portraits into the sacred episode, with sitters being represented as shepherds, magi and other figures. The sitters were often portrayed in historical dress, which limits the scope of any attempt at identification, although the glimpse of modern garments beneath their disguise (Fig. 21), or elements such as jewellery, like the child's pearl earring in the *Meeting* (Fig. 18), provide valuable clues.¹¹⁷

The use of portraiture to represent the sitters' devotion had the advantage of fulfilling another function, since it enabled these individuals to signal their identification with the experiences undergone by the divine figures. Three prime examples of this use are the paintings commissioned by Margaret of Austria from Juan Pantoja de la Cruz: the *Birth of the Virgin* and the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (Fig. 22), made in 1603 for her oratory (now Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado), and the *Annunciation*, commissioned by the queen c. 1604, to be sent to her family in Graz (now Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum). The *Adoration* depicts the queen as the Virgin, accompanied by her brothers and King Philip III as shepherds. In the *Birth of the Virgin*, Margaret's mother and sisters are portrayed among the midwives and her assistants; St Anne's experience was implicitly associated with that of the queen. The *Annunciation* depicts the queen as the Virgin and her daughter Ana Mauricia as the archangel Gabriel. Queen Margaret used these paintings to display a clear visual parallel between divine maternity and her own royal maternity, underscoring her capacity to provide male heirs for the Hispanic monarchy.¹¹⁸

Christo crucificado, no por eso avemos de pensar, que se hallaron presentes, mas dezimos, que aquel tal tenia devocion de contemplar en aquella imagen, y en este sentido no es impropio, sino permitido, porque no ai otro modo de explicar aquel concepto'.

116. Its large dimensions (225 × 188 cm) indicate that it was probably for a family chapel. Before being recently reassigned to Juan de Roelas, the canvas was attributed to Blas de Prado and to Eugenio Cajés's father Patricio. See J. Yeguas Gasso, 'La remodelació de la col·lecció d'art del Renaixement i Barroc del Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (2018)', *Acta Artis. Estudis d'art modern*, vi, 2018, pp. 195–215 (211–12).

117. In addition to the discrete hints at modern apparel in three of the men in discussion in Juan Bautista Maino, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Hermitage (post 1613) (Fig. 21), see Juan Pantoja de la Cruz, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, Museo del Prado (1603) (Fig. 22); Diego Velázquez, *Adoration of the Magi*,

Museo del Prado (1619); Angelo Nardi, *Adoration of the Magi*, monastery of San Bernardo, Alcalá de Henares (c. 1620); and Jerónimo Jacinto de Espinosa, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, parish church of Chelva (c. 1674), which includes a young girl, probably a portrait. It is likely that donors' portraits were also included in Juan Bautista Maino, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, on copper, private collection (c. 1611–13).

118. Carlos Varona (as in n. 95), pp. 199–215, esp. 214–15. It is possible to find similar maternal associations between scenes of the life of the Virgin and portraits of noble women in Renaissance Italy; see M. Deprano, 'Per la anima della donna: Pregnancy and Death in Domenico Ghirlandaio's Visitation for the Tornabuoni Chapel, Cestello', *Viator*, XLII, 2011, pp. 321–51; and J. I. Miller, 'Miraculous Childbirth and the Portinari Altarpiece', *Art Bulletin*, LXXVII, 1995, pp. 249–61. On the practice of Spanish patrons commissioning portraits of themselves and members of their families as saints see A. Jasienski, 'Converting



21. Juan Bautista Maino, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, c. 1613. St Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum



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22. Juan Pantoja de la Cruz, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1603. Madrid, Museo del Prado

Given the evident singularity of the portraits of Margarita as the Virgin, they cannot be directly compared to other cases such as Cajés's paintings for the Cercito chapel. Yet, these three paintings, commissioned by the no less a figure than the Queen Consort of Spain, testify to the acceptability of expressing concerns about maternity and procreation through the commission of religious paintings on a related theme. It seems reasonable to assume that the practice of including portraits in scenes related to maternity would have been copied by other patrons in Madrid, extending to those of a lower social rank, such as the Cercito family. Thus, it is worth considering that Cajés's *Meeting* was intended as an expression of the Cercitos' wish to commemorate not only the experience undergone by the Virgin's parents, but also their own experience of parenthood. As observed above, the Cercitos had three children. The youngest had been born only two or so years before the canvas was painted. The inclusion of the portrait of their youngest daughter alongside St Anne serves to add emphasis to the theme of the family and procreation. It seems reasonable to suggest, however, that the Cercitos may have wished to commemorate more than simply their having been 'blessed' with Melchora's fecundity, which ensured the continuity of their lineage. For, if the proposed identification of the two groups of figures that accompany Anne and Joachim given above is accurate, there was clearly a wide difference in age between the young Francisca and her older siblings. The degraded condition of the painting makes it hard to ascribe possible ages to the older members of the family, but the figure identified here as Pedro is indisputably depicted as going bald, although, like Joachim, he has not yet lost all his hair; and the woman identified as Melchora appears to have grey or greying hair (Figs 17–18). Their appearances thus suggest that the couple were far from young when they had their third child, as was the case with Anne and Joachim when Anne became the mother of the Virgin. If this is correct, it points to a still closer tie between the Cercitos' experience and that of the two saints, and provides an additional motive for their unusual decision to make this religious scene the sole focus of one of the altars of their chapel.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The *Meeting at the Golden Gate* should be understood in terms of both the patrons' personal devotional concerns and the wider ethno-religious tensions of early modern Spain. The reconstruction of the Cercito chapel proposed in this article offers a new perspective on the way in which religious art engaged with the tensions prompted by the issue of the purity of blood, as well as with anxieties related to family and procreation. The chapel's dedication to the Holy Child of La Guardia, a Spanish cult with a marked anti-*converso* character, testifies both to the Cercito's animosity towards *conversos* and to their concerns over the conservation of the purity of blood of their own lineage. In this devotional space the commemoration

of the Inquisition, the rejection of the *conversos* and the perpetual memory of a Spanish family were combined in an exceptional manner. The promotion of the patrons' own, un-mixed Christian lineage was evident in the chapel's main altarpiece, with its display of Pedro's and Melchora's portraits together with violent images of the martyrdom of the Holy Child at the hands of *conversos*.

Similar themes of lineage and purity were also present in Cajés's *Meeting at the Golden Gate*, although in a less obvious form. Their choice of the encounter between Anne and Joachim, by this time an antiquated iconography, reflected the Cercito's conservative tastes. The altarpiece's theme of parenthood allowed them to allude to lineage, but in a way that expressed their Christian humility. Their devotion to St Anne, and the scene's specific capacity to engage with questions related to the birth of their offspring, were also themes associated with the cult of Holy Child of La Guardia. When considered in the context it was commissioned for, a deeper significance of Cajés's *Meeting at the Golden Gate* emerges: the painting served as display of gratitude for the blessing parenthood that the husband and wife had been granted, and also commemorated the continuity of their pure Christian lineage.

There can be no doubt that the establishment of the Cercito Chapel in the heart of Madrid also served Pedro's professional interests. His social and professional status were further increased when, probably around 1608, he was appointed to the Toledo tribunal of the Inquisition as both a notary and *familiar*.¹¹⁹ He thus became a defender of the notion of purity of blood by his very profession. The relationship of the Cajés family with the Augustinians also developed. Patricio, Eugenio, and members of their families, would later be buried in the Cajés family sepulchre located near the grilles of the high altar of San Felipe el Real.¹²⁰

As for the artist, the *Meeting at the Golden Gate* and the lost altarpiece of the Holy Child of La Guardia, painted at the beginning of Eugenio Cajés's career, demonstrated the young painter's capacity to create an original proposal for an unprecedented devotional programme.¹²¹ The commission from Pedro Cercito became a turning point for him, leading to further engagements. In 1609, the Augustinians commissioned Cajés to paint his much-celebrated, but today lost, altarpiece for the high altar of San Felipe el Real,¹²² which in turn opened the door for his appointment as royal painter as well as to more commissions.

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119. For this appointment see above, n. 41.

120. AHPM, P. 5635, Simón Gutiérrez, fols 1702^r-10^r (will of Eugenio Cajés, 12 Dec 1634). See also E. Llaguno y Amirola and J. A. Ceán Bermúdez, *Noicias de los Arquitectos y Arquitectura de España desde su restauracion*, 4 vols, Madrid 1829, III, p. 113 footnote 1; and Angulo Íñiguez and Pérez Sánchez (as in n. 1), p. 226.

121. Cajés's visual resourcefulness is also evident in later proposals for new religious episodes. See C. Caveró de Carondelet, 'The Virgin Embracing the Virgin: Eugenio Cajés' Short-Lived Iconography of Our Lady del Sagrario in Counter-Reformation Toledo', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, xcvi, 2019, pp. 921-50.

122. Martínez (as in n. 6), pp. 114-15.

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