

HOUSE- WIFIZATION

An Iconographical Study

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Without Domestic Labour the Family Ceases to Exist by OK-RM and Mathieu Lavanchy. From Jack Self, *Home Economics: Five New Models for Domestic Life*, (London: The Spaces, 2016), 7.

This essay is an iconographical study of the process of *housewifization* theorized by the recently deceased author Maria Mies. Her thesis *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* is the main theoretical framework. The aim is to understand the cultural and structural background of the domestic space as private, feminine, detached from direct economic production, and a place of care where women are still the main actors. Mies introduces the term *housewifization*, which refers to the process by which women have been reduced to the role of housewife as a precondition of a capitalist mode of production.¹ The main issue is the degradation of women's social status and their association with the home. The essay focuses on the first stage of this process, related to colonization in Early modern Europe. To cover the topic, seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings representing women in the domestic realm are argued to constitute a body of visual evidence of a *housewifization* process associated with the construction of a modern notion of domesticity. Stated differently, *housewifization: An Iconographical study* examines how idealized notions of domesticity shape and were shaped by representations of the home, particularly Dutch Genre paintings, under which lie a process of domestication and enclosure of women linked to colonialism.

One of the most powerful image associated with domestic spaces is that of domesticity. In Western societies, the home presents itself since the seventeenth century as a powerful concept constructed around family life, love, and affection.² A private nutshell that protects one individual from the outside world. Domesticity is based on an ideal order of the family home; however, it underlies social structures and gendered relationships. Inseparable from the economic and political structures that produce it, the home has historically, both influenced and reflected power relations and social hierarchies. The ideal home is in fact constructed around the division of labor between private and public and embedded with the cultural idea that women should take care of it out of love.³

In the 1970s, the second wave of the new feminist movement breaks away from cultural feminism. Women start talking freely about private issues related to their sexuality and bodies. The traditional distinction between public and private spheres is questioned, and the home is reconsidered as a space seemingly free of politics and where women are marginalized.⁴

Consequently, feminists start to rethink and redefine housework - the work that mainly women perform in the private realm. The "Wages for Housework" movement challenges the concept of domesticity itself.⁵ A ground-breaking work that advances the debate on domestic labor is Mariarosa Della Costa's seminal book: *The Power of Women in the Subversion of the Community*. This essay presents the first argument against the traditional Marxist view that housework is non-productive. Della Costa recognizes the strategic connection between women's unpaid domestic labor and men's paid wage labor. In the ideal home, the breadwinner, the husband, is considered productive in the public sphere as the housewife, is expected to labor in the private sphere out of love, not for pay. Housework or reproductive labor - to use Marxist words - is all the work required to sustain life - from care for the elderly, children, housekeeping to providing a spouse with emotional support.

1 Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, Critique Influence Change (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2014), 100.

2 Irene Cieraad, *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*, Space, Place and Society Ser. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 13.

3 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 18.

4 Ibid, 24.

5 Maria S. Giudici, "Counter-Planning from the Kitchen: For a Feminist Critique of Type," *The Journal of Architecture* 23, no. 7-8 (November 17, 2018): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2018.1513417>.



Engraving of The execution of Anne Hendricks for witchcraft by Jan Luyken. From Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2014), 172.

6 Giudici, “Counter-Planning from the Kitchen, 5.

7 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 27.

8 Ibid, 68,69.

9 Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, Second, revised edition (Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia, 2014), 103.

10 “Alienation of their bodies” are terms used by Silvia Federici to explain the enslavement of women to procreation. Federici, 91.

If reproductive labor is kept apart from real waged labor, this work is invisible and exploited and turns into the women’s natural vocation.⁶ Della Costa rejects this fabricated hierarchy and division of labor, also known as the sexual division of labor.

In 1986, Maria Mies traces the social origins of the sexual division of labor in her book *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. The study reinforces and contributes to the connection between capitalism and patriarchy: “If violence against women is not accidental but part of modern capitalist patriarchy, then we have to explain why this is so. If we reject a biologicistic explanation - as I do - we have to look for reasons which are central to the functioning of the system as such.”⁷

Mies relates the origins of the sexual division of labor with the violent process of *primitive accumulation*, the early phase of capitalism theorized by Marx in the last chapter of *Capital* vol. 1 published in 1867. In Early modern Europe, subsistence mode of production is replaced, and capital accumulation becomes a motor of productive activity. However, before capitalism can arise, labor and capital must be concentrated. Part of the foundation of this process is the asymmetric and exploitative production relations that include land privatization, expropriation of the agricultural population, and colonialism. Yet Mies stresses that a critical phase of this process involves the domestication of women and the reinforcement of family relationships. To ensure reproduction of labor power, which she theorizes as the very base of value accumulation, women are relegated to the private realm to control of their sexuality and ensure reproductivity.⁸ In other words, primitive accumulation is based on colonial expansion, land expropriation but also on enclosure of women in the home with a clear distinction between the public - space of production - and the private - space of reproduction. The function of the latter in the accumulation of capital being invisible.

Mies emphasizes the violence of this process, both directly and indirectly as primitive accumulation is primarily a phase of divisions, hierarchies, and inequalities between class, race, and gender. In Europe, control of reproduction by the state leads to centuries of campaigns and attacks against women’s sexual and productive autonomy. Social repression through institutions, myths, and diktats are combined with direct brutality such as the *witch hunt*, during which women outside domestic life or with a kind of autonomy are criminalized and persecuted from the twelfth to the seventeenth century.⁹ Either directly or indirectly, a long and non-linear process has relegated women to the home and alienated them from their bodies with the consequence of social degradation.¹⁰

Within this framework, the main topic of interest in this research is the idea of domesticity that conceals what Mies theorizes as a process of *housewifization*: a phenomenon by which the necessary division of labor under capitalism has relegated women to the role of housewife, non-productive and dependent of a male breadwinner, head of the family. The essay focuses on an early stage of housewifization and colonization that occurred in the bourgeois class in Modern Europe. This period of division of labor and exploitative relationship between men and women and between men and colonies, interrelated with land privatization, see the rise of new political institutions, cultural norms, and notion of domesticity. The main



Collage to explore how the contemporary home functions as a set for patriarchal performances by Editcollective for the entry to the RIBA competition. 2021. Image from editcollective.uk/power

purpose is to understand the origins of the modern home and capitalist gendered domesticity through early modern notions of privacy, love and so on that contributed to the construction of a normative, civilized female type that ensures reproduction and maintenance of the home.

Family as we know it today, romantic love, and homeliness are all concepts constructed in this period as indirect forms of violence to promote and perpetuate the artificial hierarchy between the waged work of men and the labor of women.¹¹ Women learn, through institutions and norms, to internalize exploitation of their work defined as a natural resource laying outside capital, as love and voluntariness.¹² In other words, the modern home that praises family, materialism, privacy, love, marriage and so on act as ideological instruments used to relegated women to the home and uphold self-repression. These institutions and cultural norms are highlighted in the texts that follow to create an index. Identifying these themes helps to clarify how they contribute to the interconnected processes of colonization and *housewifization* as a result of capitalism's essential division of labor. The symbol ">" in front of the terms is a formal choice to detach the word from the rest of the text and does not indicate any hierarchy between the words.

> *Family*. The phenomenon of *housewifization* and colonization significantly shape and is shaped by the creation of the notion of family as a political institution. The "internal colony," which consists of a nuclear family headed by a male "breadwinner," would not have been possible, according to Mies, without external colonies.¹³ Eventually, the family, that is, the home organized around co-residency and blood relations promoted by the state, allows the men to be active in the outside world while women ensure reproduction in the home. The family is a social organization based on the sexual division of labor.¹⁴

> *Marriage*. Until the nineteenth century, marriage is reserved for the part of the population owning property. It is a public institution that sets the rules for how the household, which is one of society's most private institutions, is organized.¹⁵ Later, to control reproduction in the working class, the prohibition of marriage for propertyless people is abolished, and proletarian women reach in turn the status of housewives.¹⁶ Modern marriage is the primary social structure that promotes the nuclear family and housewife as a social status.

> *Property*. In the rising bourgeois class, property gave male citizens the right to own a family and have power over wives and children.¹⁷ Owning a household relief men of the burden of reproduction and elevate them to active subjects in the public realm. Property also raises the question of heirs and requires control of women's sexuality.

> *Materialism*. Housewifization in the bourgeois class first occurs in Europe with early merchant capitalism and colonization. The emergence of global trade in early modern Europe and the triangular commercial system results in the import of luxury items to the European market consumed by its elites. The ladies of the bourgeois class are considered consumers and demonstrators of luxury and wealth. With the house functioning as their privatized arena for consumption while remaining cut off from production and accumulation, the home developed into a collection of luxurious items. Materialism refers to wealth accumulation that relegates women to the status of consumers and providers.¹⁸

11 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 103.

12 Ibid, 69.

13 Ibid, 110.

14 Ibid, 103.

15 Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 10.

16 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 109.

17 Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 98.

18 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 103.



Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Threshold View of a Passageway*, 1642-78. Oil on canvas, 100 × 71 cm. Louvre, Paris, France.

> *Privacy*. The family and the home declared as private territory, in contrast to the public realm of economic and political activity is a fabricated hierarchy possible because of a sexual division of labor. The public becomes the place of action and political life where male can achieve work because they own a household where reproduction is taken care of. However, women's labor to sustain this household is not economically recognized, resulting in the consideration of their work as natural and of private matter.

> *Love*. The status of housewife is also upheld by the romantic idea of love. The ideology of love and care functions to counterbalance the prior economic and sexual autonomy enjoyed by women prior to the emergence of the nuclear family. In the bourgeois home, love does not manifest itself through sexual activity, but rather as an instinct of maintaining an ordered home. Since the state supports the family organized around love and affection, housewives become a social status.¹⁹

> *Body/Sexuality*. Control of reproduction means the control of women's bodies and sexuality. In addition to confining women to reproductive work, maternity is degraded to non-work and a natural resource for labor force. The result is the loss of essential conditions necessary for physical and psychological integrity.²⁰

> *Virtue*. Women are relegated to the duty of maintaining order in their homes because their families and their honor depend on it. the notion of virtue is an ideological construction embedded in the home that guarantees women's reproductive work. Therefore, the construction of domesticity and modern women around the concept of virtue in Early modern Europe is a crucial tool for domestication as well as for self-repression.

> *Domesticity*. Seventeenth century Dutch genre paintings are considered to be the cradle of modern domesticity.²¹ With the representation of the home standing as the main theme, their portrayals of the everyday provide a picture of early modern domesticity that praises a devotion to family life and a desire for privacy and protection from the outside world.²² The paintings are part of and were produced during the Golden Ages, a specific period lasting from the independence of the Dutch Republic from Spain in 1648 until 1672, the beginning of the Franco-Dutch War. It is a time following economic growth from world trade expansion and colonization which led to a prosperous period for merchants who accumulate wealth and property. Both capitalist growth and the rise of the Dutch Republic leads to new social structures and a nation organized around the home. Eventually, the family home becomes the fundamental unit of the new, republican, Calvinist Dutch society, and a tool for social control.²³ On the one side, the home becomes a symbol of the moral destiny of the Dutch people as the republic searches for a new national identity. On the other, in a phase of capitalist acceleration, domestic spaces become the sphere of reproduction and consumption separated from production.

> *Division of Labor*. The rise of industry and Dutch maritime nation to global dominance since the turn of the century does, in fact, result in the privatization of the home and the relegation of women to it. Bourgeois families become units in which a social and sexual division of labor is clear. Bourgeois men, most of them merchants, are active in the outside

19 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 104.

20 Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 102.

21 Cieraad, *At Home*, 13.

22 John Loughman, *Public and Private Spaces: Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Houses*, Studies in Netherlandish Art and Cultural History Vol. 3 (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000), 21.

23 Christopher Brown, *Scenes of Everyday Life: Dutch Genre Painting of the Seventeenth Century* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984), 56.

- > *Family*
- > *Marriage*
- > *Property*
- > *Materialism*
- > *Privacy*
- > *Love*
- > *Body/ Sexuality*
- > *Virtue*
- > *Domesticity*
- > *Division of Labour*
- > *Worldliness*
- > *Capitalism*
- > *Colonialism*
- > *Cities*
- > *Urbanism*
- > *Homeliness*
- > *Cleanliness*

world and public sphere of the city and colonies. Their women and wives, to ensure reproduction, find themselves more and more restricted to the home and private sphere. In other words, it is a period in which the home and family become the primary unit and a sanctuary protected from the hostile outside world, both symbolically and literally. Major social campaigns are launched through literature known as domestic conduct books that strictly define women's role in marriage, child-rearing, and household management to relieve men of the burden and allow them to be productive in the public sphere.²⁴

24 Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 6.

25 Ibid, 66.

26 Brown, *Scenes of Everyday Life*, 60.

27 Ibid, 60.

> *Housewifization*. Books and tracts about new domestic life that promotes duties and responsibilities according to gender are well spread in the seventeenth century. The publication in 1625 of Jacob Cats' book *Houwelyck*, is known by most of the population. The way this book celebrates ideas of marriage, family, and love, among other things, greatly influences Dutch domestic life. The visual representation of domestic spaces in art is constructed within Jacob Cats' prescriptions of women's roles.²⁵ The result is the development of the family bourgeois home as a social group relegated to the private sphere, with the housewife as the main actor for its maintenance, both literally and symbolically.²⁶ In this way, seventeenth-century genre paintings of women within domestic spaces can be understood as a form of art related to a period of rapid capitalist development that reflects and shapes the new social and structural ideals of the Dutch Republic. It echoes the ideal of the new society by elevating the ordinary home and offering idealized depictions of family.²⁷ Genre paintings compose, and mirror women as typical female archetypes associated with the home, and are placed within the home to act as reminder of right social conduct. In this sense, they can be seen as a form of art promoting an ideal notion of domesticity, under which hides a process of housewifization of bourgeois women.

This essay argues that these iconographies form a body of evidence of Maria Mies' theory as much as they add to her discourse. 17th century Dutch genre paintings representing women in the domestic sphere both contribute to and reflect what Maria Mies theorizes as a process of *housewifization*. The aim is to challenge the paintings' realist representation of a notion of home to understand them as a reflection and a contribution to a social project of domestication, part and parcels of the new Dutch capitalist society.

To support this argument, the essay proposes an iconographical study. An introduction of the outside world of the Dutch republic, from an economic to an urban framework, leads us to the inside world of the paintings. Four paintings are then extensively analyzed. To reveal their participation to the discourse of *housewifization*, they are studied as fragments to relate or complete the index singled out throughout the text. Finally, an annex containing a non-complete catalog forms a further body of visual evidence. Approximately 20 paintings of the same thematic group, period, and time are classified to form an extension of the iconographical study. All of them relate to the index to which the reader can refer without reading the entire essay.



Abraham Storck, *View of Amsterdam Port: The Ij Near the New Bridge*, 1660.
Oil on canvas, 81 × 108 cm. Private collection.

Genre paintings of domestic spaces depict the interior world of the Dutch Republic enclosing and acting as a nutshell in response to the expansion of the outside world. The following paragraphs aim to anchor the iconographical study in their specific economic and colonial context to understand the growing idea of the outside world as hostile that needs its protective counterpart. Capitalist growth leading to rigid urban planning and standardized housing plays an important role. Starting from an urban scale, the essay will then focus on the representation of interior spaces through the paintings.

> *Worldliness*. Between 1581 and 1672, a period called the Dutch Revolt starts with the creation of the Dutch Republic. In 1581, the Dutch provinces establish themselves independent from the Habsburg dynasty to form the Republic, a confederation under a federal assembly.²⁸ The grain trade in the Baltic region is dominated by the nation and indirectly finance the first phase of the revolt. The merchants have therefore a great influence on the government and promote Protestantism, Republicanism, citizenship and are open to different religion to facilitate trade.²⁹ The expansion of the outside world, that is, capitalist development and colonization witnesses the enclosure of the home.

> *Capitalism*. The federal state is one where the towns set policy and, because of competition between the towns and the countryside, can benefit from the incomes of urban markets. In other words, a state that allows capitalism to grow.³⁰ From the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, capitalism - the market economy combined with mass wage labor - is developing. The Revolt is an accelerated phase of capitalism carried out by the wage workers of the Seam Beggar's fleet that make up the labor force, and the bourgeoisie and merchant community, who make up the capital.³¹ At the time of its independence in 1648 with the Treaty of Münster, the new world of the Dutch Republic is therefore not a revolution from a feudal nobility to a capitalist society but a developing phase of capitalism with the emergence of a state that positions the merchant bourgeoisie in the center, a class from which domestication of women and reinforcement of family relationships consequently emerges.

> *Colonialism*. Colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade play a great role in the economic growth of the republic. With the experience in the Baltic Sea region, the collaboration in cities between the locals and newcomers, and the city council dominated by merchants, the first trip to the Caribbean in 1595 is a success. Then, the beneficial relationships that Hollander has with immigrants and between entrepreneurs and the government give rise to the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and later the Dutch West India Company (WIC). The Wesselbank and the VOC's organizational model that take place in the Netherlands and the establishment of new cities and ports in the colonies allow the Triangular Commercial System, to grow, based on the violent process of the slave trade. Economic expansion relies on slave-made goods like textiles, sugar, coffee, and tobacco from the Americas sold in Europe.³² The violent process of colonialism is interrelated to the process of *housewifization* as *primitive accumulation* is based on colonial expansion and control of reproduction.

> *Cities*. The state has a government in which the towns determine

28 Maarten Prak, *Pioneers of Capitalism: The Netherlands 1000–1800* (Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton University Press, 2022), 91.

29 Ibid, 92.

30 Maarten Prak, *Pioneers of Capitalism*, 92.

31 Ibid, 117.

32 Rik Van Welie, "Slave Trading and Slavery in the Dutch Colonial Empire: A Global Comparison," *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 82, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2008): 51, <https://doi.org/10.1163/13822373-90002465>.



Gerrit Adriansz Berchheyde, *The Bend in the Herengracht near the Nieuwe*, 1672.
Oil on panel, 40.5 × 63 cm. Rijksmuseum Collection, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

33 Prak, *Pioneers of Capitalism*, 2022, 92.

34 Marjolein 'T Hart, "Cities and Statemaking in the Dutch Republic, 1580?1680," *Theory and Society* 18, no. 5 (September 1989): 665, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00149496>.

35 Ibid, 664.

36 Ibid, 676.

37 Arthur K. Wheelock, *The Public and the Private in the Age of Vermeer* (London, Wappingers Falls, N.Y: P. Wilson, 2000), 12.

38 J.E. Abrahamse, "De Grote Uitleg van Amsterdam : Stadsonwikkeling in de Zeventiende Eeuw" (2010), 119, <http://dare.uva.nl/document/158810>.

39 Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Fontana Press, 1991), 386.

40 Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 98.

41 J.E. Abrahamse, "De Grote Uitleg van Amsterdam : Stadsonwikkeling in de Zeventiende Eeuw," 119.

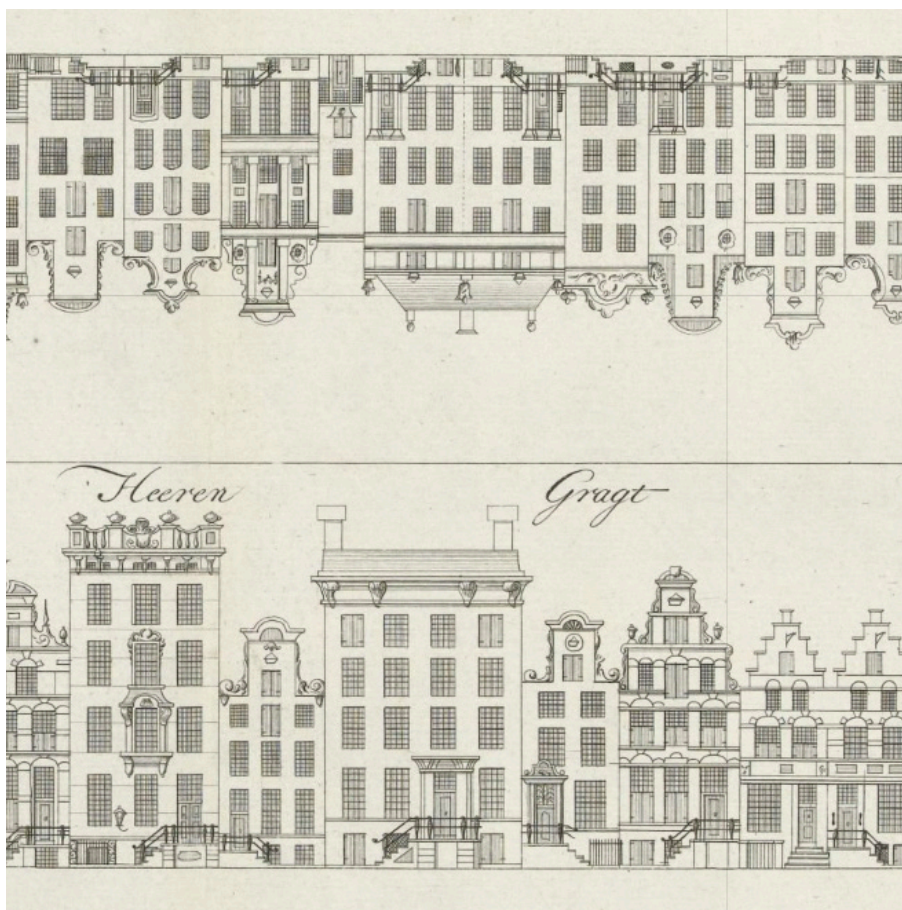
42 Loughman, *Public and Private Spaces*, 22.

policy, but no single town is large enough to dominate the others.³³ Each city has a textile and brewing industry and its specific market. To cite a few, Dordrecht is the main river trade entrepôt; The Hague is the bureaucratic center; Delft is a dairy and beer market, and Rotterdam is a fishery center and river/sea trade center.³⁴ Amsterdam is the city with the largest capital resources and the strongest credit base with the establishment in 1609 of the Bank of Exchange and in 1614 the Bank of Loans and later of private banking. Its industry develops due to the abundance of cheap and accessible peat resources and an extensive network of canals allows great physical mobility in the area. Amsterdam also rise to prominence in the Baltic and Mediterranean trades, eventually emerging as a leading trading hub,³⁵ while profiting from colonization and trade, which allowed the city to collect taxes and to triple its revenue between 1620 and 1679.³⁶ From the mid-century canals were lined with buildings owned by the upper-class, furnished with opulent objects. Amsterdam becomes Europe's great emporium of luxuries.

> *Urbanism*. The Dutch republic rises to prominence in the global capitalist system with a direct impact on urban development. With its largest capital resources, Amsterdam is taken as a case study for urban planning and its impact on housing. Due in large part to its strong economic position, the city sees significant urban development marked by methodical planning, private land ownership, large-scale expansions, and standard housing. Amsterdam was granted authorization in 1609 to increase its surface area and territorial jurisdiction. Illegally constructed buildings are absorbed by new fortifications in 1613, and parts of the city are integrated into the new urban fabric. However the creation of a private residential area is the most significant innovation. The profit-oriented development of the well-known canal belt resulted in the creation of a new neighborhood where opulent residences are constructed in compliance with rigorous guidelines, ultimately standardized housing.³⁷ In 1662, a new extension financed by violent land expropriation makes Amsterdam the most planned European metropolis and a fully fledged development project to generate revenue. Land use is maximized, and city blocks and plots are usually orthogonal so they can be quickly measured and sold.³⁸ The urban context of Amsterdam reveals the republic's need for regulation in a profit-oriented society.

> *Property*. Luxurious and regulated housings are constructed along the *Herengracht* bend, owned by wealthy merchants, directors of large trading companies, and an increasing number of investors and rentiers. A male bourgeois owning property is the precondition to a citizen's right to play an active role in the Dutch urban community.³⁹ It is also the prerequisite to own a family and exercise control over a wife and children. Property means owning a family and wife that guarantees reproduction and cleanliness of the home while men are active in the public sphere.⁴⁰

> *Homeliness*. Combined with functional zoning, the housing development results in standardized typologies.⁴¹ From around 1650, wealthy merchants and regents acquire property and develop housing responding to their new needs. Built on a plot of land between five and eight meters wide, the typical Dutch narrow house has typically three to four stories, attics, and cellars.⁴² Information about space organization is found in the architectural treatise published by the Middelburg-born



Caspar Philips Jacobszoon, *Gevens van huizenrijen aan de Keizersgracht naar de Nieuwe Spiegelstraat en de Herengracht naar het Koningsplein*, 1768-71.
38 × 49 cm. Rijksmuseum Collection, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

43 Wheelock, *The Public and the Private in the Age of Vermeer*, 36.

44 Loughman, *Public and Private Spaces*, 23.

45 Ibid, 28.

46 Ibid, 27.

47 Ibid, 29.

48 Ibid, 28.

49 Wheelock, *The Public and the Private in the Age of Vermeer*, 36.

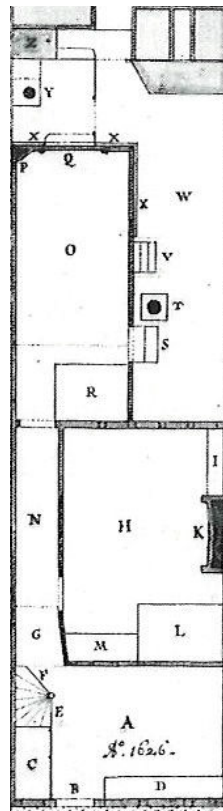
50 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 384.

51 Ibid, 375.

bookseller Willem George in 1681. From the seventeenth century, the floor plan of the Dutch house witnesses a division of space, with a front and a back of the house.⁴³ Around 1650, the ground floor is primarily divided into two areas. The front part, known as the *voorhuis*, serves as a place of business and work. A back room composing the living area with a fireplace is called the *binnenhaard*. Occasionally, the very back of the house had a room used for food preparation.⁴⁴ The ground floor of the upper class gets more complex in the second half of the century. An enclosed outdoor space was often provided by an inner courtyard that divided the front and back. The *voorhuis* and the courtyard were connected by a corridor that ran the entire length of the house. Room functions are more clearly defined, and a space for domestic cores is added at the very back. Books of domestic conduct, read by the upper class, dictated proper manners for guests in the house's more public areas.⁴⁵ Many of these newer homes have smaller *voorhuis* that resemble an entrance hall with side rooms indicating the head of household is working as a craftsman or trader away from the home.⁴⁶ The new ground floor of the Dutch house responds to the burgher's new concerns about regulations and gender roles. The man and head of the family is entitled to the front part of the house so that he can have his office and receive guests. The woman is confined to the back of the house, away from the public eye, where her living and cooking areas, the laundry room, and other housekeeping necessities are arranged.⁴⁷ After completing domestic chores, she resides in the *voorhuis* where social relations with guests are specified by domestic conduct books.⁴⁸ The courtyard can be interpreted as a completely private outdoor space, allowing no contact with the outside world. The domestic sphere secludes itself from the public sphere and becomes a series of thresholds with levels of privacy that allow contact regulations with the outside, the front door acting as the barrier separating the interior private domain from the exterior public life. The threshold is the border between worldliness and homeliness.⁴⁹ Standardization of housing reflects a concern for regulations, gender roles, and order at the scale of the city and the house. The Dutch home acts as a shell that secludes women from the public area of both the city and the house. Her space is at the back where the main cleaning tasks are done.

> *Cleanliness*. In the New Dutch society, maintaining cleanliness in the domestic realm becomes the reflection of the Nation's values.⁵⁰ After the independence from Spain, being clean meant being vigilant and patriotic in defending one's home, hometown, and homeland.⁵¹ This new ideology reveals the crucial importance of the home becoming society's primary unit and the association between women's virtue and the domestic realm becomes an efficient strategy to ensure a clean, and an ordered society.

The subdivision and gradients of the domestic realm becomes very present in Dutch genre paintings representing women in the domestic realm, therefore composing rich visual evidence of standardization and gender norms. By depicting architecture, space organization, objects, and characters, they reflect social changes and a new modern bourgeois notion of domesticity. They are pictorial constructions that communicate through objects and motifs an ideal image of domesticity in which ideas and associations are hidden in a plausible reality. In other words, realism



Groundplan of Houses in Anjeliergracht in Amsterdam from 1634. From Gemeentearchief, John Loughman, *Public and Private Spaces: Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Houses* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000), 24.

52 Franits, *Paragons of Virtue*, 9.

and symbolism work together to create a vision of domesticity.⁵² These imageries reflect the new home of the Dutch Republic, the new primary environment for moral development and the core of society, where women are constructed as a normative female type to ensure its maintenance.

The further analysis is limited to iconographies of female characters within interiors. To reveal their participation in the discourse of *housewifization*, each painting is extensively analyzed as fragments that refer to, and complete the index singled out in the first parts of the text, to which the readers can always refer themselves to.



Caspar Netscher, *The Lace Maker*, 1662. Oil on canvas, 34 × 28 cm. Wallace Collection, London, United Kingdom.

The Mussel-House

The Lace Maker shows a young girl wearing simple clothing. She is working at a bobbin-lace cushion that she is holding in her lap with both hands. She is dressed in a bodice, skirt, and light-embroidered cap. Her shoes are in the left foreground on the floor behind her, and a broom is in the corner beyond them. An unframed landscape print is pinned to the wall at the back.⁵³

The character is a woman performing domestic activity within the home. According to the symbol on her cap, she is married. Her dress is in wool and indicates modesty, and most importantly a lack of vanity. She is also turned slightly towards the wall which prevents visual interaction and communicates an impression of seclusion. Her attention is focused on lacemaking, which is the foundation of her diligence and respectability.⁵⁴ The domestic task of lacemaking is linked to strong moral values and more specifically to virtue. It can be associated to the task of spinning, a domestic activity crucial for the housewives to perform because it honors her and her family. In his domestic conduct book, Jacob Cats' verses praise virtue of women spinning by referring to biblical proverbs. It provides a theological foundation of the honorable role she has to play in taking care of the home.⁵⁵ The Lace-Maker is a housewife performing a domestic task associated with virtue and thus reflects a notion of domesticity where women are relegated to the home on the socially conscious concept of honor. Virtue becomes an ideological instrument used to associate women to the home. Since spinning and lacemaking are themes in Dutch genre paintings, their prevalence contributes to the idea's propagation and maintains self-repression. Associating the Lacemaker to the home on the base of virtue participates to reducing socially women to the role of housewife. > *Virtue*

On the floor on her right are placed two mussel shells. Sometimes interpreted as a symbol of eroticism, mussel shells are also used as a metaphor for domesticity in several literary works. Poems from the seventeenth-century honor women for their role in caring for their mussel-house. When urging women to stay at home, Cats use analogous imagery.⁵⁶ The rhetoric is obvious, the mussel is a creature that remains inside its shell. The woman compared to a mussel is encouraged to stay within the home. The house described as a shell reveals its role of protection from the outside world and its seclusion from the public sphere. The Lacemaker is directly associated with domesticity, becoming its very representation. > *Domesticity*.

A pair of shoes fills the left bottom corner of the image. Their symbolic meaning refers to classical antique literature that praises marriage. They recall an Egyptian women's custom and law prohibiting them from wearing shoes inside the house, as a reminder to stay within the home. Well known in the seventeenth century, this myth is used by several authors in treatises on marriage to urge women to manage domestic labor.⁵⁷ Matrimony is a consensual partnership in which roles are divided according to sex that guarantees the social structure of the family. In a marriage, the husband provides while the wife takes care of the home. The family being the chore of the state, marriage is a tool to ensure stability in society, that is, a clear sexual division of labor.

53 Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century Based on the Work of John Smith*, vol. 5 (London: London Macmillan, 1913), 164.

54 "Wallace Collection Online - The Lace Maker," accessed January 1, 2024, <https://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=65171&viewType=detailView>.

55 Franits, *Paragons of Virtue*, 71.

56 Ibid, 79.

57 Ibid, 77.

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58 Franits, *Paragons of Virtue*, 67.

Matrimony relegates women to reproduction inspired by the divine idea of love, and thus preserve social structure of the family and the state. Jacob Cats' conduct book *Houwelyck* praises matrimony as honorable, natural, and immutable.⁵⁸ Marriage, a public institution praised as natural and virtuous, is actually a social organization under growing capitalism. The Lace-maker represented with a pair of shoes lying next to her praise marriage as her natural and honorable state. Her matrimonial role being to take care of the family, it contributes to her relegation to the home. > *Marriage*.

59 Ibid, 77.

The broom refers to the maintenance of the home and the importance of physical and spiritual cleanliness.⁵⁹ Domestic tasks are to be performed with diligence as to be clean is to have strong moral values. In the new Dutch republic, it refers to patriotism and to the protection of the country, town, and home. The broom serves as a metaphorical instrument for clearing the nation of the stains left by Spain's rule over it in the past. Cleaning is a sign of dignity, and the broom is connected to moral and spiritual purity.⁶⁰ The broom next to the Lace-maker recalls the connection between the state, the home, and women in the moral fate of the individuals and of the society as a whole. > *Cleanliness*.

60 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 379.

The scene takes place in a reduced corner of an interior. The only architectural elements are a wall and a wooden floor, depicted as simple surfaces. The domestic space is represented as a nutshell completely secluded suggesting an idea of intimacy. The notion of domesticity communicated by the paintings is intertwined with an idea of privacy. The woman's activity is thus suggested as a private matter, separated from the public sphere and production. Her labor is considered natural in the domestic sphere that she embodies. > *Privacy*.

The interior space is depicted in a very modest and simple way with an unframed landscape print pinned on the wall. This image emphasizes the secluded aspect of the home and its construction in opposition to the outside. The print, which evokes worldliness, is placed in what appears to be the back of the house, highlighting the Lace-maker's secluded interior space as the paradigm of Dutch homeliness. > *Homeliness*.

The conspicuous placement of a married woman with the broom, shoes, and mussel shells, is a pictorial device to create a powerful representation of the ideal femininity intertwined with a notion of domesticity. The extensive analysis of the painting reveals that the ideal domesticity depicted in the Lace-maker refers and symbolizes marriage, virtue, domesticity, privacy and cleanliness, all cultural norms and institutions that relegates women to the domestic space and thus contribute to a process of > *Housewifization*.



Jan Steen, *The Morning Toilet*, 1663. Oil on panel, 65.8 × 53 cm. Royal Collection Trust, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Luxury and Sexuality

The Morning Toilet represents a woman seen through an archway between two columns. The wooden door is wide open, showing a woman sitting on the edge of a four-poster bed wearing an opulent dress. She pulls off her stocking and faces the observer. Her breasts are exposed as her bodice is undone. To her right, a jewelry box on a table is covered by a carpet. Pearls are falling from the open box. On the threshold of the door are positioned an open book of music, a skull entwined with a vine, and an upside-down lute with a broken string.⁶¹

The character, seated on the bed, is removing a stocking while slightly raising her dress. The act of pulling off a stocking is perceived as suggestive, and emblem books advise against doing so too soon as it gives in to sensual temptation. Additionally, the Dutch term for stocking was also used as slang for fornication.⁶² This gesture has multiple meanings referring to physical pleasure that place the body and sexuality of the character as one of the central themes. The painting associates the domestic space to a sexualized women body. > *Body/ Sexuality*.

The Morning Toilet is a representation of a new normative feminine figure. The fact that she raises and crosses her legs indicates ease with her body. Then, the upward gaze of the woman contradicts the recommended representation, which is to lower the head and incline to the side. It expresses a sense of self-consciousness about visibility and exposure. The combination of her pose and gesture re-interprets the feminine stereotypes. Still as a sexualized object, the woman represents a modern feminine figure that embodies the change in trends and norms of the nation.⁶³ The modern woman becomes a metaphor of the rise of a modernity and speaks about society's demand and need of a new normative female type associated with the home and consumption. *The Morning Toilet* creates indeed an image of the modern woman marked by consumer ship.⁶⁴ The character's clothes and the objects filling the room indicate wealth. The fur-lined jacket that the woman is wearing is an expensive textile that also refers to modern fashions. Modern Fashions are defining clothes and hairstyle as well as a general concept of modernity.⁶⁵ Here the fashionable woman is a new figure concerned with wealth. The four-post bed, the sheets, the carpet, and the jewelry box speak about extravagant lifestyle and consumption. On the threshold are positioned an open book, a skull entwined with a vine, and a lute with a broken string. The presence of these objects symbolizes vanity. They are motifs of the fleeting nature of pleasure illustrated by the opulently furnished room beyond.⁶⁶ The combination of the woman and objects of vanity refers to her consumption and accumulation of wealth within her home, represented by her expensive goods and costumes. The painting renders a modern construction of normalized women associated with materialism. A clear link can be made with the first stage of *housewifization* that Mies theorises as the transformation of bourgeois women as consumers and symbols of luxury. The proliferation of objects and furniture creates a domestic realm more difficult to maintain than it was previously, as well as something to attach to. The home becomes a collection of opulent objects and a place for accumulation of wealth that restrict women to this new privatized arena for consumption. > *Materialism*.

61 Quentin Buvelot, Desmond Shawe-Taylor, and Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *Masters of the Everyday: Dutch Artists in the Age of Vermeer* (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2015), 137.

62 Marjorie Elizabeth Wieseman, H. Perry Chapman, and Fitzwilliam Museum, *Vermeer's Women: Secrets and Silence* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2011), 202.

63 Nanette Salomon, *Shifting Priorities: Gender and Genre in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2004), 66.

64 Ibid, 64.

65 Ibid, 67.

66 Wieseman, Chapman, and Fitzwilliam Museum, *Vermeer's Women*, 202.

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67 Loughman, *Public and Private Spaces*, 20.

68 Wheelock, *The Public and the Private in the Age of Vermeer*, 40.

69 Ibid, 40.

70 Wieseman, Chapman, and Fitzwilliam Museum, *Vermeer's Women*, 202.

71 Salomon, *Shifting Priorities*, 72.

72 Wieseman, Chapman, and Fitzwilliam Museum, 202.

73 Salomon, *Shifting Priorities*, 74.

The wealthy interior of *The Morning Toilet* speaks about the economic expansion of early merchant capitalism that relies on colonization and slavery. The Dutch East and West Companies' activities, along with the growth of Dutch overseas trade around the world, turn the house into a cabinet full of slave-made goods. The interiors of the bourgeois class exceeds with tropical woods, Persian carpets and Venetian mirrors.⁶⁷ While the opulent room of *The Morning Toilet* filled with expensive objects addresses the general enrichment of the bourgeois class, the oriental carpet on the table is a direct reference to colonization. An Asian or "Turkish" carpet, with its warm glow offering a significant colour accent to the space, was frequently draped over the tabletop in upper-middle class homes.⁶⁸ Individuals from diverse social backgrounds filled their homes with goods and artworks purchased from art dealers or at the markets, transforming the home in a place of wealth accumulation.⁶⁹ Luxury is a fundamental stimulus for colonialism and early capitalism that allow wealth accumulation and the relegation of women to consumers and providers in the private arena of the home. The luxury is for the ladies of the bourgeois class. > *Colonialism*.

The painting is framed by an imposing entrance with massive column that appears more like an exterior doorway than a bedroom doorway. The transition between the viewer's actual world and the painted illusionism is frequently highlighted with this kind of framing technique.⁷⁰ The placement of the lute, book and skull on the threshold emphasizes the distinction between the inside room and the outside.⁷¹ The painting frames the women in an interior space and architecture is used to mark a clear separation from the outside. The domestic interior is represented with an idea of privacy and intimacy, associated to the female character. > *Privacy*.

The viewer approaches the scene through an archway. This technique is used to highlight the contrast between the viewer's actual environment and the illusionism of the painted world inside. The stone step creates a threshold through which the male viewer gaze at the woman.⁷² The main topic of the scene is physical love and thus intended to male viewers, invited by the lady to join him in the room. In this sense, *The Morning Toilet* provides the perfect setting for connections amongst well-educated men. They can relate to and understand each other through their gaze at the body of a domesticated, sexualized, and normalized woman.⁷³ > *Male gaze*.

The Morning Toilet represents a modern and fashionable woman within a wealthy domestic interior. Her association with materialism and consumption acts as a sign and image of modern bourgeois society. World expansion transforms the home in a place of wealth accumulation where the woman is the main consumer. In other words, with early modern capitalism, women's place become the private sphere where she can accumulate expensive objects while remaining separated from production. Thus, the painting depicts the interconnected processes of colonization and > *Housewifization*.



Jan Steen, *The Dissolute Household*, 1663-64. Oil on canvas 108 × 90.2 cm.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States.

Family Portrait

The Dissolute Household arranges the characters in a manner that is similar to a theatre stage. A triangle serves as a base for the painting's composition and at its center is a young woman in elegant clothing. The painting depicts a scene of domestic chaos. Satire is employed to celebrate the ideal ordering of the home while disrupting it: The dog eats the plate on the table, a child steals from the cabinet, and the youngest child plays with pearls in his highchair. As the man of the house laughs and blows off the reproach of the nun to his right, the woman in the foreground is holding a glass between his legs. And finally, a large pig is by the kitchen door.⁷⁴

Women are perceived as impulsive and uncontrollable creatures when unrestricted by matrimony and conjugal responsibilities.⁷⁵ Because of her attractive appearance and her behavior, the female character in the center may be viewed as a debauched woman.⁷⁶ Certainly not confined by marriage, she can only be a prostitute.⁷⁷ The association of an unmarried woman and a completely disordered home highlights the significance of matrimonial institution in ensuring social order. Marriage becomes a tool to guarantee women taking care of the home and thus ensure stability of society at large. > *Marriage*.

The painting is a scene of family life turned upside down to emphasize the two separated but interrelated construction of family and home. The way so many figures are arranged in the limited pictorial space, breaking up the composition and generating several focal points, is reminiscent of public life paintings from the 16th century.⁷⁸ Inserting references of public life iconographies in the domestic sphere is called a strategy of topsy-turviness. The goal is to evoke a sense of nostalgia of a well-organized home, which helps to build a concept of domesticity around the family.⁷⁹ In the new bourgeois society of the Dutch Republic, the family acts as the primary cell of the political and economic system. It is the first community that compose the chore of the household and thus the base of the city and the state.⁸⁰ Compared to a small political realm, the nuclear family raises the men to the status of lord of the household that can demand submission in exchange for his legitimate rule and moral behavior.⁸¹ The division of labor and hierarchy within the family is promoted by the state to allow the men to be active in the outside world while women ensure reproduction in the home. The internal colony established; the men can contribute to the expansion of the external colonies.⁸² The visual language of the Dissolute Household creates an ideal of domesticity that evokes memories of a well-kept home where the woman takes care of the household chores so her husband can focus on his business. In other words, a familial scheme with a strict sexual division of labor where men are breadwinners and women are providers and consumers. Therefore, the painting participates through visual language in the social construction of new modern domestic and familial norms. > *Family*.

The dissolute household represents the sacred house breached by the outside world by using visual references of bordellos from the previous century. Dutch modern domesticity is constructed in opposition to the outside world. The Dutch are, in fact, the world's greatest explorers in the 17th century, expanding their empire as far as New Zealand and the

74 "The Dissolute Household by STEEN, Jan," accessed January 4, 2024, https://www.wga.hu/htm-1_m/s/steen/page2/dissolu.html.

75 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 400.

76 "The Dissolute Household by STEEN, Jan."

77 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 401.

78 Salomon, *Shifting Priorities*, 54.

79 Salomon, 55.

80 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 386.

81 Schama, 388.

82 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 13.

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83 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 389.

Arctic Sea. The home exists as the opposite of the outside hostile world where harmony, morality, and wealth are found.⁸³ The housewife, who sleeps in the back, has neglected her house and allowed the chaos to seep inside. The painting, by representing the home invaded by the world, recalls that it should be a place where the trader finds harmony and morality. The notion of worldliness refers to a process of colonization that requires *housewifization* to guarantee the order of the interior world.
> *Worldliness*.

84 Salomon, *Shifting Priorities*, 52.

85 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 400.

The house has lost its purity to the filth of the outside world. By transposing visuals of public atmospheres into interiors that are meant to be understood as private, the paintings remind the viewer of the importance of a clear separation between the outside world and the inside world.⁸⁴ When the lines between the world and the home are not properly drawn, trouble is inevitable.⁸⁵ The paintings advise that the family and the home should be reduced to a private realm to guarantee its order. The home should stay a sphere separated from politics and economic activity to ensure the stability of society at large and therefore promote a notion of domesticity where reproduction is a private matter. > *Privacy*.

86 Ibid, 387.

An important character is the woman asleep at the table to the left. She is a housewife but that is not taking care of the house, which leads to complete chaos. The housewife is the cleansing agent of the home, literally and symbolically. The home was of supreme importance in determining the moral fate, both of individuals and Dutch society. The housewife is the primary purifying agent in the home, just as the house itself is meant to purge the outside world of its impurities.⁸⁶ > *Cleanliness*.

The dissolute Household is a repertoire of immoralities taking place in the domestic realm. The disorder of the home lay in the dissolute barrier between worldliness and homeliness. The visual language recalls the importance of the separation between the public and private spheres in a ordered society. Therefore, the nostalgic image of an ideal home reveals a wider social project where the family forms the chore of social stability.
> *Housewifization*.



Vermeer, *The Girl with a Glass of Wine*, 1658-59. Oil on canvas, 67 × 78 cm. Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, Germany.

Civil Love, Labor of Love

The Girl with a Glass of Wine presents a young woman accepting a wine glass that an elegantly dressed man hands to her, while in the background. We are witnessing a scene of seduction, and it appears that the woman is accepting her admirer's advances based on her smile. The woman looking out involves the viewer in the scenes and shows her consciousness of the situation. The left window is open, and the light highlights the range of colors of the scene.⁸⁷

87 "Understanding Girl with a Wine Glass by Johannes Vermeer," accessed January 6, 2024, http://www.essentialvermeer.com/cat_about/brunswick.html.

88 Salomon, *Shifting Priorities*, 109.

89 Ibid, 109.

The painting is a scene representing civil courtship within the home. The woman serves as the composition's focal point and the primary character. Her lookout and smile speak about her consciousness of exposure and highlight her sexuality as the central theme of the scene. Before 1650, seduction and sexuality are depicted as a popular category of mercenary love and bordellos.⁸⁸ Paintings belonging to the said group set a sexual narrative in public spaces, where relations are based on economic exchange. *The Girl with a Glass of Wine* represents a shift in Dutch Society where the home becomes the site of formal courtship with women as central characters. Women become the emblem of a new type of sexuality based on civility and respectability.⁸⁹ In early modern Dutch Society, the rise of the bourgeois class owning property leads to the question of heirs. The relegation of women to the home is a way to control her sexuality and, consequently, their ability to procreate. Women's sexuality is consequently reduced to the procreation of children within the home. Sexuality is reduced to the manifestation of matrimonial love and is replaced by a constructed ideal of instinct for maintaining an ordered home. > *Body/ Sexuality*.

90 Salomon, 114.

91 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 421.

92 Ibid, 422.

The painting represents love as civil courtship that contrasts with earlier artworks part of the popular category of mercenary love and bordellos. Women are no longer associated with sexual love in the public sphere but with civil love in the domestic realm. In this sense, love takes the place of sexuality as the characteristic that both defines and is defined by the feminine.⁹⁰ The Dutch are the first to picture marriage as associated with love and to represent women as loving and civilized creatures within the home. Jacob Cats, in his domestic conduct book, praises affection and tenderness at the core of matrimony.⁹¹ Love is a civil matter and no longer a sexual one. The custom of seduction is a means to obtain marriage with the obligation of reciprocity.⁹² With love at the center of marriage, a woman fulfills her husband's wishes out of honor rather than submission. All the domestic tasks she must perform within the home become a pleasure that ensures conjugal joy. Women's work becomes labor of love. The new bourgeois home is constructed on the ideology of love and care to ensure its maintenance while externalizing its costs. The painting reflects a notion of domesticity around romance promoted by the state that relegates and upholds women to the social status of housewife.

> *Love*.

The scene takes place in what seems to be the front part of the house. The architecture of the room and the presence of guests indicate it taking place in the *voorhuis*, where women reside after completing domestic chores and where outside visitors are allowed. Architecture is



a fundamental element in pictorial construction and recalls a domestic space that is subdivided, with a front and a back of the house. A more public area of the house allows contact with the outside in the domestic realm, regulated by codes of conduct, revealing the concern for regulation and social control as well as a domestic space with gradients of privacy.
> *Homeliness*.

93 Salomon, *Shifting Priorities*,
107.

By staging an image of civil romance in the domestic sphere with a woman as the main character, *The Girl with a Glass of Wine* is part of a new pictorial category that reflects the evolving ideology of marriage and family in the early modern Dutch Republic.⁹³ The painting is a vision of domesticity that constructs a modern type of woman with the help of the ideology of love. Within the deep structural and social changes of the new capitalist state, the control of feminine sexuality is at stake.

> *Housewifization*.



Photography by Sara Ramo from the serie *How to Learn What Happens in the Natural Order of Things*. 1975. Image from li-mac.org.

In Early modern Europe, the expansion of the world has resulted in the enclosure of the home and constitutes the cradle of Western domesticity. As we have seen, this period witnessed a shift to a private home for wealth accumulation where women were considered consumers and providers. In the early modern bourgeois home, the luxury was for the ladies, and the house became a space filled with goods to attach to and maintain.

The study the Dutch Republic during its “golden ages” is a window into this phenomenon. From the urban to the housing scale, strict spatial organization reflected the increasing importance of gender regulation between public and private. Urban development was marked by systematic planning, and private land ownership, and resulted in standardized housing. The new luxurious bourgeois home became completely secluded from the public realm with a complex ground floor more and more subdivided according to function, reinforcing gender roles within the domestic realm.

It was in fact a time of capitalist acceleration with wealth accumulation based on asymmetric and exploitative production relations that included land privatization, expropriation, and colonialism with the emergence of a republic that positioned the bourgeoisie at its center. A class from which domestication and reinforcement of upper-class family relationships have arisen. The profit-oriented republic was organized around a new notion of family home as the primary unit of society, with a clear distinction between the public - space of production - and the private. In the secluded sphere of the domestic realm, women were relegated to reproduction and reduced to the role of housewife, “non-productive” and dependent on a male breadwinner. The standard idea of what is a home has arisen and marriage, family, love, virtue, and so on became ideological tools to ensure the maintenance and work required to sustain life, that is, reproduction in a Marxist sense.

The aim of analyzing Dutch genre paintings was to challenge their realist representation of the home and understand them as a reflection and a contribution to a social project of *housewifization*, part, and parcels of the new Dutch capitalist society. The analysis has proved they are visual evidence of the construction of a private and feminine vision of domesticity organized around the family. As we have seen, they are imageries visually analogous to the prescriptions of the time concerning domesticity and women’s role within it, representing a plausible reality forged by artists in response to pictorial traditions and systems of beliefs. In other words, they mirror the system of value of which they are part. The paintings analyzed in this essay reflect a systematic representation of standard feminine figures literally and symbolically associated with the home and thus reflect wider social and structural changes in Early modern Dutch society. But the paintings are also actors of these shifts. By constructing realist visions of domesticity associated with symbolism to praise the housewife as a woman’s natural vocation in a new nation, Dutch genre paintings served as the canvas for a campaign of domestication. In this sense, the paintings, through pictorial style and motifs, both mirrored and contributed to a first stage of housewifization in Early modern Europe.

The aim was to understand the origins of capitalist-gendered



The Home is Factory for New Consumers by OK-RM and Mathieu Lavanchy. From Jack Self, *Home Economics: Five New Models for Domestic Life*, (London: The Spaces, 2016), 7.

domesticity and how it was related to love, virtue, family, and marriage, among other themes. It has been argued that the modern notion of home is a construction around asymmetric hierarchies between men/ women, public/private, and masculine/ feminine with one term becoming more prominent than the other, reducing it to a lower position. Women, relegated to an inferior status, have undergone major social degradation that our domestic spaces, still organized around love and family, hide, and perpetuate.

The origins of our domestic spaces lie in several stages of *housewifization* that have later diffused through class. The process started in fact in the bourgeois class, as owning property was the precondition for owning a family. Later, the 19th century saw the abolition of the law prohibiting propertyless individuals from marrying, relegating in turn proletarian women to the position of housewives. From the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the further development of housework and the housewife as an agent of consumption was generalized. The housewife as a social category diffused through class and the western home became universally organized around the nuclear family and a place to accumulate new devices and goods. All industrialized and civilized countries can be traced back to the process by which women became housewives as the working class adopted the bourgeois nuclear family.⁹⁴

94 Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, 106.

The standard idea of what is a home was a bourgeois construction where institutions and cultural norms promoted and guaranteed the necessary division of labor of a capitalist mode of production. The ideal home was based on exploitative relationships, consumer ship, and sexual division of labor and constitutes today the background of our notion of domesticity. Moreover, it is important to address the further issue of the construction of the housewife as a women's status quo, which became a crucial tool in the international division of labor to legitimize unpaid and low-paid work in the production of goods since the delocalization of industries in the 1970s. Even if the essay focused on an early phase of the process, it is important to underline the struggle of women in the international division of labor and the role of housewives as an optimal labour force in developing countries, producing goods for consumers in the West.

Today, patriarchal relationships and the international division of labor maintain the accumulation model proving that inequalities and exploitative relationships pointed out in this essay are structural problems. This work did not propose any solution but has rather contributed to a reflection of our domestic realm as a political project rather than a space that has developed naturally. Furthermore, our homes are still organized around the nuclear family as the unit of our socio-economic system and women are still the main agents of consumption associated with the domestic realm, bearing the burden of privatized domestic work. The family and the notion of privacy are surely a starting point when trying to reevaluate and rethink the way we live and share.

I would like to end this research by highlighting two points. The first one is the prevalent dichotomy between the public and the private realm, that could be elaborated. Domesticity can only be understood in the more general story of modern privacy and its separation from the realm of the public. To conduct further research on the origins of the division between



Photograph of The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from Editcollective as an alternative to individual housework for the Oslo Architecture Triennale. 2019. Image from editcollective.uk/gdp

public and private, the paper could investigate for example the separation between Polis and Oikos in classical Greece to further understand the public/ private relation within the Greek political philosophy that separates the inevitably related realm of politics and the household.

Finally, as this essay focused on women and didn't challenge the binary division of gender, and the definition of gender itself, I would like to recall Judith Butler's theory on performative acts and gender constitution. "Gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self."⁹⁵ In this sense, the modern home of the Dutch republic could be seen as the domestic archetype where female individuals could perform their feminine gender under pressure from political institutions, cultural norms, concepts like honor and taboos.

95 Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal (Washington, D.C.)* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>.

ANNEXE

ANNEXE

Uncomplete Catalogue



Gabriel Metsu, *A Woman reading a letter*, 1665-1667. Oil on wood panel, 52.5 × 40.2 cm. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.



- > *Marriage*
- > *Privacy*
- > *Virtue*
- > *Domesticity*
- > *Worldliness*
- > *Capitalism*
- > *Colonialism*
- > *Homeliness*



Gerard ter Borch, *Woman Sewing beside a Cradle*, 1656. Oil on canvas, 46.5 × 38 cm. Mauritshuis, The Hague, Netherlands.



- > *Family*
- > *Privacy*
- > *Virtue*
- > *Domesticity*
- > *Homeliness*
- > *Cleanliness*



Cornelis Bisshop, *Girl Peeling an Apple*, 1667. Oil on panel, 70 × 57cm.
Rijksmuseum Collection, Amsterdam, Netherlands.



- > *Privacy*
- > *Virtue*
- > *Domesticity*
- > *Urbanism*
- > *Homeliness*
- > *Worldliness*
- > *Cleanliness*



Michael van Musscher, *Marketing money*, 1669. Oil on canvas, 74.5 × 64.5 cm.
Wawel Castle, Kraków, Poland.



> *Materialism*

> *Virtue*

> *Domesticity*

> *Worldliness*

> *Capitalism*

> *Colonialism*

> *Homeliness*



Cornelis de Man, *Interior with a woman Sweeping*, 1666. Oil on canvas, 65 × 58 cm. Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft, Netherlands.



> *Materialism*

> *Privacy*

> *Virtue*

> *Domesticity*

> *Worldliness*

> *Capitalism*

> *Colonialism*

> *Homeliness*

> *Cleanliness*



Pieter de Hooch, *Interior with Women beside a Linen Cupboard*, 1663. Oil on canvas, 70cm x 75.5cm. Rijksmuseum Collection, Amsterdam, Netherlands.



- > *Family*
- > *Marriage*
- > *Materialism*
- > *Privacy*
- > *Domesticity*
- > *Worldliness*
- > *Cities*
- > *Urbanism*
- > *Homeliness*
- > *Cleanliness*



Johannes Vermeer, *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*, 1657. Oil on canvas, 83 cm × 64.5 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, Germany.



- > *Marriage*
- > *Property*
- > *Materialism*
- > *Privacy*
- > *Love*
- > *Domesticity*
- > *Colonialism*
- > *Homeliness*



Johannes Vermeer, *Woman writing a Letter, with her Maid*, 1670-77. Oil on canvas, 71.1 × 60.5 cm. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.



> *Materialism*

> *Privacy*

> *Love*

> *Domesticity*

> *Worldliness*

> *Capitalism*

> *Colonialism*

> *Homeliness*



Jacobus Vrel, *Interior with a Woman Seated by a Hearth*, 1654. Oil on panel, 64.5 × 47.5 cm. Carmen Thyssen Collection, Malaga, Spain.



> *Property*

> *Materialism*

> *Privacy*

> *Domesticity*

> *Cities*

> *Urbanism*

> *Homeliness*

> *Housewifization*



Johannes Vermeer, *A Woman Asleep*, 1657. Oil on canvas, 87.6 × 76.5. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US.



> *Materialism*

> *Privacy*

> *Domesticity*

> *Homeliness*



Jan Steen, *Woman at her Toilet*, 1655-60. Oil on panel, 37 × 27.5 cm. Rijksmuseum Collection, Amsterdam, Netherlands.



> *Materialism*

> *Privacy*

> *Love*

> *Body/ Sexuality*

> *Domesticity*

> *Worldliness*

> *Colonialism*



Nicolaes Maes, *Woman plucking a Duck*, 1656. Oil on canvas, 58 × 66 cm.
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, US.



> *Privacy*

> *Body/ Sexuality*

> *Domesticity*

> *Worldliness*

> *Homeliness*



Pieter de Hooch, *A Mother's Task*, 1658-60. Oil on canvas, 52.5 × 61 cm.
Rijksmuseum Collection, Amsterdam, Netherlands.



- > *Family*
- > *Marriage*
- > *Property*
- > *Privacy*
- > *Love*
- > *Virtue*
- > *Domesticity*
- > *Division of Labour*
- > *Worldliness*
- > *Homeliness*
- > *Cleanliness*



Jan Steen, *The Dissolute Household*, 1663-64. Oil on canvas, 108 × 90.2 cm.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States.



- > *Family*
- > *Marriage*
- > *Domesticity*
- > *Worldliness*
- > *Colonialism*
- > *Homeliness*
- > *Cleanliness*



Jan Steen, *The Dissolute Household*, 1663-64. Oil on canvas, 81 × 89 cm.
Wellington Museum, London, United Kingdom.



- > *Family*
- > *Marriage*
- > *Domesticity*
- > *Worldliness*
- > *Colonialism*
- > *Homeliness*
- > *Cleanliness*



Johannes Vermeer, *The Glass of Wine*, 1658-59. Oil on canvas, 65 × 77 cm.
Gemäldegalerie Berlin, Germany.



> *Marriage*

> *Privacy*

> *Love*

> *Body/ Sexuality*

> *Virtue*

> *Domesticity*

> *Worldliness*



Johannes Vermeer, *Girl Interrupted at her Music*, 1658-59. Oil on canvas, 39.4 × 44.5 cm. The Frick Collection, New York, United States.



> *Marriage*

> *Love*

> *Body/ Sexuality*

> *Virtue*

> *Worldliness*



Johannes Vermeer, *Officer and Laughing Girl*, 1657. Oil on canvas, 50.5 × 46 cm.
The Frick Collection, New York, United States.



> *Marriage*

> *Love*

> *Body/ Sexuality*

> *Virtue*

> *Worldliness*



Johannes Vermeer, *The Little Street*, 1657–1658. Oil on canvas, 54.3 × 44cm.
Rijksmuseum Collection, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

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POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

A positionality statement is a notice that specifies race, class, gender, and privileges under the belief that group characteristics influence research methods. I'm a white, cisgender woman who was privileged to have access to education growing up. It is also important to mention that the standpoint of this essay is primarily Western-centric, which is indicative of the literature it is based on.

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Beyond the Closet, Klea Ott

Staging Movement, Ada Massarente

Destination Home, Vanesa Santillan Messina

First Struggle Then Housing, Antoine Ricard-Gauthier

Pretending to Take the Country's Side, Karl-August Valfells

Round Table, Jian Lin Wong

Persistent Community, Melchior Dechancé

Room for Women, Camyl Vigneault

From Hard to Soft, Julie-Anna Barès

Factory of Lives, Serena Mazzetti

