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Prince Baltasar Carlos 's Chamber in Las Meninas

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Cover Page Footnote

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Prince Baltasar Carlos's Chamber in *Las Meninas*

Mercedes Llorente

This article addresses how one of the great masterpieces of European painting, *Las Meninas* (fig. 1), can be read as rites of passage (in pictorial form) for *infanta* Margarita.¹ In Habsburg Spain, and equally in the Royal Family, this was the moment when children passed from infancy to childhood, when they were expected to acquire control over their bodies and responsibility for their souls. It could be said that they became little adults, and in the paintings, this is expressed through their dress. During this transition at age five or six, the child acquires the virtue of prudence, particularly relevant for future kings and queens, and began to take communion. Velázquez' portrayal of a historically and socially situated ritual, that of the liminal passage from age five to six, freezes *infanta* Margarita in a sacral moment: the crossing, forgotten until now, of the threshold that takes these persons from infancy to the "newly acquired" state of *puericia*. This contributed to the magnetism, the sheer force of *Las Meninas* (fig. 1) as it would have been felt by an informed contemporary spectator.

¹ See: Mercedes Llorente, "The Portraits of Children at the Spanish Court in the Seventeenth Century: The Infanta Margarita and the Young King Carlos II" in *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, 35:1 (December, 2010): 43-60.

The bibliography for *Las Meninas* is enormous. The following is a very small selection: Jan Ameling Emmens, "Les Meninas von Velázquez: Miroir des Princes pour Philippe IV" in *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 12 (1961): 51-79; Jonathan Brown, "Sobre el significado de Las Meninas" en *Imágenes e ideas en la pintura española del siglo XVII*, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1985), 115-142; Enriqueta Harris, "Las Meninas at Kingston Lacy" *The Burlington Magazine*, n° 1043 (1990): 125-130; Fernando Marías, "El género de Las Meninas: Los servicios de la familia" in *Otras Meninas*, ed. Fernando Marías, (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1995), 247-278; Fernando Marías, *Las Meninas*, (Madrid: Electa), 1999 and *Velázquez. Pintor y criado del rey*, (Madrid: Nerea, 1999) and Fernando Marías, "Las Meninas de Velázquez del despacho de Felipe IV al cenador de Carlos III", *Velázquez y Calderón: Dos genios de Europa (IV centenario, 1599-1600, 1999-2000)*, (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2000), 156-178; Joel Snyder, "Las Meninas and the Mirror of the Prince", *Critical Inquiry* 11, (June, 1985): 539-72; John, F. Moffitt, "Velázquez in the Alcázar Palace in 1656: The Meaning of the Mise-en-scène of Las Meninas" *Art History*, VI-3 (1983): 271-300; Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón, *Velázquez: las Meninas y sus personajes*, (Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 1943); Svetlana Alpers, "Interpretación sin representación: mirando *Las Meninas*", *Otras Meninas*, ed. Fernando Marías, (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1995), 153-162; Victor I. Stoichita, "Imago Regis: Teoría del arte y retrato real en Las Meninas de Velázquez" en *Otras Meninas*, ed. Fernando Marías, (Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1995), 181-203; Susanne Stratton-Pruitt, "Velázquez's Las Meninas. An Interpretive Primer" in *Velázquez's 'Las Meninas'*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 124-149.



(fig. 1) Diego de Silva Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656. Oil on canvas, 318 x 276 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid (Spain).



(fig. 2) Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, *Queen Mariana of Spain in Mourning*, 1666. Oil on canvas, 196.8 x 146 cm. National Gallery, London (United Kingdom).

Recent research shows that the Habsburg monarchy was structured through the organisation of the royal Household. The Household was governed like a small-scale Republic and the children were trained for their future political roles as prudent ruler king or queen. In order to be a good ruler, one had to attain three kinds of prudence: self-prudence, the control of body and soul; domestic prudence, to rule the family; and political prudence, to rule the republic or monarchy.

This article will argue that the virtues of political prudence that should grace *infanta* Margarita and King Charles II were symbolized in the paintings and the Planets contained in the two palace halls, the Prince's Halls of Virtue, where the children in *Las Meninas* (fig. 1) and *Queen Mariana in Mourning* (fig. 2) were represented.² Since Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, son-in-law of Velázquez, placed his *Queen Mariana in Mourning* in a similar palace hall, it is possible to “read back” and thereby more accurately interpret *Las Meninas*.

Particular attention will be devoted to the specific places represented in both paintings and to the decoration and contents of those spaces. King Carlos II is portrayed in the *Pieza Ochavada* (fig. 3), which was one of the King's public rooms in the Alcázar. The room was a square space with chamfered corners. In the middle of each chamfer there opened a small door richly ornamented, with jasper jambs and lintel crowned by a curved pediment supporting a bronze bust. On either side of the door there was a niche, eight in all, where the statues stood. They were complemented by two more, one in front of the other, situated between the two balconies and the two doors to the *Salón de las Comedias*. On each of the side walls, perpendicular to the façade, there were two large doors. One opened to the *Salón de los Espejos* and the other, of the same size, gave way, on the other side, to the King's *galería de mediodía*. The juncture between chamfers and walls was bridged by means of a giant order of Corinthian paired pilasters set in a broken plane and rising to twice the height of the room. On top of them ran a strong entablature giving rise to a dome divided into eight sections by an equal number of radial strips. Lastly, each stretch of wall was divided into several oval ornaments and insets to hang the different canvases whose distribution was dictated by the situation of the high windows.³ It is possible to identify the room through one of the

² According to Jonathan Brown and John H. Elliot: “(...) The *Salón de la Virtud del Príncipe* had been used in order to glorify the superior physical and moral qualities of the sovereign. It had also been used to underline the antiquity of the dynasty, thereby confirming the sovereign's claim to the throne, and showing instances of royal behaviour to his successors ... The decoration ... followed three different modes of expression: allegory, analogy and narrative. ...” in Jonathan Brown and John H. Elliot, *Un palacio para el rey*, (Madrid: Taurus, 1988), 155.

³ For more information on the old Alcázar, see José Manuel Barbeito, *El Alcázar de Madrid*, (Madrid: Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos, 1992), 120-122.

sculptures, *Moon Diana*, that the *Cardenal Infante* had sent the King Felipe IV in 1637.⁴ It should be noted that Felipe IV was also known as the Sun King, hence the importance of the Planets and the Octagonal Room, which symbolises the monarchy. In addition to the sculptures representing the seven planets, there were bronze statues by Leone Leoni of the Empress María of Hungary, of Felipe II and of Carlos V. All of the paintings in the room, with the exception of a Tintoretto and a few others, belong to the Flemish school and are described in the royal inventories.⁵ They deal mainly with hunting and war. There were also paintings of Hercules and of other gods such as Mercury, Saturn, Diana (the goddess of hunting) and Bacchus, all of which referenced

“Velázquez was first named *veedor* on 22 January 1647, and then *contador*, on the 7 of March, of the work being done in the *Pieza Ochavada*. Behind these posts there was the King’s will for his painter to be involved officially in this work, as it is probable that for a long time now he had been giving his opinion on matters relating to its decoration (...) the control of the work executed by Velázquez and Gómez de Mora is confirmed, although it is difficult to determine who was ultimately responsible for the design of this space” in Juan Luis Blanco Mozo, *Alonso Carbonel (1583-1660), arquitecto del rey y del Conde-Duque de Olivares*, (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2007), 231-233.

⁴ Regarding the sending of the sculptures representing the Planets, see Carl Justi, *Velázquez y su siglo*, (Madrid: Akal, 1999), 545; on the sculptures sent to Spain Iain Buchanan, “The Collection of Nicolaes Jongelincx: I. ‘Bacchus and the Planets’ by Jacques Jongelincx” *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXIII, (1990): 102-113; Stephen N. Orso, *Philip IV and the Decoration of the Alcázar of Madrid*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 153-162, where note 12 is a detailed description of the *Pieza Ochavada* in the middle of which stood a jasper table with a Spinario on top which was reflected in the *Salón de los Espejos* mirror as painted in Carreño Miranda’s portraits of Carlos II 1671-1677.

⁵ The 1666 inventory lists a Bacchus by Van Dyck, a Mercury and Saturn also by Van Dyck, a Diana Hunting with Nymphs, by Rubens, a hunting scene also by Rubens, nymphs hunting deer by Rubens and Esnei, a Heracles and a Diana by Rubens, a Heracles fighting with a lion, a hunting scene with dogs and wild boars by Rubens, as well as various bronze figures, statues and statuettes representing the planets, plus medallions, etc:

- 2 varas de largo y vara de ancho un Baco con ninfas de Van Dyck,
- de la misma altura y media vara planeta uno de Mercurio y otro de Saturno de Van Dyck,
- 3 varas y media de largo y media de alto Diana con sus ninfas cazando de Rubens,
- del mismo tamaño de caza y guerra de Rubens,
- 5 varas de alto y 2 de ancho ninfas cazando venados de Rubens y Esnei,
- vara y media de largo un Hércules y una Diana de mano de Rubens,
- 2 varas de alto y media de ancho Hércules luchando con un león,
- 5 varas de largo y 2 de ancho caza de perros y jabalíes por Rubens,
- Planetas de bronce,
- 3 figuras de bronce,
- 12 medallas de mármol con sus pedestales de jaspe de diferentes colores,
- 4 cabezas de bronce,
- una estatua del que corta la espina de bronce con su pedestal de madera fingida de jaspe sobre un bufete de jaspe ochavado, que descansa sobre pie de madera la estatua.

Archivo General Palacio Real Madrid, Sección Administrativa, Bellas Artes, leg. 38. For subsequent reference abbreviate e.g. A.G.P.R.M.

moral attributes. There were also a number of medallions, which we know depicted Roman emperors.⁶

The virtues that a King needs to cultivate in order to be a wise ruler are characterised and exemplified in this room.⁷ Indeed these are the virtues the young Carlos II would be expected to acquire. In the *Pieza Ochavada*, an iconographic program is laid out, in which the superior virtues of the Spanish Habsburgs, as an ancient dynasty that ruled the world, are represented by the three Leoni bronze portraits.⁸ The idea of signifying royal virtues through a representation of the planets was not new.

It is probably no coincidence that the *Moon Diana* was chosen to be included as a detail in Mazo's painting. The sculpture *Moon Diana* plays two roles. The first, with reference to Carlos II, is that this planet was understood to mark the first age of childhood.⁹ This emphasises Carlos's minority and reminds us that the *Pieza Ochavada* stands as a symbol of the Crown itself.¹⁰ The second and equally important intention concerns Queen Mariana as regent, guardian-tutor and caregiver (*curadora*).¹¹ The Moon represents chastity in government. Furthermore, chastity is seen as the guarantee, through monogamy, of patrilinear inheritance, and thus of monarchy itself. Wives were considered the repository of their husbands' honour and held responsible for maintaining the purity of bloodlines. The woman's role was the reproduction of the family and, in Mariana's case, the safekeeping of the dynasty.

Among the paintings, there are several hunting scenes. Horsemanship, as much as hunting, was regarded as good training for royal office, teaching the fundamental qualities necessary for governance.¹² The education of the

⁶ Fernando Checa Cremades, "La Pieza Ochavada" in *El Real Alcázar de Madrid. Dos siglos de arquitectura y coleccionismo en la corte de los Reyes de España. Septiembre-noviembre*, Fernando Checa, (Madrid: Nerrea, 1994), 403; Orso, *op.cit.*, 153-162.

⁷ These are: Temperance, love of his vassals, Prudence, choosing well counsellors and ministers, fortitude, military prudence, warrior spirit, agreeability and liberality.

⁸ See note 2.

⁹ Llorente, *op.cit.*, 43-60.

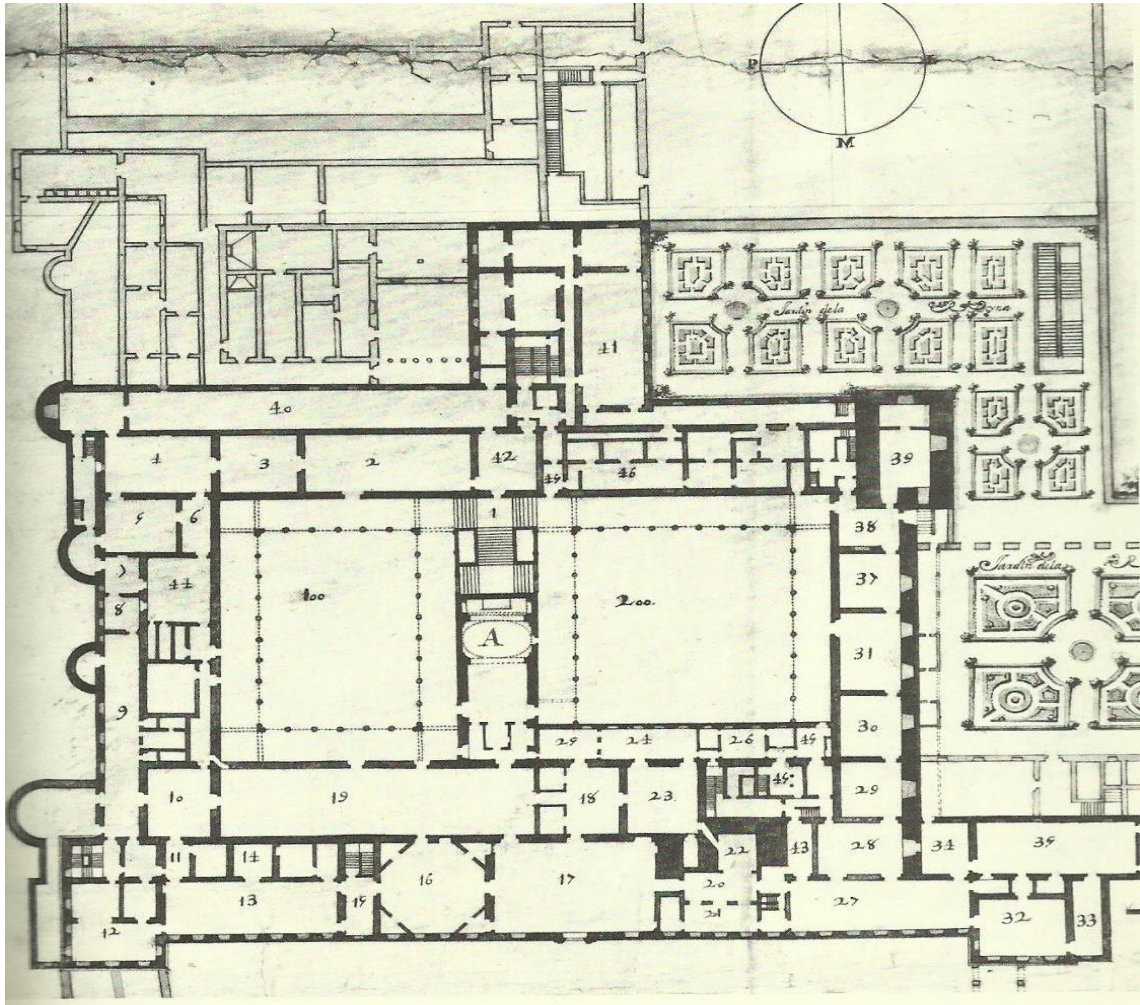
¹⁰ Mercedes Llorente, "Imagen y autoridad en una regencia: Los retratos de Mariana de Austria y los límites del poder", *Studia Historica*, Vol. 28 (2006): 211-238 and Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 372-383.

¹¹ Mercedes Llorente, "The Portraits of Queen Mariana of Austria as Governor, Tutor, and Curator by Juan Bautista del Mazo and Juan Carreño de Miranda (1665-1676)", *Habsburg Women of Early Modern Europe*, ed. por Prof. Anne Cruz and Dr. Maria Galli Stampino, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 175-196. The *Pieza Ochavada* is referring to Mariana's Curatela or Mariana as Caregiver too.

See also Mercedes Llorente "Mariana como gobernadora" *Las relaciones discretas entre las monarquías hispana y portuguesa: Las casas de las reinas (siglos XV-XIX). Arte, música, espiritualidad y literatura (11-14 de diciembre de 2007)*, (Madrid: Polifemo, 2008), vol. III, 1777-1810.

¹² For Castiglione, the true virtues of a courtier lay in his command of weapon and military skills. The physical education recommended for courtiers was different for the ladies. Men practiced those that gave them vigour, strength and physical dexterity. Ladies were told not to perform exercises meant for men, only those appropriate to their condition, which must be

princes, therefore, should focus on the practice of both, as well as on military training. The most valued qualities were those that confer agility, vigour, strength and physical dexterity (dancing, ball games, playing soldiers, and so on). Velázquez shows this in his portrait of *Prince Baltasar Carlos in the Riding School* (fig. 4).¹³ °



(fig. 3) Detail from Teodoro Ardeman, *Plan of the Alcázar of Madrid and Its Environs* Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (France). Number 16 is *Pieza Ochavada*.

done with the “soft delicacy which is theirs.” See Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, (London: Penguin, 1976), 355.

¹³ Enriqueta Harris, “Velázquez’s Portrait of Prince Baltasar Carlos in the Riding School” in *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 118, n° 878 (May, 1976): 266-275; John F. Moffitt, “Velázquez y el significado del retrato ecuestre barroco”, 207-216; David Davies, *The Anatomy of Spanish Habsburg Portraits. Transcript of Inaugural Professorial Lecture*, (London: Embajada de España, 1998), 77-80. The subject of horsemanship as political education goes back to classical antiquity, with the centaur Chiron’s education of Achilles.

While hunting and horse-riding were not practiced exclusively by the royal family, they were nonetheless considered to manifest noble virtues; royal lineage was associated with the highest virtues.¹⁴ The cult of chivalry created a recognisable code through which the acts and spectacles associated with the privileged classes served to demonstrate their natural right to power. Hunting was an activity where the sovereign met the most prominent members of society and the hierarchy of power was re-enacted. Hunting days were the highlight of the court calendar. Seen as a royal attribute, horsemanship became a metaphor for power and a symbol of the art of politics; as a representative of civic and military virtues, the horseman was a moral archetype. The sculptures of the Planets represent the virtues required of a Christian knight to gain God's favour, indicating that the knight stands above the other nobles and as such, is fit for Kingship.¹⁵ It is from his lineage that the monarchy will be drawn.

It is important to underline the significance of the miniature carriage shown in the back of the Mazo portrait. As the court began to displace the knight as the central "location" for changing ideas about chivalry, the carriage began to displace the horse as a representative element that conferred a sacred-like status on the monarch.¹⁶ The monarch came to be seen as Auriga, the charioteer, and the carriage symbolised government. In the Mazo portrait, we note the Queen as regent in the foreground, holding a petition in her hand, while the young King (although still, at this point, supported by baby reins) learns to manage the reins of power.

In Court ritual, the royal carriage allowed for a clear hierarchical division, picking out the figure of the king and placing him at the centre of the Court and its retinue. Visually, it not only positioned the monarch, but it elevated him above others, and framed him. Thus it is not difficult to understand the significance of the carriage placed behind Carlos II in the Mazo portrait as making reference to the king's *body politic*.¹⁷ It is precisely with Mariana of Austria and her son that the carriage reaches its most prominent position.¹⁸

¹⁴ Castiglione, *op.cit.*, 355.

¹⁵ These are: Temperance, love of his vassals, Prudence, choosing well counsellors and ministers, fortitude, military prudence, warrior spirit, agreeability and liberality.

¹⁶ The carriage is portrayed in the National Gallery (London) copy, as well as in the Museo Casa Greco de Toledo (Spain) and in the portrait that is in a private Madrid (Spain) collection, but it is absent in the Museo de Ponce painting.

¹⁷ Kantorowicz, *op.cit.*, 429-430; Kantorowicz states that in France it was the custom at royal funerals for the royal effigy and the real body of the King to be transported in different carriages – one bearing the real body with funereal lugubriousness, the other bearing the King's effigy, a figure of the King in Majesty as if still alive, with all due pomp and circumstance. We might link the carriage in the Mazo portrait to the medieval carriage that bore the royal effigy, symbolising the everlasting dignity of the monarch.

¹⁸ The number of engravings and paintings that imitate the foundational myth of Count Rudolph was important during the time of Mariana and Carlos II. Whereas in the original, he had given his horse to a priest who carried the Host, now the monarchs gave their carriage, which led the royal carriage to be equated to a monstrosity. See Alejandro López Álvarez,



(fig. 4) Diego Velázquez & Workshop, *Lección de equitación*, 1636, Duke of Wellington's Collection, Londres.

The sculpture of *Moon Diana* plays two roles, it represents the age of the child; it also represents the Queen as ruler, the one who takes care of Carlos II and safeguards both the monarchy and the Crown. *Moon Diana* further references Mariana's role as a strong woman (*mujer fuerte*), one who possessed not only the traditional masculine virtue of fortitude, but also the

Poder, lujo y conflicto en la corte de los Austrias: coches, carrozas y sillas de mano, 1550-1700, (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2007), 117-123.

more specific female virtue of chastity.¹⁹ In the *Pieza Ochavada*, the notion of the justified and assured continuity of Habsburg rule over the world (on account of their virtues) is emphasised by placing the young King very precisely in context, with the carriage and the *Moon Diana*.

Velázquez depicted the *infanta* Margarita and her retinue (including himself) in the main room of the principal Prince's Chambers.²⁰ This space had belonged to her half-brother, Baltasar Carlos. While the Prince was alive, its importance must have been equivalent to that of other main rooms of the Alcázar, especially those used by his father, Felipe IV: the *Salón de los Espejos* and the *Pieza Ochavada*. It is not known how the room was used after the Prince's death. On the basis of an existing document, the *Certificación de las alhajas que ay en el Cuarto del Príncipe tocantes a S.M. por muerte de Diego Velázquez*,²¹ (*Inventory of the jewels held in the Prince's Privy Chambers that had belonged to the monarch from some time after Velázquez's death*), it has been understood that the room served the painter as workshop and office. In later years, as we read in the inventories of 1686 and after, the Prince's Chamber was indeed said to be the workshop of the chamber painters.²² The setting of *Las Meninas* (fig. 1) in this room could very well be the result of its function as a studio/workshop. It is certainly the case that in *Las Meninas*, the presence of the easel serves to transform the room into a workshop, even though it may not have been the usual workplace for Velázquez.²³

In real space, the door in the background (where José Nieto stands) opened to a staircase that went up to the Ruby Room. As José Manuel Barbeito points out, this staircase was strictly for private royal use.²⁴ The route taken in official ceremonies followed the patio staircase, a more appropriate

¹⁹ Mariana herself is acting as Rudolph, exercising virtues outside the female norm.

²⁰ This room belonged to the Prince Baltasar Carlos after he was given his own Household, separate from that of his mother, in 1643.

²¹ This document is in *Varia Velázqueña en el III Centenario de su muerte 1660-1960*, Ed. A. Gallego y Burín (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Dirección General de Bellas Artes, 1960), II, 388-9.

²² "Las colecciones de pintura en el Alcázar de Madrid durante el siglo XVII. Los inventarios de 1636, 1666, 1686 y 1700" in *El Real Alcázar de Madrid. Dos siglos de arquitectura y coleccionismo en la corte de los Reyes de España. Septiembre-noviembre, 1994*, (Madrid: Nerea, 1994), 383-387.

See also Juan Miguel Serrera, "El palacio como taller y el taller como palacio. Una reflexión más sobre *Las Meninas*", in *Madrid en el contexto de lo hispánico desde la época de los descubrimientos*, (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, departamento de Historia del Arte, 1994), vol. I, 585-601.

²³ Jonathan Brown, *Imágenes e ideas en la pintura española del siglo XVII*, *op.cit.*, 121 and Serrera, *op.cit.*, 585-601.

²⁴ It was a six-level staircase running parallel to the facade in between two openings. There is no doubt that it ran from the Prince's gallery to the *Aposento del Rubí*, which was the room over the entrance hallway. This staircase was an important and complex construction that linked the main area of the *Pieza Ochavada* with the secluded hallway, where the king and queen mounted their carriages to go out privately. For the refurbishment of the Alcázar. See Barbeito, *op.cit.*, 120-122 and Blanco Mozo, *op.cit.*, 231-233.

one, since it emphasised and increased the inaccessibility of the Monarch who could only be reached by other routes which involved crossing numerous rooms in the Royal Chambers.

The door and flight of five stairs we see in the Velázquez painting could be seen to symbolise the notion of transition.²⁵ This transition might even refer us back to the topic of the rites of passage, specifically the passage from childhood to *puericia* that is implicit in the newly acquired control over her body by the *infanta*, in her new form of attire, and in the numerous references to her ongoing training in the Household's ways.²⁶ However, it could equally refer to the transition between the male, public quarters of the King palace and the more private ones. This staircase was used by both king and queen when they wanted to leave the Alcázar privately.²⁷ It is certain that Velázquez knew such matters intimately, not only through his role as a Palace *apostador* and keeper of the collection, but also because he was actively involved in its design and construction. These steps led to the main Crown Prince's rooms, and was therefore a public masculine space when Baltasar Carlos was living there.

Each room of the royal chambers had a spatial significance that derived its meaning from royal codes, and from its association and proximity to the monarch. Visitors to the king or queen were received in rooms according to their rank. The rooms, therefore, defined the personal standing of the visitor; the space was heavily symbolic, invested with a specific meaning indicating the quality and position of visitors, each one of them treated according to a strict set of conventions.²⁸

In light of the above, a singular question arises: where should Velázquez portray the *infanta*? If we look for a possible "narrative" in the scene, we might believe that Margarita has temporarily left her mother's chambers to enter the large room, and that she is expected to return shortly to rooms in her mother's part of the palace. Clearly she could not be portrayed in

²⁵ The notion of the door indicating a state of transition is found in Roman art. It was later used by Christians.

²⁶ Llorente, "The Portraits of Children at the Spanish Court...", *op.cit.*, 43-60.

²⁷ According to Arnold van Gennep, a rite of passage develops in three phases: the moment of separation, the liminal moment, and the moment of incorporation. He also talks of the significance of a physical transition in rites of passage, where a "threshold is literally crossed at the moment of passing through a door", Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 1992, 29-32. In *Las Meninas*, the threshold is the door where Velázquez places José Nieto.

²⁸ The further a person was allowed to venture into the King's private chambers, the higher his status. Bureaucrats and junior servants might only go as far as the entrance hall, or a patio, or the corridors that led to the offices or kitchens, but none of them were allowed further than the "first landing of the main staircase." The route might also be prolonged to dazzle an ambassador or regal envoy by leading him through a maze of richly decorated rooms in order to underline the idea that only a powerful monarch, such as the King of Spain, could be surrounded by such beauty and magnificence, in Carmelo Lisón Tolosana, *La imagen del rey: Monarquía, realeza y poder ritual en la Casa de los Austrias*, (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1991), 19-20.

a room in the king's Alcázar, such as the *Pieza Ochavada*, which was barred to women except during certain public events, when they attended behind screens. On the other hand, the female area of the Alcázar was barred to men. The comings and goings to the queen's palace were carefully controlled by etiquette and protocol. Access to the princes' and princesses' chambers was even more rigorously controlled. Visits to them were regulated by the *majordomo* of the week whose job it was to serve the princes and infantes.²⁹ When the children were small, people might only visit them at certain hours of the day in the queen's chambers. The room that Velázquez chose, therefore, must be an intermediate one, but one that would retain its symbolic significance (as we have seen, some of the same concerns influenced choices concerning the representation of Carlos II in the *Pieza Ochavada*). The choice of room must also express the virtues appropriate to a young girl, specifically here, the acquisition of political prudence. It would have to have the same properties of the room where she received visits in her mother's chambers, that is to say it should be semi-private, and not a male public space, like the *Pieza Ochavada*.

Why is Margarita depicted in an identifiable room? In a typical portrait she would more likely have been painted in a non-descript, generalised setting. Why then does Velázquez show her in what was evidently a *male* room, and presumably a real, identifiable one, with rich associations? The answer might be that what is being signalled here is women's place in a hierarchy defined by men. Margarita would eventually leave her mother's Household - and it must not be forgotten that its head was her father, the King - to become the wife of Emperor Leopold. *Infanta* Margarita, like all women, was subject to patriarchal authority and it is arguable that this is precisely what is represented by setting the scene in Prince Baltasar Carlos's main room. Thus paternal authority and the future authority of the husband are being emphasised. Women must show humility and obedience to their husbands. Had the *infanta* been depicted in a room where Queen Mariana received visitors on her own authority, this more crucial, necessary link to the male world - a world where women's role was to serve, as wives and mothers to kings, and to enable the continuity of the line--would have been lost.

The fact that the *infanta* is not depicted in a female setting does not completely exclude the portrayal of characteristics which may be associated with femininity, for the room is a semi-private space, albeit one subject to male authority. The inventories tell us that when completed, *Las Meninas* (fig. 1) was placed in the King's office, which serves to underline the work's private, even personal nature. Only those of sufficient distinction, and close

²⁹ "El dicho Mayordomo Semanero terna cuidado quando algún Embaxador, o Grande, o otra Persona semejante embiare apedir licencia, y ahora para hir al quarto de las Infantas que se de razón de ello al Mayordomo mayor antes de responder a la tal persona,... quando la tal persona hubiere de hir el dicho Mayordomo Semanero, asistirá allí." A.G.P.R.M., *Histórica, Etiquetas Generales*. Caja 50.

enough to the King to see him in his office, would ever have glimpsed *Las Meninas*.³⁰

The inventories also describe the paintings that hung in Prince Baltasar Carlos's room. We know that scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* with *Birds*, *Animals* and *Countries* hung in the upper row; *The Labours of Heracles* hung in the middle row; finally, in the lower row, one could see *portraits of philosophers and planetary gods*. With the latter, we return to the topic of the virtues that a prince must possess. Two paintings are clearly recognisable to the viewer of *Las Meninas* (fig. 1): *The Duel of Pan with Apollo* and *Minerva's Punishment of Arachne*, both scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.³¹ Both paintings recount punishments, respectively of Pan and Arachne, for their arrogance and hubris, subject matter underlining two of the three main virtues of a woman: modesty and obedience.³²

The theme of Arachne serves to emphasise the importance of honesty and chastity in women, as expressed in suitable activities such as *labor* (needlework, or in the case of Arachne, knitting wool).³³ According to the famed humanist Juan Luis Vives, sewing was as good as the reading of edifying books, "both profitable and keepers of temperance: whiche thyng specially women ought to have in price."³⁴ From medieval times, knitting had

³⁰ John F. Moffitt, "Las Meninas en el despacho de verano" in *Velázquez, práctica e idea. Estudios dispersos*, (Málaga: Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Andalucía Oriental, 1991), 207-216 and Fernando Marias, "Las Meninas de Velázquez del despacho de Felipe IV al cenador de Carlos III", *op.cit.*, 156-178.

³¹ For the different readings of these paintings: Charles de Tolnay, "Velázquez's Las Hilanderas and Las Meninas (An Interpretation)", *Gazette des Meaux-Arts*, 6Th series, vol. 35 (1949): 21-38; Jan Ameling Emmens, "Les Menines von Velázquez : Miroir des Princes pour Philippe IV" in *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 12 (1961): 51-79; Joel Snyder, *op.cit.*, 539-72, Joel Snyder and Ted Cohen, "Reflexion on Las Meninas: Paradox Lost" *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 7, Nº 2, (Winter, 1980): 429-447.

³² Chiding and punishment were not considered good ways to bring up children. So thought Saavedra, for whom those who come from a "good place" are better "punished with words than injuries" and those who act this way are "better loved" for it when the children are grown up:

"Los que de buen lugar vienen, mejor se castigan por palabras, que por feridas: e más aman por ende aquellos que asi lo facen, e más gelo agradecen cuando han crecido. Los afectos oprimidos dan en desesperaciones. Quien indiscreto cierra las puertas a las inclinaciones naturales, obliga a que se arrojen por la ventana. Algo se ha de permitir a la fragilidad humana, llevándola diestramente por las delicias honestas, a la virtud, que no se reprenda al príncipe en público." in Diego Saavedra Fajardo, *Empresas políticas*, ed. F. J. Díez de Revenga, (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1988), Empresa 2, 29.

³³ *Labor*: Originally it encompassed all kinds of needlework. The one they practiced on canvas is called *Labor blanca* in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua*, (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1734), 862, Vol. 4.

In Covarrubias, the sample, model or pattern for the work is called *dechado*; by extension, we have *dechado de virtud*, a model of virtue. This *dechado de virtudes* for Infanta Margarita to emulate is in the mirror. Sebastián Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española según a impresión de 1611*, (Barcelona: Horta, 1943), 510-511.

³⁴ Luis Vives, *La formación de la mujer cristiana*, (Valencia: Ajuntament de València, 1994), 155.

been associated with virtue, a conceit based on the Old Testament Proverb (31: 10-13) and the New Testament passage that refers to the Virgin Mary as the “spinner and creator of the thread of life.”³⁵ Bearing a male heir is the most important accomplishment of a future queen.

Among the books in Velázquez’s library was Juan Pérez de Moya’s *Philosophia Secreta*, which related, among other myths from sources such as Ovid, those of Arachne and Pan.³⁶ For Pérez de Moya, in his commentary, the

³⁵ The proverb goes like this:

¿Who can find a virtuous woman?

for her price is far above rubies.

(...)

She seeks wool and flax

and works with willing hands

(...)

She puts her hands to the distaff,

and her fingers ply the spindle.

³⁶ Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón, “La librería de Velázquez” in *Del homenaje a Ramón Menéndez Pidal*, (Madrid: Hernando, 1925), Tomo III, 379-406.

On the subject of Aragne’s metamorphosis, Moya says that it is an example that teaches us that however versed one is in some art, there is always someone else who comes along and adds improvements, as happens in the arts and sciences, where the new adds to the old; however excellent we are, we must not compare ourselves to God and become arrogant, lest He punishes us and shows us what we really are, and we are turned into a small and vile animal, like Arachne.

“(…) es para darnos por este mudamiento ejemplo de que aunque uno sea muy docto en una arte, puede venir después quien le exceda, añadiendo algunas novedades, como en todos los oficios y ciencias se hace, que los nuevos añaden a los antiguos, por ser el tiempo gran maestro para aumentar la ciencias, como dice Aristóteles: Tempos bonum cooperatur est forum, et per tempos artium additamenta facta sunt. Quiere decir: El tiempo es buen ayudador para estas cosas, y por tiempo fueron añadidas las artes. Esta fábula conviene a la primera Minerva, por cuanto esta contienda era sobre tejer, y la primera es a quien estos artificios se atribuyen. Otrosi nos da ejemplo que por más excelencia que parezca que tenemos, no debemos igualarnos con Dios, ni ensoberbecernos de manera que por no reconocerlo todo de su bondad nos castigue y haga conocer lo que somos, siendo apartados de su gracia, y que todo cuanto sabemos es frágil, como tela de araña, como experimento Aragne, vuelta en tan pequeño y vil animalito” in Juan Pérez de Moya, *Philosophía secreta de la gentilidad*, Ed. Carlos Clavería, (Madrid: Cátedra, 1995), 244-247 and 397.

On Pan, Pérez de Moya says that it is no wonder that Pan’s music was adjudged better than Apollo’s by Midas, since those of corrupt judgment always appreciate earthly things more than heavenly ones, and that the more Midas tried to appear wise and hide behind “gold and dignity and magnificence,” the more his customs betrayed him to his servants.

“(…) Que Midas juzgase cantar mejor Pan que Apolo, no es maravilla, porque los que tienen corrompido el juicio estiman siempre en más las cosas terrenas que las celestiales de Apolo. O porque en los de grosero entendimiento no caben delicadezas, por esto le parecía mejor la rústica música de Pan que la delicada de Apolo. Que entre Apolo y Pan hubiera disputa sobre el tañer y cantar, esto es que un día se ayuntaron los de aquella comarca y tuvieron disputa sobre cual era más razón de ser adorado, el dios Pan o el dios Apolo. Quiere decir cual era mejor, seguir el ganado y labranza, o las ciencias. Y porque este Midas no curó de los saberes, por esto dice que juzgó por mejor la música de Pan que la de Apolo; porque era necio no concedía ventaja a Apolo (...) Midas fingía ser sabio, y cuanto más procuraba encubrirlo con oro y dignidad y grandeza, tanto mas sus propias costumbre, que son pregoneros, lo descubrían a sus criados, y estos a todo el mundo, figurado por la tierra que produce las cañas,

ultimate meaning of both myths was that all knowledge is like Arachne's web, and that the old knowledge can be undone by the *new*.³⁷ The two mythological paintings were actually Mazo's copies of two Rubens paintings that had formerly been part of the Royal Collection. Velázquez, therefore, is both copying and emulating Rubens in his turn, through an imitation of the works of his disciple Mazo. In this way reference is being made to a way of learning – by copying or imitating our predecessors. In this particular case, Margarita is learning from her parents, whose reflection we see in the mirror. As Baltasar Gracián says, “One is not born whole; one develops every day ... until one reaches the point of the perfect being, sum total of qualities and eminences.”³⁸

The reason for Arachne's punishment was precisely her refusal to acknowledge Minerva as her teacher. By insisting on her *originality* and denying her debt to the goddess, Arachne was guilty of pride and a lack of humility. Pérez de Moya goes on to say that what the fable of Minerva and Arachne teaches us is that “however much we excel in something, we must not claim to be equal to God, nor must we become so arrogant that we may be punished for not acknowledging his goodness (as Arachne is by Minerva), be revealed for what we truly are, and banished from His grace.”³⁹ Thus Margarita, provided she is virtuous like her parents, will continue to enjoy Divine Grace. To extend the hierarchical reference, the *infanta* will have to learn to give more weight to the divine than to the earthly, for even the wisdom of her parents was not theirs, but came from God. Margarita must develop a fear of God and practice piety, another fundamental female virtue.

In accordance with Pérez de Moya's explanation of the Apollo and Pan myth, we learn that gold, riches and honours cannot hide a lack of wisdom, for the truth will be revealed to all, as was the case with Midas, where the king's folly was first seen by his servants and later proclaimed to the world. If she understood the system of imitation and analogy, and read the pictures rightly, Margarita would learn that she should act virtuously not only for its own sake, but also in order to set an example to her Household. In this way, and in due course, her lineage would be bound to keep God's grace, which would ensure the sacred continuation of the Habsburgs. Indeed, the light that illuminates Margarita can be read as the light of Grace, the mark of the person touched by the hand of God.⁴⁰

que son las trompetas de los escritores y poetas que van descubriendo por todas partes todas las bestialidades y sucesos de los hombres.” in Pérez de Moya, *op.cit.*, 133-136 and 254.

³⁷ Fernando Marías deals with this subject of the triumph of the “modern” artistic models represented by Arachne over the “the old” in *The Spinners*, see Fernando Marías, *Velázquez. Pintor y criado del rey*, *op.cit.*, 212.

³⁸ “No se nace hecho; vase cada día perfeccionando en la persona, en el empleo, hasta llegar al punto del consumado ser, al complemento de prendas, de eminencias” in Svetlana Alpers, *The Vexations of Art. Velázquez and Others*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005), 159.

³⁹ Pérez de Moya, *op.cit.*, 254.

⁴⁰ “In the light we shall see light. O continue thy loving kindness to those who know thee. ... Since only with them may the soul find itself then we are to conclude that in eternal life there

On one level, *Las Meninas* (fig. 1) is simply a portrait of the *infanta-emperatriz* with a dwarf. Yet having reached the age of five or six, Margarita had arrived at what viewers of the time would have regarded as the dawn of the age of prudence.⁴¹ She entered into a new life of learning, one which was structured in the pedagogy of the time, as a threefold process. Velázquez signals this transition visibly in the painting.⁴² It is manifest, for example, in the dress that the *infanta* is now wearing, in the apparent control of her body and the way she moves her hand. She is now able to perform certain rituals by herself, public luncheons for example, as can be seen by the *búcaro* being offered to her by members of her mother's Household. These attendants are in fact helping her attain the virtues every prince and princess must possess in order to rule their own realms. In Margarita's case, her future domain will be the Household where she will, in her turn, be helpful to her husband and children.

Velázquez places himself next to the *infanta*, something heretofore unprecedented in Spain. It is precisely in this liminal moment that the painter is able to subvert social convention, portraying himself as a painter standing next to the royal persons of the *infanta* and the King and Queen, as a member of the King's Household. But Velázquez also needs a reason, an argument, to underpin his presence. This suggests the importance attributed to family membership and in Velázquez's particular case, membership of the King's household and the capacity to depict himself as such.

In *Las Meninas* (fig. 1) what is shown is more than a mere portrayal of a person or a scene. We can read the picture as Velázquez's mental image, the artist's *disegno interno*. The room, the Prince's Chamber, is empty, just as in Mazo's *The Family of the Painter*, where we are shown the painter's studio empty and a painter, either Velázquez or Mazo himself, executing *infanta* Margarita's portrait. We should not, therefore, read the picture as merely a rendition of a visible event. We can read *Las Meninas* as a picture in which Velázquez explains the implication of being the King's painter, in doing so Velázquez dignifies not only the portrait as a form, but also the painter who fashions such a form.

will still be place for temperance, fortitude, justice and charity that virtue purge the soul in conversion" in Ann Livermore, *Artist and Aesthetics in Spain*, (London: Tamesis Books Limited, 1988), 60; David Davies, *The Anatomy of Spanish Habsburg Portraits*, 77-80; Tanya J. Tiffany, "Light, Darkness, and African Salvation: Velázquez's Supper at Emmaus", *Art History*, 31 (2008): 33-56.

⁴¹ Memory is needed to learn prudence, either personal or historical, and in the particular case of monarchs, that of other kings, which can also be learned through images. This is one of the aims of painting – to educate.

⁴² The rite of passage in its threshold or liminal phase, when social life was maintained and reformed. This was the moment that kings used to grant favours, for instance after a birth or a baptism... it was usual to free prisoners or give alms, besides celebrating the occasion.