

The Politics of Painting: Velázquez and Diplomacy in the Court of Philip IV

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The influence of Diego Velázquez on the history of art cannot be overstated, but studies to date have not taken note of his impact on Spanish politics during the mid-seventeenth century. In short, Velázquez was as much a politician as an artist, his position in the Spanish court required both responsibilities. In the years 1659-1660 the painter played an especially remarkable role in the affairs of state when he was called upon to make court preparations for the *Paz de los Pirineos*, a peace accord ending nearly thirty years of war between the two reigning European superpowers, France and Spain. The treaty was contingent upon the royal marriage of the Spanish princess María Teresa, daughter of king Philip IV, to French king Louis XIV (Philip's nephew). In simple terms, we might say Velázquez's involvement in the treaty and wedding celebrations appeared only to be artistic: he produced a few paintings, chose tapestries, sculptures, paintings, and furniture for exhibition, and determined the precise placement of other works of art for the treaty negotiations in Madrid, and also for the wedding celebrations near the Spanish border with France. However, in light of the importance European courts placed upon aesthetics and their ability to project certain attitudes, Velázquez's actions had theoretical *and* real political consequences for the success of the treaty and marriage. His decisions set the overall tone for political events, and helped shaped their outcome. This study recontextualizes the courtly celebrations of the Peace of the Pyrenees to examine how Velázquez's role had ideological implications on European diplomacy, thus highlighting his political contributions as statesman in early modern Spain.

Eye-witness testimony through diary accounts, letters and contemporary biographers—all of which will be detailed here—suggest that Velázquez's contemporaries viewed him as more than a simply a great artist. In general, these accounts point out that Velázquez's contributions to historical events were overwhelmingly aesthetic. But these testimonies also indicate that Velázquez's artistic production combined with his proximity to unfolding political events had a lasting impact upon diplomacy. With respect to the Peace of the Pyrenees, the artist enjoyed the opportunity to manipulate the mood and outcome of what was happening. First, he had to redesign and redecorate the Alcázar where the meeting with French dignitaries took place. Second, he constructed and adorned the pavilions on Pheasants Island in the Bidasoa River, the official frontier between France and Spain, and the location of the actual wedding celebrations. Velázquez's creation of a few works, his selection of priceless artistic pieces such as furniture, sculptures, tapestries, and paintings, as well as the beautification of royal spaces that he directed, suggest that these are symbolic acts meant to set a particular political climate for the wedding and peace treaty.

How can simply changing decor lead to an imposition of ideology and incite political change? Early modern European dynasties were well known for their interest in projecting a certain attitude of greatness when confronted with competing monarchies, especially during eras of decline. This suggests that artistic production was ideological. Ideology corresponds to how dominant social, political, legal, or religious institutions work through value systems, conceptions of the world, and symbol systems in order to legitimize either the current status quo,

or urge a change of the norm. In many ways ideology requires the social adoption of ideas which are often embedded in symbols and cultural practices. Hence, it is possible to examine aesthetics as it acts within a socialization process of coercion or persuasion. In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson writes that the mere production and dispersion of aesthetics is ideological: “the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic [. . .] is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right” (79). Similarly, Louis Althusser believed that ideology was most effective when performed by what he called state ideological apparatuses (political, social, and religious institutions), but also through aesthetic forms such as painting, design or opera. Althusser identifies culture (aesthetics) as not only are reflective but also productive (*Lenin* 112). And, state ideological apparatuses can effect change by less visible methods such as through literature or art. Indeed, art upholds a common ideology which ensures the stability and control of the dominant body charged with its creation: “To my knowledge, no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses” (*Lenin* 98). This immediately brings to mind Velázquez’s state-supported role as artist. On the one hand, Velázquez’s artistic production extended the political agenda of the Spanish monarchy because, quite simply, he was paid to do so. In fact, R.A. Stradling reports that Velázquez was an essential part of the court propaganda machine, especially under the Count-Duke of Olivares (46). On the other hand, both Althusser and Jameson believe that artists are trapped between what is really transpiring contemporaneously and what they expect to impart through their works of art. Naturally, the relationship between what Velázquez was paid to depict in his artwork and the events that were unfolding around him exposes a fundamental problem between the real and the imagined, what Jameson deems “unresolvable social contradictions” (79). These “unresolvable social contradictions” can be solved, according to Jameson, by constituting themselves as symbolic acts that “find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm” (79). Following this line of thinking, aesthetics and their creation are ideological acts with the power to offer symbolic resolutions to determinate problems. With regard to the Peace of the Pyrenees and royal wedding, the unresolvable social contradictions that Velázquez sets out to solve are related to the courtly obligation to construct a positive climate for interactions between French and Spanish officials, despite the fact that the Spanish people were not necessarily in favor of peace with their archrivals. Hence, for Velázquez, aesthetic decisions regarding the exhibition of certain artworks—or their exclusion—had political repercussions. The painter may have wished to project the Habsburgs, the wedding, and the peace agreement in a positive light, and any lapse in artistic judgment would be regarded as damaging to the peace process since décor routinely played an important role in how European dynasties viewed one another. Indeed, visiting European dignitaries took special note of every detail, often recording their reactions in diaries and they made their reactions public upon returning to their homeland, a point I shall return to momentarily.¹ Considered in this light, artistic endeavors can maintain the capacity to reach beyond the aesthetic form and foment opinion, or manipulate belief. In short, art has ideological value and artists do, too.

Beyond his position as Philip IV’s court painter, Velázquez occupied various central court positions. His career as courtier and diplomat began in 1623 when he was named *Pintor de Cámara*, and reached its zenith in 1652 as he took up the honored position of *Aposentador Mayor de Palacio*, a post he held until his death in 1660. There were six applicants for the *Aposentador Mayor de Palacio* and, though Velázquez was not originally proposed as a candidate for the position, Philip IV named him to the post, which suggests the close relationship

the king and his painter enjoyed. Besides being *Aposentador*, Velázquez also simultaneously occupied other significant court positions: *Ujier*, *Alguacil de Corte*, *Ayuda de Guardarropía*, *Tapicero Mayor*, *Ayuda de Cámara*, and *Superintendente de las obras reales*. With the new appointment as *Aposentador*, Velázquez's salary was raised to the then-impressive sum of 5,000 *ducados*, meaning he took his place among the best-paid and most important court officials. The job, however, also signaled a respite in his vibrant career as a painter since the new courtly duties required a great deal of his time. Having been named to these important court positions, the artist was ever more interested in strengthening his office and he began to search out ways to secure a knighthood. Indeed, the height of his social and political career finally arrived in 1659 when he was dubbed a knight in the Order of Santiago.² Velázquez's status and influence were especially notable for a painter. Although he painted less, it was within the politically-charged ambience of the Spanish court that he managed to create some of the most significant works of his life, such as his masterpiece *Las meninas*.

With his knighthood and numerous bureaucratic offices, the painter was developing into a prominent politician since his work required contact with the most powerful and influential court officials of the Spanish crown. Velázquez enjoyed special access to powerful court representatives such as Philip IV's favorite, Don Gaspar de Haro, the Marqués de Heliche, or to other royal appointees such as Juan Gaspar Alonso Enríquez de Cabrera, Admiral of Castile. Since Velázquez was charged with preparing for state visits and audiences with Philip IV, he was privy to important political happenings and perhaps even shaped their outcome. J.E. Varey reports that Velázquez had the opportunity—and obligation—to speak regularly with the king (419). Similarly, Muñoz González states that the painter enjoyed a very close relationship with the Spanish Monarch that allowed him to “contribuir a crear un determinado tipo de ambiente” (547). This access can be considered especially unfettered if we remember that the painter took up residence in an apartment in the Treasury House which was connected by a passageway to the Royal Palace, the site where his workshop had been located for many years. While Spain found itself in dire financial straits during much of the seventeenth century, Velázquez's physical proximity to court officials, especially those who managed the royal treasury, contributed to his success in obtaining funds for his own artistic endeavors as well as for the redecoration of palace quarters.

Interactions with foreign dignitaries and Spanish nobleman as well as his multiple roles in the court suggest that Velázquez was much more than a court painter. At times he was involved in numerous negotiations, and even made unilateral decisions pertaining to court policy when they had to do with the all-important production of art. It is important to remember that Velázquez was known throughout Europe during his own lifetime and several visiting dignitaries requested to meet him. Walter Armstrong writes that as *Aposentador Mayor* alone, Velázquez had multiple duties that presented great difficulties:

The Marshal [*Aposentador Mayor*], among his multifarious duties, was solely responsible for all the interior arrangements of the palace. It was his duty to inspect all the details of lighting, heating, sanitation, decoration, etc.; to assign apartments to the various persons in waiting; to organise all court festivities, drawing up programmes of the entertainments for submission to the king; and finally, to act as quartermaster during the

royal progresses. Those who have travelled in Spain [. . .] will understand what the task of transporting a luxurious court across such a country must have been in the seventeenth century, when to the difficulties of obtaining supplies and quarters were added the harassing minutiae of a rigid and bewildering etiquette. (80)

Dealing with details regarding housing and its maintenance meant that requests for repairs and improvements in décor or design had to pass through the painter's hands.³ Moreover, frequent court relocation supposed that Velázquez had to be prepared to pack up and move an incredible amount of palace possessions as the court traveled between royal residences and palaces as well as other chief political and administrative centers such as Aranjuez, El Escorial, or Valladolid.

The artist's work in Madrid carried with it other challenges such as the administration, renovation, and architectural work in the Hall of Mirrors of the Alcázar Real, as well as palace decorations for all official state visits and the preparations for the various court festivals. These duties afforded Velázquez the opportunity to decisively influence the great celebrations of the Spanish court such as the aforementioned 1659 Treaty of the Pyrenees and the revelry for the accompanying royal marriage. Velázquez's participation in the treaty and marriage was monumental. First, he was responsible for redecorating the Alcázar for the visit of the French court to Madrid. Second, he had to design and decorate the wedding pavilions located near the border between France and Spain where the actual nuptials took place. His influence, however, extended beyond mere décor. The great playwright, Calderón de la Barca, who was commissioned to write the opera *La púrpura de la rosa* specifically for the celebration of the peace and marriage, based his musical work on the mythological stories portrayed in various paintings and other artistic works arranged by Velázquez expressly for the French visits.

Calderón's opera was staged January 17, 1660 in the Coliseo del Buen Retiro.⁴ While the playwright is known for his *comedias* and *autos sacramentales*, many do not even know he wrote an opera. He actually wrote two operas in 1660, *La púrpura de la rosa* and *Celos, aun del aire, matan*, which base their composition on the artwork of the Alcázar. The *libretto* for the first, *La púrpura*, retells the mythological love story of Venus and Adonis and highlights Mars as Venus' rejected, jealous lover. In a rage, Mars kills Adonis. While the God lies dying, his blood provides the crimson color to the roses near him, and supplies the title of the opera—*la púrpura de la rosa*. At the end of the opera Venus dies of a broken heart, ascends to the heavens and takes her place triumphantly beside Adonis. According to Louise Stein, the message of the *libretto* is clear: love and peace are victorious over jealousy and hatred and, so, Venus triumphs over Mars. The myth, then, was employed as a warning against the vices of jealousy and vengeance, and it attempted to persuade the audience that the royal matrimonial union will bring about a happy end to the long military conflict with the French ("Opera" 139). Hence, in much the same way that Velázquez's artistic judgments was influencing the political landscape for the wedding celebrations, Calderón's opera was just as politically calculating since it too was commissioned to honor both the treaty and the marriage.

Although there are no explicit references to Velázquez in the opera, his fingerprints are visible.⁵ In short, Velázquez either painted or chose the paintings for particular positions within the Alcázar because each exhibited themes of peace and reconciliation, love and honor, which

were also the thematic cornerstones of Calderón's opera. In fact, the conscious choice of the Venus-Adonis theme was most likely derived from the decorations chosen by Velázquez for the very significant negotiations and meetings between French and Spanish ministers. To seek out this sort of relationship between aesthetics and historical context—the *historicity of texts* as well as the *textuality of history*, in Louis Montrose's words—one must look back to 1659-1660. A reconstruction of the socio-historical moment in which Velázquez and Calderón created their masterpieces ultimately yields a profound perspective of the society in which they lived, and an understanding of the cultural and political ambience that surrounded the peace agreement. Cultural critics such as Stephen Greenblatt or Montrose as well as theorists such as Jameson argue that reconstruction and resituation facilitate a fuller recovery of meaning of works under study. As Greenblatt states, "The world is full of texts, most of which are virtually incomprehensible when they are removed from their immediate surroundings. To recover the meaning of such texts, to make any sense of them at all, we need to reconstruct the situation in which they were produced" (227). Of course, Greenblatt, like most cultural theorists, uses the term *text* loosely; literary texts stand alongside other cultural texts. And the recontextualization of these cultural and literary texts, combined with remnants and vestiges of the past, fashion an anthropological context that subsequently yields unknown or embedded ideologies. For Montrose texts and other cultural artifacts are "ideologically marked," and malleable, since they are both "socially produced" and "socially productive" (22). Painting, décor, and opera certainly emanate these qualities.

As *Pintor de Cámara*, *Tapicero Mayor de Palacio*, and *Aposentador Mayor de Palacio*, Velázquez was in an excellent position to control the Crown's message and shape public opinion. He was charged with organizing all palace activities (theatrical events, celebrations, musical performances, exhibitions, etc.) and he was responsible for decorating the Hall of Mirrors of the Alcázar Real, where the visit by French dignitaries took place in 1659. The entire negotiations and wedding pact began earlier in the year when Philip IV's court favorite, Luis de Haro, and Louis XIV's chief minister, Cardinal Mazarin, met frequently to negotiate the terms of the *Paz de los Pirineos*. The treaty was contingent upon a royal marriage so what he needed to accomplish in order to prepare the royal installations for the Gramont's visit. His tasks began with the renovation work on the Real Alcázar where his choice of artistic works projected the Spanish Habsburgs as world leaders, even though their dynasty was very much in decline. The painter's main task was to redecorate the Hall of Mirrors, the centerpiece of the Alcázar and central location of the renovations.⁸ He began the renovations some years earlier and even chose certain Italian pieces he secured during his trip to Italy between 1649 and 1651. The Hall of Mirrors abounded in paintings depicting the Venus and Adonis myth, the theme that best emphasized peace, love, and, prosperity. The visiting Gramont greatly admired the furnishings and even requested a tour of the Alcázar's other rooms, a visit directed by Velázquez himself (López-Rey 147). According to Antonio Palomino, a contemporary biographer of the artist, the king ordered Velázquez to attend personally to Gramont and his party:

Since Monsieur le Maréchal had wanted to see the King's Apartments at leisure, His Majesty ordered Don Diego Velázquez to wait on him with great solicitude, showing him whatever was most precious and remarkable in the Palace. [...] Don Diego Velázquez showed them all [Gramont and his two sons] the rooms in the Palace, where they found much to admire

on account of the multitude of original paintings, statues, objects of porphyry, and other treasures with which its great fabric is adorned. (173)

As Palomino indicates, the Marshal-Duke of Gramont was impressed with the Alcázar's collection, but the tour took the artist away from more pressing details awaiting his attention.

Aesthetic theorists such as Georg Lukacs, Theodor Adorno, and Walter Benjamin, among others, believe that in its appearance, form, and, practice, art is political, and serves as a product and reflection of the totality of which it is a part.⁹ For these critics, artwork has the power to reveal itself as spectacle and become a commodity that can be readily consumed by its audience. This seems to have been Velázquez's intention as he assembled priceless works expressly for the French visit. Among the paintings that Gramont saw were those selected to reflect an attitude of diplomacy and reconciliation, as well as political power. Art works depicting peace included two by Tintoretto, *El mito de Venus* and *Venus y Adonis*, in addition to Veronese's *Venus y Adonis* which hung just inside the entrance to the Hall of Mirrors, and which was acquired by Velázquez in Italy.¹⁰ That work was exhibited alongside its companion painting, *Céfalo y Procris*, which Velázquez obtained from the Museum of Strasburg (Checa 330). Finally, Velázquez contributed his own *Venus y Adonis*, today also known as *La Venus del espejo* or *The Rokeby Venus*, which hangs in London's National Gallery.¹¹ Overall, Velázquez's contribution was extremely important since at least four of his own paintings formed part of the royal collection: the already-mentioned *Venus and Adonis*, as well as three others of relevance, *Apolo y Marsias*, *Psique y Cupido*, and *Mercurio y Argos*.¹² With the exception of *Mercurio y Argos*, the aforementioned paintings were destroyed during a major fire in 1734 that reduced to ashes a rather large and significant portion of the Alcázar. *Mercurio y Argos* was saved only because workers were able to cut the canvas from its frame, and carry it out before the fire consumed that part of the palace.

Other paintings attested to the greatness of the Spanish monarchy and counterbalanced the peaceful themes of the Venus works with scenes of Spanish battlefield greatness, or its Catholic hegemony. These works included Titian's *Emperatriz Isabel*, *Carlos V con perro*, *Philip II con armadura*, and *Santa Margarita*. Also exhibited in the Hall were paintings signifying the four Hapsburg monarchs as warriors defending the Catholic Faith: Titian's *Carlos V en la batalla de Mühlberg*, alongside its planned companion painting, Rubens' *Philip IV ecuestre* (a copy by Juan Bautista del Mazo hangs in the Uffizi), as well as Titian's *Philip II después de la Batalla de Lepanto*, and Velázquez's *Philip III y la expulsión de los moriscos de España*.¹³ Dale Brown believes that these paintings were symbolic for their Catholic themes that upheld predominant hegemonic beliefs: "As paragons of Christian virtue, the kings of Spain possessed an assortment of moral attributes which were exemplified in the representations of heroes of the Bible and classical antiquity" (248). More than simply exhibiting a superior moral or Christian value system, however, Velázquez's task was especially tedious considering that members of the Spanish Court were really not in favor of any agreement with the French, and Philip IV himself expressed disgust for Louis XIV and the Bourbon monarchy. The wedding, meant to seal the peace agreement, was a state necessity more than a consolidation of power, as royal weddings tended to be during the period.

Faced with this problem, Velázquez must have felt as if he occupied a precarious position as he needed to preserve the peace, save face, and project the Habsburgs as world leaders. His

artistic creations attempted to symbolically resolve this problem by establishing a certain diplomatic mood: for the Bourbons he featured the peaceful message of Venus paintings; for the Habsburgs he displayed artwork that implied the enduring religious and military legacy of the Spanish monarchy. It is through the display of these paintings and other works of art, or palace furnishings, that one realizes that art has the ability to illustrate a world that exists for a time, but one that does not necessarily coincide with reality. Indeed, Althusser has suggested that art has a powerful quality in that it does not represent social reality as it is, but instead it represents what social reality looks like or feels like:

I believe that the peculiarity of art is to “make us see,” (. . .) “make us perceive,” “make us feel” something which alludes to reality (. . .). What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of “seeing,” “perceiving” and “feeling” (. . .) is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art and to which it alludes (. . .). [Great artworks thus] make us “perceive” (but not know) in some sense from the inside, by an internal distance, the very ideology in which they are held (*Lenin* 221).

According to Althusser, the imaginary world created by art is not a scientific representation of “the real world” and does not yield knowledge of it. This coincides closely with Jameson’s belief that aesthetics have symbolic value (79-81). Instead, art creates a particular view of what the real world might “look like” or what it might “feel like.” Painting, for example, does not depict its subject as it is or was, but rather the subject has been described from the artist’s viewpoint—a lens that ultimately shapes how the spectator comes to understand the world as presented in the artwork. Much has been written, for example, that demonstrates how Velázquez was adept at painting alternate realities in his portrayal of Baroque aesthetics. And the preparations and work for the *Paz de los Pirineos* was no different. During the French visit, the delegation was impressed with the Hall of Mirrors, the royal collections, and the overall state meetings that put Spain, for a time, at the forefront of European aesthetics. François Bertaut, a member of the French delegation, later recorded his thoughts declaring that “Hay que confesar que la manera como el rey da ordinariamente audiencia en Francia no es nada al lado de ésta como recibieron al señor mariscal” (561). Similarly, the son of the Marshal-Duke of Gramont, Antonio, who made the journey to Spain with his father, stated that there was “[...] un aire de grandeza y de majestad que no he visto en ninguna parte” (529). Both of these testimonies point to the impact of art and indicate the value of art as spectacle in European courts. Velázquez’s choice to exhibit specific paintings, and his personal tour of the Alcázar for the French, were no doubt politically motivated since all of the works on display expressed powerful messages meant to create a peaceful but controlling ambience for the state visit, underlying the ideological value of art and aesthetics.

An interesting footnote to the French visit to Madrid is that it included not only a tour of the royal collections, but also attendance at a *comedia* written by none other than Calderón de la Barca who, like Velázquez, was well-known to the French. According to Bertaut, one of the theatre-goers, the *comedia* performance gave him and his delegation an opportunity to speak with the playwright:

Por la tarde, [el señor Laisné] y el señor de Barrière me vinieron a buscar para ir a una comedia Antigua que habían representado de Nuevo, que no valía nada, a pesar de ser de don Pedro Calderón. Fui también a ver a ese autor, que es el poeta más grande y el talento más hermoso que al presente tengan. [...] Disputamos un poco sobre las reglas de la dramática, que en ese país no conocen, y de las que se burlan. (616)

Readers today surely would find it interesting—even humorous—that a nobleman from France would question the dramatic knowledge of a playwright like Calderón, even declaring that a Calderonian drama “no valía nada.” But, this citation is significant for another reason. Bertaut’s words indicate that European delegations were acutely aware of the intent and power of public spectacle and royal decor. In this case, the French understood the persuasive visual affects of theatre. Moreover, the French spectators questioned aloud the Spanish decision to re-perform, for this occasion, a drama more in the tradition of Lope’s *comedia nueva* than classical theatre. In other words, the French did not simply passively consume the ideological message implied within the production, but instead questioned aspects of it. Indeed, as Terry Eagleton reminds us, for all of their inconsistencies, a successful ideology must communicate a version of social reality which is real and recognizable enough not to be simply rejected out of hand (15). Based on the aforementioned documented reports there is little doubt that while the French debated the rules of drama or discounted the importance of royal pageantry, their appreciation for the aesthetic production of Calderón and Velázquez was obvious. If not, why would they have recorded their opinions?

Bertaut, an important member of the French delegation who was present during all noteworthy royal activities, also met both Calderón and Velázquez. Although it is unlikely that the playwright and the painter were together when these encounters took place, evidence does indicate that there may have been some sort of relationship between them. This connection may best be seen in the paintings and other art works displayed in and around the Hall of Mirrors. As already mentioned, these works reflected the Venus theme that served as the basis for Calderón’s opera, *La púrpura de la rosa*. At the same time, the mythological story of Céfalos y Procris was not only a subject of one painting in the Hall of Mirrors, but also the theme of Calderón’s second opera, *Celos, aun del aire, matan*, performed shortly after *La púrpura*. Is all of this simply a coincidence? It is certainly probable that the decorations had an impact on the composition of the opera as Stein has indicated (*Songs* 191). In fact, Velázquez may have been a catalyst for Calderón’s selection of this particular theme, just as he was central to the unfolding political situation. This scenario is not unlike other reciprocal relationships between Calderón and Velázquez. Take, for example, Calderón’s *Rendición de Breda* and Velázquez’s painting of the same name. Calderón’s play portrayed the Spanish victory over the Protestant rebels, and it is widely thought that the drama was the foundation for Velázquez’s aesthetic treatment of the surrender in his own painting. Moreover, Calderón knew the royal art collections quite well, which were under Velázquez’s management. While there is little written proof that unequivocally links Calderón and Velázquez, they must have known each other, or at least met one another on occasion. It is known, for example, that Calderón routinely visited the Alcázar to practice with musicians and singers, and Velázquez’s carried out most of his work in a studio in the Alcázar where he could supervise first-hand the renovations of the Hall of Mirrors. We may not have direct evidence of a personal friendship between the painter and the dramatist, but the

aforementioned examples demonstrate that each knew of the other's work, and appreciated his talents. To make a definitive statement describing collusion between the two artists, however, is impossible.

Thanks to diligent research by Louise Stein, it is also known that one significant influence on the theme of *La púrpura de la rosa* was the Marqués de Heliche, Don Gaspar de Haro, a court minister of Philip IV whose father was none other than the court *valido* Don Luis de Haro.¹⁴ The Marqués assisted Velázquez in the preparations for the arrival of the French to Madrid in 1659 and boasted a formidable knowledge of the royal art collections. According to an inventory of his own possessions carried out in 1651 and another from 1677, the Marqués owned Velázquez's *Venus y Cupido*, in addition to some 300 other paintings by numerous artists (Stein, "Three" 192). Moreover, Heliche probably was privy to details of the negotiations being completed by his father and Cardinal Mazarini. According to Palomino, besides touring the Alcázar of Madrid, the Marshal-Duke of Gramont visited Heliche's palaces to see his collection (172). Heliche also helped to initiate the genre of opera to Calderón and others, and he produced both *La púrpura de la rosa* and *Celos, aun del aire, matan* (Stein, *Songs* 211). The Marqués was even in charge of staging palatial dramas in the Retiro and, according to Stein, might have worked with Calderón to resolve any problems associated with dramatic representations which Heliche was producing (*Songs* 213).

Due to his stunning decoration for the French contingent to Madrid, Philip IV immediately put Velázquez in charge of all arrangements for the royal expedition to the Island of Pheasants in the Bidasoa River where the actual nuptials would take place. The Bidasoa River, which divided Spain from France, was the most neutral point between the two countries, and had been used for another Franco-Spanish wedding, when princess Ana de Austria, Philip IV's sister, married French king Louis XIII almost thirty years before. From the announcement of the wedding and peace in October 1659 until the spring of 1660, besides planning for the French visit to Madrid, Velázquez was also occupied with the arrangements for the trip to the border. The task was immense: he had to arrange housing for Philip IV and the Spanish court, as well as construct or reconstruct, and decorate the Spanish areas on the island where the wedding celebrations would take place. After selecting the tapestries, furniture, and other furnishing that would adorn the Spanish pavilions, Velázquez and his assistants left Madrid on April 8, 1660, finally arriving at the border on May 2, 1660.¹⁵ During the trip, Velázquez had to inspect and reserve all housing along the way to the border, as well as for the return trip.¹⁶ One of his carpenters repaired and fixed all doors at the inns in order to protect court officials from thieves, or, worse, assassins (López-Rey 144). Velázquez's long journey took 24 days and as soon as he arrived at the Bidasoa he began decorating the Spanish pavilions where the vows were to take place. Gállego describes the undertaking: "Al Aposentador Mayor toca ocuparse del mobiliario de la mitad española del Pabellón de la Entrega, compuesta de galería, sala y otras piezas, pasillo y oratorio, regiamente decorados." (61).¹⁷ The preparation and construction work lasted almost two months. By the end of the construction phase, the main pavilion had private rooms for the French on the north side and Spanish on the south.¹⁸

For its part, the Spanish court left Madrid on April 15th, a week after Velázquez and his crew, in a caravan containing the royal family, their servants, court ministers, and other administrators; the convoy extended a distance of 32 kilometers and advanced only about 8-10

per day. Composed of more than 70 pulled wagons, 32 smaller wagons, 70 individual horses, 500 pack mules, and 900 riding mules, it seemed that nothing was left behind.¹⁹ According to Brown, Philip IV not only took along his most valuable jewels, but also brought the majority of his personal belongings in 14 coaches, pulled by 6 mules each. The king also made the necessary arrangements for the travels of four physicians, four surgeons, two bleeders, the royal barber, and his three assistants, as well as cooks, waiters, and other servants (Riggs 291). Even the court *valido*, Don Luis de Haro, brought with him over 200 assistants (Brown 173; Riggs 291). Arthur Stanley Riggs states that the beginning of the entourage could be seen entering Alcalá de Henares as its tail was just leaving Madrid (292).

The decorations which Velázquez's transported to the border were notable for their quality as well as quantity. In addition to some of the best Flemish tapestries that the Spanish court possessed, the painter brought furniture, carpets, curtains, velvet draperies, silk curtain cords, and jewels from the royal collections, almost all of which were transported from their original place in the Alcázar (Riggs 294; Elliott, "Twilight" 1).²⁰ Velázquez made sure that the tapestries fit the pavilions exactly, and each decorative piece had a precise location. As both politician and artist, it was important for Velázquez to choose these decorations judiciously since any error in subject matter could offend the French and hinder the peace agreement and marriage.

Velázquez also was responsible for the royal gifts which Philip IV gave to Louis XIV which, according to Palomino, included "a Golden Fleece in diamonds, a gold watch ornamented with diamonds, and other precious and exquisite jewels of inestimable value..." (175). Without a doubt, the rich and opulent appearance of the Spanish Court was important judging by the amount and lavishness of clothing and jewelry, as well as by the number of ministers and assistants who were allowed to make the trip. The Spanish contingent dwarfed the French. And Velázquez was in charge of the entire affair. One can only imagine the work that was to be undertaken by the artist. Yet, his success was notable. As Stradling reports, the majority of the neutral observers later reported that the Spanish pomp greatly influenced the impending events: "what was fundamentally a sad and even a humiliating occasion for Philip was compensated in part by a notable triumph of *reputación*" (323). Velázquez's ideological message was clear: he set out to show that Spain was not an empire in decadence, but rather a world power set on maintaining its prosperity and hegemony. At the same time, he meant to portray the Spanish state as a peaceful one, encouraging the nuptials and avoiding dishonor among the French.

The matrimony finally took place in phases starting on the June 3, 1660, and ending on June 9. When the final portions of the peace treaty were negotiated and sworn on June 7, the royal nuptials could take place. In the wedding ceremony, Don Luis de Haro acted as a stand-in for king Louis XIV, since a Spanish princess could not leave Spain unwed, and Louis XIV was not to enter Spanish territory. On a subsequent day, Philip guided his daughter to a line that divided the French and Spanish delegations, and officially presented the princess to her new husband, this being known as "las entregas" (Elliott, "Philip IV" 189). All aspects of the occasion fell to Velázquez, who was also one of the admirably dressed courtesans present at the ceremony, which points to his importance to the diplomatic process. He may even be one of the many officials captured in one of Le Brun's famous tapestries depicting the wedding which were painted ten years after the nuptials.²¹ At this point, it is important to note that the relationship of

all classes of visual arts to political power is not related to Spanish ideology alone. It was widely believed in France, especially during Louis XIV's reign, that decor had political and ideological implications. For example, in *Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV: Nuptial Fictions and the Making of Absolutist Power*, Abby E. Zanger points out that María Teresa's huge Spanish hoop skirt, or *guardainfante*, was considered by the French to be stodgy and outdated (156). Although the skirt was stylish among female elites throughout Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, by the time of the wedding it had been replaced in France by less ostentatious, more narrowly cut skirts. Zanger cleverly shows how the princess was convinced to don tighter fitting French attire in an effort to appropriate her political influence and reinforce France's position in the negotiations of the treaty. In other words, Zanger shows how María Teresa's dress could influence the state of affairs. Like most aesthetic production, even Baroque dress can have a politicizing and ideological quality.

Thus came to an end a tumultuous time for Spain, and a busy epoch for Velázquez. The great master exhibited his usual brilliance in the face of difficult economic and political times for Spain. Indeed, at that moment it was not known what the consequences of this new marriage would mean for Spain's future. Ironically, it happened that as a result of the marriage contract, Spain was to pay a dowry of 500,000 gold crowns—an enormous and impossible sum given its declining treasury. Despite Spain's best efforts, the dowry was never fully paid, and partly due to the unpaid sum, Philip d'Anjou, the grandson of María Teresa and Louis XIV, became king of Spain upon the death of Carlos II in 1700, ending two centuries of Habsburg control.²²

The day after the wedding, an exhausted Velázquez and king Philip IV made their way back to Madrid. After spending a few days with a fellow painter and friend in Valladolid, Velázquez finally arrived in the capital on June 26, 1660. His family eagerly awaited his arrival because rumors had circulated at court that the painter's exhaustion had actually led to his death. After his arrival, he began putting tapestries, paintings, furniture, and other adornments back in their rightful place in the Alcázar. He also wrote a series of letters and memos in order to arrange payment for various purchases made before, and after, the journey, and requested payment for his assistants.²³ On Sunday, June 31, after having spent the morning with Philip IV, Velázquez complained of "fatigas," and returned home to rest. It seems that the stress and exhaustion of state affairs had taken their toll on the sixty-one year old painter-politician, and his health began to fail. He died on the sixth of August, one month after returning from the wedding celebrations. Velázquez's body, adorned with the robes of the Order of Santiago, laid in state in his bedroom until the following night when he was put to rest in the Iglesia de San Juan Bautista.

The story of peace, diplomacy, and the political and ideological impact of Velázquez's painting does not end with the painter's death, however. Just after the master passed away, Cardinal Mazarini commissioned an opera to celebrate the royal nuptials. Composed by Francesco Cavalli with a

The goal of this study has been to outline the role of Velázquez in the important political events of 1659-1660 and to demonstrate that he was not only a celebrated artist, but also one who could be considered a political figure. Few letters or official documents survive that describe his day-to-day political activities, but several accounts indicate that he did have a mediating effect on European affairs. Even though his duty in state policy was not the same as, say, a court minister or Spanish grandee, Velázquez nevertheless played an important role. His

diligent work in preparation for the French visit, especially his meticulous choice of tapestries, sculptures, paintings, and furniture, were meant to project certain themes, and foster the crown's ideological agenda. Indeed, it was widely believed in Europe that the portrayal of art was key to projecting an image of greatness. In the case of Velázquez, certain identifying moments or tendencies, chiefly in the production of aesthetics, were thought to provoke political change. This is what Jameson means when he states that aesthetic acts, and the production of aesthetics, have definite symbolic ideological consequences (79). Similarly, Eagleton has stated that the objective of aesthetics-as-ideology is to falsify "social reality, suppressing and excluding certain unwelcome features of it, or suggesting that these features cannot be avoided" (27). In short, aesthetics and ideology are mutually engaging, and Velázquez, more than any other artist during the period, was especially adept at using art to manipulate public opinion and establish diplomatic moods. Examined in light of the cultural framework that informed the pending historical events, one cannot minimize the role of Velázquez as political and artistic catalyst. His lucid decisions influenced the artistic and musical traditions of Spain and France and, by relation, played a notable role in fashioning European politics.

Notes

- (1) See first-hand accounts in François Bertaut's *Diario del viaje de España hecho en el año 1659, en la ocasión del tratado de la paz* and J. García Mercadal's *Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal* or those quoted in José López-Rey's *Velázquez's Work and World*, Steven N. Orso's *Philip IV and the Decoration of the Alcázar of Madrid*, Antonio Palomino's *Lives of the Eminent Spanish Painters and Sculptors*, Bernardino de Pantorba's *La vida y la obra de Velázquez: Estudio biográfico y crítico* and Abby Zanger's *Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV: Nuptial Fictions and the Making of Absolutist Power*.
- (2) According to Fernando Marías *Velázquez's* knighthood had both a political and financial effect since it meant that his salary was raised considerably, and he was seen as an equal in the court: "[. . .] significaba de inmediato el reconocimiento de su condición de hidalgo y un honor añadido, de tipo social, que adjuntar al real aprecio de su arte y a las mercedes económicas obtenidas de Philip IV a lo largo de toda su carrera" (228).
- (3) Letters containing some of the many petitions for redesign, repair, and relocation can be found in Volume 2 of *Varia Velazqueña: Homenaje a Velázquez en el III centenario de su muerte 1660-1960*.
- (4) The most complete historical background on the opera can be found in Calderón de la Barca Tomás de Torrejón y Velasco, *La púrpura de la rosa*, eds. Angeles Cardona, Don Cruickshank, and Martin Cunningham.
- (5) There is no definitive proof that Calderón and Velázquez knew one another. However, Stein states that the painter collaborated with various musicians and dramatists in his work in the palace. Did he also know or work with Calderón? According to Margaret Greer, although Velázquez did not know Góngora or Quevedo well, the master painted their portraits, and she goes on to raise the possibility that the painter and playwright knew each other ("Three Paintings" 185). To explore that prospect, Greer analyzes Velázquez's *Retrato de un hombre* comparing it with the only known portrait of Calderón (from the 1677 edition of his *Autos sacramentales*) in order to demonstrate that the playwright was possibly the model ("Calderón" 151-3).
- (6) See Thomas O'Connor's "Infantas, Conformidad, and Marriages of State: Observations on the Loa to Calderón's *La púrpura de la rosa*." As early as 1654 the possibility of a marriage proposal was appealing to the Spanish monarchy but Spain did not yet have a male heir to the throne, underscoring María Teresa's importance as successor. Moreover, as husband to María Teresa, Louis XIV could feasibly occupy Spain's throne as king, a disparaging possibility for the Spanish Court. When Philip Próspero was born November 28, 1657, and his brother Fernando Tomás December 21, 1658, Philip IV hesitantly welcomed the marriage and the opportunity for peace, a fact revealed in the loa of *La púrpura de la rosa*. For her part, María Teresa often talked about the proposal to marry Louis XIV since it was presented in 1653 when portraits of the young princess was exchanged for paintings of Louis XIV through Venetian ambassadors.
- (7) Gramont carried various letters from Louis XIV and the queen mother, Ana de Austria (Philip IV's sister), to the king of Spain officially requesting the marriage. The subsequent entrance by Gramont in Madrid, and his presence before Philip IV, are events recorded in the opera, which specifically mentions Gramont as he who laid the groundwork for the exit of the beloved princess to France: "[...] vino el Duque de Agramón / a pedirla... / ... de manera / que allá la paz se ajustaba / y acá el casamiento; [...]" (vv. 196-200).

- (8) *The Hall of Mirrors' name is owed to the eight Venetian mirrors in ebony frames which alternated with the large windows. The overhead fresco was divided in five sections and boasted the Fable of Pandora. The painting of various scenes was delegated to Agostino Miteli and Michele Colonna, who were well-known Italian fresco artists that Velázquez brought to Spain two years before. Painting was also done by two young Spaniards, Juan Carreño de Miranda and Francisco Rizi de Guevara. According to Palomino Velázquez sketched the ceiling, and then delegated the work to the younger artists and apprentices (167). Among the protagonists portrayed in the fresco was Cupid who also played a central role in Calderón's La púrpura de la rosa.*
- (9) *See Ernst Bloch et al., Aesthetics and Politics, for a summary of these writers' work.*
- (10) *Stein believes that it was Veronese's work, the best of the collection, which provided Calderón with the idea and basis for his rendition of the myth in La púrpura de la rosa (Songs 213). The Veronese Venus now hangs in the Prado Museum.*
- (11) *The painting is known as The Rokeby Venus because it formed part of the Morritt Collection at Rokeby Hall in Yorkshire before its acquisition by the National Gallery of London ("National Gallery"). Interestingly, there was a companion painting to Velázquez's Venus y Adonis mentioned in various inventories and catalogs from the mid-1600s up to the early 1900s when the Velázquez Venus was permanently housed in The National Gallery. Its whereabouts, however, are not known. According to the National Gallery, the companion piece was a 16th-century Venetian picture of a naked nymph surrounded by a landscape. On the other hand, Duncan Bull and Enriqueta Harris posit that the companion piece may have been a Venus done by Pordenone. They base this hypothesis on notes and drawings that appear in the National Gallery of London catalogue (1913) left by the Scottish artist Richard Cooper who traveled throughout Spain and France making pencil copies of both the Velázquez Venus and Adonis (Rokeby Venus) and the companion work he labeled 'Venus of Pordenone' ("Companion" 643-54).*
- (12) *In Stein's analysis of the painting Mercury and Argos and its relationship to the decoration of the Alcázar, she indicates that the theme of the work—the mythological story of Mercury, Argos, and Jupiter—is closely linked with the power of music in the seventeenth century ("Three Paintings" 175-76). For Stein, the intimate connection between the role of music in this painting and its position in the Hall of Mirrors had a great influence on Calderón's opera, in addition to affecting the overall decorative scheme of that area of the palace.*
- (13) *Orso points out that many scholars believe that Ruben's equestrian portrait of Philip IV was finished by Velázquez who may have painted the king's face (Philip IV 58), while others believe that Bautista del Mazo, who worked in Velázquez's workshop, made the copy.*
- (14) *See Stein's "Opera and the Spanish Political Agenda" (135-36), Songs of Mortals, Dialogues of the Gods. Music and Theatre in Seventeenth-Century Spain (210-12) and "Three Paintings a Double Lyre Opera, and Eliche's Venus: Velázquez and Music at the Royal Court in Madrid" (190-92).*
- (15) *There is some discrepancy concerning when Velázquez left Madrid but a letter of his, "Certificación de Velázquez sobre los gajes del carpintero Martín Gajero en la jornada de Fuenterrabía" states that they left April 8, 1660 (Varia Velazqueña 381). Other letters reveal that the following individuals accompanied Velázquez: José de Villarreal, Maestro mayor de las obras reales; Damián Goetens, a tapestry maker and son-in-law of Velázquez,*

- who, along with Juan Batista del Mazo, were Ayudas de Furriera; Martín Gajero, a carpenter; and two sweepers, Julián Destrada and Lucas Leal.
- (16) Pantorba describes Velázquez's itinerary which was also that of the court: "The journey started by way of Alcalá and Guadalajara, and they arrived in Burgos, where Velázquez had orders from His Majesty to leave the Keeper of the Keys, since His Majesty had to stop in that city. The others continued on their way to Fuenterrabía, where Velázquez prepared lodgings for His Majesty in the castle that Baron Watteville, Governor of the city of San Sebastián" (*La vida y la obra de Velázquez* 175). A more detailed list of locations, as well as their corresponding expenses, was kept by Martín Gajero, Velázquez's carpenter (*Varia Velaqueña* 383-84).
- (17) Juan Antonio Gay Nuño writes about the necessary work that had to be carried out simply to prepare the pavillions: "Para que los monarcas español y francés y sus respectivos ministros se entrevistasen en tan importante coyuntura, había que alzar en la isla de los Faisanes, en el Bidasoa, un pabellón congruentemente decorado y amueblado para recibir a los regios conversantes y a sus más próximos colaboradores. En los muchos testimonios documentales que hacen fe de los trabajos previos [. . .] y el peso todo de la compleja organización recayó sobre el aposentador mayor, esto es, sobre nuestro Velázquez" (110).
- (18) See Armstrong's *The Life of Velázquez* (100) and Riggs' *Velázquez: Painter of Truth and Prisoner of the King* (293).
- (19) See Camón Aznar's *Velázquez* (924) and Dunlop's *Memoirs of Spain during the Reigns of Philip IV and Charles II, from 1620 to 1700* (601). According to Dunlop, just as was the case with the royal entourage, the infanta's belongings also required great care: "The Infanta's trousseau, as it has been called in modern days, required of itself no inconsiderable train. She had twelve trunks lined and covered with crimson velvet, the hinges, locks, and keys of silver, containing twenty-three full suits for the Princess, all extremely rich; and other twenty trunks, covered with Russian leather, and the iron-work gilt, which were filled with an immense quantity of all sorts of linens; also six more trunks overspread with amber leather, and lined with crimson satin, their hinges, bars and locks, of gold enameled,—two of them full of amber gloves, whisker cases, purses, and other curiosities for the Duke of Anjou; the other four containing rich presents, to be distributed among the French ladies. It required 50 sumpter horses to carry the Infanta's dressing plate and perfumes; other 25 sumpter bore most exquisite hangings and tapestry" (601-02).
- (20) The tapestries that hung in the Spanish pavilions were chosen to project an image of opulence and power. These were silk tapestries with hints of gold that recounted virtuous stories: *Las virtudes de Noé*, *Rómulo y Remo*, *La Pasión de Nuestro Señor*, and *Ícaro y Andrómeda* (Camón Aznar 926). Among the works known to have been exhibited were the *Historia de San Pablo*, which, according to Camón Aznar, was done by the great Rafael, and also *El Apocalypsis* by Van Orley (which today can be found in the Spain's Valley of the Fallen).
- (21) Le Brun's tapestries were designed for the Palace at Versailles but today reside in the French Embassy in Madrid. For commentaries on the tapestries, see Camón Aznar (927) and López-Rey (145).
- (22) A version of Calderón's opera, rewritten by Tomás de Torrejón y Velasco and performed in 1701, commemorates Carlos II's first year as king of Spain and the New World, as well as his eighteenth birthday. Torrejón, born in Spain, was the Chapel Master of Lima

Cathedral who moved to the Peru as part of the entourage of the new Viceroy Pedro Fernández de Castro y Andrade, Tenth Count of Lemos (1632-1672). Torrejón's opera utilized Calderón's libretto, but he wrote a new loa in praise of the Bourbon king, and was forced compose new music since Calderón's had been lost. See my article, "Public Reception, Politics and Propaganda in Torrejón's loa to La púrpura de la rosa, the First New World Opera" and commentaries of Cardona, et. al. in their edition of La púrpura de la rosa.

- (23) *These letters are compiled in Varia Velazqueña: Homenaje a Velázquez en el III centenario de su muerte 1660-1960 (378-87).*
- (24) *The opera was first performed at the Salles des Machines of the Paris Tuileries on February, 7 1662.*
- (25) *See the diaries of Gramont, Motteville, Bertaut, and Montpensier contained in J. García Mercadal, Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal.*

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