

LAS MENINAS*



* Painting from the *Las Meninas* series by Pablo Picasso (1957) with a superimposed image of the princess Margarita, copied from the original painting of the same name by Diego Velázquez (1656). Postmodernist collage by © Pascual Delgado.

Las Meninas **

*When natural history becomes
biology, Inside El Prado,
Pablo Ruiz enters the hall
when the analysis of wealth
where hangs 'Las Meninas.'
becomes economics,
He stands before when,
above all, the enormous canvas
and stares into Velázquez's
reflection upon language
mocking eyes. becomes philology,*

*He's looking straight at him.
Then and Classical discourse,
at the face of the child princess
in which being and representation
Margarita, like a blue jade buddha
found their common locus,
at the very centre of the painting,*

*is eclipsed, then, a blonde cherub
in the profound upheaval
clad in organdy and silk.
of such an archeological mutation,*

*surrounded by her attendants: man
appears in his ambiguous position
dueñas, maids of honour, courtiers,
dwarfs, as an object of knowledge*

*Doña María Agustina Sarmiento,
and as a subject that knows
a German shepherd,
the Italian court jester: enslaved*

sovereign, Nicolaso Pertusato,
her tutor Nieto...*observed spectator*,
spies the sinister figure of a man
he appears in the place
entering (or exiting?) backstage
belonging to the king,

at the far right of the spectral studio,
which was assigned to him...by Las Meninas,
inside the vastness of the Royal Alcázar.
but from which his real presence

What is this man about to do?
has...long been excluded.
As if, He knows that someday
he will also hang
in that vacant space

The key to understanding
the play of light and shadow.
towards which Velázquez's Maybe
he intends to kill the king!

...painting was directed,
Starts to sketch frantically
but which it was nevertheless
reflecting only a series
based on 'Las Meninas'.
in the chance presence of a mirror,

Everything will revolve
and as though by stealth,
around the princess.
Paintings cover all the walls
all the figures of the Master's studio:
...still lives...whose alternation,

or perhaps devotional themes...
reciprocal exclusion, interweaving,
The Temptations of Saint Anthony,
and fluttering one imagined

Portraits of King Philip IV
and Queen Mariana, *(the model,*
the painter, also reflected now
in a hazy mirror *the king,*

the spectator) in the exact centre of the back
wall. *suddenly stopped their*
imperceptible dance, It's too dark to tell.
immobilized into one substantial figure,

He knows he will never outdo the Master:
and demanded that the entire space of the representation
O, fury and futility of his ageing
eyes and hands *should at last be related*
before the ageless crushing
to one corporeal gaze.
victory of Art!

** Composite Postmodernist poem by © Pascual Delgado, written in Montreal, on October 2003. Final revision January 13th 2016. All texts in italics are direct quotes from Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, translation by Tavistock/Routledge (1970) of *Les mots et les choses*, (1966).