

**Signaling Spanishness: Communicating peninsular Spanish identity in Antonio Rodríguez Beltrán's *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion* (c. 1670)**

Hana Nikčević

**Abstract**

In the early modern Spanish Habsburg world, preoccupied with the attempted colonization of the Americas, the Atlantic Ocean functioned as a threshold of identity. Spaniards born in the Americas, as well as those who simply relocated overseas, were thought to be fundamentally, negatively altered by their new environment. In this paper, I argue that Antonio Rodríguez Beltrán's *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion* (c. 1670) seeks to communicate its sitter's 'pure' Spanishness by both associating her with Spanish royalty (through deploying a conventional Spanish mode of court portraiture) and emphasizing her whiteness (by contrast with the darker complexion of the Indigenous woman, in a historical moment wherein white skin was associated with Spanish purity and superiority). First, I outline the history of hosting and portraying little people at the Spanish court, concluding that, in deploying this established pictorial genre, María Luisa's portrait associates her with historical Spanish royalty. I also summarize the intended utility of the genre as a means of communicating physical contrast. Second, I discuss Spaniards' perceptions of Indigenous American, African, and mixed-race people as well as creoles (*criollos*, Spaniards born in the Americas) in the Spanish Americas to explain the rationale behind my overall conclusion: within the context of Spanish colonialism and emergent, racially-inflected notions about Spanish superiority, *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion* is intended to portray its sitter as 'purely' Spanish, an identity not only communicated through the association with Spanish royal portraiture, but also keyed to whiteness and, thus, emphasized in this painting via María Luisa's physical (namely, epidermal) contrast with her Indigenous companion.

Upon the deaths of Don Joseph de Silva y Mendoza in 1682 and his son Don Manuel Joseph de Silva Toledo in 1696, both in Madrid, inventories of their possessions revealed their ownership of an abundance of objects originating in the region then known as New Spain.<sup>1</sup> Officially the Viceroyalty of New Spain, this territory was established by Habsburg Spain in 1521 upon the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire (marked by the fall of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital).<sup>2</sup> As numerous scholars have discussed, objects from colonial Mexico regularly made their way to Europe and often featured within the curiosity cabinets of the royal, noble, and wealthy.<sup>3</sup> Goods such as ceramics, clay, feather mosaics, and furniture in the collections of Don Joseph and Don Manuel Joseph indicate these histories of transatlantic travel, but neither of these two men had ever set foot across the Atlantic—so whence came these goods from abroad?<sup>4</sup>

The vector of this collection's overseas relocation was Doña María Luisa de Toledo y Carreto (1656–1707), wife of Don Joseph, mother of Don Manuel Joseph, and daughter of the Marquis de Mancera, Antonio Sebastián de Toledo, viceroy of New Spain between 1664 and 1673 (fig. 1).<sup>5</sup> As a result of her father's office, María Luisa spent her childhood and early adolescence in Mexico/New Spain, and it was during this period of her life that her portrait was painted by, most likely, the artist Antonio Rodríguez Beltrán, lauded as the “Titian of this new world.”<sup>6</sup> In this portrait (fig. 2), today held by the Museo del Prado, Madrid, but currently located at the Museo de América, Madrid, María Luisa is depicted wearing a sumptuous, lace-trimmed dress, patterned with floral motifs and the occasional dragonfly. The lacy end of one voluminous sleeve meets with the frilly cuff of a delicate, ochre-hued glove; in this gloved hand, she dangles her other glove (which, somewhat eerily, retains

<sup>1</sup> Andrés Gutiérrez Usillos and Rocío Bruquetas Galán, *La hija del virrey: el mundo femenino novohispano en el siglo XVII* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte, Dirección General de Bellas Artes, Subdirección General de Museos Estatales, 2019), 65.

<sup>2</sup> Myles Hudson, “Battle of Tenochtitlán,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 15, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Tenochtitlan>.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Byron Ellsworth Hamann, “The Mirrors of Las Meninas: Cochineal, Silver, and Clay,” *The Art Bulletin* 92, no. 1/2 (2010): 6–35; Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 246; and Isabel Yaya, “Wonders of America: The curiosity cabinet as a site of representation and knowledge,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 20, no. 2 (2008): 173–188, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/fhm038>.

<sup>4</sup> Gutiérrez Usillos, *La hija del virrey*, 65.

<sup>5</sup> “María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion,” Museo del Prado, <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/María-luisa-de-toledo-with-her-Indigenous/37b4ea69-5647-4493-8793-55c0c07c2c0c>.

<sup>6</sup> Gutiérrez Usillos, *La hija del virrey*, 310; quoting Fray Matías de Escobar, *Americana Thebaida*, 1729. Antonio Rodríguez was born in Mexico around 1635; his lineage was Spanish, so he was a Creole. In his early teens, he became a disciple of the painter José Juárez (1617–1661). Interestingly in relation to the ideas of race and hierarchy explored in this paper, Antonio Rodríguez appears to have been one of several painters engaged in dealing with certain perceived issues to do with the profession of painting in New Spain—excessive numbers of untrained artists, these artists claimed, were reflecting poorly on the profession as a whole. Per Susan Deans-Smith, “In 1674, thirteen master painters (including Antonio Rodríguez and Juan Correa) of Mexico City granted power of attorney to two of their colleagues, the master painters Sebastián López Dávalos and Cristóbal Caballero, to represent them in ‘all matters and affairs related to painting and its defense.’” These artists produced “a set of revised guild ordinances” for the consideration of the Mexico City council; in this document, a “new clause, number fifteen, proposed that once the reformed clauses became effective no master painter could agree to train and accept apprentices who were not Spanish. Although other than the term *español*, no specific racial categories were used in this instance, the all-encompassing ‘not Spanish’ extended the exclusionary clause to blacks and *castas* as well as Indians.” Susan Deans-Smith, “Dishonor in the Hands of Indians, Spaniards, and Blacks’: The (Racial) Politics of Painting in Early Modern Mexico,” in *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, ed. Iona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 60.

the shape of the hand that once filled it). Indeed, María Luisa's left hand is bare, and it rests upon the head of a woman of short stature who stands alongside her. This woman is identifiably of Indigenous Mexican origin based on her skin tone, intricately tattooed face and hands, and *huipil*, decorated with a geometric pattern of triangles and pineapples.<sup>7</sup>

When María Luisa returned to Spain—at the end of her father's term as viceroy and to wed Don Joseph—the Indigenous woman most likely did not accompany her.<sup>8</sup> This painting, however, did, preserving the woman's image and serving as a memento of María Luisa's time in New Spain.<sup>9</sup> Per Gutiérrez Usillos, whose foundational research on this painting underpins this paper, María Luisa's portrait was likely painted to mark her transition into a marriageable age and anticipate her impending marriage: she was engaged to Don Joseph de Silva y Mendoza, the third-born son of the Duke of Pastrana.<sup>10</sup> The proffering of their youngest son to María Luisa—the eldest was engaged, but the second-oldest was unattached—may have indicated some reservations on the part of Don Joseph's parents about the status of the viceroy's daughter.<sup>11</sup>

In this paper, my aim is to contextualize *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion* within a pictorial tradition and a historical milieu: the convention in Spanish court portraiture of depicting royals alongside individuals of short stature and the racially-inflected social hierarchies of Spain and the Spanish Americas during the colonial period. Given the painting's date of creation, my focus is on the seventeenth century, but material is occasionally drawn from the eighteenth century. This paper is accordingly organized in two main sections. First, I outline the history of hosting and portraying little people at the Spanish court, concluding that, in deploying this established pictorial genre, María Luisa's portrait associates her with historical Spanish royalty. I also summarize the intended utility of the genre as a means of communicating physical contrast. Second, I discuss Spaniards' perceptions of Indigenous American, African, and mixed-race people as well as creoles (*criollos*, Spaniards born in the Americas) in the Spanish Americas to explain the rationale behind my overall conclusion: within the context of Spanish colonialism and emergent, racially-inflected notions about Spanish superiority, *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion* is intended to portray its sitter as 'purely' Spanish, an identity not only communicated through the association with Spanish royal portraiture, but also keyed

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<sup>7</sup> Gutiérrez Usillos, *La hija del virrey*, 300; Donna Pierce, Rogelio Ruiz Gomar, and Clara Bargellini, *Painting a new world: Mexican art and life, 1521-1821* (Denver: Frederick and Jan Mayer Center for Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial Art, Denver Art Museum, 2004), 220. A *huipil* is a straight, tunic-like garment, worn as a blouse or dress depending on its length, consisting of one piece of fabric folded in half; it has been worn by women in Mesoamerica since at least the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

<sup>8</sup> María Luisa had actually already married Don Joseph while she was in New Spain (Don Joseph was not present for the proceedings), but a second, representative ceremony was to be held upon her return to Spain.

<sup>9</sup> Gutiérrez Usillos, *La hija del virrey*, 296.

<sup>10</sup> Gutiérrez Usillos, *La hija del virrey*, 53.

<sup>11</sup> Gutiérrez Usillos, *La hija del virrey*, 50.

to whiteness and, thus, emphasized in this painting via María Luisa's physical (namely, epidermal) contrast with her Indigenous companion.

First, however, I should clarify the state of knowledge pertaining to the identity of the Indigenous woman depicted. Gutiérrez Usillos identifies the woman as belonging to one of the Chichimec nations. "Chichimeca" was the term used by the Nahua, or Nahuatl-speaking, inhabitants of central Mexico to designate the various peoples who lived in the region "La Gran Chichimeca," north and west of the Valley of Mexico, corresponding to the regions known as Nueva Galicia, Nueva Vizcaya, and Nueva León; the term was adopted into Spanish around the 1520s and understood to denote a "barbarous," nomadic people.<sup>12</sup> Gutiérrez Usillos's identification is based on contemporaneous documents attesting to the Chichimeca practice of facial tattooing, typically used as an identifying marker of an individual's nation; the frequent enslaving of individuals from this region, many of whom ended up serving in New Spain; and certain later paintings that depict similar facial tattooing on subjects described as Chichimeca.<sup>13</sup> Given both the dearth of visual evidence of the various Chichimeca nations' unique tattooing practices and the possibility that the artist did not render the woman's tattoos with any degree of accuracy, it is not currently possible to identify the woman's precise background.<sup>14</sup> It is for this former reason, however, that this painting both represents such a remarkable artifact of seventeenth-century Mexico and demands further investigation in continuation of this paper.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Charlotte M. Gradie, "Discovering the Chichimecas," *The Americas* 74, no. S2 (2017): 67–88.

<sup>13</sup> Gutiérrez Usillos, *La hija del virrey*, 279–280. In the early eighteenth century, Spanish-born but Nuevo León-based military commander and landowner Antonio Ladrón de Guevara described the Chichimeca facial inscriptions as "a variety of blue stripes and signs, with whose differences one nation can be distinguished from another," and Mexico-born Alonso de León, then Governor of Coahuila and Texas, wrote in 1690 that the Chichimecas "paint the faces in general, each nation with different stripes, and others the whole body" featuring "stripes crossed, straight, or waved." The two paintings that depict facial tattooing on individuals identified as Chichimec are New Spain-based painter Manuel Arellano's *Rendition of a Chichimeco, Native of the Province of Parral* and *Rendition of a Chichimeca, Native of the Province of Parral*, both 1711, oil on canvas, held at the Museo de América, Madrid; the facial tattoos depicted on this man and woman are much less intricate than those shown on the short-statured woman accompanying María Luisa. It is also worthy of note that two of the groups inhabiting the region referred to as La Gran Chichimeca, the Zacatecas and the Guachichiles, are postulated to have been named (by the Nahua) in relation to their use of body paint. The Zacatecas, according to late sixteenth-century writer Gonzalo de las Casas, were named in relation to grass (*zacate* in Mexico), but another contemporary account proposed that the term meant "black head" in the language of the Zacatecas (Philip Wayne Powell, *Soldiers, Indians and silver: the northward advance of New Spain, 1550-1600* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969], 237, no. 27). A sixteenth-century Augustinian missionary, Friar Guillermo de Santa María, wrote that the Guachichiles were thus named because "guachichil" means "redhead," and these peoples painted their hair with annatto, "wore red bonnets," and kept "caged sparrows that have red heads" (Olivia Kindl, "The Colors of the Desert: Ritual and Aesthetic Uses of Pigments and Colorants by the Guachichil of Northern Mexico," in *Painting the Skin: Pigments on Bodies and Codices in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica*, ed. Élodie Dupey García and María Luisa Vázquez de Ágredos Pascual [Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019], 103). These characterizations support the identification of the Indigenous woman as one of members of the nations comprised under the term "Chichimeca" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is not possible with this limited evidence to postulate that the Indigenous woman portrayed alongside María Luisa is, e.g., Zacateco.

<sup>14</sup> While Gutiérrez Usillos comes to this same conclusion, and it is not possible within the scope of this paper to further pursue this line of inquiry, I do not wish to foreclose the pursuit of more information on this subject. Another project, or an extension of this one, could attempt the identification of the Indigenous woman's specific origins; on-site research in Mexico would undoubtedly be necessary.

## People of short stature at the Spanish court

The pictorial tradition within which I would like to situate *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion* is that of depicting individuals of short stature in Spanish court portraiture, a genre that evidently provides the model for this painting. The Spanish Habsburgs had ‘kept’ people with dwarfism at the court since at least 1446, choosing short-statured people as royal companions likely for their appeal as so-called “monsters” and “marvels.” The former term claimed a more multivalent meaning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than it does today, denoting not exclusively the horrifying but also, and primarily, the wondrous or anomalous.<sup>15</sup> Although little people at the courts were in some sense ‘attractions,’ they, simultaneously, lived and worked at the most esteemed location in the kingdom. Because little people were thought to be genuinely physically inconvenienced—while other entertainers’ “strange” behaviour was considered artificial, short statured individuals’ exceptional states were perceived as the work of God—they provided an opportunity for the royal family to assert their fulfilment of their charitable duty to protect the members of their domain.<sup>16</sup> Little people were brought into the palace and supplied with residence therein; they were furnished with food, dress, and other necessities and, sometimes, given an allowance.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, alongside those termed “giants,” little people were the most common of those individuals perceived as physically anomalous at the early modern European courts.<sup>18</sup>

One well-known proponent of the practice of keeping so-called “court dwarfs” was Spanish Habsburg king Philip IV (r. 1621–1665), whose court allegedly comprised at least 110 little people.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, little people were most highly, and thus characteristically, desired at the Spanish court, and they were brought to court from across Spain, as well as from France, Germany, England, the Spanish Netherlands (1556–1648), Poland, Milan (then under the Spanish Habsburgs), Italy, Portugal, and even more distant regions.<sup>20</sup> The Habsburgs also received and gave little people as gifts, and, suggesting the high value placed on these human presents, there is evidence that different courts competed over them. Isabella Clara Eugenia, sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands and daughter of Philip II of Spain, noted in a letter that “Twice the French had wanted to steal” from her an unidentified man of short

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<sup>15</sup> Fernando Bouza, *Locos, enanos y hombres de placer en la corte de los austrias: oficio de burlas* (Madrid: Ediciones Temas de Hoy, 1996), 51; Janet Ravenscroft, “Dwarfs—and a Loca—as Ladies’ Maids at the Spanish Habsburg Courts,” in *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-waiting across Early Modern Europe*, ed. Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 147.

<sup>16</sup> Bouza, *Locos*, 23; Ravenscroft, “Dwarfs,” 148.

<sup>17</sup> Ravenscroft, “Dwarfs,” 150.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher William Wells, “Court ‘Monsters’: Deformity in the Western European Royal Courts between 1500 and 1700,” *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 7, no. 2 (2018): 188.

<sup>19</sup> Betty Adelson, *The Lives of Dwarves* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 149.

<sup>20</sup> Ravenscroft, “Dwarfs,” 150.

stature, whom she intended to send to her family in Spain.<sup>21</sup> Simultaneously, though, and perhaps underlining the evident objectification of these individuals when conceived of as gifts to be sent from court to court at a royal's whim, Isabella elsewhere refers to the short-statured Bonamí (whose name translates to “good friend”) as the *sabandija*, or louse, that she was sending to her brother.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, little people at the courts were often given nicknames that highlighted their small size, such as louse (*sabandija*), worm (*gusano*), flea (*pulga*), sparrow (*gorrión*), lap dog (*perrillo de faldas*) and shrew (*musaraña*).<sup>23</sup> As Janet Ravenscroft has suggested, it is perhaps not possible to identify whether these epithets were purely patronizing or to some extent also terms of endearment, but they likely highlight the special roles often occupied by little people at court: close companions of the typically Spanish royal family, identified initially on the basis of their unique stature.

### People of short stature in Spanish court portraiture

People of short stature at the Spanish court have been an area of some interest for art historical studies on the basis of their appearance in portraits of the Spanish royal family. While the first portraits of the Spanish court emerged at the end of the fifteenth century, little people began to be included in these paintings only slightly later, in the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>24</sup> The earliest extant Spanish painting of a little person is Anthonis Mor's 1550 *Cardinal Granvelle's Dwarf* (fig. 3), depicting a man who apparently served Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (1517–1586), a cardinal patronized by the Spanish Habsburgs.<sup>25</sup> This painting is the model for later works depicting little people alongside dogs or other animals, a convention postulated to associate little people with animals on the basis of not solely size but position in society.<sup>26</sup>

Of more direct relevance to *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion* is the tradition of double portraits featuring little people, in which members of the Spanish court are depicted alongside people of short stature. King Philip IV, for instance, was depicted on multiple occasions with people of short stature; in a painting by Gaspar de Crayer, for example, Philip appears next to an unnamed man of short stature (fig. 4), while, on a canvas by Rodrigo de Villandrando, Philip stands alongside

<sup>21</sup> Ravenscroft, “Dwarfs,” 150; The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Isabella Clara Eugenia, archduchess of Austria,” Encyclopedia Britannica, November 27, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Isabella-Clara-Eugenia>.

<sup>22</sup> Ravenscroft, “Dwarfs,” 150.

<sup>23</sup> Ravenscroft, “Dwarfs,” 150.

<sup>24</sup> Ravenscroft, “Dwarfs,” 152.

<sup>25</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle,” Encyclopedia Britannica, September 17, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Antoine-Perrenot-Cardinal-de-Granvelle>.

<sup>26</sup> Ravenscroft, “Dwarfs,” 147; Joanna Woods-Marsden, “A Vision Of Dwarfs,” in *Dreams and Visions*, ed. Nancy van Deusen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 335; see also Angelica Groom, *Exotic Animals in the Art and Culture of the Medici Court in Florence* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 158.

the named Miguel Soplillo, who was sent to Philip by his aunt Isabella Clara Eugenia as a gift (fig. 5). Isabella Clara Eugenia, likewise, was represented some years earlier alongside a woman of short stature (fig. 6); notably, in this portrait of Isabella as well as in Villandrando's portrayal of Philip IV, we can see the pose that prefigures that assumed by María Luisa, in which the royal figure places a bare hand atop the head of the little person depicted alongside them. Art historian Leticia Ruiz Gómez has interpreted this pose as one of benevolence and protection, suggesting that, in these paintings, the short-statured individuals represent the Spanish citizenry, offering a visual synecdoche of the depicted royal's rulership.<sup>27</sup> As Gutiérrez Usillos has suggested, the gesture may also function more literally and underline María Luisa's competence as the head of a household, mingling—and, perhaps, tempering—her evident authority with an element of gentleness.<sup>28</sup>

This is the first comparison that should be drawn between *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion* and the visual tradition in which it follows. Whether benevolence necessarily inheres in this position may be questionable or impossible to confirm, but by depicting María Luisa in the recognizable image of Spanish royals, Rodriguez communicates her status as adjacent to royalty as the daughter of the viceroy of New Spain. As the name implies, the viceroy is the 'alternate' to the king. The Kingdom of Spain was composed of a number of independent sovereignties, united by their common ruler; when the Americas were inducted into this unified collection of sovereignties, it was as another such state. Just as the Spanish king had viceroys in Valencia, Aragon, and Navarre, so, too, did he appoint one to oversee the kingdom of the "Indies," which was eventually divided into separate kingdoms, one of which was New Spain.<sup>29</sup> María Luisa's father thus held "all the powers and prerogatives" that the king would have had had he been there in person, and this portrait communicates that royal association. Clearly, the identity of the woman depicted alongside María Luisa is key to this symbolism: if the short-statured people in the Spanish royal portraits represent the Spanish citizenry, this woman evidently represents the Indigenous population of the Americas, specifying the purported domain of the vicerealty and possibly indicating its benevolent rulership thereof.

In addition to aligning María Luisa with Spanish royalty, this image also communicates, like those other royal portraits with people of short stature, the wealth of the royal (or viceregal) individuals depicted. The presence of those employed by the court, of course, connotes that the royal family has the financial means required to support a retinue, a message that is here perhaps underlined through

<sup>27</sup> Leticia Ruiz Gómez, *El retrato español en el Prado: Del Greco a Goya* (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2006), 68–69.

<sup>28</sup> Gutiérrez Usillos, *La hija del virrey*, 261.

<sup>29</sup> Donald E. Smith, *The Viceroy of New Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1914), 110; see also Alejandro Cañeque, *The King's Living Image: The Culture and Politics of Viceregal Power in Colonial Mexico* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

the Indigenous woman's 'hybrid' outfit. The clear affinity between the pattern, sleeve form, and lacy cuffs on María Luisa's dress and the Indigenous woman's green dress, which sits underneath her *huipil*, is, presumably, not accidental. It may suggest a common origin for the two garments, consequently pointing to the viceregal court's contributions to her attire.<sup>30</sup>

Other pictorial antecedents suggest the multivalent specificity with which María Luisa sought to be painted into the Spanish tradition. Firstly, María Luisa's portrait is not the first to deploy its compositional convention in an overtly colonial context. The painting in which the 'hand-on-head' gesture is thought to have originated, Cristóvão de Morais's 1553 portrait of *Juana de Austria with her Black Slave Girl* (fig. 7), offers a model for the communication of the sitter's dominance over a colonized region. As Carmen Fracchia and Janet Ravenscroft have proposed, de Morais's portrait indicates the "social position of Juana as the next Queen of Portugal" as well as her acquisition of riches from Portugal's overseas colonies: both the fan in her hand and the small Black girl, who was likely a wedding present from Juana's husband, Prince João.<sup>31</sup> So, too, does María Luisa's portrait suggest colonial authority and wealth—through her possessive gesture of touching a hand to the Indigenous woman's head—and it thus does so by referencing specifically the means by which a Spanish royal woman had formerly communicated her colonial power. Another point of comparison is Alonso Sanchez Coello's 1585 *Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia y Magdalena Ruiz* (fig. 8), which exhibits the most striking compositional similarities to the portrait of María Luisa. In Coello's painting, the Infanta stands in the centre of the painting and gazes out at the viewer; Magdalena Ruiz, a long-time servant of the family, is to her proper left, standing only as tall as the Infanta's waist. While Isabella Clara Eugenia supports a cameo of her father, Philip II, between the thumb and forefinger of her right hand, her left hand rests possessively atop the head of Magdalena Ruiz. The positioning of these two figures is nearly identical to that of María Luisa and her Indigenous companion. In, seemingly, recalling this

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<sup>30</sup> It could also be suggested that the idea of wealth drawn from this colonial enterprise is embedded within this painting.

One element in this characterization could be the bevy of pearls adorning María Luisa. These oceanic gems—amongst other earthly resources like silver—were much desired and lucratively traded by the Spanish, who sought and came upon them in abundance in the Americas. Pearl fishing was, however, a dangerous occupation, and the Spanish employed and enslaved both Indigenous South Americans and West African individuals for the task. Indeed, many years earlier, in 1570, French philosopher Michel de Montaigne commented on the devastation wrought by Europeans on the so-called New World as a result of their consumerist desires: "So many cities razed, so many nations exterminated, so many millions of people put to the sword, and the richest and most beautiful part of the world turned upside down, for the traffic of pearls and pepper." See Molly A. Warsh, *American Baroque: Pearls and the Nature of Empire, 1492-1700*. Williamsburg, Virginia: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. The history of mining silver in Mexico may also be key to drawing out all of the nuances in this painting; the conflict known as the "Chichimeca War" (1550–90) was instigated by the Spanish encroachment into Indigenous lands in pursuit of silver; the Spanish established mines and sought to enslave the Indigenous Mexicans in order to operate these mines. Warfare ensued and continued until the Spanish determined to assimilate the Chichimecas 'peacefully' to Christianity as well as to a sedentary and agrarian lifestyle as opposed to nomadism. (See Powell, *Soldiers, Indians and silver*.) The inclusion of a woman identifiably of the Indigenous nations termed Chichimeca, then, may also reference this history and assert both the Spanish conquest of Mexico and the Spaniards' ostensibly benevolent resolution to a lengthy conflict.

<sup>31</sup> Carmen Fracchia, "The place of African slaves in early modern Spain," in *The Place of the Social Margins, 1350-1750*, ed. Andrew Spicer and Jane L. Stevens Crawshaw (Oxford: Routledge, 2016), 155; Janet Ravenscroft, "Invisible friends: questioning the representation of the court dwarf in Hapsburg Spain," in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal: Social and cultural histories of norms and normativity*, ed. Waltraud Ernst (New York: Routledge, 2006), 43.

image of Isabella Clara Eugenia, daughter of Spanish Habsburg King Philip II, María Luisa's portrait also likely seeks to present its sitter as, specifically, a Spanish bride-to-be. As Gutiérrez Usillos has noted, María Luisa's portrait was likely produced in anticipation of her marriage; likewise, when Coello painted Isabella's portrait, Isabella was referred to as the "Bride of Europe" for her numerous potential royal engagements.<sup>32</sup> Notably, *Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia y Magdalena Ruiz* also evinces the transoceanic trade central to Iberian colonialism; Magdalena Ruiz carries two monkeys, likely native to Portuguese territories in the Amazon.<sup>33</sup> In deploying a conventionally Spanish mode of royal portraiture as well as specifically recalling earlier images within that tradition that accord with its sitter's situation, María Luisa's portrait asserts her identity as that of a Spanish royal.

### Physical contrast

It is not solely through recalling a Spanish tradition of royal portraiture, however, that María Luisa's portrait asserts its sitter's Spanishness. Within the colonial context to which the portrait refers through its inclusion of the Indigenous woman, there arise specific reasons for which María Luisa may have wished to insist upon her Spanishness as well as visual cues via which that Spanishness could have been communicated: respectively, peninsular Spanish superiority over the diverse inhabitants of the Americas and whiteness of skin. If Coello's portrait of Juana of Austria brings up the relevant context of paintings in which white sitters are shown alongside nonwhite individuals, generally indicating the context of slavery and imperialism, the double portrait *Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia with Magdalena Ruiz* evidences the tradition of depicting royals alongside people of short stature for the effect of physical contrast. Indeed, Magdalena Ruiz was most likely *not* a person of short stature, so this portrait suggests the royal family's reluctance to be depicted alongside those in contrast to whom they might not have appeared markedly physically superior.<sup>34</sup> This second element is the one to which I first turn: understanding that people of short stature were depicted alongside Spanish royals to emphasize the 'ideal' physical form of the royal body by contrast, we can contextualize the idea, which I develop later, that the Indigenous woman alongside María Luisa was depicted to also emphasize María Luisa's skin colour (and associated Spanishness) by contrast.

<sup>32</sup> Catherine Closet-Crane, "Dwarfs as seventeenth-century cynics at the court of Philip IV of Spain: a study of Velazquez' portraits of palace dwarfs," *The Free Library*, June 1, 2005, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Dwarfs+as+seventeenth-century+cynics+at+the+court+of+Philip+IV+of...-a0170372826>; Laura R. Bass, *The Drama of the Portrait: Theater and Visual Culture in Early Modern Spain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 155, n. 26; see Trinidad Antonia, "La Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia," in *Felipe II: Un monarca y su época*, 688.

<sup>33</sup> "Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia and Magdalena Ruiz," Museo del Prado, <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/infanta-isabel-clara-eugenia-and-magdalena-ruiz/f5bad972-2c95-4b8d-8f73-6ed6151cc0b8>.

<sup>34</sup> Ravenscroft, "Invisible friends," 43.

The tradition of including little people in royal portraits has been discussed by scholars as primarily a project of contrast.<sup>35</sup> It is accepted that the short-statured body is intended to accentuate the height of the royal body, the desirability of which emphasis has been attributed to a few interrelated, contemporaneous philosophies of the body. Firstly, as Roy Porter has noted, height may have been tied to health and prestige.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, and more specifically, there existed an esteem of the average as it pertained to the royal body. In his sixteenth-century *Book of the Courtier*—translated into Castilian in 1540 by Juan Boscan—Italian diplomat Baldassare Castiglione describes the ideal courtier as “neither too small nor too big, since either of these two conditions causes a certain contemptuous wonder and men built in this way are stared at as if they were monsters. . . . So I wish our courtier to be well built with finely proportioned members.”<sup>37</sup> Political philosopher Fadrique Furió Ceriol, writing a treatise in 1559 dedicated to Spanish king Philip II, likewise defined the ideal courtier’s body through negations and oppositions. The ideal courtier should be not over the age of thirty, neither melancholic nor phlegmatic, and of “medium height and weight, as any extreme in this part looks bad, and takes authority away.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, later, in his 1633 *Diálogos de la pintura*, artist and art theorist Vincente Carducho associated physiognomy with morality, and he described the “just man” as, above all, “well-proportioned.”<sup>39</sup> The value placed on both the average and the proportionate in early modern conceptions of beauty meant that individuals with achondroplastic dwarfism—as opposed to those with proportionate dwarfism—were doubly removed from the corporal ideal.<sup>40</sup> It is thus on the basis of not simply height but also proportionality that a little person with achondroplasia, such as the woman depicted in the portrait of María Luisa, could serve to characterize by contrast the body of an accompanying individual as the royal ideal. It is also noteworthy that, as Gutierrez Usillos points out, María Luisa is likely accentuating her own proportions and height by sporting *chopines*, a type of platform shoe.<sup>41</sup> We can infer, then, that the inclusion of the Indigenous woman is intended to assert María Luisa’s ‘average’ size and proportions by contrast. In addition, however, I would propose that this visual tradition of somatic contrast, presumably comprehensible to any (noble) Spanish viewer of

<sup>35</sup> E.g., Maximilian Derksen, “Induction and Reception of Dignity in Diego Velázquez’s Portraits of Court Dwarfs,” *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 14, no. 2 (2020): 188; Andrew Edgar, “Velázquez And the Representation of Dignity,” *Medicine, Health Care & Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2003): 117; Barry Wind, *A Foul and Pestilent Congregation: Images of Freaks in Baroque Art* (New York, 1998), 3; Joanna Woods-Marsden, “A Vision of Dwarfs,” 331. Woods-Marsden notes that the French sixteenth-century chronicler Brantôme wrote: “In the portrait of a very beautiful and pleasant-looking lady, place next to her an old hag, a moorish slave or a hideous dwarf, so that the ugliness [*laideur*] and blackness [*noirceur*] may give greater luster [*lustre*] and brilliance [*candeur*] to her beauty and fairness.”

<sup>36</sup> Roy Porter, “History of the Body,” in *New Perspectives in Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 210; Ravenscroft, “Invisible friends,” 43.

<sup>37</sup> Wells, “Court ‘Monsters,’” 185, citing Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier; from the Italian, done into English by Sir Thomas Hoby, anno 1561* (London: D. Nutt, 1900); Ravenscroft, “Invisible friends,” 30.

<sup>38</sup> Ravenscroft, “Invisible friends,” 30.

<sup>39</sup> Colin C. Sanborn, *Destierro and Desengaño: The Disabled Body in Golden Age Spanish Portraiture* (Oberlin: Oberlin College Honors Papers, 2019), <https://digitalcommons.oberlin.edu/honors/135>, 18.

<sup>40</sup> Ravenscroft, “Invisible friends,” 46.

<sup>41</sup> “María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion,” Museo del Prado.

the time period, serves also to underpin another contrast present in the painting: that of skin colour. In emphasizing María Luisa's whiteness through contrasting her skin tone with the darker complexion of the Indigenous woman, this portrait, I suggest, emphasizes María Luisa's Spanishness. To explain why this may be the case, I first need to outline some notions of race and hierarchy in the Spanish Americas.

### Race and hierarchy in colonial Mexico

Understanding the intersections and significance of such notions as race, lineage, skin colour, and hierarchy in the context of early modern colonial Mexico, and Spain's colonial territories in the Americas more broadly, requires, as Magali M. Carrera pointed out in her 2003 *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings*, that we refrain from the uncritical importation of present-day perspectives on these issues.<sup>42</sup> It is not sufficient to assume that there existed a hierarchical ordering of the three primary 'groups' in the Spanish Americas—the Spaniards, the Indigenous Americans, and the Africans—that was *based* on skin colour as opposed to *corresponding* to it. The notion of homogeneous, superior 'whiteness' is thought to have been constructed around the late seventeenth century alongside and in opposition to the idea of Blackness that was weighted down with oft-Biblical meaning to contextualize and justify the slave trade, but to imagine a colourist hierarchy in the Spanish Americas by simple extrapolation is clearly inadequate.<sup>43</sup>

As is visually documented in the well-known eighteenth-century genre of casta paintings, however, there did exist a preoccupation with genealogy and race in the Spanish Americas. Typically produced as either a set of sixteen individual canvases or a single image divided into a grid of sixteen rectangles, casta paintings feature serial imagery in order to portray the diverse progeny of the 'interracial' couplings possible in the Spanish Americas. One such image, for instance, visually and textually informs us that *De Español y d India; Mestiza* ("from a Spanish man and an 'Indian' woman, a Mestiza child") (fig. 9); another may demonstrate that *De Español, y Mulata; Morisca* ("from a Spanish man and a mulatto woman, a morisca girl").<sup>44</sup> The genre's taxonomic impulse (suggested by its ostensible genetic underpinnings, systematic ordering, and carefully labelled 'identities') has led some

<sup>42</sup> Magali Marie Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Erin Kathleen Rowe, "Visualizing Black Sanctity in Early Modern Spanish Polychrome Sculpture," in *Envisioning Others: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, ed. Pamela A. Patton (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 58; see also David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Carrera, *Imagining Identity*, 27, 72.

scholars to read casta paintings as accurate anthropological or ethnographic documents.<sup>45</sup> More recently, however, it has been argued that these paintings are much more likely to have been fanciful, intended to wishfully construct racial identity as fixed and legible—because racial identity was, in practice, ambiguous and beyond categorization or control.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, although casta paintings include numerous terms for specific identities, only some of those classifications appear in colonial records such as parish registers, tax lists, and censuses; present in the textual records are primarily “Spaniard,” “Indian,” “black,” “mestizo,” “mulato,” “castizo,” “morisco,” and “zambaigo,” and, in the eighteenth century, “lobo,” “coyote,” “pardo,” “moreno,” and sometimes “chino” also appear.<sup>47</sup>

Despite a certain degree of artificiality, the casta paintings do reflect a *sistema de castas* that was central to societal structuring in the Spanish Americas. The fixation on lineage was an importation from Spain, where it had originally pertained to the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood). Since the mid-1400s, honorable “Old Christians” (*cristianos viejos*) were those without any Jewish or Muslim blood, and this distinction afforded them access to the highest echelons of Spain’s hierarchically organized society.<sup>48</sup> As the qualifier “old” implies, there was a temporal, genealogical factor in determining *limpieza de sangre*. While some of the earliest laws decreed that the absence of Jewish and Muslim ancestry needed only to be verified through the four grandparents (meaning, thus, that it took three or four generations of piety to establish Old Christianity), laws by the 1550s had been unburdened of these limitations: *limpieza de sangre* had come to refer to lineages that claimed to be Christian since “time immemorial.”<sup>49</sup> As Elizabeth Kuznesof notes, what began as an issue of religious purity evolved into one of *raza*, or lineage, and this preoccupation was one factor in the classificatory impulses present in the Spanish Americas.<sup>50</sup>

This religious basis for Spaniards’ genealogical queries inflected notions of lineage in the Americas. Appointing themselves responsible for converting Indigenous Americans to Christianity, Spaniards located themselves as the aristocracy of Mexico, thus instating another schema of hierarchy from Spain, that of nobles versus plebeians.<sup>51</sup> Indigenous Americans—except for their own nobility—became agricultural laborers and payers of tribute. But because the Indigenous Americans were thought to be neophytes, eventual “New Christians,” they were still protected by the Spanish crown

<sup>45</sup> Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 5–8.

<sup>46</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 5–8; Carrera, *Imagining Identity*, 44–105 (chapter 3).

<sup>47</sup> María Elena Martínez, “The Language, Genealogy, and Classification of ‘Race’ in Colonial Mexico,” in *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, ed. Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 35.

<sup>48</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 39; Martínez, “The Language, Genealogy, and Classification of ‘Race,’” 27.

<sup>49</sup> Martínez, “The Language, Genealogy, and Classification of ‘Race,’” 27.

<sup>50</sup> Carrera, *Imagining Identity*, 10; Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, “Ethnic and Gender Influences on ‘Spanish’ Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 4, no.1 (1995): 160; Martínez, “The Language, Genealogy, and Classification of ‘Race.’”

<sup>51</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 39.

(and the internal hierarchies of their own societies were recognized).<sup>52</sup> This was not the case for Africans, who were imported for their labour and deemed incapable of converting to Christianity.<sup>53</sup> A hierarchy of ‘races’ did, thus, exist, with the colonizing Spaniards at its apex and Indigenous Americans as well as Africans distinctly ‘below.’<sup>54</sup>

Not everyone, of course, ‘fit’ precisely into one of these categories, as the aforementioned *casta* paintings sought to emphasize. Miscegenation between Spaniards, Indigenous Americans, and Africans took place from the sixteenth century, and the “racially-mixed” people born of these unions were termed “castas.”<sup>55</sup> The common term “mestizo,” for example, referred specifically to those born of one Spanish and one Indigenous American parent, and, because many such relations occurred outside of marriage, the term began to be associated with illegitimate birth and a lack of cultural affiliation; consequently, mestizos were often banned from prestigious positions.<sup>56</sup> In the late sixteenth century, mestizos’ rights were further diminished; colonial laws decreed that they were not allowed to employ Indigenous Americans for labor (i.e., partake of the *encomienda* system), bear arms without special permission, claim to be Indigenous American nobility, work as public notaries, or be ordained priests, amongst other restrictions.<sup>57</sup> “Mulattos,” meanwhile, referring to those with one Spanish and one African parent, were also associated with illegitimacy and their rights were similarly curtailed.<sup>58</sup> The increased intermarriage from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards inspired an increased awareness of New Spain’s “racial types,” and those of ‘mixed’ parentage were stereotyped as “rowdy and morally lax.” This view was widely held by most colonial officials, and, notably with regards to the painting at the centre of this paper, the Viceroy Marquis de Mancera (María Luisa’s father) himself identified the castas as “an expanding, vile mob that contributed to the colony’s social obfuscation.”<sup>59</sup> In sum, the preoccupation with lineage as it pertained to religion (and purity as it pertained to Christianity) evolved in the Spanish Americas into a concern with racial lineage, locating ‘pure’ Spaniards above those whose genealogy involved, entirely or partly, Indigenous American or African heritage.

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<sup>52</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 39; Martínez, “The Language, Genealogy, and Classification of ‘Race,’” 31.

<sup>54</sup> Differing opinions are sometimes offered on the comparative statuses of Indigenous Americans and Africans in the Spanish Americas. While historians John K. Chance and William B. Taylor suggest (as most do) that Africans were far less respected than were Indigenous Americans, Ilona Katzew proposes that, in practice, Africans may have received some more esteem—part of her reasoning, however, is that Africans were esteemed as wealth-signalling possessions, so it is likely still the case that any additional admiration afforded to Africans was not rooted in any morally rigorous sentiments. Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 39.

<sup>55</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 40.

<sup>56</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 40.

<sup>58</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 40.

<sup>59</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 40. The Marquis de Mancera also, notably, asked to leave New Spain and surrender his viceregal office after his first three-year term, but his request was denied by the Queen and he was compelled to remain abroad for another six years (Usillos, *La hija del virrey*, 39).

## Visual art and phenotypic identification

These anxieties about non-Spanish and mixed-race individuals are thought to be manifest in the aforementioned casta paintings, which delineate the results of interracial relations, and the use of this visual medium to demonstrate this issue suggests that phenotype was central to ideas about castas' identities. While Carrera importantly insists that skin colour *alone* was not used as *the* marker of one's identity (and that casta paintings additionally make use of sartorial and vocational signification, constructing more holistic representations of *calidad*, or status/quality), documents suggest that it did count as one factor amongst several.<sup>60</sup> As mentioned, constructions of skin colour as indicators of superiority or inferiority arose in relation to slavery and often drew on pre-existing religious connotations ascribed to whiteness (or lightness) and darkness. Jesuit priest Alonso de Sandoval (1576–1652), for instance, wrote a treatise on slavery, *De instauranda Aethiopia salute* (first published in Seville in 1627 and republished with additions in 1647), that aligned whiteness with Christianity; blackness, accordingly, was associated with sin.<sup>61</sup> Such clear distinctions do not seem to have informed Spaniards' perceptions of Indigenous Americans,<sup>62</sup> but certain sources suggest that skin colour was, indeed, a relevant index of identity. For instance, in 1735, the stratification of Mexico's inhabitants was described by one observer as follows, suggesting that colourism, with whiteness privileged, did factor into social hierarchy:

No distinction is made other than that between whites and those of *mano prieta* [dark hand]. The first are the Europeans and their offspring known as creoles... the term *mano prieta* refers to *mestizos*, coyotes, mulattos, lobos, zambaigos, moriscos, salta atras, tente en el aire, gibaros, chinos, and the Indians—who comprise the majority in this kingdom. The Indians who enjoy esteem are the *caciques* [nobles], and the Tlaxcalans who so much aided Cortes during the Conquest. The mulattos are the domestic servants of the Spaniards...<sup>63</sup>

While various timeframes have been postulated for the development of the *sistema de castas*, Katzew suggests that it was likely fully established in Mexico City by the middle of the seventeenth century, and strongest between 1660 and 1720.<sup>64</sup> The *sistema*, she writes, relied in part on racial labels. By the seventeenth century, official colonial documentation—law texts, parish records, Inquisition

<sup>60</sup> Carrera, *Imagining Identity*.

<sup>61</sup> Grace Harpster, "The Color of Salvation: The Materiality of Blackness in Alonso de Sandoval's *De instauranda Aethiopia salute*," in *Envisioning Others: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, ed. Pamela A. Patton (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 86.

<sup>62</sup> Notably, English sources, and especially those pertaining to the casta paintings, are not nearly as explicit or clear on this subject (whiteness and colourism as they affected perceptions of Indigenous Americans in colonial Spanish America) as one might expect. Further research is required.

<sup>63</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 42.

<sup>64</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 42.

trials, criminal cases, censuses, and the *Relaciones geográficas* (Geographical Accounts)—evinced attempts to define individuals’ phenotypes, frequently referring to a person’s skin color and the traits commonly associated with an ethnicity.<sup>65</sup> Likewise, for example, in 1728, a man whose lineage came under scrutiny was identified as “a Spaniard because he was white and blond” and evidently not of “broken” color.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the term “*color quebrado*,” meaning “broken colour,” was used to refer to those of mixed ancestry, indicating that skin tone was understood to be an indicator of lineage and, thus, that different skin tones were understood to be associated with different ‘races’; those of *color quebrado* were also associated with bad habits (*malas costumbres*).<sup>67</sup>

Given this perceived association between skin colour and racial identity, it can be suggested that the *casta* paintings seek to key racialized and mixed-race identities to skin colours. Furthermore, the idea that genealogical becoming-Spanish *and* whitening was ‘progressive’ while becoming-Indigenous-American or -African *and* darkening was ‘regressive’ is exemplified in the terms denoting the progeny of certain interracial pairings. If a *mestiza* married a *mestizo*, their child was deemed *tente en el aire*, or “suspended in the air,” indicating that they had not moved away from either of their parents’ status; if a *mestiza* married an Indigenous American, though, their offspring was termed *salta atras*, or “jumping backwards,” indicating that the child had regressed, or moved away from Spanishness and whiteness.<sup>68</sup> This ties in with my suggestion, introduced earlier and elaborated below, that María Luisa’s portrait emphasizes her whiteness and thus ‘superior’ Spanishness by contrast with the darker skin of her Indigenous companion.

### ***Criollos, peninsulares, and the climate***

Before returning to María Luisa’s portrait, I should address one more related discourse at the intersection of social hierarchy and race, this time involving not solely genealogy as a determining factor in one’s identity but also climate. I mention this context because it, too, may have informed María Luisa’s desire to be—and method of being—depicted as Spanish. Historian R. Douglas Cope suggested that the *sistema de castas* may have resulted from the Spanish creoles’ (*criollos*, meaning those of solely Spanish descent but born in the Americas) desire to distinguish themselves from the non-

<sup>65</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 42.

<sup>66</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 46.

<sup>67</sup> Norah L. A. Gharala, *Taxing Blackness: Free Afromexican Tribute in Bourbon New Spain* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019), 83; Ben Vinson, *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 48–49. It must be clarified, however, that a *direct* link between skin colour and ‘bad habits’ is not unambiguously evident. For instance, those of “*color quebrado*” could have been deemed suspect due to the association of *mestizaje* (mixing) with illegitimacy, while skin colour may have been secondary.

<sup>68</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 48.

Spanish ‘races’ of the Americas.<sup>69</sup> As Katzew has stated, there existed a “legendary antagonism between Spaniards and creoles,” largely due to the fact that Spaniards did not have a high opinion of those born in the Americas.<sup>70</sup> The resultant *criollismo* (pride in being creole), which became established in the second half of the seventeenth century, was written about by authors in the eighteenth century.<sup>71</sup> In 1712, French explorer Amédée-François Frézier travelled to South America and, four years later, published *Relations du voyage de la mer du sud*; in this text, he made note of “the antipathy between American and European Spaniards.”<sup>72</sup> Some years later, in 1755, scholar and bishop Juan Jose Eguiara u Eguren (1696–1763) published *Biblioteca Mexicana* to “counteract European denigration of the peoples and cultures of the Americas.”<sup>73</sup> The peninsular Spaniards (amongst which the viceroy’s family would be counted) are thought to have looked down on the creoles because of, firstly, their place of birth: identity was thought to be not solely genetic but also a function of climate. Since the sixteenth century, Europeans had suggested that Spaniards’ move to the New World changed them, affording them the negative characteristics allegedly possessed by the Indigenous Americans (a theory based on classical notions of climate and constitution).<sup>74</sup> Throughout the entire colonial period, it was believed that the tropical climate of the Americas caused not only the resident flora but also the human inhabitants, *as well as Europeans who transferred there*, to “ripen” and “spoil” quickly, to “degenerate.”<sup>75</sup> Crucially, it was also proposed that climate affected skin colour: in his late eighteenth-century *Gazetas de literatura de México*, Spanish priest José Antonio de Alzate y Ramírez rehearsed the widely-held belief (mentioned, too, by Spanish authors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) that humankind had ‘originally’ been white, but various circumstances including climate had established a wider range of colors (and which could only be changed via *mestizaje*, here meaning racial mixing with those who were white).<sup>76</sup> It is in light of these beliefs that María Luisa’s voyage to the opposite shores of the Atlantic functioned as a passage across threshold of identity; her identity was not an immutable characteristic keyed to her place of birth, but rather something subject to environmental change.

Additionally, Spanish concerns about creole identity were not based exclusively on climatic factors. It was also suggested that creoles were inferior because they *were not* simply Spaniards born

<sup>69</sup> R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 22.

<sup>70</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 43.

<sup>71</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 87.

<sup>72</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 66.

<sup>73</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 93.

<sup>74</sup> Ilona Katzew, “‘That This Should Be Published and Again in the Age of the Enlightenment?’ Eighteenth-Century Debates About the Indian Body in Colonial Mexico,” in *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, ed. Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 77. See also Anna Herron More, *Baroque Sovereignty: Carlos De Sigüenza Y Góngora and the Creole Archive of Colonial Mexico* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 8.

<sup>75</sup> Katzew, “‘That This Should Be Published,’” 82.

<sup>76</sup> Katzew, “‘That This Should Be Published,’” 95–96.

abroad—instead, miscegenation was so common in the Spanish Americas that those purporting to be creole were more likely to be castas. One of the *Biblioteca Mexicana*'s featured authors wrote of the need “to clarify the purity of blood of creole literati; because we must be wary that the preoccupation that they have in Europe that we are all mixed (or as we say, *champurros*), contributes not little to the indifference in which they hold the works of the worthy.”<sup>77</sup> When Jesuit missionary Joseph Gumilla laid out the relationships via which Spanishness and whiteness could be achieved (in four generations of intermarriage with Europeans, for instance, an Indigenous American bloodline could become fully white), his aim was to discredit the European notion that the entire populace of the Americas was “hopelessly mixed,” per Katzew, and thus inferior to peninsular Spaniards and the rest of Europe. Gumilla’s proposed method of redemption for the Americas was the gradual becoming-white of the entire population.<sup>78</sup>

In sum, Spaniards largely looked down on and restricted the privileges of any non-Spanish ‘races’ in the Spanish Americas, including those of mixed parentage; as is apparent in various sources, including casta paintings, these distinctions were *associated with if not expressly based on* skin colour.<sup>79</sup> Europeans and peninsular Spaniards, meanwhile, were suspicious of creoles who, despite being ‘purely’ Spanish, were born in the Americas *or even* those Spaniards who had spent a significant amount of time in the Americas; both of these latter states also had associations with skin colour: climate, it was believed, could and did change humans’ constitutions and appearances, and even those purporting to be Spanish could actually be castas (who are depicted in the casta paintings, at least, with darker skin). Given María Luisa’s imminent return to Spain and anticipated marriage to a Spaniard (from a noble family that may have harbored some doubts about her status) at the time of this portrait’s production, it may be the case that this portrait was intended to assert her Spanishness not solely via association with a Spanish tradition of court portraiture but also via accentuating her whiteness.

### **Communicating Spanishness via whiteness in *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion***

Taking into account the Viceroy Marquis de Mancera’s stated derision for the castas (as well as his desire to return to Spain much earlier than he was ultimately compelled to); the broader issue of peninsular Spaniards’ and Europeans’ disdain for creoles based on their imagined affinity, climatic

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<sup>77</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 93.

<sup>78</sup> Katzew, *Casta Painting*, 48.

<sup>79</sup> My aim is not to suggest that people were discriminated against *on the basis of* the colour of their skin; I instead wish to suggest that whiteness was *associated with* Spanishness.

and genetic in origin, to the Indigenous inhabitants of the Spanish Americas; and María Luisa's anticipated marriage to a peninsular Spaniard; I propose that the inclusion of the Indigenous woman alongside María Luisa is intended to rehearse the convention of physical contrast—already embedded in the pictorial format of the Spanish royal flanked by the person of short stature—to emphasize not just María Luisa's royal 'proportionality' but also her white skin. A seventeenth-century Spanish viewer (and, perhaps specifically, one from the noble audience María Luisa would entertain) would be accustomed to reading somatic difference between a royal and a person of short stature in such a painting, and María Luisa's portrait makes use of this learned vision: the viewer is expected to contrast María Luisa with her Indigenous companion, thus comparing María Luisa's white skin to the darker skin of the Indigenous woman. Other compositional strategies emphasize this reading. María Luisa's face and neck, firstly, appear to be lighter in hue than not solely those of the Indigenous woman, but also all other elements of the painting—in other words, María Luisa's complexion is made to appear lighter by ensuring that it is the lightest element of the image. The intricate tattoo adorning the Indigenous woman's face may have been included to further darken her complexion.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, the prominent blush across María Luisa's cheeks may recall an older 'observation' about Spaniards versus Indigenous Americans: the former blushed easily, indicating a morally correct capacity for shame (at such situations as, for instance, nudity), while the latter was deemed incapable of blushing, due to the ostensibly correlated factors of dark skin and a morally suspect lack of shame.<sup>81</sup> Lastly, María Luisa rests a bare hand as opposed to a gloved one atop the Indigenous woman's head, serving to bring María Luisa's pale skin still closer in spatial proximity to the complexion of the Indigenous woman, making the contrast in tone appear more obvious and stark. Given the foregoing discourse regarding Spanishness and whiteness (visualized, too, in the later *casta* paintings), I propose that María Luisa's emphasized whiteness entails an assertion of her supposedly superior, 'pure' Spanishness.

The motif of the removed glove may also tie directly into the portrait's marital undertones, if Rodríguez Beltrán was familiar with the symbolic conventions of Dutch marriage portraiture. In this tradition, a glove could connote the confirmation of the marriage contract, and some Dutch pendant portraits of couples feature each lover wearing one glove from a single pair; a removed glove could

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<sup>80</sup> I do not intend to suggest that the tattoo was not actually present on the woman's face. I mean instead to suggest that in electing to paint the tattoo (as opposed to, as might have been possible, leaving it out) the artist *may* have intended to emphasize the darkness of the woman's skin. Also worth considering is the extent to which such intricate ornamentation might have endowed the 'otherness' (to Spaniards) of the Indigenous woman with other associations. For instance, Michael Gaudio's, "Making Sense of Smoke: Engraving and Ornament in de Bry's *America*," the second chapter in Gaudio's *Engraving the Savage. The New World and Techniques of Civilization* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008), argues that the overtly intricate rendering of smoke in engravings (by Theodor de Bry, after John White, in 1590) of Indigenous Americans in colonial North Carolina was intended to reference the intricate engraving traditionally used to represent scenes of witches and witchcraft.

<sup>81</sup> Brian Cummings, "Animal passions and human sciences: shame, blushing and nakedness in early Modern Europe and the New World," in *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan Wiseman (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002): 26–50.

also indicate the idea that the glove was to be given as a gift to a lover.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, however, the removal of the glove may harbor another meaning. Placed at the same level on the canvas as the Indigenous woman's face, the gloves are similar in hue to her skin tone and positioned such that this comparison is noticeable. Grace Harpster has addressed the aforementioned painting by Cristóvão de Morais of *Juana de Austria with her Black Slave Girl* with reference to the symbolism of sartorial darkness: in that painting, Juana's bare white hand is intended to contrast not only with the dark skin of the Black girl (upon whose head she lays her hand) but also with the darkness of her own clothing; the effect, per Harpster, is a racially-coded message, wherein a "noble" and "Christian" whiteness is set off by an "antithetical" blackness.<sup>83</sup> I would like to suggest a similar reading of the bare hand and the gloves in María Luisa's portrait. One immediately noticeable feature of this painting is the eerie corporeality of the dangling, unworn glove: it hangs not limply from María Luisa's hand but, instead, stiffly, as though it were still stretched around a spectral hand.<sup>84</sup> I would suggest that this corporeality of the glove indicates the association of its material with skin and, thus, its colour with skin colour; consequently, I propose that the removed glove is intended to communicate María Luisa's casting off of any similarities with Indigenous Americans, castas, and even *criollos* in advance of her return to Spain: despite her time abroad, she has protected and maintained an unassailable Spanish purity, symbolized here by her bright, white skin. Indeed, this may even tie into the above mentioned eighteenth-century use of *mano prieta* (dark hand) as a colour-coded synecdoche for the non-Spanish inhabitants of the Americas.

In conclusion, I have proposed that *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion* seeks to communicate its sitter's 'pure' Spanishness by both associating her with Spanish royalty (through deploying a conventional Spanish mode of court portraiture) and emphasizing her whiteness (by contrast with the darker complexion of the Indigenous woman, in a historical moment wherein white skin was associated with Spanish purity and superiority). Based on Andrés Gutiérrez Usillos's suggestion that this painting was likely made to anticipate María Luisa's marriage to peninsular Spaniard Don Joseph de Silva y Mendoza, the third-born and thus not most highly esteemed of the Duke of Pastrana's sons, I have suggested that the assertion of María Luisa's Spanishness may have

<sup>82</sup> David R. Smith, *Masks of wedlock: seventeenth-century Dutch marriage portraiture* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 80–81; Bianca M. du Mortier, "De Handschoen in de Huwelijksymboliek van de Zeventiende Eeuw," *Bulletin van Het Rijksmuseum* 32, no. 4 (1984): 195.

<sup>83</sup> Harpster, "The Color of Salvation," 101. Harpster also notes that "In the early modern period, black skin was often referred to as a fabric, livery, or cloak. Several missionary descriptions of the New World and Africa use the metaphor of clothing to account for the diversity of the world's populations. In the sixteenth century the Spanish chronicler Peter Martyr d'Anghiera describes the variety of skin colors in his *Decades of the New World* as 'diverse liveries.'"

<sup>84</sup> My thanks to those who confirmed my suspicion that this element was, in fact, noticeably strange and worthy of further consideration: Dr. Angela Vanhaelen, Tara Allen-Flanagan, and Caroline LaPorte-Burns.

been related to perceived or actual peninsular doubts about her status, in light of her nine-year stay in New Spain/Mexico.

*Hana Nikčević is an art historian and museum worker, currently organizing public programming and outreach at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto. She has an M.A. in art history from McGill University and a B.A. in art history from the University of Toronto. Her research interests include historical and contemporary art about the environment, plastics, and the aesthetics of loss.*

## Figures



Figure 1. *Portrait of Viceroy Don Antonio Sebastián de Toledo*. Salón de Cabildos, Ayuntamiento de México. ©Salón de Cabildos, Ayuntamiento de México.



Figure 2. *María Luisa de Toledo with her Indigenous companion*, c. 1670, Antonio Rodríguez Beltrán, oil on canvas, 209 x 128 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid; currently at Museo de América, Madrid. ©Museo Nacional del Prado.



Figure 3. *Cardinal Granvelle's Dwarf*, c. 1560, Anthonis Mor, oil on wood, 126 x 92 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. ©Musée du Louvre.



Figure 4. *Felipe IV junto a dos servidores* (*Philip IV with two servants*), c. 1627-1632, Gaspar de Crayer, oil on canvas, 215 x 163 cm. Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación (Madrid). ©Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación.



Figure 5. *Prince Philip and the Dwarf*, Miguel Soplillo, c. 1620, Rodrigo de Villandrando, oil on canvas, 204 x 110 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. ©Museo Nacional del Prado.



Figure 6. *Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia and Her Dwarf*, c. 1599–1600, Frans Pourbus the Younger, oil on canvas, 217.5 x 131 cm. Royal Collection Trust. ©Royal Collection Trust.



Figure 7. *Juana de Austria with her Black Slave Girl*, 1553, Cristóvão de Morais, oil on canvas. Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels. ©Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium.



Figure 8. *Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia y Magdalena Ruiz*, c. 1585, Alonso Sánchez Coello, oil on canvas, 207 x 129 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. ©Museo Nacional del Prado.



Figure 9. *De Español y d India; Mestiza*, 1763, Miguel Cabrera, oil, 135.5cm x 103.5 cm. Museo de América, Madrid. ©Museo de América.