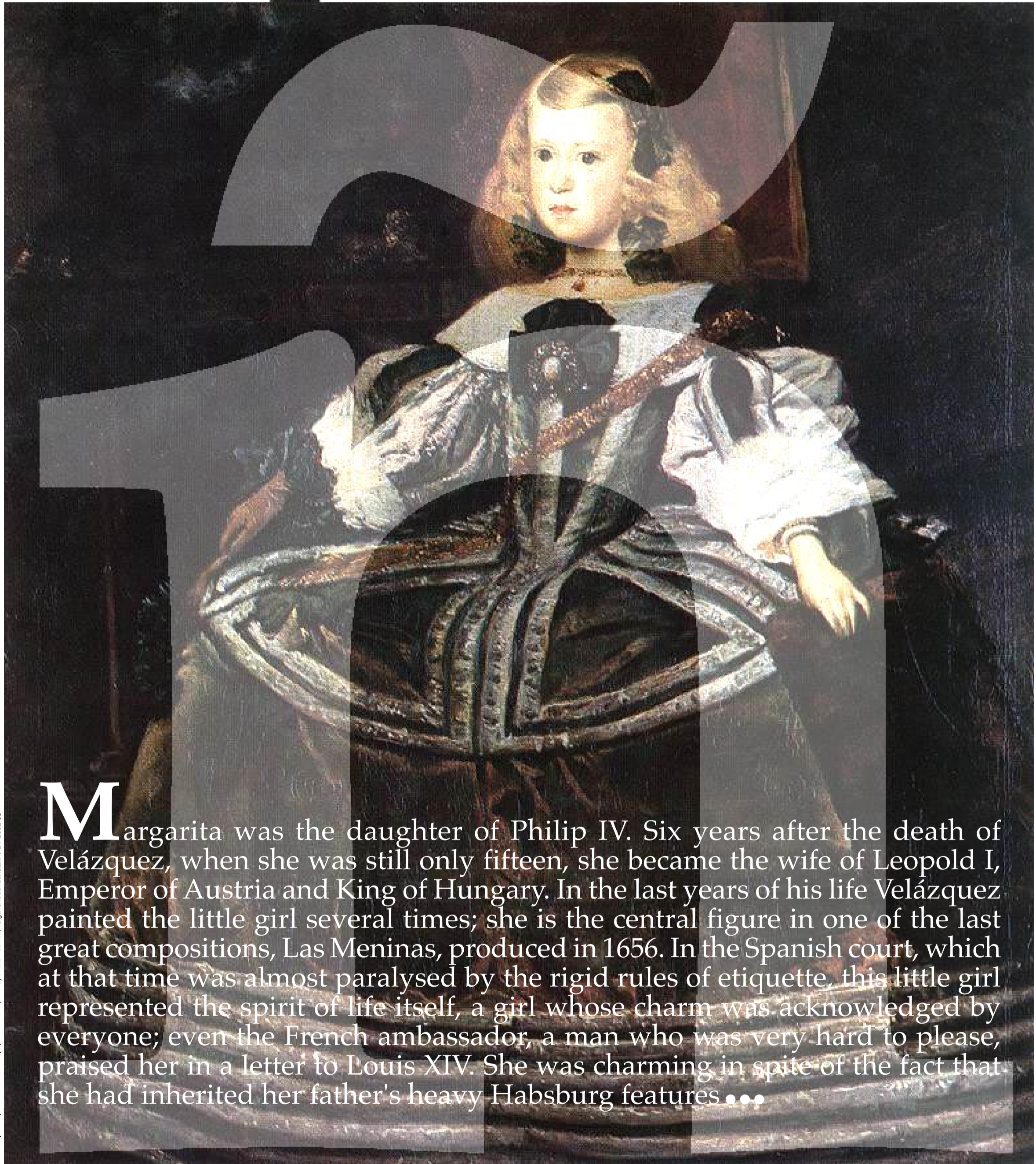


Spain



Margarita was the daughter of Philip IV. Six years after the death of Velázquez, when she was still only fifteen, she became the wife of Leopold I, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary. In the last years of his life Velázquez painted the little girl several times; she is the central figure in one of the last great compositions, *Las Meninas*, produced in 1656. In the Spanish court, which at that time was almost paralysed by the rigid rules of etiquette, this little girl represented the spirit of life itself, a girl whose charm was acknowledged by everyone; even the French ambassador, a man who was very hard to please, praised her in a letter to Louis XIV. She was charming in spite of the fact that she had inherited her father's heavy Habsburg features...

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