

## Cervantes, Calderón and Matters of Honour: Romance and Tragedy in “El curioso impertinente” and *El pintor de su deshonra*

*Los asuntos de la honra se presentan de varios modos en la literatura española de la temprana modernidad, desde obras cómicas hasta dramas serios que los críticos han caracterizado como tragedias. La trama de honor tiende a la tragedia cuando invierte el modelo convencional de la comedia nueva griega y de la novela bizantina en el cual la heroína triunfa por medio de la integridad y el reconocimiento de su verdadera identidad. La tragedia, un género que resiste una definición teórica abstracta, se transforma por medio de su interacción con otros géneros en obras de honor. Es posible estudiar estas cuestiones de género y reconocimiento en “El curioso impertinente” de Cervantes y El pintor de su deshonra de Calderón. En ambos textos los lazos de amistad entre hombres anulan la fidelidad e ingeniosidad que caracterizan a la típica heroína cómica, y la acción dramática termina en una soledad trágica. No obstante, ninguno de los dos presenta una trama trágica completa, porque los modos de reconocimiento resultan ser parciales o falsos. En el contexto de la teoría aristotélica, la trama de honor crea un grado de ironía ajena a la tragedia clásica.*

In a familiar passage from his “Arte nuevo de hacer comedias” Lope de Vega advises that playwrights who compose for public theatres should centre their plots on matters of honour: “Los casos de la honra son mejores, / porque mueven con fuerza a toda gente” (163). In practice, honour and its dilemmas are useful to playwrights because they can inform several kinds of dramatic action.<sup>1</sup> The heroine who sets out to recover the honour that she has lost by yielding to an act of seduction can set in motion a plot that traces the pattern of classical New Comedy and Greek romance, leading to the heroine’s reassertion of her identity and her marriage to the male partner that she has marked out for herself. The action proceeds through perils and adventures to comic closure, and depends on disguise, indirection, and the wit of the heroine and of the mercurial servant who accompanies her.<sup>2</sup> Honour motivates action of a very different kind in plays that deal with the force of the honour code in aristocratic marriages. In such works an act of infidelity, or the perception

of unfaithful speech or conduct, condemns a noble woman to death through her husband's agency. Both parties experience conditions that limit their freedom: the wife as the object of unbridled male desire and the husband as an agent of a code that links honour to public reputation and social status. In this context matters of honour lead to features often classified as tragic, including the progressive isolation of the central characters, the restriction of their freedom and agency, and their surrender to the logic of honour.<sup>3</sup> The honour plot is productive because it can be adapted to comedy and romance and, through techniques of inversion, to forms of constraint and violence associated with tragedy. A specific feature of the Spanish honour plot, however, is that the inversion of romance conventions generates a degree of irony alien to classical tragedy. In the resolution of an honour play, with its conjunction of "foundational violence" and "the art and science of honour," irony is the only textual signifier that remains (Carrión 79).

The diversity of matters of honour can illuminate the interaction of genres, both in early modern theatre and in related forms of imaginative literature. Since one of the sources for matters of honour and revenge in the *comedia* is the Italian *novella* tradition, the development of the honour plot can be analyzed in these two parallel forms.<sup>4</sup> Honour plays illustrate the transformation of the romance plot and its treatment in works that end in direct violence. Robert ter Horst has argued that the Spanish *comedia* turns to tragedy when two factors that support and advance the lovers' designs in comedy - the "socially acceptable desire to marry and time as an agent of overcoming the obstacles to marriage" (186) - turn against them and lead to violence. On this reading the honour play is not "an autonomous genre," but a form of "new tragedy" that revisits and redefines the conventions of New Comedy (182). Ter Horst's approach suggests an intertextual interpretation of texts that deal with honour and retribution in aristocratic marriages, works that modern critics have often analyzed as tragedies.<sup>5</sup> This essay will build on ter Horst's view of the *comedia* and "new tragedy" by arguing that the honour plot inverts the defining pattern in Greek romance that rewards constancy through a recognition scene that reveals the true identity of the hero and heroine and leads to their union in marriage. The innovative treatment of romance and recognition in both the *comedia* and the *novela* illuminates the ways in which the emerging genres of early modern Europe respond to classical forms. In Renaissance literary theory tragedy is a canonical genre, exemplary in its high mimetic characters and its plot structure, and Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* is praised for its ethical value and the unity of its episodic action. The honour plot transforms these received structures and illustrates the importance of

counterstatement and generic mixing as processes of change in the system of genres.<sup>6</sup>

An outline of the central conventions of Greek romance will clarify my argument concerning its inverse relationship to the aristocratic honour plot. Northrop Frye places at the centre of Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* a female figure who persists in her plan to marry a young man she has chosen for herself, against parental opposition and social differences. During her trials of descent to a lower or demonic world, Charicleia exercises constancy and practical stratagems that enable her to overcome suffering and obstacles. The resolution of these challenges rewards her endurance, through recognition of her true identity and her marriage to the hero Theagenes. The romance plot threatens to reduce the heroine to a sacrificial victim of rape or death; marriage marks her victory over these demonic forces.<sup>7</sup> Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* presents the same pattern of fidelity tested by trials of forced separation and unwanted desire and rewarded by recognition through tokens and marriage.

In contrast, honour plots that centre on aristocratic marriage frustrate both the virtues that their heroines attempt to practice and the processes of recognition. These inversions can be studied in two exemplary texts: Cervantes's "El curioso impertinente," an intercalated *novela* from *Don Quixote* (1: 33-35), and Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra*, a canonical wife-murder play. The comparative reading here of these works will centre on four elements of the honour plot: marriage and the placement of women between men, the heroine's attempts to negotiate her position, the violence exercised on women's bodies, and the means and ends of recognition. Cervantes and Calderón follow a tradition of tales in which the exchange of women confirms bonds among men, and they explore the tension between honour as self-identity or fidelity to one's word and honour as a mediated quality defined by the perceptions of others (Egginton 52).<sup>8</sup> A turn toward tragic isolation and violence is clear in each text. The troubled pattern of recognition that they share nonetheless raises questions concerning their affiliation with tragedy. Recognition is central to the comic reconciliations of romance and to the tragic plot. In this context partial or failed recognition marks a departure from the structure of classical tragedy and creates a marked degree of irony.<sup>9</sup>

The ironic revisiting of tragic structure in the honour plot can be related to the instability of tragedy as a genre. Classified in Renaissance poetics as one of the historical kinds inherited from classical literature, tragedy may appear to rest on set dramatic conventions. In practice, however, it is resistant to the categories of theory and invites openness in staging and interpretation. Aristotle's initial definition of tragedy in the

*Poetics* stresses four core elements: “the imitation of a good action, which is of a certain length and complete,” appropriateness of poetic language to each part, acting rather than narrative as the means of presentation, and the emotions of pity and fear (12). Here formal categories of imitation and representation are juxtaposed with the affective reaction of the audience. In Aristotle’s detailed consideration of tragedy his emphasis shifts to the structure of the tragic plot through a pattern of reversal (*peripeteia*) and recognition (*anagnorisis*). Each of these terms presents problems of definition. Reversal is a formal feature that functions simultaneously at the thematic level, examining the troubled relationship between “purposive action” and “its residue of the non-intended” (Eagleton 125). Recognition refers both to a “decisive moment” in the development of the tragic plot and to the “theme of knowledge” among its characters (Cave 3). In its dual nature recognition suggests the mutual implication of form and theme: “Structure and theme, poetics and interpretation, are thus curiously combined in this term, as if the attempt to separate them had broken down” (Cave 3). The challenges of defining tragedy speak to its formal diversity.

A complementary account of tragedy as a genre focuses on its presentation of human actions in response to suffering, through such abstract themes as external fate, retributive justice, and the place of human beings in the order of nature. On this reading the central tragic concern is the force of an inexorable law brought to bear on the individual human will (Frye, *Anatomy* 209-10). This approach associates with tragedy “a particular view of man’s place in the world and a particular understanding of suffering and conflict” (Goldhill 53). Such attempts to isolate a tragic world view should be qualified by considering the particular concerns of specific works, recognizing that ancient tragedy is “a highly experimental genre” marked by “formal innovativeness and dynamic interaction between plays” (Goldhill 60). Such innovation is central to tragedy itself and to its interaction with other genres. The early modern honour plot illustrates the interplay of tragedy with the patterns of Greek romance - a non-canonical form recuperated in Renaissance poetics - and the emerging genres of the *novela* and the *comedia*.

The opening of “El curioso impertinente” introduces male friendship and marriage as bonds with the potential to conflict with one another. Anselmo and Lotario, two young members of the Florentine nobility, enjoy an exemplary friendship that has made them known as “los dos amigos” (1: 33, 399). The unity of will between them is such that Lotario assists Anselmo in winning the hand of Camila, a woman of notable beauty, social status, and virtue: “hija de tan buenos padres y tan buena ella por sí” (1: 33,

399). At first Lotario accepts the young couple's hospitality, but over time he begins to visit Anselmo's house less frequently, recognizing that a new marriage has affected the old bonds of friendship. Anselmo, however, balks at this change and insists that their relationship be maintained on its former terms: "que si, por la buena correspondencia que los dos tenían mientras él fue soltero, habían alcanzado tan dulce nombre como el ser llamados *los dos amigos*, que no permitiese, por querer hacer del circunspecto, sin otra ocasión alguna, que tan famoso y tan agradable nombre se perdiese" (1: 33, 400). Anselmo declares his commitment to the reputation that he and Lotario have attained in their friendship. He sees no need to lessen their bond through needless conformity with social conventions of discretion and circumspection. While Lotario believes that friendship must cede to marriage, Anselmo assumes that both bonds can be maintained simultaneously. A long tradition of writing on civic virtues, traceable through Renaissance manuals of courtly conduct to classical sources in Aristotle and Cicero, supports this attachment to friendship. The value that Anselmo places on his bond with Lotario nonetheless diminishes his role as an honourable husband and places his marriage at risk.

Anselmo heightens this risk when he decides to test Camila's fidelity, on the grounds that virtue shows its true value when subjected to proof. Lotario attempts to dissuade Anselmo, arguing from logic and from natural and religious authority that a wife's loyalty should not be put to an artificial test. Anselmo, however, demands unqualified proof of Camila's integrity, and he enlists Lotario as the "instrument" of this desire, setting out the terms in which the test should be conducted: "yo tengo para mí, ¡oh amigo!, que no es una mujer más buena de cuanto es o no es solicitada, y que aquella sola es fuerte que no se dobla a las promesas, a las dádivas, a las lágrimas y a las continuas importunidades de los solícitos amantes" (1: 33, 403). This proposal engages well-known literary models. Promises, gifts, tears, and importunate pleas are the gestures and tactics of the poet-lover in courtly love lyric and Renaissance pastoral romances. Anselmo expects his wife to resist the amorous words and tokens that Lotario will present to her. The terms of his plan suggest a refusal or denial on his part of Camila's social role as his wife, a status that should remove her from lover's solicitations. He nonetheless regards the test as feasible on the assumption that it will be a private arrangement between men. In accordance with the value that he assigns to male friendship, he plans to treat his wife as a counter in a contest between himself and Lotario.<sup>10</sup> His test defines Camila's position in a nexus of male friendship and sets out the external trials that she must negotiate to defend her identity.

Serafina, the heroine of *El pintor de su deshonra*, finds herself caught between the claims of her husband Don Juan Roca and her former suitor Don Alvaro. She also disrupts the pleasures and talents that have shaped Don Juan's life, and the challenge that she unknowingly represents is central to her place among men. Calderón's characterization of Don Juan associates him with aristocratic circles of friendship, art, and letters. The play's opening scene shows him in conversation with Don Luis, a longstanding friend who shares his affection for Italy. Don Juan speaks warmly of his pleasure in his recent marriage, a satisfaction that has surprised him, since this change of estate has drawn him away from his former life of studies and creative work. Don Luis stresses his friend's devotion to visual art. Don Juan's skill is such that he might practice painting as a trade ("oficio"), but instead he regards his art as an adornment or accomplishment appropriate to his social standing (45-48). Painting is presented here as a liberal art that confirms Don Juan's identity as a member of the aristocracy and reinforces the bond among male peers.<sup>11</sup>

The dialogue with Don Luis presents Serafina as a challenge to her husband's identity. Don Juan speaks of the social considerations that led him to contemplate marriage and of the decisive effect of Serafina's appearance. Her beauty inclined him to love in a portrait and seized his will in her person:

Como aunque mi pecho ingrato,  
 por las noticias que tuvo  
 desde allá, inclinado estuvo  
 de Serafina al retrato;  
 después que vió a Serafina,  
 tan del todo se rindió,  
 que aún yo no sé, si soy yo. (77-83)

Although cast in praise of Serafina, these lines reveal the tension between the ethos of Don Juan's youth and the claims of his marriage. Through painting Don Juan achieved a perfection that has outdone nature. Serafina's superior beauty now prompts him to recognize the limitations of his art, an internal conflict that inevitably compromises his commitment to the marital bond. A variation on the formula "soy quien soy" expresses his divided emotional state. In his influential study of baroque theatre in Spain, José Antonio Maravall notes that through this phrase high mimetic characters declare their conformity with the codes that determine their standing in society, "el reconocimiento de la obligación de conducirse

según el modo que a la figura social de uno le corresponde" (101). Conformity with external conventions, however, can demand the denial of internal emotions, and the formula can also register the tension between a role that society has determined and the passions that shape a character's inner life. The victory over the self that Maravall has described is subject to conflict and uncertainty.<sup>12</sup> Serafina dislocates the social role that Don Juan has defined for himself: "aún yo no sé, si soy yo." His later attempt to paint Serafina's portrait reinforces his unease. His intent is to possess his bride fully by representing her on canvas (Bass 70), but he finds that he is unable to imitate the symmetry and proportion of Serafina's image and to capture the evanescent elements that constitute her beauty.<sup>13</sup> Serafina's superiority to formal aesthetic categories calls into question the view of painting as a liberal art that shaped his place among his peers. Don Juan casts on his wife's beauty - the first cause of his love - blame for what he has been unable to achieve in his art: "mas culpa es de tu hermosura" (1169).

The honour plot invites us to consider the ways in which the heroine negotiates her position between men. Anselmo's test sets Camila between two claims defined by the interests of men: the marriage-bond and the demands of courtship. Her attempts to negotiate this situation proceed through stages, from careful silence and refusal of Lotario's amorous rhetoric to her final acceptance of the love that he has declared to her. Her surrender means that she must persuade others that she has kept faith with the social value of integrity in marriage, a task that requires her to exercise the ingenuity and discretion of a romance heroine. Her role becomes particularly challenging when Lotario, in the false belief that Camila has admitted the attentions of other men, informs Anselmo of her infidelity and advises him to prepare his vengeance with care: "con silencio, sagacidad y discreción podrás ser el verdugo de tu agravio" (1: 34, 427). Here the disposition of the three characters is articulated in the terms of an honour play, in which an aggrieved husband must exact silent and prudent revenge on his wife.

Camila maintains her husband's confidence in her fidelity by playing out the role of a wife who has fallen under suspicion in an honour plot, in a tableau of virtue and violence that she stages for Anselmo's benefit. Here Camila's awareness of the theatrical conventions that govern honour is clear.<sup>14</sup> She reproaches Lotario for his treachery against friendship and married love, and summons him as both witness and object of the sacrifice that will redeem her bond to her husband. She declares her intention to kill Lotario and herself with a dagger; when Lotario resists, she turns the weapon on her own body. The wound that she inflicts is superficial, but her rhetoric and gestures are sufficient to persuade Anselmo that she is

constant in her virtue and equal to the ancient exemplars of female excellence to whom she invites comparison: Penelope, Lucrecia, Portia (1: 34, 430, 430-31, 435). Camila's tableau is tragic in that it demonstrates the destructive force of honour on the marriage-bond and mimics the noble death of an exemplary protagonist. Although her performance confirms the dishonour that Anselmo has suffered - "la tragedia de la muerte de su honra" (1: 34, 436) - he is convinced that his wife embodies the perfection that he sought to prove through the test that he has set for her.

The conflicting bonds of friendship, marriage, and erotic love also define the position of Calderón's Serafina. Engaged in an uneasy marriage to Don Juan, Serafina is exposed to the demands of erotic love when Don Alvaro returns unexpectedly to renew his claim. She responds by asserting her unyielding fidelity to the marriage-bond. Although she loved Don Alvaro in the past, she has married another and is no longer as she once was: "me casé: ahora soy quien soy" (1031). Here the formula "soy quien soy" affirms a strong commitment to the social code of nobility. As Don Juan's wife Serafina has accepted the estate of an honourable marriage, and she refuses any gesture that would put this bond at risk. Her encounter with Don Alvaro nonetheless betrays the tension between her social role and her inner emotional life. Even as she resists his embrace, she sheds tears that reveal the passion of old love:

Cuando me acuerdo quién [fui],  
 el corazón las tributa;  
 cuando me acuerdo quién soy,  
 él mismo me las rehusa;  
 y así entre dos afectos  
 como el uno al otro repugna,  
 las vierte del dolor, y al mismo  
 tiempo el honor me las hurta;  
 porque no pueda el dolor  
 decir que del honor triunfa. (1039-48)

In returning to Serafina to renew his love, Don Alvaro has denied the effects of temporal change. In courtship the lover must persist, but he should not force his claims against the marriage-bond: "when an old love confronts a new marriage, love's absolute obligation is to desist" (ter Horst 197). In his presence Serafina is aware of both past and present - "quién fui" and "quién soy" - and she experiences the competing demands of the love that she has lost and the honour that marriage requires of her. Honour suppresses her tears, since the pain of old love must not mark its triumph.



The victory over the self that allows Serafina to comply with her social role conceals the force of her passions. Like the heroines of Calderón's other honour plays she exercises her own voice within the limitations of the marital union, and her discourse betrays her divided emotional state.<sup>15</sup> Despite her attempts to negotiate the conflicting claims of love and honour, her position between her husband and her former lover remains unstable and subject to dissolution.

The standard resolution of the honour plot demands violence. In the tableau that Camila stages for Anselmo she exercises violence upon herself. Her actions respond to the choices available to female characters in the tragic tradition. Camila mimics suicide, an act generally limited to women in Greek tragedy (Loraux 9). Women have freedom to bring death upon themselves and to commit this act in the marriage chamber, a space that confirms the role of marriage and maternity in defining female social roles (Loraux 23). The tableau that Camila plays out in the private space of her husband's house conforms to this pattern. The manner of death that she attempts, however, is unusual. In Greek drama suicide is shameful, and women compound this shame by hanging themselves, choosing a "formless" way of dying that brings "irremediable dishonor" (Loraux 9). Camila turns on herself a dagger, a steel weapon associated with male authority and male violence, imitating the noble death of suicide by the sword. Camila also reverses the heroine's role in the traditional tale of male bonding. When she stages her defense of the honour and integrity that Anselmo has vested in her, she refuses to serve as a counter in an arrangement between men and takes command of the conditions that confront her. The text traces her "movement from a silent object of desire and discussion to a narrating and controlling agent" (Mancing 18).<sup>16</sup> By claiming the burden of wronged virtue, Camila leads Anselmo to accept a view of events that is an exact inversion of the truth; her imitation of tragic self-sacrifice is a false mirror that reflects back her husband's irrational desires. Anselmo's confidence in his wife's honour makes him complicit in his own deception: "por mil maneras era Anselmo el fabricante de su deshonra, creyendo que lo era de su gusto" (I:35, 442). The three central characters find themselves bound in an ironic and unstable triangle.

In contrast with Camila, Serafina is the object of fatal violence exercised on her body. Her abduction at Don Alvaro's hand exposes her marriage-bond to the constraints and risks of codified honour. Don Juan expresses his awareness of this vulnerability when he disguises himself as a journeyman-artist so that he can search with discretion for his lost wife. He marks his separation from the courtly world of grace and friendship by choosing to practice painting as a trade, rather than as a liberal art (2644-

47). A willingness to accept money in exchange for his art - a contractual arrangement that his noble status would normally forbid - gives him access to the means for avenging himself.<sup>17</sup> A private commission brings him to the estate outside Naples where Don Alavro has sequestered Sefarina, and when he sees them embrace he discharges a pistol on their two bodies. As an artist who trades in honour Don Juan fixes the elusive image of Serafina's beauty in her blood (3102-04). The violence exercised here on the heroine is faithful to received tragic models. In the context of early modern attitudes concerning gunpowder weapons as instruments that undermine traditional forms of heroism, Serafina suffers a formless death, in a flow of innocent blood that marks the ambiguous excellence that women can attain in Greek tragedy.<sup>18</sup>

In "El curioso impertinente" and *El pintor de su deshonra*, the experience of the central characters and the disposition of those associated with them suggest that the honour plot has led to tragedy. Both Anselmo and Don Juan surrender to a logic of honour that narrows the range of viable action to vengeful violence. Although Camila and Lotario escape before Anselmo can exercise force against them, the sequel of his dishonour leads to their deaths: Lotario as a soldier at the battle of Cerignola and Camila in a convent, on hearing of his loss in war. Entrapped in his perception of Serafina's infidelity, Don Juan kills her and his rival Don Alvaro, in a bleak tableau of dishonour. In both texts the resolution of the dramatic action exacts the tragic costs of isolation and death.

Some principles of Renaissance poetics can elucidate the nature and the limitations of these works as tragedies. Renaissance commentators follow Aristotle's *Poetics* in isolating reversal and recognition as the definitive features of the tragic plot. The operation of reversal is clear in both Cervantes's *novela* and Calderón's *comedia*. Anselmo suffers the destruction of the civic and domestic virtues that have defined his identity as a citizen of Florence - Lotario's friendship and Camila's fidelity - and this dual loss leads to his sudden death. Don Juan sees himself reduced from an aristocratic artist to a craftsman who works at the command of others, and in this role he paints the desolate portrait of his own dishonour. The reversal of honour and social standing is common to the two characters.

Recognition, in contrast, is far less straightforward in both texts. In paradigmatic tragedies the resolution of the plot depends on a crucial act of cognition. Commentators emphasize the timing of the recognition scene and outline different kinds and means of recognition. Aristotelian precedent establishes that in the best tragic plots recognition and reversal occur simultaneously. In his influential commentary on the *Poetics* Lodovico Castelvetro states that recognition can centre on persons or

deeds: “la riconoscenza delle persone, quando il fatto si conosce e le persone operatrici s’ignorano, o vero la riconoscenza del fatto, quando le persone si conoscono, ma il fatto si ignora” [the recognition of persons, when the act is known and the persons involved are unknown, or else the recognition of the act, when the persons are known but the act is unknown] (1: 324). The emphasis on these two kinds of recognition is well established in the critical tradition, but early modern writers admit a third, internalized kind, in which the central tragic character takes cognizance of his own implication in the reversal that he has suffered.<sup>19</sup> These concepts - recognition timed to coincide with reversal, recognition of persons and of deeds, internalized cognizance - are central to the poetics and practice of tragedy, and each of them can be studied in relation to the honour plots of Cervantes and Calderón.

Recognition of persons is not at issue in “El curioso impertinente.” The three central characters are known to each other, and their initial relationships are ones of amity. The conflict that arises among them follows from the tension between the friendship of Anselmo and Lotario and the erotic love that they put to the test in Camila. In this context recognition centres on Anselmo’s knowledge of the deeds that the other two characters have committed and the timing of his awareness in relation to the reversal that he suffers. The reversal coincides with Camila’s surrender to Lotario, an act of infidelity that is sufficient to compromise the honour that Anselmo has sought to perfect in friendship and marriage. The narrator underlines the connection between marital infidelity and the failure of male friendship: “Rindióse Camila; Camila se rindió; pero ¿qué mucho, si la amistad de Lotario no quedó en pie?” (1: 34, 420). Anselmo is long delayed in recognizing the deeds that his wife and friend have committed because Camila consciously sustains and intensifies her role as the most faithful of wives. The timing of reversal and recognition does not conform to the pattern of classical tragedy and is strongly ironic in its inversion of romance conventions.

Irony also marks Anselmo’s eventual recognition of his dishonour, a process that occurs in stages. First, Camila’s servant Leonela tells her master that she can disclose to him indiscretions that have occurred in his house, and the threat of her discovery prompts Camila and Lotario to flee in secret. When Anselmo finds his house deserted, he realizes the disgrace that he has suffered and begins to experience the effects of this loss: “poco a poco se le iba volviendo el juicio” (1: 35, 444). His flight to the house of a friend leads to the last stage of recognition. In a chance encounter outside Florence, a traveller relates to Anselmo the events of his own household: a servant, caught by night descending from a window, has divulged the story

of Lotario's flight with Camila. This account is offered as a recent piece of news from the city, remarkable for the unexpected turn that it reveals in the relationship between the two famous friends. Although the traveller does not know Anselmo and cannot relate every detail of what has happened, Anselmo realizes immediately that he is listening to the public tale of his dishonour. Burdened with the full knowledge that the code of honour has turned against him, Anselmo proceeds to his friend's house. Isolated in a bedchamber, he begins to write an account that acknowledges the folly of his quest for perfection and pardons Camila, a testament that his sudden death leaves incomplete.

Anselmo's statement centres on the impertinent desires and actions that he has imposed on his wife and on the costs that these have exacted from him: "Un necio e impertinente deseo me quitó la vida. Si las nuevas de mi muerte llegaren a los oídos de Camila, sepa que yo la perdono, porque no estaba ella obligada a hacer milagros, ni yo tenía necesidad de querer que ella los hiciese; y pues yo fui el fabricante de mi deshonra, no hay para qué..." (I: 35, 445). Here Anselmo records an internal recognition that is linked to the reversal that he has suffered. He admits the irrational nature of his test of Camila's fidelity, and he accepts his own role in undermining his excellence as a husband and his place in society. The echo of the phrase that the narrator applied to him at the time of Camila's dissimulation - "el fabricante de su deshonra" - emphasizes the ironic delay in his knowledge of the actions that have undone him. His statement is also notable for what it leaves unsaid. Anselmo imagines a future in which Camila may hear the news of his death and receive his belated pardon. He attempts to mitigate the consequences for her of his unreasonable desires ("no hay para qué"), but his pen stops abruptly at this point. Anselmo's cognizance at the time of his death is partial in its reporting and its effects. Recognition in "El curioso impertinente" compounds irony with irony, in a plot structure that marks a clear departure from the model of tragedy in classical literature and Renaissance poetics.

Recognition in *El pintor de su deshonra* involves both persons and deeds. In the country house of Don Luis outside Naples, Calderón assembles the elements of a conventional recognition scene and subjects this set-piece to a striking inversion. When Don Juan accepts the commission to paint a secret portrait, he has the opportunity to discover the identity of the man who has abducted his wife and to observe their conduct together. The acts that he witnesses, however, are deceptive in their significance and ironic in their impact. As Serafina awakens from a troubling dream, she allows Don Alvaro to embrace her for the first time

during the play's action. This sight convinces Don Juan that they have compromised the bond of his marriage and moves him to violence:

Cuántas razones propuse  
aquí para reportarme,  
al verla en sus brazos, todas  
es forzoso que me falten.  
¡Muere, traidor, y contigo  
muera esa hermosura infame! (3078-83)

Like many of the male protagonists in Calderón's honour plays, Don Juan has ruminated on the risks to his honour and on the prudent timing of action to protect or avenge himself. The discovery of Serafina in Don Alvaro's arms overrides such reasoning and incites Don Juan to kill them both. This outcome is ironic for wife and husband alike. In an inversion of the romance convention that rewards the heroine for her constancy, Serafina is murdered despite her consistent fidelity to her husband. What Don Juan recognizes is not the truth of her identity and constancy, but a false impression that leads to destructive violence. Don Juan's art is now turned to an ironic end. In life Serafina defied the mimetic powers of his paintbrush, but in death he can fix her objectified beauty in blood. The tableau of Don Alvaro and Serafina is a public image that confirms the dishonour that Don Juan has imposed on himself.

The development of the honour plot in "El curioso impertinente" and *El pintor de su deshonra* illustrates the counterstatement or inversion of romance as a central factor in the emergence of early modern genres. Both texts reverse the fortunes of their characters by transforming the stable and persistent conventions of Greek romance. Traditional tactics of delay and reliance on constancy are of no avail to their heroines, and mechanisms of recognition prove to be incomplete or false. Recognition leads neither to the recovery of identity that marks the end of a romance nor to the articulated discovery of persons and deeds that defines the plot of a classical tragedy. Frye argues that the structure of romance traces a descent to a demonic realm of stasis and sacrifice, followed by an ascent to a higher world of freedom and fulfilment. The compound ironies of honour narratives end in the "night world" of romance, "a world which is more of an object of moral abhorrence than strictly a tragic one" (Frye, *Secular Scripture* 91). If tragedy explores the workings of fate on an individual life and reveals an order that must be, the honour plot leaves its characters in "the human world of error," a dark realm that is alien to the interests and desires of the self (Welles 129).

## NOTES

- 1 Larson's study of Lope's honour plays stresses his role in creating and elaborating the core conventions of this form (17). Larson also comments on the various ways in which Lope develops the honour plot over the course of his career as a dramatist, from his early comedies that avoid acts of vengeance through the heroic romances of his middle period to the pessimistic and violent plays of his maturity (159-64). Lope provides a model for the diverse treatment of the honour plot by the authors of the *comedia nueva*.
- 2 Frye comments on the "driving force" of disguise and concealment in New Comedy. This genre traces the progress of young lovers toward the marriage that they desire in the face of opposition from their elders, through a paradigmatic plot that celebrates the victory of "guile and craft" over power, including the power of threats and violence (*Secular Scripture* 68-71). In the Spanish *comedia* concealment and craft are often the instruments of a young heroine who must allay a threat to her honour, and the *gracioso* who accompanies and assists her is a variant of the clever slave, a stock character in New Comedy.
- 3 Frye outlines these defining features of tragedy (*Anatomy* 206-14). The tragic hero is a figure superior to others who is subjected to an order beyond the normal course of human affairs; in this context, the tragic plot presents the "narrowing of a comparatively free life into a process of causation" (212). The central theme of tragedy is the isolation of the hero, and its conclusion offers "an epiphany of law, of that which is and must be" (208).
- 4 Bradbury reviews and revisits the standard studies of the influence of Italian *novelle* on the *comedia*, with particular attention to Lope's adaptations of material from Bandello (including his canonical honour play, *El castigo sin venganza*). Barbagallo discusses potential Italian sources for Cervantes's treatment of honour in friendship and marriage in "El curioso impertinente."
- 5 Critical analysis of tragedy in early modern Spanish drama begins with two seminal articles that centre largely on Calderón's honour plays, particularly *El pintor de su deshonra* (Parker, Watson). Readings of Spanish honour plays as tragedies focus on the force of fate or destiny that bears on the central characters, the choices that these characters make in response to their circumstances and the bounds of the honour code, and the affective engagement of the audience. Ruano de la Haza interprets Calderón's canonical honour plays as a form of *tragedia mixta*, in which the honour code leads the protagonist to confuse fate with providence and the resolution of the dramatic

action urges the audience to recognize the unfolding of a divine design in the punishment of honour as idolatry (173-74). Critics have also discussed the place of time in tragedy. Ruiz Ramón notes that untimeliness in love initiates and sustains the tragic action in Calderón's wife-murder plays (173-77). Vitse states that temporal distance is an essential element of the tragic plot. In pointed reaction to approaches that rest on essentialist conceptions of genre, Kluge defines baroque tragedy in terms of a cognitive perspective that allows the playwright to develop the "tragic potentiality" inherent in the Spanish *comedia* (245-48). Lobato provides a useful survey of critical interpretations of tragedy in Calderón.

- 6 Fowler discusses the ways in which new genres emerge through the counterstatement or inversion of traditional forms (174-78) and through the mixing of received generic conventions (181-83). Fowler's approach suggests that the early modern honour plot can be interpreted as an anti-genre of Greek romance.
- 7 This account of the paradigmatic pattern of romance follows Frye (*Secular Scripture* 71-75). Frye's analysis draws attention to the centrality and agency of female characters in romance narratives.
- 8 Avallé-Arce traces the history of this traditional tale in Spain, beginning with the twelfth-century didactic variant in Pedro de Alfonso's *Disciplina clericalis*.
- 9 The failure of recognition is related to more general issues of knowledge and cognition in the honour plot. As Simerka has shown, early modern honour texts explore the narrow terms in which male protagonists define and assess female virtue and suggest that knowledge of the motives and conduct of others can only be acquired from multiple, interdependent perspectives. In Simerka's view "El curioso impertinente" "highlights the importance of employing all available modes of epistemological inquiry because no single method is sufficient unto itself" (*Knowing Subjects* 155). Her analysis reads honour literature through modern theories of cognition that emphasize interactive and experiential modes of knowing (*Knowing Subjects* 139-62).
- 10 Girard's classic study discusses triangular desire as an informing structure in European narrative fiction, using "El curioso impertinente" as an exemplary text. Sedgwick expands Girard's approach by considering the shifting boundaries of sexuality and ideology over time and the place of power within the triangle that sets a female figure at the centre of male attachments and male desire. In her reading of Shakespeare's sonnets, Sedgwick notes that the relationship between the speaker and the fair youth "is set firmly within a structure of institutionalized social relations that are carried out via women," including "marriage, name, family, loyalty to progenitors and to posterity" (35). The Spanish honour plot explores the difficult position of the woman in a

triangle that reinforces the bond between men. Simerka's "Homosociality" studies the shaping force of relations among men in the Spanish *comedia*.

- 11 The literature of courtly conduct places painting among the arts that mark aristocratic status and encourage social exchange among peers. In the *Libro del cortegiano* Castiglione praises painting as an art through which the courtier can imitate the ordered fabric of nature, display his broad knowledge, and rival the accomplishments of classical antiquity: "né a questo pervenir si po senza la cognizion di molte cose, come ben sa chi lo prova. Però gli antichi e l'arte e gli artífici aveano in grandissimo pregio, onde pervenne in colmo di summa eccellenzia" [nor can this be attained without knowledge of many things, as anyone with experience knows well. For this reason, the ancients held art and artists in the greatest esteem, through which the highest degree of excellence was attained] (94).
- 12 Thacker considers the limitations of Maravall's view that "soy quien soy" consistently expresses the "subjection of the self to expected social role" (155) and discusses the various rhetorical and affective uses of this phrase in twelve of the plays from which Maravall's examples are drawn.
- 13 Paterson's analysis of art theory in *El pintor de su deshonra* explicates the two sets of terms in which Don Jun describes his attempt to paint Serafina's beauty. Symmetry and proportion are central concepts in a humanist aesthetics that defines the art of painting as the imitation of a rational order. The capture of evanescent elements appeals to an ideal of creative agency, in which an artistic image is the external representation of a visionary idea (97).
- 14 Camila's performance reveals the theatrical nature of honour and explores the contradictions of a structure of truth that depends of theatre. Egginton's *The Theater of Truth* is a detailed and theoretically informed study of theatricality and its constructions of truth in Hispanic baroque literature.
- 15 Carrión's reading of Calderón's *El médico de su honra* elucidates the capacity of a heroine in an honour play to interrogate the legal and religious constraints of marriage, "the conflict between what the Law says she is supposed to be or do and what the law affords her to voice" (86). Thacker's analysis of the dilemma that the heroine Mencía encounters in this *comedia* can be applied to Serafina. The unexpected arrival of Enrique, Mencía's former lover, creates a conflict between her social role as an honourable wife and her "desiring self"; her recourse to the "soy quien soy" formula attests to the difficulties that she faces in controlling and repressing her emotions (156-57). Serafina confronts a similar conflict of role and self and responds in similar ways.
- 16 Mancing argues that Camila's role illustrates the primacy of narrative over logic as a "cognitive mode" and that the agency that she exercises through discourse transforms her place in relation to Anselmo and Lotario (11, 18). Wilson and Jehenson offer parallel commentary on Camila's use of discourse



- and performance to reverse the position assigned to female characters in traditional narratives of male friendship.
- 17 The defense of painting as a liberal art attempted to distance its practitioners from the sphere of commercial activity, elevating their social status and exempting them from a standard tax on goods produced for sale. Calderón's interest in this debate is apparent in his secular and sacred theatre and in a deposition that he wrote in support of the nobility of painting (Bass 16-17, 66-67; Curtius).
- 18 Loraux observes that the sacrifice of women in Greek tragedy confers on them a glory that is consistently assimilated to the excellence of male warriors: "when young girls die, or when, as we have seen, wives die, there are no words available to denote the glory of a woman that do not belong to the language of male renown" (48).
- 19 Cave argues that early modern poetics moves beyond Aristotelian categories by positing that recognition can refer to an internal process of self-awareness as well as to the external knowledge of persons and deeds: "the severance and the doubling characteristic of recognition plots are now predicated on the moral and psychological structures that constitute the individual" (231). Eagleton notes that this modern version of *anagnorisis* can lead us to consider the limits of self-awareness and the capacity of tragic heroes to attain "the full panoply of tragic self-consciousness" (99).

#### WORKS CITED

- ARISTOTLE. *The Poetics. Aristotle on Poetry and Style*. Trans. G. M. A. Grube. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958.
- AVALLE-ARCE, JUAN BAUTISTA. "El cuento de los dos amigos." *Nuevos deslindes cervantinos*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1975. 153-211.
- BARBAGALLO ANTONIO. "Los dos amigos, 'El curioso impertinente' y la literatura italiana." *Anales Cervantinos* 32 (1994): 207-19.
- BASS, LAURA R. *The Drama of the Portrait: Theater and Visual Culture in Early Modern Spain*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2008.
- BRADBURY, GAIL. "Lope Plays of Bandello Origin." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 16.1 (1980): 53-65.
- CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA, PEDRO. *El pintor de su deshonra*. Ed. Manuel Ruiz Lagos. Madrid: Alcalá, 1969.
- CARRIÓN, MARÍA M. *Subject Stages: Marriage, Theatre, and the Law in Early Modern Spain*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2010.
- CASTELVETRO, LODOVICO. *Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta*. Ed. Werther Romani. 2 vols. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1978-79.

- CASTIGLIONE, BALDASSARRE. *Il libro del cortegiano*. Ed. Ettore Bonora. Milan: Mursia, 1972.
- CAVE, TERENCE. *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988.
- CERVANTES SAAVEDRA, MIGUEL DE. *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*. Ed. Luis Andrés Murillo. 2 vols. Madrid: Castalia, 1978.
- CURTIUS, ERNST ROBERT. "Calderón's Theory of Art and the *Artes Liberales*." *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953. 559-70.
- EAGLETON, TERRY. *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
- EGGINTON, WILLIAM. *The Theater of Truth: The Ideology of (Neo)baroque Aesthetics*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010.
- FOWLER, ALASTAIR. *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.
- FRYE, NORTHROP. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.
- . *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976.
- GIRARD, RENÉ. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1965.
- GOLDHILL, SIMON. "Generalizing about Tragedy." *Rethinking Tragedy*. Ed. Rita Felski. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008. 45-65.
- JEHENSON, YVONNE. "Masochisma versus Machismo: Camila's Rewriting of Gender Assignations in Cervantes's *Tale of Foolish Curiosity*." *Cervantes* 18.2 (1998): 26-52.
- KLUGE, SOFIE. *Baroque Allegory Comedia: The Transfiguration of Tragedy in Seventeenth-Century Spain*. Kassel: Reichenberger, 2010.
- LARSON, DONALD R. *The Honor Plays of Lope de Vega*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1977.
- LOBATO, MARÍA LUISA. "Calderón, autor trágico." *Estado actual de los estudios calderonianos*. Ed. Luciano García Lorenzo. Kassel: Reichenberger, 2000. 61-98.
- LORAUX, NICOLE. *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*. Trans. Anthony Forster. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987.
- MANCING, HOWARD. "Camila's Story." *Cervantes* 25.1 (2005): 9-22.
- MARAVALL, JOSÉ ANTONIO. *Teatro y literatura en la sociedad barroca*. Madrid: Seminarios y Ediciones, 1972.
- PARKER, A.A. "Towards a Definition of Calderonian Tragedy." *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 39.1 (1962): 222-37.
- PATERSON, ALAN K.G. "Juan Roca's Northern Ancestry: A Study of Art Theory in Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra*." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 7.3 (1971): 195-210.
- RUANO DE LA HAZA, J.M. "Hacia una nueva definición de la tragedia calderoniana." *Bulletin of the Comediantes* 35.2 (1983): 165-80.
- RUIZ RAMÓN, FRANCISCO. *Calderón y la tragedia*. Madrid: Alhambra, 1984.

- SEDGWICK, EVE KOSOFKY. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.
- SIMERKA, BARBARA. "Homosociality and Dramatic Conflict: A Reconsideration of Early Modern Spanish Comedy." *Hispanic Review* 70.4 (2002): 521-33.
- . *Knowing Subjects: Cognitive Cultural Studies and Early Modern Spanish Literature*. Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures 57. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2013.
- TER HORST, ROBERT. "From Comedy to Tragedy: Calderón and the New Tragedy." *Modern Language Notes* 92.2 (1977): 181-201.
- THACKER, JONATHAN. "Maravall and the Self in the *Comedia Nueva*." *Bulletin of the Comediantes* 65.1 (2013): 155-73.
- VEGA, LOPE DE. "Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo." *Preceptiva dramática española del Renacimiento y el Barroco*. Ed. Federico Sánchez Escribano and Alberto Porqueras Mayo. 2<sup>da</sup> ed. Madrid: Gredos, 1972. 154-65.
- VITSE, MARC. "Calderón trágico." *Pedro Calderón de la Barca: El teatro como representación y fusión de las artes*. Ed. Ignacio Arellano and Angeles Cardona. *Anthropos Extraordinarios* 1 (1997): 61-64.
- WATSON, A. IRVINE. "El pintor de su deshonra and the Neo-Aristotelian Theory of Tragedy." *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 40.1 (1963): 17-34.
- WELLES, MARCIA L. *Persephone's Girdle: Narratives of Rape in Seventeenth-Century Spanish Literature*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2000.
- WILSON, DIANA DE ARMAS. "'Passing the Love of Women': The Intertextuality of *El curioso impertinente*." *Cervantes* 7.2 (1987): 9-28.