

## The Function of Portraits and Metatheater as Microdrama in the Comedia

### La función del retrato y el metateatro como microdrama en la comedia



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#### ABSTRACT

This essay examines the function of portraits and metatheatrical situations, which in some cases, form microdramas. First, metatheater as a dramatic device will be explained, in terms of functions and subcategories, according to recent academic research, including that of Lionel Abel, Kate Flaherty, Ellen Frye, Richard Hornby, Manfred Pfister, Alejandro Paredes, Marnie Lange Roodi, and Bruce Wardropper. Second, the comedias *El vergonzoso en palacio* (Tirso de Molina), and *El pintor de su deshonra* (Calderón), will be analyzed, with specific attention to the use of the portrait as dramatic device, which sometimes creates a microdrama, and the multiple metatheatrical situations in the plays, focusing especially on the situations that are actually microdramas. Here, important research on these comedias will be quoted, for example, the academic work from Manuel Sito Alba, Jane Albrecht, Laura Bass, Raymond Conlon, Clark Colahan, David Darst, Frederick de Armas, and Susan Fischer. Ultimately, the important scenes with portraits and the significant metatheatrical situations are shown to be microdramas, and these microdramas help to establish the actor-spectator relationship. Without the use of portraits, metatheater, and microdrama, these two comedias would not be able to develop the dramatic action, the tension would not grow, and the spectators would not be pulled into the dramatic world

**KEYWORDS:** *comedia*, portrait, metatheater, microdrama, dramatic device, spectator.

#### RESUMEN

Este ensayo examina la función de los retratos y las situaciones metateatrales, que en algunos casos forman microdramas. Primero, se explicará el metateatro como recurso dramático, en términos de las funciones y las subcategorías, según la investigación académica reciente, incluso el trabajo de Lionel Abel, Kate Flaherty, Ellen Frye, Richard Hornby, Manfred Pfister, Alejandro Paredes, Marnie Lange Roodi, y Bruce Wardropper. Segundo, las comedias *El vergonzoso en palacio* (Tirso de Molina), y *El pintor de su deshonra* (Calderón), serán analizadas, prestando atención específica al uso del retrato como recurso dramático, que a veces crea un microdrama, y las múltiples situaciones metateatrales en las obras dramáticas, enfocándose especialmente en las situaciones que son microdramas. Aquí, se citará la investigación importante en estas comedias, por ejemplo, el trabajo académico de Manuel Sito Alba, Jane Albrecht, Laura Bass, Raymond Conlon, Clark Colahan, David Darst, Frederick de Armas, and Susan Fischer. Últimamente, las escenas importantes de los retratos y las situaciones metateatrales significantes son microdramas, y estos microdramas ayudan en el establecimiento de la relación entre el actor y el espectador. Sin el uso de los retratos, el metateatro, y el microdrama, no se podría desarrollar la acción dramática en estas dos comedias, no se crecería la tensión, y los espectadores no serían arrastrados al mundo dramático y el espectador. Sin el uso de los retratos, el metateatro, y el microdrama, no se podría desarrollar la acción dramática en estas dos comedias, no se crecería la tensión, y los espectadores no serían arrastrados al mundo dramático.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *comedia*, retrato, metateatro, microdrama, recurso dramático, espectador.

## THE FUNCTION OF PORTRAITS AND METATHEATER AS MICRODRAMA IN THE COMEDIA

What is a portrait? Basically, it is an image of the external form of a person; one can paint, draw, or take a photograph of the individual. Typically, the portrait captures only the head and shoulders of the person, or simply the face; portraiture is the actual art of creating a portrait. In 17<sup>th</sup> century theatre of Spain, there are many comedias in which portraits are used as dramatic devices, and in several, such as *El pintor de su deshonra*, by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, and *El vergonzoso en palacio*, by Tirso de Molina, the use of the portrait literally becomes a microdrama, inserted into the main dramatic action. Essentially, it is a situation quite similar to metatheater. What exactly is metatheater? It is one of the most dynamic of the dramatic devices, and in its most emblematic manifestation, metatheater is simply a play-within-a-play. As Lionel Abel explains in his seminal book, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*, the protagonist in the plays by Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Calderón, remains “conscious of the part he himself plays in constructing the drama that unfolds around him,” (Abel, 1963, 167).

This essay examines both portraits and specific metatheatrical situations as quintessential examples of microdrama as seen in the comedia of Spain’s Siglo de Oro. In its most basic definition, microdrama, or sometimes called “minidrama,” is a dramatic scene which is expressed succinctly, with one (or possibly two) characters, a conflict, and a moment of illumination. In his seminal book *Microdramas: Crucibles for Theater and Time*, John Muse explains: “a microdrama is a play crafted to be considerably shorter than its audience’s likely horizon of temporal expectation,” (Muse, 2017, 2). First, metatheater as a dramatic device will be explained entirely in terms of function and subcategories, according to recent scholarly investigation. Second, two comedias will be analyzed, with specific attention paid to two aspects in both plays: the use of the portrait as dramatic device, thereby creating microdramas, and the multiple metatheatrical circumstances in the plays, focusing particularly on those that are critical examples of microdrama. Ultimately, what will be demonstrated is that microdrama itself is the dramatic device which maneuvers the dramatic action of both comedias, by fulfilling multiple functions, including the most important, that of establishing the actor-spectator relationship and the resulting communication.

As a dramatic device, metatheater and metatheatrical situations have several functions, all of which are directly linked to the spectators. Metatheatrical situations help to shatter the glass wall that allegedly separates the actors on stage from the spectators in the audience, thereby allowing direct communication between both groups. It is in this intermediary space, between the actor and spectator, that direct communication does indeed take place, thereby allowing the spectator to feel like an active participant in the dramatic production. In all its variations, the use of metatheater in the play creates multiple levels of situations where dramatic reality and dramatic illusions are dissolved into one entity. Metatheatrical events sometimes create complex structures of language, discourse, and dramatic action. Specifically in terms of the spectators, metatheater has several functions in the play. First, in some situations, it gives the spectators privileged information unknown to the other characters. Second, metatheatrical circumstances can be used to reveal secret identities. Third, metatheater greatly increases the dramatic tension for the spectators. Finally, all of the

metatheatrical situations in a play, in their totality as a group, help to establish and maintain the channel of communication between the actors and spectators. Using the dramatic theories of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> specialists, such as Lionel Abel, Matthew Stroud, Alejandro Paredes, and David Darst, one can research and find that some metatheatrical scenes are indeed actually examples of microdramas.

I would be remiss not to begin with Lionel Abel's work, followed by subsequent critics. His research offered a significant source for the application of metatheatrical theory to comedia studies specifically and to world theatre in general. Abel examined dramatic works ranging from the classic Greek tragedies to contemporary theatre, as well as plays by both Shakespeare and Calderón. Abel classified the plays he analyzed as follows: "theatre pieces about life seen as already theatricalized. By this I mean that the persons appearing on the stage in these plays are there not simply because they were caught by the playwright in dramatic postures as a camera might catch them, but because they themselves knew they were dramatic before the playwright took note of them," (Abel, 1963, 60). Many critics have used Abel's theories to analyze Spanish baroque drama, the comedia. For example, Bruce Wardropper finds that in general, Abel's basic theories about metatheater are well-formulated, and in the article, «La imaginación en el metateatro calderoniano,» he affirms: "El metateatro es precisamente esta «imaginación interior» de los personajes deshonrados. Al crearse un papel dramático distinto del que les dio el dramaturgo, ellos nos hacen patente – dentro de la imaginación calderoniana – la fuerza imaginativa de sus vidas cuasi autónomas," (Wardropper, 1974, 629). Truly, when a character changes roles halfway through a play, the spectators, who are temporarily caught up in the world of illusion, might be led to believe that it was the character's own imagination that provoked the change, not the playwright's. In «Nuevamente la cuestión del metateatro: *La cisma de Inglaterra*,» Alejandro Paredes appropriates Abel's metatheatrical theory for his own analysis, concluding that Calderón "escribió metateatro dándose cuenta de ello y enteramente con el propósito de presentar en su teatro un arte que a la vez de ser estéticamente elaborado debía de contener temas de interés extrateatral," (Paredes, 1983, 547). Many critics have spoken of metatheater comprehensively but few have focused on the multiple variations of metatheater that can take place in one single play, and none have as of yet springboarded off Abel's work with metatheater onto microdrama.

Returning briefly to what metatheater is, seems to be, and could be, one must look at the pivotal example in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, when Hamlet invites a group of actors to the palace to perform a play. In *Hamlet*, there is more to the metatheater than one initially thinks, and it is this sole play that has been analyzed more than any other dramatic piece in the world, in terms of metatheater, thus rendering it necessary to examine here. Springing off the notion that all the world's a stage and everyone's a player, Shakespeare clearly recognized the metatheatricality of life. Marnie Lange Roodi explains, "The ancient notion of 'Theatrum Mundi' was popular in the Renaissance... Shakespeare and his contemporaries explored this idea extensively in their plays through metatheatre. In this way, metatheatre bridges the gap between the stage and the audience by making members of the audience aware of the theatricality in their everyday lives," (Roodi, 2013). The self-referentiality remarks by Hamlet himself during some of his soliloquies point to these analogies, and of course, inviting the actors to the palace to perform a play is the ultimate moment for Shakespeare to provide evidence for his case. Taking the idea of what metatheater is even further, in his book *Drama, Metadrama and Perception*, Richard Hornby writes that, "Briefly, metadrama can be defined as drama about drama; it occurs whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself," (Hornby, 1986, 31). Rather than merely a play-

within-a-play, Hamlet and the actors offer the audience a peephole view of the design and construction of a play, thereby enhancing their theatrical experience even more. In "Theatre and Metatheatre in *Hamlet*," Kate Flaherty explains that the play, "is self-reflexive; it constantly draws attention to the greater reality by which it is encompassed: an audience in a theatre watching actors perform as characters. The challenge for the audience, then, is to remain consciously complicit - to submit to the fiction even while being aware that it is a fiction," (Flaherty, 5). In the past, often when drama specialists spoke of the notion of the spectators' suspending their disbelief, they did not reference plays where the actual art of writing plays was incorporated into the plays themselves. They did not speak of the metatheatricality of Shakespeare in terms of a play about plays and playwrighting, but rather, the simple play-within-a-play.

The classic example of metatheater, the play-within-the-play, is explicit and obvious, but in some instances of metatheater, the characters discuss the construction of the metatheatrical scene itself: the designing, implementation, enacting, and closure of the scene. Therefore, in its most readily understood definition and basic manifestation, metatheater is simply a play within a play. Metatheater is not limited to this explicit type of situation however; other more implicit (sometimes almost elusive) metatheatrical situations or circumstances include those listed previously, but worth repeating and expanding upon: roleplaying, crossdressing, reverse crossdressing, meta-imitation, multiple identities, mistaken identities, and other metatheatrical events, such as a concert, masquerade ball, carnival, dance, puppet show, or any type of performance, within a play, at which the other characters are now spectators, too. Similarly, portraiture scenes and the use of portraits themselves often become metatheatrical situations, such as in Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra* and Darlo *todo y no dar nada*, Tirso's *El vergonzoso en palacio*, and Lope's *La dama boba*. In a situation of portraiture, there are two levels of spectators: when a character is seated for the portrait, the artist-character is a spectator, observing the character being painted, and the audience forms a second level of spectatorship, in that they are observing the entire scene. Depending on the actual circumstance, the portraiture scene can become its own microdrama, if it contains all the elements and can be lifted out of the primary play and stand on its own as a theatrical piece, as will be seen in *El pintor de su deshonra*. Regarding the comedia, metatheater has been discussed by many critics, who have analyzed the use of metatheatrical situations in a multitude of comedias. However, through my three decades of analyzing dramatic devices in 17<sup>th</sup> century theater of Spain, two comedias have always been prominent, in terms of metatheater, for many reasons, Tirso's *El vergonzoso en palacio* and Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra*. Ironically, both plays are replete with metatheatrical situations, the use of portraits, and portraiture (and asides, too); they both also offer exquisite examples of microdrama.

In Tirso's *El vergonzoso en palacio* (c. 1611), nearly every character is involved in a metatheatrical situation, either completely willingly or simply unknowingly. In some cases, the characters themselves design and construct the metatheatrical circumstance during the play itself, whereas in other instances, the metatheatrical situation develops on its own, as a result of the unfolding dramatic action. Some of the metatheatrical situations are of short duration, lasting only a few verses, while others are constructed early on and endure until the conclusion, thereby literally forming the framework of the play. There are several cases of role-playing and both multiple and mistaken identities, and there is literally a play-within-the-play. One character cross dresses and there are several references to carnival; art is used as a metatheatrical tool as well. In all its variations, the use of metatheater in the play creates multiple levels of

situations where dramatic reality and dramatic illusions are dissolved into one entity. As explained above, it is especially in this comedia where metatheatrical events create complex structures of language, discourse, and action. In her article “Mileno, Mireno: Creation and Character in *El vergonzoso en palacio*,” Ann Wiltrout observes: “Tirso assumes the role of the omniscient narrator who frames his work in telescoping levels of time and of audience.... Tirso must create a subtle and complex elaboration on the frame device in order to convey the illusion of the multiple levels of ambiguity and reality that comprise *El vergonzoso en palacio*” (Wiltrout, 1983, 194). In terms of the spectators, metatheater has several functions in this play. First, in some instances, the spectators receive privileged information unknown to the other characters. Second, metatheater is used in one circumstance to reveal secret identities. Third, metatheater increases the dramatic tension for the spectators. Fourth, the metatheatrical situations in their totality help to establish and maintain the channel of communication between the actors and spectators. In fact, in their totality, all of these metatheatrical circumstances, events, and situations together form what I have termed a meta-comedia, that is, a comedia about the comedia, and of course, a comedia within a comedia. Here, not only will the fundamental metatheatrical situations in *El vergonzoso en palacio* be analyzed, in conjunction with their communicative function for the spectators, but how the play serves as the preeminent example of meta-comedia will also be revealed. Furthermore, there is a traditional metatheatrical scene in which the character Serafina performs a little play: it is succinct, lasting only a few verses; it contains a conflict; there are only two characters; and there is a moment of illumination, for her and for the three levels of spectators. In addition, this case of metatheater-microdrama incorporates a surprising, confusing, and critical element: the portrait. For its part, however, even the use of the portrait will give its own instance of microdrama.

As *El vergonzoso en palacio* opens, the first metatheatrical situation is established almost instantly: Ruy Lorenzo is trying to escape from being killed by the Duque, and he meets two shepherds on the road, Mireno and Tarso. He begs them to exchange clothes with him and his servant Vasco. When they enter again, Mireno is now a *galán* and Tarso is his *lacayo*, and Ruy and Vasco are the shepherds. An important observation regarding this circumstance of metatheater is that it is completely straightforward for the spectators. They know exactly who each character really is, from the beginning, and Mireno and Tarso even spend several verses choosing new names for themselves. Mireno becomes Don Dionís (1.716) and Tarso is Gómez Brito (1.729). Mireno is captured by Doristo and Lariso and brought back to the Duque’s palace. Mireno explains that he had exchanged clothes with Ruy Lorenzo, the man for whom they were actually searching. This relatively complex metatheatrical situation actually incorporates role-playing, multiple identities, and mistaken identities. In the introduction to their edition of the play, Browning and Minelli observe that “role-playing is more than an activity in the life of the characters; it is a way of existing, a reflection of the complexity of individual human nature which, in its interaction with others and with the self, has no choice but to play one or more roles,” (36). At this point, Magdalena falls in love with Don Dionís (alias Mireno), and she gives him another role to play, that of her *maestro*. Mireno retains his multiple, false identities throughout the entire play, until the conclusion. His first metatheatrical situation constructs the entire framework of the play: he pretends to be Don Dionís, and Magdalena fatefully falls in love with him.

Later, in Act 3, Magdalena designs and initiates her own metatheatrical situation, which involves her supposed Don Dionís. Before Mireno (Dionís) enters, she

says:

abiertamente  
 le declararé mi amor,  
 contra el común orden y uso;  
 mas tiene de ser de modo  
 que, diciéndoselo todo,  
 le he de dejar más confuso. (3.447-52)

Subsequently, she fakes a dream sequence (3.491-610) in which she tells “Dionís” that she actually loves him and not the conde de Vasconcelos, which he had believed. In one extensive soliloquy (3.545-610), Magdalena repeatedly changes roles in acting out a fake dialogue between herself and “Dionís,” at the end of which she declares: “Días ha que os preferí / al conde de Vasconcelos” (3.609-10). To be more accurate, we should call her speech a monological soliloquy because she knows that Mireno (Dionís) is listening, but she pretends not to know; this adds yet another aspect or level to the complexity of this entire metatheatrical situation. The entire dialogical soliloquy is informative for Mireno (Dionís), but simply commentative for the spectators, who already know she loves Mireno (Dionís). They are waiting to see how Mireno will react to her declaration of love for him. As I explain in my manuscript treating the communicative function of dramatic devices in early Peninsular drama, the dialogical soliloquy occurs when a character seemingly holds a conversation with him or herself, while vacillating between two points of view. The dramatic figure can either take on two (or more) separate personalities or refer to himself in the second or third person. (Both types of situations acquire metatheatrical characteristics.) In considering a particular issue, the character may act in different ways: if the character is in love, he or she may appropriate a tender, solicitous personality or an excited, passionate one. Or the character may exclaim to him or herself, “You fool, how could you fall in love?” Additionally, as Manfred Pfister explains: “the speaker of a soliloquy may address himself as ‘you’, which can then produce a conflict between several viewpoints (‘contextures’) in one and the same soliloquy – such as the contrasts between body and soul, heart and mind, duty and desire, past and present...” (Pfister, 1988, 128).

The extensive metatheatrical situations involving Mireno and Magdalena reach a crescendoed conclusion at the end of Act 3. Magdalena writes a letter inviting him to her garden at night, and Mireno (Dionís) seizes the opportunity. Shortly thereafter, the Duque (Magdalena’s father) requests her presence and she informs him that she is marrying her *maestro*, “Don Dionís.” The Duque is furious, but it is at that moment that Lauro explains that “Don Dionís” is actually his noble son. Subsequently, the original (pre-Act 1) metatheatrical situation involving the shepherds Lauro and Mireno is explained. Lauro (the name acquired by the nobleman Pedro) had been forced to flee because a traitor told the King that Pedro (now Lauro) had killed the King’s mother. Therefore, Pedro had changed his identity to become a peasant named Lauro and raised his son Dionís as a peasant named Mireno, living far from court. As the conclusion of the play draws near, an *atambor* announces the innocence of Pedro, the duque de Coimbra, and Lauro finally is able to reveal that he is actually Pedro and that Mireno is his noble son, truly named Don Dionís. In true baroque fashion, the audience can speculate about the irony of Mireno taking his chances and calling himself Dionís. Could he be recognized at court? It is an ironic form of meta-imitation, as Dionís is adopting his own previous – and true – identity. Furthermore, it is a case of imposed meta-imitation, in that it was Dionís’s father’s problem, not his own. Due to

circumstances beyond his own control, Dionís was forced to become Mireno, but then he chose to “imitate” his true self, becoming Dionís again, before he was supposed to revert, if ever.

There is also a complex metatheatrical situation involving Magdalena’s sister Serafina. It is actually a series of circumstances, forming various layers of metatheater, including role-playing, multiple identities, cross dressing, and a play-within-the-play. In “Female Psychosexuality in Tirso’s *El vergonzoso en palacio*,” Raymond Conlon explains, “Where Magdalena is plagued by ambivalence, reluctant to commit herself and more likely to ponder her problems than to resolve them, Serafina is single-minded, direct and effectual,” (Conlon, 1985, 55-56). Juana assists her cousin Antonio in secretly watching the two sisters so that he can choose the one that he prefers to marry. Ironically, the decision to choose your future wife (rather than letting destiny, fate, or your parents choose one for you) is practically a metatheatrical event itself, in that the potential husband shuffles through numerous women, looking for what he believes will make the ideal wife. Rather than participating in life as it evolves, the man is controlling it, which is what metatheater can essentially be, in some situations: a master puppeteer pulling the strings, within a play. Antonio selects Serafina, and in Act 2, Juana explains to Antonio that Serafina will be rehearsing a play: “que por ser mañana / Carnestolendas, a su hermana intenta / representar, sin que lo sepa el duque” (2.474-76). Antonio wants to secretly watch her rehearse and he brings along a painter, whom he commissions to paint a portrait of her. In his study *The Comic Art of Tirso de Molina*, David Darst observes:

The garden scene is perhaps the most complicated dramatic creation in Golden Age literature. The levels of reality extend four and five times beyond the spectator, and the characters, especially Serafina, express numerous splits in their personalities. The audience is prepared for Serafina’s ‘drama’ by the conversation of Antonio and a painter.... The inclusion of this seemingly parenthetical explanation of painting and ideogenesis is to set the spectator’s perceptive sensibilities in the right direction for what is to follow: a contrast of art and nature. (Darst, 1974, 62-63)

Thus, when Serafina is rehearsing her play, *La portuguesa cruel*, there is a simultaneous metatheatrical situation occurring, the painting of her portrait. To complicate matters further, Juana warns Antonio (and the spectators) in advance that Serafina will be dressed as a man, so that she can perform the various roles of the play. Knowing prior to her entrance that Serafina will be in men’s clothing is extremely useful to the audience because now they will not have to attempt to figure out exactly who the character is. In “Meta-imitation in the Comedia,” Frye points out the following:

cross dressing is the better way to conceal one’s true identity rather than simply adopting another identity of one’s same gender. It is more difficult to cross dress, in that one has to procure the other gender’s clothing, adopt the typical speech and gestures, and temporarily add or hide parts of the body, but other people are accustomed to seeing an individual as a man or woman, so pretending to be the other gender may deceive others more quickly and completely. (Frye, 2004, 133)

In many instances of cross-dressing in comedias, the situation is not explained to the spectators in advance. For example, in *La vida es sueño*, when Rosaura enters at the

opening of Act 1, it may not be immediately clear to all of the spectators that the character is actually a female. Immediately before Serafina's entrance dressed as a man, Antonio discusses Aristotle's philosophy of art with the painter, concluding his discourse as follows:

Del mismo modo miré  
de mi doña Serafina  
la hermosura peregrina;  
tomé el pincel, bosquejé,  
acabó el entendimiento  
de retratar su beldad,  
compróle la voluntad,  
guarnecióle el pensamiento  
que a la memoria le trajo  
y viendo cuán bien salió  
luego el pintor escribió:  
*Amor me fecit*, abajo.  
¿Ves cómo pinta quien ama? (2.703-15)

The painter asks Antonio why he needs a portrait of Serafina, since he already has her image engraved upon his mind, and Antonio replies that he needs a physical portrait that he can see with his eyes. (The painter will later ask Antonio if he would like Serafina portrayed as a man, as she was dressed, and he says yes, which will enable Serafina to not recognize herself, when she ultimately sees the portrait.)

Serafina's metaperformance is rather complex in and of itself, and this overall metatheatrical circumstance is an example of microdrama, with all of the elements in place (there are only two characters, and there is a conflict, followed by a moment of illumination), and the entire "play" can be lifted out of the comedia and be performed on its own. In "Female Psychosexuality in Tirso's *El vergonzoso en palacio*," Raymond Conlon suggests:

Because no one could be drawn into a role so completely as Serafina is unless there is some connection between the passions she portrays and pre-existing feelings of her own, her extravagant behavior here suggests that this woman who exercises such restraint over her feelings loves dramatic representation because it provides, directly or vicariously, a safe and controlled outlet for emotional expression. (Conlon, 1985, 63-64)

Additionally, before she begins her "rehearsal," she tells Juana why she is dressed as a man:

Fiestas de Carnestolendas  
todas paran en disfraces.  
Deséome entretener  
de este modo; no te asombre  
que apetezca el traje de hombre,  
ya que no lo puedo ser. (734-39)

Juana's response, "Paréceslo de manera, / que me enamoro de ti" (740-41), has provoked critics to speculate about Juana's sexuality (for additional information, see



Conlon's article "Female Psychosexuality"). Serafina then proceeds to deliver a monological discourse on theater in general (749-84). Finally, she begins to act, changing her voice to fit each characters' gender, and Juana (her known spectator) and Antonio (her unknown spectator) are her spectators, along with the "real" audience in the theater itself. Antonio and Juana's reactions mimic the "real" spectators' own direct responses to the metadramatic action; for example, Antonio remarks, "¡Hay celos con mayor gracia!" (903), when Juana plays the role of a jealous man.

The play-within-the-play is directly linked to the subsequent metatheatrical situation involving Serafina and Antonio. The portraiture scene is metatheatrical in nature, but it becomes amplified into an actual microdrama, complete with conflict and a moment of illumination. Antonio throws the completed portrait of Serafina on the ground at her feet and walks away, and Serafina picks it up, sees a man who looks like herself, and she immediately falls in love with him. At Serafina's request, Juana insists that Antonio return, to tell Serafina the identity of the man in the portrait. He tells her that it is Don Dionís de Coimbra and that she can meet Don Dionís that night in her garden. When Antonio arrives in the garden, he assumes the identity of Dionís. Laura Bass explains in her book *The Drama of the Portrait*: "This quintessentially baroque layering of levels of representation calls attention to theater and portraiture as homologous cultural and material practices with the power, at once seductive and perilous, to shape and unmake identities," (Bass, 2008, 10). Regarding the specific case of double metatheatricality, Jane Albrecht points out that, "Don Antonio, who has fallen in love with Serafina, is already playing one role as the duke's secretary.... He creates his own play when he simulates a dialogue between himself and his invented Dionís" (Albrecht, 1984, 64). Antonio changes his voice so that Serafina will believe that there are actually two men outside, himself and Dionís. This case of metatheater mirrors Magdalena's metatheatrical scene, and similarly, there is roleplaying, mistaken identities, and meta-imitation. Serafina invites him inside, and it is not until the conclusion of the play that Serafina, much to her chagrin, discovers that he is actually Antonio. The spectators are aware at all times of Serafina and Antonio's true identities, whereas the metatheatrical situations involving Mireno and Magdalena are only partially revealed to the spectators. They are not aware of Mireno's noble heritage until much later in the play. Obviously, the triple use of the identity of Don Dionís can be overwhelmingly confusing for the spectators, particularly since in the end, there truly is a real Don Dionís.

For as comical and lighthearted that *El vergonzoso en palacio* is for the spectators, Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra* (1640s) is the diametric opposite, for it is tragic and serious. However, similarly to *El vergonzoso*, in *El pintor* we have portraiture and the use of portraits as dramatic devices, and numerous metatheatrical situations, with several instances of microdrama. In the article "Metateatro en Calderón: *El gran teatro del mundo*," Manuel Sito Alba concludes: "Estamos inmersos en el mundo barroco, el cuadro dentro del cuadro y éste parte integrante de la arquitectura general. El término metateatro tiene, en este aspecto, plena y textual validez, ya que el autor de *La vida es sueño* pretende abarcar más allá del teatro: la total creación... creador a su vez de nuevos reflejos. Esta faceta aporta, creo, un punto más a su genial pericia de autor y de realizador teatral" (Alba, 1983, 802). Art plays a larger, overarching role in the metatheatrical situations of this comedia than in *El vergonzoso en palacio*. There are several instances of role-playing and mistaken identities. There is a masquerade sequence and an extensive use of singing that creates its own metatheatrical circumstance. Characters scheme and contrive small situations that can

allow them to carry out their personal, often illicit, plans. For the spectators, the metatheatrical situations fulfill certain functions: to reveal secret information, to explain an action, and to heighten the dramatic tension. Also, metatheater in *El pintor de su deshonra* advances the plot, and therefore the dramatic action rapidly gains momentum after Act 1.

Act 2 opens with a portraiture scene in which Don Juan Roca is attempting to paint a portrait of his wife Serafina; he is deeply in love with her and obsessed with capturing her beauty on canvas. This example of metatheater forces the characters to adapt additional identities: Juan is a painter and Serafina is his model. As such, he tells her exactly how to pose and what facial expression to have; in short, he controls her. This prognosticates for the spectators how each man who falls in love with Serafina will try to dominate her, especially Don Álvaro. In this same dramatic sequence, there is even more foreshadowing for the spectators: Juan complains of his inability to capture the essence of his wife's beauty on the canvas. Don Juan explains:

De la gran naturaleza  
son no más que imitadores  
... los pintores;  
y así, cuando su destreza  
forma una rara belleza  
de perfección singular,  
no es fácil de retratar;  
porque como su poder  
tuvo en ella más que hacer,  
da en ella más que imitar. (1101-10)

This artistic concept of the Siglo de Oro which Don Juan has explained in his own words has been analyzed by Clark Colahan in "Art and Imagination in Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra*." Colahan observes that, "particularly reminiscent of Dürer, he [Juan] attributes the difficulty to the perfection of the beauty which he seeks to reproduce, but the *gracioso* Juanete mocks this attitude and offers another explanation for his inability to form an accurate picture of his wife: he does not understand her true situation," (Colahan, 1981, 76). What is Serafina's "true situation"? She is completely in love with her husband, Juan, but Juan believes that she is still in love with her former betrothed, who supposedly died in a shipwreck. Another possible interpretation is that Juan and Serafina still do not have a child, which is metaphorically reflected in his inability to paint her portrait. Laura Bass explains: "If in the first scene Juan Roca is praised for creating lifelike beings in his art, when he murders his wife at the end of the play he simultaneously destroys an actual human being and forecloses the possibility of biologically producing with her another one" (Bass, 2008, 70).

As this portraiture scene continues, Don Juan concludes:

Y así me doy por vencido,  
y te pido, si mi amor  
volver quisiere a este error,  
no lo permitas, corrido  
de ver que no he conseguido  
retratarte parecida. (1151-56)

The irony is that Serafina will not be able to stop him from trying to paint her again, later in the play, and unknowingly. Furthermore, his incapability as an artist in this situation serves as a metaphor for his incapability to keep her as a wife. In “The Art of Role-Change in Calderonian Drama,” Susan L. Fischer states: “In all probability Roca can never truly love Serafina because he cannot, despite a training designed to sharpen this ability, penetrate her inmost being, her soul or heart” (Fischer, 1975, 75). This portraiture scene is the first microdrama in the play, with two characters, a conflict, and eventually, a moment of illumination.

Juan gives up and intends to divert himself by going outside; Serafina objects because it is Carnival: “mil disfrazadas bellezas / merecerán tus finezas” (1208-09). This is the first of several references made to the masquerade. Ironically, it is Serafina who is first displaying any signs of jealousy, and not Juan. Shortly, though, the situation will be reversed. Juan leaves and Don Álvaro enters, disguised as a sailor, thereby creating his first metatheatrical circumstance. As Serafina’s former betrothed, he had been assumed dead in a shipwreck, and Serafina’s father had forced her to marry the older Juan Roca. She knows that this sailor is Álvaro and he tries to plead his case, refusing to leave. Suddenly, Juan returns home and Álvaro is forced to hide, thus creating another metatheatrical situation. Álvaro listens to the conversation between Juan and Serafina, as Juan discusses the masquerade (1433-57) that will take place tomorrow, thus giving Álvaro an idea for another scheme. The conglomeration of metatheatrical events in this sequence rapidly advances the action of the play, in addition to offering foreshadowing to the spectators.

Before the Carnival celebration, the dramatic action shifts back to other characters, Serafina’s friend Porcia (Álvaro’s sister) and the Príncipe. He has come to Porcia’s balcony and hears her playing the harp. He tells Celio:

Escucha atento;  
que el tono ha de decirme  
si llegaré a la reja o si he de irme;  
pues de concierto están nuestros desvelos,  
que llegue si es amor, que huya si es celos. (1625-29)

This metatheatrical situation does not affect the dramatic structure of the play in a significant way. Even when tension is heightened by Porcia’s playing a song about jealousy, to warn the Príncipe that her father is approaching, the anxiety for the characters and spectators alike is short-lived. As the play advances, Porcia will simply find herself in a love triangle, when the Príncipe falls in desperate love with Serafina.

Álvaro and Fabio, both disguised, go to the masquerade; the stage directions read as follows: “Dentro, grita, y córrese una cortina, y están en un tablادillo los Músicos y salen las Mujeres que pudieren por una parte bailando, con máscaras; y por otra los Hombres, de trajes diferentes. Don Juan, Serafina, Flora y Juanete” (p. 120). While at the masquerade, Álvaro asks Serafina to dance, she tries to refuse, but Juan insists that not accepting this “unknown” man’s invitation would be impolite. Thus, Serafina dances with Álvaro, who takes the opportunity to express his love for her. Serafina becomes outraged and insists on leaving with her friends. As they leave, Juan tells the gracioso Juanete to follow the masked man who danced with Serafina. When Álvaro removes his cape and mask, he is still wearing the clothes of a sailor. Hence, this is a case of double role-play, or meta-imitation: Álvaro, first disguised as the sailor, disguised himself again. The entire metatheatrical situation, which functions on several

levels, from the masquerade itself to individual mistaken identities, is useful to the spectators and is extremely important to the structure of the play: it shows Álvaro's ambitious desires, Serafina's reluctance to allow her honor to be placed in danger, and finally, it foreshadows how the dramatic action is about to unfold. When a fire breaks out and chaos ensues, just as Álvaro took Serafina away to dance with him, with Juan's permission, now Juan hands the unconscious Serafina to the sailor (alias Álvaro) for protection, and Álvaro jumps at the chance to bring her home with him to Italy, practically with Juan's permission again. The tension mounting during the masquerade ball continues to climb until the moment when Serafina is essentially kidnapped and Juan throws off his own disguise and jumps into the sea with her in his arms.

Act 3 has a series of linked metatheatrical situations as well. In the first one, Porcia contrives to get Álvaro out of their father's country house so that the Príncipe can come visit her there secretly. In a brief monologue, she begs her father, who is presently estranged from Álvaro, to agree to speak with him (2156-72). In the meantime, Álvaro is preoccupied with arranging his own metatheatrical situation: he is hiding Serafina in the country house. Both Álvaro and Serafina give Belardo specific instructions regarding their secret schemes. Porcia tells Belardo to inform the Príncipe to wait for her to return surreptitiously. Álvaro asks Belardo to bring Serafina out of hiding when he leaves with Porcia. Then Belardo directly addresses the spectators:

¡Que haya quien diga, señores,  
que es oficio aprovechado  
el de alcahuete, y a mí  
no sepa valerme un cuarto! (2380-83)

The Príncipe arrives, followed immediately by Porcia. From her hiding place, Serafina hears everything, including the arrival of Álvaro, which heightens the dramatic tension immensely. Porcia tells the Príncipe to hide in the next room, where Serafina is, ironically. Both Álvaro and Porcia make excuses to each other for why they have returned, and then they agree to go back to their father's house together. It is at that moment when Serafina and the Príncipe emerge from their hiding spot, with Serafina covering her face with her hands. She is trying to conceal her identity from him, but he forces her to reveal herself. The Príncipe declares his love for her, while she now senses her imminent death.

Soon thereafter, Juan arrives, disguised as a poor artist. He has concealed his real identity so that he will not be recognized and be forced to explain his dishonoring caused by Serafina's kidnapping. The Príncipe requests Juan to paint a portrait of the woman he loves, who is extremely beautiful. Juan explains that it is difficult to capture the essence of beauty on the canvas, but he finally agrees. He tells Juanete to put pistols with his paints and then he says:

donde el Príncipe me lleva,  
ya que ultrajes de mi honra  
quieren que pintor me vea,  
hasta que con sangre sea,  
el pintor de mi deshonra. (73-77)

This alerts the spectators that a tragedy is about to befall Serafina. According to

the Príncipe's instructions, Belardo conceals Juan behind the grating of a window, so that he can paint the portrait of Serafina without her seeing him. This is the final metatheatrical circumstance in the play. Belardo leads Serafina into the garden and she faces away from Juan, so Belardo encourages Serafina to turn around before she lays down to rest. When Belardo finally steps aside, Juan immediately recognizes the sleeping Serafina, much to his dismay. He delivers a lengthy soliloquy, and Serafina eventually wakes up: she has been suffering a nightmare, that Juan is trying to kill her. At that moment, Álvaro enters, he tries to comfort Serafina, and she tells him, "Nunca fueron / tus brazos más agradables," (3068-69). Of course, Don Juan, hidden from them but able to see them and to hear their conversation, interprets the situation badly (because technically, there is no evidence of Serafina have been unfaithful to Juan), and he says in an aside:

(Ap. Ya, cielos,  
no hay sufrimiento que baste.  
Cuantas razones propuse  
aquí para reportarme,  
al verla en sus brazos, todas  
es forzoso que me falten.) (3076-81)

Then revealing himself, Don Juan yells in a loud voice, "¡Muere, traidor, y contigo / muera esa hermosura infame!" (3082-83), and he shoots his pistol, killing both Serafina and Álvaro.

With the deaths of Álvaro and Serafina, the metatheatrical situation ceases to exist, and all is revealed. It is this portraiture scene, the highly coveted but never completed portrait of Serafina, that brings us rapidly and directly to the shocking conclusion of the play. In "The Soundless Dance of the Passions: Boscán and Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra*," Frederick de Armas explains: "In his tragic discovery of what he perceives to be Serafina's guilt, Juan Roca has found the force of imagination that enables him to become an artist, but he will be an artist of death," (De Armas, 1992, 866). De Armas suggests that Juan's paintbrush has become a pistol and blood is the paint. In the audience, the spectators are explicit witnesses and accomplices, as they have watched every moment of the dramatic action, and perhaps identified with Juan, or Serafina, or Álvaro, Porcia, or the Príncipe. Truly, this portraiture scene has transformed into a powerful, disturbing microdrama, with two characters, a grave conflict, and an unexpected (and mistaken!) moment of illumination, when Juan assumes that Serafina has been disloyal to him (and there is no concrete evidence of that, but merely circumstantial). In "La imaginación en el metateatro calderoniano," Bruce Wardropper observes: "Últimamente son los sueños -las imaginaciones exentas de la disciplina del alma despierta- los que traicionan el amor que todavía siente Serafina por don Álvaro.... Es ahora cuando don Juan los mata, a ella y a don Álvaro, con las pistolas que con la astucia - la prudencia pervertida - del hombre imaginativo lleva en su caja de pinturas" (Wardropper, 1974, 627).

To conclude, many metatheatrical situations are employed by Tirso in *El vergonzoso en palacio*, and furthermore, his use of metatheater here is quite complex: several instances of role-playing extend throughout the entire play; there is cross dressing and a performance of a literal play-within-the-play; and the garden scene contains multiple metatheatrical circumstances unfolding at the same time. One

difference between *El vergonzoso* and other comedias is that in *El vergonzoso*, many metatheatrical events are explained in advance, for the benefit of the spectators. Contrastively, Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra* shows more subtle uses of metatheater, due in part to the stronger, continual presence of art and portraits in the play. None of the metatheatrical situations are explained in advance, and therefore there is no interruption to the flow of dramatic action; they simply blend right in to the sequence of events and they increase in frequency and in intensity until the conclusion. It is patently clear that it is the metatheatrical situations and microdramas in their totality that allow the dramatic action in both *El vergonzoso en palacio* and *El pintor de su deshonra* to begin, develop, unravel, and come to an end. Of all the dramatic devices employed in these two plays, metatheater is the most frequently used, thereby constructing the underpinning of both comedias. The use of metatheater also allows for a channel of communication between the actor and spectator to be established and continue to function throughout the plays, whether through privileged information or simple explanation of a plot advancement. Even more importantly, metatheatrical situations draw the spectators into the dramatic world and they are roped into being silent accomplices. Without the use of portraiture, metatheater, and microdrama as dramatic devices in these comedias, the dramatic tension for the spectators would never achieve such great heights, nor would the two Serafinas' worlds come crashing down so hard. But perhaps that is Tirso and Calderón's point, with their complexly baroque conclusions: in *El vergonzoso*, Serafina is not happy about her marriage, even though she theoretically loves Antonio; in *El pintor*, Serafina is killed by the man who loves her. Perhaps as a respite from or as a mirror to their own lives, the spectators have effectively been pulled into the dramatic world in both comedias, through the clever use of portraits, portraiture, metatheatrical situations, and microdrama.

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