

'LANGUAGE AND SILENCE': PERFORMING FRIENDSHIP AND HONOR IN CALDERÓN'S *EL PINTOR DE SU DESHONRA*

Charles Oriel
Northern Illinois University

According to a traditional saying, 'a man's word is his bond' . . . Feelings of honor and shame function only when people can face and talk to one another orally; only under such circumstances of physical presence are there genuine speech acts, honorable obligations, or shameful losses of face.

—Elias L. Rivers, "The Shame of Writing". 274

Although the above title echoes that of Melveena McKendrick's "Language and Silence in *El castigo sin venganza*" (1983), the following observations were inspired, at least in part, by "The Shame of Writing in *La estrella de Sevilla*," an article published some twenty years ago by Elias Rivers, that has furnished the epigraph. Rivers's essay utilizes Walter Ong's work on orality and literacy, as well as J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts, to examine the function of written utterances and their relation to the code of honor. Despite the influence that speech act theory and discourse analysis in general continue to exercise on critical views of Spanish Golden Age (and other) drama, much work remains to be done to articulate the complex relation between the traditional code of honor, that governs so much of the *comedia's* esthetics, and those speech acts and discursive patterns that both activate and constitute it. This essay attempts to address this question in Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra*.¹

Since their first publication in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962)—based on Austin's 1955 Harvard lectures—, a good many concepts derived from speech act theory have been used in increasingly complex variations by linguists and literary critics alike.² Austin's lectures constitute, among other things, an attempt to dismantle the long-held assumption that the purpose of language is to 'represent' reality (the so-called Descriptive Fallacy). He emphasizes that such verbal acts as promises, threats and orders clearly do not point to or describe a (pre-existing) reality, but rather 'enact' or effect one; such utterances are *performative*, as opposed to *constative* (descriptive, referential) utterances. Despite Austin's final rejection, toward the end of his lectures, of this basic opposition, in

favor of a more general system of *illocutionary forces* (what a particular utterance *does* in a given context), my own tendency is to reinscribe that opposition, at least to a certain degree. While I do not ultimately question Austin's move, I maintain a simple (and perhaps simple-minded!) belief that acts of reference are preliminary to other, more complex, speech acts; to put it succinctly: a basic referentiality necessarily underlies every intelligible form of utterance. Thus, one cannot issue a promise, a threat or an order (to use the examples earlier cited)—or any other performative utterance, for that matter—without presuming the existence of those acts and objects included referentially within the utterance: under normal circumstances, it is impossible to 'promise to go to a show' without presupposing the existence of such acts and objects as 'to promise', 'to go' and 'show'.³ I therefore continue to advocate a (preliminary) distinction between constative and performative 'aspects' of a given utterance, but with a view toward elaborating the ways in which that distinction invariably dissolves, especially in the context of the traditional code of honor.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the honor code in relation to speech acts is the enormous degree to which, within such a system, many, if not all, utterances function both constatively and performatively at the same time. It is thus impossible to speak (referentially) of the dishonor of another person without also effectively dishonoring that person in the very same act; therefore, an utterance that is apparently constative ('merely' descriptive) also has the performative illocutionary force of an insult. As David Hildner puts it, in reference to Calderón's honor plays:

There is an equation made by several 'dishonored' husbands between the utterance of such words as *agravio* and *celos*, and an actually committed act of adultery. Talking about these matters comes to be an offense in itself, which in turn must be avenged. This divorce of verbal sign from reality constitutes a conceptual framework for the understanding of the values implied in the *código de honor*. (*Reason* 29)

Within the discursive parameters of the honor code, utterances not only describe, but also enact reality, and radically so. The resulting confusion—between what is preexistent to discourse and what is produced by it—is undoubtedly a major source of tragedy in these plays.

Friendship is a frequent motif in *El pintor*, particularly in act 1. The drama's opening lines—formulaic greetings exchanged by Juan Roca and his old friend Luis, after what is apparently a very long absence—immediately and pointedly evoke this theme:

LUIS: Otra vez, don Juan, me dad
y otras mil veces los brazos.
JUAN: Otra y otras mil sean lazos
de nuestra antigua amistad. (1:1-4)

Juan echoes Luis's hyperbolic request that they exchange seemingly infinite hugs as a symbol of their friendship, describing their mutually outstretched arms as *lazos*.⁴ By stressing that the institution of friendship is what 'binds' them together both literally and figuratively, Juan implicitly invokes the obligations that inhere in and constitute such relations. The term *obligation* itself etymologically implies such a 'tying together' (Latin *ob* [from] + *ligare* [to tie, bind]) and, from a speech act perspective, can do no other than remind us of Austin's well-known espousal of the common dictum (partially quoted by Rivers in the epigraph) that "[a]ccuracy and morality alike are on the side of the plain saying that *our word is our bond*" (*How to* 12). Words function as both bonds and binds in this drama, which is to say that communicative acts literally constitute the 'society on stage.' One must keep in mind, however, that *Autoridades*' second definition of *lazo* is operative, as well: "En sentido moral vale engaño, asechanza, tropiezo y ardid" (2:372a).⁵ A given community is, apparently, both done and undone by words.

In the drama's opening scene, Juan explains to Luis his decision to marry late in life, and we immediately become aware that he has chosen to marry, not out of love, but because of his need to obtain an heir (1:17-27). Luis responds by noting that marriage had, in the past, at least, always seemed to be the last thing on Juan's mind:

Ya sé las dificultades
que hubo en vuestra condición
para esa plática, y que
siempre que en ella os hablé,
hallé vuestra inclinación
muy contraria . . . (1: 28-33)

The term *plática* here connotes the performative dimension of language: the notion that one invariably *does* things with words. The first and third definitions of the term in *Autoridades* make this discursive/performative dimension clear: (1) "conversación u discurso que una persona tiene con otra" and (3) "lo mismo que Práctica" (3:293b-294a). Words are always a form of praxis, as speech act theory insists. In fact, one of the very first examples Austin invokes as a quintessential performative utterance is the type of oath proffered during a wedding ceremony, most versions of which—in the Western tradition, at least—involve the utterance of commissives ("I do.") by two people who thereby pledge themselves publicly to one another for life. In so doing, they make an explicit promise to one another and, at the same time, an implicit one to society at large. The drama's opening scene makes it clear that Juan has studiously avoided precisely this type of commissive *plática*—both saying and doing—all of his life, and this is an important aspect of his characterization,

from an ethical point of view.

Ironically, in light of this social dimension of marriage, Juan goes on to reiterate that he has finally decided to marry because of social and economic obligations:

... ya rendido a la atención
de mis deudos, o a que fuera
lástima que se perdiera,
faltándome sucesión,
un mayorazgo que creo
que es ilustre y principal
y no de poco caudal,
correspondí a su deseo ... (1:57-64)

The 'desire' that is 'corresponded to' by Juan is not the passion of his betrothed, as we might expect in this context, but rather that of his *deudos*. To a great degree (and from a modern point of view at least), this essentially falsifies the marriage—motivated by purely social considerations—before it has even begun, despite Juan's declaration that he has latterly been won over by Serafina's beauty (1:81-83).

Juan again invokes the theme of friendship (1:97) in order to explain to Luis that he won't be availing himself of the latter's hospitality, due to the large number of people (Serafina and her father, etc.) accompanying him. Luis, however, invokes that same friendship in order to protest:

JUAN: ... me atrevo a pedirlos...
LUIS: ¿Qué?
JUAN: ... que licencia me deis
para ir a mi posada,
que estará ya aderezada.
LUIS: Notable agravio me hacéis.
¿Soy hombre yo que pudiera,
igual dicha deseando,
nada embarazarme, cuando
todo Nápoles viniera
con vos?
JUAN: Ya sé lo que os debo;
pero ...
LUIS: No hay que responder.
O a mi casa, o a no ser
más amigos.
JUAN: No me atrevo
a aventurar amistad
tan segura y verdadera. (1:104-18)

From an illocutionary standpoint, this is a fairly complex exchange. Juan starts by issuing an explicit directive (in this case, a request) that Luis, given these circumstances, grant him permission to go to his own lodgings. In response, Luis issues a constative (statement) that such a request has the (implicit) illocutionary force of an insult, a thing here pointedly *done* ("hacéis") with *words*. As noted above, the overlapping of constative and performative aspects within a single utterance is a common discursive characteristic of the honor code. Luis thereby forces Juan to consider and to state explicitly the obligations to which their friendship binds him ("Ya sé lo que os debo"). He takes control of this phase of the conversation by issuing a negative directive that effectively cuts off communication in the current situation ("No hay que responder") and issues a conditional threat to terminate both this communication and their friendship altogether, if Juan does not abide by his (Luis's) wishes. Finally, Juan accedes to Luis's wishes by issuing a statement that he would not dare risk their friendship in this way.

This exchange is emblematic of the tenuous nature of human relations in the communicative universe of Calderón's honor plays. Like marriage in this drama (at least), even so personal and intimate a relationship as friendship appears to be framed almost exclusively in terms of social obligation, rather than any individual or subjective impulse. So strong are the obliging social *bonds* of friendship in this sense—like what was pointed out earlier in relation to language itself—that they actually (and paradoxically) threaten to destroy it: when Juan reaffirms their friendship by calling it "tan segura y verdadera," there is a tremendous sense of irony, for us at least, in that characterization; it is anything *but* that, given the preceding analysis. Juan's personal relations—marriage and friendship—are, like all those represented in this drama, uniformly mediated by obligation. The other noteworthy aspect of this conversation between the two friends is how much of it ultimately amounts to 'strategic' verbal acts, i.e., a jockeying for discursive power (more on this below).

In the following scene, a conversation between Luis and his daughter Porcia, friendship is twice more evoked, but, as in the earlier case, purely in terms of the necessary keeping up of appearances inherent in all such relationships. Luis reiterates "las grandes obligaciones" entailed by his friendship with Juan in terms of his duties as host:

LUIS:

Ya sabrás
(mil veces te lo conté)
las grandes obligaciones
que a Juan Roca he tenido.

- PORCIA: Que eres su amigo te he oído
decir en mil ocasiones.
- LUIS: Pues has de saber que ya
con su esposa por aquí
vuelve.
- PORCIA: ¿Serafina?
- LUIS: Sí.
Y hasta embarcarse será
mi huésped.
- PORCIA: Yo lo agradezco
de mi parte.
- LUIS: ¿Qué te obliga?
- PORCIA: Ser Serafina mi amiga . . . (1:163-75)

Porcia expresses contentment at the prospect of seeing her old friend Serafina, but her father pushes her to refrain from expressions of personal sentiment and to reframe the friendship in terms of social obligation.

When Serafina *does* arrive, in the following scenes, the subtle interplay of courtesy and obligation—ritual hyperbole and euphemism—frames the entire exchange (I, 280-92), a tendency that the servant Juanete criticizes in no uncertain terms, in an aside: “¿Hay paciencia para ver / una plática molesta / de cumplimiento?” (1:300-02). This is the third time in the short space of the first 300 verses of this drama that the term *plática* has appeared. The first, already noted, occurs in the opening scene, when Luis refers to Juan’s past habitual avoidance of marriage (1:30). The second instance is Juan’s admitted avoidance of the topic of Luis’s son’s (Alvaro’s) purported death: “Confieso que no querría / hablaros en esto; pero / ya la plática salió” (1:132-34). (The term *plática* appears once more in the first act [1:812], when the Prince refers to Serafina’s apparent verbal skill.) The references to *plática* underline the performative nature of various utterances—how *plática* is also *práctica*, as noted above—, but also emphasize the degree to which discourse in this drama is socially framed by a clear pattern—a social practice—of avoidance or repression of certain topics considered either unpalatable or unacceptable for public airing. Luis perhaps best emblemizes this pattern, for he is the character who most often cuts off verbal exchanges or redirects them onto what he considers to be safe ground (1:153; 162). In short, the ‘honorable obligations’ referred to in the epigraph entail significant silences, a notion that receives fuller and more explicit development in act 3.

Once Porcia and Serafina are alone, Serafina again invokes friendship, in order to express herself honestly, as a form of figurative identity between two individuals:

Ya te acuerdas, Porcia mía,
 de aquel venturoso tiempo
 que en Nápoles las dos fuimos
 tan amigas, que pudieron
 juzgar nuestros corazones,
 regidos de un movimiento,
 que había en un cuerpo dos almas
 o estaba un alma en dos cuerpos. (1:361-68)

It is on the basis of *this* concept of friendship that Serafina recalls her prior romantic involvement with Porcia's brother Alvaro and reveals her current feelings of remorse due to her continuing love for him. The striking thing about this scene is that it is perhaps the only instance in the entire drama of honest communication between two characters. This appears to be a special, if rare, communicative province of women—no such exchange occurs between a man and a woman, or between men. Men's discursive patterns with one another and with women appear throughout (in this and many other dramas) to be so ritualized as to actually belie their inner thoughts and emotions—thus, the standard baroque trope of appearance vs. reality is borne out with fatal consequences. Nearly all Golden Age drama depends upon this (now, clichéd) opposition. In *El pintor*, however, this binomial is pushed even further, because friendship (with the lone exception of this one scene involving Porcia and Serafina) and even marriage are enacted and totally contingent upon the honorable requisites of social decorum and appearance.⁶

The social philosopher Jürgen Habermas makes a distinction between 'communicative' and 'strategic' action that appears pertinent to this discursive aspect of the honor code:

. . . communicative action . . . must satisfy the condition of an agreement reached communicatively, without reservation . . . In strategic action, linguistic processes of reaching understanding are (generally) not used as a mechanism of action coordination . . . we may appeal only to the conditions for the reciprocal influence that opponents, acting in a purposive rational way and oriented respectively toward their own success, attempt to exert upon one another. (203)

The honor code necessitates a conversion of all 'communicative' acts into 'strategic' ones, imposing a state of discursive war in which individuals are reified as 'opponents': either potential invaders or victims. When the individual subject is conceived—and is forced to conceive others—in this way, the inevitable effect is a radical alienation, and this is, of course, what plays itself out in *El pintor*.

The status of promises and other commissive utterances, in this and

many other Golden Age dramas, has more to do with personal pride than with personal morality. In this context, 'keeping one's word' is more a question of actively displaying the ability to carry out one's priorly stated will—and the resulting gain in social stature—than of any sense that this might be the 'right' thing to do. In the *dramas de honor*, nearly all verbal interactions are framed within a dialectic of power (the imposition of one's desires on another) that is the essential characteristic of strategic modes of action. Ironically, and most paradoxically, the honor code—a discursive praxis that purports to ensure social stability ('action coordination,' as Habermas puts it)—is ultimately antisocial: a destabilizing and disfiguring force that threatens to tear apart the communicative bonds that constitute society. This is the central irony regarding honor in all three of Calderón's wife-murder plays.⁷

In her confession to Porcia, Serafina reveals that Alvaro had promised his hand in marriage to her (1:453). This is the drama's first explicit instance of a commissive utterance, albeit reported in third-person and after the fact, and it is noteworthy that it comes in the form of a marriage proposal, for it serves as an obvious contrast to Serafina's marriage to Juan Roca, an arrangement conceived and carried out in the name of social obligation. As noted above, Juan has married more due to social pressure than to any personal impulse, while Serafina intimates that she has married for two reasons: she believed that Alvaro was dead and she wanted to honor her father's wishes. In short, the marriage's ostensible commissive basis, established as occurring prior to the drama's represented action, was undoubtedly effected only secondarily and as a result of prior 'contractual' commissives exchanged by Juan and Serafina's father: "Mi padre, pues, deseaba / efectuar los conciertos / tratados" (1:503-05). The drama thus makes it explicit that the marriage's personal commissive basis was extremely shaky, to begin with. Later in act 2, when Serafina defends herself in the face of Alvaro's continuing accusations and complaints, she claims to have acted in conformity with social decorum and obligation:

... el amor de mi esposo,
 la paz del estado mío,
 la obligación de mi sangre,
 el trato, el gusto, el cariño . . . (2:235-38)

Although she does refer to her husband's love for her, there is, significantly, no explicit mention of her own feelings of love for her husband nor is there any denial of the love she still feels for Alvaro.

Serafina confesses to Porcia that she and Alvaro had debated about revealing their feelings for one another to their respective fathers:

... confiriendo los dos
 si sería buen acuerdo
 que entre mi boda y su ausencia
 nos declarásemos; viendo
 que no era justo enojar
 a entrambos padres a un tiempo, (. . .)
 hasta la vuelta ajustamos
 callar. ¿Cuándo, cuándo, ¡cielos!,
 le estuvo mal al amor
 valerse del silencio? (1:479-88)

It is, of course, their silence on this matter that leads directly to the tragic course of events: another instance of discourse silenced by social obligation. These forced suppressions of discourse constitute the center of *El pintor*, and this becomes increasingly and more explicitly so, as the action progresses.⁸

In a similar vein (and later on in this same act), when Alvaro laments his fate in a monologue, he cuts short his *queja* when he sees Serafina approaching:

Con mi hermana viene. ¿Quién
 creará que cuando más busca
 ocasión de hablar la voz,
 es cuando queda más muda?
 ¡Oh, qué de cosas tenía
 antes de ver su hermosura,
 que decir! Pero, al mirarla,
 ya no encuentro con ninguna. (1:943-50)

Discourse is again suppressed precisely at the moment when it should, by all rights, be most available for the expression of intimate feelings. In this case, it is Serafina's beauty that ends the possibility of further discourse by Alvaro.

This notion—that her beauty silences discourse—is corollary to the drama's most identifiably emblematic motif: painting. The painterly metaphor of the play's title is, of course, another trope of silence and 'inexpressibility,' signalling that all representational systems (such as painting and language) are necessarily limited. Juan cannot pictorially represent Serafina's beauty on the canvas, because its essence is inexpressible, except in a superficial visual sense. Likewise, the drama's many silences—whether explicit or implicit, forced or voluntary—point to language's representational limitations, but also to those things that should not or cannot, as stipulated by a given society's norms, be expressed publicly. The code of honor depends, as we have seen, on such silences, yet is paradoxically also dependent upon discourse, for (social) honor could

not exist without some verbal form of expression, *el ¿qué dirán?* Indeed, one of the primary tensions of the *dramas de honor* stems from the fact that the code of honor demands silence(s), yet that code is one of the most essential esthetic elements of a literary genre—drama—that is predicated almost entirely on spoken discourse.⁹

When Alvaro desperately asks Serafina to confirm that she is married to Juan, she replies: “¿Cómo puedo, cómo puedo / decir que sí, si estás vivo, / ni decir que no, si miento?” (1:634-36). The paradox of referentiality is thus evoked quite explicitly, if rhetorically, by Serafina, who finds herself in a discursive ‘double bind’: she cannot confirm her marriage to Juan, since this would amount to an effective falsifying of the secret marriage vows she had exchanged priorly with Alvaro (the only thing that could licitly break the discursive bond that had resulted from that commissive would have been Alvaro’s death). Likewise, she cannot deny the existence of her current marriage to Juan, since to do so would constitute a lie. Like so many characters in this drama, she is caught in a double bind typical of the *comedia*, suspended between the discourse of personal volition and that of social obligation.¹⁰

A similar verbal double bind occurs in act 2, when Juan begins to suspect his wife of infidelity, but cannot utter the words—even to himself—that would confirm his suspicions as true: “¡Ay de mí! Yo mismo / miento si lo digo, y miento, / ¡ay de mí!, si no lo digo” (2:448-50). Here, such words, even in a totally private situation, have a ratifying, referential force. Yet the paradox is that their utterance would effect (*perform*) a dishonor that is at least equal to the original dishonor (his wife’s ostensible infidelity) that those words appear only to represent. This form of verbal evasion is, as we have seen, at the heart of the honor code: as long as the words are not uttered and remain covered over by silence, the dishonor does not (socially) exist.

A similar example, one that again underscores the pragmatic nature of language in this drama, occurs soon after in this same tense scene, when the servant Juanete warns his master that a stranger has just entered the house illicitly. When Juan searches unsuccessfully for the intruder, Juanete defends the truth of what he has said, “. . . bien podrás no hallarlo; / mas, señor, lo dicho dicho” (2:457-58). Immediately after, Flora (Serafina’s servant) blames Juanete for this dire situation, but Juanete maintains his position with a reiteration of the words he has uttered and their referential truth:

FLORA:	Tú tienes la culpa de todo.
JUANETE:	Pícara, lo dicho dicho. (2:477-78)

It is as though the reality of the situation is not merely confirmed, but actually enacted by being uttered. Once again, we see the performative

status of a seemingly neutral (constative) reporting of facts. But, as before, once the reality of a given situation has in this way been ratified by utterance, it cannot be ignored: in terms of the honor code, it has become a social reality, regardless of the so-called facts.¹¹

Deserving of some attention in this context is the first act's final scene, in which Serafina defends herself in the face of Alvaro's repeated accusations of infidelity to their secret marriage:

Cuando me acuerdo quién fuí,
 el corazón las tributa;
 cuando me acuerdo quién soy,
 él mismo las rehusa;
 y así entre dos afectos,
 como el uno a otro repugna,
 las vierte el dolor, y al mismo
 tiempo el honor me las hurta;
 porque no pueda el dolor
 decir que del honor triunfa. (1:1039-48)

The ritualization of honor as a form of obligation is thematized in Serafina's declaration as far more important than any (mere) personal considerations. Past identity ("quién fuí") is contrasted with present identity ("quién soy"), bringing to focus the discursive (social) constitution of subjectivity, attainable only by way of the subjection of personal impulses ('dolor') to a given set of discursive constraints.

The scene ends in a breathless exchange of half-verses with Alvaro insisting that Serafina will one day be his again. When Serafina denies this hope in the form of a question, she is startled by a nearby thunderbolt in the background: "¿Yo ser tuya? / Un rayo... ¡Válgame el cielo!" (1:1066-67). Her question coinciding with her explicit directive—in the form of a prayer—to the heavens, makes explicit, especially given the fate that she will eventually suffer, that characters' destinies are so often determined by their linguistic behavior.¹² In this respect, however, Alvaro's immediate response to Serafina is even more interesting: "¡Ay de mí! ¡Cuánto me asusta / que el aire pronuncie el trueno, / cuando tú el rayo pronuncias!" (1:1068-70). Alvaro's utterance metaphorically humanizes the air by rendering it capable of 'discourse' in the form of thunder; but the thunder is itself posited figuratively as an *effect* (and not a *cause*) of Serafina's discourse: according to Alvaro, Serafina says the word "lightning" (*rayo*) and thunder results. This is emblematic of the *plática/práctica* binomial evoked earlier: what is apparently constative is portrayed as radically performative—saying and doing, describing and enacting—at the same time. Serafina and the other characters are both causes and effects of their own fates, and the honor code is the 'air' they breathe, the

enabling set of background discursive rules that determines who and what they are.¹³

The end of act 2 offers two explicit examples of the suppression of discourse, that is, the avoidance of certain words as a means of denying a given reality. When Juanete informs his master of Serafina's abduction, Juan responds: "Calla, / si no quieres que mi aliento / te abrase" (II, 987-89). Juan issues a strong directive to be silent, backed up by a conditional threat of punishment. Shortly thereafter, when asked about his apparent desperation at this revelation, Juan responds by once again beginning and then immediately suppressing discourse:

Es
una desdicha, una rabia,
una afrenta, una deshonra
tan grande, ¡ay de mí!, tan rara,
que no me atrevo a decirla
hasta después de vengarla . . . (2:1000-05)

Only after his dishonor has been avenged may it be uttered publicly, as is borne out in act 3, in which silence is even more explicitly and significantly thematized.

El pintor's final act opens with Luis secretly decrying his friend Juan's dishonor. When his daughter Porcia asks what is bothering him, he refuses to say, invoking (in an aside) the obligations entailed by friendship: "(Débame en aqueste caso, / ya que me deba el sentirlo, / también don Juan el callarlo)" (3:28-30). By virtue of that friendship, Luis is obligated to share in Juan's pain, but he must, even more importantly, maintain silence, for to utter his friend's dishonor would both ratify and constitute (constate and perform) it.¹⁴ The honor code denies the possibility of any communicated sense—on Luis's part to Juan himself—of empathy (out of friendship), since this would constitute a dishonor; instead, there is only silence and isolation.

The primary motif by which silence becomes self-consciously explicit throughout the beginning of the third act is a tangible image of spoken utterance: *labio*, which appears four times in rapid succession. When Porcia questions her father about his anger toward her brother Alvaro, Luis immediately cuts her off: ". . . no me hable en él tu labio" (3:48). In the very next scene, Serafina attempts to silence Alvaro's appeals to her by pointing out the fatal consequences that may arise from the wrong words uttered by the wrong person:

. . . escúchame, porque
mi nombre oyendo en tus labios,
y en él mi mal, y del nombre

también el intento, trato
de aprovechar la ocasión,
porque de una vez salgamos,
tú de dudas, yo de penas,
y de confusiones ambos. (3:141-48)

In this same scene, Serafina asks to be brought to a convent to live out her life in isolation. Alvaro silences her with a command: "Suspende el labio. / No prosigas . . ." (3:230-31). When Serafina later encounters the Prince on Alvaro's estate, she attempts (unsuccessfully) to hide her identity and then refuses his every advance, but ends by demanding his secrecy regarding their encounter, promising the same on her own part: "Vuestro nombre / jamás saldrá de mi labio" (3:441-42).

The references to silence (*callar*)—the suppression of discourse—are so concentrated in the final act that just a few examples must suffice. In soliloquy, Juan makes explicit the requisite silence demanded by the honor code. Bemoaning his dishonor, he exclaims:

¿Qué es lo que pasa por mí,
fortuna deshecha mía?
Pero no lo digas, no;
que aun de ti no quiero yo
oírlo, porque sería
conmigo estar desairada
mi pena, al ver que una vida
que perdonó acontecida,
no perdona pronunciada. (3:468-76)

As before, he refuses to utter words that will confirm his dishonor—if he did, he claims, his 'pain' might ultimately be willing to pardon anything that has happened, with the lone exception of its legitimation by way of utterance: "In the face of the unmentionable . . . the only solution is silence" (McKendrick "Language" 92).

As many critics have noted, this well-known soliloquy (3:468-515) contains one of the most powerful critiques of the honor code to be found in all of Calderón's drama. While the limitations of this essay do not permit a detailed analysis here, it is worth noting, in the context of these remarks, the utter disjunction—decried at length by Juan—between honor and personal responsibility:

Poco del honor sabía
el legislador tirano,
que puso en ajena mano
mi opinión, y no en la mía.
¡Que a otro mi honor se sujete,

y sea (¡oh injusta ley traidora!)
 la afrenta de quien la llora,
 y no de quien la comete! (3:489-96)

As conceived here, honor is directly opposed to justice, and it is in this sense that responsibility, both ethical and verbal, dissolves. The silences imposed by the honor code amount to a forfeiture of the discursive bonds that enable and constitute the ethically viable subject and society. Personal moral responsibility is paradoxically vitiated by the fulfilling of socially defined obligations, which are, in this universe, empty signifiers of an ethical signified from which they have long since been disattached.

A similar example of silence and the resultant lack of responsibility occurs late in the third act, when Pedro, worried about not having heard from his daughter and her husband, complains to Luis:

PEDRO: . . . no me escriben; y nadie
 a quien yo escribo *responde*
 a propósito. Pues sabe
 el mundo que la amistad
 vuestra ejemplo es de amistades,
 merced me haced de decirme
 qué sabéis dél.

LUIS: [Ap.] ¡Duda grave!
 Pues decirlo y no decirlo
 es a su honor importante.
 Mas menor inconveniente
 es que lo dude y lo calle;
 'que en materias del honor
 hablar sin pensado examen
 es muy difícil, aunque
 a muchos parece fácil.

PEDRO: ¿Qué me *respondéis*?

LUIS: Que ya
 no extraño que a mí falten
 cartas, faltándoos a vos. (3:782-99; my emphasis)

The displacing of responsibility is literalized in the lack of verbal responsiveness (*responder*), as Pedro complains that no one will answer his queries to his satisfaction. In seeking information, he appeals—most ironically, given the theme established early in the first act—to his personal friendship with Luis, who, however, weighs the obligations of honor (both Juan's and his own) over and above those of his friendship with Pedro, and so silence wins out on all fronts.

In the drama's final scene, Juan publicly admits responsibility for Alvaro's and Serafina's deaths, but only after his honor has been thus

'cleansed.' He asks to pay for his crimes, issuing a directive to all the injured parties, that is, to the two fathers and the Prince himself: "Matadme todos" (3:1019). His directive is, however, immediately nullified by the Prince, who proceeds to defend and then exile him by way of four directive speech acts (commands) of his own:

Ninguno intente injuriarle;
que empeñado en defenderle
estoy. Esas puertas abre.
[Abre BELARDO la puerta que cerró, y sale DON JUAN.]
Ponte en caballo ahora,
y escapa bebiendo el aire. (3:1020-24)

The two fathers immediately and reverentially sweep aside all personal parental obligations, in the name of those broader, more public social obligations imposed by the honor code:

PEDRO: ¿De quién ha de huir? Que a mí,
 aunque mi sangre derrame,
 más que ofendido, obligado
 me deja, y he de ampararle.
LUIS: Lo mismo digo yo, puesto
 que aunque a mi hijo me mate,
 quien venga su honor, no ofende. (3:1025-31)

The Prince imposes ostensible social order once again with two final speech acts: first, he confirms with a forceful constative declaration that all involved have acted honorably: "Honrados proceden todos . . ." (3:1035). We cannot but perceive this final statement with all due irony, for justice—which should, theoretically, be maintained by the Prince himself—has been unthinkingly sacrificed on the altar of honor. Secondly, the Prince offers to marry Alvaro's sister Porcia, whom he was wooing at the beginning of the drama (but had given up on, after falling in love with Serafina). The Prince's publicly uttered commissive—the offer of marriage—is an implicit duplication of those dubious commissives that were the ostensible basis of Juan and Serafina's marriage and is likewise weakened by the context in which it is produced. The institutions of marriage (explicit at the drama's beginning and end, and thereby framing it) and friendship (found throughout in different forms) are empty performances that are ultimately subordinate to the honor code. We can only anticipate, from this ending, that the pattern of fatal miscommunication will recur.

To summarize: the honor code functions in *El pintor* to subvert communicative action and to impose the use of strategic actions (to use

Habermas's terms) that undo the bond-creating function of words. Within that code, utterances take on a radically performative status that effectively erases the constative backdrop or shared referential reality that normally anchors discursive exchange. Thus, Juan Roca, rather than perceiving or representing 'constatively'—by way of his painting—a pre-existing state of dishonor (since his wife Serafina has not in fact committed any 'dishonorable' act), literally becomes the painter—the enactor or the 'performer'—of his own dishonor, just as the drama's title proclaims. Rather than enabling or imposing social order, the honor code functions, in *El pintor* and the two other Calderonian wife-murder plays, to tear it apart. Ethical obligations and personal relations, ostensibly the earmarks of the honor code (as noted by Rivers), are swept away in the name of ritualized social obligation. It is my belief, finally, that speech act theory sheds light on the discursive patterns and processes by which Calderón's 'honorable' subjects are both done and undone with words.

Notes

¹With some notable exceptions, my comments focus largely on the drama's first act. All citations are from Valbuena Briones's edition of *El pintor*. Act and verse numbers are indicated in parentheses.

²A number of essential postulates of speech act theory (as originally conceived by Austin) were critiqued by Jacques Derrida, among others, during the 1970s. Due to spatial limitations, I cannot address here the well-known critical exchange between Derrida and Searle.

³J.R. Searle, among others, calls this the 'propositional content' (*Expression* 1). All performative speech acts have an implicit propositional 'constativity,' i.e., the conventionally agreed-upon (referential) reality that is the background for their intelligibility.

⁴The *Diccionario de Autoridades*' third definition of the term *lazo* is the reference here: "... unión, vínculo y estrechez" (II, 372b).

⁵The potential abuses of language are made explicit in one of Valbuena Briones's notes to his edition. Glossing a common neoplatonic comparison made by the Prince between love and music (I, 740-48), he translates from Petrarch: "... con blandas palabras un hombre engaña a otro, y ten por conclusión que para engañar no hay cosa más conveniente que la voz" (p.147).

⁶Susan L. Fischer has accurately and concisely characterized it as "an overzealous compliance with a code of social behavior which encourages men to engage in dissimulation, falsification, and other deceptive practices under the pretext of preserving their self-respect and social reputation" (73).

⁷As Francisco Ruiz Ramón reminds us, "el disimulo . . . combinado con el miedo (de la esposa) y la sospecha (del marido), produce el malentendido, que, alterando las bases de la relación entre ambos, va cortando todos los puentes de comunicación . . ." (135).

⁸McKendrick's essay views silence as the principal motif of *El castigo sin venganza*.

⁹While it is possible to make the same argument about spoken discourse in re-

gard to other literary genres, it is only in drama that there *must* be characters who speak. One might, for example, postulate the existence of a novel (or poem) in which no one but the narrative (or poetic) voice 'speaks.' In both those other genres, however, the term 'voice' is itself somewhat metaphorical, since there are no 'speakers,' per se, only that narrative or poetic function that actuates the literary text. Drama alone is explicitly dependent, and predicated, upon the *performance* of social and verbal interaction: speakers speaking with and to one another.

¹⁰Margaret R. Hicks has convincingly evoked the notion of the double bind to analyze discursive patterns occasioned by the honor code in Lope de Vega's early drama, *La batalla del honor*: "An individual is forced to choose between . . . two sets of conventions if, for example, a social taboo conflicts with, say, speaking the truth or even with speaking clearly and to the point" (17-18).

¹¹Myra Gann evokes the same relationship between silence and honor in reference to Calderón's three wife-murdering husbands, all of whom: ". . . find themselves faced with the danger of having a dishonor *voiced* and therefore constituted, regardless of the guilt or innocence of their wives. In order to preempt the uttering of the doubt which would constitute the dishonor, they all choose to wipe out the subject matter itself and thus silence the voice of the common tongue in a final way" (42). McKendrick similarly underlines the performative, enacting nature of such utterances: "Unarticulated the crime resists reality; articulated it is brought into being. . . . Because language gives substance to thought it cannot be allowed to realize fantasies by formulating and defining them" (91).

¹²As Catherine Larson notes, regarding *La dama boba*: "What finally happens to these characters is more a function of what they say and how they say it than of what they do or how they do it. Language—or, even more specifically, language *as* action—becomes the ultimate determinant of each character's fate" (27).

¹³Ruiz Ramón notes a similar inversion of cause and effect in a soliloquy in *La cisma de Inglaterra*, but relates it specifically to the temporal structure of drama in relation to predictions and their corollary dialectic of freedom and destiny: ". . . la transformación de la Libertad en Destino . . . consiste, básicamente, en negar el principio de causalidad, y su manifestación en el orden de la temporalidad, subvirtiéndolo mediante la inversión de la relación causa/efecto: el efecto es convertido en causa, el después en antes, la consecuencia del acto libre en causa fatal—'estrella'—del acto" (172). Ruiz Ramón's formulation of the problem is by no means contradictory to the discursive construction of subjectivity or community that I am here attempting to elaborate: in effect, they are simply different aspects of the same dialectic.

¹⁴"The utterer, in reporting an offense committed by a third, absent party, is himself offending, but in a more serious way, since he performs face-to-face the all-powerful speech act of dishonoring; his offense is even greater than that of the original offender" (Gann 47)

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