

Cruelty behind the curtains: the Painting of Jealousy in Calderon de la Barca's El pintor de su deshonra.

The veiled display of cruelty on stage is one of the characteristics of the Spanish Golden Age comedia and Calderon de la Barca's tragic plays are not different in this regard. However, and as we see in El pintor de su deshonra, cruelty is the notion that will immediately come to the mind of the one who has the entire view of what is happening on stage, i.e. the public or spectator. Moreover, and as it also happens to them, many of us today will have not doubts about judging Serafina's death as cruel, too. Nonetheless, what they and we, XXI century spectators, can signify for cruelty might be different. Thus, in this paper I would like to suggest that, in this *comedia*, Calderon's portrait of cruelty is based on a very specific notion of irrationality, one that can be applied not only to women but also to men. Under this notion, irrationality -as it happens to cruelty—cannot be directly displayed. However, its phenomenological implications and consequences can be easily grabbed or collected by the mind as it is suggested by the same Don Fernando in his explanation of his own painting of Hercules. This description, as I hope to show, is an ekphrasis of Zurbaran's Hercules y el centauro, which not only portraits Hercules fighting with the centaur but also Deianira's jealousy, Hercules's second wife. Thus Don Fernando's description, on one hand seems to work as a fiction (or story) of jealousy but on the other hand, as a metafiction of the poetics of cruelty on stage.