

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### AHCT Board of Directors, project leads. Association for Hispanic Classical Theater, Inc. Other.

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Volume 43, numéro 4, automne 2020

Spaces of Power of the Spanish Nobility (1480–1715)  
Les espaces de pouvoir de la noblesse espagnole (1480–1715)

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1076851ar>  
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36408>

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Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)  
2293-7374 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Friedman, E. (2020). Compte rendu de [AHCT Board of Directors, project leads. Association for Hispanic Classical Theater, Inc. Other.] *Renaissance and Reformation* / *Renaissance et Réforme*, 43(4), 283–286.  
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36408>

of some plays.<sup>10</sup> As a digital project, it is a robust website with an efficient user-experience design that succeeds in keeping “the database freely available for as long as possible in a sustainable manner” (“Home,” *outofthewings.org*), while it prompts reflections on the fact that information repository projects cannot be updated forever. This leads to questions about the sustainability of digital ventures in general. As a research and practice community, Out of the Wings is still very active at fostering play readings, workshops, and forums on translation into English of Spanish-language drama—events that can be followed at *ootwfestival.com*.

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<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36407>

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WordPress: Accessed 1 May 2020.

[wordpress.comedias.org](http://wordpress.comedias.org).

Theatrical production in Spain during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods in England enjoyed a rich and prolific moment of creativity, often called the Golden Age. The Renaissance in Spain, influenced by Cinquecento theory and evolving neoclassical precepts, led to the baroque period, with verse drama becoming more and more ornate, elaborate, and rhetorically and conceptually complex, and with a certain resistance to strict neoclassical principles. The Spanish counterparts of William Shakespeare and his contemporaries and followers include Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Pedro Calderón de la Barca, among other playwrights, male and (in a definite minority) female. Lope de Vega (1562–1635) is credited with the formulation of the *comedia nueva*,

10. Nine plays of Golden Age drama in English translation are available at Spanish *Comedias* in English Translation, Association for Hispanic Classical Theater ([comedias.org/texteng.html](http://comedias.org/texteng.html)), and seven at the EMOTHE digital library ([emothe.uv.es/biblioteca/index.php?](http://emothe.uv.es/biblioteca/index.php?)), among them Lope de Vega’s *Madness in Valencia*, David Johnston’s 1998 translation of *Los locos de Valencia*, published in EMOTHE in 2012, accessed 21 January 2021, [emothe.uv.es/biblioteca/textosEMOTHE/EMOTHE0230\\_MadnessInValencia.php](http://emothe.uv.es/biblioteca/textosEMOTHE/EMOTHE0230_MadnessInValencia.php). This translation is featured in Out of the Wings, but only with a sample.

“the new art of writing plays,” which features a three-act structure, polymetric verse, perspectives on the theme of honour and gender roles, unity of action, and an emphasis on tragicomedy. The playwrights operated under the censorship of the Inquisition, so that any potentially subversive elements had to be inscribed subtly and ingeniously. Lope de Vega’s *Fuenteovejuna* (1619), for example, depicts the killing of a cruel and corrupt nobleman by villagers who take collective responsibility for his murder. The monarch (King Fernando) berates but does not punish them. The conservative ending, however, cannot conceal the revolutionary thrust of the play. The most celebrated and imitated leading character in the works of Tirso de Molina, *nom de plume* of the priest Gabriel Téllez (1579–1648), is Don Juan Tenorio of *El burlador de Sevilla* (The Trickster of Seville, 1630). Calderón’s masterpiece, and arguably the most significant play in Spanish, is *La vida es sueño* (Life is a dream, 1636), which unites love, honour, religion, and self-conscious theatricality—often termed metatheatre—with dazzling poetic imagery. Other dramatic luminaries of seventeenth-century Spain are Guillén de Castro, the Mexican-born Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, Antonio Mira de Amescua, Ana Caro, María de Zayas, Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, and Agustín Moreto, each adding a special signature to his or her artistic output. The playwrights were, in many cases, extremely prolific. More than four hundred works of Lope de Vega alone have been conserved.

The Association for Hispanic Classical Theater (AHCT), founded in 1984, has as its goals the promotion and appreciation of early modern Spanish drama and the bringing together of scholars, teachers, students, critics, producers, directors, and others interested in examining, analyzing, and performing the *comedias*. The AHCT website provides a vast array of materials for a diverse “audience.” The site contains an electronic collection of over two hundred plays—full-length works, one-act interludes (*entremeses*), sacramental dramas (*autos sacramentales*), translations into English, and plot summaries—as well as guides, teaching aids, and other supplementary resources. Also available are videotaped plays from around the world: Spain, Latin America, the United States, and other countries. The AHCT has enjoyed a strong collaboration with the Siglo de Oro Drama Festival held annually at El Chamizal National Memorial in El Paso, Texas, and the collection houses a sizeable number of film recordings from the performances there. The website includes a catalogue that lists videotapes from Chamizal and elsewhere, and papers delivered at the annual AHCT conference and other venues. The aim is to help users

in academic pursuits, matters of performance, and the search for grants and funding options.

The “Digital Play Texts” section of the website encompasses the work of twenty-three playwrights and additional works by anonymous authors. Those represented include dramatists of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries—precursors of Lope de Vega and the *comedia nueva*—among them Miguel de Cervantes. It is clear that significant effort by dedicated and learned scholars—led by Vern Williamsen, with an impressive corps of contributors, far too many to name individually—went into the preparation of the manuscripts. Some of the plays are annotated; the majority are not. The “Digital Video Archive” consists of recordings of live performances of early modern Spanish plays plus films, documentaries, interviews with representatives of academia and the theatre, and keynote lectures from the organization’s annual symposia. The recordings are in DVD format, with selected entries available for streaming. The overall collection in the archive is the largest of its type in the world. “Educational Resources,” as the rubric suggests, offers tools for instructors who are introducing students at multiple levels to the plays of the Golden Age, through explanation and annotation of scenes from well-known plays along with broad and carefully chosen links to supplementary materials. The tips are presented with skill, empathy, and ingenuity, with an eye toward analysis, performance, multimedia, and new technologies. *Comedia Performance*, first published in 2004, is the peer-reviewed journal of AHCT. It highlights staging techniques (past and present), design and wardrobe issues, audience composition, performance sites, and the application of performance theory to early modern Spanish drama.

True to the intentions of the leadership of AHCT, the website is extensive in its offerings and an indispensable source of information and materials for scholars, instructors, students, theatre practitioners, comparatists, and other interested parties. The play texts and additional items are available to all, while members of AHCT have access to videos, newsletters, *Comedia Performance*, and supplementary resources. It is obvious that the organization aims to encourage and stimulate the study of early modern Spanish theatre, and to facilitate access to essential and ancillary materials. The website is comprehensive and user-friendly. Many notable scholars, critics, directors, designers, and actors, along with students at different stages (as it were) of their careers, have participated in the development of the resources and of

the website. All manner of theatre enthusiasts—from the senior scholar to the novice, from theatre professionals to neophytes, from those who know more about Lope and Calderón than about Shakespeare to those whose training has omitted traditions and innovations from Spain—can profit from the website. So, importantly, can those who have never studied the Spanish language and those who have not been exposed to the depth, artistry, and brilliance of early modern Spanish drama.

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<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i4.36408>