

Taking Liberties with Cervantes, Calderón, and Lope  
in Repertorio Español's *Tres obras cortas del Siglo de Oro*

Christopher D. Gascón  
State University of New York College at Cortland

One might be tempted to interpret director Andres Zambrano's bold reworkings of Cervantes' *El retablo de las maravillas*, Calderón's *Visiones de la muerte*, and Lope's *Las cortes de la muerte* as a rebellion against and subversion of Golden Age values and aesthetics. He adds violent endings, comments ironically on other works by the dramatists, converts humor into horror, and reverses outcomes entirely. I argue, however, that the director's work is not so much a critical deconstruction of the three pieces as 1) a relocation of the plays' themes from the Spanish Golden Age to our own contemporary context, and 2) a game of perspectivism in which he tests the limits of directorial manipulation and the texts themselves to show the range of ideas this material may express.

In these works, the three literary giants posed questions that were of utmost importance during an age of shifting social, political and religious paradigms. Zambrano takes the dramatists' concerns as a starting point, but spins them such that they resonate in our secular, contemporary society. If, for example, *El retablo de las maravillas* questions the extent to which we are willing to deny reality in the name of honor, Zambrano's version in addition makes us consider the relationship between labeling, disenfranchisement, fear of the other, and radical violence.

Zambrano also comments on the art of the theater and questions the limits of the dramatic text. Cervantes, Lope, and Calderón all conceived of these works as experiments with perception. Zambrano's revisions and inversions of the three works are a way of dialoguing with the texts and their interpreters about interpretation and perspective themselves. He demonstrates, for example, in Calderón's *Visiones de la muerte* how one man's farce may be experienced by another as a tragic nightmare.