

Sedycias' research unearths depth of Spanish playwright, earns Vanderbilt publication

[Theresa San Luis](#) | Aug 25, 2013 | [0 comments](#)

The "Shakespeare of Spain," Lope de Vega, deserves more recognition than he has received as an unsophisticated, popular playwright of his times, according to Prof. Joao Sedycias, chair of the SIUE Foreign Languages Department.



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In fact, Sedycias has helped unearth the complex psychological dimension of this 17th century Spanish writer, so that his article on Lope was accepted for publication by Vanderbilt University in its peer-reviewed academic journal, "Bulletin of the Comediantes."

"I'm very honored and pleased to contribute to SIUE's scholarly production and academic reputation through such research," says Sedycias. "It's one of the most rewarding and enjoyable articles I've written."

Sedycias' paper, "Dying for Love: Eros and Violence in the Lopean Drama," details Lope's deep psychology concerning human desire within his *comedias*. The Spanish *comedia* is a three-act play combining dramatic and comic elements. Sedycias said themes about star-crossed lovers, long depicted by Spanish writers preceding Lope's and Shakespeare's time, contain complex psychological elements that only modern psychologists such as Denis de Rougemont and René Girard have recently analyzed.

In rediscovering this "old literature," Sedycias' research resurrects Lope in light of contemporary literary critics to clarify and bring into focus the psychological structure of desire.

"These 17th-century playwrights were already addressing issues in very sophisticated ways in their time," said Sedycias.

Sedycias said Girard's theory of mimetic desire consists of three main components: the subject, the mediator, and the object of desire. Sedycias examines how this kind of desire was skillfully represented in Lope's plays. The mediator is someone with autonomy who serves as a model to the subject. The mediator defines which objects will prove to be desirable to the subject. The subject can be the lover, or person who yearns for the objects determined by the mediator. The object of desire oftentimes reveals itself as an obsessive and all-consuming love in Lope's plays.

According to Sedycias, "the more difficult for the subject to get to the object of his desire, the more ardently he will pursue it." Lope's work illustrated these concepts through love triangles in his *comedias*. For example, in the play, *El caballero de Olmedo*, the passion of two men, Rodrigo and Alonso, become more volatile and ignites further when they vie for the same woman's love.

"Clearly, the complicated matter or obstacle fueled their desires," said Sedycias.

In addition, Sedycias said that Sigmund Freud's observations made about human desire hundreds of years later were clearly articulated in Lope's plays. Freud states, "The value the mind sets on erotic needs instantly sinks as soon as satisfaction becomes readily obtainable. Some obstacle is necessary to swell the tide of libido to its height..."

In other words, when the object of desire becomes mundane, ordinary or easy to obtain, desire loses its vigor. However, when the object of desire becomes special, unique or hard to get, desire intensifies.

"Certainly, this is depicted by the maddening love affairs and quarrels among characters in Lope's plays," said Sedycias. "The complex mechanics of desire presented in Lope's *comedias* apply to us as well. It speaks to our condition today. Lope's 'plays for popular consumption' address questions and problems that happen to be very current, just as Shakespeare did in his own plays."

Sedycias said that Western love stories are often complex, pathological tragedies that end in death.

"Once the lover is 'hooked,' the biggest obstacle that cannot be overcome, death, results from desire being crystallized in its most potent form." Sedycias said some well-known examples of Western tragic love stories that follow this pattern include "Romeo and Juliet," "Tristan and Iseult," "Wuthering Heights," "West Side Story," and the movie, "Love Story."

Sedycias described a philosopher's insightful observation about Western love stories: "There's something not altogether wholesome with the view of romantic love and desire in the West... because very often these stories end in death."