

# Vices, Scapegoats, and Evil Forces: Magic in the Works of Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, and María de Zayas y Sotomayor XXX

Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

## Background

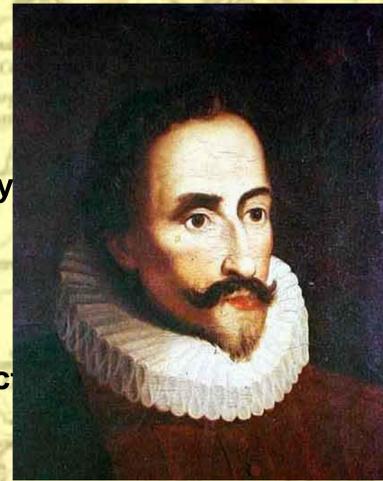
- The Golden Age of Spanish Literature (“Los siglos de oro”) lasted from approximately 1492 until 1681.
- Magic was a part of daily Spanish life, especially in certain regions of the country.
- The Spanish Inquisition sought to eradicate popular practices of magic in order to assert control, adopting methods of fear.
- Moors were expelled from Spain by 1614.
- There was censorship of all published works in an attempt to control beliefs that contradicted Church doctrine.
- In order to publish works involving magic, authors had to reshape their ideas and present them in ways to evade censorship.

## Focus of Research

- I explored works that were aimed toward two different audiences
- Cervantes and Zayas wrote prose for more educated audiences, while Alarcón wrote plays seen by the common man
- How did the depiction of magic differ between authors and modes of representation?
- How did censorship shape the authors’ writing and depiction of certain groups?
- I focused on three main groups of people:
  - Innocent women
  - Moorish men
  - Real magic: witches, magicians, and the devil

## Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra

- Major satirist of the Golden Age
- Author of “El coloquio de los perros” as part of his *Novelas ejemplares* (1613)
- Evaded censorship by writing about magic in psychological terms
- The witches interact with the devil only under the influence of hallucinogens
- Despite not openly depicting magic, Cervantes utilizes talking dogs
- The high morals of the dogs counteract the supernatural aspect of their existence



Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra

## María de Zayas y Sotomayor

- Early feminist writer of the Golden Age
- Examination of parts of her two major works:
  - Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637): “El jardín engañoso”
  - Desengaños amorosos* (1647): “La inocencia castigada”
- Uses magic to denounce most men
- Empowers the virtuous, independent women in her works



María de Zayas y Sotomayor

## Juan Ruiz de Alarcón

- Born in Mexico, but spent the majority of his life in Spain
- Wrote many *comedias* (comedies), including:
  - Quien mal anda en mal acaba* (1620)
  - El prueba de las promesas* (1634)
- Stereotypes females as foolish and Moors as partners of the Devil
- In line with the morals of the Catholic Church in his writing
- Yet, the use of magic is justified in the case of a noble, concerned father



Juan Ruiz de Alarcón

## Conclusions

- Cervantes appears to share the same views of magic as the Inquisition, but shows the humanity of the witches in his work.
- Zayas and Alarcón appear to share society’s stereotypical views of Moors.
- Zayas uses magic in a feminist manner: desperate men use magic to achieve their goals, but virtuous women triumph.
- Alarcón demonstrates opposing views: Moorish men have connections with the devil, and men can use magic for good reasons.
- It is clear that the Inquisition did not always view the use of magic in literature as a threat.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Nina Davis for serving as my advisor for this senior honors thesis.