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

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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
- 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?
- 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

María de Zayas y Sotomayor
- Early feminist writer of the Golden Age
- Examination of parts of her two major works:
  - Novelas amoroas 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

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

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.