

Iberia. *Illustrating El Cid* is an insightful addition to Cidian studies: it approaches and systematizes a field that was, until now, unexplored. Medieval Iberia scholars, and particularly cidianists, will find in it a challenge to explore the Iberian Middle Ages from new perspectives.

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SANDER BERG. *The Marvellous and the Miraculous in María de Zayas*.
Oxford: Legenda, Studies in Hispanic and Lusophone Cultures, 2019. viii +
177 pp.

Focusing on the figure of María de Zayas y Sotomayor, Sander Berg's concise volume is dedicated to delineating the early modern author's pervading indeterminacy in the treatment of the supernatural, a fundamental though understudied feature of her popular novella production. After underscoring that twelve out of Zayas's twenty novellas include possible "marvelous, miraculous or fantastic" aspects, Berg sets out to provide a much needed comprehensive and contextualized overview of the supernatural in Zayas (4).

The study is organized into five chapters. The first provides an overview of Zayas's life and reception. In it Berg ambitiously tackles four broad facets, while strengthening and weakening claims made by previous scholars: (a) the vast gaps of biographical knowledge about Zayas adding more evidence to support assertions of her stay in Italy, (b) the reception of her oeuvre in the seventeenth-century tempering exaggerated contentions to her popularity, (c) the history of her critical rediscovery in the late twentieth-century celebrating Juan Goytisolo's contribution, and (d) a succinct overview of scholarship on the supernatural in Zayas. Berg's main contributions to the study of Zayas center on drawing attention to "the epistemological shift affecting the belief in the supernatural" and identifying "the various subcategories of the supernatural" illustrated by close readings of pertinent novellas (35).

The second chapter, no less ambitious, aims to answer "how the supernatural was conceived in seventeenth-century Spain, how it was experienced and dealt with by the authorities, and what role it played in the literature of the period" (35). The most compelling sections (e.g., 2.5-2.7) are dedicated to illuminating the tempering role the Inquisition played in the persecution of "magical crimes" due to its increasingly skeptical attitude towards witchcraft and miracles alike. As a starting point, Berg rapidly delineates various subcategories of the supernatural as defined by

St Thomas Aquinas, among others, providing examples of differing magical practices (e.g., *brujas* vs. *hechiceras*). However, the bird's-eye-view (term taken from the title of section 2.2) approach to scholarship, applied to most of this section, results in a series of stimulating, albeit fragmented descriptions of magic taken from a mixed array of treatises from the early to mid-1500s (e.g., Castañega, Ciruelo, Vitoria). The discussion then abruptly transitions to another "brief glance" (49), this time focused on the epistemological shift of the supernatural, understood as a transition from belief in the plausibility of magical phenomena to skepticism and even ridicule of what came to be seen as mere superstition (3-4). The main thrust of the argument lies in illustrating how the ambiguity resulting from this shift is captured by the writings of humanist scholars as Pedro de Valencia and Covarrubias, as well as select literary authors as Cervantes and Calderón de la Barca. Regrettably, many of Berg's astute observations and wide-ranging *exempla* lead to unproblematized conclusions with little concern for answering the why of matters nor exploring their relevance in depth.

The final three chapters provide perceptive comparative close readings of novellas by Zayas that feature magic. The aim is to illustrate Zayas's "exploitation of the indeterminacy surrounding the preternatural," which Berg posits is the result of the author's unconscious reflection of the ambivalence of a shifting episteme, combined with baroque reader's predilection for *admiratio* through contradictions (70). Chapter 3 focuses on those that feature ambiguous treatments of magic as false (*El castigo de la miseria*, *La fuerza del amor*), real (*El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud*, *La inocencia castigada*), and/or comical (*El castigo de la miseria*, *El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud*) planting the seed of doubt in the reader. Chapter 4 centers on the figure of the Devil, which Berg complicates by highlighting the opacity manifest in the novellas' open-ended outcomes in *El castigo de la miseria* and, in particular, *La perseguida triunfante* and *El jardín engañoso*. Each section dedicated to a different novella offers a brief summary of the plot, an overview of critical literature, a discussion of the sources, and a convincing and detailed reading underlining the indeterminacy of Zayas's treatment of the supernatural in the tale.

The fifth and last chapter examines all remaining miraculous and fantastical events in the novellas, "disembodied voices, premonitory dreams and pristine corpses" (111), which "turn the miraculous into something eerie" (123). Berg proposes that as occurred with the preternatural, miracles too were treated with growing skepticism. He notes that Zayas "even if she does not cast doubt on the miraculous as such, introduces a different kind of dubiety and hesitation as well as

strengthening her pessimistic view of the fate of women” (114). Unfortunately, both the aforementioned thesis and the causal relationship between miracles and Zayas’s beliefs on fate remain woefully vague. In the subsequent section, which builds on Todorov’s theories of the subgenres of the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvellous including Freud’s notion of the uncanny, Berg introduces a third category, the fantastic-miraculous. However, this extension of the former nomenclature intended to help identify Zayas’s use of hesitation remains largely undefined and underutilized (124). The unit on the subject of miracles draws to a close with an unrelated sub-section titled “A few good men” before transitioning to a divergent discussion on the subject of astrology (132). In the final paragraphs Berg underscores Zayas’s fatalistic view of women’s position within society as embodied by her characters’ “suggestion that astrology trumps free will” (7).

The conclusion efficiently reframes the main thesis of the text: “uncertainty is what links her [Zayas’s] supernatural, preternatural and fantastic episodes, and together they shape the experience of reading Zayas’s novellas just as much as the feminist and transgressive passages” (145). Moreover, Berg invites future scholars to open additional comparative and context-driven avenues of research to bring Zayas’s novellas into conversation with the novelistic production of contemporaries within and beyond Spain, as well as across genres with Jacobean theater and Spanish *comedias*. The last lines are dedicated to a tempered praise of Zayas ability “to complicate a given story or combine elements from various sources ... while at the same time (unconsciously, no doubt) cashing in on the indeterminacy surrounding the supernatural caused by an eroding episteme” (146). While Berg’s work sometimes raises more questions than it answers, it successfully broadens the scope of scholarship dedicated to Zayas and the genre of novellas as a whole.

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STEPHEN BOYD, TRUDI DARBY, AND TERENCE O’REILLY, EDS. *The Art of Cervantes in “Don Quixote.” Critical Essays*. Cambridge: Legenda, 2019. 289 pp.

British Hispanism boasts a long and robust history of engagement with Cervantes, from Thomas Shelton’s early English translations of *Don Quixote* – the first into any language – and the deluxe illustrated editions of the novel produced in eighteenth-century London, to the countless scholars in