



Zayde: A Spanish Romance (The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe)

Marie-Madeleine Lafayette

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Standing at the critical juncture between traditional romance and early novelistic realism, *Zayde* is both the swan song of a literary tradition nearly two thousand years old and a harbinger of the modern psychological novel.

Zayde unfolds during the long medieval struggle between Christians and Muslims for control of the Iberian Peninsula; Madame de Lafayette (1634-93) takes the reader on a Mediterranean tour typical of classical and seventeenth-century romances—from Catalonia to Cyprus and back again—with battles, prophecies, and shipwrecks dotting the crisscrossed paths of the book's noble lovers. But where romance was long and episodic, *Zayde* possesses a magisterial architecture of suspense. Chaste and faithful heroines and heroes are replaced here by characters who are consumed by jealousy and unable to love happily. And, unlike in traditional romance, the reader is no longer simply expected to admire deeds of bravery and virtue, but instead is caught up in intense first-person testimony on the psychology of desire.

Unavailable in English for more than two centuries, *Zayde* reemerges here in Nicholas Paige's accessible and vibrant translation as a worthy representative of a once popular genre and will be welcomed by readers of French literature and students of the European novelistic tradition.

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