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William Childers. *Transnational Cervantes*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2006. xxi + 310 pp. ISBN 978-0-8020-9045-4.

Transnational Cervantes is a sophisticated and beautifully written book that attempts the dual task of interrogating the writer's fictions within their original historical circumstances and in terms of their relevance for the present. William Childers bears in mind the transitional thrust of Cervantes' creative enterprise, which took place as Spain was in the process of defining itself as a nation. The dialectics of patriotism and critique, and of orthodoxy and irreverence, inform the narratives presented here. In the well-crafted preface, Childers announces that he sees *Persiles y Sigismunda* as a type of defamiliarization of *Don Quijote*; and this is an important point, given that the study, while dealing with other texts, concentrates on an oppositional structure, exemplified in the broad geographical scope of one and the insularity (the Iberian trajectory) of the other. The study consists of three parts, each divided into two chapters, and a conclusion.

Part I looks at "The Colonized Imagination" and "Cervantes and *lo real maravilloso*." Childers notes that the conquest and settlement of the New World parallels, in absolutist practice, what he calls internal colonization, predicated on both religion (the statutes of blood purity) and ideology (Counter-Reformation doctrine). He finds in the 1605 *Quijote* prologue a highlighting of the relation between reading and textual/political authority. In questions of control, the reader is calculatedly and ambiguously inscribed as "surrogate monarch and regicide" (18). La Mancha is itself, on several levels, a borderland, as are Sevilla and Argel, and Cervantes discovers in fiction a means of exploring these territories and the conceptual options that they suggest. In a fascinating twist, Childers uses Latin American magical realism as a frame for investigating the supernatural and the marvelous in Cervantes' narratives. The argument is complex and compelling, and it recasts the topic of realism to associate the writings less with the

nineteenth-century European models than with subsequent modernist and postmodernist trends.

Part 2, devoted to *Persiles*, contains chapters that address "Pilgrimage and Social Change" and "Turning Spain Inside Out." Childers contends that, in his last narrative, Cervantes subjects the imperialist paradigm of Spanish identity to "deterritorialization," a reintegration of the closed domain into the community of nations that surround it. In a richly textured and perceptive reading of the pilgrimage as allegory, Childers is concerned with the implications of the arrival of the protagonists in Spain early in Book 3, and he connects the presence of the feminine (and feminine resistance) in the early modern period to the situation of foreigners and to New World encounters. In his consideration of the comprehensive structure of *Persiles*, he signals Cervantes' critique of the reigning ideology, which produces a unified but isolated Spain. The unity itself is, at best, precarious, by virtue of the marginalization of a large segment of the population. Synthesizing the pilgrimage theme with the incorporation of fictional realms, Childers elaborates what he labels a kaleidoscope of changing views of the world, in which the reader's society is juxtaposed with others, with the goal of establishing "a poetics of social restructuring," as one section is titled. In this "northern tale," characters move comfortably in southern spaces, able, paradoxically, to remain inside and outside the fictional representation of Spain. Childers accentuates the social motivation of the narrative over a meditation on individual agency, on the *peregrinatio vitae*. The travels in *Persiles* stress social interaction, and they effect transformations in the pilgrims. Stated succinctly, "the work explores the processes whereby social reality is negotiated" (146).

The last section, influenced, it would seem, by cultural materialism, is, in certain ways, the most daring, because Childers endeavors to indicate the place of Cervantes' fictions in today's world, first through the lens of an increasingly globalized Spain and then from the transatlantic perspective of the United States. In a fascinating complement to the preceding analysis, he deals with "Cervantes and the New Moroccan Immigration to Spain" and "Chicanoizing Don Quixote." He links Cervantes' *moriscos* with the shifting demographics of contemporary Spain and gives special attention to the expelled Ana Félix and to a more symbolic and harder-to-classify figure, the potential *morisca* Zoraida, who justifiably belongs, without belonging, in Spain. The "Chicano reading" of *Don Quijote* is based primarily on *Las aventuras de don Chipote* (1928) by Daniel Venegas, *The Road to Tamazunchale* (1975) by Ron Arias, *The Quixote Cult* (1998) by Genaro González, and *The Mixquiabuala Letters* (1986) and *So Far from God* (1993) by Ana Cañillo. Regarding the group as an internal colony, Childers associates the explicit or implicit allusion to *Don Quijote* in Chicano literature with cultural resistance aimed at the Anglo-American mainstream. He surveys points of contact between the imposition of Western protocols in the New World and the current dynamics of Chicano and Anglo cultures, and he discovers a common denominator in "their problematic relation to European modernity, of which the consumer culture of the contemporary United States is but the extreme (and perhaps final) form" (217). Bypassing conventional real-

ism, to a degree, the Chicano novel finds its roots and its impetus in the Cervantine tradition. In the conclusion, "Cervantes and Shakespeare: Toward a Canon of Spanglish Literature," Childers imagines Cervantes and Shakespeare as figureheads of the Latino and Anglo canons, respectively, in the U.S. What follows is penetrating, clever, prescriptive, and even redemptive.

Childers offers brilliant commentary on Cervantine fiction in general, and his insights on the underappreciated *Persiles* are exceptional. I would place his study alongside those of Alban Forcione, Diana de Armas Wilson, and other notable scholars. Childers manages to treat the most intricate of theoretical matters—and to engage a highly diversified group of theorists and critics—with soundness, clarity, and a sense of fairness. One realizes, notably in the references to his second home in Baeza, that he has learned a lesson from the master: his art has become his life. The range and the depth of this particular transnational approach are remarkable. In my judgment, this is not only one of the best books on Cervantes by a young scholar, but one of the best books on Cervantes.

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