

**“Transcultural (Dis-)Orientations:
Spain and England in *Miguel y William* (Inés París, 2007)”**

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William Shakespeare and Miguel de Cervantes, as two of the most prominent literary figures in human history, have always been a source of unparalleled fascination among their readers and their coexistence in time has pushed many critics to explore the possibility of a mutual interaction between them. Besides, the fictitious meeting between these cultural icons has become one of the greatest literary fantasies of all time and has excited the imagination of many creators, such as, among others, José Somoza in “Una Conversación del otro Mundo entre el Español Cervantes y el Inglés Shakespeare”, Anthony Burgess with his short story “A Meeting in Valladolid” (1989), José Carlos Somoza in his play *Miguel Will* (1997) or Nahum Montt with his novel *Hermanos de Tinta* (2016). Another example is the film *Miguel y William* (Inés París, 2007), which depicts an encounter between Miguel de Cervantes and William Shakespeare in 1590 and fantasizes about the possibility of both writers competing for the love of the same woman while collaborating in creating a play. Criticism on this film has focused on the historical inaccuracies and the lack of realistic verisimilitude of this romantic comedy, which was clearly conceived as an exercise of fantasy and imagination

rather than as a documentary biopic of the two literary giants. However, beyond the distorted specific details about the life of the two great writers as individuals, the film manages to create a compelling representation of two conflicting worlds (Renaissance England and Spain) which collide in the imagined encounter of the two geniuses. In this sense it can be helpful to carry out a reading of *Miguel y William* making use of the critical notion of “orientation”, as developed by Sara Ahmed in her influential work *Queer Phenomenology, Orientation, Objects and Others* (2006), in order to analyse the way the film constructs the opposing images of both nations at the time.

If we look beyond its anachronisms and its conventional romantic comedy plot, *Miguel y William* can be read as a serious engagement with the authors’ time which reveals differing life attitudes that ultimately come to underline and reaffirm, in some cases through the traditional clichés and stereotypes about both countries taken from the “Black Legend”, the differences in their national identities. Those clichés, which make evident the mutual lack of knowledge between cultures constantly highlighted in the film, function as a source of orientation since they are used as a way to reaffirm collective identities. As Sara Ahmed points out, “[o]ne faces where one is not, but a “not” that is reachable or available from where I am, and indeed in being so always reflects back or shows where one is located” (116). In this sense, the stereotypes of the film provide characters with a set of mental coordinates to place themselves in relation to “the other” and vice versa. Thus, by describing “the other”, as the film shows, they are just defining themselves.

Works Cited

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