

## A Subject in Allegorical Clothing: The Case of 'el maldiciente Clodio' in Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda

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Résumé de l'article

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## A Subject in Allegorical Clothing: The Case of 'el maldiciente Clodio' in *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*

*El presente estudio aborda la relación entre personificación alegórica y subjetividad literaria en Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda de Miguel de Cervantes (1617). Aunque se ha reconocido que el personaje de Clodio, maldiciente por excelencia, manifiesta características alegóricas, se han considerado las mismas incompatibles con su notable vida interior. El artículo precisa la conceptualización de maledicencia y murmuración durante el siglo XVII en España como un solo vicio. Luego, se aprovechan estudios filosóficos y psicológicos sobre el autoconocimiento para sostener que la subjetividad de Clodio va en función de su naturaleza alegórica, de modo que su estatus como personificación de los vicios de lenguaje da lugar a la introspección y voluntad de actuar que lo caracterizan.*

Palabras clave: *alegoría, subjetividad, autoconocimiento, Clodio, Miguel de Cervantes*

*This article considers the relationship between allegorical personification and literary subjectivity in Miguel de Cervantes's Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda (1617). Although previous scholarship has recognized the allegorical qualities of the character Clodio, a slanderer par excellence, these qualities have been seen as incompatible with his marked inner life. I begin by clarifying the understanding of speech vices in seventeenth-century Spain as a single vice measured by speech's harmful effect. I then draw from philosophical and psychological studies on self-knowledge to argue that Clodio's subjectivity is a function of his allegorical nature. His status as a personification of the speech vices gives rise to the introspection and agency that characterize him.*

Keywords: *allegory, subjectivity, self-knowledge, Clodio, Miguel de Cervantes*

Book II, chapter 8 of Miguel de Cervantes's *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (1617) ends with the death of Clodio. The text is structured largely as a travel narrative, and Clodio is one of a number of characters who

journey for a season with the protagonists before falling away, in his case, through unnatural means.<sup>1</sup> While Clodio is walking through a palace corridor, a stray arrow pierces his tongue, killing him instantly. Lest the reader be tempted to interpret this extraordinary turn of events as coincidental, the narrator and the protagonist Auristela are on hand to ascribe Clodio's death to divine Providence, who intervenes in an unjust world to carry out a punishment that befits the crime. From his appearance in Cervantes's *novela bizantina*, as an exile from the English court for publicly condemning the king's adultery with Rosamunda, Clodio is both singled out for committing sins of the tongue and condemned for them. Wherever he appears in the text, the epithets *maldiciente* and *murmurador* accompany him, with actions that lend ample support to the charge.<sup>2</sup>

Noting this apparent tidiness of character, several critics have concluded that Clodio is best described as an allegorical personification.<sup>3</sup> According to standard definitions, he is allegorical in that he is a material creation that suggests the immaterial (Lewis 45) and a personification in that he "brings to life, in a human figure, something abstract" (Fowler 1025). Running alongside this designation, however, is the recognition that, with Clodio, there seems to be a humanlike complexity that is not easy to write off as allegorical. Clodio has an unusual inward bent for a romance character, let alone for an allegorical personification. He ruminates constantly and at length over his many schemes and identifies with precision his feelings, motivations, and the opinions he holds of others. Rodrigo Cacho Casal states the puzzle this way:

Clodio es por tanto un personaje alegórico que sirve como contraejemplo para destacar los defectos de la sátira personal. Pero, asimismo, Cervantes le atribuye características y debilidades humanas que le permiten ser algo más que un mero recipiente ideológico. En sus frustradas maquiavelerías se reconoce no a un ser diabólico de una sola pieza, sino a un hombrecito arrogante que tropieza a cada rato con su ciega vanidad. (319)

In this essay, I will argue that Clodio's humanity is a direct function of, and so is inseparable from, his allegorical status. Drawing from the insights of personality psychology and the philosophy of the self, I show that his allegorical nature, rather than flattening his character, as one would expect, deepens him in ways unseen in the rest of the romance. The paradox of Clodio is that in the process of being reduced to a simple correspondence with the speech vices, he is pushed in the opposite direction, toward a fully realized human subject.

In his presentation and development of Clodio, Cervantes takes great care to maximize a materialization of the speech vices without calling undue attention to Clodio's allegorical status. The character's engagement with others in response to the ever-changing circumstances of his environment does not come off as forced or artificial. Yet Cervantes seems to have calculated a series of deliberate encounters in which Clodio lives out key contemporary conventions on the nature of the speech vices. The naturalism relative to the internal workings of the romance conceals what might otherwise appear as didactic.

The terms *maldiciente* and *murmurador* tend to travel together in early modern Spanish texts where the context implies a sin of the tongue. Cervantes hews to this tendency in his own writing, whether Clodio is describing himself, Teresa Panza is slighting her fellow townspeople, or Cipión and Berganza are policing their speech as the latter recounts his life's story.<sup>4</sup> The thread that runs through *El coloquio de los perros* is the most developed treatment of slander in Cervantes's writing aside from the *Persiles*, and it provides confirmation of two points central to an understanding of the vice. First, *malediciencia* and *murmuración* are almost synonyms. If there is any light between them, it is that *malediciencia* places special weight on the evil content of speech and *murmuración* on the evil dissemination of such content. But neither the nature of the words nor the mode of dissemination is at the heart of these vices, which leads to a second idea. The vices are measured by harmful effect: function outweighs content, dissemination, or even purpose. Whenever Cipión or Berganza brings up the speech vices, it is inevitable that an indictment of its effects follows. "Acaba un maldiciente murmurador de echar a perder diez linajes y de calu[m]niar veinte buenos" (Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares* 314), says Berganza, in a typical passage.

A theological treatise published later in the century makes these ideas explicit. Titled variously *General ruina que en todos estados padece el mundo por el vicio de la murmuración* and *Contra el vicio de la murmuración*, the 1675 tract published by the Augustinian Juan Bautista Sicardo sees *murmuración* as a moral problem and a social ill. The worldwide scope he delineates in the title is hardly an exaggeration from Sicardo's perspective because the sin, though it may arise in one person, can thrive only in community. What is a danger to the individual soul imperils everyone with whom it comes into contact:

[N]o puede haber cosa más intolerable que un maldiciente, del cual no está libre la inocencia más clara; destruye los créditos, desdora una buena fama, perturba la paz, siembra discordias y finalmente es un fuego que lo consume todo y una universidad

de maldades; como dice Santiago, “mancha todo el cuerpo, e inflama todo el curso de nuestra vida.”<sup>5</sup> (Sicardo 8)

The vice of *murmuración* condemned in the title becomes exemplified by the *maldiciente* once Sicardo begins his invective, which supports the inference that *murmurador* and *maldiciente* are synonyms. Like Cervantes, Sicardo claims a functional definition of the speech vices: “Consiste pues la murmuración en palabras que disminuyen y desvanecen el crédito y fama de otro” (3-4). Evil speech arises not in the words themselves but in what they do: they destroy, tarnish, and disturb.

The early modern understanding of the self assumes a public value that Sicardo calls *crédito* or *fama*, elsewhere called *reputación* or *honra*, that at any moment could be diminished by a speech act. When the perceived threat to one’s reputation is greatest, violence is the likely result. In his history of honor culture in the seventeenth-century Yébenes de Toledo jurisdiction, Scott Taylor finds that “[r]eputation was at the core of violent disputes” (36). In addition to documenting a slew of stock epithets and expressions that could be interpreted as slights to honor, Taylor surveys depositions in which litigants sought to characterize, after the fact, the speech that led to violence. Even when the words spoken were not in dispute, which was often the case if pronounced in the presence of witnesses, the disputing parties attempted to cast the tone of the words on record in terms of their effect on reputation. Victims of violence were wont to characterize their speech as courteous (“con gran cortesía” was the usual phrase), implying that the aggressor’s reputation was not impugned, in order to show that the violent response was unjustified. On the other hand, those accused of perpetrating violence tended to couch their victims’ speech as affronts to their reputation in order to excuse their violent acts (Taylor, *Honor* 53-55). Both points of view have in common the acceptance that reputation is so fragile that even the way words are spoken can damage it.

*Maledicencia* and *murmuración*, as descriptors for any speech that threatens one’s reputation, like the central role that speech played in litigation over violent quarrels, reveal the extent of anxiety in the early modern era over the individual’s public image. Measuring the viciousness of words by their perceived effect is a capacious standard. There would have been no end to slander litigation had the standard for the breach of virtue been the same as the standard for the breach of law. It was not.<sup>6</sup> In the case of *maledicencia* as a social ill, the words could be falsifiable, but they didn’t have to be. Of the four categories of *murmuración* that Sicardo considers, only in one must the speech be untrue (4).

Clodio's slanderous career bears out the importance of making a distinction between harmful speech as a legal construct and harmful speech as a moral or social construct. He justifies his gossip-mongering in the English court by resorting to the *exceptio veritatis*, the recognized legal defense in *injuria* proceedings that the matter asserted is true, in this case, that the king was indeed having an affair with Rosamunda and that the elevated position of Rosamunda was resulting in chaos. Whatever the strength of this argument in a court of law, it has no sway in the court of public opinion. His shipbound companions, unmoved, respond like a Greek chorus upholding the judgment of the polis. Rosamunda counters Clodio's self-defense by stating that "no todas las verdades han de salir en público ni a los ojos de todos," and Mauricio concurs: "sí, que tiene razón Rosamunda, que las verdades de las culpas cometidas en secreto, nadie ha de ser osado de sacarlas en público, especialmente las de los reyes y príncipes que nos gobiernan" (I.14.224).<sup>7</sup> Mauricio's appeal to the special deference due kings and princes dovetails with Taylor's claim that affronts to honor in the early modern era "were simply the flip side of the standards of etiquette, and any breach of courtesy could be taken as an affront" (*Honor* 245). The more honor was due someone, a king being at the pinnacle of honor-worthiness, the more likely an affront became a risk when that individual was the topic of public speech.

Lurking in the background of Clodio's defense of the truth of his insights is another truth, this one known to the reader, which were it made public in the romance, could sully the honor of a prince and princess. Clodio will later voice suspicion over whether Periandro and Auristela are really the brother and sister pilgrims they hold themselves out to be. The admonition that "no todas las verdades han de salir en público" applies with equal force when the truth is, or should be, obvious and the affront risked by voicing it more difficult to measure than the fallout from a king's adultery. At the very least, we can say that making public Auristela and Periandro's true identities would be tantamount to calling them liars. Further, it would raise the specter of scandal over the indecorousness of an unmarried man and woman having spent time alone together. Sinforosa may be the one who arranges to have the convalescing Auristela receive a visit from Periandro, but the lovers, despite their insistence on propriety, do not turn down the chance to have a private conversation, with Periandro at Auristela's bedside no less (II.4-5.300-03).<sup>8</sup> In any event, whether or not Periandro and Auristela are truly siblings is trumped by the fact that Periandro and Auristela don't want the truth of their relationship known. Transparency is not an early modern virtue, but honor is. The two Northern pilgrims hold themselves out

as siblings. To play along with their posturing is courtesy; to question it would be an affront.

The understanding of *maledicencia* and *murmuración* as words with pernicious effect, words that can be perceived as an affront to honor, are the key for reading two of Clodio's relationships, with Arnaldo and Auristela, that would at first not seem to have direct contact with the sins of the tongue. With Arnaldo, Clodio arrogates to himself the role of adviser, a role that implies the need to observe the advisee's circumstances and on that basis make recommendations on a course of action. This job description does not on its face manifest itself as slander. Clodio's fulfillment of these duties is marked by a welcome dose of good sense. In advising Arnaldo on the proper role of a prince in choosing a spouse, he draws from a deep well of classical and medieval wisdom (Sacchetti 162-63). Equally judicious is Clodio's observation that a prince does not serve his kingdom best by absenting himself from it, especially when the king's father is aged. These are reflections on how a prince ought to govern, suggesting a course of action arising from the reality of the prince's situation as Clodio perceives it. And central to Clodio's perceived reality is the intuition that Periandro and Auristela are not siblings but lovers. The truth of Clodio's intuition and the prudence of his advice could stand on their own without the text vindicating them. That the text does so, giving Arnaldo free rein in the final lines of the romance to express his regret for not having heeded Clodio's prophetic tongue, makes it all the more jarring that his tongue is punished with a mortal arrow (IV.14.712).

Nonetheless, an appreciation of the public value of honor demands that we recast Clodio's prudence as slander. Clodio takes on the role of Arnaldo's confidant, without Arnaldo having invited him into the sanctum of his inner deliberations. This means that when Clodio verbalizes his awareness that Arnaldo is pining for Auristela and when Clodio reprehends him for not attending to his kingdom, he is transgressing a socially marked boundary of decorum. The transgression is all the more reprehensible when the object of transgression is of royal blood. Clodio is fully aware of the violation in prefacing his speech to Arnaldo on the folly of the prince's pursuit of Auristela:

Yo, que siempre los vicios de los príncipes he reprehendido en público, sin guardar el debido decoro que a su grandeza se debe, sin temer del daño que nace del decir mal, quiero agora sin tu licencia decirte en secreto lo que suplico con paciencia me escuches, que, lo que se dice aconsejando, en la intención halla disculpa lo que no agrada. (II.2.290)

Arnaldo is confused by the introduction and so agrees to listen to Clodio's speech in the hopes of clarifying what Clodio means. What Arnaldo doesn't understand is that by consenting to hear what Clodio has to say he is signing away the decorum due his princely station, which exposes him to Clodio's scrutiny of his shortcomings. So clever is Clodio, so brazen in his malevolence, that in requesting Arnaldo's permission to speak, Clodio at the same time announces his intention to speak without Arnaldo's permission ("sin tu licencia"). The narrator's gloss of Arnaldo's permission with the military term "salvoconducto" heightens the characterization of Clodio's speech as the crossing of a boundary and underscores Arnaldo's folly of bringing into his counsel a hostile party (II.2.290). Clodio's preface thus broadcasts his obsession with slander, and the body of his speech substantiates it.

Arnaldo's consent to being advised does follow Clodio's speech, albeit in a weak form. Arnaldo expresses regret that he can't hear more of what Clodio has to say after Periandro interrupts them. Knowing now that Clodio wants to advise him on how to govern his princely affairs, Arnaldo wishes him to proceed. But even with Arnaldo's permission, and unbeknownst to the Danish prince, *maledicencia* is still at work. Given that early modern *maledicencia* is measured by effect, the intended effect of the speaker is a relevant factor in understanding the morality of a speech act. We learn of Clodio's intended effect in advising Arnaldo prior to his second conversation with him, in which he reiterates the folly of a prince neglecting his kingdom for the socially unknown and likely committed Auristela. The omniscient narrator opens a window to Clodio's motivations, noting that Clodio "moría por turbar o por deshacer los amorosos pensamientos de Arnaldo" (II.4.298). *Turbar*, as Sebastián Covarrubias defines it, is "poner en confusión y rebato" (58r), the same kind of activity carried out by Sicardo's archetypal *maldiciente*: "perturba la paz, siembra discordias" (8). The *maldiciente* of the *Persiles* seems to harbor the hope that Arnaldo, were he to act on Clodio's counsel, would not quietly disappear from the action of the *Persiles* but would publicly confront Auristela and Periandro about the nature of their relationship. Clodio longs for an ugly disturbance in what must appear to him as a drowsy, *Candide*-like kingdom where rule goes to the most virtuous and the fighting men pass the day in athletic games. In Arnaldo, he sees the opportunity to speak the right words in the right ear as a means of catalyzing open conflict.

After Arnaldo rebuffs him, Clodio seeks out Rutilio as an accomplice to his slander. The litany of aspersions he casts on his companions in conversation with Rutilio, from Antonio's coarseness to Periandro's effeminacy, need no explanation as examples of *murmuración* or



*maldicencia*. What may not be as evident is that Clodio's love letter to Auristela belongs in the same category. The letter is different from Clodio's previous interventions in the novel in that this speech act is delivered in written rather than oral form, but it is still a communication with language. He sets the tone of the letter at the outset, explaining that his love for Auristela is unique in that it is not founded on the beloved's beauty, grace, or personal qualities but on pity. In any context, such a confession of love would be an insult, but considering that the object is universally acclaimed as the quintessence of beauty, grace, and virtue, Clodio's words carry an even deeper disdain. No less insulting is the way that Clodio, having been banished from his country and unchained from Rosamunda only by pleading before Arnaldo, now postures as Auristela's savior. No one, he claims, can rescue her from her misery except he, not even her brother – "si lo es," he adds. The three words are tantamount to blackmail. With them, he violates the boundary of decorum meant to keep outsiders from peering into the parts of her life she would rather not make public.

Perhaps the most revolting violation is the way that Clodio muses on the hardships that Auristela has had to endure since leaving her home: "El yerro y despiadado acero ha amenazado tu garganta, el fuego ha abrasado las ropas de tus vestidos, la nieve tal vez te ha tenido yerta y, la hambre, enflaquecida y de amarilla tez cubiertas las rosas de tus mejillas y, finalmente, el agua te ha sorbido y vomitado" (II.7a.318). As if he were composing a *blason anomatique*, Clodio articulates Auristela's body part by part, but unlike the gallant exalting his lady's features in sumptuous hyperbole, Clodio imagines Nature in its cruelty abusing each of them in turn. The language is graphic, heavily dependent on physical sensation, as heat, cold, water, and sharp objects work pain over the surface of Auristela's skin. With only words at his disposal and Nature as a menacing substitute for himself, Clodio succeeds in handling, better, manhandling, Auristela's body, not content to finish his twisted fantasy until fire has burned away her clothes and cold rendered her stiff. In his ultimate act of slander, Clodio seeks the purest and most honorable character of the romance to stain with his ostensibly amorous prose. He casts her as a vulnerable inferior, abused and exposed, and himself as the savior willing to overlook her dark secret in exchange for her virginity. His letter underscores once more the understanding contemporary to Cervantes that slanderous words are measured by their effect. They don't need to state an untruth; they don't even need to be pejorative. From the pen of one who is "maldiciente sobre discreto," obscenities can be masked as compliments.

The previous pages have gone to show that the character of Clodio is entirely comprehensible as the materialization of the sins of the tongue, that

he really has only one character trait but that this trait expresses itself in a multi-faceted way to mirror a multi-faceted vice. In this respect, the designation of allegorical personification is justified. Where there is slippage, it is not in how Clodio behaves but in three neutral details that the text assigns to him: his name, his age, and his home prior to his appearance in the romance. A middle-aged exile from the English court called Clodio could conceivably be filled with any kind of personality, ethos, aptitudes, and deficiencies.

These departures from the norms of allegorical personification explain in part how an allegorical personification can exist on the plane of the romance without attracting undue attention to itself. No character in literature is human. That readers can take lines of text and conjure creatures uniting flesh and soul depends on the skill of the writer and the reader's willingness to indulge an illusion. An allegorical personification, no less than Sancho Panza, is a fancy. The former, however, starts at a formidable disadvantage in persuading readers of its humanity. An abstraction is not only inhuman and inanimate; it is by definition immaterial. Cervantes overcomes the initial challenges of adaptation by giving his abstraction a name, age, and recent address. If we hold to the view that in the *Persiles* Cervantes sought to impose some measure of neo-Aristotelian order on Greek romance, these accommodations make sense.<sup>9</sup> There is no functional difference between a character named *Maledicencia* and one whose existence as a character is coextensive with manifestations of *maledicencia*. Calling the character *Maledicencia* would upset the romance's verisimilitude, but relentlessly branding him with the epithet *maldiciente* does not. A Christian allegory would demand that *Maledicencia* be defeated and might send out *Caritas* to wither him in the brilliance of her purity. A stray arrow shot through the tongue is an extraordinary coincidence but falls short of the kind of unmediated supernatural intervention that would raise the hackles of a *preceptista*.

Stepping back from the genre of the *novela bizantina* to the broader classification of romance, we can outline some common features that romance characters have with respect to the humans reading about them. Like humans, romance characters speak and act; they plan and desire. They are acted on, spoken to, and become the objects of the plans and desires of others, in the face of which, and in light of circumstances unfolding in time, they are compelled to recalibrate their modes of interaction with the outside world. It is not accurate to say that the characters of romance have no interior life. Readers would not be able to appreciate what it means for a character to be pining in love, a favorite romance occupation, or simmering with jealousy, as Auristela does for the stretch of a few chapters, without a

narrator's description of internal states or first-person speech production (like spoken discourses, letters, and poetry) that reflect the condition of the heart. Where the humanity of romance characters seems stunted is in the area of interior knowledge. They do not reflect an awareness that they are beings carrying on a unique constellation of experiences, or, for that matter, that the beings surrounding them carry on an inner life.

The awareness of one's own unique experience goes to the heart of what is meant by subjectivity in the philosophy of the self. As Ursula Renz writes at the outset of *Self-Knowledge: A History*, "it is assumed that for a thing to be an agent or epistemic subject requires that it be epistemically acquainted with some of its properties or states in a way that others are not" (1). David A. Jopling, in his monograph on self-knowledge, similarly writes of the unique relationship of the experiencing self to the self, or, more simply, the experience of one's being, under the heading "existential self-relation" (35). Auristela certainly exhibits feelings of jealousy over the nearness of Sinforosa to Periandro, but the text does little to develop her awareness that she is jealous. It does not show her attempting to give shape to the emotion that has captivated her, working through how jealousy affects her mental processes and what it looks like to others, evaluating its morality, or untangling its relationship with her will. In short, Auristela does not exhibit introspection, the inward look by which subjects become aware of their mental states (Gertler).<sup>10</sup>

In all of these areas, Clodio excels, and he excels in them precisely because he is the allegorical personification of slander. It is common in a formal allegory for the allegorical figure to introduce himself or herself to the work with his or her name, which corresponds to the abstraction represented, and a description of how that abstraction functions in the allegory. This technique is especially suited to allegories with a first-person narrator or third-person limited point of view. At the opening of *Cárcel de Amor*, for example, the fictionalized *Autor* encounters a fierce jailer with a prisoner in tow and elicits a standard allegorical introduction from the jailer:

Yo soy principal oficial en la casa de Amor; llámanme por nonbre Deseo; con la fortaleza deste escudo defiende las esperanças y con la hermosura desta imagen causo las aficiones y con ellas quemo las vidas, como puedes ver en este preso que lievo a la Cárcel de Amor, donde con solo morir se espera librar. (San Pedro 84)

Consistent with an allegory, *Deseo* is associated with emblems of his abstraction, a characteristic that Clodio shares.

Likewise, Clodio's opening speech includes an account of himself that resonates with the introductions common to allegorical figures: "Tengo un cierto espíritu satírico y maldiciente, una pluma veloz y una lengua libre; deléitanme las maliciosas agudezas y, por decir una, perderé yo, no sólo un amigo, pero cien mil vidas. No me ataban la lengua prisiones, ni enmudecían destierros, ni atemorizaban amenazas, ni enmendaban castigos" (I.14.223). Simple though it is, this explanation amounts to a summary statement of the abstraction that saturates Clodio's character. With these single introductions from *Deseo* or Clodio, the reader has the necessary framework to understand how the character will function for the run of his appearance in the text. To be fair to Clodio, his introduction is buried in the middle of an extended slander of Rosamunda. This is to say that the larger purpose of Clodio's first speech isn't to define *maledicencia* but to exemplify it, which helps minimize the woodenness of an allegorical figure's appearance in a *novela bizantina*. That account of himself, however, is necessary to understand why he is chained to Rosamunda and why his first words in the romance are to heap insult on his fellow prisoner.

In a formal allegory, this kind of first-person account amounts to characterization, but characterization only in the thin sense that it tells us something about what abstraction the character represents and how the character gives the abstraction material life. Such characterization does not reach any notion of personhood, for the reader carries to the text the assumption that the allegorical personifications are material and animated but not subjects, that is, that they have no interior life. They are like robots reciting statements programmed into them.

We cannot so easily minimize Clodio's account of himself. The intent might be for an allegorical figure to explain the abstraction he materializes, but the effect is to create something looking much like an "I" carrying on the unique experience of itself. He speaks of what motivates him and what gives him pleasure, and we have no reason to doubt that his self-understanding is accurate. He commends his ruthlessness without any sugar-coating; with cold accuracy he confesses that human life is of no value if it stands in the way of his uttering a slanderous word. In summary, he evidences a knowledge of the ends to which he directs himself (slander), an understanding of the reasons for which he directs himself to these ends (pleasure), and an awareness of the effects that he has on the world around him (total havoc).

Other passages bear out the fact that Clodio is capable of reflecting on who he is. Taken together, they present a consistent picture of him as a creature of slander while simultaneously giving us a richer, more complicated picture of his inner life. As Clodio's affect is subservient to

*maledicencia*, so are his will and body. Apparently shocked by the brazenness with which Clodio trumpets his vice, Mauricio and Ladislao try in vain to curb him. Mauricio pleads for the social value of protecting honor, which Clodio dismisses: “Todo lo sé ... pero, si quieren que no hable o escriba, córtense la lengua y las manos, y aun entonces pondré la boca en las entrañas de la tierra, y daré voces como pudiere, y tendré esperanza que de allí salgan las cañas del rey Midas” (I.14.225). Clodio’s response isn’t to critique Mauricio’s defense of the social order, an objective appeal, but to turn the argument back to himself, a subjective appeal.

Clodio’s experience of himself as self overrules the values of the world beyond his obsession. That self understands its existence as embodied; the physical body animates an “I,” which is the locus of desire and will. He has already defined himself by “cierto espíritu satírico y maldiciente”; now he seems to be threatening Mauricio: “Cut me to pieces and I’ll slander you from the grave.” The physical appendages that he does articulate, pen and tongue in his first speech, hands, tongue, and mouth in the second, are metonymic emblems of his slanderous spirit, the necessary accoutrements to write and speak his slander. Like a standard allegorical personification, his material existence is a creature of his abstraction. But his statements also reveal something quite basic about what it means to be a self: an awareness of embodiment. Jopling describes this awareness as the “somatic sense of self,” in which the self is “subjectively and corporeally felt” (55). Clodio knows, and can express, what it means to be at once a constant physical entity driven by one purpose and the sum of bodily parts working toward that purpose.

When inviting Rutilio into his confidence, Clodio makes a markedly similar statement. He beckons, “ven acá, descubridor de tus pensamientos y derramador de tus secretos” (II.5.307-08). Then, rather than assuaging Rutilio that his secrets will be guarded with silence, he wonders aloud how there could possibly be any good sense in trusting a notorious gossip:

¿Qué mayor seguridad puedes tomar de que no se sepa lo que sabes sino no decillo? Todo esto sé, Rutilio, y con todo esto, me salen a la lengua y a la boca ciertos pensamiento que rabian porque los ponga en voz y los arroje en las plazas antes que se me pudran en el pecho o reviente con ellos. (II.5.308)

Clodio brushes aside objections of his own making, even prudence itself, in favor of his overwhelming subjective experience. He understands himself as a slanderous core that controls the appendages and organs that formulate slander. Both admissions, to Mauricio and Ladislao, then to Rutilio, reveal a unique intensity of experience. Clodio has no desire but the desire to slander

and that desire rages like an insatiable appetite that unless acted upon will ravage him inside.

The image of raging thoughts that threaten to spread rot through Clodio's lungs or burst him from the inside is vivid and hyperbolic. It brings out an additional explanation for his unusual subjectivity. Clodio's experience of himself as self is more than the sum of the adaptations that Cervantes would have had to make in writing an unspecified allegorical personification into a Greek romance. Clodio cannot be fully understood as three bare personal details, a body, and a randomly assigned vice that have been fused together and set free to roam on a romantic landscape. The nature of that vice is crucial to Clodio's heightened sense of self, for it is conveyed exclusively in speech acts. The expression of lust need not be spoken or written. Lust can be represented by having an aging royal mistress chase after a strapping young rustic, as with Rosamunda's pursuit of the young Antonio. But the speech vices by definition exist in words. They can be common, vulgar words, the kind that incite the small-town fracas documented in *Yébenes de Toledo*. They can also come with courtly polish and wit. Refined *maledicencia* can inflict far-reaching damage in palaces and literary circles. By providing the single detail that Clodio is lately of the English court, Cervantes is able to represent *maledicencia* in the register of the *discreto*.<sup>11</sup> For an individual to express the inner operations of body and soul requires observational acumen and descriptive prowess. The difference in these candid exchanges is that rather than turning these abilities to the outside and using them to do harm, he turns them inwardly on himself.

The two sources of Clodio's subjectivity, first, the need arising from allegorical personification that the reader be reminded as often as the character is present that he is an abstraction materialized and, second, the expression of that abstraction in speech acts, work to synergistic effect. That synergy is best understood by the concept of agency. Clodio stands out from the other characters of the *Persiles*, especially in Book II, by exhibiting a high degree of this quality. At its simplest, agency is the capacity to act. Philosophers have elaborated on this definition with the insight that the capacity to act is a function of intentionality, understood "in terms of causation by the agent's mental states and events" (Schlosser). Clodio is one of the few characters whose ongoing mental states we as readers can access. We access them easily and constantly. Further, these mental states, as expressed in his dialogues and discourses, gravitate toward what he wants to do and intends to do. From telling Arnaldo that he is about to give him unsolicited advice to laying out before Rutilio his case to seek a better life elsewhere, Clodio follows a reliable sequence of articulating his frame of

mind, broadcasting his plans, then following through with corresponding actions. He is the exception to the kind of character that the romance customarily produces, where, in Baruch Hochman's words, "people are driven, rather than conscious; coerced, rather than struggling volitionally to achieve ends that their conscious selves affirm" (77).

Clodio's agency stands out as more vigorous than it might otherwise be given the relative lethargy of his companions during the palace episode. Most of the characters collected in the first book are dead weight in the plot of the second. Until Periandro settles down into the role of narrator of his adventures, he is more reactive than proactive, destabilized and confused by Auristela's jealousy. He resolves with Auristela to continue the journey to Rome, but the corresponding action doesn't immediately follow. We have unambiguous insight into the mental states of Auristela, Sinforosa, and Policarpo, to the extent that love and jealousy are the province of the thinking subject, but the actions that follow from their thoughts, their various court intrigues, are mediated by the work of others. Whether we examine Clodio by himself or hold him up to the characters around him, his transparent and unrelenting intentionality should cast doubt on the notion that allegory and narrative must be by nature in competition.<sup>12</sup>

One feature of the human self that Clodio exhibits sets him apart entirely from his companions. His sustained and consistent verbalization of who he is and the mental states that he represents in going about his actions make him the only character in the *Persiles* who articulates a self-concept, the term in psychology used to describe how people usually think of themselves (Larsen 441), more fully, "a schematic and adaptive set of beliefs about the self that is used to represent to the person whose self it is, and to others, the character traits, values, moral feelings, desires, and commitments that are considered to define the self" (Jopling 45). The self-concept is schematic because it is organized by a "specific knowledge structure" (Larsen 441). In the case of Clodio, the schema of his self-concept is easy to discern not only because it is so consistent, but also because it is so simple. Everything about him is structured around his identity as slanderer. Clodio reinforces the inseparability of slander from his existence when he is faced with Mauricio's proposal that he and Rosamunda marry. He refuses to entertain the possibility of killing himself as she does, resolving instead: "Yo no me mataré ... porque, aunque soy murmurador y maldiciente, el gusto que recibo de decir mal, cuando lo digo bien, es tal, que quiero vivir, porque quiero decir mal" (I.14.225-26). Given an endless range of justifications for living, he zeroes in on one: the pleasure he feels in slandering.

Clodio articulates the same self-concept both when he is representing himself to himself, what is called his private self-concept, and when he is representing himself to others, his social identity (Larsen 437, 451). To be fair to the text of the romance, there is only one piece of evidence that can be applied without ambiguity to our understanding of his private self-concept. As we find Rutilio tearing up his love letter, we also find Clodio folding his own to keep near his breast, “satisfecho de su habilidad y ufano de su atrevimiento” (II.7a.322). We need look nowhere else for confirmation that Clodio’s self-esteem, the value that he attaches to himself, derives from his slanderous output (Larsen 443). The only time that the text shows Clodio reacting without an audience before him, he validates everything that he has said about where his desires, abilities, and self-worth lie.

But really, every time Clodio speaks it is implicit that his self-representations are ultimately for himself. The fact that he so readily turns objective debate into subjective expression bespeaks an inward bent. Many of his speeches run the length of monologues, but their insensitivity to their putative audiences might make them better cast as soliloquies. Since Clodio’s whole identity, including his self-esteem, is bound up in speech production, it is not surprising that he would consider his ears to be the primary destination for what comes out of his mouth. All speech produced nurtures his ego, and as his ego grows, the likelihood that he will be cognizant of the negative effects that his speech has on others proportionately decreases. From the perspective of literary analysis, he is behaving exactly like the personification of a vice. We take for granted as readers of formal allegory that the allegorical personifications will be oblivious to each other’s personhood. They are voices echoing in a self-made wilderness. To the extent that they peer beyond themselves, their efforts are subsumed in attempts to find accomplices, not unlike Clodio’s overtures to Rutilio.

The formal distinction between private self-concept and social identity matters little in establishing Clodio’s self-schema because all claims about his understanding of himself lead to the same place, that he views himself as a slanderer. Where the distinction is helpful is in accounting for the one occasion in which Clodio makes claims about himself at odds with reality. The character whom we have been told earlier is in his forties presses his amorous suit to Auristela by boasting in his letter to the seventeen-year-old, “Mozo soy, habilidad tengo para saber vivir en los más últimos rincones de la tierra” (II.7a.318). Clodio cannot have the reasonable expectation of deceiving Auristela, for she has the visual evidence to falsify his claim to youth and the common sense to realize that a man who is a threat to the dignity of a king at one court will be a threat to the dignity of every king at



every court. In playing up an implausible virility to his teenage recipient, Clodio accentuates the creepiness of his advance. The essence of his letter has been to characterize himself in such a way that a match with Auristela would not only be desirable but something of a condescension for him. Throwing lies in her face denigrates her superiority at every level, especially the superiority that she derives from her moral purity. Viewed as a manifestation of social identity, this self-conception, however preposterous, falls into Clodio's familiar pattern of using speech to work harm. A slanderer may lie in his efforts to harm another. An unflattering lie about the victim of slander is the easiest route to this end. In this case, a flattering lie about the perpetrator of slander is a tortuous route to the same end.

Most likely, Clodio is aware of the deception but unconcerned about being believed, which is suggested by the way that he reacts to his composition prior to delivery. After reading his letter to Rutilio, Clodio confides to him that he plans to keep it, "por honra de mi ingenio," evidence that the letter has more to do with inflating his self-esteem than tearing down Auristela (II.7a.319). As a vindication of his "ingenio," stating what he believes to be true about himself would be far less ingenious than formulating an imaginative lie. A chapter later, when Clodio does decide to deliver the letter to Auristela, the narrator couches the move as one of "desvergüenza" and "atrevimiento" (II.8.328). It is understandable to describe the act of giving the letter to her as shameless and bold with respect to the mores of the time. With delivery, Clodio's words begin to infect the outside world with their evil. But at its time of composition, irrespective of whether it will ever leave Clodio's breast, the letter is a source of pride for its "atrevimiento." He is aware that merely writing what he has written is transgressive, which is an indication that he is fully aware of his lies. And he is so enamored of them that he can temporarily and, as it turns out, fatally suspend thought over the ramifications of delivery. His words have a narcotic quality that dulls the use of his reason. Viewed from the outside, the sin of slander is measured by its social harm. Inside the vicious subject, we see the slanderer driven by an idolatry of speech.

Fernando Bouza Alvarez, surveying attitudes toward the various modes of communication in early modern Iberia, identifies currents of anxiety over the truthfulness of written speech, whose deliberative nature was seen to facilitate deceit more easily than spontaneous oral speech acts (20). Clodio brings to the fore the seduction in the power of the written word to displace objective truth with subjective fancy. He knows that he is a middle-aged pariah but at the same time lets himself take flight on the page to a place where he is a young man able to marry a mysterious beauty and make a home with her anywhere in the world. Merely by memorializing his

thoughts in a love letter he invents an alternate self with enduring presence. On the level of characterization, Clodio's faulty claims about himself strengthen the illusion that he has a core of being. The ability to exist with contradictions is a human trait. It bespeaks breadth and complexity. In the contradictory claims "I am young and easily assimilated" and "I am middle-aged and an outcast," the one constant is "I am." Part of what it means to be human, or a character approaching human subjectivity, is to be discontinuous; a contradiction is evidence of the plenitude of the self (Hochman 92).

With this discontinuity, Clodio comes close to, but ultimately falls short of, the sense of mystery central to the modern notion of self, the assumption, to use Charles Taylor's words, that "[w]e are creatures with inner depths; with partly unexplored and dark interiors" (115). If Clodio's far-fetched account of himself to Auristela hints at a dark interior, it is a place fully illumined with the knowledge that he is slander personified. Clodio's own monolithic view of himself excludes the possibility of unexplored regions within. No person can be reduced to a single trait; very few would describe themselves with as streamlined a self-concept as Clodio's.<sup>13</sup> It is unavoidable for a human not to form a self-concept, but the research does not imply that our self-schemas are meant to be exhaustive understandings of ourselves. On the contrary, the individual lives with the assumption that he or she is ultimately irreducible, nothing more or less than "I." The characters in literature who appeal to us as most like humans do so perhaps for this reason more than any other, that they feign the impenetrability of pure consciousness.

Though Clodio's pretensions to humanlike subjectivity have limits, the strides he makes should matter for our understanding of how pre-modern genres like the romance and medieval allegory were already working out common features of the novel, even if in isolated and embryonic ways. In his wide-ranging studies of allegory, Angus Fletcher has observed allegory's common quality of "ruminative self-reflexivity," its tendency to keep returning to its own constructs of meaning (10).<sup>14</sup> In the kind of formal allegories that flourished in pre-modern Europe, this quality would be diffused across the work, and with the reader's expectations preadjusted to the experience of the genre, it would be transmitted with little notice. Cervantes's great feat with Clodio is in harnessing allegory's power of "ruminative self-reflexivity" to animate a character in a romance. As a speech vice fully alive to itself, Clodio manages to project the illusion of psyche.

Psychological analyses of literary characters are more plausible and more useful the more faithfully the characters exhibit humanlike mental

processes. The ease with which Clodio's expressive inner life lends itself to this kind of study obscures some of the incongruousness in the use of late modern psychological categories to evaluate an early modern literary character. Yet despite the chronological gap between technique and subject and the difference in kind between human being and imaginative creation, there is an important historical relationship at work. The givenness of the self as construct is one of the defining features of modernity.<sup>15</sup> Among the many places where this construct takes shape is in the artistic production of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. Early modern scholars have been showing for decades how literature and other forms of art reflect and give rise to a conception of the self that is absent in previous centuries but of enduring significance for those that would follow. In turn, the discipline of psychology, the study in naturalistic terms of mental and emotional phenomena, is one of modernity's most prominent progeny. Understood this way, the artistic reflections on the human that are apparent in the *Persiles* are the intellectual ancestors of science's later expansions into the workings of the human mind.

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#### NOTES

- 1 I use the terms romance, and more precisely, Greek romance, to identify the genre of *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* in English and *novela bizantina* to identify it in Spanish. Sacchetti's monograph is the most comprehensive examination of the *Persiles's* genre.
- 2 Four times in the text the narrator refers to Clodio as "el maldiciente Clodio," or "Clodio, el maldiciente," the final occasion at the moment of his death (I.15.234, II.2.289, II.8.335). He is elsewhere a "gentil maldiciente" (II.5.307). Clodio also takes the related title of "murmurador," in the words of the narrator ("nuestro murmurador," II.5.307) and in the mouth of Rutilio (II.7a.319, II.5.311). Clodio, for his part, recognizes that to others he is a negative type, indirectly participating in his reduction to caricature. He confesses to Arnaldo, "tengo fama de maldiciente y murmurador," making no attempt to deny or qualify the charges (II.4.299).
- 3 Among these are Casaldueiro (71-72), Wilson (68-69), and Cacho Casal (312-16).
- 4 Teresa Panza expresses her concern over "el murmurar y el maldecir" were her daughter to marry beyond her station (*Don Quijote* II.5.586). In *El coloquio de los perros*, Berganza first introduces the meta-criticism of *murmuración* as

- he rounds off the account of his sojourn in the Matadero (Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares* 306).
- 5 The spelling and punctuation of quotations from Sicardo's treatise have been modernized.
- 6 Spanish law, as early as the *Fuero Juzgo* incorporated the Roman concept of *injuria*, criminalizing a variety of false public imputations (Maciá Gómez 14). The *Siete Partidas* allowed two causes of action for damage to reputation arising from another's public speech. *Injuria de palabra* (now called *injuria*) encompassed any harmful speech, while *injuria de hecho* (now called *calumnia*) applied to the accusation that another had committed a crime (Maciá Gómez 15-16, 47). The truth of the matter asserted was a recognized defense to *injuria de palabra* and *injuria de hecho* in the *Siete Partidas* (574-75; VII, IX, I). Maciá Gómez finds that "la veracidad de la imputación como elemento de exculpación" is a constant throughout the history of the legal concept, in Spain and elsewhere (13-14). Taking dueling to be an extralegal mechanism of justice, it bears mentioning that early modern dueling manuals circulating in Spain were likewise in agreement that to justify a duel the injurious words had to be false (S. Taylor 24).
- 7 To facilitate reference to other editions, citations to *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* and *Don Quijote* use the following format: book.chapter.page.
- 8 The fact that neither of the lovers is responsible for arranging the meeting in Policarpo's palace gives the veneer of truth to an observation much later in the book, that "la mucha honestidad de Auristela jamás dio ocasión a Periandro a que en secreto la hablase" (IV.1.630).
- 9 In broad terms, this is Forcione's reading of the *Persiles* (169).
- 10 If there is anyone in the *Persiles* who approaches Clodio in the ability to direct reflection toward the self, it is the lust-ridden Rosamunda, the other character traditionally categorized as an allegorical personification. Like Clodio, she animates a single vice, but unlike him, she breaks out of the allegorical cast at the end of her life, repenting of her sins. Her confession and plea for pardon to Antonio is her maximum disclosure of self-knowledge, which is to say that she is most fully a subject, and therefore most fully human, when she is least allegorical (Sacchetti 160). Clodio travels the more unlikely path, becoming more like a human as he plays with greater gusto the role of allegory.
- 11 On the nature of Clodio's *discreción*, see Egido (198-200, 205).
- 12 This is the view articulated by Teskey: "It seems, then, that in allegory narrative and personification are inversely prominent" (23).
- 13 See Larsen on approaches to self-complexity (447).
- 14 Paxson makes a similar argument (164-66). His treatment of the birds personified in Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* emphasizes the role that speech production can play in heightening allegorical self-reflexivity (90-91).

15 This is the premise of Charles Taylor's monograph. See especially ix-xi.

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