Persiles' Retort: An Alchemical Angle on the Lovers' Labors

RUTH EL SAFFAR

Persiles, especially coming as it did on the heels of Cervantes' Don Quixote, has a long history of baffling its critics. In what follows I would like to touch briefly on some of the expectations we bring to the reading of prose fiction and then propose a radically different perspective from which to consider Cervantes' last work. From this other perspective, based on the alchemical view of the opus as cyclical rather than linear, I will suggest that Persiles is a psychological and literary achievement of profound significance. In the alchemical perspective, it is Don Quixote and the novelistic tradition of the solitary hero's journey toward death that seems impoverished. The mysteries that take the initiate out of captivity to ego-bound consciousness and linear time lead, as we shall see clearly in the case of Persiles and Sigismunda, into the heart of fecundity and procreativity as they enact the process by which that which is separate becomes united with what was once conceived of as other to itself. Continued separation of the sort experienced by Don Quixote leads inevitably to death and must be seen, from the perspective being explored here, as a failure.

Until very recently few have been able to read Persiles without looking for ways to explain it away. I think that is because we require of our "novels" that they be ingested for their plot interest, and that they be judged according to the norms of everyday life. Like the Canon of Toledo, like the neo-Aristotelians whose apotheosis of verisimilitude made likeness to outer reality the lynch-pin for a palatable theory of fiction, we tend to ask of a work of art that it "make sense" in an intellectual way. Few of us admit to Don Quixote's passion for romance, and fewer still know how to enter the symbolic language of a text to read it imagistically. Yet only such a style of reading yields the incredible treasures contained in Persiles as it spirals out temporally from the present forward into the future and retrospectively into the past, juxtaposing images of birth and death, transcendence and depravity in a bewildering array of events. Curiously, it is Don Quixote who alerts us to the importance of a reading style not dependent on the satisfactions of the intellect.¹

In the mini-romance he spins for the Canon of Toledo in I, 50, Don Quixote evokes a scene that has all the characteristics of what the alchemists might call a solutio experience.² Let us re-read a little of the extended fantasy: "Tell me," Don Quixote asks the Canon,

"could there be anything more delightful than to see displayed here and now before our eyes . . . a great lake of pitch, boiling hot, and swimming and writhing about in it a great number of serpents, snakes and lizards, and many other sorts of savage and frightful creatures; and then to hear issuing from the middle of that lake a most dismal voice crying: "You, Knight, whoever you may be, that gaze on this dreadful lake, if you would reach the treasure hidden beneath these black waters, show the valour of your dauntless heart and plunge into the middle of its dark, burning liquor?" (I, 50, 440)³

Don Quixote continues his fantasy, imagining, of course, that the knight will overcome his fears and jump in, thereupon finding himself in the midst of a meadow more beautiful than the Elysian fields. After describing the natural and artistic wonders of such a paradise, he continues to press his case to the Canon:

¹ Alban Forcione, in Cervantes, Aristotle, and the "Persiles", was the first to analyze as a coherent literary response Don Quixote's anti-Aristotelian defense of the chivalric novels in I, 50. I am indebted to his insights for this part of my reading.

² The alchemical terms used here and throughout the article come from the vast material published on alchemy in the seventeenth-century. Although much has been written on alchemy by twentieth-century commentators, perhaps the most accessible reference for an explanation of the terminology is Edinger.

³ This and all subsequent references to Don Quixote are drawn from the Cohen translation.
The fantasy goes on to evoke still more sensual delights: a sumptuous feeding, the sounds of beautiful singing and finally the experience of being surrounded, after dinner, by more lovely damsels.

Don Quixote offers the story of the Knight of the Lake as an alternative to the Canon of Toledo's theory of art. That theory, which dominated late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century ideas about prose fiction, places a premium on verisimilitude and the satisfaction of the faculty of reason. In Don Quixote's artistic value system, it is imagination, rather than reason, that is seeking satisfaction. His underwater fantasy, unrealistic though it obviously is, clearly responds to a need within him. His conscious appropriation of the role of knight —with his aspirations to fame, power, and efficacy— carries on its underside a longing to return to the passivity of infancy, where countless lovely ladies will bathe, oil, dress, feed, and sing to him. The fantasy, while demonstrating how art satisfies by being the carrier of unconfessable desire, also reveals a deeply regressive tendency that is the mark of an immature ego. If neo-Aristotelian literary theory is repressive, what Don Quixote uncovers beneath the repression is a lost infancy in the collective unconscious whose needs are met in images of care and feeding in a never-never land of beautiful and oliferous female caretakers.

Erich Neumann has called the blissful state of dissolution that Don Quixote elaborates in his fantasy "uroboric incest":

In uroboric incest, the emphasis upon pleasure and love is in no sense active, it is more a desire to be dissolved and absorbed; passively one lets oneself be taken, sinks into the pleroma, melts away in the ocean of pleasure. . . . The Great Mother takes the little child back into herself, and always over uroboric incest there stands the insignia of death (Origins, 17).

Longing for the Great Mother and the restoration of the age when she reigned is the motivator for Don Quixote's quest, as he makes clear in his Golden Age speech in I, 11. As powerful as his armor is the drive to break through it —to risk taking in, and being taken in, by the world from which he has lived so separated. The fantasy of the snake-infested lake reveals both the danger of the desire to break through, and, correspondingly, the primitive nature of the urges his armor holds in check. Diana Wilson, in an informal communication, has called Don Quixote's secret wish to be taken in by so many anonymous ladies his diapersonal fantasy. In Part II, where the knight's search, through an increasing passivity and contact with earth and water, carries him ever-closer to his death, the idealization of the damsel figure itself begins to break down as the women he meets become increasingly coarse, hostile and menacing.

Images of death, disorientation and darkness in fact dominate the Don Quixote of Part II, offering a melancholic counterpoise to the heroic, solar qualities the hero sought to incarnate in Part I. The crows who throw him to the ground in Chapter 22 as he initiates his descent into the Cave of Montesinos are harbingers of the death and despair he will encounter underground in the figures of the enchanted knights Durandarte and Montesinos, just as the post-menopausal Belerma, with her black robes and sallow complexion, portends the failure of his hopes for a recovery of the lost Dulcinea. In fact, the cave dream that Don Quixote accepted as truth shows division, not union, to be the end product of his search for the idealized feminine. Both Belerma and Dulcinea appear in the dream not only corrupted and debased, but also on the other side of the glass —out of reach if not out of sight. As we have already seen, the uroboric incest fantasy in which Don Quixote indulges in I, 50 suggests that the knight is prepared only for the kind of connection to the feminine that implies dissolution, and hence, death. The dream in II, 23 reinforces the sense that Don Quixote as knight can never break through to that other, and that, furthermore, that other is a figure of decay and loss who cannot provide him with what he wants.

Using the imagery of alchemy as a metaphor for the psyche's search for union with the other, we could say of Don Quixote that the goal of the opus —the coniunctio or marriage of the King and Queen, is aspired to but not achieved. Don Quixote intuitively understands the imprisonment of psyche in matter —it is that intuition that drives his chivalric career and that stimulates his idea that the women he meets along the way are being carried off against their will. He imagines —as he tells Sancho in I, 19— that he will in fact be able to pull off marriage to a princess and ascend to the throne by the strength of his sword. When the sword and the will that wields it tire, however, as they do in Part II, the fact of failure is revealed. The effort to force the soul's redemption ends not in fulfillment but in death, as Don Quixote acknowledges in Chapter 72 when he realizes that Dulcinea will not appear.

I find it curious, if not symptomatic, that it would be Don Quixote that has so captivated our collective imagination. Don Quixote is a case history of a modern Western man, cut off from his mythic and archetypal roots and seeking, through adjustments in consciousness (taking on a new name, a new persona, a new career), to establish a regenerative relationship to the captive soul, or to whatever that lost and discarded "other" might be called. The approach to union that Don Quixote enactsthe imitative, so many of his compatriots, indeed, parroting the whole colonial enterprise—is bound to fail. Cervantes' masterpiece exposes the relationship between armoring and addiction long before we have awakened collectively to their grip on us.

In Don Quixote the solutio experience that is desired is also resisted. In Part II when water imagery begins to emerge, the knight is still armored, so that when he responds to the call of the captive spirit at the shores of the Río Ebro, he cannot make the rescuing journey. When he falls from his oarless boat in I, 29, the armor nearly drags him under. On the shores of an even larger body of water he once again falls and faces death, with the consequence this time that he relinquish his armor for at least a year. If solutio was
procedural clarifications. It is not necessary to this analysis to imagine that Cervantes consciously adopted alchemical imagery for the work in which he intended to “compete with Heliodorus.” The reading I offer here is not one that grows out of an intertextual impulse, though such an approach might well buttress what I am attempting here. The period during which Cervantes was writing his major works happens to coincide with the golden age of European alchemy. The works of Heinrich Khunrath and Michael Maier, along with many others, were published within a few years of Persiles. The wood-cuts, musical compositions and poetry that were directly inspired by alchemical insights testify to the strong attraction alchemy carried for creative figures of the Renaissance. Still, my case here rests on the deeper sense that the fount of all imagery is the psyche itself, and that under certain conditions, that imagery may come forth spontaneously.

My thesis here is that Cervantes’ Persiles, if some of its parts were written early, is in over-all conception the work of Cervantes’ last years. I can well imagine, as Avalle-Arce has conjectured, that the basic matter of Books I and II was written before Don Quixote. Books III and IV have more of the feel of the later writing, it is also true. What interests me, however, is the totality, the final disposition of the disparate parts into a whole that has the overwhelming coherence of a completed psychological journey—one that plunges its principal protagonists in medias res into the refining retort where they will undergo the burning, dissolving, coagulating, mortifying, putrifying, separating and conjoining processes by which their desires are refined and transformed.

Moving now into some general points about the nature of the alchemical work, it might be helpful to consider the writings of Carl Jung, whose fascination with the relationship between alchemy and psychoanalysis influenced his writing throughout the second half of his life. He says of alchemy that it represents the projection of a drama both cosmic and spiritual in laboratory terms. The opus magnum had two aims: to rescue the human soul and the salvation of the cosmos. . . . This

work is difficult and strewn with obstacles; the alchemical opus is dangerous” (C. G. Jung Speaking, 228)

As we shall see as we delve further into Persiles, the journey of Persiles and Sigismunda is one carried out in constant exposure to death. It follows, in fact, a pattern of death and rebirth that Alban Forcione also has traced in his Cervantes’s Christian Romance. Unlike the Christian journey, however, whose goal is transcendence, the alchemical one being enacted between Persiles and Sigismunda leads toward earthly fecundity and power, as symbolized in the marriage of the king and queen. As Eduardo González has shown in a complex analysis of the first 11 chapters of Book I, the work is to escape the mono- and homoerotic economies in which the protagonists are caught.

Alchemy, using the imagery of chemical processes, involves the procedures by which base matter—the prima materia, is cleansed of its dross so that the essential perfection hidden within it may be freed. The end of the alchemical opus is often imagined as a royal marriage or coniunctio. Many alchemical woodcuts depict the last stage of the alchemical process as the marriage of the King and Queen. And, incidentally, they often show an earlier stage in which the union—not achieved but foreshadowed—involves the royal pair as brother and sister. Before that stage, as a still earlier foreshadowing, alchemical imagery shows the union in the figure of the hermaphrodite, the “monstrous” uniting in a single body of the opposites which must later be differentiated so as to be reunited.

Essential to the work, so basic that many alchemists have called it the “root of alchemy”, is the bath, or solutio. In many places the whole opus is summarized by the phrase “dissolve and coagulate” (Edinger, 47). In Persiles, unlike Don Quixote, the solutio experience is indeed primary. The work, and the work, begins when the couple has reached the stage of dissolution, when their outer self-definitions, including their gender identification—have been stripped entirely away. They are literally at sea when Book I begins. Jung says of the symbolic process that it is “an experience in images and of images.” (CW 9.1 par. 82). He adds further that:

its development usually shows an enantiodramia structure like the text of the I Ching, and so presents a rhythm of negative and positive, loss and gain, dark and light. Its beginning

is almost invariably characterized by one’s getting stuck in a blind alley or in some impossible situation; and its goal is illumination or higher consciousness, by means of which the initial situation is overcome on a higher level (9.1, par. 82).

The place where Persiles is stuck is represented imagistically at the beginning of the novel in the cave to which he has been
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between opposites, is never perceived by the intellect. Ordinary consciousness works only between terms in opposition, which is why the intellect unenlightened by the well-springs of the archetypal is so prone to absolutist positions and therefore to violence. The third term, by which the opposites are reconciled, emerges not out of consciousness, but in the unconscious. It arises not through efforts to control and decide, but through indirection, and a willingness to lose one's way by taking an unfamiliar route.

The "third" that intellect never anticipates or understands turns out in this case to be Persiles' mother Queen Eustoquia, who is little impressed with codes of honor when it comes to the health and well-being of her beloved son Persiles. Serafido explains to Rutilio:

[Persiles] went to tell [Queen Eustoquia] that he was dying for Sigismunda, and that he'd decided to let himself die rather than betray the respect he owed his brother. This confession brought the queen's dead happiness back to life. She gave Persiles hope, saying she'd help him even if it would mean pushing aside Magsimino's wishes, for when it comes to saving a life there are more important things to consider than a brother's anger (343-44).

Here, however, unlike the case in Don Quixote, the mother's path does not draw the son into the magma of uroboric bliss. Instead of inviting him back to the mother or Great Mother image, the human mother Eustoquia points beyond herself to a relationship to the feminine that is not regressive but in fact growth-enhancing.

As Jung has said in a passage already cited, the goal of alchemical work, as of analytical work, is not so much to get out of the presenting difficulty as to achieve illumination through overcoming it at a higher level. As the band of pilgrims makes its way from the frozen northern islands to Rome over the course of the four books of Persiles, the hero continues to experience the same problems of rivalry and desire that drove him out from home in the first place. Persiles escapes conflict with his brother

7 All English citations to Persiles are from the Weller and Colahan translation.
8 Erich Neumann, in The Great Mother distinguishes between a feminine that has a regressive effect, and a feminine that promotes growth. The former is more associated with the engulphing mother, the latter, with the maiden.

coagulatio

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Coagulatio caught up in matter and feels encumbered by it in the process, from whence comes the meaning of "labors" or "trials" in the book's title. Sigismunda he is following an inner authority against an outer one. The fall into matter that is implied in the which is punished by consequence of taking a step that will challenge outer authority. As Edinger says, "being an ego is inextricably connected with guilt, of who he is and where he came from.

The initiating problem out of which the whole journey grew, we finally learn as the journey draws to its end, is that Persiles was caught deep in a conflict between his love for Sigismunda, a princess sent to live with them because of a war in her native Frislandia, and his fear of Magsimino, the older brother betrothed to Sigismunda. So stuck is Persiles in that love triangle —so paralyzed by fear of his brother, so overcome by desire for his brother's fiancee— that he has begun to waste away.

Jung frequently commented regarding rational thinking that "tertium non datur" —that is, the third term, the resolution

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Magsimino only to find it again in his rivalry with Prince Arnaldo. In every book Persiles has to contend with rivals of high birth who represent aspects of his own pretensions toward her. His flare-ups of anger and rivalry are expressed in each book through "inferior" characters who stand for the weaknesses in his nature that he is learning to overcome. The fires in Persiles burn those who have not been able to tame their lust. They have their counterpart in the alchemical refining process which Jung found so analogous to the work of individuation.

Persiles' movement into action out of depression introduces another key process in the alchemical work, a process the alchemists called coagulatio. Coagulatio means something like taking on flesh, becoming embodied. It can feel like a punishment, because it is the consequence of taking a step that will challenge outer authority. As Edinger says, "being an ego is inextricably connected with guilt, which is punished by coagulatio, getting caught up in matter —doing something" (93). When Persiles sneaks off to Rome with Sigismunda he is following an inner authority against an outer one. The fall into matter that is implied in the coagulatio, while it is redemptive, also takes on the quality of that which needs to be redeemed. Persiles, by leaving for Rome with Sigismunda, becomes caught up in matter and feels encumbered by it in the process, from whence comes the meaning of "labors" or "trials" in the book's title. Coagulatio engages the initiate in labor, in the hard, physical, working through.

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The opening scene on the Barbaric Isle, the scene by which the work begins, depicts the hero imprisoned, and marked for death. The death sentence is not absolute, however, and Persiles manages, because of his beauty and radiance, to escape the fate to which he appeared destined. The opening scene, therefore, is an instance all unto itself of the cycle of death and birth, a cycle Persiles will repeat again and again as he works his way to Rome. The icy seascape and isolated islands that are the geographical backdrop of Persiles' trials in Book I figure forth his own frozen and isolated soul. It will be through the combined action of solutio and calcinatio, through the process of dissolving and burning, that he will distill, out of the dross of desire, the essence that is his love for Auristela.

The fiery phase of alchemical work, called calcinatio, has to do with affect. Of this part of analysis Edward Edinger says:

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<td><strong>Calcination</strong> brings about a certain immunity to affect and an ability to see the archetypal aspect of existence. To the extent that one is related to the transpersonal center of one's being, affect is experienced as ethereal fire (Holy Spirit) rather than terrestrial fire — the pain of frustrated desirousness.</td>
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<td><strong>Calcination</strong> is captured at a basic level in the prophecy which determines the barbarians' actions in Book I. The hearts of the male captives, we are told, are dried and ground into a fine powder, which is then made into a drink. The man who will be designated to father the child who will win power and respect for the inhabitants, is the barbarian who can drink the potion without wincing. The recipe closely resembles that used by the alchemists in the calcinatio phase. And since calcinatio represents the necessary frustration of concupiscence, we can see why the barbarians are so slow to find a man among them capable of drinking the potion that has the quality of quick-lique. So poor are the barbarians at mastering lust that instead they fall into it, confalgrating their entire island in the process.</td>
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<td>The operations of calcinatio and solutio around which so much work is carried out are exemplified in the inset stories of Rutilio and Manuel de Sousa Coutinho in Book I. The two stories reveal the Scylla and Charibdis of the lovers' journey: Rutilio, who runs off with his dance student to Rome, has allowed lust to dominate him; Manuel, who endures a two-year wait to marry the woman he loves only to discover on his wedding day that she has given herself to Christ, has fallen into despair. The first escapes, but barely, the consuming fires of the Barbarians; the second attempts to throw himself into the sea.</td>
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<td>Fire and water — desire and despair: these are the elements through which Persiles is working, elements and passions reiterated in every book and circulated through many of the characters. Throughout each of the four books Periandro and Auristela will steer a difficult course between passion and renunciation, between enacting a cheap week-end get-away to Rome à la Rutilio and giving up and casting themselves in the freezing waters of rejection and isolation à la Manuel.</td>
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<td>That the process of calcinatio is central to the refining work to which Persiles has submitted himself is clear not only because he confronts the dangers of fire in every book, but because of the central role of Rutilio, who has also escaped the fire, and who best represents Persiles' journey in its negative aspect.</td>
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Rutilio learns, just as Persiles has to, to tame the fires of lust. It is he who is present at the final coniunctio at the end of the work.

Yet Rutilio's name also suggests another aspect of the alchemical process, the notion of circulatio or circumambulation. Persiles is constructed along a cyclical patterning, so that what is up comes back down, and what is down must go back up. Persiles and Sigismunda's journey is not over, even at book's end, as the presence of Serafido and Magsimino and Rutilio at the end make clear. Persiles and Sigismunda will return to the north. Their work may require renewal at a later date. The narrator tells us they had many children and grandchildren. Each new person and each new generation opens up the opportunities for the continued process of death and rebirth, of decay and renewal, or going out and coming back, that is represented in the alchemical work.

Of all the many pairs of lovers represented in the Persiles, only Periandro and Auristela withstand the tests of frustration and jealousy to which, again and again, they are subjected in a kind of ever-renewed, sublimated, “patriarchal taste test.” Each with experience they grow in consciousness, and, correspondingly, the fires become less and less threatening, more and more contained. In Book I on the Barbaric Isle the pilgrims barely escape with their lives when lust among the barbarians sets off an orgy of murder and burning. In Book II the fire that sends the pilgrims on the run is set by craft, not brutish stupidity, and the pilgrims more easily escape. In Book III a tower with metal doors protects them from one fire, and the other they escape before it even becomes a danger to them. Finally, in Book IV, the fire appears as a strictly inner affair, and manifests in a fever which immolates Persiles' only true rival, his feared brother Magsimino, come to Rome to impede his younger brother's marriage.

If fire is the instrument by which the self is purged of affect and passion, the alchemical process of solutio works to break down ego and persona barriers. The sea into which Persiles and Sigismunda set out as they follow Queen Eustoquia's suggestion that
they go to Rome dissolves all attachment to their egos—driving them into roles and activities never before experienced by a pampered young prince and princess. For two years they wander in strange dress under assumed names among people of languages and customs utterly alien. They are even, for a long time, separated from one another. So absolute is the dissolution of identity of Periandro and Auristela that when they first find one another after having wandered separately and lost on the seas and among corsairs and pirates, that they embrace, each dressed in the clothes of the opposite gender. Their cross-dress embrace, albeit monstrous, provides an image of their ultimate union. The hermaphrodite, a frequent symbol in alchemical drawings, stands for the conjunction of opposites that Persiles and Sigismunda in fact ultimately produce out of their island of lust and identity confusion. In this sense the prophecy of the Barbaric Isle can be interpreted symbolically as Persiles' own search for rebirth out of his languor and desire and into a more efficacious expression of self.  

At the moment when their true journey with one another begins, therefore, the solutio has so dissolved their identities that nothing of who they once were remains but their love. In the disguise they take on once they have escaped the dangers of the Barbarous Isle, however, they represent themselves gender-appropriately, but as brother and sister, and not as lovers. Edinger says of the solutio process in alchemy:

Sol and Luna will stand for the masculine and feminine principles as they concretely manifest themselves in the personality at the beginning of the process. In other words, the dominant conscious attitude of the ego is represented by Sol and the anima at its current state of development by Luna. These two are dissolved in a "friendly water"—that is, mercury—which is equated with the maternal womb and corresponds to the prima materia. Incest symbolism is emphasized by the phrase, "it behooves you to join consanguinity, a sameness of kind" (48).

As Persiles and Sigismunda travel disguised as brother and sister, they do have a real incest problem, one that Clodio suspects early on and that comes to a head in Book IV when Constanza and Antonio the Younger confront Auristela about her excessive love for a man she insists on calling her brother. At the moment when their true journey with one another begins, therefore, the expression of self.

In the woodcuts of the Rosarium Philosophorum we see the stages of the transformation process as Sol and Luna, masculine and feminine work their way through to the stage of enlightenment that is represented in the mysterium coniunctionis, or marriage of the king and queen. In the hermaphroditic embrace of the couple at the beginning of Book I we see foretold the beginning of a transformation process that will end in the marriage of Persiles and Sigismunda as king and queen of their now united islands. That the union is productive and creative is signalled by the last several words of the book, which refer to Persiles' and Sigismunda's "long and happy line of descendants."

Although coniunctio is the goal of the process, and calcinatio and solutio (among others) the means by which it is reached, it is important to note that the work goes on in the unconscious. Don Quixote could not really reach his goal of union because he was trying to achieve it by the strength of his own will. His ego was therefore always in the way. He could not sink into the chemical bath without drowning. Persiles and Sigismunda, on the other hand, have plunged in when the story begins. They are at the mercy of forces greater than they, and are in danger at any moment of succumbing to those forces. I think that a lot of the play with the magical and the miraculous in Persiles has to do with the fact that these basically unconscious figures need wolves to warn them off and sages to guide them in territory completely unfamiliar to the intellect.

In the light of the magical elements in Persiles, it is interesting to contemplate the role of the sage, and to note that all along the way, from Book I to Book IV, there is a figure of prophecy—a seer—who both provides an image of the goal and gives pointers as to how that goal can be achieved, or at least helps outline when the dangers become too great. In the first Book the wise old man figure is a prophet, admired by the barbarians, who has foretold the birth from among them of a powerful leader. It is a regenerative prophecy, and involves calcinatio and coniunctio, as we have seen, in an effort to produce the divine child or savior.

In Book II the wise old man emerges in the figure of the astrologer Mauricio, who is able to foretell disasters occasioned by lust and thus to save the pilgrims. Through his daughter Transila he also participates in the seeking of a true coniunctio as he supports her in resisting the first night rape rituals common among his countrymen. His predictions are useful and accurate, but they are of a clearly mundane nature and are subject to considerable discussion and skepticism.

It is at the end of Book III, however, just as the pilgrims are about to reach Rome, that the fullest expression of enlightenment appears in the figure of the wise old man Soldino. In addition to having the power of prophecy, a prophecy which allies his consciousness with that of the author as he "foretells" the outcome of each major character's journey, Soldino has a philosophy of life and a way of living that is anything but mundane. Having warned the pilgrims of an impending fire he leads them to his hermitage and invites them into what
looks like a dark cave only to reveal, deep in its center, a beautiful field full of flowers and fruit-bearing trees. Here is the elysian field of Don Quixote's fantasy, once again, but achieved now not by an impetuous leap into murky waters, but through painstaking work. Soldino explains: "I built the hermitage with my own hands and constant effort. . . . Here I am lord of myself" (286-87).

He goes on to point out that his inner world satisfies in a way the outer world of war and conflict never could. It is a place of joy and sorrow where past, present and future are all one. It is, in short, the image of the inner world that, as the pilgrims reach their destination, will be outpictures in the "heavenly city" of Rome and the marriage of the king and queen.

Yet Soldino's solitary renunciation of the world is still not the end of the journey. He is, like the Barbarian prophet and Mauricio, a way-shower, but not himself a figure of salvation. For, as has already been noted, transcendence is not the goal of alchemy. In this sense, Persiles is not ultimately a Christian romance. The goal of alchemy is earth-, not heaven-centered.\(^\text{12}\) The...

\(^{12}\) As Edinger puts it, "The alchemical *filius philosophorum* begins and ends on earth. This suggests that primary importance is given to the concrete, spatio-temporal reality of the ego. The fulfillment of the limited human condition is placed above ideal perfection" (144).

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Throughout *Persiles* the temptation of escape into what Jung would call the "whiteness" is latent in the struggles of the young lovers. The first sign of that temptation comes in the interpolated story of Manuel de Sousa Coutinho already alluded to. The devastating effects on Manuel of his beloved's entrance into the Holy Orders serves as an early indication of a possible "way out" that is not a way out at all. Both Manuel and Leonora die of the effects of that escape. Sigismunda, nevertheless, often feels drawn to the idea of the convent, and it is her decision to choose God over Persiles in Book IV that drives Persiles into his deepest despair.

In the final scenes of the work, however, in the carefully orchestrated reunion of all the characters of the primary triangle, the "blood" and the redness that for the alchemists represents the end of the work comes into play. Persiles is being embraced by Rutilio and Serafido in Chapter 13 of Book IV when the jealous lover of Hipolita, Pirro the Calabrian, rushes upon him and runs him through with a sword. When Magsimino, the brother whom Persiles has betrayed, catches up with the couple, he finds Persiles "all covered and stained with blood" (349). As his last dying act, Magsimino, who is burning with the Roman fever, joins Persiles and Sigismunda. The narrator describes the scene with considerable attention to detail: "with his right hand he took hold of his brother's left . . . while with this other he grasped Persiles' right hand and placed it in Sigismunda's" (349). Here the dying king performs the union, saying:

I believe you're prepared for this, my true children and brother and sister. Dear brother, touch these eyelids and close these eyes of mine in eternal sleep, while with this other

* There is apparently confusion here between "Holy Orders" —the sacrament by which a one is ordained a priest— and "profession", which refers to the vows one takes upon entering a religious order. Instead of "the Holy Orders", the text should probably read: "a religious order." -F.J.

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| 10.1 (1990) | Persiles' Retort |

This marriage begs to be regarded in symbolic fashion, as it so severely deviates from the norms which Christians by 1616 had come to expect, especially of royalty. Why, after so much struggle to get to Rome, would the king and queen marry on the streets outside Rome? Why would the marriage involve the death of the old king, and the birth out of him, who refers to Persiles and Sigismunda as "my children" of a bloodied young man and his bride? I believe that to attend to this imagery is to return Persiles to the chemical retort in which, for the four Books that make up the *Trabajos*, he and Auristela are heated and cooled, dissolved and coagulated, separated, and finally conjoined. But it is also a retort, or response, to the figure of the solitary hero as depicted in Don Quixote, being a testimony to the value of the unconscious and of passivity as co-participants, with consciousness and activity, in the magical work of transformation.
The Twelve Labours of Heracles were a number of tasks that the mythical hero Heracles was told to complete by King Eurystheus. It all started when Heracles was to steal the cattle of Geryon, who lived on the island of Erytheia, somewhere in the west. Heracles went on his quest, and he first had the cross the desert of Libya. At some point, having been so frustrated at the heat, he shot an arrow at the sun. Alchemy - Main page for Alchemy discussion. Ingredients - List of alchemical ingredients in Morrowind. Tribunal and Bloodmoon - Lists of ingredients added by the two expansions. Alchemy Effects - List of all ingredients sorted by effect. The main alchemy apparatus items are as follows: Alembic decreases the strength and duration of all negative ingredient effects. Calcinator increases the strength and duration of all ingredient effects. Retort increases the strength and duration of all positive ingredient effects. Legend: represents item Quality; a higher numerical value equals higher quality. Count is the number of items found in the game, not including those sold by merchants. Locations for some of the apparatus are not exhaustive. At each vertex of a polygon, there is both an interior and exterior angle, corresponding to the angles on the inside and outside of the closed figure. Understanding the relationships that govern these angles is useful in various geometrical problems. In particular, it is helpful to know how to calculate the sum of interior angles in a polygon. This can be done using a simple formula, or by dividing the polygon into triangles. Steps: Draw the polygon whose angles you need to sum. The polygon can have any number of sides and can be regular or irregular. For example, you might want to find the sum of the interior angles of a hexagon, so you would draw a six-sided shape. 2. Choose one vertex.