

Verse and Transmutation

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Verse and Transmutation

A Corpus of Middle English Alchemical Poetry
(Critical Editions and Studies)

By

Anke Timmermann



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ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
Bod	Bodleian Library
CUL	Cambridge University Library
<i>DNB</i>	Dictionary of National Biography
ed./eds.	editor(s)
<i>expl.</i>	<i>explicit</i>
f./ff.	folio(s)
GUL	Glasgow University Library
<i>inc.</i>	<i>incipit</i>
KCC	King's College Cambridge
<i>DIMEV</i>	<i>Digital Index of Middle English Verse</i>
<i>NIMEV</i>	<i>New Index of Middle English Verse</i>
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>TCB</i>	<i>Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum</i> (Elias Ashmole, comp.; London, 1652)
TCC	Trinity College Cambridge
TCD	Trinity College Dublin

Bibliographical details for reference works abbreviated here may be found in the Bibliography.

NAMING CONVENTIONS

Names of well-known alchemists and other historical individuals appear in the form most familiar to English-speaking readers (e.g. Arnold of Villanova, Raymond Lull). Names recorded in manuscript witnesses retain their spelling.

INTRODUCTION

The fifteenth century marked a significant development in Englishmen's approaches to alchemy. Recipes for the philosophers' stone, formerly mostly confined to the expression of Latin prose, were now circulated in English rhyme. Between the fifteenth and late seventeenth centuries in particular Middle English alchemical poetry permeated manuscripts, and with them, their readers' understanding of the art. Indeed, alchemy was the most popular topic for scientific poetry in fifteenth-century England, and the genre of alchemical verse defined scientific literature to a significant extent.¹ The sheer bulk, variety and consistency of Middle English rhymed *alchemica* even eclipsed the vernacular alchemical poetry of continental Europe.²

While it is clear that many alchemical practitioners and writers considered verse a good medium for the communication of the transformation of base metals into gold, the contexts and reasons for this are manifold. Some alchemical versifications were written in the hope of procuring royal patronage. Others, like the poems at the heart of this book, derive from a more laboratory-based background. Various poems were circulated as works of famous authors and alchemical authorities, often contributing to a pseudoepigraphic tradition. But many alchemical poems, among them the corpus of texts considered here, travelled from one manuscript to the next anonymously. Alchemical poetry in all its guises would continue to preserve alchemical lore for more than two centuries, until it vanished together with the craft of alchemy on the threshold to the modern period.

This book discovers the secrets of alchemical writing, thought and practice through an investigation of Middle English alchemical poetry. It identifies and explores a previously unidentified corpus of alchemical verse, a

¹ The word 'science' is used throughout this book to denote branches of natural philosophy roughly relating to modern natural sciences: a combination of *scientia*, natural philosophy and theoretical craft knowledge. Further, I employ the term 'alchemy' in accordance with its use in the fifteenth century (mostly relating to experiments and the transformation of matter); a critical discussion of the term may be found in Principe and Newman, "Some Problems". Finally, the term 'alchemical practitioners' as used in this book is intended to capture the rather inclusive group of individuals engaged in alchemical pursuits in the late medieval and early modern period.

² Kahn, "Alchemical Poetry" I, II. Chapter 1 below delivers an introduction to alchemical poetry.

noteworthy part of the extant written record of alchemy hitherto neglected in scholarship. The studies in this book present an alternative, corpus-based approach to the history of alchemy, to complement and intersect with narratives focusing on, for example, individuals and institutions. They put an untitled, authorless and often textually unstable body of vernacular recipes centre stage and show that the poems' original reception as a corpus, once unearthed from the manuscript record, offers a unique perspective on historical conceptions of language and literature, authorship and authority, natural philosophy and craft knowledge.

1. DEFINING A CORPUS: THE SCOPE OF HISTORICAL MATERIALS CONSIDERED

The poems considered here, recipes for the philosophers' stone, were written, circulated and received in connection with each other, and in various permutations, throughout the early modern period. By merit of these connections they form a corpus of texts. The corpus' poems include the "Verses upon the Elixir" (*NIMEV* 3249), "Exposition" (2666), "Wind and Water" (3257), "Boast of Mercury" (1276 and 3271), "Mystery of Alchemists" (4017), "Liber Patris Sapientiae" (1150), "Richard Carpenter's Work" (1555, 2656 and 3255), "Short Work" (3721), "In the sea" (1561.7), "On the ground" (2688), "I shall you tell" (1364) and "Trinity" (1558.5). Anonymous English prose texts like "Terra Terrae Philosophicae" and "Alumen de Hispania", and a number of secondary writings, complete the corpus. The poetic core of this corpus is significant even just by statistical considerations alone. It was recently estimated that ca. 70 alchemical poems were written in England between 1500 and 1700.³ The twenty-one corpus texts identified here clearly left a significant mark on this textual tradition. More than 130 manuscripts containing four hundred witnesses of texts from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" survive. Some are plain notebooks, others products of scholarly arts, and yet others beautifully illuminated scrolls, the famous "Ripley Scrolls".

Notably the nature and scope of this corpus, while necessarily a pragmatic construct to a certain extent, are primarily suggested by the historical materials themselves: the anonymous poem "Verses upon the Elixir" not

³ Kahn, "Alchemical Poetry" I, 268. For a list of German alchemical poems (for comparison) known in 1976 see Telle, "Altdeutsches Spruchgedicht," 417–418.

only circulated on a larger scale than even George Ripley's most popular English verse work, the "Compound of Alchemy" from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries,⁴ but also accumulated a number of exegetic, supplementary or parallel texts in its reader reception. Late medieval and early modern users of the poem appear to have employed an identifiable core set of texts to illuminate their interpretation of the "Verses upon the Elixir", and vice versa. Some used parts of the "Verses upon the Elixir" as raw material for the composition of new recipes, others wrote compendia which showcase texts from the corpus in strategic positions. All core texts emerge in extant manuscripts from the mid-fifteenth century onwards. An older textual tradition connected with the origin and development of the poem provides the chronologically earliest parts of the associated corpus (going back to the turn of the fifteenth century), while later translations and adaptations transport the corpus poems and associated texts into the later early modern period, until their manuscript production and reception wanes, in part replaced by print, around the mid-seventeenth century.

The corpus identified here is necessarily not truly exhaustive. With some imagination it could be conceivable to write the entire history of medieval and early modern alchemical literature based on a thoroughly extended corpus alone. The corpus as defined here, however, is sufficiently self-contained to present a meaningful body of works for study, and a representative cross-section of alchemical writing. The poem "Verses upon the Elixir" shows a larger number of textual and material associations with other alchemical poems than other alchemical poems of the time, in all manuscripts investigated (a body of codices larger than the list of sources at the end of this book indicates). It therefore also occupies a central position in the constructed corpus as well as in Middle English alchemical literature. Criteria for inclusion of ancillary texts in the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" are straightforward, conclusive textual or material indications: poems from the core corpus appear in a significant number of extant manuscripts, which date from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, mostly together with other items from the corpus; texts supplementing the core corpus, in turn, demonstrate close material and textual affinities to the same, as well as a solid number of surviving witnesses. Contemporary annotations and comments on corpus texts constitute additional evidence for the connections

⁴ The "Compound" survives in 40 English copies and eight Latin manuscript copies (Rampling, "Catalogue," s.v. item 9), the "Verses upon the Elixir" in fifty and eight copies respectively (see Chapter 1).

that form the corpus. The only group of texts included despite a restricted circulation history are exegetic prose texts written after, and directly referring to, the “Verses upon the Elixir” (one of which only survives in four manuscripts). These texts provide such essential context for the poem that their omission would also have neglected vital information about the contemporary reception of the corpus texts.

The emphasis on material and textual-linguistic connections in my definition of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” should be considered more significant than a nod to scholarship on textual corpora.⁵ It is the presentation of the poems in manuscripts that represents the most tangible, and thus also most reliable definition of the corpus, its creation and reception. Underneath this physical manifestation the corpus texts also share a school of alchemical thought and recognisable content. They are all recipes for and commentaries on the philosophers’ stone and related processes, which join in the alchemical tradition of practice most popular in early modern England and Europe at the time of their composition, and thus based around pseudo-Lullian concepts and their derivatives. Their understanding, naturally, changed over time, and thus as the corpus around the “Verses” was adapted to different contexts. It is this juxtaposition of a stable yet adaptable tradition in manuscripts, and a constantly changing context in which the manuscript copies were produced and received, that creates the opportunity for historical analysis highlighted in this book.

Perhaps the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” may be compared metaphorically with an extended modern family: blood relations and best friends combine to form a recognisable unit whose identity can be defined and acknowledged, and whose progression over time can be investigated. This particular family of alchemical poems encapsulates the creation, transmission and evolution of alchemical knowledge in the laboratory and the scriptorium, witnessed the development of different genres and notetaking techniques, and forms part of the history of Middle English verse, technical vocabulary and *Gebrauchsliteratur*.

⁵ Most pertinently the Corpus of Early English Medical Writing (see e.g. Taavitsainen and Pahta, *Medical*, esp. Pahta, “Code-Switching”; Pahta, “Flowers”).

2. WRITING HISTORY THROUGH THE LIVES OF TEXTS: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Since at least the seventeenth century, the natural sciences seem to have resolutely erased, not relived their past. They are amnesiac disciplines, and insofar as they have a history of their own making, it is an epic history of titanic (and quirky) individuals.⁶

Geber and Rhazes. Raymond Lull and Paracelsus. John Dee and Edward Kelley. Andreas Libavius and Michael Maier. For all periods, cultures and geographical areas, alchemical history is traditionally anchored in the names of famous alchemical practitioners.⁷ Modern histories of alchemy often acknowledge the human agency in alchemy and develop narratives for audiences familiar, and indeed comfortable, with the history of science populated with known individuals and defined by institutions. This applies to both famous and infamous historical characters, the latter including alchemical fraudsters and practitioners well-known for their misfortunes.⁸ Another, recently more fully developed approach to the history of alchemy, which is concerned with the chemical aspects of alchemical experimentation, similarly builds upon historical alchemical practitioners to tell its tales.⁹ Further, the histories of collectors, early bibliographers, antiquarians and intellectuals, their libraries, cultural and institutional backgrounds contain valuable information about manuscript circulation and pertinent places of learning. Studies on famous individuals concerned with alchemical lore and writing often even incorporate elements from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” among their source materials.¹⁰

⁶ Daston and Sibum, “Introduction,” 4. See also Shortland and Yeo, *Telling Lives*, esp. the introduction (1–44).

⁷ The ‘biographical’ tenor of early histories of alchemy may be observed in Taylor, *Alchemists*, Thompson, *Alchemy and Alchemists*, Read, *Alchemy to Chemistry* and Holmyard, *Alchemy*. Much more successful recent studies on alchemically inclined individuals, of which there are many, include Moran, *Libavius*, William Newman’s publications (e.g. *Gehennical Fire*), Lawrence Principe, *Aspiring Adept*, and a special issue dedicated to the study of John Dee in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* (2012).

⁸ One example is Nummedal, *Alchemy and Authority*. For institutions, see e.g. Moran, *Patronage*.

⁹ See e.g. Newman and Principe, *Alchemy Tried*. This should be considered together with the historiographical approach to craft knowledge followed by Smith, see e.g. “Making as Knowing”, and, in a wider context, with the contributions in Smith and Findlen, *Merchants*.

¹⁰ To name but a few, these include Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*, which includes “Alumen”; Dunleavy, “Chaucer Ascription,” which discusses the “Verses upon the Elixir” and “Lead”. Sherman, *John Dee* and Corbett, “Ashmole,” both touch upon the Ripley Scrolls.

The methodological approach adopted in this book, however, considers texts, not individuals, as the main actors of its narrative. It thus captures a part of the history of alchemy and Middle English writing that is not usually considered in historiography. Indeed, for the majority of texts contained in the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” a person-centred approach would prove problematic. A preliminary list of the *dramatis personae* named across the 134 manuscripts containing texts from the corpus around the “Verses” includes close to one hundred individual references.¹¹ This number may appear to be a cornucopia of information for the investigation of these persons; indeed, it has been argued that the loss of materials affects merely the number of manuscripts and not the balance of information contained in *mediaevalia*.¹² In the case of the corpus around the “Verses”, however, as for other *alchemica*, the surviving names, especially those for whom biographical information is available, generally do not relate to the manuscripts’ early production and reception but, overwhelmingly, to their afterlives. More than a quarter of names recorded for the corpus refer to early modern or modern collectors from the seventeenth century onwards. The associated individuals considered alchemy not primarily a craft or topic of natural philosophy, but one of literary, aesthetic, contemplative, religious or occult value.

Further, an analysis of the personnel behind the corpus around the “Verses” would be selective by necessity. Many individuals did not leave a trace of their agency other than the manuscript text itself or annotations. The majority of those whose names are recorded are connected, in one way or another, and for various, often collection-related reasons, with Elias Ashmole or John Dee. Yet from the perspective of the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, Ashmole and Dee play a late and marginal role. Finally, the individuals situated between the famous and the unknown yield some interesting research, yet fewer results than a dedicated biographical study would merit.¹³ The discrepancy between the number of recorded names and the larger, unknown number of now anonymous users of the manuscripts, between the stories already told about the prominent

¹¹ See Timmermann, *Circulation and Reception*, 62–63 and A3–34 for a full list of names mentioned in connection with the corpus around the “Verses”, and the final part of Chapter 2 below.

¹² Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts*; Ker, “Migration”. Carey, *Courting Disaster*, 37–38.

¹³ Timmermann, *Circulation and Reception*, Chapter 3, contains a study on physician-chemist Patrick Saunders and one Richard Hipsley, two men connected with the production and reception of several corpus manuscripts as well as John Dee and Edward Kelley.

parts of the former and those not possible to tell about the latter, suggests that there is more to the history of alchemy and its writings that needs to be investigated.

With regard to authors as potential focus of historical studies the matter is just as complex. Authorship can be assigned, removed, contested and ignored in isolation from the original act of a text's creation. This is particularly the case for manuscript copies, each of which may confirm or deny a pre-existing attribution, or establish or ignore an absent one. Authors' popularity was a similarly volatile matter. As Walter Map put it so aptly in the twelfth century:

My only fault is that I am alive. [...] I have no intention, however, of correcting this fault by my death. [...] I know what will happen after I am gone. When I shall be decaying, then, for the first time, [...] [my work] shall be salted; and every defect in it will be remedied by my decease, and in the most remote future its antiquity will cause the authorship to be credited to me, because, then as now, old copper will be preferred to new gold.¹⁴

Generally the story of authors and their works, often pseudonymous oeuvres and corpora that influenced the history of alchemy to a considerable extent, have proven to be marvellous material for addressing difficult and pressing questions in the history of alchemy, with results that are as valuable to scholarship as the texts they investigate were to their historical readers. Editions and case studies often agree with the historical prominence of a particular author and yield wonderful results, foremost the investigation of the highly influential pseudo-Lullian body of late medieval works.¹⁵ However, copyists involved with the production and reception of contemporary *alchemica* like the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" more often than not did not record an author for a text. The body of medieval and early modern alchemical poetry, even alchemical writing in general, is largely anonymous.¹⁶ Although illustrious authors like Thomas Norton and George Ripley

¹⁴ Walter Map as cited in Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 11–12.

¹⁵ Pereira, *Alchemical Corpus* and "Lullian Alchemy"; Kühlmann and Telle, *Corpus Paracelsiticum*. Norton, *Ordinall*. See also Singer, "Alchemical Writings"; Kibre, "Alchemical Writings", "Further Manuscripts" and "Albertus Magnus"; Grund, *Misticall Wordes*, "ffor to make", and "Albertus Magnus" (the last on alchemical poetry); Obrist, *Constantine of Pisa*; Newman and Principe, *George Starkey*; Newman, *Summa Perfectionis*, and on Bacon in "Overview" and "Philosophers' Egg"; with a wider natural philosophical angle, Hackett, *Roger Bacon*; and, in the digital medium, editions of Newton manuscripts in *The Chymistry of Isaac Newton*. On ancient authorities see e.g. Ferrario, "Origins". See Chapter 3 below for a more detailed discussion of authorship.

¹⁶ See also Chapter 3 below, and Schuler, *English Magical and Scientific Poems*.

played instrumental roles in the history of alchemy, they merely represent the bookends of the reception history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, and moreover only for part of its texts and manuscripts. In this context it seems that a history of alchemical poets in particular would be an “arbitrary elevation of obscure poetasters into major figures, simply on the grounds that they have identified themselves in some way as ‘authors’”.¹⁷

Incidentally, in the early modern period authorial attribution was at times refuted; we can only imagine classical scholar Isaac Casaubon’s delight at discovering the true dating of the Hermetic corpus at the turn of the seventeenth century, which proved a great tradition ‘wrong’.¹⁸ Generally in the history of alchemy, however, even more so than for other Middle English literature, critical, disputed discussion of the authorship of a canonical text seems comparatively rare.¹⁹ *Anonyma*, therefore, require special attention. Their role in the communication of knowledge can, and needs to be, told separately from other histories of alchemy.

This book, and its focus on the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, follows a complementary approach to most existing methodologies in historiography. This is the history of texts written by mostly unknown individuals, approached through the evidence of their material output (manuscripts), not the history of individual writers—the story of the adaptation of texts in individualised manuscript copies, not of standardised texts. As the case studies will demonstrate, the advancement of alchemical writing and thought as told through the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” reveals information about a large number of previously unknown writers and users of alchemical texts, and about little-known discourse communities.²⁰ This book is, in short, intended to lend voices to hitherto silent parts of alchemical history.

¹⁷ Boffey, *Courtly Love Lyrics*, 79. See also Chenu, “Auctor,” 83. For the modern concept of authorship, see Biagioli and Galison, *Scientific Authorship*, especially the introduction (1–9). Also Johns, “Ambivalence”.

¹⁸ Grafton, *Defenders*, 145–161.

¹⁹ A notable exception is the early-twentieth debate about the historical identity of Thomas Norton as the author of the “Ordinal of Alchemy”: Nierenstein and Charman, “Enquiry”; Reidy, “Thomas Norton”.

²⁰ A particularly good model for this textual approach, which is here extended to corpus work, may be found in Telle, *Sol und Luna*.

3. READING THIS BOOK: A BRIEF GUIDE

This book presents both sources and studies on an influential corpus of Middle English alchemical poetry. Beyond its contribution to historical scholarship on the history of alchemy and Middle English writing it is also intended to function as a reference book. The main body of the volume introduces the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” and delivers case studies on particularly interesting aspects of its creation, circulation and reception. Each case study is self-contained and focuses on a different theme of alchemical literature and manuscript production. The appendix reproduces the raw materials underlying the case studies: editions and stemmata. The individual chapters and editions may, therefore, be consulted in isolation from each other, even if the entirety of the book reflects the corpus and its uses for historiography best.

The initial two chapters concern the corpus and its history within its literary and historical contexts. Chapter 1, the basis for all subsequent chapters, starts with a survey of the genre of alchemical poetry in late medieval England, then introduces the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, from its origins to its afterlife in print. This includes comprehensive entries on the individual corpus texts’ scope, contents and position within the corpus, which may be read in conjunction with the editions and stemmata provided at the end of this book. Chapter 2 discusses the characteristics of the corpus as a corpus, i.e. as an interrelated group of texts, especially its original formation in the fifteenth century and the scribal, linguistic principles underlying its connections. This part closes with a survey of the individuals that shaped the corpus over time and a reflection on those whose names have not survived.

The two middle chapters approach early modern conceptions of authorship and authority, now through the lens of the corpus’ history, from two rather different angles. Chapter 3 considers the haphazard attribution history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” and the issues of translation and genre in relation to alchemical verse. This essay on authorship, ascription practices and perceptions of authority reveals that the genre of vernacular alchemical poetry in itself carried merit for its readers. Chapter 4 focuses on the beautifully illuminated ‘Ripley Scrolls’, which incorporate poems from the corpus from the late fifteenth century onwards, to investigate connections between authority and illumination or medium. This chapter demonstrates that the manifestations of the poems on the Scrolls and in plain manuscripts relate to each other in hitherto unacknowledged ways.

The final two chapters provide case studies of the cultural contexts in which individual, outstanding corpus-related manuscripts were written and received. They concern material and institutional aspects of the organisation of alchemical knowledge, and dedicate more space to the development of two specific environments in which the “Verses” and associated texts were received in the sixteenth century. Chapter 5 explores the academic environment in which a copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” (in Trinity College Cambridge MS R.14.56) was read and debated, then analyses the sequential appearance of a series of marginal notes around the text. A written conversation between readers over the course of several decades, these marginalia witnessed early modern scholarly approaches to vernacular craft recipes. Chapter 6 identifies the organisation of a series of notebooks written and annotated by a single unnamed physician of the sixteenth century. His experimental, text-based conceptualisation of the use of alchemy in the manufacture of medical remedies bears implications for the history of alchemy and medicine, the history of the book and manuscript studies, and for the historiography of medieval and early modern science.

Together, these six chapters showcase the merits of a corpus-based approach to alchemical, and generally Middle English, literature. Themes discussed and chosen for focus in Chapters three through six may seem heterogeneous, and indeed they are intended to sample the richness of the corpus at hand. They are examples of, but also exemplary for, corpus-derived historical studies.

The appendix reproduces critical editions for the core corpus texts—the first to be published of the corpus poems and associated prose texts—as well as diplomatic editions of ancillary works. The rationale for editorial procedure and a note on the visualisation of the texts’ histories in stemmata may be found there. Introductions to each edition summarise key data for each text, identify all known manuscript witnesses and depict stemmata for the critically edited texts. The editions themselves and their apparatus were put together with an eye to user friendly presentation: they are intended to be primary materials for further research. Taken together, the studies and editions presented here, like the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, form a microcosm of alchemical historical communication.

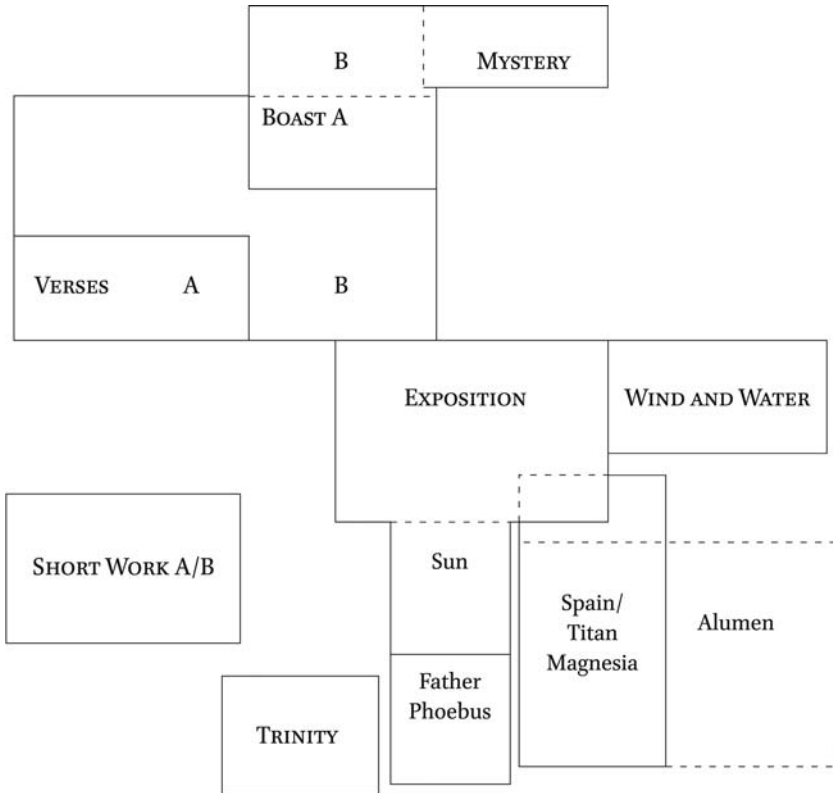


Diagram I: The fifteenth-century corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”

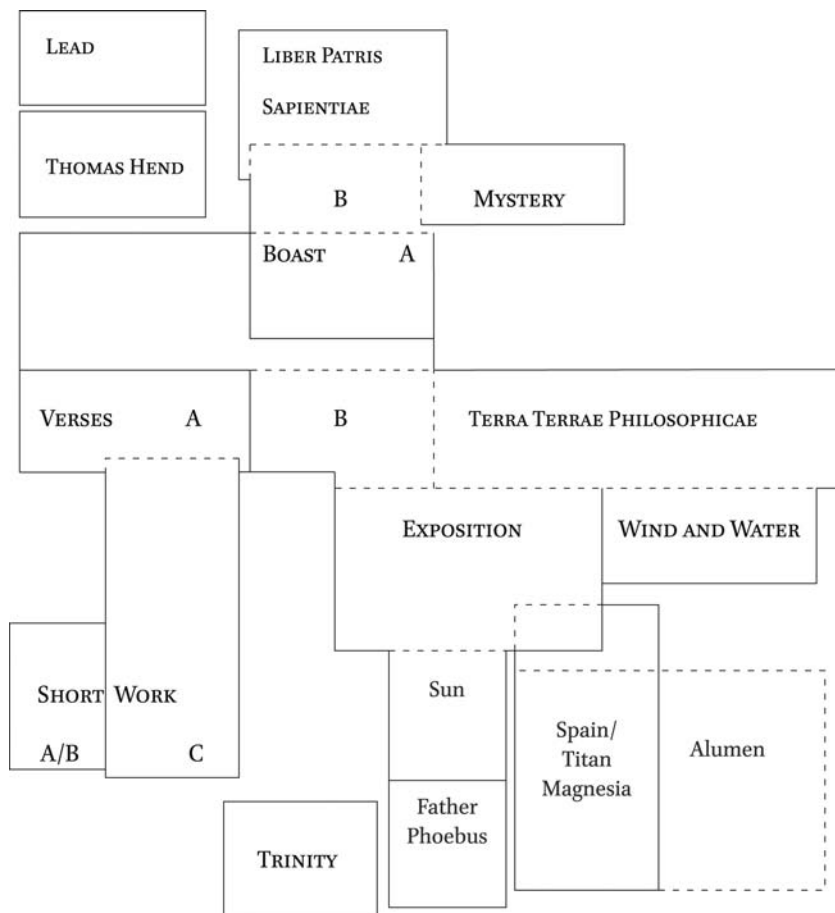


Diagram II: The developed, early modern corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”

CRITICAL STUDIES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO A CORPUS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ALCHEMICAL POETRY

1. ALCHEMICAL POETRY IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

In the fifteenth century, on the threshold of the early modern period, England witnessed tremendous political, social and cultural change. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge operated amidst a growing number of academic institutions in the British Isles and in continental Europe—the Scottish universities of St. Andrews (1411) and Glasgow (1451) were part of a surge of new academic foundations—and headed the vibrant international scholarly exchange characteristic of the pre-Reformation period. The scholarly study of natural philosophy thrived alongside medical doctors' attempts to contain epidemics, a general enthusiasm for astrological intelligence and its applications, and an increasingly vigorous flow of scientific information to a wider range of audiences. Scientific communication evolved amidst the contemporary cultivation of poetry that inspired Chaucer's successors, John Lydgate and Thomas Hoccleve, as well as James I of Scotland.¹ Meanwhile, craftsmen continued to work under the guardianship of the guilds while adding literacy to their set of professional skills.

Alchemy, a craft based on an intricate theoretical system, intersected naturally with university disciplines concerned with natural philosophy on a theoretical level, and with some crafts on a practical level. Not organised in a guild, it was commonly practised both by those who came into contact with alchemical lore in bibliophilic environments (scholars, clerics, medical doctors, etc.) and by craftsmen engaged with metals, furnaces and the modification of substances (smelters, smiths and workers in the mining industry). Sophistication of practice and individual emphasis on theory or practice necessarily varied between these groups as well as from one individual to another. But in the fifteenth century in particular craftsmen with alchemical leanings refined their knowledge in a newly revived combination of word and deed, in the workshop and on paper. It was in this environment, and

¹ For a wider perspective on poetry in the English Renaissance see Marotti, *Manuscript*.

in the course of just a few decades, that Middle English alchemical poetry became the most emblematic, successful and current expression of the craft and its teachings.²

The written world of alchemy into which alchemical poetry was introduced looked back upon a relatively homogeneous tradition. Although medieval manuscripts may be quite diverse in content and written expression, it is possible to discern two main types of medieval alchemical literature: firstly, ancient, traditional, Arabic or Greek texts, often theoretical in nature. These ancient texts had passed easily into the Latin tradition of the Middle Ages, which added large corpora of pseudonymous *alchemica*, populated under the names of ancient authorities, to the body of literature.³ They continued to be circulated, adapted and applied in the fifteenth century. This part of alchemical literature (both ancient and imitated) was associated closely with the high culture of writing, monasteries and, in the later Middle Ages, academic contexts. Secondly, medieval alchemical literature included texts written in, and for, the workshop. This pragmatic, applied body of texts consists of recipes and working notes, often of more imminent and recent origin than the traditional texts mentioned before. They were frequently noted down either in blank spaces of theoretical manuscripts or, as time passed, in dedicated volumes and craft recipe collections, so-called books of secrets, many of which are lost to the historical record.⁴ It was particularly this latter branch of alchemical writing that produced Middle English alchemical verse.

If a novelty in alchemical writing in the fifteenth century, Middle English alchemical poetry was nevertheless based on an ancient tradition, one that defined its genre and medium: like all medieval scientific poetry alchemical verse evolved as an adaptation, imitation, translation and continuation of classical didactic poetry.⁵ Poetry had been the preferred educational medium of classical Rome and was reintroduced to the canon of elevating and instructive writings in the course of the humanist revival of late

² Pioneering research on alchemical verse includes Schuler, *English Magical*; and Schuler, *Alchemical Poetry*. The most comprehensive and recent survey of alchemical verse is Kahn, "Alchemical Poetry" (Parts I and II).

³ See the Introduction and Chapter 3 for details.

⁴ A prominent book of secrets and the historian's task of discovering the practice behind the texts forms are discussed in Smith and Beentjes, "Nature and Art". On books of secrets see Eamon, *Science*; and the individual contributions in Leong and Rankin, *Secrets*, esp. Smith, "What is a Secret?".

⁵ Timmermann, "Scientific and Encyclopaedic Verse". Early Byzantine and Arabic alchemical poetry is discussed in Schuler, *Alchemical Poetry*, xxvi–xxvii.

medieval Europe. Didactic poems by Lucretius and Pliny, Manilius and pseudo-Aristotle enjoyed a particularly enthusiastic reception.⁶ The world of knowledge preserved in the extensive body of medieval scientific poetry developed to be rather more inclusive than either an ancient or a modern concept of science and its objects would imply. Poetic works relating to medicine and botany, to astronomy, astrology and cosmology, were joined by technical poetry, e.g. on masonry, by rhymed culinary recipes and household books, by grammatical rules and other items related to academic education and the *artes* proper, as well as encyclopaedic poetry, an extensive digest of various branches of scientific knowledge.⁷ Writers of the late medieval and early modern periods also accepted alchemical recipes among the subjects worthy of versification, both enthusiastically and for the last time in history.

A vernacular tradition of scientific poetry emerged from the fourteenth century onwards. In England in particular this proved to be a successful format for the preservation of alchemical lore. Vernacular alchemical poetry throughout continental Europe pales before the sheer volume, variety and consistency of Middle English *alchemica*. German alchemical verse, for instance, favoured not practical recipes or extensive explanations but mostly comprised received knowledge about alchemy in useful phrases and pithy maxims, so-called gnomic texts.⁸ The more wordy, Italian form of alchemical poetry flourished in the Renaissance in imitation of Latin didactic poetry. In France the *Roman de la Rose* determined the style and reception of alchemy in verse to a significant extent. But across the continent alchemical verse would never quite achieve the ubiquity enjoyed by its English equivalents.⁹

Notably, the range of subjects covered in Middle English scientific poetry is not identical to that of scientific prose. Poetry and prose were considered complementary and not necessarily interchangeable by both writers and readers. Also, different disciplines employed verse to a different degree. Although medicine was by far the most popular topic for scientific texts in fifteenth-century England, and indeed throughout Europe, medical

⁶ For a comprehensive history of didactic poetry see Schuler and Fitch, "Theory and Context".

⁷ Scientific manuscripts including such items in the fifteenth century are described, e.g., in Voigts, "Scientific" and Keiser, *Works of Science*.

⁸ Telle, *Sol und Luna*.

⁹ Kahn, "Alchemical Poetry" II, 254f. and 264ff. The heterogeneous development of alchemical verse in Europe and its conditions are yet to be investigated in scholarship.

theoretical texts only occasionally took verse form.¹⁰ Yet generally the sudden thirst for scientific information in Middle English, particularly in verse, by a growing audience (now including a newly literate public, university scholars, noblemen and craftsmen) fuelled the production of scientific writing further.¹¹ The fifteenth century produced roughly six times more texts (prose and verse) than the fourteenth century, a body of writing which included a much higher proportion of vernacular texts and an unanticipated number of scientific poems.¹²

Recipe texts were particularly prone to the textual transformations typical of the fifteenth century: versification and vernacularisation. Like the majority of medieval alchemical poetry, the corpus of poems at the centre of this book comprises recipes for the philosophers' stone,¹³ the ultimate product of alchemy that was believed to remove all imperfection from substances as well as the human body. However, the general late medieval penchant for rhymed recipes applied to all branches of scientific learning. Hundreds of Middle English pragmatic alchemical, medical and culinary recipes survive, as well as *secreta* and instructions for mixing inks or making vessels.¹⁴ These last, in turn, have material points of contact with alchemical recipe literature: they describe methods for producing equipment necessary for the practice and writing of alchemy.

This enthusiasm for verse recipes may, in part, have been motivated by practical considerations. Practising alchemists in particular, among them a large group of craftsmen not fluent in Latin, may have found using a recipe from memory easier when ingredients and methods could be recalled in pairs of rhymes.¹⁵ The poetic form lent itself to carrying information from

¹⁰ Jones, "Information and Science," 101; Keiser, *Works of Science*, 301; see also Robbins, "Medical Manuscripts".

¹¹ On literacy see e.g. Parkes, "Literacy" and Jones, *Vernacular*.

¹² Jones, "Information and Science," 100–101. Also Taavitsainen and Pahta, "Vernacularisation" and Voigts, "Multitudes".

¹³ The position of the apostrophe in the term 'philosophers' stone' (stone of the [natural] philosophers) should be noted. The term's origin is unclear, as explained in the *OED*, s.v. 'philosopher's stone' (10/2010): it is referred to simply as (*noster*) *lapis*, '(our) stone', in medieval Geberian writings. Albertus Magnus called it *lapis quem philosophi laudant ubique*, "the stone which the philosophers everywhere laud", thus possibly originating the term *lapis philosophorum*.

¹⁴ Recipes and their genre are analysed in Carroll, "Middle English Recipe," which includes a comprehensive bibliography for culinary, medical and alchemical recipes on pp. 41–42; Grund, "Golden Formulas," Stannard, "Rezeptliteratur" and Telle, "Rezept".

¹⁵ On the mnemonic functions of (didactic) verse from the fifteenth century onwards see Voigts and McVaugh, *Latin Technical Phlebotomy*, 19; Schuler and Fitch, "Theory and Context,"

page to furnace. For copyists of *alchemica* the medium of verse held similar merits. Rhythm and rhyme as mnemonic aids allowed the transmission of text from one manuscript to another without the danger of skipping a line or phrase by accident.¹⁶ Other merits of employing the poetic medium include its potential in attracting patrons for the alchemical work. This function developed more fully in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the form of dedicatory poems prefacing alchemical prose, or the production of presentation copy manuscripts containing alchemical poetry.¹⁷ It does not, however, apply to the core corpus of texts discussed in the remainder of this book. Overall, as the most popular branch of scientific poetry in fifteenth-century England, alchemical poetry is more emblematic of the period than scholarly prose texts or other scientific or non-scientific verse in many respects. Alchemy now spoke not just the language of the man outside the university, but also in a rhythmic, melodious voice.

A consideration of the material manifestation of alchemical verse in pragmatic, notebook-like manuscripts enlightens our understanding of its uses, dissemination, and indeed its authors' envisaged audiences further. It is worth noting here that alchemical manuscripts, including those containing alchemical poems, are in some respects different from their other scientific counterparts. Alchemical readers and writers used a fairly specific form of terminology and expression to navigate a growing body of *alchemica*, one that might have restricted the nature of volumes in which alchemical verse might be recorded. But since alchemical poetry in particular provided an ideal template for the ordering of thoughts and experiments from the fifteenth century onwards, with time, it entered a wide variety of manuscripts. Alchemical verse could be found on scholars' bookshelves and in artisans' and practising alchemists' workshops. It was read by physicians as well as miners and goldsmiths, and altered, wittingly or unwittingly, in spelling, wording or even structurally, by all audiences. The body of alchemical poetry thus reflects the contexts of its production and reception. Each copy was a unique product, a mixture of an exemplar's model and a copyist's reading of the same, of theoretical beliefs and practical considerations.¹⁸ Therefore,

25; Taavitsainen, "Transferring," 38–39, who also refers to a study on the different audiences for prose (learned) and verse (broader): Blake, *Form of Living*.

¹⁶ Schuler, *Alchemical Poetry*, xxxiv–xxxv.

¹⁷ Schuler, *Alchemical Poetry*, xxxiv–xlii, esp. xxxvi–xxxviii, and Kahn, "Alchemical Poetry" II, 63–64, the latter a distillation of existing theories on functions of alchemical poetry.

¹⁸ On medieval scribal processes see Parkes, *Scribes*; repercussions of scribal unfamiliarity with alchemy are mentioned in Principe, *Secrets*, 53; the traits of more expert copyists with

perhaps more than the academic art of medicine and other scholarly disciplines, the written heritage of alchemy constitutes evidence of the interactions between theory, practice and texts.¹⁹

In linguistic terms, alchemical poets used characteristic styles, motifs, verse-forms and structural elements. Some of these naturally intersected with the expression of alchemical prose. It had long been believed that only a worthy alchemist would be able to understand a recipe and discover the secrets of nature behind alchemy's obscure, metaphorical terminology and expression. In the fifteenth century copyists and readers of vernacular *alchemica* and the growing body of alchemical verse found themselves forced to interpret alchemical terminology derived from the Arabic, Greek and Latin in Middle English terms.²⁰ Here alchemical poetry became instrumental in the refinement of a scientific terminology in Middle English. Rhyme words provided unfamiliar terms with a phonetic point of reference. They also drew the copyist's attention to important information, which was often placed towards the end of lines. The transition of alchemical terms into Middle English, and thus of alchemical concepts and thought into a living language's referencing system, thus occurred successfully, consistently and memorably in verse.²¹ For the remainder of the active period of circulation for alchemical literature, which lasted well into the seventeenth century and beyond, the detectable alchemical poetic idiom remained remarkably stable.²² Only the appearance and increasing dominance of chemistry among the sciences, now striving to be modern in approach and symbolic formulae, banished poetry from the study of nature and separated literature from science.

In terms of famous authors, fifteenth-century England brought forth two alchemist poets whose names and works have dominated the historical impression of their period: Thomas Norton and George Ripley. Norton

a vested interest in alchemy, such as those described here, will emerge in the case studies especially of Chapters 5 and 6 below.

¹⁹ This also emerges variously in studies of alchemical manuscripts across Europe (see e.g. Kassell, *Medicine and Magic*, Lång, *Unlocked Books*, or Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*) and in manuscripts like those containing texts from the corpus of poems discussed in this book (especially their annotations). See particularly Chapters 5 and 6 below.

²⁰ Pereira, "Alchemy".

²¹ On the development of Middle English technical languages for scientific texts see also Schleissner, *Manuscript Sources*, esp. Voigts, "Multitudes". The case of alchemy and its terminology is yet to be studied exhaustively.

²² This may be observed in the development of the texts edited in the Appendix below. See also Chapter 2, especially the section entitled "Textual variation and corpus connections".

(ca. 1433–1513/14), Bristolian municipal officer and courtier (and at one point adviser to Edward IV), wrote the “Ordinal of Alchemy”, the only text attributed to him, in the final quarter of the fifteenth century. A single substantial poem of 3,102 lines plus preface, the “Ordinal” ensured Thomas Norton’s role as a figurehead for English alchemy in the fifteenth century from its early reception onwards.²³ Like Norton, George Ripley (d. ca. 1490) is a historical alchemical author whose poetic oeuvre eventually superseded his persona. Ripley was canon regular of Bridlington priory in Yorkshire and is said to have travelled to Louvain (Flanders) and Italy to study with masters of the arts and alchemy.²⁴ But his sizeable body of alchemical poetry, and his later pseudonymous oeuvre, have preserved his name in history much more forcefully. Riplean works present mostly an adaptation of Latin sources using alchemical principles commonly attributed to thirteenth-century philosopher and doctor Raymond Lull (whose name, attached to a greatly successful pseudonymous textual tradition, defined alchemical literature in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries).²⁵ They also purport to preserve Ripley’s own laboratory experiences. Among Ripley’s best known works are the “Compound of Alchemy” (also known as “The Twelve Gates”)²⁶ the “Mystery of Alchemists”,²⁷ and a number of other alchemical poems. These, the vast, extended pseudo-Riplean corpus dating from the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onwards, and the illuminated scrolls bearing alchemical poems now known as ‘Ripley Scrolls’, will become relevant for the history of the corpus of poems discussed in this book. By the early modern period the iconic Middle English alchemical poet George Ripley had thus joined the ranks of the very authorities he emulated.

Beyond and including Thomas Norton and George Ripley the tradition of vernacular alchemical poetry was defined by spurious or changing attributions to both ancient and contemporary authorities. More often than not poems were circulated without the name of an author attached. The reasons

²³ Not much is known about Thomas Norton’s life, and his biography has been rewritten and refuted several times; see Reidy, *Thomas Norton’s Ordinal*. The “Ordinal of Alchemy” is *NIMEV* 3772; editions are reproduced in Reidy and in *TCB*, 1–106. An early modern German verse translation is the anonymous *Chymischer Tractat Thomas Nortoni* (1625).

²⁴ On Ripley see Principe, “Ripley, George,” and Rampling, esp. “Catalogue,” 126, fn. 2, which details the history of Ripley biographies. These are more useful than information given in the only modern edition of Ripley’s work to date (apart from Taylor, “George Ripley’s Song”): Ripley, *Compound* (ed. Linden).

²⁵ On the pseudo-Lullian corpus of works see Pereira, *Alchemical Corpus*.

²⁶ *NIMEV* 595; *TCB*, 107–193.

²⁷ This is part of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”; see below.

for this strong tendency towards anonymity are relatively straightforward: as *Gebrauchstexte* proper (practical instructions without literary pretensions) most alchemical poems did not require a fixed named author to lend authority to their contents. Readers and copyists selected useful contemporary recipes and theoretical texts by different criteria, like genre and language.²⁸ The circulation of alchemical knowledge and the reception of texts differed in contemporary and canonical alchemical literature. As such, Middle English alchemical poetry in particular constitutes an immediate witness of the contemporary understanding of alchemical substances, methods and theory on one hand, and their translation into writing, and practice, on the other. Anonymous alchemical verse provides a direct glimpse into the production, communication and circulation of both theoretical and practical knowledge.²⁹

It is not only because of the traditional historiographical focus on famous authors, alchemists and works, but perhaps also due to the modern separation of poetry, alchemy and science that scholarship has neglected—and, at times, even scorned—alchemical poetry. To the modern eye its literary merits pale before the poems of Chaucer, Gower and their fifteenth-century peers. In his monumental *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Lynn Thorndike famously dismissed the work of George Ripley as “very stupid and tiresome reading”.³⁰ In the fifteenth century, however, scientific and other poetry was much more integrated and formed different parts of the same body of Middle English writing. At times they even intersected: Chaucer’s oeuvre, the *Romaunt de la Rose* and Lydgate’s verse regimen entitled *Dietary* (which, incidentally, turned out to be Lydgate’s most popular work during and immediately following his lifetime) are prime examples of medical themes in literary verse written by poets without a professional interest in natural philosophy.³¹ Conversely the style and language of alchemical poems written by alchemical practitioners without any literary ambitions resemble those of the Middle English poetic oeuvre to a remarkable extent. Scientific, alchemical and literary poems all participated in the development of the Middle English language and expression. They also often shared space in contemporary manuscripts. Finally, the scientific reception of specific passages in otherwise literary works and the artistic appreciation of scien-

²⁸ These issues will be explored in detail in later parts of this book.

²⁹ See also Kahn, “Alchemical Poetry” II, 63–64.

³⁰ Thorndike, *History of Magic*, IV, 352.

³¹ The role of Chaucer on late medieval/early modern perceptions of science, poetry and authors is discussed in Chapter 3 below.

tific poetry also testify to the original interactions between the disciplines.³² Scientific, and thus alchemical, poetry was an integral part of the written culture of fifteenth-century England.

The afterlives of Middle English alchemical poems are distinctive, even if they pale before the thriving late medieval and early modern manuscript tradition of poetry.³³ While manuscript production and reception continued well into the seventeenth century, alchemical verse did not enjoy an early representation in print, the medium whose invention left a most distinguishing mark on the latter part of the fifteenth century. Much of the Middle English alchemical poetic oeuvre, such as pragmatic recipes and mnemonic rhymes, was probably considered too practical, ordinary or ephemeral to be printed together with a carefully selected body of works intended to preserve a legacy of human knowledge.³⁴ By the time some alchemical poems materialised in printed volumes, particularly in English, the genre itself had almost turned into history.³⁵ Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (TCB), a compendium of alchemical verse published in 1652 as an homage to the English language, marks the beginning proper of the published body of alchemical poetry as well as its epitome.³⁶ Thanks to Ashmole's bibliophilic (rather than purely linguistic), historically sensitive interest in alchemy and poetry, his compendium includes works by Thomas Norton and George Ripley as well as Chaucer's "Canon's Yeoman's Tale" and many of the poems which form the focus of this book. As such, Ashmole's collection, both the printed book and the underlying manuscript collection, may be considered the final resting place of the body of alchemical poetry of medieval England.³⁷

2. THE CORPUS AROUND THE "VERSES UPON THE ELIXIR"

The late medieval alchemical poem "Verses upon the Elixir" (henceforth also "Verses") played a vital part in the communication of alchemical knowledge

³² See, for example, BL MS Sloane 320 (s. xvi^{ex}), which contains the conclusion of Chaucer's "Canon's Yeoman's Tale" (f. 34^v) together with *alchemica* by George Ripley.

³³ The term 'afterlives' is adapted here loosely from the term relating to the late preservation and reception of historical letters; see e.g. Daybell, *Material Letter*, chapter 8.

³⁴ See also Timmermann, "Introduction".

³⁵ The first Latin collection of *alchemica* is Zetzner, *Theatrum Chemicum* (1602–1661).

³⁶ Kahn, "Alchemical Poetry" I, 255–256; TCB.

³⁷ Ashmole's preparatory manuscripts now form a substantial part of the Ashmolean Library's collections at Oxford (Bod MSS Ashmole 971 and 972).

in the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. It was written, copied, read, annotated, interpreted, tried and tested, dismissed or accepted, and certainly constantly discussed by readers and writers with alchemical interests. Within contemporary networks of written knowledge, the poem “Verses upon the Elixir” not only represents a prime example of its genre, but, as will become clear throughout this book, a central work utilised by early modern scribes and readers to discover the correct procedure for making the philosophers’ stone. Moreover, its users considered the “Verses upon the Elixir” not a stand-alone text, but a poem to be consulted, altered and digested in comparison with other *alchemica*. These associated texts form a corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, a microcosm of written alchemical thought containing clues about how their users thought, wrote and practised alchemy. It is this corpus that is at the heart of this book. The reconstruction of its texts’ (and thus their writers’) interactions presented in this chapter will both aid the development of case studies in later chapters of this book and, generally, prove useful for an understanding of how alchemical ideas were circulated and received in late medieval and early modern England.

A Middle English rhymed recipe of up to 194 lines, the poem “Verses upon the Elixir” formed connections with a large number of contemporary and ancient *alchemica* through proximity in manuscripts, in language or content, and in the contemporary perception of the body of alchemical literature. At least fifteen texts and their variants are related to the “Verses upon the Elixir” (*NIMEV* 3249). The nature of their connections with the “Verses” divides them into several groups: “Boast of Mercury”, “Mystery of Alchemists” and “Liber Patris Sapientiae” (*NIMEV* 1276, 4017, 1150.3) are poems whose text coincides with parts of the “Verses”. The poems “Exposition” and “Wind and Water” (*NIMEV* 2666 and 3257) form bonds with the “Verses” by virtue of being appended to the poem in manuscripts. The set of poems now gathered under the title of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” (*NIMEV* 2656; 3255.7; 1558) is connected with the “Verses upon the Elixir” through intertextuality; those appearing together with “Richard Carpenter’s Work” on the ‘Ripley Scrolls’ (*NIMEV* 2688.7 (“On the ground”); 1561.7 (“In the sea”); 1364.5 (“I shall you tell”)) form an extension of this group. Peripheral additions to the corpus are poems resembling the “Verses upon the Elixir” on a poetic, linguistic level: “Short Work” (*NIMEV* 3721) and “Trinity” (*NIMEV* 1558.5). It should be noted that all texts mentioned appear overwhelmingly in manuscripts together with other corpus texts: their affiliation with the corpus identified here is both material and linguistic in nature. Three sixteenth-century prose texts, a translation of the “Verses upon the

Elixir" ("Terra Terrae Philosophicae") and two commentaries on the poem ("Lead" and "Thomas Hend"), provide the final links in the chain.³⁸

As products of a textual evolutionary process over the course of two centuries, the corpus and its cross-connections are fairly complex. Naturally the origins and interactions of these texts could not be fully explained in terms of causality, origin and succession. However, for the present purpose of introducing the corpus and its individual texts as objects of historical investigation, the clustering of poems according to their manner of association with the "Verses" (as suggested above) will provide a practical way of managing information about the corpus.

Texts belonging to the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" survive in more than one hundred manuscripts dating from the mid-fifteenth to the later seventeenth century, numbering more than 400 copies of these texts in total. An ever-changing, written and thus documented reception accompanies this active circulation of the texts. Although the corpus around the "Verses" was not acknowledged explicitly by late medieval and early modern audiences, e.g. in form of a dedicated collection or commentary upon its nature, it would have been recognised by informed late medieval readers of English *alchemica*: individual manuscripts containing a high number of corpus texts, notebooks analysing a remarkably large portion of the corpus in the search for reliable alchemical intelligence and numerous annotations across all extant manuscripts debating corpus texts' alchemical content are witnesses to its ubiquity and joint reception by compilers and readers alike.³⁹ Considered in its entirety, the corpus of texts associated with the "Verses upon the Elixir" represents a late medieval virtual reference work, a reserve collection and a repository of knowledge.

2.1. *The "Verses upon the Elixir"*

Take erth of erth erthes broder
 Water and erth it is non other
 And fire of therth that berith the price
 And of that erth loke thou be wise

"Verses upon the Elixir", *incipit*

The poem "Verses upon the Elixir", which comprises a recipe for the philosophers' stone in verse form, was one of the most frequently copied verse texts

³⁸ See also the Introduction above. A number of these texts and manuscripts feature in Keiser, "Heritage". Visualisations of the corpus at the beginning of this chapter (Diagrams I and II) may be used as a mnemonic reference for the following introduction of the individual corpus texts.

³⁹ The notebooks are subject to investigation in Chapter 6.

of the late medieval and early modern period.⁴⁰ It survives in a comparatively large number of copies: at least thirty full copies and numerous substantial and minor fragments. The four extant fifteenth-century manuscripts and their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century successors certainly represent only a fraction of those originally in circulation.

Written in the customary cryptic alchemical style the poem details substances and operations, including specific information on measurements, proportions, colour stages of the work and durations of the experiment's parts, in six individual yet interdependent cycles. The first isolates three elements (earth, water and fire) from 'earth' by cold dissolution in *aqua nemoris* ('water of the wood'), then advises elaboration (i.e. separation of crude and fine parts) and the production of a gum by evaporation.⁴¹ The subsequent distillation of *aqua vitae* is followed by the appearance of a red fire from which a black, dry earth emerges, the basis of all following steps (nigredo; ll. 1–20). This black earth is purified until it assumes a bright colour, imbibed with the aforementioned water to turn white (albedo), heated to produce a red substance (rubedo), and imbibed further to produce the stone (an elliptic part of the recipe, ending l. 38). The second section discusses the alchemical-philosophical underpinnings of the work, among them the importance of the four elements, of 'sperm' as a vital force, and of *aqua nemoris* as solving agent (ll. 39–54). The third part (ll. 55–68) proposes a shortcut to the recipe: sublimation in arsenic, calcination with mercury, combination with *aqua fortis*, fixation over fire, and imbibition; the produced stone, the recipe tells us, can transform forty times its weight of copper and lead (into gold and silver). The fourth section focuses on *aqua vitae* derived from two elixirs, which have been made from lead (ll. 69–81). Part five explains the cleansing properties of this water and expands upon the use of a (possibly related) 'oil' for rubrification, before detailing, possibly repeating, the progression of the work from black to red (ll. 82–99). The final section delivers the results: projection of the stone on mercury to transform it into gold (one part on two hundred, ll. 100–105).

⁴⁰ Dunleavy, referring to an early edition of the *IMEV*, identifies the "Verses upon the Elixir" as the fourth most widespread medieval alchemical text after "On Preparing the Philosopher's Stone", Ripley's "Compound of Alchemy", and Norton's "Ordinal of Alchemy": Dunleavy, "Chaucer Ascription," 10.

⁴¹ Information on alchemical processes for this poem, and all texts discussed below, is based on reliable entries in Priesner and Figala, *Alchemie*, and various other secondary literature, including several works by Principe and Newman (see Bibliography for details).

The recipe's structure, the intersection of its steps and the repetitive nature of the alchemical practice would have been familiar to its readers from other alchemical writings. For example, George Ripley's near-contemporary "Compound of Alchemy" is presented in twelve 'gates' which divide the manufacture of the philosophers' stone into twelve steps.⁴² While the poem is interspersed with *Decknamen* for substances and procedures it is noteworthy that allegorical passages in the "Verses" do not make use of traditional personified or populated imagery like hermaphrodites, king and queen, childbirth, or mythical creatures, as many contemporary *alchemica* do.⁴³ But even if actual processes referred to in the "Verses" cannot be identified with certainty due to linguistic ambiguity, both the recipe text and its reader reception suggest that the poem was intended for use in the alchemical workshop and actually employed as such.⁴⁴ As a *Gebrauchstext* the poem bridges two literary traditions: concise, straightforwardly practical prose recipes often found in margins of medieval notebooks, and alchemical allegories.

The supposed author of the poem "Verses upon the Elixir" is named by Elias Ashmole and some of his contemporaries as 'Pearce the black monk'. There is no evidence of this ascription dating from before the seventeenth century; indeed, some manuscript writers may have taken their information from the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*; the source for the attribution in the *TCB*, however, is not clear. The only external reference to Pearce in the period of the active circulation of the "Verses", the mid-fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, may be found in another corpus text: "Trinity", a poem which forms part of the Ripley Scrolls (see below), mentions Pearce or his oeuvre as an authority on the alchemical work.

Who is Pearce? Unfortunately no historical evidence is available in the form of other writings or biographical information. His explicit affiliation with the Benedictine order (implied in the designator "black monk") is probably more indicative of a copyist's evaluation of the "Verses upon the Elixir" and alchemy rather than an indication for the existence of an actual

⁴² *TCB*, 107–109.

⁴³ On *Decknamen* and concealment see Principe, "Decknamen," including its bibliography, and Long, *Openness*, 148. Crosland, *Historical Studies*, is a relatively early publication focusing on peculiarities of alchemical expression, but outdated. Further literature on *Decknamen* in specific contexts (and a later period than is of relevance for the "Verses") may be found variously, and much more reliably, in Principe, *Secrets*, and Newman, *Gehennical Fire*.

⁴⁴ See e.g. a unique prose commentary of the fifteenth century, written alongside the "Verses" in Bod MS Ashmole 759, ff. 124^{r-v}.

author of that name.⁴⁵ Beyond the text of the “Verses”, Pearce remains an early modern legend.

Like so many of the vernacular *alchemica* of the late medieval period, the “Verses upon the Elixir” developed different versions which circulated simultaneously throughout the entire early modern period. The two main variants of the “Verses” (A and B₁) share substantial textual parts but differ in their rendition (more and less concise), order and, in part, wording of the recipe. Only two couplets are peculiar to the shorter version, A, in comparison with version B. The first (ll. 72–73) references the liquefaction or extraction of *aqua vitae* from elixirs; its absence in version B₁ is noteworthy, as it either implies that the water is synonymous with the elixirs, or leaves its production up to the reader’s interpretation. The second couplet (ll. 84–85) relates a conventional religious reference without any obvious necessity or practical purpose. Pithy and practical in nature, version A of the “Verses” would have been ideally suited for use in the alchemical workshop.

Version B₁ of the “Verses upon the Elixir” expands the same recipe with theoretical sections. It includes nine additional passages (i.e. up to one hundred additional lines) which cover not just practical instructions but the entire scope of alchemical writing in their content. Its religious and philosophical phrases are mostly rhetorical in their discussion of the ideal disposition and pious conduct of the successful alchemical practitioner (e.g. ll. 87–102);⁴⁶ they often function as transitions between different parts of the poem. Other parts diverge from the alchemical recipe or its description in version A, among them details on natural and chemical principles (ll. 57–86), more details on the qualities of *aqua vitae* (ll. 140–146) and on the transformation of base metal into gold (esp. ll. 177–192). An introduction to the personified substance ‘Mercury’ and an allegorical monologue in which ‘she’ praises her own alchemical qualities forms one of the most substantial amplifications of version B₁ (ll. 116–126, 127–138). This section also occurs as an individual poem entitled “The Boast of Mercury” in later manuscripts, often *verbatim* and occasionally as a variant text (see below). Altogether, while not entirely misplaced beside the alchemical furnace, version B₁ probably best represents the essence of the didactic tradition of alchemical poetry.

⁴⁵ *TCB*, 269, 473 and 487. The relationship of the clerical orders and alchemy has not been studied in detail to date. Initial impressions may be found in Partington, “Albertus Magnus,” 13–14; see also Theisen, “Attraction” and DeVun, *Prophecy*.

⁴⁶ Here and henceforth line numbers in italics refer to version B of the poem. See Table I for details on differences between versions A and B.

Version B was further rearranged in some copies to alter the sequence of practical steps (version B₂). Here two medial parts of the poem are positioned towards the end of the poem, wedged into the middle of a section which is peculiar to version B (ll. 57–116 appear after l. 181). Consequently, all practical steps of the experiment are placed towards the first half of the “Verses” and followed by theoretical and religious passages in the second half. It seems that structure B₂ was thematically organised to facilitate direct access to the practical parts. It combines version A’s pragmatic nature with the alchemo-poetic aspects of version B in its standard form.⁴⁷

Table I: Alchemical procedures in two versions of the “Verses upon the Elixir”

<i>Part</i>	<i>lines</i>	<i>Version A</i>	<i>lines</i>	<i>Version B₁</i>	<i>Content</i>
I	1–8	1	1–8	1	introduction; materials
	9–20	2 (A)	9–34	2 (B)	isolation, dissolution, elaboration, distillation, nigredo
	21–26	3	35–40	3	purification
	27–30	4 (A)	41–48	4 (B)	further steps
	31–38	5	49–56	5	cibation & conclusion
II			57–58	a	introduction second part
	39–44	6	59–66	6	philosophical basis
			61–62	b	likeness of species
			67–76	c	unnatural procedures, polemic discussion elements
45–54	7	77–86	7	Aristotelian elements	
		87–102	d	religion	
III	55–60	8	103–108	8	sublimation, calcination grinding/ingression

⁴⁷ Surviving witnesses distribute as follows: Version A: 15 full copies (and substantial fragments, which will be implied when full copies are mentioned henceforth), 2 fragments; Version B: 36 full copies, of which 12 each belong to either Version B₁ or B₂, while the remainder do not show markers of either version clearly, mostly because they omit significant passages; and a further four medial fragments. For an overview of witnesses including minor fragments and variants see the Edition towards the end of this book; stemmata are provided there (Diagrams VI and VII).

<i>Part</i>	<i>lines</i>	<i>Version A</i>	<i>lines</i>	<i>Version B₁</i>	<i>Content</i>
	61–65	9	109–113	9	composition/fixation cibation → stone
	66–68	10	114–116	10	projection 1:40
IV			117–126	e	introduction Mercury
			127–138	f	“Boast of Mercury”
	69	11	139	11	Saturn
			140–146	g	
	70–71	12	147–148	12	elixeration from Saturn
	72–73	x			extraction <i>aqua vitae</i>
	74–81	13	149–156	13	its qualities
V	82–83	14	157–158	14	water: albification
	84–85	y			religion
	86–99	15	159–172	15	oil: rubification, citrine gold earth: nigredo-rubedo final development: oil, ferment + mercury
VI	100–103	21	173–176	21	projection 1:200
			177–192	h	fire assay
	104–105	22	193–194	22	concluding couplet

Sections not numbered but listed with a letter are peculiar to one version and itemised by letter, x-y for version A and a-h for version B.

The content, alternative versions and standard forms of the “Verses upon the Elixir” were firmly established by the end of the fifteenth century. It is not clear which version predates the other; the extraction of condensed texts from more elaborate versions was a common practice for alchemical writings of the medieval period, but the supplementation of short texts with more material and amalgamation of texts were similarly valid writing techniques. In the sixteenth century all versions of the “Verses” entered a phase of subtle adaptation to different manuscript contexts including fragmentation, amalgamation, authorial attribution and translation. It is notable here that the poem’s fragments by far outnumber the variant copies: selection and omission were generally more widely practised among copyists than the alteration of poems beyond word level. In their historical reception, the

three variants of the “Verses” (A, B₁ and B₂) did not supersede each other, but were retained, circulated in parallel and even copied side by side in some manuscripts. Some of the later compilers involved in this parallel rendition may have had a literary or antiquarian interest in documenting several versions in the same volume. However, the notebooks preserving many of the earlier copies, and their annotations, imply that many copyists and readers considered the different versions of the “Verses” complementary renditions of an alchemical experiment, constituting multiple approaches to the manufacture of the philosophers’ stone that were, hence, to be preserved and dissected for meaning rather than approved or discarded in competition with each other.⁴⁸

2.2. *Texts Associated with the “Verses upon the Elixir”*

2.2.1. *Physical Relations: “Boast of Mercury”, “Mystery of Alchemists” and “Liber Patris Sapientiae”*

The poem “Boast of Mercury” and its textual relations, “Mystery of Alchemists” and “Liber Patris Sapientiae”, are texts most intimately connected with the “Verses upon the Elixir”: medial passages of the “Verses” appear *verbatim* in these poems. In the sixteenth century the poems developed variants which formed further, different connections with the “Verses upon the Elixir” and its surrounding corpus. In many ways, “Boast of Mercury”, “Mystery of Alchemists” and “Liber Patris Sapientiae” form the nucleus of the corpus around the “Verses”.

2.2.1.1. *“Boast of Mercury”*

I am mercurye the mighty flos florum
 I am most worthiest of all Singulorum
 I am sower of Sol and Lune and Mars
 I am genderer of Iovis of him be all wars.

“Boast of Mercury”, version A, *incipit*

I am Mercury the mightiest flos florum
 I am most royall & richest of all singulorum
 I am Patronus & Princeps most royall
 I am the mother of all manner of mettall

“Boast of Mercury”, version B, *incipit*

⁴⁸ See e.g. Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 (‘Dekyngston’) and BL MS Sloane 1098, both s. xvi, and TCC MS O.2.15, s. xvi–xvii, which contain versions A and B₁; BL MS Sloane 1842, s. xvi/xvii contains both versions A and B₂; and other manuscript witnesses contain either of the three variants at any time of their transmission.

An excerpt from version B of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, the poem “Boast of Mercury” (short: “Boast”) isolates the first-person soliloquy of Mercury personified. The resulting stand-alone poem of twelve lines is a theoretical explanation of the qualities of mercury as an alchemical principle: rather than the common metal, ‘philosophical’ mercury (and its counterpart, sulphur) form the basis of all alchemical work. The “Boast” emphasises Mercury’s status as ruler of all other planets, i.e. material superseding all lesser metals. Individual copies of “Boast” often include an additional, original but unobtrusive couplet in the same style (“I am shee that doth all/ I am shee that men caule”); if these lines carry supplementary information this is not obvious to the modern reader. This early version of “Boast” as an individual poem, which is roughly contemporary with the “Verses upon the Elixir”, was circulated anonymously, widely and independently from the “Verses”. Notably, copyists were aware of and explicit about its origins: many copies of “Boast” conclude with an “etc.”.

“Boast” also developed a completely different and much more substantial variant, version B, in manuscripts from the sixteenth century onwards. Version B of “Boast” is related to “Boast”, version A only by virtue of its *incipit*, theme and speaker, and it fluctuates in length between fifty-nine and sixty-two lines. In its contents this version concentrates on the mercury-sulphur principle in detail befitting its extended scope: here ‘Mercury’ not only encompasses all metals but also all types of substances (vegetable, animal, mineral) and elements (ll. 1–8). She acts upon substances (mortification, calcination, revivification, ll. 9–10), is a life-giving principle and embodies black, red and white stages of the work (rubedo, nigredo, albedo; ll. 11–14), and reacts adversely to some substances (ll. 15–19). The poem also incorporates a polemic discussion of elements familiar to readers of the “Verses” (29–35, *a-c*; “Verses”, version B, ll. 69–76).⁴⁹ Ample space is given to the introduction of Mercury’s ‘husband’ (sulphur), their complementary roles in alchemy, their exclusive compatibility and, once united, inseparability (ll. 20–28, *d-q*, 40–52). The poem also introduces a third substance, the product (or ‘child’) of their conjunction, the philosophers’ stone, which is specified to multiply by the factor of one thousand (ll. 53–57). This text of “Boast of Mercury” clearly employs a different metaphorical register than the “Verses upon the Elixir”, in which similar personifications do not occur beyond the inclusion of “Boast” in version B. Further noteworthy tropes in “Boast of Mercury” are metaphors relating to matrimony (monogamy ‘by

⁴⁹ Please see the discussion of this passage in Chapter 2 below.

2.2.1.2. “Mystery of Alchemists”

I am mercury the mightiest flos florum
 I am most riall & richest of all singulor
 I am patronas & princes most ryall
 I am mother of all manner of mettall “Mystery of Alchemists”, stanza 79

“Mystery of Alchemists”, a substantial, anonymous Middle English alchemical poem, forms an indirect extension of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, as it absorbs substantial passages of “Boast of Mercury” into its text (as well as smaller parts of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variants “Spain” and “Titan Magnesia”).⁵² The common passages now form part of a didactic dialogue between ‘father’ and ‘son’, that is, alchemical master and apprentice, concerning the workings of nature, the conditions of alchemical transmutation and the manufacture of the philosophers’ stone. The poem’s scope varies too much from one copy to the next to justify the definition of a standard version. The *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* prints a text of 296 lines which may be considered a median length for current purposes; the *NIMEV* states 132 quatrains as a guideline.⁵³

Probably written around the same time as the “Verses upon the Elixir”, “Mystery of Alchemists” is difficult to place in the corpus of texts in terms of chronology. Similarly, the poem’s relation to “Boast of Mercury” and the “Verses upon the Elixir” in terms of originality or derivation is uncertain. All three poems, however, testify to a late medieval enthusiasm for an allegorical first-person monologue of Mercury as personified substance. With approximately twelve extant copies, “Mystery of Alchemists” does not seem to have been as popular as the “Verses” or other texts from the body of late medieval *alchemica*.⁵⁴

Some scholars considered George Ripley, canon of Bridlington (d. ca. 1490), figurehead of fifteenth-century alchemical poetry, to be the author of “Mystery of Alchemists”.⁵⁵ The poem plays a significant role in Ripley’s oeuvre, a body of work which includes both authentic and pseudonymous

“Verses”; further, BL MS Sloane 2809, of the sixteenth century, which amalgamates versions A and B₂ of “Boast”; and the assembled manuscripts in Elias Ashmole’s collection (now Bod Ashmole MSS), which, taken together, gather the entire tradition of “Boast” texts.

⁵² For “Richard Carpenter’s Work” see below.

⁵³ *TCB*, 380–388.

⁵⁴ On extant copies see also the Edition of the text in the final part of this book.

⁵⁵ See e.g. Singer, *Catalogue*, item 812; *NIMEV*, item 4017. This attribution may go back to Bale, *Illustrium Maioris*, of 1548. On “Mystery of Alchemists” see Rampling, “Catalogue,” s.v. item 19.

texts. It is, however, best considered one of the latter: manuscript evidence indicates that the poem was originally circulated as an anonymous poem with intermittent but consistent attribution to Ripley.

2.2.1.3. “*Liber Patris Sapientiae*”

This worthy science of Alcemy yf thou wilte it learne
 a litle monye out of thy purse tho[u] muste for beare
 to buy therwith flos florum it is moste worthyeste
 and to builde well hir chamber and hir neste [...]

My sonne[,] [mercury] is called the mightiste flos florum
 And moste royall and richeste of all singulorum
 She is verie patron, and princes moste royalle
 And she is verie mother of every mettalle

“*Liber Patris Sapientiae*”, excerpt (stanzas 8 and 36 in *TCB*)

In the corpus of texts associated with the “Verses”, “*Liber Patris Sapientiae*” represents a sister text to the “Mystery of Alchemists”. Also dating from the sixteenth century, “*Liber Patris Sapientiae*”, too, borrows medial passages, at times almost *verbatim*, from “Boast of Mercury” (here from version B). “*Liber Patris Sapientiae*” may also be considered a didactic dialogue in verse form, even if the speaker’s addressee, a ‘son’, does not explicitly partake in it.

The full version of the poem takes up a staggering 120 quatrains in Ashmole’s edition and varies greatly in scope in its manifestations in manuscripts. “*Liber Patris Sapientiae*” combines extensive apologetic and advisory sections on secrecy, the social and legal aspects of alchemy and, occasionally, a stanza on alchemical verse with theoretical-allegorical passages on the alchemical work.⁵⁶ Some copies provide a summary of the seven metals’ properties (one metal per quatrain), a more metaphorical rendition of the conjunction of mercury and sulphur (albedo, rubedo and projection) and an explanatory paraphrase of earlier parts of the poem. Notably, the text never uses the imperative, and does not stylistically resemble a recipe in any of its parts, even if some of them engage closely with the theoretical underpinnings of the manufacture of the philosophers’ stone. Altogether, “*Liber Patris Sapientiae*” resembles a medley of philosophical-theoretical alchemical lore, possibly a secondary creation pieced together from a variety of other sources in its individual copies.

⁵⁶ *TCB*, 194–209 and 487; stanza 21 defends the medium of alchemical verse. The scope of extant manuscript copies is provided in the Bibliography, in the Handlist of Manuscript Witnesses, below.

Surviving copies of “Liber Patris Sapientiae”, only five in number, at times omit pertinent passages and therefore lose the connection with the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, in which “Liber Patris Sapientiae” generally occupies a marginal role.⁵⁷

2.2.2. *Close Bonds: “Exposition” and “Wind and Water”*

Their physical attachment to the “Verses” distinguishes the poems “Exposition” and “Wind and Water” from other texts in the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. Both poems are frequently copied, in sequence, directly after the text of the “Verses”, often as if intended to be read in conjunction, at times even without visual separation to form an amalgamated text. As ‘physical’ extensions of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, “Exposition” and “Wind and Water” establish a broader basis for the extension of the corpus in the early modern period.

2.2.2.1. *“Exposition”*

Nowe of this matter to you most clere
 An exposicon I do make here
 Wheryn I charge you secrete to be
 That frynde ne foo do it se

“Exposition”, *incipit*

In style similar to that of the “Verses upon the Elixir” the “Exposition” describes a transmutatory alchemical experiment in a space of sixty-eight lines. Sources do not imply that the poem was ever attributed to an author. With twenty-six full copies and substantial fragments surviving, the “Exposition” establishes its significance in Middle English alchemical poetry through its prominence alone.

The “Exposition” is characterised by its *incipit* as an exegetic text dependent upon the presence of another, as well as by its appearance in many manuscripts directly after version A of the “Verses”. This close association goes back to the earliest surviving, fifteenth-century witnesses of both poems, yet cannot be confirmed intrinsically: their contents depend too much on an interpretation of the language of alchemy to match the experiment described in the “Verses upon the Elixir” with that of the “Exposition”. It is perhaps for this reason that the “Exposition” always circulated in physical proximity to one or several poems from the corpus around

⁵⁷ Surviving witnesses are listed with the Edition of excerpts of the text at the end of this book.

the “Verses upon the Elixir”, to maintain a connection which might otherwise be lost quite easily. Only the most modern copies of the “Exposition” appear independently from the “Verses” in manuscripts, an unintentionally autonomous text of uncertain exegetic value once stripped of its point of reference. It is difficult to tell whether this dissociation was a deliberate or accidental process.⁵⁸

The content of the “Exposition” may be summarised thus: after the above-cited introductory lines, with the notable use of the secrecy topos (ll. 1–4), the poem provides a cursory glossary to the key terms upon which the experiment in the “Verses” is based (‘earth’, ‘water of wood’; ll. 5–6) and emphasises sericon as key ingredient (l. 8)—a substance interpreted variously, by early modern readers, as lead oxide (probably litharge or red lead) or other substances.⁵⁹ A series of processes ensues: the extraction of mercury, and sublimation of its three ‘lycours’, from a ‘gum’: the first (*aqua vitae*, alcohol, here ‘attractive mercury’), is won by *bain marie* (ll. 11–20); the second (‘our’, i.e. philosophical, mercury, *lac virginis*, or permanent water) has generative powers within the philosophers’ stone (ll. 23–40 remind of the “Boast of Mercury”) and is employed for the purification of ‘earth’ (ll. 41–44); the third, (an oil, ‘tincture’, *sulphur vive*, soul of Saturn) is used for the production of a red gum (ll. 45–49). The final section concerns the production of the philosophers’ stone and emphasises the importance of the two gums (the aforementioned philosophical mercury and sulphur, ll. 53–59) and the two elixirs generated (ll. 60–64). Other lines, rhetorical glue between the outlined steps, include apologetic appeals to God as the creator of all matter and giver of secrets (ll. 51–52, 65–68).

The scribal treatment of the “Exposition” in Elizabethan times is generally careful. The poem does not generate any variant versions and thus constitutes a rarity within its family of related texts. Perhaps afraid of leaving out essential detail, copyists were also reluctant to truncate the “Exposition”. It is curious, then, that the scope of the poem’s text fluctuates between sixty-seven and seventy lines. The addition of passages to some copies, the removal of those perceived as redundant and the replacement of others account for this subtle yet meaningful variation. The “Exposition” was also subjected to a large number of alterations at word level, particularly variation of the positions of words.

⁵⁸ In addition to the mentioned full copies the poem survives in three minor fragments; see also the witnesses and stemma (Diagram X) listed with the Edition below.

⁵⁹ Principe, *Secrets*, 121, with reference to a forthcoming article by Jennifer Rampling.

Why would generations of alchemist writers constantly reshuffle the words and phrases in an ancillary alchemical poem? One explanation might be that the individual changes relate to aspects of alchemical practice. Indeed, it is noteworthy that only passages not essential to the poem's alchemical content, e.g. religious *topoi*, are not subjected to alteration. Another likely answer is that they tried to do something which the modern historian still fails to achieve: to match the advice given in the "Exposition" with the text of the "Verses", and to better understand their composite recipe for the philosophers' stone.

2.2.2.2. "Wind and Water"

Take wynde and water white & grene.
and drawe therof lac virginis
Where some it call a water clere
the which water hathe no pere "Wind and Water", version A, *incipit*

Nowe will I clerely declare vnto you all,
the making of our Elixir which we call our stone,
truly & instly howe, herkin euerichone
first knowe ye materialls & propercion of eche one
"Wind and Water", version B, *incipit*

Thanks to the survival of seventeen extant full copies, the standard version of "Wind and Water" belongs to the group of the most widely circulated Middle English *alchemica*, both together with and independently of the "Verses upon the Elixir". "Wind and Water" also dates from the mid- to late fifteenth century and is often appended to the "Exposition" (and thus indirectly to the "Verses", version A).

Another anonymous addition to the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", this original, concise version of "Wind and Water" does not seem to describe a full experiment. Its text concerns the distillation of *lac virginis* (a synonym for philosophical, i.e. alchemically produced, mercury) derived from two elements, 'wind and water'. Notable is the advice to change the receiver (l. 7), preserve a white fume (l. 6) and observe a red, strong fire, possibly the stage of *rubedo* (ll. 8–9). The Latin ending (ll. 10–13, where applicable) specifies that this last, rubificated substance, the 'menstruum', is philosophical gold, which (it states) may be used for a number of further processes.

"Wind and Water", version A, shows intertextual connections with the "Verses", where six of its lines surface almost *verbatim*. It is not clear whether "Wind and Water" was intended to represent a summary of the "Verses upon the Elixir" or "Exposition", or to be circulated alongside the two poems to

elucidate their content; readers often considered “Wind and Water” the final section of the composite poem (“Verses” followed by “Exposition” and “Wind and Water”) without commenting on the repetitive nature.

Like “Boast of Mercury”, however, “Wind and Water” leaves its most distinctive mark in the history of early modern alchemical writing in its alternative sixteenth-century guise: an extensive poem which introduces the reader to the subject matter in an almost dramatized form and complements version A with more technical detail on procedures, equipment, theoretical background, justification and relevance of the experiment.⁶⁰ Its final lines mark this variant as a recipe for the philosophers’ stone (a clearer goal than version A’s intended outcome). Version B certainly comprises very dense information in metaphorical terms (with substances personified), but not necessarily a clearly structured series of steps, in the lines between *incipit* and end. We hear of proportions (one part on nine for male and female substances), procedures (coction and mortification, ll. 10–12); of reactions (contrition into a powder, congelation/ceration and generation of a stone, ll. 13–14) and adaptations: if this stone-‘child’ is made with the power of his ‘father’ (sun, i.e. gold, l. 25), it is the king of metals; if made with the ‘mother’ (moon, i.e. silver, l. 25), it needs to be imbibed further (ll. 15–22). The text is careful to distinguish between common precious metals used for currency and the ideal outcome of this work, their philosophical counterparts (ll. 26–30). A transition referring to the authority of the Old Testament (ll. 30–32) leads into the second part of the poem, which starts with a discussion of the hidden nature of the philosophers’ stone and its all-encompassing qualities (ll. 33–41; this part reminds of the “Boast of Mercury”) and instructs on its congelation, elaboration (removal of the imbibed liquid and other impurities), rubrification by heat and congelation into the red stone (ll. 42–47). The final section (ll. 48–62) comprises more general moral/pious advice on good alchemical practice.

Parallels between versions A and B of “Wind and Water” only become apparent in individual phrases:

*Take winde and water, whyte & also greene/
and like as I meane doo you them together,
& by a limbeck drawe yerof a mylk water clene,
and doo it into ye Liquour. Rex Boria et
Regina meridie evin thether.*

“Wind and Water”, ll. 5–9⁶¹

⁶⁰ 23 copies of Version A and 5 of Version B are extant today. All surviving witnesses are listed with the Edition of the text. Stemmta are provided in Diagram XI.

⁶¹ Italics editorial.

This may explain why Version B of “Wind and Water” generally circulated independently from the standard text. Only five full copies and substantial fragments, of a more recent date than witnesses of version A, survive. Nevertheless, the contemporary generation of a few commentaries provides a good impression of the original impact both versions of “Wind and Water” must have had originally on Middle English alchemical poetry and its readers.⁶²

2.2.3. *Intertextual Connections: “Richard Carpenter’s Work”*

The third major group of poems associated with the “Verses upon the Elixir” entertains subtle yet solid relations with different parts of the core corpus presented above. All four versions of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” belong to this group, as well as a fragment variant (“God Angel”) and the more ancient prose original of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, “Alumen de Hispania”. With their adaptation of familiar, recognisable phrases, terms and expressions from the wider corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, these texts provide the corpus’ sinew, an inner structure that connects various poems in a firm yet flexible way.

The modern umbrella title of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” unites four originally separate alchemical poems which circulated independently, often anonymously, and always without a common title (indeed, more often than not, without any title at all) in manuscripts from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards.⁶³ To their original readers the recipes presented in these poems would have seemed, if not straightforward, then at least decipherable and, indeed, complementary to one another: even though not all, if any, contemporary readers succeeded in translating “Richard Carpenter’s Work” into practical terms, or even wished to experiment in the workshop, they recognised the poems’ promise as well as the connections between them, and often tried to unveil their secrets. This is evidenced by annotations and the existence of several parallel copies of the poem’s versions and in many manuscripts.⁶⁴

⁶² See e.g. New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library MS Osborn fa. 16, pp. 39b and 41b.

⁶³ Altogether there are 74 full copies and substantial fragments, and various minor fragments surviving today. See below on statistics for the individual versions.

⁶⁴ Six of the seven manuscripts in Cambridge library holdings alone contain altogether ten copies of three versions of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”. On the decipherability of *Decknamen* see Principe, *Secrets*, 18; on ways of deciphering historical alchemical texts *ibid.*, 143–156.

The poems' similar *incipits*—probably the reason for their modern indiscriminate title—are variations on the couplet “Of Spain take the clear light/ the red gum that is so bright”; in the other three variants, the term “Spain” is replaced with metaphorical synonyms for gold (“Titan Magnesia”, “Sun” and “Father Phoebus” respectively). These terms will serve as short titles for the individual poems throughout this book.

The identity of the man who lent his name to the title of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” has been elusive since the first record of the name appeared in a fifteenth-century manuscript.⁶⁵ This may be the “old manuscript” seen by Ashmole and hence responsible for his declaration of “Titan Magnesia” as “The Worke Of Rich: Carpenter”.⁶⁶ Surprisingly, although the name is documented only for this poem and appears sporadically in manuscript copies of the text (and eventually even imported directly into manuscripts from Ashmole’s printed version), Richard Carpenter was established as an alchemical author by the end of the seventeenth century.

Antiquarian Elias Ashmole is only one in a long row of scholars who, with varying conviction, attempted to supply the name of Richard Carpenter with biographical information:

I finde that in Anno 1447. *John Carpenter* then *Bishop* of *Worcester* founded the Colledge at *Westbury* neere *Bristol* [...]. Besides this he built the *Gatehouse* at *Hartleborough*, a *Castle* neere and belonging to the *Bishop* of *Worcester*; and did severall other *Workes* of *Piety* and *Charity*. This *Bishop Carpenter* is supposed to be *Brother*, or neere *Kinsman* to *Richard Carpenter* our *Author*, and accounted an *Hermetique Philosopher*. He was *Contemporary* with *Norton*, and *Cannings*; and for the most part lived neere unto them, at the aforementioned *Westbury*[.]⁶⁷

More recently it has been suggested that Carpenter’s “brother was the Bishop of Worcester”, or an “Oxford graduate, [...] a canon of Westbury-on-Trym, and as a West Countryman [...] [who] may have known his fellow alchemist Norton”.⁶⁸ With no other conclusive evidence available, however, Richard Carpenter remains “a name to do little more than conjure with”.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ TCC MS O.2.16, f. 66^v.

⁶⁶ TCB, 275 and 487. Ashmole refers to genealogical records and “an old *Manuscript* (and it was the ancientest *Hand-writing* I ever saw[.]” (ibid., 473–474); neither can be identified today.

⁶⁷ TCB, 473–474. William Cannings was a wealthy mayor of Bristol, Norton’s hometown. On Ashmole and Cannings, see Janacek, “Virtuoso’s History,” esp. 411.

⁶⁸ Ashmole, *Theatrum* (introd. Debus), xliii; Hughes, *Arthurian Myths*, 303–304.

⁶⁹ This fitting expression was coined in a different context in Cooper and Pearsall, “*Gawain* Poems,” 365.

2.2.3.1. “Spain”/“Titan Magnesia”

Of spayn [*or: titan magnesia*] take thou thy clere light
 The redde gomme that is so bright
 Of philosophers the sulphur vif
 Callid golde withouten stryf “Spain”/“Titan Magnesia”, *incipit*

The first two variants of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, “Spain” and “Titan Magnesia”, are identical except for the variation in the first line. For the sake of conciseness (and in view of the fact that the Latin source text discussed below is called “Alumen de Hispania”) the term “Spain” will be used henceforth to refer to either text unless indicated otherwise.

An alchemical poem of ninety-six lines, “Spain” presents another transmutatory recipe instructing in the manufacture of, as the poem puts it, the “riche rubie stone of price” (l. 84). It begins with the extraction of a tincture from ‘Spain’, further specified as red gum/*sulphur vive*/gold,⁷⁰ whereupon a husband and wife (sun and moon, philosophical gold and silver) are amalgamated (ll. 1–11) to generate a (mineral, cf. l. 46) stone with the help of mercury (ll. 12–16). The stone is then subjected to liquefaction, probably by distillation, as the recipe warns that the fume must be preserved (ll. 17–23). It also specifies the temperature needed to see a succession of colours in the work as the aforementioned stone decocts and changes its properties (black, white, red and ‘citrine’, ll. 24–34). The result, an amalgamated, inseparable substance, decocts in a sealed container to generate the animal stone (described with its qualities in ll. 35–46). The remainder of the poem is a long section of more theoretical-advisory content (ll. 47–96, see also the common passages with the “Exposition” below). Noteworthy here is the emphasis on temperature regulation in decoction (ll. 77–78), on books and literacy (ll. 79–81) and the mention of Mary, sister of Moses, as an alchemical authority (ll. 88–90).

“Spain” is indirectly connected with the “Verses” through intertextuality. The poem shares some passages with the theoretical parts of the “Exposition” in a modified yet recognisable form. The following parallels are just one example of such coincidences (italicisation editorial):

ffor fowles in their therewith^u do fle
 and also fisshes swym therewith^u in the see

⁷⁰ This helps interpret the term ‘magnesia’ in the alternative *incipit*, “Titan Magnesia” and parts of “Father Phoebus”: generally in pseudo-Lullian alchemical lore ‘magnesia’ was a symbolical name for any number of substances, similar in its function to other *Decknamen* in alchemical literature. Priesner, “Magnesia”.

*ffor moisture of the redde grape
And of the white who can it take*

“Spain”, ll. 65–68

Erth is withyn most fyne
Water of Wode aysell of wyne
ffor the moisture of the grape who can it take
And sericon don our maistry make

“Exposition”, ll. 5–8

Since the relevant line does not fit into the metric and rhythmic structure of the “Exposition” it may have originated in “Spain” or a third, shared but unidentified source. More pertinently, such an appearance of familiar elements in different, approximately contemporary *alchemica* is very common in late medieval and early modern written culture, if in different degrees of congruency. Notably, “Spain” is the only version of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” with this quality; all other versions connect with the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” in different ways.

The position of “Spain” within the corpus around the “Verses” is much more complex than simple intertextuality. It also links different parts of the corpus with each other and with an ancient tradition of alchemical literature. Its Latin prose ancestor, “Alumen de Hispania”, served as a model for this translation as well as others in the late medieval period. For the history of “Spain” in the late Middle Ages it is significant, firstly, that its English verse version was the first vernacular translation of “Alumen” to gain particular popularity in alchemical circles. Although a fourteenth-century French prose version represents the first vernacularisation of “Alumen”, the Middle English poem “Spain” drew a larger audience and more enthusiastic reception.⁷¹ Secondly, the abovementioned reference to the legendary ancient alchemist and authority Maria (commonly known as “the prophetess” or “the Jewess”), a figure also prominent in annotations of post-fifteenth-century copies of the “Verses”, links “Alumen” and “Spain” with a poem from the Ripley Scroll, “Trinity”.⁷² Both “Alumen de Hispania” and “Trinity” will be discussed in their own right below.

“Spain” proved to be as popular as it was tenacious in manuscript survival. The nineteen extant copies of “Spain” (full texts and substantial fragments)

⁷¹ The manuscript containing the French version is CUL MS li.3.17, ff. 68^v–70^v. Readers here often kept separate manuscripts for Latin prose and English verse texts; only occasionally did “Alumen” and “Spain” appear together (TCC MS O.2.16, Bod MS Ashmole 1416). On scribal tactics of the copyist of Bod MS Ashmole 1416, see Barthélemy and Kahn, “Voyages,” 492.

⁷² For Maria, see Patai, “Maria” and especially the more developed version of this article in Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*, 71 ff. See also Chapter 3 below.

and various smaller fragments include an unusually high proportion of early, fifteenth-century witnesses; copies of “Titan Magnesia” are more rare.⁷³ While popular yet not ubiquitous in early modern manuscripts, the individual versions of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” certainly encouraged much scribal creativity: some copyists of “Spain” chose to omit a theoretical section (ll. 49–66), others composed variant endings and alternative *incipits* (for example, by adding the colophon “Geber of Spain saith”), or changed single words and terms in order to improve, one suspects, the poem’s contents or style.⁷⁴ In terms of circulation and survival, then, “Spain” represents both the tradition and the expansion of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”.

2.2.3.2. “Alumen de Hispania”

Accedens Aaron ad mariam prophetissa sororem suam salutans eam dixit.
 O prophetissa soror mea audiui siquidem de te multoties
 quod albificas lapidem in vno die.
 Respondit Maria. Vtique o Aaron per diem & in parte diei.

“Alumen de Hispania”, *incipit*

“Alumen de Hispania”, a fifteenth-century Latin translation of a Hebrew, and possibly an even older Arabic text, served as the source text for the Middle English poem “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variant “Spain”. In this didactic dialogue, Maria shares the secrets of alchemy with Aaron (or Aros), a rather inquisitive “philosopher” of uncertain mythical or historical parentage. Within the dialogue we find discussions of the possibility of albification in a single day or less (ll. 1–13); the production of the great elixir (this coincides with the text of “Spain”: the poem omits the general introductory questions of “Alumen” to cut straight to the recipe; ll. 19–29); another, purportedly ancient recipe using mountainous herbs, also referencing ‘kibrit and alkibrit’ (substances we will encounter again in “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variant “Sun”); its product is of vast projecting power (ll. 33–50). This is then summed up more pithily (or indeed supplemented with another recipe) by Maria to cheer up the struggling Aaron (ll. 54–61): a gum ‘elsarog’ is added to the mixture, followed by further explications on the nature of

⁷³ Only four copies of “Titan Magnesia” can be recorded. Twelve fragments are not clearly identifiable as one variant or the other. All witnesses may be found with the Edition of the text in the Appendix. Stemmatata for both variants are provided in Diagram XII.

⁷⁴ The mentioned alterations may be found in the copies of Bod MS Ashmole 1478, TCC MS R.14.45 (2 copies); Bod MS Ashmole 1490. The Edition’s critical apparatus records variation on word or phrase level and may be consulted for more detail.

certain substances used, including moist calces, four stones, a reference to Hermes, a warning about foolish and lengthy nigredo and the futility of trying the work even in a year without the necessary knowledge and divine grace (ll. 63–83). The text closes with Maria's observations on the hermetic vessel, the temperature of the fire in the alchemical work and on true hermetic lore (ll. 84–105).

Some copies of "Alumen" then end in a short Latin poem attributed to Arnold of Villanova, which may be considered a pithy, mnemonic rendition of some of the key phrases from the preceding prose text.⁷⁵ The abovementioned popularity of "Spain" in the fifteenth century may, however, be more due to its ancient ancestry than the attribution of this short verse text to a near-contemporary authority. Together, the prose and verse component of "Alumen" represent the pre-Western roots of alchemy and the didactic poetic style revived in early modern Europe.

The title used here, "Alumen de Hispania", agrees with a popular version of the *incipit* of the recipe proper (l. 20 ff.). The text's author is not stated explicitly in late medieval manuscripts. However, thanks to her incorporation into the text, "Alumen" was consistently associated with Maria ("the prophetess", "the Jewess" or, erroneously, the "sister of Moses"). Incidentally, Maria was to become a figure so prominent in English writing and its general, non-scientific conceptions of alchemy that Ben Jonson's mention of her in his play *The Alchemist* would have fallen on comprehending ears.⁷⁶

The Latin text of "Alumen de Hispania" survives in at least thirteen copies. There also appears to be a slightly more recent German translation of the text.⁷⁷ A sixteenth-century prose translation into English, copied into at least five manuscripts over the course of the following decades, completes the text's cycle through manuscripts and their media.

Within the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" "Alumen" represents an ongoing yet somewhat outdated genre bearing the authority of an ancient tradition. As a Latin prose text often reproduced in the same manuscripts as English poems from the corpus, it offers a literary, cultural and scientific point of reference to fifteenth-century readers and their successors.

⁷⁵ Arnold of Villanova, "Carmen," printed in Zetzner, *Theatrum Chemicum*, 4: 542–543. See also Schuler, *Alchemical Poetry*, 420–428.

⁷⁶ Ben Jonson, "The Alchemist," II, i, 80–83. See also Chapter 3 below.

⁷⁷ Many copies of this text are unidentified due to often ambiguous listings in library catalogues; see Timmermann, "Ungereimtes". Details for witnesses may be found with the Edition of the text.

2.2.3.3. “*God Angel*”

In the name of the holi trinite
 now send ws grase so hyt be
 fyrst god made boþe angel & heuen
 and alle so the world wyth planets seuen

“*God Angel*”, *incipit* (BL MS Harley 2407, f. 75^r)

Amalgamation and fragmentation generate much of the marginal corpus around the “*Verses upon the Elixir*”. “*God Angel*”, a rather influential variant of “*Spain*”, was created as part of this scribal exegetic creativity right at the start of the manuscript circulation of “*Spain*”. In fact, it first materialises in a manuscript that also contains possibly the first and probably the only surviving fifteenth-century copy of “*Titan Magnesia*”.⁷⁸ The poem comprises original passages and phrases borrowed from the final, ‘literary’ parts of “*Spain*”, including the abovementioned phrase shared with the “*Exposition*”.

The title used here combines key words from the first distinctive line of the poem (l. 3), to distinguish it from a variety of poems with similar *incipits*: “*God Angel*” models its *incipit* on a religious commonplace by invoking the holy trinity to support the alchemical work. This beginning also connects “*God Angel*” with another poem from the corpus, “*Trinity*”, mentioned twice above because of its references to alchemical authorities (Pearce for the “*Verses*”, Maria for “*Spain*” and “*Alumen de Hispania*”). Although otherwise a diluted derivation of corpus poems, “*God Angel*” is thus a distillate of various connections within the network of knowledge preserved in the corpus around the “*Verses upon the Elixir*”.

“*God Angel*” is a collection of aphoristic couplets on the divine origins of matter, prerequisites for alchemical success and qualities of the ideal practitioner, permeated with allusions to God as the creator and keeper of secrets. Its practical content is negligible: the text merely mentions three flowers (l. 28, crystalline powders) and the moon/silver as essential to the work (l. 29).

The poem’s full scope of forty lines is the same as that of other variants of “*Richard Carpenter’s Work*”, even if all except one of the manuscript copies bisect or truncate the text. The second half of the poem (beginning “*If thou wilt this work begin ...*”, l. 23) appears separate from the first part in the earliest witness and was erroneously identified as the single extant copy of a poem entitled “*Geber, On the Virtue of the Planets and of the Philosopher’s Stone*” in an early catalogue.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ BL MS Harley 2407.

⁷⁹ Information on this original identification for BL MS Harley 2407, f. 75^{r-v}, in Singer,

Overall, only three witnesses of “God Angel” survive. It seems that its theoretical, pious advice was eclipsed by other, more practical variants of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” in their reception. It is all the more noteworthy, then, that Ashmole includes the poem in his *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, in isolation from “Richard Carpenter’s Work” and the corpus around the “Verses”.⁸⁰

2.2.3.4. “Sun”

Of the Sonne take the light
 The redde gome yat is so bright
 And of the mone do also
 The whight gome there both to

“Sun”, version A, *incipit*

Of the sonne take the clere light,
 the red ston yat is so bright.
 The philosophor in all his liffe
 called it sonne, & it is argent vive

“Sun”, version B, *incipit*

“Richard Carpenter’s Work” variant “Sun” adds complexity to the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, as it survives in different formats, on several scribal media and in various connections with different parts of the corpus. “Sun”, version A, is similar to “Spain” in several respects. Both poems provide practical and theoretical instruction in the alchemical work, possibly even the same recipe for the philosophers’ stone, and sixteen of the forty-two lines in “Sun” coincide with the initial part of “Spain”.

But “Sun” generally assigns more importance to the documentation of synonymous terms for alchemical substances. Its short variant (ten to twelve lines, a truncated version of the full text) starts with red and white gums (*sulphur vive*/gold and silver, and here also kibrit and alkibrit; see “Alumen de Hispania” above; ll. 1–8). From these a tincture is extracted before they amalgamate while imbibing *aqua vitae* (ll. 9–12). The long version continues beyond this line, to explore the nature of the *aqua*, again specifying common terms by which it is known (‘acetum of philosophers’, *lac virginis*, spirit of life, ll. 13–22) and its role in the abovementioned process, followed by a rhetorical conclusion of this part of the recipe (ll. 23–32). The stone now generated is mentioned (ll. 33–36) before the practical parts of the decoction leading to its generation are explained: perfect temperature and a perfectly sealed vessel are of vital importance (ll. 37–42).

Catalogue, was taken from the *DIMEV*.

⁸⁰ *TCB*, 211. See the Edition of the text below for witnesses and stemma (Diagram XIII).

In addition to the shared passages with “Spain”, “Sun”, version A, connects with the corpus around the “Verses”, and the “Exposition” in particular, in a manner which deserves special reflection. Compare, for example, the following two passages:

Acetum yat is goodde and fyne
better to them then any wyne

“Sun”, ll. 31–32

Erth is withyn most fyne
Water of Wode aysell of wyne

“Exposition”, ll. 5–6

The cohesion between these phrases is not exactly intertextual, yet their rhyme patterns, terminology and phrasing agree with one another: the passages seem to be interchangeable. This “interphraseology”, an extended use of formulaic phrases common to poetry beyond the alchemical, can be observed in the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” in a large number of instances. It will be discussed in the following chapter in more detail.⁸¹

Both long and short versions of “Sun” form part of the illuminated Ripley Scrolls, though always in one version only; the short version is peculiar to the Scrolls and does not appear in codices. When on the Scroll, “Sun” is implicitly attributed to Ripley and written underneath the imposing opening image of an alchemist holding an alchemical vessel. In this vessel a roundel, or wheel, of circular images depicts the progression of an alchemical experiment. The relation of this image to the text of “Sun”, if any, is not clear. The choice of “Sun” as the initial text on the Scroll is nevertheless remarkable given the fact that it does not in itself appear to be special or different from other poems on the Scroll or in the corpus of poems around the “Verses upon the Elixir”.⁸²

It is noteworthy that individual, anonymous copies of version A of “Sun” in bound manuscripts always render the complete, long version of the text—moreover, only in association with other texts from the corpus around the “Verses”. The authorial attribution to Ripley for this poem is restricted to the Scrolls. The production of bound manuscript copies of “Sun” surges around the mid-sixteenth century. But even generally, version A of “Sun” enjoyed enduring popularity: eleven and ten witnesses survive of the long and short version respectively.

Version B of “Sun”, another short, related yet essentially different alchemical poem of (for the alchemical practitioner) problematic comprehensiveness, appears independently from version A in manuscripts from the fif-

⁸¹ See the final section of Chapter 2 below.

⁸² The Ripley Scrolls are analysed in Chapter 4 below.

teenth century onwards. Version B describes the conjunction of the red stone and argent vive and the addition of the ‘bird of life’, possibly referring to the *cauda pavonis* (the state of colour changes in the experiment believed to precede the final *albedo*).⁸³ It then echoes other poems’ advice on the preservation of the fumes in this process and ends somewhat abruptly.

Within the written culture of early modern England version B of “Sun” is only marked by a comparatively unenthusiastic reception.⁸⁴ In the corpus around the “Verses” it occupies an ancillary position.

2.2.3.5. “Father Phoebus”

Take the father y^at phoebus so bryghte
 that sytteth so hyghe in maiesty
 with his beames y^at shyneth lyghte
 in all places wheresoe^ur he be

“Father Phoebus”, *incipit*

“Father Phoebus” is a true and late, sixteenth-century variant of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” of forty lines. The term peculiar to this variant’s *incipit* requires further explanation: Phoebus, an epithet of Apollo, the sun god, could represent the metal gold in general and the philosophers’ stone in alchemical contexts.⁸⁵ The fact that the term “phoebus” also occurs in “Spain” (l. 26) is not entirely due to coincidence.

In its contents, although formally another recipe text, “Father Phoebus” focuses on theoretical aspects of the alchemical work. Thirty-six of its forty lines are mainly rhetorical phrases. The main focus is on the ingredient, “the father y^at phoebus so bryghte”, here also ‘homogenye’ (l. 13), its role as vital principle (ll. 1–14) and its opposing principle (or wife) ‘magnesia’ (l. 15). After a quatrain announcing the recipe proper (ll. 17–20) the same merely advises the division of gold and refinement of the substance (making the ‘thick’ ‘thin’, ll. 21 and 31). The remainder of the poem follows the terminological inclination of “Sun” in its tenor and explains the difficulty of identifying the recipe’s substance correctly.

With its alternating rhyme pattern (unique among the poems in the core corpus, and apparently a deliberate, original aspect of the poem rather than a re-arrangement of lines originally grouped in couplets) “Father Phoebus”

⁸³ Priesner, “Farben”.

⁸⁴ Only six copies survive, which are listed (as well as copies of all variants of the poem) with the poem’s Edition in the final part of this book. See there for the distribution of copies between codices and Scrolls. Diagram XIV in the Appendix provides a stemma.

⁸⁵ The connection with the philosophers’ stone (l. 28) is established in two copies of “Father Phoebus” in BL MSS Add. 5025 (4) and Add. 32621.

stands out among other variants of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”. As a result of this distinction, not only is “Father Phoebus” more difficult to memorise and conducive to accidental use of identical rhymes in the copying process, but its abundant textual similarities with “Sun” are also obscured—perhaps a desired effect considering their joint appearance on the Ripley Scrolls.

With regard to its supposed authorship, then, the poem “Father Phoebus” shares “Sun”’s implicit attribution to Ripley. Ashmole’s historically faithful reproduction of “Father Phoebus” among the texts on the Ripley Scrolls confirms this in print.⁸⁶ The fact that this variant of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” was never associated with Carpenter in early modern manuscript copies is also telling. “Father Phoebus” materialised primarily on the Scrolls and had a defined standard text rather than several variants, so that a consistent attribution was comparatively easy to institute and maintain.

On the Ripley Scrolls, “Father Phoebus” is written beside the image of a sun and above a Bird of Hermes, a composite of a bird’s body and a king’s head. The debatable significance of this position, and association between image and text, resulted in the swap of this poem with “Sun” in one exemplar.⁸⁷

Patterns of survival for “Father Phoebus” mirror those of “Sun”, version A, almost completely. And like that of “Sun”, the history of “Father Phoebus” is marked by a lack of textual variation, fragmentation or other alteration. This may be due to scribal inertia, an inherent quality of the text which ensured its preservation (as opposed to inviting the composition of variant forms), or to accident. A perhaps pertinent observation, however, is the reciprocal relationship between textual instability and practical content of alchemical poems of this length: within the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” and the family of texts gathered under the title “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, “Father Phoebus”, an essentially theoretical text, seems the most prescriptive, static and reliable poem.⁸⁸

2.2.4. *Peripheral Corporality: “Short Work” and “Trinity”*

The outer boundaries of the fifteenth-century corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” are defined by texts which are either modifications of those described above, or, while originally only remotely related, an integral part

⁸⁶ *TCB*, 377–378.

⁸⁷ San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313.

⁸⁸ 17 copies survive, only four of them on Ripley Scrolls. See the Edition towards the end of this book for details.

of the corpus in later parts of its history. Their multifaceted histories, roles in the corpus and historical development introduce the questions of orality, literacy and materiality to the history of the corpus around the “Verses”: was it a trend of the workshop, outside of manuscript culture, that prompted the texts to change as they did, or could it have been a purely literary reception of the texts which inspired certain adjustments? In the case of the “Short Work” a pithy original recipe expands and grows to be connected with the “Verses”, somewhat similar in its textual expansion to the long versions of “Wind and Water” and “Boast of Mercury” discussed above. In the case of “Trinity” the Ripley Scrolls and a contemporary, analytic literature on alchemical texts and authors play an important role. The resulting picture of the variability and malleability of corpus texts mimics the cycles of the original circulation of the manuscripts in which they are written.

2.2.4.1. “Short Work”

Yf ye wolle to pys medycyn a plye
 make first hevy hard hotte & drye
 nessche lyght cold & wete
 put ham to geder & make ham mete

“Short Work”, version A, *incipit*

Herde hevy hote & dry
 put togeder for so did I
 hote & moste colde & wete
 make them togedir to mete

“Short Work”, version B, *incipit*

Take heuy soffte could & dry
 Clense him & calce grind sutly
 if thou can any good
 desoule him in water yat is so wodd

“Short Work”, version C, *incipit*

A poem with a rather elusive role in the fifteenth-century corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, the “Short Work” is here named after its early modern description as “a work very short and true”. Variations of this line head several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century copies of the text. The poem was mostly circulated anonymously, but was attributed to the scholar and Franciscan friar Roger Bacon in two sixteenth-century copies, an infrequent yet thought-provoking attribution.⁸⁹

Formally recipes of up to ten lines, the original versions of the “Short Work” (A and B) present similar and yet differently phrased alchemical instructions which are not clearly practical or theoretical in nature. They

⁸⁹ London, Wellcome Institute MS 519; Bod MS Ashmole 1480.

are, indeed, too short to be instructive, and the tenor reminds of gnomic rather than scientific poetry. Yet the poem proved ideal for insertion into blank spaces, among the sundry scribblings on flyleaves or, in one instance, on a manuscript cover.⁹⁰ Many copies must have been lost, but six and fourteen copies of versions A and B respectively survive today.⁹¹

On a linguistic level the “Short Work” witnesses scribal emendation at its most active. The few lines that comprise the poem (six to ten lines for versions A and B) show a great amount of variation, including a formless fluctuation of individual words, an always recognisable yet notoriously unstable *incipit*, a unique rendition on a Ripley Scroll, and various amalgams with commentary texts and different versions of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”; the last is also the poem which appears in close proximity to the “Short Work” in early manuscripts.⁹² It seems that the text was considered a rhetorical commonplace which could be replicated and altered on the spot. It is further interesting to note that late copies of “Sun” show some intertextual and physical affinity with version B of the “Short Work”. Yet, overall, the short versions of the “Short Work” permeate the corpus around the “Verses” without leaving a lasting impression.

The essential role of the “Short Work” in the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” is only established with the emergence of a long variant in the sixteenth century. Version C of the “Short Work” was copied and circulated independently from the concise texts, and belies its title with a total of ninety-eight lines. With a shift in emphasis towards practicability this version describes a practical experiment in functional, metaphorical and theoretical terms; similarities between versions B and C end with the *incipit*.

The content of the “Short Work”, version C, may be summarised thus: a series of instructions moves from the cleansing and grinding of the first line’s cryptic substance to its dissolution in *aqua nemoris* (‘water of the wood’, which is also used in the “Verses upon the Elixir”) and extraction of a tincture (‘mercury water’, ‘oil’, ll. 1–8), whereupon the earth ignites or turns red (ll. 9–10). After an interlude mixing advice with another familiar instruc-

⁹⁰ Bod MS e Mus 63, back cover.

⁹¹ Witnesses for the individual versions of this poem, and records of original titles, are listed with the Editions towards the end of this book. See also Diagram XV (stemma).

⁹² The Ripley Scroll in question is BL MS Add. 5025 (3), which does not contain any other poems. Amalgamation or parallel rendition of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” occurs in Bod MS Ashmole 759, Bod MS Ashmole 1416, Bod MS Ashmole 1486, TCC MS R.14.45, BL MS Sloane 288, BL MS Sloane 2176 and the Sloane notebook series under discussion in Chapter 6.

tion to, “make water of earth & earth of water”, i.e. a division reducing the matter to the four Aristotelian elements (ll. 17 and 20), the recipe continues to induce albedo and nigredo, by calcination, congelation (ll. 22–28), then liquefaction, fermentation and dissolution in *aqua vitae* (ll. 29–34). The resulting conjunction of a ‘soul’ and ‘body’ requires ingestion, specifically imbibition with its own distillate (ll. 35–40; qualities described in ll. 41–44). This section of the poem ends with one stanza on the merits of decoding alchemical recipes for the practitioner (ll. 45–48). Afterwards the recipe instructs the manufacture of antimony from philosophical sulphur, specified as vital force for mercury (ll. 49–54), followed by rubrification, the generation of another ‘child’ out of the two principles’ conjunction and its imbibition (ll. 55–63). Two substances emerge, which must be conjoined again (ll. 64–66). A long final section (starting l. 67) explores textual exegesis for alchemical purposes further, and analyses the meaning of some substances and processes of the preceding recipe in much detail, referencing the Bible and the *Turba philosophorum*. Most interesting is the final quatrain, which identifies the ashes left in the vessel at the end of the procedure as the desired, precious outcome (ll. 95–98)—a clue not often contained in alchemical recipes with this clarity.

Version C survives in thirteen full copies and substantial fragments as well as numerous smaller fragments.⁹³ On a textual level, extant copies of the “Short Work”, version C, show little variation, and any changes that do occur are mostly of a stylistic or rhythmic nature. Finally, with regard to its authorship, Ashmole’s attribution of this elaborate version of the “Short Work” to George Ripley cannot be confirmed from manuscript evidence.⁹⁴

Most notably for the present context, the elaborate version shows striking affinities with the “Verses” of the nature described as “interphraseology” above: linguistic patterns, rhyme structures and other echoes between the two poems abound. It seems likely, therefore, that the “Short Work”, version C, was written in reaction to the popularity of the “Verses upon the Elixir”. The poem may also be another indicator for a sixteenth-century trend of elaboration in alchemical poetry, similar to that already observed for “Boast of Mercury” and “Wind and Water”. Although clearly not a product of

⁹³ These are listed in the preface to the Edition (final part of this book), together with seven minor fragments.

⁹⁴ The attribution is only repeated—perhaps prompted by Ashmole’s—in London, Lincoln’s Inn MS Hale 90, f. 48^v. The “Short Work” is printed in the *TCB*, 393–396 (long version; attribution repeated in the table of contents on p. 488); and 436 (version A).

coincidence, the interaction between all mentioned corpus texts cannot be described completely in terms of causality or chronology. The “Short Work”, version C, takes part in a theme that defines the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” in style, language and content.

2.2.4.2. *Trinity*

In the name of ye trynite
herken here & ye shall see
myne auctor yat fformyth thys work
both ffir̄st last bryghte & dark

“Trinity”, *incipit*

The content of “Trinity”, an alchemical poem here named pragmatically after its abbreviated *incipit*, is more narrative than practical or theoretical in nature. It delivers a chronicle of alchemical authorities as mentors of the poet-narrator’s work. The poem possibly dates from around 1500, may have been written for the context of the Ripley Scrolls and, overall, represents a fairly late addition to the fifteenth-century core corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”.⁹⁵ The role of “Trinity” in the corpus is first established in its physical appearance together with “Sun” and “Father Phoebus” on some Ripley Scrolls, a physical manifestation which defines it more firmly than these two variants of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”: four of its eight extant copies can be found on the Scrolls.⁹⁶

Given its consistent appearance on the Ripley Scrolls, it is perhaps surprising that the implicit attribution of “Trinity” to Ripley did not supersede the poem’s actual, anonymous origins. This may be due to the fact that “Trinity” never became an essential part of a typical Ripley Scroll, but only features as the final text on some of them. In this case shown on the final panel, “Trinity” is surrounded by the image of one or two human figures, supposedly an alchemist and (occasionally) a king or bishop of uncertain relation to the text. In some witnesses “Trinity” was not meant to be included; other surviving exemplars appear to have been cut off at the end, possibly effecting the loss of some copies of “Trinity”. Incidentally, Ripley Scrolls contain either the long version of “Sun”, version A, together with “Trinity”, or its short version without “Trinity”; scribes’ decisions to compile either the former, concise Scroll or a relatively long one including the long version of “Sun” and “Trinity” may have been deliberate.

⁹⁵ Manuscript dating for the earliest surviving codex and Ripley Scroll containing copies of “Trinity” are inconclusive. See also Chapter 4.

⁹⁶ A stemma (Diagram XVI) and manuscripts are recorded with the Edition of the text.

It is also possible that Elias Ashmole recognised this scribal rationale, as he did not print “Sun” or “Trinity” together with Ripley Scroll texts, nor indeed elsewhere in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*. By extension, Ashmole then does not seem to have considered “Trinity” and “Sun” a part of the Middle English alchemical literary legacy—he did not choose to include the texts in spite of their existence in manuscripts, outside of the Scroll context, of which he must have seen several in the course of his editorial work.

Within the corpus around the “Verses”, however, “Trinity” occupies the role of keeper of the alchemical literary heritage in yet another way. The authors named in the poem to certify the excellence of “Trinity” (or of texts preceding it) include one “Pearce”, the supposed author of the “Verses”. Significantly this confirmation of Pearce as an author occurs prior to the seventeenth century, and therefore prior to allusions to Pearce in extant copies of the “Verses upon the Elixir”. “Trinity” also refers to “the sustre of moyses mary prophetiss[a]” (l. 14), the female alchemical authority at the heart of the tradition of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variant “Spain” and its ancestor, “Alumen de Hispania”. Uniquely, in the corpus around the “Verses”, “Trinity” is both a part of the corpus and a witness of its history.

2.2.5. *Additional Poems from the Ripley Scrolls: “On the ground”, “In the sea”, “I shall you tell”*

With their allegorical depictions of the alchemical work, the Ripley Scrolls’ illuminations are the most famous manifestation of alchemical illustrations of early modern England. As receptacles for texts from the corpus around the “Verses”, the Ripley Scrolls are markedly different from the bound codices that constitute the more common medium of preservation. Apart from “Richard Carpenter’s Work” variants “Sun” and “Father Phoebus” (and, occasionally, “Trinity”) the Ripley Scrolls contain three poems which probably originate on the Scrolls: “On the ground”, “In the sea” and “I shall you tell” (all named after their *incipits* here). Like the Ripley Scrolls, all three poems date from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century and are essentially anonymous, in spite of their indirect attribution to Ripley. These three poems, introduced briefly below, are essentially peripheral to the corpus around the “Verses” and complement the core corpus in familiar yet informative ways.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Chapter 4 introduces the Ripley Scrolls in much more detail. On alternative renderings of the alchemical content of all three poems, see Rampling, “Alchemy of the Ripley Scrolls” and McLean, *Study Course*.

2.2.5.1. *“On the ground”*

One the grownde there is an hill
 allsoe a serpente within a well
 his taylor is longe with winges wide
 all readye to flee by everye side

“On the ground”, *incipit*

“On the ground” is a text as substantial in length as the major texts surrounding it (“Sun”, version A, particularly when it appears in its long variant, and “Father Phoebus”). As a recipe text it may appear slightly more obscure, but certainly related in tone and content to other texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”.

From a modern perspective, it is hard to tell whether the poem describes a full recipe or is intended to present a collection of more selective advice, held together by rhetorical phrases and in need of supplementation by other texts: it speaks of a substance (metaphorically represented by a serpent or dragon, ll. 2 and 11) buried in a well, i.e. a liquid, which must be kept safe (in a closed vessel) to preserve the essence of the stone (ll. 1–8). The nature of all mentioned ingredients is discussed in terms of the four elements (ll. 13–18). Putrefaction into a black substance is succeeded by mortification, described as fermentation (‘round bladders’; ll. 19–26). The poem ends with albedo by ablution with the original liquid and imbibition, and reference to a white and red stone (ll. 27–36). The relation between the poem and its surrounding images—a green dragon eating a black toad, painted at the foot of a fountain—also remains open to interpretation.⁹⁸

2.2.5.2. *“In the sea”*

In the Sea withouten lees
 standeth the birde of Hermes
 eatinge his winges variable
 and maketh himselfe full stable

“In the sea”, *incipit*

“In the sea”, a concise poem of just twelve lines, is the only poem present on all extant Ripley Scrolls. This may be due to its medial position on the Scroll, which made it less prone to material loss, or indeed to its function on the Scroll, where it serves as a transition between texts and images yet occupies a stable position beside the image of the Bird of Hermes to which its *incipit* refers. This Bird of Hermes is depicted as a large hybrid of a variable

⁹⁸ Fifteen copies survive, only two of them in codices, not Scrolls; see also the Edition below.

bird body (at times akin to a pigeon, in other renditions a bird of prey or chicken) and the head of a bearded king, about to eat his own wings.

The poem describes a related alchemical process in similarly metaphorical terms: a description of the bird's auto-ingestion (dissolution or corrosion) in a liquid (the 'sea') precedes a note on albedo, rubedo and the philosophers' stone. It closes with a formulaic couplet acknowledging God as inspiration. It seems that "In the sea" explains, supplements and yet obscures the image's meaning at the same time.⁹⁹

2.2.5.3. *"I shall you tell"*

I shall you tell without leisinge.
howe and what is my generation.
homogenia is my father.
and Magdnetia is my mother.

"I shall you tell", *incipit*

"I shall you tell", an alchemical soliloquy in the manner of "Boast of Mercury", consists of thirty-eight lines of information on the theoretical background of alchemy and the nature of the "Serpent of Arabia", supposedly the product of the experimentation described and depicted on the Ripley Scroll. Elements of its text worth mentioning here are the quartet of 'homogenie', 'magnesia', 'azoth' and 'kibrit' (the last reminiscent of the term in "Alumen" and "Sun"; ll. 3–6); the 'serpent of Arabia', tamed by sun and moon (possibly philosophical mercury and sulphur) and weighed down by its wings, producing a 'blood' (red liquid solvent; ll. 7–22); and the final lines, which reference the trinity, three substances combined in one, possibly an allusion to the three stones (animal, vegetable and mineral; ll. 34–38).

The poem is written underneath the image of a dragon whose chest bleeds into a transparent ball symbolising an alchemical vessel, which contains three black balls and a formerly clear liquid. A relation between image and poem is plausible if not plain. While "In the sea" and "On the ground" also appear in bound manuscript volumes in later parts of their transmission, and then without accompanying illustrations, the influence of "I shall you tell" does not extend as far beyond the Ripley Scrolls.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Survival statistics are the same as for "On the ground": fifteen witnesses, thirteen of which are found on Ripley Scrolls. The Edition below provides a list of extant copies.

¹⁰⁰ Fifteen copies survive, only one contained in a codex; see also the Edition of the text in the Appendix.

2.2.6. *Added Ingredients: “Lead”, “Thomas Hend” and “Terra Terrae Philosophicae”*

The general sixteenth-century taste for alchemical recipes, fuelled by an underlying desire to convert writing into practice, resulted not only in the generation of poems like those introduced above but also in the copious production of related commentaries, secondary texts, ancillary writings and interpretations. In relation to the “Verses upon the Elixir” two prose texts (“Lead” and “Thomas Hend”) constitute such an extension of the corpus. Although not appearing as ubiquitously in manuscripts as critical annotations, these two texts left a distinguished mark in manuscripts surrounding the corpus. Another prose text, a Latin prose translation of the text of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, entitled “Terra Terrae Philosophicae”, rounds off the extended history of the corpus in the later parts of its history. Consequently, the following introductions complete the inventory of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”.

2.2.6.1. *“Lead”*

Take [Saturn] and beate it as thin as yow can, then take aqua vitae viniger distilled, that is rectefyed, and putt these thynne plates into the [aqua] vitae
“Lead”, incipit

This anonymous, untitled yet substantial prose text of the sixteenth century describes an experiment with lead, the substance chosen to designate its title for current purposes.¹⁰¹ The text presents a self-contained recipe. Its procedure starts with the immersion of pulverised particles of lead in ‘aqua vitae vinegar distilled’ (*aqua vitae rectificata*) in a sealed vessel, so that it albifies and can, once strained, be distilled by bath to leave a white residue. This is distilled again on a low heat to leave a red or yellow residue in the alembic. Once the receiver has been changed this red ‘*aqua oleum*’ is increased until it yields an ‘earth’, which, in turn, is albified by calcination, then imbibed with the distillate of the previous step to conclude the albedo. Rubedo is achieved by imbibition with the red water. Projection upon silver and casting upon impure substances ensues; the recipe promises transmutation into silver (this part ends in l. 33). For the red work the process is repeated with red oil, projection upon gold, and the transmutation of lead into gold (ll. 34–38).

¹⁰¹ One erroneous ascription of this anonymous text to Chaucer, in a manuscript of the early sixteenth century, is discussed in Timmermann, “New perspectives”.

It is significant that the recipe then refers to the “Verses upon the Elixir” as an authority for part of the process described: “and this accordeth to the worke in ryme: *Earth* of earth and erthes brother” (ll. 42–44). The remainder of the text analyses the given recipe through this perspective, trying to match its own recipe with the “Verses”. More pertinently for the current context, “Lead” forms part of a literature influenced by the “Verses”, and is unusual in its straightforward acknowledgement of its source of inspiration. “Lead” thus lends the “Verses” authority.

Some scribes explicitly mark “Lead” as a text to be read in conjunction with the “Verses upon the Elixir”.¹⁰² In practice, the text is written almost invariably directly before or after the “Verses”; only one of its six surviving copies appears physically isolated in a sixteenth-century manuscript.¹⁰³ This symbiosis, even if one-sided, mirrors the dependency of the “Exposition” and “Wind and Water” on the “Verses” in earlier manuscripts.

2.2.6.2. “Thomas Hend”

tak apottell of vinegre distillyd in a vessell of glasse & put there in 3 [pound]
of rede leade & styre yt well & lette yt stond 3 dayes sterynge yt every daye
often tymes
“Thomas Hend”, *incipit*

This tract, entitled “The conclusion of Mr Thomas Hend for the same thing” (here also “Thomas Hend”), appears generally attached to “Lead” in extant manuscripts.¹⁰⁴ Its title describes exactly its purpose and contents: “Thomas Hend” provides an alternative rendition of the experiment described in “Lead” and forms another secondary, if slightly longer and more detailed bond with the “Verses”. Despite a consistent attribution history, the identity of author Thomas Hend remains mysterious. No other works, historical records or information on Hend’s life are available.

Similarly unfortunate is the fact that clear parallels between the three relevant texts elude us: without the physical association with “Lead”, and thence the “Verses”, “Thomas Hend” would be an unlikely relation to the

¹⁰² For example, the copyist adding “Lead” after the “Verses” in BL MS Sloae 288 provides a segue between the texts: “Note well yf you make the ffire to much your matter will ascende into the limbecke, and therfro decende into the receptorye as white as any milke that euer you sawe” (f. 164^v). Its predecessor, BL MS Sloane 1842, not only has that note, but also precedes “Lead” with the note “Explicatio precedentium versuum” (f. 12^r).

¹⁰³ BL MS Sloane 1095. All surviving witnesses are listed with the Edition towards the end of this book.

¹⁰⁴ Three of its four surviving copies follow “Lead”: BL MS Sloane 1842, London, Wellcome Institute MS 577 and BL MS Sloane 288 (in roughly chronological order); see also the information listed in the Appendix, with the texts’ Editions.

“Verses upon the Elixir”. Its recipe is perhaps noteworthy for details of substances and processes referenced more elusively in both the “Verses” and “Lead”: “Thomas Hend” uses three pounds of lead, which he specifies to be red lead (lead oxide, l. 2); and names the dry matter first left after distillation to be *anima saturni* (l. 8). The text advises frequent stirring (ll. 3–4), later with a hazel stick (l. 53), straining with a filter (l. 4), adds that distillation should be by alembic (l. 5), and the dissolution of the *anima saturni* in ‘oxen bladders’, tied shut and suspended in cold water (ll. 11–13); describes the use of a glass still ‘with his alembic well joined’ in the heat of ashes (ll. 14–15) and the resulting ‘oil’ to be appearing ‘by the nose’ (l. 18). Methods described include evening out matter with one’s fingers (ll. 22–23) and the use of a ‘wire measure’ (ll. 23–28), weighing by counterpoise (ll. 29–31) as well as various other measurements by proportion, the observing of a rattling sound in the vessel ‘as it were small stones’ (ll. 37–40) and the breaking of a glass ‘over a clean vessel’, undoubtedly very practical advice (l. 66). “Thomas Hend”’s vocabulary is more extended than that of the text’s predecessors; examples are the explicit mentions of a crucible (l. 22), a pot (l. 25) and a ‘rotund of glass with a long neck’ (ll. 29–30).

Overall, however, both as an isolated text and within the network of the corpus around the “Verses”, “Thomas Hend” appears an afterthought most remarkable for its existence as an exegetic text on the “Verses”, a poem whose origin precedes this text by more than a century. Its attention to detail, including the meticulous reference to the “Verses upon the Elixir”, leave an impression of how alchemical poems like the “Verses” were transmitted and received, in a practical context no less, for an extended period of time.

2.2.6.3. “*Terra Terrae Philosophicae*”

Accipe terram de terra et fratrem terrae quae non aliud est quam Aqua et terra, et ignis de terra pretiocissima Atque in hac terra eligenda fac vt sis prudens. “*Terra Terrae Philosophicae*”, *incipit*

“*Terra Terrae Philosophicae*”, the final addition to the late corpus around the “Verses”, is a sixteenth-century Latin translation of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, version A, complete with the “Exposition” and “Wind and Water”. As a translation this text is much more deliberate and programmatic in nature than the prose texts previously introduced. Its purpose is obvious in, and ideally fulfilled with, its systematic attribution to George Ripley.¹⁰⁵ The irony

¹⁰⁵ Rampling, “Catalogue,” s.v. item 29. It is interesting to note the seventeenth-century

of attributing a Latin prose text based upon a Middle English alchemical poem to an iconic Middle English alchemical poet must have escaped its original scribes. Surviving manuscript copies date from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at a time when the body of Middle English *alchemica* was past its heyday and alchemical readers developed a revived penchant for Latin, 'authorised' literature, including new writings imitating their ancestry.¹⁰⁶ Unlike their predecessors, those involved in the production and reproduction of Latin texts based on works from the corpus around the "Verses" do not seem to have been aware of the corpus as a corpus. Thus, here and elsewhere in the corpus, texts originally associated with each other assume new guises and are dissociated from each other without difficulty or, indeed, readers' protest.

"Terra Terrae Philosophicae" concludes the evolution of the corpus and, more generally, alchemical literature when it is printed along with Ripley's collected works in 1649.¹⁰⁷ As such, "Terra Terrae" is a relatively late addition to the Ripleian corpus: a famous printed collection from the mid-sixteenth century does not include this text, as Ashmole points out correctly in his commentary on the "Verses" in the *TCB*.¹⁰⁸ However, it appears with Ripley's works in a list in 1619, from which the 1649 publication may have taken its cue.¹⁰⁹ At that point the text's value is anchored on names like Ripley's and its form is fixed in print. In retrospect it is the swan song of the corpus around the "Verses" and the tradition of alchemical poetry.

translation of "Terra Terrae" into French (e.g. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Français 19074 (Saint-Germain français 1645)), and into English (e.g. BL MS Sloane 3732, dated for 1669).

¹⁰⁶ See the final part of Chapter 3 below. Witnesses consulted are listed with the Edition of the text in the Appendix; some could not be seen in person in preparation of this book. As for "Alumen de Hispania" a number of witnesses have not been identified to date.

¹⁰⁷ Ripley, *Opera*, 314–322.

¹⁰⁸ *TCB*, 473.

¹⁰⁹ Pitts, *Relationum Historicarum*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CORPUS AROUND THE “VERSES UPON THE ELIXIR”: ORIGINS, PATTERNS AND PECULIARITIES

The most remarkable feature of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” is its ‘corporality’: the fact that it was written, received and maintained as an interconnected corpus of texts for more than two centuries from the mid-fifteenth century onwards. The joint appearance of corpus texts in manuscripts, their use of similar passages or coinciding references to a particular alchemical authority, as observed in Chapter 1, show copyists’ craft and readers’ understanding of alchemical literature. Moreover, the development of the corpus connections over time is an expression of their understanding of alchemy, its terminology, principles and experimentation. This chapter concerns the core characteristics of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” (across all corpus texts) as well as its uses for historiography.

The findings of this chapter are based on the critical editions provided towards the end of this book, especially their critical apparatus, and provide the basis for the more complex studies presented in subsequent chapters. Typical yet outstanding examples of the textual characteristics discussed were sourced from from all relevant manuscripts, and thus from the more than four hundred individual copies of corpus texts that survive today.

The first part of this chapter describes the original formation of the corpus in the fifteenth century. The subsequent section on its development in the early modern period focuses on three scribal techniques instrumental in this process: changes to a poem’s scope, alteration of individual words and phrases, and the correlation of passages in different works. The third part addresses the issue of scribal intent, i.e. the question to what extent the formation of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” was a result of reflected thought or a coincidence of literary fashions and the concerns of the craft. Finally, a coda considers the individuals involved with the production and preservation of manuscripts containing corpus texts.

1. THE CORPUS AROUND THE “VERSES UPON THE ELIXIR”
IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPTS

The birth of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” correlates with the origin of the poem itself in the mid- to late fifteenth century. Prior to its creation some texts now identified as related to the “Verses” mostly existed in different realms of the literary canon of alchemy. Therefore, although the poem “Verses upon the Elixir” is neither the most ancient nor the most prominent of corpus texts in the fifteenth century, the formation of the corpus (and the possibility of its identification with historical hindsight) is indebted to the poem’s creation—an act of composition answering the abovementioned contemporary need for a consolidation of the ancient and recent traditions of alchemical writing.¹

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the inventory of the corpus around the “Verses” already covered more than half of its eventual scope. It included the “Verses upon the Elixir”, “Exposition”, “Wind and Water”, “Mystery of Alchemists”, “Alumen de Hispania”, “Short Work” (albeit in an early, not yet related version), “Richard Carpenter’s Work” (“Spain”, “Titan Magnesia”, “Sun” and minor variety “God Angel”) and the Ripley Scroll texts “On the ground”, “In the sea”, “I shall you tell” and “Trinity”. The early corpus thus combines texts of more ancient origins (“Alumen de Hispania”) with recent creations (“Mystery of Alchemists”) and new poems (“Verses upon the Elixir”), Latin prose with English verse, codices with scrolls, and extensive works (e.g. “Mystery of Alchemists”) with almost aphoristic pieces (“Short Work”). The links between this motley group of texts, which mainly first appeared in the fifteenth century, would endure for centuries.

Nineteen fifteenth-century manuscripts survive today (only a fraction of the 134 extant corpus manuscripts, most of which date from later periods).² These volumes provide evidence for the early formation of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”: they reproduce copies of the early corpus texts in significant numbers and in close proximity to each other, creating text clusters which would also encourage the readers’ associa-

¹ See Chapter 1. Diagrams I and II, placed before Chapter 1, provide visual aids for understanding the following paragraphs on the formation and development of the corpus.

² Corpus manuscripts counted here do not include codices containing copies of “Alumen de Hispania” in isolation, i.e. without the appearance of at least one other corpus text in the same volume (these are, however, included in the List of Manuscripts in the Bibliography). The current selection of manuscripts is generous, including a few vaguely dated for the turn of the sixteenth century, in order to create a representative sample.

tions of these poems with each other, their contents and styles. Eleven of these manuscripts mostly contain copies of individual corpus texts paired with “Alumen de Hispania” and other Latin prose treatises, and thus bridge the current, Middle English and the older, authoritative Latin tradition of alchemical writing.³ The remaining eight fifteenth-century manuscripts are more expressive witnesses to the establishment of the corpus as an interconnected body of texts. They represent an originally larger body of manuscripts (their exemplars and descendants) which are now, demonstrably and unfortunately, lost. But although these manuscripts cannot be arranged in exact chronological order, the overview of their corpus-related contents in Table II reveals patterns of appearance for corpus texts in these volumes and perhaps, by extension, in the written culture of alchemy in late medieval England.

Table II: The corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” in fifteenth-century manuscripts⁴

	<i>Bod Bodley Rolls 1</i>	<i>TCC R.14.45</i>	<i>BL Harley 2407</i>	<i>TCC O.2.16</i>	<i>Bod Ashmole 1416</i>	<i>Bod Ashmole 759</i>	<i>BL Sloane 3747</i>	<i>BL Sloane 3579</i>
“Verses upon the Elixir”	–	–	–	–	–	✓	✓	✓
“Exposition”	–	–	–	–	–	✓	✓	✓
“Mystery of Alchemists”	–	–	–	–	–	✓	✓	–
“Alumen de Hispania”	–	–	–	✓	✓	–	–	–
RCW “Spain”	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
“Short Work”	–	✓	–	✓	✓	✓	–	✓
Other corpus texts (diverse)	✓	✓	✓	–	–	–	✓	✓

Why did fifteenth-century copyists and readers begin to perceive, copy and produce the corpus texts in relation to one another, and how was the connection maintained until the end of their active circulation in

³ Exceptions are an isolated copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” (BL MS Sloane 1091); two copies of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” variant “Spain” (Oxford Corpus Christi College MS 226 and CUL MS Dd.4.45) and a French prose version of the same (CUL MS Ii.3.17).

⁴ A more detailed but less easily visually accessible version of this table, including indications about fragments, numbers of copies and versions of poems, was included in Timmermann, *Circulation and Reception*, Chapter 1.

manuscripts? Given the loss of a significant number of manuscripts since the fifteenth century, and hence of vital evidence, answers to these questions are necessarily tentative to a certain extent. Yet a few pertinent observations can be made.

It is without question that the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” is a product, but not a deliberate, artificial creation, of fifteenth-century craft and scribal culture. The accumulation of corpus texts in association with each other was not planned *a priori* or executed in a single, prescriptive or influential compendium, but occurred more gradually across a range of fifteenth-century manuscripts. It thus reflects the common interests of a diverse group of writers (authors and copyists) and readers. Their activities of gathering, ordering, amending and creating information in and through a set of alchemical poems, moreover in spontaneous agreement with each other in wording, phrasing, subject or clustering, are indicative of fashions or current concerns in alchemy and alchemical writing (I will return to this point later). In other words, there was something about the “Verses” and associated poems that mattered to English-speaking alchemically inclined individuals of the late fifteenth century. With the corpus they crystallised an interconnected web of information for and by alchemical practitioners out of the fast-growing body of alchemical literature. Comprising alchemical recipes, theoretical background and authoritative advice for the practising alchemist, the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” constituted something akin to an alchemical reference tool.

Two early manuscripts (Bod MS Ashmole 759 and BL MS Sloane 3747) appear to have been particularly instrumental in the original establishment of the “Verses upon the Elixir” in Middle English recipe literature—a necessary condition for them poem’s institution as a common thread in the corpus investigated here. These sister volumes, compendia of alchemical writings, were probably written by the same individual. They were then passed on to a single owner in the sixteenth century, together with a third manuscript (BL MS Sloane 3579), a partial copy of the former two manuscripts supplemented with further alchemical texts.⁵ Palaeographical evidence and ownership marks establish the connections between the manuscripts quite firmly. But apart from their subsequent absorption into Elias Ashmole’s and Sir Hans Sloane’s collections the history of these manuscripts is not known. The ways in which they were written, indeed, the shape

⁵ On the sixteenth-century owner, one ‘Corthop’, see Rampling, “Catalogue,” 128; she refers back to Black, *Catalogue*, 372. See also Grund’s earlier study: Grund, *Misticall Wordes*, esp. 38.

of the manuscripts today, however, indicate that their joint circulation and survival provided a point of stability in the corpus' early history. As a group of manuscripts they also inspired the corpus' perpetuation for two reasons in particular: the compilations' sense of purpose and their readers' identification with the same.

The rationale behind the compilation of MSS Ashmole 759 and Sloane 3747 appears to have been both alchemical and literary. They represent a cross-section of alchemical recipes circulated at the end of the fifteenth century, including a remarkable number of Middle English alchemical poems.⁶ Other items in these manuscripts are comparatively simple copies of mostly Latin and English prose treatises, many of them on alchemical theory, practice and equipment, with very little annotation.⁷ The compiler seems to have composed the manuscripts to identify a valid procedure for the manufacture of the philosophers' stone through textual exegesis.

Probably aware of the textual variations that may obscure metaphorical alchemical texts even further (such as scribal errors and, indeed, different versions of a text) this scribe even conserved several copies of the corpus poems for comparison. The manuscripts contain duplicates of the "Exposition" and "Wind and Water" (two distinctly different versions of amalgamated copies in the Sloane manuscript, a standard copy of the "Exposition" only in the Ashmole volume), of "Richard Carpenter's Work", variant "Spain" (standard copies in both volumes together with a variant fragment in the latter) and the "Verses upon the Elixir" (version A in the Sloane manuscript; fragments of both versions in the Ashmole codex). It is significant that this compiler focused his thorough approach to such a marked extent on alchemical poetry. It must have been the quality of these poems and their inherent promise of success which drew this compiler, and his contemporaries, to the corpus texts.

The compiler's engagement with the "Verses upon the Elixir" was particularly intense. He is likely to be the author of an original recipe recorded as a prose commentary on the poem.⁸ This instructional text identifies a

⁶ Among these are, apart from the corpus poems, *NIMEV* 410 (the "Epistle to Edward IV", Rampling, "Catalogue", s.v. item 13), Ripley's "Cantilena" (*ibid.*, s.v. item 6) and *DIMEV* 886, two generally untitled, anonymous Middle English alchemical poems.

⁷ Noteworthy is the large number of texts from or relating to the pseudo-Lullian oeuvre, esp. Ripley's "Accurtations" and "Pupilla Alchimiae" (Rampling, "Catalogue", s.v. items 1 and 27) as well as a didactic dialogue on astrological matters (ff. 66^r–71^v). Many texts on transmutatory experiments, however, are unidentified, possibly original treatises of varying length.

⁸ Bod MS Ashmole 759, f. 124^{r-v}. While it is possible that the compiler copied this

“grene hewe” (for the ‘water of the wood’) for distillation; advises on the use of ‘diverse vessels well-glassed’ (i.e. glazed and thus impermeable) for dissolution, of a “panne of musselyn brasse” for sublimation (or a related process involving the emission of ‘vapours’), and of ‘linen cloth’, white chalk and egg whites for luting; it spells out the fact that “your strong lycour [...] is our oyle our doughter our derling and our gret tresure”, thus interpreting the “Boast” passage on mercury in connection with the main text of the “Verses” (a matter not clearly explained in the poem’s text); and introduces a circulation, i.e. repeated distillation for a purer result, to the process, with an intriguing interpretation of the term ‘medicine’ (“Verses”, ll. 68, 100/116, 173, 179): “circule it simple or compound wth suche as byn conuenyent for the disceas of man after thau^ortorite of phesik”. Overall, this recipe is very clearly a reaction to the “Verses”. The progression of its experiment uses the same phrasing as the poem. It also makes an effort to explore the poem’s instructions in useful practical terms, from the abovementioned specifications of equipment and procedures to the allocation of specific time periods to individual steps of the process. Indeed, this commentary/recipe seems to be an attempt to reconcile the different versions of the “Verses” with each other. This perceived contrariness of the poem, or rather, the alchemical debate which necessitated the composition of its several versions in the first place, may have been instrumental more generally in the generation of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. The poem’s existence in two dramatically different, irreconcilable versions, the mysteriousness of the textual alternatives of the “Verses” and its yet promising rendition of a recipe for the philosophers’ stone seems to have created a constant need for reproduction and debate, and thus propelled this poem into the corpus’ centre.

Owners and readers of the two mentioned early core codices (Bod MS Ashmole 759 and BL MS Sloane 3747) certainly received the texts together with their original compiler’s impression of Middle English alchemical poetry. To them, the manuscripts must have represented a peer’s digest of alchemical literature and a proposal for the fruitful pursuit of alchemical knowledge. The fact that this compiler pursued alchemical questions

commentary from another source this seems unlikely: the commentary ends seamlessly with the phrase “and as to the blak erth lefte in the bottom do ther^with as is afore taught in the tretise next before the exposicon of erth in this quayer specified afterwardse,” which applies to this specific volume and links the “Exposition” with the “Verses”. Other copies do not survive. Due to its identical *incipit* the text is erroneously recorded as a prose version of the “Verses upon the Elixir” in some bibliographies.

through the meaning of Middle English alchemical poems, and in as many as two volumes, would have been noted by anyone consulting his compilations. Those readers who chose to excerpt texts from these two manuscripts into their own notebooks would have continued and enforced the focus on English verse *alchemica* for following generations of the texts' users. Unfortunately, direct descendants of these volumes are difficult to identify, and some were lost. Their successors, however, testify to an unbroken development of the corpus around the "Verses" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁹ This succession of manuscripts distilled information out of the Middle English alchemical body of writing in ever changing ways. Here, scribal culture, textual exegesis, alchemical pursuits and the emergence of the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" went hand in hand.

The English verse version of "Alumen de Hispania", "Richard Carpenter's Work", variant "Spain", provides additional evidence for fifteenth-century audiences' appetite for English verse recipes and thus the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir". While both "Spain" and its Latin prose original continued to be circulated in parallel, partly in the same manuscripts and in a number of variants for more than two centuries, "Spain" enjoyed a more consistent presence in written culture soon after its composition. Even the fifteenth-century manuscripts containing the early corpus show this development.¹⁰ At a relatively early date after its composition, "Spain" almost exclusively appeared in manuscripts together with other English poems from the corpus around the "Verses". It seems that the poem was tailored for and received as part of this relatively recent branch of alchemical writing.¹¹

It is worth noting here that, with the exception of "Alumen de Hispania", all texts in the early corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" date from the fifteenth century, hence are near-contemporary with the manuscripts into which they were copied. Consequently, the establishment of the corpus around the "Verses" is an expression of originality. The corpus presents a counterpoint to the established, ancient and authoritative literature of alchemy, a new tradition establishing its own points of reference in language

⁹ See esp. Bod MS Ashmole 1445 (s. xvi/xvii).

¹⁰ See Table II above. Full copies of the Latin version of "Alumen" mostly date from the fifteenth century; "Spain" emerges at the same time but continues to be circulated to a much greater extent in later centuries; individual witnesses and their dates are listed with the Editions in the Appendix.

¹¹ The only exceptions are Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 226 and CUL MS Dd.4.45: both contain "Spain" as the sole item from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir".

and manuscript culture. As such, the corpus around the “Verses” represents a scientific equivalent to the Middle English poetry produced, for example, at courts of the fifteenth century in the wake of Chaucer.

2. TEXTUAL VARIATION AND CORPUS CONNECTIONS

Any manuscript text is produced by a cumulative group of authors: unknown originators and later copyists who each change the work, its shape, content and language in their personal copies. Scribal alterations range from drastic revisions of a text’s scope to minor shifts in wording, syntax or spelling, some of them an accidental by-product of the perils of reading another’s handwriting. Such scribal influences constitute the essence of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” in the two centuries after its original formation. Generations of copyists demonstrated their perception of the corpus as an interconnected group of texts, and of the recipes presented in the texts as different solutions to the question of the philosophers’ stone, in their adaptations of the poems. Even the incomplete set of manuscripts surviving today bears witness to the ways in which copyists employed the corpus around the “Verses” in their ongoing search for the alchemical secret. This living reception of the corpus may have had a far more wide-reaching impact on alchemy and alchemical literature than any individual, standardised or even printed alchemical text could exert.

Textual criticism, the scholarly discipline concerned with the nature and chronology of manuscript texts, traditionally presents scribal changes in the apparatus of critical editions and, visually and schematically, in the form of stemmata (graphic depictions of the relations between witnesses akin to a family tree).¹² These editions and stemmata usually consider individual texts in isolation from others—they would not be able to represent an intercon-

¹² I engaged with the history, nature and implications of textual criticism and its methods in detail in Timmermann, *Circulation and Reception*, Chapter 4. A history of the stemmatic method may be found in Robinson and O’Hara, “Cladistic Analysis,” esp. 117–123; stemmata are considered as a ‘historical process’ in Hanna, “Manuscripts,” 116; further, important questions about the difficulties and potential shortfalls of the stemmatic method were raised in Hanna, “Application”; Flight, “How Many”, *ibid.*, “Complete” and others. Recent approaches to dealing with text variants in the form of stemmata include, perhaps most apt for the current context, Eagleton and Spencer, “Copying” and forthcoming work by Hall (“Making Stemmas”). Key insights on textual criticism as applied to medieval manuscript texts are provided in Pearsall, *Manuscripts*; Minnis and Brewer, *Crux*; see also Hanna, *Pursuing*, and Voigts, “Editing”.

nected corpus like that around the “Verses upon the Elixir” in diagrammatic form. But the study of an interrelated group of texts like this corpus widens the perspective on scribal culture significantly, since it not only experiences scribal changes for each individual text and across a period of time, but also establishes correlations between different texts. A corpus analysis facilitates a distinction between unique, individual, regional or time-specific alterations from those that apply more generally. The corpus’ development, once analysed, may also separate a copyist’s slip of the mind or hand from meaningful variations, abandoned interpretations from pertinent discussions, and linguistic eccentricities from terminological developments. The evolution of the corpus might be visualised in a combination of the individual texts’ stemmata. This ‘three-dimensional’ stemma, a stratification of information on textual changes, would allow the discovery of patterns, clusters and correspondences at a glance.¹³

Three types of textual development in the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” are particularly common and fine examples of the ways in which copyists used these poems to explore alchemical ideas and experiments: quantitative changes, i.e. the truncation or augmentation of texts (structural adaptations); qualitative changes in wording and phrasing (text variation in poetry); and subtle textual affinities between corpus texts (“interphraseology”). Their complexities also indicate how modern historians may employ textual criticism in approaches to the history of alchemy and Middle English writing.

2.1. *Structural Adaptation*

Alchemical recipes, apart from being metaphorical (at times to the point of obscurity), often detail a series of different stages of the alchemical experiment. These stages’ order and validity were as much subject to interpretation as the recipes’ wording; the succession of processes in alchemical recipes was vital to the experiment’s success.¹⁴ Since they knew about alchemical texts’ malleability in manuscripts, alchemical practitioners exhibited a natural scepticism towards any given arrangement of a recipe. Based on their theories about its correct manifestation, late medieval

¹³ The concept of a three-dimensional stemma is presented in detail in Timmermann, *Circulation and Reception*, Chapter 4. The results of the current chapter are based on this method.

¹⁴ The difficulty of identifying a correct succession of stages is introduced e.g. in Telle, *Sol und Luna*, 95–96.

copyists would change a text's structure, scope and organisation of a text at will. In the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", fragments (selectively copied parts of a text), extended copies (often amalgamated with other poems from the corpus) and structural variants (such as versions A and B of the "Verses upon the Elixir") by far outnumber true variants.

In practical terms, fragmentation and the rearrangement of steps of a recipe often went hand in hand. Two generations of altogether five related corpus manuscripts dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are prime examples for this.¹⁵ Each of these manuscripts contains excerpts from the full text of the "Verses upon the Elixir" which isolate individual stages of the recipe (as defined in Chapter 1). Notably, these sections always remain intact in this act of fragmentation. Some of these sections provide a shortcut or alternative to the general alchemical procedure described in the "Verses" (e.g. l. 103 ff., *inc.*: "In arsenic sublimed there is a way straight"); others isolate theoretical information (l. 81 ff., *inc.*: "Our gold & silver is not common plate") or extract "Boast of Mercury". Rather than altering the text beyond recognition or noting down an interpretation, copyists fragmenting the poem in this way chose to identify the poem's building blocks. The recipe remains prescriptive but its interpretation follows a methodical focus. Consequently, the two structural versions of the "Verses upon the Elixir", which remained stable in their transmission throughout the early modern period, constitute two different proposals for a solution to the puzzle posed by the poem. The principle of meaningful fragmentation as a tool for understanding procedures applies on a grander scale to all texts in the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir". It is the textual equivalent to an alchemist's separation of substances from composite materials in the alchemical workshop.

A copyist's choice to fragment a text is usually deliberate. Misinterpretation of the source text (e.g. the failure to identify a page break as a break, not the end of a text) or faulty recollection (if the text is written down from memory) appear to be both less likely and less common than intentional fragmentation.¹⁶ Copyists' knowledge of the genre, the texts and the nature

¹⁵ BL MSS Sloane 1092 and 1098; BL MSS Sloane 288 and 1842 and London, Wellcome Institute MS 577; their common ancestor by one remove is Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Codex 111.

¹⁶ On the function and concept of memory in medieval times (*memoria ad res* vs. *memoria ad verbum*) see Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, esp. index and chapter 7, "Memory and the Book" (221–257). Different types of notebooks and notetaking techniques, and their influence on the copying process, will be discussed in much more detail in Chapters 5 and 6 below.

of manuscripts prompted them to look for further exemplars as soon as a particular copy did not seem trustworthy; the frequent, demonstrable use of several exemplars for a reliable compilation of an alchemical poem (as witnessed in the corpus' stemmata) demonstrates this. More often than not the decision to copy a particular exemplar was as deliberate as the decision to include a full text or fragment in a new compilation.¹⁷ Generally, then, each corpus manuscript extant today may be considered a collection of fragments of the body of alchemical literature: an individual's intelligent selection of texts, of passages to process and instructions to put into practice.

The most striking example of meaningful fragmentation, its uses and reader perceptions in the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" presents itself in a passage which was isolated from an authoritative source and inserted into a number of different texts around the beginning of the sixteenth century. The passage in question, a polemical discussion of the value of a number of alchemical materials, occurs in a theoretical part of version B of the "Verses upon the Elixir", in which the poem's speaker reflects upon the principles of the alchemical work.¹⁸

All salts & sulphures farre & neere
 I interdite them all in feare
 All Corosive waters blood & hayre
 Pisses hornes & Sandivere
 Alloms Attriments all I suspend
 Rosalgar and Arsnick I defend
 Calx vive & Calx nox his brother
 I suspend them both th'one & th'other "Verses upon the Elixir", ll. 69–76

This passage also occurs in "Boast of Mercury", version B, "Mystery of Alchemists", in "Liber Patris Sapientiae", and twice in a sixteenth-century prose text not otherwise associated with the corpus, Humfrey Lock's "Treatise on Alchemy". The relevant excerpts are reproduced in their entirety below to illustrate the remarkably consistent concurrence of this passage in such a

¹⁷ Stemmata for all core texts from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" are provided with the Editions in the Appendix. Stemmata referring to manuscript volumes rather than individual copies, and combining the transmission of several texts in order to visualise copyists' choice of sources were included in Timmermann, *Circulation and Reception*; see also Chapter 6.

¹⁸ Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations agree with the Editions at the end of this book.

variety of alchemical poems, which is unparalleled in the body of Middle English alchemical writing.

All manner of Salte I defie
 Sulphur arsene & argale
 Alume Orpiment & heale
 Gold Siluer & Sandaver
 Galls Gumms & Egsheles
 Corrosive waters and calces else
 Goats' horns and alum plume
 Good with them will I none done
 All yat discordes from metalles
 It is conterary in generall

“Boast of Mercury”, ll. 29–35/a–c

And all manner of Saltes I defye
 Sulphur arsnecke & argulie
 allom orpement & hayre
 gold Siluer & Sandyvere
 Gales gums & eges shels
 corosyfe water & calssis els
 gotes horne & alom plume
 good with them will I none done

“Mystery of Alchemists”, ll. 341–348

All manner of Saltes I doe defie
 And all manners of Sulphurs in waters of Cerosines
 Alsoe Allom Vitriolle Atrament & here
 Gould, Siluer, Angola, and Sandiuer
 goms and galles and also eg shells
 honnie wax and oilles or calces ells
 Alsoe I defie our money beralle & christalle
 ropine pitch, also Amber Iate & corralle
 herbes date stones, marble or Tyne glas
 yf ther com any of all thes therin yt is the worse
 Also, pell, gotes horns, Allum plume
 good with them I will non done

“Liber Patris Sapientiae”, ll. 35–46

One saultes and alomes do thay worke,
 one heare and eake on blood,
 gooths hornes also and allam plumbe,
 that neuer com to good.
 In iron some do thinke to finde
 the philozofors stone
 and worke theareon with greate expence,
 yet better let alone,
 In vinniger and other thinges
 yn tartur burned whight
 thay wen to find philozofie
 and thear thay losse thear light [...]
 Of argalle I wright, for that it [vinegar] is

ofte in this crafte namid,
and put in place for to disseau
such as ar not ordayned

Humphrey Lock, "Treatise", dedication, ll. 94–105; 114–117¹⁹

The final text listed, Lock's "Treatise", is a compilation of excerpts from contemporary alchemical literature, not an original composition. Its history elucidates the origin of the cited passage: apparently the "salts and sulphurs" segment was originally part of a translation of the "Perfectum Magisterium", a Latin alchemical tract usually attributed to Arnold of Villanova (1243–1311) in manuscripts and printed editions.²⁰ Outside of this poetic manifestation the 'salts and sulphurs' trope, referring to the 'philosophical' components of metals, was common to medieval alchemy and derived from Avicenna's *Physica* and considered what makes alchemy alchemy.²¹ Paracelsus' subsequent connection of salt and sulphur with mercury and their derived alchemical concepts were finally refuted in Boyle's *Sceptical Chymist*.²² But why did this century-old discussion of alchemical principles create such a stir in sixteenth-century Middle English alchemical poetry?

The reason for the popularity of this passage seems to lie in its contents. Scribal alterations of individual terms in this passage are clearly concerned with the alchemical content of this passage. The line "Pisses hornes & Sandivere" (l. 72) was also reredered as "goats' horns and sandiver", and later as "piss, goats' horns, worms and sandiver"; different copies of subsequent lines see the substitution of "gums" for "Allouns", "Sal tynctur" and/or "sal gemme" for arsenic; and the elusive 'calx nox' was also interpreted as "calx ovorum", "calx mort" and even "claws of a fox and all his brethren" (ll. 73–75). Copyists may, then, have inserted this passage into different alchemical recipes to test its applicability it to different experiments, or to observe its meaning change in different practical-textual contexts.

It is particularly noteworthy here that this passage represents a sixteenth-century phenomenon. It was not present in the fifteenth century, then

¹⁹ Grund, *Misticall Wordes*, 132–133, details variations linguistic rather than practical in nature. Similar prose passages are reproduced in Grund's publication on p. 153 ("Treatise," f. 299^v, ll. 9–12); p. 156 ("Treatise," f. 300^v, l. 3 ff.); and p. 230 ("Treatise," f. 323^r, ll. 8–10).

²⁰ Grund, *Misticall Wordes*, 39 ff. The text is also known as "Flos florum". For editions see Calvet, *Oeuvres Alchimiques*, 359–440 (discussion on 22–32).

²¹ On John of Rupescissa's use of the terms, together with mercury, on their role in medieval alchemy and the difficult situation regarding sources see Principe, *Secrets*, 64–65 and footnotes.

²² Müller-Jahncke, "Paracelsus", 268. Boyle, *Sceptical Chymist*, 40, 49, 150. Principe, *Aspiring Adept*, 43–46.

inserted consistently into sixteenth-century copies of the abovementioned texts, and finally, systematically removed from them towards the end of the century. As an alchemical theme, this passage permeates the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, and alchemical literature, only for a few decades. It reinforces the connection of a group of texts already associated with each other in the manuscripts and minds of early modern alchemical readers, and lends them a novel, current aspect.

Corpus stemmata and the sheer bulk of affected copies reveal that the dispersal of the abovementioned passage was not the result of an unusually widespread circulation of a single manuscript or a single scribe’s creation. Instead, the passage indicates a fashion in alchemical writing, followed independently by different copyists in various manuscripts.²³ This fashion is an expression of a growing concern about certain alchemical materials in the sixteenth century, perhaps a revival or novel discussion of Villanova’s theories on alchemical experimentation or a renewed engagement with pseudo-Lullian theories of matter and transformation.²⁴ Annotations and commentaries by contemporary readers, too numerous and diverse to be included here, confirm this impression. In this instance, fragmentation is used as a method for building knowledge and communication.

Finally, the ‘salts and sulphurs’ passage demonstrates the merit of a corpus-based analysis for both the identification and the interpretation of historical themes relevant to a particular period. The importance of the ‘salts and sulphurs’ debate is not created by modern scholarly expectations, but suggested by the manuscript materials themselves. This evidence of a historical development becomes truly visible to the modern eye in the context of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”.

2.2. *Text Variation in Poetry*

Alchemical texts were constantly subjected to scribal variation in individual words and phrases, perhaps even more so than other Middle English literature. Alchemical writers used a pool of Middle English terms and phrases to communicate their recipes in a metaphorical, obscure style; their employ-

²³ I am using the term ‘fashion’ in the straightforward sense of a periodical trend, cp. Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 5; Lewis, “Faculty”. Three-dimensional corpus stemmata, omitted here for pragmatic reasons, may be found in Timmermann, *Circulation and Reception*; the stemmata provided at the end of this book give a good impression of this phenomenon when read in conjunction with each other and the texts’ Editions; see esp. Chapters 5 and 6 below.

²⁴ The vivid, ‘golden age’ character of alchemy in the sixteenth century is also outlined in Principe, *Secrets*, 81–82.

ment of metaphor was peculiar to the craft. Also, the general ambiguity of alchemical terms borrowed from all languages and periods of the alchemical tradition introduced an element of uncertainty to alchemical texts. It was the reader's responsibility to explore terms, metaphors and synonyms in order to discover their true meanings.²⁵ Texts argued that only a worthy, sage alchemist would be able to translate a recipe correctly into a plain experimental setup of substances and procedures, and thus manufacture the philosophers' stone. Combined with historical lexical changes in alchemical terminology, the gradually changing character of alchemical experimentation and copyists' practical difficulties of interpreting another scribe's handwriting, alchemical texts encouraged alteration in each individual copy. The liveliness of this scribal activity emerges, for example, in the number and quality of changes recorded in the critical apparatus of the editions produced towards the end of this book.²⁶ Like the structural changes described above, types of variations of words and phrases are not usually specific to the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" but apply more generally throughout the body of late medieval and early modern *alchemica* in prose and verse; only their manifestation as a unique group of verbal permutations in each copy of a text is individual.

On a lexical level the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" shows a gradual tendency towards vernacularisation in the early modern period. While some early copies of "Richard Carpenter's Work", variant "Spain", show a curious mixture of Latin and English terminology, Middle English options prevail in their descendants. For example, the original "sta(n)t in ignis regimine" ("Spain", l. 82), changes to English in only the first word ("stondith" or "stands") by the mid-sixteenth century. Notably, the change is a consistent and lasting one. This development mirrors the growth of the body of Middle English alchemical poetry as a genre.

Elsewhere in the corpus the multilingual origins of alchemical terminology and its gradual transformation into Middle English frequently resulted in scribal confusion. For example, unintentional code mixing occurs in the use of the terms "kibrit" and "(al)kybert" in "Sun", version A. Synonyms for the "light of the sun", and neither translated nor annotated in any of the extant copies, both words derive from an Arabic term, "alkībrīt", which

²⁵ See the reference to *Decknamen* in Chapter 1; literature on this particular aspect of alchemical language is listed there.

²⁶ A classic study of alchemy and language is Hannaway, *Chemist*. For literature on textual criticism and the wider Middle English scribal culture see above and the Bibliography below, esp. Crossgrove, "Textual Criticism".

designates sulphur.²⁷ As mentioned above, the terms also appear in “Alumen de Hispania” and its translations, and in “I shall you tell”. A large variety of variant spellings in surviving copies of all texts indicates that copyists were not aware of the etymological origins of the term, yet used it meaningfully. It may be for this reason that the variation was not commented upon by readers (the variations are not annotated in any of the copies consulted); they may have thought the emendation to be orthographical, not semantic in nature. Both the vernacularisation and the large orthographical range of alchemical poetry and prose are mirrored in Middle English writings on other branches of natural philosophy and, generally, in the progression of the English language towards an early modern and, eventually, modern idiom.²⁸ But in alchemical contexts, the fluidity of the evolving language and the manuscript medium reacted strongly with the metaphoricality of alchemical expression. Each reading was potentially an act of interpretation.

The genre of poetry afforded copyists with different possibilities of text variation than prose. Although written without literary pretensions and not strictly keeping to a perfect execution of rhyme and rhythm, alchemical poems like the “Verses upon the Elixir” nevertheless defined a range of likely, possible and inappropriate variation through their poetic form. This applies both to medial and final word positions. A word substituted for another in the middle of a line would require a similar stress and amount of syllables as the original to be a perfect fit for the given context. This is the case in the unpredictable substitution of ‘clerks’ for ‘works’, almost a homograph and (depending on dialect) phonetic sibling, in the phrase “All werkes this water makyth white and light” (“Verses upon the Elixir”, l. 82/157). While clearly a solution pleasing to the ear, this alteration changes the focus of the line (subject and voice). In the standard version, water is the agent for albification; in the variant it is subjected to it by learned men who are potentially, but not necessarily, part of the clergy.²⁹ Yet it is often difficult to identify a copyist’s intentions, if any. In the present example, an exemplar employing a looped letter “w” in the word “werkes” (a palaeographical variant of the secretary hand which could be misread to include the letter “l”) would remove the possibility of a clean explanation. As a group of interconnected texts, however, the corpus around the “Verses

²⁷ *MED*, s.v. ‘kibrit’ and ‘alkibrit’. See also Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*, 528.

²⁸ See esp. Taavitsainen and Pahta, “Vernacularisation” and Voigts, “Multitudes”.

²⁹ *MED*, s.v. ‘clerk’.

upon the Elixir” documents reader reactions to a certain extent: annotations and switches between the terms “clerks” and “works” in different copies show that, regardless of the variant’s initial purpose, it certainly caused some debate among the poem’s audiences.³⁰

Words at the ends of lines, i.e. rhyme words in alchemical poems, offer less room for interpretation for both copyist and historian. Any alteration of one rhyme word requires a corresponding change of its partner term. It is almost impossible to change a rhyme word by accident, and difficult to do so on purpose. Here poetry fulfils the pragmatic function of preserving the text’s content. Indeed, authors of alchemical poetry employed this tool for their own purposes. They often placed important information for the alchemical practitioner, such as names for substances or time indications, towards the ends of lines. The following couplets represent just a fraction of deliberate arrangements of this kind in the transmission of texts from the corpus “Verses upon the Elixir”.

ffor in it therth dissoluyd must be With <u>u</u> outen fire by daies thre	“Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 9–10
I kill I slay & eke Calcine I dye & eke I liue againe	“Boast of Mercury”, ll. 9–10
Erth is withyn most fyne Water of Wode aysell of wyne	“Exposition”, ll. 5–6

Poetic parameters of textual variation do not just influence late medieval scribal choices, they also bear implications for historical research. Just one example from the corpus around the “Verses”, here an illuminating observation on code switching, will illustrate this point. The couplet under consideration, the *incipit* of “Boast of Mercury” both within the “Verses” and in both versions of “Boast”, combine Middle English and Latin terminology, a practice common in alchemical and other late medieval literature, as already implied above. In her study of bilingualism and language mixing as a discourse strategy in medieval writings, Linda Voigts explains that, in her experience, “[not] all instances of code mixing lend themselves to explanation [...] [;] some are so obvious that they scarcely need analysis”; her example for self-explanatory code mixing is the couplet

I am mercurye the mighty flos florum I am most worthiest of all Singulorum	“Boast of Mercury”, ll. 1–2
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³⁰ An inspired insertion appears in a copy of version B in Bod MS Ashmole 1445: here it is “all Darkenes” that the water makes bright.

Here, Voigts argues, “one scarcely need belabor the painfully obvious constraints of rhyme that account for the Latin words” employed as rhyme words.³¹ While this argument may generally hold, this couplet proves to be an unfortunate example. Variants recorded for other witnesses of the poem prove that each copyist had several possible solutions at hand, partly aided by the comments of an exemplar’s readers, partly by a linguistic aptitude demonstrated in other instances of code switching in their work, and in part by intimate knowledge of the poem beyond its singular manifestation in the exemplar.³² A copyist’s choice of Latin terminology for this couplet was, therefore, conceivably a deliberate one.

Textual variation across the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, especially in “Boast of Mercury” and “Wind and Water”, generally shows that it is often neither the rhyme nor a copyist’s general preference for Latin or English terminology that determines the appearance of a couplet, term or individual word. Rather, scribal choices represent a combination of received tradition and different perceptions of the two languages as interchangeable or incompatible. For example, many copyists of “Wind and Water” chose to combine English and Latin terminology in its *incipit*, sometimes mingled with an anglicised Latin term, producing an awkward if conventional rhyme:³³

Take winde & water white & grene
And draw yerof lac virginis [*or*: a lac virgine] “Wind and Water”, ll. 1–2

In the *incipit* of “Boast of Mercury”, however, half of the surviving copies successfully switch both rhyme words to English, so that code mixing does not occur.

I am mercurye the mighty flos florum [*or*: (flos) flower]
I am most worthiest of all Singulorum [*or*: honour] “Boast of Mercury”, ll. 1–2

³¹ Voigts, “What’s the Word?,” 819.

³² Popular variants for ‘flos florum’ are ‘flower’, ‘flos flower’ and, in one instance, “(*canc.* flos florum) *ins.* flower”; for ‘Singulorum’ they are ‘honour’, ‘all singulores’, ‘singuler’, ‘above all ore’, another switch from Latin to English in “*canc.* singulorum *ins.* honour” (two witnesses), and one inexplicable variation, ‘of alchymy’. See the apparatus for all three texts’ Editions in the Appendix, and the relevant stemmata, for information on the manuscript witnesses. (Variants for copies of “Mystery” not recorded).

³³ TCC MSS O.2.15 and R.14.56, Bod MS Ashmole 1450, GUL MS Ferguson 102, and BL MSS Sloane 1092, 1098 and 1842. They represent a fourth of all surviving copies, and a higher proportion of the extant full copies.

The overall amount of variation for the first couplet in “Boast of Mercury”, version B (the elaborate sister poem of version A), is also remarkable. In all copies its first line ends in “flos flower”, whereas the matching rhyme words vary in each witness.

I am Mercury the mighty flos flower
 I am most royall & richest above all ower
 [*or*: about all ore; *or*: Singuler] “Boast of Mercury”, ll. 1–2

One copy even concludes the couplet with “[...] flos florum/ [...] omnium singulorum”, and thus exposes its writer’s competence in the Latin language as much as his desire for consistency.³⁴ Notably, the meaning of the couplet does not change, no matter which variant appears in a copy. The choices these writers made (and choices they are, as variation of this kind is not accidental) provide a complex picture of language awareness and copying strategies.³⁵ Indeed, the constraints and creativity of scientific scribal practices would merit a separate, dedicated study.

A final observation on multilingual linguistic variation as it occurs in the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” is that it does not seem to differ much from variation in a purely Middle English text in many respects. Consider, for example, this couplet, which offers two possible combinations of rhyme words:

Of my daughter without dread [*or*: spite]
 beene made elixirs both white and red [*or*: red and white]
 “Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 70–71/147–148

Theoretically, either of these options may be employed without changing the content of the couplet. Yet all copies of both versions B₂ and A of the “Verses” choose the “dread/red” rhyme, while texts in structure B₁ generally employ “spite” and “white”. This occasionally, but not necessarily accidentally, results in a series of similar consecutive rhymes in the text:

³⁴ BL MS Sloane 1098. This copy was produced by the physician introduced in Chapter 6 below.

³⁵ Outside the corpus around the “Verses”, i.e. the pragmatic focus of this chapter, the field of study concerned with medieval languages, bilingualism and *Fachliteratur* offers much valuable insight into the ways in which late medieval writers used and conceived of language. An excellent study containing key references to relevant literature is Hunt, “Languages”; further, see Voigts’ extensive study of medieval multilingual scientific manuscripts (Voigts, “Scientific”), various publications relating to the Helsinki corpus projects (see Taavitsainen and Pahta, *Medical*, esp. Pahta, “Code-Switching”; Pahta, “Flowers”; and others) as well as Hunt, “Code-Switching”.

a golde head in sparne full right
 and a silver hed to him more light
 and a mercury head full bright
 and a [silver] head this is full right
 Of my daughter without any spight
 bene made elixirs both red & white

“Verses upon the Elixir”, version B₁, ll. 143–148 (TCD MS 389)

A chronology of or causality between any of the available options cannot be discovered due to close chronological, often necessarily imprecise dating of the sources.³⁶ These rhyme words behave like the Latin and Middle English alternatives presented in the previous example, but also like word variations across the late medieval manuscript oeuvre. The purpose of such alterations is often obscured by the general malleability of manuscript texts; the extent to which oral transmission influenced the transmission is difficult to determine.³⁷ It is significant here that alchemical poets and copyists of the corpus texts wrote largely for practical purposes, and even if the alchemical idiom and poetic genre presented them with a peculiar set of linguistic devices, not all scribal variations were intended to be meaningful. Often only a consideration of the context and, in this case, the role of a variation in other parts of a corpus of texts can help distinguish the noteworthy from the negligible.

Notably the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” often provides sufficient textual context for investigation, i.e. a microcosm of texts and copyists and a body of mostly poetry produced by a diverse (and unwittingly connected) community of alchemical readers. The case studies in later parts of this book are, in part, based on, derived from or inspired by this principle. They will explore further how the corpus and its textual variations can contribute to our knowledge about the processes of writing, reading and practising alchemy in late medieval and early modern England.

2.3. *Interphraseology*

An addendum to this selective typology of scribal variation in the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” presents itself in what I shall term interphraseology, a subtle coincidence of phrases which is common in the corpus

³⁶ Manuscripts involved in this process are listed in the critical apparatus of the Edition of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, version B, at the end of this book.

³⁷ The field of historical linguistics has pursued this question variously in recent decades. Most relevant for the current context, however, are Love, “Oral,” here with an emphasis on the interaction of orality and print culture; and Fox, *Oral*.

around the “Verses”; it may also be described as an equivalent of intertextuality on a phrasal level.³⁸ Interphraseology differs from the use of formulaic phrases common in poetry beyond the alchemical by defining the present corpus if not exhaustively, then at least forcefully:³⁹ phrases peculiar to the corpus provide a linguistic grid that holds large parts of the corpus and its written manifestations together. They often reinforce the ‘corporality’ of the corpus, which is otherwise established by joint manuscript appearances of texts, connective commentaries and other ‘external’ criteria.⁴⁰ Some similarities between the “Verses upon the Elixir” and “Short Work” comprise such resonances:

yf thou can any goodde
dissolue it in water of the woodde
“Short Work”, version C, ll. 3–4 (BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 33^{r-v})

pure subtill right faire & good
& then take ye water of the wood “Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 7–8

tyll he comme vnto hys full age
and then make thou a maryage
Bitweene the daughter and the soonne
& then haste thou the maystrye woonne
“Short Work”, version C, ll. 63–66 (BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 33^{r-v})

till he be growne into his full age
then shall he be strong of courage [...]
till that she be brighter then ye sonne
for then have you all ye masterye wonne
“Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 51–52; 37–38

Bothe in masse booke and in psalter
written byfore the pryeste at altar
“Short Work”, version C, ll. 69–70 (BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 33^{r-v})

In mennes praiers and dauys salter
pleynly it is writen before the prestat thauter
“Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 84–85

³⁸ The term ‘interphraseology’ was coined for the purposes of the present work. I am not aware of any established equivalents in existing literature.

³⁹ The issue of oral transmission, already touched upon in connection with word variation above, will not be included in the following considerations because of its known methodological difficulties and unreliable evidence. For a recent scholarly discussion of the role of orality in medieval studies see Hall, “Orality”.

⁴⁰ See Chapter 1.

Interphraseology almost certainly affected both the production and the reception of these poems. A copyist or writer of *alchemica* might mix expressions from several poems, thereby producing another potentially meaningful characteristic worthy of comment and interpretation by readers (other than metaphors, *Decknamen* or the sequence of alchemical steps described above). A reader versed in alchemical literature would be able to retrieve the sister text's surrounding couplets from memory and thus have a point of reference at hand; a textual parallel could then be employed in the interpretation of an obscure alchemical recipe, in a similar way as reference works or secondary works (commentaries). Like the characteristic scribal changes previously discussed (structural and word variation in alchemical poems), interphraseology is then, at times, evidence of a complex interaction of alchemical practice and writing, and of textual exegesis with the goal of practical implementation. Interphraseology provided both a glossary and a toolbox for the alchemical practitioner. The existence of marginal notes and notebooks pointing out such connections with the help of marks or annotations confirm that this type of associated reading was, indeed, practised in the early modern period and prompted by these echoes.⁴¹ Interphraseology combines the formulaic character of alchemical (and indeed all scientific) writing with the creativity of the alchemical, Middle English and poetic idioms.

It should be noted that, due to its strong aural component, interphraseology may not always have been a deliberate tool of imitation or cross-referencing, but rather an unwitting reiteration of another poem. The following occasions of interphraseology across versions A (excerpts 1 and 3) and B (excerpts 2 and 4) of the "Verses upon the Elixir" demonstrate this shrewd imitation quite clearly:

Which is don in houres thre
Whiche forsoth is gret furle
[or: which may be clypped godes privitie]

"Verses upon the Elixir", ll. 25–26

and that shalbe within howres three
that shalbe great wonder to thee
[or: (full) great ferlie]
[or: greate farley *ins.* wonder]

"Verses upon the Elixir", ll. 39–40

Which [or: and] all is don in houres thre
This may be callid Godis preuite

"Verses upon the Elixir", ll. 92–93

⁴¹ See Chapter 6 for a particularly pertinent example.

and all done in howres three
 this may be cleped [*or*: called] Gods privitie

“Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 165–166

Another indication of the spontaneous, rather than planned, use of interphraseology can be discovered in the textual history of the corpus. Individual copies of the “Verses upon the Elixir” and related texts rarely show a close affinity with their direct ancestors, or with a specific version of their model text. Interphraseology shows up sporadically, and usually in copies which also suggest in other ways that their scribes relied on memory more than faithful copying techniques. These copyists preserved the general content of the poems, and thus their instructions for alchemical experiments, but did not maintain specific rhetorical elements.⁴²

Notably, interphraseological passages also mark the boundaries of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. Phrases and timbres common among corpus texts constitute a primary quality of the corpus: particularly marked expressions occurring throughout the corpus are not present in other, non-corpus Middle English alchemical poems. Interphraseology, it seems, constitutes the sociolect of this particular family of texts. It also confirms the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” as a microcosm of the alchemical literature of its time.

3. INTERPRETING SCRIBAL VARIATIONS

Detecting and documenting derivations in manuscript copies of a text is one thing, interpreting them is quite another. The three types of scribal activity introduced exemplarily above variously demonstrate the difficulty of distinguishing scribal intent from scribal error. The following paragraphs propose a systematic approach to the interpretation of scribal variation.

A plain description of the copying process underlying the production of all four hundred extant witnesses of corpus texts will elucidate the practical mechanisms of scribal activity. When writing a manuscript, any late medieval alchemical practitioner would consult at least one source, possibly even an annotated exemplar of the text of his choice. He now had two essentially different options for the composition of his own copy of the text. He could choose to retain the original text *verbatim*, an endeavour in which

⁴² BL MS Sloane 1842 is one of many examples in which this phenomenon can be observed across its copies of corpus texts.

he might or might not succeed, or to change some of its wording. In the latter case he could either record variant and original side by side or, as was more common, substitute old with new words. Finally, the copyist might have preferred not to reproduce the text as given, either ignoring it completely, or omitting passages, or merely using it as an inspiration for a verse composition of his own. Whatever his choices, and however successful their implementation, his copy (as still accessible today) makes both a negative and a positive implicit statement about the text in question, and about the fitness and knowledge of the copyist. Therefore, the nature and degree of variation in a particular manuscript copy of a text require careful disentanglement for a scholarly interpretation.

The steps and hazards of applying scholarly hindsight to scribal variation emerge clearly in the following consideration of a passage from the “Verses upon the Elixir”. As mentioned above, many copyists preferred regular rhythms and rhymes to irregularities. They often effected the same by means of minor textual alterations, which did not tend to affect a poem’s contents significantly. It was also noted above that versifiers often placed vital alchemical information at the end of a line in order to prevent accidental corruption of the text in later copies. In light of this it would seem likely that rhymes would match throughout a poem’s transmission, with accidental and obvious irregularities amended immediately in the next generation of copies. It is, therefore, all the more surprising to see that one couplet in a passage peculiar to version A of the “Verses upon the Elixir” preserves an irregular rhyme form throughout its transmission from the fifteenth through the seventeenth century:

A black earth like tinder dark
heavy as metal beneath shall lie

“Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 17–18 (spelling modernised)

The irregular rhyme pattern originates in a manuscript closely related to the ancestor of most surviving texts (Bod MS Ashmole 1450). It is only amended to rhyme in two pairs of copies, which either adjust merely the second rhyme word (“[...] dark/ [...] lurk”) or both (“[...] dry/ [...] lie”), a variation both alchemical and linguistic in type.⁴³ How may one interpret this peculiarity?

The fact that the irregularity, impossible not to notice and clearly not difficult to change, was repeated in the majority of extant copies indicates that

⁴³ BL MS Sloane 3474 and GUL MS Ferguson 322. Cp. the stemma for the “Verses upon the Elixir”, reproduced before its Edition in the Appendix (Diagram VI).

it was perpetuated deliberately. Their writers affirmed the text's authority over their aesthetic inclinations, perhaps even shared the belief that a failed rhyme too crude to be caused by scribal error is likely to contain vital hidden information for the alchemical experiment—information that would be lost with an emendation of the rhyme. Without further evidence, however, this remains a matter of conjecture.

The varying structure of a particular quatrain from the "Verses upon the Elixir" provides more evidence for scribal deliberation. In its most regular manifestation the quatrain reads,

gold þat commyþ off þe vary vre
 and is may shynyng bryght & pure
 Is alway norysht by þe sulphr hode
 and þan knowth men both long & brod

"Verses upon the Elixir", ll. 181–184 (BL MS Sloane 1091)

Similarly inconspicuous passages are contained in only two later copies.⁴⁴ Most copies of the poem deliver a somewhat awkward couplet instead:

Gold that cometh from ye Oare is nourished by sulphur hed
 and that knoweth men both long & bred "Verses upon the Elixir", ll. 181–182

It is difficult to imagine how this peculiar arrangement was created in the first place. The first line is quite obviously twice as long as a standard line, and impossible to separate without disturbing the poem's couplet structure. A line break accidentally missed and subsequent attempt to supplement information in a single line (at the expense of its companion) is a conceivable explanation. With its consistent preservation in later copies this passage demonstrates that each copyist acted as both a reader and a writer. More pertinently, it shows, once more, that each copy preserves indications of the circumstances of its creation as well as its creator's alchemical, linguistic and other inclinations.

The distinction of a meaningful peculiarity in a text from an innocuous one is the first, essential step to gaining insights into late medieval alchemical practitioners' experiences as copyists, and thence their understanding of alchemy. A preliminary classification of scribal accident and deliberation may, therefore, be a useful device for related historical investigations: firstly, if an exemplar provides an unremarkable, customary text, scribal alteration is always deliberate, and its preservation probably accidental. Secondly, if

⁴⁴ TCD MS 389 and Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston').

the original presents minor irregularities (such as an inexpert word alteration), an aesthetic or other corrective change may be deliberate or accidental, a preservation of the irregularities, however, more likely purposeful. Further, a major irregularity, such as the uneven rhyme and rhythm explored above, indicate deliberation on behalf of the copyist both when they are changed and when they are preserved; an accidental treatment is neither likely nor even possible. Finally, if a poem is noted down from memory or copied from a palaeographically difficult exemplar these classifications will not hold.

In conclusion, the textual history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” shows a bewildering amount of variation which can perhaps only be preserved adequately in the apparatus of a critical edition. However, the corpus’ connections offer the possibility for observing certain currents and traditions which suggest themes close to the hearts of the manuscripts’ compilers, and thus themes of promise for a modern historical analysis. A focus on the identification of patterns and peculiarities creates ideal conditions for further studies. We may not be able, from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” alone, to isolate a quality which made alchemists recover, repeat and adapt specific elements, while confining other variants to individual copies. But questions concerned with the interaction between the individual copyist and his environment, between single copies and the history of a text, and between the formation and reception of each copy will reveal much about the culture in which the corpus around the “Verses” was produced.

4. CODA:

COPYISTS AND COLLECTORS IN THE CORPUS AROUND THE “VERSES UPON THE ELIXIR”

Professional groups involved with the production of alchemical manuscripts, and thus the copying of alchemical verse and the creation of variations like those outlined above, include all those engaged with alchemy on a theoretical or practical level. As mentioned before, this group ranged from those investigating alchemy through its written lore (scholars, clerics and monks), and medical doctors with varying vested interests in the manufacture of chymical remedies, to craftsmen employed in metal working businesses. Further, an audience of some alchemical poetry with dedicatory or literary characteristics would have included early modern readers enjoying Middle English poetry, among them scholars and courtiers. But

those involved with the circulation and reception of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” are perhaps best sorted into separate (if not necessarily distinct) categories according to their involvement with manuscript production, reception and preservation: in this manner we can capture all those whose names were not recorded in the corpus manuscripts. This final section of the current chapter aims to outline the roles of named and anonymous individuals in the shaping of alchemical literature and related objects, and how much, or little, it is possible to know about their work. It reinforces the historiographical proposition of this book: that an approach based on the texts as actors, rather than the polarised group of known, named individuals, will generate new insights into these texts as well as the history of alchemy.

Manuscript owners make for the most articulate of users of the corpus around the “Verses”. An increasing, early modern concern about the loss of manuscripts (which also led to the appointment of college librarians, the compilation of booklists and lending registers at the universities, and the introduction of shelfmark systems) prompted the insertion of ownership marks in manuscripts as much as the removal of previous owners’ signatures as the decades passed.⁴⁵ Explicitly recorded owners for the corpus around the “Verses” include alchemical poet Thomas Charnock; Elizabethan polymath John Dee, his mathematical pupil Thomas Digges, and other members of the Dee/Kelley circle, like Christopher Tylour; medical practitioners with astrological and alchemical interests including Simon Forman and physician-chemist Patrick Saunders; infamous alchemist and prisoner Clement Draper; ‘wizard earl’ Henry Percy; and archbishop of Canterbury William Sancroft. As owners, these individuals also became users (readers, often annotators) and lenders of the manuscripts, and hence human connecting points in the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hackel, *Reading Material*, 138; Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 32; Sharpe, “Accession”. See also Chapters 5 and 6 below.

⁴⁶ A dedicated study of the Saunders-Hipsley manuscripts relating to this corpus, and a list of all names relevant to the corpus manuscripts or of all manuscripts associated with each person (which would stretch the scope of this chapter unduly) were included in Timmermann, *Circulation and Reception*, Chapter 3. Noteworthy, classical or pioneering studies on the mentioned owners are: Taylor, “Thomas Charnock”; Sherman, *John Dee*; Parry, *Arch-Conjuror*; and a special issue of the journal *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* (2012): “John Dee and the sciences”; a pre-2005 bibliography on Dee may be found in Clucas, “Recent Works” (see also his “Introduction” in the same volume); also Harkness, *John Dee’s Conversations*. Further Johnston, “Like Father”; Bayer, “My Master’s Master” and “Lady Margaret”; and

Collectors, antiquaries and founders of monumental museums, particularly avid signers of their possessions, still lend their names to some corpus manuscript's shelfmarks today. Their list is long and illustrious. Antiquary Elias Ashmole collected copies of texts from the corpus around the "Verses" for his linguistic-scientific interests which would culminate in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*.⁴⁷ Physician-collector Sir Hans Sloane came into the possession of similar *alchemica* in his investigation of writings on nature. Lawyer-turned-New England settler John Winthrop carried part of the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" across the big ocean. King Frederick III of Denmark acquired manuscripts including corpus texts for his royal library. Sir George Erskine of Innertiel's manuscripts put a Scottish twist on his alchemical-occult collecting interests as well as the manifestation of the "Verses" and associated texts on paper.⁴⁸ Collectors whose names are documented but not as firmly attached to corpus manuscripts as, e.g., the Ashmole collection's shelfmarks, include James Ussher (Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh), Thomas Whalley (priest and fellow of Trinity College Cambridge), nineteenth-century London physician Sigismund Bacstrom and many other scholars, clerics and doctors.⁴⁹ They played a vital role in the preservation of the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir": without their fervent (even if at times occult) interest in *alchemica*, more manuscripts containing corpus texts might have suffered the fate of their lost ancestors and descendants.

Compilers of manuscripts, however, are more difficult to identify. The term 'compiler', also used to define those who re-arrange existing quires, more strictly refers to someone collecting and arranging texts in a volume, and thus coincides with that of scribe or copyist to a certain extent.⁵⁰ Volumes containing texts from the corpus around the "Verses" are often

Harkness, *Jewel House* (on Draper see esp. chapter 5, pp. 181–210). These manuscripts were also traced in Keiser, "Heritage".

⁴⁷ On Ashmole's collections and interests see esp. Feola, "*Theatrum*"; for source materials, Josten, *Elias Ashmole*. Interesting in this context is Wright, "Elizabethan Society".

⁴⁸ See e.g. Janacek, "Virtuoso's History"; MacGregor, *Sir Hans Sloane* and Nickson, "Hans Sloane"; Wilkinson, "Alchemical Library"; Browne, "Old Colonial" and, more recently but subject to mixed reviews, Woodward, *Prospero's America*; Taavitsainen, "English Alchemical Literature"; and McCallum, "Sir George Erskine". It is also interesting to note that the copy of the "Verses" in Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/1/4, shows linguistic markers of a Scottish dialect.

⁴⁹ O'Sullivan, "Ussher"; Glatstein, "Bacstrom's Alchemical Manuscripts"; for Thomas Whalley, see Chapter 5 below.

⁵⁰ Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 9; Wogan-Browne et al., *Vernacular*, 4.

written in competent hands, but not usually produced by a professional scribe. Ownership marks or other evidence of their identities are, accordingly, rare. Individuals known to have copied the “Verses” and associated texts include the famous (e.g. aforementioned Simon Forman) and the relatively well-known, like Vicar of Winchester John Higgens, who consistently signed his Latin-English translations in his manuscripts.⁵¹ Others were part of alchemical, scientific and literary circles of the turn of the seventeenth century, like adept Thomas Robson, who appears to have been instrumental in the history of the book collections of astrological and chemical physician Richard Napier, who, in turn, facilitated Ashmole’s ownership of some corpus manuscripts;⁵² Theodore Gravius, who had helped Napier, together with Robson, to prepare chemical medicines;⁵³ and “Robarte Garland, practitioner in the arte spagyricke”, whom Robson employed as a copyist at times.⁵⁴ As a group, Robson, Napier, Ashmole, Gravius, Garland and, by association, John Dee and Samuel Norton connect several manuscripts containing texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” with each other. They are one happy example of a community of compilers who created and interpreted these *alchemica*, reinforced the connections between the corpus texts and produced and preserved manuscripts.

But most copyists of corpus texts left little more than their text for posterity. Among those recording their names, at least, are one H. Bayle (whose name appears in Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Codex 111), James Standysh (associated with Ripley Scroll BL MS Add. 32621) and Thomas Potter (owner-compiler of BL MS Sloane 3580 B), the last possibly a Benedictine monk.⁵⁵ The majority of copyists remain unidentified.

Readers of manuscripts containing the corpus around the “Verses” are the most difficult to pinpoint. Silent readers who are not owners or otherwise named individuals elude identification. Stains, creases, erased passages, and similar circumstantial marks of reading are just indications of the original,

⁵¹ On Forman, see Lauren Kassell’s work, e.g. *Medicine and Magic*; Higgens’ signature may be found, e.g., in BL MS Sloane 1842.

⁵² See, among others, Webster, *Health*, 311; MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*; Kassell, *Medicine and Magic*, 2.

⁵³ Poole, “Theodoricus Gravius”; MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 189; Sawyer, “Patients”.

⁵⁴ Bäcklund, “Footsteps”. Garland is also among the authorities referenced in the Trinity Compendium (see Chapter 5).

⁵⁵ On Bayle see Newhauser, “Merlini Allegoria”. Standysh’s name is recorded on the Ripley Scroll, but nothing else is known about him. On Potter see Keiser, “Heritage,” 192. Keiser references Emden, *Biographical Register*, 392.

large readership of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. Annotators (essentially readers with a keen pen), who were quite instrumental in the shaping of a manuscript, may sometimes be distinguished from one another by their hands, but are difficult to interpret further.

Altogether it is clear that a comprehensive history of the corpus manuscripts cannot be written from surviving evidence about people and their actions.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, for silent readers as for outspoken writers, an awareness of the original existence of all these individuals will be useful for more focused textual and material investigations into the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. Even without knowledge of their names and identities, these individuals formed the rather heterogeneous discourse communities that shaped the reception of the corpus explored in the remainder of this book.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ See also Wright, *Fontes*.

⁵⁷ Claire Jones develops the term ‘discourse community’ in a linguistic context in “Discourse Communities”.

CHAPTER THREE

AUTHORSHIP, AUTHORITY AND ALCHEMICAL VERSE

1. MEDIEVAL AUTHORSHIP AND *ALCHEMICA*

What is an author? This question, firmly associated with Foucault in the minds of scholars today, presented itself to writers and readers in different contexts a millennium ago.¹ The written culture of the earlier Middle Ages was based on an original notion of God as the ultimate originator of the Creation and Biblical texts. In this sacred context,

writings of an *auctor* contained, or possessed, *auctoritas* in the abstract sense of the term, with its strong connotations of veracity and sagacity [...]. [The] thinking we are investigating seems to be circular: the work of an *auctor* was a book worth reading; a book worth reading had to be the work of an *auctor*.²

Human, if still divinely inspired, writers were introduced to the world of writing through learned commentaries and prologues; they contributed exegetical insights and original thought to the written oeuvre of their time, within the framework of a divine Creation. Ancient writers were established as authorities for specific scholarly disciplines in the high Middle Ages, like Galen for medicine. Here, too, text and author became synonymous. “When medieval writers allude to Augustine or Ovid, the chief association that these authoritative names conjure up is not that of an inspired figure whose genius informs certain texts but that of the texts themselves.”³

Concepts of authorship and attribution practices relating to the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” are distant relatives of the Scriptural tradition in some respects. Latin *alchemica* modelled on, translated from or referring to the older Islamic and Greek traditions showed an early tendency to use attributions in order to add connotations of ancient wisdom to a text. Paul of Taranto’s thirteenth-century ascription of his own, clearly scholastic *Summa perfectionis* to Geber is a perfect example of this practice.⁴

¹ Foucault, “What is an Author?”; based on a lecture, this was originally published in 1969.

² Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 39, 9.

³ Wogan-Browne et al., *Vernacular*, 5.

⁴ See Newman, *Summa Perfectionis*.

Alchemical authors elevated by medieval attribution included the real, mythical and Biblical (Rhazes, Maria and Moses) as well as contemporary writers. In the fifteenth century, canon of Bridlington George Ripley wrote alchemical verse under his own name; his status as Middle English alchemical poet was established soon afterwards and increased with pseudonymous writings—a status which would also affect the perpetuation of the anonymous corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” in later centuries.

Yet the concept of authorship applicable to Middle English poetry, and thence alchemical poetry, differs from the Scriptural and canonical model to some extent. Indeed, the Middle English literary verse tradition is largely anonymous. Only longer works like the *Confessio Amantis* seem to “warrant autobiographical *mise en scène*”. Short courtly love poems circulated largely without attribution; and where an ascription occurred, it often became synonymous with the authority of the poem itself.⁵ Similarly, alchemical poetry of fifteenth-century England rarely provoked consistent attribution. It shows an unwitting connection here to late medieval *Fachliteratur*, like books of secrets and craft manuals, which were conceived of as preserving knowledge that “was not referred back to canonical *auctoritates*, but was collective and anonymous”.⁶ Overall, the act of authorial attribution for late medieval natural philosophical writings, particularly pragmatic alchemical writings, and even more so for alchemical poetry, was not a natural part of manuscript composition, and not necessarily expected by audiences, either.

Whenever they were recorded in manuscripts, authorial names occurred in various, vulnerable and ambiguous places on a manuscript page (in titles or colophons, appearing as characters or merely referred to in the texts themselves, or as references added by readers in the margins). Not marked as authorial in any of these positions these names could also indicate persons otherwise associated with a text or its contents. Attempts made as early as in the thirteenth century, in prologues to Scripture, to clear up similar confusions by means of textual organisation did not prove successful in all types of manuscripts. At the time when the corpus around the “Verses” first appeared in late medieval manuscripts the purpose and place of an attribution was still not conventionally fixed.⁷

⁵ Boffey, *Courtly Love*, 62 and 65.

⁶ Chartier, “Foucault’s Chiasmus,” 27.

⁷ Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 156. See also Thomas, “Reading and Writing,” 401; Thomas cites Peter Beal, “Shall I Die?”. The corpus’ manuscripts very rarely provide textual markers (‘[name] scripsit’) for authors.

The nature of alchemy and its writings added a further element of instability to attribution and authorship in alchemical manuscripts. Middle English recipes in particular reflected contemporary practices of alchemy and writing, both of which were riddled with experimentation and change.⁸ Consequently, readers' beliefs in authority and authorship varied with each copy and reading experience. Theoretically, in the likely case that an experiment based on a recipe did not produce the promised result, alchemists could either adjust the text, leave it unchanged but interpret it differently, or dismiss its authority, whether named or not. Names of authors were added to or removed from manuscripts simultaneously, if not always accordingly. For Middle English alchemical poetry, vernacular recipe texts written with an eye to practicability rather than named authority, anonymous circulation constituted a viable and commonly practised option; the vast number of anonymously recorded alchemical verse even in recent catalogues testifies to this.⁹ As obvious from the surviving witnesses of texts from the corpus around the "Verses", anonymity did not preclude the popularity of a recipe text.

The notion of pseudonymous writing merits special consideration in this context. To the modern reader, pseudonymous authorship seems to indicate that there is something amiss with the veracity of an attribution. Alchemical readers, however, many of them copyists themselves, knew of the common attribution practices of late medieval writing and had different expectations towards the function and meaning of an ascription.¹⁰ For them, the truth value of an attribution depended on a shared belief in authorship in its general sense of origination, and in the case of *alchemica*, also the school of thought, especially widely conceived in the case of the Lullian approach to alchemy.¹¹ The fact that attributions varied between different copies of the same text did not challenge the perception of a text *per se*. It just added to the task of interpretation required from a learned user of alchemical texts—one that certainly did not affect the efficacy of the recipe described in the text.

⁸ See Chapters 1 and 2 above.

⁹ *DIMEV*; Voigts and Kurtz, *Scientific and Medical Writings* and others.

¹⁰ Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 15–29; and Bonner, "Chaucer Apocrypha," esp. 473–476. For a discussion of authorship and truth, see Kane, *Piers Plowman*, esp. p. 6, and Minnis, *Medieval Theory*, 21 and 47. The analysis of attributions for the "Verses upon the Elixir" below will provide further evidence on this subject.

¹¹ Long, *Openness*, 145. Lull was referenced in the Introduction and Chapter 1 above, and will feature again in the ascription history of the "Verses" below.

By the end of the period considered here, printing and publication increasingly determined the world of writing and the concept of authorship, with a tendency towards its modern form.¹² The corpus around the “Verses” and its reception were also affected by these developments. As contemporary and ancient authors’ names graced the title pages of printed books, the “Verses upon the Elixir” and some associated texts, too, entered printed publication and secondary literature with a fixed authorial name. A novel, Latin prose incarnation of the “Verses upon the Elixir” was absorbed into collected works of George Ripley in the seventeenth century; eighteenth-century tomes like Zetzner’s *Theatrum Chemicum* included “Alumen de Hispania” among their items; and Francis Barrett’s typically nineteenth-century publication, *The Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers*, paraphrased the “Verses” and other works whose authorial and other origins are more questionable than his prose suggests.¹³ Around the same time, as indicated previously, collectors of manuscripts including Elias Ashmole and Sir Mathew Hale investigated the authorial origins of these texts. Authorship was now considered a true reflection of origins.

2. ATTRIBUTING THE “VERSES UPON THE ELIXIR”

Authorial attributions for the poem “Verses upon the Elixir” provide a concrete example of motivations and implementations of attribution in Middle English alchemical poetry.¹⁴ Generally, the supposed authorship of the “Verses” alone is more diverse, less stable and comparatively older than Pearce the Black Monk’s acknowledgement in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* would suggest.¹⁵ Copyists of the “Verses” may generally have asked themselves who wrote the poem throughout its transmission, but only few of them proposed an answer in the form of an authorial attribution (Table III). Considered in connection with the textual history

¹² On early modern English alchemical publications see Kassell, “Secrets”. On manuscript and print McKitterick, *Print*; on scientific topics in print Timmermann, “Introduction”.

¹³ Zetzner, *Theatrum Chemicum*, Vol. 5, 497–498; Ripley, *Opera*, 314–322; Barrett, *Alchemystical Philosophers*, 298–299 (paraphrase); based upon the last was Waite, *Alchemystical Philosophers*, albeit without inclusion of Pearce the Black Monk or the “Verses upon the Elixir”.

¹⁴ A thorough study of attributions across the corpus around the “Verses” has shown that practices applied to this individual poem mirror those occurring in the wider corpus (Timmermann, *Circulation and Reception*, Chapter 5); the focus on the “Verses” in this chapter is pragmatic and exemplary in nature.

¹⁵ *TCB*, 269, 473 and 487.

Table III: Ascriptions for the "Verses upon the Elixir"

<i>Date</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>
~1550	TCD 389	Chaucer	"The verses"
1550-1600	BL Sloane 3667	Raymonde Lully	"a philosophor spekyth thus" ["1. Raymonde Lully"]
~1575	Bod Ashmole 1485	Thomas Norton & "an Unknowen aucthor"	"An Allegorye supposed to be made by Thomas Norton" & "Verses of an Unknowen aucthor"
s. xvi	Bristol *	Norton	*
s. xvi	Leconfield 99 *	Norton	*
s. xvi	BL Sloane 3688	Arnoldus de Villa Nova	"De magno opere of Arnoldus de Villa Nova"
s. xvi	Bod Ashmole 1490	Maria	"Another. Maria"
1603-1625	Bod Ashmole 1445 I	(<i>canc.</i> Arnoldi de uilla noua) Chaucer	"Elixer Arnoldi de uilla noua" & "A practtike"
s. xvii	GUL Ferguson 229	"Pierce ye black Monck."	["Thus"]
s. xvii	Edinburgh ERG/1/4	Pearcye	"Pearcye"
s. xvii	KCC Keynes 42	Pearce the black Monck	"Pearce the black Monck upon ye Elixir"
s. xvii	KCC Keynes 67	"An vnknowen author"	"An vnknowen author, vpon the philosophers stone."
mid-s. xvii	Bod Ashmole 1445 III	[Dr Flood], "Piearcie the Black Monke"	"Veritas de terra orta est" & "Piearcie the Black Monke vpon ye Elixir."

* MS lost¹⁶

[] attribution or title added in a later hand or ambiguous

of the "Verses upon the Elixir" (i.e., its transmission over time and stemma), this list of attributions is rather revealing.¹⁷ Only one fifth of the extant

¹⁶ Ascription for Bristol MS recorded in Norton, *Ordinall* (introd. Holmyard), vi; for Petworth House Leconfield MS 99 in Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Sixth Report*, Appendix, s.v. item 99. Since the places and times of ascription vary considerably (either written by the original scribe together with the text of the poem or by a later reader; directly above a text or in the margins), the recorded names are not necessarily all intended to name authors; they might also refer to helpful literature or other associations in some cases.

¹⁷ The stemmata for the "Verses", as well as a list of manuscript witnesses, may be found with the poem's Edition in the Appendix (Diagrams VI and VII).

copies (thirteen out of sixty-one) record an author's name; four fifths circulated anonymously.

The custom of attribution clearly emerges as a typically early modern one in the corpus, as numbers of attributions increase with time. Indeed, the temporal distribution of authorial names in the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" mirrors that of the recording of other names (of owners, collectors and readers) discussed at the end of Chapter 2 above. But the patterns of attribution in the succession of copies through the centuries also indicate scribal spontaneity. Six of the recorded names occur in more than one copy, but never in an exemplar and its direct ancestor or descendant. The three listed attributions of the "Verses upon the Elixir" to Thomas Norton even apply to different versions of the text; the relevant manuscripts are neither related nor otherwise linked with each other through common sources (for texts from within or without the corpus) or ownership. Further, the copyists of two directly related manuscripts listed here made different choices of authorial attribution: the exemplar (Bod MS Ashmole 1490, a volume favouring ancient authorities) attributes the "Verses" to Maria; its copy (Bod MS Ashmole 1445, a collection of English *alchemica* in Ashmole's possession while he was compiling the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*), attributes it initially to Arnold of Villanova, then amends the ascription to Chaucer. Here and elsewhere attributions seem to follow a compiler's tastes and perceptions, not a commonly agreed ascription or an exemplar's model.

Similarly disjointed patterns of attribution are observable throughout the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", which remained, essentially, an anonymous body of texts. Its attributions were rarely so persistent or apposite that they defined a text up to the point of its preservation in print.¹⁸ Of the three hundred surviving copies of the core corpus poems alone only eleven contain an explicit or implicit ascription. The only poem consistently associated with a poet's name is the "Mystery of Alchemists", which is marginal to the corpus but, as mentioned above, formed an established part of Ripley's attributed oeuvre. It is particularly noteworthy that the attribution of related prose texts ("Alumen de Hispania", "Thomas Hend" and "Terra Terrae Philosophicae") is disproportionately high and consistent. This may, indeed, be due to the Latin texts' coherence with Latin prose practices of

¹⁸ See Chapter 1 for individual poems' attribution histories. For a general theory on the purposes of the ascriptions see Long, *Openness*, 145.

ascriptions, and their role in the international dissemination of texts. This point will be discussed in more detail in the two case studies at the end of this chapter.

The mixture of scribal spontaneity, deliberation, education and experience that constitutes the act of attribution in the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” frames a pertinent question: by which criteria did these copyists choose an authorial name? Many of the attributions listed above (e.g. those to Raymond Lull and Arnold of Villanova, doctors of alchemical fame, and to mythical ancient alchemist Maria the Jewess) can be explained in terms of an author’s popularity at the time of attribution, and his or her association with promising alchemical lore and recipes. Similarly, the abovementioned unrelated attributions to Thomas Norton seem appropriate, since Norton wrote his seminal Middle English alchemical poem “The Ordinal of Alchemy” around the time of the birth of the “Verses”: copyists would have recognised the poems’ parallels in genre, time of writing and style. The choice of Pearce the Black Monk as an author, however, is more puzzling. A literarily undistinguished character with no historical record other than his appearance in “Trinity”, Pearce only adds his designation as a black, i.e. Benedictine monk, to the picture, which may have carried favourable connotations for those who used his as an authorial name. Furthermore, the “Verses upon the Elixir” were never attributed to the alchemist we now consider to be the household name of alchemical poetry, George Ripley—an indication that late medieval, early modern and modern concepts of alchemical authorship might differ considerably.

Geoffrey Chaucer’s appearance in the list of authors of the “Verses upon the Elixir” illuminates the contemporary reception of the genre of alchemical poetry further. One of the attributions appears uncontested at the top of one copy of the poem (TCD MS 389, written in the mid-sixteenth century);¹⁹ the other, already mentioned above, amends an original Chaucer attribution to one to Arnold of Villanova (Bod MS Ashmole 1445, dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century). In both cases it seems likely that the writers recognised certain literary qualities in the “Verses”, a tone, style and vocabulary they associated with Chaucer’s writings. The general Chaucer reception of the sixteenth century in particular was marked by a special appreciation of his ‘learned’ qualities, which also resulted in a significant

¹⁹ The attribution here refers to a set of texts and may not have extended to the “Verses upon the Elixir”; the argument of this chapter is not affected by this. Timmermann, “New Perspectives”.

addition of 'scientific' titles, mostly dating from the fifteenth century, to the Chaucer apocrypha: the "Treatise on the Astrolabe", "Canon's Yeoman's Tale", "Equatory of the Planets", and also the "Verses upon the Elixir" and "Lead". Their attributions to Chaucer overwhelmingly occur in alchemical, medical and scientific manuscripts, many of them containing texts from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir".²⁰ Since the contemporary perception of Chaucer as an author and scholar did not involve the distinction between the genres of literature and science, between poetic writings about alchemical themes and alchemical writings in poetic form, the Chaucer ascription for the "Verses" is not intended to emphasise the literary qualities it acknowledges implicitly. Instead, it intentionally places an originally anonymous but well-known late fifteenth-century alchemical poem in the wider-ranging oeuvre of the sixteenth-century persona that is the 'scientific' Chaucer.

With regard to the concept of anonymity for late medieval and early modern readers of alchemical texts, two points are noteworthy. Firstly, the corpus's early modern readers may have disagreed with a copyist's choice of author at times, but they never protested against a text's anonymity. And secondly, there are signs of an onset of reflection upon authors and authority in the late-sixteenth-century corpus around the "Verses", in the form of an attribution to 'an unknown author' (Bod MS Ashmole 1485). This note is written to mark a deliberate break in the middle of a copy of the "Verses upon the Elixir" otherwise attributed to Thomas Norton. In his desire to distinguish the first from the second half of the poem, the copyist thus made a positive statement about missing information. Upon closer inspection of the relevant manuscript it becomes clear that this is a habit of a particular compiler. The initial two parts of this manuscript, produced around 1575, contain mainly Latin prose. The "Verses" appear in the third part of the volume, a compilation of *alchemica* English in origin or language, written by Theodore Gravius, Richard Napier's assistant.²¹ This third manuscript section begins with a list of alchemical authors (f. 1^v) and accumulates copies of several of George Ripley's works as well as other well-known alchemical poems. In this respect this manuscript prefigures Elias Ashmole's editorial activities for the *TCB* a few decades later. One of its items is entitled "Certayne verses of an uncertayne auctor": a poem which further survives in two other copies, one

²⁰ Information on MSS and Chaucer ascriptions was sourced from Voigts and Kurtz, *Scientific and Medical Writings*. See also Dunleavy, "Chaucer Ascription," 3; Bonner, "Genesis"; and Aiken, "Vincent of Beauvais".

²¹ The manuscript, but not the part discussed here, is mentioned in Poole, "Theodoricus Gravius," 246, fn. 35. Gravius was introduced in the final part of Chapter 2 above.

of which, written by Simon Forman, ascribes it to Arnold of Villanova (Bod MS Ashmole 1490). What, then, were the motivations for Gravius's 'negative' attributions? Within this compendium's context, they seem to be connected with the act of manuscript compilation. The third section of the manuscript is presented as a collection of Ripleiana with ancillary, related texts. For this purpose, Gravius implicitly distinguished three categories: Ripleiana, poems by other well-known English authors, and *anonyma*. His penchant for a particular author's oeuvre (supported by the early modern taste for named works) generated his need to acknowledge each text's authorship.²² In the case of the "Verses upon the Elixir", his scrupulous categorisation prompted Gravius to bisect the poem into one part of (supposedly) well-known, and one of unknown authorship. Finally, his choice to include the latter part of the "Verses" instead of truncating the text appears to be an acknowledgement of the textual tradition of the poem and indicates Gravius's acquaintance with the genre.

In conclusion, anonymity defines a well-respected part of fifteenth-century English alchemical poetry. Especially in the early circulation of the "Verses upon the Elixir" attribution was very rare and an expression of personal, not commonplace, views. The integrity of the text and a well-produced copy appear to have been most important for copyists in the production and use of an alchemical poem. Authors often just added grace notes to an anonymous tradition.

3. TRANSLATIONS: LANGUAGE, GENRE AND AUTHORITY

While authorship did not equal authority in the late medieval period, and only few names of manuscript users were recorded over time, the genre of Middle English alchemical poetry itself offers a different, comparatively consistent approach to the issue of authoritativeness in the history of alchemy. Two pairs of texts from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" will illustrate the central role of genre in the communication of alchemical thought in the following two case studies. The first pair of texts (the Latin prose text "Alumen de Hispania" and its Middle English verse

²² See above; this development culminates, and becomes most visible, in the organisation of printed collections such as Gratarolus, *Auriferae Artis*, Zetzner, *Theatrum Chemicum*, and, a century later, Manget, *Bibliotheca*; and the publication of authorities' *Opera* (a continuation of the trend in the compilation of alchemical compendia described here) such as Raymond Lull's, Arnold of Villanova's and George Ripley's (see below).

translation, “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variant “Spain”) represents the beginnings of the corpus and the rise of the English alchemical poem. The second pair (the Middle English alchemical poem “Verses upon the Elixir” and its Latin prose translation, “Terra Terrae Philosophicae”) encapsulates the final period of the corpus’ active manuscript circulation, and with it the institution of authorship as a badge of quality.

3.1. “Richard Carpenter’s Work”:
“Alumen de Hispania” in English Verse

“Alumen de Hispania”, a dialogue between Maria the Jewess and Aros (or: Aaron), a historically elusive ‘philosopher’ and student of the alchemical art, had transmitted instructions for the production of the philosophers’ stone in Latin for more than a century when a fifteenth-century versifier decided to transform its recipe into Middle English verse to create “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variant “Spain”. As outlined above, both “Alumen de Hispania” and “Spain” circulated for more than two centuries in parallel, not in competition with each other, until “Spain” superseded its Latin prose original. Since the text remained unchanged in alchemical content, it must have been other qualities of either text that attracted audiences at different times: their authorship, linguistic forms and the genres of medieval Latin prose and Middle English poetry.

With regard to their authorship, “Alumen de Hispania” and “Richard Carpenter’s Work” form exceptions in the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. Both are associated with named authorities assigned during or soon after the period of their active circulation and reception. Their authors’ cultural connotations and influence, however, have somewhat unique histories.

Maria the Jewess represented ‘old alchemy’ to medieval audiences. Evidence abounds of her alchemical repute in medieval written culture: she was supposed to have authored classical texts on alchemical lore and is mentioned in Thomas Norton’s “Ordinal of Alchemy” and, in literature beyond the alchemical, in Ben Jonson’s play “The Alchemist” in this capacity.²³ Maria was also credited with the invention of some alchemical apparatus and the water bath, which is hence still known as ‘bain marie’.²⁴ Yet, like that of the

²³ “Will you believe in antiquity? Records?/ I’ll show you a book where Moses, and his sister,/ And Solomon have written of the art;/ Ay, and a treatise penn’d by Adam [...]O’ the philosopher’s stone”. Jonson, *The Alchemist*, II, i, 80–83.

²⁴ Berthelot, *Collection*, 2: 26 and 37.

alchemical Hermes, her fame was based on a confusing mythology. Maria was frequently mistaken for Miriam, the sister of Moses (even in “Spain”, l. 90), in accordance with the medieval belief that Moses was an inspired alchemist.²⁵ Further, when referred to just as ‘Maria’, without a designator, she was not clearly distinguishable from the Virgin Mary, who features prominently in Western alchemist’s invocations. By the turn of the seventeenth century, Maria’s identity, and indeed the origin of “Alumen de Hispania”, was frequently debated in alchemical circles, including a discussion by practitioner of alchemy and composer of emblems Michael Maier, physician to the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II.²⁶ Maria’s dialogue partner in “Alumen”, Aros, was connected with a similar multitude of identities in early modern times, among them Horus, the Egyptian god, or Aaron, the Biblical figure (albeit without Biblical indications of alchemical expertise on his part).²⁷ In “Alumen de Hispania”, however, Maria refers “several times to God, in a style and manner that can best be characterized as those of Jewish piety”.²⁸ Further, Maria was always firmly connected with “Alumen” not by attribution, but thanks to its dialogue structure and her role as one of the speaking characters. A fifteenth-century manuscript even depicts Maria beside the text of “Alumen de Hispania”, in appropriately ancient dress and headdress, and in a similar fashion to ancient Greek philosophers and sages drawn elsewhere in the volume.²⁹ The text’s authority was thus clearly anchored in Maria’s (and Aros’) mythical-historical personality.

The author supposed to have composed “Spain”, Richard Carpenter, does not match Maria in repute or charisma. As mentioned previously, his modern association with the poem in its current title does not reflect the sparse number of attributions referring to him in early modern manuscripts; and Richard Carpenter’s identity was never established outside of the text of the poem, in spite of Elias Ashmole’s efforts to identify the author through other documents.³⁰ The omission of his name from manuscript copies of the poem was certainly facilitated by its vulnerable location in the title line. Additionally, the act of translation that created this poem removed Maria from the

²⁵ Moses appears as an adept in a Latin alchemical dialogue entitled “Allegoriae sapientium supra librum Turbae XXIX distinctiones”. See Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*, 19 and 37, with reference to Gratarolus, *Auriferae Artis*; Zetzner, *Theatrum Chemicum*, 1: 467–479.

²⁶ Reidy, *Thomas Norton’s Ordinal*, ll. 2657 and 2563. See Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*, 77, on its reception in Maier, *Symbola Aureae Mensae*.

²⁷ Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*, 60–80.

²⁸ Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*, 71.

²⁹ Cambridge, St. John’s College MS G. 14 (182), f. 6^r.

³⁰ See Chapter 1.

text together with its dialogue structure. As a result, “Richard Carpenter’s Work” circulated mostly anonymously.

Given this generally ‘unauthorised’ circulation of “Spain” and a stable association of “Alumen de Hispania” with Maria (and Aros) it is remarkable that “Spain” was no less popular than “Alumen” from the fifteenth century onwards. Moreover, copyists appear to have favoured the English poem over the Latin prose text once its transmission was firmly established in the sixteenth century. Even allowing for uneven survival patterns of manuscript witnesses, an interesting chiasmus appears in the second half of the sixteenth century: “Alumen de Hispania” reaches its lowest point of popularity at the exact time when “Spain” achieves its peak circulation.³¹

The textual form and presentation of the two texts appears to have been a decisive factor for the latter text’s surge in popularity in the sixteenth century. In the broader, earlier medieval literary tradition, didactic dialogues represented a product of Latin scholastic literature which had become particularly popular with English audiences in the vernacular and in verse form. “Sidrak and Bokkus”, a poetic scientific dialogue between a Christian philosopher and a heathen king originally composed in the thirteenth century and most revered in a Middle English verse translation of an Old French prose text, is just one of many examples of this genre; “The Argument of Morien and Merlin” another.³² Didactic dialogues fulfilled a sophisticated pragmatic function for both fourteenth-century authors and audiences. They transported the reader into the text—in “Alumen de Hispania”, Aros acts on behalf of the ignorant and doubtful alchemist wishing to learn the secrets of the art. They also ordered the text into sections (headed by Aros’ questions) and information proper (here, the recipe for the philosophers’ stone and its underlying theory, condensed into Maria’s replies to Aros). Finally, didactic dialogues personified the authority of the text, here in the figure of Maria. For “Alumen de Hispania” the didactic dialogue thus provided a form, function and tradition appropriate to the customary Latin prose literature of its time.

By contrast, the transposition of “Alumen” into “Spain”, from a didactic dialogue into a recipe, adapted the text to contemporary alchemical practitioners’ tastes. It also affected the text’s implications. “Spain” describes

³¹ Twelve full copies and substantial fragments of “Spain” survive from that period, but only three for “Alumen”, two of which are vaguely dated for the entire period of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see the list of manuscript witnesses provided with the Editions in the Appendix).

³² Burton, *Sidrak and Bokkus*; Grund, “*Sidrak and Bokkus*”; Taylor, “Morien and Merlin”.

materials and procedures (a recipe extracted from “Alumen”) interspersed with theoretical information. It presents the recipe directly, without the mediation of a speaker, much less a dialogue between an explicit originator of the recipe and a user, and loses the association with Maria in the process. Although not original in content, “Spain” is an original composition in the medium of verse, indistinguishable in style and expression from the remainder of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. Its anticipated audience are, therefore, fifteenth-century readers used to navigating vernacular didactic poetry as well as alchemical laboratories, an audience whose education, literary experiences and expectations towards an alchemical text are different from that of “Alumen de Hispania”. Interestingly, manuscripts incorporating “Spain” are, more often than not, compilations of English *alchemica*, not collections of traditional Latin texts.³³

It is interesting to note here that “Alumen de Hispania” and “Richard Carpenter’s Work” variant “Spain” eventually met on the ground of vernacular *alchemica* when “Alumen” was translated into English prose (and other vernacular languages) in the seventeenth century. The mechanics of translation, made more complex by this reversal of language and advance of genre, would merit further study.³⁴ For current purposes, however, a few observations on the comparatively extensive scope of the English prose text will suffice. As mentioned above, “Spain” removed the optional and yet characteristic introduction of “Alumen”, whereas its original rhetorical passages mimic elements typical of English alchemical poetry. But the seventeenth-century English translation of “Alumen de Hispania” retains all textual elements of the Latin prose text yet echoes “Spain” in phrasing and expression. Due to the dilution of time and translation the early modern English texts of “Alumen de Hispania” and “Spain” would not have seemed to be related to anyone but the most careful reader:

Aros the Philosoph^{er} meeting with Miriam the prophetisse, sister of Moses, when he drew nigh to her, he honored her, & said, oh Prophetesse I have heard very much concerning thee, viz: that thou dealbats the stone in one day, to whome Miriam answered, yes Aros, & in part one day. [...]

Take allume of spaine white gume & Red gume which is Kibrick of the Philosophers, & their sol, & greater tincture, & conioyne gume, with gume, in true matrimony
 “Alumen de Hispania” (English), introduction
 and excerpt (BL MS Sloane 3778, f. 100^r)

³³ An early, prime example is TCC MS O.2.16, which dates from the fifteenth century. See James, *Western Manuscripts*, s.v. ‘O.2.16’.

³⁴ Indicative of possible directions of research is Crisciani, “Aspetti”.

Of spayn take thou thy clere light
 The redde gomme that is so bright
 Of philosophers the sulphur vif
 Callid golde withouten stryf
 Of hyme drawe out a tyncture
 And make a matrimony pure

“Spain”, *incipit*

This late adaptation of “Alumen de Hispania” therefore further underlines the observation that “Spain” not merely translates, but transposes “Alumen” into the genre of English alchemical poetry.

How self-conscious the choice of medium might have been on behalf of “Spain”’s originator is an interesting conjecture, in spite of the poem’s apparent success. A modern historian familiar with the apologies and defences of the English language published so copiously in early printed books might expect a similarly defensive attitude on behalf of alchemical writers of different ages, in anticipation of their audiences’ possible scepticism towards their choice of medium. We already encountered an example of such a defensive passage in “Liber Patris Sapientiae” (*TCB*, 194–209, stanza 21) in a wordy, somewhat literary extension of the corpus around the “Verses”. However, in the case of the pragmatic poetry that constitutes the core of the corpus this problem did not present itself.³⁵ Instead, it seems that alchemical poetry in itself was a marker of reliability to late medieval and early modern readers. Verse had established itself as a customary vehicle for alchemical recipes within a few decades, just before “Spain” was composed. By the time “Richard Carpenter’s Work” appeared in print in Elias Ashmole’s *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, and thereby became part of a leading printed collection of Middle English verse, its language and genre had become a merit, not a deficiency, even in the eyes of an early modern collector.³⁶

In conclusion, “Alumen de Hispania” and “Spain” prove to be an interesting case of alchemical poetry gradually replacing didactic dialogue in function, repute and popularity. Moreover, it appears that the genre of alchemical poetry in itself carried authority. Early modern readers were not necessarily looking for authors but rather for rhymed recipes to advance their alchemical knowledge and practice. The implications of this histori-

³⁵ “[U]ntil the very end of the seventeenth century, [...] the didactic poem was much less self-conscious in both theory and practice, even though a good deal of it was being written and printed. [...] The abundance of vernacular didactic poetry [...] was the legacy of late medieval poetic practice, in which this kind of verse was taken for granted [...]. No defense [sic]—or definition—was necessary”. Schuler, “Theory,” 4.

³⁶ *TCB*, “Prolegomena”.

cal development for historiography are as simple as they are profound: for late medieval and early modern history of alchemy and its craft and scholarly relations, a history of texts and genres captures an essential part of the spirit of sixteenth-century science.

3.2. "*Terra Terrae Philosophicae*":
The "Verses upon the Elixir" in Neo-Latin Prose

The Neo-Latin movement in text and scholarship, which coincided with the institution of print roughly a century after the introduction of verse just explored, considerably affected the circulation of the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" in manuscript form. As for the previous establishment of Middle English verse as an accepted, popular medium of alchemical writing, this development was driven by both circumstances and audiences. Perhaps influenced by printers' endeavours to preserve a scientific and literary heritage in printed volumes, alchemical readers cultivated a new appetite for ancient and authoritative texts. This enthusiasm prompted the composition of texts based upon, imitating or pretending to be of an 'old' origin.³⁷ In the case of the "Verses upon the Elixir" this new fashion for old texts involved a curious reinvention: the poem was translated from English verse into Latin prose, assigned with a fixed title ("*Terra Terrae Philosophicae*") and attributed to an author. This author was fifteenth-century English versifier George Ripley—an author we have encountered several times before, and whose repute as an alchemical authority for recipes like that presented in the "Verses" was growing in early modern continental Europe.³⁸ "*Terra Terrae Philosophicae*" was created in the late sixteenth century and represents an exact translation of the "Verses", version A, complete with the "Exposition" and "Wind and Water". Rather than translating the poem into Latin verse, which would be difficult but not impossible to achieve, "*Terra Terrae*" emulates Latin prose *alchemica* of previous generations. Similar Latinate compositions and reinventions would also define the printed compilations of alchemical texts in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁹

³⁷ The term 'old', as used here, appears in historical manuscripts to indicate sources of merit (both manuscripts and texts) in the early modern period; the actual age of the sources is never specified further.

³⁸ See Rampling, *George Ripley's Alchemy*, chapter 7 and *ibid.*, "Transmission".

³⁹ Some of these printed compilations were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

“Terra Terrae Philosophicae”, an appendage to the history of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, represents the reversal of the history of “Alumen de Hispania” and “Spain”: the removal of rhyme and the English language, and hence of the text’s geographical, cultural and historical identity, in favour of a pan-scholarly language, a named authority and an associated, implied origin more ancient than the translation but possibly contemporaneous with the date of composition of the “Verses upon the Elixir”. This act of translation (linguistic and cultural) invites a new investigation of the function and effects of genre, language and named authority on alchemical writing, now in a period defined by different ideals. Apart from a general appeal of Latinate alchemical knowledge, what recommended “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” to readers to merit its copious reproduction, its inclusion in printed collections, its persistent co-existence with the “Verses upon the Elixir” during the final decades of its active manuscript circulation, its translation into German and French and even its translation into English prose?⁴⁰

The need for the composition of “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” and its popularity are matters worth pondering. Initially not circulated beyond the British Isles and rendering the text of the “Verses upon the Elixir” *verbatim*, “Terra Terrae” would not have increased the accessibility of the text to an Elizabethan audience.⁴¹ Its ascription to George Ripley, which occurs both early and persistently, seems to be the key element of value, both anticipated by the translator or early copyists of the text and readily accepted by its readership. This attribution to Ripley appears to have been as wilful an act as the translation was laborious. The overall purpose was likely the manufacture of another item for the pseudo-Ripleian oeuvre which would encourage circulation and, eventually, publication in print.

Notably, this use of a common knowledge about Ripley, his style, the alchemical content of his authentic and pseudoepigraphic work, vocabulary, choice of language and genre in the composition of texts was quite widespread in early modern England. Strengthened by more than a century of strong manuscript tradition, Ripley had become an emblem of late medieval alchemical wisdom by the turn of the seventeenth century. As mentioned previously, some texts from this ‘Neo-Ripleian’ body of works

⁴⁰ An English prose rendition may be found in BL MS Sloane 3732, a seventeenth-century volume containing mainly items attributed to well-known personalities in the (then) recent history of alchemy.

⁴¹ Early surviving witnesses of the Latin prose version appear in manuscripts of English origin: BL MS Sloane 1842 and Bod MS Ashmole 1485, both from the second half of the sixteenth or turn of the seventeenth century.

belong to the anonymous part of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”: “Mystery of Alchemists” (included in Bale’s bibliography of 1548 under Ripley’s name); the “Short Work”; and the ‘Ripley Scrolls’ (attributed, among others, by Elias Ashmole in *the Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, who is otherwise so scrupulous in his verification of a text’s authorship).⁴² By the mid-seventeenth century the addition of “Terra Terrae” to the Ripley apocrypha, too, had been fully accepted in English written culture. Pitts’ famous bibliography of English authors then connected Ripley and “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” with each other in print; Combach’s publication of “Terra Terrae” in 1649 together with Ripley’s collected works would have raised only the eyebrows of very well-read, multilingual readers of manuscripts, i.e. of those who would have noticed the parallels to the “Verses upon the Elixir” and the conflict between the poem’s anonymity and the prose text’s attribution.⁴³ If any eyebrows were raised, they were raised in silence, as no written evidence to this effect survives. The reason why “Terra Terrae” proved to be successful in named print circulation thus appears to be a combination of its Latin language, the attribution to Ripley and its subsequent publication in print, which prompted further manuscript copies and translations to be produced.⁴⁴

One point to consider in more detail is the reciprocity between manuscript and print in the seventeenth century. As printed and handwritten versions of the text co-existed, and manuscripts imitated print more and more often, readers’ and copyists’ beliefs about ascriptions were also influenced by the printed word.⁴⁵ It is noteworthy in this context that the manuscripts in which the “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” appears, whether chosen over the “Verses” or independently, show a clear bias towards Ripleiana or named authorities. In the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, these manuscripts are not part of, but a supplement to, its manuscript circulation. Even those manuscripts which combine “Terra Terrae” with other items from the corpus have a clear agenda for their compilation, whether a focus on Ripleiana and Latin items (Bod MS Ashmole 1485 and GUL MS Ferguson 91) or, as is the case in one late manuscript (Edinburgh, Royal

⁴² See Chapter 1 and the introductions to individual texts in the Editions below for bibliographical references.

⁴³ Pitts, *Relationum Historicarum*. Ripley, *Opera*, 314–322.

⁴⁴ See Ripley, “Georgii Riplaei ... Schrifften”.

⁴⁵ It is likely, if not entirely demonstrable, that some of the late manuscript copies of “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” were copied from printed volumes. For a discussion of this context, see Chapter 5 below.

College of Physicians MS ERG/1/4), the aim to preserve every item the collector could get his hands on.⁴⁶ “Terra Terrae” is also often found in a curious mixture of periods and genres, among texts which are not clearly intended for the preparation of alchemical experiments but monuments of a philological or canonical tradition (as is the case in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 11133, a volume composed in a courtly setting at the beginning of the seventeenth century).⁴⁷ As a result of these copying rationales, manuscripts containing “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” also point to an intended and actual readership different from that of the “Verses upon the Elixir” and early associated texts, and more akin to audiences for later printed compendia. Where “Spain” opened up a wider audience for the recipes also transmitted in “Alumen de Hispania”, “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” deliberately defines a small, philologically inclined readership, a group set apart from the continually thriving reception of the “Verses” and other Middle English alchemical poems. This distinction between Neo-Latin scholarly and English poetic craft manuscripts was also observed above for volumes containing “Alumen de Hispania” and “Spain”.

It was probably because of this discrepancy in form and purpose, or rather the confusing lack of definition of either, that “Terra Terrae” often did not reach copyists who concentrated on materials from the core corpus around “Verses upon the Elixir”. Elias Ashmole, for instance, considered “Terra Terrae” from a theoretical perspective only when he wrote his commentary on the “Verses” authorship:

Ludovicus Combachius in his late Collections of some of Ripley's Workes, put this of Pearce the Black Monk's among them under the Title *Terra Terrae Philosophicae*; and publishes it as Ripley's: and withall that Tytle [*Terrae Terrarum*] which Pitts also gives to one of his Workes may seeme to insinuate this; But I conceive all are not Ripley's which walk under his Name, for questionlesse, many Pieces are (of late Tymes) fathered on him which he never wrote.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Examples of manuscripts not belonging to the corpus around the “Verses” in any other way are all rather slim volumes (of 75–143 folios each) of the seventeenth century; see the Handlist of Manuscripts (Bibliography) for details.

⁴⁷ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 11133 roughly dates from 1604–1608. On its composer, contacts and the compilation as means of social-professional proliferation see Hausenblasová and Purš, “Simon Thadeas Budek”. Ripley is mentioned there (pp. 79–80), but the copy of “Terra Terrae” or its role within this volume not discussed. I deduce its function within the codex's copies of Riplean works from the entirety of the manuscript's contents and its compiler (Budek)'s table of contents on ff. 159r–190r “Index rerum et verborum in *omnia opera venerabilis Canonici Domini Georgij Riplei Angli*”; see also Rampling, “John Dee,” esp. 501–502.

⁴⁸ *TCB*, 473.

Ashmole had always considered manuscripts a primary source of information, and he likely owned Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1485, which contained both the “Verses” and a copy of “Terra Terrae” complete with Ripley’s name, when he prepared the *TCB*. Yet apart from his concentration on English verse, his possible consequent blind spot for Latin prose and his doubt about the ascription, Ashmole may have had a practical reason to overlook the two texts’ similarities: he did not include this particular manuscript in his preparations of his print publication. The relevant stemma shows that, if Ashmole indeed owned the volume at the time, he dismissed the copy of the “Verses” in Ashmole MS 1485 in favour of another for use in his edition for the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, and rightly so, as it is a unique, distinctive copy which does not represent an ideal, standard text suitable for Ashmole’s philosophy behind the *Theatrum*.⁴⁹ In the same step he may have dismissed the entire codex; there was no reason or opportunity for him to sift through its, or any other volume’s, prose contents for his edition purposes. In other words, this copy of “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” and, significantly, others circulating with Ripley’s name at the time, although probably not escaping his notice altogether, simply did not attract Ashmole’s explicit attention. The “Verses upon the Elixir” were more attractive to him, and for most early modern men going before him.

A brief look at the circulation of the “Verses upon the Elixir” and its Latin translation in manuscripts testifies to the fact that, as demonstrated above, the poem did not depend on an authoritative name for popularity: no less than 50 full copies and substantial fragments of the poem, but only eight copies of its Latin prose translation survive.⁵⁰ More pertinently, copyists in possession of exemplars of both the “Verses upon the Elixir” and “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” chose not to reproduce them alongside each other and often decided in favour of the poem.⁵¹ The poem remained the more popular of the two texts in English speaking countries until the end of their joint manuscript transmission towards the end of the seventeenth century; its prevalence appears to have remained in place even once the

⁴⁹ Please see the stemma for the “Verses upon the Elixir”, version B (Diagram VII) in the Appendix.

⁵⁰ See the manuscript witnesses listed with the Editions towards the end of this book for shelfmarks.

⁵¹ For instance, the “Verses” in London MS Sloane 1842 served as exemplar for London MS Sloane 288, but the copy of “Terra Terrae” was not transposed into the latter (see the stemma for version B of the “Verses”, i.e. Diagram VII, and manuscript information and statistics for “Terra Terrae Philosophicae” here and in the Editions below).

dissemination of “Terra Terrae” in print set in from the mid-seventeenth century onwards (the period following that considered here). Given that the ever-changing attribution of the “Verses”, as outlined above, did not impede its popularity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, one might well wonder whether its Latin prose translation would have been as successful as it was later on without the aid of Ripley and the print medium.

In sum, authorial ascription, translation and the transposition from prose into verse or *vice versa* had different effects on the circulation and reception of “Alumen de Hispania”, “Spain”, the “Verses upon the Elixir” and “Terra Terrae Philosophicae”. Both translations discussed in this chapter reflect the fashions of their times. If we consider these case studies together with the patterns of ascription (or rather lack thereof) in the corpus around the “Verses” as a whole, it seems that authority in alchemical writing was not necessarily, and certainly not exclusively, expressed by way of attribution. The tendency to associate a named personality with authority increased in the later periods of the corpus’ history. Where attributions do occur in the corpus they are as deliberate as a choice of genre and language. Most notably, genre was a significant carrier of authority. Medieval and early modern readers of *alchemica* understood verse and the Middle English language as indicators of value. For them, the promise of health, wealth and knowledge did not have a specific name but a distinct mode of expression.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RIPLEY SCROLLS: ALCHEMICAL POETRY, IMAGES AND AUTHORITY

Some poems related to the “Verses upon the Elixir” enjoyed a colourful chapter in their material manifestation: from the turn of the sixteenth century onwards, they were circulated on large scrolls depicting alchemical processes in colourful illustrations. These ‘Ripley Scrolls’ are now prized possessions and rarities in modern collections of *alchemica* thanks to their unusual format and beautiful illuminations. Their association with George Ripley, fifteenth-century alchemical writer whose name features in the later history of some parts of the corpus around the “Verses”, further accounts for their current popularity. Upon closer inspection, however, the Ripley Scrolls are a confused and confusing set of historical objects. The origin of the Scrolls¹ may be more recent than Ripley’s lifetime and their association with Ripley is not present in early exemplars. Further, they were not intended to be used in separation from other *alchemica*; the texts on the Scrolls (poems from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”) were also circulated in plain manuscript volumes—indeed, as will be demonstrated below, the texts moved between Scrolls and plain manuscripts from one copy to the next. Hence the poems are as noteworthy as the illuminations when they appear together on the Scrolls, and the relations between the Scroll images and poems are both ambiguous and complex.

What motivated the production of the Scrolls in the first place? Whence did the texts originate and how were they selected, combined and illustrated? To what extent did the Ripley Scrolls gain authority and notoriety through association with Ripley? Given that scrolls as *Beschreibmaterial* and illuminations were both unusual media in an otherwise firmly square, bound and unadorned alchemical manuscript culture, what role did they play in the Scrolls’ circulation and reception? Finally, just how did early modern readers use the Scrolls to retrieve knowledge about the workings of

¹ Throughout this chapter, I will spell the word ‘scroll’ with a lower case initial when referring to the generic object and with an upper case initial in connection with the Ripley Scrolls.

alchemy and its application in the workshop? This chapter addresses these questions through the history of the poems on the Ripley Scrolls. It will first describe the Scrolls and existing scholarship on their rather exceptional presentation of alchemical experimentation, then consider circumstances around the poems' appearance in particular media, and finally discuss the role of illumination in alchemical texts' authority, popularity and reception.

1. POEMS AND PRETTY PICTURES:
INTRODUCTION TO THE RIPLEY SCROLLS

The group of scrolls now catalogued under the title of the Ripley Scrolls unites three essentially different types of Scrolls. The first, a combination of allegorical illustrations of alchemical processes interspersed with major textual elements, is of concern to the present study. Dozens of carefully drawn alchemical practitioners, nude figures, mythical creatures and heavenly bodies accompany up to six poems related to the "Verses upon the Elixir" ("Richard Carpenter's Work", variants "Sun" and "Father Phoebus"; "On the ground", "In the sea", "I shall you tell" and "Trinity") on these Ripley Scrolls. Fifteen witnesses from the early modern period are extant today.² The other two, minor varieties of the Ripley Scrolls may be neglected for present purposes: the first shows different images (two pictures of an alchemist or monk reclining on a chaise longue with an angel appearing in front of him, presenting a tray with varying offerings). It does not have any connection with alchemical poetry and survives in three exemplars.³ The other type survives in a single copy (BL MS Add. 5025 (3)) and shows an illustra-

² I am not taking into account late copies dating from the eighteenth century or after (one of them the Scroll only recently put on display at the Science Museum in London: Science Museum, London: *Alchemy Exhibition 2012*). For the major type of Scroll this leaves the following fifteen extant early modern witnesses: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276; Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2; London, British Library MSS Add. 5025 (2), Add. 5025 (4), Add. 32621, Sloane 2523B; London, Wellcome Institute MSS 692, 693; New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library MS Mellon 41; Oxford, Bodleian Library MSS Ashmole Rolls 40, Ashmole Rolls 52, Bodley Rolls 1; Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library MS 93; San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313; and the Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities Ripley Scroll (MS 205).

³ The only existing reproduction to date of an image from Bod Ashmole Rolls 53 may be found (unfortunately in reverse) in Hughes, *Arthurian Myths*, 59.

tion of a rose, wherefore it has been associated with Rosicrucianism in past scholarship.⁴ This unique exemplar contains a variant of the “Short Work”, version B, as its sole textual component. It does not exhibit any symbolical or textual connection to the major variant of Ripley Scroll.

The fifteen Ripley Scrolls connected to the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” contain depictions of scenes from the metaphorical world of alchemy, coloured in the customary red, black, white and green, whose imagery would have been familiar to its audience versed in the contemporary alchemical literature.⁵ Unlike medieval poetic scrolls, the Ripley Scrolls unroll from the top to the bottom, not sideways.⁶ The images may differ slightly in their artistic execution from one Scroll to the next. The number, nature and order of the poems varies more frequently. The following description applies to a common denominator of the surviving witnesses.⁷

At the top of the Scroll, a large, robed, bearded figure in headdress towers over a disproportionately large alchemical vessel. Inside this vessel eight circular images linked with a chain form a large roundel. Whether Aristotle or Hermes Trismegistus, an alchemist or figure reminiscent of Ashmole’s engraving of “the head and shoulders of God in Majesty rising behind a globe which contains a representation of the Last Judgement”,⁸ dressed in a monk’s robe or a secular garment, the figure is certainly part of a larger pictorial tradition including medieval depictions of Christ holding the globe on medieval *mappaemundi*, or, later, the Creation in the obscure,

⁴ See e.g. McCallum “Ripley Scroll of the Royal College,” 44; this refers back to Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*.

⁵ The images are analysed with regard to their colour schemes, points of reference and alchemical relevance in Rampling, “Alchemy of the Ripley Scrolls”. Published images of Scrolls include a small fold-out colour reproduction of the Huntington Scroll (now San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313) in Dobbs, *Alchemical Death*, and its black-and-white reprint in McKnight, *Science*, 55–87. Microfilm reproductions of BL MSS Sloane 2523B and 2524 may be found in: Sloane, *Papers*. References to digital, online images of Scrolls are referenced in the Bibliography; other published images are referenced in the literature review below.

⁶ Rouse and Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses*, esp. 26–27.

⁷ The following description coincides in parts with that in McCallum, “Ripley Scroll,” and several library catalogues. It refers specifically to the Huntington Scroll (San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313), shown in Figures I to IV; but not to its unusual arrangement of the poems (see below).

⁸ Corbett, “Ashmole,” 333; see also TCB, 210; Moncrieff and Small, “Account,” 575; and Linden, “Alchemy and Eschatology,” 104.



Figure 1: Ripley Scroll (Huntington Library MS HM 30313, section 1).

Reproduced by kind permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

symbolical “Mutus Liber”.⁹ If interpreted as a human rather than divine figure, this alchemist observes representations of his own alchemical experience in the abovementioned circles: they depict a series of scenes from an imaginary alchemical workshop, with monk-like men examining flasks filled with metaphorical depictions of alchemical processes.

The ninth circle at their centre shows two figures holding a manuscript volume (notably not a scroll) which represents, as the accompanying caption in one Scroll informs us, the “Book of Philosophy” (New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Mellon MS 41). Such a tableau of alchemical images is not unusual in alchemical illustration. Similar scenes appear, for example, in the *Aurora Consurgens*, an illustrated alchemical treatise of the fifteenth century, here in the form of a Hermetic vase surrounded by personifications of the seven planets.¹⁰ Below this imposing initial image the text of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variant “Sun” (long or short) is inserted.

The images following seamlessly below the alchemist’s vessel on the Ripley Scroll depict, in sequence, a nude man and woman standing in a seven-sided pool which is surrounded by alchemists pouring a liquid into its waters; and a four-sided pool as a stage for variations on this theme. A winged dragon adorning the base of the latter pool is spitting out, or perhaps about to ingest, a black toad.¹¹ The last element of this panel is a furnace heating the mentioned dragon’s pool, a red and a green lion guarding the fire on either side. A banner between the dragon’s pool and the lions’ furnace contains the poem “On the ground”.

The next section of the Ripley Scroll is overseen, in the literal sense, by the face of the sun. Further down its teardrop rays surround the image of a white bird with a man’s crowned head, the “Bird of Hermes”, as a caption informs us. Between sun and bird the text of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” variant “Father Phoebus” appears on marginal banners. And, probably in an

⁹ These and other interpretations are proposed in Dutschke, *Guide*, s.v. ‘HM 30313’; Moncrieff and Small, “Account,” 562; McCallum, “Ripley Scroll of the Royal College,” 43; Dobbs, *Alchemical Death*, 85; Warlick, “Fluctuating Identities,” 115; and “Liber Mutus Alchemiae Mysteria filiis Artis nudis figuris, evidentissime aperiens” in Manget, *Bibliotheca Chemica Curiosa*, 1: after p. 938 (title engraving plus 15 plates).

¹⁰ See Obrist, *Débuts*, illustration 44 (taken from Zurich, Zentralbibliothek MS Rh. 172, p. 13).

¹¹ Another toad appears on the Ripley Scroll’s first panel. The symbol of the toad (signifying poison) and its recurrence in Ripley’s writings is analysed in detail in Telle, *Buchsignete*, 67–70.

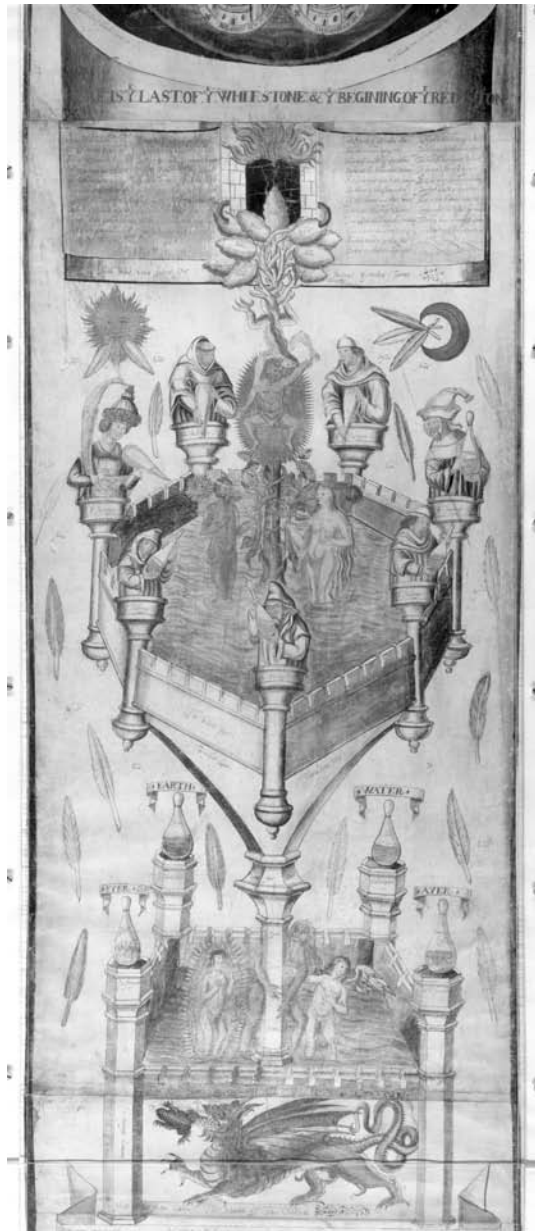


Figure II: Ripley Scroll (Huntington Library MS HM 30313, section 2).

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allusion to the water-filled orb upon which the Bird of Hermes stands, the poem "In the sea" is written on a banner below this scene.

The third panel of the Ripley Scroll presents a variation of the preceding picture: a sun, now black and gold in colour, which holds three interlinked circles (black, white and red). This sun rests on a lunar crescent which is, in turn, held up by the mouth of a dragon whose tail winds around its neck and body. The dragon further bleeds from its belly into a third orb, now half filled with water and three black circles. The space below this image conveys the poem "I shall you tell" to the reader; its relation to the images is not evident.

The final panel is not part of all Ripley Scrolls. It depicts two men holding and looking at a rectangular object, often an oversized piece of paper or a scroll, which may or may not contain the poem "Trinity". One of the figures, elsewhere described as a "pilgrim or perhaps a philosopher", scribe, puffer or 'George Ripley', is dressed in trousers, boots and hooded jacket, and carries a staff with a hoof at the bottom and scroll wound around the top.¹² The other figure is dressed in ecclesiastical robes and holds a crown and long staff. Whether the absence of "Trinity" from some final panels or that of the entire final panel from some Scrolls is due to omission or material loss cannot be determined with any certainty. It is possible that all Scrolls were originally intended to contain both panel and poem. Apart from these main pictures the Ripley Scrolls feature further banners with Latin and English captions, as well as numerous smaller pictorial elements from the inventory of alchemical symbolism, like feathers, suns and moons, and furnaces.

Even a superficial look at the Scrolls without the discerning eye of an art historian tells us that anyone wishing to own a Ripley Scroll would either have had to commission an artist to draw these pictures, or would have needed sufficient artistic skills to produce a new copy. Only occasionally does a Scroll seem to have been drawn by an inexpert hand (as is the case with BL MS Sloane 2523B). The close similarities, to the extent of identical design, of all surviving Scrolls of this type also indicates that the illuminations must have been drawn with another exemplar at hand or in mind.

The textual elements of the Ripley Scrolls are as complex and noteworthy as their illuminations. As outlined in Chapter 1, all Scroll poems are typical alchemical poems of their time, that is, Middle English verse recipes written

¹² Different theories for the professional identity of the two figures are presented in Elias Ashmole's edition manuscript for the *TCB* (Bod MS Ashmole 972, 375); Pächt and Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts*, vol. 3; Smith, *Body*, 14–16; Warlick, "Fluctuating Identities," 115 and 128 (fn. 23); McCallum, "Ripley Scroll of the Royal College," 44.



Figure III: Ripley Scroll (Huntington Library MS HM 30313, section 3).
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in a style associated with excellent *alchemica* around the turn of the sixteenth century. Three of the six poems probably originate on the Scrolls: “In the sea”, a short and notably the only poem appearing on all extant Scrolls; “I shall you tell”, an alchemical soliloquy in the manner of the “Boast of Mercury”; and possibly “Trinity”.¹³ The other three, major poems (“Sun”, “Father Phoebus” and “On the ground”, a text of more substantial length) enjoy an early representation in codices; their material origins, as relating to manuscripts and Scrolls, will be discussed in more detail below.

Apart from these six core poems and the abovementioned short, individual headings, some Ripley Scrolls contain additional textual items. One, an address “To the Reader” (see BL Add. 5025 (4)), pays homage to the dedicatory introductions permeating contemporary printed books. Another, a continuation of “Trinity” (*inc.*: “Of these Types and Figures your Eyes doth beholde/ Meruellular matter the hidden sence doth vnfolde”), provides a similar nod to textual culture in the form of an enhanced, theoretical conclusion. A third item, a lengthy prose text entitled “An expounding of the significacion of the seauen seales wherewith the booke of Phelosophie is closed”, adds literary merit and authority. This text is now known to us as the English version of Arnold of Villanova’s “Visio mystica” (i.e. the pseudo-Arnaldian work also going by the titles of “Cathena aurea” or “Flos florum”) and is featured on just one Scroll (New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Mellon MS 41), there as the first text, preceding “Sun”.¹⁴ The textual inventory of Scrolls is complete with the note that they contain either the long version of “Sun”, version A, together with “Trinity”, or its short version without “Trinity”. With this variability the Ripley Scrolls offer much more evidence for individuality in contemporary approaches to alchemy than their generally stable, pictorially fixed manifestation might suggest.

It is uncertain how many Ripley Scrolls of this kind were originally produced. As mentioned above, fifteen surviving copies from the late fifteenth to mid-seventeenth century (the period of active manuscript circulation of the corpus around the “Verses”) have been identified. The earliest surviving witness (Bod Bodley Rolls 1) is recorded as dating back to the mid- to late

¹³ The earliest surviving witnesses of “Trinity” on a Scroll and in a codex are too vague in dating and too close in the chronology of their origin to argue for the poem’s origin in either medium conclusively.

¹⁴ An edition of the “Cathena aurea” may be found in Calvet, *Oeuvres Alchimiques*, 547–556 (discussion on 35 and 250 ff.). McLean, *Study Course*, also remarks upon the identity of this text.



Figure IV: Ripley Scroll (Huntington Library MS HM 30313, section 4).

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fifteenth century, but the majority of Ripley Scrolls date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Scrolls' size varies from that of a ladies' silk scarf to that of a dinner table that would seat about twenty people—the smallest Scroll (BL MS Add. 5025 (2)) measures 1.25 m × 14 cm, the largest (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276) extends to 5.5 m × 60 cm.

The question of the original purpose and function of the Scrolls has been asked variously but not yet successfully answered in existing literature. One theory states that the Scrolls were intended to be on permanent display in an apothecaries' shop;¹⁵ however, since the oldest surviving Scroll (Bod Bodley Rolls 1) is so large that it can only be unrolled gradually, allowing the reader to see only a single section at a time, this is unlikely. Another proposes that the Scrolls were used for educational instruction in laboratories;¹⁶ this possibility is called into question by the sophistication of the artwork on most of the Scrolls and the entailed cost of production.

The geographical area whence the Ripley Scrolls originated poses another conundrum. While inscriptions on three Scrolls (BL MS Add. 5025 (2); London, Wellcome Institute MSS 692 and 693) suggest they may have been drawn in northern Germany, their Middle English poetry (and association with George Ripley from the sixteenth century onwards) firmly places them into the English tradition of alchemy. It may not be coincidental that the only other known alchemical scroll, discovered in 1681 and signed by Thomas Charnock, contains English verse together with "Scheames most circular."¹⁷ I am not aware of a similar combination of alchemy, scroll material, poetry and illumination in other European manuscript cultures. It is perhaps for this reason, in combination with the often more favourable publishing conditions on the continent, that the Ripley Scrolls were printed in Germany in the eighteenth century together with German translations of the Scroll texts and accompanied by wonderful woodcuts faithful to the rendition described above.¹⁸ The Scrolls do not seem to have had a notable reception on the continent before this German publication in the eighteenth century.¹⁹

¹⁵ Robbins, "Alchemical Texts," 62. McCallum, "Ripley Scroll of the Royal College," 44, also expresses scepticism about this theory.

¹⁶ van Lennep, *Alchimie*, 45.

¹⁷ This scroll and its discovery are described in letters of Andrew Pasc(h)al to John Aubrey, transcribed in Bod MS Ashmole 971/972, and its texts reproduced in Taylor, "Thomas Charnock," 150–160.

¹⁸ Ripley Scroll in Beuther, *Universal*, fold-out panel. Telle, *Buchsignete*, cover and plates 37 and 38.

¹⁹ McLean, *Study Course*, 3, reaches similar conclusions.

Unfortunately, information about the identity of early patrons who commissioned, of artists and copyists who drew, wrote and composed the Ripley Scrolls and of original owners has been lost to the historical record.²⁰ A little more information is available about early modern owners who acquired some of the Scrolls during an early stage of their circulation. These “aristocratic and wealthy individuals” include Archbishop Sancroft (for Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276), Sir George Erskine (Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2) and William Paston (London, Wellcome Institute MS 693).²¹ Today, the Scrolls are libraries’ prized possessions or sought-after objects of interest to private collectors. One Scroll was sold by a private Egyptian collector in an auction in 2000 and bought by an Italian book dealer on behalf of an anonymous purchaser.²² Another Scroll, auctioned at Sotheby’s in the 1980s, was sold for ca. £135,000, and the Fitzwilliam Museum’s scroll, one of the most elaborately produced, is said to be worth at least £250,000 today.²³

Scholars in the history of alchemy have shown a similarly enthusiastic response to the Scrolls and produced a wide variety of research on various aspects of the Scrolls’ history, which merits a brief survey at this point.²⁴ The Ripley Scrolls were more carefully catalogued than their unadorned cousins, the plain manuscripts which constitute the majority of written objects related to alchemy. Such descriptive publications constitute the bulk of the available Scroll literature.²⁵ Publications dedicated to individ-

²⁰ The supposed link of London, Wellcome Institute MS 693 with John Dee (last proposed by Roberts and Watson, *Catalogue*, 17 and 54) cannot be confirmed. On Arthur (son of John) Dee’s affiliation with a Ripley Scroll, see Hogart, *Alchemy*, 289.

²¹ McCallum, “Ripley Scroll”.

²² McCallum, “Ripley Scroll of the Royal College,” 46.

²³ This sum was put forward in Science Museum, London: *Alchemy Exhibition 2012*. Nicholas Robinson, Curatorial Assistant at the Fitzwilliam Museum’s Department of Manuscripts and Printed Books, informs me that this is not an official valuation, but probably the Science Museum’s estimate based on a combination of the increase in manuscript prices since the abovementioned Sotheby’s sale and the Fitzwilliam Scroll’s particularly fine execution.

²⁴ I am not aware of other comprehensive, critical discussions of standard literature on the Ripley Scrolls to date. The following passages will help position the methodological approach here in scholarship on and beyond the Scrolls, alchemical history and manuscripts.

²⁵ They are, roughly in sequence of publication, Moncrieff and Small, “Account”; Hanford, “Scroll,” 201–202 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Library MS 93); *Catalogue ... Dyson Perrins* (1958), 93–94 and plate 50 (San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313); on the same scroll see also Dutschke, *Guide; Catalogue ... Dyson Perrins* (1960), 118–119 + Plate 58 (New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Mellon MS 41,

ual Scrolls²⁶ are rare in comparison with the flood of critical discussions originating from the 1960s onwards.²⁷ In reaction to their obscure imagery (both textual and pictorial), some early scholars' approaches to the Ripley Scrolls followed a decidedly esoteric or literary direction.²⁸ More recently, esoterically inclined perspectives have been based upon a sounder historical basis.²⁹

Some literary scholars have mainly considered the Scrolls together with selected contemporary alchemical poetry like George Ripley's oeuvre, and propose an iconographic approach to them.³⁰ Others utilise the Scrolls in studies on alchemy or alchemical imagery to support arguments as diverse as political history, alchemical pictorial gender issues, John Dee's bibliophile pursuits, as potential inspiration of a completely unrelated manuscript's illustrations or as an opportunity to discuss the Scrolls' language, images and alchemy.³¹ The Scroll images also appear in a variety of publications focusing on medieval art history, often without substantial textual explanation.³² Finally, one of the main problems mentioned in existing scholarship is that of distinguishing the coincidence of artistic images with alchemical symbolism from alchemically significant illustrations.³³ The Ripley Scrolls'

accidentally reproduced in mirror image); Pächt and Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts* (Bod Bodley Rolls 1 with images); Witten and Pachella, *Alchemy and the Occult*, 3: 271–288 (black-and-white images and full description of the same Scroll); Hanna, "Index," 235–258 (pp. 243–244 contain a transcription of "Trinity" from the Huntington Scroll); Wormald and Giles, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 1: 229–233 and plate 92; on this, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276 see also Rand, *Index*, esp. the macaronic index entry [A 22], 90–91.

²⁶ McCallum, "Ripley Scroll of the Royal College", was the first article to provide the current standard classification of types of the Ripley Scrolls. Warlick, "Fluctuating Identities," 124–125, proposes a refined classification of the Scrolls according to their 'visual details'.

²⁷ In Burland, *Arts*, 76, the Scrolls are unquestioningly mentioned in connection with Ripley's oeuvre.

²⁸ Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*. This contains partial reproductions of BL MSS Add. 5025 (1)–(4).

²⁹ McLean, *Study Course*, esp. "Lesson 1: Introduction—Placing the scroll in context".

³⁰ Linden, "Ripley Scrolls"; and Linden, "Reading the Ripley Scrolls". These publications have certain limitations in their historiographical approach and results.

³¹ For political issues see Hughes, *Arthurian Myths*. Metaphor and gender are discussed in Warlick, "Fluctuating Identities". John Dee's Scroll appears in Roberts and Watson, *Catalogue*, s.v. 'MS DM 91' (original shelfmark for the Scroll now known as London, Wellcome Institute MS 693), esp. 17 and 54. Pictorial parallels to other images are outlined in Keiser, "Heritage". Rampling, "Alchemy of the Ripley Scrolls".

³² E.g. van Lennep, *Alchimie*.

³³ See Halleux, *Textes*, 148–153 and Telle, *Buchsignete*. Also, Gabriele, *Alchimia*, esp. 143–163: "Alchimia e storia dell'arte?".

images, however, are clearly alchemical in nature and thus the subject of somewhat specialised, well-founded investigations in connection with the history of art.³⁴

As diverse as these publications appear to be, they are all concerned with the Scrolls' illustrations to a significant extent, and especially with their origins, purpose, function, and symbolism; only the most recent work concentrates on the contents of both images and texts. This multiplicity of specific approaches covers many individual aspects of the Scrolls' history and interpretation. They remain loose pieces to the puzzle posed by the very existence and nature of the Ripley Scrolls.

2. ILLUMINATED SCROLLS VS. PLAIN CODICES: THE COPYIST'S DILEMMA

The combination of scroll format and illumination was unusual in alchemical contexts. As mentioned above, apart from the Ripley Scrolls, only one other alchemical scroll may have existed; the scroll itself, which is described as containing diagrams or perhaps images (the abovementioned "Scheames most circular"), does not survive.³⁵ The existence of the Ripley Scrolls and the number of surviving copies is, therefore, all the more remarkable. What prompted copyists to choose the scroll medium, the creation of visual imagery and the inclusion of alchemical recipes in verse for the composition of the Ripley Scrolls?

Scrolls, although an unprecedented medium in alchemical contexts, were an established medium for preserving certain kinds of Middle English writing, including records and official documents (based on the ancient tradition of scroll usage for these purposes) as well as vernacular literature,

³⁴ Key publications in this area are Obrist, *Débuts*; *ibid.* "Visualization"; *ibid.* "Vers une Histoire". For visual motifs and their connection to alchemy see Dixon, *Alchemical Imagery*. Völlnagel, *Splendor Solis*, is a joy to read. Other relevant publications concern four anonymous early fifteenth-century tractates of German origin: the "Donum Dei"; the "Rosarium Philosophorum"; the "Aurora Consurgens" (printed in Gratarolus, *Artis Auriferae*, item 5); and "Das Buch der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit", published in Reusner, *Pandora*, and analysed in Putscher, *Buch der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit*. See also Ganzenmüller, "Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit", especially for his exploration of letter symbolism and signs in the work (116–121).

³⁵ Only a report about its discovery in the seventeenth century survives in a manuscript dating from the end of the century (Bod MS Ashmole 971/972), and thus from two centuries after Charnock's death—a necessarily unreliable witness. See also above and Rampling, "Alchemy of the Ripley Scrolls," chapter 3.

genealogies, liturgy and drama.³⁶ Poetic medieval rolls were not usually illuminated and “served as the initial receptacle for new poems, the form in which they were first written down and first circulated”.³⁷ Those scrolls preserving musical notes and lyrics had economical and practical merits: they were easy to transport and could be read without the need to turn pages, which was an advantage in performance settings. It may be their association with poetry, their known applications or indeed the association with authenticated documents that recommended the scroll medium to the originators of the Ripley Scroll.

Once they were in existence, the Ripley Scrolls’ material connection with their non-scientific models created some interesting contextual conundrums. Although medieval scrolls generally typically took on the form of *rotuli*, i.e. scrolls unrolling and hence read from top to bottom,³⁸ the Ripley Scrolls’ deceptively familiar vertical orientation fuelled scholarly debates about the intended direction of reading (top to bottom or bottom to top). Elias Ashmole chose to print the Scroll texts in reverse order in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, implying the correct direction of reading the texts to be from the bottom to the top.³⁹ This would place “Father Phoebus” at the beginning of the poems’ sequence and “Sun” at the end, and it would also explain Ashmole’s omission of “Trinity” from his reproduction of Scroll poems—as a rhetorical list of alchemical authorities it would have made for an awkward prelude to a series of alchemical recipes. In later scholarship it has been proposed that this direction of reading has an underlying ideological rationale: “one must read up, since the exaltation of the matter is being described”.⁴⁰ However, there is no indication that the direction of reading followed by contemporary readers (and intended by copyists) is anything other than conventional. The material evidence of wear and tear, especially the appearance of cracks at the tightly rolled bottom of the Scrolls, a faded, often-handled top and the occasional loss of the final panel all indicate that the actual reading practice also agreed with the order of texts

³⁶ On the ancient history of the scroll and its medieval uses see Roberts and Skeat, *Birth*; Rouse and Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses*; Suarez and Woudhuysen, *Companion*, s.v. ‘scroll’. See also below.

³⁷ Rouse and Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses*, 26–27.

³⁸ Genealogies are discussed in Scott, *Gothic*. See also Bühler, “Prayers”.

³⁹ *TCB*, 375–379. The reverse order of texts was previously observed in Linden, “Reading the Ripley Scrolls,” 240, and adopted in Dobbs, *Foundations*, 78, both publications suffering from various historiographical problems.

⁴⁰ Dobbs, *Alchemical Death*, 78.

reproduced in contemporary manuscript copies of the Scroll texts: a top-to-bottom arrangement from “Sun” through to “Trinity”. Considering his ownership of at least one manuscript containing three major Scroll texts in the customary order (Bod MS Ashmole 1480) together with the mentioned evidence, Ashmole’s reversal of the texts appears to have been a personal, interpretative and anachronistic choice. Consequently it also seems unlikely that the Scroll compilers’ original choice of medium was motivated by a desire to encrypt their contents by adding an ambiguity of order. They must have chosen scrolls over codices for other reasons.

What purpose did the scroll material of the Ripley Scrolls fulfil, then? Significantly, with the Ripley Scrolls as the only surviving evidence for alchemical use of *rotuli*, it seems that alchemical scrolls were closely, perhaps inextricably, connected with illumination. Even considering the estimated consequences of manuscript losses since the fifteenth century this observation holds: illuminated and rare manuscripts, including those of an unusual format, often enjoyed particular care in bequests, collections and archives, hence may have been rather more prone to preservation than their plain counterparts. Therefore, the survival of a substantial number of Ripley Scrolls and their consistent illumination seems to suggest that, if a scroll was produced for alchemical purposes, it contained images. This conspicuous connection between images and scrolls is the key to the intersection of the use of scroll material and the Scrolls’ contents—there are clear indications that the motivation for the Scrolls’ combination of uninterrupted paper space and intertwining images was practical in nature. Texts, especially poems, can easily be divided into sections and therefore be rendered on sheets of various sizes without affecting the quality of the text or the experience of reading; hence codex copies of poems from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” continued to be reproduced successfully and received enthusiastically throughout the early modern period. By contrast, images like those on the Ripley Scrolls, i.e. carefully composed sequences of intersecting imagery, are best displayed in their entirety to avoid accidental loss of meaning and links between different parts of texts and pictures. A complete reproduction of the illuminations requires ample amounts of space and a medium larger than a folio sheet of paper or parchment. The Ripley Scroll images therefore employed a format readily available for the display of large amounts of information: the scroll was a perfect marriage of form and function. The Scrolls’ generally splendid appearance and expensive production did additional justice to the chosen medium. Once combined with illustrations, the Scroll poems remained faithful to the scroll medium.

As logical basis for a copyist's decision to produce a scroll instead of a codex, then, the illustrations on the Ripley Scrolls deserve special attention in their own right. Effectively they represent as much currency in alchemical communication as the Middle English genre of alchemical poetry.⁴¹ In contrast to the established linguistic metaphorical terminology of alchemical writing, e.g. in the personification of alchemical substances and periphrastic description of processes, alchemical drawings were a relatively recent creation to the medieval Western world of manuscripts. Previously alchemical lore had been accompanied, if at all, by perfunctory sketches of apparatus, shorthand symbols for alchemical substances or, in the Lullian tradition, encrypted symbolical diagrams. By the time that the first Ripley Scrolls were drawn up, however, an established vocabulary of pictorial metaphors was available to supplement alchemical prose and verse:

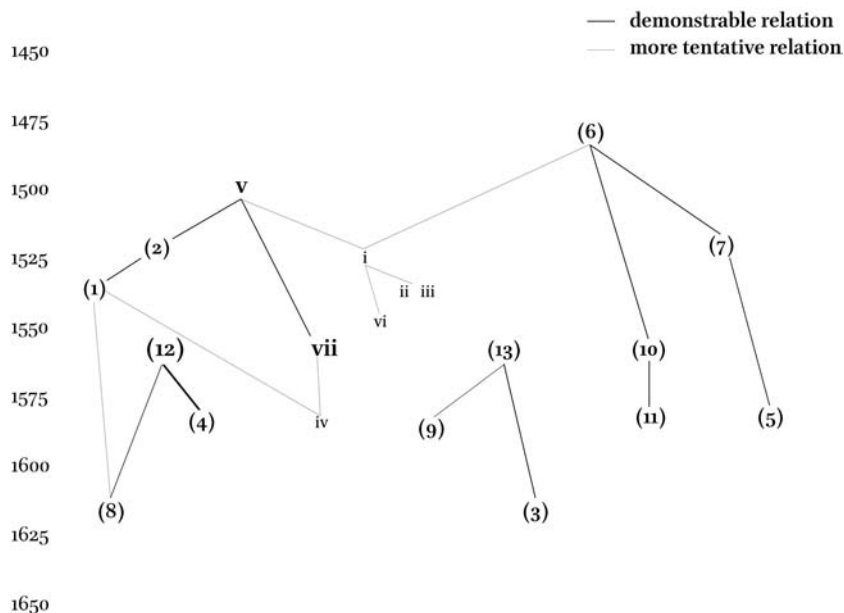
in the early fifteenth century [...] illustrations no longer merely punctuated alchemical texts but were organized into whole series and into synthetic pictorial representations of the principles governing the discipline. The rapidly growing number of illustrations made texts recede to the point where they were reduced to picture labels, as is the case with the [Ripley] Scrowle[.]⁴²

But although 'picture labels' in terms of the restricted space they occupy on the Scrolls, the Ripley Scroll poems occupied a much more significant role in early modern alchemical writing. Given that the Scrolls contain several influential poems from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", a corpus not previously identified in scholarship, a new angle may be applied to their investigation in this chapter: a history of the Ripley Scrolls through the history of the poems. This focus on the textual elements of the Scrolls offers an opportunity to understand the origin, creation, perception and use of the Scrolls in comparison with contemporary bound manuscripts—a glimpse into compilers' and readers' reception of the Ripley Scrolls as manuscripts and as instructive materials for the practice of alchemy.

The issue of chronology is the first theme emerging from a consideration of the Ripley Scroll poems beyond the material confines of the Scrolls: when did they originate, what is the historical sequence of poems and images, and how does this affect their relation to each other?

⁴¹ On the history of alchemical verse, especially its central role as a popular form of preserving alchemical knowledge in fifteenth-century England, see Chapter 1.

⁴² Obrist, "Visualization," 131f.



*Diagram III: Stemma, Ripley Scrolls*⁴³

- (1) BL MS Add. 5025 (4), Scroll, s. xvi
- (2) BL MS Add. 32621, Scroll, s. xvi
 - i BL MS Sloane 1098, s. xvi
 - ii BL MS Sloane 1113, s. xvi
 - iii BL MS Sloane 1114, s. xvi
- (3) BL MS Sloane 2523B, Scroll, s. xvii
- iv Bod MS Ashmole 1441, s. xvi–xvii
- v Bod MS Ashmole 1480, s. xvi
- vi Bod MS Ashmole 1486, s. xvi

⁴³ Size of sigil represents the number of relevant texts considered. Amalgamated from stemmata for the Ripley Scroll texts (“Richard Carpenter’s Work,” variants “Sun” and “Father Phoebus” and “Trinity”), which can be found individually with their editions towards the end of this book; supplemented with information about the characteristics of copies of Scroll texts not edited critically here, as well as the materiality of the Scrolls. Scrolls without significant texts and codices whose copies of Scroll texts cannot be positioned clearly in this stemma have been omitted.

- (4) Bod Ashmole Rolls 40, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
- (5) Bod Ashmole Rolls 52, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
- (6) Bod Bodley Rolls 1, Scroll, s. xv^{ex}
- (7) Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276, Scroll, s. xvi¹
- (8) Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2, Scroll, s. xvii
vii London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, s. xvi²
- (9) London, Wellcome Institute MS 692, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
- (10) New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
Library Mellon MS 41, Scroll, s. xvi²
- (11) Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library MS 93, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
- (12) San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313, Scroll, s. xvi²
- (13) Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Human-
ities Ripley Scroll (MS 205), s. xvi

The history of the corpus poems, on and off the Scrolls, is illuminating in this matter. A chronological arrangement of the surviving witnesses and their relations to each other—comparable to a stemma based on all Scroll texts' textual variation and manuscript dating—confirms not only that Bod Bodley Rolls 1 is the oldest surviving Scroll, but also the tentative dating of the Scrolls (hitherto primarily concluded from palaeographical considerations) to the late fifteenth century. The Ripley Scrolls appear to be contemporaneous with or even slightly more recent in origin than the corpus poems.⁴⁴

The following observations will illustrate this, particularly when considered together. Firstly, a codex (Bod MS Ashmole 1480) likely contains the earliest witnesses “Sun”, version A long, “Father Phoebus” and, possibly, “Trinity”. Secondly, “Sun”, version B, was already looking back upon a thriving manuscript circulation by the time version A emerged; this confirms an older tradition whence the short variant of version A may have been derived for the Ripley Scrolls (it first appears on the abovementioned, oldest Ripley Scroll). And thirdly, the earliest surviving copy of “On the ground” (BL MS Sloane 3579) certainly predates its life on the Ripley Scroll, thus providing the most conclusive evidence for the seniority of poems over images. Altogether it seems that the Ripley Scrolls are not an original creation of novel poems and images, but they incorporate poems already in circulation and supplement them with images and, likely, more poetic material.

The material manifestation of the poems further supports the impression that they originated outside of the Scrolls. The appearance of “Sun” on the

⁴⁴ See Diagram III. Also, McLean, *Study Course*, 2.

earliest surviving Scroll (Bod Bodley Rolls 1) is particularly telling for three reasons: firstly, this short version of “Sun” ends with an incomplete line consisting just of the word “and”; hence it was clearly truncated while copied from a long version of the text. The Mellon Scroll (New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Mellon MS 41), a direct derivative from the Bodley Scroll, also contains two copies of “Sun” written beside each other, but one of them is a slightly longer and occasionally differently worded variant of the text, perhaps an original creation of its scribe. This alternative text continues “Sun” not just to complete the abandoned line, but to include another couplet from the long version of “Sun”. Significantly, the source for this supplementation was demonstrably not one of the extant Ripley Scrolls;⁴⁵ and since the long version of the poem occurs more often in codices than on Scrolls, it is likely that the supplementing exemplar for the extended version of “Sun” on the Mellon Scroll was taken from a codex.⁴⁶ The Mellon Scroll therefore provides further evidence for an established manuscript tradition of “Sun” independent of the Ripley Scrolls.

Secondly, the short version of “Sun” is specific to the Scrolls (i.e. it does not appear in codices). The chronology of surviving Scrolls shows the oldest extant Scroll (Bod Bodley Rolls 1) to mark the origin of the short version, at the end of the fifteenth century and on a scroll. Later Scroll copies (after the unique Mellon Scroll discussed above) consistently abort the text before line 10; the Scroll copied from the Mellon Scroll (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library MS 93) is the first to produce a copy with an uneven number of nine lines and the start of this tradition. Other, later Scrolls’ incorporation of the long version of “Sun” is necessarily based on the text’s manuscript tradition in codex form—another influence of the generally prevalent manuscript tradition for alchemical writing on the exceptional Ripley Scrolls, and notably a one-directional influence from book to scroll, but not vice versa.

Thirdly, and finally, the earliest witness of the Ripley Scroll shows the text of “Sun” written on the plain surface of the scroll, without a panel frame like the one surrounding “In the sea” and “I shall you tell” in this, and all texts on many other Scrolls. The space allowed for “Sun” in the planning of the images does not seem to have been sufficient, necessitating the truncation of the text and the space-saving omission of the frame after the Scroll had been

⁴⁵ See Diagram XIII, the stemma for “Sun”, in the Appendix.

⁴⁶ It is, nevertheless, still possible that a more complete Scroll exemplar was lost; see also below.

completed. The inclusion of the last line's "And ..." is self-conscious in its indication of the existence of the longer poem. This is the final confirmation of the compiler's intention to write a more complete version of "Sun", hence a text sourced from a manuscript exemplar, onto this Scroll. By extension, this implies that at least some of the other Scroll poems were not written for but adopted into the Scrolls from independent manuscript contexts.

If the corpus poems pre-date the existence of the Ripley Scrolls, then the poems were selected, put into order and supplemented with the banners (and perhaps two of the minor poems, "In the sea" and "I shall you tell", whose patterns of survival are not conclusive) to produce the standard Scroll in its entirety. Consequently the Scroll images constitute illustrations of the poems: the texts chronologically and hence logically precede the illuminations. However, an interpretation of the Scroll poems' semantic relations to the Scroll images cannot be achieved without difficulty. Deciphering the meaning of either alchemical text or image, inscrutable when considered separately, is not aided but somewhat obscured by their conjunction, and perhaps appropriately so—a direct and obvious correspondence between text and image may not even have been intended. Perhaps the alchemical convention of concealing information from unworthy practitioners is observed here by means of employing ambiguous imagery.

Much more interesting for current purposes, however, is the question of how the combination of poems and images on the Scrolls interacted with the practical production of the Scrolls. One may well wonder how the Scrolls were designed *a priori* to achieve an ideal allocation of space for images and poems, and how writing and drawings were added to previously blank paper to produce their symbiotic existence. A close look at the Scrolls shows that most of them contain dedicated panels for the poems, frames drawn with care to accommodate the substantial poems (as opposed to the banners bearing captions). Sometimes these panels are set between pillars, akin to simple versions of the 'architectural frames' which appear, for instance, around the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett manuscript of the *Splendor Solis*, equal in prominence, artistic value and execution to the other pictorial elements.⁴⁷ At other times the Ripley Scrolls contain other dedicated and visually separate spaces for the poems: floating banners, the walls of furnaces and the abovementioned plate held by the final two figures on the Scroll (pilgrim and cleric). The Huntington Scroll (San Marino, CA, Huntington

⁴⁷ Völlnagel, *Splendor Solis*, 112–118.

Library MS HM 30313) is a good example of a successfully planned and well-executed Scroll. More frequently, however, the text panels are slightly too narrow, too wide, too spacious or otherwise mismatched with the physical extent of the texts they contain. The discrepancy between the artist's anticipation of scribal activity and the copyist's actual products is especially obvious in one exemplar (Bod Ashmole Rolls 40) which shows ample blank space in a central position, perhaps reserved for but never filled by "I shall you tell", a poem missing from this Scroll. Another, quite obviously unfinished, medial fragment of the standard Scroll (Bod Ashmole Rolls 54) does not contain any texts, although it does provide the panels on which they are usually displayed. Both Scrolls present a curious reversal of the scenario so often observed in illuminated manuscripts, where space is reserved for illuminated initials but never filled with the same, often due to the lack of funds for an illuminator. Another peculiar case is a Scroll (BL MS Sloane 2523 B) which displays most poems in the margins, written partly over the illustrations which, as mentioned above, were probably created by a lay artist. His artistic talent was apparently as misguided as his judgement about the Scrolls' layout. In all these instances, whether abandoned expert projects or miscalculated lay products, the images clearly precede the texts in the actual production of the Scrolls, a reversal of the chronological order of their existence in late medieval alchemical literature.

Other Scrolls show signs of emendation or other material peculiarities which are interesting to note. For example, the Cambridge Scroll (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276) has several pieces of paper pasted over individual words, often rendering an alternative term, yet occasionally and inexplicably repeating the same word written in the original text. These pieces of paper are glued to the Scroll on one side only and thus form flaps which can be opened to reveal the word underneath, perhaps to allow for different parallel readings. It is this sophistication and ambiguity which testifies to the level of skill applied to the production of most of the Ripley Scrolls. They transport the poems (especially those demonstrably predating the Scrolls: "Sun", "On the ground", "Father Phoebus" and "Trinity") into carefully constructed, novel and colourful contexts.

A final area highlighted by a poetry-related history of the Ripley Scrolls is the education of copyists and readers about the poems and their origins. Contrary to the general modern perception of the Ripley Scrolls as self-contained, stand-alone objects their contemporary copyists and readers were well-informed about alternative ways of procuring alchemical information. This was particularly useful for those compilers who had an imperfect exemplar to hand. The Huntington Scroll (San Marino, CA, Hunting-

ton Library MS HM 30313), while perfectly executed in artistic and scribal aspects, would have been one such imperfect model for later scrolls, as its order of texts on the Scroll is rather unique: it places “Father Phoebus” before “In the sea” and “I shall you tell” without indicating the meaning of this alteration. Later compilers who wished to produce their own Scrolls from the Huntington Scroll found it too particular to accept and copy unquestioningly. One copyist using this Scroll as an exemplar (for Bod Ashmole Rolls 40) chose to omit both “Father Phoebus”, “I shall you tell” and “Trinity” altogether; another (producing Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2) restored the standard order of texts after consulting another exemplar (BL MS Add. 5024 (4)) and dismissing its superfluous elements (the introductory “To the Reader” and conclusive “Of these types”, which are, as already pointed out above, peculiar to this Scroll). Both copyists demonstrate a keen sense of what a Ripley Scroll should look like; the latter also showed the initiative to procure another copy and produce a version which agrees with neither of his exemplars, but with a common denominator of all Ripley Scrolls. Both of the derived Scrolls date from late periods of the Scrolls’ circulation, but similar evidence of deliberate, informed scribal decisions can be observed in earlier copies on many different levels. Sixteenth-century compilers of many Scrolls knew about and used manuscripts as exemplars for the poems (as is the case for BL MSS Add. 5025 (4) and Add. 32621, both derived from Bod MS Ashmole 1480). The images present on their Scroll exemplars, although now admired and perhaps even revered, do not seem to have lent the poems as much authority as the relative age and thus reliability of the manuscript copies did. Scroll compilers, like copyists producing codices, mainly aimed to produce accurate specimen including a faithful rendition of the texts. The comparatively conservative form of the poems on most Scrolls, including little creative variation, testifies to this fact.⁴⁸ Generally also, the above-noted compilation of either a concise Scroll (short version of “Sun” and omission of “Trinity”) or a relatively extensive one (long version of “Sun” and inclusion of “Trinity”) always appears deliberate rather than a consequence of circumstances such as the presence of an incomplete or short exemplar. Overall, the Ripley Scrolls’ poems demonstrate their compilers’ textual knowledge and ambitions for achieving meaning.

⁴⁸ See the apparatus of the editions for “Sun”, “Father Phoebus” and “Trinity” towards the end of this book.

The London/Cambridge physician whose notebooks will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this book represents a particular level of sophistication which may serve here as an example of readers' responses to the Ripley Scrolls, their poems and wider alchemical textual culture. As will be explained in Chapter 6, this physician had access to a wide range of manuscripts and both the means and inclination to acquire as much information as possible about alchemical texts. The comparison of extant copies, recording of alternative renditions and thus production of a comprehensive picture of alchemical knowledge through the Middle English period were at the centre of his textual exegesis: he read and wrote to understand alchemy and its potential medical uses in all its complexities, and considered scribal errors and variations in manuscript copies evidence of received knowledge which would help him create new insights into the craft. Two of the physician's notebooks (BL MSS Sloane 1098 and 1113–1114) present, among other items, the fruits of his reading regarding the Ripley Scroll texts. He clearly consulted both a Scroll and a codex and thus excerpted different versions of the poems for comparison. Significantly, the manuscripts he used were not only the oldest sources available to him but also, probably, the oldest extant witnesses of their kind today (Bod Bodley Rolls 1 and Bod MS Ashmole 1480). His other collection habits indicate that the physician sought out these exemplars rather than chancing upon them. It appears, also, that his desire to consult original, unadulterated copies is based on an interest in the poems, not those aspects which make the Scrolls increasingly remarkable during his lifetime—their unusual format, their images and their purported origins as implied in their attribution to George Ripley. Otherwise meticulous in recording his authors and sources, especially the authoritative ones, the physician does not mention any of the unusual features of one of his exemplars: that is a scroll, its attribution to a named originator or even its elaborate illuminations. While it is possible that he had disproved the Ripley attribution due to the existence of anonymous copies of the poems, his disregard of the scroll pictures indicates that he did not consider them essential (or useful) for an understanding of the texts. The physician consulted the Ripley Scrolls as an additional source for a poetic tradition he recognised as an anonymous one. His insights may be remarkable in their meticulousness, yet they also reflect a textual interest shared by many of his contemporaries.

It is worth emphasising here, once more, that sixteenth-century readers and copyists would consolidate texts from and for either medium, codex and scroll. The separation of Scrolls and other alchemical volumes in the minds of collectors and audiences happened from the turn of the seventeenth

century onwards, alongside the institution of antiquarianism. Thus none of the Scrolls containing “Trinity” serve as an original for copies in manuscript volumes.

Finally, the manifestation of the poems on the Scrolls provides information about the Scrolls’ actual use by readers through the ages. This appears to have been pragmatic and hands-on, a utilitarian handling that runs contrary to our modern perception of the Scrolls as valuable artefacts. In this context the duplication of poems on the oldest Ripley Scroll (Bod Bodley Rolls 1), which was already mentioned above, is instructive. One of the duplicate copies was added by a later hand directly beside or underneath the original script, possibly when the Scroll was retouched in the sixteenth century.⁴⁹ More pertinently, though, whoever augmented the Scroll in this way did not consider the Scroll a museum object to be preserved and not altered. It was treated like any other manuscript: as a working space reserved for written thought and experimentation. This and other Scrolls’ originally blank margins also contain annotations proper (see e.g. BL MS Add. 5025 (4)). The Princeton Scroll (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library MS 93) even contains readers’ notes in both English and Italian.⁵⁰ Here, and in all aspects discussed above, the picture gleaned for the Scrolls’ circulation and reception is a markedly diverse one once scholarship, like Ripley Scrolls’ original investigators, looks for solid information behind the Scrolls’ colourful imagery.

3. NAMED AUTHORITIES, THE RIPLEY SCROLLS AND THE CORPUS AROUND THE “VERSES UPON THE ELIXIR”

The Ripley Scrolls’ combination of alchemy, poetry, scroll format and illumination is unique in the body of Middle English alchemical manuscripts. Their special appearance alone would justify an enthusiastic reception from medieval and modern audiences alike. An author, figurehead or authority seems hardly necessary to make them stand out to readers. However, with regard to named authorship, the Ripley Scrolls present an exceptionally complex scenario. The full and bewildering variety of potentially authoritative individuals associated with the Scrolls includes all singular human figures drawn on the Scrolls (now variously interpreted as God, Hermes,

⁴⁹ Pächt and Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts*, 88.

⁵⁰ Rampling, “Alchemy of the Ripley Scrolls,” 7.

Ripley or a cleric); George Ripley as indicated in the moniker of the Scrolls; the actual, if not explicitly named poets and artists whose work is combined on the Scrolls; and the names of alchemists mentioned as alchemical experts in the poems. In some cases and contexts the Scrolls lent these individuals or their work authority, in others the nature and degree of their significance for the popularity of the Scrolls changed over the centuries. Nevertheless it is clear that the Scrolls' current fame firmly rests on the shoulders of George Ripley as an associated author. The final part of this chapter will investigate the Ripley attribution and the impression of alchemical authority preserved in the final Scroll poem, "Trinity", to illuminate this issue.

The Ripley Scrolls mostly circulated without explicit ascription except for intermittent individual ascriptions (one to [Roger] Bacon in BL MS Add. 5025 (4)). The attribution of the Scrolls to George Ripley has been a powerful one, not least witnessed by the scholarly assumption that Ripley himself was depicted as the large human figure towering over the alchemical experimentation scene at the top of the Scrolls.⁵¹ But as for attributions of *alchemica* in codices, this ascription is difficult in several ways. Although the first explicit ascription to Ripley occurs already in the sixteenth century (on the back of Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276) only two further copies of the fifteen extant Scrolls repeat this attribution (London, Wellcome Institute MS 692 and BL MS Sloane 2523B, both derived from the same exemplar, which, unfortunately, does not survive).⁵² Apart from the fact of the relatively rare appearance of Ripley's name in writing these attributions are problematic. Referring to Ripley as a knight ("Georgii Riplaei equitis aurati") they do not indicate whether they refer to the poems, the illustrations, or, most likely, both. The exact nature of his involvement with the Scrolls may not have mattered to their early modern audience, but the appearance of the attribution in the late sixteenth century, that is, a century after the Scrolls' creation is significant. At this time, as "Terra Terrae Philosophicae" and other works were posthumously added to the pseudonymous oeuvre of Ripley, his legendary reputation as a Middle English alchemical poet surpassed by far the significance his contemporaries had assigned to him. Significantly, the stemma shows that the attributing Scrolls are not directly related to each other, so that each attribution must have been based not on an uncritical acceptance of a previous ascription but a reflected choice. This choice, in

⁵¹ See Pächt and Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts*, especially Illustration 1018b (p. 164).

⁵² Linden, "Ripley Scrolls," 75, quoting a private correspondence, supports my impression that the script on the latter is from the Restoration period.

turn, expresses a general assumption about the nature of Ripley's oeuvre and the recognition of the Scroll poems as part of this genre.⁵³

A consideration of the history of the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" qualifies this impression further. Within this wider context of the Middle English alchemical poetic corpus it becomes evident that Ripley attributions of the scroll texts occur only on Scrolls, not in codices. Their sporadic appearance in Scroll exemplars is, therefore, nevertheless an organised matter. In fact, there may have been a notional connection between the Scrolls and the early modern rising star of Ripley as an alchemical poet, as a marked diversion from the essentially anonymous original circumstances of the Scroll poems in the fifteenth-century body of alchemical writing. Here the early modern period is an instrumental condition for the establishment of Ripley's reputation as emblematic poet and the production of the Scrolls—two things which would have been inconceivable around Ripley's lifetime. The Scrolls, in short, become a representation of Ripley's image in some alchemical circles in the sixteenth century.

However, the Ripley attribution was not accepted uncritically. On one hand, some Scroll readers were not convinced of its veracity; one amended the Ripley attribution on an exemplar (Wellcome Institute MS 692) to one to Robert Fludd, almost certainly an expression of the need to replace an inappropriate name with a more fitting one rather than an original attribution. On the other hand, the Scrolls are situated firmly outside the printed tradition of Latin prose versions of his texts: they did not appear in print until the mid-seventeenth century, in the quintessentially English *TCB*, and only then with explicit attribution to Ripley. The modern name of the Scrolls may, then, be more indicative of a modern need to associate names with exceptional works, and a corresponding early modern assignation of names to particular types of writing, than of a generally accepted or even factual historical attribution.

"Trinity", the final text on the Ripley Scrolls which also forms part of the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", presents essentially different evidence for the production and reception of the Ripley Scrolls and corpus poems, their copyists' and readers' notions of authorship and authority, and the relation between the two. Apparently written around 1500 and perhaps specifically for the Scrolls, "Trinity" appears on the final panel of merely three of the fifteen Ripley Scrolls relevant here (BL MSS Add. 5025 (4) and

⁵³ See Diagram III and Ashmole's abovementioned interleaved edition copy for the *TCB* (Bod MS Ashmole 972, p. 375).

Add. 32621, and Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2); some of its copies may have been lost with the final parts of damaged Scrolls, others omitted on purpose or by accident—two Scrolls even show the final image of a human figure (the ‘pilgrim’) beside an empty, or rather, vacant panel (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276) or space (New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Mellon MS 41). Curiously this latter presentation influenced a modern interpretation of this image as showing “a man, his mouth agape, his left hand raised in gesture of astonishment”.⁵⁴ Before the background of the omission of “Trinity”, however, the banner unrolling from his staff reading “ve mihi miser qua olim operam perdidit”,⁵⁵ now has an added *double entendre*. The question of whether “Trinity” was originally intended to be an integral part of the Ripley Scrolls cannot be answered; the issue of its loss and the reasons for its omission on some is a point of little consequence to the present argument.

Although Scrolls which omit “Trinity” do not miss any practical information (the poem is not instructive in nature), they do fail to incorporate a host of alchemists mentioned in its contents, which present an acknowledgement of, and perhaps even a tribute to, the alchemists’ authority.

In the name of ye trynite
 herken here & ye shall see
 myne auctor[s] yat fformyth thys work
 both ffirst last bryghte & dark
 som of hem I shalle ye tell
 both In rhyme & In spell

“Trinity”, ll. 1–6

The exact meaning of the terms ‘auctor’ and ‘work’ is a matter of conjecture. As for the abovementioned Ripley attributions, they could refer to the poets and poems on the Scroll (individually or as a group), the artists and their illuminations, or, more generally, to the originators of those alchemical ideas which constitute the contents of the Scrolls. The last possibility seems most likely since any creator or reader of the Scrolls would not have thought of the individual poems as separate entities, in spite of their visual separation, dispersion and enclosure in their individual panels. The multiple authorship indicated in the plural form of “auctors”, which is the common reading of the surviving “Trinity” copies, is telling in this case: apparently the Scrolls were neither perceived as nor intended to be an original idea of a single author.

⁵⁴ Witten and Pachella, *Alchemy and the Occult*, 3: 287–288.

⁵⁵ “Woe is me, a wretched man who has meanwhile lost the work”.

It may not be a coincidence that only Scroll copies without “Trinity” were explicitly attributed to Ripley as a single author.

Lists of authorities like that which constitutes “Trinity” appear variously in English alchemical poems, for example on the abovementioned Charnock scroll whose texts survive in a historical if later copy. Here Raymond Lull, George Ripley, Thomas Dalton, “a canon of Lichfield” (according to legend a contemporary of Dalton’s who had inherited the alchemical secret from Ripley),⁵⁶ Thomas Norton and finally Charnock himself are mentioned, i.e., a rather homogeneous group of fifteenth-century alchemists and their hero, Lull.⁵⁷ By comparison the assembly of alchemical luminaries mentioned in “Trinity” is more diverse. It includes ancient authorities for natural philosophical and alchemical works, both the actual (or at least supposedly real) and mythical, but also more recent, Western figures.⁵⁸

malapides plat & peion
 & ye boke of turba philosophorum
 both aristotle Jeber & hermes
 also lelly morien & raseres
 bonellus raymundus & albertt
 arnold & perci the monnk so blak
 aros & rases & allso dessima
 the sustre of moyses mary prophetissa
 bacon allso the greate clerk
 fformeth I wys alle thys work

“Trinity”, ll. 7–16

Two of these figures, Pearce the Black Monk and Maria the Prophetess, are of particular interest in the present context, as they link the Ripley Scrolls directly with the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” and the issue of authorship and authority. As mentioned before, Maria is associated with both “Alumen de Hispania”, the Latin prose original of “Richard Carpenter’s Work” variant “Spain”, and a character in the latter poem. By mentioning her, “Trinity” thus links, albeit implicitly, “Spain” with “Sun” and “Father Phoebus”. Further, by surrounding Maria’s name with that of other authorities, the poem places the Scrolls on the map of alchemical writing, from its beginnings to the time of the Scrolls’ composition. Here “Trinity” as a whole bows to the tradition to which the Scrolls are indebted. The figure of Pearce the Black Monk underlines this impression. His name is first

⁵⁶ Taylor, *Alchemists*, 130.

⁵⁷ Taylor, “Thomas Charnock,” 155.

⁵⁸ Concise information on Hermes, Rasis and Geber (in relation to their appearance on an engraving in the *TCB*) may be found in Corbett, “Ashmole,” 329.

mentioned in the text of “Trinity”, a full century before it appears in the margins of copies of the “Verses upon the Elixir” in the role of an authorial attribution. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Pearce is and always has been a historically elusive figure. Perhaps, then, his seventeenth-century status as someone who lends authority to the “Verses upon the Elixir” resulted from the mythological status assigned to Pearce through the occurrence of his name in “Trinity”, in a list of established alchemical authorities.

The absence of some authorial names from “Trinity” is also instructive about the role of authority in the Ripley Scrolls. Consider, for instance, the household names of late medieval alchemical poetry. While it may not be surprising to find Thomas Norton missing among the names, the omission of George Ripley appears more noteworthy. Although the composition of “Trinity” precedes spurious ascriptions to Ripley and is therefore not naturally associated with his name, it would have been easy if not second nature to any copyist to change the list of alchemists in “Trinity” at a later date to incorporate George Ripley. Similarly, as mentioned above, the attribution to George Ripley is not written on any of those Scrolls which contain “Trinity”. This is further evidence for the fact that the name of George Ripley does not seem to have had any impact on the Scrolls’ development and reception, on their place among late medieval and early modern writings, or indeed on the contemporary perception of alchemical poetry as an authoritative if anonymous genre.

In conclusion, an investigation of the Scrolls from the perspective of the texts written on them, with help of the corpus around the “Verses” and its history, makes it possible to answer our initial questions about the concept of authorship and the Ripley Scrolls at least in part. It seems clear that the neither the scroll medium, nor the illuminations, or their attribution to George Ripley have left a mark on the circulation and reception of “Sun”, “Father Phoebus” and “Trinity”. The complex transposition of these texts from manuscript to scroll and *vice versa* throughout the two centuries of the Scrolls’ active transmission, and the references to the genre of alchemical writing in “Trinity”, indicate that the greater textual context of these alchemical poems was never lost to its compilers: many favoured age before beauty, that is, reliable old manuscripts over more recent but potentially difficult illuminated scrolls, when choosing an exemplar for their own copies. Moreover, annotators of the Scrolls used them as working materials. The purposes for which the Scrolls were consulted span, like their readership, the entire spectrum of the early modern world of alchemical writing.

CHAPTER FIVE

ALCHEMICAL POETRY AND ACADEMIA: MANUSCRIPTS AS CHRONICLES OF SCHOLARLY ENQUIRY

Why do readers of *alchemica* think what they think, and how do they think about it? Various ways of structuring thought, and techniques for the acquisition and organisation of knowledge on the page and in a collection, were taught to and acquired by generations of alchemical practitioners and scholars throughout the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. The underlying discourse communities, ranging from craftsmen to scholars, constructed and conceptualised their manuscripts and collections in a mixture of method and personalisation which allows the discovery of the ways in which they understood books and nature.

The final parts of this book concern essentially early modern learned approaches to the corpus around the “Verses” and the materiality of the organisation of knowledge. This chapter focuses on a copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” in a sixteenth-century manuscript (TCC MS R.14.56) which has been kept in a Cambridge college since the early seventeenth century. The early modern manuscript page and the academic library, two physically limited spaces of astonishing internal complexity, determined the history of this codex. The first part of this chapter will put the tail ends of the manuscript’s history into perspective, i.e. its origins and final storage in Trinity College Library, which has determined its institutional context and reception for the past four centuries. It will then introduce relevant theoretical background, especially sixteenth-century developments in book culture.¹ Finally, it will show how, through scholars’ avid use of the Trinity manuscript, this particular copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” graduated from being a plain recipe text to a means of communication.²

¹ This will also be relevant to the context of Chapter 6 below.

² This chapter is based on materials first used for the compilation of the following article: Timmermann, “Sixteenth-Century Manuscript”.

1. TRINITY COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE MS R.14.56 AND
THE LIBRARIES OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CAMBRIDGE

In 1637, Thomas Whalley, vice-master of Trinity College Cambridge, died. His connection with the College had started with his matriculation as a student fifty-three years earlier, and, a cleric, priest, lover of books and probably a bachelor, he had decided to consider the College's Library in his will. His bequest included the handsome sum of £120 for the acquisition of printed books, as well as ten manuscripts he had acquired for his own studies and delectation.³ Among the latter was an alchemical manuscript (now TCC MS R.14.56, henceforth the 'Trinity Compendium'), which reached its final destination on the College Library's shelves. Even then, only a few decades after its original compilation, the codex showed signs of heavy use in the form of a multitude of annotations, which led early twentieth-century bibliographer M.R. James to describe it as "a very ugly shabby book".⁴ The turbulent history of the Trinity Compendium was, however, much more fascinating than James knew.

The Trinity Compendium is a digest of late sixteenth-century alchemical knowledge compiled from several manuscripts. Large parts of the volume were written by the same person, in a reasonably neat secretary hand and over a period of time, as inks and the quality of the script and paper vary.⁵ Other parts, written in different hands, appear to date from the same period. Unfortunately, the early history of the Trinity Compendium is rather confused.⁶ It will suffice to note here that the volume represents a personalised collection of *alchemica* interleaved with related parts of other contemporary alchemical manuscripts.⁷

³ £120 in 1637 represents the equivalent of £15,000 of present-day currency (cp. *Measuring Worth*). Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 83 and 90.

⁴ James, *Western Manuscripts*, 2: 341, entry 925. This remark can be put into perspective with the help of the following study: Sherman, "Soiled".

⁵ Sherman proposes that an analysis of ink quality may be as helpful in the dating of manuscripts as watermarks for that of paper stocks: Sherman, *John Dee*, 223.

⁶ Diverging systems of page numbers, the presence of some smaller leaves bound into the volume at ff. 49–52 and the loss of fifty-one folios in a middle section attest to the fact that its quires were not always arranged in the current order. Due to the absence of the primary copyist's name or a clearly identifiable, extant exemplar (see stemma below) it is difficult to determine a more precise time of composition than the long mid-sixteenth century, or to pinpoint when the volume assumed its current collation.

⁷ Since its assembly into its current state happened at a relatively early date (most likely around the turn of the seventeenth century), and hence reflects an early modern compilation

In its contents the Trinity Compendium presents a fairly conservative selection of alchemical texts. Between its covers we find theoretical treatises of varying origins, with a bias towards Latin prose texts including (pseudo-)Lullian items, as well as Latin versions of works circulating under the names of traditional authorities like Geber (Jābir ibn Hayyān) and Rhazes (Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi).⁸ Among the more obscure texts are an alchemical conversation between a necromancer and a spirit, in its subject matter much more conventional than the title may suggest; two texts on the alchemical material alkibrit, i.e. sulphur;⁹ and a collection of short texts entitled “Dicta Philosophorum”, which comprises excerpts from books attributed to alchemical authorities (Asclepius, Hermes, Plutarch, Plato, Pythagoras, Maria sister of Moses, and authors prominent in the manuscript’s main texts: Avicenna, Geber and Raymundus [i.e., Raymond Lull]).¹⁰ In these sections the manuscript resembles the established, authoritative academic textbooks used in medieval and early modern academic medical education.¹¹ Equivalent medical manuscripts would contain the Canon of Avicenna, the Isagoge and other classical didactic texts on the human body and its diseases. Authors bridging the alchemical and medical realms (like Rhazes, Lull, Arnold of Villanova and John of Rupecissa), and, more generally, the natural philosophical intersections of alchemy and medicine, would become relevant for the institutional perception of this volume at Trinity College Cambridge.

Poems from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” may be found among the small yet significant number of English alchemical verse in the Trinity Compendium: it includes a full copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, version A, amalgamated with the “Exposition” and “Wind and Water”, an eight-line fragment of “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variant “Spain”, and another English alchemical poem not related to the corpus around the

close to the spirit of the individual quires’ composition, the following paragraphs describe the entire compendium without further consideration of its miscellaneous origins.

⁸ Pereira, *Alchemical Corpus*. On ancient origins and authorities of alchemy: Ferrario, “Origins”.

⁹ *MED*, s.v. ‘kibrit’, ‘alkibrit’; see Chapter 1, on “Alumen de Hispania”, “Sun”, “I shall you tell”.

¹⁰ The title is recorded as “Verbum abbreviarum seu Hortus Thesaurorum” in James, *Western Manuscripts*, 2: 341.

¹¹ On medical curricula and the ‘articella’ textbooks see Siraisi, “Faculty of Medicine,” esp. 366 f.; on the intermingling of practice and authoritative teachings in medical commentaries see Siraisi, “How To Write,” 96 and Siraisi, *Medicine*, 41 and 63–78. Also Siraisi, *Medieval*, Getz, “Faculty of Medicine” and “Medical Education”.

“Verses”; all these items are written in the main compiler’s hand.¹² It is not clear whether the compiler intended to document the state of alchemical literature of his time or whether he had practical interests in the recipes the poems describe. Most notably, however, it was this vernacular verse section of the manuscript which grew to be its most remarkable feature in the following decades: out of all items contained in the manuscript, the “Verses upon the Elixir”, “Exposition” and “Wind and Water” inspired the composition of the highest number of marginal notes.

The Trinity Compendium was not just a personal collection but, apparently, also a secluded volume. The textual history of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, “Exposition” and “Wind and Water” shows that this particular copy served as an original for only one sixteenth-century compiler’s copies.¹³ If the Trinity Compendium did not take part in the extraordinarily flourishing exchange of written *alchemica* which can be observed generally in the early modern history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, it is likely that it was written, or at least originally kept, in Cambridge, the town also influential in its scholarly reception and its final place of storage. The Trinity Compendium’s main compiler may have been a learned sixteenth-century Englishman moving in proximity to intellectual circles, perhaps even part of academia.

It is also interesting to note that the text of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, “Exposition” and “Wind and Water” contained in the Trinity Compendium is a fairly late copy of an early, near-authorial version which has not survived (see Diagram IV). It reproduces the complete poem and does not show any signs of personalisation on behalf of its copyist. The limited circulation of this manuscript needs to be considered in this context. It is possible that later copies simply cannot be identified from the surviving evidence; a clean, standard text like this one does not contain any errors that would form connections in a textual comparison. It is just as likely, however, that some readers’ decisions to record their comments on the page instead of producing their own copy in a personal notebook (a practice subject to scrutiny towards the end of this chapter) curtailed the production of later copies.

¹² The additional item is on ff. 108^v–109^r, *inc.*: “Take of the eyer bludde that is so redde”.

¹³ BL MSS Sloane 1092 and Sloane 1098; see Diagram IV and Chapter 6. Further manuscripts (Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 (‘Dekyngston’), possibly an exemplar to Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS Gl. kgl. S. 3500 80, and BL MS Sloane 2170) show textual similarities, but evidence does not clearly identify the Compendium as their ancestor.

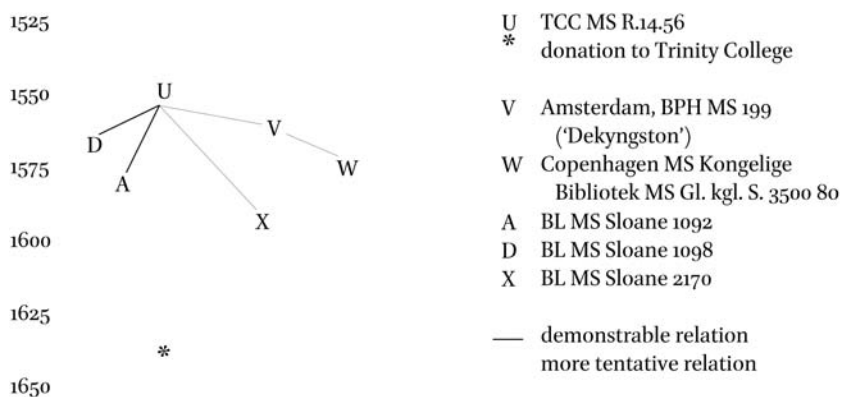


Diagram IV: Stemma for Trinity College Cambridge MS R.14.56¹⁴

The early ownership history of the Trinity Compendium would shape its future history until today: at an uncertain date after its compilation the volume was acquired by Thomas Whalley. When the young Thomas matriculated from Trinity in 1584 he formed part of a family tradition. It seems that his brothers and nephews became junior members of the College; his grandfather, a Cambridge student before the foundation of Trinity College, may have been at St. John's College in his time.¹⁵ Whalley became a fellow of the College after completing his BA but before acquiring his MA. In 1599, after he had dedicated seven years of diligent study to his Bachelor of Divinity, Whalley was ordained deacon and priest at Peterborough. Two decades later he became Rector of Orwell (Cambridgeshire). In College he successively held the posts of Senior Dean and Senior Bursar. However, it was not until forty-five years after his first matriculation that the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him through direction of a royal mandate. The Trinity Compendium probably fell into Whalley's hands in the final six years of his life, when he was vice-master of the College and hence had both the means and the opportunity to expand his private collection.

¹⁴ Amalgamated from stemmata for the "Verses upon the Elixir", version A, "Exposition" and "Wind and Water", version A. Stemmata for the individual texts may be found with their editions in the second part of this book.

¹⁵ Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, 4: 377, s.v. 'Whaley [sic], Thomas'. The identity and vitae of the mentioned members of the Whalley family cannot be established with certainty. Conceivable brothers of Thomas are Richard (matriculated 1577), Walter (1580–1581), John (1584–1585), and Robert (1580–1581). Richard Whalley, born ca. 1499, may have been Thomas Whalley's grandfather.

Whalley was not unusual among his peers with his alchemical interests. Alchemical manuscripts (and, later, printed books) generally formed a natural part of a number of private book collections of the sixteenth century, some of them substantial.¹⁶ The most famous extensive contemporary collection with ample holdings of *alchemica* is probably that of polymath and scholar John Dee, who, incidentally, became fellow of Trinity College in the year of its foundation (1546).¹⁷ His medical colleagues were the most prominent group of scientific professionals to compile book collections of considerable size, and these, in turn, often enlarged the scientific sections of academic libraries after their original owners had died.¹⁸ Thomas Whalley's bibliophile endeavours may be comparatively humble, but expressed a similar learned spirit: he bequeathed his books and manuscripts to Trinity College Library at Cambridge. Five of the ten manuscripts Whalley donated to the College contain alchemical texts.¹⁹ Dating mainly from the sixteenth century and incorporating contemporary items like alchemical poems, these five volumes also represent the most current materials: manuscripts preserving alchemical knowledge as it was applied around the time of Thomas Whalley's birth. Whalley's *alchemica* may indicate a personal interest in alchemical experimentation or a purely textual approach to the study of nature as God's creation. The geographical, biblical and intellectual triangle formed by readers of *alchemica* in early modern Cambridge, Oxford and London would have supported his endeavours with an abundance of available manuscripts and books, as well as a peer group and communication network.²⁰

The later development of the institutional context into which the Trinity Compendium was transported as part of Whalley's bequest deserves special attention, since it is one example of many which shaped the preservation and perception of alchemical knowledge in early modern England. Soon after Whalley's death and donation Trinity College Cambridge cele-

¹⁶ Elmer, *Library*; Roberts and Watson, *Catalogue* and Roberts, "Additions"; Batho, "Library"; Jones, *Sir Isaac Newton*.

¹⁷ French, *John Dee*, 24.

¹⁸ Jones, "Medical Libraries". Informative in this context are also Leedham-Green and McKitterick, "Catalogue", Oates, "Libraries" and Talbot, *Medical Practitioners* and "Universities".

¹⁹ Alchemical manuscripts in Whalley's bequest now carry shelfmarks TCC MSS R.14.38, R.14.44, R.14.45, R.14.56 and R.14.57; non-alchemical items are TCC MSS B.3.20, B.15.12, B.16.4, R.4.3 and R.14.39 (James, *Western Manuscripts*, 2: 341).

²⁰ See Chapter 6 below for more information on southern England's communication networks. Chartier, *Order*, is of general interest to this context.

brated its centenary. At that point, the College and its Library were already looking back upon a history marked by adaptation and change. Founded in 1546 in a formal merger of two former colleges, King's Hall and Michaelhouse, the College was designed to focus on divinity, a subject largely based on the reading and interpretation of the Bible and related writings. The combination of the two original colleges' libraries, however, did not prove ideal for this purpose: civil law, rather than divinity, had been their area of excellence.²¹ With an increase of degrees in divinity in the second half of the sixteenth century, and a substantial number of students following the undergraduate arts courses, reading material for these subjects was of high importance; a smaller number of students of law required fewer textbooks by comparison.²² The body of printed educational books in the early College Library reflects this development: books relevant to religious studies took on an increasingly prominent role as both the Library and Trinity College evolved to occupy an established role in Tudor Cambridge. All subsequent changes in Trinity College Library holdings, which will be described in detail below, were in part a deliberate reaction to, and in part an inadvertent result of, changes in the College structure, the University curriculum and a general direction of early modern intellectual interests.

Alongside religious reading material, however, natural philosophical books, first and foremost medical literature, were subject to supplementation in Trinity College Library in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Medicine had long been an established part of the University's degree when Henry VIII, also founder of Trinity College, founded a Regius professorship in 'physic' in 1540, alongside professorships in divinity, Hebrew, Greek and civil law.²³ The medical curriculum was reformed throughout the early modern period. Thomas Linacre's famously programmatic medical lectureships in Oxford and Cambridge, the medical fellowships provided at Gonville Hall in 1557 and the University's statutes of 1570, which waived the obligatory degree of MA for future physicians, were part of the same movement towards an improved, accelerated academic education of medical practitioners.²⁴ From the 1540s onwards, therefore, Cambridge University

²¹ Early King's Hall Library holdings are detailed in Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 12. Gaskell remains the classic authority on the history of Trinity College Library. His work is supplemented by McKitterick, *Wren Library*, 64. See also Mooney, *Index*.

²² Numbers of higher degrees awarded in the later sixteenth century are summarised in Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 23. Contemporary statutes for medical degrees may be found in Heywood and Wright, *Cambridge*, 10, 14 and 17.

²³ Pedersen, "Tradition," 462.

²⁴ Lewis, "Linacre," esp. 225–226.

educated three times as many medical students and issued a much higher number of licenses to practise medicine, surgery or both, than previously.²⁵ Trinity College was the college to award the highest number of MDs in Cambridge during this period.²⁶ The expansion of the College Library's natural philosophical holdings to provide for this subject area formed a strong undercurrent that would influence the college members' approaches to written knowledge.²⁷

The position of alchemy within this newly focused canon of academic interests is a complex issue. Alchemy was never part of the university curriculum; the institutionalisation of modern chemistry and a professorship at Cambridge would not occur until 1702 (the first of its kind in Britain).²⁸ Yet in early modern academic circles, the connections between alchemy and scholarship were not as loose as the contemporary university curriculum would suggest. On one hand, alchemy featured frequently as a topic in academic disputations. Even in the early seventeenth century these included

questions dealing with astrology, alchemy, and magic. The topics range from general questions about the lawfulness of such studies and whether they are sciences at all, to such narrow topics as the possibility of transmuting base metals into gold and of using spells to cure diseases. Frequently the respondents were expected to argue against the occult sciences [...]. But occasionally some freedom for divergence was allowed[.]²⁹

Alchemy also had natural connections with medicine in the area of pharmacy and the manufacture of remedies.³⁰ On the other hand, many early modern scholars showed an interest in alchemy, whether they were interested in the use of alchemical procedures for medical purposes outside of academia, or engaged in alchemical experimentation in a college setting; Somerset gentleman Samuel Norton (1548–1621), probably great-grandson of alchemical poet Thomas Norton, is said to have practised alchemy while

²⁵ Lewis, "Linacre," 230–231 and 240.

²⁶ Pelling and Webster, "Medical Practitioners," 196.

²⁷ For a general discussion of the academic atmosphere of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, see Brooke, "Learning".

²⁸ Archer and Haley, *1702 Chair*. The institution of the chair probably occurred in early 1703, as the University was using the Julian calendar (*ibid.*, xvi).

²⁹ Feingold, "Occult," 78.

³⁰ The joint history of alchemy and medicine remains a topic in need of further research in modern scholarship; see e.g. Crisciani, "Alchemy". Its pioneer, Allen G. Debus, published variously on related subjects with a focus on Paracelsianism. See e.g. Debus, *Chemical Philosophy, English Paracelsians and French Paracelsians*.

studying at St John's College, Cambridge.³¹ Some sought to gain insights into the workings of nature from a theological viewpoint, like (perchance) Thomas Whalley. Yet others joined a long line of learned men who stretched their intellectual curiosity beyond their own field of study, a line extending to the scientific studies of Sir Isaac Newton, another alumnus of Trinity College, and into the eighteenth century. In many ways, Whalley, his interests in natural philosophy and alchemy found an ideal home at Trinity College Cambridge—as did his books and manuscripts.

Once they entered Trinity College Library in 1637, Thomas Whalley's books and manuscripts joined a much larger collection whose establishment and growth was essentially different from his private library. As mentioned above, Trinity College Library's holdings had been adapted to the changing needs and demands of the College's junior and senior members since the late sixteenth century. For the early seventeenth century in particular, the targeted acquisition of printed books for the fellows of Trinity College is well-documented: its new emphasis on natural philosophy beyond the medical curriculum mirrored the fifteenth-century expansion of the manuscript holdings of college libraries in many respects.³² Divinity would continue to account for at least half of the stocks throughout the seventeenth century, but in the 1640s the College also owned 438 books on other subjects; a quarter of these covered various areas of natural philosophy. By the last quarter of the century, books on the sciences would account for ten per cent of the collections. Trinity was not the only Cambridge college which showed such tendencies. Although the history of St. John's College Library, Trinity's geographical neighbour, is yet to be written, its patterns of acquisition and classification appear to have been similar.³³

In a booklist drawn up in 1645, the 'Medici' section of Trinity College Library alone lists 53 books "including writers not only on medicine but also on alchemy, botany, chemistry, metallurgy, pharmacology, and surgery".³⁴ This 'Medici' section provides a particularly interesting context for Thomas Whalley's books. The Library's historian, Philip Gaskell, found that

³¹ Feingold, "Occult," 84; Mandelbrote, "Samuel Norton".

³² Jones, "Medicine and Science," 437.

³³ St John's College's printed holdings were composed of bequests (foremost John Collins' medical library in 1634) and monetary donations following the opening of St. John's Old Library in 1628. I would like to thank Jonathan Harrison, Librarian of St. John's College library, for this information. Jones, "Reading Medicine," 155–156.

³⁴ Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 89. Gaskell's classification is clearly modern, not historical.

[p]erhaps the most interesting feature of this part of the Library is the group of eighteen volumes of alchemy and iatrochemistry bought by the College in 1637 (S28–S34) as a representative collection of the major medieval and Renaissance writings in this area. They included the heterogeneous *Theatrum chemicum* (S30), and the daringly modern Paracelsus and Sennert (S28–S29).³⁵

Several points are noteworthy here. Firstly, the date of these acquisitions coincides with the date of Thomas Whalley's death and bequest. An influence of Whalley's will and wishes on the nature of these acquisitions, although certainly possible, cannot be established from extant documents; Whalley's last will does not survive. Secondly, the motivation behind these acquisitions, as proposed by Gaskell above, leaves open the question of whether the desire to compile a 'representative collection' of alchemical items was one proposed and supported by the College, or a fellow's personal agenda. If Whalley was, indeed, instrumental in this process, his donation of books and manuscripts, too, would need to be considered in a different light. Finally, if the described purpose for the Library's expansion is accurate, the targeted acquisition of *alchemica* as historical, not scientific, documents would agree in part with Elias Ashmole's method of collecting alchemical poems, which commenced around the same time.³⁶ Incidentally, Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, which was first published fifteen years after the described developments, does not seem to have formed part of Trinity College Library holdings until 1864, when it was given as part of another bequest, now that of former Trinity scholar William Grylls.³⁷

Even if not in competition with printed books in the early seventeenth century, manuscripts like the Trinity Compendium, and with them texts from the corpus around the "Verses", were perceived in an environment increasingly defined by the printed book in academic libraries. As mentioned above, many manuscript additions to the Library can be traced back to originally private sources. Like the Trinity Compendium, the majority of alchemical manuscripts entered the Library through this back door.³⁸ Once part of the Library collections, the manuscripts were adapted to the Library's existing classification system, i.e., categorised within given parameters, in closest proximity to the given categories, and according to the judgement

³⁵ Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 90.

³⁶ *TCB*, "Prolegomena". Feola, "Theatrum".

³⁷ On Grylls' bequest see Gaskell and Robson, *The Library*, 34–35. I would like to thank Trinity College librarian Sandy Paul for bringing this volume and its history to my attention.

³⁸ Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 79.

of an individual whose intentions were pragmatic: a librarian's conception of the order of books and the world primarily serves the functionality of the library. The establishment of ordering principles in Trinity College Library was an ongoing concern when the Trinity Compendium joined its shelves. A dedicated College Librarian had first been provided for in Sir Edward Stanhope's will in 1603; a classification system was proposed in the early 1640s under the guidance of the appropriately named College librarian, William Clutterbooke. This, however, was not carried out until the 1660s, when books were finally classified by subject rather than donor.³⁹ The categorisation by subject area, shelf number and *numerus currens*, a system agreeing with the conception of modern libraries in principle, was not necessarily an obvious choice at the time: even the concept to assign unique shelf marks to individual books, a method first introduced in monastic libraries in the fourteenth century, was only one of several systems in use in the sixteenth century. Alternative systems (e.g. the use of repetitive shelf marks without an assignation of book presses to specific subjects) required the presence of a librarian for the retrieval of individual items.⁴⁰

The organisation of Trinity College Library, even if not established when the Trinity Compendium was first given to the Library, is meaningful for the context of contemporary receptions of alchemy and alchemical poetry in scholarly contexts. The Trinity Compendium was assigned to the early modern Library's R class, which covers the areas of history, poetry, philosophy, law, natural science, medicine and music, and thus a wider field than the 1645 'Medici' section of printed books.⁴¹ Significantly, for the purposes of the Library, a more precise definition of the volume, and hence of the role of alchemy within the university disciplines, was not necessary.

It is further remarkable that medieval manuscripts formed a relatively recent addition to the College Library: "In 1600 Trinity did not possess a single one of [...] [its] superb medieval manuscripts [...] [.] Then all of a sudden the College was presented with about 330 manuscripts", the majority of

³⁹ Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 75 ff., 86 and 112–115. The first draft class catalogue of 1645 survives in a manuscript now in the British Library (BL MS Sloane 78, ff. 139^r–154^r). An alphabetical finding list of less relevance to the current investigation predates it by five years.

⁴⁰ Sharpe, "Accession," 281 and 284–287.

⁴¹ This modern description of the miscellaneous contents of section R appears in James, *Western Manuscripts*, 2: v. The Library's indexed class catalogues, which mirror its organisation, run from 1667 to ca. 1675 (TCC MSS Add. a.101 and a.101A); the catalogue of the Old Library is now TCC MS Add. a.103¹. See also Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 9, 23, 86–90, 128. Heywood and Wright, *Cambridge*, 10, 14 and 17.

which were part of one of four donations containing materials out of the dispersal of monastic libraries.⁴² From the 1620s to the end of the seventeenth century, a further thirty-nine donations of 206 manuscripts in total were made, among them Whalley's.⁴³ The expansion of the College's manuscript collections continued to be impressive. Even today, Trinity College Library contains the largest collection of medieval manuscripts of any college in Great Britain.⁴⁴

Yet even amidst the cornucopia of manuscripts arriving at Trinity College Library in the seventeenth century, the Trinity Compendium would have been an oddity. Prior to Thomas Whalley's bequest only one alchemical manuscript formed part of the College's collection; this had been donated by Thomas Nevile, master of the College from 1593 to 1615, a man of wide scholarly tastes but not known for a particular penchant for alchemy.⁴⁵ It was not until the eighteenth century that a considerable donation of *alchemica* was made to the College by scholar and antiquary Roger Gale, son of the University of Cambridge's Regius Professor of Greek, Dr Thomas Gale. In his case it was most likely antiquarian interests that prompted Roger Gale's acquisition of alchemical works, a passion he had in common with his contemporary Sir Hans Sloane, even if the latter also had his medical background to support his literary alchemical pursuits. Similarly, the majority of alchemical manuscripts circulating in England at the time did not enter academic institutional libraries until at least a century after Whalley's bequest. Notably, Gale's donation to Trinity College Library does not hold as much potential for an investigation of humanist approaches towards alchemical writings as Thomas Whalley's, both due to the time and to the motivation of their respective collection activities.

Its absorption into the Library collections also marks the tail end of the Trinity Compendium's active history. Palaeographical analysis of its marginalia shows that the manuscript left the active cycle of written communication when it was placed into the care of College librarian William Clutterbooke in 1637. Many other items held there today testify to the fact that 'once a book had come into the library it was very rarely annotated thereafter'.

⁴² Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 79.

⁴³ Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 83.

⁴⁴ See Mooney, *Index*.

⁴⁵ TCC MS R.14.37. James, *Western Manuscripts*, 3: v–xiii. Incidentally, the only alchemical manuscript present in St John's College at the time was given sometime between 1633 and 1644 (Jonathan Harrison, Librarian of St. John's College library, private conversation, 2006).

[As] a class, readers in the Library tended to leave little obvious trace, save in their subsequent writings and in records of the books they borrowed. [...] [By] itself the known and recorded use of Library is poor evidence for the interests and activities of members of the College.⁴⁶

In 1637, therefore, the volume was archived and became an object of comparatively limited use, almost an artefact. Its actual late readership, including undergraduates, students and doctors of divinity, law or physic, was essentially different from the volume's first reader (its compiler) or any readers he would have envisaged for it. The Trinity Compendium thus also stopped circulating as the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" entered the final years of active manuscript reception. In this way, its appearance in Trinity College Library and its subject classification are emblematic of the increasingly marginal role of alchemical manuscripts in the early modern printed world of writing.

2. THE MARGINS OF KNOWLEDGE: BOOKS AND COMMONPLACING IN TUDOR ENGLAND

It may seem that alchemical manuscripts record recipes in an impersonal way; more often than not they do not record the name of authors, copyists or annotators. Yet they contain implicit information about their users, and, in this instance, a very distinctive community of users. In its current state, the Trinity Compendium shows much wear and tear. No other item from Thomas Whalley's collection shows a similar amount of signs of early usage. The notes which grace this manuscript's margins, and occasionally every bit of blank space on a page, are signs of use rather than abuse: the volume's history of emendation and annotation reveals the backgrounds, interests and personalities of its readers.

The method of notetaking applied in the margins of the Trinity Compendium confirms its users' identities as sixteenth-century scholars: men influenced by humanism and antiquarianism, the contemporary development of scribal culture and print publication, and the institution of academic collections and libraries; men whose internal organisation and *mise-en-page* of newly produced manuscript texts, annotations and notetaking techniques informed their understanding of *alchemica*. The educational and cultural influences of those who wrote and annotated the Trinity

⁴⁶ Gaskell, *Trinity College Library*, 33 and 75–78.

Compendium will provide further background for the analysis of its copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” in the final part of this chapter as well as the subsequent chapter, which discusses the written exploits of a contemporary physician.

Sixteenth-century culture had a general impact on the ways in which literate men, especially scholars, received and understood information in several areas related to the written word.⁴⁷ One prominent area of change was the introduction of printed books. A subtle way in which the institution of print influenced scribal culture is in the layout of manuscript pages. While early printed books took their visual orientation from their manuscript ancestors, the sixteenth-century media reversed this process. Manuscripts now made full use of the possibilities of textual arrangement showcased in print, including title pages and, increasingly, indices and tables of contents.⁴⁸ More pertinently, however, the expanding publication of works by canonical authors and their sixteenth-century followers facilitated access to information and developed the distinctly early modern perception of the book market as a receptacle for, and generator of, current thought. This bookish communion of authors and texts from several time periods, geographical and cultural areas resulted in what has been described as “information overload”.⁴⁹ In libraries like that of Trinity College Cambridge the need to sort information for future retrieval resulted in the implementation of the above-mentioned classification system. Otherwise, early modern readers found that their urge to acquire more information from the growing book market needed to be balanced with techniques of digesting it in meaningful ways. John Locke, Gabriel Harvey, Ben Jonson and John Dee are among the most prominent men to preserve their reading experiences for their peers and thus in the historical record.⁵⁰ Here the availability and format of received written information prompted the organisation of its reception and the production of further knowledge.

Alongside and key to the introduction of print, humanism, the grand educational reform of Renaissance Europe, changed the ways in which both

⁴⁷ Hackel, *Reading Material*, contains a valuable overview and bibliography for the history of reading. See also Sherman, *John Dee*, chapter 3.

⁴⁸ McKitterick, *Print*, chapter 2, esp. p. 47 ff. Cp. the influence of print on the perception of authorship discussed in Chapter 3.

⁴⁹ Sherman, *Used Books*. Grafton, “History of Reading,” 142–143. Information overload is discussed in a series of articles in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (2003), see esp. Rosenberg, “Early Modern”; Blair, “Reading Strategies” and *ibid.*, *Too Much to Know*.

⁵⁰ Meynell, “John Locke’s Method”; Sherman, *John Dee*; Jardine and Grafton, “Studied”; Evans, “Ben Jonson’s Library” and McPherson, *Ben Jonson’s Library*.

famous and ordinary readers conceived of the written word. It promoted a systematic, reflected and analytic approach to texts and their exegesis. The emblematic object at the heart of the sixteenth-century learned culture is the commonplace book, a vessel for the fruits of reading and notetaking related to the earlier tradition of medieval *florilegia*.⁵¹ Commonplace books were originally blank volumes divided into sections, each dedicated to a certain theme or concept heading. According to Erasmian teachings, texts were comprised of grammatical, rhetorical, moral and other valuable meanings which, once extracted, would become building blocks for new insights in different contexts. In short, commonplacing was a meticulous process of dissection, classification and the rearrangement of texts. As a method for understanding received knowledge to generate further insights, it also delivered the parameters of scholarly thought. Finally, its writing techniques would also permeate manuscript codices not related to the art of commonplacing.⁵²

A third aspect of sixteenth-century book culture relevant here is the Renaissance antiquarianism so closely connected with the interests of humanism. Here the acquisition, even accumulation of knowledge expressed itself in the form of private book collections which rivalled the budding academic libraries of sixteenth-century England; John Dee's famous library was already mentioned above as a prominent place of learning for the student of books, nature and the occult. The organised shelving of books in private and academic collections mirrored the evolving organisation of texts in manuscripts and printed books. Both were used for orientation in the labyrinth of early modern learned thought. Book collections, whether private or part of an institution, implicitly represented the order of the early modern world.

How was alchemical writing affected by the momentum of sixteenth-century learning and culture? With regard to print, the impact was not direct. Alchemical books were not printed in significant numbers until the second half of the seventeenth century, excepting a small peak of publications towards the end of the sixteenth century. Generally, early modern

⁵¹ Rouse and Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses*. Notably some modern scholars would have early modern annotation techniques attributed to the introduction of print; see Cavallo and Chartier, *History*, 23. For their classification see Blair, "Note Taking," 90.

⁵² See especially Blair, "Note Taking". Also Sherman, "Renaissance Readers"; and Kintgen, *Reading*, esp. 18–26. Other literature on commonplace books ranges from the classic Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts*, Parker, "Importance" and *Commonplace Book*, to Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books* and Beal, "Notions in Garrison".

readers with alchemical interests were much more likely to benefit from print publications in other areas of natural philosophy, which informed the theoretical principles of the art.⁵³ Since the readership of alchemical poems like the “Verses upon the Elixir” included clerics and medical doctors, i.e. scholars whose main occupation received much attention in print (including the writer of the notebook series discussed in Chapter 6 below), their understanding of the organisation of word and thought would have been based on recently published works to a considerable extent.⁵⁴

Humanist teachings and the connected methods of textual exegesis played an important role in the history of natural philosophical writing, and thus alchemy and the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”.⁵⁵ Since Tudor copyists of scientific texts, like all others, had access to more written materials than their predecessors, the commonplace book offered them an opportunity to gain a form of remote access to a bewildering mass of information.

Carrying on an ancient tradition, natural philosophy in the Renaissance searched for certain, causal knowledge about nature primarily through the interpretation of and commentary on authoritative texts. [...] Instead of developing a literary method specific to their subject, natural philosophers drew from the humanist education and ambient culture shared by the educated élite.⁵⁶

Some medical commonplace books and manuscripts whose compilers occupied a “mediating role as both receiver and transmitter of medical information” are well-known to modern scholarship.⁵⁷ Similarly, some of the sixteenth-century manuscripts containing texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, including the Trinity Compendium and the notebooks of the next chapter, took on distinctive forms.

Finally, antiquarianism, the culture of collecting and the organisation of libraries not only afforded new ways of acquiring and accessing written information to those of sufficient means or an appropriate institutional affiliation, but also subtly influenced the ways in which the canon of the disciplines and the order of knowledge were perceived. The organisation

⁵³ Kassell, “Secrets”.

⁵⁴ On medical readers of alchemical poems, see Telle, “Spruchdichtung,” 459.

⁵⁵ On commonplacing and notetaking in natural philosophical contexts see Ann Blair, esp. “Annotating”; *ibid.*, “Humanist Methods”.

⁵⁶ Blair, “Natural Philosophy,” 449 and 451. See also Blair, “Note Taking,” 88; Kibre, “Albertus Magnus,” 200.

⁵⁷ Jones, “Harley MS 2558,” 36; also Jones, “Medicine and Science”.

of libraries, their emerging classification systems and architectural peculiarities would have left an impression on any scholar using them; and conversely, these scholars were instrumental in the further adjustment of libraries once they were found to be lacking in structure or capacity.⁵⁸ Private collectors reading *alchemica* in academic surroundings, like Thomas Whalley, might try to emulate or supplement their institutional collections. Readers like the physician of chapter 6 below, i.e. readers who mostly borrowed texts to produce their own copies, would need to choose individual items from the libraries of others and be influenced by the pre-selection presented there. Alchemical manuscripts forming part of historical collections are therefore often best understood in terms of the interactions between the spaces they occupied at different times: their physical whereabouts, the categories into which they were sorted, the items surrounding them in a collection, and, most pertinently, the virtual cornucopia of literature available to their readers.

Altogether, manuscripts containing items from the corpus around the “Verses” document this evolution of media over time: the arrangement of the Trinity Compendium and the Sloane Notebook Series (see Chapter 6) is very different from that of the manuscripts that established the corpus in the fifteenth century.⁵⁹ These codices show that established methods of navigating the growing body of knowledge were as necessary a skill for an alchemical practitioner as his intimate knowledge of alchemical substances, equipment and procedures. Perhaps more so than previously, the production and reception of texts was not confined to the items one had at hand but involved with a wider culture of writing.

3. ALCHEMY ANNOTATED

If a “commonplace book is like a record of what that memory might look like”, the Trinity Compendium is a recollection of a generation of scholarly thought.⁶⁰ Its margins preserve evidence of the reader reception of the period between the volume’s original compilation and its donation to Trinity College. As outlined above, this period between the mid-to late sixteenth century and 1637 constitutes both the only and a very active time of annotation. The Trinity Compendium’s copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir”,

⁵⁸ James, “Collections”; McKitterick, *Wren Library*.

⁵⁹ E.g. Bod MS Ashmole 759 and BL MS Sloane 3747, see Chapter 2 above.

⁶⁰ Thomas, “Reading,” 410.

merged with the “Exposition” and “Wind and Water”, is particularly heavily annotated. The margins and even spaces between lines are covered with notes to full capacity. Lines marking specific words or reaching diagonally across the pages add to the picture of business. Indeed, it was likely the confusing, crowded appearance of this poem in the Trinity Compendium which inspired M.R. James’s abovementioned, uncharitable if not injudicious description.

Who annotated the Trinity Compendium? Given the manuscript’s constant presence in Cambridge (as proposed above) it seems that the annotators, too, were Cambridge men. Thanks to their references to a large number of related writings (most likely including both manuscripts and printed books) it is clear that they had enjoyed formal training in textual interpretation as well as access to a number of other *alchemica*; and considering the situation of the natural philosophical and alchemical holdings in college libraries in the late sixteenth century, it is almost certain that they would have found them in private collections. The annotators of the Trinity Compendium, therefore, seem to have been members of the educated circles around late sixteenth-century Cambridge, perhaps scholars with an academic affiliation.

It is also worth pointing out specifically that several readers were involved in the annotating process, one of them probably the (anonymous) compiler of the volume. This observation holds even though it is difficult to establish which of the notes that grace this copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” represent contributions by different readers, and which of them were produced by the same reader in different sittings; the presence of several annotating hands is obvious. Finally, even a glance at this copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” reveals that its annotators were schooled in exegetic methods of reading and preferred Latin as language of annotation. Here an interesting juxtaposition of intellectual and practical backgrounds occurs on the manuscript page. Arguably, the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” represents a genre of *alchemica* composed by artisans, that is, those more versed in laboratory experimentation than in the production of manuscripts: it is rather different from simple theoretical-allegorical poems on alchemy that are not recipes, neither in format nor content, from dedicatory poems written in the hopes of securing royal patronage or poems with doctrinal significance.⁶¹

⁶¹ Kahn, “Alchemical Poetry” I, 268 discusses “The Hermet’s Tale” (*TCB*, 415–419) as a prime example of allegorisations (his term); *ibid.*, II, 69–71, engages with doctrinal and practical contents of alchemical poems. A poem quite obviously designed to procure patronage (and

In the Trinity Compendium, a good century after their composition, the “Verses upon the Elixir” are discussed by Cambridge readers apparently educated in letters but also familiar with alchemical experimentation to a level necessary for meaningful commentary.

For the following analysis of the mechanisms of annotation, the importance of marginalia for the work of Thomas Lorkyn, Regius professor of physic at Cambridge from 1564 to 1591, may provide some perspective:

were it not for these notes we should not know that Lorkyn himself practised as well as taught medicine [...] they are meant to help Lorkyn himself and other users of his book in ordering and assimilating their own reading, comparing and criticizing what they read, and preparing the medical reader to carry his understanding of what he reads over into action.⁶²

Lorkyn’s library was open to students who were also allowed to borrow books; it probably ‘served as something of a faculty library during his long tenure of the regius professorship’.⁶³ In many alchemical manuscripts, however, the process of annotation was not as explicitly aimed at a known readership or cannot be traced to the existence of a professional circle or the location of a specific library. Nevertheless, Lorkyn’s treatment of books and readers is an interesting expression of the communication between scholars at his time, and the role of books within it.

A closer parallel may be drawn with the vita and library of scholar-statesman Sir Thomas Smith, who was the first Regius professor of civil law at Cambridge from 1542 and was an integral member of John Cheke’s circle.⁶⁴ Smith’s commentaries and annotations of books reveal the mind “of a scholar trained in mid-Tudor Cambridge”. Significantly, by “the early 1570s Smith had developed an active interest in practical chemistry, alchemy, and metallurgy”.⁶⁵ Smith and Whalley resemble each other in their position, affluence and willingness to collect books. The Trinity Compendium’s annotators were their peers. The remainder of this chapter will consider the Trinity Compendium as a product of this scholarly environment. The conversations about alchemy preserved on its pages will illustrate an intimate chapter of the reception of *alchemica*.

thus amalgamated from different sources and appropriately lengthy) forms the main focus of Grund, *Misticall Wordes*.

⁶² Sherman, *John Dee*, 70.

⁶³ Jones, “Medicine and Science,” 167, 169–170.

⁶⁴ Smith is further discussed in Webster, *Health*, 315–316.

⁶⁵ Sherman, *John Dee*, 76.

3.1. *Conversations in the Margins:
Marginalia in Trinity College Cambridge MS R.14.56*

Given its current level of annotation, it is difficult to imagine the Trinity Compendium in its virginal state. A page like f. 86^v (see Figure V) would have contained just the text of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, surrounded by ample margins and with sufficient space between the lines to make the reading experience a pleasurable one. The scribal tools from which an early reader of the Trinity Compendium might have chosen when facing the pristine text were many, including a number of uses for the written word. The text might have been structured with verbal annotations (in tables of contents, headings or marginal key- or catchwords). On an explicatory level, notes could have been used to indicate provenance, linguistic issues, the poem’s supposed authorship or title. Notes of a more personal nature (famously, John Dee’s diary) were not unheard of, and marks of owner- or readership, although not yet customary, might have been added, too. The main types of notes recorded in the Trinity Compendium, however, amend or comment on the poem’s contents, or are “the result of the state of textual uncertainty”.⁶⁶ Interlinear notes and marginalia in particular merit further investigation.

In comparison with other paratextual elements, interlinear notes and alterations to the text of the “Verses upon the Elixir” are relatively few. Yet they show that the readers were familiar with the experimental aspects of alchemy, whether through practical experimentation or reading knowledge. In their contents, most of the notes explore matters of the text further, paraphrase passages, gloss the terminology and provide practical or theoretical background for the recipe described in the poem. Only some marginal notes contain straightforward practical alchemical information. Methodologically these notes fall into the categories of the descriptive (summaries of phrases or passages), corrective or intrusive (ranging from orthographic changes to the proposition of alternative passages) and explicative (additions to text or the theory underlying it). As mentioned above, the majority of interlinear notes are written in Latin. They also employ a scholarly and professional style reminiscent of scholarly exegesis, rather than the experimentation underlying so many more urgently written, less carefully crafted notes in other contemporary alchemical manuscripts. Further, many notes consist of a single phrase or alchemical terms which neither challenge nor

⁶⁶ Sherman, *John Dee*, 81–89.

substantiate the main text in an obvious way. For example, on the page preceding the selected one, the word ‘earth’ in the line “It owt of the earth looke thowe take” prompted a reader to insert “terra secunda .i. gumme sericon” (TCC MS R.14.56, f. 86^r). Some remarks appear to refer to other books directly, or deliver parallel passages, synonyms or concepts from other *alchemica*. Taken together, these notes demonstrate that the readers followed customary sixteenth-century practices of annotation, albeit adapting their vocabulary to the special context of alchemical literature.

Significantly, interlinear notes and marginalia in the Trinity Compendium are not independent, equal elements on the manuscript page: they demonstrate immediate written reactions not only to the text itself, but also to previous readers’ notes; or, in the instance of a single reader re-consulting a text he had read and annotated before, reactions to his own previous readings. The most striking example of this, in the interlinear notes, is an alteration of the time scale prescribed for an alchemical process. Originally and in all other copies, the relevant lines read

ffor in it the earthe desolued must bee
without fyre [by] days three

“Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 9–10

In the Trinity Compendium, however, a reader has changed the word ‘days’ to “wekes”, an alteration possibly prompted by alchemical practice, i.e. motivated by the failure to produce the desired result in an experiment within the indicated time span; it may also present information acquired from another alchemical treatise. A later reader has expressed his scepticism towards this emendation by adding a question mark to the same. Similar attempts to recover a text’s true, ‘obscured’ meanings frequently occur in alchemical texts whose style quite clearly puzzled contemporary readers as much as it does the modern historian. In the Trinity Compendium in particular, however, it is evident that all successive readers put the manuscript as they received it under constant scrutiny—complete with previous readers’ annotations. They did not consider the recipe text itself more important, or more authoritative, than the contemporary remarks preserved in the annotations. The resulting chronology of notes bears witness to a specific form of written communication.⁶⁷ In these ‘marginal’ conversations, all users of a manuscript form a discourse community.

⁶⁷ Similar observations about John Dee’s marginalia are presented in Sherman, *John Dee*, 15. For more theoretical discussions of annotation see Blair, “Note Taking,” 86.

Another striking piece of evidence for the interaction of readers in notes presents itself in a couplet with a peculiar rhyming pattern. In the Trinity Compendium, and the majority of extant copies of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, one couplet is preserved in a noticeably awkward form:

A blacke earth like tynder darke
 Hevie as metall bynethe shall lye “Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 17–18⁶⁸

This is the only couplet in which the rhyme words do not rhyme. Whenever this is not corrected, it is safe to assume that the compiler of the respective manuscript chose to keep this irregularity. Some copyists of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, however, did change one of the two rhyme words in order to produce a rhyme; this results in one of these two varieties: “A blacke earth like tynder darke/ Hevie as metall bynethe shall lurk” (GUL MS Ferguson 322) or “A blacke earth like tynder dry/ Hevie as metall bynethe shall lye” (BL MS Sloane 3747). The second version changes the alchemical information about the properties of the substance described (dark/dry) and is therefore intrusive; the first version is of a stylistic nature and changes the metaphorical connotation of the phrase at most. The Trinity Compendium retains the couplet as it appears in most other manuscripts, complete with the imperfect rhyme. This invited readers’ comments perhaps more than other passages of the text: a reader of the Trinity Compendium added the word “dry” as an alternative rhyme word to the first line. Another note reads “alias drye”; it probably represents an attempt to reconcile the original version, perhaps perceived as authoritative, with the stylistically more pleasing one. Both readers were clearly knowledgeable about other copies circulating at the time.

Most striking about these notes, however, is that they evolved over a long period of time, and most likely without a later reader in mind. As mentioned before, the manuscript was not intended for (or at least not entered into) circulation, and certainly did not travel beyond the intellectual circles of Cambridge. The annotations, as indicated previously, hence constitute a form of temporally remote communication: a forum for the exchange of knowledge about the body of alchemical writing and its interpretation. They record information and provoke further written reactions to it. In the given example they take on the form of annotations comprising quotations from alternative copies, not original comments. The notes moreover do not present information as a fact; if they did, one would find cancelled passages

⁶⁸ This example was used previously in Chapter 2 above, for different purposes.

substituted by the versions a given reader approved of. Instead, the notes document a thought process, a list of alternatives recorded side by side. All readers were able to consider them as viable alternatives.

The mechanisms of annotation described so far can be characterised as results of the attempts to digest and improve texts. A third form of annotation is cross-referencing, another typically scholarly technique.⁶⁹ Although text-based analysis of *alchemica* was often both the basis for, and supplemented by, practical experiments, the readers of the Trinity Compendium, Cambridge men of a scholarly background, mostly employ marginal notes to provide cross-references to other works. Here it is not only possible to reconstruct the corpus of works to which these readers had access (an exercise carried out in part for the ‘virtual library’ of the physician discussed in Chapter 6 below), but also to explore the annotations by type.

The references in the Trinity manuscript employ different formats. Some notes provide a folio number without mentioning a specific book. They refer partly to pages in the volume itself, and partly indicate that the annotating reader used the other, referenced book so frequently that he did not need to record its title for his own information. Other notes mention an authority without providing a concrete point of reference. These notes are evidence that a reader had memorised a passage or more general concept in association with a named authority, or, more likely, received it as common knowledge. Again, the need for a full reference is abolished. A third group of cross-references provides complete information about names and page numbers for parallel passages. For example, at the right margin of folio 86^v, ca. two thirds down the page (see Figure V), there is a cluster of notes in the same hand mentioning John Garland. This reader seems to have compared the “Verses upon the Elixir” directly with the Garland volume in question, which may have been in his possession at the time. From the note alone, however, it is not possible to identify the work or volume intended. In the sixteenth century, Garland was best (and erroneously) known as the author of the *Compendium alchimiae*.⁷⁰ Generally, however, since the Garland passages referred to in the margins appear to derive from passages in

⁶⁹ “Extensive cross-referencing, both within the volume and to other volumes, is almost always in evidence in scholarly readings: no word appears in scholars’ margins with a higher frequency than *vide* (except, perhaps, *nota*). By reading with all other authorities in mind, and by entering them into the margins, the scholar provided a network of, and map to, an ever-growing body of knowledge”. Sherman, *John Dee*, 71; 82–83.

⁷⁰ Garland, *Compendium*. On Garland, see Webster, “Alchemical and Paracelsian,” 311; Lawler, *Parisiana Poetria*, xi–xii.

the Trinity Compendium itself (mostly in its margins) and in other contemporary or older alchemical writings, the volume's annotators seem to have approached *alchemica* both within their literary context and through close readings. And they made the information they gleaned through this parallel reading of several *alchemica* available to later readers, who may have perused the Trinity Compendium in the same setting.

When considered as a medium of communication, marginalia, and especially cross-references, both limit and define the audience of the Trinity Compendium in some respects. Early readers of the manuscript characteristically and initially left the annotations for their own perusal. Whenever the manuscript changed hands afterwards, it carried the thoughts of some previous owners in a form of expression akin to diary writing; cross-references as shorthand references presupposed a knowledgeable reader. In this way, the Compendium presented readers of the "Verses upon the Elixir" with text and commentary, the need to interpret both, and, to some, the invitation to join in the annotation. Its mostly Latin, formal exchange of thoughts, written by readers who shared a high level of education, and its conversation about books and manuscripts, would have been recognised only by readers of similar backgrounds.

A particular and peculiar form of audience control is executed in some notes written in cypher. Upon closer inspection, this script appears to be a form of Hebrew written, partly, in reverse; once deciphered, many of the words simply mention the production of an elixir, and therefore do not contain any vital information.⁷¹ The function of the cypher is, then, not to communicate knowledge to a select few, or to hide it from the uninitiated, but to discourage subsequent readers unable to read the script. The cypher itself implicitly declares them unworthy of receiving any valuable information. Significantly this manuscript's intended readership is, therefore, not only shaped by its compiler, but also by its annotators. And just as they turned to authorities for help with the interpretation of an obscure passage, they were aware of the fact that their comments would represent a perhaps not identical, but yet similar aid or a hindrance for their successors. Taken together, the different forms of marginalia present in the Trinity Compendium show that the act of annotating involved coincidence and deliberation, disclosure and concealment to varying degrees.

⁷¹ I am grateful to Dr Peter Forshaw for deciphering the script.

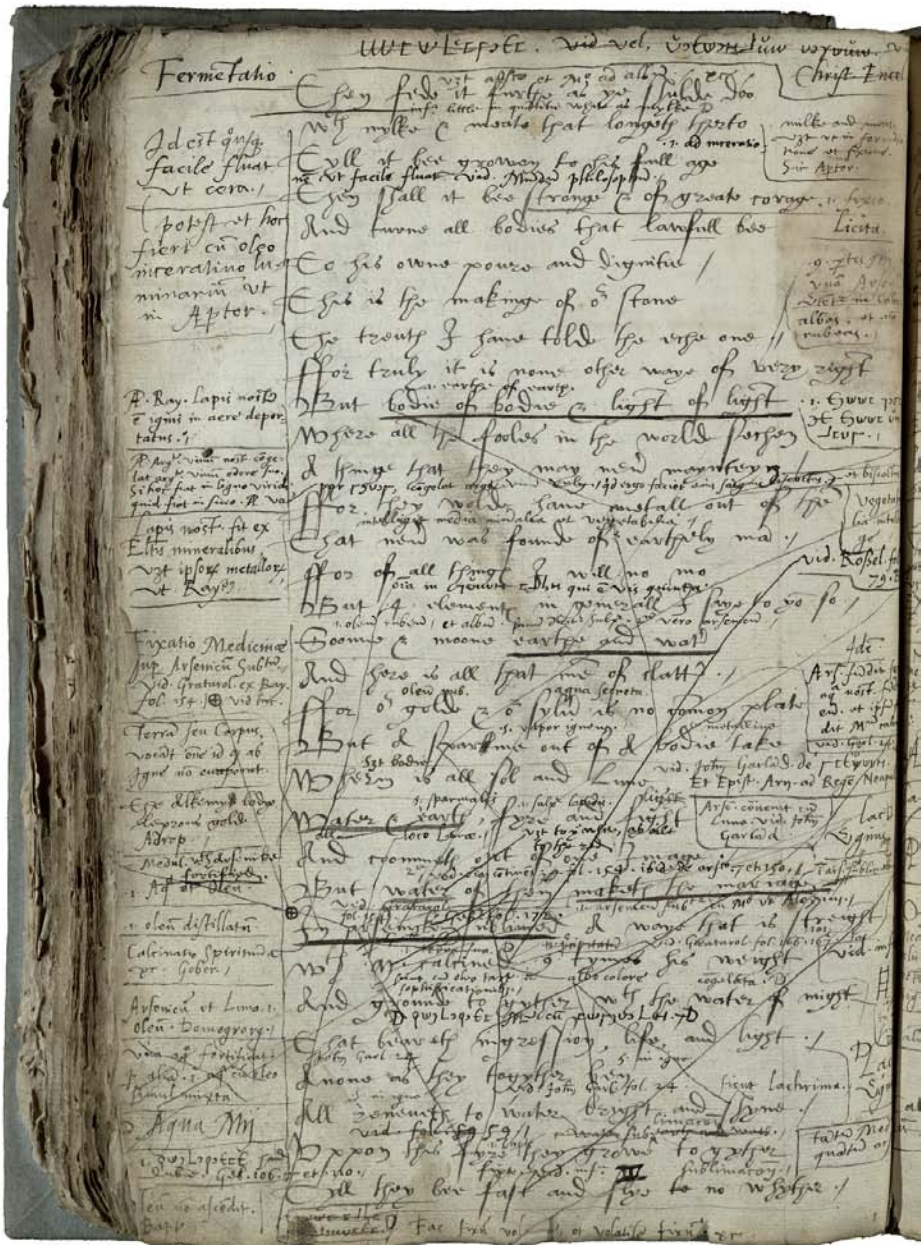


Figure V: The Trinity Compendium (TCC MS R.14.56), f. 86^v.
 Reproduction by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.

3.2. Reading Annotations as Historical Records

Perhaps more than the contents of marginalia, the physical form of annotations exposes the mind-set of early modern readers. It reveals ways in which they handled information on the one hand, and material objects in the form of manuscripts on the other.⁷² In the Trinity Compendium, as in other sixteenth-century manuscripts on natural philosophical topics, note-taking techniques do not appear to be particular to the subject of alchemy or natural philosophy. Nonverbal elements used to mark passages or words in early modern manuscripts in general include underlining, asterisks, quotation marks, brackets (most curiously ‘face brackets’) and hands with pointing fingers (‘manicules’), short verbal indicators such as variations of *Nota* (NB, *Nota Bene*). Systems of numbers and symbols could be employed to associate a passage with a parallel or commentary in the same manuscript or in other volumes. Such remote references were common practice in Tudor times and mixed with discursive or reference marginalia.⁷³ Many of these non-verbal techniques are also present in the Trinity Compendium and, *per se*, not more or less noteworthy than thousands of similar structuring methods in contemporary manuscripts. However, within the present context, that is, in the Trinity Compendium’s unusually heavy annotation and its singular combination of a scholarly readership and alchemical poetry, an abstraction from the notes’ contents to the ways in which they sort, structure and conceive of alchemical thought is informative: it reveals the ways in which scholars, rather than professional alchemist artisans, dissected and understood *alchemica*.

When M.R. James described the volume as “a very ugly shabby book”, he was probably referring to the numerous scribbles and deletions, lines and marks that blemish the pages. At first sight, his seems a just verdict. However, at closer inspection, the sheer number of notes around the “Verses upon the Elixir” in the Trinity Compendium indicates that there simply was not enough space to accommodate all readers’ notes in longhand. The solution devised by the Compendium’s readers appears in a virtual separation of one of its pages (f. 86^v, see Figure V) into its individual parts: the text of the “Verses upon the Elixir” belonged in the middle of the page, added interlinear notes and marginal notes in between and around the same, and non-verbal structural elements scattered all over the page.

⁷² Grafton, “History of Reading,” 148.

⁷³ Sherman, *John Dee*, 81–89, 68. The terms ‘manicule’ for drawings of pointing hands and ‘face brackets’ for brackets in the shape of a profile appear to be Sherman’s coinage.

The first observation to be made here is that verbal cross-references do not refer to line numbers in the “Verses upon the Elixir” or marginal notes beside it, but only to more remote texts or works. This appears to be an economical measure on behalf of the Compendium’s annotators. Written in an abbreviated yet linguistic form, these notes would point any subsequent reader into the direction of related literature, albeit in an exclusive manner, as detailed above.

Further, an attempt to match verbal marginal notes to the relevant passages of the “Verses” shows that marginalia are often positioned at some distance from the passage they comment on. This is due to the fact that, for the succession of readers involved in the volume’s annotation, it was impossible to plan the arrangement of notes, and the allocation of space on the page, with possible future annotations in mind. While initial readers were able to place their notes in the margins directly beside the relevant text passage, they had to find a different way of linking passages and notes once this space was occupied. In the Trinity Compendium readers did not employ symbols, but devised another system of non-verbal cross-references—the very lines cutting through the text which contribute to the manuscript page’s untidy appearance. Therefore, rather than disfiguring the manuscript, these ‘connecting lines’ form a network of cross-references with diverse functions. Similar practices were used elsewhere in contemporary manuscripts, most pertinently by polymath John Dee, whose library and scholarly activities provide various points of reference for early modern reading practices.⁷⁴ In the present copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” the lines fulfil various functions. Some interconnect terms from the poem to interpret obscure passages. For example, the terms ‘body’ and ‘metal’ are connected in the following passage.

ffor truly it is none other waye of very right
 But *bodie* of bodie & light of light
 Where all the fooles in the worlde sechen
 A thinge that they may neuer maynteyn./
 ffor they wolde haue *metall* out of them
 That neuer was founde of earthely man./

“Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 39–44⁷⁵

⁷⁴ “[John Dee’s] ‘connection lines,’ which usually appear in manuscripts, cross boldly through the text—on a busy page appearing to cross it out—and reveal a blatant bias towards the utility rather than the aesthetic appearance of a page. The practice is most common in Dee’s alchemical texts.” Sherman, *John Dee*, 88.

⁷⁵ See Figure V (TCC MS R.14.45, f. 86^v), ll. 10 and 13; italics editorial.

In this case the interlinear connecting line functions as a shorthand interpretation. It interprets the body, or substance, necessary for alchemical success, as a metal. It also implicitly determines the error of others, the “fools” mentioned in the third line cited above: according to this connection between the couplets, their search for a metal, as opposed to a different type of substance, is correct. It must be the method or target of their search which precludes alchemical success. Perhaps unsurprisingly, several interlinear and marginal notes, partly written in the exclusive Hebrew code described above, comment upon the same passage. Most noteworthy for current purposes, however, is the fact that a simple connecting line can carry such detailed information.

Other connecting lines on f. 86^v function not so much as a shorthand, but as reader navigation devices. In connecting the text with marginal notes not situated directly beside a pertinent passage, they constitute a simple and effective means of clustering commentary around a pertinent passage when the space available does not accommodate all notes. Indeed, some of these lines reach all the way across the page to a marginal note which must have been added at a fairly late stage in the text’s annotation. Significantly, the marginal notes’ relative positions to each other and distance from the part of the poem they comment upon, together with the different hands involved in annotation, reveal a chronology of notes and readings: a chronicle of the poem’s reception by a defined readership which would be worthy of further investigation in its own right.

A third group of lines employed in the Trinity Compendium’s annotation of the “Verses upon the Elixir” connect marginal and interlinear notes with each other. These lines surpass the previously described ones in their reach. Some of them establish cross-references across folds and page breaks. Occasionally they extend to several terms at the same time, connecting more than two points of reference and thus providing a map for the critical reader’s orientation in the text. Quite frequently this type of physical and interpretative connection of terms by line is motivated by the metaphorical ambiguity of the “Verses”; as in the passage quoted above, many terms designating alchemical materials and processes required translation into practicable terms for use in the laboratory. Similarly, the lines spreading out in a starburst pattern around the term ‘arsenic’ in the following excerpt serve its interpretation.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ See Figure V (TCC MS R.14.45, f. 86^v), ll. 25–26; italics in the transcription editorial.

In *arsenicke* sublimed a waye that is streight
 With M[ercury] calcined .9. tymes his weight

“Verses upon the Elixir”, ll. 55–56

Here the connecting lines lead to interlinear and marginal notes as well as other parts of the poem and detail, among other things, procedure (e.g. heating over fire) and other materials to be employed (white, not red *calx*, according to a marginal note at the top right margin). Those lines direct the reader to bibliographical notes whose symbols, in turn, indicate further related literature. Some of the lines have been crossed out by later readers. The readers who removed such a connection from the term ‘arsenic’, the one word at the centre of this copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, apparently considered it to be crucial to the alchemical recipe for the philosophers’ stone. The fact that the term appears in a passage often isolated in fragmentary copies (described as a potential shortcut to the alchemical secret in Chapter 2 above) is probably not coincidental.

Taken together, the connecting lines and non-verbal annotation elements reveal that this particular group of readers did not perceive the text of the “Verses upon the Elixir” as a linear, chronologically developed construction. The structure of the poem itself exhibits the flexibility, repetitions and circularities exemplary for other works of the genre, as well as the abovementioned characteristic vagueness in style. Early modern readers understood the “Verses upon the Elixir” in stages of close reading, through collation with other alchemical works and, perchance, supplemented with practical knowledge about alchemical processes. Since the manuscript was not designed in its entirety, the need for an efficient form of referencing initiated the combination of notes and interconnecting lines. Unlike the compilation of a separate notebook, these methods of referencing present the most immediate possibility of recording notes and enable readers to build upon the knowledge of others. Annotations in the Trinity Compendium, as scholarly as they may be, form a social and professional means of communication.

Overall, these readers’ notes show that their writers were knowledgeable about alchemical practice, but nothing truly suggests that this knowledge was acquired through practice or media other than books. The methods of reading exhibited here coincide with those of scholars studying, among other things, classical, historical, or political texts. Connections with practice like that of John Dee, Samuel Norton and their yet unknown Cambridge contemporaries are intriguing and not unlikely, if yet to be investigated.

With a last look at the copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” in the Trinity Compendium, one might still ask why none of the readers used line and page numbers to achieve a similar effect. The answer probably lies in these readers’ perception of themselves: they were not employed to produce a commentary, nor did they pursue a specific question or task with their reading, or consciously form part of a larger conversation about alchemical matters. They were individuals who consulted a copy of a text intermittently, yet always with interest. This copy of the “Verses upon the Elixir” in particular is suspended between the individual and the collective (or rather, collected), between old and new traditions, and between deliberation and circumstance.

CHAPTER SIX

ALCHEMICAL VERSE AND THE ORGANISATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Whether a quick jotting down of an idea or the careful composition of a treatise, the use of pen and paper to order thoughts is familiar to all literate men throughout history. Alchemical practitioners of all levels of literacy were among those who employed language and writing to advance their knowledge, among them the writers and annotators of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. A particularly articulate group of corpus readers emerges in the late sixteenth century: physicians discussing the uses and misuses of chemical remedies in medicine. Paracelsus, his followers and opponents constitute the most famous part of the history of pharmacy, a development which had been foreshadowed by alchemo-medical stirrings from the late Middle Ages onwards. *Alchemica* now appeared in private book collections at the same time as doctors refined their commonplacing techniques.

The sixteenth century generally showed crucial developments in the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”: the Trinity Compendium (of the previous chapter) was subjected to annotation, the Ripley Scrolls advanced towards Scotland, the “Verses upon the Elixir” now also existed in a Neo-Latin prose version, and the corpus as a whole reached peak circulation before its imminent demise in the mid-seventeenth century. Within this plurality of readings and expanding materiality, corpus manuscripts produced in the early modern medical, learned reception of alchemical poetry reveal much about their writers’ understanding of medicine and alchemy in an evolving structure of learning.

This final chapter concerns a series of notebooks written by a physician in the final decades of the sixteenth century. Widely read in the natural philosophical literature available in his time, the physician produced more than three dozen volumes in which he investigated the uses of alchemy for medical purposes, among other things, with the help of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. The notebook writer’s contributions to manuscript culture are remarkable for three reasons: firstly, his access to literature and books details early modern communication networks and their uses of alchemical poetry. Secondly, while the Trinity Compendium of the previous

chapter represented a communication of a group of peers, the notebooks display a single individual's working space. His personal way of arranging and processing alchemical and medical information develops a distinctive architecture of alchemo-medical thought. And thirdly, the physician's combination of literary and actual experience provides a unique opportunity to look over the shoulder, into the mind and, exceptionally, the workshop of an early modern doctor with alchemical interests. This chapter explores the notebooks (henceforth, the 'Sloane notebooks', named after their current place of storage in the British Library's Sloane collection), their contents, organisation and purpose.¹

1. THE SLOANE NOTEBOOKS:
MEDICINE AND THE CORPUS AROUND THE
"VERSES UPON THE ELIXIR"

1.1. *Introduction to the Notebook Series*

Towards the end of the sixteenth century a physician set out to preserve the wisdom he gleaned from books in writing. His notes and thoughts, gathered over the period of several decades, eventually filled approximately fifty notebooks, of which thirty-four survive today. In their contents, these notebooks cover alchemical, medical, philosophical and political matters.² Their language is that of the learned. In their form, they employ distinctive note-taking strategies. But in their presentation, the notebooks are essentially personal: they do not record the compiler's name, they are not numbered or indexed, and do not otherwise preserve any aid for orientation which would be necessary for anyone other than their compiler to make sense of them. Moreover, the Sloane notebooks' compiler did not prepare texts for publication, a pursuit which led many of his contemporaries (including Simon Forman and Andreas Libavius) to write similarly extensive notes with com-

¹ Timmermann, "Doctor's Order", is an early version of the work presented in this chapter.

² Subject matters covered in each of the Sloane notebooks (a = alchemy; m = medicine; a/m = alchemo-medicine/pharmacy; p = allegorical painting/other): BL MSS Sloane 1041 (p), 1042 (a/m), 1043 (a/m), 1060 (a/m), 1061 (a/m), 1062 (a/m), 1063 (p), 1082 (p), 1092 (a), 1093 (m), 1095 (a), 1096 (p), 1097 (a), 1098 (a), 1099 (a/m), 1105 (a), 1113 (a), 1114 (a), 1127 (a/pharmaceutica), 1136 (a), 1146 (a), 1147 (a), 1148 (a), 1149 (a), 1150 (a), 1151 (a), 1152 (a), 1153 (a), 1158 (m), 1169 (p), 1170 (a), 1171 (a), 1181 (a), 1186 (a). The original number of notebooks is an estimate based on general statistics of manuscript loss for the period, combined with the notebooks' own contents and references to further volumes.

parative fervour.³ Without such a public purpose for his writing activity, his compilation process is an implicit, silent one. Presented with the Sloane notebook series as it now rests in the archives of the British Library, modern historians are faced with a similarly bewildering wealth of information as their compiler encountered while writing them. The following, initial introduction of the Sloane notebooks presents their general features and history, in order to facilitate a subsequent, detailed analysis of how they came into being.

The Sloane notebooks, although not marked with a name or kept as a set, are unmistakably related to each other thanks to their compiler's distinctive script, a somewhat forceful secretary hand.⁴ They were clearly compiled in the final two decades of the sixteenth century: in addition to palaeographical and textual evidence, the manuscripts' paper and watermarks confirm their time of composition.⁵

The notebooks' general appearance may be described as conventional, related to humanistic ideals and Renaissance commonplacing, yet remarkably methodical: individual entries excerpted from other books are quotations or exact paraphrases, referenced with abbreviated authors' names or, very occasionally, titles. Lists, tables of contents, indexes, references and cross-references, marginal commentaries and numbered items can be found throughout the series. Apparently written into ready-bound volumes of quarto or smaller formats (not on individual sheets gathered at a later point of time), most of the books are rather slim, containing either forty or ninety folios of sturdy paper each. Thus, easy to handle and carry around, generally devoid of illustrations and plain in their presentation of text, the notebooks were not intended to be aesthetic objects but items of use. In this respect, they resemble the laboratory notes of practical alchemists of earlier generations as well as the logbooks of their modern day descendants.

A rough classification of subjects places the bulk of materials in the category of *alchemica* (twenty volumes), followed by what Sloane chose to call

³ Kassell, *Medicine*; Moran, *Andreas Libavius*.

⁴ Cross-references in Sloane's handwritten catalogue are few and unreliable; it is likely that the manuscripts had become dissociated from each other before Sloane acquired them. All three sets of shelfmarks present in most notebooks refer to the Sloane collection. Keiser proposes that "the proximity of the original numbers (in parentheses) indicate that the greater part of the manuscripts must have come into Sloane's hands at the same time". Keiser, "Heritage," fn. 20.

⁵ BL MS Sloane 1092: Briquet 4432–4433 (1556–1581); BL MSS Sloane 1097, 1098, 1099, 1113: Briquet 8078–8081 (1566–1598); BL MS Sloane 1105: Briquet 1314 (1591); BL MSS Sloane 1113, 1114: Briquet 1845 (1581–1605). See Keiser, "Heritage," fn. 19–20.

'pharmaceutica', i.e. items on chemical medicine (mostly recipes) (six volumes); a surprisingly small section of *medica* proper (two volumes); and one markedly peculiar illuminated alchemical book, which combines fragments of texts from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" with skilful if amateur coloured paintings of mystical, Biblical and alchemical scenes.⁶ It should be noted that these manuscripts are rarely listed or identified with their title or subject matter in early modern inventories; the classifications proposed here are modern and approximations.⁷ Another five notebooks do not contain natural philosophical themes, but describe a design for two allegorical paintings and their artistic execution in great detail, mentioning "more than one hundred and thirty figures, many of them mythological, biblical and literary, but many also from classical, medieval and sixteenth-century history"; this last group, contemporaries of the compiler, further confirms the dating of the notebook series.⁸ A preliminary look between the covers reveals texts, excerpts and notes written in Latin, English and occasionally Greek. Altogether, the Sloane notebook series represents a single writer's learned if eclectic collection of knowledge of man and nature as represented in the literature of his time.

It is noteworthy that the notebooks do not appear to have been circulated after their initial composition. Their texts were not copied further or, in the notebooks, annotated by other readers. The notebooks' contents and stemmata relating to texts from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" demonstrate the seclusion of the compiler's written thoughts quite plainly. The lack of physical evidence for the notebooks' circulation may, in part, be due to the fact that some of the personalised, unusual copies of texts recorded in the notebooks would have any discouraged potential copyist to use them as exemplars.⁹ It seems more likely, however, that the notebooks remained solely in the hands of their compiler and did not elicit an opportunity for another's annotation. In the notebooks, the Sloane compiler gathered the world of natural philosophical literature for his personal contemplation—a body of works available to anyone else in his professional

⁶ BL MS Sloane 1171. Keiser, "Heritage," fn. 22, points out parallels to the Ripley Scrolls and illustrations in BL MS Harley 2407.

⁷ See also Chapter 5 above. On the circulation of *pharmaceutica* see Webster, "Alchemical and Paracelsian".

⁸ Evett, "Elizabethan," 141, with reference to BL MS Sloane 1082. See also Ashworth, "Natural History".

⁹ Even a brief look at the extreme fragmentation of texts in these manuscripts, and their high prominence in the critical apparatus of the texts' editions, confirms this (see Appendix).

and geographical position with as much ease, but here digested and prepared for private purposes. As will become clear in their detailed analysis below, the notebooks were intended to be instruments of research, not communication.

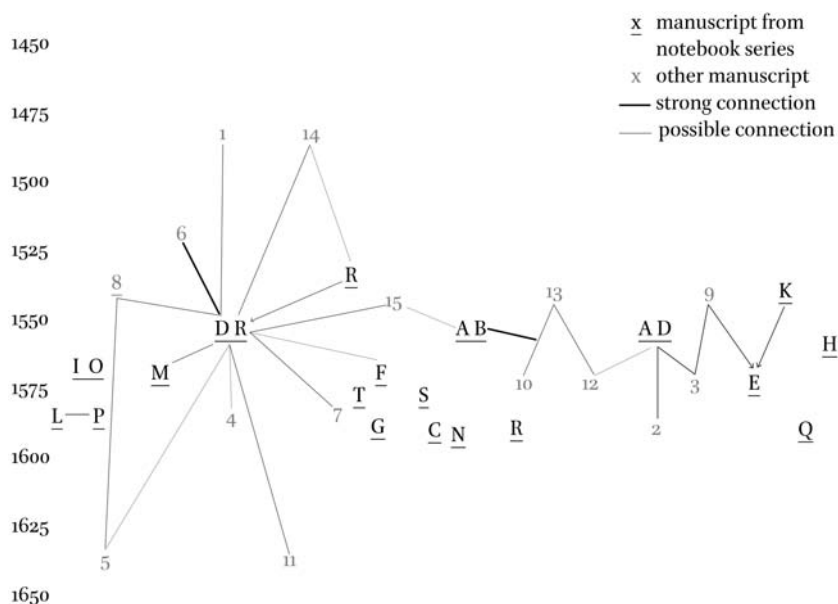


Diagram V: Stemma, Sloane Notebook Series¹⁰

A	BL MS Sloane 1092	1	BL MS Harley 2407, s. xv
B	BL MS Sloane 1095	2	BL MS Sloane 1842, s. xvi/xvii
C	BL MS Sloane 1097	3	BL MS Sloane 3667, s. xvi ²
D	BL MS Sloane 1098	4	Bod MS Ashmole 1441, s. xvi–xvii
E	BL MS Sloane 1105	5	Bod MS Ashmole 1445, s. xvii
F	BL MS Sloane 1113	6	Bod MS Ashmole 1480, s. xvi
G	BL MS Sloane 1114	7	Bod MS Ashmole 1486, s. xvi

¹⁰ This stemma was amalgamated from stemmata of relevant texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, which can be found individually with their Editions towards the end of this book. Some sigils occur several times: they represent different stages of compilation and/or copies of different texts within these notebooks. Sigils shown directly beside each other represent simultaneous writing stages. Sigils not connected with another show influences of all other manuscripts represented around them. The width of connecting lines indicates the strength of connection: the thicker the line, the more copies can be demonstrated to be sourced from that exemplar. Arrows indicate sequences of notebook composition and interpretations of texts.

H	BL MS Sloane 1146	8	Bod MS e Mus 63, s. xvi
I	BL MS Sloane 1147	9	Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS Gl. kgl. S. 3500 80, s. xvi
K	BL MS Sloane 1148		
L	BL MS Sloane 1149	10	London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, s. xvi ²
M	BL MS Sloane 1150	11	London, Wellcome Institute MS 693, Scroll, s. xvii
N	BL MS Sloane 1151	12	Yale University, Beinecke Library MS Osborn fa. 16, s. xvi ²
O	BL MS Sloane 1152		
P	BL MS Sloane 1153	13	Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Codex 111, s. xvi
Q	BL MS Sloane 1170		
R	BL MS Sloane 1171	14	TCC MS R.14.45, s. xiii/xiv/xv
S	BL MS Sloane 1181	15	TCC MS R.14.56, s. xvi
T	BL MS Sloane 1186		

1.2. *The Compiler*

Given his fairly broad interest in current affairs and all things alchemical and medical, the notebook compiler's identity is an intriguing matter. Unfortunately, neither his name nor his occupation or institutional affiliation, if any, have been recorded in writing. The notebooks indicate that the compiler was familiar with the theory, production and application of remedies beyond common household knowledge; the number and intricacy of pharmaceutical texts he recorded and his critical engagement with them in commentaries alone suggest that he was likely a pharmacist or doctor. He will be described pragmatically as the 'physician' in the remainder of this chapter.

The compiler's geographical location around Cambridge or its environs is a little easier to detect, since,

in one of the descriptions of the allegorical paintings, he writes of *Philosophus* holding an indenture to which is affixed 'the common seale of *owre* university', and swearing on '*owre* proctoures booke wyth a brasen chayne & bossyes', contrasted with *Historicus*, whose indenture carries '*the* common seale of the university of Oxenford' [.]¹¹

It is not possible to match the compiler's initials "C.S.", which grace one of the abovementioned allegorical paintings, with a specific individual registered at the University of Cambridge in the second half of the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, his use of the Trinity Compendium for his notebook compilation, as demonstrable in the stemma for the "Verses upon the Elixir", also implies a Cambridge connection.¹² The manifestation of his own writing and his engagement with scholarly manuscripts further indicates that

¹¹ Evett, "Elizabethan," 144; emphasis original.

¹² See Diagram VI in the Appendix.

the physician himself had enjoyed an academic training.¹³ In addition, the vernacular notebooks of the Sloane series contain intermittent personal references to the area around London. One note mentions “Brensley iiii myles from Rochester[;] [...] Groomebrydge, and Tunnebrydge fyve miles from the Temmes” (BL MS Sloane 1146, flyleaf). The compiler’s physical presence in the London—Cambridge—Oxford area would certainly have facilitated his access to written information.

It has been proposed that the physician “had moderate Protestant religious and political attitudes, and was associated with a group of important and mainly East Anglian members of the inner circle of Elizabeth’s court. [...] In his later years he became involved in a protracted lawsuit in which he seems to have been the loser”.¹⁴ Much of this argument relies on the unsupported but not unlikely assumption that the allegorical notebooks contain the compiler’s own writings, not copies of someone else’s work. For the present purposes it is safe to assume that the Sloane notebook writer was a physician with some academic training, possibly a statesman, active in south-east England, with established connections to the University of Cambridge, in the second half of the sixteenth century.

This information [may not be exhaustive: neither the physician’s name, nor his training, networks or information about his private collections (if any) are explicitly recorded in extant manuscripts. However, as the following sections will show, the medical Sloane notebooks, while comparatively few and devoid of medical case histories, contain much information about him: they are a prime example for the ways in which a corpus-based history can lend a voice to previously silent historical actors].¹⁵

2. NOTEBOOKS AS VIRTUAL LIBRARIES

The Sloane notebooks encapsulate their compiler’s intellectual personality, especially his aim to master the increasingly diverse pool of information available on the growing book market in an organised manner. As will become clear shortly, his notes represent an attempt to consolidate texts and experience, printed books and manuscripts, alchemy and medicine, ancient and contemporary knowledge through textual exegesis. As a map

¹³ On the Trinity Compendium, see Chapter 5 above.

¹⁴ Evett, “Elizabethan,” 151 and 142.

¹⁵ Cp. the Introduction at the beginning of this book.

to the physician's reading experiences, the surviving notebooks invite the exploration of the wide range of publications and manuscripts he accessed over time.

Had he owned all the books he consulted for the composition of his notebooks, the physician's reading library would have comprised an impressive collection. His classical section would have been as well stocked as any college library of the time, including Latin and Greek authorities such as Aristotle, Homer, Virgil, Cicero and Galenic writings, as well as medieval history and literature.¹⁶ The physician's copies of contemporary works on natural philosophical subjects, however, could not have been accommodated on the few shelves usually set aside for them in late sixteenth-century academic libraries. Here his sources are particularly rich in vernacular works: English writings, followed by French, Italian and German publications. The *medica* and *alchemica* represented in the notebooks and, therein, the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", merit a closer investigation.

2.1. *Medica*

Medicine was one of the most exciting areas of learning to explore in books in the sixteenth century. Publications of both classical and contemporary authors travelled further than any medical student of previous generations ever could. Conflicting theories about the causes of disease and its treatment spread in an infectious manner. Moreover, Paracelsian lore and discussions of its intricacies, both by supporters and opponents of these theories, turned the written medical debate into a complex matter. It was in this environment that the Sloane notebook compiler cut a path through medical information in his notebooks.

The medical notebooks (most typically BL MSS Sloane 1093, 1099 and 1158) facilitate an identification of the physician's reading material thanks to their scholarly presentation: their mostly Latin paratext (written in accordance with the medieval written medical tradition, which was perpetuated at universities and in print) often lists an author or year, i.e. publication date, after each excerpt. These pieces of information sufficed for his own reference. Unfortunately, he rarely indicated an exact title. Manuscript sources supplemented the printed materials, sought out specifically and avidly by the physician for the purpose of comparison and critical evaluation. In these

¹⁶ Information overload, college libraries and sixteenth-century book culture were introduced in Chapter 5 above.

instances, the source is even more difficult to pinpoint. The entire 'virtual' medical library of the physician nevertheless shows clear areas of preference.¹⁷

The causes of diseases and the workings of the human body represent the physician's basis of knowledge. He explored them through Latin medical literature including pathologies (e.g. by Paris professor Jacques Houllier) and diagnostic texts (such as works on uroscopy by Petrus Forestus and Henry Daniel's *Liber uricrisiarum*, circulated in manuscript). Plague treatises (mostly by French doctors, like Jean Antoine Sarazin's *De peste commentarius* and works by Laurent Joubert and Auger Ferrier) are predictable additions to his literature given the frequent but sporadic outbreaks of the disease. Yet works on syphilis, otherwise so popular with the physician's contemporaries, appear to be absent from his reading list.¹⁸ Regimen and paediatric works (e.g. by fellow-countryman Thomas Phaer), gynaecological treatises (by Spanish colleague Luis Mercado), botanical works on the uses of plants in remedies (e.g. Pietro Andrea Mattioli's oeuvre) and works on remedies and pharmacopoeia (notably including Conrad Gesner's work as well as that of his botanical student Anton Schneeberger) complement the foundations of his reading. Accordingly, medical notebooks in the Sloane series cover a broad spectrum of known diseases of the early modern period, from the cold ("morbus frigidi") to the hot (diverse fevers), from head to toe (albeit with the customary skirting of the legs), with especially careful treatment of pains (e.g. "colicus dolor") (MS Sloane 1099, ff. 5^v-6^r).

Finding strategies to restore health to a body was the physician's most urgent pursuit. The works he consulted specifically on the manufacture and administration of remedies, pharmacopoeia, had been born out of an early medieval desire to systematise, record and rationalise pharmaceutical practises—one that the physician would continue in a different way in his alchemo-medical notebooks, as will be seen below. Even early modern pharmacopoeia like those consulted by the physician were derived from the *Antidotarium Nicolai*, the first comprehensive, organised pharmaceutical encyclopaedic collection of remedies in the Western world, composed in the mid-twelfth century and printed as early as in 1471.¹⁹ All notebook remedies thus follow a familiar format: they comprise a brief description of the

¹⁷ See Table IV (at the end of this chapter) for of printed sources referenced in the notebooks.

¹⁸ See e.g. Slack, *Impact*; and Quézel, *Mal*.

¹⁹ Goltz, *Mittelalterliche Pharmazie*.

remedy and traditional alternative terminology or names, often with a reference to alchemical authorities, followed by claims to its uses and efficacy, and, added by the compiler, a reference to the source of the information. The following notebook entry entitled “venenum pestis” describes a vaguely miraculous cure for the plague able, according to this source, to bring the near-dead back to life.

Ex Scorpionibus solet parari quoddam oleum valde compositum et apud omnes Chymistas celeberrimum vulgo oleum Elementis appellatum quod et in veneno assumpto et in pestilentibus affectibus admirabiles edit effectus, semimortuos patientes reviviscere faciens, quod oleum in casu isto summo opere commendo si eo solo loci arteriarum exteriores et cordis regio inungantur. libro de peste. pag. 176. BL MS Sloane 1099, f. 6^v 20

It is not only in the reference to the chymical connections of scorpion oil that this excerpt shows an affinity with alchemy, but also in the ideal of a substance that removes bodily illness. Significantly, however, neither the passage cited above nor the traditional pharmacopoeia recorded the method or manufacture of remedies in any detail. Knowledge about their preparation was assumed in typical readers, i.e. mostly academically trained physicians or apothecaries, as the Middle Ages turned into the early modern period.

Ingredients peppered throughout the medical notebooks include herbal, mineral and animal substances; those available in any pharmacy, garden or kitchen, as well as more notable, often more expensive or rare materials. The physician himself underlined, among other things, cinnamon, “crocus martis” (iron sulfate), various *aquae vitae* and wines. Magical-medical objects from faraway lands, like the following, provide an impression of the range of items the physician considered in his medical research—a range not unusual for early modern medicine, yet interesting if juxtaposed with the substances, methods and efficacy of alchemically produced remedies.

A certayne stone within the Gall of a hogge ys fownd in thease indies in the contrie of pan which they esteeme more againste poyson & other diseases then the Bezoar stone the portuigals call it petra de porco that ys hogges stone. It ys mucho used in malacca. linschotten pag. 139. BL MS Sloane 1127, f. 12^{r-v}

²⁰ *Transl.*: “It is customary to prepare a strongly composed oil from scorpions, and it is called the common elementary oil, celebrated by all chymists; and it destroys the symptoms in those stricken by poison or affected by the plague in wonderful ways; wherefore I strongly recommend the oil in question, if only administered by rubbing into the outer arteries and around the region of the heart. Book on the Plague, page 176”.

References like these extend the physician's library of medical relevance significantly beyond the abovementioned basic works. The author of the abovementioned passage, Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, was a Dutchman and prolific writer who travelled the Far East in the late sixteenth century. The notebook compiler was also familiar with the work of Marcus Oddus (Marco degli Oddi), an Italian doctor who had only recently introduced clinical education in his local hospitals.²¹ Moreover, all authors that can be identified from the doctor's (often cryptic) references are his contemporaries or near-contemporaries, often men whose interests and affiliations relate to the grand movements in education, medicine and natural philosophy of the sixteenth century. Thus, we find humanist doctors (Johannes Manardus, Pietro Andrea Mattioli) in the physician's reading list as well as writings by Paracelsus (if only rarely excerpted and referenced), Paracelsus' critics (e.g. Conrad Gesner) and Paracelsians (Joseph Duchesne, *alias* Quercetanus, and popular medical writer Jean François Fernel).²² Further mentioned in matters of alchemo-medical contexts are Viennese imperial physician Johannes Crato von Krafftheim (1519–1585) and Dutch physician Bernhard Dessenius van Cronenburg (1510–1574).

Particularly noteworthy is the physician's consultation of works by doctors with a keen interest and practical experience in alchemy *cum* medicine: Georgio Melichio, who operated a distillery at a pharmacy in Venice;²³ German doctor Johann Winter (Joannes Guinterius) and his French colleague Petrus Palmarius (Pierre le Paulmier, 1568–1610), who supported the incorporation of chemical remedies into academic medicine,²⁴ and Martin Kopp (Martinus Copus), author of a treatise on the dangers and benefits of the then so popular "glass of antimony".²⁵ Here, the distinction between medical and alchemical items is difficult, perhaps not even necessary. In the compiler's literary and practical experiences, medicine clearly received an alchemical influence.²⁶

²¹ Klestinec, "History".

²² Studies on Paracelsus and his English reception were initiated by Debus, *English Paracelsians*, and amended in Webster, "Alchemical and Paracelsian"; see also Pumfrey and Dawbarn, "Science"; Grell, *Transformation*; and Pumfrey, "Spagyric Art"; as well as Webster, *Paracelsus and "Paracelsus"*, and Williams and Gunnoe, *Paracelsian Moments*, which contains a comprehensive Paracelsus bibliography. Original, if often pseudonymous *Paracelsica* are edited by Kühlmann and Telle, *Corpus Paracelsisticum*. On Paracelsianism in France see Kahn, *Alchimie*.

²³ Palmer, "Pharmacy".

²⁴ Shackelford, *Philosophical Path*, 214; Debus, *French Paracelsians*, 19–20.

²⁵ Copus, *Spissglas*. Shackelford, *Philosophical Path*, 434; see also Kühlmann and Telle, *Corpus Paracelsisticum*, 397.

²⁶ References listed in the notebooks which could not clearly be matched to a single

2.2. *Alchemica*

The history of alchemical writing and its permeation of early modern culture is quite different from that of medicine. Most alchemical texts the physician consulted were only circulated in manuscript. The reconstruction of his reading materials is, accordingly, more difficult. Some printed books bridging the subjects of medicine and alchemy via Paracelsians, like Kopp's *Das Spissglas Antimonium* and von Suchten's *De Secreto Antimonii*, appear in the notebooks' excerpts.²⁷ The physician also scoured Mandeville's travel accounts for information on creatures, e.g. gryphons, which he added to a list of animal metaphors commonly used to describe alchemical substances (MS Sloane 1150, ff. 33^v–37^r; Mandeville reference on f. 37^r).

Classical alchemical authors referenced, and perhaps consulted in print, include ancient Arabic alchemist Morienus, whose teachings had been introduced to the Western world as early as in the twelfth century and became very popular in the form the Latin *Liber de compositione alchimiae*; as well as John of Rupescissa, the renowned fourteenth-century author of alchemical and prophetic works. Both major schools of Western alchemy, Lullian and Paracelsian, are represented as well as works attributed to Lull and Paracelsus—the latter clearly considered under development and investigation. And finally, a strong presence of vernacular alchemy, with an emphasis on alchemical poetry, permeates the alchemical notebooks, sourced from its thriving, primarily anonymous manuscript tradition. Here the physician's scrupulousness of recording author's names, if at all, only when they are fixed and proven is telling: he merely acknowledged George Ripley by name, but did not repeat any of the attributions punctuating the vernacular alchemical oeuvre in ever changing permutations.²⁸

It is interesting to note here that subject areas covered in the purely alchemical Sloane notebooks concern mainly transmutatory alchemy of a general nature, but also, occasionally, discussions of the manufacture of gold for pecuniary purposes or other practical and theoretical aspects of the alchemical work. Most alchemical notebooks, however, intersect with the *pharmaceutica* and contain recipes proper, i.e. texts providing ingredients and instructions in the kind of detail noted above as missing from standard pharmacopoeia.

author or category are, in alphabetical order, Stephan Arnold, Ludovicus de Lannay, B Angelus, Hermius, Horpius, Prosper and Octav. Robertus.

²⁷ On Copus see footnote 25 above; von Suchten, *De Secretis Antimonii*; Priesner, "Suchten, Alexander von".

²⁸ See Chapter 3 above.

The “Verses upon the Elixir” and associated poems permeate almost half of the physician’s extant notebooks, in multifarious guises. The “Verses” alone are recorded in four different versions. Some notebooks incorporate full texts or substantial fragments, others take individual lines from corpus texts and juxtapose them with each other.²⁹ The sources for these excerpts were a large number of manuscripts specifically sought out by the physician. His remarkably hands-on approach to alchemical poetry even inspired him to compose his own variant of the “Verses upon the Elixir”—a permutation of phrases on the alchemical principles and rhetorical fillers which do not, unfortunately, lend any substance to our insights into his understanding of alchemy:

for earthe & fyre commeth of one
 whyche ys father & moother of owre stone
 water & ayre commeth of the same
 I tell yowe the truthe in Goddes name.
 put thease togyther wythowte stryfe
 whyche maketh owre very stone of lyfe
 In the matrix when they be shytted
 looke never thy vessell be vnknitte
 till they have Engendered a stone
 That wyll brynge bothe sunne & moone
 Vnderstand thease wordes or thou begynne
 or litle forsoothe shalte thou wyne.
 for thou mayest faile for faulte of lyghte
 But the sunne & [*illeg.*] do shine full bryghte
 When thou haste water of ayre & ayre//
 of fyre & fire of earthe, then haste thou tharte. BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 47^r

Although not necessarily the finest example of sixteenth-century alchemical poetry, these few rhymes nevertheless encapsulate the essence of the Sloane notebook series: they are situated at the centre of the written culture of late sixteenth-century natural philosophy, with all its creative potential.

2.3. *Contemporary Libraries as a Source of Notebook Knowledge*

Where did the Sloane notebook compiler access all the books and manuscripts he excerpted? Although his identity is not clear, it does not seem obvious that he was not the owner of a private library on the scale of a John

²⁹ Notebooks containing alchemical verse are BL MSS Sloane 1097, 1105, 1113, 1114, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1170, 1171, 1181 and 1186. The Handlist of Manuscript Witnesses in the Bibliography below lists all items of sufficient length (one couplet or more) from the corpus around the “Verses” contained in these volumes.

Dee.³⁰ Yet early modern libraries would have provided the physician with ample literature.³¹ College libraries and college members' private collections are known to have supported and attracted readers; Tudor book collections were part of professional and social communication networks. While the addition of *alchemica* and *Paracelsica* to Cambridge college library holdings, as well as other institutional libraries, would not set in until the turn of the century, private libraries like Thomas Whalley's would have supplied this *desideratum*. Stemmata of texts from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" confirm that, in his search for alchemical literature, the physician excerpted from writings in different private and academic collections, over an extended period of time, and in various places—with a likely concentration on the southern English territories and the resources of London, Cambridge and Oxford book culture.³²

Private medical libraries deserve particular attention as a likely source of the Sloane notebooks compiler's information. A complement to professional medical tasks, borrowing, lending and annotating books was a characteristic, flourishing part of medical culture in Tudor Cambridge.³³ There are numerous examples of sixteenth-century Cambridge gentlemen whose collections are distinctly medical in character, however large or small the number of books they owned.³⁴ Many of these private book collections consisted primarily of printed works of relatively recent date, and thus agree with the Sloane notebooks' medical sources.³⁵ Books owned by scholars other than physicians, are less likely to have catered for the physician's tastes: Robert Cotton, whose library not only absorbed the books of Elizabethan collector-patron John Lord Lumley but also served as a reference library for his contemporaries, owned relatively few *medica*.³⁶ In medical collections, alchemical items often suffered from a similar marginal position.

³⁰ Apart from being a true polymath and bibliophile, Dee pursued the aim to build a national library. See Sherman, *John Dee*.

³¹ For a general introduction to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century libraries, see Leedham-Green and McKitterick, "Ownership". Lay book owners feature in Clark, "Ownership".

³² TCC MSS R.14.45 and R.14.56 were in private hands in Cambridge before their addition to the College Library in the seventeenth century (see Chapter 5 and below). See also Feingold, "Occult"; *ibid.*, *Mathematicians' Apprenticeship*; and De Ricci, *English Collectors*, 14–21.

³³ Fehrenbach, Leedham-Green and Black, *Private Libraries*; Leedham-Green, *Books*; Jones, "Reading Medicine," 167 ff.

³⁴ Leedham-Green and McKitterick, "Ownership," 323–324. Peter Murray Jones, "Book Ownership," 50, 61; *ibid.*, "Reading Medicine," 176.

³⁵ Lewis, "Faculty," 240–241.

³⁶ *DNB*, s.v. 'Cotton, Sir Robert Bruce' and s.v. 'Dee, John'.

In the case of Andrew Perne, a medical practitioner who held influential posts at Cambridge colleges, the number of *alchemica* among his books appears only low in comparison with the vast number of 2592 titles he left to Peterhouse.³⁷ Yet the collections of Thomas Lorkyn (Cambridge regius professor in physic from 1564 onwards and reformer of the academic medical education) and his father-in-law, John Hatcher (d. 1587) not only incorporated many of the printed medical books discussed above, but also included a relatively high proportion of *alchemica*, and are thus most pertinent to the Sloane notebook compiler's biblio-biography.³⁸ At the time of his death in 1591, Lorkyn owned 570 titles, among them 400 connected with medical studies, including a few books on chemical medicine.³⁹

In late sixteenth-century Oxford, too, academic physicians collected information on alchemy. Regius professor of physic (1561–1583) Walter Bayley's "interest in distillation, and in mineral and botanical *materia medica* was characteristic of medical fashion all over Europe in his generation and the one before."⁴⁰ While Lorkyn himself appears to have perused these publications with a theoretical mind, and his practice (and probably teaching) remained faithful to Galenic principles, "anyone who used his library had the opportunity at least to sample the views of such free spirits".⁴¹ The physician who composed the notebooks analysed here may well have been among these library users.

2.4. Libraries and Laboratory Knowledge

The prevalence of alchemical notes in the Sloane notebooks, the survival of such a large number of written documents and their compiler's medical profession pose one pertinent question: was the physician an 'arm-chair alchemist'? Sixteenth-century scholarship exhibited a general tendency towards approaching the book of nature through books. Many of the compiler's contemporaries, especially his academic colleagues, would have confined their alchemical ambitions primarily to textual exegesis. Yet there is ample evidence that the Sloane notebook compiler supplemented his

³⁷ Jones, "Reading Medicine," 161–163.

³⁸ Leedham-Green, *Books*; Lewis, "Faculty"; Jones, "Reading Medicine," esp. 159, 167 ff. and 176; Jayne and Johnson, *Lumley Library*; *DNB*, s.v. 'Lumley, John'; and McPherson, *Ben Jonson's Library*, 10. Lumley's catalogue of 1609 is TCC MS O.4.38.

³⁹ Medical book owners in Oxford are outlined in Lewis, "Faculty," 222 ff. See also the table presented in Jones, "Reading Medicine," 162–163; Sangwine, "Private Libraries," 167–184.

⁴⁰ Lewis, "Faculty," 235.

⁴¹ Jones, "Reading Medicine," 177; and Jones, "Book Ownership," 60–61.

alchemical readings with practical experiences, that he gathered alchemical information as much through the words of others as with his own eyes, and that his alchemical notebooks served as much for potential practical implementation as his medical ones.

The first piece of evidence for a practice-based approach to alchemy are the physician's personal commentaries in the alchemical notebooks. One compares the results of his personal preparation of "red glass of antimony" with its descriptions in his literary sources:

I fynde the essence of the redde glas of antimony p̄pared not to be the same of tholde philosophers of whyche they write so many matters in that it ys more earthly & of the grosser partes. BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 43^v

Another notebook (BL MS Sloane 1181, ff. 6^r–26^r) documents practice in a more immediate manner. It contains a numbered list of *desiderata* related to alchemical practice, a rare instance of a first-person account of experimentation and equipment. This list testifies both to the difficulties and practicalities of acquiring alchemical substances. It mentions simple substances ("2. To Buye of the purest & sincerest mercury that ys no waye counterfett nor made of leade"), composite, ready-made products ("18. To Buye golde & sylver calcined wyth a corrosiue water made of vitrioll & salte peter"), but also, and most significantly, a 'bucket list' of observations described in literature, to be experienced, compared and perfected in person:

23. To see the closynge of the leaste glasses sigillo salomonis and openinge of them agayne as vlstadius do teache cap. 20. q l. & howe manye wayes besydes this sealinge & openynge maye be doone.⁴²

24. To close a glasse wyth the mowthe of an other glasse sette fittely to yt, & to lute yt abowte wyth the Best lute, & howe the best luting ys made.

27. To learne the Best kynd of filtrynge

Interesting for the history of objects used in alchemical experimentation is an inventory of coveted glassware (items 20–22), including alembics, stills, a 'pelican' and glass vessels of different sizes, ranging from one ounce to a quart.⁴³ The description of an ideal furnace surprises with its candidness and fine observations:

⁴² The "vlstadius" mentioned here is probably Philip Ulstad, and likely refers to his "pioneering work on distillation and chemical technology" (Webster, *Health*, 310) of 1525: Ulstadius, *Coelum Philosophorum*.

⁴³ Groundbreaking archaeological studies of the materiality of alchemy include Martín-Torres, "Tools" and *ibid.*, "Solomon's House".

33. To make the fornaces of a reasonable heyght that they neede not to be stooped vnto, as ys at mystresse Bakers

This passage highlights the fact that the writer is interested in contemporary practices as well as models proposed in literature; the authority of works and craft intermingle here. Moreover, such evidence for practical experimentation by readers of *alchemica* is especially noteworthy when its writer is firmly situated in an academic medical context. Many entries in the list, as it survives today, have been cancelled to the point illegibility; apparently they were crossed out after the described item had been read, seen, tried or acquired.

However, most interesting in the present context are the physician's plans concerned with the reading and writing of books. Recorded together with the cited, planned acquisition of alchemical apparatus and experience, they underline the pragmatic yet creative nature of the notebooks:

45. To wryte all the names of every particular substaunce that ys fownde in the operation or wourckyng vpon the glasses or vesselles that conteyneth the stuffe, cum anno domini et die

Although describing the labelling of vessels, this writing activity mirrors the assignation of separate volumes to the study of different substances. More to the point, however, is the following note.

54. To conferre every practyse wyth the rules in the Booke of Theoremes & wyth The notes or signes of perfection or trewe wourcke

Perhaps comparable with the abovementioned outline of the allegorical paintings, these passages describe a programme for scribal activities which the physician certainly followed with much thought and deliberation. Some of the notebooks in the extant Sloane series were first conceived as part of this list. Other reading reminders even refer to his own notebooks from the series:

lege tractatum excellentissimum et vere aureum de plumbo philosophorum in libro saturni pagine 295. 296. 297. 298. nec te legisse penitebit

BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 43^r ⁴⁴

The "liber saturni" (BL MS Sloane 1097), a collection of information on the metal lead, will feature in more detail below.

⁴⁴ *Transl.*: "Read the excellent and truly golden (i.e. splendid) tractate on the lead of the philosophers in the book of Saturn, pp. 295–298, and it will not displease you to have read it."

A final remarkable category of personal notes in the Sloane notebooks concerns questions about alchemical concepts, which represent a more open-ended enquiry into the nature of alchemy and its language: “Quaestio. Cur lapis a philosophis leo viridis et Aquila volans appellatur?” (BL MS Sloane 1150, f. 32^r).⁴⁵ The physician’s interest in alchemy thus encompassed alchemical texts and their interpretation, experimentation in the alchemical workshop, and the connection between the two. The notebooks not only provided remote access to the world of writing, but also a link to the material world.

3. THE ORGANISATION OF THOUGHT IN THE NOTEBOOK SERIES

The acquisition of blank books does not the notebook make. In the process of transforming reading into writing, an early modern notebook compiler could choose from established options for manuscript compilation (such as the commonplace books introduced in the previous chapter), which he might apply more or less consistently. The Sloane notebook compiler, however, adapted the humanistic tools of writing (like those described in Chapter 5) further. His notebooks document several stages of reading and sorting information, both in their sequence and in their page layout, i.e. the arrangement of texts on the manuscript page. While his contemporaries’ attempts at commonplacing often turned out to be unconvincing and fragmentary, the physician’s notebook system mirrors the way in which he structured his own thoughts about alchemy and medicine. They became a tool of learning.

Some of the physician’s contemporaries are well-known creators of similarly extensive alchemical notebooks, most prominently London merchant-turned-prisoner Clement Draper (ca. 1541–1620); it is noteworthy that Draper also copied texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”.⁴⁶ His method of using texts as technologies, for the virtual witnessing of experiments and advancement of his understanding has been likened metaphorically to the alchemical use of a ‘pelican’ (distilling apparatus).⁴⁷ But while Draper was self-reflective and explicit about his reading, writing and experimenting process, the Sloane notebook series reveals its compiler’s approach only implicitly.

⁴⁵ *Transl.*: “Question: Why is the stone called the green lion and flying eagle by the philosophers?”

⁴⁶ BL MSS Sloane 317, 320, 1423, 3688, 3748, and part of Bod MS Ashmole 1394.

⁴⁷ Harkness, *Jewel House*, 196 ff., esp. 199.

3.1. *The Order of Medicine*

The medical notebooks are a natural starting point for the analysis of the Sloane notebook series' organisation. They represent the compiler's first steps into natural philosophical literature, both logically and perhaps chronologically, as they are directly related to his professional interests. Late sixteenth-century medicine and its writings followed certain customs of presentation in the physician's sources and beyond—structures which were serviceable and comparatively easy to emulate. Therefore, just as these medical notebooks resemble rather conventional sixteenth-century collections of medical recipes in their content, their arrangement is comparable with that of other contemporary medical compendia.

One volume (BL MS Sloane 1099) may serve here as an example of a typical medical notebook the Sloane series compiler would have written while visiting another's library. The arrangement of excerpts therein is chronological, indicating that the compiler read books one after the other, from front to back, rather than in parallel. He kept notes as he progressed, akin to a register of reading. Hence the excerpts are not fitted into a previously arranged classification, as would be the case in a typical commonplace book.

At first sight it appears curious that all plague remedies in the volume, including the one cited above (written on f. 6^r), were crossed out. Without further evidence one might think that the physician had dismissed the cancelled remedy in favour of another, or failed to produce the medication or to apply it successfully. The actual reason for the cancellation, however, offers itself in the form of a second medical volume (BL MS Sloane 1093). In this second, and truly secondary, notebook (entitled "Collectanea de morbis, et eorum remedies [sic]"),⁴⁸ the physician reworked the previous volume's chronological reading notes into something reminiscent of a medical commonplace book or even the pharmacopoeia he consulted so avidly. He divided the volume which was to contain the "Collectanea" *a priori* into sections dedicated to specific parts of the body or illnesses (loosely arranged 'from head to toe'); then placed excerpts belonging to each category below each heading. Within each section the reading notes remain chronological, listing extracts from one book in their original order, then excerpts from another book, and so on.⁴⁹ With future expansion of his reading and,

⁴⁸ "Anthology of illnesses and their remedies".

⁴⁹ Thomas Fayreford's notebook is a well-researched example of a similar if earlier, fifteenth-century medical collection: Jones, "Harley MS 2558"; on commonplace books see Chapter 5 above.

consequently, this volume in mind, the physician left additional space in each section, some of which remains blank until today. And whenever he transferred one entry from the exemplar to the new compilation, he cancelled the original entry, probably to avoid accidental duplication. Indeed, cancelled passages from the chronological notebook appear *verbatim* in the organised volume. It is further possible to tell that he started the compilation of the “Collectanea” at a well-chosen period of his research, i.e. once he could gauge the approximate space needed for each body part and illnesses that afflict it, and after he had read and excerpted a body of literature sufficient for an initial contribution to be made to each section. The “Collectanea” appear to have been written in quite a short space of time, as ink and handwriting are fairly consistent, and the volume is fairly complete in the shape it survives in today. The result is a handbook fit for use in medical practice.⁵⁰

One might expect the exemplar, BL MS Sloane 1099, to have been redundant as soon as its unwieldy entries had been transferred to the “Collectanea”. Yet both manuscripts survive, the latter fairly in a pristine condition, the former incorporating numerous cancellations. A look at the entire Sloane notebook series reveals that the physician generally kept both chronological and systematic volumes to modify and reuse their entries in other notebooks; the descendant of the “Collectanea” must have been lost, but their contents also influenced the compilation of some pharmaceutical notebooks in the series. The initial reading notes were not intended to be provisional: they constituted raw materials fit for several applications to other notebook contexts. The introduction of this intermediate stage to the compilation of commonplace books made the choice of categories and items to sort under them a more reflected and experienced one than the straightforward introduction of classifications so commonly used by the physician’s contemporaries. His process represents experimentation on paper.⁵¹

Incidentally, the books listed as ‘pharmaceutic-medical’ in the Sloane catalogue reveal much less about the physician’s approach to medicine than one might expect. They may be summarised as referring to Paracelsian

⁵⁰ It is not possible to determine the exact connection between these medical writings and the physician’s medical practice; for a similar historiographical conundrum see Kassell, “How to Read,” 9 ff.

⁵¹ Cp. Harkness, *Jewel House*, 196. On experimentation and learning also Smith, *Body*, esp. 17–20.

theories and writings. Alchemy and medicine are generally closely associated across the Sloane notebooks, partly by means of cross-references, partly by the natural overlap of literature the physician read for medical and alchemical purposes. The distinctions made here for pragmatic purposes are not precise. Hence, the organisation of the 'pharmaceutic-medical' notebooks will be captured appropriately with the analysis of the alchemical notebooks below.

The almost painstakingly methodical layout of the medical notebooks, while conventional, merits further consideration, as it mirrors the physician's rather clinical mind. Each page was designed before any textual elements were added to it; its sections were allocated as mechanically as the "Collectanea"'s subject categories. Using ruled lines, the physician separated broad margins from the main body of the page. These margins would have been ideal for the addition of numerous commentaries; they are the types of margins that would have served the readers of the Trinity Compendium of the previous chapter very well. However, the physician only added keywords into them for orientation (names of ingredients or diseases) but left the margins otherwise blank. The main entries, written in the central sections of each page, are numbered consecutively and separated from each other with horizontal lines. Together with the margins' lines, these form compartments for each textual element: primary texts in the centre, related primary texts above or below the same, and ordering paratextual elements towards the edge of the page. Further, as mentioned above, each entry starts with a *numerus currens* and ends with a reference to its source. The only other structuring method employed in the medical notebooks, if sparingly, is the underlining of individual terms and graphic emphasis, mostly by means of bolder pen strokes. Overall, while his consistency in page layout, sorting information and the referencing of sources is admirable and rare, on the whole, the Sloane notebook compiler worked within the parameters which were used and useful for literate medical practitioners in general.

3.2. *The Arrangement of Alchemical Information*

The alchemical notebooks represent their compiler's foray into a craft and science not structured externally by universities, a *Fachliteratur* or scholarly tradition. It is perhaps this comparatively disordered state of alchemical literature, both ancient and early modern, that inspired the physician to impose a structure of his own, in an attempt to orientate himself in alchemical lore. His notebook writing for *alchemica* is essentially different from the process described for the *medica* above.

While not explicitly declared as such, on close inspection, the bulk of the Sloane notebook series represents a reference library on alchemical substances. Here, each notebook is dedicated to a specific alchemical substance: one is explicitly dedicated to lead in its title (BL MS Sloane 1097: “*liber saturni id est de plumbo philosophorum, seu argento viuo Coagulato./ lapis occultus*”, f. 1^r); other notebooks’ contents indicate their focus on mercury, antimony and other metals or elements. Cross-references between the *alchemica*, and the medical notebooks, built a network of knowledge on human and alchemical bodies and their relations to each other.

It should be noted that a few notebooks were set aside to gather information which would not fit into these categories; another couple of volumes are dedicated to Latin traditional *alchemica*. These will not be considered in the following paragraphs, which describe the main body of alchemical notebooks in the Sloane series.

The act of systematisation of information underlying the alchemical notebooks’ compilation is rather intricate. The alchemical notebooks are clearly the result of a structured method of reading tailored to the physician’s purposes. While the *medica* were first excerpted and then sorted, no records of chronological reading notes survive for *alchemica*. Although one must allow for the possibility of missing and lost volumes, it seems that the initial, documenting stage of reading was omitted here. Manuscript miscellanies whence the physician sourced his alchemical texts may have acted as preliminary arrangements instead. Excerpts from these alchemical manuscripts were written into commonplace-type notebooks straightaway.

This early organisation necessitated further structuring methods. Here, too, the physician decided against the development of secondary volumes, a method he had applied in his medical notes. Instead, he established connections between themes, substances and experiments on the existing manuscripts’ pages. When he identified a subcategory in a notebook, the physician compiled an index to the relevant entries in the same volume; for example, BL MS Sloane 1098 displays an index on “crystal” materials on its inner front cover. He would also use blank space within the notebooks to dedicate subsections to such ancillary themes. For instance, the notebook containing the physician’s abovementioned list of alchemical materials and experiences includes several pages on quicksilver (BL MS Sloane 1181, ff. 1^v–5^r). A substantial section of another notebook (BL MS Sloane 1153, ff. 7^r–51^r) contains a variety of notes on the compatibility of certain alchemical elements (entitled “*Harmonia Corporis*”).

Cross-references indicating correlations between texts or between useful pieces of information found in different notebooks are shorthand equiv-

alents to the mentioned lists and subsections. Although these cross-references are not spelled out explicitly, some can be identified by close observation. For example, the trefoil sign which appears frequently in all Sloane notebooks appears to refer to BL MS Sloane 1095. To implicate other notebooks, the physician employs specific Latin synonyms of the word 'book' or 'volume' as proper names: "manuscriptus", "thesaurus" or "codicillus" refer to three different manuscripts which are, unfortunately, lost. And whenever alchemical recipes were required to appear in several notebooks, among them texts from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", the compiler marked the duplication with a cancellation of the text in the primary location or, more frequently, procured different versions of the same text which would serve different notebooks in different capacities. His use of four different versions of the "Verses upon the Elixir" (as mentioned above) and the countless isolation of couplets from associated texts, which appear in a variety of notebooks, is based on this method. In combination of all these ordering devices and the multiplicity of manuscript texts, the physician's use of the alchemical notebooks takes textual exegesis to new realms.

Since the original passages in all alchemical notebooks remain legible, even the carefully cancelled items, it would be possible to draw a timeline of their composition had we all notebooks available for inspection. But even the surviving notebooks show that this was by no means a straightforward progression of thought and knowledge, but a more complex interaction of notetaking, reading, cross-referencing and refining. The increasing sophistication of the physician's understanding of alchemical matters emerges with the complexity of his writing techniques, based on a medical professional background and with a view to the medical employment of alchemical procedures.

With this general sequential organisation of the alchemical notebooks in mind, it is worth noting that the arrangement of alchemical knowledge on each manuscript page is different for texts in different languages. The Latin alchemical notebooks, a minority in the series, contain materials from classical and authoritative works. Somewhat equivalent in status to the medical authorities that permeated contemporary libraries, authoritative alchemical texts are presented in a similar layout as the medical notebooks, but they show a wider range of graphical features, including the frequent use of bold script, underlining and red ink. Instead of merely recording catchwords, their marginal space contains substantial commentaries and references; the latter operate not with names and titles, but almost exclusively with symbols and page numbers. Many entries provide a text's *incipit* ending in "etc." and followed by an explanation; and significantly, the commentary

was often authored by the physician rather than received knowledge. All these critical devices suggest that the physician was intimately familiar with his alchemical sources. His reception of *alchemica* was much more vivid, complex, creative and experimental than his scholarly-detached approach to *medica*.

The vernacular *alchemica*, including the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, create a much more spontaneous arrangement of a notebook page. Adjustments range from a simple introduction of an additional margin for further references or commentary to the abandonment of all margins, compartments or numbering sequences. On these pages, form and purpose seem to coincide: just as the physician experimented with the poems, their sections and the ways in which they may be combined in order to yield a full rendition of a particular substance’s properties and uses, so the script on the manuscript page moved in unprecedented ways, almost like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to contribute to an unknown picture.

The physician’s commentary on the corpus texts remains primarily Latin in language.⁵² English prose explanations, although rarer, also render parallel passages from other works which are intended to elucidate difficult terms and concepts. Significantly, throughout his critical engagement with English *alchemica*, the physician implicitly acknowledged the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” as an interconnected corpus of writings. He arranged passages from the corpus in clusters. Three manuscripts in particular serve this function (BL MSS Sloane 1092, 1095 and 1098).⁵³ Further, phrases he quotes in his annotations, to elucidate specific passages throughout the

⁵² BL MSS Sloane 1097, 1105, 1113, 1114, 1146–1153, 1170, 1171, 1181 and 1186, contain, in alphabetical order, “Alumen”, “Exposition”, “On the ground”, “Richard Carpenter’s Work” variants “Spain”, “Titan Magnesia” and “Sun”, “Short Work”, the “Verses upon the Elixir” and “Wind and Water”, complete with Latin annotations.

⁵³ BL MS Sloane 1092 contains an amalgamated version of the “Verses”, version A, with the “Exposition” and “Wind and Water”, a medial fragment of the “Verses”, version B, starting at “Boast of Mercury”, and another fragment of the “Verses”, version B; MS Sloane 2095 supplements this with a clean copy of “Boast” and one of the exegetic prose text “Lead”; and MS Sloane 1098 diversifies the textual matter with the following combination of texts: “Verses”, version A amalgamated with the “Exposition”, three excerpts from version B (one starting with “Boast”) followed by a Latin commentary, and a variant with Latin commentary; two full copies of the two versions of “Boast” in variant forms; “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variant “Spain”/“Titan Magnesia” (one full copy, an initial fragment, and a variant medial fragment), “Sun” (version A long and an initial fragment of version B), “Father Phoebus” and “God Angel” (one full copy each); two copies of the “Short Work”, versions B and C (one with a Latin commentary); three copies of “Wind and Water” (version A, a fragment of the same and a fragment of version B, the last two with commentaries); and, finally, a substantial text rendition of “Mystery of Alchemists”.

Sloane notebook series, often represent precisely those elements of the corpus which hold it together (by virtue of intertextuality, interphraseology, shared concepts or origins).⁵⁴ Since the physician sought out and had access to a large variety of manuscript copies, he also demonstrably selected the exemplar for a poem's copy with greatest care. Stemmata show that he saw around a dozen manuscripts containing multiple copies of several corpus texts altogether; Diagram V just indicates volumes he used particularly carefully. The physician's selection criteria were concerned with clean, basic texts as a foundation for his exploration, supplemented with unusual variations he deemed illuminating; he dismissed variants he knew to contain significant scribal errors and did not copy them further. Attributions, titles or the appearance of a particular manuscript did not influence his process. For example, he chose to copy some texts from a Ripley Scroll, but favoured manuscript copies for others. His interest in the corpus was pragmatic, textual and alchemically motivated, his methodology scholarly, and his evaluation of the body of available alchemical writings both informed and astute. In the stemma (Diagram V) his manuscripts further stand out because they upset the chronological direction commonly present in traditional stemmata, as well as the ideal of one source producing several copies. The physician's notebooks cause knots, clusters and general disorder in the stemma, while his methods of notetaking produce order in the multitude of excerpts he took from his sources.

Finally, the physician's textual experimentation with the corpus texts becomes particularly apparent in two manuscripts which acted as source material for his composition of BL MS Sloane 1098 (TCD MS 389 and the Trinity Compendium, TCC MS R.14.56). Here the evidence for his originality strikes even the untrained eye: both his exemplars are simple compendia containing a variety of alchemical texts written page after page, line after line, in an orderly fashion. The physician would have seen the Trinity Compendium while it was still in private hands, probably Thomas Whalley's, before it entered the College Library and while it was being annotated in the margins.⁵⁵ He decided to use these two manuscripts as sources for the main text of the "Verses upon the Elixir" (in BL MSS 1092, 1095 and 1098 for the Trinity Compendium; MSS 1098 and 1171 based on the Dublin volume); he dismissed others in this process. However, he chose not to write a simple, unadorned and accurate compendium in replication of TCD MS 389;

⁵⁴ See Chapter 2 above.

⁵⁵ See Chapter 5 above.

nor was he inspired by the Trinity Compendium's annotations to incorporate them in his notebooks. Instead, he effected a complete re-organisation of their information: he extracted both manuscripts' singularly representative, standard texts of the "Verses", as perfect additions to his collection, and supplemented them with his own comments and cross-references. This diligence in textual choice, together with the boldness of his notetaking system, mark the notebooks as records of alchemical poetry as it was circulated in the late sixteenth century, and at the same time a medium for a particular individual's enquiry into things alchemical and medical.

In conclusion, the Sloane notebook compiler's way of thinking about the medical uses of alchemical processes resulted in the dissection of reading materials into passages referring to specific substances and the placing of these excerpts into specially designated notebooks, which interconnected with each other by means of cross-references. Retaining the traceability of their original context but allowing for further modification, the notebooks became a working space in which a new body of knowledge could be constructed from medical and alchemical elements. The physician thus not only witnessed, but took part in the contemporary discussion of alchemo-medical matters, even if his was a silent debate, on paper, with himself and mostly contemporary authors. Probably a practising doctor, he also seems to have acquired materials for a laboratory which would have been ideal for the manufacture of both conventional distillations and chemical remedies. His methods of experimenting on paper and in the workshop took his contemporaries' readings and uses of the "Verses upon the Elixir" and associated texts to a logical, meticulous conclusion.

Table IV: Some printed books referenced in the Sloane Notebook Series

Johannes Manardus = Giovanni Manardo	1462–1536	[poss.] <i>Epistolarum medicinalium libri</i> (1535)
Thomas Phaer = Jehan Goeurot	1510?–1560	[poss.] <i>Regiment of Life</i> (1544); [poss.] <i>Boke of Chylidren</i> (1544)
Petrus Andreas Matthiolus = Pietro Andrea Mattioli	1501–1577	translation of/commentary on Dioscorides's <i>De materia medica</i> (1544)
Jacobus Hollerius = Jacques Houllier	1510?–1562	[poss.] <i>De materia chirurgica</i> (1544); [poss.] <i>De morbis internis</i> (1578); [poss.] <i>De morborum curatione etc.</i> (1565)
Conrad Gesner	1516–1565	<i>Thesaurus Euonymi Philatri, de remediis secretis, liber physicus, medicus, et partim etiam chymicus ... nunc primum in lucem editus (Evonymus)</i> (1552; English from 1559)
Giorgio Melichio	s. xvi	[poss.] <i>Avvertimenti nelle composizioni de' medicamenti per uso della spectaria, con un diligente esame di molti semplici di Giorgio Melichio augustano, già spectale allo Struzzo di Venezia</i> (1557)
Montan = Joannes Baptista Montanus	1498–1551	[poss] <i>Opuscula varia ac praeclara: in quibus tota fere Medicina methodice explicatur ... H. Donzellini ... opera infinitis prope mendis vindicata, atque in duo volumina digesta</i> (1558); [or poss.] <i>Consultationes medicinalesin duos distinctae tomos, nunc primum post Valentini Lublini ... Hieronymi Donzellini Philippique Bechii editiones ac medici recognitae. Accessit ejusdem Reinert Sol. Consiliorum medicinalium sectio prima</i> (1560)
Johannes Garcaeus = Johannes Gartzke	1530–1574	<i>Meteorologia</i> (1568)
Antonius Schneeberger	1530–1581	[poss.] <i>Catalogus medicamentorum simplicium ...</i> (c. 1562); [poss.] <i>Medicamentorum facile parabilium aduersus omnis generis articularum dolore enumeratio ...</i> (1580)

- Auger Ferrier 1513–1588
s. xvi^{med}–s. xviiiⁱⁿ
[possibly] *De pudendagra lue Hispanica* (1564); [poss.] *Vera medendi methodus ...* (1574)
- Martinus Copus
= Arioponus Cephalus
= Martin Kopp
[probably] *Das Spissglas Antimonium oder Stibium genandt, in ein Glas gegossen, es sey geel oder rodt, das man Vitrum antimonii nemmet, ein warhafftige Giff und gantz gefehrliche schedliche Artzney sey ...* (1569)
- Alexander von Suchten 1520–1590
De Secretis Antimonii (1570)
- Janus Antonius Saracenus
= Jean Antoine Sarazin
[poss.] *De peste commentarius* (1572)
- Henricus Wolfius
= Heinrich Wolff
[unidentified publication of 1576, poss. mistaken reference for: Henricus Wolfius and Bernhardus, von der Marck und Tervis, *Von der Hermetischem Philosophia, das ist, von dem Gebenedaiten Stain der weisen* (1586)]
- Roch Le Baillif d. 1605
[poss.] *Le demosterion de Roch Le Baillif Edelphie Medecin spagiric... Sommaire veritable de la Medecine Paracelsique, extracte de luy en la plus part, par le dict Baillif ...* (1577–1578)
- Martin Ruland the elder 1532–1602
[poss.] *Curatationum Centuriarum* (1578–1596)
- Claudius Minos
= Claude Mignault 1526–1606
[probably] *Claudii Minois I.C. commentarii ad emblemata Andr. Alciati: ad postremam auctoris recognitionem aucti & recogniti* (ca. 1580)
- Joannis Fernelius
= Jean François Fernel ca. 1497–1558
[probably] *Therapeutices universalis* ([poss. ed.] 1581)
- Laurent Joubert 1529–1583
[poss.] *Traitté de la peste ... plus une question de la paralysie et deux paradoxes de la revulsion by Laurent Joubert* (1581)
- Donatus Antonius Ferrus [s. xvi]
[probably] *D. A. Ferri... de podagra enchiridion* (1585)

- Marcus Oddus
= Marco degli Oddi
1526–1591
[poss.] *Marci Oddi Patauni physici professoris Pro sua tutanda de putredine sententia apologia ...* (1585)
- Ludovicus Mercatus
= Luis Mercado
1520–1606
[poss.] *De mulierum affectionibus* (1587); [poss.] *De pulsibus libri duo in quibus tota ars cognoscendi morbos, et prognosticandi disertissime tractatur* (1592)
- Joannes Guinterius
= Johann Guenther von
Andernach
= Johann Winter
1505–1574
[probably] *Ioannis Guintherii Andernaci Medici Commentarius De Balneis, & aquis medicatis* (1565) and *De Medicina Veteri Et Nova Faciunda Commentarius Secundus* (1571), [poss. translation of Paulus Aegineta, *Opera de re medica* (1542, in an edition of 1588)], [poss. commentary on Marcilio Ficino, *De vita libri tres* (1549)]
- Johan van Heurne
1543–1601
[poss.] *Praxis medicinae nova ratio* (1587)
- Hieronymus Brisianus
= Girolamo Bresciano
fl. s. xvi²
[probably] *Methodus Scientiarum Hieronymi Brisiani Medici: Ubi quaecunque ad scientiarum pertinent conscriptionem, docte, ordinatim, ac distincte pertractantur* (1588)
- Petrus Forestus
1522–1597
[poss.] *De incerto, fallaci urinarum iudicio, quo uromantes, ad perniciem multorum aegrotantium, utuntur: & qualia illi sint observanda, tum praestanda, qui recte de urinis sit iudicaturus, libri tres* (1589)
- Paracelsus
= Philippus Theophrastus
Aureolus Bombast von
Hohenheim
1494–1541
[poss.] *Bücher und Schrifften* (10 vols.) (1589–1591)
- Quercetanus
= Joseph Duchesne
1544–1609
[poss.] [*Opera Medica*] (1575) = *A breefe aunswere of Josephus Quercetanus Armeniacus, ... to the exposition of Iacobus Aubertus Vindonis, concerning the original, and causes of Mettales. Set fourth against chimists ... By John Hester, practitioner in the Spagericall Arte* (1591)
- Jan Huyghen van
Linschoten
1563–1611
[poss.] *Delinectio Orarum maritimarum, Terrae vulgo indigetatae Terra do Natal item Sofalae Mozambicae, & Milindae, Insulae q Sancta Laurentii ...* (1596) [or other early travel writing]

Meurnio
 [= Théodore Turquet de
 Mayerne?]
 1573–1654/5
 [poss.] *Apologia in qua videre est inuolatis Hippocratis [et] Galeni legibus, remedia
 Chymice preparata, tuto usurpari posse, ad cuiusdam anonymi calumnias Responsio*
 (1603)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Information overload not only applied to the early modern period, but also applies to the nature of sources for the history of alchemy today. Historians' difficult task is to find fresh and illuminating ways to navigate a body of writing whose manifestations and forms, migration through manuscripts, across disciplines and geographical areas are as diverse as their original writers' and readers' lives and work. This book has proposed and demonstrated a historiographical approach based on a history of texts in manuscripts, particularly *anonyma*, guided by the textual networks of alchemical poems. The boundaries of this research were defined by a family of texts, the corpus around the poem "Verses upon the Elixir". Its directions and applications were suggested by the historical materials themselves. Chapters 3 and 4 investigated the roles of authorship and authority in the reception of the corpus. They discovered that named authorship and distinctive manuscript features like a scroll format and illustrations did not have the same impact on the poems' reception as they do on our perception of the body of alchemical writing and manuscripts today. Chapters 5 and 6 combined the history of the corpus around the "Verses" with more familiar narratives about institutions, collections and notetaking techniques. Here the verse-related angle provided insights into the minds of both anonymous and named individuals who had hitherto escaped closer historical analysis. In all studies the focus on text corpora lent a new perspective on materials partly familiar and partly undiscovered. Historical disentanglement of a pandemonium of sources, when ordered by the history of corpora of texts, can, therefore, expand our knowledge about the communities around the individuals wrote and received them.

Beyond the themes highlighted in these studies many more remain to be explored in future scholarship. My list of *desiderata*, as prompted by this research, includes increased investigation on the communication of ideas at the lower ends of the alchemical-social strata: analysis of texts used by anonymous alchemical writers and practitioners with interests ranging from the metallurgical to the philosophical, and any kind of alchemical texts from brief, elliptic recipes to lengthy theoretical treatises. Again, manuscript manifestations of texts, complete with annotations and textual changes, would offer a useful approach to hitherto undiscovered material. This research would successively capture the breadth of alchemical activity

in the Renaissance. The materiality of manuscripts, another aspect of historiography that merits a dedicated focus in the history of alchemy, would provide the tools for these inquiries.

Another area opened up by the case studies in this book from a slightly different angle is a reader-driven history of libraries and collections. The collector as reader and the history of books after they enter a collection, beyond disciplinary boundaries intimated by an institution or its shelving system, offer much food for thought: they supplement the impressions of the role of alchemy in society recovered by the recent work on the sites where chymistry was practised.¹ An 'institutional history' of alchemy would also aid the effort of discovering historical practices and correcting a historical record that had originally, unwittingly, edited alchemy out of academic circles.

A matter only touched upon here but worthy of note is the study of pre-Paracelsian contacts between medicine and alchemy in their manuscript context, and thus in their literary cultural contexts. Here, too, the book as object, as means of the preservation and transmission of knowledge, and silent witness of practical approaches to texts will suggest fruitful paths, and a consideration of the movement of texts situated between the medical and the alchemical will open up inquiries beyond case studies on individual books and personalities: in this instance, a thorough study of the recipe as text form would be particularly promising.

A third area of pressing questions in the history of alchemy concerns alchemical expression: terminology, genres, and the non-verbal communication of alchemical lore. This book focused on alchemical verse; and my subsequent work on alchemical images is intended to investigate the communication of alchemical practices in non-verbal elements of alchemical manuscripts, and thus translates the approach shown here to other types of alchemical documentation. But much remains to be investigated once a certain cross-section of alchemical manuscript writings is evaluated. No matter what the specific type of text or document under investigation, corpus-based research will be ideal for distinguishing individualisations of texts and codices, regional or temporal fashions for textual or practical parts in the history of alchemy from more general movements. Both the individual and the wider context merit investigation, but, as their intermingling in the

¹ The Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry hosts a series of conferences on the 'Sites of Chemistry' to showcase this work, to date with a temporal focus more recent than the period discussed here, but nevertheless indicative of exciting research on places of chymical practice: <http://www.ambix.org/projects/sites-of-chemistry/> (4/2013).

final two case studies has shown, a corpus-based perspective adds another dimension to locating manuscripts and historical actors in the large web of communication that presents itself in extant alchemical manuscripts. Ideally, a significant number of critical editions and their conjunction in a virtual environment would highlight particularly noteworthy individuals, manuscripts, places and periods. The medium of digital editions and new approaches to stemmata would aid this process significantly.

A final logical step into the future of research to be mentioned here is the contextualisation of alchemical writings in the wider world of Middle English literature and culture. Here, too, a textual approach will facilitate the combination of research on other areas of Middle English writing, both literary and pragmatic. Joint textual corpora would also offer an opportunity for studies into the development of vernacular technical terminology and tropes over time. Certain parallel developments in, for example, medicine and alchemy, as well as influences of other languages and literatures and even fashions in the use of equipment would emerge (some of which are peculiar to alchemy, others borrowed from, or lent to, other areas of language, literature and practice).

All research directions outlined here naturally intersect with existing studies, and would complement them by merit of their textual-material approach to formerly neglected materials. The widest implications of research presented in this book, then, affect the discovery of research angles that capture new materials for historical investigation. The reception of anonymous *alchemica*, when seen through the history of the corpus around the "Verses", indicates that the genre of Middle English alchemical poetry lent authority to texts. I therefore selected it here as a theme guiding the researcher and reader of this book through a variety of materials not hitherto investigated in combination with each other, or not studied at all in existing scholarship. Like the texts investigated in this book, a large number of anonymous prose texts and unidentified text fragments, particularly in vernacular languages, lie undiscovered and unresearched in manuscripts and archives all over Europe and beyond. They are often neither captured in catalogues nor even classified appropriately to indicate their content, length or origin. But it is this recipe literature that defines practical applications of alchemy in medieval and early modern Europe. With a focus on the characteristics of texts it might be possible to find other criteria which helped these manuscripts' writers and readers navigate their texts, and this will define a strategy for their recovery and analysis. If not a recipe for the alchemical secret, corpus-based research may yet be a method of turning information overload into knowledge.

EDITIONS

PREFACE TO THE EDITIONS

The edition of a corpus of texts involves editorial decisions which are sensitive to the nature of the corpus, its scope and its individual texts, but also aims to keep the information provided manageable and useful to a wide variety of audiences. For the purposes of the present volume on the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” both the choice of textual material and the editorial treatment are necessarily pragmatic: all core texts are presented in a critical edition for each of their extant versions. Some ancillary texts are reproduced in diplomatic edition. The critical editions, the first to be published to date, are intended to facilitate access to the texts for researchers in and beyond the fields of late medieval and early modern English history and the history of alchemy. Their presentation and the extent of the critical apparatus balance the complexities of extant copies with an aim for readability, as specified below. The diplomatic editions are intended to provide further textual and cultural points of reference unencumbered by their texts’ convoluted histories (which would move far beyond the immediate context of the “Verses upon the Elixir”).

Each of the text editions is preceded by an introduction consisting of summaries of the standard text’s relation to the poem “Verses upon the Elixir”, variants, date of composition, author and title. It should be noted that my identification of variants constitutes an original contribution to scholarship: textual distinctions were not previously stated explicitly or consistently in the available catalogues and literature. For poems, the *NIMEV* reference is also provided. The manuscripts’ dates of composition are based on information from the relevant libraries’ catalogues and secondary literature, as well as my own insights into the palaeography and chronological order of the texts’ manifestations in the individual volumes. More information on the texts’ position within the corpus, chronology, variants, summaries of their contents and related literature may be found in Chapter 1, on authorship and attribution issues in Chapter 2 above. The corpus texts’ relations are also visualised in a diagram placed before Chapter 1, which may be a useful reminder of the conceptualisation of the corpus. Chapters 1 and 2 are not cross-referenced separately in the edition’s introductions for reasons of conciseness. Similarly, titles preserved in extant manuscripts are not repeated here but recorded in the Handlist of Manuscript Witnesses in the Bibliography below.

The discursive parts of each text's introduction are followed by a list of extant manuscript witnesses and the sigla they were assigned for the purposes of the critical edition. Full copies and substantial fragments are arranged in order of sigil (not manuscript shelfmark) and separately for each version (where applicable), to facilitate perusal of the edition apparatus. Sigla for version B texts are rendered in italics. Minor fragments, variants, lost copies and, occasionally, witnesses I was not able to consult in person are listed separately by shelfmark. Finally, bibliographical references of notable early print publications of the texts have been provided. The inclusion of full manuscript descriptions would have been unwieldy and impracticable in the framework of the present volume. References to standard catalogues comprising the most comprehensive information about the corpus' manuscripts are supplied in the Bibliography below. The introductions for core texts of the corpus finish with a visualisation of the extant witnesses' relations in the form of stemmata. The principles of their composition and presentation are summarised separately below.

All edition copies providing the basic texts for the critical editions (indicated by [edition copy] in the respective manuscripts lists) represent good text versions, i.e., they agree with an identifiable standard or common denominator of all surviving texts. Whenever more than one suitable copy was available the most ancient exemplar was chosen. Where an edition copy exhibits an unusual variant (a rare if inevitable phenomenon) a more characteristic alternative was substituted from a copy closely related to the edition copy, and the change recorded in the apparatus.

All text editions are based on normalised transcriptions which aim to retain original features of the text in a reader-friendly presentation. Abbreviations and contractions have been interpreted, expanded and added letters underlined accordingly. Spelling, punctuation and sentence division have been preserved; also, the use of 'u' and 'v', 'i', 'j', 'ij' and 'y', of 'ff' in initial position, ð ('eth') and þ ('thorn', although replaced with a 'y' where palaeographically justified) and the original capitalisation have been retained. Changes in script (generally concurrent with a change in language, e.g. from English to Latin) are not marked up. Numerals and measurements are rendered as in the exemplar where typographically possible (e.g. 'C' for 'one hundred'), otherwise transliterated; measurement symbols appear in translation; alchemical symbols have been replaced with their linguistic Latin equivalents. In these cases any varying notations in parallel texts have not been recorded. All editorial procedures specified apply to both poems and prose texts.

The critical apparatus provides a complete record of meaningful variations in all parallel witnesses of a text. The apparatus follows the sequence

of the main text, with variations identified by the lines in which they appear. Omissions of significant words or lines, structural changes to a text (e.g. the reversal of lines in couplets), additions and alterations of words and variant renditions of passages constitute the bulk of the apparatus. Variations in word order and spelling variants have been ignored unless they help or change the reading of a passage; conjunctions, prepositions, personal pronouns and other highly variable linguistic elements of the Middle and Early Modern English idiom were not considered in the apparatus. Minor scribal errors are noted only where they affect a text's historical reception or later manifestation in manuscripts. Similarly, marginal material has been widely neglected, and scribal emendation generally been recorded only if it appears in the main scribe's own hand. As for the visual presentation of the critical apparatus, spelling was retained for variations applying to a single witness only. However, whenever changes affect more than one copy and the extant witnesses show different orthographical forms, the spelling was modernised. Editorial notes used in the textual apparatus apply to the following word only unless round brackets indicate their expansion over a set of words. Round brackets may also indicate minor differences in individual entries gathering otherwise similar variations from a number of manuscripts. Square brackets and italicisation distinguish editorial comments from the text proper (see also the abbreviations below).

The following editions have not been supplemented with a commentary and glossary for several reasons. The corpus' varying and vast stock of terminology, references to alchemical equipment and procedures, possibilities of translation into alchemical practice and the development of all these aspects over the course of more than two centuries provide a complex, incongruent yet interconnected mass of information which could not be captured adequately in editorial paraphernalia. The corpus' wide-ranging geographical and institutional affiliations, associations with named personalities, historical readers' interpretations and literary influences remove the possibility of providing accurate yet simple and elegant explanations of any aspect of the corpus texts' contents and meaning. However, the descriptions in Chapter 1, the case studies forming the main focus of this book and modern editions of contemporary *alchemica* including a glossary or commentary may serve as ancillary references for the editions presented here.¹

The following editions are based on my own transcriptions and research, aided in part by the kind individuals listed in the Acknowledgements above. Any errors that remain are my own.

¹ See e.g. Reidy, *Thomas Norton's Ordinal*; Grund, *Misticall Wordes*.

1. ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE CRITICAL APPARATUS

<i>a.m.</i>	<i>alia manu</i>
<i>add.</i>	added
<i>alt.</i>	altered
BL	British Library
Bod	Bodleian Library
<i>canc.</i>	cancelled
<i>corr.</i>	corrected to
CUL	Cambridge University Library
ed./eds.	editor(s)
f./ff.	folio(s)
GUL	Glasgow University Library
<i>ill.</i>	illegible
<i>ins.</i>	inserted
KCC	King's College Cambridge
l./ll.	line(s)
MS/MSS	manuscript(s)
<i>om.</i>	omitted
<i>prec.</i>	preceded by
<i>repl.</i>	replaced by
s.	<i>saeculum</i>
TCB	<i>Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum</i>
TCC	Trinity College Cambridge
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
<i>var.</i>	variation
[]	editorial comment or addition
()	unit of words added or altered; <i>or:</i> minor variation in some witnesses
/	line break

2. NOTES ON THE STEMMATA

Core texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” are supplied with a visualisation of the relation between their extant witnesses below. These stemmata necessarily only provide a rough impression of the state of affairs. The frequently tentative dating of manuscripts and the diagrammatic confines of the stemma format limit the accuracy achievable with this type of representation. Further, with an unknown but certainly significant number of copies lost, relations between surviving witnesses are illuminating from a linguistic and textual point of view but do not always indicate material proximity, i.e. they do not necessarily imply that one copy-

ist had the exemplar indicated in the stemma at hand when compiling his own manuscript. Wherever such a material connection can be inferred with certainty, and, pertinently, supported with external evidence about the manuscripts and their production, this is mentioned in the main part of this book (Chapters 1 through 6). Generally, however, it is judicious to consider these stemmata scholarly tools, not depictions with an intrinsic truth value. Based on significant variations in the texts these stemmata are, nevertheless, good estimates of how the copied texts are related to each other.

The mode of visual representation for the corpus texts' stemmata was chosen with care. It is, with some modifications, based on traditional (Lachmann) stemmata and intended to support an understanding of the history of the individual texts, as well as of the entire corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", by merit of being particularly sensitive to the complex history of the texts and their manuscripts.² Changes to the traditional stemmatic method include the elimination of a single *urtext* for each text. However, whenever it is possible to infer the original existence of a lost witness acting as a common ancestor for later copies this is indicated with a grey sigil (x, y, z); this lost exemplar's position in the stemma is necessarily pragmatic rather than based on evidence of a date of composition. Where extant copies show textual proximity to not one extant or lost exemplar, but rather to several extant copies, they connect visually to a pertinent branch in the stemma (without the presence of a placeholder sigil). Similarly, a connection of many copies to a single 'lost exemplar' (see e.g. "Richard Carpenter's Work" variants "Spain"/"Titan Magnesia") indicates a group of texts showing striking similarities rather than implying the actual existence of such an exemplar.

Generally, full texts are identified as exemplars of fragments and not vice versa; but occasionally the textual links prove so strong that it seems that the exemplar is, indeed, a fragment supplemented with lines from another, unidentified exemplar. In those cases the stemma should be read accordingly.

Finally, I have adapted the width of connecting lines in the stemmata's branches to reflect the conclusiveness of relevant evidence about the copies' relations. Solid lines represent fairly certain connections between witnesses, while fainter lines indicate likely but more tentative relations between texts. A full stop after a sigil (see e.g. A6 in the stemma for the Verses version B)

² See also my brief discussion of textual criticism and stemmatics in Chapter 2 above.

denotes a “dead end”, a copy personalised so much by its writer that it is unlikely to have served as an exemplar for later copies.

Any peculiarities of representation applying to individual stemmata only have been mentioned with the relevant stemma.

POEMS

1. "VERSES UPON THE ELIXIR"

NIMEV 3249

Date

The poem "Verses upon the Elixir" was written around the mid-fifteenth century. Its subject matter, style and terminology suggest that the poem is roughly contemporary with George Ripley's "Compound of Alchemy" (1471) and Thomas Norton's "Ordinal of Alchemy" (1477); lexical and manuscript evidence supports a slightly earlier date of composition.³ The oldest surviving witnesses of version A (BL MS Sloane 3747) and version B (BL MS Sloane 1091) date from the second half and the end of the fifteenth century respectively. The latter version is preceded by a fragment of version B in Bod MS Ashmole 759, a manuscript which also contains an initial fragment of version A.

Author

The "Verses upon the Elixir" are best considered anonymous. The poem circulated anonymously before some sixteenth-century copies attributed it intermittently to a variety of ancient and late medieval alchemical authors. Elias Ashmole's attribution of the "Verses" to 'Pearce the Black Monk' (Bod MS Ashmole 1445, and thence *TCB*, 269, 473 and 487) appears only in seventeenth-century manuscripts (also KCC Keynes Alchemical MS 42; Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/1/4; GUL MS Ferguson 229); neither its validity nor the identity of its author can be established from the available evidence.

³ *OED/MED*, e.g. s.v. 'privity', 'ferly', 'everече', 'burgeon'. Entries in the *OED/MED* are based upon printed editions of selected works and may therefore merely serve as rough guidelines.

Title

The poem was generally circulated without a title. The title used for current purposes, "Verses upon the Elixir", is an amalgam of similar titles appearing in some late manuscript copies and modern bibliographies.

Manuscripts Version A

- A* Bod MS Ashmole 759, ff. 127^r–128^r, s. xv^{ex}
 A1 Bod MS Ashmole 1445, ff. 26^v–28^r, s. xvi/xvii
 A2 Bod MS Ashmole 1450, pp. 23–30, s. xvi
 A3 Bod MS Ashmole 1492, pp. 127–130, s. xvi
 C1 TCC MS O.2.15, ff. 81^v–83^v, s. xvi/xvii
 C2 TCC MS R.14.56, ff. 86^r–88^v, s. xvi
 D* Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston'),
 ff. 222^v–224^r, s. xvi
 F* GUL MS Ferguson 322, f. 5^{r-v}, s. xvi²
 G* Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS Gl. kgl. S. 3500 80, ff. 18^r–20^r, s.
 xvi
 S1 BL MS Sloane 1092, ff. 3^v–5^v, s. xvi²
 S2 BL MS Sloane 1098, ff. 19^v–21^v, s. xvi
 S3 BL MS Sloane 2170, ff. 74^v–76^v, s. xvi–xvii
 S4 BL MS Sloane 3667, ff. 118^r–120^v, s. xvi²
 S5 BL MS Sloane 3747, ff. 106^v–108^r, s. xv² [edition copy]
 S# BL MS Sloane 1842, ff. 18^r–20^r, s. xvi/xvii

Medial Fragments Version A

- BL MS Sloane 1097, f. 67^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1150, f. 2^r, s. xvi

Manuscripts Version B

Versions B₁ and B₂, where applicable, are indicated in brackets at the end of their entry.

- A4 Bod MS Ashmole 1445, ff. 19^v–20^v & 20^v–21^v, s. xvi/xvii (Version B₂)
 A5 Bod MS Ashmole 1445, ff. 49^r–52^v, s. xvii
 A6 Bod MS Ashmole 1485, ff. 47^v–48^r & 48^v–50^r, s. xvi² (Version B₂)
 A7 Bod MS Ashmole 1490, ff. 142^r–142^v & 142^v–143^r, s. xvi (Version B₁)
 A# Bod MS Ashmole 1394, p. 139, s. xvi–xvii (Version B₁)
 A#² Bod MS Ashmole 1480, f. 59^v, s. xvi
 C3 TCC MS O.2.15, ff. 83^v–84^r & 84^v–86^r, s. xvi/xvii (Version B₁)
 D1 Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston'),
 ff. 27^v–29^r, s. xvi (Version B₁)
 D# Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston'),
 ff. 60^v–61^v, s. xvi (Version B₁)

- E*₁ Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/1/4, ff. 11^r–13^v, s. xvii (Version B₂)
- F*^{*2} GUL MS Ferguson 322, f. 6^{r-v}, s. xvi²
- F*₁ GUL MS Ferguson 229, ff. 12^r–14^v, s. xvii (Version B₁) [edition copy]
- H* Bristol, Clifton College,⁴ s. xvi
- K*₁ KCC Keynes Alchemical MS 42, ff. 1^r–3^r, s. xvii (Version B₂)
- K*₂ KCC Keynes Alchemical MS 67, ff. 23^v–26^v, s. xvii (Version B₁)
- L*₁ London, Lambeth Palace, Sion College MS Arc. L.40.2/E.6, ff. 47^r–48^r, s. xvi (Version B₁)
- M*₁ Boston, MA, Massachusetts Historical Society MS Winthrop 20 C, ff. 154^r–155^r, s. xvi (Version B₂)
- P*₁ Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Codex 111, ff. 76^r–77^v, s. xvi (Version B₂)
- S*^{*} BL MS Sloane 288, f. 99^r, s. xvii
- S*^{*2} BL MS Sloane 288, f. 164^{r-v}, s. xvii
- S*^{*3} BL MS Sloane 1092, f. 62^r, s. xvi²
- S*^{*4} BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 22^r, s. xvi (Version B₁)
- S*^{*5} BL MS Sloane 1842, ff. 11^r–12^r, s. xvi/xvii (Version B₂)
- S*₆ BL MS Sloane 317, f. 94^r, s. xvi^{ex} (Version B₁)
- S*₇ BL MS Sloane 1091, ff. 105^r–108^r, s. xv^{ex} (Version B₂)
- S*₈ BL MS Sloane 3580B, ff. 181^r–183^r, s. xvi²
- S*₉ BL MS Sloane 3688, ff. 74^v–78^r, s. xvi^{ex} (Version B₂)
- S*_{#2} BL MS Sloane 1092, f. 13^v, s. xvi²
- S*_{#3} BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 18^{r-v}, s. xvi (Version B₁)
- S*_{#4} BL MS Sloane 1171, f. 6^r, s. xvi
- S*_{#5} BL MS Sloane 1171, f. 14^v, s. xvi
- T*₁ TCD MS 389, ff. 101^r–103^v, s. xvi¹ (Version B₁)
- W*^{*} London, Wellcome Institute MS 577, ff. 52^v–53^v, s. xviiⁱⁿ (Version B₂)
- W*₁ London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, ff. 69^v–70^v & 72^r–72^v, s. xvi² (Version B₂)
- Y*₁ New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library MS Osborn fa. 16, pp. 37a, 38b, 39a & 40b, s. xvi² (Version B₂)
- Y*_# New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library MS Mellon 43, f. 7^v, s. xvi

Medial Fragments Version B

- BL MS Sloane 1097, f. 23^r, s. xvi
- BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 18^v, s. xvi
- BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 25^v, s. xvi
- Bod MS Ashmole 759, f. 126^v, s. xv^{ex}

⁴ Transcription in Holmyard, *Alchemy*, vi–vii.

Minor Fragments of the "Verses upon the Elixir" (Version A or B)

- BL MS Sloane 320, f. 1^r, s. xvi^{ex}
 BL MS Sloane 1097, f. 79^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1114, f. 17^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1148, f. 36^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 16^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1181, f. 30^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1842, f. 16^r, s. xvi/xvii
 BL MS Sloane 3579, f. 17^v, s. xv
 Bod MS Ashmole 1486, f. 18^{ob}, s. xvi

Lost Copy

Petworth, Petworth House, Leconfield MS 99, ff. 13^r–16^r, s. xvi

Variant Copy

BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 47^r, s. xvi

Not Seen

Jerusalem, Jewish National and University Library MS Var. 259, bundle 6,
 s. xvii²

Printed Versions

T *TCB*, 269–274

Francis Barrett, *The Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers; With a Critical Catalogue of Books in Occult Chemistry and a Selection of the Most Celebrated Treatises on the Theory and Practice of the Hermetic Art* (London, 1815), 298–299 (paraphrase)

1450

1475

1500

1525

1550

1575

1600

1625

1650

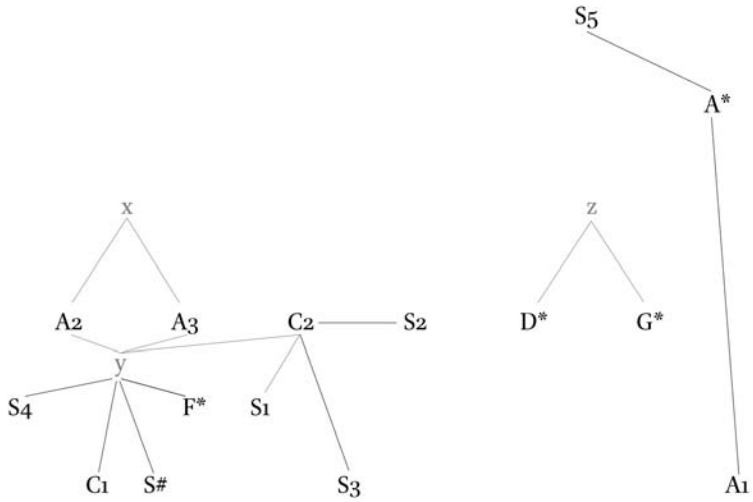


Diagram VI: Stemma, "Verses upon the Elixir", version A

1450

1475

1500

1525

1550

1575

1600

1625

1650

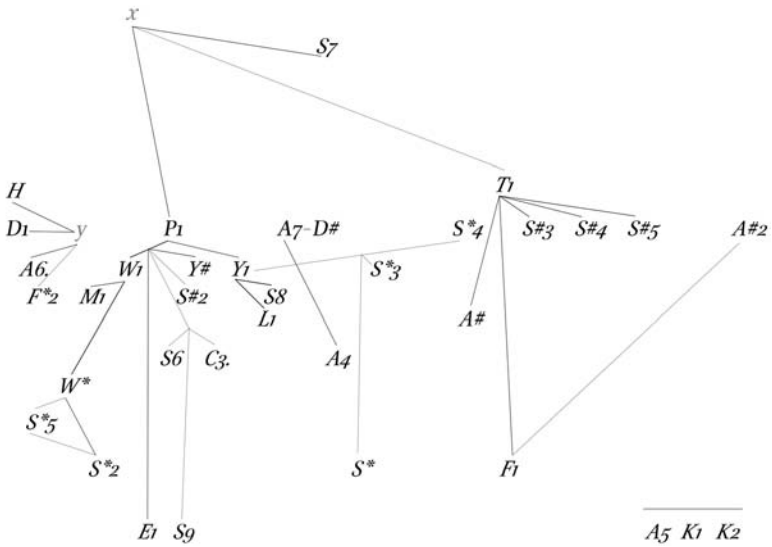


Diagram VII: Stemma, "Verses upon the Elixir", version B

1.1. "Verses upon the Elixir": Version A

Take erth of erth erthes broder
 Water and erth it is non other
 And fire of therth that berith the price
 And of that erth loke thou be wise
 5 The true elixir if ye list to make
 Erth out of erth loke that ye take.
 pure subtill faire and good
 And do it with water of the Wode
 ffor in it therth dissoluyd must be
 10 Withou^uten fire by daies thre
 depart the thynne then from the thyk
 and vapour it in to gomm like pik
 a water therof distille ye shall
 Our aqua vite and our menstruall
 15 And after that shall come a fire
 Redde as blode and full of yre
 A blak erth like tinder drie
 hevy as metall beneth shall lye.
 Wheryn is hidde gret preuyte
 20 ffor moder of all that erth must be
 Then into purgatorie she must be do.
 And haue the peynes that longith therto
 Till she be bright as the Sonne
 ffor then is the maistry wonne
 25 Which is don in houres thre
 Whiche forsoth is gret f[u]rle
 yeve that erth his water to drynk
 Till it be white as ye can thynk

1 f. 106^v | Take] Make A1 2 Water and] water & *ins.* of S1; water of A1, D*, G*, S2, S3 | non] no
 S1, S2 5 list to] wilt A2, A3, C1, F*, S4 6 Erth out of erth] It *ins.* earthe out of the erth S1; it
 owte of earthe A2, D*, G*; earth *canc.* It out of earth C1; It *ins.* Earthe out of *canc.* the earth C2
 8 do it with] than take F* 10 by] *om.* A2, A3, C1, C2, S1, S2, S4 | daies] days *ins. a.m.* wekes
 three *ins. a.m.* ? C2 12 in to gomm] in a gum A2, A3, C1, F* 14 aqua vite] aquaviv D* 15
 a fire] after A3, C1 17 A [...] drie] As Blacke like Madder dry A1 | drie] blacke *corr.* darke A2;
 dark A3, C1, C2, D*, F*, G*, S1, S2, S3, S4 18 hevy [...] lye] in ye bottom of ye glas shall lorke S4
 | beneth] below A3, C1 | lye] lurk F* 19 Wheryn] In hit A* 21 she] it A2, A3, C1, S4 23 she]
 it A*, S4 25/26 *om.* (*repl.* And yat forsooth is greate fact (*add.* greate wonder or marvell)) A1
 25 houres] heures A3 26 Whiche [...] f[u]rle] which may be clypped godes privitie G* 27
 f. 107^r 28 Till] that *all other MSS except* A1 | it] he G*

And after yeve it his fire so good
 30 Till it be redde as eny blode
 Then fede it forth as ye shuld do
 With mylk and mete that longith therto
 Till it be growen to his full age
 Then shall she be strong and of gret corage
 35 And turne all bodies that lafull be
 To his owen power and dignite
 This is the making of our stone
 The trouth I haue tolde you echon
 ffor truly ther is non other wey of verrey right
 40 But body of body and light of light
 Where all the folys in the worlde sechyn
 A thing that they mowe neuer metyn
 ffor they wolde heue metall out of theym
 That neuer was founde of erthly men
 45 ffor of all thyngges I will no mo
 but 4 elementes in generall I say to you so
 Sonne and mone erth and water
 and here is all that men of clater
 ffor our gold and our siluer is no [com]en plate
 50 But a Sperme out of a body take
 Wheryn is all sol lune and light
 Water and erth fire and fright
 And all comyth out of on ymage
 but water of the wode makith the mariage
 55 I[n] arceneck sublymed a wey there is streight
 With mercury calcyned ix tymes his weight
 And gronnden togeder with the water of myght

29 it] hym A* | his] om. A2, A3, C1, C2, D*, G*, S1, S2, S3, S4 31 shuld] shall A2, A3, C1, S1 34
 she] it *all other MSS* | Then [...] corage] Then shall it be strong of corage A*; Soe shall itt Wax
 full of Courage A1 36 power] powder S1; pore S4; poure A*, C2 38 tolde] tought S3 | echon]
 everyone A2, A3, C1; euery chone S4 39 truly] om. A2, A3, C1 | ther] it C2, S1, S2, S3 | verrey]
 om. A2, A3, C1, S4 41 in the] of this A2, C1, S4 | sechyn] seeken A3 42 mowe] *i.e.* may *all
 other MSS* | metyn] maintain C2, S1, S2, S3 44 of] bie S3 45 I will no mo] I will say no mo
 A3 50 But [...] take] om. A3 | Sperme] Sparme *ins.* animam S1; spark *corr.* sparne C2 | take] I
 take C1 51 all] om. A2, A3, C1, S4 | sol lune and light] sol & lune C2, S1, S2; soll and lune fforto
 light S3 52 fright] sight A2, A3, C1; fight C2, S1, S2, S3, S4 53 all] om. A2, A3, C1, C2, S1, S2, S3
 54 f. 107^v | water of the wode] water of them A2, A3, C2, S1, S2, S3, S4; water of (*ins.* the wood)
 them C1 55 sublymed] om. A2, A3, C1 57 And gronnden togeder] Which is donn A*

- That berith engression lyf and light
 Anon as they togedyr byn
 60 All rennyth to water bright and sheyn
 Vppon this fire they growe togeder
 Till they be fast and fle no whethyr
 Then fede theym forth w^{ith} thyne hande
 With mylke and mete to make theym strenge
 65 And here haue ye a good stone
 Wherof an vnce on forty will gon
 Vppon venus and mercury
 This medecyn will make the mery
 I haue a doughter that hight saturne & derlyng
 70 Of my daughter w^{ith}outen drede
 Byn made elixers bothe white and rede
 Ofwhom ye must drawe a water clere
 This science if ye list to lere
 This water reducyth euery thyng
 75 To tendernesse and fixing.
 Buriouyth & groweth & yevith frute & light
 Ingression lyf and lastyng sight
 and all rightfull werkes the soth to say
 hit helpith and bryngith in a good wey
 80 This is the water that is most worthy
 aqua perfectissima & flos mundi
 All werkes this water makyth white and light
 Reducyng and shynyng as siluer bright
 In mennes praiers and dauys salter
 85 pleynly it is written before the prest at thauter
 and of thoye gret marvell ther is
 ffor all thyng it bryngith to rednesse

60 rennyth] renewithe S3 63 forth] further C2 64 strenge] *i.e.* strong *all other MSS* 68 This [...] mery] Which medecyn wold make the mery A* | the] thee *all other MSS* 68/9 section break S5 [*edition copy*]; section break *add.* Nota S4 69 saturne & derlyng] Saturns Darling A3; saturne *ins.* derling S# | I haue [...] derlyng] *canc.* (*repl.* Nowe listen to my dawghter megge/ that hight Saturne, and Darlynge deare) S3 71 bothe] *om.* A2, A3, C1, F* 73 lere] heare A3 76 Buriouyth] buddeth *all other MSS* 77 sight] in sight A2, C1, F*, S4; in hight A3 78/9 All rightfull works the fayth to sayd/ it helpeth & bringeth in a good mayd A3 79 hit] he S4 80 water] thing A2, A3, C1, F*, S4; way C2, S1, S2, S3, S# 81 f. 108^r 82 werkes] clerks A2, A3, C1, C2, F*, S1, S2, S4, S# 84 dauys salter] *i.e.* David's psalter *other MSS* 85 it is] *om.* A2, C1 86 *ins.* (*add.* That myrracles maie be wrought and lynde/ by suche as be of pure thought and mynde S3) 87 bryngith] turnyth A*

as citrine gold he is full hye
 Where non is so redde ne so worthy
 90 And in therth gret marvel is hydde
 That is fyrst so blak and then so redde
 Which is don in houres thre.
 This may be callid Godis preuite
 Then therth shall turne redde as blode
 95 As citrine gold riall elixir and good
 And then the redde oyle to hym shall go
 Redde ferment And redde mercury also
 And growe togeder wekese sevyn
 Nowe blissid be almyghty God of hevyn
 100 An vnce of this medecyn worthy
 Cast vppon ijC vnces of mercury
 Makith gold most riell
 Euer to endure and dwell
 Nowe haue ye herde the makyng of our stone
 105 The begynnyng and ende and all is on

1.2. "Verses upon the Elixir": Version B

Take earth of earth earthes brother
 & water of earth, that is no other
 & fire of earth that beareth ye price
 & of the earth looke thow be wise
 5 This is ye true Elixer for to make
 earth out of earth looke that thou take
 pure subtill right faire & good
 & then take ye water of the wood
 Cleere as Cristall shineing bright

88 gold] dole C2, S1; oyle S# 89 Where] *om.* A2, A3, C1, F*, S4 | non] non other to hym A* 90
 hydde] had A3, C1 92 Which] and all S3 93 This may be] Wherefore it is A* 95 riall] natural
all other MSS 99 Nowe [...] hevyn] Wherefore blissid be God of hevyn A*; now blessed be
 the king of heauen S# | God of] god in A2, A3, C1, S4 102 gold] sol S# | riell] reall C2; royal
all other MSS 103 Euer] heaven A3 (1.2.) 1 f. 12^r | of] out of S9, Y1 | earthes brother] earth
 brethren C3; the whych is erthis brother S7; earth's own brother S8, Y1; earths Mother K1; *canc.*
 brother *ins.* moder K2 2 water of] water and S9, W1 | no other] another A4, A6, A7, C3, D1, E1,
 F*2, H, L1, M1, S6, S*, S*2, S*3, S*4, S*5, W*, Y1 4 the earth] ether A4; thy earth S6, S*2 5 for
 to] if thou wilt K1; for to (*ins.* if thou wilt) A5 7/8 pure subtile fayer and gaye/ and then take
 water of the deuwe of maye A6 7 right] *om.* *all other MSS except K2, L1, S8, T1* | good] *canc.*
 redd goodd W1 8 of the wood] that is so wood L1, S8, S*, S*3, S*4, Y1 9 Cleere] there H

- 10 & put them together & right
 Three dayes thou must let them lye
 & then depart them privilye & slye
 Then shall it be bright shineing
 and in ye water a soule running
- 15 invisible hid & unseene
 a merveyulous matter it is to meane
 Then part them by distilling
 and thou shalt see an earth appearing
 heavy as mettle should it be
- 20 in the which is hid great privitie
 distill ye earth in greene hue
 three dayes duering well & true
 & put them in a body of glasse
 in ye which never worke was
- 25 In a furnace he must be doe
 & set in a lembeck also
 & draw from him water cleare
 the which water hath noe peere

10 put] do A6, A7, C3, D1, E1, F^{*2}, H, P1, S6, S7, S8, S9, W1, Y1 | & right] anon right *all other MSS except* and thyght M1; right S6; full righte L1, S*, S^{*3}, S^{*4}; anone full righte S8; and wryte T1; *canc.* and *ins.* anon right K2 11 thou must] *om. P1*; see thou A7; after then S6; then A4, A6, C3, D1, E1, F^{*2}, H, K1, M1, S7, S9, W1, W*, Y1 12 privilye] properlye A4; suttely S6 | & slye] *om. A7, D1, M1, S7* 13/14 the soule from the bodye then are they shayne craftilye/ and yet shall they be brighte shineing A4 13 shall it be] shall be brought water C3, K1; shall they be S6; that water will be S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W*, (*canc.* shall yt be bright) (*ins.* bee brought water) K2 14 soule] sol S6 | running] roming A4; remaining E1, S8, Y1; renning A7, P1, S6, S7; renning *alt.* reyning K2; reigning A6, H, K1, S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W1, W* 15 invisible [...] unseene] in visible yt is and wonderfull then Y1 | invisible] visibly C3 | hid] is P1, W1 | unseene] wonderfull thyn S8; unneath seen L1, S*, S^{*3}, S^{*4} 16 a [...] meane] A mervailous water, A mervailous matter it is to meen A7 | matter] water E1 | to meane] to ween K1; to *canc.* meane *ins.* weene K2; so meane T1; to menn S6, S*; to many (a) man S8, Y1 17 distilling] stilling S^{*2}, S^{*5} 18 thou [...] earth] there shall leave the earthe S6 | see] *om. P1, W1*; have S^{*2}, W* | earth] earth *ins.* gum A5 | appearing] raymayning *ins.* apering Y1; departing D1, M1, P1, S7, W1 19 as] *om. A4, A7* 21 distill] dissolve S6; distill *ins. a.m.* dissolve S7 | in] into L1, S*, S^{*3}, S^{*4} | in greene hue] by greate hewe P1; in greate hewe W1; in degree netely S6 22 three [...] true] And putrefie it .10. dayes in a stillie S6 | duering] *om. S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W* | well] well *canc.* good P1* 23 put [...] body of glasse] put the earth in a glass S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W*; *these MSS also reverse the couplets in ll. 21–26* 24 never worke was] neuer work done was S8, Y1; never afore work was L1, S*, S^{*3}, S^{*4} 25 doe] set A4, A5, A6, A7, C3, D1, E1, F^{*2}, H, K1, P1, S7, S8, S9, S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W1, W*, Y1 26 & [...] also] and set (up)on him a lembeck also K2, L1; and do on him a good limbeck A4, A7, C3, D1, E1, F^{*2}, H, K1, P1, S7, S8, S9, S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W1, W*, Y1; and on his head a good Lymbeck A5; and do on him a good humett A6 27 draw from him] there distill S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W*

- and then make thy fire stronger
 30 and thereon continue thy glasse longer
 and then shalt thou see a fire
 red as blood & of great ire
 And after that an earth there leave shall
 the which is called ye mother of all
 35 and then in purgatory she must be doe
 and have ye paines that long there to
 till that she be brighter then ye sonne
 for then have you all ye mastery wonne
 and that shalbe within howres three
 40 that shalbe great wonder to thee
 Then doe her in a faire glasse
with some of ye water that hers was
 and in a furnace doe her againe
 till she have drunk her water certaine
 45 And after that water give her blood
 that was her owne pure & good
 and when she hath drunke all ye fire
 she shall wax stout & of great ire

29/30 Then continewe the fire longer/ But make it somewhat stronger S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W* | stronger/ [...] longer] strong/ [...] long D₁, S₇ 31 then [...] see] then truly shall come A6, C₃, F^{*2}, H, P₁, S₉, W₁; after that shall come S6; after this water will come S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W* | see] see come A4, A7, E₁, K₁, K₂, L₁, M₁, S₇, S₈, T₁, Y₁; see therfrom D₁ | a fire] a greet fier S₇ 33 leave shall] leve thou shalte A₇; shall leave sure D₁; bene shall M₁ 34 called] cleped A4, A7, C₃, E₁, F^{*2}, K₁, L₁, M₁, P₁, S₇, S₈, S₉, W₁, Y₁ | ye mother of all] of all; ye mother D₁ 35 and then] That earthe S6 | she] she (*ins.* that Earth) A₅ | doe] leed A₇ 36 and have] to have D₁, S₈; And *ins.* To A₅ 37 f. 12^v | brighter] purifyed brighter D₁; better M₁ 38 have you] is A4, A7, C₃, D₁, E₁, L₁, P₁, S₆, S₇, S₈, S₉, S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W₁, W*, Y₁ 39 and that shalbe] which shall be D₁; which will be done S6 | howres three] weekes two and howers three A4 40 that [...] thee] If you doo ye craft surely D₁; and that will show a great privitie A6, H | that shalbe] yat forsoothe is S6; which shall be L₁; the which forsouth is C₃, E₁, K₁, P₁, S₉, W₁ | great wonder to thee] greate wonder to see T₁; greate mervayle to thee A4; great marveille A7; great ferlie C₃, E₁, K₁, M₁, P₁, S₆, S₉, W₁; full greet ferle S₇; greate farley *ins.* wonder S8 41 *ins.* (*add.* which is donn in howers three/ which forsooth is great fayritie/ out of a nother coppy) S^{*5} | faire glasse] clean glasse A₅, K₁; vessell of glasse S6; body of fair glass A4, A7, S₉ 42 hers] *canc.* *ther ins.* hers K₂ 43/44 Till he have dronken his water all/ And become whit as cristall S6 43 doe] set L₁ 44 her water certaine] her weight clean P₁, W₁ 45 give] is A₇; green C₃ | blood] blood sanguine A4, A7 46 that [...] good] *om.* S₇ | that [...] owne] which is fire callid S6; yat was of hir owne nature D₁ | pure & good] fair and good S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W*; pure (*canc.* and good) (*ins.* & fine) A4 47 ye fire] I fere D₁, S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W*; in fyer A4; in feer P₁; in fere Y₁; *canc.* the *ins.* her ffyre K₂ 48 wax stout] wax strong A6, C₃, D₁, E₁, H, K₁, M₁, P₁, S₇, S₉, W₁; wax stronger Y₁; waxe stronger *ins.* stowte S8; be strong A4, A7, S6, S^{*2}, S^{*5}, W* | of great] full of S8, T₁; *canc.* full *ins.* greate of W₁

Then take thou meate & milke thereto
 50 & feede ye child as thou shouldst doe
 till he be growne into his full age
 then shall he be strong of courage
 and turne all bodyes that lawfull be
 to his owne power & dignitie
 55 and this is ye making of our stone
 the truth I have said to you every 'chone
 for all that take any other way
 much good they loose & more they may
 for truly there is no way of right
 60 but body of body & light of light
 man of man begotten he is
 & beast of beast to his likenes
 Many fooles in this worke seeken
 a thing that they may never geten
 65 they would have mettle out of iron
 that never was found by earthly men
 ne neuer was found by Gods might
 that they should beare such fright
 All salts & sulphures farre & neere
 70 I interdite them all in feare
 All Corosive waters blood & hayre

49 Then [...] thereto] Then take you meate & milke thereto (*ins.* with milke & meate yat longe thereto) *A5* | milke] drink *D1, P1, S7, W1*; dringk milk *Y1* 50 feede] norrishe *S6* 52 then [...] courage] Then shall he be of Stronge (*ins.* it wax full of) Courage *A5* | strong] stoute *A4*; stronger *Y1* | of courage] and of great courage *A6, H*; and mightie of corrage *S6* 53 turne] thorough [*sic*] *W**; through *ins.* turne *S*5*; throghe *ins.* toorne *S*2* | lawfull] leyfull *A5, E1, K1, P1, W1*; feble *W**; feeble *ins.* lawful *S*2, S*5* 56 I have said to] I shew *S7*; here is told *A5, K1*; is told to *Dr*; I have told *A4, A6, A7, C3, E1, H, M1, P1, S8, S9, W1, Y1* | you] *om. K2* 57 take] woorke *L1*; seekethe *P1* 58 much [...] may] much shall loose (*canc.* by any saye) (*ins.* & more they maye) *A4* | good] *om. A6, A7, C3, D1, E1, M1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1* | loose] buisy *A6, S9, Y1*; buisy *ins. canc.* befill *ins.* looseth *A5*; befill *C3*; beseech *A7, E1, M1, P1, S7, W1* | may] may lees *A7* 59 way] weerke *L1* 61 of man] of woman *A7*; of (*canc.* wo)man *A4* 63/64 many fooles in ye world seeke a thing:/ by yer foolishe practysing *D1* 63 Many] all the *A4, A6, A7, C3, E1, M1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1* | this worke] the world *A4, A6, A7, M1, P1, W1, Y1*; this world *E1, K2, L1, S9*; the *alt.* this world *C3*; th[is] word *S7* 64 may [...] geten] can never meet with nor find *A7*; can never meet *A4, A6, C3, E1, M1, W1*; may never meet *P1, S7, S9* 65 iron] such a thing *Dr*; him *A4, A7*; them *A6, C3, E1, L1, M1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1*; *canc.* Iron *ins.* hem *K2* 66 earthly men] worldly men *C3, E1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1*; erthely mans wurking *Dr*; Earth Elemente *A7* 68 beare such fright] atteyne to soch a sight *L1* | fright] fruit *A6, A7, C3, D1, E1, M1, S9, W1, Y1*; freight *ins.* (yat is f[u]ite) *K2*; frute by ryght *S7* 70 in feare] *om. A7*; Ifere *D1* 71–76 *om. E1, P1, S7, W1, Y1*

Pisses hornes & Sandivere
 Allouns Attriments all I suspend
 Rosalgar and Arsnick I defend
 75 Calx vive & Calx nox his brother
 I suspend them both th'one & th'other
 Of all things I will no moe
 but fower in generall I say soe
 Sunn̄ & moone earth & water
 80 and here is all that men do clatter
 Our gold & silver is not common plate
 But a Sperme out of a body I take
 in which is Sol Luna life & light
 water & earth fire & fright
 85 all cometh but of one Image
 but ye water of ye wood maketh ye marriage
 Therefore here is no other way
 but to ye living God to pray
 ffor covetuous men it findeth neuer
 90 though they seeke it once & ever
 Set not your hearte in this thing
 but onely to God & good living
 and he yat will come thereby

72 Pisses hornes] goats' horns *A6, D1, M1*; piss, goats' horns *A4, S9*; urines, hornes *L1*; Piss hornes
ins. wormes A5 73 Allouns] gums *A6, D1* 74 and Arsnick] Sal tynctur sal gemme *A4*;
 saltincker, sall gem *S9* | I defend] allso I fende *A6* 75 f. 13^r | Calx nox] calx ovarum *A6, D1*;
 claws of a fox and all his brethren *A4, S9*; Calx ofox *A7*; calce nex *L1*; calx mort *K1*; calx *ins.*
 mort *K2*; calx [*sic*] *C3* 76 suspend] defend *A4, A7, S9*; forbid *A6* 77 all things] Salte Things
A7; all this *S*2, S*5, W** | I will] there needethe *S8* 78 fower] four *other MSS*; fure thinges *D1*;
 four elements *K1*; foure *ins. elementes A5* | I say soe] that long me to *L1* 79 Sunn̄ [...] water]
 air, earth, fire and water *S*2, S*5, W** | earth] *canc. fyer ins. ereth A4*; ffer *A7* 80 and [...] clatter]
om. M1 81 Our [...] plate] *om. Y1* | is] ben *A5* 82 I take] ytake *D1*; take *A6, A7, C3, E1,*
L1, P1, S7, S8, S9, W1 83 (*add. ex Saturno extractum per vehementissimum ignem*) *A4, A7, S9*;
(add. drawne owt of Saturne by vehemensce of fyer) *S9*; *om. A5* | in which] in ye which body
D1 84 earth] air *A4, A7*; erth & *ins. aer S7* | fright] fruit *A6, D1*; sight *E1, S7, Y1*; sprite *S8* 85
 but] out *A6, C3, E1*; *om. P1, S8, S*2, S*5, W*, W1, Y1* 86 water [...] wood] water of life *A6*; water
 so woed *Y1*; water that is so woode *L1*; water *S7* | maketh] would make *P1, W1* 87 Therefore
 here is] Wherefor, I can finde *L1* | no other] an other *C3* 88 to [...] to pray] take ye to the
 lorde & pray *M1*; take you to your booke and goo pray *D1*; but take thy beades and pray *P1, W1*;
 take to your beedes & pray *S7*; take your beades, and devoutlie prairie *L1*; take thy beads and
 go pray *A4, A7*; take thee to thye beades and praye *A6, C3, E1, S9, Y1* 89–102 *om. A4* 89 it
 findeth] get yt *Y1* 90 seeke [...] ever] suche Evidence haue ever *A7* 91 not your hearte] not
 your heart only *D1, M1*; your hertes none other wise *L1* | in this] in sych a *S7*; in this riche *L1*
 92 onely] principallie *L1*; also *M1* | God &] *om. A7* 93 he] they *S7, S9, P1, W1*; ye *Y1* | thereby]
 this science by *L1*

must be meeke & full of mercy
 95 both in spirit & in countenance
 full of charitye & good governance
 and evermore full of Almes deeds
 simply & poorely his life to lead
 with prayer penance & pittie
 100 & ever a lover to God to bee
 and all ye riches thou canst can & leade
 it to doe for Gods love almes dedes,
 In Arsenick calcyned sublymed a way there is straight
 with Mercury calcined ix times his weight
 105 and ground with ye water of might
 that beareth ingression life & light
 And anon together as they byn
 all runneth to water bright & sheene
 upon this fire they grow together
 110 till they be fast & fly no whether
 But then feede him with thy hand
 with milke & meate to make him strong
 and then shalt thou have there a good stone
 One ounce vpon xl it will gone
 115 upon venus or mercury
 this medicine will make thee merry.

94 full of mercy] of good memory S7 95 both in spirit] In hert & spyryt S7 | countenance] contynuanee M1; good countenance E1; good contynuanee S7 96 good] om. P1, S7, S9, W1 97 evermore] with good will L1 98 poorely] purely C3, E1 99 pittie] full of pitie L1; piety A5 100 & [...] bee] euer to drede God, and his louer be L1; and eure drede god wher euer thou be S7 101 (add. and praie to god to be thy good speed) A7 | and [...] leade] & in all ye werks yat yu spe[k]s Y#; and all the richesse that ye of speede A6; and all your ryches and you will spede S7; and all the ritchesse yat thou mayste [carry] *canc.* or & leade K2; and all the riches that is sped C3, E1, M1, P1, S9, W1, Y1 102 it [...] dedes] To do good works & almes dedes Y#; to do God worship with almes deed A6, C3, E1, M1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1 103–117 om. A6, P1, W1 103 Arsenick] marcurye Y# | calcyned] om. all other MSS | sublymed] *ins.* F1 [edition copy], A4 | straight] right S7 | (add. did Raymunde, the trothe to saye,/ was to sweete Marye full deuoute aye/ by whome, vnto him, secretes were shewde,/ of this *canc.* hide science, hide from lerne and lewde/ Wherefore to God praising euere be,/ that ioyeth aboue in blisse, one in Trinitee) L1 104 calcined] *sublimed ins.* calcined T1 105 ground] ground together K1, A5; ground *ins.* together K2; growin D# | with [...] might] a water yer with is Y# 106 beareth] gyvith Y1 | life & light] yt will nought mis Y# 108 &] yt will D# | sheene] cleane Y1 109 this] his A7 | grow] goe T1; *canc.* twoo *ins.* growe K2 110 whether] further Y1 111 f. 13^v | him] them forth A4, C3, D#, E1, S7, S9, Y1; them forthwith K1; him forth A7, M1, T1 112 to make him] till they be K1; till they be (*ins.* to make them) A5 | him] them A4, C3, D#, E1, S7, S9, Y1 114 ounce] om. A#, T1 | gone] run A#, Y1 115/116 om. Y1 115 mercury] mercury truly D# 116 will [...] merry] wylt make full mere S7; you shalle see D#

And yee that have sought many a day
 leave worke & diligently pray
 for ye longer yee seken
 120 ye longer it is yerre yee it meeten
 and ye that would faine be sped
 take good heede to my daughter Megg
 for she will tell ye truth & right
 hearken then with all your might
 125 for now they shall speake say to your eare
 & leare my daughter how shee yow leare
 I am Mercury the mighty flos florum
 I am most worth of all singulorum
 I am sower of [sol] [luna] and Mars
 130 I am gendrer of Iove, of him be all wars
 I am Suteller of Saturne & dower of venus
 I am Empresse & princesse & regall of Queenes
 I am mother and mirroure & maker of light
 I am headest & highest & encreaser of fright

117 And] all *all other MSS except But D#* | many a day] in vaine many a daie *D#*; any other waye *Y1* 118 leave [...] pray] laude god and take yor booke and praye *A6*; Leave yor wurking herein & take yor booke & praye *D#* | diligently] take your beads and *A4, A7, C3, E1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y#*; thanke god and *M1*; take youre to *Y1* 119 ye longer] the lenght [*sic*] of tyme *M1* | yee seken] you so in vaine seeke *D#* 120 it is] ye maye *A7* | meeten] meke *P1* 121/122 But yow that fayne the marcke woulde hitt/ listen to my gentle writt *A6* 121 and ye] and he *C3, E1, S7, S9, W1, Y1*; all you *A4*; but if you *A7, Y#* 122 take [...] Megg] Lystyn my doghter and ye wyll her wed *S7* | take good heede] listen *A4, A7, C3, D#, E1, K1, P1, W1, Y#*; lysten nowe *S9*; lysten then *Y1* | daughter] gentle daughter *A4, A7, D#, M1, Y1* 123 tell] tell thee *A6, T1, Y1* | ye truth] you truth *K1*; truly *M1* 125 for [...] eare] *om. A4, A5, A6, A7, C3, M1, P1, S7, W1* | say] leaue *T1*; laye *K2* 126 leare] here *K2* | & [...] leare] *om. A5, A6, C3, M1, P1, S7, W1*; howe herof she shall the leare *S9* | how shee yow leare] *om. S9*; howe she shall thee leed *A7*; how yow shold leare *T1* 127 mighty] mightiest *A4*; mighty & goodly *S7* | flos florum] flower *A6, C3, D#, K1, M1, S7, S9, W1, Y1*; (*canc. flos florum*) *ins. flower K2*; floure *E1*; flose flower *P1* 128 most worth] most worthiest *A4, K2, S#2, T1* | singulorum] honour *A6, C3, D#, E1, K1, M1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1*; *canc. singulorum ins. honour K2* 129 sower] lover *M1*; sister *A6*; *canc. sower ins. sours K2* 130 I [...] wars] *om. M1*; I am of Jovis & of him be alle *A7*; I am gever of loves of him be all praise *P1, W1* | of [...] wars] by gods grace *A6*; of him by all ours *D#*; many be my snares *K1*; of him be all warrs (*ins. many be my snares*) *A5, K2* | wars] wayis *Y1* 131 Suteller] sower *A4*; sowler *S7*; subtyller *S#2*, sucker *M1*; succour(er) *A6, D#*; *canc. sutteles ins. setlar K2* | dower] eke *A4*; friend to *A6*; lover *M1*; saver *Y#*; sours *K1*; *canc. sower ins. sours K2*; sower *A7, C3, D#, E1, P1, S7, S9, S#2, T1, W1, Y1* 132 I [...] Queenes] I am Empres of precise of ynen ys *A7*; I am prince of princes moste victorious *A6*; I am Empresse & royall princess of queenes *S#2* | princesse] prinns *D#* | & regall of Queenes] of all greenesse *A4*; & regende of Quenes *P1* 133/134 *om. C3, D#, E1, M1, P1, S7, W1, Y1* 133 & maker] *om. A4, S9* 134 encreaser of fright] increaser of fruit *A4, A7*; causer of sighte *A6*; (*canc. increaser of fright*) (*ins. fairest in sight*) *K2*; fairest in sight *A5, K1*

- 135 I am both sonne & moone
 I am shee that all must doone
 I am she that doeth all
 I am she that men call
 I sowe a daughter that is my darling
 140 the which is brother and loitrix of all working
 In my daughter there byn hidd
 fower things full rightfully kidd
 a gold head in a sperme full rich
 and a salver head to him more liche
 145 and a mercury head full bright
 and a sulphur head this the right
 of my daughter without any spite
 beene made Elixer both red & white
 his water reduceth every thing
 150 to tendernes & fixing
 and bringeth & groweth & giveth fright

136 I [...] doone] *om.* A4 | all] all things C3, D#, E1, K1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1 | must] shall Y# 137/138 *om.* C3, D#, E1, M1, P1, S7, S#², W1, Y1; *canc.* K2 137 I am] I mercurye am S#³, S#⁴, S#⁵ | doeth] muste doe A6 138 I [...] call] *om.* S#³ | men] none doth after A4; men dothe sister A7; men after A6; men dothe after S9 139 sowe] have A6, C3; *canc.* sowe *ins.* have K2; shewe A4; saw A7, E1, S7, T1, Y1 | that [...] darling] Saturne A4; Saturne that is my darling A6, A7, C3, D#, E1, M1, P1, S7, S9, S#³, W1, Y1; hight Saturn yat is my darling K1, S#⁴; (*ins.* hight Saturne yat is my darling) A5; (*ins.* hight Saturn) that is my darlinge K2 140 the [...] working] that is medlinge which is mother of all things A4 | brother] mother A6, A7, C3, D#, E1, K1, K2, M1, P1, S7, S9, S#⁴, S#⁵, W1, Y1, Y# | and loitrix] *om.* A6, A7, C3, D#, E1, K1, M1, P1, S9, W1, Y1; Y#; & matrix T1; loitrix K2; & brynght forth S7 | working] thing A7, C3, D#, E1, M1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1 141 in [...] there] in min dawtrys head Y# | there] hath K2 | byn] is D#, S7 | hidd] I had A7; I hid A6, E1, M1, P1, S9, W1 142 fower [...] kidd] *om.* A4, A7 | fower] *see l.* 78 | rightfully] commonly A6, C3, D#, E1, K1, M1, P1, S9, W1, Y1, Y#; as it is S7 | kidd] I bid C3, Y1; I kid A6, E1, K1, P1, S9, W1; callyd D# 143 head in] hid in Y#; (*canc.* heade [in]) *ins.* seed, a K2 | in a] *om.* E1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1; the A7; and a C3, K1 | full] *om.* all MSS except S#³, T1 | rich] right T1 144 salver head] silver head all other MSS; siluer head full bright Y1; silver hid Y#; silver seed K1; siluer head *ins.* seede A5, K2 | to him more] none him all MSS except S#³, S#⁴, S#⁵, T1 | liche] like A4, A7; light T1 145/146 *om.* Y1 145 head] seed K1; head *ins.* seed A5, K2; hid D#, Y# | full bright] verye brighte A6 146 head] seed K1; head *ins.* seede A5, K2; hyd D#; *om.* Y# | the right] full right P1, T1, W1; in him right D# 147 spite] dread A6, A7, C3, E1, K1, P1, S9, W1, Y1; doubt A4, S7; de(e)d D#, M1 148 f. 14^r | made] *om.* Y1 | red & white] white and red all other MSS except K2, S#³, S#⁴, S#⁵, T1 149 (*add.* (*ins.* Of whom thou canst) Therefore of her draw a water cleere/ The Scyence yf lyst to leare) A5, K1; *add.* Therefore of her draw a water clear this science if thou list to leare K2 | his] this A4, A6, A7, C3, S9, T1; her S7, Y1 150 tendernes] duringe A4; enduer A7 151 and [...] fright] and bringith troth & from it givith light Y1; And brynght forth fyre full of myght S7 | bringeth] burgegness A7; buddeth A6, C3, E1, P1, S9, S#³, S#⁴, W1; buddeth *ins.* burgeneth groweth A5, K1; bringith (*ins.* burgeneth (i.e. vegetates)) K2; bringith growth D# | & giveth] with A6, C3, P1, S9, W1; & goethe *ins.* groweth K2 | fright] frichte and lyfe A4; fryght and light K1; lyght and frichte M1; light and frute D#; fruit and light A6, A7, C3, E1, P1, S9, S#⁴, W1

ingression life & long lasting light
 All rightfull worke ye truth to say
 it helpeth and bringeth it to a good way
 155 this is ye water that is most worthie
 Aqua perfectissima et flos mundi
 for all workes this water maketh white
 shering reducing silver bright
 And of ye oyle great mervayle is
 160 all thinges it turneth into rednes
 As Cytren gold he is full high
 there is none soe red nor none so worthie
 and of ye earth a great mervaile I heede
 that yee first see black & after see red
 165 and all done in howres three
 this may be cleped Gods privitie
 Then ye earth shall turne red as blood
 Cytren gold Elixer royall & good
 and then ye red oyle to him shall goe
 170 and ferment & red mercury also
 and grow together weekes seaven
 blessed be Almighty God of heaven.
 One oz of this medicine worthie
 cast upon CC ounces of crude mercurye

152 ingression [...] light] and gyffyth ingressyon with goodly lyght S7 | ingression] increasinge A6 | long lasting light] lasting light A4, A7, D#, M1; lasting sight S#4, Y1; lasting in sight A6, C3, E1, K1, P1, S9, W1 153 rightfull] right Sol A4; righte manse P1; righteous C3, E1, K1, S9, W1 | ye truth] sooth K1 154 way] om. A7; faye A4 156 et] and A4; et etiam A6, C3, E1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1 157 all workes] of all works S9; of clerkes P1, W1; all workes (ins. all Darkenes) A5 | this water] it A4; this A7 | white] bright A4; white and shining brighte A7; quite S7 158 shering] shining all other MSS | reducing] reducing as [or: like] A6, C3, E1, P1, S9, T1, W1 | silver bright] with owty n spyte S7 159 mervayle] marvell ins. canc. nature A5 160 all] any A7 | turneth] bringeth C3, E1, K1, P1, S9, W1 | rednes] readiness P1, W1 161 As] and A7; a C3; of T1 | high] om. A4; bright Y1 162 there] om. all other MSS except K2, T1 | red] redy S7 | none so worthie] of none such might Y1; canne so worthy P1, W1 163 of] of ins. in K2 | mervaile] marvell ins. canc. nature A5 | I heede] (is) had A4, A7, D#, K2; is hid A6, C3, E1, M1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1 164 yee [...] red] is first so black and after/then so red all other MSS except T1 | after] syne S7 165 done] is done all other MSS except T1; ins. is done K2 | howres] weekes A4; earthes Y1 166 cleped] called A6, A7, D#, K1 167 turne] not turne A4; come S7 | as blood] om. A4; blood A7 168 Elixer royall] royall cleare C3; ryall and elixir S7; naturall clear K1; roiall ins. naturall Elixir ins. cleere A5 169 red] deade A4 | to him] to heaven T1 170 and] red all other MSS 171 weekes] workes E1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1 | seaven] even P1, W1 172 blessed [...] heaven] blyssyd be god therfore in heavin D#; Blysse we all our lord yn heuen S7 173 worthie] om. A4 174 ounces] om. A7 | crude] om. all other MSS except T1; [caudy] K2

175 shall make him gold most royall
 and ever enduring to hold & dwell
 fire & hammer touch & test
 & all assayes both most & least
 And it is more medicinable to mans body
 180 for it is made most perfectly
 Gold that cometh from ye Oare is nourished by sulphur hed
 and that knoweth men both long & bred
 and engendered by Mercury he is
 and nourished by earth & sulphur Iwis
 185 And our gold is made of three pure soules
 in ye which no corruption is
 but pured as cleere as cristall
 body & spirit & soule withall
 and so they grow into a stone
 190 in ye which corruption is none
 And then cast him on mercury
 and he shalbe gold most worthie
 Now have yow heard ye making of our stone
 the beginning & ending and all is one.

175 him] *om.* A4; it A6, C3, D#, E1, P1, S7, S9, W1, Y1 | gold] all pure gold D# 176 ever] *om.* M1
 | enduring] induring fyer Y1 | hold & dwell] abyde A4; hold triall K1; hold and dwell *ins.* triall
 A5, K2 178 assayes] manner of assaies D#; manner of sayes T1 | most & least] most & *canc.*
 lest least (*ins.* both more & les) A5 179 And [...] body] And it is more medicinable for mans
 body (*ins.* & it has medicen aboue comon gold) A5 | is more] muste and more A7; is M1; is
 most A4, A6, T1 180 for [...] perfectly] For it is made most perfectly (*ins.* To mans body as god
 it would) A5; then eny other mynerall mettall is or maie be D# | for] when S7 | made most]
 made pure cleane & most D# 181 Gold that cometh from the ore/ [l. 182] [...] S7, T1 | Gold] &
 Y1 | Oare] mine A6 | by sulphur hed] by sulphur red A6; by sulphur hoode S9; by fuller hood
 P1, W1; best with his sulphure T1; by sulphur good Y1; with sulphur bred euermore D#; by *ins.*
 foule sulphur *canc.* [head] K2 182 and [...] bred] *om.* A7, D#, S#³; (*add.* and is may shyning
 bryght & pure) S7 | knoweth] is knowen to E1 | long & bred] long and broade *all other MSS*
except that bin istudied A6; far and brede T1 183 by] of A7, D#, K2, M1, S7, S9, S#³, T1, Y1; upon
 C3, E1 | he is] *om.* A7 184 Iwis] I wish E1 185 soules] *canc.* Soules *ins.* Soulis *ins.* stones
 A5 186 no corruption is] there is noe corruption A7; noe corruption is none C3; corruption
 (*canc.* is none at all) *ins.* *canc.* knowne *ins.* knowne A5 187 pured as cleere] as clean A7; pure,
 cleare T1; puryd as cleane D#; purified as cleere S#³; purged pure as clear C3, Y1; purged *ins.*
 pure as clere K2; purged, pure, as [or: &] clean E1, S7, S9 | cristall] as any Christall A7, D# 188
 body [...] withall] bodie and Soulle A7 190 corruption is none] is noe corruption A7 191
 him on] him in A7, D#, M1; him upon C3, E1, K2, S7, S9; on him T1; them on S#³ 193 Now [...]
 stone] *om.* E1 | heard] here M1

2. "BOAST OF MERCURY"

NIMEV 1276

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

Version A of the poem "Boast of Mercury" is a medial fragment of the "Verses upon the Elixir", version B, and circulated independently from the latter in a slightly extended form. Its variant, an extensive, stand-alone version (B), is related to the "Verses" by association.

Date

The poem "Boast of Mercury", version A, survives contemporarily with the "Verses upon the Elixir" from the end of the fifteenth century. As an independent text "Boast of Mercury" appears in manuscripts from the sixteenth century onwards (earliest witness: Bod MS Ashmole 1480). The causal and chronological relationship between versions A and B of "Boast of Mercury" is, nevertheless, not clear given the likely loss of earlier witnesses for both.

Author

It is not possible to identify an author for the "Boast of Mercury": neither its implicit attributions as a medial section of the "Verses upon the Elixir" nor its intermittent explicit ascriptions as a stand-alone text are consistent or conclusive. Most copies do not specify an author at all.

Title

The title "Boast of Mercury" appears in connection with two sixteenth-century copies of the poem (Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston'); and Bod MS e Mus 63, here added in a later hand). In its circulation as an individual text it mostly appeared without a title.

Edition

Editions of versions A and B agree with the general edition principles outlined above. The edition of the variant ending for version B₁, however, is not based on a single edition copy, as its text varies significantly from one copy to the next. Rather, it presents a text created from the witnesses' common denominators, i.e. passages shared between several witnesses, while preserving the scope of the text.

Manuscripts Version A

Copies of “Boast of Mercury” which form medial parts of full versions of the “Verses upon the Elixir”, version B, retain the sigla assigned in the corresponding edition above as well as the related sections of the critical apparatus (incorporated into the edition below). Folio numbers refer to the relevant excerpts of the “Verses” that constitute “Boast of Mercury”. Independent copies of “Boast of Mercury” are marked with an additional letter ‘M’ in the sigil.

- A4 Bod MS Ashmole 1445, f. 21^r, s. xvi/xvii
 A5 Bod MS Ashmole 1445, f. 50^{r-v}, s. xvii
 A6 Bod MS Ashmole 1485, f. 48^v, s. xvi²
 A7 Bod MS Ashmole 1490, f. 143^r, s. xvi
 C3 TCC MS O.2.15, f. 84^v, s. xvi/xvii
 CM* TCC MS O.2.15, f. 90^v, s. xvi/xvii
 D# Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 (‘Dekyngston’),
 ff. 60^v–61^r, s. xvi
 E1 Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/1/4, ff. 11^v–12^r, s. xvii
 F1 GUL MS Ferguson 229, f. 13^v, s. xvii
 K1 King’s College, Cambridge, Keynes Alchemical MS 42, f. 2^{r-v}, s. xvii
 M1 Boston, MA, Massachusetts Historical Society MS Winthrop 20 C, f. 155^r, s.
 xvi
 P1 Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Codex 111, f. 76^v, s. xvi
 S7 BL MS Sloane 1091, f. 106^r, s. xv^{ex}
 S8 BL MS Sloane 3688, ff. 75^v–76^r, s. xvi^{ex}
 S9 BL MS Sloane 3688, ff. 74^v–78^r, s. xvi^{ex}
 SM1 BL MS Sloane 1092, f. 13^v, s. xvi²
 SM2 BL MS Sloane 1095, f. 37^v, s. xvi²
 SM3 BL MS Sloane 3809, f. 2^v, s. xvi
 T1 Trinity College Dublin MS 389, ff. 102^v–103^r, s. xvi¹ [edition copy]
 W1 London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, f. 70^{r-v}, s. xvi²
 Y1 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 MS Osborn fa. 16, p. 38b, s. xvi²
 Y# New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 MS Mellon 43, f. 7^{vb}, s. xvi

Not Seen

- Boston, MA, Massachusetts Historical Society MS Winthrop 20 C, ca. ff. 25^r–
 28^r, s. xvi

Manuscripts Version B

- MA15 Bod MS Ashmole 1445, VIII, ff. 21^r–22^v, s. xvii (Version B₁)
 mA16 Bod MS Ashmole 1441, pp. 89–91, s. xvi–xvii (Version B₂)
 mA17 Bod MS Ashmole 1441, pp. 107–108, s. xvi–xvii (Version B₂) [edition copy]

- mA18* Bod MS Ashmole 1451, II, ff. 62^v–63^v, s. xvi (Version B₂)
- mA19* Bod MS Ashmole 1480, ff. 61^v–62^r, s. xvi (Version B₂)
- mA20* Bod MS Ashmole 1490, ff. 46^r–46^v, s. xvi (Version B₂)
- MD3* Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston'),
ff. 62^r–63^r, s. xvi (Version B₁)
- mG2* Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS Old Collection 1727, s. xvi (Version B₂)
- MS*6* BL MS Sloane 1098, ff. 38^r–38^v, s. xvi (Version B₁)
- mS*7* BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 7^v, s. xvi (Version B₂)
- mS17* BL MS Sloane 3667, ff. 117^v–118^r, s. xvi² (Version B₂)
- mS18* BL MS Sloane 3809, ff. 2^v–3^v, s. xvi (Version B₂)
- MX1* Bod MS e Mus 63, ff. 70^r–71^r, s. xvi (Version B₁)
- MY3* New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
MS Osborn fa. 16, pp. 41–42, s. xvi² (Version B₁)

Printed Version

TCB, 272–273

1450

1475

1500

1525

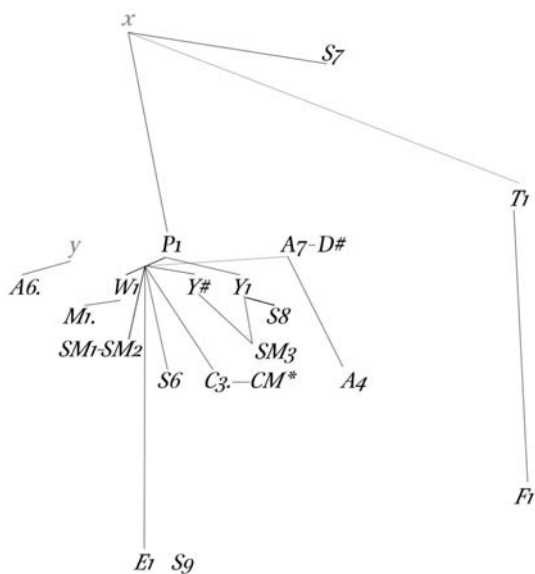
1550

1575

1600

1625

1650



A5 K1

Diagram VIII: Stemma, "Boast of Mercury", version A

1450

1475

1500

1525

1550

1575

1600

1625

1650

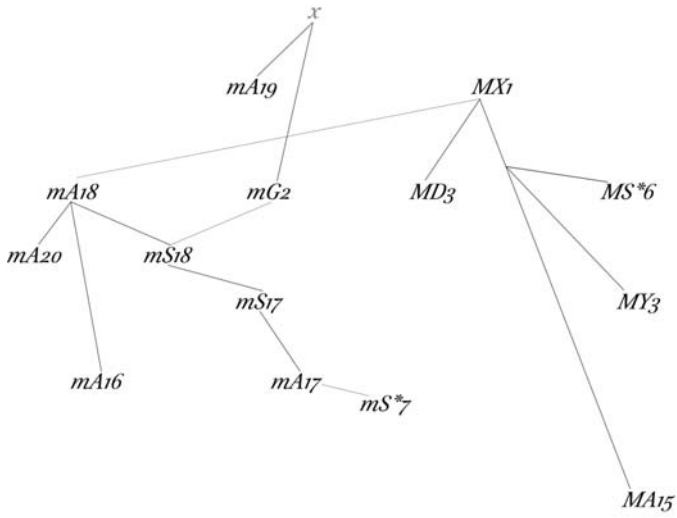


Diagram IX: Stemma, "Boast of Mercury", version B

2.1. "Boast of Mercury": Version A

- I am mercurye the mighty flos florum
 I am most worthiest of all Singulorum
 I am sower of Sol and Lune and Mars
 I am genderer of Iovis of him be all wars.
 5 I am sutteler of Saturn sower of venus
 I am emprese of princes & reguall of queens
 I am mother, and myror & maker of light
 I am head and highest & increaser of fright
 I am both sonne and moone
 10 I am shee that all must doone
 I am shee that doth all
 I am shee that men caule

1 f. 102^v | the] most SM₃ | mighty] myghty & goodly S₆; myghty & SM₃ | flos florum] flower A₅, A₆, C₃, D#, E₁, K₁, M₁, S₆, S₈, W₁, Y₁; flose flower P₁ 2 I am] which is D# | most worthiest] most worthy A₅, A₆, A₇, C₃, D#, E₁, K₁, M₁, P₁, S₆, S₈, W₁, Y₁; most worth F₁; royall and richest CM* | all Singulorum] honour A₅, A₆, C₃, D#, E₁, K₁, M₁, P₁, S₆, S₈, SM₃, W₁, Y₁; all singulores CM* 3 sower] sister A₆; sours K₁; lover M₁ 4 om. M₁; ill. var. A₄ | genderer] om. A₇; gendryd D#; gever P₁, W₁; engendred Y# | Iovis] Jupiter SM₂; all Iovis Y₁ | of [...] wars] by gods grace A₆; of him be alle [sic] A₇; of him by all ours D#; many be my snares K₁; of him be all praise P₁, W₁; of hym by all wayis Y₁; & be hem all [mars] SM₃ 5 f. 103^r | sutteler] sower A₄; succourer A₆, D#; sucker M₁; sowler S₆ | sower of venus] om. C₃ | sower of] and eke of A₄; and friend to A₆; sours of K₁; lover of M₁; saver of SM₃, Y# 6 emprese] prince A₆ | of princes] and princess A₄, C₃, E₁, F₁, M₁, P₁, S₆, S₈, W₁, Y#; princess A₅, K₁, Y₁; of precise A₇; and prinns D#; and royall princess SM₁, SM₂ | & [...] queens] of all greenesse A₄; moste victorious A₆; of ynen ys A₇; and regende of Quenes P₁; of queenes SM₁, SM₂; reall of quenys SM₃ 7/8 om. C₃, D#, E₁, M₁, P₁, S₆, SM₃, W₁, Y₁; position reversed with ll. 9/10 A₆ 7 and] of K₁ | & maker of] of all A₄, S₈ 8 increaser of] fairest in A₅, K₁; causer of A₆ | fright] fruit A₄, A₇, Y#; sight A₅, A₆, K₁ 10 om. A₄ | all] all things A₅, C₃, D#, E₁, K₁, P₁, S₆, S₈, W₁, Y₁ | must] shall Y# 11 om. A₄, A₅, C₃, D#, E₁, K₁, M₁, P₁, S₆, SM₁, SM₂, SM₃, W₁, Y₁ | doth] must do A₆ 12 om. A₅, C₃, D#, E₁, K₁, M₁, P₁, S₆, SM₁, SM₂, SM₃, W₁, Y₁ | men] none dothe after A₄; men (doth) after A₆, S₈; men dothe sister A

2.2. "Boast of Mercury": Version B

- I am Mercury the mightiest flos florum
 I am most royall & richest of all singulorum
 I am Patronus & Princeps most royall
 I am the mother of all manner of mettall
 5 I am vegetal animall & minerall
 I am fowre & one in generall
 I am aer, water, & also fire
 Among all others I haue no peare
 I kill I slay & eke Calcine
 10 I dye & eke I liue againe
 I haue lyfe & ingression
 For I am three & one ioyntly
 I am body Soule & Spirit
 Very red black & white
 15 Many wooers hang on my taylor
 But I will not with them deale
 They would me wedd against my will
 With my forme that likes me ill

1 p. 107 | mightiest] mighty *mA16, mA18, mA19, mA20, MD3, mG2, MS^{*6}, MX1*; most mygty & *mS18* | flos florum] flos flower *mA19, MD3, mG2, MX1* 2 I am] *om. MD3, MS^{*6}* | royall] real *mS18*; equal *mA16* | of all] omnium *MS^{*6}*; of *mA16, mA18, mA20, mS18* | of all singulorum] above all ore *MD3, MX1*; singular *mA19, mG2*; of alchymy *MY3* 3 (add. of all gold and siluer I am glorious flos florum) *MD3*; (add. of all golde & syluer I am gloryouse/ roote & tree fayre & bewteouse) *MS^{*6}*; (add. for of gold & siluer I am gouernore) *MY3* | Patronus &] *om. MS^{*6}*; Matrone & *mA16*; patroness *other MSS* | Princeps] prince [*or: princess*] *all other MSS except princis and patron MY3* | most royal] kindest over all *MA15, MD3, MS^{*6}, MX1*; *ins. kyndist ouer all MY3*; most real *mS18* 4 all manner of] every *MSS version B1, mA16, mA18*; all other *mS18*; all *mA19, mG2* 5/6 *om. mS18* 5 vegetal animall &] vitriall amyable in *mA18*; argentall royall and *mA19*; vegetall Artyficiall and *mG2* 6 fowre] four in qualite *mA16* 7 aer [...] fire] earth, water, air and fire *MSS version B1, mA16, mA18, mA20, mS17, mS18*; water and fyre *mA19* 9 *om. mS^{*7}* 10 dye [...] liue] die mortally and naturally I live *MA15, MD3, MS^{*6}, MX1*; dye I lyve naturally agayn *MY3*; die, I liue, and rise *mA20*; dye and also vyve againe *mG2* 11/12 *om. MS^{*6}* 11 haue] give *all other MSS* 12 ioyntly [...] one] three and one *MSS version B1*; jointly (*or iustly*) three and one *mS17, mS18, mS^{*7}*; justly three and one *mA16, mA18, mG2*; iustlye seamen in one *mA19*; ever more three and one *mA20* 14 red [...] white] red, green, black and white *MSS version B1* 15 wooers] wonderers *MA15*; wonders *mA20* 16 I will not deal with them but one way (therefore they fail) *MSS version B1* | not] in no wise *mA18, mS18*; not meddle nor *mA20* 17 *om. mS18* 18 with them to medle yat doth me yll *mA20* | my forme] most foemen *MSS version B1*; foren men *mS17*; my fo men *mS18*; fomen *mA16, mA18*; my enemies *mA19, mG2* | that [...] ill] meaning me [*or: for*] to hurt and kill [*or: spill*] *MSS version B1*

- But I will deale w^{ith} hem right nought
 20 But w^{ith} my husband as it is right
 With him y^{at} I shall beare fight
 He is by nature of my sute
 Of him the people haue most dispicte
 And when the fooles do lease the light
 25 There we had euer our kinde engendring
 Our Naturall food & our good keeping
 We shall encrease fruite by dene
 Both red & white king & queene.
 All manner of Salte I defie
 30 Sulphur arsene & argale
 Alume Orpiment & heale
 Gold Siluer & Sandaiver
 Galls Gumms & Egsheles
 Corrosive waters and calces else a
 Goats' horns and alum plume b
 Good with them will I none done c
 All y^{at} discordes from metalles
 35 It is conterary in generall
 For more to one Woman than one wedded husband d
 Ought not to be had by the law of England e
 And for Christ's sake rather than her spowse should be undo f

19 deale] medell *mA19, mG2* | with hem] with *mA16, mA19, mA20, mS17*; ne hafe ado with *mA18, mS18* | right nought] (ne with) no wight *MSS version B1, mA16, mA18, mA19, mG2, mS17, mS18*; any weighte *mA20* 21 fight] fruit *all other MSS* 22 he [...] my] I am by nature of his *MSS version B1, mA16, mA18, mA19, mS18*; I am in nature of that *mA20*; in nature of his *mG2* | sute] swett *mA16*; soule *mA19* 23 the people] many (of my) wooers *MSS version B1*; they *mA16, mA18, mA19, mS17, mS18*; that ye *mG2*; men *mA20* | most] great *mA20* 24 and therefore the fools fall into darkness and loose their light *MA15, MD3, MS*6, MX1* | when] therefore *MY3*; there *mA18, mG2, mS17*; they are *mA16*; thus *mA19*; therin *mA20* | do lease the] lessen thayr *mS17*; lose there *mA16*; lees on their *mG2*; left there *mA18*; loste ther *mA19*, haue their *mA20* | light] delight *mA20, mS18* 25 There] for if *MA15, mA16, MD3, MX1, MY3*; for *mS17*; for and *mA18, mS18*; thus *mA19*; and *mA20* | engendring] (in) governing *MD3, MX1* 27 encrease] encrease & be *mS18* | by dene] like heaven *MSS version B1* 29 p. 108 31 Alume] Also *mA18, mA20, mS18* | Orpiment] Auripigment *MA15*; orpenighte *mA19* | heale] hair *all other MSS except vren MY3*
 a–c *add. all other MSS, suppl. mA18* a Corrosive] *om. mA19* | foreign *mS17* | else] vive *mS17* | calces] calx of any metall *MSS version B1*; glasses *mA19* b alum plume] allum and alsoe plume *mA20* c will I none] shall [*or: has*] never man *MA15, MD3, MS*6, MX1* 34 y^{at} discordes from] y^{at} g[old?] y^{at} acordyth for *mS18*; that destroyeth without any *mA20* | metalles] *canc.* Nature Metall *MA15* 35 *om. mA19* d–i *add. version B1* f undo] ded *ins. vndoo MD3*

She will rather suffer her heart to be cloven in two g
 Such a spouse hath a love by artificial matrimony h
 Created first both of God & after by grace in one conjunctly i
 Many fooles to me haue sought
 But I & they accord nought
 For rather than to occupy my body with them in vaine: j
 I shall as a true lover die rather, & never live againe, k
 But with my own spowse when that I mete: l
 I will die for his love it is to me so swete, m
 Then to see the sorrow he takes, for that I am slain n
 To comfort him after my death I live againe. o
 To knowe this privy counsel there ask it of me, p
 but their petitions be so unreasonable that may not be, q
 I leaue them there where I them finde
 And as fooles I make them blinde
 40 In Philosophy I beare the flower
 For I am King Prince & Emperour
 To all men be it knowne
 Learned lewde high & lowe
 It is in me & in my fire
 45 My owne loue both lyfe & deare
 He is my light he is my fruite

g suffer [...] two] her hart burst in two *MY*₃ h a love] I alone *MY*₃ 36 fooles] *om. MY*₃ | to
 [...] sought] hath come sovth *mS*₁₈ | to] so *mA*₂₀ 37 there froward condicion causith me to
 [w]ord with yem right *MY*₃ | But] but so frowned be yer condicions *MD*₃; But so forward are
 their condicions *MA*₁₅, *MX*₁ | accord] agree *MA*₁₅ | nought] right nought *MA*₁₆, *MA*₁₉, *mG*₂,
*mS*₁₈ j-q see *ll. d-i* j occupy] venter *MA*₁₅ | my body] *om. MY*₃ k live] to rise *MY*₃ l-o
*om. MY*₃ l But] And *MA*₁₅ | own] very *MA*₁₅ n to see] for *MA*₁₅ p privy] pore *MY*₃ |
 there] that *MA*₁₅, *MX*₁; the *MY*₃ | ask it of me] asked one *MY*₃ 38 leaue] lose *mS*₁₇, *mS*₁₈; loue
*MA*₁₉ | there] that *MA*₁₉ | where] as *all other MSS* 39 as] like *MSS version B₁* | fooles] popping
 [or: popping] fools *MSS version B₁* | make] leave *MA*₁₉, *mG*₂ 40 In] of *MA*₂₀ | Philosophy]
 this fellowship and science *MA*₁₅, *MD*₃, *MS*^{*6}, *MX*₁; this science *MY*₃; fellowship *MA*₁₆, *MA*₁₈,
*MA*₁₉, *mG*₂, *mS*₁₈; good fellowshipe *MA*₂₀ | beare the] am the puer *MY*₃ 41 King] duke *MSS*
version B₁; kyng, queen *mG*₂ 42/43 line break *om. MSS version B₁* 42 men] Christian men
*mG*₂, *mS*₁₇; [proper] men *MA*₁₈; them *MA*₁₉ 43 Learned lewde] *om. MA*₁₅ | high] light *MSS*
version B₁ 43/44 *add. version B₁* The seed of Abr[aham] few men doth know *MA*₁₅, *MD*₃; the
 sede of Alchymye ffewe men do knowe *MX*₁; I am the seyd of alban y^at few men doth know
*MY*₃; (*marginal note*: alle y^at wyse men seke bothe ferr & nere) *MA*₁₈; (*add.* All that wismen
 seke bothe far and near) *MA*₂₀ 44 me] me *ins.* could *mG*₂ | fire] fyre *ins.* heate *mG*₂ 45
 loue] lowe *mG*₂ | both [...] deare] *om. mS*₁₈ | lyfe] lese *MA*₁₆; love *mG*₂ | deare] desyre *mG*₂
 45/46 (*add.* he is full gentill in his manner) *MA*₂₀ 46 He [...] light] *om. mS*₁₈ | light] son *MA*₁₅,
*MA*₁₆, *MA*₁₈, *MA*₂₀, *MD*₃, *MS*^{*6}, *MX*₁; seme *MY*₃; Lust *mS*₁₇; love *MA*₁₉, *mG*₂ | fruite] fricht *MSS*
version B₁, *MA*₁₈, *mG*₂, *mS*₁₈; knight *MA*₂₀

With him I worke w^{ith} all my might
 He is my Son I am his Mother
 I loue him paramoure & no other
 50 In Sol & Luna is all my loue
 For only in me is all his behoue
 With him I worke w^{ith} all my might
 But we may not encrease fight
 Without an other that passeth him
 55 A thousand fould who him ken
 He is my lemen & my loue sweete
 And all his Counsell I will keepe
 Seeke yee forth as I haue sought
 ffor more of me gett [y]e nought

Variant ending Version B₁

60 And now all men know you this
 How mercury has made her boast
 And magnified her worthiness
 For first she says that she is most mightiest
 And that she is flos florum, and indeed she is so
 65 For by her might every metal
 Is calcined wrought and done
 For she is flower of all floures
 In this craft of Alkemy

47 With him] in whom [or: in him] *all other MSS* | with] my lust and *MSS version B₁*; *om. mA18, mG2, mS18, MY3*; and stowe *mA20* 50 Sol & Luna] sun and moon *mA19, mG2*; gold and siluer *MY3* 51 And all I doe for his behoue *mA20* | is all] is their royalty and *MSS version B₁*; hit ys here *mA18* | his] there *MY3*; or *mG2* 52 We thre togeder worke day and nyght *mA16* 53 encrease] increase nor engender *MSS version B₁* | fight] fright *MA15, mA18, MD3, mG2, MS*6, MX1*; fruit *mA16, mA19, mS17, mS18, MY3*; neither dai nor night *mA20* 54/55 line break *om. mA18, mA20, mS18* 54 Without] *om. MSS version B₁, mA16, mA18, mS18* | an other] a lover *mA20* | for I have another love that passes them *MSS version B₁, mA16, mA18, mS18*; W^{ith}thowt I haue that love yat passeth hym *mG2* 55 a [twelve] fold *mS18*; a [hundred] fold *MSS version B₁, mA18, mA19*; An hundred *canc. foles fowlle hom so hym ken mG2* | who him ken] *om. MY3* | ken] knowe *mA19*; ken young or old *mA18, mS18*; can fyend eyther yong or old *mA20* 56 I shall him love as my leman swete *mA20* | loue] spiritual love *MSS version B₁* 57 And kepe his concile as yt is meeke *mA20* | Counsell] proper counsil *mA18, mS18* 58/59 *om. mA20* 58 forth] forth fools *MSS version B₁, mA16, mA18, mS18*; fourthier *mA19* | I] ye *mG2* 59 for in all other things shall you find nought *MA15, MD3, MX1* | more of me] in all other things *mA16, mA18, mS17, mS18, MY3*; other tale of me *mG2* | gett ye] ye fynde ryght *mS18, MY3*; you find him *mA16, mA18* 61 boast] boast iwis *MA15, MX1* 66 calcined] sooner *MA15* 67/68 line break *om. MA15, MX1*

Also in every operation in all colours
 70 Mother of metals is mercury
 For of mercury in the earth engendered they bene
 And therefore she is mother of them all
 For the earth receives the sperm good and clean
 And nourishes it to an other as it will fall
 75 Also Mercury is flying, & has a soul spiritual
 And with very progeneration very metal & elixir
 After qualities and quantities natural
 By operation of the material and ministry
 Also mercury is iiij and one
 80 And the erth is water running
 And by working is substance anone
 And it is air fleeting and fire brenning
 For by her power she calcines cold
 More than fire may do with heat
 85 And her calcination is a thousand fold
 Unto all metals as precious and sweet as gold

71 engendered] poudred *MA15* 73 sperm] Earth *MA15* 76 metal & elixir] elixir and metal
MA15, MX1 82 brenning] burning *MA15, MS*6* 83 cold] gold *MS*6* 86 and sweet] *om. MS*6*

3. "MYSTERY OF ALCHEMISTS"

NIMEV 4017

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

"Mystery of Alchemists" is connected with the "Verses upon the Elixir" through intertextuality by indirect association: one version of "Mystery of Alchemists" includes substantial passages of "Boast of Mercury" and individual couplets that coincide with "Richard Carpenter's Work", variants "Spain" and "Titan Magnesia".

Date

This poem first appears in manuscripts contemporary with the "Verses upon the Elixir". It appears to date from the second half of the fifteenth century.

Author

"Mystery of Alchemists" was circulated with intermittent, consistent yet probably erroneous attribution to George Ripley, which is also noted by Elias Ashmole (*TCB*, 380–388, notably not repeated on 488).⁵

Title

Extant copies and early printed versions of the poem assign a wide variety of descriptive titles to the text. The title used here was adopted from the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (380 and 488).

Edition

The following, diplomatic edition is intended to provide extended alchemical literary background for the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir". Stanzas are numbered as in the edition copy.

Extant texts vary greatly in scope and wording. It should be noted that a rather common variant is easily mistaken for the version relevant here; indeed, the interference with "Boast of Mercury", version B observed above may indicate the existence of an amalgam text of the two poems. Many extant copies remain to be identified, classified and investigated.

⁵ On Ripley attribution and titles, see Rampling, "Catalogue," s.v. item 19.

Manuscripts

- Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston'),
ff. 118^r–121^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Harley 6453, ff. 21^r–23^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1098, ff. 5^r–7^r, s. xvi [edition supplemented: stanza 6]
 BL MS Sloane 1423, ff. 37^v–39^v, s. xvi^{ex}
 BL MS Sloane 1723, ff. 48^r–54^v, s. xvii
 BL MS Sloane 1787, ff. 111^r–117^v, s. xvii
 BL MS Sloane 2036, ff. 22–25^r & ff. 26^r–27^r, s. xvii [edition copy]
 BL MS Sloane 3747, ff. 110^r–115^v, s. xv²
 Bod MS Ashmole 759, ff. 106^v–113^v, s. xv²
 Bod MS Ashmole 1382, pp. 254–255, s. xvii
 Bod MS Ashmole 1490, ff. 8^r–10^v, s. xvi
 GUL MS Ferguson 91, ff. 27^v–35^v, s. xvii

Not Seen

- Boston, MA, Massachusetts Historical Society MS Winthrop 20 C, ff. 21^r–24^v,
s. xvi

Printed Version

- TCB*, 380–388

3.1. "Mystery of Alchemists"

6 fowlys in the ayre wyth it doeth flee
 and fysshes therewyth do swymme in the sea
 the sowle of angelles they do deserne
 bothe man and woman to governe [...]

79 I am mercury the mightiest flos florum
 I am most riall & richest of all singlar
 I am patronas & princes most ryall
 I am mother of all manner of mettall

80 I am vigitable animall & minerall
 I am 4. & one in generall
 I am ayre water earth & fire
 among all other I haue no pere

81 I kyl I slay & eke I calcyne
 I dye & eke I liue againe
 I giue life & ingression
 for I am iustlye 3 & one

82 I am body soule & Spirit
 very red blacke & white
 many woers hang on my taile
 but I will not with them deale

83 They would me wedd against my will
 with my fomen that liketh me ill
 I will not deale with them right nought
 but with my husband as it is right

84 With whom that I shall beare fruite
 he is of nature of my sute
 of him the people haue most despyte
 & there the fooles loose their light

85 There we had euer our kind in gendringe
our naturall food & good keepeing
 wee shall encrease fruite by dene
 both red & white king & queen

86 And all manner of Saltes I defye
 Sulphur arsnecke & argulie
 allom orpement & hayre
 gold Siluer & Sandyvere

87 Gales gums & eges shels
 corosyfe water & & calssis els
 gotes horne & alom plume
 good with them will I none done

88 All that discordeth from mettall
 it is contraryous to me in generall
 many fooles to me haue sought
 but I & they accord right nought

89 I leaue them ther as I them find
 & as fooles I make them blind
 for in philosophy I beare the floure
 for I am prince king & emperor

90 To all Christian men be it knowne
 to learned lewd high & low
 it is in me & in my feire
 mine owne lofe bothe life & death

91 He is my loue he is my fruite
 with him I worke with all my might
 he is my Sonn & I am his mother
 I loue him euermore & none other

92 In Soll & lune is all my loue
 for onely of me is all their behoue
 with them I worke with all my might
 but wee by & by may not encrease fright

93 Without another that passeth them
 a thousand fold who so him kenne
 he is my leman & my loue sweete
 & all his counsaile I will kepe

94 Seeke ye therefore as I haue sought
for f[u]rther of me get ye right nought
at this time I shew you here a short conclusion
to vnderstand it & ye haue grace

4. "LIBER PATRIS SAPIENTIAE"

NIMEV 1150.3

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

"Liber Patris Sapientiae" is related to the "Verses upon the Elixir" via "Boast of Mercury" rather than directly, both for both chronological and textual reasons. Medial passages from "Liber Patris Sapientiae" borrow extensively from "Boast of Mercury", version B; some stanzas agree almost *verbatim*.

Date

The date of origin for "Liber Patris Sapientiae" is difficult to determine due to the existence of one early yet vaguely dated, and unfortunately illegible, witness (San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HU 1051). The poem nevertheless appears to be contemporary with version B of "Boast of Mercury", which dates from the sixteenth century.

Author

The text was circulated anonymously and is even recorded explicitly as such by Elias Ashmole (*TCB*, 487).

Title

The title used here agrees with its published title in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (194). In early modern manuscripts, however, the poem usually appears without a title.

Edition

As for the "Mystery of Alchemists", extant texts vary greatly in scope and wording; not all surviving texts can be easily identified; and the poem itself is ancillary to the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir". Accordingly, the diplomatic edition below was compiled from only a handful of representative copies and focuses on common passages with "Boast of Mercury", version B and other core poems from the corpus.

Manuscripts

- A21 Bod MS Ashmole 1445, V, ff. 8^v–14^r, s. xvi/xvii
A22 Bod MS Ashmole 1490, ff. 336^r–342^v, s. xvi [edition copy]
I* London, Lincoln's Inn MS Hale 90, ff. 32^r–34^v, s. xvii
HU* San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HU 1051, f. 129^v, s. xvⁱⁿ–xvi^{ex}
S19 BL MS Sloane 2036, ff. 14^r–19^v, s. xvii
S20 BL MS Sloane 2532, ff. 86^r–91^v, s. xvi

Not Seen

- Boston, MA, Massachusetts Historical Society MS Winthrop 20 C, ff. 14^v–19^v,
s. xvi

Printed Version

- T *TCB*, 194–209

4.1. "*Liber Patris Sapientiae*"

This worthy science of Alcemy yf thou wilt it learne
 65 a litle monye out of thy purse tho[u] muste for beare
 to buy therwith flos florum it is moste worthyeste
 and to builde well hir chamber and hir neste [...]

Therefore of all bodyes, and spiritts more and lesse
 [mercury] is called flos florum and worthieste princes
 90 for hir bewty and marveilous dealinge
 There is moste worthieste to haue bene kinge [...]

Nowe haue I declared the working of the bodies mineralle
 wherof they be engendred after other mens saying overall
 And as in place of the earth on bodie was fully wrought
 135 So moste the Artificiall Medicine be: or ells it is naughte [...]

My sonne [mercurius] is called the mightiste flos florum
 145 And moste royall and richeste of all singulorum
 She is verie patron, and princes moste royalle
 And she is verie mother of every mettalle

Shee is Animal Vegitalle & Mineralle
 Shee is 4. in kinde and on in generale
 150 Shee is earth, ayere, water and fier
 Amongee Al other shee hath noe peere

She killeth and sleyeth & also doth calcine
 Shee dieth & alsoe she doth reliue againe
 She giueth life and alsoe ingression
 155 for lustly she is 3 and one

64 f. 336^r | worthy] *om.* A21 66 florum] flores A21 67 neste] weagte A21 88 f. 337^r | and spiritts] *om.* S19 89 mercury] *om.* S20 | called] *om.* A21 | princes] of pryce A21 90 bewty] birth A21 | dealinge] darling S20 91 There] she *all other MSS* 132 f. 337^v 133 wherof] howe A21 | overall] in all A21 135 be] *om.* A21 144 f. 337^v 146 princes] purenesse A21 147 every] all S19 148 f. 338^r 153 reliue] live S19, S20; viue A21 155 is] is called A21

Shee is with everi kind of mixare
 the progeneration of the greate Elixar
 She is both bodie Soule and sprite
 in colloure very red blacke and white

160 Manie be the woers that hang on her taille
 but she will not with them deell
 They wold her wed Againste her Will
 with foe men that liken her full ill

She will dealle with noe manner of weighte
 165 but with her husband, as it is greate righte
 with him she will beare moch fruite
 for She is naturalle of his suite

My former men in him men haue much dispighte
 And therin such foolles lost their lighte
 170 for somtimes he is darke and sometimes brighte
 for she is like noe other weighte

for then haue they kind engendringe
 Their naturalle food and good kepinge
 Theie shall encrease fruite by deen
 175 verie red and white king and queen

My sonne in this science I doe denie
 All thinges that be discording truly
 All manner of Saltes I doe defie
 And all manners of Sulphurs in waters of Cerosiues

156 with everi] (a) very *all other MSS* | kind] kindly S19; freendly A21 157 the progeneration]
 to the generation A21 163 foe men] men I*, S20; free men A21 165 greate] good A21 167
 she [...] his] he is in nature of her *all other MSS* 168 former men] son *all other MSS* | men]
 fools A21 169 therin] then A21 | lighte] righte A21 170 brighte] lighte A21 171 she] he *all*
other MSS 172 then] *om. all other MSS* | kind] kynde of A21 173 naturalle] mercurall A21
 | good] *om.* A21 174 by deen] lye greene A21 179 in] and A21 | Cerosiues] corrosives *other*
MSS

180 Alsoe Allom Vitriolle Atrament & here
 Gould, Siluer, Angola, and Sandiuer
 goms and galles and also eg shells
 honnie wax and oilles or calces ells

Alsoe I defie our money beralle & cristalle
 185 ropine pitch, also Amber Iate & corralle
 herbes date stones, marble or Tyne glas
 yf ther com any of all thes therin yt is the worse

Also, pell, gotes horns, Allum plume
 good with them I will non done
 190 Althinge that discordeth from Mettalle
 yt is contrary to the worke in generalle

My sonne many fooles to me haue soughte
 but they and I accorded righte naught
 I leaue them ther as I them find
 195 And as fooles I leaue them blind

for with [mercurius] they haue Erred full sore
 And when they had him they could doe no more
 Therfore in fellowshipe she beareth the floware
 for She is king prince and Emperoure

200 Yet my deare sonne be thou not a knowen
 to [lerned] nor to leud, to hit, nor to lowe
 that this worke standeth by [mercurius] and in her feer
 her owne specialle loue both life and deer

for he is ther sonne, shee is his fryite
 205 in whom she worketh all her mighte
 he is her sonn, she is his mother
 She loueth him peramoure & noe other

180 Atrament] auripigmentum A21 181 Angola] argall A21 184 our money] antimony A21,
 S19; auremon S20 185 ropine] rossen *all other MSS* | late] lett *all other MSS* 186 f. 338^v |
 date] Tate S20 | Tyne glas] tinglas *other MSS* 188 pell] pearles A21 195 leaue] make *all other*
MSS 197 him] done A21; *om.* S19, S20 199 king] king queene A21 201 hit] high S19, S20;
 ritche A21 203 both] her A21

In Sonne and Moone, in her metinge is all her love
 for of [mercurius] only is all her behoue
 210 and with them shee worketh all mighte
 but they never Encrease no fruite

Therefore yt is Impossible to caste a proietione puer
 vpon on hundred thousand to make a perfecte bodie of tinkture
 with medisen of sprite well Ioynned and fixed
 215 yt shall not be perceyued when yt is well mixed

And therefore yf ther com eyther Syluer or gould in at hir gate
 The which men vst in coine or in other plate
 I swear by god that all this wordle hath wrought
 All thy laboure and worke shall turne to naughte

220 for with what mettall soever, [mercurius] is Ioyned
 bycause his coldnes and moistnes he is clويد
 put them never soe close to gether she will fume anon
 And when they com into the fier she will sone begone

Therefore [mercurius] hath a louer that passeth them
 225 an hundred fould, who soe will him ken
 And he is her louer and her lemmon sweete
 And for his counnelle she will kepe

bothe in his chamber and alsoe in his bed
 Also one lyve, and when they be ded
 230 seke fooles as ye haue well soughte
 for in all other things find youe right naught [...]

380 for yf thou woорke by good measure & perfecte time
 thou shalt haue very gould and silver fine
 then shalt thou be richer in thy selfe then anny kinge
 without he labor the science, and haue the same thinge

208 Sonne and Moone] [sol] and [luna] A21 211 they] they may *all other MSS* | fruite] fright
all other MSS 213 on hundred thousand] 1000 000 S20 214 with] without S19 | sprite] spirits
all other MSS 215 perceyued] preserved S20 | well] *om.* A21 216 eyther] other S19 217 vst]
 use *other MSS* 218 swear by] *ill.* A22 [*edition copy*] 219 thy] their S19; his S20 221 his [...]
 he] her [...] she A21 222 anon] *om.* A21 224 f. 339^r 227 will] will alwayes A21 230 well]
om. A21 380 f. 341^r

5. "EXPOSITION"

NIMEV 2666

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

An auxiliary poem claiming to explain difficult passages from a preceding text, the "Exposition" often appears attached to or incorporated into copies of the "Verses", version A. It appears to have been written in response to the "Verses upon the Elixir", even though it is not possible to match the poems' contents with absolute certainty.

Another connection between the "Exposition" and the "Verses upon the Elixir" presents itself in two early modern variant copies (Bod MS Ashmole 1441 and Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Codex 111). An otherwise independent poem, here amalgamated with the "Exposition" (*incipit* "There is a body and a body and a soul and spirit"), this echoes the "Verses" in various ways (e.g. l. 40/60: "body of body and light of light").

Date

The "Exposition" appears in manuscripts at the same time as the "Verses upon the Elixir"; three of the oldest surviving manuscripts contain both poems. Style and language also mark the "Exposition" as a product of the mid- to late fifteenth century.

Author

Apart from indirect attributions to varying authors (e.g. by association with the "Verses upon the Elixir") the "Exposition" was circulated anonymously.

Title

The title used here, "Exposition", is a digest of the poem's *incipit* and a title given in a sixteenth-century manuscript, "An exposition of Earth earthes brother" (Bod MS Ashmole 1492), the only extant copy assigning a title to the text.

Manuscripts

- A8 Bod MS Ashmole 759, ff. 128^v–129^v, s. xv^{ex} [edition copy]
 A9 Bod MS Ashmole 1441, pp. 82–83, s. xvi–xvii
 A10 Bod MS Ashmole 1450, pp. 27–30, s. xvi
 A11 Bod MS Ashmole 1480, ff. 3^{va}–4^{tb}, s. xvi
 A12 Bod MS Ashmole 1487, ff. 72^v–73^v, s. xvi
 A13 Bod MS Ashmole 1492, pp. 129–130, s. xvi
 A14 Bod MS Ashmole 1492, pp. 145–146, s. xvi
 A#³ Bod MS Ashmole 1445 VIII, ff. 26^v–28^r, s. xvii
 C4 TCC MS O.2.15, ff. 82^v–83^v, s. xvi/xvii
 C5 TCC MS R.14.56, ff. 87^v–88^v, s. xvi
 D2 Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston'),
 ff. 223^r–224^r, s. xvi
 F*³ GUL MS Ferguson 322, f. 5^v, s. xvi²
 G1 Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS Gl. kgl. S. 3500 8o, ff. 18^v–20^r, s. xvi
 K3 KCC Keynes Alchemical MS 42, ff. 3^r–4^r, s. xvii
 P2 Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Codex 111, ff. 51^v–52^r, s. xvi
 S10 BL MS Sloane 1092, ff. 5^v–6^v, s. xvi²
 S11 BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 21^{r-v}, s. xvi
 S12 BL MS Sloane 1842, ff. 18^v–20^r, s. xvi/xvii
 S13 BL MS Sloane 2170, ff. 75^v–76^v, s. xvi–xvii
 S14 BL MS Sloane 3580B, ff. 182^r–183^r, s. xvi²
 S15 BL MS Sloane 3667, ff. 119^v–120^v, s. xvi²
 S16 BL MS Sloane 3747, ff. 108^r–109^v, s. xv²
 S#⁶ BL MS Sloane 3579, f. 24^v, s. xv
 S#⁷ BL MS Sloane 3747, ff. 15^r–16^r, s. xv²
 Y2 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 MS Osborn fa. 16, pp. 37v–38a, s. xvi²

Fragments

- BL MS Sloane 1097, f. 67^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1113, f. 4^r, s. xv
 BL MS Sloane 1186, f. 29^v, s. xvi

Printed Version

- T *TCB*, 428–430

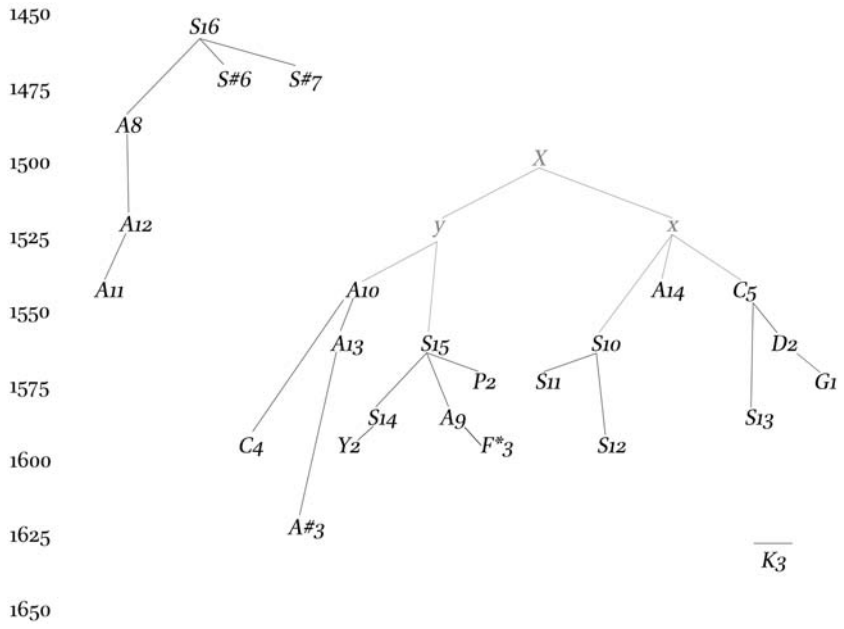


Diagram X: Stemma, "Exposition"

5.1. "Exposition"

Nowe of this matter to you most clere
 An exposicon I do make here
 Wheryn I charge you secrete to be
 That frynde ne foo do it se
 5 Erth is withyn most fyne
 Water of Wode aysell of wyne
 ffor the moist of the grape who can it take
 And sericon don our maistry make
 But nowe be ware that ye not fayle
 10 ffor then yo lose your gret trauayle
 When ye haue drawn out of the gomme
 all the mercury that will come
 Vnderstonde then lycours thre
 In that mercury conteyned to be
 15 The fyrst is the water of lyf ardent
 By bath to be departid that is most lent
 hit brennyth as aqua vite by lyve
 and is callid our mercury attractyve
 Wherwith is made erth cristallyne
 20 Out of all calces metallyne
 I speke no more therof as yeit
 ffor in this werk we nede not it
 Then comyth a water after thelke

1 f. 128^v | *om.* A14 | Nowe] *om. all other MSS except* A12, K3 | matter] thinge A11 | to you most clere] to you most dear C5, D2, S10, S11, S12, S13; dark and nothing clere A9, F³, G1, K3, P2, S15
 2 exposicon] plain exposition G1, S15; plain description A9, P2 | do] will A11, Y2 3 secrete to be] secretly A11 4 do it se] do it reade or see G1; yow suffer yt to see S15 5 Erth] earth hid within the body's centre G1, K3, A9, F³, P2, S15; And of the matter yearth A11 | withyn] *om.* A11, K3; within gold A10, A13, C4; certainly A9, F³, G1, P2; truly S15 6 aysell] *i.e.* eisell *other MSS*; distill A11, A14 7 ...grape/who... A9, A10, A13, C4, F³, G1, K3 | the] by the A9, F³, K3, P2 | grape] white grape A10, A13, C4; red grape G1 | who] we A12; (*add.* and the red) A10, A13, C4; (*add.* and of the white) G1; this central earth who A9, F³, K3, P2, S15 | can it] so can A14 8 our perfect yearth to make A11 | sericon] It & sericon A9, F³, K3, P2, S15; then S10, S11; therein A14, C5, D2, G1, S12, S13 9 *add.* shall become mercurial/ and after that essential D2, G1, K3, S12, S13 11 When] Sonne when S²⁶ | drawn] driuen S10 12 mercury] watter A11 13 lycours] mercuryes A14 15 By Balneo directly itt must bee hent A²³ | is] *om.* S14 16 to be] *om.* A10, A11, C4, K3; yt is to be G1 | departid] deprived A11 17 brennyth] burneth A10, A14, C4, C5, S10, S11, S12, S15, Y2 | by lyve] Viue A13 18 our mercury] the watter Y2 19 *om.* A²³, S²⁶ | Wherwith] Whereof A13 | cristallyne] and Calce vive A14 20 *om.* S²⁶ | all] *om.* A10, A13, C4, S14, S15, Y2 | calces] colours K3; corporate calces A9, P2, S15 23 comyth] runneth K3 | after] somewhat Y2 | thelke] thick C5, S10, S11, S14, Y2

- litell of quantite white as melke
 25 Which is sperme of nature of our stone
 Which is sought of meny on
 ffor of man best and euer thyng.
 Sperme is their begynnnyng
 Therefore our mercury we it call
 30 Which is founde ouer all
 ffor without it there is no thyng beyng
 Wherefore it is in euery thyng
 aswell in thyngges not costeous
 as in thyngges most preciose
 35 Of them it is their fyrst mater
 This moisture as nowe to your is clere
 This is the mercury that we call
 vegittall mynerall and anymall
 Our quyksilur and our lac virginis
 40 Our water permanent forsoth it is
 With this water mercuriall
 We wesse the filthe origynall
 Of our erth till it be white
 like a gomme that flowith tite
 45 By drie fire after that shall come
 Oyle wherwith we make redde gomme.
 Which is our tynctor and our sulphur vif.

24 litell [...] quantite] an aquafortis A11 | litell of] little in [or: in little] *all other MSS except* in like D2 | white] *canc.* red whit S15 25 This sperme of nature is our stone A11 | sperme [...] nature] the supprime nature Y2 | of nature] or nature D2, G1, K3, S13; naturall S10, S11, S12 26 sought] earnestly sought A9, K3, P2, S15 27/28 *position exchanged with ll. 29/30 in S²⁷*; Men do seeke it in every thinge/ and in sperme the [sic] do bygine A11 27 euery] other A²³; anye A12 28 f. 129^r | Sperme] sperme and nature A14 | their] their first A9, P2, S15, S²⁷ 29–36 *alt. structure* S10 30 Which] which mercury A14 | founde] found here and there and A9, G1, K3, P2, S15; gone A13 31 *om. S²⁷* | beyng] living *all other MSS except* A11, A12, S²⁶ 33 not costeous] (most) precious *all other MSS except* A11, A12, S16 34 *om.* A14, C5, D2, S13 | preciose] vile F²³; odious A9, A10, A13, C4, K3, P2, S10, S11, S14, S15, Y2; vile and vicious G1, S12 35 it is] they have *all other MSS except* A²³, A11, A12 | matter] nature *all other MSS except* A²³, A11, A12 36 This moisture] this is a truth A11 | clere] dear A10, A13, C4, C5, D2, S10, S11, S13 37 *om.* P2 | This [...] mercury] These three mercuryes A14 39 quyksiluer] argent vive A9, P2, S14, S15, Y2 40 water] matter A11 41 water] worthy water A9, P2, S15 | mercuriall] mynerall S²⁶ 42 wesse] clense A11 | the] our stone from his A9, P2, S15 43 erth] worke A11 44 flowith] flowyth *ins.* flyeth S10, S11 | tite] light K3, P2, S10, S11, S12; till it be day A²³, A13 46 red] our A13, C4

The sowle of saturne and the gold of lyf
 Our tyncture and our dery gold
 50 Which before was neuer thus pleynly told
 God grunte I do no displesure
 To hym fulfillyng your desire
 Nowe elementes ar deuydid echon
 With this oyle make redy your stone
 55 Our gomme two then haue shall ye
 Without the which non elixer may be
 They go the body and thesprite betwixe
 Without the which it may not be fixe
 and makith of hem in litell space
 60 Two elixers by God is grace
 Wherby artruly alterat
 all metallyn bodies to a better astate
 With sol and lune eqall to be
 To helpe vs in necessite
 65 Nowe thankid be God most gracious
 Which hath this secrete lent to vs
 His g[r]ace to vs therwith he leve
 To sawles helth vs to meve

48 gold] sol S12; soon *ins.* sol S14; [sol] Y2 49 dery] dear *other MSS*; airy A11, A12, K3; deere
 greene G1, S12, S15; dere *ins.* greene S10 51/52 *om.* S^{#6}, S^{#7} 51 I [...] displesure] I do to him no
 Ire A11 53 deuydid] decocted G1 54 f. 129^v | *om.* S^{#7} | redy] red *all other MSS except* A14, S^{#6},
 S14, S15, S16, S^{#7}, Y2 56 non elixir] it A11 57 They go] The Gumme, A^{#3} 58 it] our stone K3,
 S15; no Elixir S12 59/60 *rhymes reversed* S^{#7} 59 of hem] you A11 62 to [...] astate] to white
 and redd A11 63 sol and lune] Sunne and Moone A^{#3} | to be] take A^{#3} 65–68 *var. endings*
all extant MSS 66 this secrete] this noble secreate S15; his secrets A11 | lent] sente A11 67
 This grace of his doth come of love A11 | therwith] pray him S14, Y2 | he leve] he us give A10,
 A13, F^{#3}

6. "WIND AND WATER"

NIMEV 3257

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

Version A of "Wind and Water" is physically connected with the "Verses upon the Elixir", following the "Exposition", in a considerable number of manuscript witnesses. For the resulting composite poem ("Verses"/ "Exposition"/ "Wind and Water") the individual components are rarely marked as originally independent poems. "Wind and Water", version A, further shows intertextual links with the "Verses upon the Elixir": it repeats six of its lines almost *verbatim*. The poem's variant, version B, is mainly linked with the corpus by association with version A.

Date

Version A of "Wind and Water" first appears together with one of the earliest copies of the "Verses upon the Elixir" in a manuscript from the second half of the fifteenth century, and also seems to date from the mid- to late fifteenth century. Version B emerges in the sixteenth century as an independent text.

Author

It is not possible to identify an associated author in any of the extant copies. "Wind and Water" is therefore best considered anonymous.

Title

Although occasionally appearing with a descriptive title, "Wind and Water" mostly circulates without a moniker. The title used here, "Wind and Water", is a pragmatic contraction of its *incipit*.

Manuscripts Version A

- a1 Bod MS Ashmole 1450, p. 31, s. xvi [edition copy]
 a2 Bod MS Ashmole 1487, ff. 74^v–75^r, s. xvi
 a3 Bod MS Ashmole 1492, p. 146, s. xvi
 c1 TCC MS O.2.15, f. 83^v, s. xvi/xvii
 c2 TCC MS R.14.56, f. 88^v, s. xvi
 f1 GUL MS Ferguson102, f. 3^r, s. xvi
 f2 GUL MS Ferguson 322, f. 5^v, s. xvi²
 k1 KCC Keynes Alchemical MS 42, f. 4^r, s. xvii
 s*1 BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 36^r, s. xvi
 s*2 BL MS Sloane 1114, f. 1^v, s. xvi
 s*3 BL MS Sloane 1114, f. 4^r, s. xvi
 s*4 BL MS Sloane 1114, f. 17^r, s. xvi
 s*5 BL MS Sloane 1147, f. 27^v, s. xvi
 s*6 BL MS Sloane 3747, f. 15^r, s. xv²
 s1 BL MS Sloane 1092, f. 7^r, s. xvi²
 s2 BL MS Sloane 1098, ff. 21^v–22^r, s. xvi
 s3 BL MS Sloane 1152, f. 5^r, s. xvi
 s4 BL MS Sloane 1181, f. 32^r, s. xvi
 s5 BL MS Sloane 1842, f. 16^r, s. xvi/xvii
 s6 BL MS Sloane 3580B, f. 183^r, s. xvi²
 s7 BL MS Sloane 3667, f. 120^v, s. xvi²
 s8 BL MS Sloane 3747, f. 109^v, s. xv²
 y1 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 MS Osborn fa. 16, p. 39b, s. xvi²

Manuscripts Version B

- d1 Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston'),
 ff. 63^v–64^r, s. xvi [edition copy]
 s*7 BL MS Sloane 3580B, f. 185^r, s. xvi²
 s9 BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 39^{r-v}, s. xvi
 y* New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 MS Osborn fa. 16, p. 39b, s. xvi²
 y*2 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 MS Osborn fa. 16, p. 41b, s. xvi²

Printed Version

- T TCB, 431

1450

1475

1500

1525

1550

1575

1600

1625

1650

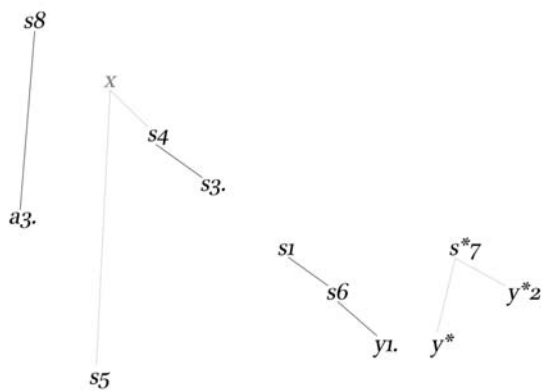


Diagram XI: Stemma, "Wind and Water", versions A and B

Connections between witnesses not included above are too tentative to be placed into the stemma.

6.1. "Wind and Water": Version A

Take wynde and water white & grene.
 and drawe therof lac virginis
 Where some it call a water clere
 the which water hathe no pere
 5 and then make your fier stronger
 When the white fume dothe apere
 chaunge yor receyvor & contynue lenger
 and then shall you se come a fier
 Redd as blood and full of yre
 10 Quod dicitur menstrum fetens sol philosophorum
 Cum quo fit nostra Dissolutio & congelatio
 Sublimatio attractio & etiam fixatio
 & sulphuris nostri sine foliati creatio.

6.2. "Wind and Water": Version B

Nowe will I clerely declare vnto you all,
 the making of our Elixir which we call our stone,
 truly & iustly howe, herkin euerichone
 first knowe ye materials & propercjon of eche one,
 5 Take winde and water, whyte & also greene
 and like as I meane doo you them together,
 & by a limbeck drawe yerof a mylk water clene,
 and doo it into ye Liquour. Rex Boria et
 Regina meridie evin thether.
 10 Set your man alwaie against ix women.
 boyle them and roste them, & yen in an oven let yem be bake

1 p. 31 | *add. before l. 1*: To the makyng of this preciose medecyn ye must s^{*6} | and] *om.* a3, c2, s1, s2, s3, s4, s5, s6, s7, s8, s^{*4}, s^{*5}, y1 2 drawe therof] thereof draw a2, f2, k1 | lac virginis] a lac virgine a2, a3, f2, k1, s6, s7, s8, s^{*6}; a lac virginis s5 3–5 *om.* s3, s4 6/7 *order of ll. reversed* y1 6 fume] *om.* s7 7/8 continue a little to [*or*: and] increase your fire / till he be red and full of ire s6, s7 7 & so kepe yt somewhat longger y1 | receyvor] receptors c1; receptory a3, c2, f2, s1, s2, s3, s4, s5, (s8) | & [...] lenger] *om.* s3, s4 8 then alytle amend youre fyre y1 | then shall you se] after that shall comme s^{*2} | shall] there shall s5 | you se] *om.* s4, s5 9–10 *add.* so maintaining still your fire/ till all become that you desire s6, y1 9–13 *om.* s7 9 Redd as blood] tell he be red y1 | full] stronge s4 10–13 *om.* s6 11–13 *om.* s3, y1 12 attractio] *om.* a3 13 sine] *poss.* sive, *see other MSS*; *om.* s4 | sine foliati creatio] *om.* fi (6.2.) 1 f. 63^v 5 and] *om.* s^{*7}, y^{*}, y^{*2} | also] *om.* all other copies 6 do them together as I mean s^{*7}, y^{*}, y^{*2} 8 ye Liquor] *om.* y^{*} 9 thether] then s^{*7}, y^{*}, y^{*2} 10 ix] the s^{*7}, y^{*}, y^{*2} 11 *mid-line break* s^{*7}, y^{*}, y^{*2} | roste] rest y^{*}

& so murdre them till all be pouder congealyd into a stone
 then all is doone, yen have you ye maistry I vndertake
 this child yus borne shall have CC at one regeneracion.
 15 and therto make yem all of his fathers power,
 with a mervailous red treble diademe & crowne,
 & shall have his full kynd & power over all partes lower,
 but when he is borne of his mother,
 he must have a noursse with pap and suck.
 20 and thus with nourishing of milk suck and pap
 he shalbe nourishyd to full age with goddes grace & good luck,
 and truly yis is ye making of our stone who so in it may say
 but ther may no man make yis stone without it have truly
 a father & a mother & other yat be of yer genealogy.
 25 his father is ye sonne, & his mother ye moone silerly
 & yet yf yer comme eny gold or siluer, yat men vse
 in plate or coyne: all is nought wourth but lost.
 without remedy: for it to recouer yt new but labour
 and coste in vaine. but it is our gold and our siluer
 30 for certaine. The which is writtin in ye old testament
 And it saies thus as I shall riherse full plaine.
 to ye informacion of my wourdes intent
 Ther is a stone in ye world hyd vnder muck,
 & it is most dyspysyd, & of all other lest set by
 35 yt is most comon & most royall in him self at a luck
 most of power, & most mervailous in wurking truly
 for in him self he is gold royall sparne & siluer clere.
 mercury & copper and he is earth water fyer & eyere.
 he is of all thing richest best cheape and most dere.
 40 and fowlest, and in his wurking most fayer.
 Also our stone is both fleshe and blood naturally,
 for when earth and water bene congealyd rottin ripe & rectified
 then depertithe ye milk from ye cruddes drye.
 & yen doe them to ye sowle of the stone fully aspyre.

12 & nurture them till they be powder black,/ and congeal ... s^{*7}, y^{*}, y^{*2} 13 yen [...] vndertake] om. y^{*} 14 shall have CC] om. y^{*} | CC] one hundred s^{*7}; four y^{*2} | regeneration] (ins. re)generation di [edition copy] 21 & good luck] om. s9 22 may say] (ins. may) say di [edition copy]; maye happe s9 23 yis stone] the soone s9 | without [...] truly] om. s9 24 a father [...] other] om. s9 | yat [...] genealogy] wyth that genealogye s9 25 silerly] [suerly?] 28/29 for [...] vaine] om. s9 35 luck] looke s9 37 f. 64^r

45 & so fold him vp, wⁱth ye sowle & wⁱth heate.
 & all shalbe blood renning full fayer and clene.
 and after congeale it into a red stone full swete.
 whⁱch shalbe precyous riche and pleasannt.
 & truly yis that I have sayd is ye making of our stone,
 50 & if you fynd it true, p^rively discretely & secretly:
 kepe it from all ivell men kynd y^at be our foes.
 as you will aunswere afore god at ye daie of iudgement iustly
 Lo to you y^at art vnderstand in specalative.
 having exercise in operacⁱon & knolege in perfectyon:
 55 nowe I have sayd to you ye truth assay nowe by yor practise
 and to you y^at vndrestand no perfitnis in operacⁱon.
 I have sayd right nought to you, kepe counsell & seek four[th]
 as others woers dothe. Neu^ertheles ye grac[e] of god is gyvin
 to many a man sode[ir]ly and soothely incomperable thereof
 60 is the wourthe.
 Therefore Primum querete regnum dej et
 Iusticiam eius et tunc omnia adjicientur Vobis.

49 that I have sayd] *om. s9* 53–62 *om. s9* 55 practise] *cut off d1 [edition copy]*

7. "RICHARD CARPENTER'S WORK"

NIMEV 2656; 3255.7 (*"Father Phoebus"*); 1558/1438 (*"God Angel"*)

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

"Richard Carpenter's Work" is a modern umbrella title for four rather distinct poems: "Spain" and "Titan Magnesia" are roughly the same text except for a variation in the *incipit*; "Sun" and "Father Phoebus" constitute completely different works. The four poems' connections to the "Verses upon the Elixir" differ accordingly. "Spain" and "Titan Magnesia" share passages with the "Exposition", and therefore constitute the only variants of "Richard Carpenter's Work" directly linked to the core corpus. The long variant of "Sun" is, in turn, related to "Spain" intertextually, and to the "Exposition" by merit of their similar idiom (interphraseology). "Father Phoebus", a true variant, is part of the corpus only thanks to its association with the other variants of "Richard Carpenter's Work".

"Richard Carpenter's Work" affects the scope of the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" in two further ways. On one hand, both "Sun" and "Father Phoebus" appear on the Ripley Scrolls, illuminated scrolls quite different from the more common codices. On the other hand, "Spain" is a vernacular verse translation of an older, Latin (and French) prose text (*"Alumen de Hispania"*), and effects a temporal, geographical and linguistic extension of the corpus.

Date

All four versions of "Richard Carpenter's Work" share their period of composition and circulation in English language manuscripts with the "Verses upon the Elixir". The possibly earliest versions, "Spain" and "Sun", appear in manuscripts by the fifteenth century, as their earliest witnesses are contained in the most recent parts of a manuscript written between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries (TCC MS R.14.45). Variant "Titan Magnesia" circulates from the fifteenth century onwards (earliest witness: BL MS Harley 2407), followed by "Father Phoebus" towards the end of the century; notably, its first surviving appearance is on a Ripley Scroll (Bod Bodley Rolls 1).

Author

The attributed author of all poems, one Richard Carpenter, proves to be an obscure historical figure. An early copy of "Spain" beginning "Notabili versus

quod Ric Carpenter:" (TCC MS O.2.16) is probably responsible for Elias Ashmole's attribution of "Titan Magnesia" to Carpenter (*TCB*, 275 and 487): Ashmole refers to an "old" manuscript as source of his information (*TCB*, 473–474). However, the attribution and Carpenter's identity remain unsupported by further evidence. The poem mostly circulated anonymously throughout the early modern period.

The two versions of "Richard Carpenter's Work" featuring on the Ripley Scrolls ("Sun" and "Father Phoebus") enjoyed an indirect, erroneous association with George Ripley, which is reinforced by their publication in this context in Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (377–378).

Title

The title "Richard Carpenter's Work" is commonly used in catalogues and bibliographies to indicate all and any of the four versions of the poem. Manuscript copies, however, did not usually circulate with a title. The titles used here to indicate the different versions of the poem derive from the terms unique to the respective *incipits*: "Spain", "Titan Magnesia", "Sun" and "Father Phoebus".

Manuscripts "Spain"

- α* Bod MS Ashmole 1478, I, ff. 2^v–3^v, s. xvi
- α*² Bod MS Ashmole 1486, Ib, f. 18^{vb}, s. xvi
- α*³ Bod MS Ashmole 1490, f. 47^r, s. xvi
- α₁ Bod MS Ashmole 759, ff. 125^r–126^v, s. xv^{ex} [edition copy]
- α₂ Bod MS Ashmole 1416, ff. 148^r–150^v, s. xv–xvi
- α₃ Bod MS Ashmole 1442, VI, ff. 15^r–16^r, s. xvii
- α# Bod MS Ashmole 759, f. 55^r, s. xv^{ex}
- γ* TCC MS O.2.15, f. 89^v, s. xvi/xvii
- γ*² TCC MS R.14.56, f. 109^v, s. xvi
- γ₁ TCC MS O.2.16, I, ff. 66^v–67^v, s. xv
- γ# TCC MS R.14.45, f. 82^v, s. xiii/xiv/xv
- γ#² TCC MS R.14.45, f. 82^v, s. xiii/xiv/xv
- ο₁ Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 226, f. 57^{rab}, s. xv
- σ* BL MS Sloane 320, f. 1^r, s. xvi^{ex}
- σ₁ BL MS Sloane 288, ff. 64^r–65^r, s. xvii
- σ₂ BL MS Sloane 3747, ff. 116^r–117^v, s. xv²
- υ₁ CUL MS Dd.4.45, II, ff. 10^r–11^v, s. xv/xvi
- χ₁ Bod MS e Mus 63, ff. 67^r–68^r, s. xvi
- χ₂ Bod MS Rawlinson D 1046, f. 5^{r-v}, s. xvi^{ex}

Manuscripts "Titan Magnesia"

- β₁ BL MS Harley 2407, ff. 91^r–93^r, s. xv
 γ₂ TCC MS O.2.15, f. 88^{r-v}, s. xvi/xvii
 σ₃ BL MS Sloane 1098, ff. 10^r–11^r, s. xvi [edition copy]
 χ* KCC Keynes Alchemical MS 37, f. 4^r, s. xvii

Fragments and Variants "Spain"/ "Titan Magnesia"

- BL MS Sloane 1097, f. 67^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 5^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1098, ff. 14^v–15^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1146, f. 71^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1148, f. 25^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1149, f. 36^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 8^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 12^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 18^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 3579, f. 24^v, s. xv
 Bod MS Ashmole 1426, III, p. 2, s. xvii
 CUL, II.3.17, ff. 68^v–70^v, s. xv

Fragments "Richard Carpenter's Work" (general)

- BL MS Sloane 1114, f. 34^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 16^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1186, f. 31^r, s. xvi

Not Seen

- Boston, MA, Massachusetts Historical Society MS Winthrop 20 C, ff. 140^v–142^r,
 s. xvi

Printed Version

- T TCB, 275–277

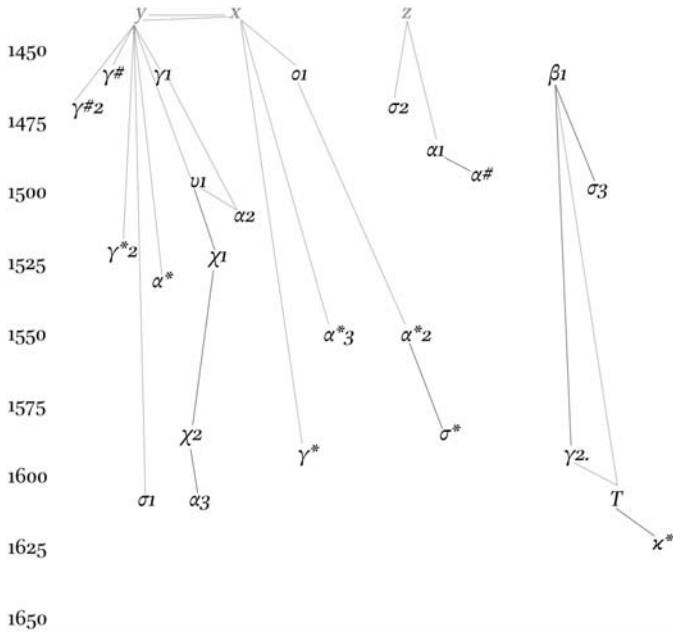


Diagram XII: Stemma, "Richard Carpenter's Work", variants "Spain" and "Titan Magnesia"

7.1. "Richard Carpenter's Work": "Spain"

- Of spayn take thou thy clere light
 The redde gomme that is so bright
 Of philosophers the sulphur vif
 Callid golde withouten stryf
 5 Of hyme drawe out a tyncture
 And make a matrimony pure
 Betwene the husbond and the wif
 Espoused with thesprite of lyf
 So that no dyuysion
 10 Be there in the coniuccion
 Of the mone and of the sonne
 After thatthe mariage is begon
 With mercury the planete
 In love make theym to mete
 15 That either with other be ioyned evyn
 Of a stone engendred send from hevyn
 Of hym make water clere rennyng
 As eny cristall bright shynyng
 Drawen of a body fixed
 20 By nature preuely annexed

1 f. 125^r | Of [...] take] Take of spayne 01 | Of spayn] Off the sonne α3; Geber of Spain saith α*3 | thou thy] *om. all other MSS except* then thy σ2 2 The] Off the 01 | gomme] lyon γ*; Gunne *ins.* Goomme σ1 | is so] shynyth so σ2; shineth α*3 3 the] clepid α*3 4 (*canc.* Espoused with the spirit of lif) Icalled Gould without strif γ* | Callid golde] gold called 01, σ*, α*2; Itt is called α3 | withouten] with owte any χ1 5 hyme] this γ*; thes 01 | a] the σ*, α*2; a good α*3; thy 01 6 a] *om.* σ*; in α2 | matrimony pure] mariage good and suer α*3 7 Betwene] betwixt 01, α*, γ* 8 sprite] water α* 9/10 line break *om.* α*3 9 So] And 01 | that] there be α3 | dyuysion] dyuersion α*3 10 there] *om.* 01, γ*, α*3; had therin α3; had α* 11 Of [...] of] In [...] in α2, γ1; neither of [...] nor of α*3 | and] ne γ* 12 After] ffro α* | that] *om. all other MSS except* α2, γ* 12/13 (*add.* Together muste they bothe wone) α*3 13–16 *om.* 01 13 With] And yat σ1, α3, χ1, χ2, α*, α*3, γ*; And υ1; and that the α2, γ1 14 love [...] mete] he make this bothe to knite α*3 | to] so to α3, υ1, σ1, χ1, χ2, γ*; for to α* 15 Joyned ether to other even α* | either] earth γ* | with] to α2 | ioyned] coyned γ* 16 Of a] γ* *all other MSS except om.* α* | engendred] ingendrynge α2 | send] sent down *all other MSS except* σ2, α*, α*3; and sent σ1 17 hym] them *some MSS;* heur υ1 | water] waters υ1; Mater *ins.* Water σ1 | clere] clean *some MSS* 18 As eny cristall] And as Christall σ1; As cristalstone 01 19 Drawen] drawe α2, α3, γ1, υ1, χ1, χ2, α*, α*3; I-draw 01 | of a] of the σ1, α*3; a α2, α3, χ1, χ2; as a α* | fixed] soe fixed α*3 20 By] Tens by α*3 | preuely] perfectly χ2, γ*; pleiny υ1; purely σ1 | annexed] mixed α3, 01, σ1, α*, α*3, γ*; amixed γ1, υ1

- With a vessell depurid clene
 Of philosophers bright and shene
 Beware the fume escape the nought
 And also marke wele in thy thought
 25 Of the fire the qualite
 Egall to the bemes of phebus it be
 In the monthes of Iune and Iuly
 Vnderstonde be thou not dully
 ffor thou shalte se mervelouse grete
 30 Colours sprynge out of the hete
 ffyrste blak white and also redde
 And after citryne withouten drede
 So that withyn houres thre
 The stone shall thorough perished be
 35 With ayre that on hym alight
 The which is then a wonder sight
 When thesprite is so refreynd
 and with his body so constreynd
 That theym a sonder may nothyng depart
 40 ffor nature doith theym coart
 In the matrice when they byn knytte
 lette it neuer be vnshitte

21–24 *om.* 01 21 With] within γ^* | depurid] pured α^{*3} , γ^* ; pure and α_2 , γ_1 ; demed α^* 22 philosophers] phebus yt is α_3 ; phebus χ_1 , χ_2 23 Beware] So that γ^* | fume] Sonne σ_1 | escape] & scepe α_2 24 also] *om.* γ^* | wele] well alway γ^* 25 Of] that of *all other MSS except* σ_2 , σ_1 ; *om.* α^{*3} | the qualite] thou keepe the qualitie σ_1 ; be evine in equality α^{*3} ; the quantite σ_1 26 ye shall the sonne beames see γ^* ; As egal phebus the bemys be σ_1 | bemes of phebus it] phoebus' beams α_2 , α_3 , γ_1 , ν_1 , σ_1 , χ_1 , χ_2 , α^* ; phebus brains α^{*3} 27 f. 125^v | Iune] *om.* γ^* ; Jule γ_1 | and] or α_2 , α_3 , γ_1 , σ_1 , σ_1 , χ_1 , χ_2 , $\gamma^\#$ 28 *om.* α^{*3} | Vnderstonde] Conceive α^* | be thou] and be α_3 , γ_1 , ν_1 , σ_1 , χ_1 , χ_2 , α^* ; be α_2 28/29 (*add.* In no matter yat kind wull) α^* 29 ffor] ffor their σ_1 ; And α^{*3} , σ_1 30 Colours sprynge] Of collours that springyn σ_1 | hete] earthe α_3 31 ffyrste [...] and] Summe blak & sum blew σ_1 | blak [...] also] blak than white & after α^* , $\gamma^\#^2$ 34 This shall be done that thou maiste see α^{*3} | stone] sonne α_2 | shall [...] perished] perseyued shal σ_1 | perished] persyd α_3 , γ_1 , ν_1 , σ_1 , χ_1 , χ_2 , α^* , $\gamma^\#$, $\gamma^\#^2$ 35 Through the collours that on hem light σ_1 | With] Saiþ ν_1 ; The α^{*3} | that on] that shall upon *all other MSS* | alight] fall σ_1 36 That wonnderfull yt may call σ_1 | The [...] then] I wise yt is α^{*3} | is then] wilbe α^* 37 refreynd] refresshed α_2 ; restrayned α^* 38 body] body to abide $\alpha^\#$ | constreynd] confixed α_2 , γ_1 ; retayned α^* 39 nothyng] no man α_2 , γ_1 40 Ther ys no thyng may hm depart $\gamma^\#^2$; That in nowise they may departe α^* ; That a sunder they shall not parte α^{*3} ; That noon may hym fro oþer parte σ_1 | ffor nature] Nature so secret α^* | theym] him α_3 , γ_1 , σ_1 , χ_1 | coart] wart γ_1 , $\gamma^\#$, $\gamma^\#^2$; knitte soe harde σ_1 ; parte α^{*3} ; corract χ_2 41 In [...] when] ffor affter σ_1 | matrice] *i.e.* matrix; mater α_2 ; marriage α^{*3} , σ_1 ; a trice χ_2 42 it] the [*or:* your] vessel *all other MSS except* σ_2 , $\alpha^\#$

Till they haue engendred a stone
 That in this worlde nys suche on
 45 ffor it is callid anymall
 Richer then the mynrall
 Which is founde in euery place
 Who so it fynde may haue gret grace
 In the and me and ouer all
 50 Bothe vegetable and sophisticall
 On hilles high and vales lowe
 it growth who so could it knowe
 Take this for an informacion
 In weight and porporcion
 55 liyth all who can seke oute
 In bus and nubi is all the doute
 Of them that will put them in prese
 To genus or to species
 Qualite or quantite
 60 To many man it will not be
 To bryng aboute this tresure
 I mene our stone of swete savere
 And yeit who can wele vnderstonde
 may fynde it redy at his hande
 65 ffor fowles in their therewith do fle

43 haue engendred] be engendrid in-to σ_1 44 That] Where σ_2 | nys suche on] is no [or: none] such one $\sigma_1, \chi_1, \chi_2, \alpha^{*3}, \gamma^\#$; is never suche one α_3 ; suche is none α^* ; is suche noon σ_1 45 it] he σ_1, σ_1 | anymall] the Stone anymall σ_1 ; anall σ_2 ; rial σ_1 46 Richer] Muche better α^* | *ill. var.* σ_1 47 *add.* Wherefore eur blissid be almyghty God of hevyn/ and his blissid moder seynt Mary virgyn/ and her gloryouse blissid moder seynt Anne nowe and eur Amen/ Yf ye cannot close in the aier and of hym make a body ye can no good $\alpha^\#$ 48 so it] it to ν_1 ; soe to σ_1 ; that [finde] it α^* ; soe ever [findes] him α^{*3} ; therto σ_1 | fynde] *om.* σ_1 | gret] *om. all other MSS* 49–66 *om.* $\alpha^*, \gamma^\#, \gamma^\#^2$ 49 me] me yat is heere σ_1 50 sophisticall] sensuall σ_1 ; bestial σ_1 52 *faulty in* α_1 [*edition copy*] | growth] groweth and is σ_1 | so could] can γ_1 ; might σ_1 ; so σ_2 53/54 *om.* σ_1 53 f. 126^r | an informacon] jn struccion ν_1 54 weight] caryth $\gamma_1, \nu_1, \alpha_2$; quantitie σ_1 ; raritie α_3 ; carect χ_1, χ_2 | proporcion] fermentacion α_3 55–60 *var. line arrangement* σ_1 55 liyth [...]
 can] Of hem that kan σ_1 | all] all the worke σ_1 | seke] it solve α_2, γ_1 ; fynde χ_2 56 bus] busk
some MSS; ens σ_1 | nubi] ubi $\alpha_2, \alpha_3, \gamma_1, \nu_1, \sigma_1, \chi_1, \chi_2$ 57 Of [...] that] Who so α_2 ; All that χ_1, χ_2 |
 will put] putteth *all other MSS* | them] himself *all other MSS except* α_3 58 genus] Iunus γ_1 ;
 Genus I saie σ_1 ; lunes α_2 ; To seke genus σ_1 60 many man] dulle wittis σ_1 62 swete savere]
 such valour α_2, γ_1 ; sweet valour ν_1 ; great valour σ_1, χ_1, χ_2 ; greatt treasure α_3 | *ill. σ_2* 63/64 *om.*
 σ_1 63 And yeit who] yf ye α_2, γ_1 ; this who α_3, χ_1, χ_2 | wele] *om.* α_2, γ_1 ; yt σ_1 64 his] your α_2 ,
 γ_1 65/66 *order of ll. reversed* σ_1 65 fowles] birddis σ_1 | in their] *i.e.* that in the air *all other*
MSS; of ye Ayre yat α_3 | therewith] *om. all other MSS* | do] can σ_2

- and also fisses swym therewith in the see
 ffor moisture of the redde grape
 And of the white who can it take
 Vertues of herbis vegetif
 70 And sowles of bestes sensitif
 Resons of angelys do discerne
 Good and ill man to gouerne
 All brynge home to thyne house
 This noble stone preciouise
 75 And most souerent of all the werk
 Bothe to lewde and to clerk
 All liyth in discession
 Of fyre and decocon
 This craft recorde if ye can rede
 80 Howe all and som and who shall spede
 In bokes clere as ye shall se
 Stondith in ignis regimine
 To bryng forth my deuysse
 This riche rubie the stone of price
 85 Herde hevy and persshyng
 Nowe is this a wonder thyng
 I kowthe neuer suche on espie
 Saf I founde howe mary
 ffyrst so I founde it withouten lese
 90 Truly was sister to moises

66 also] all $\alpha 2$ | swym therewith] *om. all other MSS* | see] depe see $\sigma 1$ 67/68 fro the moysture of the grape who can it take/ And Sericon doone yor masterie make γ^{*2} 67 ffor] the *many other MSS*; By $\sigma 1$ 69/70 Bestis that ben sensitif,/And herb that ben vegetatif $\sigma 1$ 69–72 *om.* α^* , γ #, γ^{*2} | (*add.* It bringeth to thine owne house/ This noble stone and precious) $\sigma 1$ 69 herbis] his $\alpha 1$ [*edition copy*], $\sigma 2$ | vegetif] vegetatiue $\alpha 3$ 70 sowles of] fowles & $\alpha 3$ | bestes] herbys $\chi 1$ | sensitif] sanative $\alpha 2$, $\gamma 1$; vegetive $\chi 1$, $\chi 2$ 71/72 *om.* $\sigma 1$ 72 ill] evil $\alpha 2$, $\alpha 3$, $\gamma 1$, $\nu 1$, $\sigma 1$, $\chi 1$, $\chi 2$ 73 home] *om. all other MSS except* hem $\sigma 2$ | thyne] thine owne $\sigma 1$ | house] hond γ^{*2} 74 This] thre $\alpha 2$ | noble] royall $\sigma 1$; ryche $\sigma 1$ | stone] Ruby $\sigma 1$ 75 most souerent] souerainty $\alpha 2$, $\nu 1$, $\sigma 1$, $\chi 1$, $\chi 2$ 77 liyth in] Lyeth and is done by $\sigma 1$ | discession] good discrecioun $\sigma 1$ 79–82 *om.* $\sigma 1$ 79 f. 126^v | recorde] *om.* $\alpha 3$, $\chi 1$, $\chi 2$ 80 Of all the worke whoe cast to speed $\sigma 1$ | Howe] in $\gamma 1$; knowe $\alpha 3$ | shall] so wol $\gamma 1$; will $\alpha 2$, $\alpha 3$, $\nu 1$, $\chi 1$, $\chi 2$ 82 Stondith] stant [*& var.*] $\alpha 2$, $\gamma 1$, $\nu 1$; Standeth wholle $\sigma 1$; Stande $\alpha 3$; Stond $\chi 1$, $\chi 2$ 83 To bryng] It bringeth $\sigma 1$ | my] your $\alpha 3$, $\chi 1$, $\chi 2$ 84 the stone of] ye spirit of $\alpha 2$; so gret of $\sigma 1$ 85 persshyng] with perschings felle $\sigma 1$; pearcinge $\alpha 3$ 86 It is wonnder thereof to tell $\sigma 1$; Who knew euer so wonder a thyng? $\sigma 1$ 87 kowthe] *i.e.* could | suche on] see or $\alpha 2$ 88 Saf] save that *all other MSS except* Til $\sigma 1$ | founde] find $\alpha 2$, $\gamma 1$, $\nu 1$, $\sigma 1$, $\chi 1$, $\chi 2$ 89/90 *order of ll. reversed* $\sigma 1$ 89 so I] *om. all other MSS* | it] was $\alpha 3$; it was $\chi 1$, $\chi 2$ 90 Truly] the which was *all other MSS except* That she $\sigma 2$; That $\sigma 1$

But who so that heryn shall werk
 let hym not begynne in the derk
 ffor then may he fayle w^{ith}oute light
 But if the sonne shyne bright
 95 Aduyse the wele er thowe begynne
 Or elles litell shall thou wynne

7.2. "Richard Carpenter's Work": "Titan Magnesia"

Of Titan magnesia take the cleere light
 the Redde gumme that ys so bryghte
 of philosophers the sulphur vyue
 ycalled golde wythowten stryve
 5 of hem drawe owte a tincture
 & make a matrimonye pure
 bitweene the husband & the wyfe
 Ispoused wyth the water of lyfe
 so looke that no diuision
 10 be theare in the coniunction
 of the moone & of the soonne
 after the maryage ys begonne
 & in mercurye the planette
 in love make them so to meete
 15 yat eyther w^{ith} other be ioyned evyn
 as a stone engendryd sent downe from heaven
 of hem make water cleere runnyng
 as any chrySTALL bryghte shinyng
 drawn owte of a Bodye fixed
 20 by nature privelye commixed
 wyth a vessell depured cleane

91 who [...] shall] it be that shall α2, α3, γ1, υ1, χ2; whoe so will begine this σ1 92 let hym] Beware that he σ1; loke σ1 93/94 *order of ll. reversed* α3, χ1, χ2 94 but he have gr[a]ce of god almyzt γ1; Al if he haue candil bright σ1 | But [...] sonne] In les & in ye α2 95 the [...] thowe] were good or he σ1 | *add.* Of Sonne and moone, take to thee the light/ Which daie and night will shine full bright/ ffor to wise him in that waie/ What more shoulde I to thee saye σ1 96 shall] *om.* α1 [*edition copy*] | elles [...] thou] lytyl wol be yowr γ1; ell he shal but litil σ1 | thou] shall you υ1 | *add.* ffor the phelesofer sey the ofte/ That alb ys in the egyptl yat fleyt ou[r] loft/ And in the tode yat crepit soft γ#2 (7.2.) 1 f. 10^f | Titan magnesia] Tytan and Magnesia γ2 6 matrimonye] mariage β1, γ2 9 so looke that] and so that x*, T; and so then β1, γ2 11 & of] and γ2 13 & in] and that *all other MSS* 14 love] loef x*, β1, T 15 evyn] euer γ2 19 a Bodye] bodies *all other MSS* 20 commixed] *canc.* mixed annexed γ2; annexed β1; mixed T 21 wyth] Within T

of philosophers bryghte and sheene
 beware the fume escape the nowghte
 & also marcke well in thy thowghte
 25 that of the fyre the qualite
 Eqwall to phoebus beames be
 in the moneth of June & Julye
 vnderstand and be not dullye
 for thou shalte see mervaylouse greate
 30 of coloures sprynge owte of the heate
 fyrste blacke & white & so redde
 & after citryne wⁱthowten dreadde
 & so wⁱthin howres three
 the stone shall thoroughe pearcyd be
 35 wyth ayre y^at shall vpon hym lyghte
 the whiche is a wonderouse syghte
 when the spiritte ys refreyned
 & wⁱth the bodye so constreyned
 that hem a sonder maye nothinge parte
 40 nature doeth them so coarcte
 In matrice when they beene knytte
 lette neuer thy vessyll be vnshytte
 till they engendryd have a stone
 in all the world is not suche one
 45 for yt ys called Animal
 rycher then the minerall
 whiche is found in euery place
 who fynd it myghte have grace
 in the and me & over all
 50 bothe vegetable & sophisticall
 on hylles hyghe & valleys lowe
 he growyth who so could it knowe
 take this for informacyon
 Jn characte & in proportion

24 marcke] marked β₁, T | thowghte] thoughts γ₂ 26 to] to the β₁ 27 moneth] mens β₁ 28
 and] me β₁ 30 of coloures] colours *all other MSS* 34 the stone] that stone *all other MSS* 36
 f. 10^v 37 when] Wher γ₂ 39 hem] he β₁, γ₂ 40 nature] So nature *all other MSS* | so] there
 γ₂; ther so to β₁; there so T 41 they] they both T | beene] will be γ₂ 43 they] thye β₁; thys T
 44 in all] that in *all other MSS* | world] word β₁ 50 vegetable] vegetables γ₂, T 52 so] *om.*
all other MSS 54 characte] caryt *all other MSS*

- 55 lyeth all who could seeke owte
 Jn Bus & vbi is all the dowbte
 he yat putteth hym selfe in presse
 to genus & to species
 qualitye or quantitye
- 60 to somme man it wyll not be
 to brynge abowte this treasure
 J meane or stone of suche valoure
 & yet who could well vnderstand
 maye fynd it readye at hys hand
- 65 for fowles yat in the ayre doone flee
 & also fyshes in the sea
 the moysture of the redde grape
 & of the white who could hym take
 vertues of hearbes vegetatyve
- 70 & sowles of beastes sensityve
 reasons of angelles yat do discerne
 goodde & evyll man to governe
 all brynges to thyne howse
 this stone so noble so pretyouse
- 75 & soverenyntyte of all this wourcke
 bothe to lewde & to clearcke
 lyeth all by discretyon
 Jn fyre and in decoctyon
 the crafte recordeth yf ye can reede
- 80 howe all & somme who shall speede
 In bookes cleere as ye maye see
 stondys in ignis regimine
 to brynge fourthe at my devyse
 this ryche Rubye the stone of pryce
- 85 harde heavye and pearcyng
 nowe is this a wonder thyng
 I could neuer suche one espye

55 could] so could *all other MSS* 56 vbi] Nubi γ 2, T 57 he] who γ 2 59 quantitye] any quantity β 1, γ 2; every Quantite T 60 somme] many a *all other MSS* 69 vegetatyve] vegetyff β 1, T 71 f. 11^r 72 evyll] Yéul T | man] *om.* γ 2 74 so [...] so] *om.* β 1, γ 2, *var.* T 75 soverenyntyte] *minor var. all extant copies* 76 lewde] learned γ 2 79 ye] he T 80 somme] soule γ 2; sonne β 1 82 stondys] Stands γ 2; stonis β 1; Stat T 83 ff. *new, separate text* γ 2 83 to] O γ 2

save yat J found howe marye
 fyrste fownd it wythouten lesse
 90 yat was syster to moſes
 But who it be yat shall wercke
 lette hym not beginne in the darcke
 for he maye fayle for fawlte of lyghte
 but the soonne shine full bryghte
 95 advyse the well or thou begynne
 or els litle shalte thou wynne

Manuscripts "God Angel"

β2 BL MS Harley 2407, f. 75^{r-v}, s. xv
 γ3 TCC MS O.2.15, f. 91^{r-v}, s. xvi/xvii [edition copy]
 σ4 BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 11^{r-v}, s. xvi

Printed Version "God Angel"

T TCB, 211

7.3. "Richard Carpenter's Work": "God Angel"

In the name of the holy Trinity
 Now send vs grace so it be
 ffirst God made both angell and heauen
 And also the world with planetes
 5 man and woman with great sensuality
 Some of estate and other in their degree
 Both beast and worme yat in the ground creep
 Eurich in his kind to receave his meat
 Eagles and foules in the ayre doe fly
 10 And swimming of fishes also in the sea
 with vegetable moysture and of the red grape
 And also of the whit who soe can him take
 All minerall things that grow in grownd
 Some to encreas and some to makan end
 15 All this bringeth now to our house
 This mighty stone that is so precious
 This rich ruby that stone of prise

88 howe] how on *all other MSS* | marye] maria β1 94 shine] *om.* γ2 (7.3.) 1 f. 91^r 1-2 *om.* σ4
 3 ffirst] *om.* σ4 4 planetes] planets seven *all other copies*

The which was sent out of Paradise
 Thus made the great God of heauen
 20 With all been ruled vnder planets .7.
 God send vs part of this secret
 And of that heauen yat is so sweet
 If thou wilt this work begin
 Then shrine thee cleane of all thy sinne
 25 [Conseil] in secret with all thy thought
 And euer th[e]nk on him that thee clearly b[ou]ght
 Satisfaction thou mak with all thy might
 Then .3. farne flowers thou hast in sight
yat needeth the mone to thy conclusion
 30 Take thou good heed now to this lesson
 Thou must haue grace nature and reason
 Speculatiue and cunning with good condition
 yet thou must haue more heartoe
 Experience with practick, prudent also
 35 Pacient that thou be and holy in liuinge
 Think thou on this in thy beginninge
 Thys fowrtyn heftys as I the saye
 Euer keep thou man both night and day
 Of thy desire thou mayst not miss
 40 And also of heauen that sweet bliss

Manuscripts "Sun" Version A (short)

- 01 Bod Ashmole Rolls 52, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 02 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276, Scroll, s. xvi¹
 03 Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities
 Ripley Scroll (MS 205), s. xvi
 04 BL MS Sloane 2523B, Scroll, s. xvii
 05 Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library MS 93, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 06 London, Wellcome Institute MS 692, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
 07' Bod Bodley Rolls 1, Scroll, s. xv^{ex} [edition copy]
 07'' Bod Bodley Rolls 1, Scroll, s. xv^{ex}
 08' New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 Mellon MS 41, Scroll, s. xvi²
 08'' New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 Mellon MS 41, Scroll, s. xvi²

19–22 *om.* ̣4 23–40 *om.* ̣4, T 25 [Conseil in secret] contryte in hert ̣2 28 farne] fayre ̣2
 29 yat] ryght ̣2 | mone] mor ̣2 33 yet] ryght ̣2 37 f. 91^v | *ill.* ̣3 [edition copy]

Manuscripts "Sun" Version A (long)

- α_4 Bod MS Ashmole 1441, II, pp. 110–111, s. xvi–xvii
 α_5 Bod MS Ashmole 1480, f. 12^v, s. xvi
 α_6 Bod MS Ashmole 1486, Ib, ff. 17^v–18^v, s. xvi
 σ^{*2} BL MS Sloane 1113 f. 8^r, s. xvi
 σ_5 BL MS Sloane 1098, ff. 23^v–24^r, s. xvi [edition copy]
 θ_9 Bod Ashmole Rolls 40, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
 θ_{10} BL MS Add. 5025 (4), Scroll, s. xvi
 θ_{11} BL MS Add. 32621, Scroll, s. xvi
 θ_{12} Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2, Scroll, s. xvii
 θ_{13} San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313, Scroll, s. xvi²
 ψ_1 London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, ff. 62^r–63^r, s. xvi²

Manuscripts "Sun" Version B

- α_7 Bod MS Ashmole 1394, XI, f. 81^r, s. xvi–xvii [edition copy]
 γ_4 TCC MS R.14.45, f. 5^r & 5^v, s. xiii/xiv/xv
 σ_6 BL MS Sloane 1098, ff. 25^v–26^r, s. xvi
 σ_7 BL MS Sloane 1171, f. 13^r, s. xvi
 σ_8 BL MS Sloane 1723, f. 41^r, s. xvii
 σ_9 BL MS Sloane 2176, f. 25^r, s. xvii

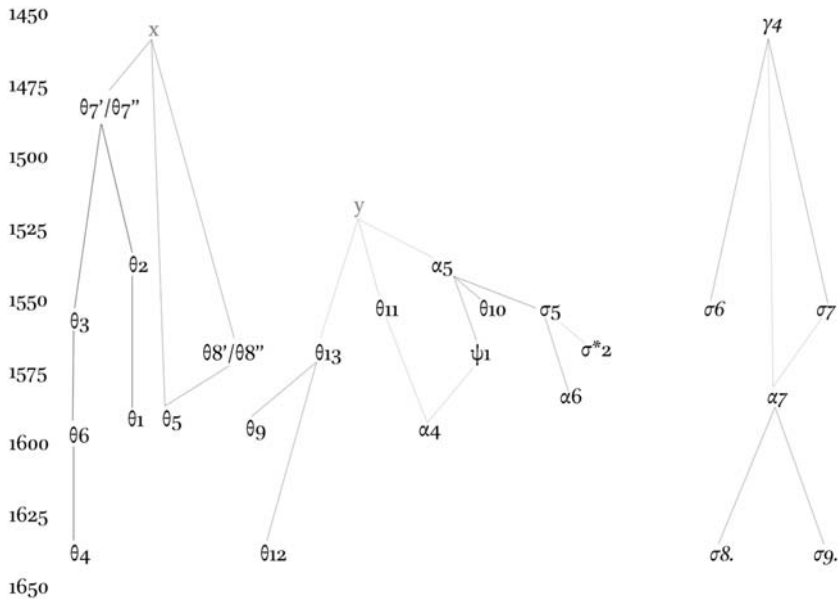


Diagram XIII: Stemma, "Richard Carpenter's Work", variant "Sun" (A short and long; B)

7.4. "Richard Carpenter's Work": "Sun"

7.4.1. Version A (short)

Of the Sonne take the light
 The redde gome yat is so bright
 And of the mone do also
 The whight gome there both to
 5 The Philosophers sulphur wife
 This I called withowten strife
 Kybright & kyber I called also
 & other names manie mo
 Of them drawe owt a tincture
 10 And make a matrimony pure
 Between the husband and the wife
 espoused with the spiryte of lyfe

7.4.2. "Richard Carpenter's Work": "Sun"—Version A (long)

Of the soonne take the lyghte
 the redde gumme yat is so bryghte
 & of the moone do also
 the white gumme there bothe twoo
 5 the philosophers sulphur vyue
 thus ycalled wⁱthowten stryfe
 kibrighte & alkibrighte called also
 & other names manye mo
 of hem drawe owte a tincture
 10 & make then a maryage pure
 bitweene the husbände & the wyfe
 yspoused wⁱth the water of lyfe
 but of this water thou must beware
 or els thy wourcke wyll be full bare

1 scroll | the light] thy light *all other MSS except* 07", 08', 08" 2 is] be 05; shynes 08', 08" 2/4
 gome] gemme 03, 04, 06 4 there both to] of them trewe 08'; of them twoe 08" 4/5 [...] and
 some of there heate/ [...] fnyers sullfer wyte 05 5 The Philosophers] The vinager and the
 08', 08" | vife] wyte 02 6 withowten] as above 05 7 & kyber] it is 08', 08" 8 other names
 manie] many names other 03, 04, 06 9/10 Of him draw out a cinister flood/ And thy worke
 shall be good 03, 04, 06 10–12 *om. all MSS except* 08', 08" (7.4.2.) 1 f. 23^v 4 bothe] keep 09,
 012, 013; *om.* 010; be α6, σ*2 | twoo] trowe 011 6 ycalled] I calle it 011 7 alkibrighte] *i.e.* alkibrit
 9 a] a white 09, 013 10–22 *om.* α4 10 then] them [*or:* of them] *some MSS* 13 water] worke
 012

15 he muste be made of his owne kynde
 marcke thou well in thy mynde
 Acetum of philosophers men call this
 & water abidyng so it ys
 the maydes mylke of the dewe
 20 yat all or wourcke doeth renewe
 the spiritte of lyfe called also
 & other names many mo
 the which cawsyth or generation
 bitweene the man & the woman
 25 so looke yat there be no diuision
 be theare in the coniunction
 of the moone & of the soonne
 after the maryage ys begoonne
 & all the whyle they be a weddyng
 30 gyve them to theyre drinckyng
 Acetum yat is goodde and fyne
 better to them then any wyne
 nowe when this maryage is doonne
 philosophers calleth this a stone
 35 the whiche hathe greate nature
 to bringe a stone yat is pure
 so he have kyndely norysHING
 perfyte heate & decoction:
 But in the matrice when they be putte
 40 Looke neuer thy vessyll be vnshutte
 tyll they have engenderyd a stone
 in all the worlde is not suche one.

16 well] well now θ_{12} , θ_{13} ; now α_5 , θ_9 , θ_{10} , θ_{11} , ψ_1 17 Acetum of philosophers] Acetum
 philosophorum θ_{10} ; acetum of filosoforum α_5 20 That all before be here renew θ_{13} | all or
 wourcke] other workes θ_{12} ; all other warkes α_6 | renewe] kenne α_5 21 spiritte] Serpent θ_{11} |
 called] men called θ_{12} 23 generation] our generation α_5 , θ_9 , θ_{10} , θ_{12} , θ_{13} , ψ_1 24 bitweene]
 betwixt θ_9 , θ_{11} , θ_{13} | the man & the woman] the red man & ye whyzt woman α_6 25 so] but *all*
other MSS except α_6 | looke] *om.* α_6 | there be] *om.* α_4 , α_5 , θ_{10} , θ_{11} , ψ_1 26 be [...] the] betwene
 them in their α_6 30 them to theyre] him to her θ_9 , θ_{12} , θ_{13} ; to them their α_4 , θ_{11} 31 goodde
 and] very θ_{12} 32 them] him θ_9 , θ_{13} 33 doonne] begon θ_{13} 36 myghtty in warkyng *precios*
 & puer α_6 39 *ff. variant ending of 60 lines* α_6 39 f. 24^r | they be putte] about θ_{10} 40 Looke]
 Let α_4 , θ_{10} | Looke [...] vessyll] let never the glasse θ_{11} 41 *om.* α_4 42 all] *om.* θ_{12} | is] there θ_{11}

7.4.3. "Richard Carpenter's Work": "Sun"—Version B

Of the sonne take the clere light,
 the red ston yat is so bright.
 The philosophor in all his liffe
 called it sonne, & it is argent vive
 5 then take bothe sonne & mone
 & make of them coniunctyon
 & Joyne them w^{ith} the birde of lyffe
 then will they store & make strife
 yf thou willt have, yat yu haste sought
 10 beware ye spirit, Escape ye nought

Manuscripts "Father Phoebus"

- α8 Bod MS Ashmole 1480, ff. 13^v–14^r, s. xvi
 γ5 TCC MS O.2.15, f. 87^{r-v}, s. xvi–xvii
 σ10 BL MS Sloane 1098, ff. 24^v–25^r, s. xvi [edition copy]
 ψ2 London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, ff. 63^v–64^r, s. xvi²
 θ14 Bod Ashmole Rolls 40, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
 θ15 Bod Ashmole Rolls 52, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 θ16 BL MS Add. 5025 (4), Scroll, s. xvi
 θ17 BL MS Add. 32621, Scroll, s. xvi
 θ18 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276, Scroll, s. xvi¹
 θ19 Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2, Scroll, s. xvii
 θ20 Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities
 Ripley Scroll (MS 205), s. xvi
 θ21 San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313, Scroll, s. xvi²
 θ22 BL MS Sloane 2523B, Scroll, s. xvii
 θ23 Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library MS 93, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 θ24 Bod Bodley Rolls 1, Scroll, s. xv^{ex}
 θ25 Bod Bodley Rolls 1, Scroll, s. xv^{ex}
 θ26 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 Mellon MS 41, Scroll, s. xvi²

Printed Version "Father Phoebus"

T TCB, 377–378

1 f. 81^r | sonne] shynyng sone γ4 2 ston] gum *all other MSS* 3 all his] his long γ4, σ6, σ7 4
 it sonne [...] vive] the golde to be sulphur vyfe γ4 | sonne] gold σ6, σ7; sol σ8, σ9 | & it is] with
 his σ8, σ9 5 sonne & mone] sol and lune *all other MSS* 6 and a conjunction anon ye join γ4,
 σ6, σ7 7 & Joyne] *om.* γ4, σ6, σ7 | birde] nobel bird γ4, σ6, σ7 8 *om.* σ8, σ9; most highest and
 make it nutritive (*ill.* γ4), σ6, σ7 9 *add.* Thus spowse them w^{ith} the spiritte of lyfe σ7 | willt
 have] desire γ4, σ6, σ7 10 look the fume/ soonne escape thee not γ4, σ6, σ7 *end add.* & you
 shalt spend more than a king/ except he have help of the same thing σ6, σ7, σ8, σ9

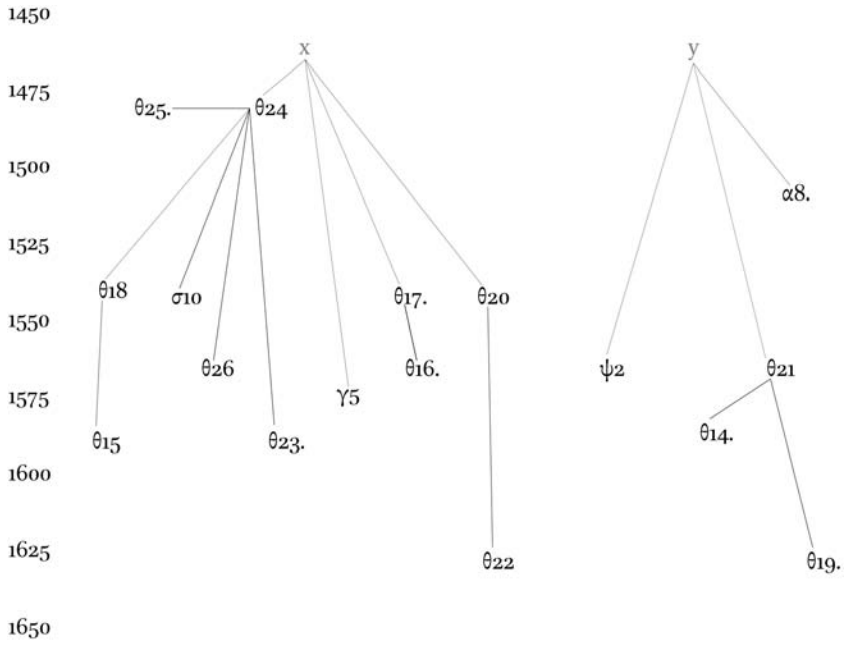


Diagram XIV: Stemma, "Richard Carpenter's Work", variant "Father Phoebus"

7.5. "Richard Carpenter's Work": "Father Phoebus"

Take the father yat phoebus so bryghte
 that sytteth so hyghe in maiesty
with his beames yat shyneth lyghte
 in all places wheresoeuer he be
 5 for he ys father to all thyng
 maynteyner of lyfe to crophe & roote
 & cawsyth nature for to sprynge
with the wyfe beyng soote
 for he ys salue to euery sore
 10 to bryng abowte this pretyouse wercke
 take goodde heede vnto this lore
 I saye to lewde & eke to clercke
 & homogenye ys hys name
 whiche god shope with his hande
 15 & magnesia ys hys dame
 yu shalte verily vnderstande
 nowe I shall heere begynne
 for to teache the readye waye
 or els litle shalte thou wynne
 20 take goodde heede what I saye
 diuylde yu phoebus in many a parte
with his beames yat beene so bryghte
 & thus with nature hem coarcte
 the which is mirroure of all lyghte
 25 this phoebus hathe full many a name
which it ys nowe it is harde to knowe

1 f. 24^v | yat] *om.* 016 | phoebus] shynes 025 | so] *om.* 075 | so bryghte] highte 017, 020, 022 3
 shyneth] be 014 | lyghte] so bright 014, 015, 016, 017, 018, 020, 022, 023, 026; bright 075, 021, 024,
 025 4 wheresoeuer he] where they 020, 022; ere that he 017 5 thyngel] lyueing thinge 026 6
 crophe] hearbe 025 8 in man, in myne & plant to boote 017 | wyfe] wyse *some MSS* | beyngel]
 beginneth 016 9 salue [...] sore] calve to every cow 08 10 pretyouse] prosperous 015, 018;
 present 08, 02 11 lore] leernyng 023 12 lewde] learned 075, 015, 018; law 014 13 hys] my 08,
 022, 026, 02 14 shope] made 015, 018; shaped 075, 014, 019, 020, 021, 022, 026; shone 016 | his]
 one 015, 018 15 hys] my 018; her 075 18 to teache the] to teach thee a 075, 015, 018, 020, 022, 023,
 024, 025, 026 | readye] rede 024 21 many a parte] many parts 014, 015, 016, 017, 018, 019, 020,
 021, 022, 025 22 beene] brinne 019; bemes 023 23 and this is nature which is his roote 017 |
 coarcte] corretes 015, 018; conjoin 020, 022; convert 023, 026 24 mirroure] master 019; mother
 014, 021 25 hathe] know has 020, 022 | full] *om.* 020, 022 26 it ys nowe it] that *all other MSS*;
var. 08, 014 | harde] full hard 075, 015, 016, 017, 018, 020, 022, 023, 024, 026; now full hard 019, 021;
 nowe heere for to 02 | to knowe] for to showe 017; for to know 016, 023, 024, 025, 026

& but ye take the very same
 the philosophers stone ye shall not knowe
 therefore I counsell or ye begynne
 30 knowe thou well what he be
 & yat is thicke make it thynne
 for then yat shall ryghte well lyke the
 Nowe vnderstande what I meane
 and take goodde heede thereto
 35 thy wourcke els shall be litle seene
 & turne the to mykle woe
 as I have sayed in this lore
 many a name I wys he hathe
 somme behynde & somme byfore
 40 as philosophers theare hym gave

27 but] if [...] not 023, 026 | ye] then γ5 28 philosophers stone] Phebus or Stone 016, 017 | ye]
 then γ5 | knowe] haue 017 29 counsell] counsel thee α8, ψ2 30 thou] it 015, 016, 017, 018;
 thore α8 | he be] it should be 015, 018; it be γ5, 016, 017, 025 32 for then] and 022 | ryghte]
 full 015, 016, 018, 019, 023, 024, 025, 026; be 020, 022; *om.* 017 33 f. 25^r | vnderstande] vnderstand
 well 014 35 be litle seene] little seme 019; not be seen 017 36 the to mykle woe] the to
 mouche woo 015, 018; to thee full mickle woe 014, 019, 021; to thee muche wo ψ2; to thee ffull
 moch woo α8 37 in this] this ouour 015, 018 38 name] Man 016, 017 | he] it 016, 017 40
 theare] youe γ5; them 020, 022; they 016, 017; dothe 015

8. "SHORT WORK"

NIMEV 3721

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

The poem "Short Work" is one of the late additions to the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir". Its short, fifteenth-century versions are not part of the corpus at the time, but its elaborate variant appears complete with striking linguistic affinities with the "Verses upon the Elixir" (interphraseology) in the sixteenth century.

Date

The early, concise versions (A and B) of the "Short Work" are extant in manuscripts from the fifteenth century onwards. Version C, which forms part of the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", dates from the sixteenth century.

Author

The "Short Work" is an anonymous composition which lacks early, consistent attributions in extant manuscripts. However, it is interesting to note that different versions of the poem were attributed intermittently to George Ripley (London, Lincoln's Inn MS Hale 90; also *TCB*, 393–396 and 488), and to "friar [most likely Roger] Bacon" (London, Wellcome Institute MS 519; Bod MS Ashmole 1480).

Title

Generally circulated without a title, the "Short Work" is here named after its rare yet surprisingly consistent early modern description as "a work very short but not so short as it is true" (*et sim.*; earliest witness: Bod MS Rawlinson B. 306; also *TCB*, 393–396 and 488).

Manuscripts Version A

- a6 Bod MS Ashmole 1416, f. 150^v, s. xv–xvi
 a7 Bod MS Ashmole 1486, Ib, f. 18^{va}, s. xvi
 c3 TCC MS O.2.16, f. 72^r, s. xv [edition copy]
 d2 Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 ('Dekyngston'),
 f. 64^r, s. xvi
 s10 BL MS Sloane 288, f. 65^r, s. xvii
 s11 BL MS Sloane 320, f. 1^r, s. xvi^{ex}

Manuscripts Version B

- a8 Bod MS Ashmole 759, f. 55^r, s. xv^{ex}
 a9 Bod MS Ashmole 1416, f. 150^v, s. xv–xvi
 a10 Bod MS Ashmole 1448, p. 77, s. xv [edition copy]
 a11 Bod MS Ashmole 1480, f. 15^r, s. xvi [edition copy variant ending]
 c4 TCC MS R.14.45, f. 6^r, s. xiii/xiv/xv
 q5 BL MS Add. 5025 (3), Scroll, s. xvi
 s12 BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 16^r, s. xvi
 s13 BL MS Sloane 1723, f. 41^r, s. xvii
 s14 BL MS Sloane 2176, f. 25^r, s. xvii
 s15 BL MS Sloane 3579, f. 18^v, s. xv
 s16 BL MS Sloane 3580B, f. 185^v, s. xvi²
 w2 London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, f. 65^v, s. xvi²
 x1 Bod MS e Mus 63, backcover, s. xvi
 y2 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 MS Osborn fa. 16, p. 39, s. xvi²

Manuscripts Version C

- a12 Bod MS Ashmole 1445, VIII, ff. 45^r–46^v, s. xvii
 a13 Bod MS Ashmole 1479, ff. 217^r–218^r, s. xvi
 f* GUL MS Ferguson 322, f. 5^r, s. xvi²
 i1 London, Lincoln's Inn MS Hale 90, ff. 48^v–50^r, s. xvii
 s17 BL MS Sloane 288, ff. 73^r–74^r, s. xvii
 s18 BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 33^{r-v}, s. xvi
 s# BL MS Sloane 1149, f. 9^r, s. xvi
 s#² BL MS Sloane 1150, f. 2^r, s. xvi
 s#³ BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 23^v, s. xvi
 s19 BL MS Sloane 1723, ff. 64^r–65^r, s. xvii
 s20 BL MS Sloane 1842, ff. 20^v–22^r, s. xvi/xvii
 s21 BL MS Sloane 3688, ff. 66^v–67^v, s. xvi^{ex}
 x2 Bod MS Rawlinson B. 306, ff. 43^v–44^v, s. xvi^{ex} [edition copy]

Fragments Version C

BL MS Sloane 1097, f. 13^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1097, f. 28^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1105, f. 23^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1113, f. 3^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1149, f. 9^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1151, f. 22^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 13^v, s. xvi

Not Seen

Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/1/6, pp. 660–663, s. xvii

Printed Versions

TCB, 436 (version A)
 T TCB, 393–396 (version C)

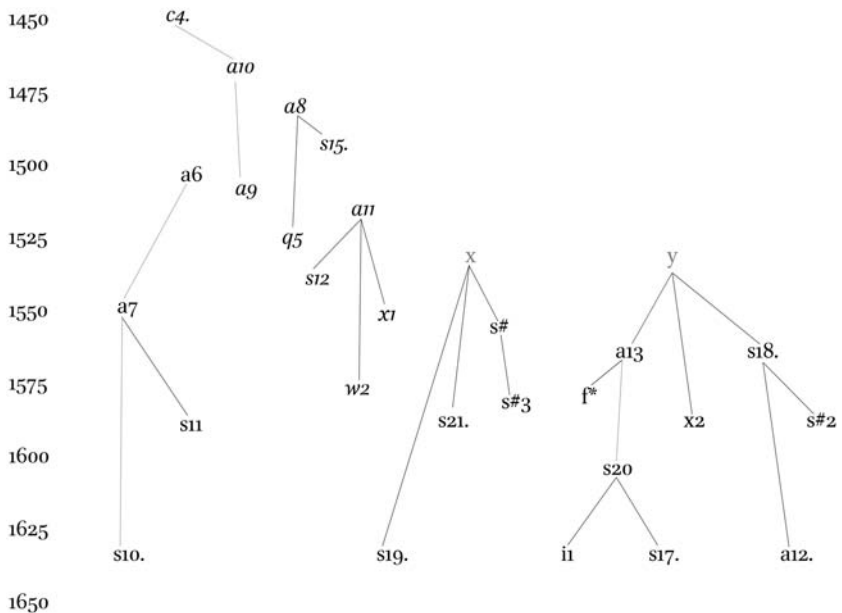


Diagram XV: Stemma, “Short Work”, versions A, B and C

Connections between witnesses not included above are too tentative to be placed into the stemma.

8.1. "Short Work": Version A

Yf ye wolle to þys medycyn a plye
 make first hevy hard hotte & drye
 nessche lyght cold & wete
 put ham to ged_er & make ham mete
 5 þus may ye spend mor þanne þe king
 Yf ye have comyng of suche a þyng

8.2. "Short Work": Version B

Herde hevy hote & dry
 put togeder for so did I
 hote & moste colde & wete
 make them togedir to mete
 5 Than art þu richer þan the kyng
 But if he haue the same þinge
 Thys is ye waye to soth fastnes i
 No other waye had hermes ii
 He that taketh more or lesse iii
 Is lyke to lose all as I gesse iv

1 f. 72^r | to] *om.* a7, c3 [edition copy], d2 | medycyn] Elixir d2; worke s10 2 *add.* make heauye harde bodyes drye s10 | first] a6 | hevy hard] them s11; heauy a6, a7, s10 4 put] ioyne d2 | put [...] make ham] make these together a7, s11 5/6 *order of ll. reversed* a7, s11 5 Then maie yt spend with a kinge s10 | thus [...] mor] thou shalt be richer a7, s11 6 but if he haue yat very thing d2; Yf yee canne werke such a thinge s10 *var.* [Colde] & moyste, hotte & drye/ Shall beste agree in our Masterye/ Yf thou wylte make siluer or golde/ make it of soche as I haue ye tolde/ Of other bodyes if yu wilte yt make/ lyke natural things to thy mettall take/ Then euery Body will turne to Golde/ So haue I wrought a hundred folde q5 (8.2.) 1 p. 77 | *add.* Sowe thy purest frute in thy mercurye/ tyll he be deadde in hym, dissever the qwicke/ from the deadde, the drye fro the moyste with/ busye cure, & imbibe the deadde with the qwicke/ & the drye wyth the moyste, till the deadde/ haue ouercommethe qwycke, tunc totum habe-/ bis magisterium: s12 | Herde] *prec.* Take a9, an, c4, s12, s13, s14, s16, x1; Vulfus seith s15; Take ye w2; Thus a8 | Herde hevy hote] hot, moist, cold a8, q5, s15 | hevy] *om.* y2 | hote] wete c4 2 put togeder] put them together c4; do them together s12, s13, x1; Soe together s14; do together an, s16, w2, y2; byn put togeder a8; to gedre a9 3 hote] Take softe an, w2; With hotte a8; Take harde x1; drie a9 | moste] dry s15, a8; *om.* s16, y2; heauy an, w2, x1 | colde] hard c4; dry s12 4 also put togeder all emete a8; do so tyll evenly yei be mete a9 | Make] ioyne c4; put s12, s15, x1; do an, s13, s16, w2, y2; Soe s14 | to mete] even met c4, s12, s13, s14, s16, x1, y2; all emete s15; even I met an, w2 5/6 *om.* a9, s15 6 But if he] Aut yf he c4; If thou s13, s14; thoughe he s16, y2; but he an, w2; Excepte x1 | haue] haue helpe of s12 | same] self same an, w2 i–iv *add.* an, s12, w2 iv all this wourcke is lyke to leese s12

8.3. "Short Work": Version C

Take heuy soffte could & dry
 Clense him & calce grind suddly
 if thou can any good
 desoule him in water yat is so wodd
 5 there of take a tincture
 & earth calces good & pure
 Of this mayst thou haue thy trauall
 both mercury water & oyle
 out of ye eayre w^{ith} flames great
 10 fiere into ye earth doth creape
 in this worke if you wilt win
 take hed where w^{ith} they doist begine
 And in what wise yat thou doist warke
 for losyng of thy way in the darke
 15 & where w^{ith} what & how ye matter shall eand
 I tell & counsell the as my freand
 make water of earth & earth of water
 then art thou well onward in thy matter
 For thou shalt fynd hid in myre
 20 both earth water eayre & fyre
 I tell ye my brother I will not flatter
 of our earth is made our water
 the w^{hich} is cleare white as snow
 & maketh our earth to calcine & grow
 25 Blacnes fyrst doth show

(8.2.) end *add.* Album & rubium ex vna radise prosedunt/ Nullo *ins.* alio alierius ieneris corpore interbeniete pullulat j k j/ Et luna in argenti opere est ip[se] candidum j k j c4; so that ye muste fyrst make that that is colde moiste and erthy to be hotte/ drie and fry before the coniunccon or commyxion/ [*ill.*]tel with that matrimony of body and sperite must/ be made anon after the water is drawn or at the/ leste withyn two houres after s15; And all is don in houres thre/ Wherefore it is callid Godis preuyte a8; therefore yf thou wylt make ouer Stone/ se yf thou canst make govld mone/ for he ys the father of ouer Stone/ & syl[u]er ys the mother/ yf she be takyn yn Hyr [k]ynd/ who knoweth not thys in phelosophy ys but blynd x1 (8.3.) 1 f. 43^v 2 calce grind] to calx grind him i1, s17, s20, T; calse him s18; the calx grind s19; to calx grind a12 3/4 order of ll. reversed i1, T 3 can] can do a12, i1 4 yat is so] of the f*, s18, s19; both alternatives a12, s20, s21 6 &] an s17, s19, s20, s21; In i1 7 haue] *om.* s20 | thy] with i1, s18, T 9 eayre] air *other MSS*; Earthe s21 13 wise] manner i1, T 15 where w^{ith} what] wherewith, what a12, s18, s19, s21; where, with what i1, s17, s20, T 25 *om.* T

as by the practise thou shalt know
 desolue & calsyne oft & oft
 with congelation till ye body to whitnes be brought
 make ye bodye fluxible & floing
 30 with thy earth parfit & tayming
 Then after ferment is done
 whether with sone or mounne
 dessolue him with ye water of lyfe
 I cauelyd marcurie with outten strif
 35 put yat soule with ye boddy & ye sperit
 to gether in one yat they may meate
 In his dames belly till he wax great
 with giueing him drink of his owne sweat
 for ye milke of a kowe to a child my brother
 40 is not so sweet as ye mylk of his owne mother
 this child yat is so maruelously wrought
 vnto his heritage he must be brought
 his lyuelyhoud is so worthy a thing
 of a bility to spend with a kinge
 45 he yat beareth all this in mynde
 & vnderstandeth these parables all
 with operations he may fynd
 poore rich great & smale
 with our sulphir we make our antimony which is whit & red
 50 & therefore we make our mercurie quike & dead
 this is a mettall yat I speake of one of ye seuen
 if you be a clark reede what I meane
 there is noe planit of ye vi nether great ne smale
 but if he be put to them he will callcine them all
 55 Vnto red blud he must be brought
 els of him thou gettest ryght nought
 retch him with ye wode water

26 till mercury & earthe together do grewe s18 28 body] bodyes a12 | till [...] to] of the bodies
 till s19, s21 30 tayming] tayning a12, ii, s18, s21, T; rayninge s19; tayn (*ins. u*) yng a13 31 f. 44^r |
 is] is once ii, T; is to be once a12 32 whether] wether you will s18, T; whether it be ii; whether
 thou wilt it be a12 | or] and ii 37 his dames belly] this belly of is Dames ii 39 to a child]
moved to beg. l. 40 s18 40 sweet] kind s19 41 is] thus ys s18 43 lyuelyhoud] lifehood a13, s17,
 s18; heritage s19 44 a bility] hability ii, s21 45 all] well ii, s20 47 he] they s19 50 therefore]
 therof s21, s# 51 this [...] one] This mettall yat I speake of ys one s18 | which is] *om.* s19 56
 ryght] *om.* s18

man & woman I clothid vnder one hatter
 in & of them is conceaued a child
 60 lously of beuty meake & myld
 Out of the earth w \bar{u} th dropes strong
 norish ye child in his mothers wombe
 till he by comed to full agg
 then make thou a mariagge
 65 betwene ye doughter & ye sone
 then hast thou ye mastre wone
 The begining of this work if you wilt craue
 in holy writ thou shalt it haue
 in ye bible y \bar{a} t most wholly booke
 70 writtne who therein lyst to looke
 & what is antemony that thou shal marke
 I haue written vnto ye if thou be a clark
 Loke about ye before & thou mayst fynd
 playnely writen wh \bar{i} ch maketh men blind:
 75 our work is bringing ageane of mercurie
 that philosopher cawleth Solution
 but if thou louse not thy vnclean boddy
 thou workest without discreyson
 of this losing speaketh ye philosophor in ye booke of Turby
 80 Some weneth y \bar{a} t losing is without boddy
 imbibission of water is not ye losing
 but it is in bringing of ye boddy into water ageane torning
 that is to say into such water
 y \bar{a} t is torning ye boddy into his fyrst matter
 85 the secound work is to bring
 earth & water to congealing
 The clensing ye third is an other
 vnto whitnes my owne brother
 with his water of his owne

58 I clothid] inclosed a12 59 in [...] is] I [...] I ii 61 earth] ayre s18 63 to] vnto hys s18; so
 s19 67 craue] *canc.* haue craue x2 [*edition copy*]; *canc.* have *add.* craue s18 69/70 both in
 mass book and in psalter/ written before the priest at altar a12, s18, s#2, T 71 marke] wercke
 s#, s#3 72 vnto ye] written by letter s18 73 &] *all other MSS except s21* | mayst] canst *other*
MSS 75 of] our T 77 not] *om.* s18; *ins.* not a13 79/80 *om.* ii, s17, s20, T 79 ye [...] ye] *om.*
 s18 | Turby] Earbe s19 81 imbibission] Inhibition T 82 boddy into] *om.* s19 | water] his firste
 watter s17 84 torning] *canc.* losing torning x2 [*edition copy*] 87 f. 44^v | ye third] of the third
 a12, T; of the earth s17

90 which is full maruilus to be knowne
 the forte worke is distilling
 of ye earth & water by sweatyng
 And thus hast thou by one assent
 earth water eayre & fyre ye fourth elament
 95 the ashes which is in ye bottome of ye uessel
 looke thou dispyise them not
 for I tell ye ryght well
 there ys the dyadem of our crafte

90 full] *om.* s17 | knowne] vnknownen s17 91 forte] fourth *all other MSS* | worke] worde s17
 93 one] our s17, s20 94 fourth elament] four elements ii, T 95 which is] *om.* s19 96 not]
 not though left T 96/97 *line break om.* a12 97 for] Son a12 98 there ys the] they are the s18

9. TEXTS FROM THE RIPLEY SCROLL

NIMEV 2688.7 (“*On the ground*”); 1561.7
 (“*In the sea*”); 1364.5 (“*I shall you tell*”)

Relation to the “Verses upon the Elixir”

The poems “On the ground”, “In the sea”, and “I shall you tell” join the extended corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” thanks to their appearance on the Ripley Scrolls together with “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variants “Sun” and “Father Phoebus”, and “Trinity”. Their connection is thus one of material or physical proximity.

Origin and Date

The earliest identified copies of “In the sea” and “I shall you tell” appear on the oldest extant Ripley Scroll (Bod Bodley Rolls 1), possibly their point of origin. By contrast, “On the ground” first survives in a fifteenth-century codex (BL MS Sloane 3579). All three poems date from the late fifteenth century.

Author

Not attributed to any author explicitly, these three poems are associated with George Ripley through their medium of presentation, the so-called Ripley Scrolls. It is not clear at what point in time this (certainly erroneous) attribution originated; it heads the reproduction of the texts in the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (376–379) and the corresponding entry in its table of contents (488).

Title

“On the ground”, “In the sea”, and “I shall you tell” were circulated without a title throughout the period of their transmission. The titles used here are derived from the poems’ *incipits*.

Edition

Due to these three poems’ peripheral role in the corpus and their remarkably uniform, faithful rendition in all inspected witnesses, they are rendered here in diplomatic rather than critical edition.

Manuscripts "On the ground"

- BL MS Sloane 2523B, Scroll, s. xvii
 BL MS Sloane 3579, f. 36^v, s. xv
 BL MS Add. 5025 (4), Scroll, s. xvi
 BL MS Add. 32621, Scroll, s. xvi
 Bod Ashmole Rolls 40, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
 Bod Ashmole Rolls 52, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 Bod Bodley Rolls 1, Scroll, s. xv^{ex}
 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276, Scroll, s. xvi¹
 Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2, Scroll, s. xvii [edition
 copy]
 London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, ff. 62^r–63^r, s. xvi²
 London, Wellcome Institute MS 692, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 Mellon MS 41, Scroll, s. xvi²
 Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library MS 93, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313, Scroll, s. xvi²
 Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities
 Ripley Scroll (MS 205), s. xvi

Printed Version

TCB, 378–379

9.1. "On the ground"

One the grownde there is an hill
 allsoe a serpente within a well
 his tayle is longe with winges wide
 all readye to flee by everye side
 5 repayre the well faste aboute
 that the sepente pase not out
 for if that he be there agone
 thou loseste the vertue of the stone
 what is thy grownde thou must know here
 10 and all so ye well that is so clere
 and what is the dragon with his tayle
 or els thy worke will little avayle
 thy well must brenne in water cleere
 take good heede for this is thy fire
 15 thy fire with water brent shall be
 and water with fire washe shall he
 thy earth on fire shalbe put
 and water with ayre shalbe knyte
 thus you shall goe to putrefaction
 20 and bring the serpente to redemption
 first he shalbe blacke as a croe
 and downe in his denne shall ly full low
 soe swolne as a tode that lyeth on grownde
 blaste with bladders sittinge so rownde
 25 they shall to borste and lye full playne
 and thus with crafte thy serpent is slayne
 he shall change colours there many one
 and tourne as white whalle by the bone
 with the water that he was in
 30 washe him cleane from his sinne
 and let him drinke a lyte and lyte
 and that shall make him fayre and white
 the which whiteness is ever abiding
 lo here is a very full finishinge
 35 of the white stone and the red
 heare is trewly the very ded.

Manuscripts "In the sea"

- BL MS Sloane 2523B, Scroll, s. xvii
 BL MS Add. 5025 (2), Scroll, s. xvi
 BL MS Add. 5025 (4), Scroll, s. xvi
 BL MS Add. 32621, Scroll, s. xvi [edition copy]
 Bod Ashmole Rolls 40, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
 Bod Ashmole Rolls 52, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 Bod Bodley Rolls 1, Scroll, s. xv^{ex}
 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276, Scroll, s. xvi¹
 Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2, Scroll, s. xvii
 London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, f. 64^r, s. xvi²
 London, Wellcome Institute MS 692, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
 London, Wellcome Institute MS 693, Scroll, s. xvii
 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 Mellon MS 41, Scroll, s. xvi²
 Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library MS 93, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313, Scroll, s. xvi²
 Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities
 Ripley Scroll (MS 205), s. xvi

Printed Version

TCB, 376–377

9.2. "In the sea"

In the Sea withouten lees
 standeth the birde of Hermes
 eatinge his winges variable
 and maketh himselfe full stable
 5 when all his feathers be from him gone
 he standeth still as a bone
 hear is now both white and Red
 And also the Stoane to quicken the dead
 hear is all and some withouten fable
 10 both hard and Leech and malliable
 Vnderstand now well and right
 and thanck yow God for this light

Manuscripts "I shall you tell"

- BL MS Sloane 2523B, Scroll, s. xvii
 BL MS Add. 5025 (2), Scroll, s. xvi
 BL MS Add. 5025 (4), Scroll, s. xvi
 BL MS Add. 32621, Scroll, s. xvi [edition copy]
 Bod Ashmole Rolls 52, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 Bod Bodley Rolls 1, Scroll, s. xv^{ex}
 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 276, Scroll, s. xvi¹
 Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2, Scroll, s. xvii
 London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, ff. 64^r–65^r, s. xvi²
 London, Wellcome Institute MS 692, Scroll, s. xvi–xvii
 London, Wellcome Institute MS 693, Scroll, s. xvii
 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
 Mellon MS 41, Scroll, s. xvi²
 Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library MS 93, Scroll, s. xvi^{ex}
 San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313, Scroll, s. xvi²
 Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities
 Ripley Scroll (MS 205), s. xvi

Printed Version

TCB, 375–376

9.3. "I shall you tell"

I shall you tell without leisinge.
 howe and what is my generation.
 homogenia is my father.
 and Magdnetia is my mother.
 5 and [azoth] trulie is my sister.
 and kibright forsouth is my brother.
 The Serpent of Arabia is my name.
 the which is leader of all this game.
 that some tyme was both wood & wilde.
 10 and now I am both meeke & mylde.
 the Sonne & Moone with ther might.
 haue Chasened me yat was so light.
 My winges that me brought.
 hither and thether where I thought.
 15 now with their might they downe me pull.
 & bringeth me whether they w[u]ll.
 the blod of my harte I wisse.
 now causeth Ioye and blysse.
 and desolveththe verie stone.
 20 and knitteth hym or he haue done.
 Now maketh hard that was lixe.
 and causeth hym to be fixe.
 of my blood and water y wisse.
 plentye in all the worlde ther is.
 25 it ronnethe in euerie place.
 who findethe it he hathe grace
 in all the worlde roneth ouer all.
 and goeth rounde as a ball.
 but if thou vnderstande not this.
 30 of the worke thou shalte mysse.
 therefore know ere thou begyn.
 what they be and all his kynne.
 everye man hathe it full suer.
 and all is but one matter.
 35 thou must parte hym in thre.
 and knitt hym as the Trenetye.
 and make hym all but one.
 loe here is the philosophers stone.

10. "TRINITY"

NIMEV 1558.5

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

"Trinity" is the final poem on some Ripley Scrolls and thus related to two major ("Richard Carpenter's Work", variants "Sun" and "Father Phoebus") and three minor corpus poems ("In the sea", "On the ground", "I shall you tell"). Moreover, "Trinity" is the only known text to mention 'Pearce', the supposed author of the "Verses upon the Elixir", prior to the seventeenth century. The poem also refers to "the sustre of moyses mary prophetiss[a]", an authorial figure connected to "Richard Carpenter's Work" variant "Spain" and its derivates.

Date

"Trinity" appears to originate in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, and is thus near-contemporary with the "Verses upon the Elixir".

Author

Thanks to its appearance on the so-called Ripley Scrolls, "Trinity" is indirectly if erroneously associated with George Ripley at an unidentified point in history. The poem is not explicitly attributed to an author in any of the extant copies, and should therefore be considered anonymous.

Title

Due to the lack of a title in its manuscript copies, "Trinity" is referred to here with its abbreviated *incipit*.

Manuscripts

- a5 Bod MS Ashmole 1480, ff. 14^v–15^r, s. xvi [edition copy]
- q1 BL MS Add. 5025 (4), Scroll, s. xvi
- q2 BL MS Add. 32621, Scroll, s. xvi
- q3 Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/2, Scroll, s. xvii
- q4 San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 30313, Scroll, s. xvi²
- w1 London, Wellcome Institute MS 519, f. 65^{r-v}, s. xvi²

Not Seen

- BL MS Sloane 410, f. 2^v, s. xvi
- Bod MS Ashmole 972, p. 375, s. xvii

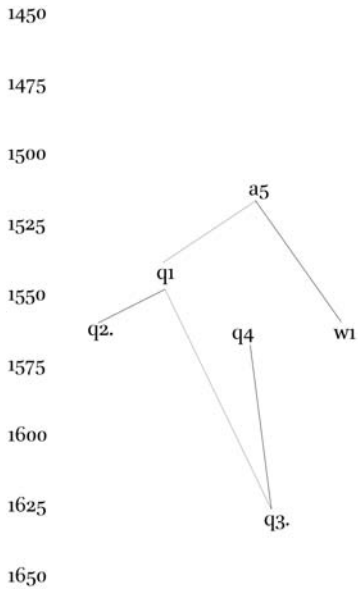


Diagram XVI: Stemma, "Trinity"

10.1. "Trinity"

In the name of ye trynite
 herken here & ye shall see
 myne auctor yat fformyth thys work
 both ffirst last bryghte & dark
 5 som of hem I shalle ye tell
 both In rhyme & In spell
 malapides plat & peion
 & ye boke of turba philosophorum
 both aristotle Jeber & hermes
 10 also lelly morien & raseres
 bonellus raymundus & albertt
 arnold & perci the monnk so blak
 aros & rases & allso dessima
 the sustre of moyses mary prophetissa
 15 bacon allso the greate clerk
 fformeth I wys alle thys work
 as these accorrde nowe In one
 that here ys the philosoffers stone
 other wyse yt may not be
 20 ouer stone well thys I counsell thee
 & pray youe god of hys grace
 that thowe mayest save tyme & place
 to have the trowth of thys parable
 thank thowe god yat ys so stable
 25 ffor many a man defyeiyth thys
 both pope & emperoure & kyng I wys
 preste & clark & allso ffryer
 & not so moch but ye very beggar

1 f. 14^v 3 auctor] aunswere q3; Authors q1 4 bryghte] brey q3, q4; light q1 5 hem] him q3 7 malapides] Matipidis q1 | plat] Plato q1, w1 | peion] paioye q3 8 om. q1, q2 10 lelly] *i.e.* Lully *other MSS* | raseres] Rosores q3; Rosaries q4; Rasses q1; Racies q2; raseris w1 13 rases] vascos q3; Rasces q2, q4; Rateie's q1 | dessima] Dettima q1 14 mary prophetissa] Maria [*or*: Mary] the prophetess q1, q2, w1 16 f. 15^r | fformeth] firmith q4, w1; affirmeth q1, q2 | I wys] also q2 17 as these accorde] all this accordeth q1, q3, q4; all these recorde q2 19 wyse] ways q2, q3 20 ouer stone] understand *all other MSS* | well] *om.* q4 22 save] have *all other MSS* | place] space *all other MSS* 25–28 *om.* q2 25 defyeiyth] desireth *all other MSS*

nowe Iesue & yt be thy wyll
 30 kepe vs alle ffrom the payne of hell
 & as thowe madest dayes seven
 brynge vs to the blys of heven
 alle manner of good men In theyre degree
 saye amen a men ffor charite

29 now the & hich be thy well q3 | & yt] if it q1, q4; *ill.* q2 30 alle] *om.* q2, q4 33 manner [...] men] good men q2 | there degree] his digne q4 34 saye] *om.* q3, q4 *end add.* Thus with will I am Content/ To shew this comely Ornament q1

PROSE TEXTS

1. "ALUMEN DE HISPANIA"

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

"Alumen de Hispania" is the fifteenth-century Latin translation of a Hebrew, and possibly an even older Arabic prose text, which served as the base text for "Richard Carpenter's Work", variant "Spain". As origin rather than derivative of a part of the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir", and as a Latin prose text, "Alumen de Hispania" makes for a comparatively unusual extension of the corpus.

Date

"Alumen de Hispania" appears frequently in the same manuscripts as other texts from the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir" in the late fifteenth century. The composition of the text, i.e. its translation from a more ancient text, may, however, predate this period by several decades.

Author

"Alumen de Hispania" was never explicitly attributed to an author. Nevertheless, "Alumen de Hispania" maintains an association with a number of alchemical authorities throughout the period of its transmission by merit of mentioning them in its text (most prominently Hermes and Maria). The connection with Maria, the mythical alchemist commonly known as 'the prophetess', 'the Jewess' or the sister of Moses, is particularly strong in its manuscript tradition: an early witness features a drawing of Maria beside a copy of the text (Cambridge, St. John's College MS G. 14 (182), f. 6r).

Title

"Alumen de Hispania" is recorded, at times, together with a title resembling the following: "Practica Mariae prophetissae sororis Moysi et Aaron". The title used here agrees with a common form of the *incipit* of the recipe proper (l. 20).

Edition

Due to both the peripheral role of “Alumen de Hispania” in the corpus and the variability of extant texts one representative copy is rendered here in diplomatic edition, as a point of reference for the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. Similarly, the following list of manuscripts dating from before the eighteenth century is not exhaustive, yet will provide a good impression of the linguistic range and the original popularity of the text.

Manuscripts Latin

- BL MS Harley 3528, f. 64^v, s. xv
 BL MS Sloane 2459, ff. 1^v–3^r, s. xv [edition copy, verse ending]
 Bod MS Ashmole 1416, ff. 99^v–100^v, s. xv–xvi
 Bod MS Ashmole 1420, art. 5, pp. 62–63, s. xvii
 Bod MS Ashmole 1448, pp. 30–33, s. xv
 Cambridge, St John’s College MS G. 14 (182), ff. 6^r–10^r, s. xv
 Manchester, Rylands Library, Latin MS 65, ff. 192^v–193^r, s. xv [edition copy, prose text]
 San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HU 1051, ff. ff. 37^r–38^v, s. xvⁱⁿ–xvi^{ex}
 TCC MS O.2.16, f. 74^{r-v}, s. xv
 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 3001, ff. 12^r–14^v, s. xv
 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 5477, ff. 61^v–62^v, s. xv
 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 5509, ff. 252^r–253^v, s. xv
 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 11336, ff. 105^v–108^v, s. xvi

Manuscripts English

- Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 199 (‘Dekyngston’), ff. 291^v–292^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 3688, ff. 46^v–47^v, s. xvi^{ex}
 BL MS Sloane 3778, ff. 100^r–105^v, s. xvii
 Bod MS Ashmole 1487, ff. 61^r–62^r, s. xvi

Fragments

- BL MS Sloane 1113, f. 8^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1149, f. 22^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1149, f. 37^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 17^v, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 42^r, s. xvi
 BL MS Sloane 1181, f. 1^v, s. xvi

*Not Seen*⁶

- Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek 40 Cod. 180, f. 241^r, s. xv/xvi (Latin)
 BL MS Sloane 1744, ff. 14^r–17^r, s. xvii (English)
 BL MS Sloane 2192, ff. 17^v–20^r, s. xvii (English)
 BL MS Sloane 3506, f. 72^r, s. xvii (English)
 BL MS Sloane 3641, ff. 1^r–8^r, s. xvii (English)
 BL MS Sloane 3772, ff. 31^v–37^r, s. xvii (English)
 Bod MS Ashmole 1451, ff. 25^r–26^r, s. xvii (English)
 Bod MS Ashmole 1418, ff. 52^v–54^r, s. xvii (English)
 Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS Gl. kgl. S. 1718, s. xvi (Latin)
 Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek MS N. 177, pp. 81–87, s. xvii/xviii (German)
 Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/1/5, I, pp. 129–131 (Latin)
 GUL MS Ferguson 76, ff. 26^v–28^v, s. xv
 Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Voss. Chym. Q. 17, ff. 67^r–70^r, s. xvi (German)
 London, Wellcome Institute MS 719, ff. 149^v–153^r, s. xvi (Latin)
 Modena, Biblioteca Estense MS Latin 357, s. xvi–xvii (Latin)
 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Français 19069 (Saint-Germain français 1227), f. 64^v, s. xvi (French)
 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Français 19074 (Saint-Germain français 1645), f. 67^r(–69^v), s. xvii (French)
 Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek MS August 3076, f. 203, s. xv (Latin)

Printed Versions

- Francis Barrett, *The Lives of Alchemystical Philosophers; With a Critical Catalogue of Books in Occult Chemistry and a Selection of the Most Celebrated Treatises on the Theory and Practice of the Hermetic Art* (London, 1815), 363–366 (paraphrase)
 Gulielmus Gratarolus, *Avriferæ Artis, Quam Chemiam Vocant, Antiquissimi Arthores, siue Turba Philosophorum* (Basel, 1572), 343–348⁷
 I. P. S. M. S., *Alchymia Vera: Das ist Der waren vnd von Gott hoch gebenedeyten, Natur gemessen Edlen Kunst Alchymia wahre beschreibung, Etliche kurtze vnd nützliche Tractätlein zusammen getragen, wie versa pagina zusehen; Allen denselben Kunstliebenden zu nutz an tag gegeben ...* (1604), item XIV
 Michael Sendivogius, *Lumen chymicum novum* (Erfurt, 1624), 130–132
 Arnaldus de Villa Nova, *Opus aureum D. Arnaldi de Villa Nova ... Drey unterschiedliche Tractat von der Alchimey ...* (Frankfurt, 1604) [not seen]⁸

⁶ Information in this section is based on modern library catalogues (see Bibliography). It is possible that some of these entries refer to texts related to but not identical with “Alumen de Hispania” as it is reproduced below.

⁷ A translation of this is contained in Patai, *Jewish Alchemists*, 71–74.

⁸ Referenced on Adam McLean's *Alchemy Website* at <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/maryprof.html> (accessed 6/2012).

Jean Maugin de Richebourg, *Bibliothèque des philosophes chimiques* Vol. 1 (Paris, 1740), 77–84

Lazarus Zetzner, *Theatrum Chemicum, praecipuos selectorum auctorum tractatus de chemiae et lapidis philosophici antiquitate, veritate, iure, praesentia & operationibus continens* Vol. 5 (Strasbourg, 1659), 497–498

1.1. "Alumen de Hispania"

- Accedens Aaron ad mariam prophetissa sororem suam salutans eam dixit.
 O prophetissa soror mea audiui siquidem de te multoties
 quod albificas lapidem in vno die.
 Respondit Maria. Vtique o Aaron per diem & in parte diei.
- 5 Dixit Aaron eidem. Et quomodo erit illud quod asseris o prophetissa.
 Quando albificamus lapidem de hendrahemus nigrum.
 Respondit maria. O Aaron. Numquid de parte ista mortui sunt gentes.
 An nosci quod sit aqua uel res qui albificat elendrahemus.
 Dixit Aaron eidem. Hoc est ita ut tu dicis o domina in tempore longo.
- 10 Respondit Maria Hermes dixit in omnibus libris suis quod philosophy
 albificant lapidem suum in hora diei.
 Inquit Aron. Quid est istud excellens.
 Respondit Maria. Excellentissimum est hoc apud eum qui ignorat.
 Inquit Aaron eidem. O prophetissa si sint apud homines omnia .4. elementa
 15 elyxir compleri possent & complexionari & coniungi & coaglari eorum fumi
 ac retineri de vno donec impleret consequens.
 Respondit Maria O Aaron per deum si non essent sensus tui firmi
 non audires a me uerba hec. Verumptamen.
 Recipe gummi de yspania Gummi album & gummi rubeum.
- 20 quid est kybrit philosophorum eorum sol & tinctura maior.
 & matrimonifica gummi cum gummi uero matrimonio.
 Intellexisti o Aaron. Respondit. vtique domina mea.
 Dixit Maria. Custodi fumum & caue ne aliquid fugiat ab illo.
 & esto mensura ignis qui sit sicut mensura caliditatis solis in diebus iunij et
 iulij.
- 25 & morare prope vas. & intueri mira quomodo nigrescit albescit & rubescit
 in minus quam in tribus horis diei.
 Et fumus penetrabit corpus & spiritus constringetur.
 & erunt sicut lacta incerans liquefaens & penetrans.
 & illud est occultum o Aaron.
- 30 Dixitque Aaron eidem. Ego non dico quod erit hoc semper.
 Respondit Maria. O Aaron & mirabilius est de isto eo
 quod non fuerit apud antiquos no accesserit ad eos per meditatorem. &
 illud est.
 Recipe herbam albam claram inhonoratam optimam super monticulos.
 & tere ipsas regentem sicut in sua hora. & illa est corpus uerum non fugiens
 ab igne.
- 35 Dixit quod Aaron. Numquid ipse est lapis ueritatis o domina.

Respondit Maria. Vtique Verumptum nesciunt homines
hoc regimen cum uelocitate sua.

Inquit Aaron. Et postea quod?

- Respondit Maria. Postea ignifica super illud kybrit & zeybit
40 quare ipsi sunt duo fumi complectentes duo lumina.
& proice super ipsa complicans tincturarum & spirituum & pondera
ueritatis.
& tere totum & pone ad ignem. & videbis de ipsis mirabilia.
O Aaron. totum regimen est in temperie ignis.
O quam mirum quomodo monebitur de colore in colorem
45 in minus quam in hora diei quousque ad metam rubedinis & alboris.
Et tunc deice ignem & dimitte infrari quare cum infrigatum fuerit
& apertum inuenies ipsam corpus margaritale clarum esse
in colore papauerum siluestrus mixtum albore.
& illud est intrans liquescens penetrans.
50 Et cadit pars eius super 1000.1000. & ducenta milia o Aaron.
Tunc Aaron inclinato capite procidit in manibus sujs.
Dixit quod Maria. leua caput tuum o Aaron.
per deum abbremabo super te rem si deo placuerit
Vt illud corum proiectum super monticulos clarum
55 quod non capitur putrefactone uel motu.
Recipe & tere ipsam cum gummi elsarog.
& cum duobus fumis quare corum comprehendicans est gummi elsarog.
& tere totum & appropinqua igni. & totum liquefiet.
Si proieceris super ipsam uxorem erit sicut aqua distillans.
60 & quando percutiet ipsam aer congelabitur
& erit corpus unum. Prohice de ipso. & videbis mira o Aaron.
Nam istud est secretum scolie. Et scias quod praedicta duo fumi
sunt radices hujus artis & sunt oleum & calx humida.
et philosophy nominauerunt illa multis nomibus modis & cogominibus.
65 sed corpus fixum est de corde saturni comprehendicans tincturam
& compos sapiem siut scolie.
Et acceptum de monticulis est corpus album clarum.
& ista sunt medicina hujus artis. & pars inuenitur super monticulos.
Et scias quod sapientes non nominauerunt illud compos scolie
70 quarum scolias non complebitur ni per illud.
In hoc scolie sunt mirabilia. intran namque in illo .4^{or}. lapides.
& suum regimen uerum est sicut dixi.
& illud est primum scoliarum Aje & Seth.
Per illud allegori[c]a ut Hermes scolias in libris suis.

- 75 si gens non caderet super manentem sui parlamenti.
 sed semper lognificauerunt philosophy suum regimen.
 & similauerunt opus per quodlibus quod non oportet facere illud opus.
 & faciunt nigrum uno anno non nisi pro occultatone ignorantie philosophi
 donec firmatum sit in cordibus eorum & in sensibus
- 80 quare ars non complebitur preterque in anno
 quare est secretum dei magnum.
 & quando audiunt de secretis nostris non uerificant ea
 prope eorum ignorantiam. Intellexisti artem o Aaron.
 Respondit Aaron. Vtique o domina mea. Sed narra mihi de isto
- 85 uase sine quo non complebitur opus.
 Dixit Maria. Illud est uas Hermetis quod occultauerunt scolia.
 & non est uas ignorantium sed mensura ignis tui.
 Tu es sapiens ulterius uide questionem meam & auide amplectere.
 Dixitque Aaron. O domina mea hobedisti in societate scoliari
- 90 qui posuerunt in libris suis facere artem de corpore vno.
 Respondit Maria. Vtique quod Hermes non docuit quare radix scolie
 est compos indole insanabile. & est toxicum mortificans omnio corpora.
 & pulumbi[fic]at ea & coaglat uenerem odore suo.
 Dixit quod Aaron eidem. Illud est sicut dixisti.
- 95 Respondit Maria. Ego iuro tibi per deum eternum
 quod hoc erit quando soluitur donec sit aqua subtilis.
 non curo qua solutione fiat coagolatum zaybec in lunam
 super robere ueritatis & incidit sonum kalay
 & letificat ipsam lunam & in omnibus corporibus est scientia.
- 100 sed scolia prope longiquitatem eorum probationjs
 & eorum uice inuenerunt hec elementa tignentiora.
 Et ipsi inuenerunt eam praeter uas Hermetis
 quam illud est dimidium de sapientia dei occultatum. a gentibus.
 et ipsi ignorant veritatem regiminjs prope eorum ignorantiam vasis.
- 105 Explicit practica siue secretum Marie prophetisse Deo Gratias Amen

Maria mire sonat mira quod talia donat
 Gummi cum binis fugitiuum figit in ymis
 Horis in crinis tria vinca[t] fortea finis
 Maria lux roris legam legat in tribus horis
 filia platonis consorcia iungit amoris
 Gaudet in assata. sata per tria sociata.

2. "LEAD"

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

"Lead", a prose recipe, forms part of the written reception of the "Verses upon the Elixir". The text itself explicitly names the "Verses" as an authority for part of the alchemical process it details; the headings of two late copies immediately following the "Verses" further explicitly declare "Lead" to be an explanatory, ancillary text (BL MS Sloane 1842; London, Wellcome Institute MS 577).

Date

"Lead" was necessarily written after the "Verses upon the Elixir" and appears to date from the early sixteenth century (earliest extant copy: TCD MS 389).

Author

Apart from an early, erroneous ascription to Chaucer (TCD MS 389) the text circulated anonymously.⁹

Title

In the absence of a fixed historical model, the title used here ("Lead") is a pragmatic abbreviation of the text's *incipit*.

Manuscripts

- PF2 GUL MS Ferguson 229, f. 8^{r-v}, s. xvii
 PS5 BL MS Sloane 288, ff. 164^v-165^v, s. xvii
 PS6 BL MS Sloane 1095, f. 7^{r-v}, s. xvi
 PS7 BL MS Sloane 1842, ff. 12^r-13^r, s. xvi/xvii
 PT1 TCD MS 389, ff. 96^r-97^r, s. xvi¹ [edition copy]
 PW1 London, Wellcome Institute MS 577, ff. 53^v-55^r, s. xviiⁱⁿ

⁹ See also Timmermann, "New perspectives".

2.1. "Lead"

Take [saturnus] and beate it as thin as yow can, then
 take aqua vitae viniger distilled, that is
 rectefyed, and putt these thynne plates into the
 [aqua]. vitae, and stop fast the glasse wⁱth wax, and
 5 lett them stande to gether 4. or 5. daies, and the
 [aqua]. vitae will be as white as milke, the power
 out the [aqua]. vitae, that is white from the ledd
 that remaines so sottely as you can, then still
 it in balneo., and the [aqua]. vitae will destill, and
 10 thatt which remayneth will lye white in the
 bottome, of the which matter yow must destill
 a [aqua]. in drye .[ignis]. and wⁱth esyest [ignis]. thatt
 you can .4. or 5. daies itt will be a stilling
 or more, and when the [aqua]. is all come, there
 15 will appere in the Lembick redd, or some what
 yellowe, then change your receptorie, and kepe
 your [aqua]. by him selfe, and recipe your red [aqua]. oleum by
 him selfe, and make your [aqua]. bygger, and continew
 tyll all your red [aqua]. oleum be come, then will ther
 20 remaine a terra or erth behinde, that must
 you calcine in the [ignis]. tyll itt be white, then
 ymbibe that earth wⁱth thatt [aqua]. that was distilled
 from him by littell and littell vntill he hathe
 drunke all his [aqua]. &c, sufficit ad opus album.
 25 And after that ymbibe it wⁱth the red .[aqua]. for
 the redd worke, and when he hath drunke vp
 all his white [aqua]. then make projection vpon

1 f. 96^r | it as] it small and as PS₅, PS₇, PW₁ | can] can think PS₅, PS₇, PW₁ 2 vitae viniger] vitae and vinegar PS₅, PS₇, PW₁ | distilled] *om.* PS₅, PS₇, PW₁ | that is] that is that is PS₆, PT₁ [*edition copy*] 3 these thynne plates] to that thin plates of lead PF₂; that thin plates PS₅, PS₇, PW₁ | into] into a glass to PS₅, PS₇, PW₁ | aqua vitae] aqua vitae & vinagre PS₇, PW₁ 6 the] then *all other MSS* 7 aqua vitae] aqua vitae and vinegar PS₅, PS₇, PW₁ 8 sottely] subtillye *all other MSS except* softly PF₂ 9 balneo] balmes PS₅ 10 lye white] remaine *all other MSS* 11 bottome] bottom behind PF₂, PS₅, PS₆, PW₁ 13 a stilling] in stilling PF₂; in destillynge PS₆ 14 or] and PF₂ 16 yellowe] yellow vaynes PF₂ 17 recipe] receaue PS₅, PS₆ 18 bygger] (*add.* when your red water cometh) *all other MSS* 22 thatt] his own PS₅, PS₇, PW₁; hys whyte PS₆ | distilled] byfore destylled PS₆ | littell vntill] lytle imbibe hym tyll PS₆ 24 sufficit [...] album] and this sufficeth for the white work PS₅, PS₇, PW₁ 25/26 And [...] worke] *om.* PS₆ 25 water] oyle PS₅ PS₇, PW₁ 26 worke] *om.* PS₅, PS₇, PW₁

[luna]. argentum and it will be bryttell, and so doe
vpon [luna]. with the same [luna]. vpon the which the
30 medecine was cast firste, tyll your [luna]. wax
toughe, then sease. then take every parte
there of and Caste it vpon vnperfect bodyes
et erit [luna]. . and to the
red worke ymbibe that medecine with the
35 red oyle, and then make proiection vpon [sol].
as you did vpon [luna]. and when it waxeth
tough, then take a parte therof and cast
vpon [saturnus]. et erit [sol]. att all examinacions.
and heare is the very truth of Philosopher:
40 and if you can finde itt heare on, yow
nede not seeke ytt farther, fore heare in
itt is with out doubtte: and this accordeth
to the worke in ryme: Earth of earth
and erthes brother: for firste yow destill
45 the [aqua]. from his earth and eare it was .[aqua].
itt was ayre in assendendo, the which ayre
is hyd in the [aqua]. and then with stronge [ignis].
cometh red oyle thatt is cauled [ignis]. because
it is whott. the which heate is hyd in the
50 oyle, and behinde in the bottome of the glasse
remayneth the earth, and thus have yow
4. elementes of one thinge, the which is the
Lorde of the earth, because [saturnus]. holdeth
all the earth, and all inferior thinges is
55 governed by his superiority, for all the
planettes be vnder .[saturnus]. and therefore all gover-

28 argentum] *om.* PS5, PS6, PS7, PW1 29 f. 96^v 33 luna] luna sine dubio PF2, PS6, PS7, PW1;
luna without doubt PS5 | and to the] And to the and to the PT1 [*edition copy*] 34 worke]
way PS5, PS7, PW1 | medecine] white elixir aforesaid PS5, PS7 | medecine with the] *om.* PW1
36 et erit sol] et erit bonus ad omnes examinationes PF2, PS6; and it will be good sol at all
manner of trial PS5, PS7, PW1 40 can] cannot *all other MSS* 40/41 yow nede not] never *all*
other MSS 42 itt is] *om.* PF2 | doubtte:] (*add. laudes deo amen*) PS5, PS7, PW1 43/44 in ryme
[...] brother] written in rhyme afore rehearsed PS5, PS7, PW1 46 assendendo] *var. spelling*
PF2, PS6; ascending PS5, PS7, PW1 | ayre] one PF2 47 water] eyre PS6 50 in [...] glasse]
in fundo vasis PS7, PW1; in fundo vasis, in the bottome of the vessell PS5 52 which] which
thing PS5 53/54 because [...] earth] *om.* PS6 53 holdeth] is Lord of PS5, PS7, PW1 54 all
the] the whole PS5, PS7, PW1 55 superiority, for] superiors, whereof it is said PS5, PS7, PW1

ned by him, and also all mettelles are
governed by him, because he is theare Lord
and theare governer, as itt doth appeare in
60 the Creation of stones, for [saturnus]. or Lead
is noblest amongst stones, and mettelles, and
his vertues are about the stares in the-
element. *invenimus nisi in terra, et ideo ter-*
ra, and in his earth are manie merveylose
65 thinges as Tholonius sayth.

57–59 and also [...] governer] *om.* PF2; from whence I conclude that all metals are governed by him, because their lords are governed by him PS5, PS7, PW1 58 f. 97^r 60 the Creation] the book of the creation PS5, PS7, PW1 | for] that PS5, PS7, PW1 61 stones, and] *om. all other MSS* 62 his vertues] the virtues of supercelestial things PS5, PS7, PW1 | are above] by the PS5, PS7, PW1 | stares] beams of the stars *all other MSS* 62–64 *invenimus* [...] are] are found in no element but in the earth and therefore the earth is the bringer forth of PS5, PS7, PW1 63 nisi] *om.* PF2, PS6 64 manie merveylouse] many and marvellous PS5, PS7, PW1 65 Tholonius] Ptolomy *other MSS*

3. "THOMAS HEND"

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

This prose text appears together with "Lead" in some manuscripts, apparently as an alternative explication of passages from the "Verses upon the Elixir". Like "Lead", "Thomas Hend" is not a textual but rather an exegetic addition to the corpus around the "Verses upon the Elixir".

Date

The oldest extant copy of "Thomas Hend" dates from the sixteenth century (Bod MS Ashmole 1479). It appears to be contemporary with "Lead" and similarly slightly more modern than the "Verses upon the Elixir".

Author

All except the earliest copy of the text attribute it to one Thomas Hend, an author otherwise invisible in the historical record.

Title

The title assigned here utilises the attribution to Thomas Hend as an inspiration rather than the text's occasional description as a 'conclusion' in extant manuscripts.

Edition

Unless indicated otherwise, the recorded variations occur in all other surviving copies of this text.

Manuscripts

- PA6 Bod MS Ashmole 1479, ff. 320^v–322^r, s. xvi [edition copy]
 PS8 BL MS Sloane 288, ff. 165^v–166^v, s. xvii
 PS9 BL MS Sloane 1842, ff. 13^v–15^r, s. xvi/xvii
 PW2 London, Wellcome Institute MS 577, ff. 55^r–57^r, s. xviiⁱⁿ

3.1. "Thomas Hend"

tak apottell of vinegre distillyd in a vessell of glasse
 & put there in 3 [pounds] of rede leade & styre yt well &
 lette yt stond 3 dayes sterynge yt every daye often
 tymes/ then pore owt ye cleare & dystyll yt by fylter
 5 & the[n] dystyll yt by a lymbyck in balneo wyle any
 thyng wyll dystyll/ then shall ye fynde a dry
 matter in ye bottom of ye vessell which ys callyd
anima satvrni/ which draw owt of ye vessell whan yt
 ys hoot in ye beste maner/ & a gayne mak more
 10 of ye sayd anima with new vinegre tyll ye hawe a good
 quantite/ then put yt all in ij oxen bladers & bynd
 well the mouthes & put them in colld water 3 or 4
 dayes tyll ye matter be desoluid into a thыck water
 ye which tak & put into a styllatory of glasse with hys
 15 lymbeck well joynyd & in a furnis with ashys
 eysyll cleare water with a lent fyre & when ye
 water begynnith to seace then increase ye fyre
 tyll an oyle com forthe by ye nose then change ye
 receptory & dystyll with great fyre tyll ye hawe
 20 all ye oyle which ys rede kepe yat well by yt sellfe
 then take ye earthe a bydyng[e] in ye botome & put
 yt in a crusible & thruste yt downe with thy
 fyngers/ so yat yt be playne above/ & with a wyer
 mesur ye dept & marke yt/ & then sette yt
 25 in a furnis of calcination tyll ye pote be as

1 f. 320^v 2 yt well] them well together 3/4 every [...] tymes] often every day 5 by a lymbeck
 in balneo] in a limbeck 5/6 wyle any thing will] so long as it may 6 then shall ye fynde]
 there will remain | a dry] a certain dry 8 anima satvrni] the soul of Saturn | owt of ye vessell]
 forth 8/9 whan yt ys hoot] while the vessel is yet hot 9 in ye beste maner] by the better
 way PS8, PW2; *om.* PS9 10 f. 321^r | sayd anima] soul | vinegre] *canc.* aquavite *ins.* vinegre PA6
 [edition copy] | tyll ye hawe a good] so long as thou hast a new 11 then] finally 11/12 & bynd
 [...] them] *om.* 12 3 or 4] by the space [*or:* span] of 3 or 4 13 desoluid] loosed or dissolved
 14 glasse] glas fit for the purpose PS8, PW2 14/15 with [...] joynyd] *om.* PS9 15 & in a furnis]
om. 16 eysyll] distill | with a lent fire] but with a very slack fire 16/17 ye water [...] seace] it
 ceaseth to come forth 18 com forthe] arise and come forth | by ye nose] by the horn or the
 nose of the limbeck | then] but 19 great] very strong 20 which ys] which will be | rede]
 red and fair 20/21 (*add.* keep it daintily, the water by itself and the oil by itself) 23 fyngers]
 fingers or thumb PS8, PW2 | playne above] very plain upon | wyer] spatule or stick 24 ye
 dept] that earth | marke yt] mark the height of it | & then sette yt] and calcine it 25/26 tyll
 [...] fyre] *om.*

rede as fyre/ tyll yt be stronk downe halfe
 hys heyth which you maste Iugde by thy mark vp
 on ye wyre/ then tak a rotund of glasse
 with a long neck & waye yt & kep a conter payse
 30 of hys wayght/ allso waye ye earthe & kepe a
conter payse of yt allso/ & put ye earthe in ye glasse
 & therto put as muche water as ye earthe dothe
 waye then place yt in a formis with ashys & gyve
 a lent fyre tyll yt be dryed vpe & lok ye mouth
 35 be well stopt/ & being dry put in a forthe perte
hys water/ & stopt ye vessell & dry yt vpe
 as before/ & thys do tyll you here a rattlyng in
 vessell as yt were small stonnes when you
 puttteste in yi water & rolest yt a bowght ye
 40 glasse/ then contynew forthe thy inbybitions as
 is a fore sayd with hys forthe perte of ye water
 tyll you se above ye earthe a wyght thyng lyk
 to snowe to ye thyknes of 2 grottes then tak ye
 wayght of all save ye glasse/ & tak as muche
 45 of crude mercury which devyde in 2 pertes &
 put them in 2 pottes or crusybles then you
 muste hawe other 2 crusybles & put into one
 of them a [pound] wayght of sol/ & in ye other as
 muche wayght of lune/ & let all thes 4
 50 stonde in ye fyre & when ye metall ys rede
 hoot & ye mercury be gynne to fly/ then caste ye one
perte of ye mercury vpon ye sole & ye other vpon
 ye lune & styre them well with an hasell styck
 tyll ye mettall be tornyd into mercury then put
 55 all yat into your medysyn & mak ye fyre some
 what greater & stopte faste ye mouthe of ye

26–28 stronk [...] wyre] consumed to half by gauging [or: judgment] of the stick 29/30 a
 conter [...] wayght] his counterpoise 30/31 allso [...] allso] *om.* PW2 33 with ashys] of ashes
 | lent] slow | dryed vpe] drie 36 water] water weight 36–41 & stopt [...] water] *om.* 37
 here] *canc.* hawe *ins.* here PA6 [*edition copy*] 41 f. 321^v 43 to ye thyknes of] as thick as [...]
 or more 45 crude] our 46 pottes or crusybles] melting pots 47 other 2 crusybles] another
 melting pot 47/48 one of them] it 48 pound wayght of sol] the weight of a halfpenny of
 gold | in ye other] into another 49 wayght of lune] silver as of the gold 50 & when] till 51
 be gynne] is ready 53 with an hasell styck] together 54 be [...] mercury] become mercury
 in sight 55/56 ye fyre [...] greater] somewhat more fire

vessell & all yat shall torne vnto medysyn
 & when yt ys made drye ade to hym ye 4te
perte of hys water/ & as muche of sublymid
 60 mercury & dry yt agayne & all shall torne
 vnto medysyn/ & so imbybe hym with ye 4te perte
 of hys water & fede hym forhe with ye 4te
perte of mercury sublymyd tyll ye hawe as much
 as y[e] wyll/ & in ye laste doyng which ys ye
 65 termynation let yt be sore dried/ then
 breake your glasse over a cleane vessell &
 take your medisin/ & put there of as muche
 as yo[u] wyll in an other rotounde & put to
 yt ye 4te perte of ye oyle & dry yt & so conty
 70 new doyng tyll yt be tornyd into very
 rede colour as fyre in a dark place
 & yff you wyll increase yt do in all thynges as
 ye dyd with ye wyght in puttyng to ye 4te perte
 of ye foresayd oyle with ye 4te perte of mercury sublymid
 75 tyll ye hawe as muche in quantite as ye wyll
 & at ye laste dry yt very strongly/ cast ye way
 ght of a peny vpon a [pound] of lune/ & conuertitur
 in sol optimum/

56/57 & stopte [...] vessell] *om.* 58 made] *om.* 59 water] white water 59–63 sublymid [...]
 perte of] *om.* 64/65 in [...] termynation] at the last end 65 let] look 66 cleane] fair 69
 oyle] oil by weight 71 fyre] coal 72 f. 322^r 72/73 do [...]wyght] as you did the white 73/74
 in puttyng [...] sublymid] put to it the fourth part of mercury sublimed with the fourth part
 of his oil 75 in quantite] *om.* 76 very strongly] sore 77/78 & [...] optimum] and it shall
 be as good lune as may be 77 lune] [mercurius] sublimati lunati | (*add.* proiecto sequitur:
 let make a pit in the earth narrowest above, heat him with coals hot, then take a crucible and
 put a pound of mercury sublimed therein and set him in the hot hole & cast a penny weight
 of thy medicine upon the mercury sublimed, then lay an iron plate upon the crusible and lay
 upon thy plate a few ashes and upon thy ashes hot coals and by the sides also. Then let him
 stand even so till the coals be dead and the crucible cold, then break thy vessell, and melt the
 metal)

4. "TERRA TERRAE PHILOSOPHICAE"

Relation to the "Verses upon the Elixir"

"Terra Terrae Philosophicae" is a *verbatim* Latin prose translation of the "Verses upon the Elixir".

Date

This text dates from the second half of the sixteenth century (oldest surviving witness: Bod MS Ashmole 1485), i.e. from roughly a century after the composition of the "Verses upon the Elixir".

Author

Actually an anonymous translation circulated without any reference to its English verse origins, "Terra Terrae Philosophicae" was frequently considered to be a text of George Ripley's.

Title

"Terra Terrae Philosophicae" is the historical title assigned to the text throughout its manuscript transmission and early print incarnations.

Edition

The diplomatic edition rendered below represents a good text of "Terra Terrae Philosophicae" in its early modern manuscript manifestation. A critical edition would demand a thorough investigation also of its other vernacular incarnations. A preliminary list of manuscripts belonging to the continental traditions is included below.¹⁰

Manuscripts Latin

BL MS Sloane 1842, ff. 2^r-4^r, s. xvi/xvii [edition copy]

Bod MS Ashmole 1485, ff. 70^r-71^v, s. xvi²

Bod MS Canon. Misc. 223, pp. 69-72, s. xvii²

Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians MS ERG/1/6, pp. 346-348, s. xvii

GUL MS Ferguson 91, pp. 69-74, s. xvii

Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. 11133, ff. 356^r-357^v, s. xviiiⁱⁿ

¹⁰ Some of the manuscript references, especially for non-British manuscripts, were retrieved from Rampling, "Catalogue," s.v. item 29.

Manuscript English

BL MS Sloane 3732, ff. 56^r–58^v, s. xvii

Manuscript French

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Français 19074 (Saint-Germain français 1645), f. 133^{r-v}, s. xvii

Not Seen (all Latin)

Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria MS 142 (109), vol. 2, ff. 215^r–216^v, s. xvi²

Chartres, Bibliothèque de la Ville MS 355 (488), f. 60, s. xvii

Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magliabechiano XVI, 113, ff. 11^r–13^r, s. xvi²

Kassel, Landesbibliothek, 40 MS chem. 66, no. 1, ff. 183^r–185^r, s. xvi^{ex}

Kassel, Landesbibliothek, 40 MS chem. 66, no. 2, ff. 198^r–199^r, s. xvi^{ex}

Kassel, Landesbibliothek, 40 MS chem. 67, ff. 159^r–162^r, s. xviiⁱⁿ

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS Lat. 14012, ff. 97^r–99^r, s. xvi^{ex}

Printed Versions

George Ripley, *Opera Omnia Chémica, cum Praefatione a Ludovico Combachio* (Kassel, 1649), 314–322 (Latin)

George Ripley, “Des Grossen Engeländischen Philosophi Georgii Riplaei Experimentzreiche/ Hermetische Schrifftten betreffend die Vniversal-Tinctur; so bisher noch niemals teutsch ausgangen,” in *Magnalia Medico-chymica continuata, Oder; Fortsetzung der hohen Artzney und Feuerkunstigen Geheimnüssen*, ed. Johann Hiskias Cardilucius (Endter, 1680), 379–710 (German)

4.1. "Terra Terrae Philosophicae"

Terra Terrae Philosophiae G: R.

- Accipe terram de terra et fratrem terrae
 quae non aliud est quam Aqua et terra, et ignis de terra pretiocissima
 Atque in hac terra eligenda fac vt sis prudens.
 Si ergo verum Elixir facere desideras
 5 vide vt de terra illa extrahas,
 ex terra videlicet pulchra subtili et bona.
 Hanc aqua nemoris imbue,
 nam in hac aqua terra dissoluenda est
 per tres dies idque sine igne.
 10 Quo facto separa subtile a grosso,
 atque euapora in gummi in similitudinem picis,
 ex quo aquam distillabis,
 qu[e] est nostra aqua vitae et menstruum nostrum,
 pos cuius extractionem venit ignis rubeus ut sanguis et furore plenus.
 15 Quo etiam extracto remanebit in fundo terra nigra
 ut fomentum et ponderosa vt metallum
 in qua quidem totum magnum arcanum absconditum,
 est enim mater omnium.
 Postea in purgatorium transire oportet,
 20 vt ibi sustineat poenas sibi convenientes
 quousque fiat lucens vt Sol et tunc magisterium obtinetur,
 quod fit tribus horis et est certe miraculosa.
 Quo facto dabis huic terr[e] ad bibendum aquam vt fiat albissima,
 postea similiter illi dabis ignem quousque fiat rubeus ut sanguis.
 25 Tunc vero vlteri cibabis eam cum lacte et cibo conuenientibus
 donec crescat in maturam etatem:
 tunc enim fortis erit valde et potens conuertere
 omnia corpora licita in suam potentiam et dignitatem.
 Atque h[ae]c est confectio nostri lapidis, sicut tibi verum dixi in omnibus.
 30 Nam profecto vt vera loquar non est querendum
 aliud quam corpus de corpore et lumen de lumine,
 ubi nihil minus fatui erant querentes
 res inutiles et naturae repugnantes,
 conantur enim frustra metalla extrahere
 35 ex quibus nemo mortalium vnquam extraxerit.
 Nam de omnibus rebus non aliud eligendum est in genere

quam quatuor elementa.

Sol et luna terra et aqua quae finaliter sunt
omnia de quibus multi multa loquuntur et stulti vanum fabulantur.

- 40 Nam Aurum et Argentum nostrum non sunt ea
ex quibus nobilem vasa fiunt et diuitem comuniter,
sed sunt sperma ex corpore quodam abstractu,
in quo sunt omnia sol luna aqua ignis et terra,
quae omnia ex vna imagine oriuntur.
- 45 Sed aqua illorum facit matrimonium in Arsenico debite sublimato.
cum nouem sui partibus [mercur]ij calcinati,
ita vt semel conterantur cum aqua potentissima predicta,
qu[e] prebet inngressum lumen et vitae.
Nam statim postquam simul coniuncta fuerint
- 50 omnia reuertentur in aquam, lucidam et splendentem,
et super hunc ignem simul concresecunt,
donec fuerint fixa nec amplius volatilia.
Tunc vero ulterius cum cibabis lacte et cibo donec fuerint robusta
et tunc habebis lapidem bonum
- 55 cuius vna vncia super 40 vncias veneris cadit.
cuius contemplatio anumum tuum valde exhilarabit.
Habeo filiam dilectam et mihi caram nomine Saturnam
de qua certe filia fiunt Elixiria tam alba quam rubea.
Ex ea ergo extrahere debes aquam claram,
- 60 si bone scientiam habere desideres.
Haec aqua reducit omnia metalla ad mollitiem et fixationem
facit etiam germinare et crescere fructum prebet et lucem
cum ingressione vita et splendore sempiterno
denique breuiter eloquar adiuuat
- 65 et reducit omnia perfecta opera in viam rectam
est enim aqua dignissima et flos mundi.
Docti omnes philosophi faciunt hanc aquam albam
et leuem lucentem et splendentem vt Argentum.
De hac aqua fit mentio in precibus humanis,
- 70 et legitur a sacerdote in Altari.
Hoc est oleum admirabile,
nam omnia reducit ad rubedinem et citrinitatem valde intensam,
cui non aliud equiparandum est;
In terra insuper admiranda secreta sunt recondita,
- 75 quandoquidem inprimis est nigra
ac pauplo post rubea idque trium horarum spatio,

- vnde arcanum Dei vocari potest.
 Hunc vero terra vertitur in rubeum
 ut est sanguis Aurum citrinum nostrum et Elixir naturale.
- 80 Deinde oleum rubrum illi apponendum est fermentum etiam rubrum
 et [mercuri]us rubeus vt simul conresca[n]t per hebdomadas septem.
 Benedictus sit ergo Deus c[oe]li, virtute cuius
 vncia vna istius altae medicinae proiecta super 200 vncias [mercur]ij
 conuertit illum in aurum purissimum.
- 85 Iam audiuiſti compositionem lapidis nostri cuius principium et finis idem
 est.
 Quod autem ad hanc medicinam attinet,
 charissime decreui hic tibi exponere,
 quod te maxime rogo vt in pectoris tui scrinio abscondas
 ita vt nec amicis nec inimicis patefacias.
- 90 Terra est intrinsecus subtilissima.
 Aqua nemoris est Acetum vini quisquis potest illud
 ex humiditate vuarum extrahere potest etiam
 cum eo magisterium nostrum perficere.
 Sed hic cauere debes ne decipiaris et pereat labor tuum
- 95 Cum ergo ex gum[m]i totum [mercur]ium extraxeris,
 intellige quod in [mercur]io continentur tres liquores,
 quor[um] primus est aqua vitae,
 quae per balneum lentissimo igne extrahitur.
 Haec aqua incenditur et inflamatur citissime, ut aqua vitae communis,
 100 et vocatur ignis noster attractiuus,
 cum quo fit terra cristallina cum omnibus calcibus (*canc.* cristallinis)
 metallicis.
 De qua non amplius loquar quia in hac operatione ea non indigemus.
 Postea vero sequitur alia aqua spissa
 et alba vt lac in quantitate pauca
- 105 qu[ae] est sperma nostri lapidis
 quod a multis ignoratur et perquiritur.
 Nam et hominum et animalium omnium viuientium sperma est principium,
 quocirca non inmerito vocamus illud nostrum [mercur]ium
 qui per omnia et ubique reperitur,
- 110 nam sine illo nihil vsquam viuit, atque ideo dicitur esse in omni re.
 Hec humiditas qu[e] tibi iam debet esse charissima est [mercur]ius
 ille quem vocamus vegetabilem animale[m] et mineralem,
 arg: viuum nostrum et lac virginis. et aqua nostra permanens.
 Cum hac aqua [mercur]ii lauamus peccatum originale,

- 115 et sordes terr[e] nostrae quousque fiat alba vt gummi cito fluens.
 Post extractionemem vero huius aquae predictae venit oleum per ignem
 siccum.
 Cum hoc oleo facimus gummi rubeum
 quod est tinctura nostra et nostrum sulphur viuum,
 quod alias dicitur anima Saturni et aurum viuens,
 120 tinctura nostra pretiosa et aurum nobis charissimum.
 De quibus nemo vnquam locutus est tam manifeste.
 Ignoscat ergo mihi Deus si aliquo illum offenderim
 dum voluntati tuae satisfacere conor.
 Jam itaque omnia elementa sunt diuisa.
 125 Cum hoc vero oleo rubificabis lapidem,
 iam enim habes nostras gummas sine quibus Elixir nullum fieri potest.
 Illae sunt que intercedunt et mediantur inter corpus et spiritum,
 sine quibus figi non potest:
 facitque ex eo breui tempore duo elixira
 130 per que omnia corpora metallica vere alterantur in meliorem statam
 et sunt dignitate equalis soli et lune.
 ut nos similiter adiuuerint in necessitatibus nostris.
 Nam ergo sit benedictus omnipotens Deus qui nobis hoc secretam reuelauit
 faxitque vt simul cum eo largiatur nobis suam gratiam
 135 ad animarum nostrarum salutem.
 Vt itaque breuiter huius operis ordinem reseram.
 Recipe. ventum aquam albam et viridem,
 atque ex his trahas lac virginis
 quod a quibusdam vocatur aqua clara,
 140 que non habet sibi parem.
 Cum vero fumus albus apparuerit augmenta ignem
 et videbis venire ignem rubeum vt sanguis,
 et furore plenum qui dicitur menstruum foetens et sol philosophores
 Cum quo fit nostra dissolutio et congelatio
 145 sublimatio attractio atque etiam fixatio,
 atque sulphuris nostri siue terre foliatae creatio.

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3001, 5477, 5509, 1133, 11336

2. HANDLIST OF MANUSCRIPT WITNESSES

The following list presents all identified witnesses of texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” in their manuscript context. Line numbers have been given wherever possible. Numbers of lines listed for individual texts refer to the texts proper, not counting title or closings like ‘finis’. Numbers displayed as sums (for example, ‘10 + 10 lines’) mirror a scribal caesura, e.g. a visual division of a text on the manuscript page (resulting not in one text of twenty lines but in two poems of ten lines each). Merged texts are indicated as such, and line numbers given for the whole text as well as for its individual parts.

Titles are only included if recorded in the same hand as the main text. Authorial names have not been included with this list, since they are generally recorded in annotations, not with the title (if any). For titles the transcription criteria applied to the critical editions in this book have been adopted (see the Preface to the Editions above).

Datings for manuscripts are based on information from the catalogues listed in the Bibliography, and occasionally amended in accordance with

recent scholarship, palaeographical evidence and information on textual relations between parts of the corpus.

Information about texts on a Ripley Scroll I was not able to consult in person were kindly provided by Adam McLean, Glasgow. Other materials which were difficult to access in person have been transcribed from microfilm reproductions. Items marked with an asterisk (*) were not recorded in bibliographies at the time of completion of the doctoral thesis on which this book is based.¹ Those followed by a hash (#), mostly marginal texts in the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, were not seen in person.

Information about the languages of the individual copies, particularly of prose texts, is recorded in more detail before the respective editions. Additional manuscript witnesses of “Alumen de Hispania” are listed with the edition of the text.

Abbreviations

A	“Alumen de Hispania”
E	“Exposition”
G	“God Angel”
H	“Thomas Hend”
I	“In the sea”
L	“Lead”
M	“Boast of Mercury”
MA	“Mystery of Alchemists”
O	“On the ground”
P	“Liber Patris Sapientiae”
RC	“Richard Carpenter’s Work”
S	“Short Work”
T	“Terra Terrae Philosophicae”
Ty	“Trinity”
V	“Verses upon the Elixir”
W	“Wind and Water”
Y	“I shall you tell”
X	other relevant text (see individual entries)

¹ Some of this original information has since been incorporated into and published in the *DIMEV* and Rampling, “Catalogue”.

Subscripts

A, B, C	text version
1, 2	version numbering
V	variant
S	short version
L	long version
F	fragment
M	medial fragment
P	prose
Spain	"Spain"
Sun	"Sun"
TM	"Titan Magnesia"
FP	"Father Phoebus"

*Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica**MS 199 ('Dekyngston'); s. xvi*

V _{BI}	ff. 27 ^v –29 ^r : "The true way to make ye Elixir to them/ yat have grace to undrestand the versys/following"—9 + 108 lines
V _{BIM}	ff. 60 ^v –61 ^v : "Earth of earth Elixer magnum."—87 lines
M _{BI}	ff. 62 ^r –63 ^r —104 lines
W _B	ff. 63 ^v –64 ^r : "The making of the Elixir callyd ye <u>philosophers</u> stone"—60 lines
S _A	f. 64 ^r : "A note"—6 lines
MA	ff. 118 ^r –121 ^v
V _{AF/E}	ff. 222 ^v –224 ^r : "Erthe"—32 lines first part of poem (-f. 223 ^r); merged with "Exposition" (67 lines)
A	ff. 291 ^v –292 ^r

*Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria**MS 142 (109), vol. 2; s. xvi²*

T	ff. 215 ^r –216 ^v : "Tractatus de terra terrarum georgii riplay canonici angli" (#)
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*Boston, MA, Massachusetts Historical Society**MS Winthrop 20C; s. xvi*

P	ff. 14 ^v –19 ^v (#)
MA	ff. 21 ^r –24 ^v (#)
M	ca. ff. 25 ^r –28 ^r (#)
RC _{Spain}	ff. 140 ^v –142 ^r (#)
V _{B2}	ff. 154 ^r –155 ^r —186 lines

*Bristol, Clifton College**MS; s. xvi* [lost]V_B 72 lines²*Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum**MS 276, Scroll; s. xvi*

RC _{Sun-AS}	9 lines
O	36 lines
I	12 lines
Y	38 lines
RC _{FP}	40 lines

*Cambridge, King's College**Keynes Alchemical MS 37; s. xvii*RC_{TM} f. 4^r: "Out of ye work of Richard Carpenter"—14 lines*Keynes Alchemical MS 42; s. xvii*

V _{B2}	ff. 1 ^r –3 ^r : "Pearce the black Monck upon ye Elixir."—146 lines
E	ff. 3 ^r –4 ^r : "To ye end of an old copy of the work were these following verses joyned."—67 lines
W _A	f. 4 ^r : "A Conclusion"—13½ lines

*Keynes Alchemical MS 67; s. xvii (1660s)*V_{B1} ff. 23^v–26^v: "An vnknown author, vpon the philosophers stone."—195 lines*Cambridge, St John's College**MS G. 14 (182); s. xv*A ff. 6^r–10^r: "Incipit liber marie sororis moysi"*Cambridge, Trinity College**MS O.2.15; s. xvi–xvii*V_{A/E} ff. 81^v–83^v—105 lines, first part of poem (-f. 82^v); merged with "Exposition" (69 lines)

² 56 lines printed in Holmyard, *Alchemy*, vi–vii.

W _A	f. 83 ^v —13 ^{1/2} lines
V _{BI}	ff. 83 ^v —84 ^r & 84 ^v —86 ^r —56 + 133 lines
RC _{FP}	f. 87 ^{r-v} —40 lines
RC _{TM}	f. 88 ^{r-v} —108 lines
RC _{Spain}	f. 89 ^v —26 lines
M _F	f. 90 ^v —2 lines
G	f. 91 ^{r-v} —40 lines

MS O.2.16; s. xv

RC _{Spain}	I, ff. 66 ^v —67 ^v : “Notabili <u>versus</u> quod Ric Carpent:”—96 lines
S _A	f. 72 ^r —6 lines
A	f. 74 ^{r-v}

MS R.14.45; s. xiii/xiv/xv

RC _{Sun-B}	f. 5 ^r —12 lines
RC _{Spain-M}	f. 5 ^v —25 lines
S _B	f. 6 ^r —6 lines + 3 lines Latin
RC _{Spain-M}	f. 82 ^v —22 lines

MS R.14.56; s. xvi

V _A /E/W _A	ff. 86 ^r —88 ^v : “Earthe of Earth”—105 lines, first part of poem (-f. 87 ^v); merged with “Exposition” (67 lines); merged with “Wind and Water” (9 lines English + 4 lines Latin, f. 88 ^v)
RC _{Spain-F}	f. 109 ^v —8 lines

Cambridge, University Library

MS Dd.4.45; s. xv/xvi

RC _{Spain}	II, ff. 10 ^r —11 ^v —96 lines
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MS Ii.3.17; s. xv

RC _{Spain-P}	ff. 68 ^v —70 ^v
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Chartres, Bibliothèque de la Ville

MS 355 (488); s. xvii

T	f. 60 ^r : “Tractatus de terra terrarum.” (#)
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Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek

MS Gl. kgl. S. 3500 80; s. xvi

V _{AF} /E	ff. 18 ^r —20 ^r : “Earth of earth” (in quatrains with exceptions)—32 lines, first part of poem (-f. 18 ^v); merged with “Exposition” (70 lines)
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MS Old Collection 1727; s. xvi

M_{B2} ff. 63^r–64^r—62 lines

Dublin, Trinity College

MS 389; s. xvi^l

L ff. 96^r–97^r: “Galfridus Chausier his worke”
 V_{B1} ff. 101^r–103^v: “The verses.”—195 lines

Edinburgh, Royal College of Physicians

MS ERG/1/4; s. xvii

V_{B2} ff. 11^r–13^v: “Pearcye”—181 lines

MS ERG/1/6; s. xvii

T pp. 346–348: “Tractatus de terra terrarum Geo. Riplaei.”
 S_C pp. 660–663 (#)

MS ERG/2, Scroll; s. xvii

RC_{Sun-AL} 42 lines
 O 36 lines
 I 12 lines
 Y 38 lines
 RC_{FP} 40 lines
 Ty 34 lines

Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale

MS Magliabechiano XVI, 113; s. xvi²

T ff. 11^r–13^r: “Incipit Terra Terrarum” (#)³

Glasgow, University Library

MS Ferguson 91; s. xvii

MA ff. 27^v–35^v: “The Mystery of Alchymy compiled by G[e]orge Riply
 channon Regular of Bridlington”
 T pp. 69–74: “Terra Terrae Philosophiae Georgii Riplaei Angli.”

³ Information taken from Rampling, “Catalogue,” s.v. item 29, where the manuscript shelfmark is erroneously recorded as ‘Magd.’

MS Ferguson 102; s. xvi

W_A f. 3^r—14 lines

MS Ferguson 229; s. xvii

L f. 8^{r-v} (*)
V_{BI} ff. 12^r—14^v (*)—194 lines

MS Ferguson 322; s. xvi²

S_{CF} f. 5^r—6 lines
V_{AF/E/W_A} f. 5^{r-v} (*)—41 lines, first part of poem; merged with “Exposition” (15 lines, f. 5^v); merged with “Wind and Water” (13 lines)
V_{BF} f. 6^{r-v} (*)—38 lines

*Jerusalem, Jewish National and University Library**MS Var. 259; s. xvii²*

V bundle 6 (#) (*)

*Kassel, Landesbibliothek**4^o MS chem. 66; s. xvi^{ex}*

T ff. 183^r—185^r: “Incipit Terra Terrarum” (#)
T ff. 198^r—199^r (#)

4^o MS chem. 67; s. xviiⁱⁿ

T ff. 159^r—162^r: “Terra Terrae Philosophicae Georgii Riplaei” (#)

*London, British Library**MS Add. 5025 (1), Scroll*

Ripley Scroll Type B

MS Add. 5025 (2), Scroll; s. xvi

I 12 lines
Y 38 lines

MS Add. 5025 (3), Scroll; s. xvi

S_{BV} 8 lines

MS Add. 5025 (4), Scroll; s. xvi

X	"To the Reader"—20 lines
RC _{Sun-AL} /O	42 lines, first part of poem; merged with "On the ground" (2 lines)
O	37 lines
I	12 lines
Y	38 lines
RC _{FP}	40 lines
Ty/X	33 + 2 lines, first part of poem; merged with: "Of these types" (21 lines)

MS Add. 32621, Scroll; s. xvi

RC _{FP}	40 lines
O	34 lines
I	12 lines
Y	38 lines
RC _{Sun-AL}	42 lines
Ty	29 lines

MS Egerton 845; s. xviⁱ

X	f. 16 ^v : "The hoole scyence" ["Body of a body"]—11 lines
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MS Harley 2407; s. xv

X	f. 67 ^r ["Body of a body"]—3 lines
G	f. 75 ^{r-v} (*)—22 + 18 lines
X	f. 90 ^v ["Body of a body"]—11 lines
RC _{TM}	ff. 91 ^r –93 ^r —96 lines

MS Harley 3528; s. xv

A _M	f. 64 ^v
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MS Harley 6453; s. xvi

MA	ff. 21 ^r –23 ^r
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MS Sloane 288; s. xvii

RC _{Spain} /S _A	ff. 64 ^r –65 ^r —98 lines; merged with "Short Work" (6 lines)
S _C	ff. 73 ^r –74 ^r : "Heere followethe a Treatise of Alchemye both shorte & true obscure."—96 lines
V _{BF}	f. 99 ^r —28 lines + 3 lines Latin
V _{BF}	f. 164 ^{r-v} : "Ex rotula Richardi Hypseye"—52 lines
L	ff. 164 ^v –165 ^v (*)

H ff. 165^v–166^v: “The conclusion of Mr Thomas Hende for the same thinge.”

MS Sloane 317; s. xvi^{ex}

V_{BI} f. 94^r a-b, “Operacone magna”—64 lines

MS Sloane 320; s. xvi^{ex}

S_{AF}/V_F f. 1^r: “ffor the worke of Akemye [sic]”—6 lines, first part of the poem; merged with “Verses upon the Elixir” (4 lines)

RC_{Spain-F} 8 lines

MS Sloane 410; s. xvi

Ty_V f. 2^v—22 lines

MS Sloane 1091; s. xv^{ex}

V_{B2} ff. 105^r–108^r—183 lines

MS Sloane 1092; s. xvi²

V_A/E/W_A ff. 3^v–7^r: “Take erthe of erthe”—105 lines, first part of poem (-f. 5^v); merged with “Exposition” (68 lines, -f. 6^v); merged with “Wind and Water” (13 lines)

M-V_{BM} f. 13^v—13 lines

V_{BF} f. 62^r—28 lines

MS Sloane 1095; s. xvi

L f. 7^{r-v}

M f. 37^v: “de mercurio philosophorum.” (*)—ca. 16 lines + Latin introduction

MS Sloane 1097; s. xvi

S_{CM} f. 13^v (*)—2 lines

V_{BM} f. 23^r (*)—5 + 2 lines

S_{CM} f. 28^v (*)—2 lines

E/RC_{Spain-M} f. 67^r (*)—2 lines

E_M f. 67^r (*)—4 lines

V_{AM} f. 67^r (*)—2 lines

E_M f. 67^r (*)—4 lines

V_M f. 79^v (*)—2 lines

MS Sloane 1098; s. xvi

RC _{TM}	f. 5 ^r —4 lines + commentary
MA	ff. 5 ^r —7 ^v
M _{B2}	f. 7 ^v —14 lines
RC _{TM}	ff. 10 ^r —11 ^r —96 lines
G	f. 11 ^{r-v} (*)—16 lines
RC _{Spain/TM-MV}	ff. 14 ^v —15 ^r (*)—36 lines
S _{BV}	f. 16 ^r —10 lines
M-V _{BIM}	f. 18 ^r —14 lines
V _{BIM}	f. 18 ^v —11 lines
V _{A/E}	ff. 19 ^v —21 ^v : “Veritas de terra orta est.”—105 lines, first part of poem (-f. 21 ^r); merged with “Exposition” (68 lines)
W _A	ff. 21 ^v —22 ^r —12 lines
V _{BF}	f. 22 ^r : “Aliud exemplari”—28 lines
RC _{Sun-AL}	ff. 23 ^v —24 ^r —42 lines
RC _{FP}	ff. 24 ^v —25 ^r —40 lines
RC _{Sun-B}	ff. 25 ^v —26 ^r —12 lines
S _C	f. 33 ^{r-v} —99 lines
W _{AF}	f. 36 ^r —2 lines + commentary
M _{B1}	ff. 38 ^r —38 ^v —22 lines
W _{BV}	f. 39 ^{r-v} —ca. 6 lines + variant ending
V _V	f. 47 ^r —20 lines

MS Sloane 1105; s. xvi

S _{CM}	f. 23 ^v (*)—2 lines
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MS Sloane 113; s. xvi

S _{CM}	f. 3 ^r (*)—2 lines
E _F	f. 4 ^r (*)—short excerpts
A _F	f. 8 ^r (*)—ca. 2 lines
RC _{Sun-AF}	f. 8 ^r (*)—4 lines

MS Sloane 114; s. xvi

W _{AF}	ff. 1 ^v , 4 ^r —short excerpts + commentary
V _F	f. 17 ^r (*)—1/2 line
RC _F	f. 34 ^r (*)—2 lines
O _F	f. 34 ^r (*)—4 lines

MS Sloane 1146; s. xvi

RC _{Spain/TM-M}	f. 71 ^v (*)—8 lines
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MS Sloane 1147; s. xvi

W_{AF} f. 27^v (*)—2 lines

MS Sloane 1148; s. xvi

RC_{Spain/TM-M} f. 25^v (*)—12 lines
V_M f. 36^r—4 lines

MS Sloane 1149; s. xvi

S_{V-M} f. 9^r (*)—2 + 2 lines
S_{CM} f. 9^r (*)—2 lines
A_F f. 22^r (*)—ca. 3 lines
RC_{Spain/TM-M} f. 36^v (*)—6 lines
A_F f. 37^r (*)—incipit

MS Sloane 1150; s. xvi

S_{CV-M} f. 2^r (*)—4 lines
V_{AM} f. 2^r (*)—2 lines

MS Sloane 1151; s. xvi

S_{CM} f. 22^r (*)—2 lines

MS Sloane 1152; s. xvi

W_{AF} f. 5^r (*)—5 lines

MS Sloane 1153; s. xvi

RC_{TM-F} f. 8^v (*)—4 lines
RC_{Spain-F} f. 12^v (*)—2 lines
S_{CM} f. 13^v (*)—2 lines
V_M f. 16^r (*)—2 lines
RC_M f. 16^r (*)—1 line
A_F f. 17^v (*)—ca. 2 lines
RC_{Spain-F} f. 18^r (*)—4 lines
S_{CM} f. 23^v (*)—2 + 2 lines
V_{BM} f. 25^v (*)—4 lines
A_F f. 42^r (*)—ca. 4 lines

MS Sloane 1170; s. xvi

[alchemical notes touching upon texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”]

MS Sloane 1171; s. xvi

M-V _{BM}	f. 6 ^r (*)—15 lines
RC _{Sun-B}	f. 13 ^r —13 lines
M-V _{BM}	f. 14 ^v (*)—11 lines

MS Sloane 1181; s. xvi

A	f. 1 ^v (*)—short excerpts
V	f. 30 ^r (*)—short excerpt
W _{AF}	f. 32 ^r (*)—5 lines

MS Sloane 1186; s. xvi

E _M	f. 29 ^v (*)—3 lines
RC _F	f. 31 ^r (*)—4 lines

MS Sloane 1423; s. xvi^{ex}

MA	ff. 37 ^v –39 ^v
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MS Sloane 1723; s. xvii

RC _{Sun-BP}	f. 41 ^r —ca. 8 lines
S _B	f. 41 ^r —6 lines
MA	ff. 48 ^r –54 ^v
S _C	ff. 64 ^r –65 ^r : “Here followeth a short discourse of the minerall stone.” —98 lines

MS Sloane 1787; s. xvii

MA	ff. 111 ^r –117 ^v
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MS Sloane 1842; s. xvi/xvii

T	ff. 2 ^r –4 ^r : “Terra Terrarum <u>Philosophiae</u> G: R.”
V _{B2F}	ff. 11 ^r –12 ^r : “Ex rotula Ric: Hipseley.”—52 lines
L	ff. 12 ^r –13 ^r : “Explicatio <u>praecedentium</u> <u>versuum</u> .”
H	ff. 13 ^v –15 ^r : “Conclusion of Mr Thomand Hend for the same thing.” (*)
V _P	f. 16 ^r —4 lines
W _A	f. 16 ^r —12 lines
V _{AM/E}	ff. 18 ^r –20 ^r —37 + 70 lines
S _C	ff. 20 ^v –22 ^r : “Here followeth a worke very shorte & true, but obscure withall.”—96 lines

MS Sloane 2036; s. xvii

P	ff. 14 ^r –19 ^v
MA	ff. 22 ^r –25 ^r & ff. 26 ^r –27 ^r

MS Sloane 2170; s. xvi–xvii

V_A/E ff. 74^v–76^v (in quatrains)—108 lines, first part of poem (-f. 75^v); merged with “Exposition” (69 lines)

MS Sloane 2176; s. xvii

RC_{Sun-B}/S_B f. 25^r—9 lines, first part of poem; merged with “Short Work” (6 lines)

MS Sloane 2459; s. xv

A ff. 1^v–3^r

MS Sloane 2523B, Scroll; s. xvii

“Rotulum Hieroglyphicum Pantarrae Philosophorum Georgij Riplei Equitis Aurati”

RC_{Sun-AS} 10 lines
 O 36 lines
 I 12 lines
 Y 38 lines
 RC_{FP} 40 lines

MS Sloane 2524A, Scroll; s. xvi

Ripley Scroll Type B

MS Sloane 2532; s. xvi

P ff. 86^r–91^v: “Patter Serpiencia”

MS Sloane 3579; s. xv

V_{MV} f. 17^v (*)—6 lines
 S_{BV} f. 18^v (*)—4 lines + English commentary
 RC_{Spain-P}/E_M f. 24^v (*)—(equivalent of 96) + 42 lines
 O f. 36^v—24 lines

MS Sloane 3580 B; s. xvi²

V_B ff. 181^r–182^r—12 + 56 lines
 E ff. 182^r–183^r—68 lines
 W_A f. 183^r—10 lines
 W_B f. 185^r: “compositio lapidis philosophici”—14 lines
 S_B f. 185^v—6 lines

MS Sloane 3641; s. xvii

A ff. 1^r–8^r (*) (#)

MS Sloane 3667; s. xvi²

- M_{B2} ff. 117^v–118^r: “An philosophor saynith [sic] [mercury] to spycke”—62 lines
 V_A/E/W_A ff. 118^r–120^v: “a philosophor spekyth thus 1. Raymonde Lully”—105 lines, first part of poem (-f. 119^v); merged with “Exposition” (68 lines, -f. 120^v); merged with “Wind and Water” (8 lines, f. 120^v)

MS Sloane 3688; s. xvi^{ex}

- A ff. 46^v–47^v (*)
 S_C ff. 66^v–67^v: “Heare followethe a worke verie shorte but not so shorte as it is true”—98 lines
 V_{B2} ff. 74^v–78^r: “De magno opera of Arnoldus de Villa Nova”—198 lines
 P_V ff. 122^r–131^r (*)—392 lines

MS Sloane 3732; s. xvii

- T ff. 56^r–58^v: “Earth of Philosphicall earth by [G.R.]”

MS Sloane 3747; s. xv²

- W_A/E_M ff. 15^r–16^r: “Ad mineralia alteranda in terram cristallinam”—3 + 44 lines
 V_A ff. 106^v–108^r—105 lines
 E/W_A ff. 108^r–109^v—68 + 13 lines
 MA ff. 110^r–115^v—313 lines
 RC_{Spain} ff. 116^r–117^v—96 lines

MS Sloane 3748; s. xvi/xvii

- O_{VP} ff. 130^v–131^v—ca. 40 lines

MS Sloane 3778; s. xvii

- A ff. 100^r–105^v: “The [paints] of Miriam the Prophetesse touching the Chymecall art”

MS Sloane 3809; s. xvi

- M/M_{B2} ff. 2^v–3^v—10 + 58 lines

*London, Lambeth Palace, Sion College**MS Arc. L.40.2/E.6; s. xvi*

- V_{B1} ff. 47^r–48^r: “Principium, Medium, et Finis, Lapidis Philosophici”—102 lines + 6 lines variant verse ending

*London, Lincoln's Inn**MS Hale 90; s. xvii*

- P ff. 32^r–34^v—45 stanzas in quatrains
 S_C ff. 48^v–50^r: “Ge: Ripley his worke. A short and very true worke of the same Author[s].” (*)—96 lines

*London, Wellcome Institute**MS 519; s. xvi²*

- RC_{Sun-AL}/O ff. 62^r–63^r—42 lines (-f. 62^v); merged with “On the ground” (ff. 62^v–63^r), 36 lines
 RC_{FP}/I/Y/Ty ff. 63^v–65^v—40 lines, first part of poem (-f. 64^r); merged with “In the sea” (f. 64^r), 12 lines; merged with “I shall you tell” (ff. 64^r–65^r), 38 lines; merged with “Trinity” (f. 65^{r-v}), 34 lines
 S_B f. 65^v: “fryar Backon”—10 lines
 V_{B2} ff. 69^v–70^v & 72^r–72^v—110 + 46 lines

MS 577; s. xviiⁱⁿ

- V_{B2F} ff. 52^v–53^v: “Take earth of earth earthes brother”—52 lines
 L ff. 53^v–55^r: “Explicatio Carminis precedentis.”
 H ff. 55^r–57^r: “The conclusion, of Mr Thomas hend for the same thinge”

MS 692, Scroll; s. xvi–xvii

- RC_{Sun-AS} 10 lines
 O 36 lines
 I 12 lines
 Y 38 lines

MS 693, Scroll; s. xvii

- I 12 lines
 Y 38 lines

*Manchester, Rylands Library**Latin MS 65; s. xv*

- A ff. 192^v–193^r: “pra[c]tica Maria prophetisse sororis moysi et Aaron”

*New Haven, CT, Yale University,
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*

Mellon MS 41, Scroll; s. xvi²

RC _{Sun-AS}	12 lines
RC _{Sun-AS}	12 lines [sic]
O	36 lines
I	12 lines
Y	38 lines
RC _{FP}	40 lines

Mellon MS 43; s. xvi

V _{BM}	f. 7 ^v (*)—48 lines
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MS Osborn fa. 16; s. xvi²

V _{B2}	pp. 37a, 38b, 39a & 40b—177 lines
E	pp. 37b—38a—68 lines
S _B	p. 39b—6 lines
W _A	p. 39b—11 lines
W _B	p. 39b—13 lines
M _{B1}	pp. 41a; 42b—72 lines
W _B	p. 41b—11 lines + commentary

Oxford, Bodleian Library

MS Ashmole 759; s. xv^{ex}

S _B	f. 55 ^r —8 lines
RC _{Spain/TM-MV}	f. 55 ^r —20 lines + variant prose ending
MA	ff. 106 ^v —113 ^v
X	f. 124 ^{r-v} : commentary on the “Verses upon the Elixir”
RC _{Spain}	ff. 125 ^r —126 ^v —96 lines
V _{BM}	f. 126 ^v —6 lines
V _{AF}	ff. 127 ^r —128 ^r —72 lines
E	ff. 128 ^v —129 ^v —68 lines

MS Ashmole 972; s. xvii

Ty	p. 375: “written at the bottome of Ripley’s Scrowle, between the King and the Pilgrim—In the name of the Trenitie” (*) (#)
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MS Ashmole 1382; s. xvii

MA	II, pp. 254—255
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MS Ashmole 1394; s. xvi–xvii

- V_{BIM} VI, p. 139 (*)—14 lines
 RC_{Sun-B} XI, f. 81^r—10 lines

MS Ashmole 1416; s. xv–xvi

- A ff. 99^v–100^v
 RC_{Spain} ff. 148^r–150^v: “Telos”—96 lines
 S_A f. 150^v—6 lines
 S_{BV} f. 150^v—4 lines

MS Ashmole 1420; s. xvii

- A art. 5, pp. 62–63: “Maria”

MS Ashmole 1426; s. xvii

- RC_{Spain/TM-M} III, p. 2 (*)—3 lines

MS Ashmole 1441; s. xvi–xvii

- E pp. 82–83—49 lines
 M_{B2} pp. 89–91—62 lines
 M_{B2} pp. 107–108: “d[r] Flood”—59 lines
 RC_{Sun-AL} II, pp. 110–111—9 + 19 lines

MS Ashmole 1442; s. xvii

- RC_{Spain} VI, ff. 15^r–16^r—96 lines

MS Ashmole 1445; s. xvi/xvii

- P V, ff. 8^v–14^r—120 quatrains
 V_{B2}/V_{B2M} V, ff. 19^v–20^v: “Elixer (*canc.* Arnoldi de uilla noua) (*ins.* Galfridus Chaucer) his worke” & 20^v–21^v: “A practike”—87 + 69 lines
 M_{B1} VIII, ff. 21^r–22^v—102 lines
 V_A/E_V VIII, ff. 26^v–28^r—33 lines, first part of poem (-f. 27^r); merged with “Exposition” (37 lines)
 S_C VIII, ff. 45^r–46^v—97 lines
 V_B VIII, ff. 49^r–52^v: “Piearcie the Black Monke vpon ye Elixir.”—8 + 18 + 34 + 14 + 28 + 26 lines

MS Ashmole 1448; s. xv

- A pp. 30–33
 S_B p. 77—7 lines

MS Ashmole 1450; s. xvi

- V_A/E VII, pp. 23–30: “Earthe of earthe”—105 lines, first part of poem (-p. 27); merged with “Exposition” (69 lines)
 W_A VII, p. 31—13 lines

MS Ashmole 1451; s. xvi

- A ff. 25^r–26^r (#)
 M_{B2} II, ff. 62^v–63^v—62 lines

MS Ashmole 1478; s. xvi

- RC_{Spain} I, ff. 2^v–3^v: “Elixer magnum”—53 lines

MS Ashmole 1479; s. xvi

- S_C ff. 217^r–218^r: “Here folowyth a work very schort but not so schort as yt ys true”—98 lines
 H ff. 320^v–322^r: “An other waye”

MS Ashmole 1480; s. xvi

- E_V ff. 3^{va}–4^{rb} (*)—68 lines + 20 lines variant introduction
 RC_{Sun-AL} f. 12^v—42 lines
 RC_{FP} ff. 13^v–14^r—40 lines
 Ty ff. 14^v–15^r—34 lines
 S_B f. 15^r: “Fryer Bacon”—10 lines
 V_{BM} f. 59^v (*)—24 lines
 M_{B2} ff. 61^v–62^r—61 lines

MS Ashmole 1485; s. xvi²

- T ff. 70^r–71^v: “Tractatus de terra terrarum Georgij Riplaei”
 V_{B2}/V_{B2M} ff. 47^v–48^r: “An Allegorye supposed to be made by Thomas Norton” & 48^v–50^r: “Verses of an Unknowen aucthor”—56 + 110 lines

MS Ashmole 1486; s. xvi

- RC_{Sun-AL} Ib, ff. 17^v–18^v: “Nota ortlon & rosarius”—98 lines
 S_A Ib, f. 18^{va}—6 lines
 RC_{Spain} Ib, f. 18^{vb}—8 lines
 V_F f. 18^{vb}—4 lines

MS Ashmole 1487; s. xvi

- A ff. 61^r–62^r: “Maryes Practize”
 E ff. 72^v–73^v—68 lines

W_A/X ff. 74^v–75^r: “An other conclusion”—14 lines, first part of poem; merged with unidentified verse text (*inc.*: Nowe shall I heer begynne/ to teache thee a conclusion ...) (13 lines)

MS Ashmole 1490; s. xvi

MA ff. 8^r–10^v
 M_{B2} ff. 46^r–46^v: “Tractatus de mercurio ipso”—78 lines
 RC_{Spain} f. 47^r “Geber of Spain saith”—47 lines
 V_{BMP} f. 142^r—9 lines (equivalent to 14 lines verse)
 V_{BFP} ff. 142^r–142^v: “Another. Maria”—64 lines (equivalent to 101 lines verse)
 V_{BIMP} ff. 142^v–143^r—47 lines (equivalent to 76 lines verse)
 P ff. 336^r–342^v—480 lines

MS Ashmole 1492; s. xvi

V_A/E pp. 127–130—104 lines first part of poem (-p. 129); merged with “Exposition” (69 lines)
 E/W_A pp. 145–146: “An exposition of Earth earthes brother”—66 lines first part of poem (-p. 146); merged with “Wind and Water” (13 lines)

Ashmole Rolls 40, Scroll; s. xvi–xvii

RC_{Sun-AL} 42 lines
 O 36 lines
 I 12 lines
 RC_{FP} 40 lines

Ashmole Rolls 52, Scroll; s. xvi^{tex}

RC_{Sun-AS} 9 lines
 O 36 lines
 I 12 lines
 Y 38 lines
 RC_{FP} 40 lines

Ashmole Rolls 53, Scroll; s. xvi/xvii

Ripley Scroll Type B

Ashmole Rolls 54, Scroll; s. xvi²

[medial fragment of drawings only]

Bodley Rolls 1, Scroll; s. xv^{ex}

RC _{Sun-AS}	9 lines
RC _{Sun-AS}	9 lines [sic]
O	36 lines
I	12 lines
Y	38 lines
RC _{FP}	40 lines
RC _{FP}	40 lines [sic]

MS Canon. Misc. 223; s. xvii²

T	pp. 69–72: “Terra terrae philosophicae”
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MS e Mus 63; s. xvi

RC _{Spain}	ff. 67 ^r –68 ^r —96 lines
M _{Bl}	ff. 70 ^r –71 ^r —103 lines
S _B	back cover—8 lines + 2 lines prose

MS Rawlinson B. 306; s. xvi^{ex}

S _C	ff. 43 ^v –44 ^v : “Hear followeth a worke very short but not so shorte as it is new”—98 lines
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MS Rawlinson D. 1046; s. xvi^{ex}

RC _{Spain}	f. 5 ^{r-v} —96 lines
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*Oxford, Corpus Christi College**MS 226; s. xv*

RC _{Spain}	f. 57 ^{rab} : “ <u>Pro lapide philosophorum</u> ”—76 lines
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*Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale**MS Français 19074 (Saint-Germain français 1645); s. xvii*

A	f. 67 ^r [-69 ^v] (#)
T	f. 133 ^{r-v} : “Du traité de Terra terrarum.”

MS Lat. 14012; s. xvii^{ex}

T	ff. 97 ^r –99 ^r : “Tractatus de Terra terrarum Georgii Riplae Canonici Anglie” (#)
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*Petworth, Petworth House**Leconfield MS 99; s. xvi* [present location unknown]⁴V ff. 13^r–16^r: “Norton”*Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania**Codex m (formerly Smith 4); s. xvi*E_V ff. 51^v–52^r—59 lines (47 lines + variant ending [“Body of a body”])V_{B2} ff. 76^r–77^v—156 lines*Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library**MS 93, Scroll; s. xvi^{ex}*RC_{Sun-AS} 9 lines

O 36 lines

I 12 lines

Y 38 lines

RC_{FP} 40 lines*San Marino, CA, Huntington Library**MS HU 1051; s. xv^m–xvi^{ex}*A ff. 37^r–38^vP f. 129^v [illegible]*MS HM 30313, Scroll; s. xvi²*RC_{Sun-AL} 42 lines

O 36 lines

RC_{FP} 40 lines

I 12 lines

Y 38 lines

Ty 34 lines

⁴ Sold at Sotheby's, 23 Apr. 1928, lot 5. The manuscript is recorded in the annotated HMC (Leconfield) list at Petworth House as “HMC 99 Sold, Dobell” (I would like to thank Adam McLean and the archivist at Petworth House for this information). The abovementioned Sotheby's sale of Petworth books and manuscripts is recorded in the *DIMEV*.

*Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for
the History of Art and the Humanities*

Ripley Scroll (MS 205); s. xvi

RC _{Sun-AS}	10 lines (#)
O	36 lines
I	12 lines
Y	38 lines
RC _{FP}	40 lines (#)

Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

Cod. 3001; s. xv

A _v	ff. 12 ^r –14 ^v
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Cod. 5477; s. xv

A	ff. 61 ^v –62 ^v
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Cod. 5509; s. xv

A	ff. 252 ^r –253 ^v
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Cod. 1133; s. xviiⁿ

T	ff. 356 ^r –357 ^v : “Terra terrae philosophiae”
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Cod. 1336; s. xvi

A	ff. 105 ^v –108 ^v
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3. SECONDARY LITERATURE

3.1. *Bibliographies, Catalogues and Dictionaries*⁵

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