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Urszula Szulakowska
2016

INTRODUCTION

A little remarked issue in the history of western esotericism is the manner in which Protestant alchemists of the 16th and 17th centuries continued to draw on Roman Catholic doctrine and visual imagery in generating their alchemical symbolic language, despite the fact that the Reformed Churches had condemned many of these teachings. No scholarly research so far has investigated the reasons for this deployment of Catholic ideas by Protestant Hermetic philosophers. For an earlier period the use of Catholic imagery in alchemical illustration prior to the Reformation has been the subject of Barbara Obrist's indispensable study.[1] More recently, Roberta Albrecht has discussed the use of Catholic Mariology in a literary context, examining the alchemical concepts of the 16th century poet and Anglican priest, John Donne.[2] The purpose of the present study is to investigate the use of Marian theology and iconography in the alchemical works composed by Lutheran and Anglican esoteric philosophers.

The discussion of a "Lutheran" confessional alchemy commenced with Frances Yates' pioneering study of the alchemists involved in the Rosicrucian movement of the 17th century.[3] A related question is whether there also existed an identifiably "Roman Catholic" type of alchemy in the same period.

Certainly, some alchemists and other esoteric philosophers were prepared to reach across the confessional divide in tolerance of their official religious opponents. One such example was the Silesian nobleman and alchemist, Abraham von Franckenberg (1593-1652) who, like other radical thinkers in the Protestant camp, was relatively free of the bigotry endemic on each side of the Catholic/Protestant divide. This does not mean, however, that he was considering any personal conversion to the Catholic faith. Even those alchemists who occasionally deployed fragments of Catholic doctrine in their writings and illustrations, nevertheless, remained

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[1] Barbara Obrist, *Les débuts de l'Imagerie alchimique (XIVe–XVe siècles)* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1982).
[2] Roberta Albrecht, *The Virgin Mary as alchemical and Lullian reference in Donne* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2005).
[3] Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1972).

within the orbit of the Reformed Churches, in particular, that of the Lutheran confession. As shown in the definitive study of the German Spirituals by André Séguenny, the most significant Lutheran dissidents, such as Casper Schwenckfeld (1489/90-1561), despite their irenic outlook, found the Roman Church as an institution to be totally irrelevant to their concerns.[4] Instead, like Paracelsus (1493-1541), they were intent on remodelling the configuration of Protestant theology and discipline into a personalised religious faith, specific to the individual and released from the jurisdiction of any established Church. The leading Protestant Spirituals, such as Paracelsus (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim), Valentin Weigel (1553-58) and Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), drew not only on the traditional dogmas of Christianity, whether Lutheran or Catholic, but also on the Western esoteric tradition, thereby engaging with late Hellenistic Hermeticism, astrology, kabbalism and alchemy. They engaged heavily with non-Christian sources, most especially investigating the late antique texts associated with the mythical Egyptian magus, Hermes Trismegistos (2nd to 4th century AD). The Hermetic corpus had been translated from Greek into Latin in the late 15th century by the Italian humanist, Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) and these translations (including vernacular editions) spread rapidly among the intellectual circles of Western and Eastern Europe. It was such novel esoteric currents that encouraged a less sectarian attitude on the part of some Protestant free-thinkers. Among them, there were alchemists who took whatever conceptual and visual materials they required from both pagan and Christian belief-systems, including those of the defunct Catholic tradition, and integrated this syncretic mix into their own practical and spiritual alchemical programmes.[5]

On the other side, the Catholic alchemists of the late 16th century in Italy, Spain and France were slow to adopt the medicine and alchemy

[4] The dismissive, yet tolerant, attitude towards Catholicism on the part of 17th century Spiritual dissenters from the Lutheran Church has been discussed at length in André Séguenny, *Les spirituels*: *philosophie et religion chez les jeunes humanistes allemands au seizième siècle* (Baden-Baden: Éditions Valentin Koerner, 2000), pp. 14, 131, 251-258.

[5] See, for example, Urszula Szulakowska "The Apocalyptic Eucharist and Religious Dissidence in Stefan Michelspacher's Cabala," *Aries. Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, 3 (2003), pp. 200-223. See also Urszula Szulakowska, "The Paracelsian medicine and theosophy of Abraham von Franckenberg and Robert Fludd" in Stanton J. Linden (ed.), *Mystical metal of gold: essays on alchemy and Renaissance culture* (New York: AMS Press, 2007), pp. 277-298.

developed by the followers of Paracelsus since these ideas had originated in the Protestant milieu of Northern and Central Europe. Nevertheless, by the early to mid-17th century, irrespective of the state censors, some Catholic natural philosophers had begun to explore Hermetic mysticism, along with the chemistry and medicine of the Paracelsians. Gradually, the alchemical treatises spuriously associated with Paracelsus percolated into the Catholic realms of Central Europe and Italy. From the outset, Rudolf II (1552–1612; Holy Roman Emperor, 1576–1612) displayed a high degree of tolerance of both pagan Hermeticism, as well as of the Paracelsians' spagyric medicine and alchemy, such practices being encouraged in his laboratories at the royal castle at Prague.[6] Even so, the Empire as a whole remained a dangerous place for radical thinkers, especially for those caught up in the esoteric spiritual currents. For, by the late 16th century the Jesuit Order had established its religious and political jurisdictions in the Austrian territories centred on Innsbruck. At the court of Prague Jesuit priests supervised the activities of the Emperor and reported back to the Papacy which reacted with dictates to Rudolf, intent on restraining his irenic impulses. On their own initiative the Jesuits were responsible for sending to the galleys those leading intellectuals who were propagating Paracelsian alchemy and theosophy in the southern German states, most notably, Adam Haselmayer (Haslmayr) of the Tyrol (1550-after 1617).[7]

In spite of the political forces that limited the development of religious toleration at this time, the alchemists as a group tended to incline towards a *laissez-faire* approach in regard to Catholicism. Evidence of this more liberal attitude is revealed by the manner in which they appropriated the cult of the Virgin Mary. Two specific types of Marian imagery were adopted: that of the Apocalyptic Woman as described in the Book of Revelation 12 and that of the Immaculate Conception, a type derived from the apocalyptic Mary. Illustrations of the Apocalyptic Woman had appeared in religious literature as early as the 8th century, most especially

[6] As an introduction there is the definitive study by Peter Marshall, *The Magic Circle of Rudolf II: Alchemy and Astrology in Renaissance Prague* (New York: Walker & Co., 2006), passim.

[7] Carlos Gilly, *Adam Haselmayer: der erste Verkünder der Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer: mit der Faksimile-Wiedergabe der Antwort An die lobwürdige Brüderschafft der Theosophen vom RosenCreutz aus dem Jahre 1612 und dem Verzeichnis von Haselmayers Werken im Nuncius Olympicus von 1626* (Amsterdam: in de Pelikaan, 1994), passim.

in the *Beatus Apocalypse* illuminated in Spain.[8] Prior to the Protestant Reformation, the Apocalyptic Woman had been interpreted by Catholic theologians as an allegory of the Virgin Mary. Her specific "apocalyptic" attributes in Revelation 12 included a crown of twelve stars and a crescent moon at her feet, while an aura of sun-rays shone about her. The Woman bore a Child in her arms, identified by the Church with Jesus Christ, while a dragon lurked nearby, said to be the Anti-Christ, the son of the Beast (Satan, Lucifer) (Revelation 13). These iconographic details have been constant features of the apocalyptic Mary down through the centuries and they have become standardized in Marian iconography. From this earliest iconographic type there developed a closely-related image of Mary as the Immaculate Conception.[9] In addition to these two universally popular icons there existed yet another visual image which similarly became the focus of a popular Marian cult in the Catholic Church, that of Mary as Queen of the Rosary. It should be noted that alchemical artists appropriated the iconography of the Apocalyptic Woman and, occasionally, that of the Immaculate Conception, but they never took recourse to that of the Queen of the Rosary.

The Immaculate Conception and the Queen of the Rosary were petitioned for aid by the Western powers against the enemies of Christendom. Such foes included the Muslim Turks, as well as a medley of heretics and apostates.

In the 1370s Christian imagery had appeared for the first time in the earliest alchemical treatises to be fully illustrated. Subsequently, in 1419 an anonymous Franciscan friar completed the manuscript of *Das Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit* (Book of the Holy Trinity) which included imagery of the Virgin Mary, as well as of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, St. Francis, Adam and Eve and, not least, the Anti-Christ. The visual and textual allusions in the *Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit* to the apocalyptic Mary and to the Anti-Christ reflected the intensity of the wide-spread obsession with eschatology in late medieval society. From the 14th to the 15th centuries the extreme branch of the Franciscan Order played a decisive role in the production and dispersion of apocalyptic prophecies

[8] See Barbara A. Shailor, *A Spanish Apocalypse: the Morgan Beatus manuscript*. Introduction and commentaries by John Williams (New York: George Braziller and the Pierpont Morgan Library, 1991).

[9] Mirella Levi d'Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (College Art Association in conjunction with the Art Bulletin, 1957), pp. 28-43. See also Suzanna L. Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 7-39.

and eschatological writings. These radical members of the Order were known variously as "Poverelli," "Fraticelli," "Joachimites," or in modern parlance, "Spirituals." The radical Franciscans were also responsible for significant developments in alchemical theory and visual illustration.

The strong Franciscan connection to alchemy has already been well-considered by historians, such as Joachim Telle,[10] Barbara Obrist and, most recently, Leah De Vun.[11] However, the introduction of specifically Marian discourse into alchemy by the Franciscans has not been remarked by scholars. The first time this occurred was when the anonymous Franciscan who composed the *Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit* employed Marian iconography as an allegory of the alchemical "mercury." From this mystical substance the quintessence (fifth essence) was distilled in the production of the Philosopher's Stone. In later 16th century alchemy the emblem of Mary represented the white alchemical tincture, or elixir, made from the Philosopher's Stone.

The Fraticelli had an exceptional interest in alchemy. (Dominican monks also participated in alchemy, but with less distinction). Of great importance in the history of alchemy was the pharmacology of the Spiritual Franciscan, John of Rupescissa (d.1366). He focused on the distillation of the fifth essence and his theories and practical techniques became the foundation of all subsequent European alchemy, especially influencing the medicinal alchemy of the 16th and 17th centuries. The purpose of Rupescissa's fabled quintessential elixir was to succour the health of radical preachers (Spiritual Franciscans, Waldensians and others) who were instigating socio-political and religious discord in the course of their wayfaring missions. In the second half of the 14th century these unauthorised evangelicals, both friars and laymen, were proclaiming the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the Time of Tribulations prior to his re-appearance.

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[10] Joachim Telle (ed. and comm.), *Rosarium Philosophorum. Ein alchemisches Florilegium des Spätmittelalters*, 2 vols. Translated from Latin to German by Lutz Claren and Joachim Huber (Weinheim: VCH, 1992). The facsimile in volume one is of [Anon.] *Rosarium philosophorum secunda pars alchimiae de lapide philosophico vero modo praeparando, continens exactam eius scientiae progressionem* ... (Frankfurt-am-Main: Jacobus Cyriacus, 1550). For the historiography of the *Rosarium* see Telle, *Rosarium Philosophorum*, 2, pp. 161-201.

[11] Leah DeVun, *Prophecy, alchemy, and the end of time: John of Rupescissa in the late Middle Age*s (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 32-51, 64-79.

A particular focus in the present study will be the alchemy of the 16th and 17th century "Paracelsians," the followers of Theophrastus von Hohenheim, since the alchemists who occasionally employed Catholic imagery also belonged to this same group. In particular, the spurious alchemical texts written in the name of Paracelsus, with their pagan gnostic theology, exerted a decisive influence on the development of 17th century mystical alchemy. Paracelsus himself had been an active participant in the eschatological currents of his time, writing prophecies and commentaries, as well as astrological predictions that speculated on the forthcoming apocalypse in which the current political order would be destroyed.[12]

There are additional political issues involved in the Virgin Mary's presence in alchemy which are related to the long historical struggle by the European powers against the invading forces of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Scholars have not, so far, examined the eschatological role of alchemy within the history of the Turkish wars. The Turks were feared through-out Europe as the forces of the Anti-Christ foretold in the Gospels and in the Book of Revelation. The popular view held that the battle against the Turks was an eschatological conflict between God and Satan and that the Turks were an omen of the looming apocalyptic conflagration in which the world would perish. The struggle against the Ottoman assailants is first mentioned in the *Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit* as a major reason for the practice of alchemy. The defence of Europe was the "raison d'etre" for alchemists such as the Italian Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio (1451-?), as it was for the Hungarian alchemist known as "Melchior Cibinensis" whose 15th century treatise was reprinted by Michael Maier (1568–1622).[13] The miraculous Stone of the Philosophers and the Elixir, it was argued, would serve to strengthen the power of the political and military leaders of the European armies. Maier illustrated the text of Cibinensis with an image of the Virgin Mary shown in her

[12] See Kurt Goldammer, "Paracelsische Eschatologie. Zum Verständnis der Anthropologie und Kosmologie Hohenheims," *Nova Acta Paracelsica*, 5 (1948), pp. 45-85.

[13] Michael Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum, hoc est Hermaea seu Mercurii festa ab heroibus duodenis selectis, artis chymicae usu, sapientia et authoritate paribus celebrata, ad Pyrgopolynicen seu adversarium illum tot annis jactabundum, virgini Chemiae injuriam argumentis tam vitiosis quam convitiis argutis inferentem, confundendum et exarmandum, artifices vero optime de ea meritos suo honori et famae restituendum* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Lucas Jennis, 1617), pp. 507-552.

apocalyptic form as described in Revelation 12.[14] This image may, in fact, be identified as an early type of the "Turkish Madonna," a Marian icon popularized in Germany and Eastern Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.[15] The attribute of the crescent-moon, the sacred emblem of Islam, lying prone under the feet of the apocalyptic Mary proclaimed her victory over the Turks.

Since the earliest Christian centuries the attribute of the crescent-moon in Marian imagery has been a political signifier. From the time of her first appearance in Revelation 12 where she and her Child were pursued by the dragon, the woman on the crescent-moon has appeared in some kind of embattled political context. The historical background to the Book of Revelation was that of the persecution of the Christians by the Emperor Nero in the first century. In the same manner, when the Apocalyptic Woman put in her first appearance in the shadow world of alchemy in the *Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit* then it was in the middle of an armed contest, that of the long-running dispute between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor. The author of the text was generically anti-papal due to his (probable) Spiritual Franciscan connections and he was firmly on the side of the Emperor.

The Apocalyptic Woman in Revelation manifests on the battlefield in the midst of the universal catastrophe prior to the Last Judgement (Revelation 12: 1).

> Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars …
> (New King James Version)[16]

The Woman is pursued by a red dragon (Revelation 12: 2-5).

> [2] Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.[3] And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. [4] His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her

[14] Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae*, p. 509.

[15] Leo Stausberg, "Türkenmadonnen im Kreise Ahrweiler. Eine Studie zur Heimat- und Weltgeschichte" online http://www.kreis-ahrweiler.de/kvar/VT/hjb1958/hjb1958.38.htm (retrieved 25. 4. 2016)

[16] All biblical quotes in the present study are drawn from the New King James Version Bible (New York: HarperCollins; Nelson, 1982.) Originally known as the Revised Authorized Version.

> Child as soon as it was born. [5] She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.
> (New King James Version)

In later centuries the crescent moon and the dragon transformed into a serpent became attributes of Mary in her form as the Immaculate Conception, a type derived from the Woman of Revelation. The dragon in Revelation 12 was related to the serpent of Genesis 3:1-4 where God had informed the snake that, since it had lured humanity into sin, then it would have its punishment with the coming of a new woman. The Catholic Church identified this person with Mary in the form of the "Second Eve." She it was who would crush the serpent's head under her feet (Genesis 3: 14-15). The image of Mary crushing the serpent (Satan) eventually led to the development of the icon of the Immaculate Conception which became an important recourse for Catholics seeking to defend both the Church and the wider body politic against their foes. The veneration of the Virgin Mary in her role of guardian of the Catholic Church against political disorder has endured to the present day.

For example, the Marian apparitions associated with the cult of the "Miraculous Medal" reportedly occurred during the revolution in France of 1830. The apparition was recorded as manifesting itself again during the 1848 revolution and then once more in the course of the siege of Paris by the Prussians in 1870, as well as during the anti-clerical Paris Commune in 1871. Catherine Labouré had first experienced the vision of the Virgin Mary on 27th November 1830. The Virgin was standing within an oval mandorla, her feet on a globe, treading down a serpent as in the imagery of the Immaculate Conception, although from her hands there now shone rays of light. On the edge of the mandorla there appeared the words: "Ô Marie, conçue sans péché, priez pour nous qui avons recours à vous" ("O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you").[17] The Labouré apparition was engraved onto the "Miraculous Medal." The frame around her displayed a circle of twelve stars, as in the image of Mary Immaculate. The Miraculous Medal was the proto-type for the later Marian visions witnessed by Bernadette Sibirous at Lourdes, commencing on 11th February 1858.[18] The figure at Lourdes eventually revealed herself

[17] René Laurentin, *The Life of Catherine Labouré, 1806-1876*. Translated by Paul Inwood (London: Collins, 1983), pp. 214-219, 250-256.
[18] Laurentin, *Life of Catherine Labouré*,

to be the "Immaculate Conception."[19] It is to be noted that these two apparitions of Mary Immaculate did not include the emblem of the crescent moon, since the figures had manifested in the physical realm, not in the heavens.

However, contemporary icons of the Immaculate Conception continue to include the emblem of the crescent-moon. Apart from that detail the popular image of the Immaculate Conception in the present time differs somewhat from the imagery of the 16th and 17th centuries since it was created on the model of the 19th century Marian apparitions, those of the Virgin of the Miraculous Medal and of Lourdes. In these modern versions Mary's hair is no longer loose as a sign of her perpetual virginity, but is covered with a white veil to signify her motherhood and her submissive humility. Her pose has become stiff and hieratic, unlike the dynamic flight of the Baroque Immaculate Virgins. She currently stands firmly on the earth, rather than being elevated to heaven (although the moon is present) and her mood is distanced and removed, rather than exalted and ecstatic as in earlier portrayals by Spanish painters of the 16th and 17th centuries.

In another political conflict, this time in Poland, in August 1921 there appeared a vision in the sky of the Immaculate Conception with the moon at her feet. It was said to have been witnessed by Polish soldiers during the Battle of Warsaw against the troops of Soviet Russia. In the same historical context there is an example of the manner in which the sign of the crescent moon was used to "militarize" the image of the Virgin Mary. This happened in the case of the painting of the Virgin of Ostrabrama in Vilnius, Lithuania. This icon still hangs over the eastern gate to the city where it was originally supposed to defend both the city and the whole of Eastern Europe against invasion from the East, whether by Tartars, Muscovites, or Soviet Russians. An imposing golden crescent-moon was attached to the silver-cope of the icon in 1848 and this has since become its main attribute. The sign of the moon explicitly refers to the protective function of the Virgin Mary in the defence of Europe against barbarians.[20] In similar manner the concept of a crusade against heresy and other threats to Catholicism was associated with the cult of the Immaculate Conception by Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941). Kolbe was a Conventual Franciscan friar and his devotion to the Immaculate Conception was an indispensable aspect of his membership of that Order. In 1922 Kolbe founded the journal

[19] Francis Trochu, *Saint Bernadette Soubirous, 1844-1879*. Translated by John Joyce (Hampton Court: The Across Trust, 1979: first French edition 1954), pp. 43 ff.

[20] See Maria Kałamajska-Saeed, *Ostra Brama w Wilnie* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), pp. 110, 204ff.

Ryczerz Niepokalanej ("Knight of the Immaculate") and in 1927 he instituted the Conventual Franciscan monastery at Niepokalanów near Warsaw. He also established the "Crusade of Mary Immaculate" (*Militia Immaculatae*) whose prime obligation is prayer to the Immaculate Conception.[21]

In addition, there exists a third widely-venerated contemporary Marian type based on the visions at Fatima in Portugal which commenced on 13th May, 1917. This particular apparition has been identified as that of Mary, Queen of the Rosary and she is also invoked for the protection of European Christianity.[22] It is popularly believed that a campaign of prayer with the aid of the rosary secured Austria against permanent Stalinist occupation in 1945-55.[23]

The translation of the image of the Virgin Mary to an alchemical location in the early 15th century caused the disruption of some fundamental dogmas of the Christian faith, most especially, that of the Trinitarian God who had been similarly relocated to an alchemical setting. Moreover, Mary's appearance within her new role in alchemy could be in unfamiliar guise since the original Marian attributes could be subject to modification in order to accomodate alchemical theory and also to express the eschatological mood of the times.

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[21] *Our Lady's Fool: Father Maximilian Kolbe, Franciscan Conventual Friar*. By a Sister of Mercy (Langley, Bucks: St. Paul Publications, 1964). This is a hagiography but it makes the point about the Franciscan/ Marian connection. See also Maximillian Kolbe, *The crusade of Mary Immaculate: ideals aims mission* (Manchester: Crusade of Mary Immaculate Press, 1958 -).

[22] The Fatima image is clad completely in white, with gold embroidery around the edges of the long veil and a gold star on the lower edge of the gown. She carries a gold rosary.

[23] See, for example, the article online http://www.returntofatima.org/tag/rosary-miracle-of-austria/ (retrieved 25. 4. 2016). At the end of the war in 1945 Soviet troops occupied Austria and this was expected to be permanent. However, the Franciscan Father Petrus Pavlicek, inspired by the Marian apparition at Fatima, founded the Expiatory Rosary Crusade to pray for peace in the world and for the freedom of Austria. Hundreds of thousands of Austrians prayed for these intentions. Finally, in 1955 the Soviet Army withdrew from Austria. The Austrian Chancellor announced the withdrawal of the Soviet Army on the 13th of May which was the anniversary of the first apparition at Fatima. The treaty of 15 May, 1955, re-established an independent and sovereign Austria.

CHAPTER ONE

ALCHEMY, APOCALYPTIC DISCOURSE AND THE SPIRITUAL FRANCISCANS

What was alchemy? There is disagreement among scholars on this issue because the historical alchemists from the 2nd C AD onwards have revealed a variety of intentions in their diverse practices. They were not solely concerned with the creation of the Philosopher's Stone. In fact, this supernatural object was unknown to Hellenistic alchemists. Moreover, by the 14th century the alchemists' interest in the transmutation of metals was being replaced by a new medical concern involving the production of the Elixir of Life, also known as the Universal Panacea.

In this context one of the foremost 20th century historians of alchemy, Francis Sherwood-Taylor, has written that

> Alchemy is not easy to define. Some would restrict its meaning to "transmutation of metals"; others wish to include within its scope all that relates to the exaltation and regeneration, whether of metal or of the human mind. Alchemy is not the same as mysticism, nor as metallurgy.[1]

Another definition has been offered by Robert Halleux who has proposed that alchemy was a "conglomerate (ensemble) of practices and speculation related to the transmutation of metals."[2] Halleux emphasizes the technological aspects of alchemy, as well as the manner in which the alchemists devised philosophical and theoretical models concerning the structure of matter.

One of the first alchemical texts, *Φυσικά και μυστικά* (*Physika kai Mystika*), composed by the Greek Democritus (ca. 100 AD) described an art in which metals were transmuted to a higher form and this process was

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[1] Francis Sherwood-Taylor, "The Origins of Greek alchemy," *Ambix*, 1 (1937), pp. 30-47; quote from page 30.

[2] Robert Halleux, *Les textes alchimiques, typologies des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), p. 49.

explained in both physical and mystical terms.[3] Knowledge of Greek alchemy was transferred to the West during the 12th century in Latin translations of Arabic texts. The legacy of the Greeks had been elaborated by the Arabs, most especially the distillation of alcohol which led to the production of new kinds of medicines. A variety of late Hellenistic Hermetic texts were translated from the Arabic into Latin, most especially the *Emerald Table* and the *Turba philosophorum*, to which were added texts composed by Latins in the name of the Arabian alchemists. The most important of these was the pseudo-Geberian corpus spuriously attributed to the authentic Arab alchemist Jabir al-Hazzan, but in actuality composed either in Italy, or Spain.

In the 14th to 16th centuries the new pharmacological concerns were incorporated into the Western alchemical programme. To such material aspects there were added a variety of philosophical and religious issues encompassing both speculations on the structure of natural phenomena, as well as on the problem of human salvation from a Christian perspective. An older generation of historians such as H. J. Sheppard,[4] as well as psychologists such as C. G. Jung[5] and the mythographer Mircea Eliade[6] have laid stress on the spiritual aspects of alchemy which they saw as displacing practical chemistry from centre stage. In contrast, the contemporary historian Rafał Prinke insists that the field of alchemy has always included both practical physical and spiritual aspects, although by the 16th century these two aspects had become distinguished from one another. In the 17th century a predominantly mystical type of alchemy did, in fact, emerge, one influenced by the Paracelsians and by the disciples of the mythical Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Nevertheless, the practical tradition also continued unabated and it was further developed by chemists such as Robert Boyle (1627-91) and Johann Hevelius (1611-87). They continued to experiment within the empirical tradition of the 13th century scholastics, in particular, Roger Bacon (ca. 1214-92) and Albertus Magnus (1200-80).

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[3] Rafał Prinke, *Zwodniczy ogród błędów. Piśmiennictwo alchemiczne do końca XVIII wieku*. Monografie z Dziejów Nauki i Techniki, 164 (Warszawa: Instytut Historii Nauki im. Ludwika i Aleksandra Birkenmajerów, Polska Akademia Nauk, 2014), passim.

[4] For example, see H. J. Sheppard, "The Ouroboros and the Unity of Matter," *Ambix*, 10 (1962), pp. 83-96.

[5] Most especially, there is Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968). See also the general argument in Carl Gustav Jung, *Mysterium coniunctionis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

[6] Mircea Eliade, *The forge and the crucible*. Translated by Stephen Corrin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), passim.

By the 16th century there had also emerged an extensive chemical industry engaged in the manufacture of nitric products (gunpowder and fertilisers) and in textile dyeing and metallurgy, as well as in the distillation of alcoholic and pharmaceutical preparations. Historians of science such as William Newman have emphasized the history of this industrialised production from the 15th century. It was then that practical chemists like Vannoccio Biringuccio (1480-1537) and Georg Agricola (1494-1555) distanced themselves from the alchemical art of transmutation, or they expressed scepticism about such ideas.[7] Even committed alchemical authors such as George Starkey (1628–65) were scornful of the labours of unskilled and ignorant alchemists.[8]

In fact, the arguments of modernist historians of science have their limitations. The studies of William Newman are a case in point since he takes no account of mystical alchemy and does not consider the role of alchemy within religious history. Although his research also involves the role of practical chemistry in the physical crafting of paintings and sculpture, yet, Newman takes no account of the visual imagery as a conceptual and aesthetic phenomenon. He ventures no further than the technological aspects involving the brute materiality of art-practice. Newman, like most other historians of science, ignores the subject-matter of the visual emblems and he has no interest in their historical importance as art-works. It is surprising that Newman should purport to be undertaking a study of the art/science divide in the context of historical alchemy and at the same time he is avoiding any engagement with the allegorical content of alchemical illustration. His emphasis is skewed towards minor figures in artistic/ alchemical practice of the 16th and 17th centuries, while ignoring the more important artists who created the emblematic woodcuts and engravings, among whom there were Matthias Merian, Johann Theodore de Bry, Johann Daniel Mylius, Stefan Michelspacher and Robert Fludd.[9] Newman's text limps strangely on one foot like alchemical Saturn into its own idiosyncratic direction, away from mainstream studies of art and alchemy. His argument neglects any mention of the alchemical emblematic tradition as if it had never existed.

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[7] See the argument in William R. Newman, *Promethean ambitions: alchemy and the quest to perfect nature* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), passim.

[8] William R. Newman, *Gehennical fire. The Lives of George Starkey. An American alchemist in the Scientific Revolution*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. xvii-xviii.

[9] See Newman, *Promethean Ambitions*, pp. 238-289.

Prinke has attempted to reconcile the conceptual polarisation of the "two cultures" (in C. P. Snow's terms[10]), that is, the sciences versus the humanities and the arts. Prinke suggests that alchemy was not a religion, but neither was it a science, only an area of study concerned with the philosophical understanding of nature, combined with a process of psychological self-discovery.[11] Four fields of alchemical endeavour can be identified, according to Prinke, first, the transmutation of metals into gold, then the purely practical, non-mystical aspects of industrial and proto-chemistry and, third, the mystical aspects of alchemy. Finally, there were the medicinal concerns of the alchemists. Prinke comments further that in the existing literature on alchemy there are three perspectives on alchemical history.[12] First, alchemy is treated as a disorderly collection of superstitions, myths and chemical practices bordering on magic, an aberrant cultural singularity practiced by charlatans, or dreamers. More charitably, comments Prinke, there is also some recognition of alchemy as an early stage of chemistry which eventually developed into a scientific discipline. Finally, it is conceded by scholars that there existed alchemical texts carrying a religious, esoteric and psychological meaning and which deliberately sought to cut the historical ties of the alchemists to practical experimentation. Modernist historians, according to Prinke, have defined these three fields as, respectively, pseudo-science, proto-science and para-science. [13]

It may be argued that the development of the spiritual type of alchemy with its complex visual imagery was the product of Franciscan eschatology.[14] The most decisive confluence of apocalyptic prophecy, Franciscan radicalism and alchemy is encountered in the early 15th century

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[10] Charles Percy Snow, *Two Cultures and Second Look* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), passim.

[11] Rafał T. Prinke, "Beyond patronage Michael Sendivogius and the meanings of success in alchemy" in Miguel López Pérez, Didier Kahn and Mar Rey Bueno (eds.), *Chymia: Science and Nature in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 175-231.

[12] See for example Bruce T. Moran, "Alchemy, chemistry and the history of science," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 31: 4 (2000), pp. 711-720, 713-714.

[13] Prinke, *Zwodniczy ogród błędów*, p. 26. Prinke has also referred to the work of Joseph Zon (ed.), *The Fringe of science. Protoscience - parascience - pseudoscience*, Philosophy of Nature and Sciences, 3 (Lublin: Catholic University Publishing House, 2009). See also, Stephen A. McKnight (ed.), *Science, pseudo-science, and utopianism in early modern thought* (Columbia; London: University of Missouri Press, 1992).

[14] DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, passim.

Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit, originating in Germany and composed, it seems, by a Franciscan friar.[15]

The interest in apocalyptic prophecy extends to the ancient Hebrew era when popular speculation concerning the end of the world and life after death was enlivened by visions foretelling a narrative of final disastrous events. The term "apocalypsis," however, is Greek in origins, simply meaning a vision, though the word was amplified in the early Christian era so that it gained the sense of a divine revelation of the specific events leading to the last days. The original Greek name of the Book of Revelation was the "Apocalypse of St. John." Much more ancient apocalyptic writings are found in Hebrew prophecies dating from the 3rd century BC through to ca. 100 AD. The Old Testament books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Enoch, Baruch and Daniel are of particular significance, but there are many other apocalyptic predictions dispersed through-out the Hebrew Scriptures. These concern the advent of the Messiah, the Judge of humanity on the Last Day. The early Christians, including Paul himself, had believed that the Second Coming of Christ was imminent. In the medieval period authors such as Rupert of Deutz (ca. 1075-1129), Otto of Freising (d.1158), Anselm of Havelberg (d. 1158) and Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) issued new apocalyptic predictions. The radical Franciscan Joachim del' Fiore (1131-1202) brought these prophetic currents to a head.[16]

The Spirituals (Fraticelli, Poverelli, or Joachimites) as a group were antagonistic towards the Papacy and they predicted the forthcoming demise of the Church's magisterium, spiritually and politically. They were imbued with millenarian ideas foretelling the advent of the age of the Holy Spirit when the "Eternal Gospel" would replace the Church and its Scriptures. Utopia would ensue.[17] Originally, Joachim del' Fiore, the

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[15] See Wilhelm Ganzenmüller, "'Das "Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit'" in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Technologie und der Alchemie* (1956), pp. 231-272. Also see Herwig Büntz, "Das Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit-sein Autor und seine Überleiferung*," Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum,* 20 (1971), pp. 150-160. In addition, see Uwe Junker, *Das "Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit" in seiner zweiten, alchemistischen Fassung (Kadolzburg 1433)* (Cologne, 1986), pp. 1-2, 17-21.

[16] Robin Bruce Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 20-23.

[17] R. E. Lerner, *The Feast of Saint Abraham: Medieval Millenarians and the Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). See also Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York: MacMillan, 1985), pp. 89-110. Also there is the indispensible study by

source of the extreme Franciscan current, had been inspired by sections of the New Testament that prophesied a new era for humanity. He taught that after the "Age of the Father" (the Old Testament era) and the "Age of the Son" (the New Testament period) there would follow an "Age of the Holy Spirit," a period of social equality and brotherly love. Joachim had foretold that the Second Age of the Son, the Christian era, would conclude in 1260 when the Anti-Christ would appear on earth, followed by a new Third Age.[18] St. Francis was identified by the Franciscan radicals with the Prophet of the Third Age, a new Christ in effect who had introduced the Age of the Holy Spirit in which there would take place the Last Judgement and the descent of the New Jerusalem to earth. Church authorities, fearful of the popular ferment, determinedly condemned the teachings of Joachim as heresy.

Another source of strife between the Spiritual Franciscans and the Papacy was the fact that the radical Spirituals insisted on living in conditions of extreme poverty (hence also their designation as “Poverelli) in obedience to Francis’ Testament where he had prescribed poverty and mendicancy for all Franciscans.[19] The authorities of the Order had mitigated the extreme implications of this requirement and the friars were permitted to own property. The Pope and the Franciscan Order condemned the radicals as heretics since they continued to follow Francis’ original intentions. The Spirituals, in turn, regarded the Church as deviant since in the authentic rule, as approved by Pope Honorius III in his Bull, *Solet annuere* (1223), Francis had undeniably stated that the friars could not receive money in any kind. The controversy did not cease but rather increased until John XXII was forced to suppress the Spiritual Franciscans in 1317, issuing the Bull, *Quia nonnunquam* (1322).[20]

Already in the 12th century Western alchemists from the outset were incorporating Christian eschatology into their writings, as in the case of the Latin translation of the Arabic *Turba philosophorum* (Arab original ca.

Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), pp. 62, 69, 72,175, 299-301.

[18] Steven Ozment, *Mysticism and dissent. Religious ideology and social protest in the sixteenth century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 106.

[19] John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order: From its Origins to the year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 90-91, 117.

[20] David Burr, *The spiritual Franciscans: from protest to persecution in the century after Saint Francis* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press; London: Eurospan, 2001), pp. 97-98, 196-206.

900). By the 13th century most of the leading natural philosophers and alchemists were engaged in eschatological prophecy. Even the scientific ideas of Roger Bacon (1219-92) concerning universal knowledge reveal Joachimite influences. Bacon himself belonged to the Franciscan Order. In his *Medicina Philosophica* he proposed an alchemical theory of the perfectibility of the human body and he emphasized the role of alchemy in medicine, not only in metallurgical transmutation. [21] Another influential alchemist was Arnald of Villanova (ca. 1240–1311), a Catalonian medical practitioner and prophet, who worked on the theory of the quintessence first explained by Aristotle in his *Physics*.[22] Arnald translated Arabic medical works and he also composed the treatises *Speculum medicinae* and *Regimen sanitatis ad regem Aragonum*.[23] In addition, he wrote in favour of the reform of the Church and issued his own prophecies concerning the Last Days. Both he and his contemporary John of Rupescissa were associated with radical groups of preachers, most of all the Waldensians who disregarded the disciplinary codes of the Church and wandered about preaching without canonical dispensation, urging freedom of association and discourse outside the Church. They put into question both the hierarchical structures of the Church and the secular political status-quo. These included evangelical groups associated with John Wycliffe (ca.1320–84), Jan Hus (ca.1369–1415) and the mystics of the German Rhineland: Eckhart von Hochheim (ca.1260–ca.1328), Johannes Tauler (ca.1300-61) and Heinrich Suso (1295-1366). All of these dissidents maintained that it was possible to gain personal access to God without the mediation of Catholic priests and the sacraments of the Church. They also subscribed to the eschatological ideas of the Joachimites.[24]

The French alchemist John of Rupescissa (Jean de Roquetaillade) (ca. 1310-66/70) was yet one more dissenting member of the Franciscan Order. In 1332 he commenced his study of alchemy and in his public critique of

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[21] DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, pp. 82, 85-89.

[22] See Manfred Gerwing, *Vom Ende der Zeit: der Traktat des Arnald von Villanova über die Ankunft des Antichrist in der akademischen Auseinandersetzung zu Beginn des 14 Jahrhunderts* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1996). See also DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, pp. 59-95.

[23] The alchemical *Rosarius Philosophorum*, the *Novum Lumen* and the *Flos Florum* are spuriously attributed to him. Editions of these were later printed in Lyon in 1504 and 1532, Basel in 1585 and Lyon in 1586.

[24] Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, *Master Eckhart and the Rhineland Mystics*. Translated by Hilda Graef (New York: Harper Torchbooks; London: Longmans, 1957), pp. 45-88, 139-178.

the Church and of the Avignon Papacy Rupescissa sided with the Franciscan Spirituals. In 1349 he was brought to trial before the court of canon law at Avignon where he pleaded his case before Pope Clement VI himself. This led to his imprisonment, although he was eventually exonerated of heresy in 1354. While in prison Rupescissa composed apocalyptic prophecies on the Anti-Christ (*Visiones seu Revelationes* (1349), *Vade Mecum in tribulatione* (1356) and *Liber Ostensor* (1356)).[25] Simultaneously, in circa 1350 he began to produce alchemical texts influenced by the ideas of Arnald of Villanova, Ramon Lull[26] and Roger Bacon.

Rupescissa was especially concerned with the distillation of alcohol in order to develop a medicinal elixir intended to prolong the life of those whom he termed "the poor evangelical preachers."[27] He called his elixir the "aqua vitae," stating that it contained the distilled fifth essence.[28] In his treatise *De consideratione quintae essentiae* (ca. 1351-52) Rupescissa claimed to have produced this alchemical elixir, or tincture, by means of extracting the fifth essence from gold. He called it the "coelum" (or "man's heaven" in English translations). It was so named since the skies were said to be composed of the same incorruptible spiritualized matter. Rupescissa claimed that when his "coelum" was made into a potable elixir and imbibed, then human-life was greatly extended since the elixir removed the physical corruption causing the body to decay and perish. Gold was the substance used for the work since it was believed to be the equivalent of the sun in the heavens. The metal had to be purified and distilled with alcohol and the resulting combustible oil ("aqua ardens") was regarded as being the quintessence of gold, the Universal Panacea that cured all ills.[29]

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[25] DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, pp. 57-62, 73-79, 105-109.
[26] DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, pp. 80-81, 95-99.
[27] DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, pp. 18-31, 34-35, 41-42.
[28] DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, pp. 32-51, 64-79.
[29] Rupescissa's original text *De consideratione quintae essentiae* was printed in French in Lyon in 1549. The first Latin edition appeared in 1561 edited by Guglielmo Gratarolo (1516-68) (*De Rerum omnium consideratione Quintæ essentiae, opus sane egregium*). Gratarolo published a compendium of alchemical texts, the *Verae Alchemiæ* … (1561) which included another text by Rupescissa, the *Liber lucis*. Rupescissa's alchemical writings are very practical and he gives recipes for the working of mercury with iron, or copper sulphate, and saltpetre (nitrate), as well as sulphur. He examines amalgams of gold which he treats with vinegar, or urine. He also distils antimony with vinegar. He was interested in the mineral acids and their sublimation and distillation. In fact, his pharmacological chemistry pre-dated that of Paracelsus and his disciples.

Rupescissa's text was appropriated by the pseudo-Lullians, late anonymous disciples of the Catalan theologian Ramon Llull (Eng. Lull) (ca. 1232-ca. 1315) although, in reality, he had never practiced alchemy.[30] Thus spuriously attributed to Lull, Rupescissa's treatise was published as *De secretis naturae* in 1514 (translated into German in 1532 and into Italian in 1557). The text also appeared in the pseudo-Lullian *Testament*.[31] The process of distillation described by Rupescissa was further employed by the German Hieronymus Brunschwig in his *Liber de Arte Distillandi* (Strasbourg, 1512).[32] It was from these sources that Paracelsus (1493/94-1541) learned the arts of the still. As demonstrated by Michela Pereira, the concept of the Elixir originated in the Christian eschatology of the resurrected body and its physical and spiritual perfectibility after death.[33] The Philosopher's Stone was one such resurrected and perfected body, while the elixir made from it offered an extension of life and a return to perfect health. The discussion concerning the perfect body of the Stone was the central theme of pseudo-Lull's *Testamentum*, as well as of pseudo-Geber's *Summa perfectionis magisterii*. To produce the Stone it was necessary to balance the four Galenic temperaments in a "complexio aequalis" (choleric, sanguine, melancholic and phlegmatic). The four humours of Hippocratic medicine were black bile (Gk: μέλαινα χολή), yellow bile (Gk: χολή), phlegm (Gk: φλέγμα) and blood (Gk: αἷμα).[34]

These concepts of the perfectible body were related to Hebrew and Christian prophecies concerning the resurrection of the physical body after death and the exact nature of its now immortal materiality. The Books of Ezekiel (37:12-14) and Revelation (1: 17-18) foretold the resurrection of the dead, fully-fleshed, to stand for sentence before the Son of Man who in Christian understanding was Christ as the Universal Judge. In Paul's terminology the resurrected body would be transfigured, or glorified

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[30] DeVun, *Prophecy, Alchemy and the End of Time*, pp. 95-101.

[31] See the argument in Michela Pereira, *The Alchemical Corpus Attributed to Raymond Lull* (London: Warburg Institute, 1989), pp. 1-15, 17-20, 22-28.

[32] The *Liber de Arte Distillandi* was translated into English in 1527, then into Latin by Philipp Ulstad and republished with his own attribution as *Coelum philosophorum* (1525). See Tillmann Taape, "Distilling Reliable Remedies: Hieronymus Brunschwig's Liber de arte distillandi (1500) Between Alchemical Learning and Craft Practice," *Ambix*, 61, (2014), pp. 236-256.

[33] Michela Pereira, "Uno Tesoro Inestamibile: Elixir e' Prolongatio Vitae' nell' Alchimia del '300'," *Micrologus. Nature, Sciences and Medieval Societies, I Discorsi dei Corpi* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993), pp. 161-187.

[34] Jacques Jouanna, *Greek medicine from Hippocrates to Galen: selected papers*. Edited with a preface by Philip van der Eijk. Translated by Neil Allies (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 335-359.

("glorificatum"), that is, made incorruptible, subtle and able to penetrate solids. This new glorified body would be both spiritual and material.[35] In these religious teachings the late medieval alchemists perceived similar eschatological aspects to their own art. One especially influential text in this context (and among the earliest to be illustrated with figurative narratives) was the early 15th century *Aurora Consurgens*, composed during the Church Council at Lake Constance in ca. 1414-17.[36] Attributed spuriously to Thomas Aquinas, it provided a lengthy account of the end of time. The author referred to Paul's teaching concerning the resurrection of the body. In his sixth parable he even provided a detailed and influential analogy between the Philosopher's Stone and the Second Adam who was Christ in the form of the Eucharistic bread and wine. This was one of the earliest such identifications of the Stone with Christ. In Corinthians (15: 21-54) Paul had stated that when the mortal should put on immortality and corruption put on incorruption, then death would be swallowed up in victory. Just as all died in Adam, so in Christ all would live. The first Adam originated in corruptible elements, but the Second Adam (Christ) was made from pure elements and he entered heaven in his physical body.

The account by Paul describing Christ as the Second Adam was perhaps a source for the frequent depiction of Adam in alchemical illustration, commencing in the *Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit* (1419). Adam was used as a personification of the four prime elements, the components of the red earth from which he had been created. In an alchemical context he represented impure prime matter which after purgation was transformed into the Second Adam, the Christ-like Philosopher's Stone. There exists a well-known image of the dying Adam and Eve in a manuscript of alchemical compendia held by the Laurentian Library in Florence. This treatise has been identified by the present author as being Paduan in origins, dating from the 1470s (MS Florence Medicea-Laurenziana Ashburnham 1166. d. e, *Miscellanea d'Alchmia*).[37] Giovanni Carbonelli has examined this codex earlier and he has provided interpretations of the imagery, including that of Adam whom he identified

[35] Caroline Walker Bynum, *The resurrection of the body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 259-263.
[36] "Aurora consurgens …" in *Auriferæ artis, quam chemiam vocant, antiquissimi authores, siue Turba philosophorum. (Cuiusdam epistolæ quæ Alexandri ... nomine circumfertur interpretatio, abditam philosophici lapidis compositionem ... declarans)* (Basileæ: apud Petrum Pernam, 1572. First edition).
[37] Urszula Szulakowska, "The Tree of Aristotle: Images of the Philosophers Stone and their Transference in Alchemy from the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century", *Ambix* (1986), pp. 53-77.