

Medieval Academy of America

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Author(s): Lynn Thorndike

Source: *Speculum*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Jul., 1937), pp. 370-374

Published by: Medieval Academy of America

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2848634>

Accessed: 27/05/2010 18:28

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TWO MORE ALCHEMICAL MANUSCRIPTS¹

BY LYNN THORNDIKE

THE two alchemical manuscripts to be considered in this article add two further treatises, both apparently hitherto unknown, to the Lullian alchemical collection, of which one certainly and the other probably dates before 1500. The manuscripts also contain other matter of importance for the history of alchemy during the later middle ages and around the year 1500. One manuscript is now found in the Stadtbibliothek of Bern: the other is preserved in the Riccardian library at Florence.¹

Bern B 44 is an octavo paper volume of the fifteenth century. The division of the contents into treatises in Hagen's catalogue of the Bern manuscripts is largely erroneous, and nearly half of the codex, like so many alchemical manuscripts, is a mass of confused extracts, citations, and recipes which we cannot undertake to unravel. But it also includes several well-known works of the Lullian alchemical corpus which Hagen failed to identify, such as the *Accurtatio* at fols 63^r-68^v, *Liber mercuriorum* at fols 69^r-73^v, and *Ars Magica* at fols 74^r-79^v.²

These are preceded at fols 5^r-62^{r3} by a long but unfamiliar alchemical work also attributed to Lull and described in Hagen's catalogue as *Arbor philosophie sive Alchymia*. It is quite in the style of the alchemical writings ascribed to Raymond Lull and in particular has marked resemblance to the *Tertia Distinctio* or *De secretis naturae* and to *De cura individuorum*. It makes much use of the Lullian alphabet, tree, and method of questions. It cites other treatises of the Lullian alchemical corpus, such as the *Tertia Distinctio*, *Lapidarius*, *Testament* and *Codicil*, and twice alludes to *Practica sermocinalis*, although perhaps not as the title of a work. This hitherto unfamiliar Lullian alchemical composition opens, 'Protinus ut ars et scientia tractans transmutatoria quam in precedenti volumine diximus . . . ' It is, professedly at least, divided into six parts: (1) concerning the construction of the figure S; (2) of the condition of the principles of the figure S and the solution of questions by those principles; (3) of the method of solving questions by the principles of the tree; (4) of alchemical disputation by the new fallacy; (5) of the way to solve alchemical questions syllogistically; (6) of the solution of questions in the lapidary's art. Among the questions asked are whether a body can be dissolved without calcination, whether alchemical conversion can be accomplished in the absence of the vegetable menstruum, whether alchemy is a figment, whether B (Matter?) generates D (the Menstruum?), whether the philosophers' stone can transmute mineral bodies, whether

¹ The present article may be regarded as a continuation and supplement of 'Alchemical Writings in Vatican Palatine and Certain Other Continental Latin Manuscripts,' *SPECULUM*, XI (July, 1936), 370-383.

² For these and subsequent titles of treatises in the Lullian alchemical collection see the chapter and appendix thereon in my *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. IV, 1934.

³ Hagen incorrectly represents it as covering fols 5^r-74^v. Fol. 5 is the first leaf of the present manuscript.

artificial stones can possess the same virtue as natural minerals. There are many such series of questions, including those of the quadrangular figure and those of the figure abstracted from figure. The work ends, ‘. . . Ideo dicte sunt explanationes omnium principiorum secundum quod antedicta sunt.’

There may further be distinguished in our manuscript a *De compositione aque potabilis* opening at fol. 80^r, ‘Nunc dicemus de compositione aque potabilis que fit sanguine fixato . . .’; and a *Donum dei* opening at fol. 89^r, ‘Qui desiderat artis philosophice scientie maiorem cognitionem . . .’¹ What in one manuscript is called, *Semita directa autore Lullio* (this by a late hand in the top margin) at fols 210–221 (or, 209–220) opening and closing as follows, ‘Omnis sapientia a domino deo est et cum illo fuit semper et est ante evum . . . / . . . mane extrahe et invenies es ustum bonum. Finis Semite directe,’ appears to be the *Semita recta* commonly ascribed in alchemical manuscripts to Albertus Magnus.

At fol. 228 (new numbering 227), in our manuscript a treatise opens, ‘Quoniam de opere alchemie quo philosophi doctissimi in insula Cecilie sudaverunt tractare disposuimus . . .’ This is almost identical with the incipit of a Prologue which accompanies the famous *Tabula smaragdina* of Hermes and its commentaries. This prologue is variously ascribed to Rasis² and Galen³ but would appear to be rather the introduction of the Latin translator of the *Tabula smaragdina*.⁴ Our manuscript is peculiar in adding to the usual incipit the words concerning the philosophers sweating ‘in the island of Sicily,’ which might seem to point to a Sicilian translator.⁵ On the other hand, our manuscript lacks the closing statement found in some manuscripts, ‘This is the edition of the words of Hermes according to the version of Marseilles. He who knows better, let him express it better.’⁶ Our manuscript has the further peculiarity that in it these words do not

¹ For other MSS of it, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, iv, 635.

² Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, *Latin MS. 6514* (henceforth cited as *BN 6514*), 13–14th century, fol. 86^v, col. 1: ‘Explicit liber verborum Hermetis. Incipit liber Raazi in explanatione verborum Hermetis. Quoniam de opere in quo philosophorum doctissimi desudaverunt. . . .’

³ Florence, Riccardian library, *Latin MS. 1165* (henceforth cited as *FR 1165*), 14–15th century, fols 101^r–105^r: ‘Explicit Practica Gallieni magni philosophi secretorum nature. Hic incipit Theorica eiusdem Gallieni. Quoniam de opere in quo philosophorum doctissimi desudavere penitus tractare disposuimus . . . / . . . tunc rubei coloris efficitur quod a magistris (?) concluditur. Hic finitur Theorica totaliter Gallieni phy. feliciter.’

This ascription to Galen seems owing to the occurrence in the course of the Prologue of the words, ‘ex libro Galieni alfachini.’ Steinschneider pointed out that *alfachini* was for *al hakimi*, ‘the physician.’ In *Bern B 44* this allusion to Galen is in a somewhat different context, ‘. . . et alchimie operationem ex libro Galieni alsatari in petitione ipsius Hermetis inventa.’

⁴ For seven other MSS of it than those already noted see Mrs Dorothea Waley Singer’s *Catalogue of Latin and Vernacular Alchemical Manuscripts in Great Britain and Ireland dating from before the XVI century* (henceforth cited as *DWS*), vol. 1 (1928), entry number 26. It is also found in *BN 6514* at fol. 39^r, and at Venice, in *S. Marco VI, 215* (Valentinelli, xv1, 4), 1475 A.D., fols 267–275. Valentinelli, however, gives ‘Quoniam de opere in quo philosophorum doctissimi desudaverunt . . .’ as the incipit of the text rather than prologue.

⁵ *Bern B 44*, fol. 228, ‘Quoniam de opere alchimie quo philosophi doctissimi in insula Cicilie sudaverunt tractare disposuimus. . . .’

⁶ *BN 6514*, fol. 86^v, col. 2: ‘Hec est editio verborum Hermetis iuxta rationem Massiliensium. Qui melius sapit melius dicat.’ *DWS 26*, i. Valentinelli reads *additio* instead of *editio*. The only other

introduce the *Emerald Tablet* or a commentary upon it but a *Book of Thirty Words*. Moreover, these thirty 'words' are clearly marked and are followed by a *Sententia*, which at fol. 231^v (230^v) closes, '... et benedictum nomen eius qui creavit carissimum de vilissimo. Liber de xxx verbis finit cum sententia.' But here again the usual incipit of a *Book of Thirty Words* is 'Iam tu scis qui adquiris doctrinam ...' and its usual ending, '... proice super mille quod facis donec tuus numerus compleatur. Explicit liber de xxx verbis.'¹ Approximately these words are found in our manuscript near the bottom of the first page and at the close of the thirtieth *Word* before the *Sententia*: 'Iam scis tu qui hanc queris doctrinam ... / ... proice quamlibet illarum super mille quod facies quousque compleatur numerus supradictus.' It therefore appears that the prologue of the *Tabula smaragdina* has been incorrectly attached to the *Liber XXX verborum*, to which text a concluding *Sententia* has also been added. There follows the text of the prologue, opening of the *Liber XXX verborum*, last *Word* of the same and the *Sententia*:

Quoniam de opere alchimie quo philosophi doctissimi in insula Cecilie sudaverunt tractare disposuimus ab omni latinitate interposita quasi maris alti vacante singulariter pelagus investigare consuevimus cum Hermete philosophorum patre omnium atque magistrorum maiori diligentia pertractasse ut ex sequenti serie verborum animadverti potest indubitanter novimus Et alchimie operationem ex libro Galieni alsatari in petitione ipsius Hermetis inventa est manus in antro obscuro et continebat rei radicem mundi celestium explanandum exposui. Scripsi nam hoc filiis meis et meo generi omnibus preteera sapientibus qui in timore dei sui et ydoneis. Coniuro autem per magnum deum ipsum in cuius manus iste meus liber non absque divino nutu pervenerit non ostendat eum alicui magistro nec facietis huic negotio aliquid magisterium nec malum nec stultum nec superbium nec infidelem. Nam hoc est consilium quod deus creavit quod Hermes omnibus gentibus occultavit vel occultum habuit. Celate ergo filii mei sicut Hermes pater noster qui noster magister fuit caputque omnium mundi doctorum. Si enim mandatum meum retinueritis super omnes terrarum divites post deum et sanctos eius eritis computandi.

Iam scis tu qui hanc queris doctrinam nos hanc rem multis modis explanasse. Nullus tamen modus invenitur adeo facilis ut hic in quo hanc rem in xxx explicabimus verbis. . . .

TRICESIMUM VERBUM Modus proiciendi est ut unam partem huius elixiris supra mille milium partes. Ergo cum proieceris unam partem super mille proice quamlibet illarum super mille. Quod facies quousque compleatur numerus supradictus.

SENTENTIA autem aratim (?) eorum est, Lapis qui huic operi est necessarius de re animata est. Hunc invenies ubicumque in planitie in montanis in aquis. Habent eum tam divites quam pauperes. Estque vilissimus atque carissimus lapis non lapis qui crescit ex carne et sanguine cum coreo. Quam pretiosum est homini scienti vel negotianti, Ex eo namque possunt congregari exercitus. Ex eo honorandum quem volueris. Laudetur deus et benedictum nomen eius qui creavit carissimum de vilissimo.

Liber de xxx verbis finit cum sententia.

Our manuscript further includes the *Diadem of Philosophers and Secrets of*

alchemical work associated with Marseilles that I can think of is the *Theory of Things Occult* by Raymond, a citizen of Marseilles, translated from Chaldean into Latin. Concerning it see my *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, IV, 17-18.

¹ DWS 84, listing 12 MSS. For a slightly different ending see *Vatic. Palat. lat. 1328*, fols 25^r-28^r (*SPECULUM*, XI, 374).

Floranus or *Florianus* which is also found in a Venetian manuscript.¹ The opening passage of the Bern manuscript² outlines the contents of the work:

Tractatus Magistri Floriani philosophi magni post Aristotelem, Dyadema philosophorum et secreta secretorum. Nam fuit philosophus grecus de progenie Aristotelis et ab ipso in mirabilibus naturalium imbutus in arte alchimie et in transmutacionibus corporum perspicuus ut patebit quomodo sub debita constellatione unum corpus in aliud transmutatur. Ipse vero senio applicatus terminum vite sue videns propinquum filio suo qui C(r)esus vocabatur quem multum dilexit presentem tractaculum conscribebat.

In primis igitur dicamus de constellatione zodiaci secundum motum solis et lune istorum duorum planetarum omnia generantur et corrumpuntur videlicet (?) per Aristotelem dicentem, Sol in obliquo circulo est causa generationis et corruptionis inferiorum, omnia etiam inferiora reguntur motibus superiorum. 2^o dicamus de vii planetis qui generant mineralia diversa et metallica corpora et eorum dominium est super metalla. 3^o dicamus quomodo ex mercurio et sulfure omnia metalla fabricantur artificialiter sub determinata constellatione. Quarto quomodo unum metallum transmutatur in omnia alia, ut mars transmutatur in solem lunam saturnum et iovem. Quinto quomodo luna humano artificio in omnia alia metalla mutatur. Sexto de venere. Septimo de iove. Octavo de saturno. Nono de marte. Decimo de sole. Ultimo de lapidibus preciosis gemmis et margaritis.

This last discussion of artificial gems covers fols 243^v–246^v and includes crystal, the magnet, pearl, topaz, jasper, carbuncle, emerald, sard, macedon, diamond, adamant and sapphire. The closing words are, ‘. . . et rora cum sale alkali.’

There follows a heading, ‘Claves preciosissimi,’ with the opening words, ‘Fili siquidem carissime ne archanum hoc alicui patefiat, eius secretum detegimus ponendo claves . . .’ But fols 248–255 are now missing and on 256–257, the last written leaves of the manuscript, there are no keys.

Our second alchemical manuscript, *Riccardian 984* (in the old catalogue of Lami the shelf mark is III, xx), is a paper octavo of some 36 leaves written in what appears to be an early sixteenth-century hand, neat and little abbreviated.³ The first tract in the manuscript is by Ludovicus Lazarellus⁴ or Lodovico Lazarelli of San Severino near Naples and is a quite different work from his *Crater Hermetis* which was first printed in 1505 and is not alchemical but mystical and theosophical. The two works have, however, the common feature of an interest in Hermes, whose *Emerald Tablet* is soon cited in the alchemical tract. Lazarellus states that his teacher in alchemy was a John Richard de Branchiis of Burgundy

¹ *S. Marco fondo antico 323* (Valentinelli xvi, 5) fols 145^r–154^v, already noted by me in *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, iv, 339, n. 42. Valentinelli catalogues the work of Floranus as covering only fols 145–149, but the ensuing *Secreta secretorum* are evidently part of it, as its title suggests. ² *Bern B 44*, fol. 235^r (now 234^r).

³ On its first fly-leaf or title page is written, ‘Lud. Lazareli Raym. Lulli et Io. de Branchis Tractatus de Alchimia.’

⁴ On the recto of the leaf following that mentioned in the previous note is an *Index* or table of contents, in which the first entry is, ‘Ludovici Lazareli Vade mecum h.e.tractatus de alchimia.’ On the next leaf, fol. 1^r with which the numbering of the folios begins, are sixteen lines of verse ‘Ludovici Lazareli,’ opening,

Vade liber mecum archani collega laboris
Tale tibi accedat nomen ob officium

The text proper then opens, ‘Hermes theologorum magorum alchimistarumque pater uno verborum contextu. . . .’

who began to instruct him in 1495 and who himself had become proficient in the art from reading the works of Raymond Lull and Arnald of Villanova and from long practice.¹ From this it would seem probable that Lazarellus composed his tract on alchemy somewhat after 1500. Later in the manuscript is a secret recipe for the elixir invented by the aforesaid de Branchiis or Branchis, whose other names are now given as John Rigaud rather than Richard, when he was in Siena in 1494, with the cooperation of Albert, a physician of Perugia. This secret John had revealed to Lazarellus with his own mouth.² Lazarellus thus appears to have been responsible for the putting together of this alchemical manuscript in its entirety. It is not unlikely that he had also obtained from de Branchiis the Lullian treatise which it contains and which in this case would have been composed some time before 1495, unless we suspect that de Branchiis himself may have recently fabricated it.

This Lullian treatise occupies fols 8^v–16^v of our manuscript and is written in the same hand as the tract by Lazarellus. Its titulus, incipit, and captions are as follows:

Incipit tractatus magistri Raymundi Lullii ad nepotem suum carissimum de lapidis investigatione.

Scito quod sapientes in miraculo lapidis posuerunt multas operationes. . . .

Quomodo philosophi reliquerunt quod non est nisi unus solus lapis.

Quomodo spiritus lapidis habet potentiam vivificandi corpus.

Preparatio spiritus (fol. 9^r)

Quomodo aqua secunda capiatur per se (fol. 9^v)

Quomodo flegma capiatur per se

Quomodo calcinetur terra (fol. 10^r)

Quomodo aqua secunda rectificatur

Tabula subtilitatis iacet in hoc capitulo extrahendi animam a corpore (fol. 10^v)

Sequitur lapidis vivificatio (fol. 12^r)

Ut spiritus congelatus in sulfur extrahatur a terra (fol. 12^v)

Quod lapis est corpus aereum spirituale et corporale (fol. 13^r)

De fixatione aeris in quo continetur tintura (fol. 15^r)

De tintura et fixatione lapidis cum aere

Alius modus levior cerandi elixirii (fol. 15^v)

Alius modus creandi (*sic*) elixirii (fol. 16^r)

The treatise is followed by *Tabulae chimicae* at fols 17^r–18^r and by *Excerpta ex libris Raymundi Lullii in volgare* at fols 18^r–33^r. After the already mentioned *Arcanum elixiris magistri Joannis³ Rigaudi de Branchis* at fols 33^v–34^r, an exposition of the chemical tables and a sonnet on alchemy in Italian complete the manuscript.

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¹ *Riccard.* 984, fol. 2^r.

² *Ibid.*, fol. 33^v: 'Arcanum elixeris de inventione magistri Ioanis Rigaudii de Branchis quod ipse Senarum in civitate fecit in societate magistri Alberti Perusini phisici anno 1494 anno ante adventum in Italia Caroli octavi regis Francorum. Quod arcanum ipse magister Joanes mihi ex maxima sui liberalitate ore proprio revelavit. 'Accepit primo succum lunarie septies distiallatum . . . / . . . secundum numerum algorismi in projectionem ad perfectionem deducat. Deo gratias.'

³ The name is thus spelled with two n's in the 'Index' or table of contents in the front of the manuscript, although at fol. 33^v it is twice spelled with but one n, as quoted in note 2.