

# LES ENLUMINURES

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Alchemical Miscellany including PSEUDO-LULL, *Testamentum novissimum* (The Most Recent Testament or Will); *Descriptio lapidis philosophorum* (Description of the Philosopher's Stone); *De compositione lapidis* (On the Composition of the Stone); *Compositio magni elixiris* (The Composition of the Great Elixir); PSEUDO-ARNALDUS DE VILLANOVA, *Epistola super alchimia ad regem Neapolitanum* (Letter about Alchemy to the King of Naples); *Tabula Smaragdina* (The Emerald Tablet), and other texts  
In Latin and Italian, manuscript on paper  
Italy, seventeenth century (c. 1600-1650?)

132 folios on paper, with the first and last unnumbered leaves serving as pastedowns, partial original foliation in ink top recto corners, completed in modern pencil as follows: iii (unnumbered) + 1-127, three watermarks, all bisected: one with the letters 'S' and 'B' connected with a line and surmounted by a crown (ff. 14 and 96), one with the letter 'L' surmounted by a crown (see f. 75), and another with the letters 'A' and 'P' separated by a club (ff. 68, 69), none of which are found in Briquet, Gravell, nor Piccard, complete (a<sup>4</sup> [1, pastedown, all unnumbered] i-vii<sup>8</sup> viii<sup>6</sup> [5, 6, ff. 61-62, blank] ix<sup>8</sup> [8, f. 70, blank] x<sup>10+1</sup> [-1, cancelled, + singleton after 10, f. 80] xi-xv<sup>8</sup> xvi<sup>8</sup> [3-7, blank, 8, unnumbered pastedown]) catchwords at inner bottom verso margin of each page, folded writing frames (justification ±130 x 90mm.), written in dark brown ink in an italic hand of varying quality by a single scribe in 22-24 long lines, undecorated, ff. 65-68, damp-staining upper outer corners, minor browning and show through on some leaves, some original ink blots, text legible throughout, overall in very good condition. Contemporary limp parchment binding from a single folded sheet, almost intact endbands of twisted parchment cord stitched with red, blue, and white thread, traces of two twisted parchment supports through mid-spine, scraps of sky-blue silk ribbon ties at head, tail, and opening edge (one ribbon fragment loose in back cover), spine title in light brown ink at head reading "Testimentum ultimum Ramundi Lulli I [indecipherable, perhaps 'et al.']", 20 x 20 mm. hole gnawed by animal at head of spine and front cover, small hole at back mid-spine, but otherwise in good condition. Dimensions 165 x 115 mm.

An extensive personal collection of alchemical texts compiled by a learned and enthusiastic alchemist in seventeenth-century Italy. Alongside a few well-known texts from the canon which circulated under the names of Ramon Lull and Arnald of Villanova, and the "Emerald Tablet," this includes more than a dozen detailed texts and recipes, both theoretical and practical, many focused on making the Philosopher's Stone, that have yet to be identified. This collection thus offers almost limitless opportunities for further research. The possibility of reconstructing the identity and milieu of the early modern alchemist who copied this collection is an alluring one.

## PROVENANCE

1. Made in octavo format, this manuscript was written by a single experienced Italian scribe in an informal but legible italic hand, apparently at varying speed, almost certainly for his own use. The precise origin and time of production is difficult to establish. None of the bisected watermarks are thus far identified, and the hand used was practiced throughout the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. We suggest that sometime in the seventeenth century is most likely, perhaps c. 1600-1650.

Many of the texts included in the volume begin with brief notes concerning the sources of the text (for example, on f. 93v, "From a certain philosopher friend"), often in a less formal script (more examples discussed below). These are almost certainly in the hand of the original scribe/owner but may have been added after the volume was complete.

2. European Private Collection.

### TEXT

Flyleaf ii, r-v, incipit, "Emanueli philiberto Sabaudiae Duci . . . , Seruorum fidorum subditorumque semper mos fuit (Serenissime princeps) munere exteriori aliquo, dominis, sui cordis affectus . . . Optimus Maximus ut recte valeas tuorumque votorum semper compos fias. Vale"; [second of three front flyleaves; the remaining two, f. i and iii are blank];

Dedication to Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy (r. 1553-1580), this brief preface by an unidentified author thanks the Duke for his generous patronage of an unknown work, possibly the *Testamentum ultimum*. Our manuscript's copy of this text may be related to a copy (hypothetically at least) commissioned by the Duke. He was known for his scholarly interests, which included alchemy, and was the patron of Guido Panciroli's *Rerum memorabilium iam olim deperditarum*, a catalogue of ancient "lost things" which included alchemical topics (Merlin, 1995, p. 183; Mascarelli, 1928).

ff. 1-59, *Testamentum ultimum ad isto Raymundo Lullio conditu Carolo filio Regis Ordardi, missum*, incipit, "Cum ad nos dilectissime fili invictissime[?] princeps ultimo passu . . . alchimicam tam vegetabilem quod mineralem et animale cum omnibus suis circumstantis difusam et claram ad laudem dei altissimi. Finis <?> testamentum ultimum domini Raimondi Llull[io] de insula maiorike die 19 <decembris?> 1378 penes deo gratia <?>. A quodam amico hoc testamentum recepi et ita id extraxi prout inveni et sub fidei infusionem illud accepit"; [ff. 59v-62v, blank];

Pseudo-Raymond Lull, *Testamentum novissimum*, book one, also known, as here, as the *Testamentum ultimum* or the *Declaratio Raymundi in artem chymicam*; see Pereira, Online Resources, I.62, listing thirteen manuscripts, all but one in Italy. This is not the more widely diffused Pseudo-Lullian work also known as the *Testamentum* (see Pereira, Online Resources, I.61), although it is related; its first part is not part of the original *Testamentum*, but the second part, *Practica de furnis*, is (Pereira, 1989, p. 6). Our text is an abridged version. It does not align particularly closely with the earliest printed editions, but parallels are evident: see Basel, 1572, pp. 1-85; and Basel, 1600, 1601, 1610, and Frankfurt, 1630, all pp. 1-71. This version was probably copied from another manuscript.

ff. 63-69v, *Hec descriptio lapidis, in veteribus scripturis illius theutonici repperi*, incipit, "Philosophorum lapis revelata et declarata per dominum Philippum Magistrum in felicem et christi Jesu servum fratri Nicolao candidi de Verellis prope Romam eundo Viterbium et redeundum ad predictum dominum Philippum . . . christi dormire et requiescere amen; In nomini sancte . . . [f. 63v] Recipe Vitriolum Romanum et sal petre ad liber 2 per qualibet libra mercurii . . . [f. 64v] Operatio secunda. Nota fili mi quod debes de illo mercurio sublimato accipere . . . [f. 67v] Operatio sexta lapidis ad ellixiri uermilium. Nota quod nulla res debet minui nec addi accipe ad libitum de illa puluere . . . fili mi, Amen; [f. 68v] *Multiplicatio lapidis superius descripti*, Recipe de

mercurio mundo, ut isti faciunt ... [f. 69v] et ad rubeum potens facere ut predixi"; [f. 70rv, blank];

Unidentified, although not closely following the text of the *Liber lucis* by John of Rupescissa (c. 1310-1370), this short entry does borrow the terminology of the *Liber lucis* and is organized according to 'operationes' (here six) one needs to follow to create the Philosopher's Stone. Our text mentions Master Philip and brother Nicholas (both unidentified) at the beginning, and is written as if by a master, writing to his student ("Nota fili mi ..."). On f. 68rv it includes an exhortation to live a life of grace without sin or crime. The final section on multiplying the Stone includes among other ingredients "de lacte uirginalis" (a virgin's milk?). This is physically a clearly defined section of the codex, with stains and damage from damp, suggesting it was read frequently (and perhaps actively used in a laboratory).

ff. 71-80, *Incipit descriptio lapidis Philosophorum ut supra*, incipit, "Quia principium nostri benedicti lapidis est scientia quod quatuor sunt gradus regiminis in nostro opere. Primus gradus est, ablutio et dissolutio lapidis ... Secundus est, Elementorum separatorum ...; ... [f. 74] *Aqua autem, et oleum sic debent preparari*, Recipe aquam per se in unum[?] vitro integro ut dixi ...; ... [f. 78v] Recipe illam partem mediam sine materiam quam ascenderit ...; ... [f. 80] Et cuiuslibet corporis imperfecti, et ipsa proficiet in nos corpus auri, aut lune pro ut medicina fuerit preparata. Laudetur igitur omnipotens Deus, qui huius archani scientiam nobis sua gratia contulit que est benedictis";

Unidentified and apparently unedited text on making the Philosopher's Stone; includes detailed alchemical recipes, including medicinal elixirs and distillations.

f. 80v, *Ricordo*, incipit, "Che ti fu detto, che dovessi acuire quel monstro[?] mercuriale ... se non un regimento secreto, che non si trova scritto, ne mai ni uno Psyilosofo lavosuto scrivere etc";

In Italian, and copied so that the lines taper to a triangle at the end of the page, suggesting this was either copied from the end of a section of a printed book, or was a personal reflection added by the scribe to serve at the conclusion of this section of the manuscript.

ff. 81-85, *Sequitur tractatus de compositione lapidis, iuxta declarationem supradictam auctore et inveni eum in possessio mei amici in italia*, incipit, "Iste Tractus dicitur gratia dei, eo quod ipse Deus ... alicui reuelat ... per distillationem inde pulvere facto sublimatio ab albis ovium. Et sic finem impono mei libelli ad laudem Altissimi qui est benedictus in secula seculorem Amen";

ff. 85v-87v, *Compositio magni Elixiris*, incipit, "Deo concedente notifico omnibus fide dignis mineralibus ... Postea alba de materia rubea, quod in brevi tempore erit";

ff. 87v-90v, *Ab eodem habui sub <stantiam> modum, Modus componendi lapidem philosophorum ad album et ad rubeum secundum philosophos antiquos pro ut expertum est*, incipit, "Accipe ergo cum Dei benedictione lapidem nostrum tibi notam ... [f. 90v] Et est securius facere parvas proiuctiones et melius incorporabitur quam si faceres maximas";

This section of the manuscript, ff. 81-90v, includes three short alchemistic tracts predominantly about the Philosopher's Stone and the making of medicinal elixirs. They reference Galen, Aristotle, Alfidius (f. 82), Arnaldus de Villa Nova (f. 85v), Pythagoras (f. 87v), and Hermes (f. 89v). We have been unable to identify them or find printed editions.

ff. 90v-93, *Epistola Arnaldi ville nove. Incipit liber qui dicitur flos regis de quodam phylosopho, incipit, "Scias, o, Rex quod sapientes in opera posuerunt multas res, multosque modus operandi ... lapis albus fiat et ac in ultimo rebeus eveniat"*;

Pseudo-Arnald of Villanova, *Epistola super alchemia ad regem Neapolitanum* or *Flos regis, Ad regem Neapolitanum*; "Corpus arnaldista, 2.8.1 (Online Resources); *Opera* (1504-1532), f. 398r, and Venice, 1505, f. 354v (Online Resources); Thorndike and Kibre, 1963, col. 1387. This is a clear, concise outline of the art of alchemical transmutation addressed to King Robert of Naples.

ff. 93v-96v, *A quidam philosopho amico. Incipiunt conclusiones Speculi Alchimista[?]*, incipit, "Conclusio est quod Alchimia est ars siue scientia transmutandi metallum imperfectum in metallum perfectum; Secunda conclusio est quod philosophos qui libros scripserunt de ipsa alchimia omnis sub umbra et uelamine loquenti ...";

Twenty propositions, or conclusions, concerning Alchemy, beginning with a general definition, and then continuing with more technical observations about the properties of metals and the process of transmutation.

ff. 96v-97, *Ab amico habui sub secreto. Operatio alchimica in certa auctoris et in primis tabula smaragdina ...*, incipit, "Vera est sine mendacio certum et verissimum illud quod superius est sicut est quod inferius est ... Hic itaque uocatus hermes trisimegistes totius mundi habens scientias et sapientiam";

The *Tabula Smaragdina* or "Emerald Tablet," said to be by Hermes Trismegistus; Thorndike and Kibre, 1963, co. 1691; Pereira, 2000; a brief and very influential text in the alchemical tradition, which circulated widely in manuscripts and early printed editions, and was the subject of commentaries for centuries; it was translated into English by Isaac Newton (1642-1726/7).

ff. 97-108v, incipit, "Et sobto breuita seguita questo che si contiene nel libro ... fare de fixo uolatile farmi in questo modo";

This begins a long section in Italian; many of these texts are related in topic to the Latin texts included in the manuscript (and this may include translations of the Latin texts).

ff. 108v-112v, *Modo di fare il corpo fisso uolatile ...; Modo di fare uolatile fisso ...; La resolutione di tutti de corpi calcinati aqua ...; ...; A fare oro potabile in un'altro modo ...; ... A sigillare la bocca in circulatione ...; Lapis perfectus uerus et magnus ...; Vera Alchimie nobilis operatio ...;*

Ten alchemical (and other?) recipes or procedures in Italian and Latin.

ff. 113-122v, *Lapis philosophorum supra Modum uulgi illius* <?>, incipit, "Piglia nel nome de iddio, de luna fina ben purgata pro cineritio ..."; [f. 119], *Additione per la sopra detta opera*, incipit, "Nota che Arnaldo piglia quella poluere nigra ..."; [f. 122v], *Fare l'oleo di tartare prola* <sop<sup>la</sup>> *opera*, incipit, "Piglia sal de tartaro bianco ... pro fetto pro la tua"; [ff. 123-127v, blank, apart from the statement on f. 123, "opera s[op]<sup>tor</sup> certa e prouata del sop<sup>to</sup> auctore"]

The art or science of alchemy, a discipline with roots in the Ancient world, was transmitted to Western Europe in translations from the Arabic in the twelfth century, and from that point was an established part of the Western European intellectual tradition through the seventeenth century (and indeed well after that). The effort to change base metals into gold (*chrysopoeia*) and the search for the agent that made this possible, the "Philosopher's Stone," is the most well-known aspect of alchemy, but the interests and goals of alchemists were broader, involving the transmutation of metals in general, producing better medicine, improving and using natural substances, and understanding material change (Principe, p. 122). By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, described as "alchemy's golden age," alchemists had access to an ever-growing body of written treatises, which circulated in print and in manuscripts, which guided their pursuit of their art in laboratories across Europe.

Pseudonymous texts were an important part of the alchemical tradition, both to protect the identity of the authors, and to borrow the authority of famous names. The longest text in this manuscript, and the first, is *Testamentum ultimum* or *novissimum* (the meaning is the same, the latest, or final Testament) attributed to Raymond Lull (Ramón Lull) (1232-1316). Lull was an amazingly prolific writer, and his contributions to many fields, including philosophy, theology, and apologetics are important, but he did not write any of the many alchemical treatises that circulated under his name (Pereira, 1989, and Online Resources). The *Testamentum* by Pseudo-Lull is the oldest, and arguably most important text in the corpus. The *Testamentum ultimum* in our manuscript is related to this older work. A similar, although slightly smaller, corpus of material circulated under the name of Arnald of Villanova (c. 1240-1311), a Catalan physician. His authentic writings include important medical treatises, as well as numerous works of theology. None of the corpus of alchemical texts—including twenty alchemical texts, recipes, and two medical-alchemical works—that circulated as his, however, are now considered authentic works (Calvet, 2011, pp. 33-103). Our manuscript includes his short treatise explaining alchemical transmutation addressed to King Robert of Naples.

Most of the treatises in this extensive collection, however, are not well-known alchemical treatises. This is a collection made, probably in the seventeenth century, by an enthusiastic Italian alchemist, who was gathering material from his friends and fellow practitioners. He describes the third text, a dialogue between a master and student, as found among "old writings" in Germany. The fourth text was acquired from a friend in Italy. He notes that he acquired the "Emerald Tablet" (a text that in fact circulated widely in both manuscript and in print), secretly from a friend. And so forth. Secrecy was always important to practitioners of alchemy, and alchemical texts circulated privately in manuscript long after the invention of printing in the fifteenth century. Further study of the content of this complex volume may allow scholars to recreate the intellectual milieu of our unidentified alchemist in early modern Italy.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Alchemy Website

<http://www.alchemywebsite.com/index.html>

Michela Pereira, The Pseudo-Lullian Alchemical Corpus

[http://www.ramonlull.net/sw\\_studies/l\\_en/s\\_pseudo\\_1.htm](http://www.ramonlull.net/sw_studies/l_en/s_pseudo_1.htm)

Pseudo-Ramon Lull, *Testamentum novissimum*. Basel, Peter Perna, 1572

[https://books.google.nl/books?id=uGRWAAAACAAJ&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.nl/books?id=uGRWAAAACAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s)

Pseudo-Ramon Lull, *Testamentum novissimum*, in *Libelli aliquot chemici*, Basel, Conrad Waldkirch, 1600

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/um7yxz6q>

Pseudo-Ramon Lull, *Testamentum novissimum*, in *Fasciculus aureus*, Frankfurt, 1630

[https://books.google.nl/books?id=e\\_JMAAAAACAAJ&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.nl/books?id=e_JMAAAAACAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s)

Pseudo-Arnald of Villanova, *Epistola super alchemia ad regem Neapolitanum* in *Opera*, Venice, 1505

<https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de//resolve/display/bsb10174017.html>

Antoine Calvet, "La tradition alchimique latine (XIIIe -XVe siècle) et le corpus alchimique du pseudo-Arnaud de Villeneuve," *Médiévales* [Online], 2007

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Arnau DB. Corpus digital d'Arnau de Vilanova, The pseudo-Arnaldian alchemical corpus (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

<https://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/arnau/en/corpus-alquimic>

Corpus Arnaldista

<https://sites.google.com/site/omnedecus/Home/textos/el-rosario/5-influencia/2-8-1-corpus-arnaldista>

Emerald Tablet of Hermes

[http://www.levity.com/alchemy/emerald\\_latin.html](http://www.levity.com/alchemy/emerald_latin.html)

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