

Cannabis in Alchemical Literature: Green Lion, Philosopher's Stone

By Ryan Murtha

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Twelve Keys of Basil Valentine (1599); gnostic emblem

Beatrice stood, her eyes still rivetted on the eternal wheels,
and constantly, turning mine thence, I gazed on her instead.
'Twas even thus a change came over me, as Glaucus, eating
of the weed, changed race
and grew a god among the gods of the sea.
Transhumanised...

Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy (Il Paradiso, Canto 1, lines 64-69)*

Herbal medicines and drugs play a more important part in Chinese alchemy than in the western branches. Plant-produced drugs were supposed to give quick but more transient results, while those from minerals were slower but surer... although authorities like Ko Hung assert that metals produce better results in this world, it must be remembered that the immortals of the Isle of P'eng used herbs, since the herbs of immortality grew there and it was to obtain these that the various expeditions were mounted.

Jean Cooper, *Chinese Alchemy: The Taoist Quest for Immortality*

[T]here is much reason for thinking that the ancient Taoists experimented systematically with hallucinogenic smokes, using techniques which arose directly out of liturgical observance... At all events the incense-burner remained the centre of changes and transformations associated with worship, sacrifice, ascending perfume of sweet savour, fire, combustion, disintegration, transformation, vision, communication with spiritual beings, and assurances of immortality. Wai tan and nei tan met around the incense-burner. Might one not indeed think of it as their point of origin?

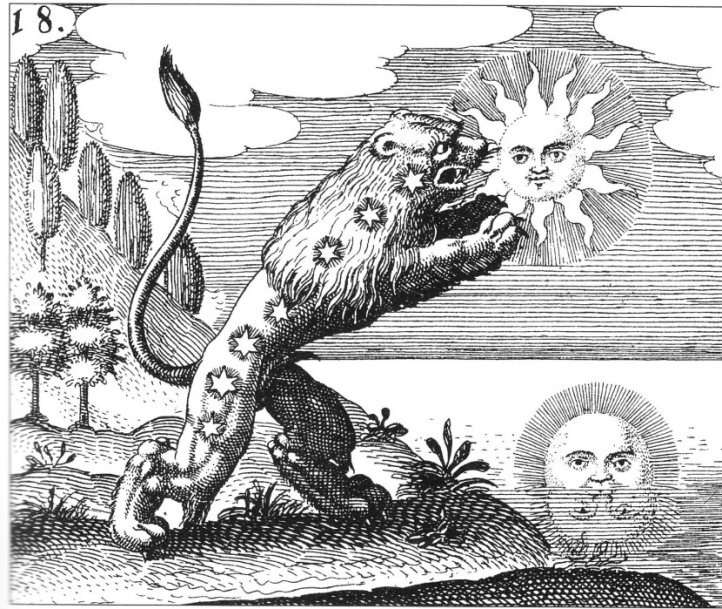
Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*

Gilgamesh's quest for the plant of immortality may hide an idealized memory of, and nostalgia for, abandoned shamanic drug plants... Is the plant they seek, in reality, the drug plant with which their shamanic predecessors had 'attained immortality', that is, seen the things of heaven? Such myths seem to signal the end of the free performance of the shamanic rite, and the inculcation of a new ethic of subservience to the state... There are a number of Mesopotamian myths that show a concern about the inability of human beings to fly, alongside those that show anxiety about the inaccessibility of a plant with special powers. It might be anxiety over the loss of the shamanic performance, and the drug plant used in it, that these myths record.

Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies*

It will be questioned perhaps by the envious to what purpose these sheets are prostituted, and especially that drug wrapped in them - the Philosopher's Stone...

Thomas Vaughan, *Aula Lucis*



Atalanta Fugiens (1617)

Three things suffice for the work: a white smoke, which is water; a green Lion, which is the ore of Hermes, and a fetid water... The stone, known from the chapters of books, is white smoke and water.

Michael Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens*

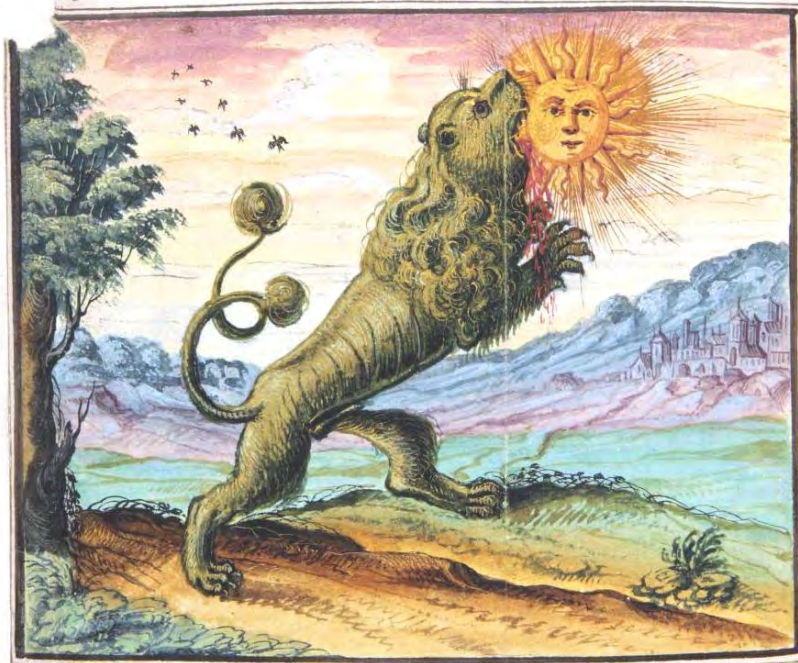
Of this self-same body, which is the matter of the Stone, three things are chiefly said; that it is a green Lion, a stinking Gum, and a white Fume... Having twelve pounds of Green Lion thus brought into gum, thou mayst believe...

Philosophia Maturata

The Wolf is the antimony; the Lion, however, the pure gold... The philosophers have written entire books about it. Especially in the Rosarium it is often said that there are three things that do the work, Leo viridis (Green Lion), aqua foetida (evil-smelling water), and fumus albus (white steam).

Johannes Agricola, *Treatise on Gold*

Spernitur à Stultis, (LEO VIRIDIS) sed amatur plus ab edoctis.



Vas-ferreus, ignis, cum tempore latens.

Radix Artis est sapor sapientum. ~~Haec~~ est MINERA omnium Salium & dicitur Sal amari
 Nullo tamen modo poteris Lapidem preparare, absq̄ DVNECH Viridi & Liquido, quod vide-
 tur in mineris nostris nasci: O benedicta ergo Viriditas, qua cunctas res generas, Crescere & ger-
 minare facis, unde noscas, quod nullum etiam Vegetabile atque fructus nullus apparet germi-
 nans, quoniam sit ibi Viridis Color.

Leo Viridis- is the Ore of Hermes... The green is that which is perfect upon the stone, and can easily be made into gold. All growing things are green, as also our stone. It is called a plant. The stone cannot be prepared without green... Gold, according to some opinions.

Martinus Rulandus, *Lexicon of Alchemy*

This substance the philosophers called immature or unripe gold, or the "Green" Lion... Having said this, because he had proved it, he called the first substance "green lion" and "unripe gold," for so it is.

R.W. Councell, *Apollogia Alchymiae*

You will see marvelous signs of this Green Lion, such as could be bought by no treasures of the Roman Leo. Happy he who has found it and learned to use it as a treasure!

Paracelsus, *The Treasure of Treasures*

Beware therefore of many, and hold thee to one thing. This one thing is naught else but the lyon greene...

Bloomfield's Blossoms

First in our green Lion is had the true matter and of what colour it is, and is called Adrop or Azocke, Duenech.

Donum Dei

Unvail'd, unbound, from Earthly Chains set free,
This third most sacred Fire the Sophi see,
Which Azot some, but others do it name
The Lyon Green, well known in Rolls of Fame.

Verse on the Threefold Sophic Fire

These blear'd eyes
Have wak'd to read your several colours, sir,
Of the pale citron, the green lion, the crow,
The peacock's tail, the plumed swan...
Thou has descry'd the flower, the sanguis agni?

Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*



A green Gum called our green Lyon, which Gum dry well, yet beware thou not burn his Flowers nor destroy his greenness.

Sir George Ripley, *The Bosome-Book of Sir George Ripley*

Wherefore they being silent, Ripley the first, and indeed the only man of all, declares to us, that the key of all the more secret chemy lies in the milk and blood of the green lion... And therefore, to be more short, when all the parts of our stone, are thus gathered together, it appears plainly

enough, what is our mercury, our sulphur, our alchemic body, our ferment, our dissolvent, our green lion.

Five Preparations of the Philosopher's Mercury



By which Green Lion another saith, "All Philosophers understand Green Gold, multiplicable, spermatick, and not yet Perfected by Nature; or Assa Foetida, because in the very first of this Operation or Distillation, a white Fume with a stinking smell exhales"

I have ventured to call the Green Lion of Ripley the Key of the Work, because his Expositor has as good as called it so. "Learn then," says he, "to know this Green Lion, and its Preparation, which is all in all in the Art; it's the only Knot; untye it, and you are as good as Master: For whatever then remains, is but to know the outward Regimen of the Fire, for to help on Nature's Internal Work"

A Short Enquiry Concerning the Hermetic Art

But they said I could not be a full colleague so long as I did not know their Lion and was fully aware of what he could do internally and externally.

The Parabola of Madathanus

Then the sowing of the field can take place, and you obtain the Mineral Stone, and the Green Lion that imbibes so much of its own spirit.

The Glory of the World

Mercury is our doorkeeper, our balm, our honey, oil, urine, may-dew, mother, egg, secret furnace, oven, true fire, venomous Dragon, Theriac, ardent wine, Green Lion, Bird of Hermes, Goose of Hermogenes, two-edged sword in the hand of the Cherub the Tree of Life, etc.; it is our true, secret vessel, and the Garden of the Sages in which our Sun rises and sets.

Eirenaeus Philalethes, *Metamorphosis of Metals*

Perfect bodies we naturally calcine with the first, without adding any impure body but one commonly called by philosophers the green lion, and this is the medium for perfectly combining the tinctures of the Sun and Moon.

The Golden Tract

And now it is known in Metallic Mysteries, that at the very Entrance, we meet the enigma of the Lion of Green growth, which we call the Green Lion; which, I pray thee, do not think is so-called, from any other Cause but its Colour.

Aesch Mezareph

Metals, as above stated, contain a salt, out of which fire and the sagacity of the artist can educe a water, which the Sages call Mercurial water, the Virgin's milk, Lunaria, May dew, the Green Lion, the Dragon, the Fire of the Sages... This is the hidden and incomparable treasure of all the Sages, which none can obtain except through the teachings of a Master, or by revelation of God, who, in His goodness makes it known to whom He will.

The Theatre of Terrestrial Astronomy

Moreover the Lion is said to be green in the threefold aspect. First in respect of his attractive power, for here the Central Sun is like to the Celestial Sun and makes the world flourishing and green. Secondly, it is called the green Lion, because as yet the Gold is incomplete, nor fixed in any body, and therefore is called living Gold. Thirdly, it is called a Lion by reason of its very great

strength, reference being had to the Animal Lion, for as all beasts obey the lion, so all metallic bodies do give place to this living Gold.

The Crowning of Nature



Allegory Lapidem

You have then nourished and dissolved the true lion with the blood of the green lion.

The Golden Tripod

The aforesaid Green Lion's Blood is the true Philosopher's Oil, above all aromas, always fixed and unalterable in the fire.

Conrad Poyselius, *Another Corollary*

With the third which is a permanent incombustible unctuous humidity, our fire natural, Hermes tree is burnt to ashes... This menstrue [brought out of our earth by the water] is the blood of the green Lyon not of Vitriol, as dame Venus [that water] can tell you if you ask her in the beginning of the work. For this secret is hid by all Philosophers... After I knew the true matter I studied five years before I could extract out of the stone its precious juice by reason I knew not the secret fire of the sages which makes to flow out of this Plant which is dry in appearance, a water which wets not the hands which by the magical union of the dry water of the sea of the sages resolves it self into a viscous water, a mercurial liquor which is the principle the foundation & the Key of our art.

Isaac Newton, Keynes MS #53

I have seen the Green Catholic Lion, and the Blood of the Lion, i.e., the Gold of the Sages, with my own eyes, have touched it with my hands, tasted it with my tongue, smelled it with my nose.

Heinrich Khunrath

I know well this Lyon Greene...

Hunting of the Greene Lyon

This is called the blessed stone; this earth is white and foliated, wherein the Philosophers do sow their gold... The fourth color is Ruddy and Sanguine, which is extracted from the white fire only.

Jean d'Espagnet, *The Hermetic Arcanum*

For this our praised plant on high doth soar,
Above the baser dross of earthly ore,
Like the brave spirit and ambitious mind,
Whose eaglet's eyes the sunbeams cannot blind;
Nor can the clog of poverty depress
Such souls in base and native lowliness,
But proudly scorning to behold the Earth,
They leap at crowns, and reach above their birth.

Sir John Beaumont, *The Metamorphosis of Tobacco*

O how many are the seekers after this gum, and how few there are who find it! Know ye that our gum is stronger than gold, and all those who know it do hold it more honorable than gold... Our gum, therefore, is for Philosophers more precious and more sublime than pearls...

Turba Philosophorum

O pre-eminent gold of the philosophers, with which the Sons of the Wise are enriched, not with that which is coined.

Thomas Vaughan, *Anima Magica Abscondita*

Therefore I affirm that the Universal Medicine for bodies is the philosophic gold, after it has been separated and drawn to the highest state of perfection. Our common gold has absolutely nothing in common with the philosophic gold we use to begin our task. In that respect common gold is dead and clearly useless.

Philip a Gabella, *Consideratio Brevis*

The green lion is the body, or magical earth, with which you must clip the wings of the eagle; that is to say, you must fix her, so that she may fly no more. By this we understand the opening and shutting of the chaos, and that cannot be done without our proper key- -I mean our secret fire, wherein consists the whole mystery of the preparation. Our fire then is a natural fire; it is vaporous, subtle and piercing. It is that which works all in all, if we look on physical digestion; nor is there any thing in the world that answers to the stomach and performs the effects thereof but this one thing. It is a substance of propriety solar and therefore sulphurous. It is prepared, as the philosophers tell us, from the old dragon and in plain terms it is the fume of Mercury—not crude, but cocted. This fume utterly destroys the first form of gold, introducing a second and more noble one. By Mercury I understand not quicksilver but Saturn philosophical, which devours the Moon and keeps her always in his belly. By gold I mean our spermatic, green gold — not the adored lump, which is dead and ineffectual.

Thomas Vaughan, *Aula Lucis*

Our fellow-workers must be able to recognize the true lead and mercury, which are neither common cinnabar nor mercury.

Zhang Boduan, *Wuzhen Pian*

But what say you of this? The Philosophers say plainly, "Our Gold is not the common Gold, and our Silver not common Silver." I say that they call it water Gold because it ascendeth to higher things by virtue of the fire, and in truth that Gold is not common Gold, for the common people would not believe that it could ascend to higher matters by reason of its fixedness.

Rosarium Philosophorum

I will now speak of the Philosophers' Secret, and blessed Viridity, which is to be seen and felt here below. It is the Proteus of the old Poets; for if the Spirit of this green Gold be at Liberty, which will not be till the Body is bound, then he will discover all the Essences of the Universal Center.

Preface to the Rosicrucian Manifestos

Our Gold is not vulgar Gold, which is sold by goldsmiths, or anything like it, but it is a certain other substance more precious than Gold itself, whose green and golden Colour doth sufficiently demonstrate its original and Excellence...This is that Liquor permanent and Triumphant over all Metals and Stone, the blood of the Green Lion, the Secret Fire...

Christopher Grummet, *Sanguis Naturae*

Our secret fire, that is, our fiery and sulfurous water, which is called Balneum Mariae... This water is a white vapor.

The Secret Book of Artephius

Know the secret fire of the wise, which is the one and sole agent efficient for the opening, subliming, purifying, and disposing of the material.

Letter to the True Disciples of Hermes

Study, then, this fire, for had I myself found it at the first, I should not have erred two hundred times upon the veritable material.

John Pontanus, *The Secret Fire*

No philosopher has ever openly Revealed this secret fire, and this powerful Agent, which works all the Wonders of the Art.

The Hermetic Triumph

It is the Philosophers' Fire, by which the Tree of Hermes is burnt to ashes.

The Tomb of Semiramis

It is this most famous medicine which philosophers have been wont to call their Stone, or Powder. This is its fount and fundament, and the Medicine whereby Aesculapius raised the dead. This is the herb by which Medea restored Jason to life.

Benedictus Figulus, A Golden and Blessed Casket of Nature's Marvels

Then must you wait till he shall obtain some substance from his mercury as it happens in the fruit of trees. For as the argent vive, both of perfect and imperfect bodies is a tree, so they can have no more nourishment, otherwise than from their own mercury... In this therefore, it is understood, that mercury, the much commended tree must be taken...

The Summary of Philosophy

The Philosopher's stone, or tincture is nothing else, but Gold digested to the highest degree: For vulgar Gold is like an herb without seed, when it is ripe it brings forth seed; so Gold when it is ripe yields seed, or tincture.

Michael Sendivogius

Take the fire, or quicklime, of which the philosophers speak, which grows on trees, for in that God himself burns with divine love.

Gloria Mundi

It appears then that this Stone is a Vegetable, as it were, the sweet Spirit that proceeds from the Bud of the Vine...

Count Bernard Trevisan, *Verbum Dismissum*

Trust my word, seek the grass that is trefiol. Thou knowest the name, and art wise and cunning if thou findest it.

The Sophic Hydrolith

You ought to know concerning the Quintessence, that it is a matter little and small, lodged and harbored in some Tree, Herb, Stone, or the like...

The Tomb of Semiramis

It contains the fire of Nature, or the Universal Spirit; with Air as its vehicle it contains Water, which must be separated in the beginning of the work, and also earth which remains behind in the form of caput mortuum, where the fire has left it, and is the true Red Earth wherein the fire dwelt for a while. The subject, duly collected, should not be less than eight nor more than sixteen ounces: place it in a china or glazed basin and cover it loosely to keep the dust out.

Sigismond Bacstrom, *Rosicrucian Aphorisms and Process*

Long have I had in my nostrils the scent of the herb moly which became so celebrated thanks to the poets of old... this herb is entirely chemical. It is said that Odysseus used it to protect himself against the poisons of Circe and the perilous singing of the Sirens. It is also related that Mercury himself found it and that it is an effective antidote to all poisons. It grows plentifully on Mount Cyllene in Arcadia...

Michael Maier, *Septimana Philosophica*

The peace god of Cyllene had given him a white flower,
Moly the gods name it, and black is the root that holds it.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

I call it the Flower of Honey,
The Flower known to the Wise...
Homer knew it well, and called it Moly...
The gods also have bestowed it upon man
As a singularly great gift,
Designed to assuage and comfort him.

It is called the Red and Green Lion...

Certain Verses of an Unknown Writer, Concerning the Great Work of the Tincture

Depart from me, thou murky cave of Circe, for I am ashamed,
Belonging as I do to heaven, to eat acorns like a beast.
Rather do I pray to receive from God the soul-healing flower Moly,
The good physic against evil thoughts.

Anthologia Palatina

The most renowned of herbs, on Homer's testimony, discovered by Mercury as a remedy against all kinds of poisons....

Pseudo-Apuleius

The most renowned of plants is, according to Homer, the one that he thinks is called by the gods moly, assigning to Mercury its discovery and teaching of its power over the most potent sorceries.

Pliny

And Hermes gave Odysseus moly - the most effective of magic drugs - but his companions, in their stupidity, were transformed by Circe from men into irrational animals.

Theocritus

I wasn't born on wandering Delos nor out of the waves of the sea nor 'in hollow caves', but on the very Islands of the Fortunate, where everything grows 'unsown, untilled'. Toil, old age and sickness are unknown there. There's no asphodel, mallow, onions, vetch or any other such worthless stuff to be seen in the fields, but everywhere there's moly, panacea, nepenthe, marjoram, ambrosia, and lotus, roses and violets and hyacinths, and gardens of Adonis to refresh the eye and nose. Born as I was amidst these delights I didn't start life crying, but smiled sweetly at my mother straight away.

Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*

We can conclude from this that from the very beginning Homer's moly was a thing surrounded by mystery and that it is not the botanists but the mythologists who are really in a position to tell us the truth about it. Unfortunately, it is precisely what the mythologists have to tell us that has tended to be neglected, and even the most recent and learned discussions of the matter are content to relegate the question of this mythical symbolism to a couple of lines. In particular the story of the Christian symbolism connected with the "soul-healing flower" has received deplorably little attention and it is this that I shall make the starting-point of my enquiry.

Hugo Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*

In Thrace near the Hebrus there grows a plant which resembles the origanum (wild marjoram); the inhabitants of that country throw the leaves on a brazier and inhale the smoke, which intoxicates them.

Pseudo Plutarch, *De Fluvius*

The Scythians take the seed of this cannabis and, crawling under the mats, throw it on the hot stones, where it smoulders and sends forth such fumes that no Greek vapour-bath could surpass it. And they howl in their happiness at the vapour-bath.

Herodotus

The lower people [Sufis] are fond of raising their spirits to a state of intoxication... The smoke exalts their courage and throws them into a state in which delightful visions dance before their imagination.

Cartsen Niebuhr, *Travels in Arabia*

For take but Monardus his own tale; and by him it should seem; that in the taking of Tobacco they [the priests] were drawn up; and separated from all gross, and earthly cogitations, and as it were carried up to a more pure and clear region, of fine conceits & actions of the mind, in so much, as they were able thereby to see visions, as you say: & able likewise to make wise and sharp answers, and ecstasies, as we are wont to call it, have the power and gift thereby, to see more wonders, and high mystical matters, then all they can do, whose brains, & cogitations, are oppressed with the thick and foggy vapours of gross, and earthly substances... but being used to clear the brains, and thereby making the mind more able, to come to herself, and the better to exercise her heavenly gifts, and virtues; me think, as I have said, I see more cause why we should

think it to be a rare gift imparted unto man, by the goodness of God, than to be an invention of the devil.

Roger Marbecke, *Defense of Tobacco*

There is an Hearbe in India, of pleasaunt smell, but who so commeth to it, feeleth pleasant smart, for there breede in it, a number of small Serpents.

John Lyly, *Euphues and His England*

...And another called bang, like in effect to opium, "which puts them for a time into a kind of ecstasis," and makes them gently to laugh.

Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*

It is hashish that brings enlightenment to reason; but he who devours it like food will become a donkey. The elixir is moderation; eat of it just one grain, so that it can permeate your existence like gold.

Amir Ahmad, *Mahsati-Roman*

To the Hindu the hemp plant is holy. A guardian lives in the bhang leaf... To see in a dream the leaves, plant, or water of bhang is lucky... No good thing can come to the man who treads underfoot the holy bhang leaf. A longing for bhang foretells happiness.

Besides as a cure for fever, bhang has many medicinal virtues... It cures dysentery and sunstroke, clears phlegm, quickens digestion, sharpens appetite, makes the tongue of the lisper plain, freshens the intellect, and gives alertness to the body and gaiety to the mind. Such are the useful and needful ends for which in his goodness the Almighty made bhang... It is inevitable that temperaments should be found to whom the quickening spirit of bhang is the spirit of freedom and knowledge. In the ecstasy of bhang the spark of the Eternal in man turns into light the murkiness of matter... Bhang is the Joygiver, the Skyflier, the Heavenly-guide, the Poor Man's Heaven, the Soother of Grief... No god or man is as good as the religious drinker of bhang... The supporting power of bhang has brought many a Hindu family safe through the miseries of famine. To forbid or even seriously to restrict the use of so holy and gracious an herb as the hemp would cause widespread suffering and annoyance and to large bands of worshiped ascetics, deep-seated anger. It would rob the people of a solace in discomfort, of a cure in sickness, of a guardian whose gracious protection saves them from the attacks of evil influences... So grand a result, so tiny a sin!

J.M. Campbell, "On the Religion of Hemp"

Indian Hemp Drugs Commission Report

The five kingdoms of plants, having soma as their chief (crestha), we address; the darbha, hemp, barley, saha - let them free us from distress.

Athara-Veda

It creates vital energy, increases mental powers and internal heat; corrects irregularities of the phlegmatic humour; and is an elixir vitae. It was originally produced, like nectar, from the ocean by churning with Mt. Mandara, and inasmuch as it gives victory in the three worlds, it, the delight of the king of the gods, is called vijaya, the victorious. This desire-fulfilling drug was obtained by men on earth, through desire for the welfare of all people. To those who regularly use it, it begets joy and destroys every anxiety.

Rajavallabha

The subtler attainments come with birth or are attained through herbs, mantra, austerities, or concentration.

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

The fourth method of awakening [i.e. enlightenment] is through the use of specific herbs. In Sanskrit it is called aushadhi... knowledge of the herbs is a closely guarded secret...

Swami Saraswati, *Kundalini Tantra*

By means of drugs and incantations one may change bronze into gold. By skilful use of chemical substances, silver may be transformed into gold and gold into silver.

Prafulla Chandra Ray

[The Hindus] have a science similar to alchemy which is quite peculiar to them. They call it rasayana. It means an art which is restricted to certain operations, drugs, and compound medicines, most of which are taken from plants.

Al-Biruni

Ch'eng Wei tried to make gold according to the directions of the Vast Treasure in the Pillow. He was unsuccessful, and his wife, going to look at him, found him just fanning the ashes in order to heat the retort. In the retort was some quicksilver. She said: "Just let me see what I can do," and from her pocket produced a drug, a small quantity of which she threw into the retort. A very short while afterwards she took the retort out of the furnace, and there was solid silver all complete!

Ko Hung, *Pao P'u Tzu*

Once the floriate elixir is finished, one ounce constitutes a "transcendent dose." If one wishes to remain in the mundane world, half an ounce is sufficient.

The fruit of this tree will be ring shaped. Its name is the Tree of Ringed Adamant. Eating its fruit causes you to be born together with the heavens and rise up to the Grand Bourne, your form transformed into clouds.

The Upper Scripture of Purple Texts Inscribed by Spirits

Xianke said, "We have numinous herbs and can only practice flying steps. Today the whole household is secluded in the rear mountains and further cultivates Taoist methods. As for the matter of direct ascension, how could I have expectations therein? We only have long life and that is all."

Sun Guanxian, *Beimeng suoyan*

It was after this discourse that the Son of Heaven for the first time performed in person the sacrifices of the furnace... He occupied himself in experiments with powdered cinnabar, and all sorts of drugs, in order that he might obtain gold.

Ssu-ma Ch-ien, *Historical Memoirs*

The way to make oneself a *Fo Shih Hsien* [a drug-using supernatural being] lies in the use of drugs of a nature similar to oneself.

Ts'an T'ung Ch'i



He proved the truth of the *Ts'an T'ung Chi*; In a golden furnace he melted the Holy Drug.

Chiang Yen

Ma-fen (cannabis) has a spicy taste; it is toxic; it is used for waste diseases and injuries; it clears blood and cools temperature; it relieves fluxes; it undoes rheumatism; it discharges pus. If taken in excess, it produces hallucinations and a staggering gait. If taken over a long term, it causes one to communicate with spirits and lightens one's body.

T'ang Shen-wei, *Cheng-lei pen-ts'ao*

Ma-fen if taken in excess will produce hallucinations. If taken over a long time, it makes one communicate with spirits and lightens one's body.

Shen-nung pen-ts'ao ching

Those people who want to see spirits use raw ma fruits, Ch'ang-p'u, and K'uei-chiu in equal parts, pound them into pills the size of marbles and take one facing the sun every day. After one hundred days, one can see spirits.

Meng Shen, *Shih-liao pen-ts'ao*

This elixir transforms a mortal into a divine transcendent person. The teachings of the Tao emphasize that one must forget his own consciousness in order to attain the goals of Tao. It is precisely this state which can be attained with cannabis.

Shennong

If even the herb chu-sheng can make one live longer, why not try putting the Elixir into the mouth? Gold by nature does not rot or decay; Therefore it is of all things most precious. When the artist includes it in his diet the duration of life becomes everlasting...

When the golden powder enters the five entrails, a fog is dispelled, like rain-clouds scattered by wind. Fragrant exhalations pervade the four limbs; The countenance beams with well-being and joy. Hairs that were white all turn to black; teeth that had fallen grow in their former place. The old dotard is again a lusty youth; the decrepit crone is again a young girl. He whose form has changed and escaped the perils of life, has for his title the name of True Man.

Shen Hsien Chuan

Take three pounds of genuine cinnabar, and one pound of white honey. Mix them. Dry the mixture in the sun. Then roast it over a fire until it can be shaped into pills. Take ten pills of the size of a hemp seed every morning. Inside of a year, white hair will turn black, decayed teeth will grow again, and the body will become sleek and glistening. If an old man takes this medicine for a long period of time, he will develop into a young man. The one who takes it constantly will enjoy eternal life, and will not die.

Pao P'u Tzu

The work is easy and the medicine is not far away. If the secret is disclosed, it will be so simple that every one may get a good laugh.

Zhang Boduan, Wuzhen Pian

Indeed, if we were to tell the vulgar herd the ordinary name of our substance, they would look upon our assertion as a daring falsehood. But if they were acquainted with its virtue and efficacy, they would not despise that which is, in reality, the most precious thing in the world.

Gloria Mundi

Therefore with all thy strength get this Water, of which an Ounce is worth above a Thousand Pound, because by this alone, without any other Labour, except the Addition of a clean, pure body, thou mayst perfect our most Honoured Stone, to which no Treasure in the World can be equaled.

Eirenaeus Philalethes, *The Fountain of Chymical Philosophy*

If you ask whether the substance of our stone be dear, I tell you that the poor possess it as well as the rich.

The Book of Alze

Mark well that which follows: The substance of the Stone of the Philosophers is common: one finds it everywhere...

Albertus Magnus
Compound of Compounds

Whoever wishes to know the method of compounding the medicine ought to begin by seeding and planting it in his own garden...This kind of precious thing will be found in every house. Nevertheless, ignorant people are not able to recognize it.

Zhang Bouan, *Wuzhen Pian*

It is manifest to all men, the poor have more of it (materia prima) than the rich. The good part of it people discard, and the bad part they retain.

Paracelsus

Men have it before their eyes, handle it with their hands, yet know it not, though they constantly tread it under their feet.

The Sophic Hydrolith

The substance is vile and yet most precious. Take ten parts of our air; one part of living gold or living silver; put all this into your vessel; subject the air to coction until it becomes first water and

then something which is not water. If you do not know how to do this and how to cook air, you will will go wrong, for herein is the True Matter of the Philosophers.

Michael Sendivogius, *The New Chemical Light*

This stone is of delicate touch, and there is more mildness in its touch than in its substance. Of sweet taste, and its proper nature is aerial.

Khalid said: Tell me of its odor, before and after its confection.

Morienus answered: Before confectioning, its odor is very heavy and foul. I know of no other stone like it nor having its powers. While the four elements are contained in this stone, it being thus like the world in composition, yet no other stone like it in power or nature is to be found in the world, nor has any of the authorities ever performed the operation other than by means of it. And the compositions attempted by those using anything else in this composition will fail utterly and come to nothing. The thing in which the entire accomplishment of this operation consists of the red vapor, the yellow vapor, the white vapor, the green lion, ocher, the impurities of the dead and of the stones, blood, eudica, and foul earth.

Begin in the Creator's name, and with his vapor take the whiteness from the white vapor. The whole key to accomplishment of this operation is in the fire, with which the minerals are prepared and the bad spirits held back, and with which the spirit and body are joined.

In answer to you question about the white vapor, or virgins milk, you may know that it is a tincture and spirit of those bodies already dissolved and dead, from which the spirits have been withdrawn. It is the white vapor that flows in the body and removes its darkness, or earthiness, and impurity, uniting the bodies into one and augmenting their waters.

Without the white vapor, there could have been no pure gold nor any profit in it.

The Book of Morienus

All true philosophers agree that the First Matter of metals is a moist vapor...

On the Philosopher's Stone

The philosopher's mercury is an unctuous vapor...

R.W. Councill, *Apollonia Alchymiae*

Our true and real Matter is only a vapor... This Green Dragon is the natural Gold of the Philosophers, exceedingly different from the vulgar, which is corporeal and dead... but ours is spiritual, and living... Our Gold is called Natural, because it is not to be made by Art, and since it is known to none, but the true Disciples of Hermes, who understand how to separate it from its original Lump, tis also called Philosophical; and if God had not been so gracious, as to create this first Chaos to our hand, all our Skill and Art in the Construction of the great Elixir would be in vain.

Baron Urbigerus, *Aphorismi Urbigerani*

The white Tiger grows angry in the western mountains and the green Dragon is irresistibly fierce in the eastern sea. Capture them with both hands and let them fight to death. They then change into a layer of the powder of purple gold.

Zhang Boduan, *Wuzhen Pian*



Vaticinia Pontificum



Chemical Tables of Senior Zadith

There are two vapors: the light and the heavy. They are the steam and the smoke. They are the dry and the moist. The smoke is the dry, the steam is the moist. The smoke is the soul, the steam is the spirit, and it is the moist.

Muhammed Ibn Umayl al-Tamini, *Silvery Water, or The Chemical Tables of Senior Zadith*

What though thou dye'st my lungs in deepest black.
A Mourning habit, suits a sable heart.
What though thy fumes sound memory do crack,
forgetfulness is fittest for my smart.
O sacred fume, let it be Carv'd in oak,
that words, Hopes, wit, and all the world are smoke.

The Poor Laboring Bee

Ouid 'mongst all his Metamorphosis
Ne're knew a transformation like to this,
Nor yet could Oedipus e're understand,
How to turne Land to smoake, and smoake to Land.
For by the means of this bewitching smother,
One Element is turn'd into another,
As Land to fire, fire into Ayrie matter,
From ayre (too late repenting) turnes to water.

By Hempseed thus, fire, water, aire, earth, all
Are chang'd by pudding, leafe, roule, pipe and ball.

John Taylor, *The Praise of Hemp-Seed*

Many who found it were so intoxicated by its fumes that they remained in their place and could no longer raise themselves.

An Anonymous Treatise on the Philosopher's Stone

Another burned his eyes out, and was thus unable to supervise the calcination and the fixation: or bleared his sight with smoke to such an extent that before he cleared his eyes the nitrogen escaped. Some died of asphyxiation from the smoke. But for the greatest part they did not have enough coal in their bags and were obliged to run about to borrow it elsewhere, while in the meantime their concoction cooled off and was utterly ruined. This was of very frequent, in fact of almost constant, occurrence. Although they did not tolerate anyone among themselves save such as possessed full bags, yet these seemed to have a way of drying up very rapidly, and soon grew empty: they were obliged either to suspend their operations or to run away to borrow.

The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart

They concur in stating that there is a despised and common substance, from which, with little trouble and expense, may be obtained not only the mercury, but also the sulphur and salt, identical with that in silver and gold. This substance is, of course, not named in their practical working, as a recipe; they do not say, "Take so and so." They say: "Take antimony, or cinnabar, etc."

Apollogia Alchymiae

The philosophers have called this maid and blessed water by many thousands of different names in their books. They call it heaven, a heavenly water, a heavenly rain, a heavenly thaw, a May thaw, water of Paradise, an aqua fortis and an aquam Regis, a corrosive aquafort, a sharp vinegar and liquor, also Quintam essentiam vini, a waxy green juice, waxy mercurium, green water and Leonem viridis, quicksilver, menstruum or blood. They also call it urine and horse piss, milk and virgin's milk, water of arsenic, silver, Luna or Lunae water, woman, a female seed, a sulphuric steam and smoke, a fiery, burning spirit, a deathly all-penetrating poison, a dragon, a scorpion which eats its young, a hellish fire of horse dung, a sharp salt, sal armoniacum, a common salt, a lye, a viscous oil, the stomach of an ostrich which eats and digests all things, an eagle, a vulture and hermetic bird, a vessel and Sigillum Hermetis, a melting and calcinating oven, and innumerable other names of animals, birds, plants, waters, juices, milks and blood, etc. They have used all these names and written of it figuratively in their books. They have suggested that such a water is made of these things, with the result that all ignorant people who have searched for it in these things, have not found the desired water.

A Magnificent and Select Tract on the Philosophical Water

In this Pantagruelion have I found so much Efficacy and Energy, so much Compleatness and Excellency, so much Exquisiteness and Rarity, and so many admirable Effects and Operations of a transcendent Nature, that if the Worth and Virtue thereof had been known, when those Trees, by the Relation of the Prophet, made election of a Wooden King to rule and govern over them, it without all doubt would have carried away from all the rest the Plurality of Votes and Suffrages.

Gargantua and Pantaguel



The 13th-century folio of Villard de Honnecourt, an artist connected with cathedral builders in France, includes the following recipe:

Retain that which I will tell you. Take leaves of red cabbage, and of avens - this is an herb which one calls 'bastard cannabis.' Take a herb which one calls tansy and hemp - this is the seeds of cannabis. Crush these four herbs so that there is nothing more of the one than of the other. Afterwards you take madder two times more than any one of the four herbs, then you crush it, then you put these five herbs in a pot. And you put white wine to infuse it, the best that you are able to have, being somewhat with care that the potions not be too thick, and that one is able to drink them