CHAPTER SIX

ALCHEMY VERSE AND THE ORGANISATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Whether a quick jotting down of an idea or the careful composition of a treatise, the use of pen and paper to order thoughts is familiar to all literate men throughout history. Alchemical practitioners of all levels of literacy were among those who employed language and writing to advance their knowledge, among them the writers and annotators of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. A particularly articulate group of corpus readers emerges in the late sixteenth century: physicians discussing the uses and misuses of chemical remedies in medicine. Paracelsus, his followers and opponents constitute the most famous part of the history of pharmacy, a development which had been foreshadowed by alchemo-medical stirrings from the late Middle Ages onwards. Alchemica now appeared in private book collections at the same time as doctors refined their commonplacing techniques.

The sixteenth century generally showed crucial developments in the history of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”: the Trinity Compendium (of the previous chapter) was subjected to annotation, the Ripley Scrolls advanced towards Scotland, the “Verses upon the Elixir” now also existed in a Neo-Latin prose version, and the corpus as a whole reached peak circulation before its imminent demise in the mid-seventeenth century. Within this plurality of readings and expanding materiality, corpus manuscripts produced in the early modern medical, learned reception of alchemical poetry reveal much about their writers’ understanding of medicine and alchemy in an evolving structure of learning.

This final chapter concerns a series of notebooks written by a physician in the final decades of the sixteenth century. Widely read in the natural philosophical literature available in his time, the physician produced more than three dozen volumes in which he investigated the uses of alchemy for medical purposes, among other things, with the help of the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. The notebook writer’s contributions to manuscript culture are remarkable for three reasons: firstly, his access to literature and books details early modern communication networks and their uses of alchemical poetry. Secondly, while the Trinity Compendium of the previous
chapter represented a communication of a group of peers, the notebooks display a single individual’s working space. His personal way of arranging and processing alchemical and medical information develops a distinctive architecture of alchemo-medical thought. And thirdly, the physician’s combination of literary and actual experience provides a unique opportunity to look over the shoulder, into the mind and, exceptionally, the workshop of an early modern doctor with alchemical interests. This chapter explores the notebooks (henceforth, the ‘Sloane notebooks’, named after their current place of storage in the British Library’s Sloane collection), their contents, organisation and purpose.¹

1. The Sloane Notebooks: Medicine and the Corpus Around the “Verses upon the Elixir”

1.1. Introduction to the Notebook Series

Towards the end of the sixteenth century a physician set out to preserve the wisdom he gleaned from books in writing. His notes and thoughts, gathered over the period of several decades, eventually filled approximately fifty notebooks, of which thirty-four survive today. In their contents, these notebooks cover alchemical, medical, philosophical and political matters.² Their language is that of the learned. In their form, they employ distinctive note-taking strategies. But in their presentation, the notebooks are essentially personal: they do not record the compiler’s name, they are not numbered or indexed, and do not otherwise preserve any aid for orientation which would be necessary for anyone other than their compiler to make sense of them. Moreover, the Sloane notebooks’ compiler did not prepare texts for publication, a pursuit which led many of his contemporaries (including Simon Forman and Andreas Libavius) to write similarly extensive notes with com-

¹ Timmermann, “Doctor’s Order”, is an early version of the work presented in this chapter.
² Subject matters covered in each of the Sloane notebooks (a = alchemy; m = medicine; a/m = alchemo-medicine/pharmacy; p = allegorical painting/other): BL MSS Sloane 1041 (p), 1042 (a/m), 1043 (a/m), 1060 (a/m), 1061 (a/m), 1062 (a/m), 1063 (p), 1082 (p), 1092 (a), 1093 (m), 1095 (a), 1096 (p), 1097 (a), 1098 (a), 1099 (a/m), 1105 (a), 1113 (a), 1114 (a), 1127 (a/pharmaceutica), 1136 (a), 1146 (a), 1147 (a), 1148 (a), 1149 (a), 1150 (a), 1151 (a), 1152 (a), 1153 (a), 1158 (m), 1169 (p), 1170 (a), 1171 (a), 1181 (a), 1186 (a). The original number of notebooks is an estimate based on general statistics of manuscript loss for the period, combined with the notebooks’ own contents and references to further volumes.
parative fervour.² Without such a public purpose for his writing activity, his compilation process is an implicit, silent one. Presented with the Sloane notebook series as it now rests in the archives of the British Library, modern historians are faced with a similarly bewildering wealth of information as their compiler encountered while writing them. The following, initial introduction of the Sloane notebooks presents their general features and history, in order to facilitate a subsequent, detailed analysis of how they came into being.

The Sloane notebooks, although not marked with a name or kept as a set, are unmistakeably related to each other thanks to their compiler’s distinctive script, a somewhat forceful secretary hand.³ They were clearly compiled in the final two decades of the sixteenth century: in addition to palaeographical and textual evidence, the manuscripts’ paper and watermarks confirm their time of composition.

The notebooks’ general appearance may be described as conventional, related to humanistic ideals and Renaissance commonplacing, yet remarkably methodical: individual entries excerpted from other books are quotations or exact paraphrases, referenced with abbreviated authors’ names or, very occasionally, titles. Lists, tables of contents, indexes, references and cross-references, marginal commentaries and numbered items can be found throughout the series. Apparently written into ready-bound volumes of quarto or smaller formats (not on individual sheets gathered at a later point of time), most of the books are rather slim, containing either forty or ninety folios of sturdy paper each. Thus, easy to handle and carry around, generally devoid of illustrations and plain in their presentation of text, the notebooks were not intended to be aesthetic objects but items of use. In this respect, they resemble the laboratory notes of practical alchemists of earlier generations as well as the logbooks of their modern day descendants.

A rough classification of subjects places the bulk of materials in the category of *alchemica* (twenty volumes), followed by what Sloane chose to call

---


³ Cross-references in Sloane’s handwritten catalogue are few and unreliable; it is likely that the manuscripts had become dissociated from each other before Sloane acquired them. All three sets of shelfmarks present in most notebooks refer to the Sloane collection. Keiser proposes that “the proximity of the original numbers (in parentheses) indicate that the greater part of the manuscripts must have come into Sloane’s hands at the same time”. Keiser, “Heritage,” fn. 20.

'pharmaceutica', i.e. items on chemical medicine (mostly recipes) (six volumes); a surprisingly small section of medica proper (two volumes); and one markedly peculiar illuminated alchemical book, which combines fragments of texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” with skilful if amateur coloured paintings of mystical, Biblical and alchemical scenes. It should be noted that these manuscripts are rarely listed or identified with their title or subject matter in early modern inventories; the classifications proposed here are modern and approximations. Another five notebooks do not contain natural philosophical themes, but describe a design for two allegorical paintings and their artistic execution in great detail, mentioning “more than one hundred and thirty figures, many of them mythological, biblical and literary, but many also from classical, medieval and sixteenth-century history”; this last group, contemporaries of the compiler, further confirms the dating of the notebook series. A preliminary look between the covers reveals texts, excerpts and notes written in Latin, English and occasionally Greek. Altogether, the Sloane notebook series represents a single writer’s learned if eclectic collection of knowledge of man and nature as represented in the literature of his time.

It is noteworthy that the notebooks do not appear to have been circulated after their initial composition. Their texts were not copied further or, in the notebooks, annotated by other readers. The notebooks’ contents and stemmata relating to texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” demonstrate the seclusion of the compiler’s written thoughts quite plainly. The lack of physical evidence for the notebooks’ circulation may, in part, be due to the fact that some of the personalised, unusual copies of texts recorded in the notebooks would have any discouraged potential copyist to use them as exemplars. It seems more likely, however, that the notebooks remained solely in the hands of their compiler and did not elicit an opportunity for another’s annotation. In the notebooks, the Sloane compiler gathered the world of natural philosophical literature for his personal contemplation—a body of works available to anyone else in his professional

---

7 See also Chapter 5 above. On the circulation of pharmaceutica see Webster, “Alchemical and Paracelsian”.
8 Evett, “Elizabethan,” 141, with reference to BL MS Sloane 1082. See also Ashworth, “Natural History”.
9 Even a brief look at the extreme fragmentation of texts in these manuscripts, and their high prominence in the critical apparatus of the texts’ editions, confirms this (see Appendix).
and geographical position with as much ease, but here digested and pre-
pared for private purposes. As will become clear in their detailed analysis
below, the notebooks were intended to be instruments of research, not com-
mination.

Diagram V: Stemma, Sloane Notebook Series

This stemma was amalgamated from stemmata of relevant texts from the corpus
around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, which can be found individually with their Editions
towards the end of this book. Some sigils occur several times: they represent different stages
of compilation and/or copies of different texts within these notebooks. Sigils shown directly
beside each other represent simultaneous writing stages. Sigils not connected with another
show influences of all other manuscripts represented around them. The width of connect-
ing lines indicates the strength of connection: the thicker the line, the more copies can be
demonstrated to be sourced from that exemplar. Arrows indicate sequences of notebook
composition and interpretations of texts.
1.2. The Compiler

Given his fairly broad interest in current affairs and all things alchemical and medical, the notebook compiler’s identity is an intriguing matter. Unfortunately, neither his name nor his occupation or institutional affiliation, if any, have been recorded in writing. The notebooks indicate that the compiler was familiar with the theory, production and application of remedies beyond common household knowledge; the number and intricacy of pharmaceutical texts he recorded and his critical engagement with them in commentaries alone suggest that he was likely a pharmacist or doctor. He will be described pragmatically as the ‘physician’ in the remainder of this chapter.

The compiler’s geographical location around Cambridge or its environs is a little easier to detect, since,

    in one of the descriptions of the allegorical paintings, he writes of Philosophus holding an indenture to which is affixed ‘the common seale of owre university’, and swearing on ‘owre proctoures booke wyth a brasen chayne & bossyes’, contrasted with Historicus, whose indenture carries ‘the common seale of the university of Oxenford’.[11]

It is not possible to match the compiler’s initials “C.S.”, which grace one of the abovementioned allegorical paintings, with a specific individual registered at the University of Cambridge in the second half of the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, his use of the Trinity Compendium for his notebook compilation, as demonstrable in the stemma for the “Verses upon the Elixir”, also implies a Cambridge connection.[12] The manifestation of his own writing and his engagement with scholarly manuscripts further indicates that

---

the physician himself had enjoyed an academic training. In addition, the vernacular notebooks of the Sloane series contain intermittent personal references to the area around London. One note mentions “Brensley iiiij myles from Rochester[,] [...] Groomebrydge, and Tunnebrydge fyve miles from the Temmes” (BL MS Sloane 1146, flyleaf). The compiler’s physical presence in the London—Cambridge—Oxford area would certainly have facilitated his access to written information.

It has been proposed that the physician “had moderate Protestant religious and political attitudes, and was associated with a group of important and mainly East Anglian members of the inner circle of Elizabeth’s court. [...] In his later years he became involved in a protracted lawsuit in which he seems to have been the loser”. Much of this argument relies on the unsupported but not unlikely assumption that the allegorical notebooks contain the compiler's own writings, not copies of someone else's work. For the present purposes it is safe to assume that the Sloane notebook writer was a physician with some academic training, possibly a statesman, active in south-east England, with established connections to the University of Cambridge, in the second half of the sixteenth century.

This information may not be exhaustive: neither the physician's name, nor his training, networks or information about his private collections (if any) are explicitly recorded in extant manuscripts. However, as the following sections will show, the medical Sloane notebooks, while comparatively few and devoid of medical case histories, contain much information about him: they are a prime example for the ways in which a corpus-based history can lend a voice to previously silent historical actors.

2. Notebooks as Virtual Libraries

The Sloane notebooks encapsulate their compiler's intellectual personality, especially his aim to master the increasingly diverse pool of information available on the growing book market in an organised manner. As will become clear shortly, his notes represent an attempt to consolidate texts and experience, printed books and manuscripts, alchemy and medicine, ancient and contemporary knowledge through textual exegesis. As a map

---

13 On the Trinity Compendium, see Chapter 5 above.
14 Evett, “Elizabethan,” 151 and 142.
15 Cp. the Introduction at the beginning of this book.
to the physician’s reading experiences, the surviving notebooks invite the exploration of the wide range of publications and manuscripts he accessed over time.

Had he owned all the books he consulted for the composition of his notebooks, the physician’s reading library would have comprised an impressive collection. His classical section would have been as well stocked as any college library of the time, including Latin and Greek authorities such as Aristotle, Homer, Virgil, Cicero and Galenic writings, as well as medieval history and literature. The physician’s copies of contemporary works on natural philosophical subjects, however, could not have been accommodated on the few shelves usually set aside for them in late sixteenth-century academic libraries. Here his sources are particularly rich in vernacular works: English writings, followed by French, Italian and German publications. The medica and alchemica represented in the notebooks and, therein, the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, merit a closer investigation.

2.1. Medica

Medicine was one of the most exciting areas of learning to explore in books in the sixteenth century. Publications of both classical and contemporary authors travelled further than any medical student of previous generations ever could. Conflicting theories about the causes of disease and its treatment spread in an infectious manner. Moreover, Paracelsian lore and discussions of its intricacies, both by supporters and opponents of these theories, turned the written medical debate into a complex matter. It was in this environment that the Sloane notebook compiler cut a path through medical information in his notebooks.

The medical notebooks (most typically BL MSS Sloane 1093, 1099 and 1158) facilitate an identification of the physician’s reading material thanks to their scholarly presentation: their mostly Latin paratext (written in accordance with the medieval written medical tradition, which was perpetuated at universities and in print) often lists an author or year, i.e. publication date, after each excerpt. These pieces of information sufficed for his own reference. Unfortunately, he rarely indicated an exact title. Manuscript sources supplemented the printed materials, sought out specifically and avidly by the physician for the purpose of comparison and critical evaluation. In these

---

16 Information overload, college libraries and sixteenth-century book culture were introduced in Chapter 5 above.
instances, the source is even more difficult to pinpoint. The entire ‘virtual’ medical library of the physician nevertheless shows clear areas of preference.  

The causes of diseases and the workings of the human body represent the physician’s basis of knowledge. He explored them through Latin medical literature including pathologies (e.g. by Paris professor Jacques Houllier) and diagnostic texts (such as works on uroscopy by Petrus Forestus and Henry Daniel’s Liber uricrisiarum, circulated in manuscript). Plague treatises (mostly by French doctors, like Jean Antoine Sarazin’s De peste commentarius and works by Laurent Joubert and Auger Ferrier) are predictable additions to his literature given the frequent but sporadic outbreaks of the disease. Yet works on syphilis, otherwise so popular with the physician’s contemporaries, appear to be absent from his reading list. Regimen and paediatric works (e.g. by fellow-countryman Thomas Phaer), gynaecological treatises (by Spanish colleague Luis Mercado), botanical works on the uses of plants in remedies (e.g. Pietro Andrea Mattioli’s oeuvre) and works on remedies and pharmacopoeia (notably including Conrad Gesner’s work as well as that of his botanical student Anton Schneeberger) complement the foundations of his reading. Accordingly, medical notebooks in the Sloane series cover a broad spectrum of known diseases of the early modern period, from the cold (“morbus frigidi”) to the hot (diverse fevers), from head to toe (albeit with the customary skirting of the legs), with especially careful treatment of pains (e.g. “colicus dolor”) (MS Sloane 1099, ff. 5v–6r).

Finding strategies to restore health to a body was the physician’s most urgent pursuit. The works he consulted specifically on the manufacture and administration of remedies, pharmacopoeia, had been born out of an early medieval desire to systematise, record and rationalise pharmaceutical practises—one that the physician would continue in a different way in his alchemo-medical notebooks, as will be seen below. Even early modern pharmacopoeia like those consulted by the physician were derived from the Antidotarium Nicolai, the first comprehensive, organised pharmaceutical encyclopaedic collection of remedies in the Western world, composed in the mid-twelfth century and printed as early as in 1471. All notebook remedies thus follow a familiar format: they comprise a brief description of the

---

17 See Table IV (at the end of this chapter) for of printed sources referenced in the notebooks.

18 See e.g. Slack, Impact; and Quétel, Mal.

19 Goltz, Mittelalterliche Pharmazie.
remedy and traditional alternative terminology or names, often with a reference to alchemical authorities, followed by claims to its uses and efficacy, and, added by the compiler, a reference to the source of the information. The following notebook entry entitled “venenum pestis” describes a vaguely miraculous cure for the plague able, according to this source, to bring the near-dead back to life.

Ex Scorpionibus solet parari quoddam oleum valde compositum et apud omnes Chymistas celeberrimum vulgo oleum Elementis appellatum quod et in veneno assumpto et in pestilentibus affectibus admirabiles edit effectus, semimortuos patientes reviuiscere faciens, quod oleum in casu isto summopere commodo si eo solo loci arteriarum exteriores et cordis regio innungantur. libro de peste. pag. 176. BL MS Sloane 1099, f. 6r

It is not only in the reference to the chymical connections of scorpion oil that this excerpt shows an affinity with alchemy, but also in the ideal of a substance that removes bodily illness. Significantly, however, neither the passage cited above nor the traditional pharmacopoeia recorded the method or manufacture of remedies in any detail. Knowledge about their preparation was assumed in typical readers, i.e. mostly academically trained physicians or apothecaries, as the Middle Ages turned into the early modern period.

Ingredients peppered throughout the medical notebooks include herbal, mineral and animal substances; those available in any pharmacy, garden or kitchen, as well as more notable, often more expensive or rare materials. The physician himself underlined, among other things, cinnamon, “crocus martis” (iron sulfate), various aquae vitae and wines. Magical-medical objects from faraway lands, like the following, provide an impression of the range of items the physician considered in his medical research—a range not unusual for early modern medicine, yet interesting if juxtaposed with the substances, methods and efficacy of alchemically produced remedies.

A certayne stone within the Gall of a hogge ys fownd in thease indies in the contrie of pan which they esteeme more againste poyson & other diseases then the Bezoar stone the portuigals call it petra de porco that ys hogges stone. It ys muche vsed in malacca. linschotten pag. 139. BL MS Sloane 1127, f. 12r

---

20 Transl.: “It is customary to prepare a strongly composed oil from scorpions, and it is called the common elementary oil, celebrated by all chymists; and it destroys the symptoms in those stricken by poison or affected by the plague in wonderful ways; wherefore I strongly recommend the oil in question, if only administered by rubbing into the outer arteries and around the region of the heart. Book on the Plague, page 176".
References like these extend the physician’s library of medical relevance significantly beyond the abovementioned basic works. The author of the abovementioned passage, Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, was a Dutchman and prolific writer who travelled the Far East in the late sixteenth century. The notebook compiler was also familiar with the work of Marcus Oddus (Marco degli Oddi), an Italian doctor who had only recently introduced clinical education in his local hospitals. Moreover, all authors that can be identified from the doctor’s (often cryptic) references are his contemporaries or near-contemporaries, often men whose interests and affiliations relate to the grand movements in education, medicine and natural philosophy of the sixteenth century. Thus, we find humanist doctors (Johannes Manardus, Pietro Andrea Mattioli) in the physician’s reading list as well as writings by Paracelsus (if only rarely excerpted and referenced), Paracelsus’ critics (e.g. Conrad Gesner) and Paracelsians (Joseph Duchesne, alias Quercetanus, and popular medical writer Jean François Fernel). Further mentioned in matters of alchemo-medical contexts are Viennese imperial physician Johannes Crato von Kрафтhem (1519–1585) and Dutch physician Bernhard Dessenius van Cronenburg (1510–1574).

Particularly noteworthy is the physician’s consultation of works by doctors with a keen interest and practical experience in alchemy cum medicine: Georgio Melichio, who operated a distillery at a pharmacy in Venice; German doctor Johann Winter (Joannes Guinterius) and his French colleague Petrus Palmarius (Pierre le Paulmier, 1568–1610), who supported the incorporation of chemical remedies into academic medicine, and Martin Kopp (Martinus Copus), author of a treatise on the dangers and benefits of the then so popular “glass of antimony.” Here, the distinction between medical and alchemical items is difficult, perhaps not even necessary. In the compiler’s literary and practical experiences, medicine clearly received an alchemical influence.

---

21 Klestinec, “History”.
22 Studies on Paracelsus and his English reception were initiated by Debus, English Paracelsians, and amended in Webster, “Alchemical and Paracelsian”; see also Pumfrey and Daward, “Science”; Grell, Transformation; and Pumfrey, “Spagyric Art”; as well as Webster, Paracelsus and “Paracelsus”, and Williams and Gunnoe, Paracelsian Moments, which contains a comprehensive Paracelsus bibliography. Original, if often pseudonymous Paracelsica are edited by Kühlmann and Telle, Corpus Paracelsisticum. On Paracelsianism in France see Kahn, Alchimie.
23 Palmer, “Pharmacy”.
24 Shackelford, Philosophical Path, 214; Debus, French Paracelsians, 19–20.
25 Copus, Spissglas. Shackelford, Philosophical Path, 434; see also Kühlmann and Telle, Corpus Paracelsisticum, 397.
26 References listed in the notebooks which could not clearly be matched to a single
2.2. Alchemica

The history of alchemical writing and its permeation of early modern culture is quite different from that of medicine. Most alchemical texts the physician consulted were only circulated in manuscript. The reconstruction of his reading materials is, accordingly, more difficult. Some printed books bridging the subjects of medicine and alchemy via Paracelsians, like Kopp’s *Das Spissglas Antimonium* and von Suchten’s *De Secreto Antimonii*, appear in the notebooks’ excerpts.\(^\text{27}\) The physician also scoured Mandeville’s travel accounts for information on creatures, e.g. gryphons, which he added to a list of animal metaphors commonly used to describe alchemical substances (MS Sloane 1150, ff. 33v–37r; Mandeville reference on f. 37r).

Classical alchemical authors referenced, and perhaps consulted in print, include ancient Arabic alchemist Morienus, whose teachings had been introduced to the Western world as early as in the twelfth century and became very popular in the form the Latin *Liber de compositione alchimiae*; as well as John of Rupescissa, the renowned fourteenth-century author of alchemical and prophetic works. Both major schools of Western alchemy, Lullian and Paracelsian, are represented as well as works attributed to Lull and Paracelsus—the latter clearly considered under development and investigation. And finally, a strong presence of vernacular alchemy, with an emphasis on alchemical poetry, permeates the alchemical notebooks, sourced from its thriving, primarily anonymous manuscript tradition. Here the physician’s scrupulousness of recording author’s names, if at all, only when they are fixed and proven is telling: he merely acknowledged George Ripley by name, but did not repeat any of the attributions punctuating the vernacular alchemical oeuvre in ever changing permutations.\(^\text{28}\)

It is interesting to note here that subject areas covered in the purely alchemical Sloane notebooks concern mainly transmutatory alchemy of a general nature, but also, occasionally, discussions of the manufacture of gold for pecuniary purposes or other practical and theoretical aspects of the alchemical work. Most alchemical notebooks, however, intersect with the *pharmaceutica* and contain recipes proper, i.e. texts providing ingredients and instructions in the kind of detail noted above as missing from standard pharmacopoeia.

---

\(^{27}\) On Copus see footnote 25 above; von Suchten, *De Secretis Antimonii*; Priesner, “Suchten, Alexander von”.

\(^{28}\) See Chapter 3 above.
The “Verses upon the Elixir” and associated poems permeate almost half of the physician's extant notebooks, in multifarious guises. The “Verses” alone are recorded in four different versions. Some notebooks incorporate full texts or substantial fragments, others take individual lines from corpus texts and juxtapose them with each other.29 The sources for these excerpts were a large number of manuscripts specifically sought out by the physician. His remarkably hands-on approach to alchemical poetry even inspired him to compose his own variant of the “Verses upon the Elixir”—a permutation of phrases on the alchemical principles and rhetorical fillers which do not, unfortunately, lend any substance to our insights into his understanding of alchemy:

```
for earthe & fyre commeth of one
whyche ys father & moother of owre stone
water & ayre commeth of the same
I telle yow the truthe in Goddes name.
put these the together wythowte stryfe
whyche maketh owre very stone of lyfe
In the matrix when they be shytte
looke never thy vessell be vnknitte
till they have Engendered a stone
That wyll brynge bothe sunne & moone
Vnderstand these words or thou begynne
or little forsoothe shalte thou wynne.
for thou mayest faile for faulte of lyghte
But the sunne & [illeg.] do shine full bryghte
When thou haste water of ayre & ayre
of fyre & fire of earthe, then haste thou tharte. BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 47
```

Although not necessarily the finest example of sixteenth-century alchemical poetry, these few rhymes nevertheless encapsulate the essence of the Sloane notebook series: they are situated at the centre of the written culture of late sixteenth-century natural philosophy, with all its creative potential.

### 2.3. Contemporary Libraries as a Source of Notebook Knowledge

Where did the Sloane notebook compiler access all the books and manuscripts he excerpted? Although his identity is not clear, it does not seem obvious that he was not the owner of a private library on the scale of a John

---

29 Notebooks containing alchemical verse are BL MSS Sloane 1097, 1105, 1113, 1114, 1146, 1147, 1148, 1149, 1150, 1151, 1152, 1153, 1170, 1171, 1181 and 1186. The Handlist of Manuscript Witnesses in the Bibliography below lists all items of sufficient length (one couplet or more) from the corpus around the “Verses” contained in these volumes.
Dee. Yet early modern libraries would have provided the physician with ample literature. College libraries and college members' private collections are known to have supported and attracted readers; Tudor book collections were part of professional and social communication networks. While the addition of *alchemica* and *Paracelsica* to Cambridge college library holdings, as well as other institutional libraries, would not set in until the turn of the century, private libraries like Thomas Whalley's would have supplied this *desideratum*. Stemmata of texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” confirm that, in his search for alchemical literature, the physician excerpted from writings in different private and academic collections, over an extended period of time, and in various places—with a likely concentration on the southern English territories and the resources of London, Cambridge and Oxford book culture.

Private medical libraries deserve particular attention as a likely source of the Sloane notebooks compiler's information. A complement to professional medical tasks, borrowing, lending and annotating books was a characteristic, flourishing part of medical culture in Tudor Cambridge. There are numerous examples of sixteenth-century Cambridge gentlemen whose collections are distinctly medical in character, however large or small the number of books they owned. Many of these private book collections consisted primarily of printed works of relatively recent date, and thus agree with the Sloane notebooks' medical sources. Books owned by scholars other than physicians, are less likely to have catered for the physician's tastes: Robert Cotton, whose library not only absorbed the books of Elizabethan collector-patron John Lord Lumley but also served as a reference library for his contemporaries, owned relatively few *medica*. In medical collections, alchemical items often suffered from a similar marginal position.

30 Apart from being a true polymath and bibliophile, Dee pursued the aim to build a national library. See Sherman, *John Dee*.
32 TCC MSS R.14.45 and R.14.56 were in private hands in Cambridge before their addition to the College Library in the seventeenth century (see Chapter 5 and below). See also Feingold, “Occult”; ibid., *Mathematicians’ Apprenticeship*; and De Ricci, *English Collectors*, 14–21.
36 *DNB*, s.v. ‘Cotton, Sir Robert Bruce’ and s.v. ‘Dee, John’.
In the case of Andrew Perne, a medical practitioner who held influential posts at Cambridge colleges, the number of *alchemica* among his books appears only low in comparison with the vast number of 2592 titles he left to Peterhouse. Yet the collections of Thomas Lorkyn (Cambridge regius professor in physic from 1564 onwards and reformer of the academic medical education) and his father-in-law, John Hatcher (d. 1587) not only incorporated many of the printed medical books discussed above, but also included a relatively high proportion of *alchemica*, and are thus most pertinent to the Sloane notebook compiler’s biblio-biography. At the time of his death in 1591, Lorkyn owned 570 titles, among them 400 connected with medical studies, including a few books on chemical medicine.

In late sixteenth-century Oxford, too, academic physicians collected information on alchemy. Regius professor of physic (1561–1583) Walter Bayley’s “interest in distillation, and in mineral and botanical *materia medica* was characteristic of medical fashion all over Europe in his generation and the one before.” While Lorkyn himself appears to have perused these publications with a theoretical mind, and his practice (and probably teaching) remained faithful to Galenic principles, “anyone who used his library had the opportunity at least to sample the views of such free spirits.” The physician who composed the notebooks analysed here may well have been among these library users.

### 2.4. Libraries and Laboratory Knowledge

The prevalence of alchemical notes in the Sloane notebooks, the survival of such a large number of written documents and their compiler’s medical profession pose one pertinent question: was the physician an ‘armchair alchemist’? Sixteenth-century scholarship exhibited a general tendency towards approaching the book of nature through books. Many of the compiler’s contemporaries, especially his academic colleagues, would have confined their alchemical ambitions primarily to textual exegesis. Yet there is ample evidence that the Sloane notebook compiler supplemented his

---

40 Lewis, “Faculty,” 235.
alchemical readings with practical experiences, that he gathered alchemical information as much through the words of others as with his own eyes, and that his alchemical notebooks served as much for potential practical implementation as his medical ones.

The first piece of evidence for a practice-based approach to alchemy are the physician’s personal commentaries in the alchemical notebooks. One compares the results of his personal preparation of “red glass of antimony” with its descriptions in his literary sources:

I fynde the essence of the rede glas of antimony prepared not to be the same of tholde philosophers of whyche they write so many matters in that it ys more earthly & of the grosser partes. BL MS Sloane 1153, f. 43v

Another notebook (BL MS Sloane 1181, ff. 6r–26r) documents practice in a more immediate manner. It contains a numbered list of desiderata related to alchemical practice, a rare instance of a first-person account of experimentation and equipment. This list testifies both to the difficulties and practicalities of acquiring alchemical substances. It mentions simple substances (“2. To Buye of the purest & sincerest mercury that ys no waye counterfett nor made of leade”), composite, ready-made products (“18. To Buye golde & sylver calcined wyth a corrosiue water made of vitrioll & salte peter”), but also, and most significantly, a ‘bucket list’ of observations described in literature, to be experienced, compared and perfected in person:

23. To see the closynge of the leaste glasses sigillo salomonis and openinge of them agayne as vlstadius do teache cap. 20, q l. & howe manye wayes besydes this sealinge & openynge maye be doone.42

24. To close a glasse wyth the mowthe of an other glasse sette fittely to yt, & to lute yt abowte wyth the Best lute, & howe the best luting ys made.

27. To learne the Best kynd of filtrynge

Interesting for the history of objects used in alchemical experimentation is an inventory of coveted glassware (items 20–22), including alembics, stills, a ‘pelican’ and glass vessels of different sizes, ranging from one ounce to a quart.43 The description of an ideal furnace surprises with its candidness and fine observations:

42 The “vlstadius” mentioned here is probably Philip Ulstad, and likely refers to his “pioneering work on distillation and chemical technology” (Webster, Health, 310) of 1525: Ulstadius, Coelum Philosophorum.

43 Groundbreaking archaeological studies of the materiality of alchemy include Martinón-Torres, “Tools” and ibid., “Solomon’s House”.

---

188  CHAPTER SIX
33. To make the fornaces of a reasonable heygth that they neede not to be stooped vnto, as ys at mystresse Bakers

This passage highlights the fact that the writer is interested in contempo-
rary practices as well as models proposed in literature; the authority of works and craft intermingle here. Moreover, such evidence for practical experimentation by readers of *alchemica* is especially noteworthy when its writer is firmly situated in an academic medical context. Many entries in the list, as it survives today, have been cancelled to the point illegibility; apparently they were crossed out after the described item had been read, seen, tried or acquired.

However, most interesting in the present context are the physician’s plans concerned with the reading and writing of books. Recorded together with the cited, planned acquisition of alchemical apparatus and experience, they underline the pragmatic yet creative nature of the notebooks:

45. To wryte all the names of every particular substaunce that ys fownd in the operation or wourckyng vpon the glasses or vesselles that conteyneth the stuffe, cum anno domini et die

Although describing the labelling of vessels, this writing activity mirrors the assignation of separate volumes to the study of different substances. More to the point, however, is the following note.

54. To conferre every practyse wyth the rules in the Booke of Theoremes & wyth The notes or signes of perfection or trewe wourcke

Perhaps comparable with the abovementioned outline of the allegorical paintings, these passages describe a programme for scribal activities which the physician certainly followed with much thought and deliberation. Some of the notebooks in the extant Sloane series were first conceived as part of this list. Other reading reminders even refer to his own notebooks from the series:

lege tractatum excellentissimum et vere aureum de plumbo philosophorum in libro saturni pagine 295. 296. 297. 298. nec te legisse penetebit

BL MS Sloane 1098, f. 43r

The “liber saturni” (BL MS Sloane 1097), a collection of information on the metal lead, will feature in more detail below.

---

44 *Transl.*: “Read the excellent and truly golden (i.e. splendid) tractate on the lead of the philosophers in the book of Saturn, pp. 295–298, and it will not displease you to have read it.”
A final remarkable category of personal notes in the Sloane notebooks concerns questions about alchemical concepts, which represent a more open-ended enquiry into the nature of alchemy and its language: “Quaesitio. Cur lapis a philosophis leo viridis et Aquila volans appellatur?” (BL MS Sloane 1150, f. 32r). The physician’s interest in alchemy thus encompassed alchemical texts and their interpretation, experimentation in the alchemical workshop, and the connection between the two. The notebooks not only provided remote access to the world of writing, but also a link to the material world.

3. The Organisation of Thought in the Notebook Series

The acquisition of blank books does not the notebook make. In the process of transforming reading into writing, an early modern notebook compiler could choose from established options for manuscript compilation (such as the commonplace books introduced in the previous chapter), which he might apply more or less consistently. The Sloane notebook compiler, however, adapted the humanistic tools of writing (like those described in Chapter 5) further. His notebooks document several stages of reading and sorting information, both in their sequence and in their page layout, i.e. the arrangement of texts on the manuscript page. While his contemporaries’ attempts at commonplacing often turned out to be unconvincing and fragmentary, the physician’s notebook system mirrors the way in which he structured his own thoughts about alchemy and medicine. They became a tool of learning.

Some of the physician’s contemporaries are well-known creators of similarly extensive alchemical notebooks, most prominently London merchant-turned-prisoner Clement Draper (ca. 1541–1620); it is noteworthy that Draper also copied texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”. His method of using texts as technologies, for the virtual witnessing of experiments and advancement of his understanding has been likened metaphorically to the alchemical use of a ‘pelican’ (distilling apparatus). But while Draper was self-reflective and explicit about his reading, writing and experimenting process, the Sloane notebook series reveals its compiler’s approach only implicitly.

---

45 Transl.: “Question: Why is the stone called the green lion and flying eagle by the philosophers?”
46 BL MSS Sloane 317, 320, 1423, 3688, 3748, and part of Bod MS Ashmole 1394.
47 Harkness, Jewel House, 196 ff., esp. 199.
3.1. The Order of Medicine

The medical notebooks are a natural starting point for the analysis of the Sloane notebook series’ organisation. They represent the compiler’s first steps into natural philosophical literature, both logically and perhaps chronologically, as they are directly related to his professional interests. Late sixteenth-century medicine and its writings followed certain customs of presentation in the physician’s sources and beyond—structures which were serviceable and comparatively easy to emulate. Therefore, just as these medical notebooks resemble rather conventional sixteenth-century collections of medical recipes in their content, their arrangement is comparable with that of other contemporary medical compendia.

One volume (BL MS Sloane 1099) may serve here as an example of a typical medical notebook the Sloane series compiler would have written while visiting another’s library. The arrangement of excerpts therein is chronological, indicating that the compiler read books one after the other, from front to back, rather than in parallel. He kept notes as he progressed, akin to a register of reading. Hence the excerpts are not fitted into a previously arranged classification, as would be the case in a typical commonplace book.

At first sight it appears curious that all plague remedies in the volume, including the one cited above (written on f. 6r), were crossed out. Without further evidence one might think that the physician had dismissed the cancelled remedy in favour of another, or failed to produce the medication or to apply it successfully. The actual reason for the cancellation, however, offers itself in the form of a second medical volume (BL MS Sloane 1093). In this second, and truly secondary, notebook (entitled “Collectanea de morbis, et eorum remedies [sic]”), the physician reworked the previous volume’s chronological reading notes into something reminiscent of a medical commonplace book or even the pharmacopoeia he consulted so avidly. He divided the volume which was to contain the “Collectanea” a priori into sections dedicated to specific parts of the body or illnesses (loosely arranged ‘from head to toe’); then placed excerpts belonging to each category below each heading. Within each section the reading notes remain chronological, listing extracts from one book in their original order, then excerpts from another book, and so on. With future expansion of his reading and,

48 “Anthology of illnesses and their remedies”.
49 Thomas Fayreford’s notebook is a well-researched example of a similar if earlier, fifteenth-century medical collection: Jones, “Harley MS 2558”; on commonplace books see Chapter 5 above.
consequently, this volume in mind, the physician left additional space in each section, some of which remains blank until today. And whenever he transferred one entry from the exemplar to the new compilation, he cancelled the original entry, probably to avoid accidental duplication. Indeed, cancelled passages from the chronological notebook appear *verbatim* in the organised volume. It is further possible to tell that he started the compilation of the “Collectanea” at a well-chosen period of his research, i.e. once he could gauge the approximate space needed for each body part and illnesses that afflict it, and after he had read and excerpted a body of literature sufficient for an initial contribution to be made to each section. The “Collectanea” appear to have been written in quite a short space of time, as ink and handwriting are fairly consistent, and the volume is fairly complete in the shape it survives in today. The result is a handbook fit for use in medical practice.\(^{50}\)

One might expect the exemplar, BL MS Sloane 1099, to have been redundant as soon as its unwieldy entries had been transferred to the “Collectanea”. Yet both manuscripts survive, the latter fairly in a pristine condition, the former incorporating numerous cancellations. A look at the entire Sloane notebook series reveals that the physician generally kept both chronological and systematic volumes to modify and reuse their entries in other notebooks; the descendant of the “Collectanea” must have been lost, but their contents also influenced the compilation of some pharmaceutical notebooks in the series. The initial reading notes were not intended to be provisional: they constituted raw materials fit for several applications to other notebook contexts. The introduction of this intermediate stage to the compilation of commonplace books made the choice of categories and items to sort under them a more reflected and experienced one than the straightforward introduction of classifications so commonly used by the physician’s contemporaries. His process represents experimentation on paper.\(^{51}\)

Incidentally, the books listed as ‘pharmaceutic-medical’ in the Sloane catalogue reveal much less about the physician’s approach to medicine than one might expect. They may be summarised as referring to Paracelsian

\(^{50}\) It is not possible to determine the exact connection between these medical writings and the physician’s medical practice; for a similar historiographical conundrum see Kassell, “How to Read,” gff.

theories and writings. Alchemy and medicine are generally closely associated across the Sloane notebooks, partly by means of cross-references, partly by the natural overlap of literature the physician read for medical and alchemical purposes. The distinctions made here for pragmatic purposes are not precise. Hence, the organisation of the ‘pharmaceutic-medical’ notebooks will be captured appropriately with the analysis of the alchemical notebooks below.

The almost painstakingly methodical layout of the medical notebooks, while conventional, merits further consideration, as it mirrors the physician’s rather clinical mind. Each page was designed before any textual elements were added to it; its sections were allocated as mechanically as the “Collectanea”’s subject categories. Using ruled lines, the physician separated broad margins from the main body of the page. These margins would have been ideal for the addition of numerous commentaries; they are the types of margins that would have served the readers of the Trinity Compendium of the previous chapter very well. However, the physician only added keywords into them for orientation (names of ingredients or diseases) but left the margins otherwise blank. The main entries, written in the central sections of each page, are numbered consecutively and separated from each other with horizontal lines. Together with the margins’ lines, these form compartments for each textual element: primary texts in the centre, related primary texts above or below the same, and ordering paratextual elements towards the edge of the page. Further, as mentioned above, each entry starts with a *numerus currens* and ends with a reference to its source. The only other structuring method employed in the medical notebooks, if sparingly, is the underlining of individual terms and graphic emphasis, mostly by means of bolder pen strokes. Overall, while his consistency in page layout, sorting information and the referencing of sources is admirable and rare, on the whole, the Sloane notebook compiler worked within the parameters which were used and useful for literate medical practitioners in general.

3.2. The Arrangement of Alchemical Information

The alchemical notebooks represent their compiler’s foray into a craft and science not structured externally by universities, a *Fachliteratur* or scholarly tradition. It is perhaps this comparatively disordered state of alchemical literature, both ancient and early modern, that inspired the physician to impose a structure of his own, in an attempt to orientate himself in alchemical lore. His notebook writing for *alchemica* is essentially different from the process described for the *medica* above.
While not explicitly declared as such, on close inspection, the bulk of the Sloane notebook series represents a reference library on alchemical substances. Here, each notebook is dedicated to a specific alchemical substance: one is explicitly dedicated to lead in its title (BL MS Sloane 1097: “liber saturni id est de plumbo philosophorum, seu argento viuo Coagu-lato./ lapis occultus”, f. 1r); other notebooks’ contents indicate their focus on mercury, antimony and other metals or elements. Cross-references between the alchemica, and the medical notebooks, built a network of knowledge on human and alchemical bodies and their relations to each other.

It should be noted that a few notebooks were set aside to gather information which would not fit into these categories; another couple of volumes are dedicated to Latin traditional alchemica. These will not be considered in the following paragraphs, which describe the main body of alchemical notebooks in the Sloane series.

The act of systematisation of information underlying the alchemical notebooks’ compilation is rather intricate. The alchemical notebooks are clearly the result of a structured method of reading tailored to the physician’s purposes. While the medica were first excerpted and then sorted, no records of chronological reading notes survive for alchemica. Although one must allow for the possibility of missing and lost volumes, it seems that the initial, documenting stage of reading was omitted here. Manuscript miscellanies whence the physician sourced his alchemical texts may have acted as preliminary arrangements instead. Excerpts from these alchemical manuscripts were written into commonplace-type notebooks straightaway.

This early organisation necessitated further structuring methods. Here, too, the physician decided against the development of secondary volumes, a method he had applied in his medical notes. Instead, he established connections between themes, substances and experiments on the existing manuscripts’ pages. When he identified a subcategory in a notebook, the physician compiled an index to the relevant entries in the same volume; for example, BL MS Sloane 1098 displays an index on “crystal” materials on its inner front cover. He would also use blank space within the notebooks to dedicate subsections to such ancillary themes. For instance, the notebook containing the physician’s abovementioned list of alchemical materials and experiences includes several pages on quicksilver (BL MS Sloane 1181, ff. 1v–5r). A substantial section of another notebook (BL MS Sloane 1153, ff. 7r–51r) contains a variety of notes on the compatibility of certain alchemical elements (entitled “Harmonia Corporis”).

Cross-references indicating correlations between texts or between useful pieces of information found in different notebooks are shorthand equiv-
alents to the mentioned lists and subsections. Although these cross-references are not spelled out explicitly, some can be identified by close observation. For example, the trefoil sign which appears frequently in all Sloane notebooks appears to refer to BL MS Sloane 1095. To implicate other notebooks, the physician employs specific Latin synonyms of the word ‘book’ or ‘volume’ as proper names: “manuscriptus”, “thesaurus” or “codicillus” refer to three different manuscripts which are, unfortunately, lost. And whenever alchemical recipes were required to appear in several notebooks, among them texts from the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, the compiler marked the duplication with a cancellation of the text in the primary location or, more frequently, procured different versions of the same text which would serve different notebooks in different capacities. His use of four different versions of the “Verses upon the Elixir” (as mentioned above) and the countless isolation of couplets from associated texts, which appear in a variety of notebooks, is based on this method. In combination of all these ordering devices and the multiplicity of manuscript texts, the physician’s use of the alchemical notebooks takes textual exegesis to new realms.

Since the original passages in all alchemical notebooks remain legible, even the carefully cancelled items, it would be possible to draw a timeline of their composition had we all notebooks available for inspection. But even the surviving notebooks show that this was by no means a straightforward progression of thought and knowledge, but a more complex interaction of notetaking, reading, cross-referencing and refining. The increasing sophistication of the physician’s understanding of alchemical matters emerges with the complexity of his writing techniques, based on a medical professional background and with a view to the medical employment of alchemical procedures.

With this general sequential organisation of the alchemical notebooks in mind, it is worth noting that the arrangement of alchemical knowledge on each manuscript page is different for texts in different languages. The Latin alchemical notebooks, a minority in the series, contain materials from classical and authoritative works. Somewhat equivalent in status to the medical authorities that permeated contemporary libraries, authoritative alchemical texts are presented in a similar layout as the medical notebooks, but they show a wider range of graphical features, including the frequent use of bold script, underlining and red ink. Instead of merely recording catchwords, their marginal space contains substantial commentaries and references; the latter operate not with names and titles, but almost exclusively with symbols and page numbers. Many entries provide a text’s *incipit* ending in “etc.” and followed by an explanation; and significantly, the commentary
was often authored by the physician rather than received knowledge. All these critical devices suggest that the physician was intimately familiar with his alchemical sources. His reception of *alchemica* was much more vivid, complex, creative and experimental than his scholarly-detached approach to *medica*.

The vernacular *alchemica*, including the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir”, create a much more spontaneous arrangement of a notebook page. Adjustments range from a simple introduction of an additional margin for further references or commentary to the abandonment of all margins, compartments or numbering sequences. On these pages, form and purpose seem to coincide: just as the physician experimented with the poems, their sections and the ways in which they may be combined in order to yield a full rendition of a particular substance’s properties and uses, so the script on the manuscript page moved in unprecedented ways, almost like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to contribute to an unknown picture.

The physician’s commentary on the corpus texts remains primarily Latin in language. English prose explanations, although rarer, also render parallel passages from other works which are intended to elucidate difficult terms and concepts. Significantly, throughout his critical engagement with English *alchemica*, the physician implicitly acknowledged the corpus around the “Verses upon the Elixir” as an interconnected corpus of writings. He arranged passages from the corpus in clusters. Three manuscripts in particular serve this function (BL MSS Sloane 1092, 1095 and 1098). Further, phrases he quotes in his annotations, to elucidate specific passages throughout the

---


53 BL MS Sloane 1092 contains an amalgamated version of the “Verses”, version A, with the “Exposition” and “Wind and Water”, a medial fragment of the “Verses”, version B, starting at “Boast of Mercury”, and another fragment of the “Verses”, version B; MS Sloane 2095 supplements this with a clean copy of “Boast” and one of the exegetic prose text “Lead”; and MS Sloane 1098 diversifies the textual matter with the following combination of texts: “Verses”, version A amalgamated with the “Exposition”, three excerpts from version B (one starting with “Boast”) followed by a Latin commentary, and a variant with Latin commentary; two full copies of the two versions of “Boast” in variant forms; “Richard Carpenter’s Work”, variant “Spain”/“Titan Magnesia” (one full copy, an initial fragment, and a variant medial fragment), “Sun” (version A long and an initial fragment of version B), “Father Phoebus” and “God Angel” (one full copy each); two copies of the “Short Work”, versions B and C (one with a Latin commentary); three copies of “Wind and Water” (version A, a fragment of the same and a fragment of version B, the last two with commentaries); and, finally, a substantial text rendition of “Mystery of Alchemists”.
Sloane notebook series, often represent precisely those elements of the corpus which hold it together (by virtue of intertextuality, interphraseology, shared concepts or origins). Since the physician sought out and had access to a large variety of manuscript copies, he also demonstrably selected the exemplar for a poem’s copy with greatest care. Stemmata show that he saw around a dozen manuscripts containing multiple copies of several corpus texts altogether; Diagram V just indicates volumes he used particularly carefully. The physician’s selection criteria were concerned with clean, basic texts as a foundation for his exploration, supplemented with unusual variations he deemed illuminating; he dismissed variants he knew to contain significant scribal errors and did not copy them further. Attributions, titles or the appearance of a particular manuscript did not influence his process. For example, he chose to copy some texts from a Ripley Scroll, but favoured manuscript copies for others. His interest in the corpus was pragmatic, textual and alchemically motivated, his methodology scholarly, and his evaluation of the body of available alchemical writings both informed and astute. In the stemma (Diagram V) his manuscripts further stand out because they upset the chronological direction commonly present in traditional stemmata, as well as the ideal of one source producing several copies. The physician’s notebooks cause knots, clusters and general disorder in the stemma, while his methods of notetaking produce order in the multitude of excerpts he took from his sources.

Finally, the physician’s textual experimentation with the corpus texts becomes particularly apparent in two manuscripts which acted as source material for his composition of BL MS Sloane 1098 (TCD MS 389 and the Trinity Compendium, TCC MS R.14.56). Here the evidence for his originality strikes even the untrained eye: both his exemplars are simple compendia containing a variety of alchemical texts written page after page, line after line, in an orderly fashion. The physician would have seen the Trinity Compendium while it was still in private hands, probably Thomas Whalley’s, before it entered the College Library and while it was being annotated in the margins. He decided to use these two manuscripts as sources for the main text of the “Verses upon the Elixir” (in BL MSS 1092, 1095 and 1098 for the Trinity Compendium; MSS 1098 and 1171 based on the Dublin volume); he dismissed others in this process. However, he chose not to write a simple, unadorned and accurate compendium in replication of TCD MS 389;

54 See Chapter 2 above.
55 See Chapter 5 above.
nor was he inspired by the Trinity Compendium's annotations to incorporate them in his notebooks. Instead, he effected a complete re-organisation of their information: he extracted both manuscripts' singularly representative, standard texts of the "Verses", as perfect additions to his collection, and supplemented them with his own comments and cross-references. This diligence in textual choice, together with the boldness of his notetaking system, mark the notebooks as records of alchemical poetry as it was circulated in the late sixteenth century, and at the same time a medium for a particular individual's enquiry into things alchemical and medical.

In conclusion, the Sloane notebook compiler's way of thinking about the medical uses of alchemical processes resulted in the dissection of reading materials into passages referring to specific substances and the placing of these excerpts into specially designated notebooks, which interconnected with each other by means of cross-references. Retaining the traceability of their original context but allowing for further modification, the notebooks became a working space in which a new body of knowledge could be constructed from medical and alchemical elements. The physician thus not only witnessed, but took part in the contemporary discussion of alchemomedical matters, even if his was a silent debate, on paper, with himself and mostly contemporary authors. Probably a practising doctor, he also seems to have acquired materials for a laboratory which would have been ideal for the manufacture of both conventional distillations and chemical remedies. His methods of experimenting on paper and in the workshop took his contemporaries' readings and uses of the "Verses upon the Elixir" and associated texts to a logical, meticulous conclusion.
### Table IV: Some printed books referenced in the Sloane Notebook Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johannes Manardus</td>
<td>1462–1536</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>Epistolarum medicinalium libri</em> (1535)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Giovanni Manardo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Phaer</td>
<td>1510–1560</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>Regiment of Life</em> (1544); [poss.] <em>Boke of Chyldren</em> (1544)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Jehan Goeuot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrus Andreas Matthiolus</td>
<td>1501–1577</td>
<td>translation of/commentary on Dioscorides's <em>De materia medica</em> (1544)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Pietro Andrea Mattioli</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacobus Hollerius</td>
<td>1510–1562</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>De materia chirurgica</em> (1544); [poss.] <em>De morbis internis</em> (1578); [poss.] <em>De morborum curatone etc.</em> (1565)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Jacques Houllier</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conrad Gesner</td>
<td>1516–1565</td>
<td><em>Thesaurus Euonymi Philiatri, de remedii secretis, liber physicus, medicus, et partim etiam chymicus ... nunc primum in lucem editus</em> (<em>Evonymus</em>) (1552; English from 1559)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giorgio Melichio</td>
<td>s. xvi</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>Avertimenti nelle composizioni de’ medicamenti per uso della speciaria, con un diligente esame di molti semplici di Giorgio Melichio augustano, già speciale allo Struzzo di Venezia</em> (1557)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montan</td>
<td>1498–1551</td>
<td>[poss] <em>Opuscula varia ac praeclassa: in quibus tota fere Medicina methodice explicatur ... H. Donzellini ... opera infinitis prope mendis vindicata, atque in duo volumina digesta</em> (1558); [or poss.] <em>Consultations medicinalesin duos distinctae tomos, nunc primum post Valentini Lublini ... Hieronymi Donzellini Philippique Bechii editiones ac medici recognitae. Accessit ejusdem Reineri Sol. Consiliorum medicinalium sectio prima</em> (1560)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Joannes Baptista Montanus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanni Garcaeus</td>
<td>1530–1574</td>
<td><em>Meteorologia</em> (1568)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= Johannes Gartze</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonius Schneeberger</td>
<td>1530–1581</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>Catalogus medicamentorum simplicium ...</em> (c. 1562); [poss.] <em>Medicamentorum facile parabili aduersus omnis generis articulorum dolore enumeratio ...</em> (1580)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ager Ferrier</td>
<td>1513–1588</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>De pudendagra lue Hispanica</em> (1564); [poss.] <em>Vera medendi methodus</em> ... (1574)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinus Copus</td>
<td>s. xvi–s. xvii</td>
<td>[probably] <em>Das Spissglas Antimonium oder Stibium genandt, in ein Glas gegossen, es sey geel oder rodt, das man Vitrum antimonii nennet, ein warhaftige Gifft und gantz gefahrliche schedliche Artzney sey</em> ... (1569)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander von Suchten</td>
<td>1520–1590</td>
<td><em>De Secreto Antimonii</em> (1570)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janus Antonius Saracenus</td>
<td>1547–1598</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>De peste commentarius</em> (1572)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roch Le Baillif</td>
<td>d. 1605</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>Le demosterion de Roch Le Baillif Edelophe Medecin spagiric... Sommaire veritable de la Medecine Paracelsique, extraict de luy en la plus part, par le dict Bailiff</em> ... (1577–1578)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Ruland the elder</td>
<td>1532–1602</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>Curationum Centuriae</em> (1578–1596)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joannis Fernelius</td>
<td>ca. 1497–1558</td>
<td>[probably] <em>Therapeutices universalis</em> ([poss. ed.] 1581)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurent Joubert</td>
<td>1529–1583</td>
<td>[poss.] <em>Traité de la peste ... plus une question de la paralysie et deux paradoxes de la revulsion</em> by Laurent Joubert (1581)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donatus Antonius Ferrus</td>
<td>s. xvi</td>
<td>[probably] <em>D. A. Ferri... de podagra enchiridion</em> (1585)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marcus Oddus 1526–1591  [poss.] Marci Oddi Pataunii physici professoris Pro sua tutanda de putredine sententia apologia ... (1585)

Ludovicus Mercatus 1520–1606  [poss.] De mulierum affectionibus (1587); [poss.] De pulsibus libri duo in quibus tota ars cognoscendi morbos, et prognosticandi disertissime tractatur (1592)

Joannes Guinterius 1505–1574  [probably] Ioannis Guintherii Andernaci Medici Commentarius De Balneis, & aquis medicatis (1565) and De Medicina Veteri Et Nova Faciunda Commentarius Secundus (1571), [poss. translation of Paulus Aegineta, Opera de re medica (1542, in an edition of 1588)], [poss. commentary on Marcilio Ficino, De vita libri tres (1549)]

Johan van Heurne 1543–1601  [poss.] Praxis medicinae nova ratio (1587)

Hieronymus Brisianus fl. s. xvi²  [probably] Methodus Scientiarum Hieronymi Brisiani Medici: Ubi quaecunque ad scientiarum pertinent conscriptionem, docte, ordinatim, ac distincte pertractantur (1588)

Petrus Forestus 1522–1597  [poss.] De incerto, fallaci urinarum judicio, quo uromantes, ad perniciem multorum aegrotantium, utuntur: & qualia illi sint observanda, tum praestanda, qui recte de urinis sit judicaturus, libri tres (1589)

Paracelsus 1494–1541  [poss.] Bücher und Schrifften (10 vols.) (1589–1591)

Quercetanus 1544–1609  [poss.] [Opera Medica] (1575) = A breefe aunswere of Josephus Quercetanus Armeniacus, ... to the exposition of Jacobus Aubertus Vindonis, concerning the original, and causes of Mettales. Set foorth against chimists ... By John Hester, practitioner in the Spagericall Arte (1591)

Quercetanus 1563–1611  [poss.] Delineatio Orarum maritimarum, Terrae vulgo indigetatae Terra do Natal item Sofalae Mozambicae, & Milindae, Insulae q Sancta Laurentii ... (1596) [or other early travel writing]
Meurnio 1573–1654/5 [poss.] Apologia in qua videre est inviolatis Hippocratis [et] Galeni legibus, remedia Chymice preparata, tuto usurpari posse, ad cujusdam anonymi calumnias Responsio (1603)