

Merian's Juggling with Motifs – Juggling with Merian's Motifs

Iconographical Borrowings in and from Merian's Alchemical Works

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The iconographical tradition of allegorical images of alchemy, which developed in Europe from the 13th century onwards, first borrowed images from Arabic manuscripts and later on created rare visual allegories based on textual ones. Only two European alchemical treatises with allegorical illustrations were known before the 15th century.¹ This situation changed when two major works in this field were written and illuminated in Germany: the *Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit* (1410-1414) and the *Aurora consurgens* (c. 1410 or 1410s/1420s).² Later, in the 16th century, with the appearance of the *Splendor solis* (1531-1532) and the *Rosarium philosophorum* (1530-1540),³ which used motifs from the above-mentioned treatises, the creation of alchemical imagery on the basis of mixing different ready-made motifs from various treatises, kind of an ›alchemical assemblage‹, became the new norm.

- 1 Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. Ms. 2872 and Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (ÖNB), Cod. Vind. 2372
- 2 Völlnagel 2012, p. 24. This floating dating makes it very difficult to determine how the two books are related. The *Aurora* may have served as a model for the *Buch*; the *Buch* may have served as a model for the *Aurora*; or they may have been created independently and simultaneously. That said, if the *Buch* was written between 1410 and 1414, it seems to be very unlikely that the *Aurora* influenced the imagery of the *Buch*. Perhaps this could be a good example of how two treatises created around the same time could have been drawing the inspiration from the same pool of images – probably partially from sources which have not survived. See also Obrist 1982; Forshaw 2020b.
- 3 The recent research by Thomas Hofmeier and Rudolf Gamper made it clear that the first manuscript (Sankt Gallen, Kantonsbibliothek, Ms. VadSlg 394A) of the *Rosarium* is dated by 1530-1540, which makes the printed version its possible copy, and not the other way around. Gamper/Hofmeier 2014, p. 7.

In this paper, I would like to visualise this evolution on example of images created by Matthäus Merian the Elder, who actively used motifs from older alchemical works, mainly manuscripts, and whose new motifs became iconic in the later tradition of alchemical illumination. Firstly, I will consider the two oldest European alchemical treatises with allegorical images, namely a French alchemical miscellany and the work of Gratheus. This is necessary because there is almost no research on these works' iconography which is of crucial importance for the entire later tradition. Secondly, I will examine the main types of allegories that appeared in these works and will then show how Merian re-used them in his printed works (*Atalanta fugiens* and the *Book of Lambspring*). Finally, I will also demonstrate how the motifs created by Merian and the ancient motifs already known were amalgamated into allegories in the later illuminated treatises.

Allegorical Imagery of Alchemy before 1410 in European Treatises

In the 8th and 9th centuries the first miscellanies of recipes for dyeing, forging precious stones and smelting metals appeared in Europe. These processes were often the same operations as had been described in the alchemical treatises of the Greek alchemists of the first centuries AD.⁴ A number of medieval recipes go back directly to the ancient papyri.⁵ Most of the alchemical treatises were translated by Arab scholars from ancient Greek, Syriac, Persian and other languages and reached Europe through Latin and later vernacular translations from Arabic. The first significant translation was *The Book of the Composition of Alchemy* translated into Latin in 1144 by the English scientist Robert of Chester (active in the 1140s) during his stay in Segovia, which at that time bordered the Caliphate of Córdoba. This and subsequent translations from Arabic were the cornerstones of the boom of alchemy throughout Europe. From the 12th century onwards, pseudo-Aristotle, pseudo-Ibn Sina, Jābir ibn Ḥayyān (active in 8th century), ar-Razi (c. 864/865-925/935), etc. were actively translated into Latin. The first European alchemists had appeared but before the 14th century, they had very rarely used allegorical language and were mainly engaged in the practice of gold-making. The only one who did not fully follow this tradition was the French poet and (presumed) alchemist Jean de Meun (1240-1305) who is celebrated for his

4 A brief description of the first Greek alchemists who lived in Egypt can be found in: Lindsay 1970. Most recent and detailed information on this matter can be found in Fraser 2007 and Martelli 2009.

5 Rodichenkov 2019, pp. 139-40.



continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*. In this poem and in many of his other works, he occasionally resorted to metaphors. However, this was not typical of other alchemical works from the High Middle Ages.⁶

It is not surprising that one does not find a single allegorical image in European treatises on alchemy from the 8th to 13th centuries: there were no allegories in the texts themselves, since the authors used only the language of the workshop. The first alchemical treatise to contain allegorical images could have been either one of two alchemical miscellanies, one French and one Flemish, dating from the second half of the 14th century. The French collection includes two small treatises, *The Testament of a Noble Philosopher* and *The Book of the Perfect Magisterium of Aristotle, Which Tells of the Light of Lights of the Philosopher's Stone*, both illuminated with introductory illustrations.⁷ The following allegorical scenes are depicted: the first miniature (Fig. 1) shows a tower from which a tree with two trunks grows. Its roots are fed by a river. On the tree's left trunk, there are seven red fruits shaped like pears or hearts, on the right, there are nine white ones. The tree is guarded by a red and a white lion while in the foreground, an adept reveals the secrets of alchemy to a fellow by giving him a key. In the second miniature (Fig. 2), a sage is talking to a naked woman. She carries two bowls in her hands to catch the red and white liquids – blood and milk – flowing from her breasts. In the centre of the composition is the sun heating up an egg with its rays. In these first known allegorical images of alchemy, the process of preparing the philosopher's stone is encrypted: the river means primordial matter, whereas the white and red fruits respectively symbolize the stages at which the philosopher's stone is able to turn metals into

< Fig. 1

Alchemical miscellany, 14th c.
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms. 2872,
fol. 401r.

> Fig. 2

Alchemical miscellany, 14th c.
Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms. 2872,
fol. 416r.

6 McWebb 2008, pp. 79-106.

7 Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. Ms. 2872.

silver and gold.⁸ The egg in the second illustration represents a hermetically sealed vessel containing both alchemical primordial principles, *sulphur* and *mercury*, depicted as blood and milk. After having been heated in an oven, the content of this vessel will become the philosopher's stone.

The second illustrated alchemical treatise from the 14th century containing allegorical depictions, is called *Sapientia Salomonis* and was composed in the vernacular by the Flemish artisan Gratheus.⁹ Gratheus's alchemy merges with astrology, magic, and the Christian religion. The author turns to God and St. John, asking them to grant him wisdom. He draws attention to the history of Christ's redemption of mankind from the original sin and its parallels with alchemy. Gratheus describes the preparation of the *panacea*, the universal remedy, comparing alchemical processes with the three days Jesus spent in the tomb and with his resurrection. The coffin corresponds to a *matrix*, an alchemical vessel in which the oncoming philosopher's stone is conceived. Gratheus even compares the »torture of metals«, i.e., their purification, with the torment of Christ by the Jews (giving rise to the most antisemitic remarks in the whole alchemical tradition which was typical in Europe at that time).¹⁰ It is obvious from this comparison, that for Gratheus the Passion of Christ is just a convenient example to which the author can allocate a purely alchemical meaning, and not an attempt to »christianize« alchemy.

There are many allegorical images in the treatise. In one of them the scene of Resurrection is depicted. With this image, Gratheus emphasizes that the metal Mercury rises »alive« from the »dead« just like Christ was captured, crucified and resurrected. For Gratheus the analogy is straightforward: like the divine Resurrection, sublimation is also an upward movement.¹¹ Moreover, this illustration depicts not the Saviour himself but his image among the stars. Gratheus implied that there is a zodiacal constellation of the Holy Sepulchre. Another drawing depicts Christ with a halo surrounded by a circle of alchemical vessels – this is the other zodiacal constellation, the one of the Holy Cross (fol. 57r). These eighteen alchemical vessels that form a kind of halo around the head of Jesus are also constellations, but not the zodiacal ones. Besides these religious allegories, the manuscript contains many other symbolical illustrations with animals, birds, monsters, fighting creatures/beasts, and figures in flasks, some of them are copulating.

8 This image is reinterpreted in a unique manuscript now held in Glasgow: University Library, Ms. Ferguson 6, fol. 4v.

9 Vienna, ÖNB, Cod. Vind. 2372. See Birkhan 1992.

10 On medieval antisemitism, see amongst others Gow 1995.

11 Cf. Birkhan 1992, p. 197.

Motifs from Old Alchemical Manuscripts in Merian's *Atalanta fugiens*

We can create a tiny pool of motifs from the two above-mentioned manuscripts consisting of eight illustrations only. Surprisingly enough, this set is quite comprehensive and even the later ›Big Four‹ of illuminated alchemy (the *Buch*, the *Aurora*, the *Splendor*, and the *Rosarium*) do not contribute much more to this list.¹²

From the French miscellany we shall distinguish the motifs of the alchemical tower, lions, trees, the spring, the egg, the breast-feeding woman, the fire of the sun, the wise man, and the key. Gratheus's work adds a few: the androgyne, birds, the alchemical coffin, coitus (or naked people in preparation for it), actions inside of flasks, winged and at the same time quadruped creatures, fights, and Biblical figures (Solomon, Jesus).

By briefly reviewing Merian's iconographic sources for the *Atalanta fugiens*, the famous poem with emblems and fugues by Michael Maier, first published in 1617, we will see that its iconography is largely based on these seventeen basic motifs. Merian most likely knew them from manuscripts from the 15th and 16th century which had re-used the oldest motifs. The breast-feeding woman is the subject of emblem 2; we find depictions of coitus or preparations for it (emblems 4, 21, 30, 33, and 34), the birds (emblem 7, 43, and 46), the egg (emblem 8), the tree (emblem 9), the lion(s) (emblem 16, here together with the motif of a winged/walking creature, and 37), the fight (emblems 25 and 47), the flask (emblem 28), the coffin (emblems 28, 44 and 50), the androgyne (emblems 33 and 38), and the spring (emblem 40).¹³

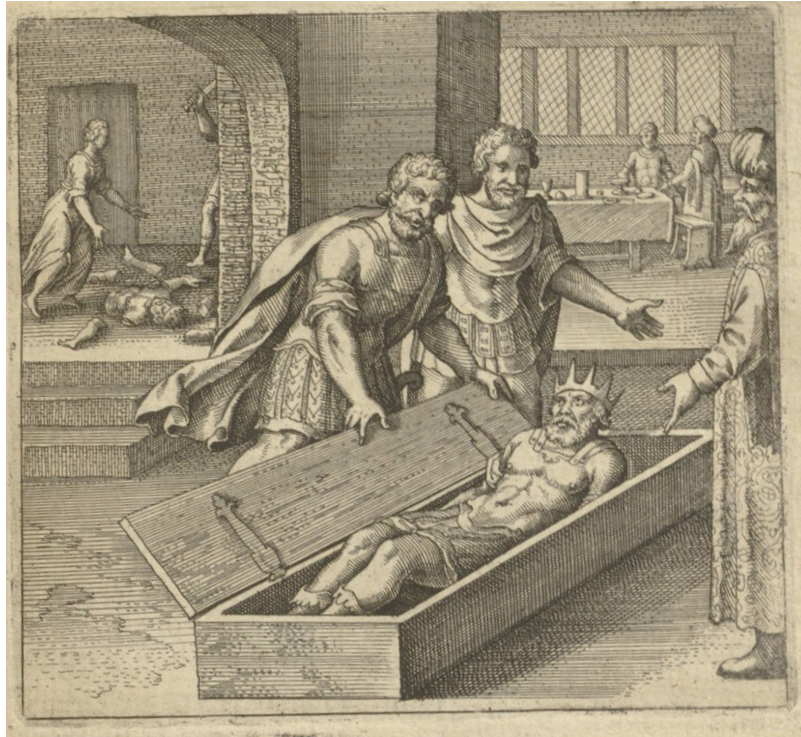
Needless to say again, all of the images in Merian's *Atalanta* clearly were not borrowed directly from these two oldest illustrated books, but from the later treatises. For example, in emblems 33 and 38, Merian used the motif of the naked alchemical androgyne as depicted in the *Rosarium*, which certainly stems from the *Buch* and the *Aurora* (for emblem 33 he used its version, which we find in the *Rosarium*, for example, in Kassel).¹⁴ In this picture, two bodies of dead lovers literally merge into one another: their corpses are transformed into an androgynous body with two heads. Sol and Luna are now one. In Merian's illustration, the sunlight heating the corpse has been replaced by a fire beneath the androgyne.

12 I deliberately do not consider the iconography of the ›Big Four‹ in detail here, as this would have required much more space. Besides, the problems of their iconography are covered in other articles. For example: Gamper/Hofmeier 2014; Putscher 1986.

13 *Furnace and Fugue* 2020.

14 UB, 8° Ms. chem. 21, fol. 75r.

Fig. 3
 Matthäus Merian the
 Elder, *Emblem 44*, Michael
 Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*,
 Oppenheim 1618.
 Frankfurt a.M., UB, Sign. 8° P 575.
 ▶ p. 117, Fig. 15.
 ▶ p. 189, Fig. 10.



Emblem 44 (Fig. 3) is inspired by the image series from the Italian alchemist Janus Lacinius's introduction for the printed edition of Petrus Bonus's *Pretiosa margarita novella* (1546) extended by his own texts (Fig. 4).¹⁵ The original depicts the king/gold sitting in front of the other nobles/metals who also want to become king/gold. Then, the king is killed by the nobles and placed into a coffin. After a few days, the aristocrats open the coffin and discover the king reborn as the philosopher's stone. In the final scene, he blesses every metal that has turned into gold with his sceptre. In Merian's illustration, we see the scenes of murder and resurrection simultaneously in one image.

Some images originate beyond the seventeen motifs I have already mentioned, namely from the allegories that emerged in the alchemical ›Big Four‹. Emblem 3, which shows the so-called ›women's work‹, symbolizing the alchemical phase of *albedo*, and emblem 31, where we see the king (or two kings, old and young), symbolizing the resurrection of dead matter

¹⁵ The series of images used in Lacinius's work was borrowed from an alchemical compendium from UB Leiden, VCF 29 (c. 1522). Lacinius's series of images was also copied as an illuminated manuscript and distributed under one cover with *Lambſpring* and *Donum dei* (Nürnberg, GNM. Hs. 16752, c. 1578-1588), as well as with *Donum dei*, *Aurora*, and *Rosarium* in Glasgow, UL, Ms. Ferguson 6 (c. 1579).



Figs. 4.1 and 4.2:
Alchemical miscellany, 1578/1588.
Nürnberg, GNM, Hs. 16752, fol. 43v., 45r.



by the power of the elixir, are copied directly from the *Splendor solis*. Written by an unknown German author, this florilegium is full of allegories on the making of the philosopher's stone and is perhaps the most luxurious alchemical treatise of all time.¹⁶

Finally, we see some motifs borrowed from manuscripts of the *Book of Lambspring* in the *Atalanta* like nesting birds (emblem 7), an ouroboros (emblem 14), a salamander (emblem 29), and a dog fight (emblem 47). Merian obviously had access to manuscripts of the *Lambspring* from the 16th and early 17th century. There are only five manuscripts of this work which were created before Merian's *Atalanta*: these are the versions from Zurich (1556), Vienna (1550-1599), Nuremberg (1578-1588), Salzburg (1607), and Kassel (1570-1610).¹⁷ It was crucial for Merian to be familiar with the iconography of this work because he illustrated the printed version of the *Lambspring* which was published in the collection of alchemical treatises called the *Musaeum hermeticum* (1625).¹⁸

Despite the fact that there are three core versions with different iconographies (Zurich, Vienna, and Nuremberg), the visual template for Merian was mainly the Viennese version, with some additions from the Zurich manuscript (it comes from the depiction of a lion and a lioness in which they walk next to each other – this scene is depicted differently in the other manuscripts of the *Lambspring*; it could also be based on an oral description, or on an image which is not preserved to this day).¹⁹

Merian adapted four images from the manuscripts of the *Lambspring* into his *Atalanta* in 1617 and then re-used almost the same engravings for his printed version of the *Book of Lambspring* in 1625. By using the images from the manuscripts of the *Lambspring* first in the printed *Atalanta* and only then in the printed *Lambspring*, he invented some new details for the imagery of the latter. In Merian's engravings for the *Lambspring* we see a burning salamander instead of the original phoenix. This is only because in the *Atalanta*, this image illustrates the emblem *Ut salamandra vivit igne sic lapis* (emblem 29). In the same way, he re-used the image of the fight between a wolf and a dog from the *Lambspring*: both animals fight equally while in the manuscript copies one of the animals is always shown defeated. This image is incorporated into the *Atalanta* to illustrate

16 Völlnagel 2004.

17 Zurich, 1556: ZB, Ms. P 2177; Vienna, 1550-1599: ÖNB, Cod. 10102; Nuremberg, 1578-1588: GNM, Hs. 16752; Salzburg, 1607: UB, M I 92; and Kassel, 1570-1610: UB, 2° Ms. chem. 11[4].

18 For example, Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, 52.2 Phys.

19 Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, Ms. P 2177, fol. 6r.

the emblem captioned *Lupus ab oriente et canis ab occidente venientes se invicem momorderunt* (emblem 47).²⁰

Finally, some of the *Atalanta's* emblems (11, 25, 27, 30, 43, 45) were inspired by the text of the *Rosarium*.²¹ However, this does not exclude the influence of the older iconography.

Merian's Motifs Surviving in Later Alchemical Manuscripts

From the 16th century onwards, it was typical to reproduce the printed versions of alchemical manuscripts with simplified or, less often, improved illustrations. Much less frequent, however, is the transfer from printed text to the medium of the illuminated manuscript. Manuscript copies of alchemical treatises were still extensively produced in the age of print for several reasons: this medium was believed to be more valuable, unique, individual, and therefore exclusive.²² The best known example is certainly the production of manuscripts based on both versions of image series of the *Rosarium*, first printed in 1550 in Frankfurt as part of the second volume on the alchemical compilation *De alchimia opuscula complura veterum philosophorum*, and then in 1572 by Pietro Perna in Basel. Merian's iconography of the *Atalanta* and his version of the *Lambspring* also appeared in illuminated manuscripts later (see below).

In the 17th or 18th century, a manuscript of the *Lambspring* was created after Merian's printed edition,²³ an interesting case of a ternary chain of reception. In the second image of the manuscript, which is unique and appears only in this copy (it was the only manuscript copy of this treatise illuminated after Merian's images), a royal figure stands next to the large house-shaped alchemical furnace. In the scene of the dog fight (figura 5), we see the beautiful urban landscape with a bridge which is completely copied from Merian. The animals are depicted according to the Nuremberg manuscript of the *Lambspring*. There are also some new elements,

20 In Merian's *Lambspring*, in the image with the birds, one of them no longer bites the other. Also, a snail was added below (emblem 8). Together, the birds and the snail symbolize the volatile and the stable, the two alchemical principles, namely *sulphur* and *mercury*. In the picture of the king lying in bed, there is a chamber pot. This is an allegory indicating that the king/metal is not just sweating but must also urinate/defecate. This could possibly be another allegory of distillation? Or is this chamber pot just a household item? Even though this remains unclear, defecation and urination were common visual alchemical allegories from the 16th century onwards.

21 Telle 1992, pp. 191-197.

22 Zuber 2018, p. 124.

23 Admont, Benediktinerstift. Cod. 829.



< Fig. 5
Matthäus Merian the Elder,
Figura 10 for *Lambſpring*,
part of Johannes Rhenanus's
Dyas chymica tripartite,
Frankfurt a.M. 1625.
Frankfurt a.M., UB, Sign. 8° P 194.6015.

> Fig. 6
Alchemical miscellany, 18th c.
Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute,
Sign. Ms. Manly Palmer Hall 51.

namely a vial with a copulating couple inside, and the archer, most likely Hermes, which were taken from other alchemical works, for example from the 15th century *Donum dei*.²⁴ The motif with the king's wide-open mouth (figura 13) is also one of those developed by Merian.

Another witness of the visual reception of Merian's works is a French alchemical manuscript created c. 1735-1799.²⁵ Everything depicted, including the typical German city landscape, is almost identical to Merian's engraving from the *Lambſpring* (figura 10).

Four high-quality images, almost exact copies from Merian's *Lambſpring* are dispersed among four different manuscripts in the famous collection of Manly Palmer Hall (Figs. 5-8).²⁶ Most likely, they were created by the English Rosicrucian Sigismund Bacstrom (c. 1750-1805). He copied every detail very diligently, yet, it becomes obvious that he did not have any original illustrated manuscript at hand: both birds are white in this version (Fig. 8; they have to be red and white in order to be compared with Sol and Luna). Bacstrom was, however, very critical towards the *Lambſpring*. In his notes,²⁷ under the heading *to be condemned*, he mentions a certain manuscript copy of this work: *a manuscript of Lamſpring [sic!], which I thought to be very valuable at that time, I believe now to be erroneous and totally false... .*

24 Galiano 2017.

25 Rome, Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, Ms. Verginelli-Rota 22, p. 243

26 Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, Mss. MPH 51, 79, 90, 92.

27 Glasgow, UL, Ferguson Ms. 46.



An almost fully illuminated copy of all the emblems of Merian's *Atalanta* is located among the Manly Palmer Hall manuscripts, as well (Figs. 9-10).²⁸ In the 17th century, the French illuminator tried to clarify some details in Merian's engravings, especially their alchemical meaning, mostly with the help of colours. The landscapes are mainly simplified in this manuscript, some details are missing, e.g. the laundry of a washwoman (emblem 5); in another miniature (emblem 18), there is no longer a dog to be seen next to the adept. Four emblems are missing (emblems 23, 33, 34 and 38. Most likely all of them were censored due to the depiction of naked bodies or acts of copulation), but it is also possible that this was probably not intentional, since the paratexts, which were also copied, can be seen next to them.

The illuminator introduced some important innovations that reinforce the content of the texts translated into French. For example, in emblem 8, the alchemist receives a fiery sword (it was an iron one in the original version) that symbolizes the power of the element of fire by means of the red colour and the licking flames. He seeks to destroy the egg, a symbol of the alchemical alembic, the vessel that was hermetically sealed with *lutum* (a substance used to seal a vessel). Four fiery spheres from emblem 17 are transformed into the symbols of the four elements: Fire, Air, Water, and Earth. Adam and Eve appear in emblems 21 and 40 coloured in gold and silver, symbolising philosophical *sulphur* and *mercury*, as in the famous *Ripley Scroll*.²⁹ With the help of the colours, the illuminator could show that the lion in

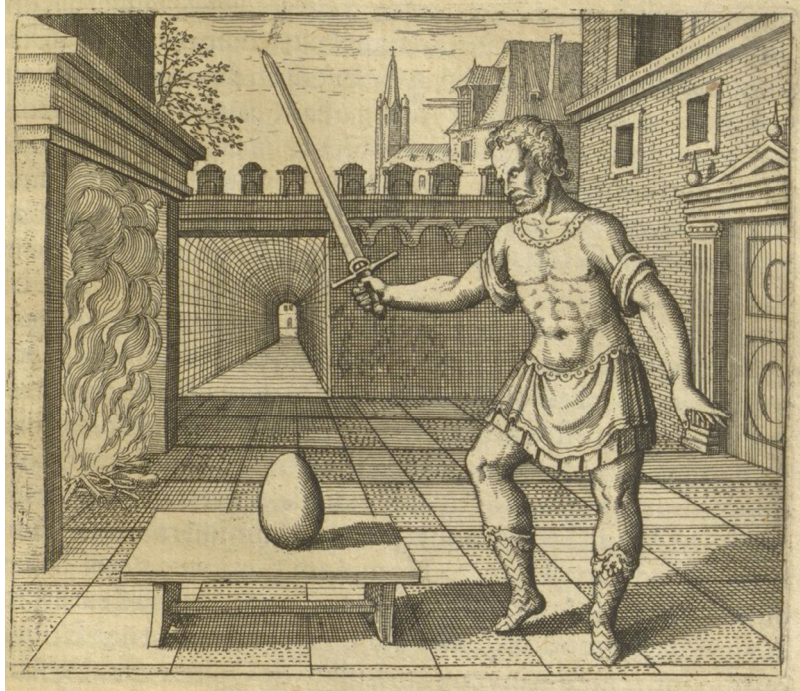
< Fig. 7
Matthäus Merian the Elder,
Figura 8 for *Lambspring*,
part of Johannes Rhenanus's
Dyas dymica tripartite,
Frankfurt a.M. 1625.
Frankfurt a.M., UB, Sign. 8° P 194.6015

> Fig. 8
Alchemical miscellany, 18th c.
Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute,
Sign. Ms. Manly Palmer Hall 92.

28 Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, Ms. MPH 170

29 McCallum 2007; Rampling 2020.

Fig. 9
 Matthäus Merian the Elder,
Emblem 8, in: Michael
 Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*,
 Oppenheim 1618.
 Frankfurt a.M., UB, Sign. 8° P 5,75.
 ▶ p. 177, Fig. 6.



emblem 37 is green, which Maier also explained in the text. Moreover, the king's red robe in emblem 46, the red-coloured blood in emblem 47, and the golden colour of the fleece in emblem 49 are innovations of the French illuminator. The execution in emblem 49 is particularly noteworthy from the mythoalchemical point of view, because the Golden Fleece and the Argonauts' journey associated with it were metaphors for the philosopher's stone and the *opus magnum* itself in some treatises.³⁰

Almost the same case of copying is present in the 18th century French manuscript from Scotland (Figs. 11-12).³¹ It contains the full series of poorly executed but iconographically carefully copied sketches from Merian's *Atalanta*. All of them are horizontally mirrored (a consequence of the process of copying) and numbered. The creator did not aim to make their version of the *Atalanta* coloured or to enhance it in any way. Small details are missing, for example, in emblem 11, the figure of Luna is not provided with the moon's symbol; the dog is again missing in emblem 18, so are the people in the background of emblem 40; there is no inscription on the scroll in emblem 43. All of this is, perhaps, due to the lack of details in this copy.

30 For example, the compilation of the *Aureum vellus oder Guldin Schatz und Kunst-Kammer* (c. 1490) which is attributed to the legendary Salomon Trismosin. More on mythoalchemy: Forshaw 2020a.

31 Glasgow, UL, Ferguson Ms. 154.



Fig. 10
Atalanta fugiens, a French
 manuscript copy, 17th c.
 Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute,
 Sign. Ms. Manly Palmer Hall 170.

Another Rosicrucian, a certain Dr. J. Kück, added an image from the *Atalanta* to their manuscript *Hermetischer Rosenkranz*, created at the beginning of the 19th century, most likely in Germany.³² The emblem they used is no. 33, which is an exact redrawing from Merian with all of its ›obscene‹ details.

A unique case of recycling the details from the images originally invented by Merian are two alchemical allegories from an illuminated alchemical miscellany created in 1765, which is now held in Croatia.³³ The Zagreb manuscript contains the most detailed picture of all manuscripts of the illustrated alchemical treatise *Coronatio naturae*, the treatise which originally emerged in 16th century England, namely the so-called depiction of *Mercurius* (emblem 2). Conventionally (in more than forty other known manuscripts of this work) this kind of image shows a river, a rock and a tree in the background. In the Zagreb version, however, there is an entire story to be seen: on the left, shepherds are leading a flock of sheep out of the stable and on the right, a man wearing a hat is trying to collect coral with a stick from a creek. This uncommon motif of catching coral can be traced back to emblem 32 from the *Atalanta*. The same motif is found in

32 New Haven, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Mellon Ms. 138, fol. 5v; Witten/Pachella 1977, pp. 767-770.

33 Zagreb, Metropolitanska knjižnica, Ms. MP 76.

Fig. 11
 Matthäus Merian the Elder,
Emblem 11, in: Michael
 Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*,
 Oppenheim 1618.
 Frankfurt a.M., UB, Sign. 8° P 5,75.



another image, also from the Zagreb manuscript, possibly belonging to the treatise *Kinder-Bett Des Steins der Weisen*, originally written in 1692. There is an androgynous figure with two *caducei* in their hands. Heraldically left stands Moses, producing water from a rock with his staff, and on the right, the figure of the coral catcher is depicted. The coral imagery could be associated with beliefs about the magical properties of corals as talismans.³⁴ In addition, coral is a prime example of camouflage as an item in between mineral, plant and living being that cannot precisely be classified. It was also believed that both, the caduceus and Moses's staff were magical wands, and that both, Hermes and Moses were masters of the alchemical art. The unique drawing from Zagreb shows how intensively the motif of mutability also radiates onto individual accessories of its representation.

In the brief overview of the wandering of alchemical motifs presented in this article, we can see how quickly the images moved from manuscript illumination to engravings and vice versa. Sometimes it was even possible

³⁴ Grabner 1969), pp. 183-195.



Fig. 12

Atalanta fugiens, a French manuscript copy, 18th c.

University of Glasgow, Archives & Special Collections, Sign. Ms. Ferguson 154.

that an image originally created in a manuscript was transformed into an engraving, with some iconographical amendments, and then this copy was re-copied as an illumination (the case of the *Lambspring* manuscript from Admont). All this was possible because various artists used different sources. Some of them preferred manuscripts or printed forms for their own (re)interpretation of a certain alchemical emblem. Thus, the evolution of the iconography of alchemical images took place like any other iconographic evolution in the Middle Ages and Early modern times: first, fixed motifs were created and then, more and more new details were added to them, which led to the emergence of new motifs.³⁵ Matthäus Merian the Elder was an important link in the chain of transmission of the alchemical iconography from manuscripts to printed works and backwards. He did not only immortalize emblems from manuscripts known to a narrow circle of people in his famous printed works and made them available for a larger audience, but he also became an inspiration for the next generation of illuminators. Thanks to him, the *Book of Lambspring* became a printed book, and the *Atalanta fugiens* a manuscript.

35 Pozhidaeva 2021, pp. 18-27.