

Phantom alchemical plants of Quersitanus

The first book, chapter 10 of Quercetanus [Du Chesne] *The Practise of Chemicall, and Hermeticall Physicke...* London, 1605, contains an interesting description of alchemically produced phantom plants.

Another [demonstration of the living forces in salts] I received from a most learned and famous Polonian, a skilfull Physitian, above 26 yeers since.

This man was so excellently, and phylosophically skilfull in the preparing of ashes out of all the parts of any maner of plant, with all the Tinctures and Impressions of all the parts of the plant, and would in such wise conserve all their Spirites, and the Authours of all their faculties, that hee had above thirtie such plants prepared out of their ashes of divers sorts, conteynes in their severall glasses, sealed up with Hermes seale, with the tittle of each particular plant, and the propertie thereof, written upon the same. So, as that if a man desired to see a Rose or Mary-gold, or any other flower, as a red or white Poppey, or such like: then would hee take the glass wherein the ashes of such a flower was inclosed, whether it were a Rose, a Marie-golde, a Poppey, a Gilly-flower, or such like, according as the writing of the glass did demonstrate. And putting the flame of a Candell to the bottome of the glasse, by which it was made hote, you might see that most thinne and impalpable ashes, or salt, send forth from the bottome of the glasse, the manifest form of a Rose, vegetating and growing up by little and little, and putting on so fully the form of stalkes, leaves and flowers, in such perfect and naturall wise in apparant shew, that a man would have beleaved verily, the same to be naturally corporeat, whereas in truth it was the spirituall Idea, indued with a spiritual essence: which served for no other purpose, but to be matched with his fitting earth, that so it might take unto it a soly[d] body. This shadowed Figure, so soone as the vessell was taken from the fire, turned to his ashes again, and vanishing away, became a Chaos and confused matter.

When I had seene this secret, endeavouring with al my might to attain to the same, I spent much time about it, but yet lost my labour.